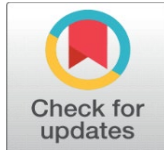


THE TRICKSTER ARCHETYPE IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA: LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR AND NOLAN BOOTH

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the representation and reinterpretation of the trickster archetype in contemporary media through a psychoanalytic reading of Lucifer Morningstar from the Netflix series *Lucifer* and Nolan Booth from the Netflix film *Red Notice*. This study utilizes Carl Jung's theory of archetypes as a major framework and specifically focuses on the trickster archetype to identify the characters' cunning strategies, moral complexity, and disruptive tendencies that impact narrative development. By comparing *Lucifer* and *Nolan*, the paper highlights the Tricksters' adaptability in modern storytelling, showcasing its role as both a source of chaos and an agent of change. Furthermore, this analysis explores how contemporary media reshapes archetypal roles, bridging the gap between traditional psychological theories and present-day narrative structures.

Keywords: Trickster Archetype, Carl Jung, Lucifer Morningstar, Nolan Booth, Modern Storytelling, Trickster Archetype

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Carl G Jung, there is a presence of collective unconsciousness in every human that shapes their behaviour. It does not surface in everyone in a same manner, but behaviour or traits appear in people that have faced past traumas or other significant issues. Jung suggests that these symbols that are universal appear in dreams, myths, and stories that shape our thinking and actions. These recurring symbols and patterns are known as Archetypes. It can be visualized as a mask that a character wears in a particular scene. And some characters can serve as a mentor of a tale, wearing that single mask for the majority of the journey. His twelve major archetypes include the Innocent, orphan, hero, caregiver, explorer, rebel, lover, creator, jester, sage, magician, and ruler. However, the important fact is that the shadow is not explicitly mentioned among them, but is a major concept in Jung's

theory of the unconscious. Every archetype has a shadow aspect-its darker, hidden or repressed side. It acts as an underlying force that influences all archetypes.

This paper applies Carl Jung's theory of archetypes, specifically the trickster archetype and the process of individuation, to analyse the transformation of Lucifer Morningstar and Nolan Booth. Jung, who developed the concept of the collective unconscious, contrasts with Sigmund Freud, who focused on the personal unconscious. While Freud would likely interpret the trickster in terms of unconscious drives, repression, and fixed personality traits, Jung views archetypes as evolving. This aligns with the study's focus on how these characters navigate their journeys of self-discovery. Unlike Freud's static interpretation, Jung presents the trickster as a dynamic figure capable of growth and transformation.

Tricksters are similar to the Jester who uses humour, the Rebel who opposes rules and the Magician who manipulates reality. But trickster overlaps as it feeds on chaos and is more of a character that uses cleverness rather than direct rebellion. This paper is a psychoanalytic reading of how the Trickster archetype manifests in two contemporary figures; Lucifer Morningstar from the Netflix series *Lucifer* and Nolan Booth from the Netflix movie *Red Notice*. It is a reinterpretation of how classical Trickster figures were once depicted. Lucifer and Nolan exhibit traits of manipulation, charm, refusal to conform to societal norms and questioning authority. They are comparable in most aspects and yet at the same time, they differ in their own motivations. Lucifer is a fallen angel who has abandoned hell, indulging in earthly pleasures. He is a nightclub owner and LAPD consultant. Meanwhile, Nolan Booth is a notorious art thief. The difference between them is the level of transformation; Lucifer goes through an extensive character change, ultimately towards a major transformation, Booth is light-hearted, playing a self-interested character who feeds on lies. This paper is analyzed by using the Jungian Archetypal theory, that aims to produce a comparative study of their character change, roles in their stories, and relationship with the supporting characters in their respective stories. It examines how the Trickster functions not just as a deceptive or humorous figure but also as a multifaceted force that challenges and reshapes the narrative.

Carl Jung in his work *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*; describes the trickster archetype as "a forerunner of the saviour, a being who disorients and yet enlightens, deceives and yet reveals truth" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 9, Part 1). Researchers such as Paul Radin explain how tricksters are, combining humour, chaos, and wisdom to critique social norms [Radin \(1956\)](#) [Hynes et al. \(1993\)](#) , provides a framework of the six traits of trickster. The essential defining feature of a trickster is inherently ambiguous and unconventional, and the other features are developed out of it. They are, deceiver, shape-shifter, situation-invertor, imitator of gods and lewd bricoleur. In contemporary media, the Trickster has developed to carve out its niche in new narrative forms. [Voytilla \(1999\)](#) examines the way the mythological archetypes such as Trickster are embedded in movie stories, conforming to the cultural context but retaining its problematic element. [Babu \(2021\)](#). a research paper by Anupa Rose Babu discusses how Lucifer Morningstar is represented in the television series *Lucifer*, where he is a reinterpretation of biblical and mythological Satan. Lucifer challenges divine authority and walks the road of self-redemption. The archaic depictions of Tricksters have been re-examined against the backdrop of the contemporary world. They are no longer viewed as evil or villainous characters; rather, they are charismatic, humorous, and even heroic at times.

Lucifer Morningstar commonly known as the Light bringer is a name that comes from the Latin word Lucifer. He was expelled from heaven by God, because he wanted to rule and have power. In the Netflix series Lucifer, the character Lucifer is played by Tom Ellis. He is a trickster character who is always boasting about his abilities particularly his good looks.

He becomes the Lord of hell after being left behind by his father also known as God. Lucifer on earth is the proprietor of a nightclub called Lux. Lux is a sanctuary for enjoying sensual and intoxicating pleasures. He also becomes a civilian advisor within the Los Angeles Police Department. Lucifer is looked as a trickster figure since he is an individual who defies divine authority. In Christian mythology, Lucifer or Satan is depicted as a devious shape-shifting character who derives joy from the collapse of God's creation. The original sin of man is a delight to the Satan. Trickster characters are generally shown to be rigid and non-conformist; however, in this essay, the way Lucifer redefines the Trickster character from one of simplistic evil to one of individualism, self-realization and transformation is discussed.

The Netflix series Lucifer comprises six completed seasons, illustrating the protagonist evolve from a hedonistic, evil character to one who forms connection with humanity and ultimately seeks redemption. While supporting characters are the driving force behind his growth, this paper centers on Mazikeen and Chloe, played by Lesley Ann Brandt and Lauren German respectively. They are the primary characters that influence Lucifer's redemption, one of them a reflection of his darker half and the other a driver of his emotional development.

Ryan Reynolds as Nolan Booth in the Netflix film Red Notice, is a renowned art thief who wishes to be the best—preferably the first and the 'only one.' His greatest rival is The Bishop, portrayed by Gal Gadot, and the film documents Booth's struggle with his identity. He plays the fool, effortlessly blending in with the crowd to remain under the radar, combining deception with stealth. John Hartley, another key character in the film, played by Dwyane Johnson, is an FBI profiler who later becomes an unexpected influence on Booth's thinking process.

Lucifer is on earth now, and yet he remains the punisher of Hell, tormenting individuals through a cycle of guilt. He likes to manipulate individuals for amusement. Lux is where he can have fun with no limits. However, collaborating with the LAPD, is an important aspect of Lucifer's journey, challenging his assumptions. Power is another element to his enjoyment; breaking rules, revealing hidden secrets, and punishing those he feels are guilty. Being employed at the LAPD is a major phase of his life, where he experiences complex moral issues, at times out of his control. This is a turning point in Lucifer's transformation.

But his supernatural ability is a thread that runs through the entire series. He starts by asking the iconic question, "What is it that you desire?" to bring out the deepest wishes of people. At first, power is employed as a manipulation tool and for one's own interests, which is in line with his trickster nature. But as the show goes on, it gives glimpses of his character development, evolving from a control device to a tool of understanding and helping others. Lucifer is strong in all aspects, ranging from his monster face to being immoral. But his supernatural power is a persistent factor throughout the whole series.

Tricksters prefer to stand alone—to be independent. Companions of Tricksters are usually the shadow of themselves but sometimes are depicted as a 'straight man' amongst the trickster's chaos. Chloe does not solely act as his romantic interest, but also as a guide that helps him navigate through the Trickster's problems. She guides him through his chaotic mind and world, helping

him find a purpose to life. The major spin-off between Lucifer and Chloe begins when he discovers that she is immune to his supernatural ability to unearth humans deepest desires. Chloe makes him feel worthy of goodness, that he is not to be limited by his role as the punisher of Hell. Throughout the series different deepest layers of Lucifer is unearthed. Even when Chloe finds about his true self—the monster face, initially she goes through an emotional turmoil, but finally accepts him. Chloe to Lucifer turns out to be something beautiful, he feels the need to view the world differently.

If Chloe is “the angel” on his shoulders whispering to a road of goodness, Mazikeen is “the devil” on his shoulder whispering to reclaim his position back in Hell. However, Mazikeen cannot be considered as an antagonist. Instead she is one of the loyal allies of Lucifer—a devoted follower who accompanied him to earth. Maze is a constant reminder of his role in Hell, resisting Lucifer’s transformation and firmly believing that their true purpose is to punish the guilty. Lucifer becomes heavily involved in human affairs. She opposes his moral dilemmas and attachments, seeing them as a betrayal of their demonic roots. She serves as an obstacle in Lucifer’s path to attaining morality. However, it is this conflict that unknowingly helps in Lucifer’s transformation. Without Maze’s resistance, he might not have fully realized the depth of his change. She forces him to question himself—should he remain the trickster and punisher he once was, or embrace his new path of growth?

The trickster archetype is finally rewritten by Lucifer by the end of the series. While searching for self-identity, he influences the people around him too. Maze who was just a shadow of Lucifer strives to choose her path, finding love and emotional growth.

Lucifer Morningstar and Nolan Booth are different in many ways, but they share a common wound- abandonment from their fathers. This abandonment can be reinterpreted as a fuel that ignites their trickster persona. Lucifer’s complicated relationship with God, which is characterised by punishment and exile, is the root cause of his rebellion and eventual fall from Heaven. Despite being given the control of Hell, he finds it as a mode of punishment rather than the idea of dominance in Hell. As a result, he embraces his role as the devil, and at the same time resents it. He masks his pain behind charm, arrogance, and a trickster persona, constantly pushing boundaries and manipulating others. Yet beneath this façade, he craves love and validation, particularly from his father, leading to a deep internal conflict about his identity.

In the same vein, Nolan Booth conceals his emotional wounds beneath a veneer of charm, wit and dishonesty. As a boy, he was falsely accused of stealing his father’s watch. This misunderstanding caused his father to shut him out for a whole year, and this created a gap that influenced the way he thought of himself. And to the bitter end, he was left by his father due to the latter’s obsession to discover Cleopatra’s third egg. All these factors were essential in developing in him to be what he became: a world-renowned thief. Nolan erodes recognition from the world, trying to plug the apathy he received from his father. Becoming the world’s greatest thief was not so much a matter of skill or desire- it was a way of proving that he was alive. When he later finds out that the watch was merely lost and that his father never intended to leave him, the revelation is too late. Those years of psychological damage and unresolved pain have already done much to fashion him, and rather than working through his trauma, he remains mired in his trickster cycle, trying to gain approbation by lying and outmanoeuvring others.

In *Red Notice*, the trickster hero Nolan Booth outsmarts Interpol so seamlessly with his intelligence, quick reaction, and ability to master pandemonium in his favour, playing dazed, fooling himself, and blending into a crowd so he doesn't elicit suspicion. He enjoys controlling the world just like the mythic tricksters do. His desire to be "the world's greatest art thief" is not for himself being famous, but also as a means of covering up his father's lack of interest and disapproval. A trickster, by definition, is one who employs guile rather than power, and Booth would much rather manipulate others. Alternatively, Hartley and Booth's father are positive influences in his development. If abandonment by his father was the trigger in moulding him into a trickster, then John Hartley's betrayal was the last warning never to deviate.

Trust is poison, and too much trust may lose its way to the finish. Instead of coveting trust, he concentrates on finding opportunities for himself. The film concludes with Booth in business once again with the betrayers Bishop and Hartley. The scene is not a reunion, but an exploitation of relationships. Booth and Hartley do not reunite, but the latter's move makes him a better and wiser manipulator, sometimes imitating archetypal tricksters. In contemporary fiction, the trickster character manifests as a psychological and narrative types and not merely a problem-solving character.

Nolan Booth and Lucifer Morningstar each demonstrate how the trickster is not merely a role one can avail oneself of but also a model of independence, guile, and survival in rebellion. Their differently followed paths demonstrate the protean nature of this archetype: Lucifer becomes something new, embracing growth and redemption, while Nolan eschews becoming, grounding himself instead in trickster-like improvisation, relying on guile and cunning to survive on his own terms. Aside from their individual beginnings, the narratives of Lucifer and Nolan define the trickster archetype's broader cultural significance. Amidst an age of viewer engagement with morally complex characters, tricksters like Lucifer and Nolan redefine heroism by abandoning dualistic definitions of good and evil. Such binary oppositions are human constructs, not universal truths, and tricksters represent the grey areas. They are not strictly good heroes or strictly evil villains. As opposed to traditional heroes, who work in the system within an attempt to serve justice, tricksters sit somewhere in the middle of order and chaos, destroying norms and re-making the world for themselves. The depictions of Lucifer Morningstar and Nolan Booth are done in a non-serious and non-conformist tone such that viewers do not suspect at first the deep qualities that they possess as trickster heroes. This essay explores in what ways each of these characters embodies the persisting trickster archetype and probes deeper differences between them. Each of their trickster natures is defined in terms of forces outside themselves and within their power — divine requirements imposed upon Lucifer and the after-effect of fatherly abandonment upon Nolan. On another plane, though, the trickster is more than manipulative rogue or rulebreaker; he is in a constant process of negotiating his autonomy, power, and sense of responsibility. Finally, Lucifer and Nolan redefine the trickster archetype in different ways — one through transformation and self-awareness, and the other by embracing an unyielding trickster persona.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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