

*Authentic Chameleons: Mythic Identity, Performative Trickster-ing, and the Potential  
of the Telephone Booth Moment*

Tracy Deonn Walker

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Communication Studies (Performance Studies).

Chapel Hill  
2007

Approved by,

Advisor: Della Pollock

Reader: Lawrence Grossberg

Reader: Joseph Megel

© 2007  
Tracy Deonn Walker  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

Tracy Deonn Walker: *Authentic Chameleons*: Mythic Identity, Performative Trickster-ing,  
and the Potential of the Telephone Booth Moment  
(Under the direction of Dr. Della Pollock)

Using the mythic Yoruba trickster figure Eshu-legba as a cultural and theoretical guide, I explore two sites of Western identity-play: the phone booth of the superhero icon Superman and the performance stage. This project probes my original script and live production, *Authentic Chameleons*, which incorporated an adaptation of a Yoruba myth and further extended my research through performance. The topics explored include: the embodiment of mutable identities as a theatrical tradition, the place of multiplicity in cultural performances, and the relationship between performance and identity. Analysis of the production functions to reformulate identity and reconfigure the cultural frameworks that allow for embodied ambivalence and plurality.

To my parents, Jerry and Linda Patterson.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Chapter

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	History of the Project .....	2
	Problem and Inquiry .....	5
	Organization.....	7
II.	CRAFTING MYTH, CRAFTING <i>CHAMELEONS</i> .....	9
	The Trickster Perspective .....	10
	“This Is A Job For....” .....	16
	Everyday Plurality .....	19
III.	EMBODIED TRICKSTERING .....	23
	Adapting Rebellious Bodies .....	23
	The Two Villagers .....	27
	Multiple Casting, Identity, and Time .....	31
	Phone Booth Moments.....	40
IV.	CONCLUSION.....	43
	The Kaleidoscope Form .....	43
	Further Explorations .....	45
	APPENDICES .....	47
	APPENDIX A: <i>Authentic Chameleons</i> .....	47
	APPENDIX B: The Movement Map .....	158
	APPENDIX C: Rehearsal Journal Selections .....	160

APPENDIX D: DVD of *Authentic Chameleons*

REFERENCES .....164

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

“Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being ‘worked’ on.”

- Gloria Anzaldúa (19)

*Authentic Chameleons* places in conversation two potentially contradictory figures: the West African Yoruba trickster-god Eshu-legba<sup>1</sup> and the comic book superhero Superman. While Eshu-legba is a tremendously salient figure in West African culture and Superman a profound, yet relatively recent, development in Western popular culture, their mythic origins and narrative lives both speak to and negotiate notions of multiplicity and identity. Their narratives reflect claims for identity play, belonging, and perspective. Using the stage as a third element wherein these two figures are placed in embodied conversation, *Authentic Chameleons* explored the process of embodying mythic constructs, notions of multiplicity and singularity of the body, and the performance of constructed identity as it “work[s] on” and through the body (Anzaldúa 19).

---

<sup>1</sup>I will refer to this trickster as “Eshu-legba” or “Eshu” throughout, although the figure (appropriately) has many names and spellings. For further variances and pronunciation, respectively, see Gates 5-6 and Hyde 110.

I am, time and again, fascinated with cultural figures that take on multiple identities, be they fictional or mythic, idealized or loathed. This capability for transformation and persistent potential for becoming is also what has drawn me to Performance Studies and encourages my creative spirit. Through the secondary space of the stage, performance mobilizes what might be considered “fixed” reality through its very attention to that reality. In other words, performance offers *separate truths* through what Richard Schechner refers to as its “second reality” (52). It is this mobilization of the rigid that makes both the performing body and performance fertile grounds for the suspension of perspective and the ideal spaces for my investigation.

## **History of the Project**

I began the *Authentic Chameleons* script by first asking the concept of “identity” a question from both sides: *what does it mean to (truly) belong?* and *what does it mean to be alienated?* Paul Gilroy provides an image in response to these questions when he argues that “The body circulates uneasily through contemporary discussions of how one knows the group to which one belongs and of what it takes to be recognized as belonging to such a collectivity” (24). Where and *who*, then, are those that are able to grasp hold of this meaning-making process and circulate instead with ease? Where are the “safe” spaces for mutable identities? While writing the script for *Chameleons* my hunt for multiple identities led me first to singular bodies that shape-shifted, or at least *seemed* to. I was seeking not just *bodies* but, in Della Pollock’s view, “body-subjects” (6). Early in my search I found that identity-



fluid bodies are not found everywhere; their livelihood and acceptance is not conducive to every space, condition, or occasion. I turned first to fictional stories, where bodies literally shift as a result of magic, supernatural forces, or other narrative devices. Bodies in the everyday, however, do not seem to shift as readily as those in our fictions; the shifting character in our “real lives” risks critiques of duplicity and/or questionable authenticity. Yet many stories that live through Western culture are full of characters, heroic and otherwise, that move through identity categories with regularity. Sometimes these individuals are said to possess “dual-identities,” or “alter-egos,” or “secret identities” but in all cases, they hold more than one identity. I began researching mythic trickster figures in the Spring of 2005 while preparing my first script for an Advanced Directing course. In August of 2006, I looked back to this research with the questions of identity in mind. It was then that the primary foci of *Authentic Chameleons* became trickster figures and popular superheroes of modern comic books as, for these mythic formations, multiplicity is the trade and not the trick.

Tricksters and superheroes are, through their narratives, given a dispensation from fixed identity. These figures are often defined by their very familiarity with plurality and the space of myth allows them to thrive. In placing this space alongside other potential spaces it became clear to me that that instead of looking for the performance of shifting as located in specific bodies what I truly sought was the shifting potential *within performance*. Victor Turner’s oft-cited formulation of “liminal entities as betwixt and between” is an apt description of both liminal figures and the performance space (95). It is through performance

and notions of performing that the terms of identity can best be explored and manipulated.

I began to imagine this ongoing project as a quest for what I have begun to call “telephone booth moments.” These moments are isolated and generative circumstances, spaces, or events with heightened potential for mutability. The telephone booth functions, then, as a moment of cultural suspension. I wrote the script for *Authentic Chameleons* in my Adaptation seminar as I continued to look for these elusive pockets of transformative potential, and in November of 2006 I started to gather a group of fellow artists for the endeavor.

In January and February of 2007 I directed and produced *Authentic Chameleons*, an original script supported in part by adaptation from research materials. The production’s rehearsal process lasted over the course of five weeks beginning with a week of round table readings of the evolving script in December of 2006. This initial rehearsal period included collaborative movement work and ensemble building exercises. I finalized the script in the third week of rehearsal after taking extensive notes on the rehearsal and research process. As I assumed a greater directorial role in the final two weeks of the process, nightly rehearsals became more vertical. The production opened in Swain Hall Studio Six on Thursday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007. *Authentic Chameleons* ran free of charge for six days with seven showings. The production process concluded with a public forum and discussion about the project on Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

## Problem and Inquiry

A so-called “suspension of (dis)belief” marks the occasion of the stage as the time and space where the otherwise unbelievable is given the purchase of meaning. The polytropic Eshu-legba is able to carry such occasions wherever he goes while Superman must find these spaces for his identity shifting. In addition, the performance stage allows for these moments via normative and traditional performance practices and via the understanding of performance space as inherently transformative and generative. I chose to situate an original narrative between these two mythic figures in this space, not because performance is the only place where they can interact but because performance is where the embodied interaction of these figures is able to speak directly to constructions of, terms of, and practices of identity.

I must then ask: How might the embodiment of the mythic trickster Eshu-legba in live performance recast an analysis of the Superman myth and cultural concepts of multiplicity and identity?

This project raises several theoretical concerns and possible pathways for exploration; in order to approach the discussion of identity and performance I might address various theorists for whom this area is central to their work. A list that is no way exhaustive includes Judith Butler, Saidiya Hartman, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gloria Anzaldúa. I will explore some of the tensions around an unfixed identity but leave for another discussion, theories of mimicry, signifying, and hybrid or serial identities. In my discussion of identity, I make a distinction between the practice of serializing or compounding identity and the *multiplicity* of identity. In the former practice, the hyphen between identity terms symbolizes additional

memberships in other cultural groups, ethnicities, or categories. The hyphening of categories, for me, suggests a fractioning of the whole. Alternatively, I argue for an explosion of the boundaries of any “whole” and envision the body-subject in excess of singularity. I offer an analysis of multiplicity as a way of articulating the plurality of the body in accordance to the very plurality of meaning of identity designations or terms. I understand and utilize “multiplicity” in relation to the presence of potential within the body, marking the capacity for simultaneous identities of the subject.

Additional potential pathways lie in a discussion of performativity of race and gender. While *Authentic Chameleons* addressed cultural and social performances of identity, I focused less on the processes of construction of identity and more on finding and analyzing the particular occasions that allow for, or even encourage, a circumvention of that construction process. In looking for such occasions I hope to mine the circumstances of these mythological figures, using Eshu as a framework for addressing other systems of identity. Although Eshu-legba’s status as a spiritual teacher and primordial force lends itself to a rich conversation about the culture of the Yoruba and the religious significance that this figure carries in Africa and beyond, I will limit my use of Eshu-legba as a theoretical guide to approaching identity and embodiment. Following Gates, who poses Eshu as a critic within literary analysis in The Signifying Monkey, I will position Eshu as a critic of concepts of and metaphors for identity.

In choosing Superman as my metaphorical construct for Western identity and duality, I also chose to limit my discussion of the icon to the mythic construction of the character of

Superman's. In future work I hope to investigate the cultural context of the *Superman* comic book fandom, the historical contexts affecting and manipulating the icon in popular culture, and the role of the graphic novel in popular culture.

## **Organization**

I will, through touchstone scenes within *Authentic Chameleons*, utilize the mythic figure of Eshu as a theoretical medium through which I can investigate representations of identity and the occasion of the stage. I have chosen not to focus on any individual identity construct or set of terms but rather on the conceptualizations of identity as addressed within the performance of *Authentic Chameleons*. Following this exploration, I will then offer a discussion of the everyday occasion for multiple identities in light of the circumstances, limitations, and productive excesses of the mythic and performative spaces.

I will frame my discussion around the four central presuppositions with which I began the *Authentic Chameleons* project, but which were subsequently unsettled and reframed by both the rehearsal process and performance event. These are: 1) The adaptation of myth to script and then to stage will concretize the process in which cultural formations are reflected in everyday discourse, 2) Embodied performance allows for the exploration of embodied theory, 3) Identity is fluid in secondary realities; here those realities are myths and performance spaces and, 4) Identity is a socially constructed conception that organizes reality.

My approach in this discussion will be to offer one primary moment or scene in the performance process per question as a touchstone for theoretical critique and analysis. Performance is a space in which these theoretical discussions can be interrogated and challenged by the force of the body, an illuminating process that I would like to detail here. Specifying these conjectures to *Authentic Chameleons* they may be restated as questions as follows: 1) How did the process of embodying and adapting the mythic and symbolic characters inform my understanding of myth and the material expression of identity? 2) What did the embodiment of one of Eshu's most famous narratives offer notions of identity and authenticity? 3) How did multiplicity as a bodily potential function in *Authentic Chameleons*? and 4) How does the figure of Eshu-legba challenge concepts of the social construction of identity?

The methodological approach to this project includes the adaptation of myth to script and the process of adapting the script to bodies on stage. In addition, I will provide an analysis of both Eshu-legba and Superman as cultural occasions for multiplicity using texts addressing the performances and identities of these figures. Using performance as my primary method, I will then analyze select scenes and moments from the process of the production.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CRAFTING MYTH, CRAFTING *CHAMELEONS*

The script of *Authentic Chameleons* developed in three separate vignettes, reflecting three occasions for multiplicity in Eshu, Superman, and the everyday. I selected a few key phrases from each primary resource to incorporate into the script. It also became clear that the three spaces of cultural myth, popular myth, and the everyday/quotidian needed some kind of connective tissue to fuse the issues raised in the separate scenarios. I decided to continue my incorporation of different cultural myths and adapted a version of the muse figures of Greek mythology in order to frame and guide the script. Traditionally the nine muses are directly connected to the higher dialogue of the gods, serving as liaisons able to communicate with humanity. I chose to adapt the role of the muses to my own set of concerns and thus developed four muses as an extension of myself in the exploration of the three main themes of the performance. The muse sisters are named Scholarly, Practicality, Hopefulness, and Elusive. The four performers are on stage throughout the entire one hour production and act as guides, filters, instigators, and inquisitive (and often invisible) observers.

The muses' constant presence in the script served to maintain the inquiry of the two mythic characters and they serve as the subjects for whom Eshu is the teacher and guide. After the opening overture and dance sequence, the muses awake only to discover that their

ability to speak to mankind, their “Voice to Inspire” has been stolen. The muses decide that the god to have most likely seen the theft is a trickster-god, for they are everywhere. The intercultural and inter-mythic nature of the script is made evident when the muses begin to seek the thief by invoking trickster gods from nine different cultures. Frustrated, they call out their last hope, Eshu-legba, and are greeted with a chuckle that booms from above and the hunt for Eshu begins. The muses attempt to invoke him into presence and Eshu mocks them by remaining invisible, preferring instead to invite them on a journey to find their “Voices” and, eventually, interrogate their role in relation to humanity. Throughout the script Eshu guides the audience and the muses to three sites of multiplicity: one of his own myths, the myth of Superman, and the quotidian occasion.

### **The Trickster Perspective**

I began researching mythic trickster figures in the Spring of 2005 while preparing my first script for an Advanced Directing course. The trickster figure is a cultural hero who disrupts and overturns cultural borders. Lewis Hyde proclaims that the “trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox” (7). Tricksters, as the “lords of in-between,” live in the symbolic liminal space of roads – especially crossroads – between civilization and order (Hyde 6). They are cunning and versatile agents of creation. The polymorphic nature of the trickster is such that encapsulating or constructing the trickster is a bit of an oxymoron and a difficult task. With this in mind, I will refer to Hyde’s foundational thinking on the trickster as a primary source



for my study.

Many cultures include tricksters in their mythic history and scholars have found it difficult to draw conclusive themes around a figure that, by nature, defies boundaries (Hynes and Doty 33). Of their many abilities, I will explore here the trickster's infamous plurality of form. The ability to possess multiple identities, to the extent to which the mythic symbol literally changes shape to become any number of mythical creatures, another sex, or even mist, is salient to the trickster's status as a border-crosser and boundary-blurring primordial force.

I chose to attend to Eshu-legba because this figure is not just a trickster but a trickster-god. As a deity of the the Orisha pantheon within the Yoruba religious tradition and culture, Eshu represents a great force for knowledge production. In the Yoruba tradition Eshu is the representation of "uncertainty or indeterminacy (Gates 32). In focusing my efforts on Eshu-legba I direct my discussion of the trickster to a particular figure who has traveled far beyond the borders of its origin.<sup>2</sup> As Eshu speaks all languages, is a teacher, and is aware of all perspectives he is an apt theoretical analytic through which Gates addresses African-American tradition, literature, and literary analyses.

For the first vignette of the script I chose to adapt Eshu-legba's most famous story, the myth of "The Two Friends" (Gates 32). This myth, according to Gates, "survived the

---

<sup>2</sup>There is a large diaspora community of Yoruba in both North and South America, spreading primarily through slave trade from West Africa. See Gates 32-25 and Palmer 60 for further discussion of Eshu's incarnations.

Middle Passage and is as familiar among the Yoruba cultures of Brazil and Cuba as it is in Nigeria” (32). Gates contends that this tale “ascribes to Esu his principle function of the indeterminacy of interpretation” (35). Indeed, like many oral histories, there seem to be as many variations of this story as storytellers. In this ancient tale, Eshu purposely divides two men who have recently proclaimed themselves the best of friends. The men unwisely make their pact without first honoring Eshu and the ambiguity that he represents. Seeing this, Eshu tests their friendship by walking between the men wearing a hat of two different colors, knowing that each man will see a different version of his hat.<sup>3</sup> The men proceed to argue over their view of the hat and eventually their fight becomes violent. I adapted a version of the myth in which Eshu watches as the men destroy themselves and their friendship over this misunderstanding and misrecognition.<sup>4</sup> This story shows Eshu at his best as he teaches human beings that perspective is both limited and limiting and that one singular entity can take on many different shapes. Gates cites a translation of the myth by Ogundipe and maintains that

Neither of the two friends is correct in his reading of the stranger’s hat; but neither is, strictly speaking, wrong either. They are simultaneously right and wrong. Esu’s hat is neither black nor white; it is both black and white. The folly depicted here is to insist – to the point of rupture of the always fragile

---

<sup>3</sup>In some variations, the men are referred to as “friends,” in others “villagers.” Eshu’s hat may be any number of color combinations. His body, instead of his hat, may also be split into a different pair of features. For instance, Hyde recounts a Cuban version in which Eshu is both a black man and a white man. See Hyde 240.

<sup>4</sup>In several variations, Eshu allows the men to fight for some time before revealing his intentions and teaching his valuable lesson. In other cases, the story ends with the image of the fighting men and Eshu does not return. I chose to follow this latter ending to a conclusion in which the villagers fight until they mortally wound one another.

bond of a human institution - on one determinate meaning, itself determined by vantage point and the mode one employs to see. (35)

As Eshu guides the muses and demonstrates the power of ambiguity it seemed important that the mythic structure of the script provide an embodiment of the “human institution” (Gates 35). The character Just So, developed in response to my research on Eshu, represents the eternally “fixed” structures of meaning, and exists in seeming opposition to the force of Eshu. Before Just So is introduced, however, Eshu allows the muses to observe and learn from the interaction of the two villagers.

In writing a script with such a broad range of characters and contexts, I wanted to ensure that the set itself remained an ever present force within the narrative. Eshu’s incarnations can be traced deep into heart of the American South and the Delta Blues tradition. Blues scholars suggest that the symbolic character of “the black man” at the crossroads (the haunting figure who can give musicians the ability to play any song on his guitar) is an extension of Eshu (Palmer 60). Palmer claims that events at the crossroads reinforce the power of the trickster to “open the path” to new understanding (60). Using the powerful center of the crossroads as another material example of the phone booth and also drawing on my past use of the crossroads in performance, I sketched the concept art for a raised wooden crossroads that would determine and guide the fate of the performing bodies.

The four arms of the crossroads span the entire length and width of the stage. The arms ascend from a ramp upwards until they meet at a higher platform in the middle of the

floor. The square platform provides yet another visual reference to the base of a phone booth and is utilized as such in the second scene, which explores the Superman myth.

The floor of the stage represented Earthly concerns and materiality. This area included the spaces between the arms (“the quadrants”) and the small area of walking space around the ends of each arm. The human characters were restricted to the floor and could not walk over or on the arms. The length of the arms, or “roads,” represented the pathway to discursive construction and the space where perspective thrives. The deities and mythological beings in the production are able to walk over, on, and around these arms. The connection between the roads and the floor of the stage thus became increasingly important bridging devices. These ramps, or “ascents,” of the arms lead from the floor to the roads and are the bridge between materiality and discourse.

I designed the crossroads so that it *mattered* to each character in the performance. The expansive structure represented the power of ideas to affect materiality and it literally restricted the behavior and abilities of both the character and performer. The crossroads forced the performers’ bodies to move differently according to their relationship to knowledge and perspective. I distributed the terms of this symbolic set device to both the cast and crew even before the set was completed.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>See Appendix B: The Movement Map.

I worked alongside the lighting and set designer to create and maintain the effect of this restriction in the rehearsal process. Each character in *Authentic Chameleons* was restricted in their movement by their discursive relationship to the crossroads set piece. The lights were placed underneath each ascent and functioned as a warning system for those characters not qualified to step onto the roads. When a character who is bound to the floor stepped onto the ascent, a sound and light cue flashed to “burn” them away. (Eshu is, of course, able to walk anywhere he pleases and does so with ease and confidence.) These restrictions were frustrating and empowering to both the characters in the script and performers during rehearsal and the performance event. In addition to the large crossroads in the floor, three screens were placed in a semi-circle upstage of the crossroads, providing a surface for two-dimensional effects and choreographed shadow work.

Both Gates and C.W. Spinks posit the trickster as a theoretical lens. In particular, Spinks states that “He is an enemy, at least a *performative critic*, of established orders...” (emphasis mine, 8). Spinks continues to say that the trickster works by “constantly reminding the narrative culture that there is much beyond its own perspective and understanding” (8). In this way, Eshu is the ideal agent of inquiry, acting upon the borders of social construction and meaning making. Following the model of using (rather, allowing) the force of the trickster to “work on” my subject of inquiry I asked what might occur when the terms of Western identity are taken to task by the “sibling of semiosis”? (Spinks 8) Utilizing both Gates and Hyde as my guides to the realm and function of the trickster figure and Eshu, I employ Eshu as a non-Western channel through which I may read Western spaces for multiplicity, including the occasion of the stage and the modern day mythic icon whose

lasting contribution to the genre of comic books is the development of the status of “superhero” and the common device of the dual, or secret, identity.

### **“This Is A Job For...”**

Superman, in his seventy year lifespan as an American cultural icon, has been firmly established in the understanding of both comic book culture and superheroes. Superman exemplifies a genre of superheroes who, armed with their secret identities, navigate the space of ability and justice while balancing the discord and weight of the notion of an authentic self. Indeed, the character that inspired the very term “superhero” is Superman (Kahn 7). Following this, Jenette Kahn, President of DC Comics, Inc., claims that Superman is the “first god of a new mythology: definitely American, not borrowed, wholly [our] own” (8). In addition to these descriptions of the caped icon, Danny Fingeroth argues that, “As the *Ur* superhero, Superman is also the easiest and most direct manifestation of the dual identity” (emphasis original, 53). Extending these three summations, I argue that in viewing this character as a mythic figure, Superman’s relationship with and negotiation of identity is in fact a significant reflection of Western concepts of identity and belonging.

Created by Jerry Siegel and Joel Schuster one evening in the late 1930’s, Superman’s story is that of a split identity: the Smallville farm-raised Clark Kent and his super-powered alien counterpart, Superman. When Clark Kent is alerted to danger, he swiftly dashes into a phone-booth to change clothes and returns as the superhero Superman. Gary Engle argues that “the brilliant stroke in the conception of Superman – the *sina qua non* [sic] that

makes the whole myth work – is the fact that he has two identities” (85). To the extent that Superman is adored in popular culture and functions from the very duality of his body, the icon reconfigures an affirmation of multiplicity. Engle asserts that prior to the *Superman* comic book, there “simply was no image that presented a blending of identities in the assimilation process in a way that stressed pride, self-confidence, integrity and psychological well-being” (85). In addition to his fantastic powers of flight, invulnerability, speed, and vision, Superman has the power to balance and move through a world that demands a singular or “whole” identity. This popular cultural figure is vulnerable to discourses that probe his authenticity by looking for the “real” persona. It would seem that Superman’s talent for dissimulation has surpassed even the control of his creators. For Superman, identity is fluid and contingent. Accordingly, the icon has been re-imagined as over a dozen alternate versions of his original form.<sup>6</sup> The flimsy disguise of Clark Kent’s glasses suggests that the superhero is reliant upon the cultural disbelief (within his universe, but to some extent the culture of the creators) that the characters of Kent and the Man of Steel could truly be the same person.

In framing this icon as a powerful and popular extension of conceptualizations of identity, *Chameleons* embodied a broader discussion of identity play and regulation. The second vignette magnified an early phone booth moment of the character in order to expand the process by which the two identities are mediated. The script never refers to the character

---

<sup>6</sup>A further analysis of the historical incarnations and reinventions of Superman may offer support for an investigation for reinvention or metamorphosis as an extension of/version of multiplicity.

as either “Clark Kent” or “Superman,” not only so that the cultural “baggage” of the icon does not detract from the focus on his identity-play but also so that one of the identities is not favored over the other. The script instead refers to this character as “The Last Son.”<sup>7</sup> I created the main image of this scene in response to a single panel in *DC Comics Presents* #85. In this story Kal-el hallucinates that the costumes of both identities are speaking to him from his closet. In Moore’s tale, Kal-el (the third persona of Superman/Kent), frustrated by their oppositional advice, screams out that neither of them are real (138). Following Moore’s take on the role of identity in the hero’s life, this scene recasts the Superman suit as a character called “Not Enough” and the Clark Kent suit and glasses as a character called “Too Much.”

In this second vignette, the figure of Clark Kent/Superman searches for the meaning of belonging. He is distinctly humanly dyspraxic and experiences the acute agony of determining when to utilize the physical prowess that his body possesses and when to, instead, fulfill the visual expectation of his physical form, leaving the unusual behavior undone. The scene of the Two Villagers and the *Superman*-inspired vignette are inversions of one another. The first explores two figures who want so desperately to be a single unit and their encounter with a changing being. The second scene presents one figure who desperately wants to be whole or unified but encounters two opposing and very different discourses on how he should navigate the world. In both cases, the positionalities are

---

<sup>7</sup>This name is in reference to the origin story of the superhero in which he, as baby Kal-el of Krypton, is sent to Earth as the last member of an alien race. This event leads to one of his pseudonyms: The Last Son of Krypton. See Engle 86 for further discussion of origin story.



characterized by their apparent movement between positionalities. However, I still wondered: can the mutability hailed in ancient and popular myths thrive in “real” life? In addition to these vignettes I projected a third scene, an original piece, offering a discussion of this type of multiplicity in the everyday.

### **Everyday Plurality**

Maria Lugones’ essay, “Playfulness, ‘World’ – Traveling, and Loving Perception,” provides a fertile ground for the investigation of identity mediation. Lugones asserts that the process of traveling and identity mediation are not the actions of untrustworthy or malevolent folk, but necessary daily behaviors of “‘outsiders’ to the mainstream White/Anglo organization of life...” (626). Lugones recounts her relationship with stereotypes about her Latin-American ethnicity by tracking how, when, and why she “materialize[s] or animate[s]” such stereotypes across shifting cultural terrain (633). I realized that what strikes me about this beautiful articulation is this: Lugones is writing defensively. She justifies her perception of her own movement within my metaphorical vision of the phone booth. The movement Lugones illustrates is costly and thus the more appropriate image seems that of a *toll booth* of culture. Lugones ardently describes this “acquired flexibility” in terms of its necessity and lack of malicious intent while stating, early in her piece, that she wishes to affirm “the plurality in each of us” (626). I wondered why Lugones is compelled to make such a thorough case for everyday multiplicity?

Lugones claims that this plurality is a part of the “ontological confusion” experienced by women of color in the US (630). When shifting “from being one person to being a different person” Lugones maintains that she is “traveling” and continues to say that although such movement

...can be done willfully, it is not a matter of acting. One does not pose as someone else, one does not pretend to be, for example, someone of a different personality or character or someone who uses space or language differently than the other person. Rather one *is* someone who has that personality or character or uses space and language in that particular way. (emphasis original 632)

Here, Lugones begins to frame her discussion in terms of authenticity. She argues that not only is she changing but she is *really* changing. As “world travelers” become different people from one “world” to the next, the notion of a singular (or “true”) “I” is troubled. Lugones asserts that her shifting is not a practice of acting or pretending and in doing so distances herself from any notion of theatricality. A long history of disdain for theatricality undoubtedly informs such a disassociation. Jonas Barish contends that “hostility to impersonation forms one of the cornerstones of Plato’s *Republic*” and this foundational enmity has not only continued today but changed its form (2).

The chameleon, a lizard best known for its ability to change its color, is often cited in Barish’s work as a symbol for varying and unscrupulous personalities. Such protean symbols, as well as texts following Plato’s denunciation of mimesis, have served to further solidify what Barish calls “the nearly automatic equation with changefulness and deceit”

(101). In this light, it becomes apparent that when describing the nature of actors on stage Anthony Munday can only conclude that “Plaiers [*sic*] cannot better be compared than to the Camelion [*sic*]” (104). If changefulness is negatively aligned with deceit, then consistency must be the manifestation of purity and truthfulness. Singularity, according to this logic, must be equitable to authenticity. The suturing of these two ideas, rooted in a critique of theatre from Plato, ensures that even as Lugones removes her practice of “traveling” from these artificial performances on the stage she is still forced to speak to and of them (626).

Plato’s desire for a complete disavowal of theatricality may not have been fulfilled but there remain societal expectations for *appropriately* demarcated spaces of mutable identity. In other words, “good” pretending has since become most welcome on stage while pretending in “real life” is “bad.” Any suitably contradictory performance offstage is then exposed to critique and regulation and the body-subject encouraged to unify. The pressures for unity, echoed in the characters of *Too Much and Not Enough*, produce subjectivities very similar to Maria Lugones, who reports feeling that she is both “one and many at the same time” (633). The experience of this “split” within the non-Anglo body has been discussed variously in works by W.E.B. DuBois and Gloria Anzaldúa, among others. Maria Lugones calls this sense of subjectivity that of “an ambiguous being, a two-imaged self” and continues to say that this liminal identity is “survival rich” (634). Lugones continues to say that this ambiguity “...is very much a part of trickery and foolery. It is worth remembering that the trickster and the fool are significant characters in many non-dominant or outsiders’ cultures” (633). Here I am arrested at her reference to the trickster! Lugones’ suggestion that her ambiguity is similar to that of the mythic trickster prompts me to ask: how else can these

models of multiplicity intersect and inform one another? If, as Lugones suggests, there is no room for a “plurality of selves” (634), in the everyday, then how might we address the circumstances and frameworks that *do allow* for such plurality? Is it possible that, following Lugones, this mutability may even be “survival rich”? (634) And yet, what are the costs, limits, and oppositional frameworks that resist *real* mutability? Performance and mythic constructs constitute sacred spaces for identity play. In studying those spaces, perhaps we can begin to seek, constitute, and affirm such sacred power in the everyday.

I investigate the terms of “myth,” “identity,” and “authenticity” as the concepts were isolated in the process of producing *Authentic Chameleons* and as they were interrogated by the space of the performance stage and the power of the performing body.

## CHAPTER THREE

### EMBODIED TRICKSTERING

#### **Adapting Rebellious Bodies**

The use of symbolic figures in fables, myths, and allegories allows for a discussion of conceptual ideas through the attachment of those ideas to characters and imagined bodies. The names of mythic figures often alert the audience as to their role in the narrative, what they will do or what they have done. In *Chameleons*, I modeled my own mythical story modeled after these types of tales. Each character in *Chameleons* had a name that expressed his or her role in the story and pointed directly to the idea that each body represented, such that the conversations between those characters were, literally, conversations between concepts. I encouraged the performers to think about what the character name meant to them and to begin to construct their characters from these associations. I had no idea that the implications of working with myth in this project would reverberate so strongly while simultaneously drawing me closer to the question of identity and multiplicity.

The audience entered the space to find the four forms of the muses on the floor, each in a quadrant of the crossroads. The four muse sisters lay on the ground silently sleeping, covered by flowing blue robes with heavy cowls over their faces. Each muse had an arm or errant foot resting languidly from underneath the fabric. Dim blue lights and soft instrumental music establish the calm atmosphere of the space. I felt it critical in this first

scene that the muses awake in character, responding immediately to the anxious scenario according to their symbolic construct and name.

As we rehearsed, the performers were adjusting to the sharp transition from laying silent on the floor for twenty minutes to jumping up with energy when a very applicable concern arose. The performer playing the muse Hopefulness, Kerstin Lindgren, mentioned that she was experiencing a great deal of difficulty portraying Hopefulness. She struggled with her first line and movement and felt both reserved and embarrassed. Kerstin attempted to rise from the floor with hope, to move with hope, and to persist in the embodiment of the idea of Hopefulness in her every gesture and found the effort exhausting and frustrating. She thought it appropriate to take “bouncier” strides in her movements and to extend each movement but expressed that it was difficult for her to find and stay “in” her character.

In myths, characters literally derive their meaning from their naming; they are what they seem and appear and present themselves to be. Mythic characters are “pure” concrete representations of abstract forms, essentialized by this very nature. Remembering this I encouraged Kerstin to remember that Hopefulness would most likely not be familiar in the way that we typically understand “character.” As a celestial being she could give herself permission to be “over the top,” again violating performative norms for “realistic acting” (Schechner 177). This did not make the task much easier, however. Kerstin developed a walk that was spirited and took up a lot of space and she also decided to infuse each of her hand gestures with playfulness. When the muses invoked Eshu-legba to ask him about their stolen Voices, Kerstin chose to thrust her arms in the air expectantly and push her body

forward to show her eagerness at Eshu's potential appearance but had to then decide how she might call out to the gods for help, a very sacred seeming action, while being hopeful? Kerstin continued to seek this confirmation throughout the rehearsal process, as did other performers.

This concern caused me to pause and evaluate what I was asking my performers to do. Kerstin's body was not only struggling, it was speaking back to the symbolic construct. This moment embodied Hyde's assertion that "actual individuals are always more complicated than the archetype..." and exemplified his description of "the mottled evidence talking back to the refined theory" (Hyde 14). Can a body perform a pure idea in the way that mythic figures symbolize discursively constructed ideas? (e.g, War, Greed, etc) Kerstin's struggle echoes the struggle within Platonic Theory of Forms and it follows that the form I asked Kerstin to practice resembled that by which the "self" mirrors an abstract ideal or singular "Form." The mythic genre served as a *theory of being* in the adaptation process and the myth, quite literally, struggled in the face of the body. I instructed Kerstin to concentrate on her own relationship to the concept of hope and Hopefulness but at every turn her consciousness of being watched in the performance space pushed her to form a character with whom audience would connect and of whom I would approve. The natural inclination of a performer to embrace this form of performative double consciousness worked against the expectation of mythic representation. Kerstin experienced the double awareness of a performer being watched but also observed herself while attempting to create and display a character ostensibly foundational to the human experience. This was, indeed, a tall order.

The cast negotiated this back-and-forth reflexivity throughout the rehearsal process. The level of training of the cast varied from member to member and this concern could, in some cases, be considered a reflection of each performer's experience. I assume that this process must be considered within the context of the production and the performer and yet the task itself, whether or not it is "easy" for a performer to execute, is a ripe matter for my discussion. Specifically, to what issues of performance and performativity did Kerstin's labor and difficulty point?

The practice, and failure, of Hopefulness is consistent with Butler's theory of the ways in which gender is disciplined to a single stroke or discursive norm. Schneider quotes Judith Butler, who asserts that performativity of gender involves "The parodic replication and resignification of heterosexual constructs..." (qtd. in Schneider 97). Butler continues to say that this repetition illuminates the process of heterosexuality as a process that "constitutes itself as the original through a convincing act of repetition" (qtd. in Schneider 97). However, aren't these constant performances also subject to the changing terms of identity over time? When Barish claims that "actions have no...fixity. They take place wholly in time; they are time functional" he reminds us that Kerstin's body, the acting body, is citing in the face of time and space (7). Kerstin's struggle points to an issue of resistance that echoes the critical force of the trickster, "the character in myth who threatens to take the myth apart" (Hyde 14). ' continues to say that the trickster "is an 'eternal state of mind' that is suspicious of all eternals, dragging them from their heavenly preserves to see how they fare down here in this time-haunted world" (Hyde 14).



This embodied resistance/failure speaks directly to the maintenance of constructed identity in the everyday. In adapting myth to script to stage, I had not accounted for the body. John Fiske writes that “The body and its specific behavior is where the power system stops being abstract and becomes material. The body is where it succeeds or fails, where it is acceded to or struggled against” (qtd. in Pollock 4). This process of translating the myth from narrative to material existence is telling. Kerstin’s struggle demonstrates that the terms of identity tremble when taken to task by the corporal force that is the body-subject. While revealing difficulties that I had not envisioned, this process also emphasized and reinforced what I have surmised to be true about identity construction. Identity is constructed and behavior inscribed in such a way that suggests that culture operates with the assumption that bodies can represent ideas but in attempting to perform one idea consistently, the material effect is constrictive and difficult to sustain. The body-subject rebels and cannot be contained by the abstraction. The nature, then of embodied identity is that the body must *always* fail in its attempts to cite such ideals. If we reposition the dynamics between the “ideal” and the “body-subject” it becomes evident that the force of the body-subject may not be consistently failing, but rather *surpassing* the limits of the Ideal.

### **The Two Villagers**

My previous adaptation of the famous Eshu myth included notes to myself that require that the performers portraying the two men be costumed in almost identical clothing. “The single difference,” the script notes, “should be in the color of their shirts. One should

be blue and one red.” In adapting the myth a second time for *Authentic Chameleons*, I chose to not only clothe the two performers in identical costumes, but to require that they move and speak in complete unison. This exploration of identification and over-identification reflects on alienation produced by the attempt to literally craft two bodies into one unit.

The script for *Chameleons* required that the performers pay meticulous attention to one another’s bodies. It also requires that the performers’ speech be identical in tone, speed, and pronunciation. The total body commitment to simultaneous movement and staging included the inhalation and exhalation of breath, head movement, smiles, footsteps, and a multitude of other articulations of the body. As soon as the performers for these roles were cast, I worked with the two men daily to build a close relationship between them. They warmed-up using a “mirror” exercise, in which one performer silently “leads” using improvisational movements and the other attempts to “follow” the movement as closely as possible. The first step in working towards harmonious behavior and speech patterns was both physical and aural observation. The performers and I developed each line of the scene together, often working line by line. I began by asking one of the performers to read a line several different ways. The other was instructed to listen and watch carefully. Then, the two performers practiced saying the lines together while I listened closely in order to choose which “reading” sounded best. We used the same process in order to establish unison body movements. This exacting method required attention to detail on everyone’s part and recording of the pauses needed for breathing. Often I asked for an extra assistant or two to monitor the multitude of extraneous, non-matching movements of the actors. While the

primary goal of the scene was to align these bodies in voice and in action as closely as possible, I turn here to the differences between the performers' bodies, differences that were haunting and also pleasurable to behold. These differences lie not only in the gaps between the performers (or the lapses in their mimicry) but also in the provocative gap between the performers' bodies and the desire for and representation of identical bodies.

Again, the bodies of the performers rebelled against the attempts to so thoroughly perform in unison. The multiplicity of these bodies lies not solely in the differences that arose, even with hours of rigorous training and bodily attention, but the sensation each night of the performance that one could not know *when* the performers would distinguish themselves as individual. As audience to such a performance, the sensation of desiring the bodies to continue their performance was evident in the humorous laughter of the crowd and the pleasure of the scene. However, there was a simultaneous desire for their homogeneity to be disrupted. The performance instilled a desire for disruption and Eshu's intervention was at once welcomed and resented. Although these figures were reaching not towards an ideal but to one another in commonality, their bodies were still unable to become completely aligned. Each night of the performance minute differences were detectable. When one performer stepped or inhaled or began a line slightly ahead of the other, the spectator experienced a desire to determine which of the two performers' performance was "wrong" and which was "right." Cast differently, this can be read as which was the "original" and which was the "copy." The urge to compare and critique this routine of simultaneity and imitation seemed to grow as the Villagers rehearsed. As their bodies became more clone-like, the desire for

evaluation of the mimesis reproduced as well.

This attention to which performer was “right” or “wrong” is echoed in the opening overture of the performance as well. Here, Eshu walks from the upstage arm of the crossroad onto the center platform in dim light and ominous, droning music. As the lights rise and a drum rhythm begins, the performer begins a slow series of gestures in a dance in time to the beat. On the second round of the musical score, lights behind the stage left and stage right screens rise and the performers behind the screen are backlit in shadow. Their silhouettes echo the dance of the performer and the three bodies move in unison. Eshu then begins to move in double time as the performers backstage continue their pace. At this moment the visual pattern established in the opening overture is interrupted and the bodies previously in sync are now moving only similarly. Their movements, still in time to the music, are similar but not similar enough. They become, as Rebecca Schneider articulates in her discussion of the clone, referential to the presupposed original but not quite copies enough (97). The scene silently implores the audience to ask, which is the copy and which is the original? One is also reminded that mistakes are made in the very presence of the performing body. As the dance continues, however, it is evident that the three figures are still in rhythm to the music if not to one another and the base perception of the “correct” dance is troubled in the face of the multiplicity of the body-subjects.

Both of these segments of the performance trouble the notion of assigned or set behavior and problematize any conceptualization of the possibility for homogenous behavior of body-subjects, even to one another. Schneider argues that “The fear of the same which-

is-not, or of the different which might pass as the same is, of course, a signature fear of Western phallogocentrism” (104). Indeed, it is the possibility of difference and the possibility for expectation to be overturned or even redefined that the performance space inherently possesses. The clone-like bodies of the Villagers thus provided a space for uneasy critique. After the two men stab one another the seeming death, or at least incapacitation, of the Villager suggests that this type of performance is unsustainable. As Schneider writes, “When only the mimic originates, scripting an original through articulating a copy, then authenticity is deranged” (97). This potential for alterity between body-subjects suggests that the performance space offers a site for radical recognition with authenticity and any notion of a “real” self.

### **Multiple Casting, Identity, and Time**

Although *Authentic Chameleons* explores multiplicity in several ways, here I will focus on the casting of individual actors in multiple roles. I approached this process with the intention to utilize actors in more than one role primarily because I thought it an interesting way to explore identity shifting as it operates in performance. I perceived the performance stage as one of the few spaces where it is not only encouraged but applauded that someone “pretend” to be someone else. In effect, audiences walk into performance spaces to be “tricked” and the so-called “suspension of disbelief” afforded by live performance seemed a good place to study the act of changing identities. Live performance insists that the actor

performs in excess of the identity of his or her body as it exists elsewhere. However, as the script continued to grow in the rehearsal process, the use of the onstage and offstage space in combination with tactics for displaying alternate identities began to complicate my understanding of the performing body.

Multiple casting is commonly a result of economic concerns. A production may cast an actor in more than one role because the producer cannot afford to pay another actor to take on the extra role. Casting performers in this way involves costume changes for the performer that occur offstage or even elaborate makeup so that the audience can clearly see that the performer is now representing someone else. Sometimes, however, roles are cast this way purposefully and offer an understanding of the text that is actually reliant upon the same body occupying different roles within the narrative to further construct that narrative.

*Authentic Chameleons* explored different types of multiplicities in each scene and staging choice, taking advantage of the stage's proclivity for moments of transformation and alterity. These moments, like Superman's, are occasions when the potential of a single body is exploded beyond normative expectations for singularity, consistency, and sameness (not fractured, but multiplied!). Just as Clark Kent goes into a phone booth only to exit as Superman, the performance stage allows for bodies to enter in one form but leave in a different way. *Authentic Chameleons* stretched and expanded its phone booth moments, drawing attention to the occasions that allowed for character transformation. Following the norms of theatricality that encourage audience members and performers to suture the

performing bodies with performed identities, audience members have to “pretend” the performer is different in order to secure the consistency of the performer’s body with that of a different character.

I argue that, as the trickster plays with perspective it is probable also that the trickster figure does not always shape-shift, but instead plays on the spectator’s understanding of identity. With that keen knowledge, the figure then shifts and husks identity around his shape. In this way performer and trickster are taking advantage of, referencing, and recalibrating our very understanding of form and identity.

While Eshu is typically described as male, he is often depicted as having the ability to be both male and female.<sup>8</sup> I chose to make this containment of two seemingly opposite identities a visual component of the character. When Eshu finally appears onstage after avoiding and taunting the muses he is wearing a long, dark red robe that is at once very flowing and fitted. The performer wears eyeliner and has long, dark hair and a goatee. Already this androgynous figure is positioned to potentially challenge any attempt to discern a singular sex. I directed the performer, Ari Gratch, to move about the space with confidence and certainty. Ari chose to smirk and laugh silently at the other characters on stage taking great liberties with personal space in order to demonstrate Eshu’s absolute control and perception of each scene.

---

<sup>8</sup>Despite the fact that Eshu is generally referred to as masculine the trickster-god is consistently described and portrayed as being genderless, indeterminately gendered, or dually gendered. See Gates 29.

Later in the production Ari walks on stage playing the role of Too Much. He enters wearing a pair of black slacks, a white dress shirt, and a dark blue tie. Too Much walks nervously, taking very small steps, and shifts his weight from foot to foot while anxiously looking around the space. As Too Much, I directed Ari to take up as little space as possible and to keep his arms to his sides. Ari chose to stutter and ad-lib inarticulate sounds to show his nervous energy and inability to speak with confidence. Before coming on stage, Ari also placed his hair behind his ears to further distinguish himself from Eshu.

In this scene The Last Son, a slightly bumbling and bespectacled young man in a tie, entered the space ostensibly on his first trip to a big city. The muses, still looking for Eshu, believed for a few moments that the The Last Son, played by another performer, is truly Eshu in disguise, a testament to their awareness of his shape-shifting powers. The muses congratulated themselves excitedly when they think they have finally seen through Eshu's trickery. As The Last Son attempted to speak to passersby on the street of the city, Too Much called out to warn the traveling muse Hopefulness of an oncoming truck and the character familiar to us as Superman is revealed. The Last Son saves Hopefulness, displaying his strength and speed by moving her body out of the path of the truck (while the other performers freeze in place to give the effect of his great speed.) In demonstrating his superhuman speed and strength, the young hero exposes his abilities and is immediately confronted on either side by the characters Not Enough and Too Much. As Janie says in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, The Last Son's "doings" are "mix[ed]



up” with his “looks” and the character is literally torn by the embodied oppositional forces of culture (78). Not Enough demands that The Last Son be “stronger all the time”<sup>9</sup> while Too Much advises against “stand[ing] out”<sup>10</sup> and the muses begin to suspect that The Last Son is not the powerful trickster-god.

The Muses see this conversation and freeze the scene to taunt The Last Son, saying that he has been “undone” by what Lewis Hyde calls, “the trap of culture” (202). They circle him, using their hands and mystical abilities to send him back in time to make a new choice. When this scene replays itself again, The Last Son allows Hopefulness to be hit by a truck; the scene freezes; and the audience is plunged into darkness. There are sounds of the body being hit by the vehicle, people screaming. Sirens tear through the space and the attention of the bustling city is immediately turned to the scene and death of this woman on the street. It is at this point that Too Much raises his arms and screams, “I think that’s quite enough!”<sup>11</sup> The chaos of the city is silenced and the Muses and The Last Son are frozen. In this moment, Too Much *becomes* Eshu and Ari forces the transition, drawing the character change out both publicly and temporally between these two characters. Eshu loosens his tie angrily and pulls his hair out from behind his ears. Eyeing the Muses and the frozen superhero, Ari stalks across the stage, stepping forcefully onto the arm of the crossroads where, as Too Much, he

---

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A, 108.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix A, 108.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix A, 127.

could not walk. He calls out loudly and with confidence and his stutter is noticeably gone. Ari's body is stiff, his head held high. It is clear that, even though the costume is the same, Ari is no longer Too Much.

I chose to cast three out of the seven performers in multiple roles so that the use of this performative device might be magnified. However, Ari's change of character onstage exposed a complex revision of this typical approach to casting and character change. Several issues are at play here, primarily at hand are concerns of authenticity and notions of shape-shifting. Even in a secondary reality formed in part from the contract between audience and performers, there exist regular practices that accompany multiple casting that assist audience identification. Costume changes happen offstage so that the audience immediately recognizes the change in the visual form of the performer when that performer reappears onstage. Unless that performer is listed as being multiply cast in the program, audiences rely on the backstage effort to change that performer's identity in order to avoid confusion. I hypothesized that when a performer playing more than one role shifts identities offstage the likelihood that the character who returns to the stage seems real/authentic seems to increase. The performed identity, then, is a *new person*. The performer's identification with a previous role is collapsed and dissolved into identification with a new role. (Costume, makeup, and character changes are helpful devices here.) In combination, the effect is that the performing body is perceived as "really" being the new character and the assumption is that when that body is meant to represent the "old" character the same shift in identification will occur. In this way, the consistent similarity of the performing body as it plays one role at a time

gestures towards that character's integrity and authenticity.

The moment when Eshu becomes Ari becoming Too Much exemplifies the potential for metamorphosis that lies ever-present in the body. In a production that is grappling with identity this particular performance explicitly acknowledges, instead of hides, the consistent, and inevitably familiar visual relationship between the audience and the performers. Through rehearsal it became clear it is not necessary for a shape-shifting character to *actually* change form.

Here, I would like to further expand on this approach to changing identity by returning to Lewis Hyde's Trickster Makes This World. Hyde extends Gates' consideration of the trickster's ability to modify meaning by constructing what he calls "the trap of culture" (204). The particular cultural artifice of identity, Hyde argues, is assembled when "an equation...[is] made between the body and the world" (170). In this equation, Hyde argues, "changeable social place is figured in terms of an unchangeable part of the body" (170). Hyde's discussion centers on the construction of and avoidance of negative consequences of the trap, consequences that primarily revolve around shame, marginalization, and degradation. Hyde argues that human beings may attempt to slip the trap of culture using what he terms "heavy bodied" resistances (171). Such resistances, Hyde says, include body modifications; an example being the practice of bleaching the skin by African-Americans who desire to look lighter (170). For, these resistances, tend to follow the rules of metonymy and thus do not draw attention to the artifice of the terms of identity. He asserts that these types of resistances often "carr[y] much of the trap" along with them (171). The trickster,

according to Hyde, understands that the representative sign of a thing is not bound to the signified and possesses the ability to not only “slip the trap of culture” but to display for others the makings of said trap (171). Often, the trickster’s shape-shifting serves to teach the story’s protagonist a lesson and enlighten him or her to ways of the world and to the advantage of close inspection and careful evaluation.

Hyde continues to say that the trickster has the capacity to execute “light-bodied” escapes (171). Eshu-Legba’s style of shape shifting plays with perspective and the very kernel of identity formation in each myth in which he appears as more than one person. Hyde concludes his discussion by stating that “the insight that comes to all boundary-crossers – immigrants in fact or immigrants in time...[is] that meaning is contingent and identity fluid, even the meaning and identity of one’s own body” (172). It is this insight that trickster naturally possesses and takes upon himself to demonstrate. So, the type of identity shifting and manipulation generally seen onstage involves a “heavy-bodied” method (Hyde 170).

Identification is refracted as Too Much/Ari/Eshu folds in and shirks the expectation of a character change through his material transformation and physicality. The character and costume change occur on stage and the shape-shifting that has been touted as the power of Eshu is seen in the body of Ari. The association of Eshu with the behavior Ari began to display then shifted, like a husk, around Ari’s body, presenting Eshu, although he had been Too Much. At this moment it becomes clear that the bypassed theatrical device for character change was only one route to shifting an identity. In fact, once this tactic was mobilized, when Ari entered the stage his identity or character was *always uncertain*. We begin to ask

not just “Who is he?” but “Who is he *now*?”

In addition, when taking on Lewis Hyde’s “light bodied” transformation performers are at their most trickster-ish. In this scene Eshu took advantage of the audience’s perception of staged identity and did not actually change his body at all. While Ari did rely on one small “heavy-bodied” change in the adjustment of his tie, the overwhelming disarding of Too Much’s frame was in the behavior. Eshu/Ari/Too Much played on the perception of identity and this shift demonstrates that the body-subject’s potential can be named in response to the construction of the identity. This moment was so much the “light-bodied” spirit of Eshu, referring back to the trap of character within the realm of performance that I was shocked each night of the production event (Hyde 171). As the terms of identity are constructed and crafted, the body then is perceived in terms of those requirements. It appears as though Eshu had been in disguise but one is left to wonder how the Too Much character, who was developed onstage over the course of fifteen minutes and who seemed “legitimate” as soon as he entered the space after a “traditional” character change was a part of the corporal form of Ari’s Eshu. The scene pointed to itself, pointed to Ari, and pointed to Eshu’s ability to encompass them both.<sup>12</sup>

The power of the trickster’s identity shifts lies not only in what form he chooses to inhabit but significantly in the unexpectedness and unpredictability of that next form. The character is capable of accessing the liminal and productive power of the phone booth

---

<sup>12</sup>Even as I note this event, there is a telling difficulty in tracking the nominal references to the body-character-subject-trickster onstage.

wherever he lives. The power to shift perceived identities is accessible at any moment and cannot be tracked by the spectator, audience member, or hapless human of the myth. These events exhibit the *imminent variability of identity*.

### **Phone Booth Moments**

Following his “reveal,” Too Much/Eshu asked The Last Son to follow him to the center platform of the crossroads, where he raises the lights underneath the platform. The Last Son is startled, saying, “Did you just pull me inside of a telephone booth? Sir, why are we inside of a telephone booth?” to which Eshu responds, “I like liminal space.”<sup>13</sup>

Initially I believed this moment would represent Superman’s first encounter with the seeming impossibility of participating as both a human and super-powered being. Gates claims that Eshu-legba is everywhere and within every human being, such that each human has his or her own Eshu that he or she can encounter (Gates 37). This diffuse force of Eshu exists within us all so that we may encounter ambiguity in our daily lives. Gates argues that although human beings have an inner Eshu, they cannot see this force on their own. According to Yoruba practice, humans must sacrifice in order to summon the “immense power” of their own Eshu, who, Gates claims, “represents power in terms of the agency of the will” (Gates 37). In this examination of Superman’s very first phone booth moment, I

---

<sup>13</sup>See Appendix A, 128.

place the icon in a conversation with the Eshu who now represents his own Eshu. This is a move from Eshu being an object to Eshu actively working on the other character. As Eshu confronts The Last Son about his choice to keep his abilities secret he says, “You...allowed a situation to come to pass that would have been different with the aid of your skills...”<sup>14</sup> With each comment his body, already in a very tight space, continues to prod the other performer into corners, forcing him to be accountable for his actions.

When it is apparent to The Last Son that Eshu sees through his bumbling attitude, the actor lifts his shoulders higher, drops his stutter, and speaks with force and determination. In this moment it becomes clear that, instead of thinking of Superman as conserving the relationship between bodies and discursive ideas, he is taking advantage of cultural understandings of strength and excess by playing on that discourse. Eventually, Eshu encourages this proto-Superman figure to play on cultural expectations by “looking like what [he] does a bit better...only when [he] need[s] to.”<sup>15</sup> Fundamentally, Superman’s dual identity works because people cannot fathom the two figures as the same body. This scene positions the mediator figure of Kal-el (again, not the “true” identity of Superman) as taking performative advantage of that understanding of identity. The phone booth allows for the conversation between these two characters to become a meta-conversation not about the death of Hopefulness but about the manner in which The Last Son chose to negotiate his dyspraxia. Eshu uses this opportunity to propose to the proto-Superman a possible path

---

<sup>14</sup>See Appendix A, 129.

<sup>15</sup>See Appendix A, 131.

around the restrictions of the either/or discourse represented by Not Enough and Too Much: the creation of a dual identity. Eshu encourages The Last Son to not see his situation as crippling or discouraging, but to instead perceive the universe as handing him the proverbial lemons with which to make lemonade. Paralleling this scene to the Lugones' understanding of her own multiplicity and again to Anzaldúa's sense of being "worked on," the "self" is fashioned in response to the construction of the world - but also necessarily "split" in response to that world, a world that insists on restraining her body.

The Last Son, through Eshu, begins to posit his own authenticity in a different light. This rendering of the mythos asserts that there is no singular, constant secret identity; Superman is not Clark Kent's secret identity and Clark Kent is not Superman's secret identity. This figure always lies somewhere in between and its identity depends on the contexts of both space and time. Superman's ability to navigate the tugging of identity on his subjectivity suggests that, perhaps his plurality is heroic not just in the face of super-villains and criminals, but in the face of culture itself.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

#### **The Kaleidoscope Form**

Turning the embodied attention of the trickster's eye to contested notions of identity and the body-subject begins to reframe identity as a process-position. This noun-verb, this gerund, is a productive view on identity that allows for constant movement and re-articulation beyond the fixation of singularity. Following Pollock's discussion of the fixing properties of sight, it seems that in a culture where the corporeal capacity for identity is limited, the "body-subject," through various modes of performance, is a site possessing depths unseen (7). Turner's assertion that "...cultural knowledge is transmitted by the recital of mythical narratives," prompts us to remember that it is critical that we attend to these tales as foundational clues to and theories of our perceptions of ourselves (qtd in Lawrence and Jewett 112). Insofar as popular and mythic frames allow for other ways of self representation, how might we begin to think of identity in terms of its potential for heroic plurality?

In looking to various identity-playful body-subjects (including the fiction of the identity-fraught figure of Superman) through the alternate lens of the trickster we see that, in many cases, as the cultural categories shift the terms of belonging shift also in response. This points to the potential of those body-subjects becoming "trickster-subjects" (Pollock 7). If

we assume that the categories around these bodies are shifting and the trickster-body-subject perceives and plays on the shifting categories then all seeming identity is reframed as *gestures towards* cultural identity.

The embodiment of this work has pointed me towards a series of preliminary conclusions that refer to a possible framework for understanding identity: First, the rehearsals towards mythic representation illuminated the body-subject as it rebelled against and exceeded the limits of an ideal. Second, the adaptation and performance of Eshu's myth of the Two Villagers suggests that even when body-subjects attempt to align themselves with one another, the cultural desire for authenticity is unhinged through the test of the corporeal form in time. In addition to these two events, the conventions of the stage that respond to and reference identity provided the opportunity to assess the practice of *recognizing* identity in performance. In sum, what I have already referred to as the imminent variability of identity is expanded to also become an understanding of identity *as* imminent variability. The only consistent identity, then, is the subject's lack of positionality; identity may only *become becoming*. Extending Homi Bhabha's formation of nationality in terms of historicity to the terms of identity, we may then posit identity as *in medias res* (Pollock 24). In concluding this project I have begun to envision identity outside of the question of authenticity, hoping instead that, as Hyde proclaims, "it is possible that there is no real self behind the shifting masks, or that the real self lies exactly there, in the moving surfaces and not beneath (54).

As a result of the work of *Authentic Chameleons* I pose yet another image for the

understanding of identity: that of a kaleidoscope in motion. Like the changing kaleidoscope, the terms of identity are always shifting and permeable as understandings of those terms change and respond to the cultural construction process. Like the trickster, the kaleidoscope of identity will continue to turn in time and in different spaces, laughing at any guess at constancy. Body-subjects, too, will only maintain the “many ways of their shifting skins and changing contexts,” defiant to fixation. Identity is not, then, the difference between two colors (or more!) side by side but the churning blend of colors and shapes of the subject in response to, in spite of, and in excess of the work of culture.

### **Further Explorations**

Further areas I hope to explore as a result of this project include the method of reading Western concepts through the theoretical channel of non-Western concepts. While Gates’ foundational work is at the forefront of such a methodology I wonder what other insights can be gleaned by employing non-Western figures as an avenue through which we investigate other concepts.

I also hope to explore the process of adapting the graphic novel or comic book aesthetic to the stage, specifically the challenge of manipulating three dimensional bodies into a two-dimensional system of representation. The medium of the superhero genre cannot be extracted from the context of the so-called “American myths” and the risks, trials, and problems of probing these figures as they become embodied is a fruitful terrain and

method I intend to consider.

Lastly, I plan to examine the cultural contexts of other heroic or mythic figures for whom identity is a salient or contested issue. The rich territory of myth may lead to further understanding of the process of production of cultural heroes. Fingerioth writes that “Only the superhero disguises his identity for a noble purpose and is able to maintain his integrity while so doing. Why?” (53) I hope to extend my research to this area as well. I wonder if the popular appeal of these heroes (beyond adventure and wish fulfillment) reflects a simmering desire that our bodies might one day perform in excess of even our own expectations. These mythic figures push the question of “Who am I?” even further in that they also hint towards the question “Who *else* am I?” This tenuous positionality is useful as trickster, necessary for superheroes, and powerfully generative in further dialogue about identity play and the performing subject.

## APPENDIX A: *Authentic Chameleons*

Adapted and written by Tracy Walker

Characters:

MUSES:

The MUSES are four ancient, celestial beings. While they have independent personalities and abilities, they are a cohesive unit with the primary purpose and ability to Whisper in the ears of mankind. They influence human thought and action by translating ephemeral and intangible discourse using their Voices. They make contact with the Heavenly/Discourse world by standing on the rise connecting the Heavenly/Discourse world to the Earth.

MUSE ELUSIVE, the Unknown:

ELUSIVE is aligned with the element of Water. She has the ability to become or allow others to become invisible. She is cautious and generally noncommittal but can be strong willed and often opposes PRACTICALITY.

MUSE SCHOLARLY, the Cautious:

SCHOLARLY is the most level-headed of the group and aligned with Air. She is inquisitive, thoughtful, and curious. She is also the eldest sister. Sometimes introverted but always thorough. SCHOLARLY's gift is the ability to move through or allow others to Bend and travel in Time.

MUSE PRACTICALITY, the Skeptic:

PRACTICALITY is aligned with Earth. She is strong-willed and vocal. While she cares a great deal for her sisters her priorities do not always match those of others. She is independent, impatient, and prefers to make decisions as quickly as possible in order to move forward. PRACTICALITY has the ability to ground thought.

MUSE HOPEFULNESS, the Dreamer:

HOPEFULNESS is the youngest of the sisters and is aligned with Fire. She is consistently energetic but also very empathic, often being affected by the emotional state of the situation surrounding her. HOPEFULNESS has the ability of spiritual Sight and can See things that her sisters cannot. She lapses into a dream-state or trance when she uses this Gift.

**Played by the Same Performer:**

ESHU:

A divine force of intersecting possibilities and ambiguities. ESHU is a powerful Yoruba Trickster God with the ability to make and unmake, shapeshift, travel, and form reality. ESHU is androgynous and fluid in voice and body. ESHU can be commanding or yielding, forceful or cautious. ESHU is androgynous. He is concerned for mankind but remains amoral in all of his endeavors. The most powerful figure in the story.

TOO MUCH, voice of Passing

**Played by the same Performer:**

VILLAGER SL, a good natured farmer

CLARK, a young man with extraordinary gifts yearning for a place to belong.

HUMANITY, representative of homo sapiens.

**Played by same Performer:**

VILLAGER SR, a good natured farmer

NOT ENOUGH, voice of Expectation

JUST SO, Voice of Order:

JUST SO is a strong element created by Mankind. He is ancient, as old as the MUSES and almost as old as the Gods. He is scheming, vindictive, and charming. He is also envious of those that can step foot in the Heavenly/Discourse world.

[Scene One]

(Three large, separated cyclorama are placed in the back of the space, in a vague semi-circle. The floor is a large raised crossroads, spanning the length and width of the stage. One MUSE is asleep on the floor in each quarter. Their faces are covered by the cowls on their robes. One male performer stands in the middle of the cross while two male performers each stand offstage, behind one of the outside cycloramas. Music begins. The performer on stage begins a series of gestures, moving slowly. After a beat two other performers behind the screens, now lit in shadow, begin to move in the same series of gestures so that the three figures are moving in a similar pattern. Music rises until two performers behind the screen step away and disappear from the stage. The performer on stage continues his movements until music stops. After the music changes the performer steps down from the center and begins to walk around the four MUSES, inspecting them. One by one he makes a sweeping gesture over their bodies and then exits upstage. As he leaves the MUSES begin to stir and PRACTICALITY is the first to rise. She looks around and does not see the other MUSES, walks around them looking into the audience inquisitively, becomes anxious in her search.)

PRACTICALITY

(slowly, becoming more and more anxious)

Muses! Muses? Sisters? What has happened? Can you hear me? SCHOLARLY!

(SCHOLARLY sits up at her name, turns around. She is disoriented)

SCHOLARLY

Yes? I'm here. I feel...(sighing) fuzzy. My hea-

PRACTICALITY

I called out for everyone, you are the only one that answered. I cannot see our Sisters.

SCHOLARLY

Neither can I...HOPEFULNESS?

(HOPEFULNESS stands up, swaying, pushes her cowl back.)

HOPEFULNESS

Sisters? I'm here.

PRACTICALITY

Are you alright?

(PRACTICALITY reaches to HOPEFULNESS)

HOPEFULNESS

Yes, I'll be alright. Where...where is she?

(They look around)

PRACTICALITY

Of course she is the last to be found.

HOPEFULNESS and SCHOLARLY

ELUSIVE?

ELUSIVE

(drawls)

Here.

(HOPEFULNESS rushes to ELUSIVE, embraces her)

SCHOLARLY and PRACTICALITY

What happened.

ELUSIVE

Something happened.



PRACTICALITY

Ever the bearer of obvious news.

ELUSIVE

(Hisses at PRACTICALITY angrily)

HOPEFULNESS

Now is not the time to bicker, MUSES. We slept far too long...I fear...I fear...

ELUSIVE

What do you See?

HOPEFULNESS

(steps forward, gazing into the Audience banks blankly.)

It's hard to envision what has passed.

PRACTICALITY

(eagerly)

Do you See what happened to us?

HOPEFULNESS

There is a wall. Of smoke. I cannot See past it. (reaches out with her hands) But I feel a void...

PRACTICALITY

Something is missing. I feel it too.

SCHOLARLY and HOPEFULNESS

Someone has taken something of our's.

ELUSIVE

Taken something? What?

SCHOLARLY

We have lost something...something.

ELUSIVE

We still have our minds

HOPEFULNESS

Our powers

ELUSIVE

Are you sure?

SCHOLARLY

No. Not sure...

PRACTICALITY

We must take stock of our abilities, sisters.

MUSES

Yes. hmmm....

PRACTICALITY

I will begin...

(PRACTICALITY steps around her ramp, speaking to her sisters and to the sky)

Shifting to stability, landing atop stone, floating to the sound hearth, the applied anchor of ailing seas of thought. Of worlds colliding, resolving, releasing until

PRACTICALITY and HOPEFULNESS

Those universes layer themselves, layer themselves, layer themselves...

HOPEFULNESS

Before my eyes... I am she that Sees, the Sight...of what so many miss. I see the invisible, realize the indiscernible, follow

## HOPEFULNESS and ELUSIVE

the concealed as it moves, sliding, sliding, sliding....

### ELUSIVE

sinuous, serpentine, meandering meander...winding, wily, I am the slipping round,  
the seeing all sides from the junction of, from the junctions of, from the crannies each  
of all corners, all

### ELUSIVE and SCHOLARLY

devious devious curves, curves...curves

### SCHOLARLY

To be not seen...(flips hood) I am the bend that bends, the bent, the twisting...to  
control time and travel in it. To gather, seek, search, be sought...

(Gesture and Effect, all muses cease to move.)

### MUSES

And now...We Speak.

(MUSES move to each of their ramps, lift a foot in unison.  
MUSES step down in unison, lights on ramp shine quickly,  
MUSES immediately yelp/cry out/hiss and step back.

### SCHOLARLY

What

### ELUSIVE and SCHOLARLY

Has happened?

### ELUSIVE

No...it cannot be. Try again.

(MUSES move to each of their ramps, lift a foot in unison.  
MUSES step down in unison, lights on ramp shine quickly,  
MUSES immediately yelp/cry out/hiss and step back.

### HOPEFULNESS

(cries out while grimacing and holding her foot

The Ascent... burned!

(Other muses are visibly distressed. HOPEFULNESS  
whimpers.)

ELUSIVE

It has never burned us away.

HOPEFULNESS

It does not recognize us...

SCHOLARLY

Let us try it once more...perhaps...?

(MUSES step gingerly towards their ramps, place a foot above  
again, lower it slowly. Again, it burns, this time they hold it for  
beat longer until they step back forcefully, hissing)

ELUSIVE

We have been cut off from the Summit. How?

PRACTICALITY

Isn't it obvious? Which gift identifies us from all of the other Beings?

SCHOLARLY and PRACTICALITY

The most salient...

ELUSIVE and SCHOLARLY.

The Voice.

HOPEFULNESS

We have been stripped.

(she looks to PRACTICALITY, reaches for her answer)

SCHOLARLY

Without our Voices the Ascent will not recognize us. Not only have we been cut off from the Others and but we cannot Speak to Inspire.

PRACTICALITY

(angered by their loss)

Obviously our Voices were taken while we slept like fools.

HOPEFULNESS

While we slumbered.

ELUSIVE

Someone

SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE, and PRACTICALITY

Mocks us.

PRACTICALITY and SCHOLARLY

But who would take it?

PRACTICALITY

(gestures to the audience, scoffs)

A human could not.

ELUSIVE

You underestimate them.

PRACTICALITY

You overestimate them!

SCHOLARLY

Silence! We have been cut off, so all we have now is each other. Without our Voices we will begin to lose purpose. We cannot stop to argue, we must find the thief. Quickly now!

#### HOPEFULNESS

Another muse?

#### SCHOLARLY

The others are not old enough, powerful enough. The question is: who *could* take it?

#### ELUSIVE

A god could.

#### HOPEFULNESS

A god wouldn't! Would they. Would they?

#### SCHOLARLY

A god takes and does what a god wants.

#### HOPEFULNESS

But steal?

#### SCHOLARLY

Gods do not steal. From each other, maybe, but from us? Or them? It's not called stealing, it's reclaiming.

#### HOPEFULNESS

Reclaiming...? But...we'll just have to ask for it back. We have to plead, find the one who took it and explain. We have t-

#### PRACTICALITY

How? How will we find such a one. We don't even know who. Do you know how long such a quest could take.

## SCHOLARLY

A millennia.

## PRACTICALITY:

Or more. To look across all lands, at all times. We'll be bending time for eternity.  
Too many gods, everywhere, at all times.

## ELUSIVE

We're not looking for all gods at all times, though, are we? We are looking for a certain variety of deity.

## HOPEFULNESS

A certain...what do you mean?

## ELUSIVE

Not all of them steal. We must find a god who likes to take things. A thief by trade.

## PRACTICALITY

One who would steal our Voice would not return it the next day. They will not reveal themselves to us. We must find a god who knows and Sees a great deal. Perhaps a friend of a thief.

## SCHOLARLY

A trickster.

## ELUSIVE and PRACTICALITY

Yes

## SCHOLARLY

A trickster who is everywhere at once will be able to tell us who took our Voices.

## HOPEFULNESS

I must invoke the right one – find a trickster who has seen our thief. Perhaps he will

help us track him through Time.

ELUSIVE

Perhaps.

SCHOLARLY

Hopefulness...?

HOPEFULNESS

(grandly, and with great veneration)

Hermes.

(silence)

Loki.

(silence, she looks around uncertainly and then lifts her arms)

Azeban. Maui.

(she sighs, thrusts her fingers and arms into space)

Kokopelli. Kwaku Ananse. Ti Malice. Nanabush. Tricksters all, we MUSES call you.  
Daucina.

ELUSIVE

It's not working.

PRACTICALITY

(begins sarcastically, looking at ELUSIVE)

Again...

SCHOLARLY

Shush. We don't have time. These gods, these tricksters are not the trickster we seek.  
We must think of another.



ELUSIVE

What of...Eshu.

(the MUSES turn to her, very slowly.)

MUSES

(whisper)

Eshu.

HOPEFULNESS

(laughing nervously)

We will never find him. Eshu finds you.

PRACTICALITY

But Eshu is everywhere. He will have seen our thief. Call to him.

HOPEFULNESS

(steps out again, is unsure.)

Eshu...Eshu!

ESHU

(laughs offstage. The MUSES gasp.)

PRACTICALITY

(to HOPEFULNESS)

Again!

HOPEFULNESS

Eshu, we -

ESHU

Sing, MUSE, of the lost children, of those that live on land bridges, of crypsis. Sing of skin walkers and word-shifters.

(startled, the women look up and around, searching for the voice.)

HOPEFULNESS and SCHOLARLY:

Where is he?

ELUSIVE and PRACTICALITY:

Where?

ESHU

Sing, MUSES, of face-dancers and chameleons. Of octopi and polymorphs. Of polytropic pluralities and multivalent malfeasance.

ELUSIVE

There are shapeshifters among us and we are they. So, my friends, is he.

MUSES:

Eshu.

SCHOLARLY:

Eshu-Legba. One of the many

MUSES:

(now that they know his name, they speak with confidence.)

Tricksters.

ESHU

Sing, MUSES, of the Janus-faced, “the shaped and the shaping.”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Paranthetical notes will be used in order to cite adapted sources without disrupting the script. (Pelton 131).

MUSES:

But where? Who? Us?

ESHU:

Yes. No.

MUSES:

(to audience, skeptical again.)

Them?

ESHU

All.

MUSES:

Do you know where or who...

ESHU

“Radically ambiguous...essentially anomalous...facing both out and in.”<sup>17</sup>

HOPEFULNESS

We must invoke him in full form or he will not appear...

ELUSIVE

It may not work.

---

<sup>17</sup>(Pelton, 131).

ESHU

Sing in me, MUSE, and through me tell the story.

PRACTICALITY

Of course it will work. He will help us find our thief. Eshu sees all sides. We must give him due if we are to regain ourselves. How could we have thought differently? We have been silly. I'm sure all we need to do is invoke his presence and speak to him, he has already made himself known. He has probably been listening this whole time. Muses, sisters....let us do what we do best.

[End Scene One]

[Scene Two]

(MUSES pull their cowls over their head and move around the space slowly, humming to the music. They begin their chant.)

ELUSIVE: (reverently)

ESHU, do not undo me.<sup>18</sup>

SCHOLARLY: (reverently)

ESHU, do not undo me.

PRACTICALITY: (reverently)

ESHU, do not undo me.

HOPEFULNESS: (bending, touching her aching back)

Knots undo me!

PRACTICALITY, SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE  
(reproachfully towards HOPEFULNESS)

Do not undo me!

HOPEFULNESS: (bowing)

Do not undo me...

---

<sup>18</sup>(Gates 3).

Elusive	Do not falsify.	Mis-
Sch.	Do not falsify the words of my mouth.	Do not misguide the movements of my feet. Guide
Prac.	Falsify the words of your mouth.	Mis-
Hope.	Do not falsify.	Guide

Elusive	Do not misguide the movements	Do not falsify
Sch.	my feet.	
Prac.	my mouth	You who translates yesterday's words
Hope	the movements of my feet.	

Elusive	Eshu, falsify	Yesterday's words
Sch.	yesterday's words.	your mouth. Translate
Prac.	Eshu, do not	Translate
Hope.	Do not falsify –	Translate

Elusive	novel utterances	Words
Sch.	Into novel utterances	Undo me Undo me.
Prac.	(pleadingly) Do not	Undo me My feet
Hope.	Do not undo me.	Undo me My mouth

(to the audience)

Elusive	I bear you sacrifices.	
Sch.	Undo me.	I bear you sacrifices.
Prac.	Undo me.	I bear you sacrifices.
Hope.	Do not Do not.	I bear you sacrifices.

(at the close of the invocation, the MUSES stop, looking up and around expectantly. Silence. Eshu does not appear.)

ELUSIVE

Well?

PRACTICALITY

But I thought –

ELUSIVE

No Eshu.

SCHOLARLY

We should have known that such a god would not appear at beck and call.

ELUSIVE

I told you. He will appear when people forget that chaos is the way and that nothing is certain.

HOPEFULNESS

So let's find him!

ELUSIVE

Perhaps we can travel to a time and a place where we know he cannot resist intervention. Somewhere rife with potential for Eshu and his love for indeterminacy and ambiguity.

ESHU

(laughs)

Muses, oh Muses. Follow me....

(SCHOLARLY does her gesture for bending time, the others follow. In unison, the MUSES, drape their hoods/shawls over their faces and step across the arms of the crossroads to occupy one quarter each)

[End Scene Two]

[Scene Three]<sup>19</sup>

(Two VILLAGERS enter, one from stage left, the other from stage right. They move to the center and greet one another, look up at the sun, hear the birds and the air. It is hot. They set aside their lunch boxes and pull on their pants, tugging them tight. They adjust all props, identically, deliberately, each movement in unison and mirrored.)

VILLAGERS:

(at once and with identical intonation, in unison)

Hello my friend! Greetings and good morning.

(They bow, mirroring one another. They clasp arms heartily.)

Well met. (pause, inhale) A long day's work is ahead of me, I do not look forward to it.

(They laugh in unison, mirror all actions. Hands into pockets, they reach for handkerchiefs, brush off their sweaty heads.)

Olorun! The sun is hot today! Already I sweat like a sour mule at the yoke. My burden is... not light. How is your wife? Your life? Your work? Fine enough, fine enough.

(They sigh, smile, inhale together. Laugh good-naturedly)

I suppose it is time then. Yes, I suppose. With a day so long ahead, I am glad that I have you. Yes, as am I, my friend. My *best* friend. Yes, my best friend. Forever? Forever.

---

<sup>19</sup> (Gates 32).



(They clasp again, shaking on it, and turn to their work, away from the middle).

PRACTICALITY:

(all in hushed tones to one another, peaking out from underneath their shawls at themselves.)

Where are we?

HOPEFULNESS

West Africa.

SCHOLARLY

When are we?

HOPEFULNESS

When myths are born.

PRACTICALITY

(scoffing)

Eshu-legba is not here. (she sniffs the air) I can smell them. These are *men*. They are not gods. (stands up)

HOPEFULNESS

(whispers)

So? (pulls PRACTICALITY down) Perhaps he has taken the form of a man.

PRACTICALITY

Why would he do that?

ELUSIVE

And why these men? They are outside toiling under a sun. They are...working.

PRACTICALITY

Does Eshu...(grimaces) work?

SCHOLARLY

(standing slowly)

Legba dances.

(ESHU is behind the cyclorama in shadow, moving to the beat of the drums.)

HOPEFULNESS:

He dances - to the beat

SCHOLARLY:

to his beat?

ESHU:

No.

ELUSIVE, PRACTICALITY:

(stand slowly together)

Of a different drummer?

ESHU:

No!

HOPEFULNESS:

To the beats of many different drummers.

SCHOLARLY:

(in sync with words      above)

many drummers.

#### ELUSIVE:

At the same time.

#### HOPEFULNESS, SCHOLARLY, PRACTICALITY:

same time.

(As the music rises to a feverish pitch, ESHU emerges from one side. His appearance halts the music abruptly. He pauses and watches, quietly, as the men work on their fields, their hoes hitting the ground in the same rhythm of the music, echoing the drums in the silence. ESHU walks out from behind the cyclorama stage right, stands sideways, then does an abrupt about face, one side of his outfit is blue, the other is red. He walks to the center of the crossroads and surveys the scene, begins to whistle. The men keep working, unaware. ESHU flips his coin, smokes his pipe and smiles mischievously. The women stand at his entrance, all facing inwards towards the middle, whistling in his silences. He does not acknowledge them, his attention is to the men.)

#### HOPEFULNESS

(All MUSES duck down)

Eshu!

#### ELUSIVE

One half of his body remains in the realm of the deities while the other half is here. His body is both spirit and earth.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>(Gates 6).

ESHU:

(he approaches them slowly, slyly)

Friends.

(The two men rise at the same time, look at ESHU, turn to one another and look back, simultaneously.)

VILLAGERS:

Hello, Traveler.

(raising their hand in greeting. ESHU walks carefully between them, eyeing them.)

ESHU:

(slowly, his voice lazy with the drawl of a god.)

You are an interesting pair.

(He does not move his head but moves his eyes and hands. He stays still while the farmers are animated in their gestures.)

VILLAGERS:

Me? (They point to their chests.) I'm not much special, just a farmer of these fields. I've been here my whole life. I'm familiar with everyone.

ESHU:

Yes, well, the two of you have a whole life together, I suppose. Farming these fields. I travel alone, a state you wouldn't be blessed to be familiar with I'd say. I'd not be especially fond of friendship, futile as it may be.

(He says this all with such a nice smile, but his words are not kind. The farmers look once at another, shrug, look back, comically, waiting.)

VILLAGERS:

(uncertainly)

Well, traveler, what brings you to our lands?

ESHU:

I am a world wanderer. I have places to go, people to be.

VILLAGERS:

If you are interested in taking a break from your, er, travels, please, stay with me. I have an extra room and a warm fire.

ESHU:

Thank you, no. I'm just passing through. I've come to see two friends.

VILLAGERS:

Ah, I see.

ESHU:

I doubt it.

VILLAGERS:

(They smile, look to the ground, then glance up, puzzled but not angry.)

(Pause.)

(VILLAGERS glance down again, look out as if to survey the other fields and workers, then look back to ESHU, who has been watching them patiently and attentively)

Hmm. Kind sir, if you don't mind, I should return to my work. Good day to you.

ESHU:

(smiles, places his fingers to his hat and nods slightly)

Good day to you two.

(He walks downstage, continues whistling, flipping his coin and steps towards the audience, winking. He exits downstage, his whistling lasting far after he is gone. The two friends watch as he leaves. The women turn slowly as he passes them, following him bodily)

VILLAGERS:

That man was certainly very strange. I've never seen the likes of him around here before. Indeed, he was uncertain in my eyes.

(VILLAGERS continue their work, plowing the fields in their crossroads. The women hold their cowls up, peeking out to look at the audience. They are amused.)

ELUSIVE:

Verily.

PRACTICALITY:

Truthfully?

HOPEFULNESS:

Certainly-

SCHOLARLY:

Sincerely. Shapeshifting, transformation, and metamorphoses all refer to actual changes, such that the character has the abilities of the new form and not the old one, and that no-one can "see-through" the change.

HOPEFULNESS:

A chameleon!

SCHOLARLY:

Of sorts

ELUSIVE:

Of thoughts.

HOPEFULNESS:

Of words!

PRACTICALITY:

Shhhhhh!

(WOMEN pull down their cowls and return to face the VILLAGERS)

(VILLAGERS look up to the sun and sigh, deciding it is time to stop. They sit down facing one another across the center path and move their lunchboxes to the middle. They settle into a cross-legged position then pause, smile at one another gently. Villager SR and SL reach towards their lunchboxes, Villager SR simply places his hands atop the lid. Villager SL looks down to his box and begins to open the lid, Villager SR gasps slightly. He is not opening his box yet. Villager SL quickly drops the lid and clasps his hands in his lap. He then notices SL's hands and mimics their position on the box. The men sigh immediately in relief, then open their lunchboxes together.)

VILLAGERS:

His stature was great and manner quite intriguing but his clothing was very odd, very. His shirt and pants, unlike anything I would wear. And that hat!

(They laugh together, catching the shared joke.)

What an ugly hat. It was so

VILLAGER SR:

Blue

VILLAGER SL:

Red

(They pause and look at one another, squinting. The women have frozen and are watching them.)

VILLAGERS:

What?

VILLAGER SR: (in unison with SL)

Red?

VILLAGER SL: (in unison with SR)

Blue?

VILLAGERS:

No.

(music rises again, slowly, as the two men stand up and stare at one another in shock.)

VILLAGERS:

You are blind, my friend.

VILLAGERS:

I am blind...friend?

(The VILLAGERS step back on the crossroads and away from one another)

VILLAGER SL:

(*angry*) Yes. (stands up) How could you possibly see a blue hat? Blue?



VILLAGER SR:

(stands up)

How could you possibly see a red hat? Red?!

VILLAGER SR, SL:

How could you

SCHOLARLY:

ESHU dances.

VILLAGERS:

(angrily)

Possibly

ELUSIVE:

ESHU tears holes.

HOPEFULNESS:

Holes in fate's fabric

PRACTICALITY:

Holes that are already there

HOPEFULNESS:

already there

SCHOLARLY:

(gestures wide to the audience)

there.

VILLAGERS:

(points to the crossroads, where ESHU paused)

there?

SCHOLARLY, HOPEFULNESS:

So that we might                      see

VILLAGERS:

Possibly                      see

(while the women chant, they step again into the their neighboring quadrants, haunting the VILLAGERS. The VILLAGERS step upstage, behind center screen. They begin to fight with shadow weapons. The women begin their chant, watching the VILLAGERS and each other.)

SCHOLARLY:

ESHU dances.

ELUSIVE:

ESHU tears holes.

HOPEFULNESS:

ESHU shows

PRACTICALITY:

ESHU holds

(VILLAGERS strike each other, fall to the floor.)

[End Scene Three]

[Scene Four]

(Women rise, changing their clothes, returning once again to their contemporary selves. They face outwards, sitting contemplatively, observing the scene.)

HOPEFULNESS:

Well, that was...that was....

ELUSIVE:

(with distance)

That was Eshu..

SCHOLARLY

And he ignored us. This was no place to confront him.

PRACTICALITY

Then why did he bring us here?

SCHOLARLY

To show us something. A clue perhaps. A puzzle?

PRACTICALITY

We don't have time for games. So what if two buffoons destroy themselves?

HOPEFULNESS

But they were friends...

### ELUSIVE

They were friends enough to kill one another.

### SCHOLARLY

Eshu unglues. They were never one body, but two bodies each with one idea.

### PRACTICALITY

Their own ideas, not our's.

### ELUSIVE

Eshu is perspective.

### PRACTICALITY

What does that have to do with us?

### ELUSIVE

How many ways can one thing be many things?

### PRACTICALITY

What? No. We make many things one thing.

### SCHOLARLY

That's true. When we Whisper into their ears – we do make sentences from formlessness.

## HOPEFULNESS

(stares outwards, with unfocused eyes.)

But one body *can* take many directions.

## PRACTICALITY

One hat can take many directions. That is all.

## HOPEFULNESS

One body. Eshu unglues. How many ways

## ELUSIVE and HOPEFULNESS

can one thing be many things? Yes....

## PRACTICALITY

(agitated)

Not so fast, sisters. Are we not the spirits that name that direction? When we whisper into the ears of the artist, the politic, the administrator. We solidify the beautiful mush that is ideas and form it into something edible for the rest of humanity. We solidify. We fix. Fix thoughts to people, fix people to thought. We fix names! We *give* name. Pull together the amorphous into the tale, a name, a song, a play. We make things solid.

## HOPEFULNESS

Practicality...

## PRACTICALITY

No. *We* bind and anchor the thoughts that float in human minds. We are the binding and the fixity.

ELUSIVE

But we are not all that binds. What of humans.

PRACTICALITY

What *of* humans?

ELUSIVE

They bind ideas to bodies, just as we do.

PRACTICALITY

Do you want our Voices back or not?

ELUSIVE

Of course I do. But I won't pretend that there are not others who make stable the ambiguous. We are not the only forces that fix!

PRACTICALITY

Of course we are the only forces that fix! Mankind is puddy and our Voices form and guide. Skirt the edges of doubt if you wish, Elusive, but I have watched them just as long as you. They are puddy.

ELUSIVE

You see only what you want to see.

PRACTICALITY

Quiet!

ELUSIVE

Humans form and guide, Practicality - they have been doing so for millennia!

PRACTICALITY

Quiet. Be quiet!

HOPEFULNESS

Muses...

ELUSIVE

(continues without hearing HOPEFULNESS, amused)

You never go to the wide angle of time, you never-

PRACTICALITY

(cutting her off)

You have always been too vague to see with clarity

ELUSIVE

(smiling)

And you too earthbound to gain perspective.

HOPEFULNESS

Muses...not now-

PRACTICALITY

You are so aloof, Elusive, so distant, refusing commitment from your amoral high ground. You fail to see that our Voices bring order and progress. You have always given *them* the benefit of your doubt and I tire of your obscurity.

ELUSIVE

I tire of your self-righteousness. We are Muses, not gods.

PRACTICALITY

Is *that* your excuse?

HOPEFULNESS

(admonishes)

Practicality!

PRACTICALITY

No, HOPEFULNESS. We are Muses! We are the ones that Whisper! We fasten the flow of time, connect the fabric of human thought – it has always been, this will not change – it is...just so!

(Bending time sound effect, Lights Change. HOPEFULNESS, ELUSIVE, and SCHOLARLY freeze. PRACTICALITY is confused and looks at her sisters. Lights change, low ominous music begins softly then rises as JUST SO steps out from behind upstage right screen, humming softly. He strides around the stage watching PRACTICALITY.)

PRACTICALITY

(PRACTICALITY remains very still and is wary of him)



Who are you?

JUST SO

(JUST SO walks towards her. He stops beside her to sniff around her shoulders and hair. PRACTICALITY hold her ground. JUST SO scoffs lightly and walks backwards, eyeing her with a smirk.)

PRACTICALITY

Who are you? How do you halt The Muses?

JUST SO

You should know who I am, Practicality. It is you who invoked me.

PRACTICALITY

Impossible. That is not my Gift. Hopefulness is the only one of us with the Sight, only she can call other beings into presence.

JUST SO

Hopefulness did not call me here, you did.

PRACTICALITY

How?

JUST SO

By calling my name.

PRACTICALITY

Calling your name...? (She thinks for a moment.) I don't know...I –

JUST SO

Think, Muse.

PRACTICALITY

(after a pause)

Just So?

JUST SO

(bowing low)

At your service.

PRACTICALITY

You cannot be a god. A god would never bow to a Muse.

JUST SO

I am not a god. I am something...else.

(He walks to stage left ramp, places a foot over the ramp, hovering. The ramp glows faintly. He lowers it. The ramp glows brightly, burning him away. He keeps his foot there, hissing in pain but does not cry out. Instead, he holds it there as long as possible.)

I have been in existence as long as any god, if not a bit longer.

(JUST SO lifts his foot)

PRACTICALITY

Why did you hold my sisters In Time?

JUST SO

(JUST SO around the other Muses, looking closely at them as he talks)

Because what I want to talk about does not concern them. Yet.

PRACTICALITY

(regaining confidence)

What do you want to talk about?

JUST SO

I know who stole your Voice.

PRACTICALITY

(interested)

You do? Who...?

JUST SO

That would be telling.

PRACTICALITY

What do you want? What do you want me to do?

JUST SO

(sharply)

Careful, Muse. Oh, be careful before you ask such a question. You do not know what position you put yourself in with those words.

PRACTICALITY

I want our Voices returned. Who took them? Please tell me, what do you wa--?

JUST SO

(warningly)

Muse...

PRACTICALITY

I will see our Voices returned! Who took them?

(JUST SO nods his head at her defiance and circles over the downstage arm)

JUST SO

Eshu-legba.

PRACTICALITY

I knew it. But why?

JUST SO

To answer that question, ask yourself why you want your Voice back so badly.

PRACTICALITY

Tell me how to find Eshu.

JUST SO

(sighing)

I cannot track his movements. But I can offer you something else.

PRACTICALITY

(uncertain)

Something else?

JUST SO

I can arrange for the return of your Voices.

PRACTICALITY

How?

JUST SO

How is not your concern. The trade is that you keep me around.

PRACTICALITY

Keep you around?

JUST SO

Not in body, but in words. In your Whisperings and seductions. Keep me there.

PRACTICALITY

I don't...I don't know...

JUST SO

(stepping towards her)

You know, Practicality, you and I are not very unlike one another.

PRACTICALITY

Oh, really?

JUST SO

(circling her)

Yes, really. You have always Known. You and I feel the same about (gestures to the audience) them. It's so much easier when they simply accept the gifts in each moment. Each moment when we are able to bring joy into their lives using the old fashioned game of bait and switch. Changeable social order is figured in terms of unchangeability....<sup>21</sup>

JUST SO and PRACTICALITY

Metonymy.

JUST SO

(steps close to her)

---

<sup>21</sup>(Hyde 170).

You and I, Practicality. We “inscribe the body as a sign of wider worlds.”<sup>22</sup> The social and the psychological, the ritual and the mundane, the business of life’s business...

#### JUST SO and PRACTICALITY

The way things are.

#### JUST SO

We “secure the borders of the[ir] narrative.”<sup>23</sup>

#### JUST SO and PRACTICALITY

Intuitively. Innate.

#### JUST SO

Always.

#### PRACTICALITY

(moves closer to JUST SO)

As any fool can see.

#### JUST SO and PRACTICALITY

Natural facts. Since the dawn of.

#### JUST SO

---

<sup>22</sup>(Hyde 170).

<sup>23</sup>(Hyde 170).

Just.

PRACTICALITY

So.

JUST SO

(whispers)

We could do this together, Practicality. You know we could.

PRACTICALITY

Yes....

JUST SO

Yes....

PRACTICALITY

Yes.

(steps away, shocked at herself)

No...No! I can't leave my sisters.

JUST SO

Of course. You can't leave your sisters. Not forever. But for a time.

PRACTICALITY

You would do this for us, but take only me? As long as I Whisper you into the ears of mankind?

JUST SO



Yes.

PRACTICALITY

Why now and why me?

JUST SO

This is a critical time for mankind. They are wavering. The centre cannot hold.

PRACTICALITY

You only answered one question.

JUST SO

(chuckles)

You see that I have limited access. (gestures towards the ramp) The weight of your Gift is unmatched among the elements.

PRACTICALITY

You know what the Muses are. Our Voices alone...my – *our* strength would be diminished if we were apart.

JUST SO

I will increase your power. Of course, the invitation could be extended to include guests.

PRACTICALITY

I...I don't know that they wou-

JUST SO

(cuts her off)

No matter. I offer ideas. Now, I shall return you to when you were.

PRACTICALITY

Return me? Alright but, what of...? (gestures towards the Muses)

JUST SO

The others will remain exactly as they were before. I charge you, though, to remember my propositions. I would be glad to have your particular type of...assistance. The Voices are only the beginning.

PRACTICALITY

And Eshu? Will he know-

JUST SO

(cuts her off)

Eshu and I have been in healthy opposition since the beginning of time. He cannot track my movements. You are the only one who knows that I have stepped foot here.

(steps backwards upstage, begins to gesture her back into her position prior to his freeze.)

Think on my offer, Muse. And whether the god of chaos and ambiguity, the thief of your Voices, is really the most...stable of allies. We'll be in touch....

(PRACTICALITY is "pushed" back into her position. Sound effect for bending time reverses, lights return. SCHOLARLY, HOPEFULNESS, and ELUSIVE unfreeze – still in confrontation.)

SCHOLARLY

Both of you be quiet! We have to keep looking. Too long have we been incomplete...without. I am beginning to grow weak. I know you all feel it, too. Time is running short. I plan to find what was taken from me and you are all welcome to join me.

(Other MUSES pause at her outburst)

HOPEFULNESS

(amused)

Not that you *could* do this alone. You need our abilities.

SCHOLARLY

This is also true. Shall we continue?

MUSES

Yes.

HOPEFULNESS

Although...

SCHOLARLY and ELUSIVE

Although?

HOPEFULNESS

(sighing wistfully)

It's just that... Well. I *miss* inspiring.

SCHOLARLY

(smiles at her, laughing)

When we have it back, we will still inspire.

SCHOLARLY, HOPEFULNESS, and ELUSIVE

In-

(inhale together)

spire.

(release breath together)

PRACTICALITY

(with disdain)

Inspire them?

(they all look together, out at the audience.)

SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE, HOPEFULNESS

If they're listening closely.

ELUSIVE

Will he lead us again?

PRACTICALITY

(dazed)

I don't know.

SCHOLARLY

Eshu shapeshifts into whatever form he wants...how will we find him again? And how will we know him when we see him?

PRACTICALITY

Don't know how to proceed...

HOPEFULNESS

PRACTICALITY? Are you alright?

PRACTICALITY

Fine. I'm fine.

SCHOLARLY

It seems the god has chosen not to appear to us...in either form or voice.

HOPEFULNESS

It seems we cannot know a thing,

ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY

simply by looking at a thing.

PRACTICALITY

Or a person. He must know that we cannot track his movements. He is a

shapeshifter. He could be female or child. Wind, bird, myst, or animal. Tricksters are “ambiguous being[s].”<sup>24</sup> Transformation, metamorphosis, transmogrification ....

#### SCHOLARLY

Morphing, transmorphing, adaptation.

#### HOPEFULNESS

But why?

#### ELUSIVE

Hermes became mist to pass through the keyhole and hide from Apollo. Loki became a beautiful mare to distract Hrimthurs’ stallion. The “abilities of the new form “allow the character to act in a manner previously impossible.”<sup>25</sup>

#### SCHOLARLY

Eshu shifts for many reasons. Perhaps he has heard something from the other gods that he wants to share with us. He may tell us more about our thief.

#### PRACTICALITY (mutters under her breath)

Unless he *is* the thief.

#### SCHOLARLY

We can try and catch him while he changes form.

#### ELUSIVE

---

<sup>24</sup> (Lugones 633).

<sup>25</sup> (“Shapeshifting”).

But we don't know what will cause him to shift.

HOPEFULNESS:

(triumphantly)

It's those telephone booth moments.

PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY:

What?

HOPEFULNESS:

You know...this looks like a job for...?

PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY:

No.

HOPEFULNESS:

You know!

PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY:

No.

HOPEFULNESS:

Oh.

SCHOLARLY

(thinking outloud)

The abilities of the new form and not the old one, such that no-one can "see-through" the change....

## ELUSIVE

Eshu changes shape when it is needed. Because he cannot do what he needs to do in one form and he can in another. Because the world prefers either/or.

## HOPEFULNESS

(triumphantly)

I told you, it's those telephone booth moments!

## SCHOLARLY

You know, I think you just might be right. Sisters, follow me!

(SCHOLARLY does her gesture for bending time, the others follow)

[End Scene Four]



[Scene Five]

(WOMEN draw down their cowls. VILLAGER SR, now NOT ENOUGH, enters from upstage right wearing a long red shirt. TOO MUCH enters from upstage left in glasses and a white shirt and tie. Lights at their feet throw their shadows up towards the cyclorama on the ends of the stage. TOO MUCH's shadow is quite small in comparison to the large shadow of NOT ENOUGH. They face outwards, frozen. They do not see the MUSES. THE LAST SON walks backwards into the crossroads and pauses. He does not see the MUSES. Sounds of a busy metropolis start abruptly as THE LAST SON turns to face the audience. There are voices, honking horns from vehicles, and music, etc. PRACTICALITY and HOPEFULNESS begin to walk up and down the outer edges of the stage, as if on a sidewalk. NOT ENOUGH and TOO MUCH are each walking on opposite sides. THE LAST SON walks slowly around the stage, in awe.)

ELUSIVE:

Where *are* we?!

PRACTICALITY

A metropolis.

HOPEFULNESS

(Walks down the sidewalk, sidestepping invisible pedestrians on a busy street)

It's dirty here. And loud!

PRACTICALITY

The humans like their homes dirty and loud.

SCHOLARLY and HOPEFULNESS

I don't see him.

ELUSIVE

Neither do I. This might not be the place. He is testing us, we should go back-

HOPEFULNESS

Wait!

(She eyes THE LAST SON, who is wandering on the other side of the road, suitcase in hand)

PRACTICALITY

You See him?!

HOPEFULNESS

Yes. I think so. There, look. This one...this one is not human.

PRACTICALITY, SCHOLARLY, and ELUSIVE

He isn't?

HOPEFULNESS

(interested and amused)

No. Look very closely.

PRACTICALITY

He looks human to me. They are all the same.

ELUSIVE

No, they're not.

PRACTICALITY

(hisses at ELUSIVE)

HOPEFULNESS

(walks over to her sisters and watches THE LAST SON with them)

At any rate, this one isn't. He walks like them, speaks like them...even smells like them. But I can see through those glasses...he is not homo sapiens. (amused)

ELUSIVE

He does so well. Hiding it I mean.

HOPEFULNESS

It's all he does.

PRACTICALITY

Well, what is he?

HOPEFULNESS

I can't tell. Nothing I've ever Seen before.

SCHOLARLY

He is the only non-human here. He must be Eshu!

PRACTICALITY and ELUSIVE

Yes...Yes.

(PRACTICALITY and ELUSIVE laugh, happy with themselves)

MUSES

We found him.

SCHOLARLY

But he does not appear to see us....

(HOPEFULNESS walks back into the crowd)

ELUSIVE

So, our “hero” makes his way into a new world.

SCHOLARLY:

What time is it?

PRACTICALITY

1938. He looks as though he is searching, searching far from home.

SCHOLARLY:

For what?

ELUSIVE:

Belonging, what else?

THE LAST SON:

(to NOT ENOUGH)

Hi, there.

(NOT ENOUGH ignores him)

THE LAST SON:

(to PRACTICALITY)

Hello, I'm –

PRACTICALITY:

'Scuse me.

THE LAST SON:

Sure thing.

ELUSIVE:

What do they see?

SCHOLARLY:

What don't they see?

THE LAST SON:

(to an audience member on SR)

Hello, there, my name is –

TOO MUCH:

Watch out!

(HOPEFULNESS ducks down, in slow motion, in front of rushing bus' lights. She covers her head.)

(Lights flash, as in a film's frame-by-frame. PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY, and TOO MUCH move very, very slowly. THE LAST SON walks at normal pace in front of TOO MUCH, pauses to look towards the lights, lifts her and walks her to the other side of the stage, depositing her in a sitting position. As soon as he stands up fully everyone else snaps into normal motion, the sound of the rushing bus passes by. The city returns to full speed. PRACTICALITY steps back with ELUSIVE and SCHOLARLY, pulls her cowl up.)

TOO MUCH:

What the?

NOT ENOUGH:

How?

PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY:

Well, well.

THE LAST SON:

Are you alright?

HOPEFULNESS:

Yes, thank you. I don't even know what happened...

PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY:

Faster than a....

THE LAST SON:

You'll be fine now.

PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY:

Leaps tall buildings in...

HOPEFULNESS

(taking his hand to rise)

Thank you.

THE LAST SON

You're welcome

HOPEFULNESS, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY:

Mild-mannered. (sigh in unison) All very nice until –

(NOT ENOUGH and TOO MUCH rush forward to THE LAST SON. TOO MUCH taps his shoulder, turning him away from

HOPEFULNESS, shakes his hand heartily. HOPEFULNESS joins the other MUSES, puts her cowl up. When NOT ENOUGH speaks, THE LAST SON is pulled away towards the light on the floor, making his shadow larger. When TOO MUCH speaks, he is pulled away from the light, making his shadow smaller.)

NOT ENOUGH:

Hi, there, mac. I'm

ELUSIVE and SCHOLARLY:

Not enough.

(TOO MUCH yanks THE LAST SON in the opposite direction, shaking his other hand very vigorously.)

TOO MUCH:

Hey, buddy. My name is

PRACTICALITY and HOPEFULNESS:

Too much.

THE LAST SON:

I'm -

NOT ENOUGH and TOO MUCH:

(Cutting him off. Both continue without giving THE LAST SON chance to respond.)

It doesn't matter.



TOO MUCH

(insistent)

See here, mac, you ought not be so forceful.

NOT ENOUGH

(forcefully and with aggression and greed)

You, know, you oughta be a bit stronger all the time. I saw what you did earlier and why are you so tame? Mild and –

TOO MUCH

Wild with your strength, never seen abilities.

NOT ENOUGH

Like that before.

TOO MUCH

You'll stand out. Before you go and stand out like that you...might want to water it down some....

NOT ENOUGH

I could use someone like you downtown. See there? How fast could you get down there and back? With your speed, well, if you could...uh, do what you do...what with the speed and the...(trails off) Well, I mean, if you could, you'd be one of a kind.

TOO MUCH

Like a regular

NOT ENOUGH

Everyday

TOO MUCH

Hero.

THE LAST SON

Hero?

HOPEFULNESS

The telephone booth moments fascinate us the most.

ELUSIVE

We are not the only forces that fix. Culture...

PRACTICALITY

Bah. Culture.

SCHOLARLY:

Shhhh!

TOO MUCH

Everyday.

NOT ENOUGH

One of a kind.

## THE LAST SON

I'm just trying –

## TOO MUCH, NOT ENOUGH

(cutting him off)

It doesn't matter. Pick one.

## PRACTICALITY

Strategy..!?

## HOPEFULNESS

Device?

## ELUSVE:

To maintain?

## MUSES and TOO MUCH, NOT ENOUGH

Pick one.

## THE LAST SON

Pick?

MUSES and TOO MUCH, NOT ENOUGH

One.

THE LAST SON

I....

(NOT ENOUGH and TOO MUCH watch him expectantly. They circle one another once, pausing to come face to face, then retreat back to their original positions before the lights and cyc. THE LAST SON takes a step backwards, then forwards, then stops. His light goes out. NOT ENOUGH's light, showing his shadow as large is still on. TOO MUCH's shadow, showing him as small, is still on. The scene freezes and city sounds stop. The MUSES sigh, step forward and pull back their cowls to speak to one another. Lights dim in the street scene.)

[End Scene Five]

[Scene Six]

ELUSIVE

(confused)

He has been

MUSES

Undone.

ELUSIVE

This is not Eshu.

MUSES

No. This is not Eshu.

PRACTICALITY

This is someone else...but he is not human.

SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE, and HOPEFULNESS

Definitely not.

PRACTICALITY

And yet he has chosen to live like one.

## HOPEFULNESS

He *looks* like a human.

## ELUSIVE

Looks like, but is not like.

## HOPEFULNESS

This world does not like the disagreement. It prefers

## MUSES

either/or.

## HOPEFULNESS

His doings don't match up with his looks...

## ELUSIVE

It cannot fix action to form.

## HOPEFULNESS

What will he do tomorrow when he sees such animosity?

## SCHOLARLY

How will he choose what to do? He has now been undone. He cannot repeat this.

ELUSIVE

How will he “slip the trap?”<sup>26</sup> How will he find communion.... in opposites?

MUSES

He has been undone.

(MUSES circle one another, speaking to the audience and to one another. They do not notice that THE LAST SON is watching them. TOO MUCH relaxes a bit from his position and eyes them cautiously, smirking.)

ELUSIVE

How many like him have been accused?

PRACTICALITY

Talking out of both sides of your mouth!

SCHOLARLY

Sitting on the fence.

ELUSIVE

Fork tongued!

---

<sup>26</sup>(Hyde 204).

PRACTICALITY

Two faced.

SCHOLARLY

Janus-faced.

PRACTICALITY

How do they slip this?

ELUSIVE

It is not just culture's trap. It is our trap, too. Many things are indeterminate, even inspiration. (glares at Practicality)

HOPEFULNESS

How will *this* myth become?

ELUSIVE

How will he become?

PRACTICALITY

What will they *let* him become?

SCHOLARLY

Will he decide to "slip the trap"?

HOPEFULNESS



(giggling)

Will he indeed? He is a handsome one but not terribly bright.

THE LAST SON

Hey! Who are you?

PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, HOPEFULNESS

(Large gasp in unison)

He sees us!

(The pull at their cowls, pushing them up to hide their faces)

SCHOLARLY

(Slightly annoyed with her sisters. She gently pulls HOPEFULNESS' cowl back down.)

Of course he sees us. He has seen the trap. He has been undone.

(PRACTICALITY and ELUSIVE pull their cowls down slowly, watching THE LAST SON with wary eyes.)

PRACTICALITY, SCHOLARLY, HOPEFULNESS

So, then. Which will you choose? *Will* you choose?

THE LAST SON

(still in some shock and wonder)

WHO are you?!

ELUSIVE

(stepping towards him and circling him, touching his shoulders

lightly.)

We know how to say many falsehoods that look like genuine things, but we can also, whenever we are willing, proclaim true things.

PRACTICALITY

Well, Last Son?

SCHOLARLY and HOPEFULNESS

Which will you show? What face is safe?

THE LAST SON

I don't know. Who are you?

ELUSIVE

We are you. (looks to the audience) And them. You see. They are you, but they are also those men. The trapper – and the trapped.

MUSES

(appreciative of ELUSIVE's words, the other three step forward)

Mmmm. What will you do?

THE LAST SON

I don't know how to balance...they won't let me. Now, please just-

SCHOLARLY

Won't let you, you say?

## SCHOLARLY and PRACTICALITY

Is it truly they that will not let you be?

## ELUSIVE

I wonder, what someone like you knows about being. Do you even know how to be?  
Or are you still being...the urges of others?

## PRACTICALITY and SCHOLARLY

He tries to be.

## HOPEFULNESS

Let him be

## ELUSIVE

That's what I'm doing. Tell me, will the world and its silly fixing, anchoring,  
bonding, stranglehold categories and names-

## PRACTICALITY

Hey!

## SCHOLARLY

Hush.

## ELUSIVE

Will this world even let you be you?

## THE LAST SON

(drawing himself up, somber and almost threatening)

This is the last time I'll ask nicely. Who are you?

(Muses pause, regarding him)

## PRACTICALITY

Exactly!

(Muses laugh)

## ELUSIVE

What will you do? Will you rage? Will you quiet? Will you you? Or will you them?

## HOPEFULNESS

Let him be.

## ELUSIVE

Why? He is naught but puddy. The world has undone him. He could have been Eshu, the tamer and not the tamed. He could have been Eshu. We could have been –

(the other MUSES turn sharply to ELUSIVE)

## PRACTICALITY

Hold your tongue.

## ELUSIVE

(stares defiantly, then turns away)

For now.

## HOPEFULNESS

It's too bad really. He could have forsaken the look-a-likes. He could have chosen greatness.

## THE LAST SON

Really? How?

## MUSES

Shh!

## SCHOLARLY

You think so?

## PRACTICALITY

What does it matter now. We will never know.

## HOPEFULNESS

Unless... we send him back...send him back to choose.

## PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY

What?

## HOPEFULNESS

We could you know. His world is just outside of our circle. We can take him back with us when we bend time.

## PRACTICALITY

His body may not survive.

## THE LAST SON

What?!

## ELUSIVE

Without owning a true self, he is lost to life anyway. His body is worthless currency.

## PRACTICALITY, SCHOLARLY

True.

## THE LAST SON

WHAT?!?

## HOPEFULNESS:

(with optimism)

Let's send him back.

#### SCHOLARLY

Yes. We are here to see the myths. Let us send him back.

#### PRACTICALITY

He is our history. He now knows the dilemma. Yes. Let's see.

(MUSES step backwards, towards the audience. They lift their arms overhead)

#### MUSES

Back!

(THE LAST SON steps backwards and the scene reverses - quickly. NOT ENOUGH and TOO MUCH circle one another, they are beside him, they are talking, waving their arms and gesturing. HOPEFULNESS steps back in, kneels down. THE LAST SON picks her up and puts her back in front of the car, he steps back into the side areas and attempts to talk to NOT ENOUGH, and PRACTICALITY. THE LAST SON steps to the front of the scene and the MUSES watch. The metropolis music begins again and THE LAST SON steps back, looking in awe.)

#### THE LAST SON:

(to NOT ENOUGH)

Hi, there.

(NOT ENOUGH ignores THE LAST SON)

THE LAST SON:

(to PRACTICALITY)

Hello, I'm –

PRACTICALITY:

'Scuse me.

THE LAST SON:

Sure thing.

(THE LAST SON sighs. THE LAST SON turns to talk to  
TOO MUCH)

Hey there. I'm new in town and I -

TOO MUCH

(pauses to look him over)

New? I coulda guessed that. Look here, NOT ENOUGH. This guy's new.

NOT ENOUGH

Oh him. Yeah. He's not from

NOT ENOUGH and TOO MUCH

around here we sure don't dress like that.



NOT ENOUGH and TOO MUCH

Where you from?

THE LAST SON

Well, it's funny you ask. I'm from just on the other side of the border –

NOT ENOUGH

The borderlands, eh?<sup>27</sup> you don't look quite like they do.

THE LAST SON

Yes, well, I am what I am.

NOT ENOUGH

What is he?

TOO MUCH

Would you like to spend some time with us?

THE LAST SON and NOT ENOUGH

Oh, I don't know.

---

<sup>27</sup>(Anzaldua).

NOT ENOUGH

if you'd like to spend time with us.

TOO MUCH

Well sure you do.

NOT ENOUGH

Looks like you sure do well.

THE LAST SON

Thanks for the hospitality, I think. It's just that, I'm not from here. Sometimes I like to think that I'm bound for great th-

PRACTICALITY

Watch out!!

(HOPEFULNESS ducks down, in slow motion, in front of rushing bus' lights. She covers her head.)

(Lights flash, as in a film's frame-by-frame. PRACTICALITY, ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY, and TOO MUCH move very, very slowly. THE LAST SON walks at normal pace in front of TOO MUCH, pauses to look towards the lights. He watches HOPEFULNESS for a beat, then steps aside to the other side of the stage. As soon as he stands up fully everyone else snaps into normal motion, the sound of the rushing bus ends with a crash. The city returns to full speed. HOPEFULNESS tumbles. PRACTICALITY steps back with the ELUSIVE and SCHOLARLY, pulls her cowl up. TOO MUCH and NOT ENOUGH gasp in horror.)

[End Scene Six]

[Scene Seven]

TOO MUCH

I think that's quite enough!

(TOO MUCH steps away – is now ESHU. ESHU looks to the MUSES and the scene before him, freezes the bodies with a flick of his wrist. MUSES freeze and THE LAST SON and NOT ENOUGH freeze. The sound of the streets becomes faint. He steps out and surveys the scene. He looks to the three standing MUSES and touches them each. They turn their heads to look at him but do not move the rest of their bodies.)

Muses. Your kind hears the words of gods so hear me now. It is your turn to watch and listen.

(ESHU walks to The Last Son and taps him on the forehead.)

Wake up.

(THE LAST SON looks up at ESHU, turns his head to the others)

THE LAST SON

(Distressed and eyeing HOPEFULNESS' body)

I think I may have made a mistake.

ESHU

Perhaps. Come with me.

(ESHU pulls THE LAST SON to the center of the cross,  
opening and shutting an imaginary door. Warping sound effect.  
Street sounds are muffled.)

THE LAST SON

What the...!? Did you just pull me inside of a phone booth?! What the - Why are we  
inside a phone booth.

ESHU

I like liminal space.

THE LAST SON

Right. Look, I know you really want me to...just chill out with the things that I like  
to do and I thought about it and there were these four women...and they said I was  
handsome but then they...well, I've been dying to tell someone this story, it's just  
crazy.

ESHU

(Attentive but calm)

I am no longer that man.

THE LAST SON

What?

ESHU

Sometimes it's easier to be someone else, when certain ends need to be met. I prefer  
chaos.

THE LAST SON

I guess...Look, if this is some sort of –

ESHU

You made a choice.

THE LAST SON

What?

ESHU

Back there. A choice. You changed your behavior, allowed a situation to come to pass that would have been different with the aid of your...skills.

THE LAST SON

I didn't know what to do. I don't *have* to do the things I do. I can make a choice about that...and I want to be like the others. I look like the others. Who-

ESHU

What do you want to be.

THE LAST SON

Me.

ESHU

Who is...?

THE LAST SON

Human.

ESHU

Really? All the time?

THE LAST SON

No. Sometimes I just want to fly over the traffic on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street.

ESHU

Why.

THE LAST SON

Because I can..! And it's faster...

ESHU

But you don't.

THE LAST SON

I don't.

ESHU

So they asked you to pick one.

THE LAST SON

I can't...

ESHU

(cutting him off)

On one hand you have what your body can do for the world, and for them. What it does. On the other hand, you have what your body represents for the world. What it looks like. Not everyone has this split...sometimes the two line up perfectly, you know.

THE LAST SON

Lucky them.

ESHU

(sigh)

You could always change your appearance...so you look like what you do a bit better.

THE LAST SON

All the time?

ESHU

No, not all the time. Just when you need to.

THE LAST SON

Isn't that playing into their hands? I shouldn't have to split myself.

ESHU

It's true. Through their assumptions you would be taking the trap with you.

THE LAST SON

This trap is nonsense.

ESHU

Here - let me overthrow the system while you work the system. The people around us are not always ready to see. Others will know your story, others that are listening right now as we speak. They have rebellious bodies, too, some of them. They will see you cope with similar hollow constraints and know that there is skill in your negotiation, and in theirs. They will read your story and see that one thing can be many, that one body can surpass expectations, that they themselves are capriciously inconsistent while the names, the terms...of identity. (hiss) These things are limited in their use.

THE LAST SON

I'm sorry, did you say that I'll help them see all of this?

ESHU

Well, with my help of course.

THE LAST SON

And the four women?

(At this, ESHU looks to the MUSES)

ESHU

The muses believe that they make solid the amorphous and that is the antithesis to my being. I make mutable the immutable. I do not mind their vocation and rather appreciate the diversity and delicious fecundity of their fruit. But I disdain intolerance for ambiguity.

THE LAST SON.

Wha-



ESHU

I think you should return now. I will make sure that you go back to an appropriate moment.

THE LAST SON

What are you?

ESHU

I am the one and the many. Chaos concentrated, creativity unleashed. Translator, messenger, the wisest fool. I am plurality. Goodbye.

(THE LAST SON steps outside of the booth, the sounds of the street come roaring back into a higher volume. THE LAST SON, NOT ENOUGH, and ESHU walk offstage. We hear the vehicle screeching, a collective gasp, and then the crunch of metal as he stops the car. There is a short moment of shocked silence. HOPEFULNESS rolls to sitting and then standing. Cheers and applause. Triumphant theme music. The muses are released from their freeze, they join one another, hugging HOPEFULNESS. ESHU enters upstage right in his costume.)

PRACTICALITY

You are alright...

HOPEFULNESS

Sisters, I am fine. Not a scratch.

SCHOLARLY

He returned you to us. Thank you...

(ESHU bows his head)

HOPEFULNESS

I heard what was said. The young boy...

ESHU

The young boy has a destiny ahead of him. He will be quite busy from now on, I assure you.

PRACTICALITY

(angrily)

Did you know she would be killed? You are connected to fate...

ESHU

It doesn't matter. What does matter is that now you know what the terms do. I thought, since you all probably gave name to the ideas at fault here, that you might be willing to help.

PRACTICALITY

Fault?! Help? We came here to get back something you stole. Don't deny it. You stole our Voices.

ESHU

The loss of your Voices has brought you on a journey and now you are here. Now see what has been unspoken.

PRACTICALITY

Stop your games. Return our Voices.

HOPEFULNESS, SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE

Will you return our gift? The Voice to Inspire?

ESHU

(sigh) I cannot. Because I did not take your Voices in the first place.

HOPEFULNESS, ELUSIVE, and PRACTICALITY

What?

SCHOLARLY

You didn't take our Voices at all. But you

MUSES

let us think

SCHOLARLY

you did.

ESHU

I took advantage of a situation that was already in motion. Assumption is a tricky business.

SCHOLARLY

But who took our Voices?

PRACTICALITY and ESHU

Someone...else. This was never about Muses....

SCHOLARLY

You planned this, didn't you? All of this.

ESHU

(to SCHOLARLY, softly)

Shhh...!

(to the other MUSES)

To retrieve what was taken we must go now to a place that is many places and many times.

(they look at one another warily, but are intrigued.)

MUSES

Alright. We'll go with you.

ELUSIVE and PRACTICALITY

Not that we have much of a choice.

ESHU

Wonderful! Let's go. (pause) Practicality, you look at me

## ESHU and PRACTICALITY

very strangely.

(He eyes her again before touching her head to put her in a daze)

[End Scene Seven]

[Scene Eight]

(The MUSES raise their cowls. They move slowly to each stand at her Ascent of the raised crossroads. Sound changes to wind and thunder. At the first thunderclap the MUSES look up, keep their cowls on. Hopefulness is the only MUSE that can see. ESHU walks on the outskirts of the crossroads.)

ESHU

Of course you all recognize this place. This place that is not very long ago...and quite recently.

HOPEFULNESS

The Bedrock of Mankind. The place of becoming.

ELUSIVE

But why have you brought us here?

PRACTICALITY

Because before they dream of decision, they feel our discourse. Influence is crafted here.

ESHU

Because events have not yet finished their progression.

HOPEFULNESS

I see something. The wind is carrying...another. Another is approaching....

ESHU

Muses, listen to me...

(JUST SO enters from upstage right)

MUSES

Who are you?

JUST SO

Hello Practicality.

HOPEFULNESS, SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE

How does this one know your name?

Just So	Eshu.	Have you learned to allow for order	Why	and	Why would you try
Eshu	Just So.	Allow disorder	both and		try to see

Just So		can't be confusing	and that	these names they fix	what is broken
Eshu	That you can be		and that	these names they fix	what is vague

Just So	culture can be fixed	should be safe	stasis	always stasis!	constructs!
Eshu		should be tested	mutability	changing always!	contexts!



HOPEFULNESS

Stop this!

(JUST SO and ESHU glare angrily at one another)

ELUSIVE

Who is he, Eshu?

ESHU and PRACTICALITY

He is the thief of y/our Voices!

HOPEFULNESS, SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE

(to both ESHU and PRACTICALITY)

What?

(JUST SO laughs)

SCHOLARLY

Practicality, you knew this?

PRACTICALITY and ESHU

I/She suspected.

HOPEFULNESS

Give our Voices back!

JUST SO and PRACTICALITY

There are conditions.

SCHOLARLY

What conditions?

JUST SO

You must Whisper only me.

HOPEFULNESS, SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE

Align ourselves only with you?

JUST SO

Forever.

SCHOLARLY

Impossible. We cannot align ourselves to one source for all Eternity. For a short time, perhaps, but –

JUST SO

This will not be a temporary bargain.

(A sound signaling the approach of the human begins softly,  
then grows)

HOPEFULNESS

What's that sound...?

ESHU and JUST SO

A human is approaching.

(HUMANITY walks in, mimicking the motion of the opening gesture. Then stopping. Then starting again before stopping himself, shaking his head. He is distressed and continues to go back and forth between the motions, stretching, gesturing and stopping to shake his head. He walks to the platform and continues)

JUST SO and ESHU

They regularly return here, to the place of unmaking and remaking. This one must be...fraught.

JUST SO

Look at him, Practicality. He is living in a *fantasy*.

JUST SO and ESHU

his dreams

JUST SO

are...out of bounds.

JUST SO and ESHU

he listens to these stories of other bodies, other lives,

JUST SO

and ceases to see what has been given to him. His capacity was marked from the moment he entered existence...and now look!

JUST SO and ESHU

His body is chaos.

ESHU

And the problem with chaos is...?

JUST SO

His body must be contained. We must contain him, focus him.

ESHU and JUST SO

(to the SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE, and HOPEFULNESS)

But I cannot speak directly to him...

JUST SO

Although humans created me in the first place.

JUST SO and ESHU

Muses, you must.

ELUSIVE

Fools, we cannot without our Voices.

JUST SO

Unless you accept my offer and receive your Voices again. He is, afterall,

PRACTICALITY and JUST SO

naught but puddy.

PRACTICALITY

(takes one step towards JUST SO)

You will return my Voice...?

HOPFULNESS, SCHOLARLY

No!

JUST SO

Yes. And augment your power, make it even greater.

PRACTICALITY

Then...I will Speak only you.

(PRACTICALITY takes his hand. Lights change, her Ascent is lit when her Voice is returned. She walks up the road, past the Human and to Just So, who is now near the stage left arm.)

SCHOLARLY

No...!

ESHU

She is lost to you now. She has aligned herself with a single force. Just So has control of your Voices and I cannot give them back. My voice is not as strong as a Muse's...this human will only hear her....

JS & P	You were born	Then a young child	And so on and so on
Eshu	Then you were a baby	And so on	and so on
Human.		so on and so on.	

JS & P		over	again	it is	now
Eshu		and	over	it is	now
Human.	And then I came here.	over	and	this place is familiar...	

JS & P	allow	for order	Why	Why would you try
Eshu	Allow disorder	both and	try to see	
Human.	Why must I...	Could I not be both		

144

JS & P	can't be confusing to your fellow-	these names fix	what is broken
Eshu	That you can be	these names fix	what is vague
Human.	can't be		

JS & P	culture can be fixed	should be safe	stasis	always stasis	constructs
Eshu	should be tested	mutability	changing always	contexts	
Human.	should be	should be	changing always		

JS & P	your look alike brethren walk a certain path	given
Eshu	walk your path	
Human.	walk a certain path?	my path my path?

## HUMANITY

But...underneath my skin, deep within. Hidden. hiding below what you see... I am more. More than I appear to be...

## PRACTICALITY

Perhaps you *are* more but how will you belong? You could have comrades. Your frame has comrades. And you should honor them. The fellow look-a-likes.....”

## HUMANITY

(Does the first gesture from the overture)

But...deep down I am so much more. If only they knew...how...how....

## PRACTICALITY

If only they cared.

## HUMANITY

(Second gesture)

But I...I want to be visible.

## PRACTICALITY

If you are to belong

JUST SO and PRACTICALITY

be invisible.

HUMANITY

(Third gesture)

Belonging? But my body-

PRACTICALITY

Is a gift.

HUMANITY

A gift?

PRACTICALITY

Your body is a roadmap that will guide you home.

HUMANITY

(Fourth Gesture)

But deep down...so much more. I am capable –

PRACTICALITY

So very capable...of the everyday things. You don't want to disappoint the others, do you? Your look alike comrades? Your fellow bodied friends? Don't upset them. It's unfair to misrepresent...it's disappointing.

HUMANITY

(stands still)



No, I don't want to disappoint...

#### PRACTICALITY

Then it is settled. It is done. You have come to this place and you will leave being as you look to be, helping everyone in the process and remaining a whole person.

(HUMANITY stops his movements, he closes his eyes, his arms are still.)

#### HOPEFULNESS

Look at him...

#### ELUSIVE

He is blank.

#### ESHU, JUST SO, and PRACTICALITY

He will follow what has been given him.

(HUMANITY begins to walk out, unsteadily, he can't physically walk down the ramp. He can't see or move. We see him almost fall, touching the edge with arms out. JUST SO laughs)

#### JUST SO

Beautiful.

HOPEFULNESS

Practicality, this isn't right! You would damn him to the life of those two Villagers?

PRACTICALITY

Gladly.

ELUSIVE

ESHU...!

ESHU

(almost distractedly)  
Yes...?

HUMANITY

Help me...I can't see....

PRACTICALITY and ESHU

Indeed.

(PRACTICALITY turns to JUST SO)

It is done. Now return the voices of my sisters.

JUST SO

No.

PRACTICALITY

You said - But you have my allegiance.

JUST SO

And I am glad of that. But they have not agreed to aid me.

PRACTICALITY

I understand. If that is the case –

(PRACTICALITY freezes everyone on stage, walking towards  
the other MUSES)

I am no longer with you, sisters, but I will not leave you without. Shifting to stability,  
landing atop stone. Of worlds colliding, resolving, releasing until....

(She returns their Voices, their Ascents light up.)

ESHU

You are making the right decision.

PRACTICALITY

This isn't about you, trickster. It is the least I can do before I leave them.

(PRACTICALITY unfreezes everyone)

HOPEFULNESS

What ha—

SCHOLARY

Our Voices...!

JUST SO

What have you done?

PRACTICALITY

My Voice is unmatched among the elements.

JUST SO

Foolish Muse!

PRACTICALITY

What does it matter that they have their Voices back. Our power is that of the grounded.

JUST SO

I... suppose you are right.

ESHU

Muses, Speak!

(music changes, lifts, as ELUSIVE steps onto her arm and crosses to HUMANITY she walks around him. When she speaks he becomes stable.)

ELUSIVE and HUMANITY

from the crannies each of all corners, all devious...devious curves...

(ELUSIVE watches HUMANITY and then walks back to her Ascent.)

JUST SO

It makes no difference, Muse.

(SCHOLARLY alks to HUMANITY from her Ascent, moves around him. When she speaks, his arms begin to move in the initial gesture of the sequence)

SCHOLARLY

You'll find that this is more than enough.

SCHOLARLY and HUMANITY

The bend that bends, the bent...the twisting...

(As SCHOLARLY returns to her Ascent, HOPEFULNESS walks to HUMANITY. When she circles him and Speaks, his eyes open)

HOPEFULNESS and HUMANITY

Realize the indiscernible, follow the concealed as it moves...sliding...sliding...sliding

JUST SO

Enough.

PRACTICALITY and JUST SO

You are given.

JS & P	given but certain! just a word you are a master of deceit
E, S, H, E	open certainly you see, identity a word with power!
Human.	my path wait! what?

JS & P	double crossing thief. the one two-faced, two voiced.
E, S, H, E	bound'ry crossing and the many. plurality in meaning infinite in number two voiced.
Human.	

(HUMANITY speaks as though trying to remember something. JUST SO and ESHU are arguing around him)

JS & P	triple lies deceit in change breaking bending dis trust.
E, S, H, E	therein lies. in change truth. making mending entrust.
Human.	therein lies.

JS & P	shifting out of deceit in change shifting out of deceit in change shifting out of
E, S, H, E	lifting through in change truth. lifting through - in change trut lifting
Human.	

JS & P	crafting familiar a secret they are all sides fully realized
E, S, H, E	Through. pushing new. we are crafting crafting crafting fully realized pieces
Human.	we are crafting fully realized

JS & P	Split. ( <i>beat</i> ) your whole self. Unity
E, S, H, E	Split. Self. Equals duality plurality.
Human.	Split. Self. Equals?

(HUMANITY speaks as though trying to remember something. JUST SO and ESHU are arguing around him)

JS & P	Suggestions	reflections in a mirror	did we mention not enough too much
E, S, H, E	Suggestions exceptions	only two dimensions	not enough too much
Human.	suggestions	reflections in a mirror	only two dimensions

JS & P	shifting	out of	the real you	if only	if only
E, S, H, E	lifting	through.	the fake you	they knew	they saw if only there was
Human.					if only I could

(getting faster)

JS & P	if only they knew you. Who. Knew. a secret	out of	if only they knew	about you
E, S, H, E	you. who. knew.	pushing	through	knew the truth about you
Human.	you. who. knew	pushing out of	through	knew the truth

(HUMANITY speaks as though trying to remember something. JUST SO and ESHU are arguing around him)

JS & P	given	for your safety, for your ease	this is not
E, S, H, E	Faces given	measures taken	for your ease this is not this is not
Human.	Faces given	measures taken	my true life...

JUST SO, ESHU, MUSES

(to each other)

Short of, more of. Keep denying. Fully realize. Real lies!

(HUMANITY stands up)

HUMANITY:

Enough! (pause)

JUST SO

What?

HUMANITY

(Slowly at first, with wonder. Gathering speed and confidence)

My body speaks before I enter the room.  
speaks for me, speaks to you.  
And sometimes, just sometimes,  
When I speak up, I let someone down.  
Because they were hoping  
Hoping, they were hoping  
That I'd turn around  
And be only their expectation,  
Open and expressive,  
Giving and expected.  
And true to my form.  
True to form,  
True to their form.

(pause)

I hate to disappoint. and yes, I do it daily.  
Because I am more than one at the same time...  
I am always familiar and strange...I am at the same time.



One is not enough to count me. Both.  
And this is our identity,  
I more than how you see,  
you are more than how I see,  
I am at the same time.  
as are you in kind.

ESHU and HOPEFULNESS, ELUSIVE, and SCHOLARLY

Yes.

JUST SO

No. No! (Backs away...)

HUMANITY

I am more than.

JUST SO

For now, Eshu. But another will come to this same juncture and we will ensure that the human leaves truly whole.

HUMANITY

I am truly,

ESHU, HOPEFULNESS, SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE and HUMANITY

but from all sides.

(ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY, HOPEFULNESS and ESHU  
“push” JUST SO upstage as he struggles against them.  
HUMANITY and ESHU turn to look at one another)

ELUSIVE, SCHOLARLY, HOPEFULNESS

She is gone. What will we do...?

ESHU

Wait. And watch. She is only bound to him as long as he has strength to keep her.  
Use your Voices, tell the other Muses to use their's...

HOPEFULNESS, SCHOLARLY, ELUSIVE

We will tell the others. But first...

ESHU

Of course.

(MUSES flip up their cowls then begin to drift towards the audience, each whispering to an audience member. ESHU walks backwards. They whisper - One body can take many directions. The boxes they keep putting you in, aren't big enough to fit you, You are as vast as you act, etc. After a few moments, they exit downstage as the lights go down, chanting even from behind the walls of the audience banks as they move off stage completely. Light dims on stage but remains on HUMANITY)

HUMANITY

One is not enough...

(HUMANITY looks down at his own body, his hands and arms.

ESHU

Because you are vast. Sing, and through you, tell the story. (bowing)

(HUMANITY nods, walks slowly down the arm, looking at the audience. ESHU crosses to center platform before he exits upstage. HUMANITY crosses down the arm, steps off. Pauses to look at the audience and walks through the two audience banks and out the door in silence. Lights on stage go down, music fades in silence)

[End Show]

## APPENDIX B: The Movement Map

### Movement Map aka The Crossroads Terms of Use:

**Earth** (Floor of the stage, Villagers and Just So are restricted to these spaces. Muses move freely among these areas) Includes the **Quadrants** of the Crossroads.

**Arms/Road** (Crossroads lengths, raised areas where only Eshu can move completely freely)

**Ramps** (Where the Muses can stand and use the Voice, bridge/ladder between earth and Higher realm of Discourse and the Gods. Placed at the ends of the arms, between arms and Earth - connecting the Earth to the “heavens” of the Arms.)

**Center Platform** (Raised square at the junction of the Arms, center lit through plexi glass. Eshu and Clark phone booth scene occurs here. Eshu dances here. Highest point in ramp.)

**Outskirts** (the area beyond the end of the ramps, space between ramp end and edge of stage)

**Movement Over the Arms** (when a character takes a stride over the arms from one quadrant to another but does not step on the arms)

### **Movement On the Arms**

### Characters’ Rules and Restrictions

#### *Muses:*

Muses can move on the Earth and in the Quadrants, and, unassisted by Eshu, only over (not on) the arms. Eshu can guide a Muse onto the Arms (but not using the ramps)

#### *Clark:*

Clark can walk over *and on* the arms but almost distractedly, like he isn’t aware that he can do it. I envision him walking backwards up one arm without quite noticing it in the Metropolis scene. He can move in the quadrants and on the outskirts. He can only walk on the center when Eshu guides him there. Clark can absentmindedly walk up the upstage arm during the Not Enough/Too Much scene.

#### *Eshu:*

Eshu can walk anywhere. Spends much of his time on the Arms. The only character who can stand on the center platform by himself.

*Just So:*

Can only walk on the Earth/floor. At one point in the Practicality/Just So scene he will step onto one of the ramps, knowing full well that he can't walk up it. He endures (enjoys?) the punishment/burn of the ramp. Acknowledges that he cannot walk on the arms. He can walk over the Arms in the Bedrock scene.

*Villagers:*

Villagers can move only in the quadrants. Spend most of their time in the downstage quadrants, separated by the downstage-upstage arm. They can place their food on that same arm. I think they may have their battle to the death behind the center screen.

*Not Enough/Too Much:*

Can move primarily in the upstage quadrants and also up and downstage on the stage left and right outskirts. (the sidewalk of the Metropolis scene) When they confront Clark they are moving in the upstage quadrants, separated by the downstage-upstage arm.

## APPENDIX C: Rehearsal Journal Selections

**Sunday January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

We've been working since last December on gestures that the cast can use to communicate. These gestures are also ways that they can assist the dense language of the show and, with any luck, some of them will become recognizable to the audience. At any rate, they help the cast embody the ethereal plot and make concrete the words that are floating through the air. Today, however, Kerstin had a really interesting comment about her gestures and her character, Hopefulness.

Kerstin mentioned to both Sally Gold (the stage manager) and I that she was having difficulty waking up and immediately portraying Hopefulness. She was struggling with her first line and movement and felt reserved and embarrassed. Kerstin said, "I feel like a child." Kerstin is older than I am and a seasoned actress so at first I thought that she felt the script, my first full length effort, was juvenile in itself. As we spoke, however, she clarified by saying that she, quite literally, felt silly and very young when she embodied her idea of Hopefulness. She struggled to rise from the floor with hope, to move with hope, and to persist in the embodiment of the idea of Hopefulness in her every gesture. It was natural to her that she would take "bouncier" strides across the room and that she would be generally upbeat in every movement. This moment caused me to pause and evaluate what I was asking my performers to do. In a sense, "I feel like a child" is a very telling comment. It shows our understanding of childhood and hope, but also might illustrate how our bodies respond to

emotion when we are younger and older. I think directing myth-like characters is going to continue to be really difficult – I wonder how we might use warm-ups to get comfortable with this type of character work.

### **Monday January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

All of the actors seem to feel as though they are working against the total embodiment of their names. The performer who plays Eshu, Ari, pulled me aside in rehearsal tonight. He said, “I don’t want to feel like a diva by saying this in front of other people. But I feel uncomfortable when I’m not deceiving other characters or ‘being tricky.’ Do you think you may have written Eshu wrong?”

This made me pause. First, I’m a writer and an artist...this is all my interpretation. What official form of Eshu is Ari working with? And didn’t he only just learn about Eshu? Do I know how to write the “right” Eshu? Does anyone?

In the scene in question, Eshu seems to genuinely encourage a character to work with him and the Ari had been struggling with this inconsistency of character. He said that he thought he should always be tricking if he is the god of deception. Again, this gave me pause! On the one hand I had a performer who was straining to be “pure Hopefulness” and on the other I had a performer who didn’t like performing anything but his archetype. Could I have “written Eshu wrong”? Ari felt very strongly that he had as much purchase on the authentic conceptualization of Eshu as I did and as a writer, adaptor, and director I was

suddenly stumped, perhaps by my own doing! Maybe I've undone myself...or Eshu has undone us both. I imagine him laughing silently in the corner somewhere at this entire interchange.

Is the idea of performing these idea-characters imposing a sense of singularity in performance. This is forcing me to seriously consider when the performers can “break character” and when they should/or do feel compelled to stay “in character.” They are all struggling to maintain an identity in their bodies and felt that their characters needed to be “flat,” without growth, change, or inconsistency. This embodied resistance speaks directly to the maintenance of constructed identity in the everyday. This reminds me of Brecht and I do hope that we are alienating the audience. This script is not asking for tears and compassion and catharsis. Still, how, indeed, can a body keep this up and remain recognizable to those watching and critiquing?

### **Tuesday January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Still struggling with the final scene. Most of it has been written but some parts of it are still floundering around and the performance is coming up!! I have written probably eight versions of this scene alone. It is SO frustrating. I want to somehow address the humanity of plurality, or the plurality in humanity, and argue that we are living in this sense of the kaleidoscope of identity change. I want to communicate the chaos in this view of the everyday. Everything I wrote initially was too specific, too located and sounded like I was



teaching a class about identity politics. I don't want to be preachy...but how do I make this matter to the everyday and take it out of the myth? Is that something I should do or is it inherently preachy?

Right now the only way that I can communicate this is with the structure of choral voices and gestures, which has been the base line aesthetic style of dialogue this entire process. Unfortunately it's not very exciting as far as onstage action but I also hope that the audience will catch some of the words towards the end. The choral pages are the hardest to learn but the most significant to write.

My lighting designer commented that one can't communicate chaos when people are speaking in unison...I think she's missing the point. People say the same thing all the time but have infinitely different meanings. That is what Eshu shows us. Interpretation. She is correct in that it may be harder for some people to read that as disagreement but, like Ari, that's only one way to view or understand "agreement." Once again, the spirit of Eshu seems to be leaking all over my writing and perhaps this, and the attempt to encapsulate a negotiation that we all live with, are the causes of my writer's block and indecision!

## REFERENCES

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. By Anzaldúa. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999. 19-20.
- Barish, Jonas. The Antitheatrical Prejudice. Berkeley: U of California P, 1981.
- Engle, Gary. "What Makes Superman So Darned American?" Superman at Fifty! The Persistence of a Legend. Ed. Gary Engle and Dennis Dooley. Cleveland: Octavia, 1987. 79-87.
- Fingerroth, Danny. Superman On The Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us about Ourselves and Our Society. New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. The Signifying Monkey. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.
- Gilroy, Paul. Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes Were Watching God. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.
- Hyde, Lewis. Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art. New York: North Point, 1998.
- Hynes, William J., and William G. Doty. Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1993.
- Kahn, Jenette. Foreword. DC Comics. Superman From The Thirties to the Eighties. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1983. 7-8.
- Lawrence, John Shelton and Robert Jewett. The Myth of the American Superhero. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Lugones, Maria. "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling and Loving Perception." The Woman That I Am. Ed. D. Soyini Madison. New York: St. Martin's, 1994. 626-638.
- Moore, Alan. "DC Comics Presents #85: The Jungle Line." Across The Universe: The DC Universe Stories of Alan Moore. Ed. Dan Didio. New York: DC Comics, 2003. 131-154.
- Palmer, Robert. Deep Blues. New York: Penguin, 1981.
- Pelton, Robert D. "West African Tricksters: Web of Purpose, Dance of Delight." Hynes and Doty. 122-140.
- Pollock, Della. "Making History Go." Introduction. Exceptional Spaces: Essays in

- Performance and History. Ed. Della Pollock. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998.
- Schechner, Richard. Performance Studies: An Introduction. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Schneider, Rebecca. "Hello Dolly, Well Hello Dolly: The Double and Its Theatre." Psychoanalysis and Performance. Ed. Patrick Campbell and Adrian Kear. New York: Routledge, 2001. 94-114.
- "Shapeshifting" Wikipedia.org 3 January 2007.  
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapeshifting> >
- Spinks, C.W. "Trickster and Duality." Trickster and Ambivalence: The Dance of Differentiation. Ed. C.W. Spinks. Madison: Atwood, 2001. 7-19.
- Turner, Victor. The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Chicago: Aldine, 1969.