

NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA: AN EMERGING WORLDVIEW IN
THREE REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORS

by

KENNETH DWAYNE MARTIN

(Under the Direction of Luis Correa Díaz)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the possibility of a field of literature called New Age Latin American literature. It identifies a newly emerging worldview that is beginning to appear at the level of mass culture. Through an analysis of texts by Carlos Castañeda, Paulo Coelho, and Alejandro Jodorowsky it elucidates a knowledge paradigm that values experiential knowledge that is garnered through attentive presence and contests the dominant paradigm of reason. This is seen as an evolution in consciousness and its relationship to literature is examined. The process of becoming that is center to the message presented in New Age Latin American literature is seen as metaphor for the human journey that is represented in travel literature. Through the deconstruction of micro and macronarratives of identity and belief the new paradigm offers the individual an opportunity to rewrite his or her narratives in order to have a happier and more fulfilling life.

INDEX WORDS: consciousness, literature, New Age, Latin America, Carlos Castañeda, Paulo Coelho, Alejandro Jodorowsky, narrative, spirituality, human transformation, travel literature

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to those who feel that something is surely lacking in the way we understand.

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I would like to acknowledge the dedication, understanding, patience, and general support that Luis Correa Díaz has showed throughout my short academic career. He has gone far beyond what any reasonable professor would be willing to do in order to teach me this new, scholarly way of understanding. You have my sincere appreciation. Also, I am grateful to my committee members (Stacey Casado, Robert Moser, and Nicolás Lucero) who have also patiently worked with me. It would be a travesty to not acknowledge my wife, Gloria, and her sacrifices while I wrote this essay and many others rather than enjoying life with her. Thank you. I must also recognize all of my professors as each of them has left an imprint on my understanding and tried as much as he or she could to accommodate the contesting viewpoint presented in these pages.

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CHAPTER 1

THE NEW AGE

Origins

If one wants to engage in an exploration of contemporary Latin American literature, the researcher would be amiss to exclude literature from such popular movements as New Age spirituality. The wide-ranging label, meant to identify a change in attitude regarding spirituality, is a growing body of work that has captured the interest of hundreds of millions of readers in the vast reaches of the world. The movement, which took hold as such in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has often been viewed as countering established, hegemonic religious forms that had been offered by traditional religions. From the new perspective there became a difference between religion and spirituality (Lewis ix).¹ The highly structured institutions that organized and guided spiritual development had felt burdensome and antiquated for some. The authority of established forms of Western religion was questioned on an increasingly broader scale and gave rise to what has been perceived, at times, as a more personal experience that contrasts with traditional established religion (xii).²

¹ Lewis points signals “an emergence- in the wake of the sixties counterculture- of a large-scale, decentralized religious subculture that drew its principal inspiration from outside the Judeo-Christian tradition” (Lewis ix). Also, Stephen Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman note that issue of the difficulty in examining religion along the traditional, static religious topography that has existed until recently. They point out the value of texts like *Religion in Britain since 1945- Believing without Belonging* (1994) by Grace Davie which problematizes former approaches to religious study. To further complicate the matter they point out the inverse situation of “belonging without believing” and how the current religious landscape is being transformed in relation (Bowman and Sutcliffe 3).

² Given that the context of this study is Latin America, it is reasonable to surmise that the established forms of religion referenced here are the Roman Catholic Church and the assortment of protestant denominations that comprise the greater body of religions in that region of the world. For more on this topic, consult “Religious Competition, Community Building, and Democracy” in *Religion and Democracy in Latin America* (1995) by Bryan T. Froehle (29).

The general counter cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s is iconic of the New Age movement and is commonly deemed its origin; however, there are other precursors that are infrequently explored with depth. One influential figure was thinker, mystic, and scientist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) who published several books on theology and his own interpretations of divinity. Also, Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) would develop the field of hypnotism. He also identified what he called a *magnétisme animal* (animal magnetism) which he considered to be a type of occult force that could be used to influence others. Scholar J. Gordon Melton notes that Mesmer “identified that energy with the Hindu *akasa*, the *astral light* of Western occultists, the Christian *Holy Spirit*, and the Platonic *world-soul*” (Quoted in Alexander 31). Thus, we can begin to see the unification of world religions in the work of Mesmer, who was influential in later groups like New Thought and modern Theosophy. These groups, which Kay Alexander indicates were predecessors to the movement studied here, were born out of the work of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky who founded The Theosophy Society in 1875 in New York.³ In two of Blavatsky’s books, *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), she claims to be disseminating the essence of all the world’s religions while envisioning a coming new age that would transform mankind. She saw herself as disseminating esoteric teachings that had been hidden, but kept alive in free masonry, mysticism, and occultism.

Inspired by the desire to find the unifying commonality among the many different religions, Blavatsky’s group adopted a set of goals that would reflect Mesmer’s attitude toward his work. According to Alexander they were: “To form a nucleus devoted to the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color, to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science, and to investigate unexplained laws of

³ It might be interesting to literary scholars to point out that English writers George Robert Stowe Mead and William Butler Yeats list among the members of her group (Alexander 31).

nature and the powers latent in man” (31). These goals were notably similar to those of the New Thought movement. The common thread between New Thought and modern Theosophy appears to be their belief in a universal brotherhood and an interest in comparative religion which also dominates the New Age movement.

Melton explains that of the two groups, New Thought is the easier of the two to isolate and define:

It emerged as a religious tradition in North America and England in the late 1800s, though it has its intellectual roots in some popular movements (Swedenborgianism and Transcendentalism) from earlier in the century. Its beginnings can be traced to Emma Curtis Hopkins who, in [1886], founded a school that eventually became known as Christian Science Theological Seminary.

(16)

The central theme of the school would be spiritual healing, which, as he points out, is also the major thrust of the New Age movement. Melton notes that New Thought, in its original formation, was a decidedly feminist movement. Nearly all of Hopkins students were women who would go on to assume professional roles in the religious community. She is recognized for having ordained more than 100 ministers who in turn created their own centers. In the process of this mass dissemination of her students and own spiritual perspective she mobilized a significant following and was the first woman in modern history to be ordained bishop and to ordain other females in the ministry. Although Hopkins’ students had broken off from her by the end of the century, New Thought had established itself in nearly every corner of the United States, particularly in the western United States and usually in close proximity to Christian Science (Melton 17).

The twentieth century would see New Thought connected by and formed around the major New Thought Churches: Unity, Divines Science, and Homes of Truth. It also included numerous smaller denominations that ultimately proved fleeting and many independent churches throughout the United States. It became known as a “new family tradition” in that it is one of several distinct new denominational families like the Latter-day Saints, Spiritualism, and the Theosophical/Ancient Wisdom Tradition. Also during the twentieth century, New Thought congregations were established and continued to thrive in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Nigeria, India, the Philippines, the Caribbean and Latin America (Melton 17). This could explain the fertility of the religious landscape that allowed the quick blossoming of the New Age movement in the latter part of the century.

In support of the potentiality of the religious landscape to produce the New Age it would be appropriate to explore the East-West connection that is one of its cornerstones. Yoga, an increasingly important element in the assortment of spiritualities that constitute New Age, was first introduced to the West in a lecture at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago where Swami Vivekananda gave a lecture on the, then, foreign philosophies of Hindu Vedanta and Yoga (Feuerstein 600). Later, Paramhansa Yogananda would give a lecture on the necessary compatibility of science and religion in Boston in October of 1920 at the International Congress of Religious Liberals (Yogananda 405). He claims to have received direct instruction from the human form of the Hindu lord Krishna who appeared to Yogananda telling him, “East and West must establish a golden middle path of activity and spirituality combined. India has so much to learn from the West in material development; in return, India can teach the universal methods by which the West will be able to base its religious beliefs on the unshakable foundations of yogic

science” (Yogananda 389).⁴ He also told the Indian guru the theme of his presentation: “Kriya Yoga, The Scientific Technique of God-Realization” (402).⁵

It is interesting to point out here that, as Feuerstein and Yogananda both note, Swami Vivekananda first arrived in the West (Europe and the United States) in the early 1890s. By the 1930s, Walter Truett says that “London [...] was teeming with Oriental scholars, eclectic students of world religions, charlatans, seekers, yogis, [and] gurus” (Quoted in Alexander 33). This is to point out that there may be some discrepancy in the existing research on the movement of and interest in of Eastern religions in the West or, perhaps, there was an explosion in interest. It may also be that interest in London and in the United States may have developed on different trajectories which later coincided or melded in the latter part of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, this point will not be discussed further nor investigated here since it is not a primary focus of this paper.⁶ According to Kay Alexander, another necessary component of the New Age would be the Human Potential movement. Alexander recounts a chance encounter in 1962 between pioneer humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow and Michael Murphy who was the owner of Esalen, one of the earliest and most important Personal Growth Centers.⁷ The

⁴ Lord Krishna is traditionally and generally considered to be the author of the ancient sacred Hindu text *Bhagavad Gita*. He is a central figure of Hinduism and is considered the Supreme Being by certain monotheistic traditions of Hinduism.

⁵ This confluent approach of science and spirituality can still be found among prominent spiritual leaders today. For example, in 2005 the Dalai Lama published *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality* that seeks a reconciliation of science and spirituality.

⁶ The focus is New Age Latin American literature and the emerging worldview that they promote. To explore this above mentioned detail further would be an unnecessary distraction that would unlikely bear relevant fruit for this study.

⁷ Alexander tells that Maslow and his wife were driving the scenic coastal route of Highway 1, also known as Pacific Coast Highway, between Monterey and San Simeon, California. It being rather late in the evening, they were looking for lodging for the night when they happened to pull in the driveway of Esalen (an old hot springs spa and cluster of cabins which Murphy had inherited years earlier) in the small community of Big Sur, California, which was relatively unknown at the time. This unintended meeting at Big Sur between the psychologist from Brandeis University and the Stanford graduate with an interest in Eastern religions would forge the origin of transpersonal psychology and the New Age movement according to Alexander. The area around Big Sur would also become “a

proper societies where New Thought and Theosophy were flourishing likely would have rejected the lifestyle of free love in Big Sur which was based on Fourierism⁸ which had seen some popularity in the 1840s but had been rejected by Swedenborgians and New Thought leaders. The small community of Big Sur was not the only Bohemian colony to appear in California in the 1950s. Another developed on Mountain Drive in Santa Barbara which more closely resembled the popular imagery of the 1960s counterculture where sex, material possessions, and intoxicants were freely available. At about the same time Aldous Huxley, then a Professor-at-large at the University of California in Santa Barbara, lived on the fringes of the bohemian society there and traveled to universities and colleges throughout California promoting his message of the human potential that remained to be unlocked. He felt that humankind still had the latent potential to develop great capacities for affection, rationality, kindness, and creativity. He was from England and participated in the development and expansion of Eastern religions in London in the 1930s previously mentioned here. Huxley studied Vedanta under the tutelage of Swami Prabhavananda and was later consulted by Murphy when he was organizing his Esalen project (Alexander 37).

Abraham Maslow would add humanistic psychology to the seemingly eclectic mix of bohemian worldviews of the California coast. This branch of psychology would become known as Third Force psychologies to differentiate it from the First Force and Second Force psychologies of Freudianism and behaviorism, respectively. This branch of psychology sought to

mecca for post [World War II] bohemians” and their belief in a unifying power and a type of “life force” (Alexander 36-37).

⁸ François Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837) was the French theoretician and founder of a social movement that perceived society as a suppressor of the twelve immutable and absolute human passions. Fourier felt that he had developed a complex and comprehensive social structure that would lead to complete gratification of all human passion. He felt that the passions, unable to take a constructive form due to stifling social restraints that were exceedingly pervasive in contemporary society of his time lead to human misery and self-destruction which perpetually plagued humanity. As a response he created small communities where his ideals were put into practice (Riasanovsky 215-219).

study healthy individuals while discarding the behavioristic models that tended to reduce the subject to no more than an animal to be studied without his or her inherent particularly human qualities⁹. Carl Rogers would also do much to promote the field with his work on client-centered therapy which worked to uncover the meaning of events in the present by the use of unconditional positive regard toward for the client which would enable him or her to be a true, authentic being in the presence of the counselor. Additionally, Rollo May would introduce the philosophies of continental existentialists like Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to humanistic psychologists (Alexander 38).¹⁰

The transpersonal direction taken by humanistic psychologists like Maslow opened the door for others like Roberto Assagioli who agreed that in addition to the ego that there were unconscious aspects of human behavior and still a higher level of conscious experience that is possible. Transpersonal psychology consisted of a mixture of approaches from seekers, clinicians, gurus, and scientists and explored the areas of meditation, altered states of consciousness and parapsychology scientists. Alexander notes that:

The emergence of transpersonal psychology had already been seeded in a variety of ways by professionals who were (1) willing to define the human condition as something more than merely biopsychosocial; (2) interested in experiences of human consciousness previously avoided by Western psychologies, as well as in

⁹ When Abraham Maslow and Anthony Sutich founded the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* in 1961 its inaugural issue stated: "The *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* is being founded by a group of psychologists and professional men and women from other fields who are interested in those humans capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place either in positivistic or behavioristic theory or in classical psychoanalytic theory, e.g., creativity, love, self, growth, organism, basic need-gratification, self-actualization, higher values, ego-transcendence, objectivity, autonomy, identity, responsibility, psychological health, etc" (Alexander 41).

¹⁰ During the 1950s Maslow kept a roster of approximately 200 thinkers to whom relevant papers were privately circulated which may be the method of distribution used by May to disseminate his ideas (Alexander 38).

(3) “the evolution of new values that include the desire to harmonize better with one’s own mind, body, group, planet and especially the cosmos (including God or Soul) as and how this might be the case.” The main emphasis of the new movement, according to [Anthony] Sutich, was on the *experiencing* individual (43-44) [My emphasis].

One can see a clear shift from traditional modes of understanding of the human condition that had become too restricting and an effort, albeit a type of professional counterinsurgency, took place to humanize the field of psychology. This is to say that the movement sought to understand the human condition from an experientially human perspective.

The lineage of separate and tangentially connected fields and movements that have been discussed here until now represent only a small fraction of what is to be explored in the formation of the New Age movement. However, they suffice to give the reader a general understanding of some of the major elements that existed as part of the confluence of ideas that would later conjunct and blend to form an eclectic and amorphous movement called “New Age”. This is also to say that the concepts that underlie the New Age movement, although they blossomed in the ambience of the 1960’s and 1970’s, actually have a longer trajectory which can be traced much further back. I do not suggest that the examples of Swedenborg and Mesmer or Blavatsky and Vivekananda are the moments of conception for the movement, but rather only that they are indicators of an attitude and interest that have a much longer history than the last few decades, as is commonly thought.

New Age in the New Age

In order to understand more deeply what will be proposed here it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the concept of New Age. It is often associated with a variety of spiritual

elements but seems to have no cohesive ideological center. George D. Chryssides offers an interesting and accurate illustration of the label “New Age”, which has been widely invoked in order to identify a collection of hotchpotch and disparate ideas, by comparing it to a beachcomber who, after passing his day discovering what is to be found in the sand, decidedly assigns a noun to identify the entire collection without regard to individuality, organization or relationship. Chryssides points out that “unless there is purpose to the grouping of such objects, or unless they bear some common set of features or at least a family resemblance, the use of any such term seems pointless” (10).¹¹ Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman echo this sentiment in the introduction of their collection of essays *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spiritualities* (2000): “We are aware that we are positing a degree of homogeneity amongst disparate phenomena over and above that often argued for by activists and practitioners within particular constitutive currents” (1).

Equally, Wouter J. Hanegraaff is astute to point out that the term New Age “is primarily a poorly defined label which has different meanings and connotations for different people” (9). Carl Raschke, who researches Christianity in the context of postmodern thought, explains the New Age as “a lush jungle of exotic spirituality, lifestyle preferences, metaphysical preoccupations and vogueish superstitions” (207). Notably, there are no references to worldviews, philosophies, knowledge or spiritual understanding in his view of the movement. His idea seems to reduce the phrase “New Age” to that which is foreign or superficial lifestyle options. He goes on to add that “[in] truth, New Age was from the beginning, and in large part remains a colorful and shape-shifting kaleidoscope of fads, fantasies and follies” (207).

¹¹ As we can see, this excessively general approach to understanding the movement is problematic and will be discussed in the next section.

M. D. Faber reflects on the loosely organized notion and offers a coherent description to help clarify the idea:

New Age has its roots in the many alternative religions which have emerged in North America and Europe in the last two centuries (Swedenborgianism, New Thought, Christian Science, Transcendentalism, Theosophy); that it is given a major, almost birthing impetus by the counterculture of the 1960s and the spiritual seekers that emerged from that counterculture in the 1970s and 1980s; that it evinces a compelling interest in many ancient spiritual and occult beliefs that may be regarded as alternative religions (channeling, shamanism, Witchcraft, crystal healing, Tantrism, Zen, yoga, meditation); that it is centrally preoccupied with the theme of the individual and societal transformation as it is derived, in part, from the writings of Teilhard de Chardin and Jung, and as it emerges, by implication, from the world of modern psychics where the notions of *relativity* and *indeterminacy* are taken by New Agers to indicate an interconnectedness of all things in the universe, that it is devoted to the hoary art of *psychic healing* in its endless and often bizarre manifestations; and finally that it increasingly aligns itself with, indeed merges into, the self-help movement with its emphasis upon self-empowerment, self-esteem, positive thinking and personality change. (6)

[Faber's emphasis]

He is able to successfully identify many of the movement's broad elements while offering a general summary of its evolution. Faber's elucidation and more elaborated understanding of "New Age" gives us reference points in the study of a movement that often lacks them. This will

also be particularly helpful later in this study given that all three authors call into question traditional religious understanding and organization.

Research by James E. Lewis into how the movement can be characterized has brought forth some useful and insightful characteristics. He lists them as: 1) Emphasis on healing 2) A desire to be ‘modern’ and use scientific language 3) Eclecticism and syncretism 4) A monistic and impersonal ontology 5) Optimism, success orientation, and a tendency to evolutionary views 6) Emphasis on psychic powers (7). Additionally, Melton has singled out the defining trait of transformation as the principal theme to be found behind the movement. Melton says:

The message of the New Age movement is its hope and transformation.

Exponents of the New Age have undergone a personal transformation which changed their lives. They have witnessed a similar change in others and believe it possible that every person can also be transformed [...] Most New Age activities aim at facilitating that personal transformation through such diverse activities as body work, spiritual disciplines, natural diets, and renewed human relationships.

(Melton 19)

One significant aspect of this study is its unique aim to identify the literature which treats this idea of human transformation that Melton points out. This, that we know of, has yet to be done.

The impetus for this perceived change has interesting causes and manifestations. Raschke says that what unifies this phenomenon is “a consistent philosophical rejection of the Western heritage of rationality, social morality, and political ideals of individual liberty and authority. The New Age movement has been a conscious and multifaceted effort to change that heritage into something ‘other’. The ‘other,’ of course, remains undeciphered” (208). From this one could formulate that some may perceive this as an attack against or disintegration of the Western

tradition. Whether it is an attack or disintegration seems to be a matter of the philosophical orientation of the critic. Seated from within the modern Western tradition it most likely will be perceived as an attack. Texts like Walter Truett Anderson's *The Next Enlightenment: Integrating East and West in a New Vision of Human Evolution* (2003) propose a rather menacing shift: the amalgamation of alien, and mostly unknown, worldviews into the Western tradition. His proposal to integrate Eastern and Western visions of human evolution sends chills down the spine of those indoctrinated and steeped in the various projects that Western modernity has undertaken.

Modernity was adversely and forever changed as it was transformed by the Enlightenment. Rational, logical, and lineal thought combined to form scientific thinking that required repeated proofs and gave promise to the hope of bettering the human condition. In many aspects this project has been extraordinarily successful. Listening to the radio while driving in a warm car on a cold day on the way to the supermarket to purchase sanitary and abundantly available food is a common occurrence that receives little accolade or contemplative attention. However, if we compare it to the process of acquiring the evening meal five-hundred years ago, the contrast is quite sharp. The technological developments have become blended into our daily existence and life marches on with the challenges of the past firmly relegated to the past.

However, not everyone is convinced of the greatness of modernity. Nikos Kokosalakis states that: "What is beyond dispute is that its promises for social emancipation and better economic, political, and cultural life, as imbedded in the optimism of the Enlightenment, have failed to materialize and the prospects for a better future for most people of the planet are dim" (18). Western rationalism and rationalization, as tools for social planning and control, have failed to deliver its promise of equality, stability, and happiness. The superior culture that was to be

produced by this has lost its shine and has come under intense questioning resulting in what he sees as a fall from grace (18).

In his analysis of traditional religion in late modernity he perceptively concludes that it was the moderns who destroyed the truth value of the sacred “and relegated it to the irrational” (18). Through the use of reason and substantial reliability on science it was determined that what could not be proven methodically, that is, rationally, was irrational and, therefore, unacceptable. It created a scheme where there could only be one Truth (the rational, reasoned truth) and everything else was deemed falsity. This bi-polar system of knowledge dominated the collective worldview for hundreds of years and permeated every facet of life. The universalization of epistemological norms was brought about by applying intense pressures to conform to the one possible Truth which modernity produced.¹²

With all its technological advancements which would comfort, protect and heal the human species, modernity was lacking something. It failed to provide any substantive answer to those pesky existential questions about the nature of life and death or their meaning. For a long time modern thinkers could only view God as an impossibility due to the lack of empirical data to support the belief in the existence of such (Kokosalakis 18). Thus we see the rise of atheism coinciding with the rise of science onto the world stage. The cold, analytical line of rational thought dismissed the fundamental tenets of many of the world’s religions and the questions that they answered. It left humankind with no guidance with questions such as “Why is it painful

¹² About this, Kokosalakis says: “The radical break from all traditional cultures and the new epistemological mode which the moderns introduced from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards was based on its absolute claim to be uniquely anthropocentric and rational naturalistic. In this respect modernity claimed to be privy to a new universal truth and a new universal certainty which not only undermined all previous certainties and conceptions of truth but also rendered them false and redundant. The basic difference between all previous dogmatic conceptions of truth and the modern one was that the former were based on transcendence and faith in extra social and supernatural agencies whereas the latter was based on a claim of empirically verifiable knowledge and human reason in the framework of the laws of nature. These laws, applying also to man as part of nature, were conceived mechanistically and were understood as knowable and discoverable hence the claim of modernity to an irreversible and emancipatory idea of progress” (19-20).

when a loved one dies?” Modernity leaves a gap or space in the whole of human existence. As Kokosalakis says, there are “no miracles, no divine interventions, [...] no saviors, no sacred churches and sacramental communities [...] and all facts are subject to symmetrical laws which preclude the miraculous, the sacred occasion (20).

This leads one to question if the New Age movement may be a return to the sacred, a reclaiming of the importance of the existential questions that modernity has neglected. I suspect that this might, in part, be led by one of the bastions of modernity itself, the contemporary university. Liselotte Frisk has published an interesting list of quantitative studies of the New Age. In the list she cites a 1994 study by Stuart Rose and the results of her own study published in 2003 which both conclude that there is a small bias toward higher education. Although New Agers were found in virtually all professions and educational levels there is a predilection in the professions where higher education is a requisite (105).^{13 14}

Although the university may be one of the greater centers of New Age thought, it certainly hosts its opponents also. Theologian Robert M. Price, in his book *Top Secret: The Truth behind Today's Pop Mysticisms* (2008), pithily blasts and mocks many of the New Age movement's most prominent figures.¹⁵ He states that his intention is not to deride the various

¹³ This leads to an interesting philosophical question about the inquisitive and questioning modern mind. Has the search for Truth lead moderns to deconstruct the very premises on which modernity stands? Has objective analysis arrived at the conclusion that empirical objectivity is not plausible as a means of understanding the human experience?

¹⁴ Paul Heelas supports this idea in his book *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (1996) when he says: “The task, then, is to explain why apparently ‘sensible’ - almost entirely well-educated- modernists should turn to what the great majority of their peers would regard to be pretty implausible mumbo-jumbo” (*Celebration* 136).

¹⁵ For example, “Chapter 2: Karma Chameleon (Deepak Chopra, *How to know God*)” harshly criticizes Deepak Chopra for presenting himself and his message as something they are not, scientific (51). In “Chapter 3: A Course on Malarkey (Helen Schucman, *A Course on Miracles*)” it is not an overstatement to say that Price disparages Schucman and her message (131). He also takes James Redfield to task for a poorly written narrative used to disguise didacticism in his widely read text *The Celestine Prophecy* (1993) in “Chapter 8: The Cellophane Prophecy (James Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy*)” (195).

spiritual teachers that he discusses for not meeting “some standard of orthodoxy” that he has defined, but rather he is “more concerned with whether the doctrines appear to be healthy and wise, especially when compared to the ancient traditions they draw from” (13). He believes that the doctrines of the New Age movement are “poorer, watered-down versions” of the major religions. However, his objectivity on the issue is called into question when he states: “I cannot help thinking that the historic treasures of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, the Kabbalah, and so on would do people more good” (13). It seems that he may be trapped within a certain modern thinking that insists on the classification and separation of spiritual traditions. I shall provide an illustration of this in the next section.

Although Price’s objectivity, and thus fairness, is easily called into question, there are others that question various elements of the New Age movement which have a much more compelling basis for their criticism. As early as 1995 arguments were launched against New Agers accusing them of cultural appropriation. Susanne Miskimmin presented a paper at the Twenty-seventh Algonquian Conference titled “The New Age Movement’s Appropriation of Native Spirituality: Some Political Implications for the Algonquian Nation”.¹⁶ In her work she outlines why the popular use of elements of Native American spiritualities or worldviews is detrimental to Native Americans and very clearly points out examples of how this is an extension of past egregious behaviors perpetrated primarily by whites.

Initially, Miskimmin confirms the hodgepodge approach of the New Age movement in that it “is a ‘grab bag’ of native spiritual traditions, with an emphasis on Algonquian and Plains spiritual belief combined with holistic healing and ‘human potential’ language” (205). She notes that most participants of the New Age movement are Caucasians of European ascendancy with

¹⁶ The Algonquian Nation is a First Nations/indigenous group of inhabitants in the Great Lakes region of North America.

no indigenous heritage. She points out that the leaders of healing sessions and other practices often make claim to some sort of First Nations heritage:

The leader, however, is often a person claiming 'mixed blood', although more often than not this claim to native heritage is only the most tenuous genetic thread linking an otherwise 'white' individual to a vague and uncertain Indian ancestor. This thread is embellished and relished. Even individuals with absolutely no possible claim to native heritage are in fact making that claim, or are culturally adopting what is genetically lacking. (205)

Thus, the genetic connection with pre-modern peoples and spiritualities is a source of credibility for the purveyor of certain aspects of the New Age movement.

Miskimmin understands that those who appropriate native culture are often genuinely attempting to address feelings of spiritual emptiness and despair. At first glance the use of native elements for spiritual growth appears to demonstrate reverence and respect for the tradition. However, she points out they are more damaging than supportive. The true underlying ideas are based on stereotyped caricatures and the politics of primitivism. Native peoples are constructed as stoic, silent, and mystical beings in the New Age imaginary and fail to reflect the diverseness of the First Nations. A mental generic "Indian" is created which contradicts the viability of indigenous groups as unique and autonomous peoples and hampers efforts to gain rights of jurisdictional disputes and ownership of natural resources (208). As she says: "Certainly, New Agers want to become only part Indian. They do not want to acknowledge First Nation struggles for cultural survival, treaty rights, self-determination or an end to substance abuse" (209). Rather than contribute to the continued destruction of the First Nations' culture she urges those who are genuinely interested to educate themselves on the history and challenges facing native peoples

today and then work to support the steps that are currently being promoted to resolve these problems.

Andrea Smith wrote a scathing essay that expresses a similar sentiment toward New Ager feminists which appropriate indigenous culture as a means of empowerment in order to reject Western notions of power and authority:

The New Age movement completely trivializes the oppression we as Indian women face: Indian women are suddenly no longer the women who are forcibly sterilized and tested with unsafe drugs such as Depo Provera; we are no longer the women who have a life expectancy of 47 years; and we are no longer the women who generally live below the poverty level and face a 75 percent unemployment rate. No, we're too busy being cool and spiritual. (71)

Her short essay harshly criticizes the commercialization of native culture which hides the oppression that they continue to suffer. Additionally, according to Smith, when a non-native voice invokes the use of native spirituality, it excludes the native people from the dialogue and disallows any effort to promote resolution of their community's problems (71).

There are other important issues related to what Miskimmin and Smith discuss. In October 2009 three people died and 18 people were hospitalized at a sweat lodge ceremony where heat and steam is used as a method of spiritual purification. James Arthur Ray, who has no known connection with native peoples, was conducting the ceremony as part of a retreat. Five days after the catastrophe Valerie Taliman, a Native American journalist, published an editorial again criticizing the appropriation of native spirituality. She quotes Alvin Manitopyes, a healer from the Cree, Anishnawbe, and Assiniboine nations who says: "Our elders conduct sweat lodge ceremonies out of love for their people to help them in their healing and spiritual growth. When

someone attaches a price tag to the ceremony, then the sacredness is gone and it comes down to them playing around with our sacred ceremonies” (Taliman). The writer adds: “What right does Ray have to mimic, mangle, and manipulate Native ceremonies that have been carefully handed down among indigenous cultures over millennia? Ray does not own any rights to Native spirituality, because they are owned collectively by indigenous peoples and cannot be sold” (Taliman). She paints a sharp contrast between Ray and native community healers when she says that “it was a bastardized version of a sacred ceremony sold by a multimillionaire who charged people \$9,695 a pop for his ‘Spiritual Warrior’ retreat” (Taliman).¹⁷

Clearly, the issue of cultural appropriation is important and merits further investigation and discussion. In the field of Latin American indigenous groups there does not appear to be a voice comparative in vocality or strength that is denouncing the misuse of their culture by non-natives. Although it is not within the scope of this study to elaborate more on the subject, I encourage researchers within the appropriate fields to consider an exploration of what consequences result from this cross-cultural adoption or use of knowledge systems where one group is, at times, desperately marginalized and whose culture is being “bastardized”, to use Talisman’s term, by those who have marginalized them.^{18 19}

¹⁷ Ray was later sentenced to two years in prison for negligent homicide for the death of three people (Mandell).

¹⁸ This will be relevant later in this study in the discussion of Carlos Castañeda who is a Peruvian-born American who is signaled as being the next in line to carry on the Yaqui spiritual tradition in Northern Mexico. Also, don Miguel Ruiz, author of *The Four Agreements* (1997), claims ascendancy from the Toltec tradition from the region now known as Mexico, the problem being that the Toltec people were predecessors of the Aztecs and ceased to exist as long as 1200 years ago. Additionally, Alejandro Jodorowsky is a Chilean-born Jew who lives in Paris with no native ancestry and claims to be a shaman, and even a psychoshaman, who has studied with Mexican shamans.

¹⁹ Two primary areas of investigation would involve the foreign use of peyote commonly used by shamans in Northern Mexico and ayahuasca which is used in shamanic practices throughout several countries in South America (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, particularly).

Problematic Terminology

Since the New Age movement is commonly thought of as a new religious movement, it would be important to take a moment to address this detail before continuing on to explore the terminology itself. Vicente Merlo offers a detailed analysis of the movement in which he deems it legitimate to talk the New Age movement as a New Age religion, Paul Heelas does not agree (Merlo 65; *Celebration* 9). While Merlo approaches the question by considering the qualifying criteria that should be used to determine the viability of a so-called New Age religion, Heelas concentrates more on the ontological organization of the movement to determine its status. In other words, Merlo believes that it matches various definitions of a New Religious Movement and Heelas sees it as being an umbrella term under which we can find several NRMs.²⁰

It seems that the phrase “New Age”, although born out of astrology²¹, is less used by those who identify with its various elements than those who use the term as an extraordinarily broad label for spiritual or occult beliefs that are not autochthonous to the West or the Westerner who holds to those beliefs or practices. Chryssides explores the question of whether the label is etic or emic in its nature, the former being a construction of an outside observer while the latter is self-descriptive. Citing the works of Wouter Hanegraaff and Steven Sutcliffe he points out that it is rarely used emically.²² Hanegraaff’s research found that of several hundred texts that discussed the subject of New Age, only six used the term in the title. Supporting his data, Sutcliffe concluded that emic usage of the phrase was ever only sporadic and is very much in

²⁰ In no way is it necessary to make a conclusive declaration on the matter at this point. It is discussed here as a means of highlighting the lack of research and agreement on the subject at hand.

²¹ There exists a tendency to associate the New Age with the blossoming Age of Aquarius. This astrological period lasts about 2,150 years and has either just gotten underway during the end of the 20th century or is soon to dawn (Hanegraaff 333). There is a certain sense of hope that seems to be resulting from an expected change that has happened, is happening or is soon to occur (334).

²² Indeed, Marianne Costa, co-author of two books with Alejandro Jodorowsky, seeks to distance their latest publication from the field of New Age in her Introduction to *Metagenealogia: El árbol genealógico como arte, terapia y búsqueda del Yo esencial* (2011).

decline (Chryssides 12). Interestingly, Chryssides doesn't agree, but rather says that the New Age movement "is still alive and well" (22) but is undergoing a transformation that is yet to be determined.

In his contribution to the collection of essays titled *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (2000) Heelas alludes to etic usage of the term when he says:

However useful it might have been to describe a form of spirituality, when deployed as it often is to make negative evaluations the term now does more harm than good. In certain quarters, that is to say, it has come to be used polemically, to dismiss certain beliefs and practices as (supposedly) inauthentic, trivial, superficial, and consumeristic. (250)

The phrase, in just a few short decades, has become loaded with the baggage of disparaging slights meant to undermine any sense of authentic meaning.

To further illustrate this problematic terminology I offer this example: An Indian that has an inclination toward the tenets of Hinduism is generally considered Hindu even though he or she may not self-identify as Hindu. A Westerner who has the same inclination is widely considered New Age. I suggest that this taxonomical compulsion is trapped within its own traditional religious understanding. From that antiquated perspective, anything that does not fit clearly into traditional archetypes provokes a crisis in the project of identification and organization of religious traditions that orders much of the world.²³ The ensuing crisis requires a new category which results in such a hodgepodge collection ranging from acupuncture to Wicca

²³ These archetypes are the Western Christian, Indian Hindu, Middle Eastern Muslim, and Far Eastern Buddhist, Taoist or Confucian where each tradition is only valid in its original racial-geographical context. Also, the adherent to any particular tradition must commit fully to a religion in which he or she has an interest. An inclination toward a certain set of beliefs without such commitment frustrates the taxonomical process of religious identification that, until the New Age movement, had been the essential basis for organizing the world.

to shamanism to meditation. This category which seems to represent modern reaction to a fragmented postmodern world is called “New Age”.

Scholars seem to agree that the term and its usage are riddled with problems and biases. However, the task of developing a new label is rather daunting. Paul Zuromski questions why we need one at all (Lewis 2). James Lewis, in 1992, noted that part of the problem was that there simply did not exist an alternative that includes all aspects of the movement and Chryssides echoed that same sentiment in 2007 citing the need to maintain a connection between the disparate elements of the movement (Lewis 2; Chryssides 22-23). Although Chryssides’ text is much more recent, it seems to avoid any mention of Heelas’ suggestion of ‘expressive spirituality’ as a means of referring to all the “teachings and practices that dwell on inner spirituality, including the natural order as a whole” (*Beyond* 250).

Although a new terminology is indeed needed for a more precise understanding and analysis of the movement, this study does not put forth a new taxonomical identifier. The problem persisting until now, it seems, is that any effort to organize the understanding of the New Age movement would be inadequate as long as it insists on being a broad label to cover such a diverse group of topics and to abandon such a broad perspective would impede a broader understanding of the movement, which has been useful. Any attempt to accurately reform this idea would need to take its extensive list of subjects into account as well as the nature of its origin as a response to traditional forms of religion. The range of this study extends, primarily, to the examination of texts that are commonly considered part of the New Age movement so as to provide a solid and fertile ground for future literary study in this field. At some moment in the future it would be more opportune, prudent, and appropriate to make such a ground-breaking presentation as the movement continues to morph and evolve.

CHAPTER 2

MAKING THE CASE FOR NEW AGE LITERATURE

New Age Literature and Academic Study

It has been brought up during the production of this study, and at other times and places to be certain, that New Age literature's position in the field of literary studies is precarious at best. The possibility of including the oft ridiculed and scorned field (Lewis "Introduction" x) of literature into academic study, for more traditional critics, is a rather preposterous suggestion that only a novice or truly uninformed scholar might consider. The questions that arise in discussions mostly revolve around two fundamental issues. The first being the literariness of the works to be examined and the second is the clear but implied threat of the disintegration or absence of intellectual rigor. Although each of these doubts is based on its own individual premises and assumptions they share a connection that is worth exploring. In this chapter I present the case for the inclusion of New Age literature in the field of literary study. Additionally, I hope to point out how the knowledge that is reported through New Age literary discourse is equally valid and how it has, at least until now, been marginalized by an outdated hegemonic system of knowledge that seeks to dismiss any challengers, despite their validity, popularity or usefulness. As a result, it is hoped that the outcome will be a clear possibility of a new type of literary study and knowledge through New Age texts that will more faithfully reflect the current epistemological climate that is developing in and outside of academia.

It seems most prudent to address the question of literariness first so as to, after having established its literary value, address then the question of the movement's intellectual validity.

The essential question then is: What is literature? Just as many others have done, I think it might be helpful to look at what is studied in literary studies and how *what literature is* is determined. To this end a brief exploration of the role of literary canon will be useful. Through an understanding of literary canon we can understand what kinds of texts are examples of valued writing, why they are valued, and possibly discern what would not be valued. A canon is a manifestation of a group's precepts and values which distinguishes it from others. This study does not hope to resolve any questions regarding canons or their formation, this being far outside the scope of the work, but rather only wishes to use the canon as a means for identifying what it is that the field of literary studies values that provokes the rejection of New Age literature.

Richard Terry wrote an essay that sought to deconstruct the widely accepted idea of the eighteenth century as the birth of literature (what it is and is not), and consequently the idea of canon. He is responding primarily to Douglas Lane Patey's article "The Eighteenth Century Invents the Canon" published in 1988 in *Modern Language Studies* (79).²⁴ Terry addresses the common lexical approach of understanding the etymology of the word literature. He notes that before the inclusion of specific works into the syllabi of universities in the eighteenth century there were attempts at canon formation, that is, intentions of inclusion and exclusion of works into and from collections. There was a movement during that Illustrious century to promote literacy among the populations. Thus, the word 'literature' was a reference to all that was referenced to by 'learned culture' (80). This understanding of the term is echoed by Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) where he notes the term's wider application to "the whole body of valued writing in society: philosophy, history, essays, and letters as well as poems" which seems very open when compared to contemporary definitions of "creative or

²⁴ Patey, Douglas Lane. "The Eighteenth Century Invents the Canon". *Modern Language Studies*. 18 (1988): 17-37.

imaginative” writings (17). From there we are to understand that the term takes on a more judgmental meaning in that it begins to be used to refer to texts of good taste. The value judgment of good taste was meant to recognize the compositional and artistic merits of the work. This definition has endured until today.

Terry’s essay provoked great response from other scholars that sought to reaffirm the eighteenth century as the birth of modern literature and the canon. However, they seem to be suffering from tunnel vision in the discussion of the birth of canon. As Joan L. Brown points out in *Confronting our Canons: Spanish and Latin American Studies in the 21st Century* (2010), the process of exclusion and inclusion of texts into and from groups has taken place for virtually as long as humans have produced literature. Brown identifies the primary function of canon formation as a technique for negotiating the problem of information overload. Citing the opening of trade markets and the increased availability of papyrus, she signals what she believes to be the birth of Western written culture between the fourth century BC and the first century AD (16-17). She identifies the problem as a simple pragmatic one that Internet users face today, “too much information. Or, in their case, too many scrolls” (17). As Brown explains, the first guardians of written texts had to select a system of organization for the scrolls. She paints an interesting picture of the ancient Ptolemies’ Alexandrian library-museum as a type of spa or center for the contemplation of philosophy and culture. The first literary scholars sought to study *grammatica* (Greek for literature) at the library-museum seeking to understand the works and even critiquing them (17).

The image that she creates is not one, in a certain functionalist essence, much different than that of the contemporary scholar on a large, sprawling campus:

Ensnared in attractive surroundings, with exceptional library resources, scholars who convened to study this papyrus cache set about performing the tasks associated with literary scholarship: assembling the material, classifying works systematically, and finally elucidating them through textual editing and criticism.

Literary criticism was largely an attempt to understand the work lexically. (17-18)

Thus, organizing the large body of existent writings turned out to be one of the first acts of literary canon formation. It is also important to note that the religious collections of the Torah and Bible involved clear selection processes that categorized and promoted certain texts over others.

Brown goes on to discuss Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* in Greece and its prizing of *grammatica* with the additional development of *rhetorica*. She sees this as a groundbreaking development in the field of literature. While Alexandrian scholars made no attempt to construct a literary hierarchy, Quintilian did just that by including works he thought to be exemplary and excluding those that were inferior, dividing his students into the two basic groups of grammarians and rhetoricians. The former would study the fictitious narrative while the latter was responsible for determining the credibility of a given work. He did include both ancient and modern (for his time) texts. The canon established by Marcus Fabius Quintilian, according to Brown, "influenced more readers than that of any nonreligious leader of the first millennium" (22). From there the Brown moves on to explore religious canons and notes that from the Protestant Reformation forward the secular canon would be constructed by a multiplicity of "sociocultural, political and intellectual movements that have trajectories of their own" (30).

What becomes entirely relevant to this study, being the origins of the modern canon and thus part of the argument against the inclusion of New Age literature, is her treatment of the rise

of nations and a literary leap that is made in the eighteenth century. It was during the height of colonization that normative canons developed to aid in the indoctrination of so-called ‘useful knowledge’ disseminated by the empires that ruled vast reaches of the world. In his article “Making a Canon”, William Calin notes: “Cultural historians often state that the claim to canonicity and to the status of high culture by a regime or an academy- the ‘institution of literature’ - serves to empower the regime or the academy and to repress those elements in society which do not participate in the hegemony”(5).²⁵ This knowledge was generally transmitted in the form of school texts whose message promoted the primacy of the colonizer. Literature would be used in a similar fashion in the process of nation building and forming a national imaginary through the use of literary canon, that is to say, determining what would or would not be read. The collection of texts that supported the development a new national identity aided in the process of forging a nation. Ángel Rama has pointed out these connections on his book *The Lettered City* (1996) where he notes how the use of local texts meld a new identity for new and struggling countries: “The concept of *literature*, with its ability to forge a national spirit, gradually replaced the concept of *belles lettres* as interpreted by Louis de Bonald and Madame de Stael” (65). The exclusion of other foreign texts, particularly those of the empires, functioned to differentiate the new nations from their previous rulers and promote the new nation as sovereign (Calin 33).

²⁵ This is equally applied to the subdivisions of art, in general, and literature, specifically, within the framework of higher thinking centers. Paul Crowther explains that: “There is a *prima facie* case for regarding the definition of art per se as unconsciously exclusionist on the grounds that the concept of art is itself a western construct. It has been organized around a canon of ‘great works’ from which non- western cultural groups and oppressed social formations within western society have been largely excluded. If they have been included, it is only to the degree that they can be assimilated within the margins of the canonic structure” (17). Virgil Nemoianu sees how this problem has manifested, then gives it some structure: “I am firmly convinced that the current dilemmas are in important ways analogous to the confrontations of 200 years ago, now projected on a global (or globalizing) scale. They can be grouped under three broad dichotomies: Western/non-Western, male/female, and elite/popular discourses. Of these three the last one seems comparatively the least tractable” (236).

Enlightenment thinkers would do much the same thing in promoting the new way of scientific and methodical thinking that was beginning to take hold in the world. Their encyclopedism changed the prevalent intellectual landscape by organizing information into volumes that presented what was worth knowing. We should be careful not to overlook the importance of this development. The collection and presentation of information into texts that were promoted as containers of the most important information “defined and consolidated knowledge” (33) in a way that had never been done before in the history of Western writing. Although Quintilian was successful in selecting texts that were worth study according to the merits of their composition and persuasion, Enlightenment thinkers promoted a new way of rational thinking that widely promoted that which they deemed worth knowing to the masses. Enlightened thinking would dominate Western centers of thought for the next several centuries using this model. They promoted a model of knowledge that proved to have elements superior to that of the previous system and sought to situate and maintain itself as the ruler of understanding.

In countries like Spain, France, and England, what ensued afterward were an abundance of publishers and a new force of public opinion fed by the Enlightenment project. The resulting explosion of written works required some sorting and scrutinizing that canonical order would be able to accomplish through the lens of Enlightened thinking. In France, the Ancients declared that only professional scholars, steeped in the Classics, were qualified to comment on literary issues while the Moderns countered with the possibility of nonprofessionals that could have knowledge superior to that of the ancient thinkers (34). By the nineteenth century the centers of higher learning had become the guardians of high (literate) culture. In the United States, Harvard was among the first universities to introduce English-language subjects into the curricula in 1865

which seems to reflect an interest in national sociopolitical issues of the time.²⁶ Although manuals appeared later in the twentieth century that charted and defined American literature, there seemed to be no real criteria for their organization. Brown notes that literary historians “have at no time felt the need to establish criteria or standards of evidence for the canons they construct. Their expertise is implicit, making their value judgments mysterious” and above reproach (36-37). Following this would be the culture wars of the last two decades of the twentieth century which reflected the weakening of the traditional order and its intense resistance to change (37).

What can be noted throughout the evolution of canon formation is a certain negotiation, albeit difficult and tumultuous, between those who feel themselves as qualified literary specialists entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the cultural values of the group and the group itself who often has its own opinions on such matters. The identity and survival of the group is always at stake. As Brown notes, “A canon is necessarily an instrument of instruction and socialization, since its value systems must be perpetuated if the group is to survive” (41). So it seems natural that there might be resistance to change among one segment or another. Just as with the debate seating the French Ancients against the Moderns, now higher education, and particularly the humanities, is facing another turning point in its identity. It seems to be reaching a point of realization of the limits of Enlightenment thinking. Society has begun to seriously question the value of the humanities and their role in the educational process of today.²⁷

²⁶ Yale had considered the idea some decades before in 1828, but decided against the move citing the superiority of the Ancients over the inferior intellect of the Moderns (36).

²⁷ For details, consult *Crisis in the Humanities* (1964), *Crisis in the Humanities: Interdisciplinary Responses* (1983), *Higher Education under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities* (1995), and *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities* (1997).

Enlightenment thinkers sought to usher in a rational understanding of the world that would open the door to material and technological progress and dismiss the myths and superstitions that had dominated understanding until that point (McIntosh 44, 50). However, in its coldly calculating linear logic, reason also brushed aside essential questions about our existence. Its truth and dominance are not able to hold steady under the anxiety-filled, hyperactive mode of contemporary life. This paper, in addition to providing literary analysis of the texts and authors listed within it, also serves as a call for a new knowledge system that addresses the concerns of our time. As Virgil Nemoianu points out in his paper “Literary Canons and Social Value Options”, the “most important cause of curricular formation is the *forma mentis* of a given age” (his emphasis) (219). Jean-Paul Sartre echoes a similar sentiment in his book *What is Literature?* (1949) when he says, “If we no longer write as they did in the eighteenth century, it is because the language of Racine and Saint-Evremond does not lend itself to talking about locomotives or the proletariat” (21). He calls for a new language and writing that is appropriate to the time and place.

What once worked for literary study is no longer completely viable. Defining literature as strictly “linguistic art [...] that evokes a reality all its own” (116), as Joseph Strelka does, precludes the study of important texts that seek to answer the existential conundrums about life that Enlightenment thinking has largely neglected. If we were to consider that certain aspects of what is studied today is *not only* read on the basis of its linguistic artistry we might be more open regarding the potential of New Age literature. For example, Miguel de Unamuno’s essay “Mi religión” (1907) which responds to questions about his religious affiliation seems to be devoid of any real linguistic artistic endeavor when compared to essay’s like “Nuestra América” (1891) by José Martí which employ a poetic prose at times in his contemplation of Latin American identity

at the end of the nineteenth century. However, both essays are widely studied for their historical, cultural, sociopolitical and philosophical components within the field of literary studies.

This raises the question of New Age literature's worth as an object of literary study. If other non-creative texts, such as Christopher Columbus' shipboard diary or Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz' letters are studied as historical and cultural artifacts, why then should texts that purport to disseminate ancient (or recovered) forms of knowledge be excluded from study? I suspect that it has little to do with the literary qualities of the works, but rather the perceived absence of intellectual rigor in the ideas that are presented. Enlightened intellectual rigor has a very strict set of guidelines and usages to which it demands allegiance as part of its legitimating authority; however, it is not given that all knowledge falls under the dominion of these rules of reason and logic. To think such a thing is to claim unequivocal and absolute truth, which in this postmodern age seems a risky proposition. One possibility, among many, is that now Enlightened thought has fully matured and has lost its youthful sense of hope that once defined it or, possibly, that it even sees a sort of naiveté in the positive 'feel good' mood of the New Age. Maybe enlightened thinking feels the experience that several centuries have taught it and it knows that the idealism and optimism that New Age is known by has a shelf-life that is limited by its usefulness to humanity.

Of Best Sellers and Academic Validity

As part of the change that academia is being confronted with, it is facing the democratization that technological development brings. For instance, scholarly texts are no longer strictly under the care and watchful eye of the university librarian. Projects like Google Books and Google Scholar make research a much more feasible option for those outside the traditional campus. Additionally, databases like Project Muse, WorldCat, and MLA's

International Bibliography have facilitated access to information that not so long ago required long hours in a library. The development of database mining and search technologies has done much to erode the authority of the gatekeepers of knowledge that higher education centers have traditionally enjoyed.

Parallel with this democratization is the wearing away of the authority that these centers of higher thought have suffered as caretakers of good taste and high culture in the onslaught of contemporary popular culture. Clive Bloom adds that “high art since the beginning of [the twentieth] century attempted to assimilate [low] culture into its regimen” (16). Best Seller lists, which often reflect the low culture that Bloom speaks of and frequently contrasts with scholarly interests, supposedly reflect the interest of readers with little or no critical training in literary analysis or interpretation. The lists can be useful indicators, although we will see that it is with limitations, which aid the scholar in gauging public interest (Miller 286). As Keith Whinnom notes:

The problems of assessing the merits of ‘popular literature’ and of placing it within the concept of literature have been looming even larger in recent years. It is a development which may be attributed in part to modern egalitarian notions- a denial of the elitist nature of literature- in part to the necessity of broadening the concept of literature and its criteria in order to accommodate and evaluate the products of modern mass culture, and possibly in some measure to critical examination by educational theorists of methods of presenting literature to the young. (189)

The value of modern mass culture should not be underestimated when considered in the light of the previous section that noted how the classics or canon came into being. As Laura J. Miller

points out, “familiarity with best-sellers is a sign of being literate *au courant*” (emphasis hers) (287).²⁸ Additionally, if we study literature as an effort to understand the human condition, then what such a large number of people are willing to invest their increasingly more occupied time to read should also be of interest to those who work in the fields of historical and cultural studies, as popular tastes can often be found on the Best Seller lists.

We may also find that what the canon suggests about a given society does not always reflect that reality. Whinnom’s problematization of the bestseller in Spanish Golden Age literature underscores this situation. He notes three fundamental problems in the study of popular literature that should be considered if one wants to research popular literature. First, there is the problem of identifying what texts are most widely read during a given period. According to Miller, it is rather doubtful that Best Sellers lists, like the New York Times Best Sellers List, are able to adequately reflect actual reader favorites. One reason she cites is the methodology behind the calculations that relies on subjective observation at times rather than verifiable empirical data.²⁹ She also notes the manipulability of the bestseller system for those who seek to maximize profits from ancillary activities that result from high book sales. Miller notes a scandal that unfolded in 1995 where *Business Week Magazine* accused the authors of the New York Times Best Seller *The Discipline of Market Leaders* (1995) of spending more than \$200,000 to purchase about ten thousand copies of their own books. According to *Business Week*’s

²⁸ This idea has an interesting implication that puts the problem of canonicity into a clearer focus. It, among many other factors, involves holding onto older, more traditional modes of understanding and knowledges while resisting new forms. However I suggest that one be careful with Miller’s ideas as some of them lack the intellectual specificity to work well in this argument. For example, she says: “After all, if so many others have found a book worthy, it must be for a good reason” (287). The list of insignificant literary contributions from the Best Seller list should be quite large one would imagine. Also, the premise of her disguised if-then statement is flawed. Just because “so many others” do something does not necessarily make it a worthwhile endeavor. However, I do agree in the sense that the strong popularity of a text or idea can warrant initial research as to why it is popular and what it offers the reader.

²⁹ She points out that the *New York Times* has recognized that its list does “not claim to be an objective compilation of information,” (296) but rather is an editorial product.

accusations, by purchasing so many books they were able to make it on to the list and remain there for fifteen weeks which drove a higher demand for their speaking engagements and simultaneously allowed them to charge significantly higher fees for those engagements (293-295).³⁰ At first glance, the subject that this study has chosen, New Age literature, it does not seem likely that such a scandal will erupt. However, it is noted that one has to be careful not to make too many general assumptions based on pop culture images. The earlier story of James Arthur Ray is a cautionary tale not to trust in vague stereotypes alone. Given that the New Age literary market has had great financial success, there is an ever-present potential for moral lapses.

The second problem that Whinnom notes is one of verifiable causality. To state it simply, there is no conclusive way of knowing *why* a work is popular. He estimates that the best that can be done to ascertain such a thing is through the use of “pseudo-psychological and pseudo-sociological explanations” (189). Here, he successfully problematizes the assumption that these lists reflect popular interests by insisting on identifying *what* specific interests and *why* they have developed at this time. In the case of New Age literature there is a comparatively clear set of norms that at least outline what a reader might be seeking in the text. Compared to fictional novels, where themes vary widely, New Age literature has the common goal of transformation and betterment of the self at the heart of its message. However, I believe this to be part of the push of study, to call for further study and examination of the chosen field of literature in order to better understand the current human situation and gain greater insight- for example, why New Age is popular.

The third problem is one which is much more complex to delineate. Whinnom seeks to understand the incongruences between what the reader and writers prefer and what critics prefer

³⁰ The authors and publisher denied any wrongdoing (293).

to study (189).³¹ He rightfully signals the dangers of basing syllabi on statistical computations of the frequency of manuscript copying or the size and number of editions in his field of Spanish Golden Age literature. He is also apprehensive about promoting a new discovered lost text even though it made no impact in its own time. He laments the constant critical attention given to texts like *Tirant lo blanc* (1490) by Joanot Martorell and *La Lozana andaluza* (1528) while other texts that were read with enthusiasm go largely ignored. He rightfully notes that “I cannot help feeling that as *historians* we must be failing in our task” (his emphasis) (189). Whinnom seems to have a balanced perspective and recognizes that the gauge for text selection is still rather biased: “The truth is that so long as histories of literature remain uncontrolled by more objective criteria than they are, they will tend to reflect our own contemporary ethos rather than that of the age whose literary history they purport to narrate” (190).

This observation on the state of the question in text selection in literary studies is fully relevant to the situation with New Age literature. As previously put forth here, the leading cause of the exclusion of New Age texts, like those from Latin American writers Carlos Castañeda or Paulo Coelho, is an attitude of intellectual inferiority toward the message being transmitted in the texts. Whinnom offers a similar example that we can use in our analysis. Widely studied works like *La Celestina* (1499) and Antonio de Guevara’s *Marco Aurelio* (1528) were only issued half as many editions as Fray Luis de Granada’s *Libro de la oración* (1554) which ran through well over one hundred editions by 1679 but has remained largely unexamined.³² One can see that

³¹ It is interesting that he pits readers and writers against the critics and does not consider a multi directional tension where each wants something different.

³² Whinnom notes that it likely would have enjoyed a much longer run with had it not been banned because of a dispute between the Fray and Melchor Cano. After appealing the ban and making revisions it was reprinted and had another eighty editions (194).

there is some mitigating factor that causes a rupture in understanding realistic literary history. This is to say that what gets studied does not necessarily reflect society or its interest.

It seems imperative, then, that we address the primary issue at hand, and that is the question of knowledge as a literary value. Whinnom offers support to this study's argument in favor of the inclusion of New Age literature in literary study when he expresses his theory of literature: "One function of language and of literature is- must be- the transmission of knowledge in the broadest sense: literature provides guidance for the individual to adjust to the world and the society around him" (196). If this broad explanation of the role of literature can be agreed upon, then I believe that, upon elaborating the New Age authors' works that are to be found in later chapters, the clear case can be made that their texts have significant literary value and have, at least until now, been undervalued. As will be explained in the next chapter, this study does not intend to give a complete report of all New Age literature in Latin America. There are certain selection criteria for the texts that indicate the exemplary status as transmitters of knowledge written with the primary function of helping the reader to grow and develop in healthy relationship to society and the world.

A New Understanding/Knowledge

Using Whinnom's description of the function of literature in its most general and fundamental sense we can begin to derive some approach that can be used in determining what literary value, if any, New Age literature may have. If "literature provides guidance for the individual to adjust to the world and the society around him" as Whinnom says, then it seems most logical to understand how the knowledge promoted through New Age literature in particular is related to the field of knowledge. The question of whether it seeks to promote a specific type of knowledge is a given assumption here in that that has seemingly been the basis

of its general rejection by academia. Within this context there is a common tendency to pit the two in binary polar opposition: intuitive knowledge versus empirical knowledge. I suggest that we be careful not to fall into this fallacious either/or argument of where there are only two possibilities which generally are oppositional to the other.

To the end of discussing the knowledge value, and thus literary value, of New Age literature, Thomas McLaughlin's book *Street Smarts and Critical Theory: Listening to the Vernacular* (1996) proves to be rather useful. He dedicates a chapter to New Age literature and the narrative that is created around transformation and healing. This narrative, a fundamentally literary device, is essential in the transformative process that movement promotes. It is through narrative that the New Age reader can begin to identify with the presented exemplary model of the author and their transformative experience to find greater peace and happiness in his or her own life with his or her own transformation. This fits clearly within the precept that literature is an epistemological matter that serves to aid in the betterment of the human condition. This description should ring palpably familiar as it is precisely what the Enlightenment thinker aimed to do and achieved to a great degree.

At this point it might be helpful to point out that the empirical nature of scientific thought and the 'untrained', vernacular³³ approach to understanding both are firmly based on the experience of objective reality. In fact, McLaughlin points out that the word's etymology refers to, in Latin, the language of the slaves and particularly to the localness of those slaves (5). This is to say, the localness as an organic part of their real environment and not foreign. This makes sense when we remember that New Age knowledge is thought of as being born from or at least

³³ The field of vernacular theory was conceived by Houston Baker in *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (1984) as a way for understanding the African American experience that blues music offers (McLaughlin 5).

related to intuitive knowledge, something that comes from within. This is contrasted sharply with reason which is something that is deduced and constructed through lineal ideas, observations, and connections made between the two. Since this study is innovative and broad in its nature, I do not hope here to enter into a deep and conclusive discussion on the workings or merits of either type of knowledge or to resolve anything other than to bring to light that there is more than one type of knowledge available and then to offer examples of the vital aspects of this other, lesser known knowledge.³⁴

McLaughlin notes that “the point of critical theory is to raise questions about the dominant paradigm out of a distrust for paradigms as such, and not to construct new disciplinary paradigms, totalizing systems that function as interpretation machines” (6). As I hope to demonstrate in later chapters, this questioning of dominant paradigms, which has become very popular in academia during the last four or so decades, is equally present in Carlos Castañeda’s erasure of personal history, as the purpose of Paulo Coelho’s journey, and Alejandro Jodorowsky’s search for origin. Just as academia has generally sought to question the norms and assumptions that govern culture, the critical approach of these authors seeks to do the same for the reader. It seems that here it can be said that academia is most objective in that it seeks to analyze on the universal cultural level in comparison to the subjective personal approach of New Age authors.

As McLaughlin says, “The New Age movement raises issues about narrative that more academic theories ignore, and its statements on the topic demand and deserve close critical questioning” (78). However, this is not to say that the New Age movement and critical theory are

³⁴ The organizational and structural idea of this study is to construct a fundamental framework onto which other more elaborate or detailed investigations can later be added. As much as anything, it is to establish the fundamental assumptions that might serve to promote the field of New Age Latin American literary study.

on equal footing, they each have their limitations. It seems that there are aspects of critical theory, like interpretive humility and a commitment to self-criticism or self-analysis, which the New Age movement and its own narrative of transformation could stand to learn. Equally interesting and important is that many New Age texts are narrative in structure. They offer a narrative of personal transformation, of the spiritual quest, of finding one's way. I would say that New Age literature has a deep interest in the essence, qualities, and role in what McLaughlin calls the *macronarrative* (cultural narrative) and *micronarrative* (personal narrative) (82). He sees the close relationship between theory and New Age as being based on two fundamental ideas. First, they are both necessarily concerned with narrative and second that they both use narrative to understand the paradigms previously mentioned. He says, "If theory is the practice of examining the cultural assumptions that make practices possible, many New Age writers would see theory so defined as one of the necessary steps to gain visionary experience and participate in planetary transformation" (80). From this he derives that the movement exercises and promotes vernacular cultural theory as a requirement for the spiritual transformation that is taking place or is to take place.

He points out how, at times, the two fields have had divergent and even contradictory paths. Many in the New Age movement have had experiences that Enlightenment thinking would reject based on the scientific principle of verifiable reproducibility. People claim to have had extraordinary experiences of divinity, felt the healing power of stones or crystals, seen auras or had prophetic dreams. However, rather than trusting in the dominant narrative of the empirical knowledge of Enlightenment thinking that might claim that they are insane or delusional, they trusted in the fundamental value of the experience and sought another source of knowledge that would "provide guidance in understanding life" (80). What they did not permit was that the

established paradigm would negate what *experience*, that which is observable and real, had demonstrated. In this aspect, the New Age movement has bested empirical knowledge by maintaining a firm focus on what is the base of critical inquiry, experience itself.

In this context, the old paradigm would seek to negate experience because the experience does not legitimate its authority. For example, if a person were to claim that last night, during the wee hours, an ethereal being appeared at the foot of her bed and conveyed a personal Divine message, the old paradigm would dismiss the experience immediately without regard to its value as *experience*. This experience does not support or promote the old paradigm as the legitimate supreme form of knowledge; hence it is discarded, regardless of the high importance placed on experience in its own system of understanding. It precludes anything that cannot legitimate its authority. As a result, it also abandons its commitment to understanding the human situation in order to better it. It is then that critical inquiry becomes a type of meta-inquiry or meta-theory where it abandons its own appreciation of experience and begins a self-reflexive discourse about its own value as the gatekeeper of knowledge. As a cultural power, the old paradigm refuses these types of experiences not as a matter of survival, because its value has been clearly demonstrated by the technological development that has unfolded during the last few hundred years, but rather refuses them out of a self-important obsession with being the dominant paradigm.

As mentioned previously in this section, one has to be careful not to fall into the false binary opposition of the either/or argument where there is only one valid possibility.³⁵ So what is an egalitarian researcher to do once they have based an entire career and decades of work on the old dominant paradigm? McLaughlin points out that “a very old paradigm is coming to an end,

³⁵ This is to say that we must be careful not to automatically reject that which does not seek to reinforce the supremacy of a system of knowledge above all others systems.

and new ways are at hand” (84). It is here that nuance is of utmost importance. As some New Agers suggest that an outdated mode of understanding will be replaced by a new one and postmodernists have tended to herald postmodernism as the answer to (or replacement for) problematic modern thinking (McIntosh 54), it seems that they might be a bit too ambitious and cavalier in their approach. To say that all need for Enlightened thinking is at its end is rather ludicrous. It denies the evolutionary, cumulative nature of knowledge. Thus, should we do away with all technological development that has taken place in the last several hundred years (as that would be the only way to completely and truly rid ourselves of the old mental regime)? This is to say that, going back to an earlier example, once we arrive at the supermarket, do we abandon the warm car that took us there and walk home in the cold? This researcher wouldn't.

The old paradigm is still inherent in the new one. As noted before, critical theory, which is nestled comfortably in the old paradigm, shares fundamental commonalities with the new paradigm of New Age thought. Exactly what the relationship will be between the two is still yet to be determined. However, it is important to note that “it is belief in the macronarrative that makes New Age practices viable” (McLaughlin 84). The New Age continues to use the form of narrative and stories to inspire and teach. As McLaughlin points out, the New Age uses some of the same philosophical assumptions as the system that it purports to reject. For example, James Redfield's New Age bestseller *The Celestine Prophecy* (1993) is based on a plot where the lineal story reveals a man on a quest who faces threats and overcomes opposition that pits good against bad for a clear resolution at the end of the novel (86). The importance of narrative should not be underestimated and leads one to consider if it might be one of the most enduring and endearing aspects of modernity. As McLaughlin states:

Narrative plays an important role in the extensive New Age literature on creativity in artistic expression and in the conscious living of everyday life. Many New Age writings express a Coleridgean or Blakean sense of the creative power of human perception. And since consciousness shapes the world, changes in consciousness raise very high stakes, because they transform the world in turn. [...] This power is present in all the arts, but narrative in particular serves a crucial function, because in creating narratives we are said to be tapping into the narrative structure of felt experience, into the narrativity of life itself. The creator of a narrative therefore has the opportunity for powerful self-knowledge, and writing becomes a healing practice for the creator as well as for the reader or audience. (88)

Thus we begin to understand the unseverable relationship between the old and new paradigms and that they function best in a hybrid form that serves humanity to move it forward.

Writing, then, takes on the role of transformer. It converts life into something new and improved from the limited old molds of modernity. It becomes the story of a journey, a voyage within that offers healing. In this journey we are able to hear, see, and, especially, feel the familiarity of the macronarrative in the intensely personal and deeply human micronarrative of the individual. It is through the New Age micronarrative that one's life begins to make sense again, begins to have meaning again. Through this meaning the reader is able to come into contact with the Divine which New Age makes the claim that its theories of creativity have as its base (McLaughlin 90). These new micronarratives heal the division of the self caused by the old paradigm that has been adamant in insisting that any experience which does not legitimate its supreme authority must be false or invalid.

This inner journey isn't the linear and direct movement toward a constant and fixed goal, but rather a meandering, crooked, curving, and unpredictable voyage that lives on in a state of perpetual evolution. McLaughlin compares it to "twelve step" recovery programs that are built on narratives of transformation. The various steps of the program act as signposts on the inner journey of the participant on their path to wholeness. It recognizes the inherent variability of the journey and respects the persistent struggle that many face. That is to say that there is no conclusive end to the program or the narrative. It is highly individuated and universal at the same time. While the individual works toward his or her personal recovery they access a more universal narrative that others have created as a healing tool (93-94).

This study's argument of the validity of New Age literature as literary hinges on the ideas that 1) what is commonly studied (i.e., the canon) does not necessarily reflect popular interests and has a rather indiscriminate history based on preferences of the critic as much as the reader, 2) bestsellers could prove to be a viable and even indispensable object of study if we are truly literary historians and critics of culture who claim to be exploring the human condition, and 3) the necessarily literary form of narrative is the prevailing mode of communication on the New Age movement's message of transformation. Considering these three factors one can surmise that the field of New Age literature is a legitimate field of literary study. That said, this author is acutely aware of the nature of change and the traditional nature of literary studies and understands that this proposition, no matter how well *reasoned*, may still not be accepted by researchers whose knowledge is informed principally by the old paradigm of Enlightened thinking. However, it is hopeful that sufficient justification has been presented to legitimate this particular study. Other researchers will have to continue making the case for some time to come

until the dominant paradigm mentioned earlier is sufficiently weakened that a new, more dynamic form may emerge.

CHAPTER 3

NEW AGE LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE

The Construction of a Literary Field

Considering such a diverse and broad movement will require some type of organization and deliberate selection in order to arrive at a suitable body of work appropriate for demonstrating the argument that this study hopes to make. As explained in the first chapter of this study, the term New Age is often applied as a broad label to represent that which does not fit within traditional geo-racial religious categories. As also noted previously, the result is a hodge-podge of practices, philosophies, and attitudes regarding the supposed current transformation of humanity. In relation to the task at hand of sifting through the sometimes eclectic and esoteric literature, Keith Whinnom has done similar work of selecting texts among a veritable sea of possibilities in his examination of Spanish Golden-Age bestsellers. His approach notes three defining criteria for the selection of which texts he chooses to discuss: limiting the time and place of the inquiry, selecting specific genres, and construing ‘popular’ as meaning ‘widely read’ (189).

This study will have a restricted time frame that is marked from 1960 until the present day as it reflects what is widely considered the general chronological frame of the New Age movement. The space is delimited to Latin America in following with already established regional literary fields of study.³⁶ The next of Whinnom’s ideas is to identify a particular literary

³⁶ Although the focus of this study is Latin American texts, works written by Latin American authors or treating Latin American indigenous philosophies, this investigator believes that a strong case can be made for a Peninsular

genre in which to work. For example he chose to work with “whole books and [...] to ignore the fortunes of individual tales, jokes, and shorter rhymes” (189). Since what is of interest here is the supposed emergence of a new level of consciousness it stands to reason that this task may be done through any form of literary production. At this point in time, it seems that the New Age movement’s literary production centers primarily on metaphysical philosophical discourse with lesser attempts made at producing creative works. This investigative work will explore creative works and philosophical discourses as well as anthropological works which intend to present a comprehensive understanding of certain indigenous worldviews that have become important to the New Age movement. This study will not investigate texts that expound specific practices such as yoga, meditation, astrology or Tarot interpretation because these practices fail to necessarily promote and elaborate an emerging worldview which can be analyzed and investigated, but, rather, are only indicative of such a perspective.

To expand Whinnom’s criteria of genre, I will be selecting authors that represent differing philosophical orientations that are represented within New Age literature in Latin America. Vicente Merlo successfully elaborates the three primary philosophical orientations of oriental, psycho-therapy, and esotericism; however, he does fail to mention the popularity of indigenous traditions that have originated from northern Mexico, for example. To further problematize the classification of New Age texts, there are questions that arise about how to properly discern a text’s philosophical inclination. For example, Alejandro Jodorowsky’s work *Psicomagia*, at first glance, would fit neatly under the umbrella of psychotherapy in that it is primarily a text about healing the inner self. However, this becomes much less simple a task

New Age corpus as well. For example, just between Spanish writers Ramiro Calle, José María Doria, and José María de la Fuente there exists more than twenty texts available for study as well as a number of audio and video files that further elaborate their New Age perspective. I believe that further investigation could result significantly more authors and books worthy of research regarding the emerging worldview that this study will be examining in Latin America.

when we consider that much of Jodorowsky's knowledge is informed by shamanism learned while he was in Mexico. Additionally, he also spent significant time with a Zen Buddhist master while in Mexico which he expounds in *El maestro y las magas*. Thus, Merlo cannot be criticized for omitting the legacy of literature that seeks to promote indigenous worldviews and spiritual practices since the field of literature is so diverse and often presents itself in hybrid forms. Given results from several comprehensive searches of New Age Latin American literature it has been concluded that the philosophical orientations of New Age literature that are most represented in Latin America are Oriental, indigenous, and esoteric worldviews.

The last of Whinnom's defining criteria is that he construed 'popular' as meaning that a text was widely read (189). Given that there is no known existing literary research on the emerging worldview that is promoted by the Latin American New Age movement, this study represents a seminal investigation in this field. With that in mind, this work seeks to research authors who have made significant contributions to the overall field of the New Age movement's metaphysical philosophical discourse. By this, it stands to reason that if the writers selected for study have made significant contributions to the field, then they will have been widely read given that the New Age movement is popular by nature of its formation and structure.

Before entering into a presentation of the existing field of literature, it is important to point out that such a task can be rather challenging, if not even nearly unmanageable at this point in time. As of the writing of this study there are no lists or databases that cover the entire geographic region of Latin America which could offer a conclusive register of authors and texts. Given the number of countries involved and the wide geographical limits considered, what will be presented here can only be a partial collection that can serve as a fertile starting point for other research. I have made every attempt to be inclusive but discerning in the process of identifying

which texts will be presented. Ken Gelder notes that the possibility of writing a comprehensive bibliography of a new field is daunting. He cites Clive Bloom's *Best Sellers: Popular Fiction Since 1900* (2002), a highly regarded reference text that attempts to survey the field of popular literary production in the United States, to illustrate how any attempt at such a definitive list at this point is lacking (3-5). The same holds true for the field studied here. The most reasonable approach, I suggest, is to identify those who have produced work that has made a significant or lasting impression in its field.

To sift through this significant quantity of New Age texts to find an object of study we can utilize Gelder's text *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field* (2004) in which he explains the field of popular fiction and how it has formed and functions. He notes several important points from the beginning. One of which is that he is careful to clarify that he does not posit popular fiction in opposition to Literature.³⁷ His narrative tone and attitude does not reflect an anti-Literature bias which seeks to privilege popular fiction over Literature, but rather to give it equal footing as a valid field of literary study with its own logic and norms (11). Similarly, this study on New Age Latin American literature does not seek to declare literary superiority over writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, Machado de Assis, Mario Vargas Llosa or Gabriel García Márquez. This study's perspective is that the customary lines of literary study can be enhanced and expanded using the newly emerging worldview that will be

³⁷ He contrasts between literature and Literature by offering examples of the latter as a means of defining it. By literature he refers to the enormous general body of written works. The other, Literature, is used to refer to works produced by authors like Jane Austen, George Elliot, Henry James, James Joyce, and William Faulkner, for example (11). He uses the example of opera contrasted with the soap opera. Opera (representing Literature) generally requires a significant degree of cultural-social education from its audience. Additionally, the audience tends to be more economically affluent and "occupies a high/restricted position in the cultural field" (13). The soap opera, on the other hand, is cheaper to produce and watch and requires virtually no special training in culture. That is to say, "pretty much anybody can watch them and understand what is going on" (13). Gelder sees Literature as a more autonomous endeavor whose creator seeks to produce his or her art according to the dictates of the artist and directed to a restricted audience of fellow artists, like-minded thinkers, and trained social-cultural groups, whereas popular works are "open to mass audiences and necessarily caught up in the logic of the marketplace" (13). That is, it is conscious of its readers and is dedicated to satisfying their tastes.

explained in Chapters 5 through 7. That is to say that the traditional examination of literature can be combined with philosophies garnered from works like the New Age Latin American texts that are studied here to give a deeper, richer, and wider set of interpretative tools to the investigator in order to better understand the human condition.

Reading the Field

Gelder explains that he prefers the term ‘popular fiction’ over ‘bestseller’ as it “lends the field its distinction” (3). Popular fiction and bestsellers are not necessarily synonymous in that writers of Literature are likely to produce bestsellers but not necessarily popular works and popular writers may publish works that do not sell well.³⁸ The object of this study will be authors that have sold well, thus producing bestsellers within their field. In the field of New Age Latin American literature there are authors who have a popular following and have produced a large number of texts, but have never made a significant impact within the field and within the New Age readership.³⁹

One example of those is Dr. Camilo Cruz (Colombia) who works within the human potential framework of Latin American self-help literature. His most notable works, *La ley de la atracción: Mitos y verdades sobre el secreto más extraño del mundo* (2007) and *La vaca: Una historia sobre como deshacernos del conformismo y la mediocridad* (2004), seek to help the

³⁸ Gelder uses the term ‘popular’ to refer to literature favored by the general populace with little or usually no training in literary criticism and also a lack of literary sophistication (13).

³⁹ Using such criteria can be problematic since, as mentioned before, there are no known comprehensive lists, databases or registers that document the totality of New Age Latin American literary production. There are also not any known clusters of such data that can be piecemealed together in order to form a coherent view of this segment of literary landscape. What has been done in this case, as well as what Gelder has done and promotes as a viable research method for popular literature, is exhaustive online searches of bookstores. Also, this study has included online searches of numerous publishing houses in Latin America and Spain as well as a detailed search of Birdy Librería (<http://www.libreriabirdy.es/index.php>), an online Spanish bookstore that is capable of searching by publisher, genre, title, and author. This research method, although distasteful to some scholars, as Gelder points out, reflects the nature of popular literary trends (6).

reader in unfolding her or his potential by removing the impediments to happiness and success and ceasing dysfunctional behavioral cycles and attitudes. Cruz conducts motivational workshops and conferences throughout the United States and Latin America. Alex Dey (Mexico), who authored similar texts titled *Despertador: Cómo tener un buen día todos los días* (2000) and *Cómo lograr todo lo que quieres: Guía práctica para convertir metas en realidades* (2001) offers insight into the connection between happiness and wealth. These authors have an interest in maximizing human potential, particularly in relation to the reader's ability to financially prosper and live well. In a vein less centered on wealth and professional production, Alfonso Lara Castillo (Mexico) wrote *Vive!* (1985), *La búsqueda* (1986) and *Mujer!...Lucha por tu ser!* (2008) which propose to aid the reader in casting off the binds of social conditioning in order to find true personal freedom. Related to gender identity, Pilar Sordo (Chile) has written *¡Viva la Diferencia! (... y el complemento también)* (2006) which sets out to explore gender identity and roles in contemporary society. Her second book, *Con el coco en el diván* (2007), continued with the same theme but is amplified to discuss a broad range of relationships in contemporary Chilean society. *No quiero crecer* (2009) treats the common modern problem of generational differences between adults and adolescents and analyzes this subject through the lens of difference and how difference can lend to a more dynamic and fulfilling relationship and life. In *Lecciones de seducción* (2010) she offers ideas and insight on what she calls the process of seduction which hinges on the concepts of self-seduction and self-care. Her most recent essay, *Bienvenido dolor* (2012) she teaches her reader about the value of psychological pain in how it can show us our limitations. He dissects the concept of happiness and shows how to utilize our disappointments to find greater happiness. Also in the field of human potential are found the works of Francisco J. Ángel⁴⁰ (Mexico), *El esclavo: una novela sobre la libertad, el perdón y la*

⁴⁰ Also known as Swami Anand Dilvar.

verdadera superación personal (2001) and *Conversaciones con mi guía ...Mas allá de 'El esclavo'* (2010) which are more attuned to the works of Castillo due to their liberating intent from the limitation of imposed identities and are more closely related to philosophy of the mind and metaphysics than self-help or motivational texts. In this field one also finds *Arte de conocerse* (2012) by Alejandra Llamas (Mexico), which is centered on the importance of self-awareness for transformation. Enrique Barrios (Chile) has published children's novels and short stories that promote the values and beliefs associated with the New Age worldview in books like *Ami, el niño de las estrellas* (1986), *El maravilloso universo de la magia* (1988), *Cuentos de amor, estrellas y almas gemelas* (1991), *Dios para locos bajitos* (1998), and *Proyecto Elevación* (2000). Patricia May (Chile) has published four works which treat the issues of spirituality. Her first book, *Todos los reinos palpitan en ti* (2001) explains the energies that transit the universe and what they mean for human existence and spirituality. She later published *Nuevos pensamientos, nuevos mundos* (2003), *Vivir conscientes* (2006), and *De la cultura del ego a la cultura del alma* (2007).⁴¹ Jorge Bucay (Argentina) has published metaphysical discourses, novels, and short stories. Among his more notable works are *Cartas para Claudia* (*Letters for Claudia*) (1988), *Déjame que te cuente* (*Let Me Tell You*) (1997), *Amarse con los ojos abiertos* (*Loving Oneself With Open Eyes*) (2000) with Silvia Salinas, *Cuentos para pensar* (*Stories for Thought*) (2002), and *El candidato* (*The Candidate*) (2006), among a number of lesser known writings.⁴² Sergio Bambarén (Peru) has published nearly a dozen books on dreaming, surfing, and the metaphysical journey. His most popular story, *El delfín: La historia de un sueñador* (*The*

⁴¹ *Todos los reinos palpitan en ti* and *De la cultura del ego a la cultura del alma* are freely available for download from her website <http://www.patriciamay.cl/> .

⁴² Bucay also has an interesting series titled *Hojas de Ruta* which consists of several books of wisdom that serve to more directly guide the reader on his or her path: *El camino de la autodependencia* (2000), *El camino del encuentro* (2001), *El camino de las lágrimas* (2001), *El camino de la felicidad* (2002), and *El camino de la espiritualidad* (2010)

Dolphin: Story of a Dreamer) (1996) is closely replicated in his other works, *La playa de los sueños* (*Beach of Dreams* (2000)) (1998) and *Vela blanca* (1999).

As has been mentioned, organizing a comprehensive bibliography of New Age Latin American writers is a substantial and rather challenging task given the lack of formal research on this topic and its presence in this region of the world. Nonetheless, there have been several Latin American writers who have been rather notable in that they have received some critical attention in addition to their commercial success within the field of study proposed here. Authors Carlos Castañeda, Paulo Coelho, and Alejandro Jodorowsky are the most prominent among the group. All of these writers have had a significant degree of commercial success both inside and outside of Latin America and their native language.

These authors have each developed a brand or image that reflects cultural, anthropological, and cosmological specificities that have defined their work and message. For example, Carlos Castañeda taught from indigenous spiritual tradition of the Yaqui of northern Mexico. A Peruvian-born American working on a degree in anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, Castañeda published a narrative version of his field notes from time spent with a shaman named don Juan Matus.⁴³ He published a total of twelve books that either speak directly about his experience as the apprentice of the Yaqui shaman or the knowledge that he later developed as a result of that experience. *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968) was the initial publication of his anthropological research which was followed by *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan* (1971) and *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* (1972). These books seem to contain the essential lessons of his shamanic teacher; however, his other texts are not lacking for content as they seem to extrapolate further

⁴³ This situation may strike a familiar chord among Latin Americanists. It is similar to the story “El etnógrafo” by Jorge Luis Borges. The difference being that Castañeda has written his findings, several times in fact.

knowledge from his encounters with don Juan Matus.⁴⁴ His success, perhaps, eased the path for later writer like Victor Sánchez (Mexico) and don Miguel Ruiz (Mexico) who would present their own versions of some of that knowledge a few decades later.⁴⁵

Paulo Coelho does not primarily write texts that explicitly seek to disseminate his message, as do the other two writers studied here. This Brazilian author is, perhaps, the most known Latin American New Age writer to treat New Age spiritual matters in his works. His literary production has been largely in the form of the novel. He has had tremendous commercial success, particularly beginning with his work *O Alquimista* [*The Alchemist*] (1988).⁴⁶

Interestingly, despite his Roman Catholic affiliation, his New Age leanings are noted on his Facebook profile page that once listed Carlos Castañeda's book, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, among his favorite books.⁴⁷

The last of the authors, Alejandro Jodorowsky also has experience with shamanic teachers from Mexico, not unlike Castañeda; however, his *oeuvre* is far too extensive and

⁴⁴ His other works are *Tales of Power* (1974), *The Second Ring of Power* (1977), *The Eagle's Gift* (1981), *The Fire From Within* (1984), *The Power of Silence: Further Lessons of Don Juan* (1987), *The Art of Dreaming* (1993), *Magical Passes: The Practical Wisdom of the Shamans of Ancient Mexico* (1998), *The Wheel of Time: Shamans of Ancient Mexico, Their Thoughts About Life, Death and the Universe* (1998), and *The Active Side of Infinity* (1999).

⁴⁵ In fact, Sánchez corresponded with Castañeda regarding his knowledge and public image as a teacher/shaman.

⁴⁶ His other works are *O Manifesto de Krig-há* (*The Manifest of Krig-há*) (1974), *Teatro da Educação* (*Theater For Education*) (1974), *Arquivos do Inferno* (*Hell Archives*) (1982), *O Manual Prático do Vampirismo* (*Practical Manual of Vampirism*) (1986), *O Diário de um Mago* (*The Pilgrimage*) (1987), *O Alquimista* (*The Alchemist*) (1988), *Brida* (1990), *O Dom Supremo* (*The Greatest Gift*) (1991), *As Valkírias* (*The Valkyries*) (1992), *Maktub* (1992), *Na Margem do Rio Piedra Eu Sentei e Chorei* (*By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*) (1994), *O Monte Cinco* (*The Fifth Mountain*) (1996), *Letras do Amor de um Profeta* (*Love Letters from a Prophet*) (1997), *Manual do Guerreiro da Luz* (*The Manual of the Warrior of Light*) (1997), *Veronika Decide Morrer* (*Veronika Decides to Die*) (1998), *O Demônio e a Srta Prym* (*The Devil and Miss Prym*) (2000), *Histórias para Pais, Filhos e Netos* (*Fathers, Sons and Grandsons*) (2001), *Onze Minutos* (*Eleven Minutes*) (2003), *O Gênio e as Rosas* (*The Genie and the Roses*) (2004), *Viagens* (*Journeys*) (2004), *O Zahir* (*The Zahir*) (2005), *Caminhos Recolhidos* (*Revived Paths*) (2005), *Ser Como um Rio que Flui* (*Like the Flowing River*) (2006), *A Bruxa de Portobello* (*The Witch of Portobello*) (2006), *Vida: Citações Seleccionadas* (*Life: Selected Quotations*) (2007), *O Vencedor Está Só* (*The Winner Stands Alone*) (2008), and *O Aleph* (*The Aleph*) (2010).

⁴⁷ He has since changed the format of his personal information available on the social media site and now all personal information is only available through his blog and Wikipedia, which do not list his favorite books.

dynamic to limit discussion of his work to that related to shamanism. This Chilean-born artist has worked in a plethora of mediums that include theatre, public lectures, performances, comic strips, novel, graphic novel, poetry, short story, film, and mime. His work typically deals with the task of reversing the process of social and genealogical conditioning that removes the shackles of imposed identities which prevents one from realizing his or her true identity, often through Eastern spiritual traditions or philosophies.⁴⁸ All of this has been synthesized in his latest book, *Metagenealogia: El árbol genealógico como arte, terapia y búsqueda del Yo esencial* (2011). The most notable among his autobiographical works are *Donde mejor canta un pájaro* (1992), *La danza de la realidad* (2001) and *El Maestro y las magas* (2006).⁴⁹ His most recent publication, *Metageneología*, co-written with Marianne Costa, seems to be garnering much attention from his readers. Although he molds his message with his personal history through (semi-) autobiographical writings, he does have work within all literary genres (narrative, poetry, theater, and essay) and with many forms (novel, short story, fable, micro-story, memoir, spiritual autobiography, and interviews).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ These include Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Although he was born into the Jewish tradition, he does not seem to strongly self-identify with any particular religion. Interestingly, he has not produced anything concretely related to Jewish religion or culture.

⁴⁹ Robert Atkinson's perspective on autobiography is interesting and illuminating: "All autobiographical writing is spiritual. By the time we are old enough, mature enough, or desirous enough to think reflectively about our own experience, put it in order, and give voice to it, everything that has happened to us comes into play as part of the ongoing endeavor to discover, or uncover, who we are at our core" (51).

⁵⁰ As mentioned in the above text, Jodorowsky has been prolific in his artistic production. To date there is no known complete list of his literary production. This is due primarily to the large amount of writing that he has produced, their revisions and the various publishers he has worked with to bring forth these works and their various editions. Following is an attempt at the project of cataloging his literary works and does not include his theatrical and filmic production: *Cuentos Pánicos* (1963), *Teatro Pánico* (1965), *Juegos Pánicos* (1965), *El Topo, fábula pánica con imágenes* (screenplay from the film *El Topo*) (1970), *Fábulas Pánicas* (reprints from some strips of *el Heraldillo de México*) (1977), *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada* (1991), *Donde mejor canta un pájaro* (1992), *Psicomagia* (1995), *Sombras al Mediodía* (1995), *Griffes D'Ange* (1996), *Antología Pánica* (with Daniel González-Dueñas) (1996), *Los Evangelios para sanar* (1997), *La Sabiduría de los chistes* (1998), *El niño del jueves negro* (1999), *Albina y los hombres-perro* (2000), *La Trampa Sagrada* (2000), *No basta decir* (2000), *La danza de la realidad: Psicomagia y psicochamanismo* (2001), *El loro de las siete lenguas* (2001), *El paso del ganso* (2001), *La escalera de los ángeles* (2001), *La sabiduría de los cuentos* (2002), *El tesoro de la sombra* (2003), *Fábulas pánicas* (reprints of all strips of

Academic study of these three writers, until this point, has been rather limited, as has been study of the New Age movement in Latin America. Two studies of the movement in this region are book chapters: Robert Carpenter's "Esoteric Literature as a Microscopic Mirror of Brazil's Religious Marketplace" in *Latin American Religion in Motion* (1999), and María Julia Carozzi's "A Latin American New Age?" in *Handbook of New Age* (2007). Both articles treat specific areas and themes. Carpenter demonstrates how esoteric texts reflect a plurality of religious possibilities in Brazil. He notes how Paulo Coelho was the first to achieve success with esoteric literature and then elaborates a view of the market forces that have converged to allow such texts to appear and prosper. Carozzi also studies similar ground but in a more anthropological light that explains the movement within Argentina and parts of Brazil by identifying 'circuits' or networks of classes, shops and bookstores that treat the topic. Neither of these articles attempts any literary study of New Age Latin American spirituality. It is also unknown, at this point, after comprehensive research, if there are any other literary studies that seek to define this field in general or in reference to specific regions.

There are some studies that reference or directly treat some of the authors presented here either in literary or anthropological studies. The most widely known of these would be Richard de Mille's *The Don Juan Papers: Further Castaneda Controversies* (1980) which is a revised edition of an earlier attempt to demonstrate that Castañeda's stories were inventions and not the real experiences that he purported them to be. In his revision he eliminated certain mistaken claims from the earlier versions regarding flora of the Sonora Desert that he says that Castañeda

el Heraldo de México) (2003), *El dedo y la luna* (2004), *Piedras del camino* (2004), *La vía del Tarot* (with Marianne Costa) (2004), *Yo, el tarot* (2004), *Cabaret místico* (2006), *Sólo de amor* (2006), *El Maestro y las Magas (The Spiritual Journey Of Alejandro Jodorowsky* (2008)) (2006), *Correo terapéutico* (2008), *Teatro sin Fin: Tragedias, comedias y mimodramas* (2008), *Tres cuentos mágicos* (2009), *Manual de Psicomagia: Consejos para sanar tu vida (Psychomagic: The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy* (2010)) (2009), *Poesía sin fin* (2009), *Pasos en el vacío* (2009), and *Metagenealogía* (with Marianne Costa) (2011)

fictionalized. Although de Mille is successful at calling into question Castañeda's credibility, he leaves much room for the discussion of the worldview that the shaman's apprentice promotes.

There is no known literary analysis of Castaneda's work.

Jodorowsky's work has been subject to limited literary criticism, but since he has worked with such a broad range of media and languages, it can be difficult to get a firm grasp on what has been studied. There have been a number of studies of his filmic body of works and his drama while his literary *oeuvre* remains nearly untouched. Robert Neustadt's article "Alejandro Jodorowsky: Reiterating Chaos, Rattling the Cage of Representation" has been one of the most informative pieces of literary investigation, until now. Additionally, this researcher's master's thesis⁵¹ at the Romance Language Department of the University of Georgia was an attempt at situating and explaining his book *El maestro y las magas (The Spiritual Journey of Alejandro Jodorowsky: The Creator of "El topo" (2008))* (2006) and its central theme of the death of the intellectual.

Paulo Coelho, despite his tremendous popular success, is yet to have notable literary criticism written about him. The scholarly aversion to his work is palpable in the lack of research that has been done on his writings. The text *Os 10 Pecados de Paulo Coelho* (2007) by Eloésio Paulo recognizes its own insufficiencies as an academic study and says that it only offers possibilities into theoretical study of the Brazilian's writings. It superficially explores certain themes within his work without attempting to delve into any rigorous intellectual analysis. Italian Vito Galeota explores, in a very general manner, the pilgrimage of the protagonist in *O Diário de Um Mago (Diary of a Magus/The Pilgrimage)* (1987) while Sheeba Rakesh's article "Desire, Sex and Subjectivity: You've Got Eleven Minutes to Live!" investigates physical desire,

⁵¹ Written under the supervision of Professor Luis Correa Díaz.

gratification, and identity in the heroine of Coelho's novel *Onze minutos (Eleven Minutes)* (2003). Although not a scholarly work, Fernando Morais has written a very comprehensive biography of Coelho, *O Mago* (2008). It would prove valuable to anyone wishing to understand Coelho's history in-depth.

Each of the three authors mentioned in the previous three paragraphs are renowned for his "wisdom" and "knowledge" which has gained each of them a dedicated group of readers as well as a large number of "followers" on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.⁵² All of them have been translated and are recognized widely. With the exception of Alejandro Jodorowsky, all of them have had significant success in the United States which has a substantial market for their work.⁵³ All three of these writers are generally revered by their dedicated readers as possessing esoteric wisdom or knowledge possessed by only a few which will benefit the reader in his or her spiritual growth and bring the reader greater and deeper happiness and peace.

Defining the Field

In order to initiate legitimatization of this field of study, in this section the reader will be presented with some identifiable and tangible aspects and characteristics that define the New Age Latin American literary genre. As a general starting point I present Carl Raschke's quote

⁵² Paulo Coelho has recently indicated that, between the two media sites mentioned, he has more than five million followers. That is to say that more than five million people (the number has since grown to more than twelve million) subscribe to and read his intermittent postings. The topic of these postings range from simple opinions about current issues to knowledge based on his experience to videos and readings of segments of his texts (Coelho *Paulo Coelho's Blog*). It might also be interesting to note that both Coelho and Jodorowsky actively utilize social media and other forms of technology in the divulcation of their message and maintain an interactive relationship with their readers.

⁵³ To date, Jodorowsky's only literary works that have been translated to English are *Manual de Psicomagia: Consejos para sanar tu vida*, which has been translated to the English as *Psychomagic: The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy*, and *El maestro y las magas* whose English title is *The Spiritual Journey of Alejandro Jodorowsky: The Creator of "El topo"*. The vastly different title for the second book seems to indicate that Jodorowsky is trying to re-establish himself in the English-speaking markets through an association with his most known and successful previous work in the United States, the film *El topo* (1970).

that the New Age movement operates from “a consistent philosophical rejection of the Western heritage of rationality, social morality, and political ideals of individual liberty and authority” (208). As pointed out earlier, the new age that has just dawned, is dawning or is about to dawn often appears in contrast with the established knowledge paradigm. As Thomas McLaughlin notes:

New Age writings share a conviction that we are at crossroads in history, a time when personal, social, spiritual, planetary, and cosmic transformation is at hand. Christian, Native American, Asian and other prophecies are said to point to the present as the end of the regime of reason, science, patriarchy, linear concepts of time, insidious form of power, etc., and the beginning of a world that honors the spiritual dimensions, intuition, the feminine, ecstatic connection between the personal and the cosmic, human spiritual unity, an openness to higher powers, and a fundamental connection to the earth. This sense of living at a moment of planetary transformation fosters a belief in the possibility of radical personal transformation as well. (79)

With this broad description we can begin to formulate some parameters of the field of New Age Latin American literary production.

However, first I would like to clearly reiterate Keith Whinnom’s approach that notes three defining criteria for the selection of which texts he chooses to discuss in order that we may more closely approach a definition of this field: limiting the time and place of the inquiry, selecting specific genres, and construing ‘popular’ as meaning ‘widely read’ (189). As established in Chapter 1, the general time frame of the New Age movement and its literary production begins in the early 1960’s continues until the present moment. Owing to the

established literary fields of Latin American and Peninsular literature, it is most appropriate to continue along those geographic lines, although a more developed and regional approach may give rise later.⁵⁴ Although Whinnom construes ‘popular’ as ‘widely read’, and I agree that that concept is equally applicable here, it is also suggested that popular mean that it is not born of centers of higher culture. That is to say that it is often formed as a reaction to the hegemonic pressure of higher culture centers.

In Joan L Brown’s book *Confronting our Canons: Spanish and Latin American Studies in the 21st Century* (2010) she describes the purpose of canon formation that is useful here as canons are the exemplary works of a given field of literature. She notes that “a canon is necessarily an instrument of instruction and socialization, since its value system must be perpetuated if the group is to survive” (41). It codifies the group’s values and idea which enables them to be distinguished from other groups. She notes that the inclusion of certain texts is equally meaningful as those that are excluded. Truly, it is through the process of exclusion that distinction takes form. Virgil Nemoianu pointed out the three fundamental dichotomies that are in the forefront of popular literature discussion which can help us better understand what is being included/excluded: Western/non-Western, male/female, and elite/popular discourses (236).

To this point we have a description of a literary field that is centered on transformation and healing that ranges from the personal to the planetary levels. It often is presented or presents a counterhegemonic type of knowledge that contests the dominant knowledge paradigm. This, then, necessarily reincorporates a counter set of different and differing spiritualities that frequently have been marginalized by the dominant knowledge and religious paradigm. In the case of the religious paradigm it will frequently contrast with dominant Christian faith,

⁵⁴ For example, I think it possible to develop a field, with much more research, of course, of Mexican New Age literature that centers on shamanism or Chilean New Age literature that is rooted in Jungian psychology.

particularly the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, this type of literature is poly-gendered in that it seeks to legitimize the feminine which had previously been subjugated by the masculine. In order to achieve these ends it will need to include work from other areas of knowledge such as anthropology, religion, and spiritual writings. Because of this, some aspects of the New Age Latin American literary field will also bring a decentralization of literature traditionally understood as a creative and social practice. Relatedly, the role of the reader becomes that of advisee, student or disciple in a desire to enact the changes that the movement, and its gurus, promises to bring forth.

In this chapter I have tried to give order and thoughtful structure to the field which is being studied. Given the existing body that I have cited as only initial findings, there is a coherent and varied field of texts available for analysis. Many attempts have been made to bring to light a comprehensive list of authors that genuinely reflect the field. However, it may be woefully obvious to some the absence of a substantive female voice. Having made numerous attempts to find women writers of New Age Latin American literature who have had even marginal success has proved difficult. At this point we can only speculate as to why this is the case.⁵⁵ Owing to the problems of disparateness of New Age topics and approaches and the wide geographical and national limits considered for this study, it is entirely possible that such women writers exist. It is rather curious that a movement that is commonly perceived as promoting the full feminine voice and privileging the feminine while repressing the masculine lacks clear women writers to promote those values in this region. Although it would be fascinating and, perhaps, revealing to explore this conundrum more deeply, there is no place for it within the

⁵⁵ One avenue of research that might prove fruitful to make conclusions on this matter might be to consider the importance of the male voice speaking the feminine message of intuition, inclusion, and tolerance. It would be interesting to research the possibility of the necessity of male voice to bring forth the female since it has been the dominant of the two voices for such a long time.

scope of this study and to speculate on causes and effects without more concrete and valid research would be irresponsible.

CHAPTER 4

TRAVEL LITERATURE AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Travel Literature and Human Development

At this point in the study it is time to turn toward developing a critical approach to New Age Latin American literature. The critical approach used here to understand the value of the body of work identified in the previous chapter is not an accidental or coincidental one. That is to say that it works well in the interpretive process of understanding the journey of the New Ager toward transformation and a brighter, happier future. A strong argument can be made that travel serves as metaphor for the internal journey and the internal journey is represented by narrative writings and writings about narratives that help the reader 'to find his way'. Through this metaphysical journey, where travel is metaphor for development, the transformation is able to manifest and a new consciousness is able to unfold. This metaphorical unfolding of the reader parallels the path of the pilgrim in travel literature and permits a mapping of the perception of human experience. Coupled with this, as I will show, is the certainty that the human consciousness that is evolving has identifiable parameters which can be used to elucidate what this researcher believes is a new level or type of consciousness, apparent in the literary works of the chosen authors, that is beginning to manifest on the level of mass culture.

It seems a good idea to review, generally, for a moment, the history of travel literature and its current state. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs point out that writings about movement have existed as long as writing itself. They cite the Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt as the earliest period in

which travel writing appears.⁵⁶ The classical Greek work *Odyssey* is among the more ancient records of movement as well as the Bible. According to Hulme and Youngs, “The biblical and classical traditions are both rich in examples of travel writing, literal and symbolic- Exodus, the punishment of Cain, the Argonauts, the *Aeneid*- which provide a corpus of reference and intertext for modern writers” (2). Trekkers like John Mandeville (*Travels of Sir John Mandeville*⁵⁷) and Marco Polo (*The Travels of Marco Polo* (1477)) created works that told the stories of their respective adventures while traveling as far east as China. Shortly thereafter, the westward expansion toward the New World and its conquest would cause an exponential increase in travel writing production. Christopher Columbus’ writings were heavily influenced by both Polo and Mandeville. In fact, Hulme and Youngs point out that the sailor’s early descriptions of the Caribbean islands echo the works of the two former travelers. The conquistadors that followed Columbus used descriptions of their travels to justify their actions or highlight their dedication to the Spanish crown, as was the case with Hernán Cortés and Álvaro Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. With this, writing had become an integral part of traveling by the sixteenth century.

As Mary Louise Pratt says in her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), much of the writing related to movement after Columbus’ arrival is centered on imperial records of geographical and cultural mapping. That is, accounts of experiences in the New World that would offer greater understanding to the existing European worldview in the context of what would be such a substantial encounter for Europeans. She explains what she calls a “planetary consciousness” that was in its initial stages at the beginning

⁵⁶ This epoch coincides with the years 1991 BCE-1802 BCE.

⁵⁷ Estimated to have first circulated between 1357 and 1371.

of the eighteenth century. Carl Linné's *Systema Naturae* (*The System of Nature*) (1735) and an international scientific expedition which was formed in the same year, now referred to as the La Condamine expedition, indicated an intense interest in understanding the natural world.⁵⁸ The previous imperial goal of mapping the world's coastlines to determine the exact shape of the planet was a viable project that proved to be realistic and doable (29). However, little was known about the interior of the North or South American continents and the La Condamine expedition sought to map and document the new colonies and territories. This moment marks a significant shift where interest turns from the outer edges or periphery of the region to the interior and its exploration which would provide a framework for "global-scale meaning" through a scientific understanding of natural history (15). She notes that by the end of that century, interior exploration had become the major thrust of "expansionist energies and imaginings" (23).

This turn inward reflects the turn inward that is seen in the New Age movement. In an attempt to truly and deeply understand, one turns from the periphery to the interior, from superficiality to depth, from cursory to detail for the benefit of knowledge and further understanding. For imperial Europe it was an attempt to know the exotic Other and for the New Ager it is an attempt to know the previously unknown self. It can be understood that to travel is to know the Other, to be exposed to that which is different. It provides one with heterogeneous experience that can have the effect of changing the mores and norms of the traveler. This journey and process of change can be seen symbolically in religious writings as well. Christian life has frequently been depicted symbolically as a journey itself. One of the most well-known examples of this perspective is John Bunyan's allegorical work *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) which tells

⁵⁸ The La Condamine expedition, although a diplomatic triumph for convoking cooperation between European countries and inspiring the Spanish crown to relax its legendarily strict travel and immigration laws, was a scientific and expeditionary failure. It is named after one of the very few survivors who managed to return after decades of being lost and penniless in the Americas. Virtually no new knowledge or understanding was gained (Pratt 15-23).

of a protagonist named Christian who journeys from his hometown, "City of Destruction", to "Celestial City" atop Mt. Zion.⁵⁹ ⁶⁰ The geospatial journey of the protagonist, Christian, represents the spiritual journey of all Christians toward and to Heaven. Hulme and Youngs note that: "Travel broadens the mind, and knowledge of distant places and people often confers status, but travelers sometime return as different people or do not come back at all" (2). It is certain that the journey has the capacity to create significant impact on the voyager. The experience of knowing the Other opens the traveler to the possibility of other values and beliefs and other ways and means of living. Thus, we see that travel, writing, and the transformations in the human spirit have had a connection for quite a long time.

In more contemporary times there are other motivations for turning inward. We see that the field of literature undergoes interesting changes that reflect contemporary modern life. Hulme identifies five broad and overlapping themes that can be found in travel writing of the last thirty-five years: "the comic, the analytical, the wilderness, the spiritual, and the experimental" (93). He thinks one motivation is that "as the earth's wildernesses get paved over, travel writing increasingly emphasizes the inner journey, often merging imperceptibly into memoir. [Peter] Matthiessen and [Robyn] Davidson have been powerful influences here in reasserting the spiritual dimension of travel and its capacity for renewal" (94). This will be the case, I will argue later, with Paulo Coelho's *O Diário de um Mago* and *O Aleph* and Alejandro Jodorowsky's book *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada* and *El maestro y las magas*. Carlos Castañeda's *Journey to*

⁵⁹ Hulme and Youngs point out that modern-day tourists are, in many ways, descendants of the early spiritual pilgrims: "A catering industry grew up to look after them, they followed set routes, and the sites they visited were packaged for them" (2).

⁶⁰ Percy G. Adams explains the commonality of such texts in the history of travel writing: "The religious quest- the search for the Holy Grail, the pilgrimage- is one of the most enduring in fiction, from Gawain and Percival to Bunyan's Christian. The books about real travelers seeking holy objects, people or places- Jerusalem, Rome, Compostela- would fill a large library" (153).

Ixtlan also reflects the internal transformation that he experienced while working with don Juan Matus. These modern tales of journey and inner contemplation reflect the specific modern situation of internal inquietude and emptiness that earlier travel writings don't address. As discussed in Chapter 2, the cold and calculating analytical form of rational thought and the scientific method leave little to the matters of the heart and soul. This hollow contemporary life has bred a new interest in the spiritual aspects of travel writing.

Truly, the pilgrimage, as a force of travel literature as a spiritual endeavor has endured from those works mentioned earlier until contemporary times. Indeed, William H. Sherman lists the spiritual pilgrimage as a "typology of travel writer" or a common, recurring theme within travel writing (21). Alexandra Peat notes this connection between spiritual development and travel writing in the contemporary world: "Modernism's concern with spiritual ethics comes to the fore in the trope of the sacred journey. The modernist pilgrimage is not only a form of spiritual seeking but also a journey that emphasizes the ongoing encounter between the individual traveler and the world" (7-8). It is a journey in which the traveler confronts his own limitations through knowing the world. This encounter with the Other thus becomes a consciousness impacting encounter with the limitations of the self. Casey Blanton notes this in *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (1997). Blanton speaks of the enduring nature of travel writing throughout history: "The persistence of this kind of writing is undoubtedly related to human curiosity and to a travel writer's desire to mediate between things foreign and things familiar, to help us understand that world which is other to us [...] The traveler/narrator's well-being and eventual homecoming become the primary tensions of the tale, the traveler's encounter with the other its chief attraction" (2). This process of change, as I hope to point out in the next three chapters, is at the core of the New Age movement and what its literature promotes.

Philip Edwards, in his book *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage: Spencer to Milton* (1997), points out the importance of the voyage in travel literature, its metaphorical meaning, and, also, its importance. The title of his book is rather important in relation to its contents. A sea-mark is something that helps to guide the seaman on his voyage in order to reach his destination. This is to point out that there is motivation and, then, also an objective. It has purpose. Edwards cites John Donne's idea that the ship is useless if it is not at sea and with a purpose (3). This is to say that without a purpose and thus an objective of some sort, then there is no possibility of voyage, in which case one is simply adrift. "This double concept of voyaging as on the one hand the restless search of the discontented, and on the other as determined self-creation is a formidable presence" (5) in literature and presents the metaphysical or spiritual voyage, as do the works that will be studied here in the following chapters. Each of the chosen authors attempts to help the reader understand the cause of his suffering or discontent and provide some framework for moving toward greater happiness and freedom. Similarly, as Edwards points out, something has been lost, because, if not, there would be no need to embark on a voyage.

This voyage is a question of leaving one state for a promised or expected better state. Similarly, Peat points out that in modernist literature: "Travel [...] becomes a sign of progress that corroborates modernist literature's avowed desire to move away from the past and, in the words of Ezra Pound, 'make it new'" (8). For Peat there is more than the simple promise of future betterment, but also a desire to face the past. Both Peat and Edwards use the description of the Janus-faced voyager who faces the past and moves forward; however, Peat points out that there is a desire or inclination to recover the past by recognizing it and incorporating it in order to move forward. What is important is to recognize the past so as to move toward the future. This

seeks not to abandon the past or refuse it, but rather a need to understand, respect, and integrate it. It is not simply remembered but transformed into something new (8). Blanton speaks of a similar phenomenon, one of healing the disjointed modern sense of identity. Modern travel writing holds the key to recuperating who we are, our self: “That modern parable concerns the quest for wholeness and the deep excavation for the self’s scattered shards. The comfortable balance between self and world, between pleasure and duty enjoyed by travel writers was thrown off kilter by the now insupportable idea of an essential self or a real world” (21). This fragmentation of the self and the quest for wholeness appear, in varying degrees, in much of the travel writing of the early twentieth century (21).

This search for wholeness and the resulting real or true Self is notable not only in travel literature but is a central theme in New Age literature. It underscores Carlos Castañeda’s *Journey to Ixtlan*. It is the significance of Paulo Coelho’s *O Diário de um Mago* and *O Aleph* and is the motivation behind nearly all of Alejandro Jodorowsky’s *oeuvre*. Thus, since the principal drive of the New Age movement is a global transformation, this cannot be accomplished without the individual finding wholeness in his being as well. That is, the quest for world transformation is accomplished through the individual journey to the Self.

Consciousness Studies

In many respects the journey to find one’s true identity or Self is a question of understanding how one has come to comprehend the world and its events, or simply, who one is now. I have chosen the field of consciousness studies, particularly the approach of evolutionary consciousness, as the basis for expounding the process of identity construction that takes one from his true Self to that of everyday identity that seems so dislocated and fragmented. Through understanding what consciousness is and how it shapes our existence (that is, our identity,

values, beliefs, and ideology which all shape our existence) we will gain a solid ground on which to begin analyzing the New Age Latin American authors and their works that have been selected for this study. Other fields like psychology or sociology have articulated viewpoints that are compatible with the purpose of this investigation; however, they are much more limited in scope and don't allow as comprehensive and robust an interpretation as consciousness studies involves.⁶¹

Although fields like psychology or sociology mentioned in the previous paragraph would surely be fruitful, just as much as a neurobiological or quantum approach would be, I will work within the philosophy of consciousness since philosophy and literary studies enjoy a well-established relationship. This should facilitate the work of bridging the space that has existed, until this point, between New Age literature and literary studies. It is no mistake that it is called a philosophy of consciousness and, thus, many of these same ideas can be found in philosophy departments under the branches of philosophy of mind and metaphysical philosophy. As one might imagine, a field with such a plethora of approaches makes defining the object of study a rather murky task. In fact, in one issue of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* Ram Vimal identifies and lists 40 different definitions of "consciousness" (Vimal 9). William G. Lycan discerns a number of types of consciousness, among which we will focus most on experiential

⁶¹ In fact, the psychological or sociological study of consciousness are but two of many approaches to understanding the field. For a general overview of consciousness that is organized by fields of study, consult *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness* (2007). While not as broad and inclusive, *Handbook of States of Consciousness* (1986) and *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness* (2007) are worth exploring as well.

consciousness.⁶² Thus, it might seem best to offer a brief and general overview of the study of consciousness and the word itself.

As Allan Combs points out, the word consciousness has been worn smooth by such widespread and unspecific usage that it can be rather slippery to grasp. He notes that although our contemporary use of the word is a fairly new phenomenon it does have etymological roots in the Latin word *conscientia*, coming from Roman jurisprudence meaning the knowledge a witness has of another's deeds. Medieval Christian scholars employed the term in reference to a moral awareness. Thomas Aquinas used it to refer to the use of moral knowledge in personal decision making. However, it was René Descartes who exercised it to express an awareness of inner ideas (Combs 1). Descartes' idea of inner ideas or mind-stuff was termed *res cogitans* while the outside objective world was referred to as *res extensa*. Later John Locke would put the word to use in its more common contemporary understanding of inner experiences. This concept is fundamental for understanding this study. According to Combs' interpretation of Locke, everything that humans know is known only through the five senses (2). This is important when one considers that humans depend heavily on experience that is perceived through the senses in order to make understanding of the world.⁶³ This is to point out that that which intervenes between sensed experience and the brain is our consciousness. These mediations tell the brain

⁶² To illustrate the diverse and dynamic nature of consciousness studies, here is a list of types of consciousness that are being referred to when the term consciousness is used, according to Lycan: Organism consciousness, Control consciousness, Consciousness of consciousness, State/Event Consciousness, Reportability, Introspective consciousness, Subjective consciousness, and Self-consciousness, Lycan also expounds briefly on at least a dozen fundamental issues with the field (2-10). Experiential consciousness, as Lycan calls it, is chosen here because of the importance of *how* experience is interpreted and what it means for human understanding. This shall become more clear and obvious in the next few paragraphs.

⁶³ Lycan believes that there are a few discernible characteristics of consciousness. It is: real, internal, specially accessible to/by me, ineffable, intrinsically perspectival, (in some sense) inaccessible to science, and (in some sense) inexplicable (11).

how to interpret and understand experience. For example, if two people were to be sitting next to a campfire and it suddenly blazed-up, *how* each person perceives this situation would determine the course of action that would follow. While one might feel threatened by the sudden surge of heat and chose to move away, the other might perceive it as an opportunity to roast a marshmallow. This is consciousness in action. It is how we make sense of and understand the world in which we live.

American psychologist and philosopher William James taught on this subject and eventually thought to discard the word altogether because it lacked any real meaning in terms of existence. That is, that the term only refers to an abstract idea whose operations and functions are little understood. It is the principal phenomenon that mediates our direct experience of reality. James substituted the word *experience* whenever he wanted to refer to the noun so as to better and more accurately label what was being referenced. Although Combs supports the common use of the term *consciousness*, he says that he supports James change in terminology (6).⁶⁴ This is to say that consciousness is not so much a thing as much as an experience or, particularly, the process of experience.

Similarly, Euan Macphail explains consciousness by highlighting two of its most important features. One is self-consciousness and the other is feeling-consciousness. According to Macphail, we know that we are not the Other, that our self ends at the outer perimeter of the skin and the Other does not pertain to the inner world within it. It is essential for distinguishing between one's own being and the rest of existence. Feeling-consciousness is how we interpret all of the experience of the inner and outer worlds. Through feeling-consciousness an organism

⁶⁴ The use of *consciousness* to refer to states like conscious or unconscious, self-conscious and multicultural consciousness, for example, are acceptable to Combs. However he says that he draws the line "when someone starts talking about the 'nature of consciousness', its 'properties,' and so on, all suggesting that it is a thing in itself" (6).

determines what actions, if any, are necessary as a response to the inputs that come in through sensory perception. For Macphail, feeling-consciousness, that which deals with experience, enjoys a primary position within consciousness. He says that “feeling consciousness is much more difficult to investigate, but is, in fact, the more important and interesting” (3). Essentially, our degree of self-consciousness, that which distinguishes us from the rest of existence, may vary widely, but we all must negotiate the value of experience in order to understand what is happening and how to react.

How we interpret these experiences is what experiential consciousness discusses and hopes to understand. Andrew Lohrey explains it as a paradigm of consciousness in which all sensory inputs are mitigated by a “predisposing framework of subjectivity” (136). To illustrate, there have been a number of scientific paradigm shifts, for example, that have accompanied scientific revolutions. Nicolaus Copernicus, Isaac Newton, Antoine Lavoisier, and Albert Einstein all ushered in significant changes in the scientific world and how we have understood the world around us and our place in it. To use the term scientific paradigm, according to him, is to recognize “that scientific knowledge is not independent of human construction and cultural convention. In other words, science is dependent on particular disciplines that have social, institutional, and conceptual contexts” (157). This approach of paradigms of consciousness calls into question our belief in objective viewpoints, neutral facts, and raw data that have been the foundation of scientific thinking. This colored lens through which we make meaning is tinted by both very specific and unspecified beliefs and values that promote and maintain scientific ideology. Lohrey says that the latest great paradigm shift was that of the Enlightenment. In this study I hope to demonstrate that yet another shift is taking place and the authors and texts that have been selected for study here represent a newly developing consciousness that is beginning

to appear on the level of mass culture. That is, that New Age Latin American authors like Carlos Castañeda, Paulo Coelho, and Alejandro Jodorowsky are essential and exemplary parts of an emerging understanding of the human experience that challenges longstanding deeply-rooted assumptions and beliefs that were brought forth by scientific and enlightened thought.

Some see this process of negotiating the meaning of experience as an evolutionary process which brings us closer to a more developed sense of self-consciousness that simultaneously makes us more aware of the otherness of the Other. Steven McIntosh elaborates a comprehensive philosophy of the evolution of consciousness in his book *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution: How the Integral Worldview is Transforming Politics, Culture and Spirituality* (2007). What McIntosh brings to this study that has yet to be done by any other author is to synthesize previous thinkers into a dialectical process that demonstrates how human consciousness evolves through phases. What is particularly useful in this study is that these phases are defined in terms that coincide with existing ideas within cultural studies: modernist and postmodernist consciousness (among others).⁶⁵ The organization of his ideas facilitates the exploration of consciousness in the literatures that no other text until now has offered.

McIntosh uses a dialectical Hegelian model of thesis-antithesis-synthesis which includes and then transcends previous levels of consciousness in the evolutionary development of the individual and society. Each level of consciousness arrives at a pathological antithesis which

⁶⁵ In order, these phases of consciousness are: *archaic, warrior, tribal, traditional, modernist, postmodernist, integral* and *postintegral*. He is careful to point out that neither integral nor postintegral consciousness are the final point or goal in this evolutionary process. His idea is that the development of consciousness will continue indefinitely, morphing into other phases which are still unidentifiable at this time (34). In addition, he notes that in certain regions, if not all regions of the world, there are various levels of consciousness that are in tension: "I think it's fairly safe to conclude that within the developed world there are at least three major and distinct stages of consciousness and culture: traditional, modernist, and postmodern. And it is clear that these stages have arisen in an historical sequence with the traditional being the older and the postmodern the most recent" (68).

challenges the underlying precepts of that level. In the process it eliminates the falsities of that level's precepts and integrates the salient truths that remain into a more developed consciousness. At the heart of this process is the highly developed sense of self-consciousness that humans possess, which Macphail also signaled as an essential component of the experiential process. This ability to reflect on one's self critically has a powerful effect on the evolutionary process according to McIntosh:

Why does this self-consciousness in humans make such an evolutionary difference? It's because with self-awareness comes the ability to take hold of the evolutionary process itself. Through self-reflection, humans have the unique ability to see themselves in perspective within the scale of evolution, and this creates both the desire and the ability to improve their condition relative to the state of their animal cousins. (13-14)

This is to say that humans have a unique ability to improve on their condition through self-awareness and reflection.

Although *how* the human condition can be improved may be fundamentally different from what the Enlightenment thinkers expounded centuries ago, the New Age movement's mission is still consistent with theirs, improve the human condition through reflection and contemplation. I hope to demonstrate in the next three chapters that Castañeda, Coelho, and Jodorowsky each claim to be doing this in their own way. Castañeda speaks of it in terms of erasing personal history. The pilgrimage of Coelho's characters marks this process of transformation as well. In Jodorowsky it is heard in the impatient command from his Zen Buddhist teacher “¡Intellectual, aprende a morir!” [Intellectual, learn to die!] (*El maestro* 38).⁶⁶ In

⁶⁶ My translation.

the case of each of these writers they intend to assist the reader through transformational narratives, both fictional and philosophical, and demonstrate how to dismantle identity in order to liberate the Self from the constructions that have come to burden it and keep the reader from deep peace and happiness.

Literature, Consciousness, and Human Development

What is at the center of this study is the intersection of literature and consciousness that is represented by the human journey or metaphysical or spiritual pilgrimage. The intersection of language and consciousness is where human growth and spiritual development occur. As this section will show, the relationship between literature and consciousness is essential and has been an unrecognized catalyst for human development throughout the history of literate culture. Through the virtually infinite possibilities of vicarious experience that literature offers, the reader is able to expand his or her awareness not only through contemplation, but self-contemplation that allows and promotes human growth and development in what we might call the metaphysical or spiritual journey to the true Self.

Philip Edwards' uses the idea of the sea-mark in his close reading of English works to speak of markers on the voyage to a destination. He notes that if we are to speak of a voyage, it necessarily implies that there is an end point or destination that is to be gained (3). This, according to Edwards, is due to a loss that occurred in "a primeval time of happiness when travel was simply unnecessary. All travel, it follows, is a mark of the loss of that happiness, a mark of discontent, and a relentless search for what has been lost" (5). Additionally, travel can be seen as a metaphor for self-creation where the voyager or pilgrim moves toward a self-determined objective in a controlled undertaking to re-fashion himself into something new (4). Both of these approaches to travel and the metaphorical (metaphysical or spiritual) journey should, at this point

for the reader, echo strongly the ideas and ambitions of the New Age movement discussed in Chapter 1. The transformation of the world, particularly through the transformation of the individual is often a voyage (back) to the true Self and an act of self-creation which usually seeks to empower the individual.

This cultural phenomenon is part of the evolutionary process it seems. According to Thomas E. McNamara, consciousness, such as the new level of consciousness that the three New Age Latin American writers presented in this study reflect, is a necessary development that seeks to resolve some vital problem (7).⁶⁷ The qualities of culture that support and promote human existence are those which are selected, guarded and passed through successive generations.⁶⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 2 with the earlier example of driving to the supermarket on a cold day then deciding to abandon the warmth and convenience of a car, a species does not automatically do away with those qualities that have promoted its development once it has reached a certain point. Indeed, McNamara says that “Evolution does not discard a successful form of adaptation once it is genetically established, unless the most basic instinctual needs, such as sex or survival, require it to do so (33). This is an evolutionary process that prizes culture as the basis of civilization because it is the “accumulated wealth of a people that has been developed and passed down by each successive generation since prehistory. Culture is the manifestation of all the highest and best achievements, the collective wisdom of a people, and its transmission raises each new

⁶⁷ Steve McIntosh speaks at length about this in his book on the evolution of consciousness. He is more specific in that he identifies the various levels of consciousness that are listed in the previous section. For McIntosh, each level of consciousness has pathologies which serve as its catalyst for change and evolution into the next level of consciousness (35).

⁶⁸ About the purpose of culture (which includes knowledge and understanding) McNamara says: “Culture can best be defined, I believe, as a set of attitudes, values and behaviors that increase the probability of survival of the majority of members of a particular reproductive community living in a particular environment over a long period of time. The essence of any culture is to provide each new member of that community with those attitudes, values and behaviors that have been successful for the majority of the preceding members of that group, thereby enabling the individual to benefit from the collective experience of previous generations”(45).

generation to a higher level of humanity” (45). The transformation and resulting evolution of humanity (or consciousness) is paramount to the collective human experience.

Here we can begin to see how humans are perceived to be on an evolutionary journey, of sorts. It is a metaphorical voyage, at this point, to a true Self that seeks to recuperate something that has been lost through time by fashioning change to liberate the Self from oppressive and destructive modes of understanding. As McNamara notes, we are now entering “a global, technological environment in which change within the average lifespan is the rule, not the exception. The evolutionary implications of such rapid change in terms of self-consciousness are profound” (26). The New Age movement represents at least part of that change from, as indicated in Chapter 2, a hyper-rational and scientific culture to a more intuitive culture. This transition, as McIntosh points out, is the result of new pathologies that arose from a previous worldview associated with the development of modernity. Similarly, McNamara states: “The emerging new culture of the postmodern era is naturally, but slowly, evolving into a radically new form of consciousness that will be fully aware of these currently unconscious processes” (27).⁶⁹ The current dominant mode of knowledge and understanding, he says, is a successful adaptation to the problems of civilization that is now our primary problem, which was once a response to a set of problems related to another mode of existence (31).

This new understanding necessarily calls for a new understanding of literature and art. As pointed out earlier in this study, the dominance of rational and scientific thinking neglected and

⁶⁹ While McNamara is citing postmodernism as the emerging new consciousness McIntosh indicates that the new emerging culture is actually *integral* consciousness. For McIntosh, postmodern consciousness has a firm foothold in contemporary developed societies and a new, yet other, level of consciousness is beginning to emerge. The latter’s argument on the matter is much more nuanced, elaborated, and more convincing than McNamara’s. For the purpose of this study, I consider the currently emerging level of consciousness to reflect an integral understanding rather a postmodern condition.

denied any substantive exploration of existential questions. As a result, it seems that the new understanding promoted by the New Age movement seeks to resolve or, at least, reincorporate these questions back into culture and its systems of understanding. The absence of some sort or divine or unifying factor has kept humankind separated from nature, and thus a deeper understanding of the human experience. The Western esoteric literary tradition, which is commonly referenced within the New Age movement, is indicative of the desire to recuperate the divine. Indeed, Arthur Versluis notes that Western esoteric literature is a medium for transmitting knowledge and awakening gnosis.⁷⁰ It is an “interdisciplinary nexus” that is the conjunction of spirituality, science, and literature. Additionally, he says, it is “generally conceived as means for transmitting consciousness” (135). This is to say that literature is a means of consciousness transmission which has the potential to change the way in which humankind understands its existence and mode of living, to provoke substantive change to improve the human condition.

This brings to mind the questions of *why* and *how* literature can have an impact on consciousness. *If* it can do such a thing is a given. David Lodge points out in *Consciousness and the Novel* (2002) that the novel has much to offer to consciousness studies, perhaps more than science. Citing a quote from Noam Chomsky that promotes the novel as a more superior model than scientific psychology for understanding human life and personality, he says that:

The reason is that science tries to formulate general explanatory laws which apply universally, which were in operation before they were discovered, and which

⁷⁰ The importance of including the divine should not be minimized. Philip Edwards, in his book *Pilgrimage and Literary Tradition* (2005), states of the Western spiritual journey: “Indeed, the spiritual pilgrim is the best kind of pilgrim, for whereas the real pilgrim is satisfied with the bones of St. James or St. Giles, the spiritual pilgrim is on the way to find God himself” (13).

would have been discovered sooner or later by somebody. Works of literature describe in the guise of fiction the dense specificity of personal experience, which is always unique, because each of us has a slightly or very different personal history, modifying every new experience we have; and the creation of literary texts recapitulates this uniqueness. (10-11)

No other writer in history could have written *El Quixote*, only Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra. Nor will anyone ever write it again.⁷¹ This speaks to the uniqueness of subjective presence that is the human experience (consciousness). In contrast, if we conduct an experiment using Newton's Third Law of Motion, for example, then it would require that our results be repeatable on demand. This disparity between objective universal observation and subjective presence is what science has failed to explain and what literary studies of consciousness have the capacity to explore. Lodge points out that literature and science don't need to compete, but rather that literature facilitates knowledge of consciousness that complements scientific understanding (16).

One starting point for this is the study of language and how it affects consciousness. Merlin Donald treats this subject persuasively in his book *A Mind So Rare: The Evolution of Human Consciousness* (2001). He offers a few important tenets that give contextual understanding of the mind to facilitate the presentation of his central theme, the relationship of language to the mind.⁷² One important observation that he offers is that there exists a given supposition that consciousness is the most valued aspect of human existence. He notes its

⁷¹ We find ourselves here with yet another reference to Borges. In this case it is in reference to the idea that *El Quixote* could not have ever been written by anyone other than Cervantes and will never be written again. In May 1939 Borges published "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" in *Sur*, an Argentine journal. This piece is written in the form of a literary review of an attempt by Pierre Menard to rewrite *El Quixote* line by line. The fictional Menard gives up after only a couple of apparently arbitrarily copied chapters.

⁷² Although he speaks in neurobiological terms at times, his primary approach to the mind is through a philosophy of mind.

importance in fundamental aspects of many contemporary legal systems and how it is the primary goal of modern educational systems.⁷³ Socrates' notable observation that the unexamined life is not worth living reflects the importance not only of consciousness, but of reflecting on that consciousness and seeking to better our situation. Donald says:

Ideally we are supposed to sustain an unrelenting assault on our own ignorance, on any residual unconsciousness, until we die. This is intended to make us more aware of our options; to encourage us to seek further enlightenment through the fine arts and literature, which are supposed to make us more conscious of what is important; and to prepare us to be responsible citizens. (14-15)

This is completely consistent not only with New Age literature in general but in the writings of the three authors selected for this study. Each of the authors promotes a self-reflexive or self-contemplative attitude, either implicitly or explicitly stated, which promises a better, happier existence or even a true Self.

Another important point that Donald makes is that the human mind is not able to maintain perceptual experience in short-term memory for more than a few seconds. This, he says, allows for a window of consciousness of that experience that lasts for about ten to fifteen seconds as the mind begins to work again reflecting on the experience after it has faded from short-term memory (15). This is to say that we are only directly experiencing our environment in short and disjunctive fragments. To add to the difficulty, he notes, that the mind is also only limited to one thought at a time. Additionally, we cannot normally complete a single subjective chain of thinking in a single subjective moment. In other words, there are only brief moments of concentration and only one thought can be processed by the mind at any given moment. As he

⁷³ The legal concepts of free elections, intellectual property, and crimes that demonstrate intentionality to commit criminal activity (e.g., murder with the intent to kill) are among those that he lists (14).

points out, “to think really complex thoughts in consciousness, we have to string together a series of brief moments into some kind of systematic thought sequence” (15). This truly problematizes the possibility of the development of consciousness. It shatters our personal narratives since we must continually return to the memory of experience, rather than experience itself, in order to be able to consider it for any substantial length of time (16).

It is in the literate brain that we can see a difference when compared to the preliterate brain function. According to Donald, the literate brain is organized to function differently and this difference influences how literate societies perform their cognitive work. Obviously, mass literacy has made significant impact in literary production, but it also has produced cognitive reorganization in both the individual and group. The development of written language was a significant advance in our capability to evolve (in terms of consciousness). The ability to write gave our memory an external storage device that would augment our poor internal system. This not only enlarged our storage capacity, but also changed the architecture of mental activity. It provided a system upgrade with storage capacity increased to a virtually infinite level. Although the new cognitive structure is a rather mundane observation in our contemporary world, it was revolutionary when compared to preliterate cognitive processes. He explains:

The external memory field gives us sharper and more durable mental representations. This allows the conscious mind to reflect on thought itself and to evolve longer, more abstract, procedures that serve to verify and control the quality of its own actions. These procedures give us the basis for turning thinking into a more formal activity, subject to much stricter standards of revision. This results in a scaffolded cultural process that can accumulate and improve over time [...]. Endless repeated reflections on the same core material over successive

generations can give a society a more powerful set of conscious procedures to follow; that is, much better ways of thinking. (313)

Thus, the external memory field (e.g., books) creates a mirror world for consciousness that mimics the structure of biological memory. This is what has propelled the evolution of human self-awareness and gives consciousness a much richer structure (310).

The sense of continuity that the external memory storage offers is essential for the cognitive structure of the brain as it provides a mirroring entity that supports self-contemplation and thus aids in the construction of narratives that are inherent in the development of consciousness. As John Bickle points out in his essay “Empirical Evidence for a Narrative Concept of Self”, it is the internal dialogue, that which is mentioned in the previous paragraph, where “we have the beginnings of a narrative account of self” (196) where one attempts to formulate responses to questions about *who* one is and *what* one cares about, an understanding of the self/Self. In fact, the stories we tell about and to ourselves and others has the capacity to enrich our understanding of others and, thus, our conscious awareness. Our subjective presence is understood through the lens of narratives we tell and are told. Narrative is essential to consciousness as it is what gives meaning to what is perceived (Fireman, McVay, and Flanagan 3). Jorge Volpi adds to this with his explanation of the relationship of fiction to the brain. He points out: “Podemos interpretar el mundo a partir de las ideas que nos hacemos de él a partir de los sentidos, o bien podemos tratar de deducir cómo funciona el cerebro con base en nuestras ideas sobre el mundo” [“We interpret the world from the ideas we make for ourselves about it from our senses, or we can try to deduce how the brain functions based on our ideas about the

world”] (67).⁷⁴ The interactions that take place between our senses and the world around us mold us into who we are and how we interpret what we perceive.

We are driven to make sense of our lives and, according to Fireman, Flanagan, and McVay, many in the field of philosophy of mind think that several aspects of human consciousness are the products of personal and collective narrative. As they explain in their introduction:

This powerful role for narrative is realized by the linking of personal memories to present conditions and future hopes, by organizing, translating and providing continuity and coherence to experience. Self-awareness and self-knowledge are constructed, to a significant degree, through narrative as we compose and assemble stories for ourselves and our world. (4)

Using the present moment of subjective experience, we create personal narrative to give meaning to ourselves, others, and everything around us. To return the earlier example of the blaze of the intense campfire, one creates a narrative for the situation which directs the appropriate reaction based on past memories and future hopes and fears, move away in fear or take advantage of the situation to roast marshmallows. Through consciousness narrative makes meaning.

This relationship between literature, consciousness and human development, although not new in itself, has only recently come to be discussed as such and seems very promising as a newly developing field of interdisciplinary study. As Roland Fischer says, if we consider narratives as representations of human experience then literary criticism gives light to the possibility of discussing processes of interpretation that directly involve and affect consciousness (24). This is particularly true with deconstructive narrative fictions like Jodorowsky’s *Las ansias*

⁷⁴ My translation.

carnivoras de la nada and Coelho's *The Alchemist*. This, I assert, would also be true for texts like Castañeda's *A Separate Reality* which seeks to deconstruct the cultural narratives which have heretofore informed consciousness and shaped meaning and understanding. Through literary studies of consciousness the investigator can explore a nearly infinite set of possibilities of human experience in order to form more a deeper understanding of how and why humans experience the way they do. This process of experiencing is the internal transformation that is the journey. The texts presented in the following chapters, I propose, are exemplary for such study and reflect a new emerging worldview that is beginning to appear in mass culture.

CHAPTER 5

CARLOS CASTAÑEDA

Of Magi, Tricksters, and Creative Literary Genius

Within the New Age movement there are several identifiable spiritual interests that are represented which contrast with organized hegemonic Western religion. One of the principal traditions has been that of indigenous worldviews. The emergence of interest in native knowledges, rituals, and artifacts has been prominent within the New Age movement, most notably in the form of neo-shamanism. Andrei Znamenski notes that the term ‘shaman’ comes from the language of the Tungus (Evenki) of Siberia. It was picked up by Enlightenment explorers who travelled in the region during the eighteenth century. They began using the indigenous word, which roughly translates as ‘excited’ or ‘agitated’, to refer to the indigenous healers and their practices (viii, 3). The word’s usage spread widely and began to be used commonly to refer to all indigenous spiritual traditions and practices, regardless of place. Znamenski points out that, after taking on varying degrees of negative connotations throughout the last few centuries, the word has currently come to signify a man or woman who specializes in understanding indigenous medicine and it is often interchangeable with ‘conjurer’, ‘magician’, ‘witch doctor’, ‘spiritualist’ or ‘sorcerer’. The general consensus is that a shaman is “simply a person who stays in touch with spirits” (ix). Although attitudes toward shamanism have varied

widely throughout time, the general sentiment is summarized in this report of interest in indigenous Siberian healers:⁷⁵

Driven by the Enlightenment philosophy with its rationalism and skepticism, many eighteenth century travelers to Siberia were not fascinated with shamanism whatsoever. In line with the dominant rationalist ideas, many explorers denounced it as primitive superstition, which some of them considered a corruption of higher classical religions. (Znamenski 4)

With the development of the New Age movement during the last decades of the twentieth century, shamanism enjoyed new popularity and respect (Lewis *Introduction* xii).

Cresting in popularity between the 1970s and 1990s, it would be difficult to argue that the early work of Carlos Castañeda wasn't foundational not only for the interest in indigenous traditions, but for the New Age movement as a whole.⁷⁶ Charlotte E. Hardman notes that Castañeda's work "sowed the seed of Western shamanism" and cites the often used reference of one of the "Godfathers of the New Age" (38, 40). The "neo-shaman" published a series of books that brought, for the first time, an insider's view of shamanic knowledge and practices through his apprenticeship with a Yaqui sorcerer.⁷⁷ Although largely associated with his research and

⁷⁵ For an informative text that presents a chronologically ordered collection of writings on shamanism from the last five centuries, consult *Shamans through Time: 500 years on the Path to Knowledge* (2001) edited by Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley.

⁷⁶ The Spanish name Castañeda is spelled with 'ñ' and appears as such on documents from early in the author's life; however, the Anglicized version (Castaneda) is utilized for publication of his texts and later in life. Given that this study is related to New Age Latin American literary production, the Spanish spelling will be used.

⁷⁷ Hardman and others' view of Castañeda as a neo-shaman is somewhat questionable as it implies a disconnect from any more traditional form of shamanic practice. Although there are many questions related to the authenticity of Castañeda's writing, and this will be discussed in the following paragraphs, this usage seems to reflect the geo-racial religious ordering noted in previous chapters which would negate the possibility of Castañeda having any capacity for understanding and presenting to the public any authentic form of shamanic knowledge. In short, the term 'neo' automatically disqualifies Castañeda as a genuine shaman. Hardman's underlying assumption seems to be that the shaman's apprentice may have fabricated his relationship and (re)invented a sacred tradition that

experience with peyote, his *oeuvre* is also comprised of a metaphysical philosophy and a worldview that contests the logical and rational positivism that dominates Western forms of knowledge.

Born and raised in Cajamarca, Peru in 1925 Castañeda immigrated to the United States as a young adult.⁷⁸ Later as a graduate student in UCLA's Anthropology program, one of his professors offered a challenge to his students- anyone who could manage to conduct an anthropological interview with a living Indian would receive an 'A' in the course. Determined to get the 'A', he claimed to meet a Yaqui from northern Mexico named don Juan Matus at a bus terminal in Nogales, Arizona in the summer of 1960.⁷⁹ He later expanded his work into a relationship with Matus as his shamanic teacher (Znamenski 189). Although he originally sought to learn about medicinal uses of plants by indigenous groups, the project took on the task of total transformation of the author and lasted until his death in 1998. His master's thesis, published by the University of California Press as *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968), was a collection of selected field notes which he copiously wrote to document nearly every conversation and encounter between the Yaqui shaman and the student (Hardman 40). It and his second book, *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan* (1971), document some twenty-two experiences he had with hallucinogenic plants and the power they

spawned worldwide interest. The question of his authenticity as a shaman and its value here will be treated more thoroughly in the following paragraphs.

⁷⁸ Perhaps as part of his practice of 'erasing personal history' he later claimed that he was born in Brazil in 1935. The information from the text above was retrieved from immigrations documents (*The Don Juan Papers 2*). Interestingly, his death certificate indicates that he was never married, when it is widely known that he was married at least once. It also lists that he was employed by the Beverly Hills Schools District which has no record of him. To add to the mystery, his remains were cremated within hours of his death and then sent to Mexico while his death was kept secret for more than two months (Applebome *Arts*). It seems that the author (and his closest friends) continued playing with the idea of personal history even after his death.

⁷⁹ His meetings take place in Arizona initially and later in the Sonoran Desert of Mexico.

have to expand one's access to other separate but equally important realities. His third book, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* (1972), brings a change of approach to the personal transformation which he was documenting under the guidance of the Indian. *Journey to Ixtlan*, which served as his dissertation at UCLA, expounds metaphysical philosophy in place of the hallucinogenic tales of the first two texts. It was followed by *Tales of Power* in 1974 which presents incredible feats and miraculous works by don Juan and don Genaro, a friend of the teacher. Castañeda had found tremendous financial success and, apparently, his niche in the world.⁸⁰

The easy path he had enjoyed in academia wouldn't last long, though. In 1976 researcher and psychologist Richard de Mille published *Castaneda's Journey: The Power and the Allegory* (1976) that sought to show the shaman's apprentice as a fabricator of stories.⁸¹ He also published *The Don Juan Papers* in 1980 and a revised edition of it in 1989.⁸² De Mille cites a collection of researchers who contest Castañeda's documentation. Not only does the critic site discrepancies between the descriptions that the writer uses and the natural flora and fauna of the areas in question, but he also cites contradictions in dates of events and appearances of different people

⁸⁰ In total, he produced twelve books before his death from cancer in 1998. His work has been translated into seventeen languages and sold about 20 million copies (Znamenski 197). At the time of his death his estate was valued at roughly \$20 million, most of which was income related to his writings and workshops and personal transformation programs based on his writings (Applebome Art).

⁸¹ This is reminiscent of the case of Rigoberta Menchú who published the autobiographical testimony, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (*I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1983))(1982). It effectively documented the oppression of indigenous groups in Guatemala. Later, researcher Davis Stoll called into question the truthfulness of segments of her story.

⁸² It is notable that in the more recent collection of essays, although touted by de Mille as containing essays from both supporters and skeptics of Castañeda, that nineteen of the forty-three essays were written by de Mille himself. His attitude seems rather prejudiced at times. This comes to light particularly clearly when one compares it with book reviews written by R. Gordon Wasson who has several doubts about the works he is reviewing, but maintains a greater degree of balance.

throughout the series of books.⁸³ This is to say that Castañeda didn't have his facts in order and this reflected the probability that the whole affair was a fabrication. De Mille offers a hypothesis as to how these fabrications managed to survive the academic rigor of his professors and department at UCLA:

I believe that Castañeda succeeded so well with professors, friends, and readers chiefly because he is a shifting, shimmering, uncertain social object on which people project images of desire they can hardly name. Professors recognized in him the incarnation of social theories they wished to validate; friends saw a suffering visionary they wanted to help; readers found a guide to the world of their dreams. (12)

Since no evidence has ever been presented, such as the author's field notes or any proof of don Juan Matus' existence, those who support de Mille have continued to question the entire production.^{84 85} In the last decade the debate has essentially settled into the three basic camps of skeptics, believers, and interested disbelievers. This last group reflects a more nuanced approach, which this study takes, and considers the value of the works outside of questions of truth and non-truth.

⁸³ De Mille offers three specific kinds of proof that the author invented the person named don Juan Matus and his teachings: 1) Contradictions in his reports, 2) The absence of convincing detail and the presence of implausible detail, and 3) Don Juan's teachings reflect not only American Indian folklore, but also Oriental mysticism and European philosophy. De Mille argues that the parallels among the three spiritual traditions that blend in don Juan's teachings is not only in philosophical similarity but also in the language used. That is to say, at times it is more than coincidentally similar, to the point of being *verbatim* (*Don Juan Papers* 18-19).

⁸⁴ One of the most plausible claims comes from Harley Swiftdeer who claimed in 1986 that he and Castañeda did, in fact, study with shamans in Mexico. Swiftdeer maintains that Castañeda's books present the secret teachings of the "Twisted Hair Council of Elders" (an eclectic body of indigenous knowledge and practices from North and South America) and that the Council had created the mythical identity for Castañeda in order to disseminate the teachings to a world in crisis (Hardman 46). This gives possibility to much of the criticism leveled by de Mille and his supporters while recognizing the Truth that is said to be present in the writings.

⁸⁵ Znamenski notes that Castañeda's wife ventures to guess that the surname he invented for his teacher "might have come from the brand of bubbly Portuguese table wine, Mateus, that she and Castañeda liked to drink with their dinners" (190).

Hardman notes that the question of authenticity of Castañeda's writings should not be cause for dismissal or undervaluation of his lessons. She understands that his critics saw "pseudo-anthropology and the appropriation of American Indian traditions for material gain, exploitation, and a pandering to New Age desires for ancient traditions, magic, and self-empowerment" (42). However, she notes that if the value of the works in question is derived from the teachings that are presented and their ability to bring the notion of a different type of reality to a wide audience, then whether or not they represent "authentic" anthropological fieldwork becomes irrelevant (42). For many New Agers, authenticity "is a matter of personal interpretation, and since Carlos has clearly experienced nonordinary reality, what he says must be true even if it is put in a fictional form" (44). As she points out, "For some [his] authenticity remains a mystery; for others, in many ways it does not matter. He may be lying but what he says is true" (42).⁸⁶ This sentiment resembles the perspective taken in this study on the matter of authenticity. This is to say that this study takes the attitude that it is not necessarily relevant whether or not don Juan Matus existed or not, but rather the teachings presented within his texts themselves and any value as a representative object of study from the field of Latin American New Age literature.

Whether Castañeda presents a faithful anthropological representation of Yaqui indigenous philosophies and practices is not of import to the research presented here. His work is viewed as a cultural artifact that is presented by a Latin American writer who disseminates a powerfully popular type of knowledge that is widely considered New Age. Great value is found when it is considered as a cultural phenomenon that proposes a radically new way of

⁸⁶ It is interesting to note that Carlos Castañeda and Alejandro Jodorowsky once met in Jodorowsky's room at a hotel. Castañeda wanted Jodorowsky do make a movie of his life. Jodorowsky never heard from Castañeda again and the project never came to fruition. In regards to the truth value of Castañeda's writings Jodorowsky says "[si es] verdad o mentira, poco importa. Si es trampa, es una trampa sagrada" ["if it's the truth or a lie is of little importance. If it's a trick, it's a sacred trick"] (my translation) (*Psicomagia* 135).

understanding the human condition. More so than whether or not it is a true account of a series of events is the fact of its popularity and influence. His massive appeal reflects a specific point in time and a place in history that can be studied. What is to be determined outside of questions of authenticity is what message is disseminated in his works if there is any similarity or consistency with other New Age Latin American writers, and what may be the appeal of (disputed) Latin American indigenous worldviews and practices to the New Age movement. I believe, and hope to demonstrate in the following pages, that he provides a not only a coherent and cohesive message but a rather developed philosophy that is as nuanced and sophisticated as any philosophy born of the Western philosophical tradition.⁸⁷

Shamanic Teachings and a Way of Knowledge

Castañeda's first book, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, is appropriately titled. Its title notes what is being presented and what it may hope to accomplish. He presents selected teachings from a specific shaman and he posits it as a *way of knowledge*. It is not only a single concept or idea that he is disseminating but an entire system of understanding. This in and of itself is substantial as implies that there is an Other way of understanding that is different from the Western dominant epistemological paradigm. He speaks of how he was introduced, by don Juan Matus, to "the *cognition* of the shaman's world" (his emphasis) (*Teachings of Don Juan* xii). Cognition, in general, is explained as "the processes responsible for the awareness of everyday life, processes which include memory, experience, perception, and the expert use of any given syntax" (xiii). However, he differentiates between the

⁸⁷ It is interesting to note how, in the case of Castañeda, the author is not viewed as being the authority for many of the readers, but rather, it is his message that gives him authority. This is to say that, for some, it is not necessarily important if don Juan Matus really existed. It is the knowledge that the writer puts forth in the text that gives testament to his authority. This is not to say that the issue of cultural appropriation is not important here. It is important. However, the object of study is the value of the writings as cultural artifacts.

“*cognition* of modern man” and the “*cognition* of the shamans of ancient Mexico” (his emphasis) (xiii). *How* these two processes interpret everyday experience is what is fundamentally different.

If we remember from Chapter 4 the process of experience which could be useful in explaining consciousness, it will be helpful in understanding how Castañeda proposes a way of knowledge that his shaman teacher put forward and is significantly different from the knowledge paradigm that he had inherited from society until that point. His first book is divided into two parts. Part I, consisting of about 140 pages presents his selected and transcribed field notes relating his introduction to and then apprenticeship under the guidance of don Juan, particularly relating to the use of hallucinogenic plants as they relate to the acquisition of knowledge and power. Part II is titled as “A Structural Analysis” and seeks to give some kind of ordered presentation to the system of knowledge that he has learned. R. Gordon Wasson, a botanist specializing in the flora and fauna of Mexico who brought to light several important questions that began to challenge the integrity of Castañeda’s work, wrote a very influential review of *The Teachings of Don Juan* in which he noted that the structural analysis seemed too contrived and perhaps was an addition that was insisted upon, after the fact, by his committee members as an additional element to perhaps bring some type of critical analysis to his masters’ thesis rather than simply selecting and transcribing field notes (*Review- The Teachings of Don Juan* 197).^{88 89}

⁸⁸ Albeit that his forty page analysis in Part II is somewhat helpful, it does pale in comparison to the narrative that he creates through entertaining dialogue and a developed sense of narrative voice in Part I. Although Castañeda is trained as an anthropologist, his creative writing skills having been widely lauded. Indeed, Wasson praises Castañeda’s writing and character development. Specifically, he relates praise from another well-respected anthropologist and adds his own, “‘What impresses me in Castaneda’s writings is that his Indians think and express themselves like the Indians I have known.’ So said to me Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, eminent Colombian anthropologist, some months ago. At one time he had had considerable contact with Carlos Castañeda, much more than I had had. I would have amplified his complimentary remark: Castaneda’s Indians speak and act as members of any pre-literate community have always spoken and acted” (*Review-Tales of Power* 245).

⁸⁹ In the 30th anniversary edition of *The Teachings of Don Juan* Castañeda includes a nine page commentary by him that does much for clarifying much of the process that he underwent and offers some significant insight (that which thirty years of reflection provides) into the type of knowledge that is being presented in his writings.

His 30th anniversary edition commentary is informative and concise. He notes the important point that his knowledge paradigm was his greatest problem:

The idea of *cognition* was, at the time, my most powerful stumbling block. It was inconceivable for me as an educated Western man, that *cognition*, as it is defined in the philosophical discourse of our day, could be anything besides a homogeneous, all-engulfing affair for the totality of mankind [...] In other words, for Western man, there is only *cognition* as a group of general [mental] processes. [his emphasis] (xiii)

For Castañeda the lessons of don Juan required a “genuine internalization” of a new knowledge paradigm that resulted in a transformation that provided “a different response to the world of everyday life” (xiii).

This can be understood as a paradigm of consciousness that Lohrey defines as a “predisposing framework of subjectivity” (136). He addresses an important issue that is at hand not only in this chapter but one that appears as the general backdrop against which opinions of this work, and any others like it are likely to be drawn, the paradigm of rational and scientific knowledge that is the foundation of the modern university. To suggest that the seat of modern knowledge storage and production is limited by a paradigm is a rather bold statement for some, but Lohrey makes a convincing argument that is further highlighted when considered in the light of Castañeda’s work. Lohrey points out that:

The concept of a paradigm of science implies that scientific knowledge is not independent of human construction and cultural convention. In other words, science is dependent on particular disciplines that have social, institutional, historical, and conceptual contexts. The concept of a paradigm puts in question

our belief in raw data, neutral facts, and objective viewpoints. Rather than standing as independently existing phenomena ‘out there’, data, facts, and viewpoints are determined by the paradigm, for the nature of a paradigm is to construct, mediate, and give meaning to these phenomena. (137)

This is to say that the rational, logical lineal thought promoted by the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century, for example, was a value system limited by its own fixed beliefs about the nature of things.

What Castañeda proposes is a different paradigm that until the publishing of his book was little considered even among specialists in the field of indigenous studies and shamanism. He suggested that there was an experientially based knowledge that would bypass or preclude the modern intellectual routes of knowledge-making: “[Shamans] maintain that human cognition can be temporarily interrupted, since it is merely a taxonomical system, in which responses have been classified along with the interpretation of sensory data” (*Teachings of Don Juan xv*). To see an example of this we only need to consider the famous story about ‘the spot’ that he recounts in *The Teachings of Don Juan*. After pestering the Yaqui shaman quite a bit to teach him about peyote and other healing plants Castañeda is on the verge of abandoning the entire project because Matus ignores him or simply refuses. With one last attempt he asks again and, after some brief contemplation don Juan conditionally agrees given that the student is able to find a spot on his porch where he would “feel naturally happy and strong” (16). Each person’s *sitio* would be different and the student would have to find (feel) his in order to prove his desire to learn about plants.

The author recounts his story which at times is even comical as the reader imagines him rolling around on Matus’ porch for hours trying to find some mythical spot that would somehow

make him feel better. He shares his frustration and outlines the progress that he makes and notes a peculiar perceptive ability that he develops by using sideways glances. He notices small areas in his peripheral vision where there is a change in the hue and certain colors that are associated with certain spots on the porch. He found what was considered an enemy spot that had the opposite effect of the spot that his would-be teacher assigned him to find. Instead of comforting and aiding him, the enemy spot made him fearful and nauseous. By the next morning he had found his friendly *sitio* and Matus agreed to teach him about the plants (*Teachings of Don Juan* 15-21). What takes place in this episode is not only a test of will or determination, but a type of placement or entrance exam for the shamanic way of knowledge that he hopes to learn. He proves that he has an ability, or at least an inclination, that would facilitate the transformation that would be necessary to become a man of knowledge in the shamanic tradition of don Juan Matus.

If we see this in the context of paradigms of consciousness we can see how the earlier comments regarding scientific paradigms are increasingly valid. As Lohrey points out,

A paradigm refers to a worldview, an organizing perspective toward the material being studied. For example, when we compare paradigms we will alter the way we perceive the world. To perceive the world in a “classical” scientific way has come to mean that we should accept that the world is like a machine, open to deductive and mechanical computations. In contrast, to perceive reality from a holistic or isomorphic perspective is to see it as an undivided universe. (137)

This is made very clear to the hopeful apprentice when he considers his odd experience of searching for his *sitio* in the context of his existing paradigm of knowledge: “There was a very strange cleavage between my pragmatic experience of fearing the ‘other spot’ and my rational

deliberations about the total event” (21). His would-be teacher assigned him a task that would call into question his existing scientific paradigm by presenting him with an alternative reality that proved to be just as valid (agitating, nauseating, and fear provoking) as what he had been presented during most of his life. This would be the first of many, many episodes that would dispute the primacy and supremacy of rational thought and logic which had been the core of understanding for Castañeda (and Western civilization). What logic and reason failed to explain, sensorial experience or experiential awareness was able to accomplish.

Although the way of knowing that is being presented in the twelve books that Castañeda published is irrational in the sense that it doesn't fit within reasonable lines of logic, it should be made clear that the system of knowledge is a system in that there are processes, procedures, norms, and structure. As the author himself attempts to elucidate in the second part of *The Teachings of Don Juan*, the world of the shaman is not without an order of its own. In his explanation of the structure of this system he notes four main concepts that each has a number of subsidiary or supporting principles or ideas (155). Following is an outline of this system of knowledge:

- I) [Becoming a] Man of Knowledge
 - a. To become a man of knowledge was a matter of learning.
 - b. A man of knowledge had unbending intent.
 - c. A man of knowledge had clarity of mind.
 - d. To become a man of knowledge was a matter of strenuous labor.
 - e. A man of knowledge was a warrior.
 - f. To become a man of knowledge was an unceasing process.
- II) A Man of Knowledge Had an Ally
 - a. An ally was formless.
 - b. An ally was perceived as a quality.
 - c. An ally was tamable.
- III) An Ally Had a Rule
 - a. The rule was inflexible.
 - b. The rule was noncumulative.
 - c. The rule was corroborated in ordinary reality.
 - d. The rule was corroborated in nonordinary reality.

- IV) The Rule Was Corroborated by Special Consensus
 - a. The benefactor.
 - b. Preparing special consensus.
 - c. Guiding special consensus. (155-188)

What has been listed here above is a very general set of guidelines that identify, define, limit, explain, order, and substantiate a way of knowledge that contests, in a certain way, the hegemonic power of the existing scientific paradigm. Thus, one can see that there is a type of reasoning and logic that organizes the system. From this perspective it can be said that the shaman's understanding is reasonable and logical. For example, one can deduce certain logical syllogisms from this structure. If a man of knowledge has an ally and one wants to become a man of knowledge, then one must acquire an ally. There is no loss of logic or reason in the order of this knowledge system.

What is problematic for some are the assumptions that underlie the premises, for example, that there are formless allies that grant power. As noted in Chapter 1, Kokosalakis shows how the truth value of the sacred was destroyed and relegated to the irrational as part of modernity and the civilized world that sought to erase or suppress anything that resembled the savage ways of the uncivilized of pre-rational existence (18). This is to say that beliefs such as the existence of beings, forces or other entities outside of what can be supported by scientific inquiry have become invalid. Don Juan's lessons on allies, acquiring power, and 'seeing' represent areas of knowledge that could not be validated by modern methodical investigation and thus was deemed unsound as a form of understanding. Although the shaman's worldview is coherent, cohesive, logical, and rational, albeit in its own way, it is simply nonsense for an enlightened thinker in the modern world.

Steve McIntosh, a proponent of evolutionary consciousness, speaks of this process. As mentioned in Chapter 4, McIntosh elaborates several levels of consciousness and associates them

with significant worldviews that coincide neatly with already existing ideas and terminology with the field of cultural studies.⁹⁰ Related to the topic at hand here, he writes of traditional consciousness and what he calls “the mythic order” which is the knowledge that was and is still disseminated through sacred texts and the institutions that have formed around those knowledges and its relationship to modernity. The absolute authority given to the church and monarchies, that of traditional consciousness became questionable under the modernist way. “That is, the clear-eyed realism derived from the rational values of the modernist worldview leads it adherents to question the nature of things and to measure and experiment with the material universe through the scientific method” (49). However, it seems that modern thinkers threw out the baby with the bathwater. While seeking to “challenge the corrupt structures of feudalism and Church-sponsored social hierarchy,” it also destroyed the sacred (49).

The existential conundrums of the human condition became neglected because modernist consciousness’ rejection of that which wasn’t ‘real’. McIntosh says,

As science and reason separated itself from mythic thinking and its constrictions of the authority of the Church, as it became increasingly differentiated from the moderating influences of other spheres of knowing such as the arts and the humanities, this initially healthy differentiation eventually became a pathological dissociation (too much transcendence, and not enough inclusion). Science eventually came to ‘colonize’ and dominate other spheres of knowing, often going

⁹⁰ I would like to point out my uneasiness with his use of the word “levels” of consciousness. For some, this term carries the connotation of a horizontal hierarchy of consciousnesses. In the context of McIntosh’s project of discerning various types of worldviews and explaining and organizing them, I doubt that he would agree that one is “higher” than the other. It may be more helpful to think of them in terms of horizontal evolution since he does argue that each level (even the most developed levels such as integral and post-integral consciousness) has its limiting pathologies. He does not argue for or present any kind of concluding or ultimate level of consciousness, thus leaving the question open for future evolutionary thinkers to work out. Additionally, one could speculate that he may have chosen this term since words like ‘types’ and ‘states’ of consciousness have well established meanings that would surely complicate and confuse the idea that he is trying to argue.

so far as to deny their validity. In many significant areas science developed into scientism, the pathological form of modernist consciousness we noted earlier which maintains that the only ‘real’ reality is objective, material reality. (53)

This is to say that if it cannot be measured as part of material reality, then it must not and cannot be real. This is essential to understanding the importance of what Castañeda accomplished by publishing the types of book that he did.

The anthropologist speaks of two kinds of reality, ordinary and nonordinary realities. Ordinary reality refers to the generally agreed upon concept of everyday material existence. Nonordinary reality is what he seeks access to, or what don Juan pushes him toward, with the use of hallucinogenic plants. His lexical choice of “nonordinary” reality is significant in that it recognizes the dominant knowledge paradigm that perceives everyday existence as normal and the other, lesser experienced forms of reality as equal and simply “not this” reality. It is noted that his second book is appropriately titled *A Separate Reality*.⁹¹ In its introduction he says,

Through the separate ingestion of each of these hallucinogens he produced in me, as his apprentice, some peculiar states of distorted perception, or altered consciousness, which I have called ‘states of nonordinary reality.’ I have used the word ‘reality’ because it was a major premise in don Juan’s system of beliefs that the states of consciousness produced by the ingestion of any of those three plants were not hallucinations, but concrete, although unordinary, aspects of everyday life. Don Juan behaved toward these states of nonordinary reality not ‘as if’ they were real but ‘as’ real. (8)

⁹¹ While this choice of words seems appropriate initially, one can find several moments in which its separateness can be called into question. However, that avenue of investigation does not keep with the principal purpose of this study and will not be pursued further.

What he proposes is the existence of other aspects or features of reality than what the modern society in which he lives is accustomed to experience and which are significantly marginalized as a knowledge by the deeply modern institution where he sought legitimization, the university. His shamanic teacher has his own worldview based on specific valuations of that view. In a comment that speaks of the totalizing authority of positivistic knowledge discussed in the previous paragraphs, don Juan tells him, “‘To believe that the world is only as you think it is, is stupid,’ he said. ‘The world is a mysterious place’” (*Journey to Ixtlan* 64).

It is clear that what Castañeda presents, in spite of the controversies regarding his works’ authenticity, is a different knowledge system that has been marginalized throughout centuries by the newly dominant scientific paradigm. His indigenous teacher, invented, authentic or a hybrid of the two, indoctrinates Castañeda to a ‘new’ understanding of reality that holds the promise to change him and his perception of reality. I think the argument can clearly be made that what the author represents is a popular movement within society: to regain some of the sacredness that was excluded from the most recent knowledge paradigm. This return to the sacredness of pre-modern spiritualities seems to be a strong desire to resolve the existential questions that until now have remained inadequately answered.

Stopping the World to Erase Personal History

If one wants to enjoy the full benefit of knowledge through the experience and understanding of other features of reality, then one of the most fundamental steps in the process will be to erase his or her personal history. In order to achieve this, the world must be ‘stopped’. Castañeda presents these concepts in his third book, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* (1972). In this text, which served as his dissertation at UCLA, he abandons the descriptions of experiences of ordinary and nonordinary reality brought on by the use of hallucinogens, as

presented in his first two books, and presents a much more philosophical treatise centered on issues such as identity, death, responsibility, and power with an added metaphysical connection, there relationship to human existence and suffering. Some have noted that this change in approach conveniently reflects changes in the taste of the post-1960s consumer who had left behind psychedelic drugs and chemical experimentation in search of a more organic and intellectual path (*Don Juan Papers 2*; Znamenski 198-199).

The concept of “erasing personal history” is fundamental in as much that it is the initial step to ‘stopping the world’ which would liberate him from the chains of socially conditioned perception which hides or blinds him to nonordinary reality. In a dialogue between the sorcerer and his student, the teacher reaffirms to his apprentice that every lesson had a single purpose, to “stop the world”:

“Everything I have told you to do was a technique for *stopping the world* [his emphasis].” A few months after that conversation don Juan accomplished what he had set out to do, to teach me to “stop the world.” That monumental event in my life compelled me to reexamine in detail my work of ten years. It became evident to me that my original assumption about the role of psychotropic plants was erroneous. They were not the essential feature of the sorcerer’s description of the world, but were only the aid to cement, so to speak, parts of the description which I had been incapable of perceiving otherwise. My insistence on holding on to my standard version of reality rendered me almost deaf and blind to don Juan’s aims. Therefore, it was simply my lack of sensitivity which had fostered their use.

(*Journey to Ixtlan* xiii)

This reinforces the importance of the initial step of erasing one's personal history. Castañeda's reluctance to surrender to Matus' distinct conceptual framework of reality complicated the project of creating a shaman from an ordinary person, particularly a person fully indoctrinated in Western notions of reality.

As mentioned in the previous section, don Juan's challenge to Castañeda to find his *sitio* on the porch was a type of preliminary or entrance exam to test the candidate for his capacity for experiencing nonordinary reality. When the candidate managed to accomplish the task, albeit with a great degree of frustration and anxiety, he was granted an apprenticeship. It seems that the old Indian was testing the rigidity or solidity of his aspiring student's consciousness or personal narrative to determine if it was pliant enough to undergo a transformation. By managing to briefly perceive different hues in areas of the porch that corresponded with feelings in his body he was able to demonstrate that his consciousness had not been so solidified by the social narrative of reality that it could not be undone.

To begin to more deeply grasp the idea of *personal history* and what the sorcerer means when he speaks of ending it would be beneficial at this point. One salient example that is perhaps the most symbolic is when Castañeda attempts to question the eclectic man about his family and heritage but is rebuffed and advised "to drop" the subject and any interest in understanding the narrative that would give order and cohesion to Matus' life. During one of their initial meetings Castañeda has prepared genealogical tables in order to document don Juan's family relationships, but is stunned when the shaman tells him, "Don't waste your time with that crap" (11).⁹² The orderly, meticulous, and systematic approach to the collection of biographic information that is a

⁹² Interestingly, we will see something quite different with Jodorowsky in Chapter 7. He advises a return to our genealogical tree in order to free us from it. Although Castañeda and Jodorowsky have contrasting views on how to achieve the goal, the objective remains the same: free one's self from the social conditioning and mental patterns that are passed from generation to generation.

cornerstone of anthropology is reduced to bunkum, at best. Donald Polkinghorne notes that the purpose of narratives, like the family narrative that the anthropologist tries to create from the genealogical tables, is to give meaning to present events. That is to say that:

Narrative is, first of all, a cognitive process that serves understanding by organizing events and happenings into frames of meaning [...] The narrative process frames events as contributing parts of an unfolding story [...] Thus the world does not show up in experience as a meaningless flux, but as already meaningfully organized as named or namable things and as purposeful temporarily unfolding processes. (5-6)

Castañeda's attempt to create a history for don Juan is an attempt at creating a narrative which can be used as reference for the teacher whenever he is encountered. In his frustration the student insists on creating a narrative for don Juan. After failing to solicit names and birth places for don Juan's parents He appeals to his identity as an Indian: "You are a Yaqui. You can't change that." Don Juan questions his authority by responding "Am I?" To this the clever pupil replies, "I can't know that with certainty, at this point, but you know it and that is what counts. That's what makes it personal history" (11). However, don Juan advises him that whether or not he himself knows that he is Yaqui is irrelevant because it is what others know that creates personal history. Don Juan points out that Castañeda has to continually confirm, reinforce, and continue the narrative that his family, friends, and society has constructed and is constructing for him (11). This is to say that there are various narratives that are being constructed at any given time which also inform the other narratives' formation.

Polkinghorne explains that, "People may simply accept the role assigned to them by the plot the dominant culture has prepared for people with their particular gender, social standing,

and background, or they may revise or refashion the assigned plot and author an innovative personal identity” (10). In the context of the earlier conversation between the sorcerer and the apprentice, Castañeda attempts to force fixed meaning into don Juan’s life by appealing to what he expects to be don Juan’s own narrative created by society that consists, partly, in being Yaqui. However, the shaman rejects this attempt at forcing adherence to a narrative and tells him, ““You don’t know what I am, do you?” he said as if he were reading my thoughts. ‘You will never know who or what I am, because I don’t have a personal history’” (11). Matus chooses the latter of Polkinghorne’s two options and opts for an innovative and ambiguous personal identity. This innovative identity is based loosely on the socially constructed narrative of what it is to be a shaman, but this again is socially constructed and involves other’s interpretations and meaning making of don Juan rather than his own interpretation. He chooses to leave the meaning as ambiguous as possible so as to force weakness into his student’s narrative creation process.

Thus narrative is an incredibly important aspect of the process of interpreting events and assigning meaning. As Fireman, McVay Jr., and Flanagan explain,

This powerful role for narrative is realized by the linking of personal memories to present conditions and future hopes, by organizing, translating, and providing continuity and coherence to experience. Self-awareness and self-knowledge are constructed, to a significant degree, through narrative as we compose and assemble stories for ourselves and our world. In a complex interplay between the experience that makes for the personal story and the personal story that structures the experience, the narrator discovers the meaning and significance of the experience. It is through narrating that we learn about our selves, our community, and the social world. (4)

Thus, don Juan negates this possibility for his student and advises him to do the same. His process of stopping the world is the process of stopping the effect that these narratives have in the construction of one's identity. They are perceived as burdensome and limiting, to the point of fatally oppressive. As the teacher points out, "It is best to erase all personal history [...] because that would make us free from the encumbering thoughts of other people [...] What's wrong is that once they know you, you are an affair taken for granted and from that moment on you won't be able to break the tie of their thoughts. I personally like the ultimate freedom of being unknown" (*Journey to Ixtlan* 13-14, 15).⁹³

When there is no narrative, or personal history as Castañeda writes of it, one arrives at a pre-narrative or state where no interpretation has yet taken place. This is to say it is a moment of direct experience of reality. I conceive of this pre-narrative state, where there is no inner dialogue to provide ideology to configure the direct experience of reality into meaningful experience, as pre-literate and a non-intellectual affair. John Bickle refers to the "little inner voice that occupies so much of our waking consciousness" (196). This inner voice is the narrative voice that constructs personal history and aids in giving us our identity based on ideologies that have been made available through culture and its various agents. Thus, it stands to reason, if one is able to cease the internal dialogue, although even a modest reduction would

⁹³ It seems that it might be fair to defend the narratives that culture provides by pointing out their value. Jerome Bruner discusses this briefly in the context of larger, universal narratives that are used to maintain a civilization in a functioning and orderly state: "I think there are indeed universals, and I think that universals are essential to living cooperatively in a culture. Indeed, cultures typically forefront these universals to keep the system on the road—through the procedures of law, through covert and overt coercion, and especially through education" (24). This should strike familiar chords for readers who have studied French Marxist philosopher Louise Althusser. The above quote resonates his ideas of ideological and repressive state apparatuses which serve as subjugating forces of the ruling class. Although this study does not enter into a classist discussion of the topic, it does take the similar view that there are historical, social, and cultural forces that seek to normalize human attitudes, experience, and, ultimately, knowledge.

likely prove impactful, the narrative would also cease. The amount of internal dialogue, then, is related to the creation of narrative meaning and the essentially the meaning of one's life.

Mark MacDowell wrote an interesting *Comparative Study of Don Juan and Madhyamaka Buddhism (Knowledge and Transformation)* (1981) where he makes connections between Buddhism and the shamanic teachings that Castañeda presents in his texts. He also speaks of the narrative construction projects: "Suffice it to note that thinking is always through some form or other, and our everyday lives are filled with only these thought forms. According to Don Juan, in order to experience non-ordinary reality, one has to shut off the inner dialogue, namely, the incessant chattering of thought forms in our minds" (31-32). He equates the phenomenon of "stopping the world" to arriving at Buddhist Nirvāna, saying that they are, in fact, one and the same (30). He notes an uncertainty that is associated with the absence of narrative. He says, "What happens when one 'stops the world'? All we can say is that one experiences the world without the veil of the usual armor of name (concept) and form (percept). Castañeda was able to record his feelings and perception, but he too finally admits that the experience eludes all description" (32). This immense freedom from the narratives that limit us seems to be the object of desire of the New Age movement. Its hope and optimism is inspired by the expectation that one day mankind will achieve collective freedom from these small and large narratives that limit human potential and, often, create suffering.

A connection can easily be made between the disintegration of the narratives that construct meaning and the current era. Postmodern cultural theory embodies these same concepts. Jean-François Lyotard speaks of postmodernism as the failure of metanarratives or the grand narratives about the human condition. These large accounts are the beliefs, ideologies, and doctrines that order a civilization. On the failure of these narratives Lyotard says: "Simplifying

to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. [...] The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal". (72) The stories that Lyotard says are failing are the same stories that don Juan tells his pupil to stop believing. One such narrative is that of reality and the resulting knowledge that is learned from it. If he is to experience nonordinary reality then he must dismantle or deconstruct his ideologies that govern the interpretation of pre-narrative experience. In order to undertake such a task he must surrender his beliefs because they are based on fixed ideas that are created through language. This is to say that he must strive to arrive at a point of pre-narrative, pre-literate consciousness.

As MacDowell notes, this state that is marked by an absence of inner dialogue and narrative creation is not an act of doing, but rather of non-doing. He says:

Clearly, don Juan's implication is that the non-ordinary reality of which he speaks is to be found, not by devising further and more elaborate cerebral feats, but in the exact opposite. That is, through practice, one transcends the boundaries of categories, logic and mathematics to the experience of the world directly. And since Castañeda's apprenticeship spanned 15 years we can tell that this is not an overnight affair. It is an extremely difficult path. (41)

The lessons of don Juan certainly are not easy for the anthropology student, as he decides to quit several times. After one such occasion he returns to don Juan who tells him that part of his problems is the heavy clumsiness caused by self-important beliefs. In order to proceed in the transformation he would have to become more flexible. The shaman tells his student, "To be a man of knowledge one needs to be light and fluid" (*A Separate Reality* 8). A man of knowledge

cannot have fixed ideas about how things are but rather must be able to interrupt the narratives in order to have a direct experience of reality. In fact the Indian tells him that, “You talk too much. You must stop talking to yourself [...] You’re not unique at that. Every one of us does that. We carry on an internal talk. Think about it. Whenever you are alone, what do you do?” (*A Separate Reality* 218) This point is also demonstrated when they discuss Tibetan Buddhist texts that Castañeda tries to explain to his teacher. The teacher notes that if the Tibetans really had direct experiences of reality then they understood that what they wrote made no difference and that in itself made their writing important (*A Separate Reality* 194). They knew that they were only creating further narratives that served to further obscure reality from humans.

Thus, in the razor’s edge of the pre-narrative present moment where there is no recalled past or projected future constructed through meaning making there is only opportunity. This opportunity comes in the form of creation. One is then free to create whatever history he or she *feels* appropriate (because it is not a thinking matter). One becomes “a free agent capable of overcoming to a considerable degree the limitations [imposed] on him/her” (Santos and Sia 145). This openness to possibility facilitates the experience of nonordinary reality and is what Castañeda has trouble developing in himself. On one occasion he and don Juan are in the desert during the night and Carlos sees some unknown object on the ground in the distance. At his teacher’s urging they move closer to get a clearer view. Carlos perceives some kind of unfamiliar animal that is in the process of dying. It is an otherworldly beast that he has never before seen. He looks at his teacher with bewilderment hoping for some kind of explanation:

And then something in me arranged the world and I *knew* at once what the animal was. I walked over to it and picked it up. It was a large branch of a bush. It had been burnt, and possibly the wind had blown some burnt debris which got caught

in the dry branch and thus gave the appearance of a large bulging round animal [...] “What you’ve done is no triumph,” [don Juan] said. “You’ve wasted a beautiful power, a power that blew life into that dry twig.” He said that a real triumph would have been for me to let go and follow the power until the world had ceased to exist. (*Journey to Ixtlan* 103)

For the teacher, Carlos’ logical rationalization is not impressive because it signifies that he reverted to the narratives that culture has provided rather than being open to the possibilities that lay within nonordinary reality.

Castañeda does finally manage to ‘stop the world’ and consequently to erase his personal history. He is able to interrupt the narratives that are provided to him by society and he also is able to control his own narrative-making process. In a pre-narrative consciousness he is able to access a different aspect of reality which had remained hidden to him. This freedom was facilitated by the ritual ingestion of hallucinogenic plants over a number of years by the guidance of a Yaqui shaman who claimed to be an expert on the matter. What Castañeda learns contests the hegemonic positivist knowledge paradigm of Western civilization and offers a different type of knowledge based on a direct experience of reality that is unmediated by that limiting paradigm. This, however, is not to say that what he learns is not guided by these ordering powers, as his shamanic knowledge is clearly based on a logical system that is reasoned. What his works do is to restore the sacred elements of existence that the dominant Western knowledge paradigm has excluded. Although there are many questions about the authenticity of his writings and teachings that will likely never be answered, this does not preclude the value of his work as a cultural artifact worthy of critical consideration. If anything, I believe it presents a significant opportunity to understand the human condition from a different perspective.

CHAPTER 6

PAULO COELHO

To Hell and Back

At this point I would like to propose a type of literary riddle to the reader: What Latin American author has sold more than 130 million books in 160 countries in 72 languages⁹⁴, has had all of his work banned⁹⁵, is read and quoted in a public speech by a sitting U.S. president⁹⁶, has more than 8.4 million and 3.8 million followers on the social media sites Facebook and Twitter, respectively⁹⁷, and whose works are notably absent as objects of study in the field of literary studies⁹⁸? The answer is, obviously, Paulo Coelho.

It is understandable if some more sophisticated reader feels this to be a rather brusque manner in which to begin a dissertation chapter in the field of literary studies. After all, the study of literature is the task of intellectuals who often work with the nuance and subtlety of complex, rigorous philosophical frameworks. To introduce the work of an author by speaking of the

⁹⁴ This is according to the back inside dust jacket of *Aleph* (2011). Even higher estimates can be found in other sources. Although the accuracy of these statistics is unknown, they do, nonetheless, indicate the rather significant interest in the writer.

⁹⁵ In January 2011 Coelho received notice that all of his books had been banned by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Iran, despite having been published there during the previous twelve years. As a response, three days later Coelho made seventeen of his works freely available in PDF format in Farsi (Persian), the language most widely spoken in Iran. He posted them as open-access files on his blog and encouraged his readers to share them widely ("Books Banned in Iran").

⁹⁶ President Barack Obama quoted *The Valkyries* (1992), a type of spiritual autobiography, in a speech given on March 20, 2011 to promote human rights (Obama).

⁹⁷ These numbers were taken directly from his social media accounts on April 14, 2012.

⁹⁸ Although his literary works have received little critical attention, it is important to note that the critical perception of him may be changing. On July 25, 2002 he was elected to the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* to succeed Roberto Campos ("Paulo Coelho- Biografia"). The academy has a strong history of rejecting writers of popular literature.

author's public power and influence can seem rather crass. Touting the fact that he has more than 12 million follows on social media who wait to read his next comment or contribution to metaphysical or spiritual philosophy seems boastful, at best. The reference to the more than 130 million books that have been sold under his name in 72 languages smacks of some arrogant assertion of capitalist consumer clout rather than referencing any value to humanity.

Additionally, it makes one seem rather unconfident, as if overcompensating for an insecurity, to mention the fact that he is read and quoted in a public speech by the current president of the United States.

Yes, it could be easily and rightfully be interpreted in such a way. However, I suggest that it precisely because of this evidence that the author should be discussed. There is a notable absence of critical thought dedicated to Paulo Coelho's work and, given the above information, one should naturally question why so. As discussed in Chapter 2 there are various forces that shape what is selected for critical study of literature, not the least of which is the personal preference of scholars. As pointed out, what literary canon suggests about a given society does not always reflect that reality. Keith Whinnom's example of *La Celestina* and *Marco Aurelio*, which are widely studied and were issued only half as many editions as the little studied *Libro de la oración*, shows that one must be careful when relying on or placing much importance on the established literary hierarchy. If we accept Whinnom's assertion that "one function of language and of literature is- must be- the transmission of knowledge in the broadest sense: literature provides guidance for the individual to adjust to the world and the society around him" (196), then important questions are raised regarding the literary value of the work of Paulo Coelho.

The Brazilian writer has an interesting history which has informed the knowledge that he disseminates through nearly thirty books. He was stillborn and miraculously brought back to life

after his parents prayed to St. Joseph in a hospital in the middle-class neighborhood of Humaitá in Rio de Janeiro in 1947. He would grow up healthy with one sister as the son of an engineer in Rio de Janeiro (Morais *Paulo Coelho* 37-38). As a young adult he was forcibly admitted to a mental institution by his parents so as to dissuade him from his ambitions to be an actor and writer (117). There he was also submitted to electroshock therapy (131-133). He later became heavily involved in drug use and was later detained and tortured by the Brazilian army, accused of terroristic raids and subversion (171, 168-170). He would develop a strong interest in Satanism and other occult sciences such as astrology and vampirism and claims to have had a direct experience of hell and the Devil as a result (214, 222, 242-246). He channeled the spirit of the Spanish Inquisitor Torquemada which he documented and published as part of his collection *Arquivos do Inferno* (1982) (325-327). It was when he would reach forty years of age that he would abandon his successful career making music in Brazil in order to follow his life-long dream of becoming a very successful writer (Burchard 18). He has managed to do just that.

There are three primary texts that will be used for analysis in this chapter, *O Diário de um Mago (The Pilgrimage)* (1988), *O Alquimista (The Alchemist)* (1988), and *O Aleph (Aleph)* (2011). Although, as is presented in the rest of this section, much of his *oeuvre* reflects the theme of the journey as metaphor for personal transformation (particularly in the form of a pilgrimage), these three works represent important aspects of his writings which I hope to elaborate throughout this chapter.⁹⁹ *O Diário de um Mago* is important in that it marks a significant turning point for the author that would be the model for many of his future works. His popular novel *O Alquimista*, undoubtedly his most popular and well-known work, is included in an attempt to

⁹⁹ There is also the practical purpose of reducing the quantity of texts to a more manageable number for analysis.

understand the popularity of the use of the pilgrimage as metaphor for personal transformation. It can be said through this example that travel literature is the basis for his presentation of human alchemy. Through travel one knows the Other and is confronted with his own limitations. His latest book, *O Aleph*, is viewed as important because it most clearly and directly treats the theme of the journey and personal transformation, but also does it in the form of the spiritual autobiography, which is one of the hallmarks of New Age literature (as discussed in Chapter 3). Following is a rather brief introduction to a number of his works, beginning with the three chosen for study here.

In August of 1986 Coelho made an important pilgrimage on the Road to Santiago de Compostela. This trip was initiated by a spiritual master from a Catholic religious order called RAM (*Regnus Agnus Mundi*) as an indoctrination into the order (Morais *Paulo Coelho* 321).¹⁰⁰ He travels along the route with a spiritual teacher from the order who, referred to as Petrus, would be waiting at some point along the route and Coelho would have the task of divining where. Once he managed to find Petrus, his master presented him with a sword and cape that would symbolize his membership and grant him mystical power. Afterward he wrote an account of the trip in the tradition of the spiritual autobiography that would be called *O Diário de um Mago*. It was almost immediately after he would publish his most well-known book to date, *O Alquimista*. This fictional novel, again, would treat the theme of the journey and its connection to spiritual development. It tells the story of a Spanish boy named Santiago who wishes to pursue his dream to travel. Thus, he becomes a shepherd and embarks on a journey to find a treasure and his “personal legend”. *O Alquimista*, it seems, gained Coelho a reputation as a writer of life-

¹⁰⁰ According to Coelho, RAM is a Catholic religious order that is based on teachings of a Catholic form of mysticism (Morais *Paulo Coelho* 321). However, it was not possible to find any source of information on the group that was not based on his book.

affirming, heartwarming, and uplifting stories, which is reflected in much of the literature of the New Age movement.¹⁰¹

Most of the Brazilian's work treats the theme of spiritual development and a number of his works do this through the use of the pilgrimage as metaphor for personal transformation. This is the case with the previous two works mentioned as well as his most recent publication, *O Aleph*. It recounts a 9,288-kilometer trip on the Tran Siberian Railway from Moscow to Vladivostok on the Pacific coast and the events that occur during the journey. Before explaining the importance of the text, I would like to devote a few lines to address a problematic aspect of the release of this work. The book is very commonly referred to as a novel. It is written in prose, uses narration (in the first person singular by a figure called Paulo Coelho who is a very successful writer on a spiritual journey) and dialogue, has a climax, and then a closed ending. Local libraries that were used in research for this study have it classified as Science Fiction and Fiction.¹⁰² In an interview with the *New York Times* the reporter (who refers to it as a novel) notes to Coelho that the protagonist is very familiar. She asks the author how much of the work is autobiographical. He says "One hundred percent. These are my whole experiences, meaning everything that is real is real. I had to summarize much of it. But in fact I see the book as my journey myself, not as a fiction book but as a nonfiction book" (Bosman "Best-Selling Author..."). To corroborate this story is a forty-five minute documentary film titled *La mia*

¹⁰¹ Although it is impossible to be certain, this researcher questions if this might also be the reason why his work has received so little critical attention. In spite of his reputation as a writer that lifts the human spirit, he does have other works that are much darker and cynical but do offer a spiritual perspective. For example, *O Vencedor está só* (*The Winner Stands Alone*) (2008) gives, in the form of the novel, an analysis of celebrity, power and what he calls the "superclass", which is at times overwhelming in its cynicism, profundity, darkness, and social realism.

¹⁰² A phone conversation with a librarian at one facility revealed the curious fact that it was classified as Science Fiction by the clearinghouse that ships the books to the library and the library simply enters the information into their cataloging system without any changes.

Transiberiana /My Transiberian (2008) that documents Coelho's 2006 trip on the Trans Siberian Railway. In it appears a woman that fits the description of the primary figure of Hilal in his book. So, one can see that the issue of genre has become a little murky. It seems that it may be a result of the erroneous use of the word 'novel' by many lay readers and also by the absence of an official genre called 'spiritual autobiography' in the cataloging system. This is complicated by various episodes in the text where the writer has mystical experiences and experiences of past life regression, among other supernatural phenomena. The intellectual discomfort or awkwardness of catalogers with such themes may have provoked a reaction that led to the classification of Fiction and, worse so, Science Fiction.¹⁰³

The two autobiographical pilgrimages of *O Diário de um Mago* and *O Aleph* and that of Santiago, the Spanish shepherd seem to be his most recognized works to date, but he does have a number of other works that warrant mention so as to demonstrate his authorial flexibility. For example, *Arquivos de Inferno* and *O Manual Prático do Vampirismo (Practical Manual of Vampirism)* (1986) reflect his earlier interest in occult themes and his experimentation with Satanism and vampirism. His next two works, mentioned in the previous paragraphs, *O Diário de um Mago* and *O Alquimista* reflect a significant change in the tone, energy, and attitude of his works. The occult obsession with power and desire give way to a narrative of personal transformation, in both the autobiographical and fictional forms. He continues with the model of the pilgrimage or journey as metaphor for personal transformation in the novel *Brida* (1990) which tells the story of an Irish girl on a quest for knowledge. In *As Valkírias (The Valkyries)* (1992) Coelho writes an autobiographical account, in third person, of a trip he and his wife make to the Mojave Desert to find his guardian angel and a group of biker women called the Valkyries.

¹⁰³ For the purpose of this study, *O Aleph* will be considered a work of nonfiction as the writer himself describes his work. There appears no reason to doubt his word on the matter and there does appear evidence to support it.

In his 1997 publication of *Manual do Guerreiro da Luz* (*The Manual of the Warrior of Light*) the author compiles a collection of short philosophical essays related to passages from various sacred texts from both Western and Oriental spiritual traditions. He abandons his fictional and autobiographical narratives to become the guru that many of his readers portray him to be by providing them with reading material from the sacred texts of various religions and offering his reading of the passages. By the time of his 2003 novel *Onze Minutos* (*Eleven Minutes*) he has returned to the theme of the journey as metaphor for transformation. The story chronicles the experiences of a young Brazilian woman who travels to Switzerland to find success. After failed attempts at dancing and modeling she becomes a rather successful prostitute and experiences a sexual and spiritual awakening. In *O Zahir* (*The Zahir*) (2005), a fictionalized novel with autobiographical elements, the narrator travels to Paris and then Kazakhstan in search of his missing spouse, whom he doesn't know if she has been kidnapped and murdered or has simply left him. As noted earlier, his novel *O Vencedor Está Só* (*The Winner Stands Alone*) (2008) offers a much different narrative voice, albeit with the same type of spiritual lessons, than what readers were accustomed, especially in comparison with his most well-known work *O Alquimista*. As is notable throughout this brief presentation of some of his works, the theme of the journey appears frequently. At times it takes the form of a formal pilgrimage, as in *O Diário de um Mago* and *O Aleph*, and at other times it is transformation disguised as travel, as in *Brida*, *As Valkírias* and *O Zahir*. Whichever the case, Coelho has produced a significant *oeuvre* that provides ample evidence for the study of the theme of travel and human transformation in literature.

Of Pilgrimages and Human Alchemy (Transformation)

The theme of travel is common in the work of Paulo Coelho. He and his characters move from space to space in search of some sort of resolution from internal conflicts. This can come in the form of a treasure, one's "personal legend", or (further) spiritual development. In the case of *O Diário de um Mago*, Coelho undergoes a type of spiritual transformation. Along the way he confronts his inner demons and learns numerous practices that will aid him on his spiritual path on this journey and in the future. He is inducted into the secret Catholic order RAM upon completion of a task assigned him by his spiritual master. *O Alquimista* presents the fictional character of Santiago, a boy who makes the seemingly strange decision to become a shepherd since it is the only way to travel and gain true wisdom. In the process of travelling he pursues dreamt of treasures and learns the concept of one's "personal legend" from the legendary biblical figure Melchizedek, the King of Salem. Similarly to his first spiritual autobiography mentioned above, *O Aleph*, marks his journey through space and time as he is presented with an opportunity to redeem himself and resolve unaddressed conflict from a previous life in the present. The three journeys here represent a path of human transformation which enables the protagonist of each work to (re)create his narrating life story, both present and past.

If we are to believe Coelho, the journey and resulting transformation is the most essential element for human unfolding:

I'm a pilgrim writer and that inevitably appears in the way my characters deals with space [sic]. I'm in constant movement and very often I find that my characters need to equally find themselves in a journey. I believe that we are constantly experiencing transformation and that's why we need to let life guide us [...] You must get as much as you can from any journey, because – in the end –

the journey is all you have [...] You have to look at life itself is a pilgrimage [sic].
 (“Any Journey is a Pilgrimage”)

This declaration has deep and far-reaching implications when considered carefully. Indeed, Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs confirm that within the Christian tradition, life itself has often been symbolized as a journey and that “travel broadens the mind” (2). The reader has to be careful not to gloss what seems like a cliché observation. This broadening is significant in what it provides and accomplishes, intentional or not.¹⁰⁴ The experience of knowing the Other opens the traveler to the possibility of other values and beliefs and other ways and means of living. It is a consciousness changing experience.

If we consider the value of experience gained from travel in relation to the development or unfolding of consciousness, as discussed in Chapter 4, we can begin to make a concrete connection between travel and human transformation. William James’ understanding of consciousness as *experience* is important in that the further experience gained through journey grants the development of consciousness. In terms of the quote above from Coelho, one gains greater consciousness and experience through travel. Human existence (*life*, as Coelho terms it) should be viewed as a journey; thus, human existence is viewed as a process of gaining greater experience or consciousness. Trinh T. Minh-ha emphasizes the value of the rupture in the continuity of our identity and knowledge. Minh-ha says, “How can one avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one’s own country, language, sex and identity?” (13). This is to say that, in order to break the routine of the ordinary one becomes something different from one’s self. This is handily accomplished through Coelho’s pilgrimage

¹⁰⁴ In the case of Coelho and the texts studied here, he intentionally sets out on a pilgrimage at the insistence of his spiritual teacher known as J. or Jean. In the case of the Spanish shepherd in *O Alquimista*, he wishes to travel, but is also compelled by the promise of treasure at the end of his journey.

where the traveler experiences others that function as catalysts of change. As Minh-ha notes, “To travel can consist in operating a profoundly unsettling inversion of one’s identity: I become me via an other” (23). Indeed, Coelho notes in *O Aleph*, “The greatest lessons I learned had been precisely those that my journeys had taught me” (*Aleph* 11). Thus, travel is a process of change. So then, we can see that travel and the transformations in the human spirit do enjoy a connection.¹⁰⁵

In *O Aleph* Coelho is confronted early on in the story by what seems to be a deranged woman. As he is to set out on his Trans-Siberian Railroad journey of 9,288 kilometers, he and his group are approached by a young woman whom he calls Hilal. She has no known previous connection to the author and is not part of his traveling party. However, she maintains that she is there to help Coelho heal his soul through her own healing, of which the author has no idea what she means. She insists on going on the journey and essentially begs to accompany him. The unexpected traveler is unwelcome and the subject of disdain and contempt by most of the author’s traveling party which is comprised of business associates related to his publications. Through dogged determination and the sympathy of an industrialist friend of Coelho she is able to make the journey with him.¹⁰⁶ This awkward figure that seems to draw the wrath of everyone initially remains on the periphery of the group and becomes the Other who will upset all of Coelho’s routines (narratives). This is supported by the fact that in the same chapter where she is

¹⁰⁵ Indeed, Alexandra Peat supports this idea when she defines the pilgrimage “as a cross-cultural flow of people and ideas around the world rather than as a journey from one fixed point to another” (17). This is to say that she views it not as a lineal movement but as the transformation that results from interaction with that which is different. She notes that modern travel literature no longer provides examples of the pilgrim on a physical journey to a shrine to pay homage, but rather “we must make a conceptual leap in order to see the spiritual journey in the mundane mechanics of modern travel” (3).

¹⁰⁶ Coelho’s friend is sympathetic and buys her a ticket in a different railcar. Then, she repeatedly asks Coelho for permission to visit his party’s car, which he ultimately grants her (*Aleph* 56, 71).

introduced, Coelho reminds us of his reason for embarking on the journey in the first place. His spiritual master has told him, “Leave your comfortable life and go in search of your kingdom” (*Aleph* 45). The author has fallen into a monotonous existence marked by routine. His master tells him “Go and re-conquer your kingdom, which has grown corrupted by routine. Stop repeating the same lesson because you won’t learn anything new that way” (*Aleph* 10). His sense of discovery and creativity are failing. Hilal, as the Other, is what makes him uncomfortable and forces him into confronting certain limiting aspects of himself.¹⁰⁷

In *O Diário de um Mago* it is part of himself who takes the form of an Other. That is, his demons, referred to as Legion, manifest in a dog that he meets on his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.¹⁰⁸ He first meets the dog in the house of a woman who his guide, Petrus, says is cursed. The dog attacks him, scaring him badly but causes no physical injuries (*The Pilgrim* 89). Petrus advises him that the dog is a challenge that he will have to overcome at some future point in the journey (92).¹⁰⁹ He sees the dog again, but it flees before he can take any action (131). His challenge will be to overcome the attacks of the Other which, in this case, symbolizes his own demons. He does manage to defeat himself and his own limitations by defeating the dog (191). Only through the otherness of his demons can the pilgrim advance spiritually. Additionally, the dog’s presence helps to move the story forward as it is only through its defeat that the author can have a successful journey. Thus, the Other and the journey itself are interdependent. Without the

¹⁰⁷ The particular limiting aspect is negative spiritual energy from an action, or lack of action, in a previous life.

¹⁰⁸ If this association between demons and the name Legion sounds familiar, it is because it appears in the Book of Mark in the Bible. Jesus is confronted by a man that is considered to be insane because he is possessed by demons. There are so many inhabiting him that they collectively call themselves ‘Legion’. Jesus casts them out of the man and into a herd of pigs which then fall to their death after running off a cliff (Mark 5:1-20).

¹⁰⁹ Petrus advises him that he will learn the practices and exercises of the RAM, but resolving the conflict with the dog, or his own demons, will present the real application of those practices and exercises (92).

dog there cannot be a successful pilgrimage and without the pilgrimage Coelho cannot confront the Other, which is really a manifestation of himself that he cannot access at home.

This contrasts somewhat with *O Alquimista* whose Other is ubiquitous, but less conflictive and tumultuous. Santiago's strong desire to know the Other manifests as a desire to travel. Coelho offers a contradicting view through the character of the boy's father who has planned that the boy would be a priest and dedicate his life to the study of the Word of God (*The Alchemist* 8). However Santiago feels strongly about this and knows that his "purpose in life was to travel [...] Ever since he had been a child, he had wanted to know the world, and this was much more important to him than knowing God and learning about man's sin." (8). He rejects the commonly held notion of knowing through the study of books and seeks to know through direct experience. It is through direct experience that he hopes to learn something of the world. This is to say that, he needs the Other, that which is different, in order to learn. Only through travel can the young shepherd gain any real knowledge. Santiago's father is depicted as being rather obtuse or uninformed as a result of not having knowledge of the other places of the world. He asserts that "People from all over the world have passed through this village [...] They come in search of new things, but when they leave they are basically the same people they were when they arrived. They climb the mountain to see the castle, and they wind up thinking that the past was better than what we have now" (9). He tries to dissuade his son from wanting to travel, but Santiago *feels* that there is something, albeit undefined at this point in the story, to be gained from travel and exposure to the yet unknown Other.¹¹⁰ He doesn't know that traveling will aid him in the unfolding of his consciousness or personal growth, but he insists that he must travel.

¹¹⁰ This episode early on in the novel presents a challenge to some readers as it requires a strong suspension of disbelief. For example, after having sent his son to a seminary to learn to read and write Latin and Spanish, the father agrees to relinquish his plans for Santiago to become a priest after only a little dissuasion. After Santiago

As Euan Macphail explains, the essential aspects involved in the growth and development of consciousness are self-consciousness, where one is aware of one's own being, and feeling consciousness, where one makes sense of experience (3). This underscores the idea that travel is a process of becoming. Through awareness of our own Self we become aware of our experience and make attempts at interpreting that experience which results in the creations of narratives of existence. Experiences of the Other define the Self. It is only through points of comparison and contrast that one's identifying parameters become clearer. That is the process of identity creation. However, as these parameters are established, the paradox of the situation is that they are constantly and simultaneously challenged by that Other who creates them.

This connection isn't only made in the travel writing itself. It is also repeated in scholarly work related to this genre. Mary Baine Campbell explains that

Literary critical work on travel writing, or relevant to the reading of it, has continued along with and sometimes between the same covers as the work of historical and cultural revision. As a kind of writing, 'travel writing' provokes certain kinds of essentially literary questions and formulations. Most interesting here are works of literary criticism that find themselves directly facing issues of power, knowledge, and identity as a consequence of the very nature of the formal matter raised. (263)

As Campbell seems to be pointing out about critical work, the trite phrase "Life is a journey", which is a commonly referenced axiom within New Age movement, is not as superficial as often thought to be. There are profound consequences to traveling, to knowing the Other. It challenges

learns that shepherds are those who travel the most in his region, he declares, "Well, then I'll be a shepherd". In response, "His father said no more" (9). This unlikely event, and others like them, are, perhaps, the root of some of the criticism of Coelho's writings and the opinion that they tend to be superficial and implausible.

the narratives about who we are, the authority that defines us, and the premises and assumptions that are used to maintain that authority.

The three issues mentioned in the previous paragraph (power, knowledge, and identity) are at the core of Coelho's work. The protagonist of each of the three works studied here seeks knowledge, a sense of personal power, and a unique identity outside of that which has been assigned or imposed by external sociopolitical forces. For example, in *O Aleph* Coelho has become trapped by his identity as a successful writer. Having assimilated that identity, he accepts its professional norms as a way of life and this becomes a tremendous limiting factor. He says, "I seem to be spending my life in airports and hotels, and any sense of adventure has rapidly given way to profound tedium" (11). The writer has lost his personal power and authority to define his own identity. He has lost touch with his heart and is unable to read the signs that will lead him to his "Personal Legend" (21). As author of his life he has lost agency.

If he has lost agency in his latest book, in his most famous he learns how to develop it. Knowledge, power, and identity are relatively unknown concepts for Santiago. However, he does have a sense of power when he decides "'Well, then I'll be a shepherd'" (*The Alchemist* 9). Although he doesn't understand the concept of Personal Legend he is on track for discovering his (21)¹¹¹. He meets a man named Melchizedek who claims to be the King of Salem who imparts his wisdom regarding Santiago's desire to travel and the realization of his Personal Legend. Melchizedek tells him that while one is young their Personal Legend is strong, it is what one wants and dreams to be, but over time it changes and begins to feel like a negative energy. However, this negative energy is actually a force that will help one in achieving his Personal

¹¹¹ Coelho never defines the concept of Personal Legend clearly but offers some explanation: "Whoever you are, or whatever it is that you hope to do, when you really want something, it's because that desire originated in the soul of the universe. It's your mission on earth" (*The Alchemist* 22). Thus, Personal Legend is equated with purpose. This purpose is what one *feels* is his or her destiny, what they must do.

Legend (21). Power, knowledge, and identity are cultivated through the realization of one's Personal Legend. Santiago, through knowledge gained through travel, develops power, both literal and figurative, and creates a new identity that is his Personal Legend. Thus, travel and its nearly inevitable contact with the Other, facilitates the discovery and development of these literary issues that Campbell points out. This happens similarly in *O Diário de um Mago*. The pilgrim battles for power with his demons. The battle is one over power that grants authority to create his identity or Personal Legend. It parallels the concept of authorial agency and the author's authority to write a narrative, but in place of a fictional narrative it is the narrative of Coelho's life.

The narrative that is created from traveling experience and encounters with those who dare to challenge the Self which is important in the construction of a metaphorical narrative of evolution. Or better said, the search for happiness is always a metaphor for the search to recover a memory of happiness. This is to say that there is a desire to return to some time or place where one was happy before, but has since been lost. As Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska point out:

The journey is symbol of narrative. Narrative- as a structure of development, growth and change- the acquisition of knowledge and solution of problem- is conceived as a physical process of movement, of disruption, negotiation and return [...] The trip constitutes a lapse in the regular rhythms of mundane existence, it leads to a place where time 'stands still' or is reversed into a utopian space of a place of freedom, abundance and transparency. (199)

The traveler, thus, seeks a place outside or apart from the limiting narratives that he or she uses to make sense of experience. This makes sense in the light of Philip Edwards' idea that all travel

“is a mark of the loss of that happiness, a mark of discontent, and a restless search for what has been lost” (5). The narratives that, at some point, served the traveler well have ceased to serve the purpose of making adequate meaning from human experience. What is desired is a return to a preliterate state discussed earlier where no narrative or meaning-making is possible and experience is simply that, experience without meaning. This is a time before any problems since all problems are always only ever a problem in thinking.¹¹² That is, narrative creation fabricates problems and the solution to these problems is a return to prenarrative (preliterate) consciousness.

This place is noted in its relationship to omens in *O Alquimista*. The gypsy woman who interprets his recurring dream of treasure insists that he will have to follow the omens: “God has prepared a path for everyone to follow. You just have to read the omens that he has left for you” (29). Omens, or signals from God, can only be found in the present moment outside of meaning-making narratives. If Santiago is not in the prenarrative eternal present he will not be able to see the omens as they are presented to him. If he were to be engaged with narrative when an omen manifests, it is likely that he would not realize the value of the occurrence and miss an opportunity to realize his Personal Legend. This is demonstrated when Santiago is traveling

¹¹² If the reader is troubled by this declaration regarding the nature of problems, please consider that all problems represent conflict between beliefs or ideas. If one accesses prenarrative consciousness where beliefs and ideas are not possible because there is no narrative to support them, then, conflict is not possible. That is, there are no problems. Problems are related to conflicting narratives. It stands to reason, then, that if one experiences conflicting narratives, the solution would be found by adjusting one of the narratives to eliminate the conflict. For example, if a person who is hungry says that he has a problem because he is hungry, but only has a piece of celery to eat but does not like celery, there is a conflict. The conflict is between the beliefs that 1) he is hungry, 2) he is doesn't like celery, and 3) he doesn't have anything else to eat. This problem can be resolved by changing the narrative that supports any of these beliefs. He could change the narrative that says he is hungry. Also, he could decide that the narrative that supports the belief that he doesn't like celery is not serving his situation and begin believing that he, indeed, truly enjoys the green, crunchy plant. Also, he could create a narrative that offers something else to eat, like calling to have a pizza delivered. The ability to access prenarrative consciousness is potent and has tremendous implications for those who cease to believe the narratives that support the scientifically established laws of nature (e.g., the law of gravity, general laws of physics, the symmetry of time and space, etc.). Coelho makes reference to this by claiming to have many supernatural powers, among which include the ability to make it rain and summon the wind (Morais *Paulo Coelho* 354-355). However, there is little room to analyze such feats in this study and the discussion would surely distract us from the material at hand.

through the dessert with the caravan. The camel drivers are tasked with the responsibility of reading the omens and have to be attentive to the present moment to notice them as they occur. Because of his awareness of this tool for realizing his Personal Legend, he is present in a prenarrative state when he notices the strange attack of a hawk by another hawk that would signal an assault on the oasis where the caravan is staying. His attentiveness is rewarded, after the omen proves to be true, by the elders of the oasis who grant him substantial respect and some degree of financial security. What takes place, then, is a return to a moment outside of time, outside of narrative knowledge that anticipates a deeper understanding.

This is also crucial in *O Diário de um Mago* in relation to the dog. Petrus, through the prenarrative state, realizes that the dog is a type of messenger or omen to offer a practical test of the knowledge that Coelho is learning from him. He sees that the dog is a manifestation of the demons that his student carries within. The woman, who is the owner of the dog, however, operates from narratives, or remembered and prescribed knowledge and has no understanding of this curse that has befallen her. This is to say that when “she had accepted it as normal” and that “the attitudes of the world were fine with her” she accepted what her society had imposed on her without continuing to struggle to maintain her own sense of power and authority to create her own identity (*The Pilgrim* 92).

It is equally important in *O Aleph*. In fact, this is the origin of the book’s name. One of the epigraphs in the text is a quote from Jorge Luis Borges’ short story “El Aleph” from the book with the eponymous title. The Aleph is a device from which one could see everything in the universe at once. For Coelho, this is the moment of prenarrative consciousness. He experiences this in the presence of Hilal and also creates it through mystical practice. It is in that present moment outside of time that Hilal’s deeper identity is revealed to him. She is a woman who he

failed to defend during the Spanish Inquisition, and thus allowed her to be condemned to be burned at the stake (*Aleph* 107).¹¹³ By being deeply unattached to prescribed meanings he is able to access, through *The Aleph*, their connection from more than five-hundred years earlier.

It is after that return to prenarrative consciousness that one can create a new narrative or even remain in that meaningless space. As Curtis and Pajaczowska explain, metaphorical journey is a process of “forgetting the ways of being” (200). One erases or exits, if you will, a narrative of mundane meaning in order to find or create a different narrative that seeks to help the traveler rid his Self of the conflicts that ail it. This is the revisionism that Campbell points out in the critical theory that parallels the personal revisions that the spiritual journey promises. The pain, suffering, sadness, and tension created by past narratives or related to future narratives is bypassed by accessing prenarrative consciousness, otherwise known as the ever-living, razor's edge of the present moment of pure consciousness where it is rather difficult to construct and become committed to any narrative.

A New Age Catholic Mystic?

One would be amiss to not take notice of the language, figures and overall shade of religion in the message that Paulo Coelho disseminates in his literature. The epigraphs that introduce most, if not all, of his books are direct quotes from the Bible, prayers to Mary (mother of Jesus), or other notable figures within the Roman Catholic Church tradition. However, it becomes equally clear that he does not shy from mentioning other spiritual traditions, not only within Christianity, but from spiritual traditions from around the world like Buddhism, Islam,

¹¹³ The references that he makes to reincarnation are inconsistent with the Roman Catholic Church and reflect a New Age aspect of his worldview. That is, the belief in reincarnation, which is a central idea in *O Aleph*, is commonly associated with the hodgepodge of New Age beliefs outside of their traditional religious order of Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.

and paganism. What comes clearly to mind is that Coelho is not a typical religious follower. He takes his religious practices to the farthest realms in search of communion with the Divine so as to achieve his Personal Legend or destiny without drawing distinctions that separate those in one tradition from another. I propose that because of this, Coelho is a New Age Catholic mystic.

The Brazilian author makes no effort to conceal his Roman Catholic Church membership. He posits messages on Twitter and other social media sites, his blog, and in his works in support of the church and also questioning and even criticizing it.¹¹⁴ At the same time he also seeks to include other spiritual traditions in his message, reflecting the New Age tendency of religious combining. For example, in *O Alquimista* there is a clear absence of any particular religion. Although Santiago is a Spaniard and there is a definite otherness attributed to the Moorish descendants of the region, the Roman Catholic Church is never mentioned. Nor is Islam, which is surprising considering that much of the story takes place in parts of Africa with a strong Islamic presence. In *O Diário de um Mago* his religious affiliations are made much clearer by not only the pilgrimage itself, which is supposed to end at the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, but also in the instruction he receives in order to be inducted into the secret Catholic order RAM. *O Aleph* seems to present a syncretic blend of spiritualities, which is much more consistent with the New Age movement as explained in Chapter 1. In fact, the story begins with Coelho and his master praying to an oak tree on his property. This neo-pagan ritual is augmented by a Sufi prayer, performed by a professed Roman Catholic (5). Although this may seem an odd combination of traditions, I propose that there is evidence that it may not be and that it might be evidence that the author is a fairly advanced mystic.

¹¹⁴ For example, in *Paulo Coelho: Confessions of a Pilgrim* (2001), which is a series of interviews with the author conducted by Juan Arias, he points out the joy of communion with others in the Catholic Church while also pointing out the unfair exclusion from ecclesiastical participation that women continue to suffer. He goes on to note the serious suffering caused by the church in Latin America as well as Spain (14).

If this study wishes to propose that the former Satanist and atheist is truly a mystic in disguise, then let it first start with some sort of defining terms for mystic and mysticism and then seek to prove Coelho's compatibility to those parameters. One of the defining features that frequently appears in the literature that seeks to discuss mysticism is that the heart of mystical practice "lies in experience" (Grant 5). There are two fundamental types of knowledge: 1) the "ordinary" knowledge that comes from discursive, mediated learning. It is abstract and unreal in that it is nothing more than a thought based on words and symbols and 2) "unmediated knowledge of and union with the divine essence" which is a direct experience without any limiting consciousness to shade or tint the experience (Cupitt 24). William Harmless states that, "the mystic possesses his or her knowledge of God not from books or academic study, but from experience" (7). Harmless posits mystical theology in complementary juxtaposition to scholastic theology. While scholastic theologians work to understand the divine mystery through the rational mind, mystical theologians sought to know it through direct experience (7). This means that there was no type of consciousness to mediate the experience, only experience itself. This direct or mystical experience complements the scholastic without either being superior to the other. Harmless says, "The mystic had a knowledge of God that belonged not simply to himself or herself. The mystic's voice was needed in the theological marketplace." (7). Coelho takes a clear stand on this issue in *O Alquimista* where the protagonist is an avid reader but becomes disillusioned with reading and book learning. He tells the alchemist that, "I rode through the desert with a man who had books on alchemy, but I wasn't able to learn anything from them". The alchemist replies, "There is only one way to learn [...] It's through action. Everything you need to know you have learned through your journey" (125). Indeed, the alchemist explains that experiential knowledge, the direct and unmediated knowledge is what he used to read understand

the omen that symbolized the attack that would take place on the oasis where they were staying: “It’s like the flight of those two hawks; it can’t be understood by reason alone” (126). Thus, we see, similarly to what is noted in the previous chapter, that there is a contesting knowledge paradigm that seeks legitimacy of at least equal footing to the dominant positivistic rational knowledge structure.

The privileged position of experiential knowledge that is common in Coelho’s works is an echoed sentiment in Manuela Dunn Mascetti’s book *Christian Mysticism* (1998). For Mascetti this is a reaction to the cold rational approach that has dominated the age of Enlightenment. She says:

The philosophy of the age of Enlightenment, as a reaction to the obscure medieval past it succeeded, was based on rationalism, and it discarded mysticism, intuition, imagination and cosmology as inappropriate to culture, education, and a religion that supported social and technological advancement. The view of the world and of nature was mechanistic; life was to be led according to Cartesian principles.

The concept of ‘mystery’ vanished with the deification of the machine. (83)

This ‘mystery’ is exactly what New Age writers, like Paulo Coelho, seek a return to in this time of strife and conflict throughout the world. In fact, Coelho begins *O Aleph* with a reference to the relevance of ancient religions in the contemporary world. He notes the genocides, religious wars, poverty, depression, and general hopelessness in the contemporary world. He doubts his own beliefs and questions his ability to be able to adequately guide others (3-5). Here is where we begin to see strong indications that Coelho is a mystic for the current age in his recognition of the lack of something in the contemporary world and the connection it has to his own lack of understanding.

As Mascetti points out, “This is the first movement of any individual who steps on the path toward God: the world outside no longer satisfies the hunger felt at soul level, and so a 180-degree turn is taken that brings us around to face the discovery of the inner world and the abode of the divine” (78). In the case of the artist at hand, he has previously established himself as an advanced spiritual being with a number of his other works, but with *O Aleph* he shows how the path continues and he once again struggles with the mundane world. He has become comfortable with his fame and literary success and fallen into the routine of the successful spiritual writer. It is the trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway that will spur the next significant step in his spiritual evolution.

His practices on this trip, those that he performs in the presence of Hilal reflect the practices of the Christian mystic. Mascetti notes that the word *mysticism* is derived from the Greek *mystikos* which has is used to mean “to shut one’s senses” and “to enter the mysteries” (79). Coelho does both, literally and figuratively in his works. Santiago, the Spanish shepherd, when faced with death if he cannot prove himself a powerful sorcerer, retreats to the desert and sits in the sand to ask for the desert’s aid in accomplishing the task at hand, becoming the wind. The boy enters into the mystery by turning away from outside stimulus. He separates himself from others and enters into deep quiet contemplation. On his third day the desert begins speaking to him and he manages to convince to forces of nature to transform him into the wind. While convincing the wind he notes that “everything happens within you” (142-153, 147). The alchemist had managed to teach the boy alchemy.

The question of alchemy is not at all separate from Christian mysticism. In fact Arthur Versluis, in *Restoring Paradise: Western Esotericism, Literature, Art, and Consciousness* (2004), points out that metallurgical alchemy is a metaphor for human transformation:

“Alchemical work is based on fundamental correspondence between self and other, between the human and the natural realms. Alchemical work consists in raising up or redeeming both humanity and nature, in achieving what one might call as well a restoration of paradise or a golden age” (136). It is in this prenarrative state of consciousness that one reconnects with that which has previously been lost and thus inspired the journey. Through this present moment, or The Aleph, the boy is able to bridge the material world with the Divine: “The boy reached through the Soul of the World, and saw that it was part of the Soul of God. And he saw that the Soul of God was his own soul. And that he, a boy, could perform miracles” (152). Santiago becomes one with the Absolute, as does Coelho on his walking and rail journeys. Man becomes the bridge between ordinary reality and divinity. Through the portal that is the present moment that is accessible within each person the entire Universe is available all at once.

Paulo Coelho, through both his autobiographical and fictional works, uses the journey as metaphor for human transformation. At once travel literature and spiritual autobiography, he demonstrates to the reader the path back to paradise, to a prenarrative state where he or she can find his or her Personal Legend or destiny. By “entering the mystery” in the Christian mystical tradition his protagonists are able gain personal power through a knowledge that contests the dominant positivistic rational knowledge in order to (re)create a new identity based on his or her connection with the Divine. Although he clearly self-identifies as Roman Catholic, he nonetheless exhibits the syncretic tendency of sampling other spiritual traditions, particularly in *O Aleph*, that is common within the New Age movement. It is because of this that I propose that Coelho is not only a mystic, but a New Age Catholic mystic.

CHAPTER 7

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

An Eclectic Mix of Art and Magic

Unlike the writers studied in the last two chapters, Alejandro Jodorowsky does not follow a particular religious or spiritual tradition. His work reflects a much more eclectic spiritual blend than that of Castañeda or Coelho. In fact, the reason for presenting his work last in this study is that his message has been much more developed, nuanced, and complex than either Castañeda or Coelho. As I expect will become apparent in the following pages, neither of the two other writers has worked in as many mediums or literary genres as the Chilean-born Jodorowsky. This artist, like his art, is very difficult, if not impossible, to classify precisely.

Jodorowsky grew up in Tocopilla, a port town of miners, sailors, and prostitutes at the time. He often felt alienated during his childhood. His parents' Russian and Jewish heritage were the cause of his exclusion from the social world of other children. Interestingly, as an adult, we will see what Jodorowsky continues being discriminated against. In 1942 his family moved to Santiago where he began developing his talent as an artist. He had an interest in circus puppets and also began to study mime at this time. The cinema was his friend because he had no others. He says, "I was a solitary boy: immigrant, white, with a big nose ... The movies were the only friend I could have" (Quoted in Cobb 20). He attended Universidad de Santiago for a while and left because he did not like it, but eventually returned. For him, college was just too limiting for his work as an artist. Cobb notes that Jodorowsky does not remember which college degrees he received. However, it has been proposed that he studied psychology and philosophy for two

years and has degrees in philosophy, mathematics, and physics (Cobb 21). He left Chile in 1953 to study art in Europe. Cobb says he did not leave Chile because he did not like the country; to the contrary, he loved it. He left because he didn't want to become tied to the region (21). According to Jodorowsky, "(I) threw my address book in the sea. I cut ties with my family, and that remained for all my life ... I never called my father or my mother. It was over forever" (Quoted in Cobb 21). Jodorowsky says that he had a poor relationship with his mother that stemmed from problems in the relationship between his parents. He says that his mother didn't touch nor offer him any physical contact as a child and that was also a part of his reason for leaving Chile (21).

In Paris the young artist studied mime with Etienne Decroux, the teacher of Marcel Marceau. Jodorowsky and Marceau became friends and traveled the world presenting a pantomime show together. Jodorowsky wrote "The Cage" and "The Maskmaker" among others mimodramas for Marceau. Through his friend, Jodorowsky was able to develop relationships with the artistic and intellectual figures in Paris. Later Jodorowsky moved to Mexico City where he also felt isolated (24). He has lived, at various times, in Chile, Mexico City, and Paris, and cannot find justice in the array of classifications that exist to describe his national identity:

My parents were Russian... I was born in Chile... The (Chilean) children didn't accept me because I was 'Russian'... The young men didn't accept me because I was a 'Jew'... The French didn't accept me because I was 'Chilean'... The Mexicans didn't accept me because I was 'French'... The Americans think I am 'Mexican'... after ten years, I will move to another planet. They won't accept me because they will think I'm an 'American'. (Quoted in Cobb 18)

Nonetheless, it would be in Mexico that he would find his first successes. In Mexico City in 1957, he completed his first film, *La cravate*, a silent interpretation of *The Transposed Heads* (1940) by Thomas Mann. He then moved there in 1960 and directed more than one hundred plays in six years (25). He also drew a surreal comic strip that was successful and lasted more than 200 weeks. In each area of his work he would find scandals and controversies.¹¹⁵ One of his greatest controversies came near the beginning of his career with the premiere of his movie *Fando y Lis* in 1968 when a riot erupted in the theater during the showing of the film (14). Jodorowsky received death threats from other directors and the general public. In fact, he fled in his limousine while onlookers threw stones and bottles at the car (69).

The scandal created by *Fando y Lis* created an opportunity for him to produce and direct his best known work, the film *El topo*, in 1970. *El topo* is a symbolic representation of Sufism mixed with the *Bhagavad Gita*, several Jewish and Christians works, and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche in the format of the Italo-Western movie.^{116 117} In the film a cowboy rides a horse through the desert in search of enlightenment. It was during this time that Jodorowsky studied meditation and Buddhism with a Zen Buddhist monk, Ejo Takata. During this time Jodorowsky also studied Taoism and karate. His film seems to be a representation of who he was at that time. As he does say, "In every movie, I put everything I am, also what I am not. Searching. Everything is a search. A search for expression, for knowledge, of emotions... *El topo* is one man's search for enlightenment" (71). As I will show later, this is the fundamental

¹¹⁵ For example, his surrealist comic strip appeared in a conservative newspaper which didn't understand his message until his drawings had gained public support. The newspaper wanted to discontinue publication of the strip but could not because of strong public support for the work (Cobb 43).

¹¹⁶ Italo-Western is a more accurate and less derogatory name for the commonly used term "Spaghetti Western".

¹¹⁷ *El topo* became a cult film that initiated the phenomenon of midnight matinee in New York that became associated with the movies *Pink Flamingos* (1972) and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), among others (Cobb 14).

work of Jodorowsky, to find the true Self, the origin of our being. This search, as he notes, appears at the heart of most, if not all, of his *oeuvre*.

Due to his success with *El topo* Jodorowsky developed a friendship with the British icon John Lennon who asked him to translate the lyrics of his song "Imagine" to Spanish.¹¹⁸ Lennon would later find an investor for the next film by the Chilean artist. With the investor that Lennon helped to find, the director was able to make *The Holy Mountain* (1973). He then directed several other films, *Tusk* (1978), *Santa Sangre* (1989), and *The Rainbow Thief* (1990), with less critical, economic, and popular success. He has one film, *Dune*, which has never left the pre-production stage (14).

Apart from being a dramatist, film director, and comic strip artist Jodorowsky also promotes himself as a master of Tarot reading. He published two books on Tarot reading, *La vía del Tarot* and *Yo, el Tarot*, in 2004. These essays serve as types of manuals for those that wish to become initiated with Tarot card reading or interpretation. In these books he explains the knowledge system behind the symbolism of the cards. *Yo, el Tarot* also includes poems related to the subject. Before moving forward into a review of his other written work, it seems an opportune moment to reflect on a specific and important difference between Jodorowsky and the writers presented in the previous two chapters, Carlos Castañeda and Paulo Coelho. While there are artistic similarities between the three writers, particularly the use of autobiographical writing as a means of transmitting esoteric knowledge, a significant difference is the diversity of mediums in which Jodorowsky works and the amount of material produced.¹¹⁹ Castañeda and

¹¹⁸ Jodorowsky never translated the song.

¹¹⁹ This is not to say that the quantity of publications and mediums used are sufficient cause for granting Jodorowsky a position as an advanced master of spiritual matters, but it does give cause to believe that having worked in so many formats and produced so many texts, that he has had ample opportunity to further develop and refine his message.

Coelho both have worked exclusively with the written word while Jodorowsky has produced his message in many mediums. I believe this to be related to Jodorowsky's more developed perspective as a spiritual master. This is to say that having spent nearly sixty years developing his body of knowledge on the esoteric arts and practices, he has had more time than the others to develop his message and explore its presentation in other mediums. Relatedly, he is presented as the last of the three in this study because of what is perceived as his more developed, complex, and nuanced message.

As a writer he has published thirty-five texts that are all connected in some way to his search for origin, for the true Self. I will be presenting here his more notable texts, that is, books that have garnered more interest from his readers and aided him in demonstrating to others his knowledge and abilities.¹²⁰ The project of growing his readership has been a slow and steady one for him. He began publishing literary works two decades ago and now has a core following of readers that continues to support his art. His first novel, *El loro de siete lenguas* (1991), was not a necessarily easy project to bring to fruition. He began writing the book during the 1960s and finished at the end of the 1980s noting that there was not a literary environment in Latin America that would support his work which revolves around spiritual matters:

Yo me sentía como un paria literario: lo que tenía que decir se refería al mundo [E]spiritual y no al mundo material, con su, para mí, venenoso folclore o artera política. La aventura de encontrarse a uno mismo, más allá de configuraciones nacionales, me parecía el tema noble que necesitaba la novela. Por lo cual, carente de amistades en el mundo literario, tuve que sumergirme en un inseguro

¹²⁰ Unfortunately, there is no real empirical measure for this determination. It is based on subjective perceptions of the author's work that have been developed through media reports, personal conversations, academic study, and general public discussions of his body of writing. Although there are reports available, which cost thousands of dollars, on the general field of the New Age literary market in the United States, they don't address specific writers, particularly one like Jodorowsky who has published little in English.

ostracismo que lentificó mi obra: me asaltaban grandes dudas, me sentía (si la Real Academia Española me permite decirlo así) un extraterrestre. (*El loro* 9)

[I felt like a literary pariah: what I had to say referred to the spiritual world and not the material world, with its, for me, poisonous chaos or cunning politics. The adventure of finding one's self, beyond national configurations, seemed to me the noble topic that the novel needed. Due to which, lacking friendships in the literary world, I had to plunge into an insecure ostracism that slowed my work: I was seized by tremendous doubts, I felt like (if the Real Academia Española permits me to say it this way) an extraterrestrial.]¹²¹

For Jodorowsky, the time was not right for publishing his writings until the 1990s.¹²² However, once he began, he would produce a new work every one or two years. After creating a bestseller with his first novel that portrayed the spiritual journey of twenty-two archetypes of the soul, the next year he would publish his genealogical autobiography *Donde mejor canta un pájaro* (1992) which recounts his family history from great grandparents to his parents. It presents his family's history as a record to be used for understanding how family heritage forms who we are.¹²³ In 1995 he published the novel *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada*, a narrative with a vaguely described tri-figured hero and an ending that only begins anew, and *Psicomagia* which is an exposition of his worldview and practice of *psicomagia*, which will be discussed at length in the next sections. In *Evangelios para sanar* (1997) he offers close readings of the Gospels and

¹²¹ Beginning with this quote and throughout the rest of this study, all translations of Jodorowsky's work will be mine unless otherwise noted.

¹²² Although there is insufficient evidence to prove it at this point, it makes one question if the New Age movement, as a literary phenomenon, took root in the 1990s, a few decades later than the United States where it originated.

¹²³ His title references the Jean Cocteau quote "Un pájaro canta mejor en su árbol genealógico" ["A bird sings best in its genealogical tree."] (*Donde mejor* 11)

explains how those writings can be used as healing texts. *La danza de la realidad* (2001) would present his first full attempt at his (spiritual) autobiography.¹²⁴ *El maestro y las magas* (2005) would prove to be another important autobiographical work as it revolves around the fundamental lesson of the death of the intellectual which he learned from Ejo Takata and several women spiritual masters and healers that were influential in his spiritual development. His latest work, written with Marianne Costa, *Metagenealogía: El árbol genealógico como arte, terapia y búsqueda del Yo esencial* (2011) is a thorough and highly organized essay on how to understand one's family history in order to achieve liberation from personal suffering and unhappiness.

The texts that have been selected for study in this chapter have been chosen so as to reflect Jodorowsky's general literary production. That is, a novel (*Las ansias carnivoras de la nada*), an essay (*Psicomagia*), and an autobiographical work (*El maestro y las magas*), as these are the broad categories into which we can classify most of his writings. In *Las ansias carnivoras de la nada* the author creates a protagonist with which the reader is unable to identify because the three protagonists have no identity and are not described other than to say that they are covered from head to toe and that they share one eye which they pass back and forth to enable them to see. To complicate the situation, they have also lost their memory. The work's vagaries leave the reader frequently feeling adrift without points of reference. As Robert Neustadt says, this novel "condenses a confusing series of oneiric and hallucinatory experiences within a short narrative that is devoid of any historical or even logical anchor" (83). The three protagonists set out on a journey to recover their identity and in the end finally meet the General, who they seek and who they believe can help them, who then changes places with one of them and the search begins anew.

¹²⁴ *El niño del jueves negro* (1999) would be his first autobiographical text, albeit only a partial or fractured view of his persona.

This search for origin, what has been termed as prenarrative consciousness in previous chapters, is very common through the writings of Jodorowsky. It can also be seen as the fundamental aspect of *Psicomagia*. In this text the author answers questions through a number of interviews that elaborate not only his experiences, but also his worldview. The text is divided into two sections that are conversations with two different interviewers asking short questions. The first section titled “Psicomagia: Esbozos para una terapia pánica” [“Psychomagic: Sketches of a Panic Therapy”] (with Gilles Farcet) outlines his ideas regarding different types of physical acts (poetic act, magical act, etc.) in relationship to the knowledge system that informs his healing practice. The second section, “Lecciones para mutantes” [“Lessons for Mutants”] (with Javier Esteban) seems to be devoted to more general thoughts and elaborations regarding spiritual growth. Although it does not follow the literary form of fictional writing or a traditional narrative, the book is essential if one wants to understand, in the works of Jodorowsky, how he understands our existence, who and what we are, as well as what can be done to change this, if one wants to do so. It is undoubtedly an exposition of the process of transformation.

This transformation, or journey as I posit it here, becomes much more lineal and more capable of being traced in *El maestro y las magas*.¹²⁵ This text, notably void of dates that would mark the passage of time of his life’s events, is a first-person narrative about his spiritual development and the role of his Zen Buddhist teacher Ejo Takata and several women magi. Although Jodorowsky had already published several autobiographical works, this one, with its central theme of the death of the intellectual, is the nucleus around which his other significant autobiographical works, *La danza de la realidad* and *Donde mejor canta un pájaro*, revolve. It is in this text where we see the fundamental spiritual work that takes place on the path to spiritual

¹²⁵ It is rather easy to consider this text as the recounting of a journey as even the English title reflects this, *The Spiritual Journey of Alejandro Jodorowsky: The Creator of ‘El topo’*.

enlightenment. Jodorowsky recounts the lessons and trials throughout different episodes of his life. At one point his Zen Buddhist teacher refuses to work with him any more until he works with Leonora Carrington, one of the *magas* who would help him to overcome his negative feelings toward women. Although the journey is rather long and arduous for the author, he does manage to do transform himself and by the end gains the respect of Ejo who passes his baton on to him as a sign of having achieved spiritual maturity.

With the three texts selected from his body of written work, the next sections will be devoted to an analysis of what commonality can be found among them in relation to the theme of the journey as metaphor for spiritual development. I hope to illustrate how Jodorowsky uses personal narrative construction and renewal as a means for spiritual development on the journey toward a more authentic and true Self. His use of meditation and what he calls psychomagic acts are tools on this path. He not only uses travel as metaphor for spiritual development, but also uses those same principles of human development in his writing of the novel so as to question the literary norms of the genre while provoking consciousness expansion within the reader.

A Creative Endeavor

When one considers Alejandro Jodorowsky's work in comparison to that of Carlos Castañeda and Paulo Coelho there is a noticeable difference that can be difficult to clearly identify. Although they each convey the same essential message, personal transformation through spiritual journey, Jodorowsky's work appears far more developed, nuanced, and complex. All three of the writers presented in this study were dedicated writers, that is that they each produced a more than a few books during their writing career. However with the Chilean-born psycho-shaman we see something different. There is a certain dedication to cultivating his

message *and* its form that isn't apparent in the others. This can be evinced in his novels as well as his spiritual autobiographies.¹²⁶

If we continue with the idea of narrative/meaning-making as a rather subjective mental construction rather than an objective universal given there is much to be said for Jodorowsky's novel *Las ansias carnivoras de la nada* and his spiritual autobiography *El maestro y las magas*. What is presented in these two works is representative of his greater body of knowledge. In these he presents a viewpoint that contests the paradigm of reason which Lohrey elaborates. This paradigm of reason of understanding is marked by "a circular and reflexive set of differences, a closed and differential reflexivity; in other words, differences that lead to more differences and so on" (141). This brings to mind one of the hallmarks of respectable scholarships, rigorous intellectual specificity. This type of specificity is only possible through differentiation which is also the task of the intellectual. As Lohrey notes: "In a paradigm of reason, the world is ordered differentially, so much so that the highest value for any individual to aspire is to fragment knowledge by drawing finer and finer distinctions" (141). As we will soon see, for Jodorowsky, this is actually a problematic hindrance rather than an aspiration.

In *El maestro y las magas* the central theme, as I have pointed out in previous work, is the death of the intellect (Martin 21). This is to say that what is central to this work and virtually everything that the Chilean produces is aimed at breaking free from the limitations of the paradigm of reason. This, I believe, is most clear in *El maestro y las magas*. This precept of spiritual enlightenment becomes clear early in the book after an American appears at the door of their meditation center where Ejo Takata is teaching Jodorowsky and several others practices and lessons in order to cultivate this mysterious and elusive state of enlightenment. The American

¹²⁶ Truth be told, his primary driving force seems to be to develop his message through the development of his art. This will be presented more explicitly and thoroughly in the next several pages.

was a student of the Japanese monk while he briefly lived in California. The American student challenges the monk to ask him any of the traditional koans that are used to cultivate an enlightened state.¹²⁷ The test begins and the challenger appears to answer all the koans in an acceptable manner, according to the reactions of Ejo. The American, to the offense of Ejo's current students, even slaps the monk as a sign of his spiritual superiority. However, in an instant, after having supplicated and deferred completely to the superiority of the wisdom of the American, Ejo jumps into the air delivering a kick to the chest of the challenger, pins him to the ground by pressing his foot across the American's throat and challenges him with an ultimate koan: enlightenment or his motorcycle.¹²⁸ The choice to be made was spiritual enlightenment or materialism and the defeated challenger chose his motorcycle and rode away humiliated, defeated, and shown to be a fraud.

After this, Jodorowsky confesses to his master that he had no clue what was happening during this strange interplay and asked how his teacher knew that the American was a fraud pretending to be a developed spiritual master (36-38). Ejo's response is at once frustrated and concise: “¡Intellectual, aprende a morir!” [“Intellectual, learn to die!”] (38). What the master is proposing to the student is that the greater wisdom and understanding that he seeks resides outside of intellectual ideas and concepts. Reason and logic cannot not resolve the questions posited in search of the essential Self. The intellectual, reasoning mind would have to be subdued in order to gain any real knowledge. The differentiation to which Lohrey refers would have to

¹²⁷ A koan is typically a story, question or statement in Zen Buddhism that is not comprehensible through reason. Rather, it is best and most easily grasped through intuition. Traditionally it is presented to the student who will then meditate, analyze and then propose a response to the koan, usually after a significant period of time.

¹²⁸ Ejo, while holding the man down with one foot across his throat was threatening to set his motorcycle ablaze with a kerosene lamp.

cease so that the koan could be perceived in its entirety and its full effects *experienced*. All intention at understanding through reason could only ever result a fragmented or splintered perspective.¹²⁹

This is also the purpose of the famous koan that asks, what is the sound of one hand clapping? When Ejo puts this koan to his former student his response is incomprehensible to Jodorowsky and the rest of the group. Logically, one would imagine the sound of two hands clapping and then intend to imagine just one. The process usually involves the visualization of one hand waving through the air searching for its missing counterpart or the use of some surrogate object to complete the clapping action. Through reason the answer to the question is, at best, unsatisfactory. This is because, as Ejo explains to Jodorowsky about other koans the American answered, “el zen no buscaba explicaciones filosóficas; pedía comprensión inmediata, más allá de las palabras” [Zen wasn’t looking for philosophical explanations; it was asking for immediate comprehension, beyond words] (38). What happens after a koan is presented is a type of mental paralysis due to the intellect’s inability to reasonably resolve the koan. This paralysis actually serves a greater purpose which is to return to prenarrative consciousness to a spaciousness of mind that is outside of the limiting intellect that seeks to fragment and splinter reality (Martin 23). The purpose of a koan is to create gaps between thoughts. As Lohrey notes, the paradigm of reason is dual in its nature as it creates a subject and object, a “binary reasoning” in pursuit of empirical methods to establish an ‘objective’ view (144). Thus, Jodorowsky and his fellow students have no way of understanding the act that the American had prepared for Ejo to prove his state of enlightenment. In contrast, Ejo, with no ‘objective’ binary view perceives the

¹²⁹ I propose that the intellectual mind is powerful enough to formulate a very large number of perspectives of any single object of study. It seems able to fragment and splinter to vast degrees. To substantiate this one only needs to consider the various contesting viewpoints in any field of study.

situation immediately through unmediated experience in the present moment. Only in that spaciousness of prenarrative consciousness can the American's answers be seen for what they are, a rehearsed act.¹³⁰

This mental challenge is also present in his novel *Las ansias carnivoras de la nada*. Rather than present a hero with which the reader can identify Jodorowsky creates a tri-figured hero of three people who are nondescript to the point that the reader finds himself tested in trying to visualize them.¹³¹ As Robert Neustadt says, “[Jodorowsky] condenses a confusing series of oneiric and hallucinatory experiences within a short narrative that is devoid of any historical or even logical anchor” (83). The lack of description is disorienting and leaves the reader searching for points of reference in order to understand and identify the work with reality somehow. The vagueness of this novel isn't coincidental, but rather serves a similar purpose to the koans, the cessation of rational, lineal thought through debilitating paralysis. If we understand reason as discipline in the sense that it gives order, we can feel how disorienting *Las ansias carnivoras de la nada* is and comprehend what this means for the author's work. Neustadt explains: “Whereas discipline in [Michel] Foucault's paradigm ‘clears up confusion’, [Jodorowsky attempts] to utilize (con)fusion against discipline. Superimposing literary, artistic and theatrical signs, they contest the compartmentalizing confinements of discipline. They create, to coin a phrase, ‘antidisciplinary’ texts (Neustadt 17). This is to say that Jodorowsky uses the vagary of nondescript heroes, among many other techniques, to force the reader's intellect into surrender

¹³⁰ Takata later tells explains to his confused pupil: “Conocer una respuesta no es poseerla” [“To know an answer is not to possess it”] (51). This means that the answer is not something that one has, it is perceived through an immediate experience of the present. In other words, it is not something that can be transmitted with word through remembered or rehearsed ideas, it must be spontaneous and living.

¹³¹ I think it might be helpful to confess to the reader that while reading the novel analyzed here that it was incredibly difficult to conceptualize the heroes. In fact, there was a sense of revelation when I saw an alternate edition of the book with three indistinct, faceless figures drawn on the cover. Even this image, as vague as it was, provided more defining mental imagery than the author in his novel.

and in the process creates a new type of writing that affects the consciousness of the reader while reading.

As the reader tries to imagine the heroes so as to potentially identify with them, there is such an indistinctness and lack of detail that the intellect cannot process. When considered in the light of Merlin Donald's idea of that literature "creates a mirror world for consciousness" we can see how these ideas come together: Through a paradigm of reason the intellect intends to make meaning in the novel. However, due to a lack of sufficient detail the mind becomes unable to process completely which gives birth to a prenarrative state of consciousness. This state is also recognized in other ways in his novel. For example, at one point the General appears on the televisions that broadcast his regular messages. He tells the viewers: "

EL CAMINO MÁS CORTO ENTRE VOSOTROS Y YO, ES EL MÁS LARGO.
 SI ME TENÉIS, NO ME RECORDÁIS; SI ME RECORDÁIS, NO ME
 ALEJÁIS; SI ME COMENTÁIS, ME ADULTERÁIS; SI ME DEFINÍS, OS
 MENTÍS; SI ME BUSCÁIS, ME PERDÉIS; SI ME VEIS, OS VEIS.¹³²
 [THE SHORTEST PATH BETWEEN YOU AND I, IS THE LONGEST. IF
 YOU HAVE ME, YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME; IF YOU REMEMBER ME,
 YOU ARE NOT FAR FROM ME; IF YOU COMMENT ON ME, YOU
 ADULTERATE ME; IF YOU DEFINE ME, YOU LIE TO YOURSELVES; IF
 YOU LOOK FOR ME YOU LOSE ME; IF YOU SEE ME, YOU SEE
 YOURSELVES.] (*Las ansias* 77).

¹³² This passage may be familiar to some readers as it is an intertextual reference to the first lines of the *Tao Te Ching*, the foundational text of Taoism, which say: "The name that can spoken of is not the constant way; The name that can be named is not the constant name" (I, 1).

In this monologue the General, who represents the origin for which the protagonists search throughout the novel, tells his viewers that the spoken word only adulterate him and that any attempt to define him would be inaccurate. This search for origin or the essential Self means that the intellectual proposition of defining is a limiting act similar to the fragmentary perspective/knowledge of which Lohrey speaks. Attempting to understand through reason and its paradigm is problematic for Jodorowsky as he seeks a unified or whole perspective that is found in prenarrative consciousness. It is in this state that one finds creative power.

In one episode of *El maestro y las magas* La Tigresa, a collaborator and onetime enemy of the author who was widely believed to use black magic to exact revenge and achieve success, places a gold ring adorned with a skull on the middle finger of his left hand. That night he felt that the ring was emitting some kind of noxious gas or vapors. His hand became cold and his arm began to ache. As much as he tried he could not remove the ring. At five in the next morning he drives frantically to Takata's apartment in hopes of getting help for what he believes is a type of curse that La Tigresa has placed on him. He found that his teacher was meditating. Jodorowsky recounts that, "Ejo por fin dio muestras de notar mi presencia. Su mirada no se dirigió hacia mi cara sino hacia el anillo. Hice un gesto de impotencia. Sonriendo, me lo quitó del dedo sin hacer el menor esfuerzo. Cesó el dolor de mi brazo" ["Ejo finally gave some indication of noting my presence. His gaze wasn't directed toward my face, but rather toward the ring. I made a gesture of helplessness. Smiling, he removed the ring from the finger without making the slightest effort. The pain in my arm ceased"] (125). With the situation alleviated the teacher told him that if he sees it as a skull, his arm will ache. However, if he doesn't attach himself to the form or the name, it is only pure gold (125). Ejo is giving the author a lesson on narrative creation and the importance of prenarrative consciousness where there is no meaning other than that found in

objective reality. In that place, Jodorowsky has the creative power to assign whatever meaning he wishes. Instead, Jodorowsky had created a narrative that gave the ring power over him and his well-being based on the narrative that La Tigresa had created for herself as a *diablero*.

This place of prenarrative consciousness that exists before language and thought can be found in the present moment. It is in the here, without re-membering the past or projecting a future that the Self can be uncovered. He says, “The only happiness consists in being what one is. There is no other happiness. The greatest punishment is not living in the present” (Iribas 633). This is the spiritual journey of Jodorowsky and the essence of his work, a journey from unhappiness and suffering related to memories of the past and fears of the future. As Neustadt explains about the author and his work:

[E]ach of Jodorowsky’s works constitutes a metaphysical foray into the confusion of space and subjectivity. Jodorowsky’s art, in other words, perpetually explores psychic conundrums that revolve around ‘place’ and ‘identity.’ Who am I? Where am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? These questions, recurring throughout Jodorowsky’s *oeuvre*, resonate with the disorientation associated with postmodernism. [...] Jodorowsky repeatedly constructs narrative *quests for an origin*. (57)

The origin that Jodorowsky seeks is to be found in the present moment. It is there that one finds agency for living and creating. Jodorowsky insists that he has no identity, only that which others project, which usually he seeks to avoid (Iribas 631). In an interview when asked how he performs psychomagic acts or tarot consultations he responds that “I simply am not, there is the other. I disappear” (Iribas 630). He notes that it requires no effort on his part, that it is not a matter of doing, but quite different. “I don’t do anything. In other words, I put myself in a

listening attitude, and I listen. And the other is what he is, or what he is being, without my intervention” he explains (630). This is the origin that continually appears in his work, the purpose of his quest, the restless search of the discontented for what has been lost which Philip Edwards discusses when he speaks of the metaphorical journey. It’s a journey to the present that heals.

It is in the present where one finds what it is that is needed. The author speaks of “a state of attention to what is important, leaving aside the superfluous. That’s all: a state of extreme attention” (631). This extreme state of attention is outside of time. This can be seen in the problem of amnesia that the three protagonists suffer throughout the novel. They have no past and cannot project a future because of this. Neustadt points out that in “Capítulo 10” a memory is invented for them by soldiers in order to force a confession. According to Neustadt this also happens in Jodorowsky’s 1965 drama *El túnel se come por la boca*, where three policemen invent a memory in order to help coerce a confession (124). It is interesting to note that socially assigned authority figures are the ones who are creating the memory/identity. This leads one to interpret Jodorowsky’s message as being that identity is a construction, just like the personal narratives that create who we are. He says, “Actually, we’re not what we are, but rather what the others want, in the beginning. Gaining insight is simply becoming what one is. The only happiness consists in being what one is. There is no other happiness” (633). Here we see the connection between happiness and becoming our true Self.

This process of becoming, the transformation, is a journey and is, among many things, a creative act, one that heals and transforms. This journey is a process or (re)writing one’s life. Just as Neustadt points out that amnesia in *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada* is an allegory for the disorientation caused by the postmodern condition, he elaborates saying that:

With the fall of grand narratives we have forgotten where it is we were going. In the ecstasy of semiotic glut we can no longer remember how to read the texts whose interpretation might point a way out of this place. Signs have been hewn from their referents, and we wander aimlessly in a hyperreal (con)fusion of images reproductions and copies. (124)

That is what Jodorowsky provides, direction by provoking his readers and showing them how they can write a new personal narrative which assigns them agency to be Creator/creator. Neustadt says, “Only when one consciously directs one’s own ‘reading’ can a reader become a subject, rewriting one’s own text” (125). That is, his work teaches readers, through modeling in works like *El maestro y las magas*, how to become their true Self in order to find greater happiness and creative freedom in his or her life.

Psicomagia

I have chosen to treat this text separately from the other two not only because of its essay format, but specifically because of how it elaborates his worldview in a way that requires little interpretation or speculation. Such texts are not always readily available when one wishes to study thinkers of a certain time or movement, so there is a desire to take advantage of this work and treat it as Jodorowsky’s thesis, representing his philosophy and practice. Although *psicomagia* is a curative practice, to understand it necessarily entails a comprehension of his philosophy. His readers/followers/disciples seek him out on tours throughout various parts of the world requesting psychomagic acts to perform to resolve some problem that is causing unhappiness or suffering.

This practice came into being while the author was working with Tarot card readings. He notes that he received at least two people a day who came in search of a solution to some problem. Citing the idea that simply becoming aware of a problem and its cause was the beginning of a solution he worked with those who sought him out to bring their problems into the light of awareness. This was accomplished through genealogical exploration and understanding, as one's genealogy holds the key to understanding our psycho-emotional ailments. However, at some point he realized that there could be no real healing without some type of concrete action to correct what had been learned about the person's genealogy. As Jodorowsky puts it, "Para que la consulta tuviera un efecto terapéutico, tenía que desembocar en una acción creativa llevada a cabo en el ámbito real" ["In order for the consultation to have a therapeutic effect, it had to lead to a creative action carried out in the real world"] (*Psicomagia* 29). Thus, his consultations transformed from an awareness raising endeavor to one where the person would have to take active steps to change the situation.

So then, what the psychoshaman does is to, once consulted, look to the past as a means of developing a historical understanding, identify the cause of the problem, and then prescribe a creative action in the real world that resolves the conflict. This, perhaps, rings somewhat familiar with readers from Chapter 4. It is reminiscent of Alexandra Peat and Philip Edwards' references to Janus, the two-faced god of beginnings and transitions from Roman religion and mythology. Peat and Edwards see Janus as symbolic of travel literature in that one face is continually toward the past while the other constantly moves forward. Jodorowsky's unwell inquisitors look to their past in their genealogy for answers so that they may transform and move forward, not seeking to refuse or dismiss the past, but rather integrate it with the present so as to facilitate forward

movement. This reinforces the connection between this New Age writer, his philosophy, and the metaphor of travel as personal transformation.

To better exemplify what it is that Jodorowsky proposes with *Psicomagia* I wish to present here an account of a psychomagic act that will be followed with an analysis of the act. In *Psicomagia* the author lists a situation in which he had not been able to communicate well with his first son, Brontis, on the spiritual plane. After the elder Jodorowsky accepted to himself that he had made some mistakes as a parent, he attempted to rectify them. He became aware that while he was filming *El topo*, in which Brontis performed also, at seven years old, one of the scenes required that Brontis bury a stuffed animal and a photo in the desert. Alejandro, for whatever reason, decided to use the stuffed bear that he had given his son at the time of his birth and also a photo of Brontis' mother. After the scene was completed they never returned to exhume the items. The father didn't know at the time that it would have a profound effect on his son that would last into adulthood. Alejandro confesses, "lo había separado brutalmente de su infancia y de su madre" ["I had brutally separated him from his infancy and mother"] (*Psicomagia* 164).¹³³ To repair the damage done by the thoughtless act, he configured a psychomagic act to resolve the situation. On his son's next birthday he would be twenty-four years old. Alejandro buried a stuffed bear and photo of Brontis' mother in the family garden and invited his son to visit. Alejandro took him outside and then pretended to gallop-up on a horse, as he had actually done in the movie. Brontis' recognized the scene immediately and played his role. However, instead of burying the bear and photo, his father told him: "Hoy cumples 7 años y tienes derecho a ser niño. Ven y desentierra tu primer juguete y el retrato de tu madre" ["Today you turn seven years old and you have the right to be a child. Come and unearth your first toy

¹³³ This apparently had long lasting consequences as Brontis never again spoke of his mother, with whom his father was separated, and never wrote to her again.

and the photo of your mother”] (165). After the act itself was finished, his son cried on his shoulder for what he describes as a long while in the rain. Alejandro says they now maintain daily contact and have a beautiful relationship, exchanging poetry and other writings.

The first step in the process that Jodorowsky defines is to uncover the past through genealogical discovery as it will help to identify what needs to be addressed in order to resolve the pathology that is impeding happiness or becoming our true Self. In the case of our example, the father does this for his son through self-reflection. The act of repairing something that happened during childhood is important since children have little agency in what their personal narrative will be. As Robert Atkinson points out in *The Gift of Stories: Practical and Spiritual Applications of Autobiography, Life Stories, and Personal Mythmaking* (1995), when we recount childhood episodes we frequently do so by explaining what happened to us rather than what we did: “We have little authorship, or control, over our lives during childhood. Our particular circumstances act more upon us more than we do upon them, as children” (52). The older Jodorowsky realized this and sought to use that same paternal authority to correct what he had done.

As for why he did this, one can really only speculate. However, I believe that Jodorowsky might not dispute some connections that we can make that serve to highlight the power of our genealogy. Jodorowsky notes that his father had instilled in him the idea that he would be the last Jodorowsky from that bloodline. His father hated his surname and refused to ever even write it (*Psicomagia* 63). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Alejandro has also said that his mother offered him no physical contact or caresses. These two bits of family history paint a family history of psychological distance and self-loathing. That would manifest later with Alejandro

with his first son on whom he would inflict similar injury by symbolically burying his mother in the form of a photo and his infancy by burying his cherished childhood toy.

As Jodorowsky explains in his latest book, *Metagenealogía*, our family heritage is crucial in our formation:

Nuestro árbol genealógico, sometido también a las presiones de la sociedad, y la cultura, nos ‘esculpe’ con las fuerzas de imitación, de repetición, de conformidad, de tradición. El trabajo de la Conciencia individual consiste en deshacernos de esos límites que no se correspondan con nuestra verdadera personalidad, para así poder realizar un proyecto inédito, original, nuevo... Y es que los círculos de repetición siempre se resisten a la novedad, pues la tradición (la conservación de la identidad familiar, cultural o social) exige a los miembros de su clan la reproducción de los propios esquemas.

[Our genealogical tree, also subject to the pressures of society, and culture, ‘sculpts’ us with the forces of imitation, of repetition, of conformity, of tradition. The work of the individual Consciousness is to undo ourselves from those limits that are not consistent with our true personality, in order to then realize an unprecedented, original, new project... And the circles of repetition always resist newness, and so tradition (the conservation of our family, cultural or social identity) demands of the members of the clan the reproduction of the same ways of thinking] (54).

In this example at hand the father is the one who has recognized the injustice perpetuated upon the son and seeks to rewrite (or perhaps revise) both his and his son’s personal narrative. His

own revision comes through healing his son, which is quite opposite of what his parents did to him, and his son's revision came through the reverse re-enactment of the traumatizing event.

So, until the moment that his father gallops-up on his invisible horse replicating the important scene from the movie, his son Brontis has no awareness of what past action it is that is limiting him from having a closer relationship with his father. As Alejandro brings the past into awareness through action, his son immediately remembers the scene and mounts the invisible horse with his father as he actually did in the movie. For Peat and Edwards this would be the present moment of the Janus figure. No longer facing back completely, but not facing forward either, the travelers are in the present attempting to create a new narrative that will revise the previous version, a type of corrective update. According to Atkinson, this is one of the psychological functions of autobiographical writing. The individual looks back on life trying to make sense of what has happened and to resolve that which ails us psychologically: "The whole project of psychological development focuses on a dialectic of conflict and resolution, change and growth. To achieve what we are capable of, we need to continually take in and make sense of what we *experience*... As we face and reface conflicts that arise our experiences and feelings merge into a harmony" (my emphasis) (6). The key word in Atkinson's idea is 'experience'.

If we consider the value of experience in the development of consciousness, we can begin to formulate an understanding of what value this psychomagic act could have had for the father and son. As explained in Chapter 4, it is the *experience* of the Other that is so important in the evolution of human consciousness because it is through exposure to the Other that our limits are challenged. Although a theoretical explanation might be helpful, it is through experience, which is mediated by consciousness, that change takes place. Remembering that William James proposed to change the word consciousness for experience, we can make an argument for how

the father and son both had a consciousness expanding *experience* through Alejandro's 'magical' act. Brontis' original experience was marked by trauma, limitation, and dysfunction. His second experience, created by the same person who created the first, was vastly different in that it offered him the healing effect of recovering his infancy and reconnecting with his mother anew. One experience overwrites a previous experience.¹³⁴ This also works similarly for Alejandro in that he has an opportunity to revise his narrative as a father, giving him the chance to offer his son kindness, sympathy and healing in place of psychological distance and inattention.

From this point in the present, with the revision of the narrative complete, the Jodorowskys have greater potential facing forward. A limiting factor has been eliminated. As Atkinson notes, "The only thing we can change about the past is the way we look at it" (16). Brontis perception of the past is changed through lived experience which serves to supplant the previous lived experience. The effects of limiting experience have been corrected by an experience of liberation. He and his father had a consciousness raising and expanding experience.

The use of consciousness in relationship to personal transformation as metaphor for journey is important in the work of Alejandro Jodorowsky. It works as both metaphor and as a creative writing technique in *Las ansias carnivoras de la nada* where his three protagonists have an experience of setting out on a journey in order to recover their forgotten identity. It is also presented in the author's own journey in *El maestro y las magas* where he confronts his intellectual blocks that prevent him from understanding his master's lessons as well as his work with Leonora Carrington who performs acts not much different from his own work later to help

¹³⁴ It should be noted that the act that was performed was not an arbitrary act. It was designed to interact precisely with the symbolic and real elements of the original (*Psicomagia* 64). It seems wise to heed Jodorowsky's cautionary warnings that only he and his sons are qualified to prescribe psychomagic acts. There could be great risk of further traumatization with the new experience if not carefully designed.

him overcome his dysfunctional relationship with women. In *Psicomagia* is where one finds the author's attitudes and precepts for the acts that he prescribes in order to re-write our personal stories and find happiness through liberation from suffering and trauma. By integrating the past into the present in the form of an act we engage, through experience, the spiritual journey to our true Self.

CHAPTER 8

THE TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY TO THE SELF: A CONTESTING KNOWLEDGE PARADIGM

Although the New Age movement is most widely cited as beginning in the 1960's in the United States, as I show in Chapter 1, it actually has a trajectory that extends much farther into the past and was heavily influenced by other regions of the world. As soon as the early eighteenth century there were writings by thinker, mystic, and scientist Emanuel Swedenborg and shortly later Franz Anton Mesmer who would work with energy, specifically *magnétisme animal*, which crossed over into a kind of universal mysticism. Later, in the nineteenth century, Mesmer's work would be inspirational for groups like New Thought and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's The Theosophy Society. Blavatsky claimed to be disseminating the essence of the world's religions in her books *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* while noting the coming of a new age. The common thread between New Thought and Theosophy would be the belief in a brotherhood of humanity and an interest in comparative religion.

Relatedly, in 1893 Swami Vivekananda gave a lecture on the, then, foreign philosophies of Hindu Vedanta and Yoga in a lecture at the World Parliament of Religions. This initial meeting between the East and West would become fertile soil which would later give birth as one of the cornerstones of the New Age movement. A few decades after, Paramhansa Yogananda would give a lecture on the necessary compatibility of science and religion in Boston in October of 1920 at the International Congress of Religious Liberals. However, it would be a chance encounter in Big Sur, California in 1962 between pioneering humanistic psychologist Abraham

Maslow and Michael Murphy who was the owner of Esalen, a personal growth center, which would give voice to what would soon emerge as the human potential aspect of the New Age movement. Maslow opened the door for others like Roberto Assagioli who agreed that in addition to the ego that there were unconscious aspects of human behavior and still a higher level of conscious experience that is possible and pioneered the field of transpersonal psychology which consists of a mixture of approaches from seekers, clinicians, gurus, and scientists and explores the areas of meditation, altered states of consciousness and parapsychology scientists.

Defining this eclectic field of beliefs and practices that range from acupuncture to paganism to chakra cleansing and Western mysticism is not a simple task. However, James E. Lewis' work brought forth some useful and insightful characteristics. Additionally, as Carl Raschke notes there is "a consistent philosophical rejection of the Western heritage of rationality, social morality, and political ideals of individual liberty and authority" (208) which this study brings to light in showing how the three authors studied here propose knowledge paradigms that challenge the current dominant paradigm of reason which was born in earnest during the Enlightenment. This once new rational and logical way of understanding ourselves and the world we live in continues to provide profound and highly advanced technologies that offer us greater comfort, safety, efficiency, and security. Nonetheless, as Nikos Kokosalakis points out: "What is beyond dispute is that its promises for social emancipation and better economic, political, and cultural life, as imbedded in the optimism of the Enlightenment, have failed to materialize and the prospects for a better future for most people of the planet are dim" (18). Western rationalism and rationalization, as tools for social planning and control, have failed to deliver its promise of equality, stability, and happiness. The superior culture that was to be produced by this has lost its shine and has come under intense questioning resulting in what he sees as a fall from grace (18).

Kokosalakis makes a convincing argument for how the positivistic paradigm of reason claims privilege to an objective universal truth which is deemed superior to the previously existing versions that were based on extra social and supernatural agencies. Rational, positivistic claims of truth gave rise to a binary view of knowledge in which what was not empirically and verifiably provable was deemed falsity and discarded. The impact this was to have on spiritual issues would be tremendous. Matters of the soul and the sacred were generally relegated to marginality. The cold, analytical line of rational thought dismissed the fundamental tenets of many of the world's religions and the questions that they answered. The existential conundrums that religion had previously answered were abandoned. This can be seen in Jodorowsky's central theme of the death of the intellectual and his practice of *psicomagia* which is not very reasonable nor is it logical according to traditional Western schools of thought. The same idea is applicable to Castañeda and Coelho who both practice techniques and have philosophies which contest the existing rational knowledge paradigm. This leads one to wonder if the New Age movement may be a return to the sacred, a reclaiming of the importance of the existential questions that modernity has neglected. Interestingly, I suspect that it might, in part, be coming from one of the bastions of modernity itself, the contemporary university.

Critics of the New Age movement, like theologian Robert M. Price, often see it as are "poorer, watered-down versions" of the world's great religions (13). The view of the New Age movement as lesser than other "true" spiritual traditions, as I argue, is a type of thinking that reflects the rational knowledge paradigm where there is one true possibility and all else of falsity. This is not to say that the movement does not have questionable aspects. The problem of cultural appropriation and some of its unfortunate consequences have been pointed out by indigenous groups and have yet to be resolved. This is particularly true in the case of Carlos Castañeda since

he, fully indoctrinated into the Western tradition through the university, is claiming to be the inheritor of the Yaqui shamanic knowledge tradition. This is contrasted with Jodorowsky who claims no spiritual or religious affiliation other than being born into the Judaism and Coelho who maintains his religious identity as a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

To conduct a successful study of New Age Latin American literature it had to first be determined if there existed such a thing. Having identified a number of writers such as Dr. Camilo Cruz, Alex Dey, Patricia May, Alejandra Llamas, and Enrique Barrios who write within the parameters of the identifiable characteristics of the New Age movement (metaphysics, healing, meditation, human potential, personal transformation, self-help, etc.), the objects of study were chosen. One of the challenges that this study faced is the difficulty in formulating a comprehensive list of New Age Latin American writers and an accompanying bibliography. This would be useful in future studies of this type, but may still be challenging given the broad geographic area and the number of national boundaries that would have to be overcome to complete such a project. Due to this, and the cursory nature of this seminal study, the authors chosen for analysis have been chosen based on their significant impact to the field. This impact is generally measured by their commercial success. This, again, is another limitation of this work in that there is virtually no information available at the time of this writing on the New Age literary market in Latin America.

Carlos Castañeda, commonly viewed as one of the initiators of the spiritual autobiography which is so common within the New Age literary field, was chosen for his historical importance in the movement. The cultural and literary value and power of Paulo Coelho's writings should not be underestimated given the massive popular appeal that he has earned. Not only has he sold more than 130 million books in 160 countries in 72 languages, but

his is quoted by the current U.S. president in a speech on human rights. Such cultural clout merits serious investigation. Additionally, his literature deserves academic attention because of the new knowledge paradigm that it presents. Although Alejandro Jodorowsky does not post the numbers that the Brazilian-born Coelho does, his diverse range of mediums and highly developed message warrant academic exploration owing to their value as cultural artifacts and works that propose a contesting body of knowledge. In this way, all three writers present a type of sacred knowledge that contests the current hegemonic rational knowledge systems. Given that the New Age movement in general, and these authors specifically, are popular in nature makes them even more important for understanding the current literary climate within the general society which is apparently seeking some sort of transformation or change in the current state of things.

What this study set out to accomplish was to demonstrate that the identified writers represent a new consciousness that is beginning to appear on the level of mass culture. It sought to identify what I believe are identifiable parameters within this newly emerging consciousness. The best way to enter into this investigation seemed to be through a discussion of the use of travel as metaphor for spiritual development and human transformation which is used to create a new personal narrative of healing and liberation from suffering. The Other and their otherness that is found best through travel and experience is that which is essential for the expansion and development of human consciousness. All three writers selected for study invoke this metaphor. Carlos Castañeda makes a *Journey to Ixtlan* in which he makes an internal journey to his true Self to gain knowledge through the use of hallucinogenic plants under the tutelage of the debatable figure of don Juan Matus. The theme of the journey or pilgrimage is nearly ubiquitous in the works of Paulo Coelho. His most well known work, *O Alquimista*, treats the journey of a young

Spanish shepherd on his way to gaining great wisdom and esoteric knowledge. *O Diario de um Mago* is similar but does so using the autobiographical experience of Coelho on the Road to Santiago de Compostela. His latest work, *O Aleph*, also documents his travels on the Trans-Siberian Railway which serves as the latest significant step in his spiritual development. Alejandro Jodorowsky's search for origin is equally a journey to the true Self and can be seen allegorically in *Las ansias carnivoras* and also in his spiritual autobiography *El maestro y las magas*.

What has been a challenge in this study is to present these authors, which have generally received little academic study, in such broad terms. All of them repeatedly present this narrative of human transformation throughout most, if not all, of their *oeuvre*. To synthesize the overarching message of their works by reducing it to a symbolic selection of a few texts that are each treated in one chapter each has been extremely difficult at times. However, this was done as an act of necessity given, again, the seminal nature of this study and its desire to provide a general approach. As the field develops, it is highly recommended that each author, as well as others, receive more dedicated, deeper, and closer readings. It is hoped that this essay has provided a general framework from which others can continue to expand and grow a dialogue about this broad and important literary field. I think that further development and research in this field could yield significant ideas on the nature of knowledge, spiritual or human transformation, the human condition, and new literary techniques, such as the use of narrative to provoke consciousness expansion, that have been little considered until now.

With the apparent return to existential questions and sacred matters abandoned by modernity one of the notable features of New Age literature is the use of shamanic themes and knowledges. Such is the case of Castañeda who uses hallucinogenic plants as a technique for

accessing other ways of knowing. His initial test of finding his *sitio* serves to prove that he at least has an inclination toward such knowledges and perhaps would be able to understand the other reality that his shamanic teacher would present to him. This task is one that clearly is found outside of the Western knowledge paradigm but does have logic of its own. The use of hallucinogenic plants and the subsequent acquisition of power through an ally is systematic and is outlined by Castañeda in the second half of his first book *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*. In that text and *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan* the author primarily elaborates his experience with the use of hallucinogenic plants and their ability and affect in terms of opening the doors of perception to other ways of knowing. It is in *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* that we find a much more philosophical treatise of what the author is hoping to convey. What is fundamental to the project of gaining this knowledge of the erasure of one's personal history. "To stop the world," as the elder shaman termed it, is to end the social narrative that creates one's identity. For example, Don Juan refuses to allow Castañeda to construct a genealogical tree for him and later advises the student to drop the subject for himself as well. The process is seen a journey, not away from something, but to a new place, a new knowledge. The journey in this example is equated to personal transformation and unfolding of potentialities. To end the narrative of personal identity is to free one's self to be whatever is needed at any particular moment. Thus, the erasure of personal history is a liberating task that has the potential for allowing new, playful narratives to accommodate the present moment rather than being entrenched in past memories and projected futures.

Paulo Coelho invokes the journey in the form of pilgrimage. His pilgrimage is toward one's "personal legend". It seems that Coelho is in a constant movement. Whether his protagonist in *O Alquimista*, or himself in *O Diario de um Mago* and *O Aleph*, movement toward

a more harmonious and happy existence is key and necessary. In his work it is experience in the present moments that serves to further personal transformation. This brings thinkers like William James who saw consciousness as the process of experience. Travel serves to bring one in contact with the Other. Through pilgrimages and journeys Coelho and his characters expand their experiences/consciousness by being exposed to that which is different. In the case of *O Alquimista* Santiago knows the Other through his travels into northern Africa. In *O Diario de um Mago* Coelho experiences himself as Other through the dog that is inhabited by Legion, his personal demon. In *O Aleph* he again uses his personal journey as a way of demonstrating how the Other, Hilal in this case, provokes like nothing else can. In this example his personal transformation involves the common New Age belief in reincarnation where he uses mystical techniques for accessing his previous life to uncover that which is still unresolved as a way of stirring him from the routines of daily his life that have come to be so burdensome. His strong Roman Catholic Church affiliation which is seamlessly molded with his advanced spiritual lessons of divine communion through pilgrimage and journey argues for the Brazilian as contemporary mystic. His return to the sacred using pre-modern spiritualities, including Sufism and paganism among others, makes a case for Coelho as a New Age Catholic mystic.

The worldviews of Castañeda and Coelho represent indigenous and mystical backgrounds, respectively. What Alejandro Jodorowsky does is to bring an even more eclectic mix to the discussion in a myriad of art forms. His writings not only treat shamanic and mystical themes, but also incorporate Eastern philosophies as well. His philosophy that is outlined in *Psicomagia* paints an understanding of how humans understand experience and how to rewrite that experience so as to create healing. His psychomagic technique teaches us a great deal about human transformation and what Robert Neustadt calls his “search for origin”. Informed by

Eastern philosophies such as Zen Buddhism and Taoism, Jodorowsky learns that the death of the intellectual is at the center of true knowledge. He learns how his own genealogy has imposed limits on his ability to live a harmonious and peaceful life. In *El maestro y las magas* he learns these lessons from a Zen Buddhist monk who later insists that he confront his hostility toward women through work with a *maga* named Leonora Carrington. During this journey to the true Self he rewrites his personal narrative and teaches the reader how to do the same. This journey is also modeled in the novel *Las ansias carnivoras de la nada*. The journey that the nondescript tri-figured protagonist makes toward recovering their true identity is a never ending process where, once at the origin of the Self, the journey only continues anew. Jodorowsky's entire body of work seems to reflect this journey to the true Self. His experiences and practice of psychomagic reflect a knowledge paradigm that, like the other two writers, contests the paradigm of reason. However, different than Castañeda and Coelho, Jodorowsky has a much more developed and nuanced message that has been and continues being delivered through various art forms.

What has been evidenced in this study is that these three representative authors are presenting a contesting knowledge paradigm that seeks to reincorporate the sacred and divine back into epistemological dialogues. They have emerged in popular culture through the New Age movement which is significant in that it is not the center of knowledge and understanding in contemporary society. Whether it is a reaction to modernity's cold, rational thought or a reversion to more useful knowledges that are capable of providing substantive answers in an unstable and often chaotic world, it is clear that there is a cohesive and coherent message in New Age Latin American literature: peace, harmony and wisdom can be achieved through the personal journey of becoming the true Self which breaks one free of the limiting personal and collective narratives that rule human existence.

It is hoped that this line of research will be further developed by others in the near future. Although there are many, many avenues for researching this field I would like to take a few moments to suggest what I think might be helpful in cultivating a more productive discussion of the themes that are represented. What I have put forth here is very general and naturally leaves a great deal to be questioned about how each of these writers achieves what they do through personal transformation. For example, in the case of Carlos Castañeda one could find fertile grounds in investigating the altered states that Castañeda accesses in order to give greater structure to this other knowledge system that he presents. As noted in the section dedicated to his work, there is undoubtedly a logic and system to what he has presented and that understanding could prove valuable for furthering the understanding of knowledge itself. Coelho gives the study of traditional mysticism a connection to a contemporary time and place that brings Christianity into a new light in terms of the power of religion in the process of personal transformation. Jodorowsky is similar in his eclectic blend of traditions and practice of *psicomagia*. There exists, then, the common need for more deeply understanding how each of these writers accomplish what it is that they say that they do. Just as some might say that the paradigm of reason has its limits as evidenced by its shortcomings, what might be the limits of the knowledges presented here? Or, perhaps, there are no limits.

What could potentially be of very significant value is the implication of the availability of these teachings. All three writers claim to be presenting knowledge that has previously been taught secretly and closely guarded. What, then, is the implication of this knowledge becoming part of public knowledge? It seems that we may already be seeing some of the undesirable consequences in the appropriation and misuse of native cultures. What implications might this different knowledge have for contemporary life? This question is relevant to many other fields

such as politics, religion, and education. How do the guardians of rational knowledge react when confronted with contesting knowledges? What is their role, if any, in the development of this contesting paradigm? I believe in and see a value for this type of research within the humanities particularly. If the role of the humanities is to seek understanding of the human condition, what implication does an experiential knowledge such as what is being brought forth here have for that understanding? Truly, these are only but a very few questions that serve to open the doors of inquiry into what is at least an interesting field of study and potentially a powerful tool for human transformation.

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