

*Castaneda's Journey: The Power and the Allegory.* By Richard de Mille. Capra Press, Santa Barbara, Cal., 1976. 206 pp. \$10.00 cloth, \$4.95 paper.

Reviewed by Marcello Truzzi

The writings of Carlos Castaneda have had a profound effect on many, from college students interested in his transcendental message to some anthropologists impressed by his ethnographic skills. Castaneda has reaped great rewards from his books (*The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, 1968; *A Separate Reality*, 1971; *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan*, 1972; and *Tales of Power*, 1974), both in royalties and in the form of a doctorate from the University of California at Los Angeles (which accepted his *Journey to Ixtlan* under its more staid title, *Sorcery: A Description of the World*, as his dissertation in anthropology). Unfortunately, what some viewed as a great academic success story has almost from the first been marred by speculations and suggestions that Castaneda's works represent a brilliant fraud, at least as scientific or anthropological documents. Much of this conjecture was contained in articles in Daniel Noel's anthology *Seeing Castaneda: Reactions to the "Don Juan" Writings of Carlos Castaneda* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), but the full story (at least until Castaneda writes his own revelations) has just emerged in a brilliant new investigative study, *Castaneda's Journey: The Power and the Allegory*, by psychologist Richard de Mille.

Through meticulous examination of the writings themselves, Dr. de Mille demonstrates many internal problems, discrepancies, and contradictions (especially in the timetables). This is augmented by thorough comparison of Castaneda's descriptions with known studies of Yaqui culture, interviews with many persons familiar with the author and his subject matter, and examination of the background of and influences on Castaneda. The book, through painstaking but highly successful research effort, manages to unwrap many of the enigmas surrounding the mysterious Castaneda and his alleged Yaqui mentor, the vaporous don Juan.

The problems that de Mille raises in this study leave little if any room for those who would still contend that Castaneda's work represents either autobiography or valid ethnography. Given the impact of Castaneda on anthropology (best exemplified by selections from his books now appearing in some anthropology textbooks and by David Silverman's recent study, *Reading Castaneda: A Prologue to the Social Sciences*, which argues that Castaneda's writings constitute a key to epistemological problems in social science), de Mille's exposé is particularly valuable for what it demonstrates about the state of contemporary anthropology, especially at UCLA. De Mille's chapter detailing how Castaneda apparently passed off his fiction as ethnography, and anthropologists' apparent lack of serious concern about the disclosure (many of us might have expected to see Castaneda's doctoral degree revoked), should be of great interest to those in the sociology of science. If

de Mille's analysis is correct—and I found it convincing—Castaneda's don Juan may be the biggest hoax in anthropology since the Piltdown Man.

Despite these bombshells, the author remains highly sympathetic to Castaneda's philosophic message. De Mille is apparently convinced by some claims of the parapsychologists and therefore does not write his critique from a positivistic perspective. Since Dr. de Mille has himself written science fiction, I suspect that he has special appreciation for the books as examples of imaginative writing. De Mille finds literary, aesthetic, and philosophic merit in Castaneda's writings (he even carefully traces the probable literary origins of many of Castaneda's ideas), and he portrays Castaneda as exemplifying the social role of the "trickster," which has long had interest for anthropologists. This regard for Castaneda's endeavor shows throughout de Mille's book and adds some interest to his analysis, while only amplifying the potency of his masterful debunking of Castaneda's works as scientific documents. Unlike de Mille, who seems somewhat amused by the whole episode, I earlier found myself aghast at the initial reactions of the social-scientific community to Castaneda's books and am outraged by the lack of serious reaction now that they are exposed as frauds.

All of this is not to deny any literary merits to the don Juan books. If Castaneda had sought a doctorate in literature or given his works to us as fantasy writings, I would not complain; but it is the belief that don Juan, his world view, and possibly even his described experiences are empirically real that has made the books so popular and influential. Now that the writings have been shown to be fiction, there are those (like Silverman) who would argue that the books are valuable to social science *nonetheless*. Since modern anthropology has finally rejected its early practice of armchair theorizing about allegedly *factual* ethnography (that sometimes was not), this new interest in taking *fictional* ethnography seriously is surely at least two steps backward and should be viewed as a mockery by those concerned with the development of a true science of culture. We might as well study Tibetan culture through the writings of T. Lobsang Rampa (Cyril Henry Hoskins), whose career is in many ways a kind of "lowbrow" version of the Castaneda Affair.

It is unlikely that Dr. de Mille's magnificent detective work will have much impact upon those smitten by the don Juan myth, but the book should be required reading for anyone interested in understanding the social realities behind both Castaneda's books and the academic follies that seem to have accompanied them. For those interested in Castaneda, the detailed bibliography is alone worth the price of the book.

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