



The multiple facets of the coyote as a Trickster in Oral Tradition and Art

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Recibido: 14 de marzo de 2023 / Aceptado: 29 de julio de 2023

Abstract. Through this article we will analyze the multiple facets of the well-known coyote in Native American oral tradition and art following Mac Linscott Ricketts' classification. Associated with a cultural hero, the thief who stole the fire, the wanderer, the Imitator and the Creator and Destroyer of life, the spectator feels identified with their inner child and seeks to find an answer to the dichotomies in life. This multifaceted character will speak on behalf of Leslie Marmon Silko's in *Storyteller* struggling between preserving the old traditions and adapting to a modern world that are so far apart. In the same line, Harry Fonseca will also represent it as a cowboy, seducer and saint.

Keywords: Trickster, Coyote, North American stories, Leslie Marmon Silko *Storyteller*, Harry Fonseca Coyote.

El polifacético coyote como pícaro en la tradición oral y en el arte

Resumen. A lo largo de este artículo analizaremos las múltiples facetas del famoso coyote en la tradición oral de los nativos americanos siguiendo la clasificación de Mac Linscott Ricketts. Relacionado con un héroe cultural, con el ladrón que roba el fuego, el vagabundo, el imitador y el Creador y Destructor de vida, el espectador se siente identificado con su niño interior y busca encontrar una respuesta a las dicotomías de la vida. Este personaje polifacético hablará a través de Leslie Marmon Silko en *Storyteller* luchando por preservar las tradiciones antiguas y al mismo tiempo adaptarlas a un mundo moderno, tan distantes entre sí. En la misma línea, Harry Fonseca también lo representará como un cowboy, un seductor y un santo.

Palabras clave: Pícaro, Coyote, Historias de Norteamérica, Leslie Marmon Silko "Storyteller", Harry Fonseca "Coyote".

Summary: 1. Trickster stories. 2. Coyote shift shapes in oral tradition and art. 2.1. The coyote who lives by his wits and makes foolish actions. 2.2. The coyote as a transformer. 2.3. The coyote as a cultural hero. Conclusions. References.

Cómo citar: Pérez Agustín, M. The multiple facets of the coyote as a Trickster in Oral Tradition and Art. *Amaltea. Revista de mitocrítica*, 15, 2023, e87601.

1. Trickster stories

In its first contact with Jesuit missionaries in the XVII century, Native American literature stood for its "naturalness" depicting natives as great experts on nature. Even before the arrival of Christopher Columbus, there were a wide variety of genres, including hundreds of narrations, songs and ceremonies that can be classified into the following categories: creation stories, trickster stories and stories about heroes and animals. Through this article we will focus on trickster stories, which/as they became very popular in the American West. But what differences can be found between Cosmogony and Trickster Stories? Cosmogony stories are sacred and give an explanation about how the world was created whereas trickster myths reveal a sacred reality about the human beings and the world that surrounded them. The former type of

stories was sometimes inspired by taboos and their main contribution was to teach people how to live in a community and interact with animals, the land and the spirit world. The leading role of tricksters and clowns was fundamental to keep an essential contact with the sacred and connect with creation and birth.

As argued in *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, in trickster myths the creator will not be portrayed as a role model or a divine creature but as a hero who is always wandering and starving, highly sexed and who likes playing tricks on people or having them played on him. These common traits among tricksters will make him both a fool and someone who is beyond the system. He does not respect the values that you have established and smashes them (Campbell 34). The high complexity of the term trickster, which varies from culture to culture, impedes a unilateral interpretation because,

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as the name implies, on one level it is probably the most important and amoral practical joker who wanders about playing pranks on unsuspecting victims. But he is far more complex than that. In Erdrich's North Dakota quartet, the coyote is a shapeshifter because he can be at the same time an evil spirit and a benevolent deity, a mortal and a god, a creator and a destroyer, a culture hero and a villain (Velie 44).

A number of theories have tried to give response to this complex character. Franz Boas, dean of American anthropologists, stated in Mac Linscott Ricketts *The North American Trickster* that "the trickster elements were the most primitive aspects of the character in question" (329). According to Boas, in the past this character was self-centered, amoral and motivated only by his own desires. With human progress this character who sometimes benefited mankind incidentally evolved to the idea of a culture hero who brings good things to humankind intentionally. The idea of the trickster as a "human being centered" product was also supported by Mac Linscott Ricketts through his doctoral dissertation entitled *Religious Significance of the Trickster-Transformer-Culture Hero in the Mythology of the North American Indians* at the University of Chicago in 1964. Due to the multiplicity of this complex character and to the lack of studies from a Native American perspective, we will follow Ricketts's classification to deepen the role of this archaic, mythical and ever changing character:

- A. A worldly being of uncertain origin who lives by his wits and is often injured and embarrassed by his foolish imitations.
- B. A transformer whose actions can shape the world.
- C. A culture hero who engages with the spirit world at great risk to make the world a better place.

The analysis of the multiple facets of the trickster is always considered in a communal context because "when he is in isolation, he is almost always in trouble" (Vizenor 288). The multiple facets of the coyote and how he attempts to preserve the old traditions adapting to a new and everchanging reality will be displayed in *Storyteller* by Leslie Marmon Silko and Harry Fonseca's series of this animal and Native American traditional stories.

2. Coyote shift shapes in oral tradition and art

One of the most prominent and universal characteristics of tricksters is shift shaping, either breaking with the established rules or easily adapting to an ever-changing world, in Radin et al.'s words "the establisher of culture" (125). This disruption of order will be a cultural element, present in most native traditions, in the shape of a trickster or a clown to keep essential contact with the sacred, through birth and creation. Among the most popular tricksters we can find the rabbit in the east, the crow in the north and

the coyote in the south. However, due to its prevalence and importance in most tribes of the American West we will focus on the coyote.

Aztecs referred to this animal as *coyotl*, a term borrowed from the Spanish word coyote. Later, Anglo-Americans named this animal Prairie Wolf. Biologists gave it the Latin name *Canis Latrans*, which stands for "dog barking", reminding us that it is a member of the canid family, interbred between the domestic dog and the wolf. Its particular howling turned this animal into the deity of dance and music among the Aztecs. However, he will also represent Old Man Coyote who will create the world and bring the fire, a sly hero or, to the contrary, the thief who stole the fire, a warrior that shows discord, the fool and the gossip. It also symbolizes one of the nine totemic animals which helps us to balance the innocence of our personality and addressed to the south it will also protect our inner child and remind us to be humble. In the interview that I recorded for my Ph.D. dissertation in (The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in Ottawa, Canada in August 2005), Evan Pritchard, chief of the Micmac, described the coyote as a very strong animal for his people because his stories carry an implicit moral: "Don't be lazy, greedy or rude like the coyote". An example of this can be found in the story *The Coyote and the Salmon* by The Thompson where the protagonist driven by his gluttony to scarf some food, will take the shape of two old ladies and eat all the salmon of this tribe.

Coyote's presence prevails in native oral literature from the Rocky Mountains in Canada to the Sierra Madre, and in The United States to the Great Basin. Among the Algonquins in the east of Canada he is also known as *Glooscap*, *Nanibush* or *Wisakedjak*, by the Native Americans in the Plains he is "The Old Coyote" and among the Salish in British Columbia, he is identified as the coyote, whereas in the Pacific coast, he is associated with the raven. The trickster character appears in some form in every culture: in Native American myths, he is Coyote and Raven; in West Africa Eshu; in China the Monkey King; and in Europe the Greek Hermes. Unlike Hermes and Eshu, the coyote never reaches the level of divinity. However, Native American tricksters will cross physical and social boundaries because they are often depicted as travelers or aimless wanderers, even having supernatural powers because they can change the stars of the universe or can turn into different creatures - either mortal or immortal - as we will see in the examples, hereafter.

Mourning Dove, an interior Salish woman who collected tribal stories among Northern Plateau Peoples, refers to the coyote in *Coyote Stories* as "'*Sinka-lip*', which means Imitator" (7) because he likes playing tricks on others and feels delighted when imitating or mocking. He was sent by the Spirit Chief to make the world a better place, as in Mac Linscott Ricketts classification, but on occasions, he was thinking about doing other things and frequently causing trouble. It is also portrayed as a dualistic figure "neither as a human being nor god, but some-

thing of both” (Radin et al., 327-350). More specifically, among the Pomo and the Maidu in California or the Hopi in Arizona, he will be regarded as a high god resulting in a dualistic figure who creates good animals like buffalos, bears and deer, as well as evil creatures like snakes or toads. In the story entitled *The Mythological Age*, the protagonist will travel across the country to separate the good people from the bad. The evil was transformed into cursed birds and animals that were assigned to different spheres, whereas the good remained in the country.

After analyzing the first facet of the coyote one may wonder why is he so popular and persistent? As a response to this, Joseph L. Henderson in (Jung 31) *Man and His Symbols* defines the trickster as a figure whose physical appetites dominate his behavior and who has the mentality of an infant. Furthermore, to satisfy his primary needs he can be cruel, cynical and unfeeling.

In some traditional stories that will appear in section 2.1, the coyote, driven by his primary need will

sexually abuse of women, gamble and sleep, when he was apparently hunting behaving like a whimsical child but merciless, however, this will not be the only facet of the famous trickster.

A different facet of the coyote can be found in the collection of a well-known Maidu painter, Harry Fonseca, who portrays the coyote as a flexible and slippery character who confronts some stereotypes placed on Native peoples. He appears as a vibrant and dynamic avatar who will explore the city of San Francisco performing different roles, an opera singer, a ballet dancer, a *koshare* and a painter. The artist displays a more modern and flexible character who wears a leather jacket, tennis shoes and checked pants, replacing the *Pow Wow* traditional dances for Rock ‘n’ Roll, going through the acculturation process imposed by Whites. Rose wears a red dress with camellias, which will also appear behind her left ear and in coyote’s jacket, symbolizing seduction, because she personifies a liberated woman. Similarly, coyote’s big and bushy tail represents the phallic member.



Fig. 1. Harry Fonseca. *Pow Wow Club*. 1980

Pas de Deus is an ironic representation of the Black Swan, Tchaikovsky’s famous classical ballet, which is a timeless love story featured by Prince Siegfried, who sees before his eyes a beautiful swan who will turn into a lovely princess called Odette, under the spell of a sorcerer Rothbart. Ironically, Harry

Fonseca portrays Odette as a chubby she-coyote who is wearing white tights. Opposed to traditional forms, the he-coyote breaks with the established rules wearing a leather jacket instead of the ballet tutu. The end will also break with the setup rules because the White Swan will rescue them, therefore defeating evil.



Fig.2. Harry Fonseca. *Pas de Deus*. 1984

Harry Fonseca proceeds to assign other roles to the coyote, like the creator of the world, the very first one, who was responsible for putting the stars in the universe, the giver and taker of life, who stole the fire or who can change the seasons moving onto a more detailed and anthropomorphic vision where he will eat frybread peanut butter and jelly. The coyote uses you if you do not watch out, or he will teach you if you let him.

As we have previously seen, this ubiquitous character is present through different art manifestations reflecting our primary needs, our inner child and our adaptive capacity, by turning a well-known classical ballet into a professional Rock 'n' Roll dancer. The coyote reflects the intricacy to adapt to a new reality preserving the classical forms giving into a dualistic figure that can sometimes be ironic as in *Pas de Deus* or serious, being the victim of his own traps, as we will see hereafter through Mac Linscott Ricketts' classification.

2.1. The coyote who lives by his wits and makes foolish actions

Most stories where the coyote turns into a buffoonish or foolish creature are addressed to children and aim to teach them a moral. However, his sometimes vulgar behaviour, sexual appetite and crudeness have forced stories to become "tales" meeting the criteria of the western dominant culture. As (Nodelman) states "...all evidence of animality and mutability has been eliminated, in order to satisfy an adult nostalgia for a supposed time of freedom from pain and limitation, a time of purity and innocence that never was" (108). The following examples of traditional stories respond to Linscott's classification where the coyote makes foolish actions and will be his worse victim.

A clear example of being a victim of his foolish actions can be found in the well-known story by Mourning Dove, where the coyote, impelled by curiosity, will try to imitate the chickadee who will prevent him from doing it telling him, "You will lose your eyes" (145). Without heeding his warning and led by his craziness, the coyote sat down by the lake, pulled his eyes out and threw them up in the willows. Once he shook the willows, the eyes fell on the ground and he realized that he was blind (Mason 299-363). This fine line between finding an explanation for the chickadee's protruding eyes and the coyote juggling with his own eyes, leads the spectator, in a matter of seconds, from laughter to a strong feeling of powerlessness, because the protagonist will never recover his vision.

His pride and innocence will also push him to compete with the very Water Serpent, plying all his wits in the well-known story *The Water Serpent and The Coyote*, by The Hopi. Owing to the Water Serpent's long tail, the coyote had to wait outside the kiva. Every time they met, the situation worsened to the extent to which the coyote, carried away by envy, decided to create a greater tail. In the end, the coyote

will get close to the fireplace and, unaware of the situation, turns and sees the grass is burning behind him, way back. He decided not to go back home because the Hopi set fire to the forest to drive him away. The unexpected turn is that the protagonist was exhausted from running away from the fire so when he arrived at the Little Colorado River, he drowned. The previously mentioned traditional stories portray a clear example of how the protagonist falls into his own traps with a tragic end. The aim is to teach children to accept themselves the way they are. Otherwise, consequences may be irretrievable like losing your vision or even drowning. We need to contextualize this for the reader to be aware of the tragic consequences that some children may encounter in the forest surrounded by predators if they do not follow strictly the rules. The coyote was in this case the perfect example of the tragic consequences a child may encounter if he/she does not follow the rules. However, driven by his wit, this apparently innocent figure could also take the shape of the Old Man Coyote, a profane character as in the well-known story, *The Coyote's Strawberry* by the Crow compiled by (Erdoes and Ortiz 314) becoming the prototype of a mythic race that existed before human beings. The coyote was spying a group of good-looking girls picking berries and told them "Ah, these pretty young things!", then he buried himself in the earth among some strawberry bushes, letting only the tip of his penis protrude and when the girls approached the bushes they exclaimed, "There is a big berry here, it is different from the others". Some girls pulled at it, some nibbled at it until one said, "this berry weeps" and the other "no, it has milk in it" and the third said, "Since we can't pick it, let's look for a sharp piece of Hint and cut it off".

Intermingled between their innocence and the impudence and obscenity of the Old Man Coyote, stories become the means to inform and transform the world. Likewise, the subsequent stories display scatological and extremely sexual scenes, impolite to Western Society in a natural and humorous way. The following story is entitled *What's this? My balls for your dinner* by the White River Sioux, reflects an extremely scatological scene where *Iktome* proposes the coyote to eat his *itka*, *susu*, eggs, balls or big hairy balls because it is what they give the guests for dinner as a great honor. The coyote replies that it must be a very bad joke, but *Itkome*, as in the previous story, will get a big skinning knife to cut his genitals.

In *Storyteller* by Leslie Marmon Silko, a Laguna Pueblo Native American, the reader is introduced to the traditional coyote who struggles to become the Governor with the sole purpose of keeping all women with him. The writer introduces him as a sacred character because his stories had to be told in wintertime drinking *Spañada* by the stove.

As the action progresses, we get to know the real coyote who lost his "ratty old fur coat" (229) playing poker, introducing another facet of a gambler. Silko emphasizes that "things like that are always happening to him, anyway" (229). Progressing through the

story another humorous and childish scatological example can be found in (Silko's) poem *Toe'osh: A Laguna Coyote Story* based on historical events and starred by the modern-day character Charlie Coyote, someone who can make others feel like a fool or can pull off a joke. In the following excerpt, led by his gluttony, the coyote will be responsible for breaking a chain with a tragic ending in a humorous way

They were after the picnic food that the special dancers left down below the cliff. And *Toe'osh* and his cousins hung themselves down over the cliff holding each other's tail in their mouth making a coyote chain until someone in the middle farted and the guy behind him opened his mouth to say "What stinks?" and they all went tumbling down, like that (230-231).

In the writer's words, the coyote chain turns into a humorous action because the protagonist reassures the others that there is nothing to worry about and that everything is going to be fine, until the thing that is not being taken into consideration happens. Through the previously seen examples we conclude that the coyote can either fall into his own traps, led by his foolish actions or on the contrary, driven by his sexual appetite or craving for food, he will plan something unexpected and convoluted to achieve his goal. In the previous example, it will turn into a humorous action but in others, the consequences can be dramatic.

2.2. The coyote as a transformer

We will secondly analyze the term transformer within Native American tradition. The name "Transformer" was given to a human or animal who possessed supernatural powers because they could create men from animals or animals from men, transform the original landscape and even change monsters into ordinary creatures. Among other groups, the character of the Trickster and Transformer have merged taking the shape of the Coyote and the Raven, who has occasionally been referred to as Trickster-Transformer as we will see in the examples below.

Many of the trickster myths possess the power to transform themselves as Zeus into a swan, eagle or bull or the transmutation of deities or human beings into the forms of animals, as a coyote turning into a salmon to be rescued by two old ladies as in the previously mentioned story *The Coyote and The Salmon* by The Thompson. Some animals like the rattlesnake undergo metamorphosis, taking the shape of humans. However, this metamorphosis can serve as a form of punishment as in the Mayan Hero Twins where the elder brothers will be changed into monkeys due to their greed.

Most tricksters have male personality traits like the coyote who is particularly inordinate, scatological, sexually vulgar and travels for the sake of adventure. A clear example can be found in *Anishinabe*

Wenebojo, which were only told by the *Mide wiwin* who was a male (Barnouw 117).

An example of how tricksters cross the boundaries of the unexpected is when the protagonist pretends to be a woman and ends up marrying a man, as in the story where *Wichikapache* proves to be a good wife, even giving birth to children with the unexpected turn of being wolf cubs, which makes the young man be ridiculed by the whole community. Although this transgender is portrayed as a natural and simple act, women reject him repeatedly because "He is not adept at skills a woman finds attractive in a potential mate such as fathering, hunting or fighting" (Walker 206), but will stand out for his laziness, cowardice and gluttony. This transformation is also present contrariwise when *Mother Coyote* transgresses the role she is expected to carry out among the Tewa in New Mexico and Arizona, brushing cornmeal off the grinding stone (Hayden 26). Although these roles were inherently set in the matriarchal communities, she will be unable to perform these tasks.

The high capacity of the coyote to transform even into non-living things depending on its needs is clearly reflected in the story by the Cherokee entitled *The Coyote turns into Corn Mill*. The first woman was dropping corn inside and grinding it to turn it into fine meal, until she realized it disappeared faster than the meal was ground. After grinding all the corn, she stores a small portion of meal. The same happened to the two next women who, a little suspicious, discussed the situation and decided to turn the mill in a different way, but the problem still persisted. With determination, one woman took an axe and broke the mill in half to see what was inside. When it rolled around on the ground, the coyote leaped up and ran away, much to their astonishment because he had hidden the old corn mill and turned it into a mill to eat all their corn (Archer 1).

In the story entitled *Coyote Keeps his name* by the Okanagon, the Creator will recognize his facet of the transformer calling him the Changing Person. He will give him a special power where he will turn into anything he wants and be able to hear everything at all distances except for water. If he died, he could come back to life, so he went out to do the right things (Lopez 1-3).

The previously seen examples portray a supernatural character who can either transform into an animal, he or she human interchangeably or into an inanimate thing, having as a common ground gluttony or preserving old traditions, constricting the established roles for men and women inner to that group.

2.3. The coyote as a cultural hero

According to the *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, a cultural hero in most cultures assists the Creator by living with the newly created humans and teaching them religious ceremonies, rules and ways of survival (9-39). The coyote will sometimes take the side of the people against the creator; or, as

a trickster, he will introduce unpleasant aspects of human life, as we will see in the examples below. Coyote's behavior is more in line with this definition of a cultural hero rather than Linscott's classification where the protagonist will take risks to make the world a better place. Through the following examples we experience that he will be responsible for the good and the bad on Earth, giving an explanation to all the phenomena we encounter in life but at the same time, as in the previous categories, he acts like a selfish creature depriving Frog People from drinking water among Colville Confederated Tribe.

The coyote acts as a cultural hero reassuring the prevalence of humankind by making women's existence possible to keep men accompanied, as in the Crow legend (Lowie, 124) and creating pregnancy in Wishram story (Ramsey 52).

Among the Apache cultures, the coyote is highly recognized as a cultural hero because he is traditionally based around hunting, warfare and the individual pursuit of supernatural power, whereas in societies that are more concerned with agriculture, these traits would remain in the background. He will also be addressed as the Old Man Coyote because his longevity will entail experience and respect, and act as a Selfish Deceiver among the Caddo, Crow, Pawnee, Hidatsa, Mandan, Salishan and Shoshone.

In the Crow legend, the *Old Man Coyote makes the World*, the protagonist appears out of nowhere and realizes that there is something missing: "Younger brothers," he said, "Is there anything in this world but water and still more water?" After several attempts, the earth diver will bring a small clump of soft earth which, when planted, will turn into plants, trees and grass. The Creator will appear in this story as if he were unaware of the actions that he should be carrying out. He started creating positive things like rivers, ponds and springs and as an empathetic character, he realizes that ducks are unhappy because they lack a companion. Quite decisively, he will bring a female duck companion for their fulfillment. The turning point comes with Cirape, who is Old Man Coyote's younger and inexperienced brother, who will bring in negative things, like weapons for human beings to defend themselves from animals. He will justify why war is positive and necessary because you paint yourself with vermilion, wear a fine shirt, sing war songs, have war honors and steal the enemy's horses, their women and maidens. And by and by you can become rich and be a chief.

By contrast, Winnebago describe the coyote as a cultural hero who helps the people because, once he knew that the river was going to be inhabited by Indians, he travelled there to remove all the obstacles and so they could live happily. In the same vein, the story *Coyote Keeps His Name* by the Okanagon, opens with the origin of the human race and describes the relationship between the coyote and the Great Spirit. At the end of the story, the Creator will explain to the coyote what his role will be in the lives of the New People, who unaware of how to dress, sing or shoot

an arrow, he will have to teach them how to do all these things. In addition to this, the coyote will have to kill all the bad creatures on the earth if he wants to become a great chief and unable to control himself he will also teach them how to do foolish things, so the coyote will be laughed at (Lopez 1-3).

The explicit instructions of the Creator give readers a glimpse of the great dependence of the coyote as a cultural hero and at the same time an unavoidable lack of control to let his inner child come out and do foolish things, not setting an example to his people. However, since he was given special powers, he "will do the right thing".

Although the coyote is not considered a deity among Native American communities, he will act as the famous Greek God and helper of humankind, Prometheus who, after living among men, was surprised to see the hunger and brutal cold that they have been put through, as a result of lacking fire. Prometheus wanted to end this suffering and begged Zeus to give men fire. They refused to help him. Prometheus, then, stole a spark of fire from one of Zeus' lightning bolts and brought fire to humankind. Likewise, coyote took pity on humans and knew where the fire was kept. It was zealously guarded by three beings, so after watching them closely, he asked them to give fire to human beings. He snatched the fire and the squirrel, the chipmunk and the frog began to chase him, so the coyote decided to pass the fire to the squirrel, who after passed it to the chipmunk and finally to the frog, who dropped it on the wood. The only one who knew how to get the fire out of the wood was the coyote, who acted as a cultural hero teaching his people how to get the fire and how to use it.

Another facet of the coyote as a cultural hero who does not follow strictly the rules of the Creator can be found among the oral tradition of the Navajo. The coyote helped the *First Woman* and the *First Man* because the sky was so dark that those who wished to travel by night needed more lights. The *First Man* worked out a plan to light up the heavens by placing different fragments of mica in the sky in the four directions. He put them exactly "where we now see three large red stars among the white ones that shine above us" (Zolbrod 93). Meanwhile, the coyote was watching him by observing the *First Man's* progress, until he grew impatient and said: "Let the stars sit wherever they will" (93). Having said this, he collected all of *First Man's* pieces of rock-star mica, threw them up into the air and blew a strong breath. The stars that the *First Man* had placed remained in the right position nevertheless the ones blown by the coyote can be seen unevenly placed resulting from his impatience. This is an explanation of how we find some stars helter-skelter due to the disobedience of the coyote to the *First Man* and his lack of knowledge of the universe's functioning. In the same vein, among the Plains there is a well-known legend entitled *Coyote Takes Water From the Frog People*, where he will act against the Frog People's will. After hunting deer and picking a big dentalia shell, driven

by his thirst he knew that every time someone needed water to drink, cook or wash they had to get it from the Frog people. Once, coyote came and told the Frog people he had a big dentalia shell and wanted to drink for a long time, to which they responded "Give us that shell and you can drink all you want" (335). Unaware of the coyote's intentions, they gave him the shell and he began drinking until he drank so much that the dam collapsed and the water went into the valley and made creeks, rivers and waterfalls. After this, the Frog people very angrily said, "You have taken all the water" until now, anyone can go down to the river to get some water to cook or drink (Erdoes and Ortiz 355).

Through the previous examples we can see how the coyote takes risks to make the world a better place, as in Linscott's classification, and at the same time personifies the good and the evil and tries to give an explanation about life's dichotomy. The spectator will encounter on occasions a trickster who is carried away by his primary needs, like drinking water, acting as a selfish creature and at the same time shows himself empathetic when he shares the fire with other animals and teaches them how to use it. All these opposed facets can be found when the coyote acts like a cultural hero.

Conclusions

After analyzing the multiple facets of the coyote through oral tradition and art among different communities, it can be concluded that this character shares some common traits with the buffoon, the glutton, the sexually promiscuous, the dominant male. However, his impulses turn him into an unpredictable character who can cross boundaries or skip the rules that surprise, threaten or teach the audience. His flexibility and adaptability helps him escape from being unilaterally labeled as a dualistic figure, trickster, naïf, liar, cultural hero, transformer, and so on. He changes with the progress of the action, either falling into his own traps, cheating on others, or setting an

example especially for young children. According to (Jacquin 244), the coyote as a trickster is the archetype of human passion who travels the world with his intestines around his body. In the course of the ethical adventures, he creates and at the same time complicates the universe. He invents suffering, tears and laugh and does not respect anything turning into a beast if necessary.

This enormous capacity to adapt to new realities has helped many artists like Harry Fonseca, Leslie Marmon Silko, Paula Gun Allen, Mourning Dove, among others, to bring an incomparable cultural framework to Western Literature artistic canon by turning the coyote into a corrupt governor known as Charlie Coyote in Leslie Marmon's Silko *Storyteller*, or into a chubby ballet dancer breaking all the setup rules, in Harry Fonseca's *Pas de Deus*.

Throughout the article, we have followed Mac Linscott Ricketts' classification where the coyote lives by his wits and foolish actions. He is a transformer and a cultural hero, and he will proceed which justifies why this popular character should stay immortal: "Of course, the trickster of the myth never dies; or more precisely, whenever he dies, he rises up again. This is because he is a symbol of mankind, the race, which according to this mythic vision, is unconquerable and immortal" (349). This multifaceted trickster becomes a liberator in the role of the antagonist and healer in colonized societies that have been dominated and forced to suppress their languages and religions, leaving their identities behind. As Clark (2001) highlights, "it is when one can identify with a character who has changed that one can envision and embrace the possibility of change for oneself" (83-91). This holistic view through different art manifestations has helped the audience to see how a solitary figure copes with daily life problems in a more serious or humorous way, teaching others to accept themselves and in the three previously displayed facets, letting his inner child arise voluntarily or involuntarily. The figure of the coyote also brings together the Native and the White adapting to an everchanging reality in a natural way, free of labels.

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