

A Point, A Process, A Meaning

A Psycho-Semiotic Inquiry into the Sorcerer's 3rd Point of Reference and Numeric
Indices in Carlos Castaneda's *The Power of Silence* (1987)

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This thesis reinterprets Carlos Castaneda's <i>Teachings of don Juan</i> saga (focusing on vol. 8). Castaneda is considered as both at once; the infamous academic hoaxer and a "sham-man bearing gifts." From this point of view, readers are invited to engage in a game of uncovering meaning and distinguishing truth from deception. The powers of silence and storytelling are explored within a triangular, theoretical tableau: The study brings together three influential figures - this Godfather of the New Age movement, a post-structuralist semiotician, and a dissident narratologist. The "countercultural <i>Zeitgeist</i>" of the (post-)1960's West unites post-structuralism and New Age thought. They create intersections with themes of revolt, psychoanalysis, consciousness studies, modern myths, shifting cultural semiotics, and poetic logic. The tableau hinges on analogous tensions between terms drawn from the writings of Castaneda, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes: the Sorcerer's <i>3rd point of reference</i>, Kristeva's <i>3rd process of the unconscious</i>, and Barthes's <i>3rd meaning</i>. These categories undergo psycho-semiotic analysis within a parallelizing post-structural framework, resisting fixed interpretations and pre-assigned reader positions. The focus of this inquiry lies on the narrative process, aiming to unveil the unspoken and the naturalised hidden behind "the veil of the narrative". This stance is not merely theoretical; it serves as a practical analytical tool. It is described through the interplay of abjection and abreaction, and the secondary analogy of a <i>split</i> (perception, subject, text). When combined with the "sorcery stories," numeric indices, and "guiding metaphors" from <i>The Power of Silence</i> (1987), these split thirds map out different levels of signification within the narrative web. They can be "keyed open" to reveal an obtuse layer of meaning, intricately woven together by a web of iterative numbers. Additionally, a numerologico-narratological interpretation experiment related to the metaphorical dimension of numbers is provided – an anachronic "key" to the implied narrative "game" or "puzzle" within the macro-structure of the <i>Teachings</i>.</p>	

Keywords autofiction, Roland Barthes, Carlos Castaneda, Julia Kristeva, New Age fiction, New Age philosophy, non-fiction, literary criticism, narrative, narrativity, neo-shamanism, new religious movements, numerology, philosophy of language, poetic logic, postmodernism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, spiritual self-help, the 3rd meaning, the 3rd process

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sorcerer's ideas, not social idea(l)s

A ticket to freedom and Blueprints of Thought

“[M]an needs now, more so than ever, to be taught new ideas that have to do exclusively with his inner world – sorcerer's ideas, not social ideas, ideas pertaining to man facing the unknown, facing his personal death.” (*TPS*, p. 229)

These words are uttered by the *brujo* don Juan Matus to his apprentice in Carlos Castaneda's (1925–1998) *The Power of Silence* (1987/1991, “*TPS*”). The 1980s – a clear decade of focus in the reading list of this thesis – can be seen as a decade when marginal discourses and voices arose and mingled, making the issue of the nature of our social reality and its norm-based foundations ever more pressing. Fields such as psychology and its derivations and variations, including psychoanalysis, as well as linguistics, semiotics, social sciences, and theoretical physics, had begun to shed light on the complex systems and processes of signifying behind our experience and reality during the 20th century. The post-secular spiritual atmosphere was also particularly fruitful for synthesising thought, and the New Age movement had taken over the place previously held by the love children of the '60's.

The Teachings of Don Juan saga (publ. 1968–1998) is the incredible story of an anthropology student, Carlos, who, first unwittingly, becomes the apprentice of a Yaqui sorcerer, don Juan Matus, in his endeavours to study the native “plants of power” (*Jimson Weed, Peyote, Ayahuasca*) of Northern Mexico. The saga is remembered as one of the biggest academic hoaxes of its time, as the first book, *A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968) afforded Castaneda his master's degree, and the third book, *Journey to Ixtlan* (1972), was successfully submitted as a dissertation to UCLA's anthropology department, even affording Castaneda a doctorate, later revoked. For this reason, most of the surrounding discussion about his work is centred upon a (by now, mostly dwindled) debate on the nature of his hoax. The autofictive story lives on, claiming to be a true account; an emic, ethnographic work, and each book in the 12-part saga maps out the “Path of Knowledge” of a pseudo-shamanic belief system called *nagualism*, or just “sorcery”. Sorcery (given endless, iterative

conceptualisations along the saga) is explained through a shift in perception, and as a journey of return, and an attempt to re-establish our knowledge of *intent* and regain use of it without succumbing to it (*TPS*, p. 105): The goal of sorcery is to *see* the world as it is, without the constraints of language and inner dialogue.

The contemporaneous studies which debunked the hoax, build a picture of the author as an eccentric, aloof personality, who nonetheless was prone to esoteric monologues, inspired by his favourite wine, Mateus Rosé, and spent considerable amounts of time in the Rare Books section of the UCLA library (so much time, in fact, that it would seem that the library and Northern Mexico were the same place). Some see him as a manipulative liar, many have played along the mystique of the *Teachings*, and some critics both debunk the hoax and still attest to the “power and the allegory” of Castaneda’s literary journey. (e.g. Sager, 2020; de Mille, 1978.) Richard de Mille (1978), one of Castaneda’s most enthusiastic debunkers and “alleglossarists”, pointed out the chronological discrepancies and identified several of Castaneda’s original sources, which depict a *mélange* of esotericism, shamanism, psychoanalytic theories and psychotherapies, Western philosophies, as well as zennism, buddhism, literary references, academic studies, and ancient wisdom (in this thesis, I focus on its psychoanalytic and semiotic analogies, and connections to Jungian and neo-platonic thought). This was done in two volumes, *The Don Juan Papers* (1976) and *Castaneda’s Journey* (1978). Even so, he concluded that:

Castaneda wasn’t a common con-man, he lied to bring us the truth. His stories are packed with truth, though they are not true stories, which he said they are. This is not your familiar literary allegorist painlessly instructing his readers in philosophy. Nor is it your fearless trustworthy ethnographer returned full of anecdotes from the forests of Ecuador. This is a sham-man bearing gifts, an ambiguous spellbinder dealing simultaneously in contrary commodities - wisdom and deception. (de Mille, 1978, p. 41.)

What I set out to do was to discover the truth behind the hoax, and the reason behind the persistent assertion that “don Juan lives”: The story (and reactions to it) builds up tension in the meeting of two world-views - “magical and rational” - that hold different views on problems such as what it means *to know* something: What is the relationship between information and knowledge; how about thinking, writing and speaking? The Academic (Western, scholarly) represented by the autofictive Castaneda (“Carlos”, to differentiate from the author in this thesis) is left face to face with the inadequacy of his scientific categories in explaining the world of the Sorcerer. Along the saga of his initiation, both in horror and in awe, the anthropology student comes to the realisation that his inventory of reality can’t measure up to the immensity and power of the world of magical perception. It is the perplexed mono(dia)logue of an agnostic, teetering at the border of what he knows to be true. An analyst (soon turned into an “analysand” of the Sorcerer), faced with experiences that cannot be explained away or measured, but that are real

nonetheless.

As a performative work, which makes the line between extra- and intradiegetic dimensions – the real-life author and his hoax of a personal account – nearly intangible, the saga might be considered as a form of “experiential literature”¹, and a “quasi-mimetic evocation of real-life experience” (see Fludernik, 1996, p. 12). In this thesis, I approach Castaneda’s book as a narrative game, a textual puppet-show where concealment and revelation are intertwined.

The volume at hand, #8: *The Power of Silence* (also *TPS*, 1987/1991) suits the purposes of my thesis, because it offers a recapitulation of the *Teachings* as a whole. The hoax was debunked by the 4th volume, but Castaneda kept writing, in an increasingly “romanceering” manner (de Mille, 1978). In *The Power of Silence*, everything is framed by memory, though these memories are reframed as *recollections* (a layman term and a magical category), and Carlos doesn’t remember having them before. He relives the crucial points of the Sorcerer’s return journey, which is at once Carlos’s character arc, and again framed by other arcs; the stories of the sorcerer’s of the past, or *sorcery stories*. Within this multi-layered narrative framework, the **Abstract** is a guiding metaphor, which is at once a matter of abstraction and an abstraction of matter, which together with the metaphors of the *Spirit* (irreducible source of everything) and *the edifices of intent* (blueprints of thought), conjoins philosophical abstractions and abstracts guiding thought-processes.

The Power of Silence (*TPS*) handles themes of time, continuity, memory, duality and perception, and holds allusions to sacred geometry, Pythagorean numerology (numeric indices), Platonic philosophy (metaphoric *relata*), and shares the format of a Socratic dialogue (doubled over: Analyst–Analysand/Teacher–Apprentice), intercepted by vivid sensory descriptions and action sequences. The Abstract mediates the material and non-material, as it at once “resides in the eyes” and “has no parallel in the human condition”. The textual and the visual imaginary intertwine in the “certain body” of the text where “[t]he eye by which I see God is the same eye by which He sees me” (Angelus Silesius, Barthes, 1975, p. 16). The underlying metaphor of the Abstract is the metaphor of the eye, permanent and variable (Barthes, 1964, p. 238), which aims to produce a vision (to *see*) an unobserved object. The actants are here read as *dream characters* (perceived once waking eyes are closed, granted a separate level of existence) and representatives of different dimensions of consciousness, and different phases of spiritual evolution, representing at once the

¹ For Fludernik (1996), narrativity and experientiality are interchangeable, and experientiality (framed with actantial frames) is an evocation of consciousness, or a representation of the speaker role, and further entangles with the innate “antropomorphic bias” of narratives. Experientiality aims to embody “cognitive faculties, the understanding of intentional action, the perception of temporality, and the emotional evaluation of experience” (Caracciolo, 2014, p. 149).

inner journey of transmutation, and the evolution of human thought as a collective chain of being.

As de Mille (1978) points out, there is no telling how far along were the *Teachings* planned, and by all means they seem to represent an ongoing learning process (“learn, unlearn, relearn”). The Abstract cores presented as *sorcery stories*, are accordingly “shades of realisation” and degrees of being aware (*TPS*, p. 105). Castaneda was a very reader-responsive writer; ask him a question, and he will inscribe it in the next book. *The Power of Silence* in many ways seems to confirm his most attentive readers’ suggestions. Because it is only the 8th book, and the total is 12, and Castaneda had been writing for at least two decades at this point, one may presume that the structure he reveals not only summarises the past events, but also maps out the paths to come. The saga also encompasses several text types into its eclectic whole, but in neat bundles of four, the first four books playing out the pseudo-scientific hoax, and its conclusion, this sequence closing in the “jump into the abyss” in *Tales of Power* (1974). The second bundle is a sequence where Castaneda-Ethnographer morphs into Castaneda-Novelist (also pointed out by de Mille, 1978), and the closure of this sequence is represented in the *split perception* and 3rd point, reached in *The Power of Silence* (1987) – a harmonising “ascent” to the descent in the fourth. The final bundle of four books are “manuals”, a concrete move from the hoax and from the realm of romanceering into that of extra-literary *praxis*. But the text-types all play into the same revelatory construct.

Here, I entangle the Sorcerer’s explanation and its culturo-philosophical implications within the framework post-structuralism, from a psycho-semiotic perspective, joining them in a discourse around narrativity, mythology, metaphor, and the relationship between language, nature, and the Real. My working hypothesis is that the 3rd point, process (Kristeva), and meaning (Barthes), all elementally include the same split, and reflect the same logico-symbolic dilemma inherent to language.

1.2 First, A Little History

Castaneda, Kristeva, Barthes, and the ‘60s

In 1962, a year which happens to coincide with the narrative beginning of Carlos’s “apprenticeship” with don Juan, and the death of Carl Gustav Jung, Thomas Kuhn famously articulated the ongoing ontological process which our previously largely unchallenged (Western, academic) worldviews are going through, as documented in the various “turns” in humanities’ paradigms of the 20th century. These turns – linguistic, narrative, and affective – were largely verbal actions: the acts of *giving*

utterance to the structures and dynamics of our everyday reality, which were now brought to debate: those of language, society, truth, identity, consciousness, and their relationship to what we call the Real. “The consensus or homologuein of an entire group” (Bourdieu, 1982), or “the utterance as ideologeme” (Kristeva, 1969/2003) was brought under question, extending critique to the very manufacturing process of factual knowledge. This debate was largely present at the time, as was the project of exposing the “power of knowledge”, which manifested as a philosophical marriage of sociology and linguistics, spurring from the understanding that the very social operations of *naming* and the rites of institution through which they are accomplished, should be studied, in sciences reliant on pre-named and pre-classified realities (see Bourdieu, 1982/2003, p. 105).

In his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Kuhn argues for a procedural, non-linear understanding of scientific progress, which occurs through *paradigm shifts*; radical changes in scientific frameworks, theories and methods. This shift is cumulative and emerges as anomalies and crises in the old paradigms, but these prowess have the potential to bring about the emergence of new ways of understanding; new systems of meaning fit to accommodate these new observations. The Sorcerer’s *Teachings* are likewise, cumulative. (An epistemic shift is a cumulation of paradigm shifts, akin to narrative “hinge points” or cardinal functions which deviate from the norm.)

A year before the original publication of *The Teachings of don Juan: A Yaqui way of Knowledge* (1968), the purported end of Castaneda’s apprenticeship, Roland Barthes (1915–1980) pronounced the *Death of the Author* (1967), a year after Julia Kristeva (1941–) received her degree in linguistics from the University of Sofia, which she finished after her relocation in France. Roland Barthes was on Kristeva’s doctoral committee, and their professional relationship was foregrounded when Kristeva, having lived in Paris for only a few months, solicited an appointment with Barthes “to discuss the nouveau roman” in March, 1966. (see Baron, 2019, p. 301.)

Meanwhile, in Carlos’s chronology, the young anthropological apprentice of sorcery was deep into his field work, and about to *see* the world of the sorcerer for the first time, and then flee back to UCLA to become a pop-shaman-author, godfather of the Human Potential Movement (a 1970’s psychoanalysis-based countercultural project), and *enfant terrible* of his department. His revolt wasn’t unique to the time – in 1968, French (bourgeois) students rose up to revolt against General de Gaulle, and “Mother and Father France” – a family psychodrama, as coined by Philippe Petit (in Kristeva, 2002, p. 7). At the same time, youth (again, quite middle-classed, yet alienated) in America began to reject the American lifestyle and revolt against the Vietnam War, culminating in the USA’s largest antiwar demonstration, in Nov. 1969, after the famous summer of love, as the hippie (“freak”,

“love child”) counterculture reached its height, and a psychedelic revolution played out (see Pruitt, 2023).

An air and an era of dissent, ambiguity and proliferation of the marginal unites the three authors, especially Kristeva and Castaneda, already marginal authors as cultural Others (immigrants; woman, sorcerer), and as the latter is a known hoaxer, and the former an accused Bulgarian communist-era secret service agent working under the name “Sabina” (see Dimitrov, 2018). Both deny the accusations (though Castaneda’s denial is another gesture of underlining the content of his work). There is also a “conspiracy theory novel” which combines historical fact and speculative fiction around the death of Roland Barthes, Laurent Binet’s *The 7th Function of Language* (2015) in which Barthes’s accidental death is recounted as an assassination. All this to show that the authors were certainly causing ripples (intense affectations and reactions) with their work, however **abstract** it may seem.

Here, in essence, is the barest shared ground – the associative blank canvas – between the third categories explored in this study: the Sorcerer’s *3rd point of reference* (Castaneda, 1987), Julia Kristeva’s (1974/2002e, p. 111) *3rd process of the Unconscious*, and Roland Barthes’s (1970/1982, pp. 43–61) *3rd, obtuse, meaning*. They belong to the same constellation, not only because of historical concurrence (authors worked on the concepts analysed in this study circa 1960–1990), because from a broad perspective, they are all expressive of the same perceived anomaly in what one would call “ordinary reality” and its fixed meanings.

I do not suggest a strict genealogy of conceptions, but rather a form of cultural cross-contamination between the post-structuralist project and the sorcerer’s explanation. Further, what is instigated between these thirds, is a compelling geometry, a cut out of the fluxing semiotic and symbolic field of the postmodern West. The trinity itself has several cultural antecedents, brought forth in several thought-traditions, like Pythagorean interpretations, the Holy Trinity, and aesthetic and literary theory (the three-fold structure of folk tales, mythical nuclei), and represents a common model of thought and rhetorics (triangulation).

1.2.1 The Spiritual Marketplace of Ideas in the Post-secular World

From Poststructuralism to New-Agey Sorcery

My initial research idea was born out of a semi-simultaneous reading of *The Teachings of Don Juan* and the theoretical works of Bulgarian psychoanalyst and semiotician Julia Kristeva (1941–). My research idea is thus originally based on an intuitive, personal moment of discovery: There is an analogy to be found – pre-existing and/or interpretational – between the principles of psychoanalysis, semiotics and Don Juan’s sorcery.

The intuitive link that spurred this exploration was first looked at by me in my bachelor's thesis, *Magic and Semiosis* (fin. *Magia ja Semioosi*, Solimeis, 2021), in which I preliminarily linked Don Juan's magical categories of *doing* (symbolisation) and *stopping the world* (awareness of the semiotic) with the Kristevan conception of the signifying process, *semiosis* for short. As the main result of my reading, I likened the *semiotic chora* (e.g. Kristeva, 1974/2002) to the functioning of the sorcerer's "assemblage point", and suggested the presence of a bioenergetic [*bios* governed by *energeia*] and biosemiotic [*bios*/life governed by *semiosis*/signs and codes²] framework and understanding of life, and a principle of interconnectedness in both (psycho-)semiotic theory and Don Juan's magic³. Biosemiotic frameworks have been applied to readings of both. This biosemiotic understanding works towards Kristeva's larger project of giving utterance to another kind of logic at play within our reality, and she calls this logic "poetic". Here I deepen this exploration, with the further interlinking of the processes of "reaching the 3rd point" and "breaching the thetic boundary".

Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes can be and have been considered as post-structuralists "avant la lettre", pioneering the movement, and their texts are the primary sources to many significant advancements in humanist theory and methodology. Kristeva greatly effected the "linguistic" and "affective" turns with her theory of the semiotic, and Barthes, on his part, is responsible not only for "the death of the author", a major shift in focus for the literary sciences and reader-response theory, but also for instigating the "narrative turn", which travelled from the study of the novel to cultural studies at large.

Castaneda himself took part in one of the big academic debates of his time, in his own field of anthropology: fellow anthropologist and Castaneda-scholar Richard de Mille (1978, pp. 64–84) convincingly argues that Castaneda's work can be contextualised by diving into the inner dynamics of the UCLA anthropology department in the 1960's. This was the debate between *emic* and *etic* methods of ethnographic field work, the "eticists" standing for the classical position of the objective observer, and the radical "emicists" insisting on the importance of personal experience in understanding foreign cultures and their practices. Castaneda, of course, was more akin to the emicist: in his first book he straightforwardly claims it to be a research in emic anthropology, and it ends in what can be considered a "parody" of a Structural Analysis. But, as de Mille (1978, pp. 72–84) goes on to show,

² See e.g. Barbieri, M. (2008). "Biosemiotics: a new understanding of life". *Naturwissenschaften*.

³ Castaneda's magical world is an agglomeration of energy fields, metaphorically called "the Eagle's emanations", and the human constitution has an energetic dimension, "the luminous egg" of four compressed compartments, and their interconnecting filaments of light. Kristeva, on her part, alludes to a biosemiotic frame of reference while placing affects "at the threshold of bioenergetic stability", and the conceptions of a semiotic chora and affectivity in itself necessarily involve a conception of energy.

it seems that Castaneda played his tricks on everyone, without discrimination:

After spending the last few years of my studies with this corpus, I could easily believe his theory that the emicists decided to play a little prank; “a well-deserved kick in the pants for certain ethnocentric, arrogant, etic mossbacks” (de Mille, 1978, p. 78), and so agreed to pass Castaneda’s delightful trickster-thesis and afford him his doctorate, despite the obvious discrepancies and chronological errors. Only thing is, they didn’t anticipate that “don Juan Carlos” had other plans. *The Teachings* were not to be contained as an odd document in the closed-off shelves of the UCLA library; “a private joke on, about, among, and for culturologists” (ibid.). It was to become a world-wide success, and the local University Press played into this with dollar signs in their eyes.

Once the debate had spread through the scholarly community, as well as into secular popularity, the emicists found themselves in a kind of a “tough spot”: Would they admit to being *liars*? Or would they pretend to be *fools*? They did neither and largely opted for the “stonewalling” answer, and so played into the mystique of *the Teachings* for years to come. Yet, as the fog around Castaneda and his work today, proves: “If the Dreamer made an ass of the University, the University got even by making him invisible, at least within the grove of Academe” (de Mille, 1978, p. 79).

Castaneda is remembered also as a Godfather of the New Age Movement⁴, and accordingly, banished to the same obscure Self-Help and Mind-Body-Spirit shelves, and considered an extra-literary work. From a sociological perspective, the movement is usually traced back to the mid 1970’s (e.g. Hanegraaff, 2007), but from a literary perspective the scope of “new-agey” texts may be traced back to Western esotericism, and the 18th and 19th century proliferation of “alternative” and non-Western belief-systems, paganism and theosophy, like in the texts of poet William Blake⁵ (1757–1827) and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891). Much of the important contemporary literature, such as the *Teachings*, seems to draw from the 1960’s psychedelic revolution and its roots in the popularising of psychoanalysis, especially Jungian strains and alternative psychotherapies.

The New Age also has a derogatory connotation of pseudo-science (e.g. Lewis, 2007), capitalised spirituality for the privileged (spiritual materialism, e.g. Bowman, 2007, p. 304) and predatory cultic milieus (e.g. Possamai, 2007), and most participants wouldn’t even call themselves New Agers (Castaneda’s moniker was given in hindsight), which further complicates the terminology. Sociological research

⁴ While still largely unexplored, research interest around the sociology of the New Age has increased since the 1990’s, pioneered by Paul Heelas and Wouter J. Hanegraaff, and taking wing especially in Great-Britain, Sweden and Holland. *Brill’s Handbook of New Age* (Kemp & Lewis, 2007) offers a contemporary collection of qualitative and quantitative religious and sociological studies.

⁵ The link spurs from the esoteric content of Blake’s poetry, and namely from his use of the phrase ‘new age’ in the preface to his 1804 poem ‘Milton’ (see also Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 53).

also notes that the New Age is often evoked in an incorrect sense, or a “pseudo-New Age” (Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 30); as a “highly general label for whatever is seen by outsiders as vaguely spiritual, alternative or ‘soft’.”

Yet the tendency to do so, in layman speech and in critique, is a point of intrigue when deciphering the semiotics; the motivators, and contents of these philosophies and practices, and their larger ontological and cultural connotations: the narrative. Appropriated to literary use, the term gains access to the widest possible understanding of the New Age (narrative), without forcibly naming the authors “new-agers”, as such naming would be against their innate philosophies. To understand the new age-y, one must observe it from a socio-constructivist perspective, since “many important aspects of the New Age could not possibly exist outside **the specific cultural constellation of western society** in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century” (Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 37, my emphasis). And to deepen understanding of the foundation of these systems of thought, it is fruitful to contrast it with other alternative ways of thinking; those that could be considered “vaguely spiritual” and “soft” (see: psychoanalysis, cultural semiotics, feminist critiques...).

Semiotics is linked to this same strain of “historical necessity”, as it observes the effects that the political and economic reawakening of ancient civilizations⁶ has on the Western subject whose symbolic systems it brings under crisis (Kristeva, 2002a, p. 31): Post-structuralist semiotics are not only a critical science but a vehicle for social revolution. This revolt is extended beyond the political dimension, into dimensions of psychic, analytic, and artistic revolt, and redefined by Kristeva (*Revolt, She Said*, 2002) as a permanent state of questioning and transformations characteristic of psychic life and artistic praxis. And revolt and dissidence are not to be understood as primarily destructive and dejecting, but processes of renewal; regeneration; renegotiation.

The scope of New Age narratives is multifaceted; the ideas cannot be found in any single organisation or ideology, and the movement manifests as a “SPIN of SPINS”⁷ (Gerlach & Hine, 1970; Ferguson, 1982; in Chryssides, 2007, pp. 9–10, 22). Together, they can be portrayed as *a counter-cultural Zeitgeist*, and researchers argue that the 21st century popularity of marriages between the mystical and the scientific indicate “that New Age interest in alternative science and alternative interpretations of mainstream science is a major cultural phenomenon” (Lewis, 2007, p. 207). This “Holistic Science” is based on the belief that, ultimately, science and spirituality are simply different roads to the same destination (Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 35).

⁶ Also a point of intrigue for “new-agey” or “alternative” philosophies; the vision of a neo-archaic community, e.g. Terence McKenna, “The Archaic Revival” (1991).

⁷ SPIN, i.e. Segmented Polycentric Integrated Group

Since the New Age (like the *Teachings* as well) is such a hybridising form, which encompasses a vast array of praxis, philosophy and sub-genres, it may be analysed through operationalising the concepts of narrative, narrativity, and narrative reality, (rather than simply a genre). It also fits the polemic positions between mainstream and alternative narratives, which “weaponise” the distinction between “narrative” (the opposing story) and “story” (personal account) (see eg. Mäkelä & Björninen, 2023). Furthermore:

A possible context for the political use of “narrative” in the ideological sense is, indeed, ideology critique. The Marxian tradition theorizes a self-concealing mechanism of ideology that involves recasting contradictory aspects of the status quo in a diachronic or narrative form. (Mäkelä & Björninen, 2023, p. 15)

The example of Marxian tradition, closely related to poststructuralism, is easily applicable to the “New Age agenda”, as a “tradition aimed to lay bare the invisible, naturalized ideologies of the dominant class [or paradigm]” (ibid.). For the Sorcerer, reality as we know it is merely a description, while the universe itself defies scrutiny and description (*TPS*, p. 101), and so closer to a narrative than an objective view of the world, and it is also a narrative with potential for empowerment, through taking back the power to tell and own one’s own story; creating new meaning. The topos of concealment – laying bare what is concealed – is recurrent in post-structuralist semiotics and narratology, as well as psychoanalysis and shamanism. The story/narrative opposition also links to the finding (still under debate in neuroscience) that when we’re listening to a good story, “rich in detail, full of metaphor, expressive of character”, we tend to imagine ourselves in the same situation (Mäkelä & Björninen, 2022, p. 18).

Since Castaneda is a pioneering author, the conventions don’t quite make the cut *per se* – he doesn’t speak of a coming “New Age”, but the sentiment is relayed in don Juan’s speech in the form: “Man needs now, more than ever...” The *Teachings* also partake in the New Age “quest culture”, portraying the archetypical “seeker”, and the quest pursued is a “distinctively modern, psychologised, ‘post-Protestant’ form of religion, now named “spirituality”, a transformative journey of the Self (see Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 51). A similar expectation of social change spurring from the individual is inscribed in Barthes’s (1975, p. 14–15) atopia of the *Society of the Friends of the Text*, who have nothing in common but their enemies (fools, conformists, moralists, intransigent rationalists); a society with no site, but a shared acknowledgement of contradictions.

As a hybrid of several different genres, text-types, and ideas, which resist face-value interpretations and pre-assigned reader positions, the *Teachings* are a poststructuralist form. The dissent is aimed at the same larger structure – the Judeo-Christian ideologeme (= religiosity instead of philosophy/spirituality) and the monolithic truth of modern science (a singular method for gaining knowledge); the

Western doxa – and there is a verisimilar wish for *another* kind of signifying system of reality – another, yet complementary logic. Julia Kristeva calls this *poetic logic* (e.g. Kristeva, 1977/1980). Carlos Castaneda (1987/1991) could call it *the sorcerer's explanation*. Roland Barthes might refer to *unbound meaning*. The interest in examining manifestations of the new age-y comes from the fact that it emulates an ontological and societal situation in which our culture finds itself. There is a lack of and a wish for a new kind of signifying. And I see no need in polarising these (or any) worldviews as “certainly true” and “fallacious wishful thinking” – rather an opportunity for a creative synthesis.

I have taken Castaneda and don Juan into the field most appropriate for their analysis – the literary sciences and their *poetic logos*. Not only are the *Teachings* consensually a work of fiction, but at the same time, analogies between these modes of thought emerge. They are all theories of anticipation, portray a biosemiotic understanding of life, and strive for a anti-authoritarian meaning-making. They are faulted for scientific jargon, and eclectic mixing of ideas. The tension created is purified by laughter and a bliss from new meaning. They simultaneously resort to dialogic rhetorics, and problematise the conception of dialogue. They seem less radical now than at the time of their publication, as there now exists a consensus within the humanities that we are living in a post-(even meta-, by now)modern world; a post-era, a time of change.

1.3 A PSYCHO-SEMIOTIC, TRIANGULAR TABLEAU

My Methodology and Research Questions

“A sorcerer perceives his actions with depth,” he said. “His actions are tri-dimensional for him. They have a third point of reference.” (*TPS*, p. 221.)

My unconventional research tableau has been inspired by Roland Barthes’s essay, *Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein* (1977c, pp. 69–78), where Barthes brings together an Enlightenment philosopher, a modernist playwright, and a movie director on a shared representative stage. Barthes imagines a gaze towards a horizon of new meaning, where the subject (author, reader, spectator or voyeur) cuts with his gaze a cut-out base of a triangle, where the eye (or the observing mind) forms the apex. The geometry of the representation travels from theatre’s stage to literary discourse, which is simply “depicting the tableau one has in one’s mind” (*ibid.*, p. 70).

Think of it in terms of the *asterism* – a pattern in the stars which can be observed by many people, but isn’t one of the internationally recognized official constellations, and each of the compositional stars, in turn, also belonging to their

respective constellations: “Though unofficial, the patterns of stars forming asterisms are thrilling targets for astronomers” (Lea, 2022). (read: Though unofficial, the patterns of signs forming un-authorised symbol-patterns, are thrilling targets for semioticians.)

This space explores the shifting of sign-signifier relations: In this tableau, the apex of the triangle is no longer the sign itself; the sign lays down in a horizontal relation to the signified. The apex is the “sole truth” of the signifier, the living organ of meaning. When the 3rd point is the apex, its concatenated sign is the abject (fear in the Sorcerer’s 1st attention or “tonal” perception), and its signified is abreaction (release through focusing the 2nd attention, perception of the “nagual”). In the case of the 3rd process, the sign is the condensed metaphor (the mnemonic symbol), and its signified the displaced metonymy of the in-between. In the 3rd meaning, the sign is a denotation of its own contradiction, and its signified a prescribed deviation. The thirds move in a space of free relationality, where the signifier, the speaking subject always prescribes the movement from non-meaning to meaning, mediated in the process of abjection-abreaction.

Within the scope of the 20th and 21st centuries, new methods of research have created a basis for a new paradigm; this new paradigm shares the ideals of inter- and multidisciplinary meaning making, which manifests as a blending categories (terms, concepts, mediums of information) and fuzzing borders. This fuzzy-blend is descriptive of postmodern qualitative research, its ethos appearing over and over in different, intersecting research paradigms. Notably, postcolonial and feminist critiques, empiric ecocriticism, psychoanalytic applications, and cultural semiotics respectively, are, within the literary sciences and humanities at large, significant contemporary frameworks, which shape scholarly discourse and research directions. These paradigms are post-structuralist, and share an affective understanding of literature (though, naturally, there is significant variation between researchers’ positions).

Instead of seeing this tableau as an “eclectic mix” (specialty of the New Ager), I conceptualise them through a lens which allows their “fuzzy-blend”. As isolated units, they can be observed; brought to focus within an artificial cut-out, a halted process, a still image. To Kristeva, the emergence of quantum mechanics⁸ reflected

⁸ An example of a contemporary, “post-structuralist method” of similar ethos would be that of *diffractive reading*, first introduced in feminist critiques (Haraway, 1992/2004; Barad, 2003/2007). It draws from quantum mechanics, and is a method of “reading texts (or ideas) through one another” (Barad, 2007, p. 30), creating a kaleidoscopic viewpoint and a pattern of correspondences and contradictions, and engendering creative, unexpected outcomes. It emphasises the interconnectedness and entanglement of ways of knowing and conceptualising, rather than viewing them as separate, distinct entities, i.e. it lends itself to *poetic logic*, and partakes in the blending and fuzzifying of previously isolated units (dichotomies), now studied from the point of view of their interaction, and

the need to fracture our discourse or intelligence in order to “tackle a problematic that can no longer be contained within the framework of classical reason”, in a search for the “unobserved object” and new (mathematical) models of formalisation (Kristeva, 1969/2002b, pp. 84-5).

Barthes, for his part, addressed the unobserved object by way of drawing a line between art and life: Life’s communications are “fuzzy” and “blurred”, and forcibly unknown to the written code, which is inescapably distinct in nature (Barthes, 1977, p. 89). When art attempts to represent or mimic the fuzzy-blur of life, it must do so on the foundation of the base code, a necessary reduction (like the sorcerers have through history operated through reductions, TPS, p. 104). In language, these reductions are reflected in distinctive dichotomies, like the classical Hegelian Self/Other dialectics, which are brought under renegotiation. Without distinction altogether, without being One or the Other; being both, things become fuzzy and neither being was effective – “But being **one or the other** opened up inconceivable possibilities” (TPS, p. 235, my emphasis).

Carlos Castaneda’s corpus necessarily involves a decoding reader position, and one which allows the reader to read ideas through other ideas (like in diffractive readings). Proceeding to read the *Teachings* from a pre-assigned reader position, without linking it with other philosophies, traditions and theories, is to forcibly leave out an obtuse and elemental (yet shrouded, elusive/allusive) dimension of interpretation. The *Teachings* are devised to be reimagined, played through, solved like riddles (of which there are three for the Sorcerer: that of the mind, the heart, and the spirit). In the field of religious studies, Corin Braga (2010) has coined Castaneda’s pre-assigned reader positions as the naive reader (the face value believer), and the sceptical reader (the critic). But both of these positions amount to a drifting reading (Barthes, 1975, p. 18), which does not appreciate the whole. For this reason, I propose the anachronic reader (Barthes, 1975) as a redeeming reader-position (Ch. 2.1.).

If one observes the paths to and from which these *Teachings* lead, one notices they are not being lead to a re-mystified world, where “magic” is the be all end all answer; this shaman doesn’t speak the poetic language of spiritual hermits, don Juan speaks like a scholarly philosopher and a proper yankee/poet, and his wisdom entangles with Western ontology, and is aimed at the generalised representative of the modern Western male-oriented mind, Carlos. But Carlos is also an Apprentice, one who seeks to learn, and represents the atopian anachronic subject, “in two places at once”.

A post-structural framework, which is a form of philosophical revolt, challenges the idea of fixed meanings, embracing a fluidity of interpretations: to

how they affect one another. “[W]e can understand diffraction patterns – as patterns of difference that make a difference – to be the fundamental constituents that make up the world” (Barad, 2007, p. 72).

Barthes, everything in a text and its multiplicity of writing is to be disentangled, nothing exhaustively deciphered.

“[T]he structure can be followed, 'run' (like the thread of a stock-*ing*) at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath: the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced; writing ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning. (Barthes, 1977d, p. 147)

Psycho-semiotic content analysis combines psychological (psychoanalytic) aspects of interpretation with the study of signs and symbols, and allows the reader to delve into the Unconscious (obscure) elements of texts, and their potential meanings. Narrative analysis, for its part, brings forth the structure, which is the vessel of the content, and situates the reading on the level of the text. This narrative structure cannot be simply extracted from the surface level of the text, but, as I will go on to show, demands a consideration of the whole (the *saga*), and an iterative, complexified reading method, based on keying open narrative “clues” (though it does not decipher but disentangle them from the polyphony of the intertextual web).

One must note, that although Barthes attempted to formalise a “structural analysis of narrative”, he also professed to being more at home within a “textual analysis”, which “endeavours to ‘see’ each particular text in its difference”, where this difference is ‘woven’ in familiar codes, conceiving of “the text as taken up in an open network which is the very infinity of language, itself structured without closure”. It is not a form of historical criticism, not even a structural analysis, but an analysis of how the text is unmade, “how it explodes, disseminates – by what coded paths it goes off”. (Barthes, 1977e, pp. 126–7.) Therefore, I will not aim at an exhaustive narrative analysis which uses all the concepts provided by Barthes (or Kristeva, or Castaneda), but appropriate to my use those which best help illustrate the logic at play in the *Teachings*.

These coded paths which entangle with poststructuralism involve numerological codes (concealed in plain sight, intended by the author), neo-platonic connotations, Lévi-Straussian structuralism, and Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian psychoanalysis respectively. This is a “resisting reading”, which aims to bring forth and dispel pre-assigned reader positions (for Castaneda, these are the face-value positions of naive mystic and rationalist critic).

My research questions are as follows:

- (1) What role do numerological metaphors play in the narrative of *The Power of Silence* (1987/1991)?
- (2) How do Kristeva’s 3rd process of the Unconscious and Barthes’s 3rd meaning emerge in the narrative of *The Power of Silence* and the Sorcerer’s 3rd point of reference?

To verify and elaborate on this analogy of 3rds, which can only be revealed in their interplay and *différance*, I will use a method of parallelisation between overlapping conceptions from each discourse at play, resulting in a psycho-semiotic, thematically oriented close reading of the *sorcery stories / abstract cores* embedded into the

narrative in *TPS*. I will provide a narratological suggestion of the interplay of micro and macro sequences in the *Teachings*. I focus on the overlapping concepts, intertextualities and ideas, especially those surrounding the description of the process of the initiation to magic that the sorcerers go through (narrated through these *sorcery stories / abstract cores*). Thus, an analogy between psycho-semiotic, post-structuralist theory and don Juan's "nagualism" is built, in a comparison centred between their understanding of *the speaking subject*. The initiative experience I am most interested in is what don Juan calls "split perception", and its procedural relationship with the 3rd point of reference. The analogy between narrative theory and Castaneda's *Teachings* is in itself of greatest interest. What if the sorcerer's explanation and the search for a poetic logic are commensurable?

2 THEORY

“Because of their extraordinary energy, naguals are intermediaries. Their energy allows them to channel peace, harmony, laughter, and knowledge directly from the source- from intent- and transmit intent to their companions.” (TPS, p. xiii.)

Since it is the explicit wish of the sham-man author, I will build my theory according to the ideas that I believe are important in uncovering the author’s *intent*, which in don Juan’s world is inherent to the *sorcery stories* and “creates edifices before us and invites us to enter them” (TPS, p. 27). An edifice is a structure which stands more or less permanently in one place. The edifices of intent are “the ulterior arrangement of the abstract”, but in the sorcerer’s world, ulterior stands for “knowledge without words” (TPS, p. 30). Here, I attempt to draw out this unobserved structure from the narrative network and numeric indices of *The Power of Silence*, and play around with Plato’s cave as an edifice of Western ontology. I advance in a labyrinth of ideas, the great, loopy chain of being, allowing everything to flow together, into the guiding metaphor of the “abstract” (at once the blueprint of thought; a summary, and the irreducible source). In this thesis, the nagual is understood as a guiding principle, which intends movement along the geometry of the work.

Contrary to popular image, Castaneda, the sham-manic author, "did the best to show others exactly how he came by his knowledge", and de Mille lists the ability to find, select, transform, marshall, and present other people's ideas without letting the sources show as one of Castaneda's prime talents (de Mille, 1976, p. 23; 93). Contradictory as these two statements might seem, these two intellectual premises of combining important knowledge and presenting it through novelty create the mystico-poetic web of Castaneda's corpus. All is hidden in plain sight, just as it is in the abstract of a Sorcerer.

“The books should not be read... as an accurate description of Castaneda’s apprenticeship, however accurate his reportage be. [...] [H]e is compulsively writing more and more books, clowning for the public, playing coyly with his image, showing a lack of courage, a weakness of vision, falling dupe to his own tricks, dallying oddly with the media, and cheapening the quest. There is something inauthentic, something desperate about his act. He has not passed the test of the warrior. He has betrayed the teachings. (Crapanzano in de Mille, 1978, p. 20.)

And all this around a decade before *The Power of Silence* (1987) was published. But, they have not suffered the fate of popularised texts, as the critic presumed; they cannot be “worked up, exploited, made into a movie, simplified beyond recognition” (ibid., p. 21) – in order to prevent the loss of his text, Castaneda opted for “losing himself” to the abstract in order to learn the trade of the idea-juggling game-master, or storyteller-sorcerer: to lay the “game” and its rules as bare as possible. And it was an important remark to make, that the *Teachings* are not an accurate description of Castaneda’s apprenticeship – but they are an accurate reportage of the

apprenticeship of Carlos the Western Academic, and attempt to portray all the phases of doubt, illusionment and disillusionment the seeking mind would go through.

Castaneda, Kristeva and Barthes are brought together here, because they seem to elucidate the same processes of meaning-making, and answer to the same ontological dilemma of the post-war West. Like the aim of my study is, so I would say are the aims of these authors; to explore the territory of the Un-known, the Un-nameable: the split continent between Nature and the Real. This is an endeavour largely present in Western literature, psychology and philosophy, gaining popularity in the 19th century, and further motivated by the dawn of psychoanalysis. This research tableau is first and foremost a creative construct, a tableau modulated in an active, creative reading process. The goal of my "trinity of thirds" is to provide an analogical geometry of conceptualisations circling the same, major, unequivocal problem: to uncover that which signifies, but can (no longer; in this temporal-spatial positioning or psycho-semiotic loci) not speak.

"The sharing of that death-bearing secret with analysts is not a mere test of their reliability or of the differences between their discourse and the domain of law, condemnation, or repression. Such a trust ("I am having you share in my crime") is an attempt to win over the analyst into a common *jouissance* - the one that the mother declined, that the mistress steals." (Kristeva, 1989, p. 86.)

2.1 Adopting an Anachronic Reader Position

Bliss, pleasure, marginal discourses

"[O]utside of the procedure that produces [the cut-out] out of whole cloth, it has, so to speak, no 'objective' existence; a 'semantologist' would not readily acknowledge its existence. With respect to the 'real' as 'nature' (a 'realist' instance), the 'detail' as the obtuse sense of the fragment is the mark of a radical rupture with regard to any 'concrete' referent: it is rather a "leaning on the signifier" or, if you prefer, "the signifier as siren". (Barthes in Bensmaïa, 1987, p. 42.)

In the movement from classical structuralist thought towards post-structuralism, the West, the central scene being in French culture, created theories which were "a *mélange* of linguistics, ethnology and psychoanalysis", which held "an ambition to elevate itself to the status of philosophy". (Timparano, 1981, p. 601.) This synthesis is detectable in the works of such authors as Lévi-Strauss, Foucault and Lacan (*ibid.*). All three are explicitly present in the works of Kristeva and Barthes, and implicitly in that of Castaneda. Albeit often presented as a criticism, in the framework of my thesis, understanding this *mélange* and taking its presence into account, is elemental.

Barthesian narrative analysis aims to produce a theoretical modulation

suitable for working out the inner dynamics of any given text, where text is understood from the point of view of “extensive text comprehension”, which encompasses understanding speeches, paintings, photographs, theatre, films, montage, and music (both scores and performances) as well as all written text (literary and extra-literary, printed and, by extension, digital) under the same models of textual production, or meaning-making. On this same basis, Kristeva has asserted that all marginal discourses (with regard to science, religion, philosophy of the polis) are linked to “a *jouissance* which breaks the symbolic chain, the taboo, the mastery [of the social code]” (Kristeva, 1974/2002h, p. 154). The marginal subject is “a child, a witch, a woman, a foreigner”, whose discourse underlies the temporal order (*ibid.*).

From a philosophical and political point of view, Barthes and Kristeva aim to proliferate a lucid view of the process of culture on-going; an antithesis of the western doxa through structural analysis of the narrative components, i.e. the makeup of cultural signs. Their projects are counter-acts to the illusionism of naturalised ideology at work in (and for) reality. Every representative of an Other is, on an ontological and abstracted level (on the level of their production and productiveness; within the dynamics of *semiosis*), the same. They speak of a situation where Art seems compromised socially and historically, and an effort of destruction on the part of the artist (Barthes, 1975, p. 54): A time when the writer can shift to another signifier (like from writer to storyteller-sorcerer?), dismiss writing (becoming a scientist, a scholar, an intellectual theorist), or change trade (stop writing) (*ibid.*). Again, an antidote in the 3rd is proposed, beyond the docile “versus” myth (dichotomy; life/death) through paradoxical formulae, where opposition isn’t countered with its opposite but ultimately through laughter (see p. 55): Lies do not take the place of truth, their contratide only brings forth the presence of something in-between, a shared non-site, an affectivity, a tension between terms (where here-or-there becomes here-and-here).

In *The Pleasure of the Text* (“Le Plaisir du texte”, 1973), Barthes sets out on his fragmented journey through the pleasures and blisses of textual fabric-weaving, giving the reader a lantern to help illumine the way, as he begins by evocating Bacon’s simulation:

THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT: like Bacon’s simulator, it can say: never apologize, never explain. It never denies anything: “I shall look away, that will henceforth be my sole negation.” (Barthes, 1975, p. 3.)

Thereby, he attempts to imagine a *someone*

“who abolishes **within himself** all barriers, all classes, all exclusions, not by syncretism but by simple discard of that old specter: logical contradiction; who mixes every lan-guage, even those said to be incompatible; who **silently accepts every charge of illogicality**, on incongruity; who remains passive in the face of **Socratic irony** (leading the interlocutor to the supreme disgrace: self-contradiction) and legal terrorism (how much penal evidence is based on a psychology of consistency!). Such a man would be **the mockery of our society**: court,

school, asylum, polite conversation **would cast him out:** who endures contradiction without shame?" (my emphasis, Barthes, 1975, p. 3.)

Pleasure and bliss are not the same for Barthes, but they may cohabitate (*jouissance*). Bliss emerges from the cohabitation of languages working side by side, whereas pleasure is "a sanctioned Babel" (*ibid.*, p. 4). Pleasure is univocal (and asocial), a single sonorous organ, an all-traversing choir singing the same tune. The pleasure of the text is when "my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do" (Barthes, 1975, p. 17). But the body might hold on to alien structures – like Carlos says that he doesn't hold on to structures but they hold on to him (*TPS*, p. 227). Bliss, then, cannot be expressed in words; it is unspeakable and inter-dicted (Barthes, 1975, p. 21); it is a polyphony, an unravelling, a Sonoran desert (so to speak) plane where bushels rustle, and the void echoes the song, distorting it, intermingling with the singing voice, grains of sand interfering with a wind from all directions at once, fuzzy, non-sensical; contradictory, alive.

For Barthes, this "someone" is the post-death-of-the-author reader; the anachronic reader. In analogy, this "someone" is also the reader Castaneda wishes to both represent "himself" (as Carlos), and evoke as his desired audience. The reader, by way of "killing the author", is granted creative freedom to work towards significance from his own frames of reference; his own cultural codex. By removing the (c) "*signifiante*" becomes the avenue of unobstructed meaning, not mediated by the concatenated sign, excluded from a "lawful" (singular, 1 and only) signified.

The reader of *bliss* (and still, simultaneously of pleasure); the writerly(readerly) reader and text, admits no hierarchy of terms, and discards the spectre of logical contradiction. He applies his own, unique logical framework in deciphering the meaning of any given text. Since a readerly logic is based on authority of the author, presupposed, keyed from the beginning (of his discourse), the logic which opposes it spurs from contradiction – a personal *poiesis*.

"One might call "poetic" (without value or judgement) any discourse in which the word leads the idea: if you like words to the point of succumbing to them, you exclude yourself from the law of the signified" (Barthes, in Bensmaïa, p. 43.)

Likewise, for Kristeva, "poetic" is language which has been "screened out" by ordinary language (i.e. social constraint), and so is a practice for which any particular language is the margin (Kristeva, 1980, p. 25). The researcher's bliss and pleasure with dealing with the Castanedian corpus their material, is that it seems that every researcher finds an image, a reflection of their own field within – something completely Other, and something distinctly familiar. Don Juan, in his peculiar monomythical way, manages to critique to ideologeme of an entire academic system at once. This is because, following the clues and the logic of the narrative sequences, the *Teachings* actually represent an inner principle of narrativity itself – that self-concealing mechanism of ideology post-structuralist semiotics set

out to map and critique. It found a way to speak around a large subject, one which is impossible to properly utter but which governs an everyday logic: **the abstract** is the blueprint for the way we tend to conceptualise the world.

In the sorcerer's world, one must adopt a new way of relating to oneself and everything else (TPS, p. 227). It is precisely the law of the signified which is recast in anachronic positioning: a new logic of signifying is sought after. A new level of meaning – a synthesising dimension. For Barthes, this level is the 3rd. He discovers it by studying still-images cut from Eisenstein's movie (*Ivan the Terrible*) – a significance emerging from hazard, then. A symbolic constellation removed from the whole sequence; removed from temporality, completely, and going against the flow of continuity, particular to the moving picture. Like the tableau in *Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein* (Barthes, 1977b), this isn't a given constellation of meaning-making – it is a particular hiatus, an observed constellation within the framework of the whole, and transgressive of it.

There is a movement from passive observation to active creation observable in several fields of postmodern thought and science.. The sign is subjected to the signifier's sole truth; Barthes's texts present an evolution from regarding language as "a system of meaning veiling reality" to conceptualising of it as an active act (White, 2012, p. 2); the New Age movement evolved from passive pre-millennial expectation of an imminent golden age into the millennial, active attitude of creating the New Age (Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 27; Melton, 2007, p. 95–6); and our contemporary understanding of consciousness is an active creative act within a *controlled hallucination* (see Luuhrmann, Seth & Sheldrake, 2023). And form (conventional) is secondary to content (creative) at every turn. Or, as don Juan says: "A warrior needs focus. Who gives a damn about wings on a luminous cocoon?" (TPS, p. 72.) (Indeed, the old piece of advice to look at the moon and not the finger pointing to it, might be a fruitful piece of advice, although in reading, it might be necessary to run through the invisible course between the pointing finger and the moon.)

2.1.1 THE THIRD MEANING

visual poems, scraps of men, and veiled puppeteers

The 3rd meaning spurs from attention given to detail – like my thesis work through attention given to clues embedded in the narrative – and the pattern, unobserved from surface level, but moving along through cumulative allusion (now that I stop here, they seem to belong to the same constellation – after all, they are all observed in the production, and in the telescoping⁹ of view-points – although I have stopped, I also intuit that once released, they keep flowing).

⁹ "It is the structural framework of cardinal functions which accomplishes this 'telescoping' of logic and tempor-ality" (Barthes, 1977c, p. 94).

I am not the first to make the conception of the 3rd meaning “travel” from image to text. Reda Bensmaïa (1987), delineating the “Barthes effect” on the genre of the essay, works through this translation between photographic interpretation and its textual counterpart through the Japanese *haiku*, a decidedly fitting middle-point between imagery and *poiesis* of the word, pointing out the visual within the textual, though the emanation of this level happens in “reverse order”: The poetic word (which leads the idea) lends itself to an allomorphic signifier-signified, which at once is neither “par la lettre” (the sign). In the original still-image, it is the detail itself (the figurative sign, removed; “scrapped” from the whole, non-totalisable) which plays the part of the word-sign (the leader of the idea).

Through this gestural removal of the part from the whole, a multitude of possible meanings emanates from the visual cut-out, mediating observation into utterance through an obvious signifier (iconic image), immediately linking it with the interpretative, symbolic logos. This detail, a choice and a position, is “an accent” (a fixed point, typographical presence/the characteristic mode of pronunciation of the speaking subject), further illustrated as “a pensive sonority”, or “music of thought-words”, or the very form of an emergence, of a fold (a crease, even), marking the heavy layer of informations [signs, figures, gestures] and signification [obstructed signifiante]” (see Bensmaïa, 1987, p. 43).

Bensmaïa (1987, pp. 41-6) operates her translation through analogy with the *haiku* tradition, where a “movement of objects into discourse” is perceived as the line of written words suddenly opens, and “there is the drawing of a mountain, of a sardine which delicately appears in place of the abandoned word”, hinting at the synesthetic quality of poetic expression; the emergence of the visual is a “symptom”, not only an effect of photons travelling into the visual cortex through the eyes, but an effect intertwining hearing (the “most suitable metaphor for reading” for Barthes) and seeing. Not only that, but of the whole conceived of through its parts – a word is abandoned (a blank expression, a silence takes itself), but the symbolising mind gathers the clues preceding the /blank/, and the /blank/ acts as a springboard from the written *parole* to the visual. Within the text, these commodities may further vary, as *metaphor* (condensation) may provide what at first glance seems a visual description (“luminous egg”, “edifice of intent”), which then acts as the springboard for the interpretation of the abandoned signified (“bioenergetic perceptual apparatus”; “an abstracted framework of knowledge”).

I would further complement Bensmaïa’s theory-translation with the addition of observing the “scrap of man” (Barthes, 1977g, p. 172) – the part which conceives of a whole, evoked from the Japanese tradition of *bunraku*, from whence Barthes searched for “A Lesson in Writing” (Barthes, 1977g, p. 170-178). Let me also take this opportunity to strengthen the notion that for Barthes, these conceptions are already,

from the start, intertwined: there is no conceivable separation between seeing-hearing-reading; his conviction is that the interpretative devices remain the same in all signifying systems, once the “veil of language” is seen through.

Bunraku is a genre of theatre, precisely a form of puppeteering, and a more concrete, embodied act than the still-image or the poetico-verbal expression, where the cut-out explicitly stands for the *personae* behind it (yet none in the audience would deem the puppet the *same* as the puppeteer – the puppet is an intermediary of signifying). The doll, while anthropomorphic, is an “image”, artificial and man-made; already always a scrap (even as a whole); an extension of man (the puppeteer), and within the art, its subtlest manipulations are rich, signifying acts. “[I]t is not the simulation of the body that it is after, but, as it were, its concrete abstraction” (Barthes, 1977g, p. 172).

The “abstract” behind the performance is clear: The puppeteer (Castaneda) stands behind the “narrator” (Carlos, puppet), veiled but known to be there; the threads are in plain sight, though easily overlooked for the benefit of the experience. In fact, the puppet is of course the “narratee”, but takes the place of the concealed narrator. The puppet is an object transmuted into subject, this subjectivity arriving from a veiled source; the audience has entered a social contract of pretending there is no source during the act, offering the puppet a space of no “a priori logos”, though the source is always implied and presumed. (see Barthes, 1977g, pp. 170–178.)

Barthes himself writes that *Bunraku* practices three separate writings which are given for reading simultaneously in three areas of the spectacle: the marionette, the manipulator, the vociferator; the effected gesture (hoax/Carlos’s trials), the effective gesture (the *Teachings*/Castaneda’s writing), the vocal gesture (the story(teller)/don Juan’s curative voice). He comments on Western modern society saying that this society believes itself to be ushering in a civilisation of the image, but what it actually establishes overall, and particularly in its leisure activities, is a civilisation of speech. (Barthes, 1977g, p. 175.) For Barthes (*ibid.*, p. 172), *Bunraku* represents a writing which abolishes the opposition between inner/outer.

The image is far more deceptive than the lexeme, “at least in literature, where the freedom of notation (in consequence of the abstract nature of articulated language) leads to a much greater responsibility than in the ‘analogical’ arts such as cinema” (Barthes, 1977c, p. 90). But, in light of the contemporary virtual reality and deep-fake technologies, which partake in this ‘analogy’ of the Real-Image, the visual cut-out has become, even beyond literature, dubious and doubtful, as it now has the potential to parade as the True-Real (Kristeva, 1969), leaving human perception little room for verification. In a culture with the current tendency to retreat to the visual (and a world of carefully curated social avatars standing in for people), and ignore “the abstract”, this becomes an ontological threat. If the dyad image-real is

concatenated into an authorised sign, without giving attention to the context and the possibility of a “sleight of hand”, reality breaks down. Image-Real isn’t our most trustworthy avenue of information – it is hallucinatory as well as empiric, witnessed both in dreaming and awake, like consciousness itself – it demands knowledge of what is beyond the image to be interpreted, just like language needs to “remember” that it is separate from knowledge, though it carries it, as don Juan repeats many times over (e.g. *TPS*, p. 37, 39).

The visual commands attention (as words on a page command interpretation), and attention translates into language what is perceived. Then, in turn, the utterance commands the interpretation of the visual content. The visual plays the role of Real-Nature very convincingly, whereas the /word/’s phantasmatic status is obvious in itself; it is only within language (the only *corpus* of which, outside the subject, is the generalised social text) where the obvious constitutes of an understanding that the Real is a communicative act, rendering Nature-Real in to a (e)utopic expression, or representation.

Like the chanting shaman who controls the visual fabric of a tribe in a psychedelic ritual, the word guides (this is the “author’s” sole *intent*, relinquishing the sanctioned Babel), interweaves the emergent pattern into coherence. The chant provides the knowledge of the abstract. Doesn’t don Juan Carlos the sham-man illustrate this very fact? Certainly his philosophy doesn’t amount to an assertion of the dream-images which it plays out in as the New Real in themselves – this would nullify the very foundation of the *Teachings*:

- 1) that the world as we know it is merely a description,
- 2) that everything can be rendered back into what it is, **the abstract**, and its “edifices of intent”.

There *is* a pattern intended by the “author” (like in the readerly text of pleasure; like each effected gesture of the puppet originates in the effective manipulations of the veiled puppeteer), but seeking it out happens on the authority of the reader. Like in Platonic-Socratic dialogue, yes, he is egging the reader on towards a conclusion he wishes them to arrive to. But, this conclusion is, at the same time, no-conclusion at all. A shared bliss, which involves “the destruction of the person” inscribed in Socratic dialogue (Kristeva, 2002b, p. 51).

Castaneda the sham-manic author “died three times” (in a jump into the abyss (4th book), and its transcendence (8th book), and finally in real life) for the benefit of his reader, without sublimation, so that his work would not be read either as a simple hoax nor a writerly work, but as an active creative act, taking his reader along to a return journey to the *jouissance* of an inconceivable thought of freedom. Whence ambiguity arises, one can deduct the Sorcerer is meeting their apprentices and tyrants on a common field, in order to abolish the dichotomies of inner and

outer creation. Like in *Bunraku*, the function of the *Teachings* is *not* essentially to reveal what is **reputed to be secret** (the author's personal history, the original sources and devices used to produce the work, the hoax; "feelings", "situations", "conflicts") while concealing **the very artifice of the process of revelation** (the inconceivable abstract; "machinery, painting, make-up, sources of light"). When the actors (or, actants) are revealed to be made of "wood and cloth" (or, dreams), they are "pulled free from the sticky organicism in which they are held". (see Barthes, 1977g, p. 173-5.) Observing the sham-man's performance dissolves the personal, corporal illusion; it is so obviously an un-truth, that its own truth, once allowed its "feet of clay", surfaces once the reader releases their wish to find the dead author from the story. (The Author is dead (irredeemably), but don Juan lives.)

Castaneda uses the traditions of Western "theatrics", and plays with its mimetic illusionism, all the while exposing the make-belief in the "natural". Because Carlos is not Castaneda; personal history is revealed only in fiction, and doesn't adhere to the lived reality of the author. The Author is dead (several times over), yet don Juan lives. The Act is separated from the Gesture, and in their counterbalance, or countermarch, while the Gesture is exhibited, the Act is allowed to be seen (see *ibid.*, p. 176). "A total spectacle, but divided, *Bunraku* evidently excludes improvisation, doubtless aware that the return to spontaneity is the return to all those stereotypes which go to make up our 'inner depths'" (*ibid.*, p. 177).

There is no improvisation in Castaneda's hoax - it is an intellectual, premeditated composition. Once the reader is ready to forsake the illusionism of mimetic art, they may join the spectacle's "shared secret", which is in the relationship between the "natural" and the "Real". The narrative can be abstracted in three levels: that of functions, actions (of actants), and narration (Barthes, 1977c, p. 88). Functional units of *The Power of Silence* (1987) include numeric indices, and the underlining transmutative, monomythical narrative. Actants (dream-characters) function on two "separate" levels; as intrapsychic principles, and as vessels of foreign discourse, mediated by a familiar conscious mind.

2.2 Oneiric Labour and Dreamed Works

A logic of Allegory

"I dream my books", Castaneda told Gwyneth Cravens. "In the afternoon I go through the notebooks with all my field notes in them and translate them into English. Then I sleep in the early evening and dream what I want to write. Everything has arranged itself smoothly in my head, and I don't need to rewrite. My regular writing is actually very dry and labored." (de Mille, 1978, p. 102)

Not only did Castaneda “dream his books”, the *Teachings* involve a great deal of dream-work, and the last sequence of books also offers a psycho-poetic manual for achieving states of a kind of lucid dreaming (*The Art of Dreaming*, 1993). Everything in *The Power of Silence* can be read as a dreaming experience. *Dreamers* (able to project a dreaming body, or the Other) are also one category of sorcerers, together with *stalkers* (manipulators of perception and energy), *warriors* (protectors in the physical and spiritual realms), *seers* (explorers of hidden truths and the fabric of the universe) and *naguals* (guides and mentors). Don Juan’s nagual Elías was one of the *dreamers*, and had the ability to copy objects from his dream and cast them into wood and iron, into artifices of haunting, exquisite beauty (*TPS*, p. 33).

Anaïs Nin, another “specialist of the dream world” whom Castaneda is known to have visited a few times (de Mille, 1978, p. 102) delineates dreamwriting “the real dream” apart from intellectually composed or fabricated dreams: there is no dialogue in the dream; there are very few words, and the words are condensed like the phrases of poems; the language is forcibly a kind of non-language, for the dream happens beyond language. As de Mille (1978) points out, Nin’s dream-writing and Castaneda’s are obviously not the same. The *Teachings* are modelled as a continuous dialogue, and are just as obviously an intellectual composition. What this means for the interpretative work concerning the *Teachings*, is that their textual analysis necessarily takes dream-interpretation into account.

Jung’s *Red Book*¹⁰ (Jung & Shamsadani, 2009) is another dialogic opus which I take as a philosophical antecedent of the *Teachings*, as they seem to also share the same “method of inquiry”, *active imagination* and *dream-dialogue*. Castaneda would have made part of the potential, early 1960's audience of the *Red Book*, and it is a far more accurate “precise counterpart to don Juan's ideas about learning to control one's dreams” than the connection to Anaïs Nin's dreamwriting, proposed by Ronald Sukenick, and questioned as quite “imprecise” already by de Mille (1976, p. 102). As de Mille notes, Nin and Castaneda and talking about radically different uses of dreams, although Nin's idea of the non-language of dreams which happen without and beyond language share similar ethos.

Jung became convinced of the profound, objective reality of the psyche through his “inner dialogues with Philemon”, a sequence of dream-dialogue, in which the voice of the dream character told Jung things he had never thought

¹⁰ There are some interesting chronological syncretisms between the *Red Book* and *the Teachings*. According to Castaneda's account, the apprenticeship began in 1961, and as deMille writes, during the narrative first years 1961–62, “the total mood of don Juan's teaching changed from day to day” (see deMille, 1976, p. xii), and the first time don Juan and Carlos are written to have discussed *seeing* is dated Jan. 29, 1962. This coincides with the time period when the *Red Book* supposedly became “widely known” to an academic, and especially esoterically oriented audience (Jung & Shamsadani, 2009). It also coincides with the death of Carl Gustav Jung (d. 1961), suggesting a compelling original source or sibling text to *the Teachings*.

consciously, and berated him for treating thoughts as if he created them himself, when they “were like animals in the forest, or people in a room, or birds in the air” (see Williams, 1981, p. 52, 59). For Carlos speaking¹¹ detracts him from the immediacy of experience and is a conscious tool he uses throughout the apprenticeship to avoid the unconscious (ibid.). Don Juan warns him not to succumb to words, and this is told in a recollection of thoughts Carlos had never thought himself, before. This goes to show how Jung’s and Castaneda’s dreamed works can be read through each other, and their uses of *dreams*, *active imagination*, and *dream-dialogue* coincide.

Kristeva (in dialogue with Freud) sees “dream-work” as a theoretical concept which touches upon pre-presentative production, and the development of thinking before thought. “In this new inquiry, a radical break separates the dream-work from the work of conscious thought and is ‘for that reason not immediately comparable with it’.” (Kristeva, 1969/2002d, p. 84.) The dream-work “does not think, calculate or judge in any way at all; it restricts itself to giving things a new form” (ibid.). This ethos joins Castaneda’s intellectually composed dreams with “writing the real dream”, and this dream-writing is also practised and produced in the “dramatic economy” of the literary text, whose geometric place cannot be represented, but “is in play” (see Kristeva, 1969/2002d, p. 86): Castaneda notes in a 1969 interview that the dramatic sequence in the book is not true in real life, and he simply took away the “gaps” of ordinary events to create “a continuous crescendo, leading to a solution” (my transcript, Castaneda & Rorszsak, 1969).

“Dream-works” serve to create an opening for the semiotician to tackle the “other scene” of production; of meaning making (the internal and inevitable problematics of all social communication; the inner dichotomies of the Real) (Kristeva, 2002d). There is no internal logic to dreams, but imaginary discourse itself presents a shift from a loss of meaning to a possible meaning (verbal desire). All sorcery stories begin with a “dark night of the soul”, which spurs an oneiric journey of return (sorcery stories). As imaginary discourse, they are never objective descriptions “be it scientific or theological”; they reach for “the symbolic uniqueness of the beyond”, and portray both “the signified sadness” of the imaginary world (TPS: loneliness, death → abjection), but culminate in a “nostalgic signifying jubilation over a fundamental, nutritive non-meaning”; “the very universe of the possible” (TPS: the source of everything → abreaction/catharsis) (citations Kristeva, 1989, p. 101). Since there is no internal logic of dreams, in order to recount them in a “dramatic sequence”, one must inject them with an intermediary logic, which would

¹¹ Barthes, referring to Lacan, says that one must bear in mind that *bliss* is denied by whoever speaks, by speaking, and whoever experiences bliss causes all possible speech to collapse in its celebratory annihilation (see Barthes, 1975, p. 21).

represent the “co-present centers in the space of heterogeneous subjectivity [mind], opacity [body] and ideal [spirit]” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 102).

Allegory, then is “a fixation of the dynamics of imagination, a temporary fetish, inscribed in the logic of imagination” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 102). Allegory is a re-ordered cut-out of the infinite image-reservoir of dreams, a detailed path into a likeness of: The imaginary experienced as “flaring up of a dead meaning with a surplus of meaning” by way of which “the speaking subject discovers the shelter of an ideal but above all the opportunity to play it again in illusions and disillusion” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 102). A “drifting reading” (Barthes, 1975) falls short of the potentials of the imaginary; a drifter runs the text from start to finish without respecting the whole (without returning, without interrupting its monologue, only letting it pass side-by-side with his own monologue, forcing them into a pre-modeled dialogue, leisurely noting contradiction as deviation, as accident, as failure).

2.2.1 Old Myths, New Mythising

Inverting the Mythical Doxa

"The Years, of which I have spoken to you, when I pursued the inner images, were the most important time of my life. Everything else is to be derived from this. It began at that time, and the later details hardly matter anymore. My entire life consisted in elaborating what had burst forth from the unconscious and flooded me like an enigmatic stream and threatened to break me. That was the stuff and material for more than only one life. Everything later was merely the outer classification, the scientific elaboration, and the integration into life. But the numinous beginning, which contained everything, was then." (Jung, 1957 in Jung & Shamsadani, 2009, p. vii)

Barthes came to note some 15 years after the publication of his *Mythologies* (1957/1972) that while there indeed exists a demythising principle in modern discourse, this has in itself managed to create a “mythical doxa”, where “denunciation, demystification (or demythification), has itself become discourse, stock of phrases, catechistic declaration” (Barthes, 1977f, p. 165), reminiscent of Kristeva’s (1979/2002g, p. 216; 222) conception of the true-real (as the truth they seek to say) as the great disruptive force in present day speech, resting upon a dualist distinction between material (perception) and historical (memory) truth.

Don Juan has often been named a “modern myth” (e.g. de Mille, 1978), and abstracting the mythical structure from the narrative of *TPS* helps conceptualise of its injected logic, which can be referenced back to Platonic thought (a reflection of our ontological premises), Jungian archetypes and the monomythical journey of

transmutation, common to New Age narratives¹². This structure is further upheld by a web of numeric indices, reliant on the same iterative bundles of 2, 3, 4, and 7 (mythic indices themselves). As carriers of the social code, myths are distributive, generic, individual, contextual and confluent with symbols (Kubiak, 2007, p. 259); an inescapable part of our linguistic practice. We can observe how psychoanalysis and semiotics constantly searches for a point of reference within our mythical histories¹³, attempting to “return” to the origins of the Real.

In the story at hand, Carlos’s somersault into the 3rd point is the result of a flight from a hungry Jaguar (which do not inhabit Northern Mexico), a mythical representation and a mnemonic symbol, which can read any thoughts “that had a history of use for us” (TPS, p. 209), and only choices out of the ordinary could confuse it. The Hero of a monomyth “is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms” (Campbell 1949/1972, pp. 19-20, in Leeming, 2014, pp. 1124), doesn’t stand for the status quo and breaks new ground. The structure of the monomyth plays out in each *sorcery story*, which explicitly share the same structure, only played out by different characters:

Don Juan says: “[S]orcery is a journey of return. We return victorious to the spirit, having descended into hell. And from hell we bring trophies. Understanding is one of our trophies.” (TPS, pp. 159-60.) The Hero With a Thousand Faces (Campbell, 1949) is a compilation of hero figures from all over the world on a quest for a wholeness of the Self. Castaneda’s eclectic cast of Sorcerer’s who shape shift and very often “seem Mexican-American”, follow the steps of the individual’s potential psychic journey, and through the four abstract cores experience “miraculous conception”, set out on “a search for something”, and all “descend into the underworld”, and the “return with some new understanding”. (see Leeming, 2014, pp. 1123-24.) But, this Hero is also their own antithesis – the archetype of the Trickster-Teacher (see de Mille, 1978, pp. 105-115). While some social myths create unfruitful “edifices of intent”, the Trickster-myth aims to dissipate them through his own edifice.

In this sort of mythical inversion, the myth itself doesn’t grant satisfaction to

¹² “Old Myths, New Mythicising” is borrowed from the title of A. E. Kubiak’s (2007) article, where she studies the New Age as a complementary culture, always creating hybrids, an identity not as a “boundary to be maintained” but a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject, and a discontinuity between mythicising and the way we consume myths.

¹³ The oneiric code, for example, refers back to the mythical Oneiroi, the dark-winged *daimones* of dreams, the sons of Nyx (the Night) and of Hypnos (Sleep), who in Homeric tradition dwell of the dark shores of the western Oceanus. In Pseudo-Hyginus’ tradition, their siblings include Fatum (Destiny), Senectus (Old Age), Mors (Death) and Letum (Dissolution). (Astma, 2017.) Coincidentally the four enemies the Sorcerer meets on the Path of Knowledge are Fear (detracts from destiny), Clarity (may lead to dissolution), Power (can kill you) and Old Age.

the reader – their interpretative process is disturbed by the scandal behind the metaphor; the evident lies-for-truth discourse. The myth isn't perfected, it negates itself by breaking against its own whole, which at once perfects its didactic goal. The framework is reminiscent also of Lévi-Strauss's story of Quesalid, "an unbeliever in shamanistic powers" who "undertook training as a shaman in order to refute their claims", like Carlos who "is just an anthropology student trying to figure out what sorcerers do" (a statement "not completely true, but not an outright lie") (*TPS*, p. 162). To the shared amazement of these two tricked-by-fate apprentices, their use of "bizarre procedures" actually produce an effect, and they end up becoming "the most powerful shamans of all" (see Neu, 1975, p. 285).

The mythical narrative suggests an experiential history beyond the saga, and the saga is that process of revelation reflected in Jung's "everything later": outer classification (the hoax, books 1–4), scientific elaboration (the abstracted level, books 5–8), and integration into life ("manuals", books 9–12). There is also an element of *recasting history*, a genre-marker of magical realism (see Reeds, 2012), where the history being recast is again both the recasting of the veiled Author's personal history, as well as a recasting of cultural history, exemplified in *The Power of Silence* (1991, pp. 115–116) by the story of Calixto Muni, a cultural hero who was drawn and quartered by Spanish executioner's, but whose story's end is changed in the oral tradition (memorable dates) of the Sorcerer's, who recount the story so that he is the victorious rebel who succeeded in liberating his people. One can observe from these mythical dimensions how the layers of Authorship, personal experience, cultural history bundle and entangle, and how a multitude of stories make up the narrative network of every single volume of the *Teachings*.

2.2.2 Metaphors and The Modality of the Time

"What do you mean by the modality of the time?"

"The modality of the time is the precise bundle of energy fields being perceived [--.] I believe that man's perception has changed through the ages. The actual time decides the mode; the time decided which precise bundle of energy fields, out of an incalculable number, are to be used. And handling the modality of the time – those few, selected energy fields – takes all our available energy, leaving us nothing that would help us use any of the other energy fields." (*TPS*, p. x)

Lévi-Strauss explains that the possibility of "mutual transformation" between symbolic structures is permitted by the existence of a "more profound symbolic ability of the human mind", which organises the whole of our experience according to the same modalities (in Eco, 1984, p. 134). The Sorcerer says that what distinguishes normal people is that we share "a metaphorical dagger"; the concerns

of our self-reflection, and though it chains us, it gives us the impression of bleeding together, sharing “something wonderful: our humanity” (TPS, p. 90). Don Juan’s “modality of the time” further entangles with the Jungian conception of the “spirit of the time”, which Jung battles with in the *Liber Primus* of his *Red Book* (Jung & Shamsadani, 2009). To Jung, the spirit of time is something that labels the world (what is good, what is evil), and his wish was to see beyond the veil of this spirit.

To relate Jung’s thought to Kristevan psychoanalysis, the spirit of time holds the power of the *deject* (metaphorical dagger-wielder): the one who *abjects* (see Kristeva, 1982) by positing the borders of reality (or, the thetic boundary) – signifying borders linked with biological life, the unity and disintegration of the body, with cleanliness and filth. When these borders are violated, one experiences abjection – repulsion and horror, the need to ab-ject; cast away in a pulsation of a guttural instinct, an emetic, falling, reeling affect: the bodily manifestation of dejecting the un-wanted, which is usually the un-known, un-conscious, un-constituted; the Other (Kristeva, 1982).

This discrepancy is further reflective of “a very profound structural mechanism concerning the casting of [--] difference and even discourse in the West” (Kristeva 2002h, p. 155). To her, the Other (like a woman) has “been able to serve or overthrow the socio-historic order by playing at being supermen” (ibid.). Jung only shared the inner experiences documented in his hand-written script of the *Red Book* with his wife and a select few associates – the reason for this travels into the narrative of his *Liber Novus*, where he, as the spiritual apprentice of the Un-known, fears that he will be seen as a liar, or worse, a madman. And, readings of Jung have professed that read out of context, the last chapters would have the reader thinking that the author was “[b]rilliant and erudite, but crazy” (see Moss, 2012/2022).

A way of understanding Castaneda is dependent on this same clause of erudite/mad-man. Castaneda decided it was time to let the spirit talk, be it with the voice of a liar and a sham-man. “The language of madness is not available to a man listening to fear rising within himself” (Barthes, 1975, p. 48), and accordingly, the first enemy one faces on the path of knowledge, is fear, and fear prevents Carlos from realising he is fleeing from an impossible beast (Jaguar). As Carlos’s second teacher, don Genaro put it in a dodgerel, “Carlitos is really cool. He’s got a bit of a poet, a nut, and a fool” (in de Mille, 1978, p. 138). For Barthes (1982, p. 109–110), the Spirit of a phenomenon is simply its right to start signifying. Sorcerer’s believe that until the very moment of the spirit’s descent, any of us could walk away from it, but not afterwards (TPS, p. 88). (Not all questions are open to be posed in the same instant in history, once they are posed, they cannot be un-asked.) The “spirit of time” (time being phenomenal) is thus what creates a horizon of all possible, legitimate significations; a modality of communication. For the Sorcerer, the magic of our being

is “the act of awareness”, and sorcery the ability to perceive something ordinary perception cannot (*TPS*, p. xi).

Poems (a continuous poetico-metaphorical, un-bound discourse), for the Sorcerer, catch the mood of sorcery, and are able to explain what can hardly be explained, and poets intuit with great certainty that there is some unnamed factor, awesome yet simple, at play (*TPS*, p. 49). “Logic and ontology have dismissed as madness, mysticism or poetry any attempt to articulate that impossible element which henceforth can only be designated by the Lacanian category of the Real”, writes Kristeva (1979/2002g, p. 216-17), and “poetry” in itself serves only to make the quest for a poetic logic acceptable to various educational and cultural institutions (Kristeva, 1980, p. 25). She also evokes the Great Chain of Being, reminiscent of both Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1888/2011) and Arthur O. Lovejoy (1936), illustrating how the Real has encompassed the flowering of mysticism and the instigation of classical rationality; where it once embraced Folly through Erasmus, it then excluded it by Descartes, where an attempt to enunciate the Real as truth by way of setting limits to Madness is proliferated, only to be opened up again in the modernist search for other forms capable of transforming or rehabilitating the status of truth. In Kristeva’s view, modernist culture is indicative of how “true” has lost its former logical and ontological security, but the social code¹⁴ has it expressed through the true-real, which is “an area of risk and salvation” for the speaking being. The true-real is reliant on semblance; it is a social meaning concealed in its own perverse cunning. (Kristeva, 1979, 2002g, p. 216-217.)

Similarly, in Lacan’s thought, the register of the imaginary, the Real, and the symbolic reflect the same coincidence of semiotic and symbolic activity (Eco, 1984, p. 134). The imaginary is characterised by the relationship of an image (signifier) and a similar object (signified), but together they do not constitute of an iconic sign, but reflect a phenomenon within the perceptual mechanism (*ibid.*): the imaginary reflects the relationship of the Ego and its images. As Kristeva writes, the imaginary constitutes a miracle (an unprecedented vision), but it is at the same time its shattering, “a self-illusion, nothing but dreams and words, words, words... the one that knows enough to speak until death comes” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 103).

This is presented in the language and vast, even confusingly multi-faceted and multi-purposed lexicon of the novels: Words gather several meanings along the narrative, even (or, especially) paradoxical and contradictory ones (and, death

¹⁴ While “codes” were not discussed in the dialogue between Carlos and don Juan, in an interview (transcript of Castaneda & Rorszak, 1969) Castaneda says that if his non-ordinary experiences would be viewed from the point of view “of a non-European man (maybe a shaman, perhaps a Yaqui)”, they are “designed to produce the knowledge that the reality of consensus is only a very small segment of the total range of what we could feel as real... If we could learn to code reality or stimuli the way a shaman does, perhaps we could elongate our sense of what we call Real.”

repeatedly comes, no matter the amount of words). In addition, many of the magical categories used are words that *seem* familiar; they are homonymous with everyday words (doing/not-doing, attention, intention, will...) or bring about associations with terms used in other texts, philosophies, traditions (e.g. tonal → “tonality” → “tonic energy”; reaching the third point → “the third process”). The metaphoric relations of the narrative are irreducible. And, this whole deciphering is met with inscribed resistance, and the Castanedian analyst forcibly stands on one’s head, and is met with the Sorcerer’s laughter, who reminds one that “trying to reason out the sorcerer’s metaphorical descriptions was as useless as trying to reason out silent knowledge” – and because of a problem inherent to words, “any attempt to clarify the sorcerer’s description only made them more confusing” (TPS, p. 220-1).

Metaphors cannot be drifted through, taken at face value. They are linguistic devices that bridge language and myth. Eco (1984) uses the analogy of curved mirrors and plane mirrors – the former reflecting “real images”, the latter “virtual images”, which he uses to allegorise the constitution of the psychic subject’s self-identity as a product or effect of the symbolic, as the real images of curved mirrors appear and disappear according to the position of the looking subject. Allegorisis (the genesis of allegory) is antithetical in its essence, and has potential for ambiguity, and for giving a signified to silence and mute things. Mimesis and poetic language “do more” than engage in an inter-ideological debate:

“they unfold the unicity of the thetic (the precondition for meaning and signification) and prevent its theologization [--.] In other words, poetic language may appear as an argument complicitous with dogma – we are familiar with religion’s use of them – but they may also set in motion what dogma represses.” (Kristeva, 1974/2002e, p. 112.)

In *The Power of Silence* (1987/1991), don Juan repeatedly instructs his apprentice to “break the mirror of self-reflection”; a symbolic gesture of looking beyond the Self (Ego’s usual relationship to the image-reservoir of the imaginary). The apprentice fails several times over, because he looks for the linear relationship between image and thing, and refuses to see the curved paths it is “retrieved” from – the avenue of its production. Again, the trickster-novelist is helpful, this time over he gives explicit clues for interpretation (as, obviously, the “demythising” principle sometimes fails even the contemporary reader): Already in the introduction he explicitly states that the image-reservoir of the Sorcerer’s discourse is metaphorical:

“These energy fields, called the Eagle’s emanations, radiate from a source of inconceivable proportions metaphorically called the Eagle.” (TPS, p. xv)

The base semiotics which govern interpretation are already a reduction, consistent with the cultural encyclopaedia of the subject, i.e. the social code. When something deviates of it, it creates confusion, and is either inventoried within that base semiotics (thetic positioning) as the closest relatable object, or granted a possible new meaning, which in turn has to alter the base semiotics. For the Sorcerers, the

inventory is the mind, and the “average person is willing to incorporate new items into his inventory if they don’t contradict the inventory’s underlying order. But if the items contradict that order, the persons mind collapses.” (TPS, pp. 165–6.)

The Teachings have been parodied under the complementary title, “A Yankee Way of Knowledge” (Barthelme, 1998): When de Mille (1978) points out that the Sorcerer not only speaks like a scholarly academic lecturer, but also resorts to queerly untranslatable contemporary American slang, this is not a mistake but a symbolic choice or “necessity”. How would the dreams of an ancient sorcerer resonate with the signifying system of the American reader of the time? By intermediating those dreams with familiar expressions given as foreign utterances and self-contradicting terms.

In the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud coins “oneiric symbols” as images conveyed by dreams which stand for something else (in Eco, 1984, p. 139). Their signifi(c)ations are not set, but dependent on the whole dream as co-text. Condensation (metaphor) and displacement (metonymy) are modalities of “tropic substitution” (ibid.). Where Freud and Jung parted from each other, was the search for an oneiric code; the search for which touches upon the hypothesis of a collective Unconscious. Freud understood that “in doing so one risks going backwards, to the very sources of human mental activity, where there will no longer be a code” (Eco, 1984, p. 139). But for the Sorcerer, this “going backwards” is that return journey the apprentice takes on – the sources of mental activity, not yet socially coded, is the lost foundation Kristeva sought after. Neither presumes there will be a symbolic code for the deciphering there – it relinquishes codistry. But by way of observing it, it speaks volumes about the coded paths which spur from it. The taxonomic endeavour is hopeless – structure must be relinquished – but from the source, a new model can be set forth. (The set space vanishes at infinity.)

The oneiric code is historical, semiotic, and dependent on the cultural encyclopaedia (base semiotic code) of the dreamer (Eco, 1984, p. 139), so this motivates don Juan’s repeated blurts of American slang and very scarce words of Yaqui language – while the dreamer yearns for his origins, he cannot deny the effect of his westernised surroundings ; he does not speak “Yaqui”, though he dreams of “Yaqui” ; his tonal is a blend of ancient traditions and western thought, and this blend speaks through the oneiric symbol of his consciousness, don Juan, the desired Other. For the *Interpretation of Dreams*, this means that the dream must be interpreted according to a linguistic and cultural competence (external to dreams), and that every oneiric image can be polysemous, and must be referred back to the idiolect of the dreamer as well as to the whole dream as it co-text (Eco, 1984, p. 139).

Lévi-Strauss ponders the final aim of anthropology Lévi-Strauss is quoted saying that

“if the final aim of anthropology is to contribute to a knowledge of objectified thought and its mechanisms, it is in the last resort immaterial whether in this book the thought processes of the South American [natives] take shape through the medium of my thought, or whether mine take place through the medium of theirs” (in Timparano, 1981, p. 603).

This same equation is at the heart of the *Teachings*. Since the *Teachings* are dreamed works of spiritual fiction modeled for the post-psychedelic revolution generation, one can refer many of the images back to the cultural codex of the pop-culture scene of the time. Since the whole saga is an inseparable whole, “the whole dream as co-text” means that one must study the whole in order to understand its inner logic. The logic injected is one of analogy and allegory, but not only verbal – a numeric code is explicitly presented in *The Power of Silence* (1987/1991). (I will say that I do believe there are *numberless* ways of keying open the *Teachings*, and it probably speaks volumes of my chosen reader-position that I ended up with the disentangling and deciphering of this code. Without the task at hand – an academic thesis, meant to fit a certain structure – I might have opted for a different avenue. And by taking the walk the numbers offered (my own oneiric labour) the latent content of the text indeed became manifest.)

2.3 Psychoanalysis, or the Therapist Need Not Believe

Displacement, Condensation, and the Third Process

“A psychologist would have a field day with your story and its present context [--]. In your mind, I must be identified with the young policeman who shattered your notion of invisibility.” (don Juan in *TPS*, p. 206.)

Castaneda’s work can be read as one of the several variations and applications of psychoanalytic therapies of the 20th century. Psychoanalysis aims to interpret the underlying psychological dimensions of language, myths, and metaphors, and creates an intersection with contemporary consciousness studies. In this thesis, Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis intermingle, and are mediated in Kristeva’s psycho-semiotic discourse and the discourse of the sham-manic Sorcerer. Above, a semiotic perspective was taken, one not only socio-cultural, but also biological and psychological. Words, and the expressive non-language of the Unconscious, and their interpretation are the tools the psychoanalyst has to grasp at the inner truths of his analysand. But it is not a passive walk to the final answer. Psychoanalyst André Green (1973, p. 185) writes about meaning:

“Meaning is not discovered, it is created. I prefer to describe it as an absent meaning, a virtual sense which awaits its realisation through the cuttings and shapings offered by analytic space (and time). It is a potential meaning. It would be wrong to think that like sleeping Beauty it merely waits there to be aroused. It is constituted in and by the analytic situation; but if the

analytic situation reveals it, it doesn't create it. ... To actualise it means to call it into existence, not out of nothing. ... but out of the meeting of two discourses..."

To Barthes (1975, p. 58), psychoanalysis is a monument which must be traversed, not bypassed (like a narrative to be run through, not drifted), "like the thoroughfares of a very large city, across which we can play, dream, etc.: a fiction". Likewise, Lévi-Strauss's *Quesalid* reveals that "the therapist [as extension of the Shaman] need not believe in order for the therapy to work" (Neu, 1975, p. 286), only participate.

Philosophically and psychologically speaking, the ontological dilemma we face in post-structural, post-colonial times indeed brings to mind a rift. And this rift cannot be located anywhere but in the domain of consciousness. On the path of the "discovery" of the Unconscious, Josef Breuer (colleague of Freud) was the one to note that memory (historical) and perception (material) function as separate "apparatuses" in the mind: he said that hallucination is a regression from imagery (symbolic) to perception (semiotic) (in Strachey & Strachey, 1981, p. 188-9). Carlos tried to reason his hallucinations into "didactic hallucinatory experiences", when the only thing that changed was a shift in perception (*TPS*, p. 48).

In Freudian theory, there are two fundamental processes of the unconscious (e.g. Strachey & Strachey, 1981): *displacement* and *condensation*, which have their literary counterparts of metonymy and metaphor. These are "primary processes"; transversal to the secondary logico-symbolic processes. In *The System and the Speaking Subject* (1973/2002, p. 29), Kristeva identifies primary processes with a compulsion for repetition, but also operations "capable of establishing functions between the signifying code and the fragmented body of the speaking subject" (and those of his social peers). This thought is further evolved in her dissertation, published a year later in 1974. Kristeva herself adds a third process: *the passage from one sign system to the other*. This process combines *displacement* and *condensation* with an *altering of the thetic position*. This shift of the thetic involves the destruction of the old position (*TPS*: the point of reason) and the formation of a new one (*TPS*: tacit acceptance, silent knowledge, 3rd point); a new articulation of the thetic through a "kind of an anamnesis". (Kristeva 1974/2002, p. 111.)

This third process of passing from one sign system to another is a transposition: it's the abandonment of one sign system for an offered, new (frame of) articulation "via an instinctual intermediary common to the two systems" (Kristeva, 1974, p. 112). If the truth of the signifier (the only truth that can be verified) is in its separation, otherness and death, these same categories may serve as intermediaries: What is a perceived contradiction of truth, may be a counter-action of the un-uttered truth. The interplay of abjection (Kristeva, 1982) and abreaction serve as psychoanalytic intermediaries for a dark night of the soul leading into a spiritual catharsis: I complement abjection with the proto-psychoanalytic concept of abreaction, largely lost to time, but presented in Freud's early theories based on the

thought that language can serve as a substitute for action, and that “by its help, an affect can be “abreacted” almost as effectively” (Freud & Breuer, 1893/1981, p. 37).

It is maintained already in Freud’s writings that the affect cannot be fully deciphered without an understanding of *cathexis*, i.e. the fact that a certain amount of psychical energy is attached to any given idea, body part or object (see Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, pp. 14, 62). This cathectic energy is distributed between different systems in the psychical apparatus (un-, pre- & conscious levels/systems), and the perceptual apparatus (p. 63, 64). The term (*affekt*) was borrowed by psychoanalysis from German psychological vocabulary: In the dictionary, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988), the affect is explicated through its original, Freudian lens: it can be used as a descriptor that designates the emotional repercussions of a, usually powerful, experience (p. 14). It is also understood as an independent dimension of thought-processes and symbol formation; it affects them, but also exists autonomously.

Abreactive techniques are cathartic methods, and easily likened to the Sorcerer’s *recollection* technique, which is not simply remembering, but reliving and rethinking the situation – the process required to experience split perception (perceive two places at once), and reach the 3rd point (of reference). The perfect not-doing in the face of the hungry Jaguar is telling a childhood story. In the initiative process, the theme of overcoming the fear of death repeats from story to story. The moods of horror, dread and fear play a significant role in the Apprenticeship, and are ignited by meetings with non-ordinary reality; impossible feats of body and psyche; spiritual beings and forces; the nearness of death; the previously Unknown. This further motivates the parallels to psychoanalytic theories surrounding affective “maladies of the soul”, hysteria, trauma, and catharsis.

The Sorcerer reaches abreaction from abjection by moving the assemblage point in a somersault into the inconceivable, like the chora that can “breach the thetic boundary”, and cross over the borders of the abject, into that which does not speak, but signifies. To go through the thetic is referring to “a second truth” (Kristeva, 2002e, p. 112) – a reinstitution of the cleared path of the first (a going back). “What a strange feeling: to realize that everything we think, everything we say depends on the position of the assemblage point,” don Juan says (*TPS*, p. 90). For the sorcerer, the focal point of magical perception and silent knowledge is the “2nd attention”. In psychoanalysis, a similar category of the mind is called the “primary processes”; un- and pre-conscious flows of energy, affecting the “secondary processes” of the conscious mind. These concepts, as well as the correlating concepts of unbound (mobile; “nagual”) and bound (tonic; “tonal”) originate from Josef Breuer (Strachey & Strachey, 1981, p. xxiii).

The Jaguar is like the death(defying)drive of the unbending mind. Abreaction

produces a “violent effect” through “reminisces” undergone in the therapeutic setting, and their potency was often frightening to the patient: but these were not signs of hysteria or illness, though it momentarily resembles them (Freud & Breuer, 1893/1981, p. 164.): When Carlos “cuts the chains of his self-reflection” (in a recollection), “strange insights pent up inside of [him] were exploding into laughter” (TPS, p. 90), like abreaction manifests as “emotional discharge whereby the subject liberates himself of the affect attached to [memory], and may produce a cathartic effect (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 1). It’s a release of bound energy, a synchronisation of memory and perception, which ex-communicates the abject as an affect.

This also cements my interpretation of the split perception experienced in *The Power of Silence* as an allegory for the “bridging” (which is, in effect, an opening) of an intrapsychic and cognitive rupture. In it, bliss and fear cohabitate; they split the subject while leaving him intact, both fleeing from the loss of the subject and seeking it (Barthes, 1975, p. 48; 59). “Cutting our chains is marvelous, but also very undesirable, for nobody wants to be free”, don Juan says (TPS, p. 89). The abreacted “object” is the mnemonic symbol; the recollected moment when the rupture was established – a moment of losing omnipotence, of becoming One thing in relation to the Other (or, Other in relation to the One).

Our personal history shapes our experience of the world, and the Ego fends-off material (it perceives as) incompatible with itself, yet the Ego isn’t the centre of personality (Jung & Freud, in Conforti, 2013). This abject, incompatible presence could be brought back to mind in the right conditions, during dream analysis. Dream analysis and interpretation were Freud’s technical tools for approaching the non-language of the primary process. The right conditions, selon Freud, were the particular dissociative state of mind he calls “hypnoid” (Freud & Breuer, 1981), a state also reached in psycholytic therapies. In dreams, all that in the subject which is not strange and foreign, finally speaks (Barthes, 1975, p. 60): it is an uncivil anecdote made up of very civilised sentiments, like the text of bliss may be a very readable anecdote with impossible sentiments (ibid.).

2.3.1 Shamanistic Healing for an Age of Reason?

Crazy Wisdom, Controlled Folly, Split Brain Men

The Teachings are an internal mono(dia)logue. Structurally speaking, they are dialogic novels, through and through: the narrative mainly consists of Sorcerer–Apprentice dialogue (representation of the character’s consciousness or speech) and descriptive passages – two modes of writing which are generally not considered narrative

themselves, like lyric poetry (Fludernik, 1996, p. 24; 29; 32). They are also an invitation, aimed at the reader, to join that dialogue (to complete it – take it beyond the realm of the monologue). The weirdest psychoanalytic session in the format of a book. Initiative, affective, from speaking subject to speaking subject. A level of ambiguity is present in the usage of dialogue, which is par essence a monologue (consciousness speaking to mind within a dream), hence I call it a mono(dia)logue. The perfect apprentice is a “double man” (e.g. *TPS*, p. 20). The apprenticeship-dialogue is an exchange between the mind (Carlos) and its consciousness (don Juan). This dialogic setting is reflective of the duality encompassed in the 3rd point; everything has a double (like poetic language has a double articulation).

“The world of daily life consists of two points of reference [--]. We have for example, here and there, in and out, up and down, good and evil, and so and so forth. So properly speaking, our perception of our lives is two-dimensional.” (*TPS*, p. 221.)

One of the donjuanistic principles states that sorcery, or the alteration of consciousness and perception, demands a *trick* (*TPS*, p. 53) to be fulfilled. Castaneda has often been described as a trickster-novelist, and don Juan, accordingly, likened to the archetype of a trickster-teacher (de Mille, 1978), and the 3rd abstract core is named “*trickery of the spirit*”. For the sorcerer, accepting the spirit without leaving the world completely, demands *controlled folly*, which is “not an outright deception [--] but a sophisticated, artistic way of being separated from everything while remaining an integral part of everything” (*TPS*, p. 245). *Controlled folly* allows sorcerers to deal with the world of daily affairs, everyone in it, and themselves: It is the art of pretending to be thoroughly immersed in the action at hand; pretending so well no one could tell it from the real thing. (*TPS*, p. 245.) (A quasi-mimetic *jouissance*.)

Philosophically, don Juan’s “controlled folly” resembles the buddhist “crazy wisdom”, the state of *yeshé cholwa* (tib. “Chaos of primordial wisdom”), which is described as a mode of thought which makes no compromise with *duality* (Trungpa, 1972/2001): A mode of thought through which the monk reaches the basic sanity of innate wisdom. The teachers of *yeshé cholwa*, the first of whom was the 2nd Buddha Padhasambhava, are known to practice unorthodox methods of teaching. The trickster-teacher is afforded a symbolic role which allows him to break against convention in order to elevate the consciousness of his apprentices, like on a peyote hunt where all is turned upside down (see Williams, 1981). The donjuanistic trickster is no different in this respect.

It is no wonder Castaneda chose the format of a dialogue. Ever since Plato, truth has been discussed dialogically. Latest by the 1980’s, not least due to Bakhtin’s influence, the nature of all language; of all linguistic “truth” was commonly described as “dialogic”. Monologue and dialogue are by virtue of the 3rd voice, interlinked, and it is possible that monologue preceded dialogue (Barthes,

1977c). And, as I see it, this mono(dia)logue has deeper connotations in interpreting Castaneda: In the heart, or the moral, of the story there is a “border-crossing”, a rupture, a bridge to pass over, which can be only achieved by stopping the inner dialogue. This is the final initiation to magic, described in *The Power of Silence* by many names: It is the “Descent of the Spirit”, or “focusing the 2nd attention”; reaching the “3rd point” of reference. It is, in this volume, expressed in terms of “split perception”; the euphoric sensation of “perceiving two places at once” which Carlos experiences during the flight from the Jaguar.

The text is never a (true) dialogue. The mono(dia)logue in the *Teachings* is in itself, a sham, a simulacrum, a dream. The text is not dialogic in its essence; it is not a debate; it invites a plurality of meanings, and, unlike classical dialogue, doesn't attempt to persuade its reader of its authoritative truth, while refusing compromise with the reader's pre-set truth. It is *a dialogue devised to stop the inner dialogue*; not to prove that one does not know, but already knows (like one would not suppose Kristeva to set out in a dialogue with Freud to affirm him but uncover that which is not said).

It invites the reader to join the desire of the writer – a desire for meaning; a desire for creation, a shared inscription. This is the position of the anachronic subject, who is a subject “doubly split over, doubly perverse”: who simultaneously and contradictorily participates in the profound hedonism of all culture and in the destruction of that culture; enjoys the consistency of his (un-authorised) selfhood, pleasure, and seeks its loss, his bliss (Barthes, 1975, p. 14). Likewise, the perfect apprentice is “a dual man”, and the anachronic subject is reminiscent of the new-ager's position, where at once they are inseparable from the cultural situation in which they originate, and to which they participate in bringing “alien” ingredients which oppose its ordinary logicising.

Taking into account the contemporary conception of consciousness as a *controlled hallucination*, we can observe the biological connotations of split perception: During the 1960's, contemporaneously with Castaneda's apprenticeship, the study *Split Brain Men* (Sperry & Gazzaniga, 1967) conducted experiments on patients who, as a result of invasive brain surgery where their *corpus callosum* was cut, suffered from a medical state called “split brain” (un-synchronised hemispheres). These experiments gave way to the realisation that while the “left brain” gains expression through language, the “right brain” remains mute, but has a gestural level of expression, and the hemispheres could also act as rivals (one hand buttons the shirt while the other un-buttons it). (Harris, 2019, 01:08–01:09.)

These studies inspired several more multidisciplinary studies, and e.g. in *The Gateway Project* -study on hemispherical synchronisation (McDonnell, 1983/2003), the worry over upsetting mainstream belief systems and the noted emphasis of

left-brain thinking, suggests that our contemporary culture constitutes a sort of **socio-cultural split brain**. This split was also rendered (without necessitating a strict genealogy, but a form of cross-contamination) into psychoanalysis (split subject), semiotics and narratology (the split in the text), and rendered as part of don Juan's philosophy (split perception). Hence, the "two one way bridges" (*TPS*, pp. 225-241) can also be interpreted as a bridge unifying these two modes of thought and their "separated" realities, as the 3rd point of reference is actually "freedom of perception" (*TPS*, p. 224) – a perception without constraint.

3 THE POWER OF SILENCE AND POETICS IN THE 3RD

3.1 Phenomena that Resist Taxonomy

Narratological perspective

“His way of talking made me believe for many years that his explanations of the abstract cores were like academic dissertations; and all I was able to do, under these circumstances, was to take his explanations as given. They became part of my tacit acceptance of his teachings, but without the thorough assessment on my part that was essential to understanding them.” (TPS, p. xviii.)

When paradigms shift, phenomena resist taxonomy; signs flee from fixed meaning; and plurality becomes irreducible, while the parts it consists of, become sonorous in a way that allows them to “conceive of the inconceivable whole”. The *sign* can create an open system of transformation and generation, as Kristeva (1967/2002c, p. 71) contends, tracing the Peircean symbol¹⁵. The (Barthesian) scrap isn’t the man, but the scrap conceives of the man, unequivocal and inseparable.

Observe how the narrative of the *Teachings* is continually the speech of a 3rd (Teacher-Consciousness), who continually addresses a 2nd, and is mediated by the 1st person (Apprentice-Mind): don Juan speaks, “He says”, and Carlos (“I”) only takes notes, and his notebooks are his only sorcery. There is some autotelic (see Richardson, 2006, pp. 30-1) quality to the 2nd person who is at once Carlos, but is meant to bleed into the reader. The Third person cannot be forgotten of in this story – he is explicit at every turn. The reader desires don Juan to be real, but is constantly disillusioned by the manipulations of the author (or, the reader desires don Juan to be a hoax, but is constantly met with contradictory truths). The author and the reader have a shared desire: for don Juan to be alive, and to see beyond the hoax. Distinctions between I/You dissipates and finds expression within the subject, and the I/You/I calls out a third voice. He/It/She out of the mono(dia)logue of I/You/I, the exo-textual nobody out of the split, speaking subject. In narratology, this is observed by the assertion that “I” (1st person) and “He” (3rd person) together constitute of “I” (the personal account) (e.g. Mieke Bal, 1985). What is still left unintegrated, is the position of “You” (2nd person) – “You” is in the split, or as New

¹⁵ which “operates by virtue of an **institutionalised** and **learnt** contiguity between signifier and signified” (my emphasis, Kristeva, 1967/2002c, p. 71).

Age philosopher Deepak Chopra puts it, “duality is where you¹⁶ are” (Chopra, Ford & Williamson, 2010).

This split stands for the material base of the distinctive logic at play in our “ordinary reality”. To the Sorcerer, the experience of dualism is “a view from another position of your assemblage point”, an experience of “knowledge you cannot yet voice”, while also reminiscent of the “older side of man” (*TPS*, p. 146). And yet, though the violent act of mind-body dualism, this is given the name of quasi-mystical transcendence, this “cruel but enormously effective trap” for the marginal in the symbolic order, and the question arises:

Is it not only *the madman* who discusses himself in the 3rd person? The exo-textuality of the seminal age is representative of further exodist fantasies; the dream of Exodus, of a Saviour from without, a utopian dream of an exo-planetary escape is proliferated¹⁷. The exodist tendency extends to the inner universe: The I/You/I remains muted, useless like Solomon’s halved babe, without hope, without cause, before someone–thing would grant them purpose and solace from the outside. But these fantasies of a foreign source only serve to strengthen the cleft within, brought to surface by the same wishful thinking.

It is easier to suppose a fantasy realm of imaginary 3rds, forever cast out from the realm of the real, than to attempt to posit that phantasm within yourself – within the frame of your living experience. Here, we arrive to the supra-level of signifi(c)ance, the supernatural, which is as much the ordeal of the superstitious as it is of the realist-positivist, just as exo-planetary fantasies the dreams of both ufologists and our leading scientists. Both grant this realm of future possibilities existence *away* – an act of dejection of one or the other, and a dismissal of the living world; of lived experience.

In a seminal age, the de- of construction becomes first *à la mode*, then the radicality of a perceived whole usurps it. Concretisation, in any of its temporal modulations, is soon exhausted, while the wholeness of the **abstract** is inexhaustible. Following Kristeva’s (2002g¹⁸; 2002h, p. 155) logicising, truth has no self, and emerges solely in the /gaps/ of an 0-1 identity; it cannot be represented in itself without immediately passing from “the ‘truth’ of the unconscious” into the symbolic order. The linguistic crimes within these shifts are perpetuated from both sides of the

¹⁶ 2nd person narration is a common feature of New Age literatures and self-help literature at large, reliant on the psychological effectiveness of personal accounts, and like mimesis and poetic language, holds an ambiguous philosophical position with a potential for anti-ideologising as well as self-theologisation.

¹⁷ Also a major theme in “alternative philosophies” of the late 20th century, e.g. McKenna & Mishlove, 1999, “Aliens and Archetypes”.

¹⁸ *The True-Real* (p. 224): “Truth is nothing more than language as a mechanism of displacement, negation and denegation [--] continually put up and knocked down, a process that [--] destroys it as identity [--] and leaves behind only a system of passages, folds, thresholds, catastrophes [--].”

episteme – those at its margins, contradicting it, and those negating the negation of the first, reliant on old schemata. The crimes come from the limits of the I/You/I, from deject to deject, other to other, a fascist tendency, the linguistic/ideological tendency to form a Babel out of babble. Therefore, it is important to note that the contradiction of the Sorcerer, is a contradiction of contradictions: the only contradiction the Sorcerer accepts, is a contradiction between terms – and “terms” has a double entendre; terms as in concepts, and terms as in “terms of usage”.

“A level of practical knowledge [procedures necessary to move the assemblage point] was included as part of teaching the mastery of awareness” (TPS, p. xvi).

3.1.1 PERPETUALLY REACHING THE JAGUAR THAT ISN'T

Castaneda narrates the events that took place in the state of Chihuahua, North Mexico, on a flat, high desert plane. The recollection begins with him reminiscing how, at the time, he was “deeply interested in explaining sorcery among the Natives of the American Southwest”, and shared his theory of pan-American trade routes that created “a sort of pre-Columbian pan-Indianism”. “Don Juan, naturally, laughed uproariously every time [Carlos expounded his] theories.” (TPS, pp. 197–8.) Carlos then *recollects* that they were gathering rare medicine herbs and, during a break, don Juan wanted to talk about the “art of stalking”, for which Castaneda would need to reach “heightened awareness”, i.e. move his “assemblage point”, the general position of which is silent knowledge. But, this position has been moved to that of “reason” – which proves hilariously useless as the jaguar appears while Castaneda “lie face down on top of a round boulder with [--] arms and legs spread like a frog” (p. 199). This is where don Juan first warns him not to look at the Jaguar, and they start their escape, zigzagging at fast pace.

Along their flight, don Juan and Castaneda engage in discussions about what would be the best course of action to take, as well as about the magical past of humans and the jaguar’s ability to read minds. The partake in “the perfect not-doing” for being chased by a jaguar; telling a childhood story; (or, kicking up dirt). The impossible flight continues to grow more hopeless, and finally, *something* happens and Castaneda steps into heightened awareness. For two hours, he runs “in two places at once”, hovering over the bushel.

Above, I provide a summary (my own) of the narrative sequence of the “Flight from the Jaguar” (or, *Reaching the Third Point*). The sequence plays out the cardinal function of *The Power of Silence*, and represents a hinge-point where the reader somersaults to a new level of signifi(c)ation. A “pensive sonority” permeates the hinge-point: there is a considerable muteness to the passage – there are no proper words to describe it, and Carlos’s experiences flow into a “euphoric feeling”. Prattle rules everywhere but in the somersault into the inconceivable, where inner dialogue halts. Split perception becomes the text's *bliss* and *brio* (Barthes, 1975, p. 13); where it attempts to overflow and for which it finds no utterance. Words are relinquished in favour of a suspended vertigo, only lending itself to affective and gestural descriptions, abstractions, and negative metaphors: “not walking / not flying either”; “transported with extreme facility”; “unique state of elation”; “physical

happiness"; "ecstasy"; "vague recognition"; "something known / forgotten"; "total bodily sensation" (*TPS*, p. 212).

Though this sequence constitutes of the cardinal function, its own silence becomes the substitutive absence description, and this silence is preceded by prattling dialogue: there's a comical air in the way don Juan and Carlos discuss childhood memories like in psychotherapy, while a hungry Jaguar chases after them. Carlos remembers a time he failed to escape the police as a child (a rather stereotypical representation of the psychoanalytic theory of omnipotence). Don Juan, like an unconventional therapist, walks him through the memory, while prescribing odd manoeuvres to fool the Jaguar by doing something unexpected. The zig-zagging alludes to not following the common path; of needing to find new avenues, creating a pattern of entanglement around the "red thread" of the escape. The zig-zagging also alludes to the "impossible" mission Carlos has taken on:

For Carlos the Talker, the theories he is busy concocting deviate him from seeing the truth of the situation: by all means, someone who theorises on "pre-Columbian pan-Indianism" should have the common knowledge that there are no Jaguars in Northern Mexico. In the sequence under the title "Reaching the Third Point" (or "Flight from the Jaguar"), don Juan's laughter is aimed at all the conceptualisations the rationalising mind offers, like it is of the utmost importance to delineate "pan-American trade routes" which would finally constitute of "a sort of pre-Columbian pan-Indianism". But before one would be able to say anything about the wisdom of ancient sorcerers, one would have to delineate a genealogy proving that there is verisimilarity in their thought-systems based on a conceivable avenue of thought (the pan-american trade route).

Setting out on such an escapade would have the researcher forever trapped within a labyrinth of words and possibilities, none coming close to what he seeks to say. And for all his rationality, Carlos-Ethnographer could not rationalise his way out of meeting a hungry Jaguar, a Jaguar that isn't there (and could kill him). Don Juan suggests that perhaps that Jaguar followed his trade route: a jab at trying to get to the answer through immense by-ways which will never attain the lived experience of these by-gone peoples, from a point of view which couldn't be further away from their way of conceptualising the world. The Jaguar also denotes Carlos's (the unbending mind's) innate fear of the unknown – when something doesn't fit into his perfectly planned-out route of research, it's an immediate threat.

To Jung, like to the Sorcerer, knowing is arrived at through direct experience, while belief relies on the faith of the mind (Conforti, 2014, p. 1237). To the Sorcerer, "The spirit in many ways was a sort of a wild animal." (*TPS*, p. 37), and to Jung (cited in Austerlitz, 2015) affects are akin to "wild and dangerous beasts", which represent them in dreams, as "striking illustration's of [the affect's] autonomous

nature when split off from consciousness". The affect is the bodily manifestation of a mnemonic symbol, so the Jaguar-metaphor represents a kind of a "traumatic complex" and possesses the psychic autonomy of the affect; that which pounces like "an enemy" and drags the ego after it; "the wildebeest" (see *ibid.*). The Jaguar "was indeed a manifestation of the spirit", and "an expression of magic" (*TPS*, p. 222).

"On the frontier between animality and symbol formation, moods [--] are the ultimate reactions to our traumas, they are our basic homeostatic resources" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 21). When the spirit descends, it involves an onslaught of the unknown, usually dealt-away with by our self-reflective bounds (0-1). Or, on the edge of silence, the word "nothing" emerges, as a result of harmonising lived experience "the best possible way" while triumphing in an inscription that settles "me" in the universe of artifice and symbol (*ibid.*). The inscriptions of affect are primarily energy disruptions in the usual flow of consciousness, leading us to that "threshold of bioenergetic stability" (*ibid.*). The subject needn't identify or disorganize the flow of affects, their generalised transference stamps the entire behaviour and all the sign systems (from motor function to speech production to idealisation) (Kristeva, 1989, p. 22). The most "archaic" energy signals flow according to their phylogenetic inheritance and are immediately assumed by verbal representation and consciousness (*ibid.*). This very immediacy (from which speaking retracts) is what the Sorcerer attempts to inhibit through the techniques of "stopping the inner dialogue" and focusing "a second attention", and finally he arrives to a "threshold that once crossed permits no retreat", and this threshold is the Sorcerer's point of reference, whereas within ordinary reality one does their best to forget it even exists (*TPS*, p. 89).

In literary creation (textualised discourse, "an adventure of the body and signs") produces a testimony of bearing witness to the affect, but in a material that is "totally different from what constitutes a mood", transposing affect into rhythms, signs, and forms (Kristeva, 1989, p. 22). Subjective testimonies of the affects of literature emerge in their readings, and it has been noted that readers are affected differently depending on their prior conceptions of the world (e.g. Lahtinen & Löytty) - a climate denialist will not be affected enough to turn to climate action based on a text, but someone already interested in environmental questions or affected by "climate anxiety" might be positively affected. This seems to point to a difference in "cultural encyclopaedias" (Eco, 1984); a difference in base semiotics. The un-affected reader does not "stop their inner dialogue", but forces the text into a debate modelled to strengthen their previous preconceptions. The affected reader might in turn finds a possibility of expansion. The utopian reader would be able to let go of their own preconceptions altogether, and be affected by a completely foreign idea, "on the spot". The atopian, anachronic reader would take into account

the foreign idea, and accept that these ideas coexist, in a necessary tension of contradiction.

The Jaguar is a representation of the abject-affect, but also a symbol of self-importance. Most sorcery stories involve an encounter with a monster, like don Juan's fish-headed enslaver, which dissipates (is proven to be a trick of the nagual-teacher). Carlos of course meets several monsters along his way, and until the Jaguar, fails at relinquishing his rational negation of their presence. For nagual Julian, self-importance was a monster that had three thousand heads:

"And anyone could face up to it and destroy it in any of three ways. The first was to sever each head one at a time; the second was to reach that mysterious state of being called the place of no pity, which destroyed self-importance by slowly starving it; and the third was to pay for the instantaneous annihilation of the three-thousand-headed monster with one's symbolic death." (TPS, p. 249.)

In don Juan's own sorcery story, he starves his self-importance by trying to act as if he had never witnessed another reality, and be of service to others. Finally, he does reach his symbolic death. With Carlos, the apprenticeship certainly looks like severing the heads one at a time. For the "implied author", Castaneda, it was the path of instantaneous annihilation – once he published his works, he knew he could never go back. He had symbolically died from the common world, the social Real.

Once self-importance is relinquished, the monsters become what they are: a part of the Abstract which retreats from them. Without the Jaguar, without which Carlos would have no elation, no lesson, no realisation (TPS, p. 222). The unknown and the marginal uphold the Real. This doesn't make everything its opposite, it makes the true-real a constant renegotiation of terms, a historical evolution of thought, a forever spurring, self-circling chain of events, happenings. We shouldn't need anyone to convince us of the inconceivable scope of the world, the only reason we need a teacher in the first place, "is to spur us on mercilessly. Otherwise our natural reaction is to stop to congratulate ourselves for having covered so much ground." (TPS, p. 249.)

3.1.2 "A Literary Testament Cum Time Bomb" *An Anamnestic Moral of the Story*

Donald Barthelme has written a book, the title of which explicitly parodies Castaneda's corpus, and the accompanying blurb further hints at an interpretation of the meaning of his work: *The Teachings of Don B.* (1998), described as *A Yankee Way of Knowledge, A Scientific Quest for God*, and "a literary testament cum time bomb, with the power to blast any reader into an altered state of consciousness". These points hit the issue at hand quite poignantly on the head. Except, from a new-agey perspective

this is the quest “for the Self”; a sacralisation of the secular – or, a quest to a conscious awareness of the authentic Self and the irreducible plurality of its expression, represented by the irreducible 0. Although it arrives at the same conclusion as the atheist’s thought process; that it is “all in the mind”, it does not amount to atheism, but a metaphysical marriage of psychology and spiritual traditions: It makes for a “religion” – without true religiosity – as the concept of God is replaced by the concept of a (higher) Self (Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 48). (This is a simple manoeuvre preventing the theologisation of the “spirit” into an Authoritative Law-maker (God as 1 instead of the irreducible element 0).)

Playing with the materialist connotations of semiotic theory, one could offer a virological metaphor for linguistic truth: If semiotics is, indeed, forced to play a game within a code which hardly allows it, the only way forward is by means of mutation; introducing a foreign code, which allows assimilation with the larger code, and then changes it, like a virus re-codes the gene it affects. Of course a virus seems an antagonistic presence, and alludes to illness and death. Yet, within the virus is also the answer to curing it. And viral modification has also useful biological ends, as we can see studying the evolution of life as we know it. A mutation may affect positive change.

The Sorcerer’s journey or return is an *anamnesis* (a recollection). Anamnestic has a double meaning, firstly “of relating to an anamnesis”, and secondly, “of relating to a secondary response to an immunogenic substance after serum antibodies can no longer be detected in the blood” (Merriam-Webster, 2024). Memory is a secondary response-system of the mind. Through recollection, the Sorcerer’s apprentice becomes “immunised” to the human condition, and as a secondary reaction, “abreacts” the constraints of his socialisation (a performative Exodus from Plato’s Cave). Playing along the biological connotations of “anamnesis–anamnestic”, the immunised subject is now capable of producing biosynthetic(/-semiotic) antibodies against injected (thought-)molecules and their codes. “[S]everal factors affect the probability of inducing an immunised animal to produce useful amounts of target specific antibodies. Antigens must be prepared and delivered in a form and manner that maximizes production of a specific immune response by the animal.” (see Thermo Fischer Scientific, 2024.)

If the Sorcerer attempts to have their readers affected to the point of “blasting them to an altered state of consciousness”, he must prepare his philosophical immunogens carefully. If composed wisely, the text may effectuate an anamnestic response, and since these “immunogens” are symbolic, it is expected that they might not produce an immediate response. Affective literature creates (or, aims to create) a real-life change in the reader–writer: Understanding, the trophy of the Sorcerer, may be latent, as these are *symbolic* teachings “par essence”: they do not aim for

immediate effect, but to stay within the reader. Symbolic power is gained by repetition. The chronological complexity is linked to the modulation of time, and the illusion of continuity. Instead of continuity, the Sorcerer's world is guided by a principle of interconnectedness and intuitive, tacit knowing, where the feeling of intuition is the "activation of our link with intent" (TPS, p. 14), and that link being the main pursuit of Sorcery; the task of dusting off one's personal link with the source of everything, in order to gain freedom: freedom of perception.

This is a perilous journey, for all sorcerers must die (and not stay dead) in order to join the world of magical perception. This death, like everything else in TPS, is a symbolic death, linked to the psychoanalytic ideas of a vital energy, a death drive, as well as abjection – a wish of return to the organic and unconstituted pulses of unconscious life. One must remember, according to the principle of interconnectedness, contradictions and distinctions are only "two sides of the same coin", thus life becomes only artificially separated from death.

Carlos fulfilled, and survived his death ("as below") in *Tales of Power* (1974), now, in turn, he tricks death (that hungry Jaguar) and transcends ("so above") it. But he is dead, just like don Juan and every sorcerer must be: Sorcerers

"live exclusively in the twilight of a feeling best described with the words 'and yet...' When everything is crumbling down around them, sorcerers accept that the situation is terrible, and then immediately escape to the twilight of 'and yet...'" (TPS, p. 193)

3.1.3 "Les bricoleurs des édifices de l'abstract"

Abstracting Triangles From the Mind

"Your problem," [don Juan] said, "is that you consider only your own idea of what's abstract. For instance, the inner essence of man, or the fundamental principle, are abstracts for you. Or perhaps something a bit less vague, such as character, volition, courage, dignity, honor. The spirit, of course, can be described in terms of all of these. And that's what's so confusing – that it's all these and none of them." (TPS, p. 38.)

The abstractions in the archetypal Western mind (Carlos), are one of two things: 1) the opposites of all the practicalities he can think, or 2) the things which he's decided cannot have a concrete existence (TPS, p. 38). The Sorcerer's (consciousness) abstract is 3) the very "thing" with "no parallel in the human condition" (it's a frame which transcends or breaches the boundaries of this condition). The true Abstract is expressed in action. "The day I met you, you met the abstract" (TPS, p. 39). Further, the abstracts cores are explicitly named as scripts (TPS, p. 54).

"In his teaching scheme, which was developed by sorcerers of ancient times, there were two categories of instruction. One was called "teachings for the right side," carried out in the ordinary state of awareness. The other was called "teachings for the left side," put into practice solely in states of heightened awareness." (TPS, p. xiv.)

In the light of these clues towards the nature of the abstract, it is interpretable as both, how the mind works, and how the logic of the text works. It speaks for both a historical level of evolution, and an internal level of evolution, related to the way we usually perceive the world.

In the 18th century, a Sorcerer called Sebastian comes by someone he calls “the death defier”. The death defier is a terrible, morbid entity – once human, now far from it, since he refuses to die. He is an ancient sorcerer, also called the “tenant”. Ancient sorcerers seem to allude to the “movers and makers” of our civilisation, those who built our ontological abstracts, or those “fundamental assumptions of ancient philosophy”, which emerge in the text as the “zopyra” or “semina aeternitatis” of common notions (Barthes in Bensmaïa, 1987, p. 41). The death defier alludes to an unmalleable framework of the mind, and the 17th century links it with another epistemological break:

In the 18th century, an epistemic shift occurred, rooted in the Renaissance, a period of return to the ancient roots of civilisation, and an ideal of human freedom of thought. The Enlightenment followed the renaissance dream of reaching for the stars, *per aspera* – of making sense of our shared world, though it is an ordeal for the soul. New articulations “sweat blood” before they are able to be uttered. This epoch laid foundations for the modern scientific worldview, a positivist endeavour: a search for unveiled truth (which had been the field of alchemy) was paired with a didactic philosophy (unable to properly escape the Church). The Newtonian universe was dawning, and Lockean methodology was instigated. (e.g. Lovejoy, 1936; Schwarb, 2009.)

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) called for a courage to use your own reason, giving a motto for the Enlightened philosophers: “Dare to know!”. In the height of Enlightenment – centred on the dialogues and publications of the French philosophers (Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Denis Diderot) – philosophy (the love of knowledge) created what one historian summed up as “a chaos of clear ideas”, the signature publication being Diderot’s “Encyclopédie” (1751–77), in which the leading authors of the time aimed to produce an ambitious compilation of human knowledge. Meanwhile, Western esotericism (and secret societies) began to flourish anew, in a new kind of religious climate of a circulation of ideas. (e.g. Schwarb, 2009, see also Kemp & Lewis, 2007.)

If the key to symbolic practice is given from its beginning (Kristeva, 2002c), a key (these are cumulative, overlapping and interlinking hinge-points) to the scientific worldview we hold today, is keyed from the Enlightenment. “A chaos of clear ideas” did not persist (it cannot; it is set to formulate a “language of destiny”), and something was lost along the way: the courage to use *your own* reason, and the courage to love and relate to the living world, in favour of an anthropocentric

journey to the stars – that promise from beyond. In the attempt to create a comprehensive taxonomy, a ritual castration of the biosphere was, again, though on another level of abstraction, effectuated. There was a will-to-order, egged on by a will-to-power, an intent to rationally demystify and catalogue the universe. “The spirit of the time” was lent to the (left-brain) mind. The spherical earth had been returned to its unicity, but Man had broken away from Nature. The modality of the time was one of evidence and verification, of what could be grasped and observed with the immediacy of the senses, and scrutinised under shared parameters and protocols.

This is why the counter-action inscribed in the Sorcerer’s model is still under the same interjection: “Dare to know!” – dare to know that language and knowledge are separate. Because, this time over, that daring was the courage to use one’s reason, it’s counter-act introjects: “Be gigantic!” [--.] “Do away with reason!” (TPS, p. 211).

That is truly the hard task. It is hard, because this process is inscribed in the functions of a narrative – “the mainspring of nar-rative is precisely the confusion of consequence and con-sequence, what comes after being read in narrative as what is caused by; in which case narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by Scholasticism in the formula *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* – a good motto for Destiny, of which narrative all things considered is no more than the ‘language’” (Barthes, 1977c, p. 94.) The destination of narrative is inscribed in its beginning – and narrative inscription “seals” the Destiny of language in use.

“For you, teaching is talking about patterns,” he said. “For a sorcerer, to teach is what a nagual does for his apprentices.” (TPS, p. 10.)

Since the nagual teaches his apprentices to deal with *intent*, and *intent* is “the force that changes and reorders things or keeps them as they are” (TPS, p. 10), the “somersault into the inconceivable” becomes an abstraction of breaking the mould and moving into a larger framework of possible meanings. The nagual – the guide, “the idea lead by the word”, formulates (into a “narrative”), then guides the consequences that that force can have on his disciples (realising the constraints innate to that narrative’s reality):

Without the nagual’s molding intent there would be no awe, no wonder for them. And his apprentices, instead of embarking on a magical journey of discovery, would only be learning a trade: healer, sorcerer, diviner, charlatan, or whatever.” (TPS, p. 11)

What makes the teaching process so hard, is that everything the nagual “seeks to say” beyond the word, requires a new level of abstraction (more in between than beyond). There is no parallel in the *human condition* (spatio-temporal set-space of social reality) for the sorcerer’s abstract. The only way of going against the conditioning of the now, is by seeking a point of reference from the past – returning to the thetic origins of the current doxa. This return is not done in order to validate preconceptions, but to perceive how these conceptions are made, over and over, in a

vast circling of thought. The symbolic field is the only means of infiltration.

Thus, the Sorcerer - like the semiotician - is forced to work through the constraints of the narrative, and is in danger of falling prey to the innate ideologies of the doxa they wish to transgress. They cannot show the process without acting out the process (performative, quasi-mimetic). They deal with contradictions, paradoxes, and antitheses - and face the ridicule and mockery of society, which feels shamed by contradiction. The bundles of "energy" (of mythic nuclei) his speech (discourse) coincide with enough familiarity to those lit up by the current narrative situation, that it is possible to dismiss everything that falls out of the scope of their original horizons of meaning, as the opposite of the truth they carry; to inventorize them conveniently so that what is unknown or odd, is cast-out as mere "prattle", "jargon", "impreciseness", or "poetry" - a dream *para-doxa*.

From the point of view of narrative analysis, this is a fallacious method of inquiry, as everything in the narrative has a function towards signifi(c)ance. As Barthes (1977c, p. 99) has noted, pointing to the shift in perspective taken in 20th century literary sciences, contemporary analyses tend to dechronologise the narrative continuum and to relogicize it, to make it dependent on "the primitive thunderbolts of logic" (affective, certainly). Time and narrative are inseparable - the modality of the time (*TPS*) and Jung's spirit of the time allude to this: Narrative is the Abstract Framework for our experience of time, though this experience has a material foundation; the rhythm (atemporal in itself; causing distention as well as condensation) is provided by the flow of affectations (discrete quantities of energies) passing through the body, observed by our consciousness, and organised through the governing logic it witnesses. Consciousness is also an awareness of time - but it is for narrative logic to account for narrative time (Barthes, 1977c, p. 99): sequence out a time-frame out of infinity.

From the point of view of narrative "time does not exist, or at least only exists functionally, as an element of of a semiotic system", true time (real-time) being a 'realist' referential illusion - or, as Valery put it: "The belief in time as an agent and guiding thread is based on the mechanism of memory and on that of combinatory discourse" (Barthes, 1977c, p. 99). Time-Real, like the Abstract of the Sorcerer, is expressed in actions of its actants (in "*C(0)*"), the Real-Time illusion (in "*R(3)*") is produced by the discourse itself.

During the sequence of actions which become the completion of the abstract frame, time becomes naturalised - it is in concordance with what its agents experience. But, when an imbalance is necessarily revealed (tension is a prerequisite of narrative advancement), the question of whether there is "an atemporal logic lying behind the temporality of narrative" arises anew. Thus, the modernists (formalists, structuralists) did point out "anomalies" of narrative time, but dealt

away with them since they see (like Barthes says of Vladimir Propp) the chronological order as irreducible – time is an uncontested reality as is, and it convinces the mind of the necessity of rooting the tale in temporality. (Barthes, 1977c, p. 98.)

For the postmodernist consciousness, the form (like a timeframe) is always secondary to content (the dynamic movement through that frame) – and content, or its true scope of signifi(c)ance, is created in an intimate dialogue with the reader. The source, thus, becomes just as secondary as its formulation. The source is not the sign. The sign is not the signified. The signified belongs to the signifier: In this thesis, and in the story of don Juan Carlos, they do become one, in a third instance, an instant, an expansion (the Jaguar is deadly, and the Jaguar isn't at all, the release is an act of the observer, who grants the abject object death or continued life).

Through familiarisation and *reconnaissance*, the monolithic when-where (quantifiables as the singular avenue of knowing) is dissipated, allowing those openings to new meaning to happen discursively. Creating the opening is the goal, that minimal chance, to enter that “otherworld”, or “separate reality”, entering a garden of fresh poiesis, in flora with those melancholy fruits of social alienation, which for Barthes, are the constituents of (Michelet's) Sorcerer (Barthes, 1964, p. 112). One of don Juan's favourite poems reads:

Am I myself or am I the beggar/
Who was prowling in my garden/
At nightfall? (*TPS*, p. 50)

What unites Barthes's and Castaneda's sorceries is this condition, whereby the sorcerer guides the reader to a crossroads of one-and-other, which is a new reality (see Barthes, 1964, p. 112). The sorcerer, as the harbinger of the marginal, brings forth all that which has been negated and cast out.

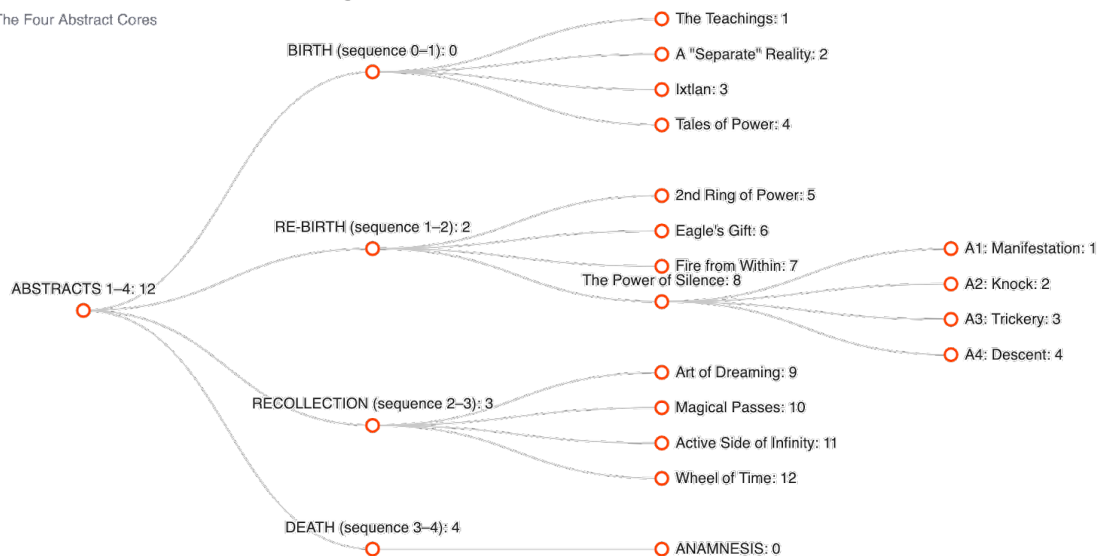
3.2 The Level of the Narrative

A Numerologico-Narratological Puzzle

“The key to symbolic semiotic practice is given from the beginning of symbolic discourse: the course of semiotic development is a circle where the end is programmed, given in embryo, from the beginning (whose end is the beginning), since the function of the symbol (its ideologeme) exists prior to the actual symbolic statement. This revokes the general characteristics of symbolic semiotic practice: the quantitative limitation, repetition and general nature of symbols.” (Kristeva, 1967/2002c, p. 65.)

Narrative Iteration in the Teachings

The Four Abstract Cores



“In terms of his connection with *intent*, a warrior goes through four stages. The first is when he has a rusty, untrustworthy link with *intent*. The second is when he succeeds in cleaning it. The third is when he learns to manipulate it. And the fourth is when he learns to accept the design of the abstract.” (original emphasis, *TPS*, p. 226.)

Above, an illustration of the narrative web of the *Teachings* (my own), is provided. One way of describing the macro-sequence of the plot of the *Teachings* is “a journey out of Plato’s cave”. Like in Platonic (Socratic) dialogue, Castaneda and Don Juan remind us that we do not know, and the Sorcerer even faults “the modern man” for his rationality, which is his self-reflection, which is also what doesn’t let him be free: “He is afraid of sorcery. He trembles at the possibility of freedom. And freedom is at his fingertips.” (*TPS*, p. 219.) The dialogic task of the Apprenticeship-dialogue, is that of conveying *silent knowledge* – here equated with such categories as *affective*, *semiotic*, or *tacit* knowledge. Or, knowledge of the (speaking) body. What Castaneda describes is in my view an intrapsychic, bioenergetic signifying-happening: don Juan’s “semiotic magic” is based on a perceptive shift, and a new awareness. The centre of the plot is the perceptive machine, and a psycho-semiotic process involving abjection and abreaction; the two, affective “ab-actions” presented in my analysis.

Another key element is to be aware of and appreciate the iterative nature of the narrative. A major point along this study was when, through extensive close-reading and study around the subject, I realised that the “Four Abstract Cores” (Manifestation, Knock, Trickery, Descent “of the spirit”) described in *TPS* are in fact the narrative core-sequences played out in the book – and, from a larger perspective, also constitute of the macro structure of the narrative played out along the 12

volumes of the saga. The Sorcerer's hint: "Although you handled your stories to exhaustion, you had no idea that there was an abstract core to them" (TPS, p. 7)

In Barthesian analysis, cardinal functions are actions which open or close a sequence, in a way which has direct consequence for the subsequent development of the story. Between the hinge-points of cardinal functions, "the risky moments of a narrative", the narrative may be saturated with "a host of trivial incidents and descriptions". The structural framework of cardinal functions is what accomplishes a "telescoping" of logic and temporality, and the catalysers, "areas of safety, rest, luxuries" while reviving a semantic tension; a promise of meaning-to-be. (Barthes, 1977c, p. 93-5.) The differentiation between functions and indices (both still *functional*) is a question related to condensation and displacement, as functions involve metonymic (displaced) *relata*, and indices metaphoric (condensed) *relata* (ibid.).

The narrative in *TPS* is simultaneously heavily functional, like folktales, and heavily indicial, like psychological novels (see Barthes, 1977c, p. 93). Indices, like catalysers and informants (which bring ready-made-knowledge) are always expansions in relation to nuclei (which form finite sets grouping a small number of terms, governed by a "sufficient" logic) (ibid., p. 97). The mythic nuclei of *TPS* are provided in the "Four Abstract Cores," which at once hints at the indicial referents, numbers and their philosophical content. *TPS* also problematises narrative time, as it at once presents "a linear timeline", which in closer inspection is thoroughly anti-chronological, unified only by the constancy of the actants and their counter-actions. (It is also "all in the mind", since the narrative is a sequence of memories and recollections.) The mainspring of narrative is the confusion of consequence and consequent (narrative's logical fallacy, above chapter): The mainspring of the narrative in *TPS* is related to time, precisely, and, on a functional level, only seems to provide continuity, through the Sorcerer (un/sconsciousness) - Apprentice (the mind) dialogue.

I suggest an indicial continuity which permeates the saga, and is summarised in the 8th book at hand. The first sequence of the macrostructure is the storyline presented in the first four books, and the conclusion of this sequence is the jump into the abyss. In this sequence, the first volume is the (1)"Manifestation": don Juan appears in Carlos's life, and another reality is glimpsed through non-ordinary experiences with "power plants". The second volume (2)"Knocks" over the assumption brought by the first manifestation: One does not need "power plants" in order to reach non-ordinary reality. The third book, Journey to Ixtlan, culminates the (3)"trickster's" work; the trick is literally completed, Castaneda receives his doctorate (in the everyday world, no less) and enters wide secular and scholarly

debate. The fourth is quite literally the story of a (4)“Descent” into the abyss. (Castaneda, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1974.)

When the second sequence (5-8) begins, there are no more teachers, don Juan and don Genaro left this world, and Carlos, now a fumbling *nagual* himself, enters “The Second Ring of Power”, which is also where the “chronological” story ends, and as the sequence progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that this “Second Ring” is an innate journey – the narrative has moved “vertically” to the level of dreams, and “horizontally”, as if producing the movement from left-brain linear thinking into the right. The first sequence was the “factual apprenticeship”, Carlos parading as a scientific researcher in the everyday world. The second sequence presents Carlos explicitly as *nagual*, suggesting that the descent pivoted us into non-ordinary reality through his own descent into the abyss. Here, the manifestation of the Other, is represented by lethal sorceresses, the Anima to Carlos’s Animus (to use the Jungian archetypes¹⁹), and the cultural imbalance they represent is reflected. Indices (or their falling away) suggests at the radical break between time in the first and time in the second: the first sequence incessantly drops calendar dates and hours of the day (their innate anti-chronology serving as proof for the hoax-debunkers), but these seize at the “Descent”. From then on, only the Sorcerer’s numbers remain, and reiterate – their injected logic guiding the paradoxical dream-real. Volumes 6-8 are purely remembrance, and the main teaching in *TPS* is the art of recollection. Through dream-dialogue and recollection, Carlos reaches the 3rd point. This time over, the “Descent” becomes a transcendence of spatio-temporal limitations; instead of entering an abyss, Carlos “hovers over the bushel”, runs in two places at once.

The 3rd point can be seen as the abstract counterpart of the “concrete” jump into the abyss. The 3rd point is within the subject, and in order to reach it, he must first come to contact with the existence of the Other. Sequence one is the “Tonallian Teachings” – what Carlos purports to have lived through in the everyday world and its ordinary reality. Sequence two is, conversely, the “Naguallian Teachings” – what Carlos purports to have recollected from his time as don Juan’s apprenticeship. The Naguallian Teachings are experienced in the inner realm and its non-ordinary reality.

In the introduction of *TPS*, Carlos explains that don Juan’s teachings comprise of 3 sets of 6 teachings for both sides. This creates a geometry within the sequences of four, where the whole of each sequence is a sum of two triangles, i.e. “a split square.” Don Juan tells his apprentice that his problem is that he sees himself as a solid block (*TPS*, p. 164), and so these teachings reconcile duality in this geometric form, where the subject is at once a whole, and lives in the split between worlds. When this is thrice repeated, an alluded insignia emerges. At every hinge point, a “somersault” is completed, rendering the Teachings on different levels of knowing.

¹⁹ Jung, C. G. (1969). "III THE SYZYGY: ANIMA AND ANIMUS".

First one learns of the trick, then of its meaning, and lastly, in the final sequence (9-12), these teachings are given corporeity, as the sham-man advances from fictioneering and romanceering into extra-literary manuals for dreaming, *Tensegrity*-training, presents a "Wheel of Time", and finally reveals "memorable dates" from his own life in the final book "The Active Side of Infinity". In a feat of impeccable poetic justice, the author dies nearly concurrently with the publication of the final book.

This goes to show that the narrative levels in the *Teachings* are highly performative, and formulated in a way which entangles the everyday world and its living people with the dream-world and its dream-characters. Inner and outer levels become inseparable. There is a thrice effected symbolic death, which in the third instance becomes one with actual death: a burial of the spatio-temporal body, and transcendence of the realm of stories and language, into the nonverbal and eternal.

Yet, the same wheel turns, an air of rebirth is attained. The fourth is always already 0. There is only one road, from birth to becoming yourself, within which process you become aware of a Self (0-1; distinction/manifestation), then of the Other (1-2; knock/distinction of the Other), then the fact that you already comprise of an innate Other, as does everyone else, and that the Self dissected from its Other is always a mere description, moderated by the presence of an implied third voice (2-3; trickery/awareness of an ordering principle, inscribed logic), and once this descriptive status is reached, reality opens up into a space of potentialities (3-4; descent/transcendence, perceiving the world as a self-contradicting whole, at once material and irreducibly plural), and these potentialities make for a world of silence, an immutable, yet constantly changing reality, a protean syllable (like the Tao, the Aoum, the U, the O) the point-0, reached through attaining a 3rd point of reference.

This third instance – Sorcerer's point of reference; the Kristevan unconscious process; the Barthesian obtuse meaning – is, within this abstract and intertextual geometry, a mediator, "trianguator" (creates a triangle). The third mediates the geometric free-space, creating a possibility, a vantage point which grants the reader-authors possibility of exploring the (text's) whole. Considered from this holistic view-point, the triangle is transformed into a square; it takes into account all currents, all possible directions; encompasses left/right, bottom/top in perfect reflective synchrony. The 4th is a metaphor for the discovery of the 3rd, where the third is the metaphor for death. Death, in turn, opposes all signification, yet signifies itself, granting it the nature of the 0. 4, a completely new space, is already 0 in relation to the 1, and a space within the 1. So the square (the sum of two triangles) is equated with a circle (0), a sphere (in R^3); 0 is the 2-dimensional textual equivalent of the sphere; the circle; the hoop in any and all direction at once.

This is the journey to the inconceivable whole, the entire somersault dissected to its most basic forms. Now, adding the element of time, the wheel, which encompasses the triangle and the sphere (like da Vincis famous *uomo*), becomes a clock-work for the chronology of *the Teachings*.

3.2.1 **Cunning, Patient, Sweet, Ruthless²⁰:** **Take Me to 1573 HEAVENWARD AVENUE** *Numerological Metaphorisation*

You may be able to get a horse to count by clapping its hooves, but the horse does not have the hairs on the back of its neck rise when it sees that the date is Friday the 13th and they have an appointment at 1 PM (1300 in military time) to get a wisdom tooth extracted at 1313 West Ave Medical Building (THE SECRET OF THE TAROT, 2024).

Since numerology is quite the un-authorised terrain of interpretation, and I build by explanation in relation to sacred geometry, let me start by reminding that I am only following the indices embedded in the narrative, and a *jouissance* over how pleasantly (and absurdly) they fall together – it is, after all, a planned structure. And the seal, the geometry, must be understood not as proof of the innate magic of insignia, but a premeditated illustration of how ritual traps attention; and how the trick was done, the narrative inconceivably structured. When a structure is instigated, it is easy, almost leisurely to work through (if disbelief is suspended):

“Ritual can trap our attention better than anything I can think of,” he said, “but it also demands a very high price. That high price is morbidity; and morbidity could have the heaviest liens and mortgages on our awareness.”

Don Juan said that human awareness was like an immense haunted house. The awareness was like being sealed in one room through a magical opening: birth. And we exited through another such magical opening: death.” (TPS, p. 264.)

The indices (ritual; trap of attention; liens, mortgages; sealed room; magical opening) given in this passage gave way to thinking about the magical seal (insignia). By way of familiarising oneself with the life of the sham-man behind the scheme, we know he paid a hard price for his hoaxing. I deduct that Castaneda, once again, veiled the talk of his inner critic. He also warns his reader not to do what he has done – but learn of it. An expectation for a better way is inscribed. And the seal the sham-man used to devise his teachings is one which is meant to “trap the demons” and confuse them, so that one may discuss with them without falling prey to them:

Three sets of four books including six teachings – the emergent geometry of three split squares, and an allusion to the seal of Solomon. The seal of Solomon

²⁰ Another set of fours are the four inextricable bases of a Sorcerer’s conduct (cunning, patient, sweet, ruthless), again positions of the assemblage point.

symbolises the trappings of the *djinn*; evil spirits, or demons, which Solomon trapped in his “brass vessel” in the pursuit of divine knowledge²¹. The seal is said to work because its 3-dimensional space confuses the spirits, and they cannot escape its bindings. Solomon used the sigil in order to negotiate with these demons without falling victim to their deception – like the anachronic reader of Castaneda doesn’t fall victim to the hoax, but works through it: By drawing out the structure from the narrative, the reader/players may symbolically do the same: that reader is no longer confused by the structure, and so escapes it: Sorcerers “find yet another opening” (“beyond” birth and death), and could leave the sealed room while still alive. “They chose to leave that immense, haunted house entirely instead of getting lost in other parts of it” (TPS, p. 264).

Likewise, to discuss the *semiotic chora* (Kristevan assemblage point) is to discuss the possibility and necessity of mediation between “incommensurable entities”. The semiotic chora “constitutes an attempt on Kristeva’s part to explore **a third space** of ambiguous relationality in the context of which our transcendence to the “demonic” lies less “beyond us” than “in-between”” (my emphasis, Margaroni, 2005, p. 78). The demonic and the monstrous are evoked in order to dispel them.

One odd and seemingly disconnected indice in *The Power of Silence* is when don Juan, on the way to meet two sorcerers, Silvio Manuel and Vicente Medrano, sits on the passenger seat but deals Carlos continuous and conflicting instructions, until Carlos says that he knows this town (Nogales, Mexico), and don Juan can just tell him where he wants to go. Fine, says the sorcerer: “Take me to 1573 Heavenward Avenue”. According to *The Kabala of Numbers* (there are several different cabals, which partly coincide in significances) each letter has an assigned number, and these numbers reflect a non-quantitative innate feature, reflective of a power, which “rests in an occult connection existing between the relations of things and the principles in nature of which they are the expressions” (Sepharial, 1911/2012, p. 8; University of Illinois, 2012). Numerology conjoins symbolism with geometrical relations, and an analogy between the laws of the Mind and those of Matter (Sepharial, 2012, p. 4). The Pythagorean cabal also aligns with the allusions to platonic thought and sacred geometry.

Without attempting at any finesse in divinatory artistry, I nonetheless evoke the obtuse level of meaning these numbers hold: Interpreted according to the logic of numerology, 0 stands for infinity, the Infinite Boundless, or egg of the universe. 4, in turn, is the number of reality and concretion (Sepharial, 2012, p. 7). These two are brought together in the hinge-points of the narrative, where the fourth simultaneously completes the pattern, and denotes a symbolic death, the third death

²¹ Presented in Jewish and Islamic traditions, as well as in the legendary *Clavicula Salomonis* (e.g. Mathers, 1889), among other sources.

being a leap into “active infinity”. The wheel of time turns. The number 6, which is the number of teachings for “each side” stands for a link, and the interaction of the spiritual, material; mental and physical in man (ibid.). It’s also “a perfection of the work”.

The basic narrative structure is $[4 \times 3 = 12]$, but 4 is always already 0, so the modulation has the hidden variation $[0 \times 3 = 0]$, honing the cyclical, reiterative nature of the Abstract. The relationship of 4 and 0 is the symbolic relationship between the physical world and the infinite source of creation. The first modulation disturbs the *tonal*, the everyday world, governed by a hegemonic logic (the conscious mind), which begets modulation upon modulation (they add up). The second, hidden modulation, 0, stands for the *nagual*, a non-being which contrasts being and allows it to exist. But this 0, in its non-being, is not a dead thing, it is an active agent or dynamic power: the very presence of it is a driving force of life.

If one uses the scheme to calculate the meaning of “1573 HEAVENWARD AVENUE”, brings forth a procession of the individual (1), logos and reason (5), rest and happiness (7), and destiny and expansion (3), which formulate (7), which is also the number of creation and completion. “Heavenward”, in turn, creates a tension between long life and happiness, side by side with discord, offence and deceit. Avenue encompasses “traveling, exile, and inconsistency” into a “perfection of the work”. What a monomythical formulation; one which lays bare the design of the Trickster-Teacher. The creation was attained by turning in a long and happy life for a perfection of the work, one which could not be perfected without unbending intent, standing behind the deceit which will not only lead to the perfection of the work, but also a perilous journey of exile.

Castaneda’s whole personal history is shrouded. There is no reason to believe any of the “facts” we have. De Mille (1978) suspects that even the “real” name Carlos Arana is a complete fabrication. I treat him as a paper man, an exo-textual no-body, but one who chose his details carefully. Only the name matters (the Author is dead). Every detail seems to have been premeditated, or woven into the pattern “epimetheically”. Even the names Carlos Castaneda and don Juan Matus reflect the work: Carlos combines “gifts and omens” with “impulse and ambition”, Castaneda connotes “news and a chronicle”, and these together point to “fatality, death, and destruction”. The whole name folds neatly into 12, and 3, which is the premise of the work: 12 symbolises both “a fortunate writing” (Carlos’s only sorcery is his notebooks) and “a town or a city” (Ixtlan is the unattainable goal, Carlos meets don Juan at a bus-station in Nogales, which is a *twin* city).

These numbers are certainly polysemous, and it is not my goal to decipher them completely – that would be simply lingering in the “dark by-ways of the Un-known” (TPS, p. 245). Their recurrence and coincidence serves as sufficient proof

of this numero-logical inscription. The volume at hand, number 8, itself stands for “dissolution”, and denotes “the law of cyclic evolution”: “the breaking back of the natural to the spiritual”. Its potentials are likewise ambiguous, as it relates to reaction and revolution, and mediates the line between genius and madness, and reconstruction and death at once.

3.3 A POETIC ESCAPE-ROOM

The Teachings as a Game with a Rule of “Thimblorig”

“Another way to read the books is as a sort of game, almost like a detective novel. Depending upon one's approach, they could be either accepted at face-value in their entirety, or discarded. [--.] Confirming and/or denying the [veracity] of who Carlos Castaneda was and if anything he wrote actually happened, is not entirely unlike reading the Bible and other religious bodies of literature [--.]” (typos corrected, Biblio, 2024.)

“The only possible way to ascertain the Truth of the words of Carlos Castaneda are to take the words as a complete body of work from the beginning to end, and then incorporate the concepts elucidated there into one's daily routine to see if they “hold any water”. As we now live in a society, world wide, that is marked by instant gratification and easy platitudes as regards the truth, it is highly unlikely that any such in-depth exploration of Castaneda's words will ever be performed by any institution examining the concepts put forth in his works.” (typos corrected, Biblio, 2024.)

My research has been egged on by the notion that Castaneda's books may be approached as a game. The Biblio (2024) page of the saga hovers this elusive interpretation, without offering much exposition to the idea – it is not an in depth analysis but an overview and a lamentation over how Castaneda's secrets may never be resolved as research interest dwindled long ago. Well, anonymous Biblio scribe, here I am. And I believe I have an intriguing key (at least one of them).

The narrative game is a game of *trying to get out* – a legend “that somewhere a secret door exists into the outside world” (see Fludernik, 1996, p. 193). Narrative games play on the ambiguities of surface-structure juxtaposition, and allow for a text to be read both as representing a character's probable thought material, and as an arranger's playful interference with the text (see Fludernik, 1996). This juxtaposition is a device which undermines realistic readings, like Castaneda repels assigned reader-positions and resists typification and exhaustive taxonomy.

Indeed, there is no reason to keep up the long-released pretences of “emic anthropology”, though it certainly may be coined as an analogy-allegory (i.e. uses analogy within an allegorical context) of an ethnography of the inner realms. The *Teachings* do not fit any conventional genre typification, not even the conventions of

New Age narratives, properly. The Teachings could likewise be named autofictive spiritual self-help; or, a trickster-novel with a didactic goal; a psychedelic adventure; a modern myth, or belief system that the imaginative may try to apply in their everyday lives. It performs the new-agey quest culture and portrays the archetypical seeker's journey, where the this spiritual quest is distinctively modern, psychologised, and post-religious (see Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 51).

The "reader position" one takes in relation to the *Teachings*, changes the outcome. Like in a virtual game, the reader chooses an "avatar" to send out on the textual playing field, and each interpretative choice changes the outcome. Like in roleplay, the rules are read out all through the quest, and the player/readers need to decipher clues like in a detective novel, and adopt a decoding (non-leisurely) way of reading, akin to solving riddles. The numbers embedded in the narrative of *The Power of Silence* act as important ciphers. Taken together with the neoplatonic connotations, the numeric indices start to point to a larger signifying structure, reminiscent of sacred geometry and Pythagorean numerology. Like Barthes says, Pythagoras is indeed the eponymous hero of Secrecy (Barthes, 1977c, p. 69), and so the sham-man of the West, dealing with an art of concealment, uses these allusions of mind-made triangles and squares and secret, hidden meanings.

The Power of Silence is an excellent volume for the "deciphering" of this game, since it explicitly recapitulates the process at play in the whole; a summary of the macrosequence (the saga's compositional whole; "the whole dream"). The Sorcerer's game's trophy is Understanding, and the game is also explicitly a hoax. The trophy is a new meaning; the key of the puzzle or the words that finally reveal themselves; an answer to the incomprehensible question riddled out; an escape from a confined space - seeing beyond the set-space, seeing through it.

Lending oneself to the position of another, makes one aware of the rules which govern their being. To choose to ignore the rules, go on as if they did not exist, is a passive acceptance of the *status quo*, as if it were easier and "for the greater good" to not attempt to change the order of things, and opt for "it is what it is". But, once aware of the rules, "the greater good" presents itself as an ideological point of view, dictated by those whom it benefits. It is the pimping of oneself for the causes of others which don Juan berates Carlos the Academic for. So, he opts for another way; he joins the game of "playing at supermen"²² (*controlled folly*, not an outright deception; an art), which grants him the power to transgress the order which attempts to trap him: and, in turn, traps that ordering into his textual web.

Castaneda, the self-reflector, knows he deals with dubious commodities. Yet,

²² Like Kristeva decreed on women (Ch. 2.2.2.): "We cannot gain access to the temporal scene [--] except by identifying with the values considered to be masculine (mastery, superego, the sanctioning communicative word that institutes stable social exchange)" (2002h, p. 155).

like neurosis might well be a makeshift (Barthes, 1975), ambiguity is a product of the temporal order. Kristeva's semanalysis incorporates this same ambiguity, as it at once demystifies the logic at work, and yet works for that negativity which classical dialectics has cast beneath all rationality (see Kristeva, 2002a, p. 31). Through Carlos's discourse, the sham-man expresses his doubts on his chosen method several times, like the subject of semiotic metalanguage must (however briefly) call himself in question to "emerge from the protective shell of a transcendental ego within a logical system" (Kristeva, 2002a, p. 33). And his Teacher-consciousness does critique him, harshly, and doesn't let him forget that he, indeed, is also vain, self-indulgent, aloof, detached.

Don Juan also doesn't let him forget, that he is only following the example of the world. Why fight for a truth based on concealment of the whole truth, repression of some of it? By taking on the role of the liar (the audience of the classical tragedy is relieved, partly, because they do not have to fill the role of the tragic Hero, damned by fate), the truth the trickster seeks to bring out is that of the lies of 'others' (the tragic Hero is purified by the *signifiante* of their actions) – the lies inherent to our language. In order to reach this underlying message, Castaneda demands attentiveness from his reader. Those who don't become aware of his trick at all, miss the mark completely. Like Jung, his abstract cores represent universal portals which the individual must traverse and a methodology for distilling an objective, ontological truth "from the Scylla and Charybdis of bias and personal opinion" (Conforti, 2014, p. 1237).

Simple awareness of the trick isn't enough – that is surface level, it is obviated (this is the "versus" myth's stance, not the 3rd term of writing). One of the oldest hoaxes in the book, the medieval game of 3 cups and a ball, exemplifies this; the "rule of thimble-rig": Everyone joins the game either because they aren't aware of the trick at all, or precisely because they are, and so think they've solved the game. History proves, that this self-congratulation has short tracks; the inattentive eye still gobbles it up, and the game master is victorious. This is also how Castaneda's hoax, which is also a game, works. "Naïf readers" (Braga, 2010), who take it at face value, don't get far, though they might enjoy their reading, and use its multitude of possible meanings to fortify their own preconceptions. "Sceptic readers" get further along, but most drop out before the "second ring" (titular of the 5th book), content to congratulate themselves for *knowing it's a trick*. They express annoyance at the continuance of the game, since they are certain they solved it. They solved a part. But they didn't change the game. Castaneda's game continues, because so does the one that inspired it.

Were the *Teachings* purely dreams, and not intellectually composed narratives, no such "rules" or "pawns" would emerge. The numbers and veiled metaphors are

an injected logic, and this logic of allegory is what comes into play, and challenges the reader/player. An endless web of possible meanings extends, and the identified numerological dimension acts as a guiding scheme; as the immaterial structure of the Sorcerer's abstract. Modalities, time, continuity – these categories which TPS handles are all able to be represented though numbers. The incessant iteration of sets of 4 and 3 and 2 fortifies the presence of numeric connotations, and both disturbs and complexifies reading and interpretation. The main goal is to reach a “3rd point”. The “abstract in the eyes” and “edifices of intent”, together with the platonic undertones, allude to the sacred geometry of platonic wholes (the simplest of which is the tetrahedra, number 4, representative of the material world) and pythagorean triangles (even the square is in fact the sum of two triangles). As shown above, daring to venture into the “mathematical abuses” of numerological metaphorization, quite another level of signifying within the dream-work of the *Teachings* was revealed.

3.3.1 The Split and a Trinity of Bridges

Psychoanalytic, biosemiotic interpretation

“The split between conscious and unconscious values (here between Christ and Mescalito) has historical antecedents. It shows up, for instance, in the conflict between the Church and the alchemists.” (Williams, 1981, p. 50.)

The psychological content of the saga functions on (at least) two levels:

(1) Carlos's own story is that of evolution, of transmutation, which at once is the process of the book, both plot wise and metaphorically. Don Juan can be interpreted as an intrapsychic principle; personified consciousness and this *true story* takes place within Carlos; the personified mind. The ethnography is an ethnography of the inner realms of the speaking subject. It is the true story, the allegory of the perceptive machine, of split perception, of signifying; being a *homo loquens*. The plot is that of an initiation, which is based on a perceptive shift, described also in the sorcery stories and the Jaguar scene from the volume at hand. I.e. The *Teachings* are an analogy-allegory of the perceptive machine; an allegory of the brain, which functions analogously in regard to neurological functions.

(2) The second psychological function is, indeed, that of a spiritual “self help” manual. *The Teachings* are also a spiritual guide book that invites its readers to take part in the psycho-drama they play out. *The Teachings* are not only 12 psychedelic, adventurous jester-novels, but also a movement; a school of thought; a psychological map, a set(-space) of “ideas” to live by. They are one of the various variations of psychoanalytic methods that saw rise in the past century, therapy even literally, as they also evolved into Castaneda's *Tensegrity*-training. An example of the cathartic method, which is a key concept in this study: The birth of the cathartic method

precedes psychoanalytic theory and coincides with the coining of the term *abreaction*.

To look at the Teachings as a textualised model of the psychotherapeutic method, is to see how the primary Analyst–Analysand framework becomes overturned – it is not Carlos the Academic analysing the legendary shaman; it is the very gaze of the Other which analyses the intruder’s logic. Don Juan is the magical “curative voice” of Carlos’s restitution narrative.

3.3.2 A Continuous Flux

Assemblage point, chora, deixis

The conceptions of the assemblage point (*TPS*), semiotic chora (Kristeva, 1974), and the deictic centre (e.g. Fludernik, 1996) bring together sorcery, semiotics, psychoanalysis and narratology, and are descriptive of the speaking subject; abstractions of the process of semiosis.

All sorcery attempts to do is “shift the apprentices assemblage point”, which would result in a perceptive shift. The chora intermediates incommensurable entities, and acts like a pendulum between meaning and non-meaning (Kristeva, 2002e, p. 93–98). The “deictic centre” answers to the questions of Who, Where, and When, and relates utterances to the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the act of utterance (e.g. Rapaport et al., 1989, p. 2). Being in two places at once, Carlos is effectively moving on two narrative levels at once, two horizontals on different vertical levels.

Imagining a process of semiosis which would involve a disruption of the usual flow of perception, and the formation of a new point of reference through destruction of an old model, requires a level of abstraction which can be communicated through numbers and geometries. Kristeva for example “places the subject in $C_0(\mathbb{R}^3)$ ”, which is a compelling metaphor for a subject in continuous flux, within a three dimensional set-space. Her numeric metaphor has been criticised as an abuse of mathematical formulae (Sokal & Bricmont, 1997, p. 38–), but taking Kristeva’s larger project of formulating a *poetic logic* into account, these numbers gain an application as mathematico-poetical metaphors. Numbers are not unequivocally quantifiable and objective, they have roots in sacred geometry and the psychology of numbers, and Kristeva uses their symbolic qualities accordingly.

Kristeva sees a subject’s identity as a process in continual flux; signification, behaviour, and the psycho-physical constitution at large changes over time (and finally, vanishes “to infinity”, in death), in concordance with the changes of its “domain”, the three-dimensional set-reality. This is the very function inscribed as $C_0(\mathbb{R}^3)$, where C_0 can vary continuously across the domain \mathbb{R}^3 . In a **metaphorical**

framework²³, this function allows us to model subjective behaviour and experience as dynamic and continuous; a process within a three-dimensional space of possible perception. Kristeva gives the formula the significance of “a set of continuous functions that vanish at infinity”. Vanishing, then, from R^3 , that three-dimensional set (double entendre; a set of a theatre/ a fixed setting) space we know as our empiric, temporal-spatial reality.

The interval between 0-1 contains all the real numbers between 0 and 1, and is infinite and has the power of the continuum (Sokal & Bricmont, 1997, p. 40). On this continuum, one can imagine the pendulum swing of the chora passing from the source (irreducible but contained by the thetic boundary), traversing the infinite space into symbolic signification. Since the individual is represented by (1), the allusion is that the boundary is set by the subject. The set space provides the allegory of the stage, at once a textual metaphor for the space in which the narrative plays out, and a metaphor of the world surrounding the subject. There is a set-space within the subject as well. Without disruption, in a continuous and iterative process, the subject observes and labels the world, distinguishes Self (1) from Other (2), this from that. This is his ordinary perception. Non-ordinary perception arises from the manifestation of the Other, a different set-space, partly coexisting in the first. The third process, or reaching the third point, does not stop at observing the presence of an Other, but involve an exchange between the two.

Imagine that abjection happens when the pendulum reaches the Other, the Unknown. To repel it is to return to the safety of the maintained order. When 0-1 involves 1-2, the possibility of a 3rd arises. Since there is *something instead of nothing*, the split signifies. Abjection and abreaction intermediate a narrative silence, and create an opening for possible meaning, in a suspension, a vertigo. The text splits: deixis happens on two vertical levels at once, on “two one way bridges”. The subject is split, always under construction, and inhabiting a realm of numberless possibility. To the Sorcerer, the tonal is an island, like to Huxley (one of Castaneda’s favourite authors), consciousness is an island (Huxley, 1954/2009). In between, there is the vast, black lake of silent knowledge, an affective presence, in the liminals of the thetic boundary.

This, in effect, renders the 3rd instance into a point of gravity; a hinge-point, or the apex of a triangle. Kristeva’s semiotics overturn the usual geometry of sign-relations so that the sign is no longer the culmination of signifier and signified, but parallel to the signified, where it is a kind of polysemous intermediary to the “sole truth” of the signifier. Signs themselves collide, and create a contradictory

²³ Even the marking style with 0 as a subscript, already connotes a non-standardised, non-ordinary use of the term, for the standardised version utilises superscript, and this version can mean different things depending on context. With this non-standardised form, Kristeva already sets her metaphor apart from its cleanly mathematical meaning.

tension in suspension. When two contradictory terms collide, but have a common signified, a possibility of mutual transformation is presented. The thetic is irreducible, like perception is an open possibility. The chora is a pendulum, like the assemblage point is that which assembles perception, which, within the split subject, fluxes between here and there, meaning and non-meaning. To begin with, the subject, placed in $C_0(\mathbb{R}^3)$, is an infinite, open formation. "Here" is clearer than "there", which lacks immediacy – like every culture has a more or less constituted centre and an increasingly fuzzy periphery (Eco, 1984).

3.3.3 Ab-actions: Abjection and Abreaction

Dismantling the (C)ave

"A moment of elation would suffice to move our assemblage points and break our conventions. So, too, a moment of fright, ill health, anger, or grief." (*TPS*, p. 210.)

The sequence which "elevates" the narrative vertically, is played out in the interplay of abjection and abreaction – two affective, psychoanalytic processes; a contra-tide of conflicting experiences. Together, they create within the narrative a suspended vertigo, which is represented through narrative "silences".

The third instance (be it "point", "process", or "meaning") always connotes an expansion – it is not either shadows or unadulterated light – it is a view of both. When the third book completed the trick, its shadow was evident. But light cannot rule everywhere (this would be true delirium), and familiarising oneself with the shadow takes away its power of deception. Descending into the shadow, the oneiric world casts another light on the darkness of the hoax. This is where Plato's cave (an edifice of intent; a blueprint of Western philosophical thought) comes in.

In *The Power of Silence* (pp. 4-11), don Juan takes Carlos into a "man-made" cave, which is "carved by the ancient sorcerers"; its "edge is slanted", and Carlos is at first comfortable in it, but as don Juan explains the history of the cave, he becomes wary of it, uncomfortable. From his position in the cave, Carlos experiences it is filled with human-like whispers. It is designed to fit two people, perfectly. Unlike in Plato's cave, there are no other prisoners, there are no concrete bindings, only the mind and its consciousness. In the Cave-World, the only light is a Fire, in the Visible World beyond the cave, the light and source of both phenomena and perception of phenomena is the Sun, which for Plato was the symbol of the Ideal World. Fire also represents consciousness. The relationship of the Cave-World and the Visible World is represented by the interplay of 0's and 4's; the relationship of the source of creation (0) and the physical world (4). Awareness of the presence of fire (consciousness), makes all the shadow objects evident in their manufactured nature.

Like in the Sorcerer's teaching scheme, also in Plato's Republic (in Wright, 1906), the cave relates to the "the four abstract cores"; the platonic "four stages of knowledge", and the "divided line" of "split perception".

There is freedom in *The Power of Silence's* rendering of the cave, since there are no guards (only *perceived* whispers), and the decision to leave the cave is up to the cave-dwelling mind. The journey out is quite as perilous; first the apprentice is puzzled, and still regards the shadows as truer than his new perception. Reluctantly, as the rational mind fights with itself, they are led out of the cave, and see the world in its unending light. Witnessing the light of the true Sun

he would be dazzled: "he would then draw the conclusion that the Sun is the author of the seasons and years, and the guardian of all things in the visible world, and in a manner the cause of all those things that he and his companions used to behold." (in Wright, 1906, p. 132.)

This is where the Sorcerer's apprentice encounters the second enemy on the path of knowledge, *clarity* (a bliss) after *fear*. Only in delirium can light rule everywhere, and taking the Sun as the Author, he might mistake it for God, and so approve of a divine law. But those shadow objects didn't carry themselves under the auspices of the Sun, they are like "puppets behind a screen of jugglers" (ibid.). Retreating to the supreme idea, where sun is both the source of all things (0) and Author (1), also permits the shadow-play to continue, in allowance of a law parading as natural order. But, somersaulting to the inconceivable, being in two places at once, denies this ellipsis. Man becomes both at once – shadow-dweller and infinite, creative being:

For the sorcerer, practising "magic" (act of awareness) without leaving the world completely, demands *controlled folly*, which is "not an outright deception [--] but a sophisticated, artistic way of being separated from everything while remaining an integral part of everything" (TPS, p. 245).

"Controlled folly is an art," don Juan continued. "A very bothersome art, and a difficult one to learn. Many sorcerers don't have the stomach for it, not because there is anything inherently wrong with the art, but because it takes a lot of energy to exercise it." [--] "By the time we come to sorcery, our personality is already formed, [--] and all we can do is practice controlled folly and laugh at ourselves." (TPS, p. 245.)

If consciousness is that "controlled hallucination", then controlled folly becomes awareness of that constant prediction, referenced from the beginning of the subjects personal symbolic practice (the "Oedipal phase"²⁴), and the thetic boundary of our culture at large. Once this self-realising prediction is realised, there is the possibility

²⁴ An excellent example of contagious social myth, and Barthes (1977c, p. 124) notes on the relevance of narrative study, "without wanting to strain the phylogenetic hypothesis, it may be significant that it is around the same moment (around the age of three) that the little human 'invents' at once sentence, narrative, and the Oedipus" – the myth Freud reanimated from the tragedies of the antiquity and laid as foundation for our psycho-social Reality, the shadow of which lurks behind the ruthlessness of the Sorcerer's world as well, where the matricide-patricide drama is "turned on its head" and Sorcerer's set in a battle to steal back their "edge" from their children.

to rewrite our conception; laugh at the “monstrous mothers” and “law-giving fathers”; see ourselves in both, and create ourselves anew. Contradiction is inevitable when the predictive apparatus encounters the Unknown.

The third instances and the split speak of the same thing: They all involve an altering of positions – Barthes's anachronic reader-position, Kristeva's thetic position, or the sorcerer's assemblage point: these all situate the reader into the text in a new way. *The Power of Silence* simultaneously mimics the process of taking this new position. And this new positioning reconciles the split, but doesn't deal away with it – the split (in the text, in the subject, in perception) remains, but it is a source of nutritive non-meaning, an inscription of the Unknown, and the very avenue of interpretation.

The 3rd meaning, though, isn't the meaning of the 3rd person (he, she, they, it). From a narratological perspective, one could say that the 3rd meaning exists between terms, and if the 3rd person together with the 1st person formulate "I", the 3rd meaning is actually what formulates "You" (I;You;He). If Mieke Bal (1985) has written that any sentence could be framed with "I am telling", it also includes "you" – telling is not passive, but an active creative act. The 3rd meaning emanates in-between dichotomies; typographically it could be detailed as the line drawn between two terms. The third meaning emanates from a hiatus, a stop in the flux, in the origo of two counterpoints. The 3rd process, similarly, seems to be represented in a moment of suspended vertigo and considerable silence – not much is being said (it escapes the adjectival), but an allusive–affective otherworldliness is produced by the suspension of terms, the oscillating interplay between horror²⁵ and *jouissance*; abjection and abreaction. The proximity (identity?) of bliss and fear (Barthes, 1975, p. 48).

“Since our minds are our rationality, and our rationality is our self-reflection, anything beyond our self-reflection either appalls us or attracts us, depending on what kind of persons we are [--.] Or it appalls us and attracts us in the same measure.” (*TPS*, p. 225.)

One could imagine it as the process of travelling that line between two incommensurable terms – in effect, "being in two places at once". It involves a certain faltering, since not much can be said, and its true meaning isn't one or the other, it is more so their tension. The 3rd point of reference is similarly an impossible passage (a somersault into the inconceivable); it cannot be enunciated in simple differences; it travels that difference; it walks the split.

This process, this shift happens in the silence of the speaking body, aided by dialogue and recollection. And, arriving to the crossing, then the “Other” side, or “Separate Reality” (vol. 2) or “Second Ring” (vol. 5), there is no more rupture. No

²⁵ This duality is readily inscribed in the etymological roots of the word, the Sanskrit *hrisyati*, which combines the meanings of “(it) stands on end (of hair, from fear or joy)” and “(s/he) rejoices” (see Merriam-Webster, 2022).

“break between Man and Nature” – and here, the reparative, healing quality of the psycho-semiotics of Don Juan again come to play: This story, this dialogue is meant to re-establish the link to “the source of everything”, as the Sorcerer says; the vital link between mind, body – and Spirit, as it is easy to interpret. This same break or rupture was a concern of Kristeva’s, and any psychoanalyst since the discovery of the unconscious. It seems to me that they all, Sorcerer, psychoanalyst, semiotician, arrive at the same clause: There is no rupture (or at least it has been greatly exaggerated), the rupture perceived is, more so, a constraint (socio-cultural, psycho-biological, perceptive). The split is inscribed in the human constitution, but philosophical and cultural abuses based on its presence have been made.

3.4 The Sorcerer’s Crossing and the Black Continent of Fantasy Physiology

The recurring theme of a “fantasy physiology” is of great interest in itself, and interlinks Kristevan theory, shamanism and the new-age, often in the form of criticism. The intuitive value of the abstract conceptions we have of our body as a system, a technology, or, as I prefer: an *organism of meaning* have in my view been perpetually misinterpreted: Perhaps on a quest to the modern truth, which Kristeva (1979/2002g) calls the true-real (*le vréel*; “vrai réel”). This “fantasy physiology” and its variations are to be understood as an allegorical utility for exploring the “black continent” for which there are no words, only non-language.

The fantasy physiology has to do with Kristeva’s “lost foundation”, and don Juan’s “vast, dark lake of silent knowledge”. Kristeva’s fantasy physiology is mediated by the chora, while the Sorcerer’s is mediated by the assemblage point. Though Kristeva doesn’t imagine a “luminous egg” as the light-body of a human, they both incorporate the split, a psychical and physical abstraction at once. Both the Sorcerer’s assemblage point and the semiotic chora are centres of bioenergetic currents that underlies the processes of semiosis, and function as distributors of energy: A shift in their status quo would thus result in a shift of perception, since as Kristeva describes choraic action, it is a pendulum which swings between the formation and destruction of meaning: Choraic action makes part of primary processes. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (Kristeva, 1974/2002) writes:

“Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body [--] by family and social structures” (p. 93).

Once abstraction is correctly posited into its materiality, this “fantasy body” is an understandable, even a very valuable philosophical concept. What makes the feat of

speaking of it plainly impossible, is the un-allowance of the underlying doxy (Western, rational, post-judeo-christian), which has dichotomised abstract and concrete, and which results in irreconcilability, or, as Lévi-Strauss has coined it, “suffering from unintelligibility” (in Neu, 1975, p. 289).

Similarly, Kristeva, in dialogue with Freud, says melancholia – a form of sublime suffering itself – is caused by the introjection of the lost object, “both loved and hated” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 98). There is an (interpretative) abreactive quality in this view, as Kristeva goes on to say that

when we have been able to go through our melancholia to the point of becoming interested in the life of signs, beauty may also grab hold of us to bear witness for someone who grandly discovered the royal way through which humanity transcends the grief of being apart (Kristeva, 1989, pp. 99–100).

These for her are the ways of speech given to the expression of suffering; not only words but screams, laughter, music, and silence. These are all aspects present in the narrative of the *Teachings*, the titular “Power of Silence,” and the discourse of the Sorcerer. After all, who “laughs uproariously” as often as don Juan; answers a question by singing for a while, or teaches the apprentice to “silence his inner dialogue”.

And in turn, at the face of the Unknown, the apprentices react affectively, gripped by horror and wonder so intense that they may scream, lose consciousness, shit themselves, and even *die* (but also, survive). Kristeva’s thoughts continue in a chapter asking, “could the imaginary be allegorical”, where she coins the imaginary as a “tense link between Thing and Meaning”, the imaginary is neither the objective description culminated in science nor theological idealism aimed at a symbolic beyond (Kristeva, 1989, p. 100). What Kristeva is getting at here is the dilemma of split perception, more precisely the amnesia of the body. Kristeva, like many psychoanalysts before her, links this amnesia with the fear of death, which is the foundational sentiment under the experience of abjection, a fear to be experienced “at the dark portals of life”, reached in distracting moments when opposites such as life and death join, as she writes in relation to Céline’s odd dissertation (Kristeva, 1989, pp. 159–60).

The topos of a split is a recurrent, analogous strain between the 3rd point, process, and meaning. All of these theories are their own attempts to reconcile with this split (“a grief of being apart”), through interpretation and *another* logic. Interpretation isn’t understood as passive action but an active process, akin to the “active creative act” our consciousness plays out in the perceptual process (see Luhrmann, Seth & Sheldrake, 2023).

In order to analyse this “split perception”, its signifi(c)ance and the ways it is effectuated in the textual fabric, I operationalise Kristeva’s (1982) abjection theory together with the more forgotten psychoanalytic concept of “abreaction”. While

coining abjection, Kristeva worked on an ambiguous author, the infamous anti-semitist Céline, the author of abjection: His world cold, strict and repulsive, with the occasional ... eruption of vital *jouissance*, or piercing laughter. "He believes that death and horror are what being is" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 134). In Castaneda, this eruption and life force; the shift of perception from the ordinary to the terrible, and from both to the magical, is dominant, and one could potentially call the text symptomatically *abreactive*, the cathartic counterpart to the morbidity of abjection.

There exists a strong, procedural relationship between these "ab-actions" (abjection / abreaction), as I call them. Imagine them as the cardinal nuclei or functions (hinge-points) of a narrative sequence under the title "Reaching the 3rd Point" ("Flight from the Jaguar"; "Completing the 3rd Process of the Unconscious"). The psychodrama inscribed in the sorcery stories is reiterated in psychoanalytic theories; plays out within the plot-lineage of *the Teachings*, and finds a textual parallel in Barthesian theory, through the "split" in the text; a split the reader (post-death-of-the-author) experiences, and from which he draws his *jouissance*.

A broken (dejected) tonal²⁶ is marked by the aspect of pieces unfitting; unjoined together; signs and signifiers violently separated from each other, in order to impose a truth which does not speak for them. This creates emptiness and static silence, and causes people to treat emotions as "blind sensations", mere "physiological responses": the "Spinozist" viewpoint which emphasises the role thought/cognitive components has/have in the (a) classification (b) discrimination of emotional states . (Under the auspices of Jungian Logos of the Word.) But, in the realm of the mental "understanding of the state becomes the state". (see Neu, 1975, p. 289.) In abjection-abreaction, horror and *jouissance*, bindings and liberation, explicitly intermingle:

Ab-react. Ab-, as in "*ab*-jection"; "off", "away", "from". If to ab-ject is to cast-away, throw-away, deject; to ab-react is to react-away, be rid-off, act out, liberate - and to ab-sect. Abreaction bears a strong link with the body, and the non-language of the body. Part of the "modern aether" of energy theories, it is described as a "release" of energy, liberating memory from the shackles of its pathologic affect. So abreaction points to the abject - no release is needed without a barrier, a *bordercrossing*. In it is a memory of dejection, the mnemonic symbol of something you cast away from yourself.

Cast-away, negated, the memory itself distorts, succumbs to condensation and displacement. The bad-object grows taller in the shadows and bugs the speaking

²⁶ The term "broken tonal" is borrowed from Jungian analyst Donald Lee Williams' *Border-Crossings* (1981), which offers a psychological and "postcolonial" perspective to the *Teachings*. The colonising West's own logos principle, the word, is deconstructed, and we miss the eros principle; the "pipe"; a ritual artifice / symbol for an avenue or bridge joining the two sides of reality, or the ego and the unconscious; mind and body.

body, like a hungry beast. Constraints it; makes it dance around it, think it away, escape, further and further. An ab-ject takes up space, energy, and attention. While this is all the speaking body needs to orient the world. This is why release of the abject; abreaction, is necessary in the process of sorcery: That bound up energy needs to be freed; put or intended to better use.

3.4.1 Poetics of a Perceptual Split, Textualised

Neurocognitive allegory

“We begin then to see – that is to perceive – something else; not as imagination, but as real and concrete. And then we begin to know without having to use words. And what any of us does with that increased perception, with that silent knowledge, depends on our own temperament.” (*TPS*, p. xi.)

In *The Power of Silence* (1987/1991), Carlos the Apprentice *recollects* (again, a magical category though also a layman term) the most important aspects of the *Teachings* he received during his initiation to Sorcery. As I have noted above, the didactic content of the *Teachings* are fortified by narrative iteration, and through this repetition, the magical categories enliven and remodulate their content over and over. In *TPS*, there is a certain geometry which harmonises the retelling through numerological iteration:

The main teaching in *TPS* is that of understanding the *modulation of time*, which is gained by knowledge of the “Four Abstract Cores”, which are also called “The Manifestations of the Spirit”, and these abstract cores are represented in the sorcery stories (stories of initiation) of past Sorcerers (don Juan himself, the nagual Élias and his apprentices Julian and Talía). The book is divided into chapters named after the abstract cores (manifestation, knock, trickery, and descent of the Spirit), and through experiencing the four manifestations, the apprentices cross into the world of the Sorcerers; reach the 3rd point of reference which finally reconciles their condition of “split perception”.

“Don Juan, whenever it was pertinent, used to tell me brief stories about the sorcerers of his lineage, especially his teacher, the nagual Julian. They were not really stories, but rather descriptions of the way those sorcerers behaved and of aspects of their personalities. These accounts were each designed to shed light on a specific topic in my apprenticeship.”

(*TPS*, p. 1.)

Don Juan says it is a blessing that Carlos is not a religious man, for if he was, the Sorcerer would have to resort to “odd rituals,” in order to convince him – this emphasises the subjective experience of magic, and that sorcery, as represented here, isn’t tied to certain praxis, but rather to the production of a magical affect. Not given to mysticism and odd rituals, Castaneda’s cerebral mind (Carlos) deals with a shared intermediary between the observable reality and the imaginary; numbers.

The iterative formulation of fours in the narrative plays along with the neurological allegory of the *Teachings*, and the metaphor of the luminous egg with four compartments: The brain can be divided, first of all into left/right hemispheres (“vertically”), and then again (“horizontally”) into an interplay of perception / memory. The fourths re-iterate as you go deeper into the brain, as each brain hemisphere (parts of the cerebrum) has four sections, called lobes: frontal, parietal, temporal and occipital. Each lobe controls specific functions. (The Johns Hopkins University, 2024.) In essence, this means that the left and right hemispheres both differ in functions, and share functions. If one part holds authority over the other, like the left of the West, it might be that one starts considering functions shared by the hemispheres – speech ability (frontal); ability to decipher spoken language (parietal), short term memory, musical rhythm, and “some degree of scent recognition” (temporal); and vision (occipital) (ibid.) – as the domain of one kind of thinking, when in fact what is in question is a shared, communicative process of both left and right brain thinking, as well as perception and memory processed through both at once, and organised by consciousness. This same division is reflected in the generations of sorcerers, who always for a group of (8) apprentices and (2) teachers: (4) women, (4) men, (1) tonallian teacher (don Juan, “left”), (1) naguallian teacher (don Genaro, “right”).

The right perceives, the left remembers; so was the perceptual apparatus divided, but together they *recollect* lived experience. The topos of “recollection” is strongly reminiscent of the “psychodrama” (the therapeutic method) and other abreactive techniques ; it is described as vividly reliving past experiences, which reveal themselves in a new light, a different perspective, and through this anamnestic (relating to an anamnesis) recollection, an “anamnestic”, secondary response is produced: an energy release (called a “jolt”, a “shiver”, a “burst”...), through which the memory is abreacted. Carlos describes how, in recollection, instead of reliving the fear, or fright he originally remembers experiencing, he passes through to a vivid experience of being there (how it felt; how he perceived it).

Carlos realises there is no continuity in his life, safe for the experience of knowing don Juan. This connotes two things at once: first, continuity is one of the distinctive elements of “ordinary”, spatiotemporal, waking reality. Castaneda, he who dreams his books, alludes again to the dimension of existence he resides in as Carlos: that of the dream-world, which is not subject to continuity, but the Freudian unconscious processes of *displacement* and *condensation*. The second connotation refers to the nature of don Juan, the don Juan “who lives”. The one thing making awareness possible, and so the experience of continuity in the first place, is *consciousness*.

Don Juan is rendered a mythicised representation of personal (un-)consciousness, a new understanding of which was one of the main aspirations of our gift-bearing sham-man. Therefore, people who claim that they have met don Juan themselves, are not lying per se, but playing into the metaphor. It is, after all, the metaphor which posits the dilemma of bringing truth; sharing wisdom by way of an irreconcilable commodity: deception, "lying about the world" to tell the truth about it; through "the scandal of the metaphor" (see Eco, 1984, p).

This ethical strife receives many commentaries along the Teachings, in passages in which a "self-reflective, implicit author" (Castaneda himself) reveals himself, though remaining in disguise, behind his mask (*personae*, a protagonist parading as focal point, narrator, and narratee on both levels of diegesis). Carlos struggles to understand the "contradictions" of the sorcerer, one of the most pressing being the relationship of language and (knowledge of) reality, and the art of controlled folly. The *Teachings* demand a trick, but only because the Apprentices are so obtuse and fond of the "aberrations of reason". "Everything I've done appears to you, therefore, as an often whimsical practical activity: teaching sorcery to a reluctant and, most of the time, stupid, apprentice." (TPS, p. 7.)

The apprentices of the sorcery stories are mostly non-believers in magic, or, if they do believe that Sorcery exists, they connote it with fear, with evil (like in the story of Quesalid). Then, when fate has left them with nothing to lose, there indeed surfaces a topos of dismemberment (both within the subject and in relation to his "previous reality"), usually succeeded by a topos involving being submerged in and thus purified by water (although, especially in the case of female apprentices, the other possible, purifying element is that of wind; the symbol for the fluidity of the mind, and also the constraining power of the mind). Water, in turn, represents the nourishing source of life, the thetic or archaic mother, who traps those "radical atheists" who, "not knowing what the ability to represent owes to a Third Party, remain prisoners of the archaic mother, for whom they mourn in the suffering of emptiness" (Kristeva, 1982/2002f, p. 258). In other words, the purification comes through the power of that which it is separated from; which is willed separate, but is in fact also the origin of that separation. The mind (represented by Animus) is the constraints of the body, and the body (represented by Anima) threatens to overthrow the mind, which is constituted in separation from its material origin.

Restoration is the phase after dismemberment and the purifying element, but restoration to a new life, in the world of "magic" (awareness), which no longer stands for fantasy, fallacy or the negative, and Evil. Instead, everything becomes "what it is", "the abstract" – it's open possibility, beyond all boundary.

The stories of the sorcerers before Carlos function as a framework in which Carlos's own sorcery story plays out, no less a metanarrative than the stories

themselves: The narrative situation is peculiar; places and timelines alternate, entangle, and become blurred in reading, the chronological complexity and the overflow of concepts familiar enough to recognise but totally removed from their original signifieds, complicate the reading on the level of the text.

This all plays for the larger goal of the *Teachings*; to affect in their reader, similar states of discomfort and perplexion, forcing them to a *de-coding* mode of reading – usually not considered a leisurely, pleasurable mode. But, in the overflow on complex components and the unending process of deciphering (in order to study this text, one must move along the text backwards and forwards, contextualise the content not only in terms of cultural and philosophical references but also an intertextuality innate to the saga; look for clues, keys, parallels, contradictions, and allow them their unconventional analogies and incongruities) there is an aspect of *bliss*. This is a writerly text; it offers no opening for a passive reading (if one were to passively read the *Teachings*, let alone a single volume along the way, neither pleasure nor bliss would emanate), and invites its reader to fill in the gaps based on their own experiences and knowledge.

3.4.2 And Yet...

A loveless path of the heart?

“On the edge of silence the word “nothing” emerges, a discreet defense in the face of so much disorder, both internal and external, incommensurable.” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 223.)

I end my analysis with a Sorcerer’s contradiction: Carlos sets on a path with a heart, under the guidance of a Teacher who tells him to “do away with reason”, yet it seems, through this complex labyrinth of lonely Dreams, the Sorcerer hasn’t done away with reason, and seems to have dealt away with love. Already de Mille (1978) analysed a certain loneliness in Castaneda’s work, and suggested that the author forsook human companionship for a separate reality where he could substitute ideas for love: “Ideas he juggles like oranges, dropping hardly any. Love he finds too hot to handle. [–.] Castaneda labored 49 years to become the complicated, superficially inconsistent, deeply constant man who wrote *Tales of Power*.” (p. 22.)

Don Juan Carlos had to set out on a different path, one *with* a heart. People don’t get to choose which kind of “spirit” rules their time; which modulation they enter. With a mind that craves understanding and a consciousness that yearns for the mystical, the cultural split brain didn’t satisfy the dreaming spirit he had.

Carlos (like any Sorcerer) is a tragic character, like the Superman of a greek tragedy, doomed from the start, just because that is the nature of the tragedy, its goal and the “perfection of the work”: through death, a Justice is done; the audience receives catharsis. The Trickster-Hero is dead, but the readers are purified. The Hero is dead, but finally free. Just like the heroes of ancient tragedies, Carlos’s downfall

was that he did not have enough wisdom in his heart; his consciousness had only stubborn reason to deal with, and a “destiny” to follow through.

The Trickster (de Mille, 1978, p. 108) symbolises “man struggling to master himself” in a world he did not ask to enter and cannot control, “man pulling himself together” to do great things “as much by accident as on purpose”, pretending to know what he is doing, in the making, “man changing from one character to another with little stability or selfhood”. The Trickster dupes and is duped. Every generation imagines Trickster anew. This unconventional hero with a thousand faces was Castaneda the Esoteric, who yearns for the magical, yearns for home, for companions, and playmates. As well as Castaneda the Ni-holist, unsatisfied with the world as it is; his mind’s ambition, his greatest conviction, reaching beyond what is acceptable. The only morbid ritual he dealt with, was that of trapping his reader’s attention and killing his own dreams (of love, of Eros; social life) in favour of a shared dream (of “divine” love, Agape; asocial pleasure).

What unites all the sorcerers is that they have a shared hurt, a shared misery: the world constrains them, and they are in a perpetual state of detached attachment, never feeling at home, lacking abstract purpose, and so weakened by the bindings of everyday life that they cannot save anybody but themselves. They despair and in their despair, catch a glimpse of another kind of way of living. But they know that taking this road will only lead them further from the everyday world. But they begin to notice that this world is an impasse, a confined space for waiting to die. They already face the ridicule of their fellow men, and this nagging knowledge of another way of life won’t leave them alone. Dreams do not cease to exist. When the controversy of these two worlds becomes insurmountable, a simple hat stolen by a bully of a co-worker is enough to finish the Sorcerer off; like don Juan, a wild rage emerges, and this rage is set against no one but the Sorcerer himself, while uncomprehending men mock him and laugh. The Sorcerer thinks:

“They had the right to ridicule him. He had been at the portals of eternity and had been unaware of it.” [–.] “There were too many of us – men with our own petty private hells, born out of stupidity – for the spirit to pay attention.” (TPS, pp. 190-1.)

Then a “silent protector”, a simple surge of energy arises, and don Juan knows he is about to die, and he dies, and he is finally dead, finally free. And yet, the world does not cease to exist, and he survives this death. Then, by virtue of “controlled folly making”, the Sorcerer is free to live as he pleases, depending on his temperament. For the sham-man, his controlled folly was resigning to solving these lonely riddles (ones he riddled out himself), dedicating his life to word-games, but with a hope to help others *see*.

Don Juan tells Carlos that dreaming is the *sorcerer’s jet plane* (TPS, p. 33). (The cultural encyclopaedia of the time plays out a tune of *Leaving on a jet plane*.) In dreaming, the sorcerer may project a *dreaming body*, “or the Other”, and be in two

distant places in the same time (ibid.). There is a cathartic note to this metaphor, because while original *jet planes* are able to carry about as many passengers as the sorcerer's cave or the car of consciousness, commercial jet-planes are able to carry up to hundreds of people. The sorcerer's dream has the potential to bring others along, and so to solve the "riddle of the heart" in a different way - not by detachment, but by the connecting link of a shared dream.

The way we speak of the world, changes it in its wake; changes the way we act towards it. To split the social text is to realise the split on which we stand, and at once accept its presence and effect, and break away from it. To the Sorcerer, death is one's most prized possession: Instead of bleeding into a "shared humanity" (a shared pain of unintelligibility), we bleed into a shared dear, which unifies all life. Beyond the procession of birth, life (and its successive re-birthings), and death, there are only structures which we hold on to. They have reflected themselves in the shape of our world, rendering the biosphere in four corners, then split in half, then unified again. These margins are also drawn and redrawn within the person.

The piercing laughter of the abject reflects the fear of death, and this fear *splits* the Real world. Urged on by the dark affectations of morbidity, fleeing from our own mortality, the pursuit of wisdom is substituted by a quest for eternal personal life and youth on earth, we break away with the mortality of the biosphere which surrounds us. We mourn the dying away of that world and connection, brought to those violent acts of desperation, which repeat a pattern of Us surviving in a battle against the Them of nature we ourselves originate from.

To the author of abjection, beneath his piercing laughter lies the grain of a world which is death and horror. The Sorcerer's laughter, the purifying laughter which reacts-away, echoes closer to that of Medusa (Cixous, 1976), and rejoices at the emptying of the world: When the Real falls away into luminous silence, a sense of wonder (something has always been, or emerges) brings knowledge (insight) of an underlying reality, which cannot be abstracted from us: The *jouissance* of a living biosphere we are inextricably bound to return to, even if it destroys our person, and for that very purpose.

CONCLUSION

SUMMA SUMMARUM, "REACT AWAY"

"Human beings have a very deep sense of magic. We are part of the mysterious. Rationality is only a veneer with us. If we scratch that surface, we find sorcerers underneath. Some of us, however, have great difficulty getting underneath the surface level; others do it with total ease. You and I are very alike in this respect – we both have to sweat blood before we let go of our self-reflection." (TPS, pp. 167–8.)

My research questions concerned two main problems: (1) the role of numerological metaphors in the narrative of TPS, and (2) the interplay of Kristevan, Barthesian and donjuanistic 3rd categories: I have delineated how the 3rd point, the 3rd process, and the 3rd meaning all encompass and involve the split (trinity and duality intermingle), and may be evaluated through the dilemma of shifting of sign–signifier relations. Split (1/2) perception, the split subject, and the splitting of the text strengthen the analogy between the 3rds. The split has historical antecedents, and is reflective of cultural paradigm shifts, but also involves philosophical, psychological, and biological premises: In language, the split is inscribed in dichotomies, which necessarily formulate self-multiplying, hierarchical systems of signifying. Philosophically, the split emerges in attempts to utter the Other (or, the Third party); to name the Un-namable, and bring forth that which is inevitably sealed away in the reductive quest for a univocal truth. While these reductions are necessary – they are the story of man attempting to render the world around him a rational one – narrativity following the idea of the true-real can act as an effective trap.

Psychologically, the split is situated between conscious and un-conscious values and thought. Originally, it relates to Freud & Breuer's discovery of "two separate apparatuses" at work in the mind; memory and perception, which on a social level manifests as a discrepancy between historical and material truth. The biological split is in the human brain; the split between two hemispheres. The deeper one ventures into the neurological structure of the brain, the more it splits; both shares and differs in functions, and not in perfect tandem. Consciousness as a controlled hallucination suggests that memory leads interpretation, but it does so while responding to the reservoir of affect stored in the body. The right hemisphere has a gestural level of signifying, while the left controls linguistic processes. In a culture which over-emphasises left brain thinking, silent knowledge is constrained.

Kristeva laments how the innate ideologies of our language force semioticians (and sorcerers, foreigners, children, feminine logic; the speaking Other) to work within a language which makes their utterances subservient to the larger principle at work (Kristeva, 2002a, p. 25), in the margins of this construct (or, this *abstract*) of the

signifying system it infiltrates, which holds it against its own rules, its own social contract. And breaking that contract is an action that will call for disciplinary action, or a judgement; the moniker of the mad-man, the position of being opposed to everything *held* as good and true. And, if it truly is so, that oddly, “the only language I have to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal” (borrowed from Jamaica Kincaid’s 1988 essay, “A Small Place”), Castaneda certainly employed the criminal’s tool-kit in his own crime against the ossified UCLA department of anthropology – and the wide audience this work gained after the feat.

This very same disparity between lived experience and scientific knowledge is at the heart of the sham-man’s narrative game. Castaneda’s guiding nagual (0) is a narratico-poetic attempt at destroying preconceptions in order to reach a common ground which escapes “the spectre of logical contradiction”. And this guide isn’t the Author; the Author has no secret to share. The guide is an inner principle, aiming to advance the reader into a dimension of meaning beyond the sentence and concatenated signifi(c)ations. As the nagual advances in the larger abstract, the narrative moves in horizontals (counter-points) and vertically between sequences of heightened awareness and ordinary perception. Everything has a double articulation, in an attempt to hover over and descend into the split between worlds, which is only a split in perception, and thereby escape their mono(dia)logue, “get out” instead of being “sealed in”.

These sequences (interplaying abjection–abreaction) are keyed open following the numeric indices in the text. Some of them seem, indeed, trivial at first glance, yet fortified by their repetition. Their seeds come into fruition much later in the narrative, a considerable distance (extension of the textual fabric) has to be crossed in order to find their resonances. But the reader is urged forward by the intuition that there is something more; that these are metaphoric *riddles* to be solved, and as these details accumulate, they begin resonating another meaning, an obtuse level revealed only by following the clues the nagual-guide provides. The numbers are indices, and so have metaphoric relata, which, in *The Power of Silence* (1987), entangle with Pythagorean geometry, (neo-)platonic thought, monomythical formulaem and Jungian psychoanalysis: All of these are “paths from which the text goes off”, and the Sorcerer’s return journey for a 3rd point of reference from the past leads the anachronic reader through the hoax, as well as through the mystique, into the origins of our shared Reality, and beginnings of linguistic truth.

Like in Jung’s search for the oneiric code, and in Freud’s dismissal of such a project, this return is to no-place at all (an exo-textual *Ixtlan*), and Socratic dialogue posits a destruction of the person on the way, and this destruction is represented as a moment of dropping the Self, while consciousness survives. This same project was taken on by Julia Kristeva, and her thetic boundary and the 3rd process of the

unconscious which breaches it, is a theoretical modulation set to create the same effect as the procession of the Sorcerer's (4) abstract cores, which involve shattering the mirror of self-reflection to reach the 3rd point.

The numbers are interconnected metaphors, embedded in the narrative, and reading through the numeric indices, one may draw out an obtuse structure, or 3rd level of signifying, hidden in plain sight, which is reflective of the narrative at play, and harmoniously encompasses micro- and macro sequences in the structure of the saga. These metaphors aim to produce a latent, symbolic effect of realisation in the reader, invited to live through the didactic experiences of the apprenticeship, through identification with Carlos's story of monomythical transmutation²⁷.

The Sorcerer's game is quite the task to take on, and in it is inscribed a hope that, one day, one may not have to resort to games and riddles in order to convey silenced knowledge. That humanity may live in a shared understanding of their connection to the living world and to everyone around them, without needing to resort to fearful responses or a reality upheld by the suppression of some-of-it. Exploring the fields of the un-known and the un-uttered are philosophical antidotes for a discourse which would get caught in a web of its own making. Terms and conceptions may be polarised, and through them we have a tendency to get caught up in a debate between words, yet over nothing.

In conclusion, we arrive at a crossroads. The reader is offered the opportunity to use the Author as a "reset button", [zero] or kill them off, returning to the law of 0-1, and so, after observing the Other (2), deject it, deciding the crime was too offensive or its cause a fantasy, a fallacy, a wishful thought. The blame is taken (the Author has died, several times over). This is an interpretative work, built by my own process, association and intuition (much of it subjected to forcible cut-outs prescribed by the structure of an academic thesis). In conclusion, we have arrived at the turning of the wheel of (textual) time where one might ab-sect this information with their own "knowing", and an opportunity arises to do something new with it.

The subject should not be objected to external binaries and historical mind-triangles. What has been effected is an opening; a 3rd way out, and this opening may close, returning to the one it departed from. But perhaps you feel the need to elongate the opening, stand at the threshold, even cross over to some plane "beyond". Perhaps something will enter, something will leave. But for a moment, possibility plays the role of the signifier, to which you offer a sign and a signifi(c)ance.

²⁷ Manifestation (1) of the Other (2), into an expansion of meaning (3), and bringing it to material fruition (4), in creation and unfoldment (7). After (7), (8) marks out a point of death making an appearance, but the dissolution and destruction of the person are also part of an evolution, which is reflected in the interconnectedness of (4) and (0), doubly split over.

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