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Anna Pavlova Murta
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Paulo Coelho: Transnational Literature, Popular Culture, and Postmodernism

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies

by

Anna Pavlova Murta
Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais
Bachelor of Art in Social Communication/Journalism, 1998
University of Arkansas
Master of Art in Communication, 2008

August 2018
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

_____
Luis Fernando Restrepo, Ph.D.
Dissertation Director

_____
Keith Booker, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Thomas Rosteck, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Abstract

With over 350 million books sold worldwide in more than 80 languages, Paulo Coelho is an international literary phenomenon that moves "beyond culture of origin" (Damrosch 199) and inhabits the "world literary space" (Pascale 281). Would his novels, therefore, stand as materialization of Goethe's humanist cosmopolitan vision upon the coinage of the term *world literature*? Many cultural scholars would argue to the contrary. This dissertation aims at exploring Coelho narratives and their popularity and controversial reception by contextualizing them within the contemporary scholarship on World Literature and within the global cultural economy.

An underlying assumption of this Cultural Studies approach to Coelho's oeuvre is that popular literature, as the *hors concours* cultural site of hegemonic struggles, has much to offer to literary scholarship. This dissertation applies the premises of rhetorical narrative criticism and cognitive theory (Unnatural Narratology, specifically) to answer the question: How do readers incorporate Coelho narratives to their lived-cultures? To that end, this dissertation explores the narrative elements in Coelho's novels – implied author, authorial audience, settings, characters, narration, structure, ethos/pathos, etc. – as well as possible interpretation pathways to such elements. Particular attention is paid to the author's major themes, namely, self-realization journey, cultural hybridity, and anti-mimesis, and their respective significance to transnational audiences. Furthermore, the cultural-material conditions from which Coelho novels stem are discussed in this study by examining the correlation between these narratives and issues such as postmodernism, globalization, the convergence culture, mass self-communication, and others.

This dissertation argues that the production, circulation, and consumption of Paulo Coelho novels constitute cultural processes that are more complex than his critics have typically

considered. These are highly intertextual, born-translated, postmodern narratives that embody the practices of a globalized, digitalized, participatory, self-contradictory, and uneven cultural economy. Despite their narrative simplicity, Coelho novels function as contact zones to their remarkably diverse audience, dialogically yielding and celebrating cultural hybridization, promoting the Goethean tolerance among different cultures, and potentially encouraging a critique of our narratively constructed social reality.

Acknowledgements

It takes a village to produce a dissertation. To the point of this one, it takes a global village. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Luis Fernando Restrepo, whose guidance, insights, considerations, and knowledge of world literature and cultures were invaluable to this dissertation. Thank you for taking a chance on me and my research project.

Akin to Paulo Coelho narratives, this dissertation represents a transformative journey of great personal growth owed to those who have accompanied me. My deepest appreciation goes to my committee members, Dr. M. Keith Booker and Dr. Thomas Rosteck. Thank you both for your priceless support and mentorship and for imparting knowledge with great sense of humor. I am privileged to have studied under Dr. Keith Booker whose incomparable intellectual acumen greatly improved my critical thinking and broadened my cultural horizons. I'm thankful for his pivotal support and the academic opportunities he afforded me. His insights into postmodernism and into the study of narratives have significantly shaped this dissertation. I owe much of my apprenticeship in Cultural Studies and Rhetoric to Dr. Thomas Rosteck. With great cultural sensitivity and unparalleled pedagogical skills, Dr. Rosteck has truly turned knowledge into empowerment, leaving an indelible mark on my transformative journey.

I also wish to thank Dr. Sergio Villalobos for directing the initial stages of this project. Thank you for the many lively, instructive meetings we had and for how they enriched the contents of this dissertation, especially regarding mass communication, Latin American literature and history. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the faculty and staff of the Department of Communication at the University of Arkansas for their friendship and the above-and-beyond

Dedication

To the memory of my extraordinary grandmother, Constância Marques de Oliveira, lovingly known to all as *Vó Costa*, who taught me with unwavering cheerfulness the value of a good education, of family, of hard work, of compassion to self and to others.

To my wonderful children, Lucas, Julia, and Laura, with immeasurable love. I have dreamed you into life.

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Introduction

1.   Preface

Few life events have greater power to raise one's awareness of national identity than moving to a different country. What once had little prevalence in how you defined yourself jumps to the top of ranks the moment someone notices your accent and asks you where you are from. A simple unsuspecting question for those who ask, an emotionally charged one for those who answer, a catalyst to a journey of self-redefinition. As a Brazilian graduate student in the U.S. on that journey, I found myself, at times, deeply aggravated by stereotypes and fervently contesting of "national symbols" about my home country. At others, I defended them as if my life depended on it. After all, it is wearisome to question who you are and there is some comfort in letting the narrative of others settle it for you.

"No, I don't care that much for soccer, I'm not catholic, and I have yet to visit the Amazon Forest. I grew up in the mountains and visited a beach only once a year, when my family could afford the long, long trip. I know how to samba, but last I checked, it wasn't a question on the passport application. Yes, of course I'm loud; I'm Brazilian after all. Get it together: Buenos Aires is not "my" capital and "we" speak *Portuguese*! Logically, I am sociable and friendly. I must constantly entertain or gather in large groups of like-minded loud, overly hygienic, physical-appearance-obsessed compatriots. It's part of my culture! And we will samba, watch soccer, eat *feijoada* (the national dish) with great passion! All the while, secretly knowing some of us are quite introverted; some grew up listening Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd or Michael Jackson; some would rather be eating *Esfirra* from Habbib's (a large Brazilian Arabic fast food

chain), playing volleyball, videogames or dancing *Salsa*. To be frank, most of us would never be in the same social circles back in the old country."

Coming to terms with my "hybrid identity" is a never-ending process. However, understanding that my identity had been hybrid all along – though moving made me painfully aware of its national components - was something I learned in graduate school. Not one of the national constructs aforementioned (feijoada, Portuguese, samba, soccer, Catholicism) is culturally "pure." They result of innumerous global cultural hybridizations dating back as far one wants to go in History. In terms of personal history, I was also in the thick of *cultural hybridization* when I started this research project. This meant dealing with a constant, inherently paradoxical, nationality-based reconfiguration of the "self." It meant fluctuating between love and hate of "homecountry," love and hate of "hostcountry." It meant learning that *nowhere* would ever truly be home or host ever again: loss, memory, nostalgia would linger subconsciously always and be forever detached from geographical demarcations.

At times, I took advantage of mistakenly preconceived appraisals; at others, I faced the oppression of "othering" – *from* others and *of* others. It was a relentless conciliation with being "the foreigner," when I hadn't even truly had occasion to define who I was, when I wasn't "the foreigner." But I wasn't alone. I quickly understood that my fellow international classmates and my racially/ regionally/class diverse students were facing similar experiences, which yielded much needed comfort, instant bonding, and sense of (imagined) community.

To my surprise, upon realizing I was from Brazil, they would ask me if I knew of a writer named Paulo Coelho. It sparked a Derridean response against the little national ideation I had brought with me. Shouldn't they be asking me about Pelé? About Rio? About Bossa Nova? Or

even Machado de Assis and Clarice Lispector? For better or worse, I was prepared for *these* questions. Nothing had prepared me to comment on Paulo Coelho. That surprises me to this day. Only last semester, two of my communication students asked me about the subject of my dissertation. When I said Paulo Coelho and one of them was clearly drawing a blank, the other student said: "Remember *The Alchemist*, that we read in High School?" It hadn't gotten old: From kindergarten to college, Paulo Coelho had never been in a reading list in my educational experience in Brazil. The image I had of him is akin to the images we normally have of comic books or gumshoe detective novels: they belong out-of-the school (until they don't!); they are of lower-class, inferior quality; they are culturally inconsequential (until they aren't!). If you enjoy that kind of reading, better keep it yourself (until they do!).

As questions about the author became a clear unexpected pattern among my associates in graduate school, I became interested in Paulo Coelho novels and began to question my assumptions. The popularity of his novels was especially intriguing because those who asked me about him couldn't be more culturally diverse: They were Christian, Muslim, Buddhists, Jewish. They had come from Macedonia, India, Indonesia, China, Colombia. How could an author – a Brazilian writing originally in Portuguese – resonate that much with readers all over the map, while I – a Brazilian national - couldn't even remember if I had ever read him? Finally, at the age of 35, unaware of the irony and the contemporary significance of it, and consistently with the findings of this dissertation, I picked up an online English copy of *The Alchemist* for the first time. Thus, this dissertation began.

2.   A Study of Paulo Coelho, the Bestselling Transnational Literary Phenomenon

With over 250 million books sold worldwide, Paulo Coelho is one of the most influential contemporary novelists. However, literary studies have historically either dismissed his novels as unworthy of critical studies or produced strongly condescending analyses of his writings. National paradigms have been explanatorily insufficient to a literary oeuvre that is fundamentally transnational in nature. But, despite the recent transnational paradigm shift in literary studies, World Literature has also paid unsatisfactory attention to narratives "deemed" popular like his. From a Cultural Studies perspective, however, popular culture is the primary site and mirror of hegemonic struggles and, thus, Coelho's narratives are of extreme social-cultural relevance. This dissertation aims at providing a critical analysis of Paulo Coelho novels from a Cultural Studies perspective of popular culture and a rhetorical narrative analysis grounded on the transnational/transcultural cultural paradigm.

I departed from three core research questions: First, where to locate Paulo Coelho novels within the contemporary discourse on World Literature? I addressed the issue by means of a critical, chronological literature review of the field. Second, what are the rhetorical possibilities of Coelho narratives in the lived cultures of his readers? To that end, I used a rhetorical narrative approach, with particular attention to narrative themes. In conjunction, I utilized the premises of Unnatural Narratology, especially those based on cognitive processes. Third, what contextual influences mediate or are mediated by Coelho narratives? That lead me to a study of the specific cultural-material conditions (i.e. production, consumption, circulation) in which said narratives thrive.

All in all, this dissertation is an academic narrative about certain narratives. From the movies I watch and books I read to the therapeutic conversation I have with my neighbor and the serious discussions I have with my children about college, I am surrounded by stories. Our lives are *storied*: that's how we, human beings, make sense of our world. In fact, we *create* worlds, including our own, through stories. We *create* ourselves and others through stories. We also *question* and *debunk* existing worlds and identities through stories. As sociologist Steph Lawler posits: "The world is intelligible because we can situate it within a story. We are intelligible because we can turn the multiple events of our lives into stories. In this respect, existing stories, whether in literary or cultural forms, or underwriting social and scientific theories, become resources to use for social actors in constructing their own stories."[1]

Narratives can be examined in terms of their constitutive elements - character, setting, plot, etc. – that is, from the elements "within" the story, as narratologists often do. They can also be studied in terms of their social context – the relations between producer and audiences, circulation and meaningfulness – that is, from the elements "outside" the story, as often rhetoricians do. I believe that the elements *within* and the elements outside a narrative are deeply, almost inseparably connected. A narrative can be defined as "somebody telling someone, on some occasion and for some purposes, that something happened to someone or something."[2]

The form, the person, the event – the inner structure of the narrative - are very important to how effectively the purpose of "somebody" reaches the "someone" who also has purposes of

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[1] Steph Lawler, "Stories and the Social World," *Research Methods for Cultural Studies,* ed. Michael Pickering (Edinburgh: Edinburg UP, 1988), 33.

[2] David Herman, et.al. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2012) 3.

their own. Additionally, the "occasion" matters a great deal because it shapes the "purpose" of both the "somebody" and the "someone" as well as the nature and form of the "something" being told. For that reason, though primarily a rhetorical narrative study, this dissertation resorts also to narratology and to production analysis. In other words, it explores the novels of Paulo Coelho in terms of their narrative elements – characters, settings, plots, etc. – and how they are possibly interpreted and "used" by his readers as well as the cultural-economic context that mediates this communication.

This dissertation studies Paulo Coelho's oeuvre following the premises of the "circuit of culture" model as proposed by Richard Johnson in his essay *What is Cultural Studies Anyway?* According to Johnson, the study of cultural products must consider all "moments" of its existence, thusly avoiding a "false or incomplete, liable to mislead" understanding that may come from a partial take on such artifact.[3] Johnson's model consists of four key contextual phases in the processing of cultural artifacts; namely production, texts, readings, and lived cultures/social relations.

2.1   "Someone who Tells"

Paulo Coelho de Sousa was born in August 24, 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to Pedro Paulo Coelho, engineer, and Ligia Coelho, homemaker and pianist. His teenage years were remarkably convoluted: disapproving of their son's artistic aspirations and concerned with his

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[3] Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies, Anyway?" *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader*, ed. John Storey (London: Arnold, 1996), 82.

bouts of anger, Coelho's upper middle-class parents committed him to mental institutions on multiple occasions, even to be treated by electroconvulsive therapy.

Later, the author dropped out of Law School to travel through Latin America, Africa and Europe. While navigating through the "hippie" lifestyle and "rock-and-roll" countercultural worlds of the 70's, Coelho experienced perhaps the first of his migrations, that of a writer, moving from playwriting to lyricism and finally becoming a novelist. As a lyricist, he wrote protest songs against the military dictatorship in Brazil. Because of that, Paulo was three times jailed and, again, submitted to torture.

In the 80's, after dabbling with a few "regular jobs," Paulo Coelho undertook the famous pilgrimage along the Road to Santiago de Compostela, in Spain. The journey would change the course of his life and yield his first novel, *The Pilgrimage* (1987). Coelho's first novel may have established him as a novelist. However, it was his second novel, *The Alchemist* (1988), that launched him into the international literary market. The book attracted modest attention when it was first published in Portuguese in Brazil, until an English and a French translation made it an international bestseller in the 90's. The novel went on to sell over 150 million copies in more than 80 different languages in the decades to come.

Paulo Coelho was featured in Guinness Book of Records twice: In 2003, he made the world record for most translations of a single title signed by an author in one sitting (53 editions) and in 2008, his novel, *The Alchemist,* became the most translated book by a living author (67 languages at the time). Commenting on that estimate, Washington Post columnist Karen Heller wrote: "Mega-best-selling authors don't just have readers. They have fans, the way rock stars have fans. Their readers are collectors, determined to own every title. They make pilgrimages to author events."

In 2002, after much controversy, Coelho was inducted to the Brazilian Academy of Letters. In 2007, the author was appointed United Nations Messenger of Peace. For decades, Paulo Coelho and his wife, plastic artist Christina Oiticica, lived half the year in Brazil and the other half in France. The couple now resides permanently in Geneva, Switzerland, where they established the Paulo Coelho and Christina Oiticica Foundation.

2.2   *"Something that Happened"*

Paulo Coelho has an extensive bibliography of fictional and non-fictional works that ranges from song lyrics and esoteric manuals to plays, blogs, newspaper columns and, of course, novels. More than 20 of his novels stand a porous genre classification. That is, the same novel can be categorized as a self-help, romance, autobiography, allegory, postmodern, or religious novel. Only a few, the most illustrative to my arguments, have received focused attention in this dissertation. These are novels that best embody his transnationalist persona and best represent his multicultural readership. Not accidently, they are also among his most popular works. There are, in chronological order of publication: *The Pilgrimage* (1987), *The Alchemist* (1988), *Veronica decides to Die* (1998), *Eleven Minutes* (2003), *The Zahir* (2005), *The Witch of Portobello* (2006), *Aleph* (2010) and *Manuscript Found in Accra* (2014).

The Pilgrimage, The *Zahir* and *Aleph* are semi-autobiographical accounts of Paulo Coelho own pilgrimages through, respectively, the Road to Santiago of Compostela in northern Spain, the Steppes of Kazakhstan, and the Trans-Siberian Rail road, where personal development quests are undertaken by the narrator. In *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo seeks the sword that symbolizes his acceptance into to the ancient catholic order of RAM under the guidance of a fellow pilgrim

named Petrus who teaches Paulo the philosophical principles and spiritual rites of the Order. In *The Zahir*, Paulo searches for his missing wife, his love-obsession and learns about marriage, relationships, and overcoming that which one can't control. In *Aleph*, Paulo quests to vanquish spiritual stagnation, angst and disbelief, which he achieves by retuning to a past life in the company of a young violinist, whom he had loved and betrayed, as she forgives and frees him from a curse.

The protagonists of *Veronika Decides to Die, Eleven Minutes* and *The Witch of Portobello* are female characters Coelho based on people he met or heard of along his publishing tours. They also undertake journeys of self-realizations by navigating the experience of, respectively, mental institutions, international prostitution, and spiritual awakening. They are also based on the author's personal life and, as stated by him, on his feminine alter ego. In *Veronika Decides to Die*, a young woman is committed to a hospice after a failed suicide attempt and submitted to an experimental treatment in which she is made to belief she would die within a week of a heart condition, resulting in the character's new found will to live. In *Eleven Minutes*, Maria, a young Brazilian enters an international prostitution ring in Geneva, Switzerland, where she experiences self-discovery through sexual experience. In *The Witch of Portobello*, a Romani born young woman named Athena, adopted by a Lebanese couple early in life and raised in London, develops supranatural abilities through dance and learns to summon the feminine side of the Divine. Her ever-growing cult-like fandom catches the negative attention of the media and organized religions, resulting in the alleged death of the protagonist.

The Alchemist and *Manuscript Found in Accra* are more allegorical or philosophical in nature. The first one, clearly Paulo Coelho's most recognizable novel, tells the story of Santiago,

an Andalusian shepherd who travels through the dessert towards the pyramids of Egypt in search of the treasure in his recurrent dream. Santiago learns much in his journey, from supernatural abilities to philosophies such as the Personal Legend and finds his treasure where back home where his story began. The philosophical teachings in *Manuscript Found in Accra* are passed on by a mysterious rhetor named the Copt who, accompanied an ecumenic group of religion leaders, talks to an anxious diverse crowd in Jerusalem on the eve of the Crusade Invasion.

2.3 "On some occasion and with some purpose"

Before I begin to contextualize Paulo Coelho novels, it might be useful to elaborate on the premises underlying this dissertation, some of which are quite controversial among scholars. This is certainly not a dissertation on the socio-political effects of globalization. Nor is it an examination of Postmodernism and its cultural implications. Furthermore, this is not an examination of the aesthetic merits of Paulo Coelho novels. It is however, an inquiry on the cultural significance of his narratives to his readers and to the contemporary scholarship on World Literature. As such, it examines the influence of globalization and postmodernism on and by the author. Thus, this dissertation contextually explores all such concepts – globalization, postmodernism, and aesthetic valuation as they relate to Coelho's works.

Paulo Coelho narratives are stories told in the contemporary context of cultural and economic globalization. Defining globalization is as problematic as the phenomenon itself and it depends greatly on one's political/philosophical stances. Commonly, globalization is associated with multinational corporations, the advent of digital media, global financial institutions, international human mobility and transnational forms of mass entertainment. This definition

refers us, for instance, to literary scholar Fredric Jameson's postulations on Late Capitalism which he defines as featuring "the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and stock exchanges (including enormous Second and Third World debt), computers and automation, the flight of production to Third World areas, along with its more familiar social consequences, including the crises of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale" ("Postmodernism" xix).

Evidently, definitions of globalization also depend on how the phenomenon is historicized. On the one hand, globalization can be defined as essentially a post-national, Western-based, contemporary phenomenon characterized by a rupture with a previous political, economic and cultural order, brought by new forms of communication, technology and trade. On the one hand, globalization can be understood as a long and complex historical phenomenon, both within and outside the West, dating as far back as the sixteenth century, and significantly accelerated in recent History. Though this dissertation draws on the significant contribution of cultural theorist who look at globalization from the first perspective, it is more aligned with to the second point of view. I believe historicizing globalization as an extensive cultural and economic process to be more helpful in reconciling the histories of colonization, decolonization and postcolonialism. As literary scholar Paul Jay postulates:

> If globalization is seen as a fundamentally postmodern phenomenon, then it would seem limited as an explanatory paradigm to contemporary (and emerging literatures) and cultures. But if globalization is a long historical process that dramatically accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century, then the globalization of literary studies cannot restrict itself to this contemporary acceleration. In particular, literature's relations to the processes of globalization as they manifest themselves in a variety of historical periods – indeed, literature's facilitation of economic and cultural globalization – is becoming a potentially important field of study that can get shot-circuited if we historicize globalization as a strictly postmodern eruption. ("Global Matters" 36)

Even in terms of Paulo Coelho novel's, which are clearly contemporary, the long historical view of globalization is more illuminating because the author speaks *to* and *of* cultures that are not necessarily fueled by Western capitalism, yet cultural and economic globalization issues seem to resonate with their historical formation. Examples of such are personified in Coelho's characters such as the Tengri descendent Kazakhstani Mikhail, the interpreter in *The Zahir*, or Halil, the Turkish violinist that accompanies the narrator of *Aleph* in the Trans-Siberian railroad, the Romani gypsy birthmother of the protagonist in *The Witch of Portobello*, or yet the Muslim Crystal merchant who employs Santiago in Morocco in *The Alchemist*, and so on.

As narratives of globalization, Paulo Coelho novels appeal to and are consumed by an audience that is, directly or indirectly, affected by global mobility. So, understandably they are transnational novels. Contemporary globalization is associated with an increased connectivity among peoples and cultures concomitant to a decreased influence of nation-states, which has endorsed a transnational/transcultural mode of thinking – the essence of transnational literature. As Coelho proclaims: "I'm not a foreigner because we are all travelling, we are all full of the same questions, the same tiredness, the same fears, the same selfishness, and the same generosity" (Aleph 247).

However, transnationalism isn't exclusive to contemporary globalization. Neither is its counterpart, nationalism – an ideology according to which identities are strongly tied to a nation whose governmental and cultural sovereignty take priority over other interests – more often associated with the relatively brief *nation-state* historical period. Moreover, transnationalism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive. In contemporary history especially, nationalism in its many strands (i.e. patriotism, fundamentalism, expansionism, etc.) is a constant feature of

globalization and is consistently undermining the rhetoric of transnationalism.[4] In Coelho novels, the transnationalism vs nationalism duality is "the stuff" of hybrid identities, crucial to character development.

Nevertheless, transnationalism seems to be the dominant ideology of contemporary globalization, which is intrinsically related to cultural convergences. Media scholar Henry Jenkins speaks of the cultural economy in contemporary globalization as a *Convergence Culture*, which is characterized by the proliferation of digital technologies, by the formations and control of multinational media conglomerates and, at the same time, by a significantly increased consumer participation cultural content via interactive media.

Lastly, contemporary globalization is frequently associated with postmodernism. But, unlike globalization, postmodernism is a phenomenon of the 20th and 21st centuries. Despite the scholarly disagreement on the precise origins of postmodernism, I believe that it is as Jameson's seminal work announces, "the cultural logic of late capitalism." Thus, postmodern theory and criticism has much to offer to the reading of Paulo Coelho's oeuvre. Multiple definitions of postmodernism(s) tend to fall at some point in the spectrum between celebratory or unenthusiastic of its potential to critique dominant discourses. Often, cultural artifacts – from architecture to cinema – are categorized as postmodern in opposition to those canonized in high modernity.[5] While modern art is premised on the essentially utopian enlightenment of reason, the

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[4] For an example of nationalist discourse within contemporary globalization see Samuel Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge." Foreign Policy, 28 October 2009. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/28/the-hispanic-challenge>

[5] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern.* (London: Verso, 1998), 1.

stable self and the systematic transparency of language, postmodern art is largely dystopian,

premised on disbelief or demystification of metanarratives, on the fluidity of language, on

cultural relativism and ideological constructions- including of the self.[6]

Undeniably, Paulo Coelho narratives are postmodern in that sense. They are also

postmodern in sense that they feature an "effacement" of clear distinctions. "For the universe of

the postmodern is not one of delimitation, but intermixture – celebrating the cross-over, the

hybrid, the pot-pourri" (Anderson 93). One key boundary effaced in postmodern culture, as

identified by Fredric Jameson, is that of high versus low brow culture.

> This is perhaps the most distressing development of all from an academic standpoint, which has traditionally had a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism, of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Reader's Digest culture, and in transmitting difficult and complex skills of reading, listening and seeing to its initiates. But many of the newer postmodernisms have been fascinated precis1y by that whole landscape of advertising and motels, of the Las Vegas strip, of the Late Show and B-grade Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery and the science fiction or fantasy novel. They no longer 'quote' such 'texts' as a Joyce might have done, or a Mahler; they incorporate them, to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw. ("Consumer Society" 2)

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, comparatist scholar Linda Hutcheon argues that this

interpolation of elite and mass/popular art is yet another contradictory feature of postmodernism,

which is "both academic and popular, élitist and accessible" (44). Rather than solely the pastiche

– blank parody, neutral mimicry – that Jameson sees in postmodern art, Hutcheon argues that

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[6] Lester Faigley, *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992) 8.

postmodern art doesn't deny the invasive cultural industry but criticizes it *from within*.[7] She posits that many postmodern artists – and some scholars – also tend to be attracted to popular culture (Western movies, detective novels, etc.) for their creative definitions of subjectivity and their acknowledgement of the role of history in art and thought. This distinction is important because defining popular, mass, or postmodern literature *only* as devoid of critical potential, I suspect, supports a highly-biased valuation of art, against which this dissertation argues.

Coelho novels are also postmodern in their nostalgic nature. As I argued before, the author speaks to and of a mobile society and the migrant experience is characterized, first and foremost, by memory and longing for the past – a simple, idyllic past that never was. past. Fredric Jameson articulates nostalgia to the practice of pastiche, wherein the perpetual copy of forms and styles of the past, the lack of subjectivity, and the absence of originality denotes an idealized representation of history, "with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage" ("Postmodernism" 21). For that reason, in terms of representation of history, the migrant experience and the *postmodern condition* coalesce.

However, this dissertation argues for multiple - and sometimes contradictory - possibilities of postmodernism. Paulo Coelho's bricolage of mimetic and anti-mimetic narrative forms (autobiography, memoire, Magic Realism, Self-help, etc.) can be *both* pastiche *and* parody (the critically engaged mimicry). They can function as the blank, acritical pastiche identified by Jameson, accommodating the dominant ideologies of postmodernity, as the conservative literary community in Brazil often defend. They can also, alternatively or at the

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[7] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, and Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 6.

same time, function as an ironic rethinking of History, as postulated by Hutcheon, critically confronting and judging the past as a reaction to the contemporary valuation of the new and novel.[8] For instance, Coelho's signature references to the local histories and folklore are undoubtedly nostalgic pastiche, but they are also a creative play on intertextuality, potentially questioning the narrative construction of reality. It is this second possibility, often overlooked by World Literature scholarship, that this dissertation attends to.

Lastly, some scholarly recognized conventions of postmodern literature shed light on Coelho's novels. Aside from being highly intertextual and nostalgic, postmodern novels can be metafictional and Magical Realist. The magical realistic, metafictional nature of Paulo Coelho novels are discussed throughout this dissertation. For example, chapter 2 argues that mimetic narrative elements in Coelho (i.e. recognizable transnational settings, base-on-real-people characters, autobiographic forms, local history para-narrative, etc.) are strategically balanced with anti-mimetic events (i.e. divination, reincarnation, apparitions, astral travel, etc.) and only the most culturally hybrid characters transcend from first realm to the second, as a metaphor favorable to transnationalism. In Chapter 3, I discuss Coelho's metafictional embodiment of the publishing industry and of the role of translation in World Literature.

In order to locate Paulo Coelho novels within the contemporary scholarly debate on World Literature, Chapter 1 explores different definitions and scope delimitations of the field. It also examines, within this debate, some of theoretical issues that are key to the understanding of Coelho narratives, such cosmopolitanism, humanism, aesthetic valuation, literary fields, and

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[8] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, and Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 39.

especially, the transnational paradigm shift in literary studies. The chapter makes a case for attention to popular culture in contemporary theory and criticism because of its cultural/political significance as site of hegemonic struggles.

Chapter 1 examines Paulo Coelho, his readers, his characters and his settings are from a rhetorical narrative approach. Special attention is given to reader responses of the mimetic and thematic kind, and their corresponding ethos and pathos appeals. This chapter works with five novels as its textual basis: *Aleph*, *The Witch of Portobello*, *Veronika Decides to Die*, *Eleven Minutes*, and *The Pilgrimage*. It is argued that, as transnational novels, the narrative elements in Coelho books resonate with a diverse, widespread readership largely affected by a contemporary transnational mode of thinking and by intensive global mobility.

In continuation to Chapter 1 analysis of narrative elements, Chapter 2 examines Coelho's major narrative themes and their significance to transnational audiences. Paulo Coelho conventionally writes about self-realization journeys and celebrates cultural hybridity eliciting audience responses of mimetic (i.e. true-to-life, physically possible), and thematic (i.e. ideological, ethical, philosophical) nature. His narratives are believable, recognizable (ethos), and highly symbolic of the migrancy experience (road, trains, airports, language schools, religious differences, translations, cultural shock, home, longing, memory, identity crisis, etc.). Therefore, they strike emotional chords (pathos) with a transnational audience. Thematically, in Paulo Coelho novels, the transnational or the migrant experience leads to self-improvement.

However, in Coelho novels, anti-mimetic elements (unsupported by the laws of the physical world) are as important as their mimetic counterparts. A Character can learn to control the weather, summon divinities, travel in time or in spirit, perform miracles. The more culturally

hybrid the character, the greater his or her access to the anti-mimetic realm. Thematically, in Paulo Coelho novels, hybridity enhances the human experience and improves cultures. Furthermore, Chapter 2 argues that the anti-mimetic narrative elements in Coelho's narratives elicit synthetic audience responses (i.e. attention to the narrative construction of reality).

Because this type of response is very typical of postmodern and unnatural narratives, and because I'm interested in the cognitive processes that interpretation of anti-mimesis entails, Chapter 2 moves from rhetorical narrative criticism to Unnatural Narratology. The chapter argues *against* scholarly views of popular culture consumption as acritical, "mind anesthesia" and *for* a humanist view of literature as a cognitive complex experience, especially significant to interpretative communities.

In sum, Chapter 2 deals with key issues to transnationalism such as hybridism, contact zones, identity, heteroglossia, polysemy, syncretism and with issues related to the interpretation of anti-mimesis, such as cognitive frames, genre, intertextuality, and allegory. In addition to the novels analyzed in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 also examines *The Alchemist*.

In Chapter 3, this dissertation moves from the relationship author-narrative-reader to the larger cultural economic context in which it is inserted. It deals with issues such a globalization, convergence culture, national and international publishing industries, simultaneous translated editions, media conglomerations, participatory culture, digital technology, self-mass communication, online presence and social media. It argues that, in the digital era, the mark of the author, so often disassociated with postmodernism, is again in vogue. It takes the simulacrum form of online presence, which strongly depends on the author's adaptability to converging media (book, e-book, movie, etc.), skillfulness in developing disintermediated relationships with

readers, and ability to incorporate the participatory culture into narrative content. All of which Paulo Coelho has expertly demonstrated.

Chapter 3 argues that Paulo Coelho novels embody the practices of the contemporary publishing industry, including that of translation. They are born-translated novels: launched near simultaneously is many languages. They are also born-translatable: Because of their narrative simplicity they easily cross over distinct cultures and languages. They emphasize the important role of translation and collaboration to World Literature: Characters and interpreters are distinguished characters; linguistic differences are prominent dialogue topics. The chapter is textually based on novels *The Alchemist*, *The Zahir* and *Manuscript Found in Accra*, as well as and on paratextual material (blogs, websites, Tweets, etc.).

3.   Postface

I was born and raised in a small town in the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, called Araçuaí, named after the flocks of colorful macaws that used to populate the place before my ancestors from Portugal settled there. I spend most of my teenage years in the big city, the State capital Belo Horizonte, literally a Beautiful Horizon of alluring lights, opportunities, diversity, cinemas, theaters, and concert halls, but also homelessness, urban violence, and lonely hearts. I went to college, converted to a new religion, and became a mother there. I'm nothing if not culturally hybrid.

In 1999, I moved to the United States for the first time. That was the verge of the new millennium, an emblematic year in the history of globalization, postmodernism, transnationalism

and the convergence culture. I have returned to live in Brazil twice since then – in two incredibly distinct cities: the megalopolis of São Paulo – a "country of its own" like New York City, and the Political center of the country, Brasília, in many ways like Washington, DC. A couple of years ago, I established permanent residence in the United States where I liked small towns in Arkansas and Utah. Granted some radical differences, they remind me so much of the lifestyle of the town I came from, especially during rodeo season. Every time I relocated I found different countries and built new homes, even though they were the same two nations. I have made stronger bonds with fellow graduate students from other countries than with Brazilian neighbor of careers than mine. I have made life-long friends in folks from my religion, while many of my compatriots became simply social media acquaintances. I have been able to relate more to small-town folks like me in both countries, than city people in either. Five minutes from where I live lays the shooting location the movie *Footloose* (Hebert Ross, 1994), a cultural icon to the Brazilian friends of my generation. My husband and I come from very different countries, upbringing, professions, and political views. It was our appreciation for classic Rock that first mediated our relationship. Though my cultural identity is clearly based on many elements other than nationality, I often feel and act on the emotional and psychological pull to the Brazilian cultural enclaves where I live.

My family is strongly affected by global mobility and each of us deals daily with our own brands of identity conflicts. My children were raised bilingual by immigrant parents and now have dual citizenship. Their stepfather left the US for the first time as an Amy soldier deployed to Saudi Arabia during Desert Storm. My father has never left our hometown of Araçuaí but has seen each of his children and grandchildren scatter across the globe. We all suffer the pains and frustrations of cultural shock. And we are all deeply thankful for digital technology, social

media, translation, and the cheapened transportation typical of our time for enabling us to feel closer inspire of our cultural and physical distance.

For all that, I may have been in a favorable position to recognize and appreciate the critical and cognitive potential of Paulo Coelho's narratives to his transnational interpretative community. Perhaps reading his novels is for them the what researching and writing this dissertation has been for me: a powerful interpretative act through which to "work out" on a personal level the contradictions of contemporary globalization, postmodernism, identity formation, and the convergence culture.

Chapter 1

Paulo Coelho in World Literature: The Transnational Turn of Popular Culture

In 1847, "the grandfather of World Literature,"[9] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, wrote: "National literature means little now, the age of *Weltliteratur* has begun." Never has such declaration been more relevant or more prophetic than in our times. From the late 1990's to now, cultural globalization has inspired a renewed scholarly interest in World Literature.[10] This is partially due to the recent acceleration of international commerce of literature, which has irreversibly changed contemporary modes of production and consumption of literary goods. It is also due to an apparent paradigm shift from a nation-state to a globe-based view of culture, a perspective that is possibly more suitable to understand Literature today.

Not coincidently, my interest in Paulo Coelho stems from the same reasons. International market conditions have placed him as a significant presence in the global circulation of literature since the late 1990s. Similarly to what happened to World Literature scholarship, a nationalist model of literary criticism proved insufficient to the understanding of Paulo Coelho.

Although my inquiry into this author and a general revived scholarly interest in World Literature share a rationale, and for all the advancement that such scholarly debate has produced, Paulo Coelho still falls into the cracks of World Literature scholars' attention. Thus, the aim of

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[9] Denominated by Albert Guérard in *What is World Literature?* (1940). See also Goethe, Brandes, Strich, Etiemble, Steiner and Damrosch as reproduced in *World Literature: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013), specifically in the "Goethean debate" path suggested by editors D'haen, Domingues and Thomsen on p. xiii.

[10] See Moretti, Damrosch, Holden, Casanova, and Tanoukhi, as reproduced in *World Literature: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013), specifically in the "World Literature theory" reading path suggested by editors D'haen, Domingues and Thomsen on p. xiv.

this chapter is to place Paulo Coelho in the contemporary discussion of World Literature theory, possibly mapping the inclusion of other works of popular culture.

In order to place Coelho in the scholarly debate of World Literature, we must understand why he, albeit being a global literary phenomenon, isn't already there in the first place. First and foremost, Paulo Coelho novels are marginal to theories of World Literature due to the exclusive nature of the field's epistemology and aesthetics.

Historically, World Literature has been defined in two almost diametrically opposed ways. The first perspective sees World Literature as all literary works ever produced, either conceptualizing Literature in larger category such as Music – not World Music, simply Music - or a collection of national literatures. The second assumes World Literature to be comprised of the "best" and most influential universally appealing literary works.

In *The Challenge of comparative Literature*, Claudio Guillén, one of the most important comparatists of the 20th Century, traces the first definition to the German language as having generated the meaning "that literature itself is worldwide," in other words, it is "the sum total of all national literatures." Guillén evaluates this definition as "a wild unattainable idea worthy not of an actual reader, but of a deluded keeper of archives who is also a multimillionaire" (143).

Guillén also examines the second definition, meaning World Literature as a compendium of masterworks or of universal authors either praised by a few respected critics or read by a multitude of readers. He evaluates this second definition in the following manner: "A disagreeable idea, in my opinion, and snobbish too, that recognizes success, and success only, together with its political, ephemeral or contingent causes" (144).

Furthermore, in *World Literature: A Reader*, editors D'haen, Dominguez and Thomsen expound on critics of the first definition, i.e. all literary works worldwide, as they point out to its

lack of pragmatism or lack of literary valuation, echoing Guillén's opinion. They also argue that, on the other hand, critics of the opposite view of World Literature, i.e. the best and most universal ever written, say the problem lays precisely on questions of literary value – a vision not unlike Guillén's either. But they add that, in practice, this second view has historically meant singling out or prioritizing dominant cultures, namely Western literature, and not even all of it, just that of specific Western nations. Their evaluation of both classic definitions is that while they "have the merit of being clear-cut, their extreme simplicity makes it impossible to address more intricate questions and avoid blind spots" (xi).

Hence, as Guillén has postulated,[11] the term World Literature can be quite vague and its definition, quite problematic. Though contemporary scholarly discussion has moved forward significantly and in many interesting directions, in my opinion, we have yet to reconcile the epistemological dichotomy that fluctuates between canonization or all-inclusiveness. The problem of looking at Paulo Coelho as World Literature resides on that impossible reconciliation. Specifically, in the fact that both standpoints - and their respective criticisms - are bound by questions of nationalism and literary value. If on the one hand, Paulo Coelho can't be read as part of a collection of national literatures, because he can't be read as "Brazilian Literature", as I will argue later; On the other hand, he can't be read as "the best ever written" either, as popular culture seldom is. Thus, both classic definitions of World Literature exclude Paulo Coelho novels.

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[11] Claudio Guillén, "Weltliteratur," *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. D'haen, Theo, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 143.

1.   World Literature: Nationalism in Question

Referring to Goethe's commemorated coinage of the term World Literature might even be cliché in scholarly discussions of World Literature today. But that doesn't make any less effective in criticizing how little of the Goethean ambitious project has been accomplished. Goethe never clearly defined what he meant by *Weltliteratur*, but the underlying ideology of his endeavor was notoriously humanist and cosmopolitan.[12]

> Left to itself every literature will exhaust its vitality, if not refreshed by the interest and contributions of a foreign one…Only, we repeat, the idea is not that all the nations shall think alike, but that they shall learn how to understand each other, and, if they do not care to love one another, at least they will learn to tolerate one another. (Goethe, 13)

Even at its most cosmopolitan origins, we can find the seeds that would – perhaps unintentionally – generate the nationalist turn of World Literature studies, unfolded not long after Goethe. For "World Literature" is originally conceived in terms of national literature even when it is defined by the most enthusiastic supranational scholars, such as Fritz Strich, who read Goethe as an advocate to liberal humanism, a promoter of freedom and understanding among all nations. In his *Goethe and World Literature* of 1946, Strich postulated that "a work becomes world literature when it has to offer something to the world without which the overall spirit of humanity would not become complete, when its roots are firmly embedded in the soil of the nation, yet its crown reaches high into the space of eternal humanity, when it's fed by the blood of the nation, yet it is infused with the spirit of general humanity" (42).

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[12] Here "humanist" refers to a philosophical stance that emphasizes the individual or collective agency of human beings and "cosmopolitan" refers to the mutually respectful and beneficial cohabitation of multiple nations.

This idea of World Literature as inexorably tied to national cultures is questioned by literary scholar Albert Guérard, a strong opponent to nationalism, to whom literature has always been *international*. In his *Preface to World Literature* of 1940, Guérard posits that regardless of the nationality of the reader or the writer, we all enjoy World Literature the same way.

> Our children are told immemorial tales, the fairy lore of all ages and climes. They do not object to the Grimm Brothers because they were Germans, to Charles Perrault because he was French, to Hans Christian Anderson because he was a Dane. The same blissful openness of the heart and mind still prevails when they graduate from the nursery […] The common man retains this freedom from prejudice until he is taught better – I mean, until he is taught worse. Adults are quite unconscious of national barriers in the literary field. (51)

More recently, in his *Die Weltliteratur* of 2005, novelist and essayist Milan Kundera criticizes the connection of World Literature to nationalist parameters even further:

> What I just said, Goethe was the first to say: "National literature no longer means much this days, we are entering the era of Weltliteratur – world literature – and it is up to each of us to hasten this development." This is, so to speak, Goethe's testament. Another testament betrayed. For, open any textbook, any anthology: world literature is always presented as a juxtaposition of national literatures …as a history of literatures! Of literatures in the plural!
> And yet Rabelais, ever undervalued by his compatriots, was never better understood than by a Russian, Bakhtin; Dostoevsky than by a Frenchman, Gide; Ibsen than by an Irishman, Shaw; Joyce than by an Austrian, Broch. (293)

There's a parallel to Brazilian author Paulo Coelho in Kundera's argument. Though critically acclaimed by French scholarship, the author's reception in Brazil is quite controversial. While his publishers in North Africa and the Middle East posit that "his style of writing translates beautifully into Arabic" (Goodyear 7), his compatriot critics joke among themselves that "translation must improve his prose" (Goodyear 3). In fact, it was only after much debate and two consecutive rounds of voting, that the notoriously selective Brazilian Academy of Letters elected Coelho its newest member in 2002.

That it is not to say that Paulo Coelho, better appreciated outside of his homeland, writing abroad to a geographically scattered readership, entirely escapes the cultural boundaries of national identity. In fact, Coelho's novels thrive on the characteristic cultural hybridism of Latin America. More specifically, few countries in the world present (and represent) themselves with the cultural miscegenation as does Brazil in its multi-layered ethnic composition and overlapping European, African and Indigenous religious formation. Paulo Coelho's "brasilidade" is at the heart of his prose. Coelho's national identity, however, is only significant in function of the transnational encounters in his novels.

Therefore, my first problem with a theoretical framework with which to approach Paulo Coelho is that of original culture. How to place an author who is only loosely defined by national roots – very culturally hybrid roots, by the way – in a discussion of World Literature which, even at its most cosmopolitan perspective, is still strongly tied to the idea of national cultures? It is in that pursuit that I turn to the contemporary theoretical solutions put forth by David Damrosch and Pascale Casanova.

2. Beyond Original Culture and into the World Literary Space

A significant contribution to the contemporary study of World Literature comes from David Damrosch who sees the daunting scope of World Literature – as in all literary works – as a non-issue: "no one denies that the term 'insect' is viable, even though there are so many billions of insects in the world that no one person can ever be bitten by each of them" (199). In that sense, there is no problem in seeing World Literature as simply Literature, an all-encompassing term.

> I take World Literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language, […]. In its most expansive sense, world literature could include any work that has ever reached beyond its home base, but Guillen's cautionary focus on actual readers makes good sense: a work only has *effective* life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture. (199)

Damrosch's definition of World Literature is useful to study Paulo Coelho because it moves us away from a nationalist perspective and one step closer to approaching literary works that are mostly detached from a home base, or rather, whose home base is the international market. The clearly materialist notion of international market here redirects us to Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, according to which literature and market are in dialogue, and the expansion of trade meant the expansion of cultural relations. In other words, World Literature in the Goethean project was subject to the development of the international market. But, as Guillén explains:

> The increase of commercial exchange and the growing power of the bourgeoise are not the be considered here as threatening events. According to Goethe, they all contribute to peace and understanding – to the realization of the eighteenth-century ideal of a human community that was better informed, more tolerant, its components less isolated from one another. […] As for Goethe's comments on the connection between literary and economic relations, *mutatis mutandis* Marx and Engels pick up on the project of *Weltliteratur* in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848. The old economic self-sufficiency – they write – is giving way to international commerce. The same process is happening in intellectual as in material production. The spiritual products of individual nations are now 'common property'; and a world literature will be formed from the local literatures. (146)

On the one hand Guillén acknowledges inseparability of World Literature to international trade. On the other hand, however, he defines World Literature as an "end" global product, "common property," necessarily created by /originated in individual nations. It is very important to stress here that the counter-paradigm to nationalist models demands a view of World Literature as predating the formation of nation-states. In other words, before there were nation-

states, there was World Literature. From this viewpoint and building upon the theories of

sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who first conceptualized the term "literary field," literary theorist

Pascale Casanova brings up the existence of a "world literary space."

According to Bourdieu's model, literary practices constitute a world where a social set of

agents (authors, publishers, critics) are ruled by their own logic, relatively independent from

other social fields. The "field" at once follows the directives of market and denies the market

logics, for a work of literature is a commercial object but its value is a symbolic, not a practical

one. In *Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus*, Bourdieu writes:

> What do I mean by 'field'? As I use the term, a field is a separate social universe
> having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the
> economy. The existence of the writer, as a fact and as a value, is inseparable from
> the existence of the literary field as an autonomous universe endowed with
> specific principles of evaluation of practices and works. To understand Flaubert or
> Baudelaire, or any writer, major or minor, is first of all to understand what the
> status of writer consists of at the moment considered; that is more precisely, the
> social conditions of this social function, of this social personage. In fact, the
> invention of the writer in the modern sense of the term, is inseparable from the
> progressive invention of a particular social game, which I term *literary field* and
> which is constituted as it establishes its autonomy, that is to say, its specific laws
> of functioning, within the field of power. (89)

Casanova's concept of a world literary space is undoubtedly indebted to Bourdieu's

concept of literary field. However, while the latter is constricted to a "national framework,

limited by the borders, historical traditions and capital accumulation processes of a specific

nation-state" (281), the first expands such framework by taking into account the global dynamics

that influence literary processes. Such expansion accounts for the difference between writers

who function largely nationally and those who function mainly internationally.

> World literary space is not a sphere that is set above all others, reserved
> exclusively for international writers, editors, critics – for literary actors
> maneuvering in a supposedly de-nationalized world. It is formed by all the
> inhabitants of the Republic of Letters, each of them differently situated within
> their own national literary space. At the same time, each writer's position must

necessarily be a double once, twice defined: each writer is situated once according to the position he or she occupies in a national space, and then once again according to place that this occupies within the world space. […] The one great dichotomy here is not national versus global literature, but between national and international writers. This is the fracture which explains literary forms, types of aesthetic innovations, the adoption of genres. National and international writers fight with different weapons, for divergent aesthetics, commercial and editorial rewards – thus contributing, in different ways, to the accumulation of national literary resources required to enter the world space and compete inside. (282)

Casanova's world literary space provides a more suitable placement for the works of Paulo Coelho, not only because it solves the hindering presence of nationalist values in World Literature criticism, but because it rejects established national categories and divisions, demanding a trans-national or inter-national mind set (280). In fact, I believe that there is a set of literary works that function almost exclusively in the world literary space, with a great degree of independence from national literary spaces: transnational literature.

Furthermore, "world literary space" defuses the issue of "flow of culture" so prominent in postcolonial discourse, since works belonging to an international literary space "move" quite differently than national literature and independently from a periphery-center model of circulation. That is especially the case for contemporary authors such as Paulo Coelho, whose novels are produced and consumed, in both cultural and economic terms, in complex multidirectional ways.

If we start from Damrosch's concept of world literature as that which moves beyond its "original" culture and segue into Casanova's concept of world literary space, finally, there's a place where the works of Coelho "fit" in contemporary World Literature. It would be so simple if the only issue with this placement were the "national vs. global" paradigm, the "center-periphery" flow of culture, and the scope of the field. However, another challenge lingers: that "literary value" is at the epistemological core of World Literature scholarship.

3.   World Literature: Literary Value in Question

The premise by which World Literature is "the best that all of literature has to offer" begs the question: Who decides what is best? The opposite premise – that "World Literature is a compendium of all literatures," also begs a similar question: Who decides which are deserving of attention? Unfortunately, departing from the world literary space as a solution for scope and definition of World Literature does not eliminate the issue of political valuation of literature which is bound to carried under the guise of aesthetic criteria. In practice, the value-criteria has been historically exclusionary of popular literature in literary criticism. Thus, even if we approach Coelho's from the standpoint of world literary space, neutralizing the dependence of this analysis to national frameworks, his novels could still be neglected simply for being "popular culture."

The exclusion of popular culture by World Literature scholarship occurs in two very politically-biased ways. One has to do with that negative perception of 'popular culture' itself. The other, has to do with the classifying of certain literary works *as* popular culture, which is often *per se* an ideological/political act.

When a cultural artifact is considered popular, it is also charged with negative valuation. Albeit the lack of agreement on what popular culture is, however it is defined, the concept carries an implied *otherness* element. In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, a book dedicated to exploring the meanings of popular culture, John Storey offers six possible definitions for the term. Historically, popular culture is defined in contrast to other conceptual categories and is a "product" of industrialized, urbanized societies. One could take up the argument that surely popular culture pre-dates industrialization and isn't exclusively urban – with which I personally

agree. In the case of Coelho's novels, however, "popularity" is intrinsically related to globalization, even if not to urbanization necessarily. But, a more productive inquiry would be, I think, whether the negative valuation of popular culture in each *post-industrial urban* definition applies to the author.

The first definition offered by Storey is that popular culture is that which is widely favored and well liked. One could consider Paulo Coelho as popular culture by this standard based solely on his massive sales or large world-wide fan base. However, the critical reception of his works is a very controversial one. Besides, as Storey assesses, a quantitative perspective alone is insufficient to define popular culture. After all, that which is *not* popular culture can also be widely favored and well liked.

The second definition takes a qualitative approach. Popular culture is what's left after what is "high culture" is subtracted. This is the kind of definition that, as Bourdieu[13] postulates, supports class distinction. What is consumed by the masses – read 'working-class' masses – is of inferior quality. In other words, it lacks the formal complexity exclusive of texts that belong to 'high culture.' Especially from this standpoint, the process of categorizing "popular culture" is symptomatic of cultural hegemony struggles. For example, many authors that are now canonized – "the best of World Literature has to offer" – weren't always so, especially in their time. As Claudio Guillén puts it, "the works of neither Dante nor Shakespeare nor Cervantes were considered classics by many European readers until well after the beginning of the nineteenth century" (144). Thus, too often this classification doesn't stand the test of time, but instead fluctuates according to changes in cultural dominance. Storey offers some more examples:

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[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984) 7.

William Shakespeare is now seen as the epitome of high culture, yet as late as the nineteenth century his work was very much a part of popular theatre. The same point can also be made about Charles Dickens's work. Similarly, film noir can be seen to have crossed the border supposedly separating popular and high culture: in other words, what started as popular cinema is now the preserve of academics and film clubs. One recent example of cultural traffic moving in the other direction is Luciano Pavarotti's recording of Puccini's 'Nessun Dorma'. Even the most rigorous defenders of high culture would not want to exclude Pavarotti or Puccini from its select enclave. But in 1990, Pavarotti managed to take 'Nessun Dorma' to number one in the British charts. Such commercial success on any quantitative analysis would make the composer, the performer and the aria, popular culture. In fact, one student I know actually complained about the way in which the aria had been supposedly devalued by its commercial success. He claimed that he now found it embarrassing to play the aria for fear that someone should think his musical taste was simply the result of the aria being 'The Official BBC Grandstand World Cup Theme'. Other students laughed and mocked. But his complaint highlights something very significant about the high/popular divide: the elitist investment that some put in its continuation. (6)

The third definition is related to the point made above by Storey. Popular culture as synonym to mass culture. The negative valuation here is that massively produced cultural artifacts – such as Paulo Coelho books, unquestionably – are hopelessly commercial, formulaic and manipulative, often consumed with brain-numbing passivity by a multitude of people. This is par excellence a Frankfurtian[14] perspective. In its most benevolent form, popular culture from the mass culture paradigm functions as a collective dream, or escapism.

It seems to me that, when critics dismiss Coelho's novels as a "spiritual twaddle" or a play on stereotypes of "popular taste," they are operating under a mix of the second and third definitions. One such scholar is Mário Maestri, author of the book *Why Paulo Coelho Was*

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[14] See John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (New York: Pearson, 2009) 62-70.

Successful.[15] Note how Maestri's assertions, here cited by Dana Goodyear, echoes these second and third approaches[16]:

> Mário Maestri, a history professor at the University of Passo Fundo and one of the few Brazilian critics who does not reflexively dismiss Coelho, has written, "In spite of belonging to different genres, Coelho's narratives and self-help books have the same fundamental effect: of anesthetizing the alienated consciousness through the consoling reaffirmation of conventions and prevailing prejudices. Fascinated by his discoveries, the Coelhist reader explores the familiar, breaks down doors already open, and gets mired in sentimental, tranquilizing, self-centered, conformist, and spellbinding visions of the world that imprisons him. When he finishes a book, he wants another one that will be different but absolutely the same." Maestri calls the work "yuppie esoteric narrative." As if to prove the point, this winter Starbucks distributed five million Venti cups printed with a Coelho quote: "Remember your dreams and fight for them. You must know what you want from life. There is just one thing that makes your dream become impossible: the fear of failure. Never forget your Personal Legend. Never forget your dreams. ..." (3).

The forth definition of popular culture described by Storey is popular culture as authentically originated from "the people," in other words, folk culture. By that definition, with all its problems – i.e. defining "the people," evading commercial value, etc. – Paulo Coelho would not be popular literature. The definition simply doesn't apply here.

Maestri's assessment has strong echoes in Brazilian academia. Goodyear statement that he doesn't reflexively dismiss Coelho really means that he directly and vehemently criticizes the author instead of simply ignoring him like many Brazilian scholars who see Coelho as beneath their critical consideration. I respectfully disagree with this approach - which seems to me

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[15] Translation mine. The book hasn't been printed in English. Maestri criticism of Coelho goes as far comparing original manuscripts to edited texts to argue how Coelho's spelling and grammar are symptomatic of his inferiority as a writer. Other arguments Maestri puts forward in that direction are that Coelho's novels contain easy, simplistic language in short sentences, paragraphs and chapters with few and uncomplicated characters.

[16] The second and third definitions of popular culture underline initial literary and cultural studies, as discussed in John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003) 36-37.

heavily aligned the third conceptualization of popular culture. Instead, I am more inclined to

agree with the fifth definition discussed by Storey. In fact, it is one of the reasons why I believe

World Literature scholarship should be devoting more attention to popular literature in the world

literary space. Drawing from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony,[17] the fifth

definition takes popular culture to be the site of cultural hegemonic struggle.

> Those using this approach see popular culture as a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups. Popular culture in this usage is not the imposed culture of the mass culture theorists, nor is it an emerging from below, spontaneously oppositional culture of 'the people' – it is a terrain of exchange and negotiation between the two: a terrain, as already stated, marked by resistance and incorporation. The texts and practices of popular culture move within what Gramsci (1971) calls a 'compromise equilibrium' (161). The process is historical (labelled popular culture one moment, and another kind of culture the next), but it is also synchronic (moving between resistance and incorporation at any given historical moment). For instance, the seaside holiday began as an aristocratic event and within a hundred years it had become an example of popular culture. Film noir started as despised popular cinema and within thirty years had become art cinema. In general terms, those looking at popular culture from the perspective of hegemony theory tend to see it as a terrain of ideological struggle between dominant and subordinate classes, dominant and subordinate cultures. (10)

The sixth definition stems from a postmodernist paradigm according to which

postmodern culture does away with the distinction between high and low (popular) culture.

Oversimplifying, all there is, is culture. That is not to say that a negative valuation no longer

exists. For, while some celebrate the end of prejudiced classification of cultural artifacts, others

deem the reduction of high art's cultural capital as a triumph of commerce over culture. My

working definition of popular culture is akin to the fifth approach described here. This

dissertation is aligned with the position that "that popular culture is what people make from the

products of the culture industries – mass culture is the repertoire, popular culture is what people

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[17] See John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (New York: Pearson, 2009) 79-82.

actively make from it, actually do with the commodities and commodified practices they consume" ("Cultural Theory" Storey 12).

It follows then that it is precisely because Paulo Coelho novels are popular literature that they merit scholarly attention. The inherent cultural conflicts of postmodernity and globalization are, according to the basic premises of Cultural Studies, played out, reflected, resisted, negotiated, in popular literary works such as Paulo Coelho's novels.

## 4.	World Literature: Humanism in Question

Another question of value underlies theories of World Literature: the value of literature itself. That is, whether the betterment of humanity is potentially a product of literature. Humanism has been dismissed in different ways. It also has been at the core of several ideological projects in History - Christianism, Marxism, Essentialism, Nationalism – many of which are questioned by the very transnational spirit that now recaptures the term.

In his controversial posthumanistic essay *Rules for the Human Zoo: A Response to the Letter on Humanism*, philosopher Peter Sloterdijk speaks of the end of humanism in modern times, and with it, the old model of a literary society whose participation in reading resulted in a fantasized solidarity within an elite literate group.

> Because of the formation of mass culture through the media – radio in the First World War and television after 1945, and even more through the contemporary web revolution – the coexistence of people in the present societies has been established in a new foundation. These are, as it can be uncontrovertibly shown, clearly postliterary, postepistolary, and thus posthumanistic. Anyone who thinks the prefix "post" in this formulation is too dramatic can replace it with the adverb marginal. Thus our thesis: modern societies can produce their political and cultural synthesis only marginally through literary, letter-writing, humanistic media. Of course that does not mean that literature has come to an end, but it has split itself off and become a sui generis subculture, and the days of its value as a

bearer of the national spirit have passed. The social synthesis is no longer – and is no longer seen to be – primarily a matter of books and letters. (4)

Sloderdjik is right regarding literature and the national spirit. However, as evidenced by transnational cultural and literary criticism, humanism is still very much alive. Perhaps because new media and new reading platform haven't replaced reading, but considerably increased access to literary works, rather than confined them in realm of archives as predicted by Sloderdijk. Perhaps because production and consumption of literary works in the context of interactive, interconnected, hyper-intertextual media yields more complex processes and possibilities in reader-text relation than either the disinhibition of "barbarity" or the self-domestication of the human. If disposed of an elitist/hegemonic notion of the "right" canon as I previously discussed, and reframed by a transnational mindset, maybe the social-synthetic potential of literature can still be – and be seen as - more than marginal.

The humanism underlying world literature – specifically transnational literature - much like in postmodern literature, is neo-cosmopolitan: a postmodern or cosmic humanism as termed by Theo D'haen in *European Postmodernism: The Cosmodern Turn*. Not the humanism intended to impose a Western vision of humanity onto humanity, but a humanism that seeks to extol the humanity of all humankind on a non-hierarchical, non-denominational, non-discriminatory basis (280).

Furthermore, as literary theorist Mikhail Epstein argues in *The Unasked Question: What Would Bakhtin Say?*, the death warrants that academics ensued to aspects of culture from the 1970's on (death to the author, to originality, to history, to utopia, to the human, etc.) and their accompanying "post-it" mode of innovation (post-humanism, post-art, post-postmodernism, etc.) which have allowed theorists to put to bed any past concepts, have been in a way self-defeating for "presuming so complete a dependence of new concepts on their immediate precursors" (44).

Towards a rehumanization of the Humanities, Epstein suggests a view of the "posthuman" as a necessary phase leading to *transhumanism*.

> I suggest that we may usefully distinguish among three stages in the development of the humanities. In the first stage, when the concept of *humanitas* emerged in Renaissance Italy, the humanities were mostly occupied with "the me in Me"—that is, with a humanness that had separated itself from God, nature, the world. In the second stage, the phenomenon of humanity was objectified and analyzed as "the other in Me." This otherness was interpreted by Marx as the totality of social relationships, as the generic other of alienated material production and economic conditions. Freud read internal otherness as id, spontaneously determining and mastering human consciousness. Semiotics, beginning with Saussure, interpreted this otherness as constituted by linguistic mechanisms that predetermine the form and meaning of our speech acts. […] The stage of the "me" coincides with the realm of traditional humanities, and the stage of the "other" with the "dehumanities." The rise of the dehumanities was not a mistake or deviation but a necessary stage: an exploration of "otherness" as constitutive of the human capacity for self-awareness and self-transcendence. […] Now that "the other" in its opposition to "me" has been theoretically recognized and explored, we are approaching a third stage […]This new stage could be termed "transhumanistic" since it would embrace both the human (in its narrow, Renaissance sense: the "me") and the nonhuman (as postulated by the dehumanities of our time: "the other"). (55)

The way I see it, D'haen's *cosmodernism* and Epstein's *transhumanism* are parallel concepts. Coelho's novels are drenched in this spirit, which is incidentally very consistent with the quote by the poet Jean Paul that initiates Sloderdijk's essay: "books are thick letters to friends." At least, to borrow Kwame Anthony Appiah's metaphor,[18] Coelho's novels are always humanistic *messages in a bottle*. It would be ironic to place them in the "personal development" genre, if it were not so. In them, transnational settings are "schools" where the most common lesson taught is one of humanist nature: that diversity is basically good. In the afterword of *Pilgrimage*, the author calls attention to this implied message by excitingly devising a transnational humanistic microcosm:

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[18] See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007) 257.

> Travelling to the Road to Santiago twenty years later, I stop at Villafranca del Bierzo. One of the most emblematic figures of the journey, Jesus Jato, built a shelter for pilgrims there... Jato is famous for preparing *queimadas*, an alcoholic beverage of Celtic origin. On this cold spring evening, a Canadian, two Italians, three Spaniards, and an Australian, are staying at the Ave Felix. And Jato tells them about something that happened to me in 1986 and that I didn't dare include in *The Pilgrimage*, because I was certain my readers wouldn't believe it. (277)

Coelho's settings - roads, crossings, bridges, airports, portals, etc. - are the locations where neo-cosmopolitan, transhumanist messages circulate, and of which Coelho's readers are just as an integral part as the author and his characters.

5.   Paulo Coelho and Transnational Literary Criticism

Globalization has recaptured Goethe's *Weltliteratur* and placed it at the forefront of academic debate. It has incidentally impelled literary and cultural studies into new, interesting directions. In a related process, so did the academic embrace of transnationalism. In *Global Matters*, literary critic Paul Jay argues that the "transnational turn" in literary studies has further – and productively - complicated the nationalist paradigm so prominent in literary theory and academic practices/politics. According to him, this paradigm shift reflects a rupture, a disenchantment with the romantic view of the nation as "home" for single literature and languages, displaced by a contemporary engagement with issues related to transnational spaces and hybrid identities. Effectively, this was a shift from a nation-based, universalistic ideology of sameness – what humanity shares - to an ideology of difference, more focused on issues of race, sexuality, class and gender, which is transnational in nature (16).

Jay traces the origins of the transnational paradigm to the social movements of the 60's – Civil Rights, Chicano(a), Women's – and to the subsequent postcolonial period characterized by

displacement, migration and mobility, both of which effectively transformed the composition of student and professoriate bodies in academia (Western Institutions in general and American universities, specifically). This demographic change brought on an urgency to historicize literary studies and to reconsider its scope. What was once predicated on a unitary, ahistorical, and universalizing take on literature gave way to a viewpoint of literature as multicultural, transformative and reflective of different identities: minority studies, multicultural studies, postcolonial studies. However, it was in the intersection of those literary and cultural studies and the studies of globalization in the 1990s from various academic fields, that the transnational turn – not without its critics[19] – took hold.

In *Migrations, Diasporas, Borders*, feminist theorist Susan Friedman posits that, paradoxically, the great prominence of nationalism of the past led to a greater understanding of the porousness of national borders in "how the history of empire and (post)colonialism binds the literature of different parts of the world together, how national cultures are formed in conjunction with literatures of other nations, and how interconnected and mutually constitutive cultures of the world have always been – and will continue to be in ever-intensifying ways because of the new technologies of knowledge and communication" (262). In this essay, Friedman gives interesting concrete examples of how the transnational turn has changed literary scholarship, from expanding literary cannons in the same language to literature stemming from former colonial nations to re-directing comparative literature to non-Western works.

As far as analyzing Paulo Coelho's novels, the paradigm shift from nation-based to transcultural/transnational is important because it is aligned with the view of World Literature

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[19] For a discussion on critiques of the transnational turn (by Said and Miyoshi) see Paul Jay, *The Globalizing of Literary Studies*, (New York: Cornell UP, 2010), esp. pages 28-32.

espoused by Damrosch and Casanova previously discussed. After all, it is because of the

transnational turn that a significant remapping of Cultural Studies has taken place. An analysis of

Paulo Coelho as a Brazilian author or his novels as Brazilian literature, I think, would at best

yield an incomplete understanding of the cultural phenomenon in question and risk, at worst, an

erroneous, misled interpretation. For his narrative is driven by a much more complex, fluid

imaginary homeland, where "in-between cultures" characters develop affinity identities rather

than national ones. What's needed here is a theoretical approach to location that is more typical

of transnationalism. Though focusing on American Studies, Paul Jay provides a useful model for

World Literature discussion, one that predates and transcends nation-state boundaries. That is, a

model whose cultural mapping is less preoccupied with official national boundaries and more

oriented, for instance, towards "critical regionalism," "borderland," "contact zones," "cultural

zones."[20] An application example of this model is found in Jay's analysis of Zadie Smith's *White*

Teeth (2000):

> Although the plot of *White Teeth* is loosely organized around Archie Jones, it is
> Samad Iqbal who initially carries the weight of Smith's complicated analysis of
> how history and genealogy have produced a conflict between multiculturalism
> and fundamentalism in the turn-of-the-century London. Samad's paradoxical
> experiences as a Bengali Muslim fighting to defend the British crown in World
> War II, his agonized responses to the forces of assimilation in London, and his
> struggle to reconnect with his twin sons with Bengali identity, culture, and
> religious perspective that he believes the West has corrupted are all central to
> Smith's larger ambition in the novel. Samad is particularly important because

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[20] For more on critical regionalism, here seen as the political and historical regionalization of spaces such as "West Indies" or "The Middle East" Asia-Pacific," see Rob Wilson, "Imagining 'Asia Pacific' Today," *Learning Places*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002). For a discussion of borderland, here seen as intercultural zones around geographical border delimitations, see Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestizo* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987). For more on excellent application of contact zone, see Louis Owens, "The Song is very short: Native American Literature and Literary Theory," *Weber Studies* 12.3 (1995): 51-62. See also Edouard Glissant, "Caribbean Discourses" (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1989) for an in-depth discussion of cultural zones.

through him Smith focuses on a set of transnational forces shaping contemporary globalization, and in a way historicizes their processes. Moreover, by juxtaposing Iqbals's experiences with those of the Jamaican Bowens, Smith underscores the globalized nature of empire's structures and effects. For all their differences, the Iqbals and the Bowens suffer through the same kind of historical experiences, and in contemporary London their children confront many of the same challenges: how to imaginatively construct English identities that are both rooted in – and routed through – the complex histories of their families and the nations that produced them. (160)

The concept of *contact zones* as defined in *Arts of the Contact Zone*, by multicultural scholar Mary Louise Pratt, is particularly useful to understand Coelho's works. Her seminal definition of contact zone is: "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (34). Of course, Pratt speaks of contact zones in contexts of higher degrees of power imbalance and violence of many kinds, like the Spanish Conquest over the Inca. However, I believe it is also possible to apply her concept in the interpretative context of contemporary transnational popular literature.

Firstly, transnational novels are narratives set in contact zones and/or they are accounts of the conflicts that take place in them. As Pratt puts it, "autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression - these are some of the literate arts of the contact zone. Miscomprehension, incomprehension, dead letters, unread master pieces, absolute heterogeneity of meaning - these are some of the perils of writing in the contact zone" (37). The very same goes for transnational literature.

Secondly, an akin conflict phenomenon takes place when readers, especially a typically transnational readership such as Coelho's, engage in the act of reading, which act yields a contact zone of its own. In doing so, imagined worlds are organized and invented - not unlike

what travel and exploration writing did for the European readership in the expansion period, but in less of a unidirectional way. In fact, as I will argue later, one of the more important and potentially empowering elements of the "transnational novel-transnational reader" contact zone is the "absolute heterogeneity of meaning."

Looking at Paulo Coelho's novels as contact zone narratives *and* as yielding of a reader-text contact zone is, in my opinion, enough to characterize his texts as essentially transnational literature and – consequently – only fully understood from a transnational paradigm of World Literature. However, definitions of transnational literature vary. Here, I assume a definition that is kin to literary comparatist Arianna Dagnino's explanation of "transcultural" literature in *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility*:

> Transcultural literature records the re-shaping of national collective imaginaries in an effort to adjust to the cosmopolitan vision in a new age of transnational and supra-national economic, political, social, and cultural processes […] There is no doubt that at the forefront of the change of paradigm under discussion are those artists, writers, and sometimes scholars who have already experienced in the flesh and in their creative minds the effects of global mobility, transnational patterns, neonomadic lifestyles, and that in their creative (or critical) works have already captured and expressed an emerging transcultural mood […]. The genesis of transcultural literature lies as much in the ever-increasing globalizing forces which are reshaping our cultural, economic, and social landscapes as in the literary discourse related to mobility at large. ("Transcultural Literature" 3)

In that sense, I posit that transnational literature refers to texts produced by transnational authors (of "neonomadic lifestyles"), whose messages attend to the needs and wants of a transnational audience (of "transcultural mood") by addressing themes and issues pertinent to a transnational context (of "a literary discourse related to mobility at large"). In every instance of this definition, Paulo Coelho's novels are to be considered transnational literature, for he – a neonomadic author– writes transnational narratives that speak to an audience, either transnational

per se or immersed in a transnational context, as evidenced by his recurrent transnational

settings, characters and themes.

5.1   Transnational Literature: Authorship in Question

As a common starting point, transnational literature refers to texts that are produced by

migrant writers wherein they create imaginary worlds to address practical and theoretical issues

related to migrancy. As literary critic Rachel Trousdale explains in *Nabokov, Rushdie and the*

Transnational Imagination:

> Most criticism of transnational fiction categorizes writers by political
> circumstances: writers are called colonial, postcolonial, exiled, or cosmopolitan
> and are compared to other writers from the same category. Others are labeled by
> their place of origin, and a writer who has lived on three continents may be simply
> "African" or "South Asian." These categorizations are misleading because writers
> in very different political positions use imaginary worlds in remarkably similar
> ways. (3)

My concern with classifying Paulo Coelho echoes Trousdale's. Every article, peer-

reviewed or not, that I encountered in my research has made a point of defining Paulo Coelho as

a Brazilian author.[21] But, in reality, his writings are much more reflective of his transnational

identity and lifestyle than they'll ever be a representation of Brazil's national culture. Albert

Guérard, in his 1940 *What is World Literature?*, had already alerted us that an author's class and

period has a stronger influence in his novels than their nationality.

> There is greater resemblance among the European minds of a given age, such as
> the Enlightenment, than between a medieval Englishman and his distant mid-

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[21] For an example of article that emphasize Coelho's national identity cited in this dissertation,
see Dana Goodyear,"The Magus: The Astonishing Appeal of Paulo Coelho." *New Yorker*, 7 May
2007. See Glauco Ortolano, "An Interview with Paulo Coelho: The Coming of Age of a
Brazilian Phenomenon," *World Literature Today*, 77.1 (2003): 57. For an exception, see Ana
Ban,"Brazilian Books for Export," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 31.4 (2015):291

Victorian posterity. If you examine an old portrait, you will first of all be conscious of the period to which it belongs. It is only on closer scrutiny that you may be able to detect the nationality of the subject. [...] Nor should we fail to take into account, in the pre-war Europe at any rate, the existence of class distinctions more rigid than national boundaries. […] On the Battlefield, all classes will fight with equal heroism for king and country. On the morrow, an aristocrat will give his daughter in marriage to a foreign aristocrat rather than to a plebeian of his own country. This condition has a bearing upon literature. Members of the upper class, because they lived the same kind of life, inspired and enjoyed everywhere the same kind of art. (53)

Guérard's argument is particularly fitting here because Coelho is in fact more kin to transnational writers than to his compatriots and, consequently, his novels reflect the transnational mindset of our times. Ariana Dagnino argues that this, the age of global mobility, has not only given rise a new point-of-view related to transnationalism, but it has also given birth to a growing number of transcultural, mobile writers. They are imaginative writers who, by choice or circumstance, live a transnational live characterized by multilingualism, exposure to the diversity of pluricultural spaces and identities.

Challenging visions of the "clash of civilizations" (Huntington) with their apparently irreconcilable divides on the one hand, as well as complete cultural relativism on the other, transcultural writers—whom I also call "transpatriate writers"—are disposed to reclaim an inclusive vision of culture/s, one which stresses the power of confluences, overlappings, and interactions rather than of polarities. In this way, not only do they contribute to the development of a transcultural literature which in its narrative choices transcends the borders of a single culture and nation, but they also promote and engage with a wider global literary perspective and, possibly, a new way of imagining and living identity. Needless to say, transcultural writers are not new on the landscape of literary history. However, it is only now that the pattern of modern (im)migrations and the phenomena of globalization generate transcultural experiences and develop transcultural sensibilities. ("Transnational Writers" 2)

With Coelho, for example, personal political and ideological views often oscillate, for instance, between critiques of late capitalism and socialist projects, which is, I contend, much more congruent with a transnational, transcultural identity than a nationally rooted one.

In *Aleph* (2001), Coelho nostalgically criticizes modern life as a result of global

capitalism. By way of example, here is how the author describes the village where he and his

party are hosted during his book signing trip along the Trans-Siberian railway, five hours away

from their final destination, Moscow.

> We walk through the village, which is something out of a fairy tale. One day tourists will come here, vast hotels will be built, and shops will sell T-shirts, lighters, postcards, models of the wooden houses. They will make huge parking lots for the double decker coaches that will bring people armed with digital cameras, determined to capture the whole lake (Lake Baikal) on a microchip. The well we saw will be destroyed replaced by another, more decorative one; however, it won't supply the inhabitants with water but will be sealed by order of the council so that no foreign children risk leaning over the edge and falling in. The fishing boat I saw this morning will vanish. The waters of the lake will be crisscrossed by modern yachts offering day cruises to the center of the lake, lunch included. Professional fishermen and hunters will arrive, armed with the necessary licenses for which they will pay, per day, the equivalent of what the local fishermen and hunters earn in a year.
>
> At the moment, though, it's just a remote village in Siberia, where a man and a woman less than half his age are walking alongside a river created by the thaw. (Coelho, "Aleph" 211)

On the other hand, and also quite often, Coelho criticizes socialist and communist

projects. For instance, here is the background he uses to construct Edda, a character who

functioned as a spiritual teacher to Athena, the main character in *The Witch of Portobello* (2007).

> I was a young enthusiastic doctor who, filled with the desire to help my fellow beings, travelled to the interior of Romania on an exchange programme run by the British government…I arrived in Bucharest during that crazed, bloody dictatorship and went to Transylvania to assist with a mass vaccination programme for the local population.
>
> I didn't realize I was merely one more piece on a very complicated chessboard, where invisible hands were manipulating my idealism and that ulterior motives lay behind everything I believed was being done for humanitarian purposes: stabilizing the government run by a dictator's son, allowing Britain to sell arms in a market dominated by the soviets (Coelho, "The Witch of Portobello" 258)

Later in the same book, a reporter from a London newspaper writing about the "witch

hunt" being brought against Athena, reflects on matters of religion: "According to the sociologist

Arthaud Lenox, phenomena like this will become increasingly common in the future, possibly involving more serious clashes between established religions. 'Now that the Marxist utopia has shown itself incapable of channeling society's ideals, the world is ripe for a religious revival" (273). Clearly, a transnational mode of thinking, which transnational novels reflect, is very postmodern it their skepticism of any "grand" or "meta" narrative. In this sense, Paulo Coelho narratives are transnational and postmodern.

Paulo Coelho's transnational identity can be recognized in the novels that are explicitly autobiographical and the ones where he is the *implied* author. From a rhetorical standpoint, narrative is as a multileveled purposeful communicative act whose elements (characters, plot, settings, etc.) is shaped in the service of a larger end. Working with that approach, in *Narrative Theory*, Phelan and Rabinowitz define implied authorship as the authorial version "whom the actual author constructs and who communicates through the myriad choices – conscious, intuitive, or even unconscious – that he or she makes in composing and revising a narrative" ("Authors" 31). According to them, this is an important distinction because, among other reasons, it recognizes the act of writing as inexorably an act of self-representation.

As literary theorist Paul De Man postulates, in *Autobiography as Defacement*, any given text, to some extent, is autobiographical since it can only be understood in the context of its authorship, of the author's self-knowledge. But, if every text is autobiographical, then no text is satisfactorily autobiographical (922). It is not in the specular structure of the autobiographical text that resides the value of classifying it as such, but in the linguistic predicament it reveals: that self-knowledge depends on figurative language. This refers not only to the autobiographer but also to the reader, since reading an autobiography can bypass the subject of the text altogether, and become, therapeutically and ultimately, learning about oneself. Not a genre or a

mode, autobiography for De Man is a "figure" of reading, a personification (prosopopoeia) of the idealized self, which paradoxically "de-faces" or masks the fictionality of the author, both giving and depriving him or her of a voice.

I'd like to return to two targets of De Man's theory of autobiography that are very pertinent to the study of Coelho. De Man points out that the first problem in establishing autobiography as a genre arises from the distinction between fiction and autobiography, this latter being defined as an uncontested yet illusory, mimetic, simpler mode of referentiality where even some degree of anti-mimesis is acceptable (ghosts, dreams, etc.). This confusing distinction, which De Man compares to the increasing vertigo decurrent of never getting off a revolving door, is further complicated when applied to Coelho's novels. The novelist never claims his novels to be autobiographical or biographical. Instead, the disclaimer "loosely" or "semi" autobiographical/ biographical is emphatically stamped under the novels' titles. The claim to fiction is clearly made. Furthermore, in Coelho's books, anti-mimetic elements are not displayed in the passing, acceptable amount of the conventional autobiography. They share equal importance with mimetic elements in the narrative, as argued in Chapter 2.

De Man's revolving door vertigo metaphor is not effaced by the "fiction" disclaimer and the anti-mimetic character of Coelho's narratives. The "ethos" nature of the autobiographic argument persists, especially in the context of the global digital era, where the "persona" of the author transcends the novel itself and becomes a larger narrative, as Chapter 3 will discuss. Thus, contrary to De Man's criticism against theorists (particularly Philippe Lejeune) who "stubbornly" insist on the contractual speech act nature of the autobiography (923), applies to Coelho novels only very problematically. De Man disagrees that autobiographies imply and author-reader relationship, where the reader "becomes the judge, the policing power in charge of

verifying the authenticity of the signature and the consistency of the behavior of the signer, the extent to which he represents or fails to honor the contractual agreement he has signed" (923). Seeing that the simulacra of literary representation gains great cultural-economic significance in the convergence culture of our times, this contractual nature of autobiography – or any other text, for that matter - no longer is a stubborn insistence, unfounded in argument or evidence, as De Man argues. In fact, the accuracy with which 21st readers perceive *the author in* the text (or the implied author as aforementioned) to represent *the author of* the text (his/her persona) is predicates the survival of the novel.

In Coelho's novels, the author/narrator's transnational authorial identity – or authenticity - echoes the conventions of transnational literature at large, in the sense that a "double demand, both for belief and for imaginative participation, also appears in much of the fiction of transnational writers: the novels, while overtly fictional contain pedagogical or testimonial elements" (Trousdale 27). Sometimes Coelho's transnational authorial identity is quite self-conscious. In *Aleph*, as Coelho and his wife enjoy a tour of Tunis, Tunisia, guided by one of his readers, Samil, chosen at random at a post-party talk during a book tour, the author contemplates the situation:

> Above the gates in the ancient city wall is a lantern, and Samil explains its significance to us. "This is the origin of one of the most famous Arabic Proverbs: 'The light falls only on the stranger'."
>
> The proverb he says, is very apt for the situation we're in now. Samil wants to be a writer and is fighting to get recognition in his own country, whereas I, a Brazilian author, am already known here. (Coelho, "Aleph" 40)

There is an important link between Coelho's self-representation as a transnational author/narrator and the transnational identity of his audience, one that is associated with notions of cosmopolitanism. Undeniably, cosmopolitanism is a charged and controversial term. But an unavoidable one in the discussion of World Literature and the contemporary transnational

paradigm. New directions and differentiations, as suggested by Walter Mignolo in *The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis*,[22] are indeed in order. For the purposes of this study however, it suffices to say that a diversity-based cosmopolitanism ideology (what Mignolo calls "critical cosmopolitanism") is not only worth recuperating but it has become a necessity in our times, when extremist nationalisms are once again threatening the well-being of displaced peoples.

Transnational authors and readers tend to be cosmopolitan individuals. At the very least, they tend to become cosmopolitan compatriots at/by the act of engaging in transnational novels. In *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, philosopher Kwane Anthony Appiah, uses this term in reference to those who "entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people" (618).

It is important to (re)define the cosmopolitan individual when looking at popular literature, however. As Susan Friedman argues, "cosmopolitanism, once thought to be the privilege of metropolitan elites, travelers and expatriate artists, is newly understood to include those who move in search of a more secure or better life at the most basic level of survival, even those whose migration is only ambiguously voluntary or decidedly involuntary" (261). Most cosmopolitan writers may still carry the mark of niche/prosperous "well-heeled class of international globe-trotters or of competent and perhaps not less privileged "consumers" of cultural folklore," as Dagnino[23] puts it. Applicable to Coelho biography as that stigma may be, it

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[22] See Walter Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis and Critical Cosmopolitanism," *Public Culture* 12.3 (2000): 721-745.

[23] See Ariana Dagnino, *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 2015) 16, 163-65. And also Rachel Trousdale, *Nabokov, Rusdie and the Transnational Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 9, for a similar discussion on the cosmopolitan nature of transnational/transcultural writers versus the textual possibilities of their novels for readers.

is far from an appropriate definition for the cosmopolitan individuals associated with the author. His novels portray characters based on real people who are often third world immigrants, prostitutes, blue-collar workers, economy nomads, whose struggle with cultural shock are an uneasy driving narrative force. Also, his worldwide readers are individuals who come from all walks of life, and more closely reflect the neo-cosmopolitan individual framed by Friedman above.

5.2   Transnational Literature: Readership in Question

As Phelan and Rabinowitz argue, "to the extent that a novel is an imitation of some nonfictional form (a biography, a memoir, a history), so the narrator (whether dramatized or not) is an imitation of an author, and just as an actual author always writes for a hypothetical authorial audience, so a narrator always writes for a "narrative audience" that treats the narrator as "real" (140).

This mimetic (realistic, recognizable) element in Paulo Coelho's persona both as author and narrator plays a significant part in the phenomenal reception of his works. And, to my view, reaching a significant transnational readership is a defining aspect of transnational literature. Not only is Paulo Coelho widely read from the Middle East to North Africa, from remote villages in South Asia to all of Latin America, but he also has a significant presence in the dominant Western cultural scene. Among enthusiastic readers of Coelho are celebrities such as Hollywood actress Julia Roberts, performer Madonna, media mogul Oprah Winfrey and former US president Bill Clinton, to whom Coelho's narrative reads beautifully "like music" (Goodyear 40). An interview printed at the end of Coelho's *The Witch of Portobello* is prefaced thusly: "Last fall,

when I did a live online chat with the best-selling Brazilian author of *The Alchemist* and many other novels, I was astounded by his sheer internationality. Talking to me in New York from his hotel in Milan, questions from fans poured in from Egypt, Sweden, Spain, Iran […] And that is the amazing fame of Paulo Coelho – his books, translated into 66 languages, touch people everywhere, often deeply, with their seemingly simple spiritual messages" (337).

If we assume, in line with a rhetorical approach, that narratives are designed in terms of genres, techniques, structures and elements by their authors, consciously or not, to affect readers in a certain way, and that reader response is a test of the efficacy of such narrative decisions, then we can extrapolate that Coelho's novels "work" and that, judging by the sheer amount of readers around the world, they present significant cultural, ideological, ethical possibilities. One such possibility is that, because of the particularly transnational composition of Paulo Coelho's audience, his novels tend to transcend national identities in a very noteworthy way, which aligns with Trousdale argument:

> […] The fictions of transnational writers can bring readers a nation-like consciousness of shared identity, replacing traditional markers such as language and geography with the less tangible grounds of exile, bilingualism, or outsider status. Such texts draw on an established tradition of nationalist novels. At the same time, they also subvert the fundamental premises of nationalist movements by suggesting that communities are not formed by a shared culture but by shared attitudes towards culture. (15)

I believe there is an unavoidable link between Trousdale' argument and literary theorist Stanley Fish's concept of interpretative communities. According to Fish, it is by the shared experience of a community of readers that meanings are created prior and independently from the texts themselves. "Interpretative communities provide specific contexts for operating as a reader. In this way, the meaning of a text is always a situated meaning produced in a specific context" ("Cultural Studies" Storey 48).

The alternate worlds of transnational fiction bring together a community of international readers and writers – in other words, a transnational interpretative community – which furthers the possible rhetorical effects of Paulo Coelho's novels. For instance, by providing them with a space that both acknowledges and transcend national borders. It seems to me that, in the case of Paulo Coelho, this transnational interpretative community functions as authorial audience (a hypothetical group that shares the author's interests, motivations and worldview for whom he/she writes) and as narrative audience (one that the actual readers, flesh-and-blood, "join" the narrative world created by the author). Considering that this is only possible inasmuch as transnational readers acknowledge said novels as valid narrative representations of themselves, a mimetic assessment of Coelho's narrative is useful, though – clearly – not all elements of his writings can be adequately analyzed by conventional mimetic narrative theory.

Phelan and Rabinowitz explain that audiences respond to fictional narratives in three possible way: mimetic, thematic and synthetic. Responses of the mimetic kind are linked the extent to which readers accept the characters as possible people and the world narrative like unto theirs. Prominently, realistic fiction like Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) or Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You* (2003) evoke their audience's mimetic interest. Thematically, audiences develop interest in the ideas represented in the narrative, how it deals with the cultural, ideological, ethical issues. For example, allegorical novels such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) certainly lend themselves to audience attention of the thematic kind. Lastly, synthetic audience responses refer to the artificially or social constructs represented in the narrative. An audience's synthetic interest is predominant while reading postmodern metafiction such as Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) or *Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children* (1981) ("Introduction" 7).

For the most part, however, audience's interest spreads evenly among three kinds of response. That is the case of Coelho's narratives. Synthetic responses to his narratives are better explained from the standpoint of unnatural narratology. I will consider first the massive audience response to Coelho novels due to their mimetic and thematic elements. Firstly, his works resonate with a multitude of transnational readers for mimetic reasons (e.g. autobiography, characters based in "real" people, iconic migrant settings, etc.). Secondly, a thematic audience response to his work is a due to the urgency of issues of migrancy today as well as to Coelho compelling desire to *recognize the other*.

What connects transnational authors and transnational readers is, in effect, the characters through whom they negotiate transnational issues. In other words, it is vicariously in transnational characters' lives that global readers join a global community – united by intellectual and emotional processes rather than geo-affiliation as premised by national paradigms; A community who self-invents in the face of global displacements and forms new cosmopolitan identities.

5.3   *Transnational Literature: Characters in Question*

Many transnational authors write transnational literature. However, the writing of transnational texts does not necessarily require that a migrant becomes an author. So long as an author develops characters who live through, by, or against the transnational experience, her or his writings can be considered transnational literature. In the case of Coelho novels, however, almost all characters are, in fact, migrants.

Phelan and Rabinowitz argue that characters have both mimetic and thematic functions. That is, they resemble possible people *and* they convey political, philosophical and ethical issues. Typically, the mimetic element heightens our interest in the thematic elements of the narrative ("Characters" 111). The more a character is recognizable (mimetic) to the audience, the more relevant the portrayed issues of migrancy (thematic) became.

The mimetic elements of Coelho's novels are exponentialized by the fact that they are either autobiographic or based on "real" people he meets on his many voyages. They may be immigrants – many are – or they are simply seen through the author's transnational lenses, which come up here and there in his narrative:

> This time I will be staying in London for only three days. There will be a signing session, meals in Indian and Lebanese restaurants, and conversations in the hotel lobby about books, bookshops and authors. I have no plans to return to my house in Saint Martin until the end of the year. From London I will catch a flight back to Rio, where I can again hear my mother tongue spoken in the streets, drink açaí juice every night, and gaze tirelessly out my window at the most beautiful view in the world: Copacabana beach. (Coelho, "Aleph" 19)

We find two typically transnational main characters in Paulo Coelho's *The Witch of Portobello* (2007) and *Veronika Decides to Die* (1998).

In *The Witch of Portobello*, Coelho builds the biography of Athena, a woman born to a Romanian gypsy mother and adopted by a wealthy Lebanese couple who later migrate to England. To do so, he uses the journalistic-like narration of the people who knew her. According to the author, the character was inspired on the life of an Austrian stewardess he met in Transylvania and on his own "feminine ego."

Athena's family moves from Beirut to London, where she briefly attends college and works as a bank teller. She apprentices calligraphy under a Bedouin in Dubai, where she also becomes a successful Real Estate agent. Athena journeys into Transylvania in search of her

origins.   She goes back and forth between London and Scotland, in pursuit of spiritual

development and communion with the "feminine part of the Divine," through dance and music.

In the process, Athena learns how to harness the powers of a divine entity, to prophesy, and to

advice a growing number of followers, inciting the persecution of zealous Christians that will

accuse her of witchcraft, leading up her to her "death."

In the words of Pavel Podbielski, Athena's landlord:

> Athena and I had only one thing in common: we were both refugees from a war and arrived in England when we were still children. Although I fled Poland over fifty years ago. We both knew that despite that physical change, our traditions continue to exist in exile – communities join together again, language and religion remain alive, and in a place that will always be foreign to them, people tend to look after each other.
>
> Traditions continue, but the desire to go back gradually disappears. That desire needs to stay alive in our hearts as a hope with which we like to delude ourselves, but it will never be put in practice; I will never go back to live in Czestochowa, and Athena and her family will never return to Beirut. It was this kind of solidarity that made me rent her the third floor of my house in Basset Road. (Coelho, "The Witch of Portobelo" 58).

When Athena justifies her search for her birth mother in Transylvania to her adopted

mother as a way of filling in the "blank spaces" in her identity, she echoes Pavel's

considerations. She says: "I learned Calligraphy when I was in Dubai. I danced whenever I

could, but music exists only because pause exists, and sentences only exist because blank spaces

exist" (105). Therefore, her transnational identity is one permeated with blank spaces. It is

Athena's father's reflections over breakfast the following morning, however, which is clearly not

lost to a migrant reader:

> A while ago, while you were in the Middle East, I looked into the possibility of going home to Beirut. I went to the street where we used to live. The house is no longer there, but despite the foreign occupation and the constant incursions, they are slowly rebuilding the country. I felt a sense of Euphoria. Perhaps it was the moment to start over again. And it was precisely that expression, "start all over again", that brought me back to reality. The time has passed when I could allow myself that luxury. […]

> I walked past some of my old haunts, and I felt like a stranger, as if nothing there belonged to me anymore. The worst of it was that my dream of one day returning gradually disappeared when I found myself back in the city where I was born. Even so, I needed to make that visit. The songs of exile are still there in my heart, but I know that I will never again live in Lebanon. In a way, the days I spent in Beirut helped me to a better understanding of the place where I live now, and to value each second I spend in London. (Coelho, "The Witch of Portobello" 106).

If in *The Witch of Portobello*, the main character is transnational by way of migration, in *Veronika Decides to Die*, the main character is transnational – or at least, transcultural – by virtue of navigating through two distinct worlds: the "normal" world of the general population and the "insane" world of a mental hospital. The novel tells the story of a 24-year-old Slovenia woman who struggles with suicidal depression. Even though everything seems to be going well in her life, Veronika sets out to attempt – and fail - suicide. Not sure how to justify her decision, she writes a letter to the press in lieu of a suicide note about how upset she is at magazine article titled "Where is Slovenia?" Veronika wakes up in a mental institution and is unknowingly submitted to an experiment designed by a Dr. Igor who tells her that her survival was a temporary matter: she had only one week to live. Dr. Igor's experiment, based on the premise that one's will to live can be evoked by eminent death, sets Veronika on an intensive week-long journey of self-realization. The book's central message is a vision of sanity as collective madness.

But it is very culturally significant and relatable to a transnational reader that Veronika's journey starts the way it does, with the realization that her cultural roots are ignored or downplayed. Veronika's reply to the magazine article is undoubtedly satirical, but that does not invalidate completely the disorienting effect of the article on her psyche. It is by reading of the anonymity of her home country that Veronika starts questioning her grasp on reality.

> She looked out of the convent window that gave on to the small square in Ljubljana. 'If they don't know where Slovenia is, then Ljubljana must be a myth,' she thought. Like Atlantis or Lemuria, or the other lost continents that fill men's imagination. No one, anywhere in the world, would begin an article asking where Mount Everest was, even if they had never been there. Yet, in the middle of Europe, a journalist on an important magazine felt no shame at asking such a question, because he knew most of his readers would not know where Slovenia was" (Coelho, "Veronika Decides to Die" 5)

As mentioned before, Paulo Coelho writes about biographical accounts or stories based on the life of real people he encounters along the way. In *Veronika Decides to Die*, he does both. Coelho briefly inserts himself in the middle of the narrative to explain to his readers that he had heard of Veronika's story three months after it happened through the account of the daughter of Dr. Igor, the psychiatrist who conducted the experimental treatment on Veronika. At this point he makes clear his intentions of recounting though Veronika's story his own experiences as a mental institution patient.

> Paulo laughed when he learned of the strange letter to the newspaper that Veronika had left behind, complaining that an important French magazine didn't even know where Slovenia was.
> 'No one would kill themselves over something like that.'
> 'That's why the letter had no effect,' said his friend Veronika (the homonymous daughter of the Villete doctor), embarrassed. 'Yesterday, when I checked in at the hotel, the receptionist though Slovenia was a town in Germany.
> He knew the feeling, for many foreigners believe the Argentine city of Buenos Aires to be the capital of Brazil.
> But apart from having foreigners blithely compliment him on the beauty of his country's capital city (which was to be found in the neighboring country of Argentina), Paulo Coelho shared with Veronika the fact just mentioned, but which is worth restating: he too had been admitted into a mental hospital, and, as his first wife had remarked, 'should never had been let out'.
> But he was let out. And when he left the sanatorium for the last time, determined to never go back, he had made two promises: (a) that he would one day write about the subject and (b) that he would wait until both this parent were dead before touching publicly on the issue, because he didn't want to hurt them, since both had spent many years of their lives blaming themselves for what they had done. (Coelho, "Veronika Decides to Die" 17)

One can argue, as Coelho and many have, that a mental institution is a whole new world, with its own rules, systems, language and cultural shock, as well as a global microcosm. Veronika's experience between the "real" world and "mental hospital land" is a transnational narrative told in "Dr. Caligary" terms, which furthermore raises issues typical of a globalized society on the individual level: personal angst, identity crisis, mindless daily routine, pressure to conformity. In the words of Zedka, a clinically depressive friend of Veronika's in the mental hospital: "Madness is the inability to communicate your ideas. It's as if you were in a foreign country, able to see and understand everything that's going on around you, but incapable of explaining what you need to know or of being helped, because you don't understand the language they speak there…And all of us, one way or another, are mad" (56).

As important as the transnationality of Coelho's characters are the settings in which their stories take place. They are in fact so central to the narrative and so transnationally iconic that, one could argue, they become characters themselves.

5.4   Transnational Literature: Settings in Question

It is a difficult task to determine the borders of a setting in a narrative: from a geographical space, to objects within, to background in general. Settings often – particularly in transnational literature - grow from physical to psychological and rhetorical space. In a significant sense, "settings begin to merge with character – among other things – because 'environment' and psychology begin to intertwine, both causally and symbolically" ("Narrative Worlds" Phelan and Rabinowitz 84). Unsurprisingly then, like characters, setting exert mimetic and thematic rhetorical functions.

Rachel Trousdale posits that "transnational literature is full of fictional countries, alternate stories and science-fictional worlds because fantastic locations create communities that replace national cultures" (2). Conversely, most Coelho novels are set in real, recognizable places (mimetic element). Often readers are invited to follow the main characters from one country to another. The more significant plot and character development tend to happen between countries, in roads, trains and airplane flights, which intensifies the transnational nature of his narratives (thematic element). Though the setting aren't fantastic locations, they are places where the spiritual, the magic, the mystic occurs. It may be interpreted that "real" locations provide Coelho's novels with a credible starting point on which to build the narrative elements that move beyond what is logical.

> Settings familiar to the authorial audience can serve as a backdrop to generate not only particular rules of configuration but also particular rules of notice, that is, standard procedures by which readers give greater emphasis to some textual signals then others. Then, too the level of accuracy of a narrator's account of setting can influence reader's decisions about the reliability of the narration and, more generally about the web of relationships between narrative, authorial, and actual audience. ("Narrative Worlds" Phelan and Rabinowitz 86)

Fittingly, the settings in Coelho's narrative are places where characters are "on the move," "in-between" real locations as to emphasize their transnational identity. Therefore, not only are Coelho and his characters transnational personages, but also their stories take place in significantly transnational settings. Two examples of such settings can be found in *Eleven Minutes* (2003) and *The Pilgrimage* (1987).

Eleven Minutes tells us the story of an international prostitute named Maria. She is born in a small village on the countryside of Brazil. As she grows up, we learn of Maria's first experiences with dating, love, relationships and sex. Eventually, as young woman, Maria travels to the big city of Rio, where – after a chance encounter - she is promised a dancer/modeling

career in Switzerland. In a new country, Maria faces all the cultural and identity conflicts that an

immigrant does toppled with the complications of working in the sex industry. She is introduced

to high end prostitution when an Arab man offers her an irrefutable amount of money for sex at

the moment her modeling career had obviously failed. She is "groomed" as a prostitute by Milan,

the Yugoslav brothel owner. She is introduced to the world of sadomasochism by a rich

international record company manager named Terence. She is shown a way out by a Swiss

painter, with whom she falls in love. In the end, true loves points Maria on the path of realizing

an immigrants greatest longing and, at the same time, biggest fear: going back "home."

As in *Veronika Decides to Die*, the main character of *Eleven Minutes* is based on a real

person with which Coelho came across in his travels. He recounts in the afterword of the book:

> In 1997, after a lecture I gave in Mantua, Italy, I went to my hotel and found that someone had left a manuscript for me in the reception. Now, I normally never read unsolicited manuscripts, but I did read this one – the true story of a Brazilian prostitute, her marriages, her problems with the law and her various adventures. In 2000, when I was passing through Zurich I met that prostitute – known professionally as Sonia and said how much I had liked what I read…She invited us, myself, a friend and a female journalist from the newspaper Blick, who had just interviewed me – to go to Langstrasse, the local red light district. I didn't know that Sonia had already forewarned her colleagues of our visit, and to my surprise, I ended up signing several of my books, translated into various languages.
>
> At that point, I had already decided to write about sex, but I still didn't have the plot or a principal character … In conversation with a journalist from the Swiss magazine L'Illustrée, I described the spontaneous book-signing in Langstrasse, and he wrote a long article about it. The result was that, at a book signing in Geneva, several prostitutes turned up to have their copies of my books signed. I was very struck by one of them in particular, and afterwards – with my agent and friend Mônica Antunes – we went for a coffee that turned into supper that turned into other meetings in the days that followed. Thus was born the connecting thread of *Eleven Minutes* […] I must thank Maria (*nom de guerre*) who now lives in Lausanne with her husband and her two lovely daughters who, during various meetings with myself and Mônica, told us her story, on which this book is based. (291)

From the very first time Maria travels from her small hometown to the cosmopolitan city of Rio de Janeiro, the reader is invited to travel with the main characters to places where intercultural encounters occur: consulates, airports, bus routes, second language acquisition schools, plazas, boardwalks, tourism landscapes. Specifically, in Maria's case, a red light district is the transnational space for, as with the sanatory of *Veronika Decides to Die*, the underworld of international prostitution is itself a new culture with its own language, rules and traditions. Here are some scenes of great resonance with migrant readers:

> Maria travelled for forty-eight hours by bus, checked into a cheap hotel in Copacabana (Copacabana! That beach, that sky…) and even before she had unpacked her bags, she grabbed the bikini she had bought, put it on and despite the cloudy weather, made it straight for the beach. She looked at the sea fearfully, but ended up wading awkwardly into its water. No one at the beach noticed this was her first contact with the ocean, with the goddess Iemanjá, the marine currents, the foaming waves and, on the other side of the Atlantic, with the coast of Africa and its lions. When she came out of the water, she was approached by a woman trying to sell wholefood sandwiches, by a handsome black man who asked her if she wanted to go out with him that night, and by another man who didn't speak a word of Portuguese but who asked, in gestures, if she would like to have a drink of coconut water (20).

> She arrived feeling exhausted and, while still in the airport, her heart contracted with fear: she realized she was completely dependent on the man at her side – she had no knowledge of the country, the language or the cold (39).
> The following day she enrolled in a French course that was run in the mornings, and there she met people of all creeds, beliefs and ages, men wearing brightly colored clothes and lots of gold bracelets, women who always wore a headscarf, children who learned more quickly than the grown-ups, when it should have been the other way round, since grown-ups have more experience. (47)

> She went out early, had breakfast in her usual café, went for a stroll around the lake and saw a demonstration held by refugees. A woman out walking with her small dog told her that they were Kurds, and Maria, instead of pretending that she knew the answer in order to prove that she was more cultivated and intelligent than people might think, asked: 'Where do Kurds come from?' To her surprise, the woman didn't know. […] Maria felt less alone on that gray morning n Geneva, with the temperature close to zero, the Kurds demonstrating, the trams arriving punctually at each stop, the shops setting out their jewelry in the window again, the banks opening, the beggars sleeping, the Swiss going to work. (62)

> Work started as it always did. The Thai women all sat together, the Colombians adopted their usual air of knowing everything, the three Brazilians (including her) looked absently about them, as if nothing could ever surprise or interest them. Apart from them there was an Austrian, two Germans and the rest were tall, pretty women with pale eyes who came from the former Eastern Bloc countries and who always seemed to find husbands faster than the others.
>
> The men began to arrive – Russian, Swiss, Germans, all of them busy executives, well able to afford the services of the most expensive prostitutes in one of the most expensive cities in the world. (154)

In *The Pilgrimage*, the transnational character is clearly Paulo Coelho himself. As mentioned previously, this is the story of how undertaking the Road to Santiago de Compostela changed the course of the author's life. The story begins as Paulo fails to receive his sword in Brazil, a symbol of his ordination as Master of the Order of RAM (Ragnus Algnus Mundi), a small apocryphal order within the Catholic church. Paulo's RAM master explains, as he was about to end the ritual: "Take away your hand; it has deceived you, …you should have refused the sword…Because of your avidity, you will now have to seek again for your sword. And because of your pride, you will have to seek it among simple people" (3). The sword is taken and buried somewhere along the medieval route known as the Strange Road to Santiago, in Spain.

Another transnational character accompanies Coelho along most of his pilgrimage. Petrus - an alias – is a mysterious Italian man. All we know of him is that he is a wealthy, successful public figure, judging from a scene where he hides from unexpected television cameras. And that he is the designated guide for Paulo on the Road, along which he'll teach meditations exercises and mystical practices to the author. On their journey, which is just as physical as it is spiritual, both pilgrims will engage in philosophical, religious and political conversations. As they develop a friendship, cultural differences and similarities between Brazil and Italy surface. However, the transcultural experience is the message that takes the forefront, especially because of the settings.

At some point, Petrus states: "when you travel, you experience, in a very practical way, the act of rebirth. You confront completely new situations, the day passes more slowly, and on most journeys, you don't even understand the language the people speak. So you are like a child just out of the womb" (38). Few locations are as evocative, symbolic and relatable to migrants than a road. It is by traveling, moving, migrating that a transnational readership recognizably redefines their cultural identity, as if they are "reborn" of the experience. In this particular novel, the road is a transnational character itself.

> Also in the twelfth century, Spain began to capitalize on the legend of San Tiago as the country fought against the Moors who had invaded the peninsula. Several militant religious orders were established along the road to Santiago, and the apostle's ashes became a powerful symbol in the fight against the Muslims. The Muslims, in turn, claimed that they had with them one of Muhammad's arms and took that as their guiding symbol. By the time Spain had regained control of the country, the militant orders had become so strong that they posed a threat to the nobility, and the Catholic kings had to intervene directly to prevent the orders to mounting an insurgency. As a result, the Road to Santiago was gradually forgotten, and were it not for the sporadic artistic manifestations – in paintings such as Buñuel's The Milky Way and Juan Manuel Serrat' Wanderer – no one today would remember that millions of the people who would one day settle the New World had passed along that route. (Coelho, "The Pilgrimage" 14)

Most of the internal journey of self-discovery or spiritual growth will happen along a route. It is in the crossroads or lodging places that cultural conflict will play out. There's a scene that takes place when Coelho and Petrus arrive in Logroño, a larger city compared to the peaceful countryside field through which the pilgrims had travelled before. To further complicate the change of scenery, the town is taken over by tourists, the press, event workers, merchants, etc. in preparation for a high-profile wedding. There, Coelho's strikes a political argument with a street vendor.

> He said that his daughter had already been married but was now separated from her husband.
> 'In Franco's time, there was more respect,' he said. 'Nowadays, no one cares about the family'.

> Despite my being in a strange country, where is never advisable to talk politics, I could not let this pass without a response. I said that Franco had been a dictator and that nothing during his time could have been better than now.
>
> The vendor's face turned red.
>
> 'Who do you think you are talking like that?'
>
> 'I know this country's history. I know the war people fought for their freedom. I have read about the crimes of the Franco forces during the Spanhish civil war'.
>
> 'Well, I fought in that war. I was there when my family's blood was spilled…I fought against Franco, but when he won the war, life was better for me. I'm not a beggar, and I have my little popcorn stand. It wasn't this socialist government we have now that helped me. I'm worse off now than I was before […]
>
> When Petrus came back, I told him about my exchange with the popcorn vendor.
>
> 'Conversation is useful', he said, 'when people want to convince themselves of what they are saying is right. I am a member of the Italian Communist Party. But I didn't know about this fascist side of you.'
>
> 'What do you mean fascist side?' I asked angrily.
>
> 'Well, you helped the popcorn man to convince himself that Franco was good. Maybe he never knew why. Now he knows'. (Coelho, "The Pilgrimage" 110)

As Rachel Trousdale points out, transnational texts function as an educational tool in the experience of living in a multicultural society. Even if only through the act of becoming familiar with different cultures by reading about them. She says: "Readers who assimilate the lessons of the text come to see fictional worlds of the novels as places where their own references, as well as those of the writer, are understood" (30).

6.   Final Thoughts

The recent scholarly preoccupation with World Literature resulting from escalating globalization has pointed literary criticism in the direction of transnationalism. From a neo-cosmopolitan humanist perspective, many scholars working from this transnational paradigm have looked at canonic works or works recipient of prestigious literature awards, such as the

novels of Vladimir Nabokov, Salman Rushdie or Kiran Desai. Although praiseworthy for their

literary achievements, those transnational novels, greatly known within the literary community,

are less accessible to a broader audience. On the other hand, because of their reach and

consumption, popular transnational literature serves as a vital locus from which to understand the

impact of transnationalism today.

In this chapter I have located Paulo Coelho within the scholarly discussion of World

Literature. I have also made a case for the Cultural Studies attention to popular transnational

literature by using the author as its representative. Moreover, I have discussed the

transnationality of Coelho's writings in issues pertaining to authorship and readership, characters

and settings. Chapter 2, in turn, is a thematic reading of his works and the respective implications

to the contemporary context of transnational literature.

Chapter 2

Paulo Coelho: Transnational Narratives and Themes

Rhetorical studies of literature are essentially examinations of literary works in their communicative instrumentality. In his 1967 essay *Restoration of the Rhetoric to Literary Study*, rhetorician Thomas O. Sloan postulates that "rhetorical critics should attempt to study the peculiar and distinctive effects of any literary work, including aesthetic effects, *in terms of* the implications which these effects have for communication to an audience" (93). This chapter is a rhetorical analysis of the thematic components in the narrative of Paulo Coelho's as they successfully connect a transnational audience to the transnational persona of the author.

In chapter 1, I discussed three ways in which authors and audiences may experience the meanings of a fictional narrative: mimetic, thematic and synthetic. The transnational nature of Coelho's novels was examined in terms of their *mimetic* components. That is, the extent to which Coelho enhances the ethos of his fictional narratives and attracts his readers for the "real-life-like" qualities of the implied author, authorial audience, characters and settings. In this chapter, I look at the thematic dimensions of Coelho's novels, or the extent to which their elements stand as embodiment of ideas. Here, I identify three recurrent themes in Coelho's novels, in no hierarchical order, that are especially relevant in the context of contemporary transnational literature: the self-realization journey, cultural hybridism and anti-mimesis.

The first two themes, self-realization journey and cultural hybridity, are discussed in terms of the mimetic-thematic dimensions of a narrative. The third theme – anti-mimesis – moves the discussion towards the relationship thematic-synthetic dimensions of a narrative. That is, the extent to which the readers may see the embodiment of ideas in narrative elements as

artificial constructs rather than mimetic representations. I examine the first two themes from a traditional rhetorical approach to narrative, privileging anti-mimetic narrative elements. Whereas anti-mimetic (fantastic, magical, supernatural) narrative elements are studied under the optics of Unnatural Narratology. Both branches of narrative criticism – Rhetorical Narratology and Unnatural Narratology - are useful to the study of Coelho's fiction because, truthful to his hybrid/transnational identity, the author strives for both mimesis and anti-mimesis equally, and one exponentializes the narrative effects/possibilities of the other.

Moreover, I borrow concepts from Bakhtin and his interpreter Julia Kristeva - such as polysemy, heteroglossia, dialogism and intertextuality - to inform this analysis. The ambivalence of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin towards rhetoric is well-documented and debated.[24] I take the stance of composition scholar Kay Halasek: keeping in mind that Bakhtin works from a context-specific narrower definition of rhetoric than the one used here, parts of his work are extremely productive to rhetorical criticism of literature.

Mimetic elements articulate ethos and pathos into the narrative world of Coelho, enhancing their readers' interest in the cultural/ideological lessons conveyed in the themes he portrays. All the while, anti-mimetic elements in Coelho's novels prime his transnational audiences to reflect on the "constructedness" of nation, memory, home, authority, and identity. The reading act, then, becomes a multi-voiced, intertextual, creative, performative and empowering act, even if "dismissed" as popular culture.

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[24] See James Thomas Zebroski, "Mikhail Bakhtin and the Question of Rhetoric" *Rhetorical Society Quarterly,* 22.4 (1992).

1.   Self-realization Journey

The self-realization journey – often resulting of a physical one – is evidently the most recurrent motif in Coelho's novels. Mimetically, Coelho's narrative elements appeal to transnational audiences because mobility to them is a significant familiar experience and because they are based on the autobiographic accounts from both author and the "real people" on which he bases his characters. Thematically, the narrative elements in the self-realization journey are attractive to transnational audiences for many reasons: For one, they embody the idea that intercultural encounters fostered by travels can result in the betterment of the self. Secondly, they signify an overall positive resolution to internal cultural identity conflicts, one of personal growth. Thirdly, they provide a cathartic experience to an all-too-common migrant emotion: the longing for or fantasy of returning home. And lastly, they convey the palatable message that cultural diversity is ultimately beneficial.

In *Journey as Purifying Elixir,* an article about the symbolic function of the physical journey in Coelho's *The Alchemist*, Kumar & Sivapriya, posit:

> His novels are built on the theme of self-actualization or spiritual fulfillment through self-awareness, self-exploration, heart-searching and action. Through life-like stories of his protagonists, Coelho attempts to convince that if the ordinary people like Santiago, a shepherd or Prym, a bar maid or Maria, a prostitute can attain self-actualization, why can't the reader. (1)

Here I take self-realization[25] to mean an inner process of self-actualization (discovery) by which one develops their human potential, the basis of self-identity, culminating in the integration of the said individual identity -skills, ideas, desires knowledge – into society. Because

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[25] Definition based on N.V. Petrenko, "Self-Actualization and self-Realization of personality in philosophical - educational discourse," *Grani*, 19.7 (2016) 52–57.

Coelho's novels are essentially about people who "find themselves" and realize their full individual potential in society, they are often categorized – and consumed - as "personal development" or "self-help" books, albeit being fictional narratives.

1.1 *The Witch of Portobello: Heteroglossia, Polyphony and Identity*

The Witch of Portobello is the pseudo-biography of a mysterious woman, Athena, who is supposedly dead from the beginning of the narrative. The author pieces together interview accounts from different characters guiding the reader on an investigative quest of how Athena's journey of self-realization ends up in her demise. The story is narrated by multiple characters as they provide an account of their unique experiences with Athena to a biographer, an intradiegetic character who, only in the last pages of the book, reveals himself to be Athena's Scotland Yard boyfriend that none of the characters had ever met and many judged to be made-up by the protagonist.

Born in Transylvania, Athena is abandoned by her Romani mother because her father was a *gadje* (not gypsy). Athena is adopted by a wealthy Maronite Christian Lebanese couple and lives part of her childhood in Beirut. Eventually, the family forcibly immigrates to London as war refugees. Samira Khalil, the adopted mother, talks about the first manifestations of Athena's paranormal gifts during the events that led to their immigration:

> Everything was going well. Then, one night, she came into our room in tears, saying that she was frightened, and that hell was close at hand. […] I took her over to the window and showed he the Mediterranean outside, lit by the full moon. I told her there were no devils, only the stars in the sky and people strolling up and down the boulevard outside our apartment. […] And the following morning, there was blood. Four men had been murdered […]. On that same day, twenty-six Palestinians were killed on a bus as revenge for the murders. Twenty-

> four hours later, it was impossible to walk on the street because of shots coming from every angle. […] For nearly a year, we stayed pretty much shut up indoors, always hoping that the situation would improve, always hoping it was a temporary thing, and that the government would take control. One morning, while she was listening to a record on her little portable record-player, Sherine (name given to Athena by her adoptive mother) started dancing and saying things: 'This is going to last for a long, long time.' (Coelho, "Witch" 27)

Two weeks later, the family was on a boat bound to London as they heard horrifying statistics of the civil war in their country. In her adult life, after working for a bank, learning calligraphy from a Bedouin and making a fortune in Real State in Dubai, Athena travels to Transylvania to track and meet her birthmother. From there, Athena embarks on a spiritual quest through ritual dance and music, reconnects with the feminine side of the Divine, learns how summon a feminine deity that prophecies through her and develops a cult-like following, ultimately becoming the target of a modern-day witch hunt.

It is specifically through the encounter and relationships with transnational characters that Athena achieves personal growth, regains confidence and eventually fulfills her spiritual potential, even if it threatens her own life. Since story is told in turns by the people in her life, readers compose the main character from the multiple "selves" to which they are given access. She is a character created and developed, sort of linearly, in the third person. Without her relationships with various transcultural characters, Athena doesn't grow. In fact, since transcultural characters are the ones who narratively create her, without them, Athena doesn't exist.

Interestingly, the narration of this novel is carried out as a conversation between each character and the interviewer/investigator. But, since the narrator is an implied interviewer that remains very impersonal until the very end of the novel, the characters become multiple narrators. There is also an atmosphere of second-person narration as readers are hailed to the

point-of-view of the "impersonal" narrator to whom multiple narrators speak. That is, the characters "talk" to this interviewer/investigator as if they were speaking directly to the reader, and the reader then is "assumes" the point-of-view of the interviewer/investigator. In the *The Witch of Portobello*, Coelho creates in literature an "effect" of pseudo-documentaries so popular in contemporary TV shows, such as *Modern Family* (ABC*)*, *The Office* (NBC), *American Vandal* (Netflix), etc.

On a theoretical level, much of the transnational/transcultural paradigm is owed to Mikhail Bakhtin's literary criticism. Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia and polyphony are particularly useful to interpret *The Witch of Portobello*. Heteroglossia refers to the many "languages" - class, region, generation, professional, epoch - that are woven into a novel as an open system of signification. Polyphony refers to the many voices and perspectives that are presented in the novel, including the ones built within a single voice or perspective.

For Bakhtin, the novel as a genre celebrates and revels in the multiplicity of languages. In the novel, heteroglossia is "personified"[26] in each character, which becomes the bearer of a language and its constitutive ideologies. In *The Which of Portobello*, each character speaks Athena into being from his or her own linguistic perspective: the adoptive Lebanese mother, the Scottish guru, the Bedouin master, the British journalist and love interest, the actress disciple. This multiplicity of consciousness is not played out evenly in the book, for power struggles are inseparable from speech acts. Neither are they subordinated to the authority of the author or implied author.

> Along with the internal contradictions inside the object itself, the prose writer witnesses as well the unfolding of social heteroglossia surrounding the object, the Tower-of-Babel mixing of languages that goes on around any object;

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[26] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981) 326.

> the dialectics of the object are interwoven with the social dialogue surrounding it. For the prose writer, the object is a focal point for heteroglot voices among which his own voice must also sound; these voices create the background necessary for his own voice, outside of which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which they "do not sound." (Bakhtin, "Dialogic Imagination" 279)

Coelho goes through great lengths to disappear as an implied author in this novel in an effort to "sound" his voice only through various character-narrators. For that reason, *The Witch of Portobello*, stands as a text imbued with heteroglossia and polyphony. More than that, the novel is in fact an intentional *performance* of heteroglossia and polyphony. One of the implications of this performance is particularly important to hybrid cultural identities. If Athena's narrative identity is constructed before our eyes through and by multiple cultural and socially diverse voices, then the reader can assume that identity is a product of an ongoing relationship and the shared events between the *self* and the *other*.

Athena's diverse observants not only collaboratively build her identity, but they also retell her self-realizing search for identity as they reflect upon their own. These journey almost always imply a return to or a longing to return "home." At first, Athena returns to Transylvania where she was born to find her "original" self. In the end, she returns to London where she reconciles with her "cultural hybrid" self. Athena's media-announced murder turns out to be a cover up story carried out by close friends, so that she can "return" to her present home. Athena's final "return home" is a return to the anonymity she enjoyed before her fame and spiritual practices got out of hand, threatening her life and her relationship with Viorel, her only child. It is not a place, but an original state of mind.

1.2   *Eleven Minutes: Ethos and Pathos in Paratext*

The return home in the story of Maria, the international sex worker from *Eleven Minutes* is more literal. The novel ends with the main character on her flight home from Switzerland to Brazil. In the final scene, Maria is about to meet with her long-sought-after, newly-found true love, a Genovese painter. Unbeknown to Maria, he awaits her - flowers in hand and all - on her layover in Paris. If we recall from Chapter 1, Eleven Minutes deviates from Coelho's usual "light" topics by portraying international human trafficking, prostitution and sadomasochism - for which the author apologizes profusely to the reader in a forewarning preface. However, the narrative is less of an underworld exposé and more the typical self-realization journey in which Maria learns core truths of the human conditions by navigating through that said underworld. She runs off from an impoverished small town in the country-side of Brazil into the alluring urban setting of Rio. There, she is tricked by the promise of working as a model/dancer in Switzerland. In Geneva, she descends into prostitution and ventures in sexual experimentation. However, the third person omniscient narrator never "paints" Maria as a victim of white slavery. As a "positive" existentialist (angst and freedoms need not lead to despair), Coelho emphasizes character agency in dealing with misfortune, which is vividly exemplified in *Eleven Minutes*.

Through it all, Maria fights for her life-long goals: experiencing adventures, making money, finding love. But her ultimate dream is to return home in better conditions than when she left. It is a conflicting dream and a constant internal struggle for Maria. As it is for many migrants, that objective grows into a fantasy, which is dispelled on and off for fear of disappointment or failure, but never really goes away. On page 145, we read: "She walked back through the cold and the dark, as she had so many times before in Geneva; normally these walks

were associated with sadness and loneliness, the desire to go back to Brazil, financial calculations, timetables, nostalgia for the language she hadn't spoken freely for ages."

The nostalgic tone of this quote is evocative of the migrant experience. In *Migrations, Diasporas, and Borders*, Susan Friedman discusses homesickness as core issue shared by all studies of human movement over space and time. She associates memory – a marked *loss* that defines migrant consciousness – to desire – which denotes *lack*. In a psychoanalytic sense, loss and lack are fundamental to a migrant's re-definition of self and community. They are catalysts to the narrative re-creation of the homeland history/culture that will be woven into collective memory overtime to ensure the survival of the migrant community. Loss (memory) and lack (desire) oscillate between hindering a migrant's adaptation to the new culture and driving a migrant's hopes and efforts to re-invent group/individual identity. These socio-psychological processes set in motion by memory and desire revolve around the construct of /*home/* to the migrant.

> Especially for migrants and diasporics, home is the perpetual site of desire, a longing that is never fulfilled in the ambiguity existence caught between a consciousness of roots elsewhere and the reality of routes, of lives shaped by movement through different locations that are never quite home. Desire crossed by diaspora often produces nostalgia and its discontents […] Desire in the borderland and diaspora can also fuel, serve as a drive for change, opportunity, freedom, embrace of the new and, of course, love of all kinds. Desire is double-edged, motivating rigidity on the one hand and adaptability on the other. Like memory, desire finds its most resonant forms in acts of the imagination, in the symbolic representation of culture. (Friedman 278)

As a symbolic representation of culture and, moreover, a highly relatable one, transnational literature stands as a fruitful site of reflection for readers in a globally mobile society. Not necessarily dismissing significant differences, transnational narratives can appeal mimetically and thematical to all those whose collective and individual identity are forged/transformed by global migration, be it forcibly by war, by multinational work placement,

in search of better living standards, fleeing from hunger, being trafficked, or for the sake cultural

enrichment, etc. In fact, transnational narratives can appeal to readers who haven't migrated at

all but are significantly affected by mobility in the contemporary context of globalization.[27] In

the case of Coelho narratives specifically, characters conventionally attain self-fulfillment in the

end, his readers are dealt *only* the more positive model of processing memory and desire.

It is not clear whether Maria proceeds to Brazil after the romantic encounter in the French

airport. But we know that her journey ends in finding "inner light" and the meaning of love

which propels her to take off to a new life back home, however she chooses to re-define /*home*/.

Unique to Maria's character is that self-realization comes through sexual experience,

which can be read as a metaphor for transcultural experiences (cultural shock, enculturation,

transculturation, etc.). In a pseudo dialogue with Maria's inner-thoughts, the narrator explains the

title of the book and describes the cynical phase of Maria's journey.

> She had to make sure that they didn't feel ashamed. These men, so powerful and arrogant at work, constantly having to deal with employees, customers, suppliers, prejudices, secrets, posturings, hypocrisy, fear and oppression, ended their day in a nightclub and they didn't mind spending three hundred and fifty swiss francs to stop being themselves for a night.
> For a night? Now, come on, Maria, you're exaggerating. It's really only forty-five minutes, and if you allow time for taking off clothes, making some phony gestures of affection, having a bit of banal conversation and getting dressed again, the amount of time spent actually having sex is about eleven minutes.
> Eleven minutes. The world revolved around something that took eleven minutes. (Coelho, "Eleven Minutes" 92)

A great deal of the narration in *Eleven Minutes* is done by Maria's sharing of diary

extracts. In this way, the author constantly switches from the narrator (omniscient, third person)

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[27] As novelist Pico Iyer notes, "Even the man who never leaves home may feel that home is leaving him, as parents, children, lovers scatter around the map, taking pieces of him wherever they go." Iyer Pico, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001) 27.

to the character-narrator (Maria, first person). The reader is then exposed to Maria's internal

dialogues and interpretations of her own event life. Furthermore, the reader is a witness to the

how Maria negotiates her worldview with the voices she encounters in her journey and how that

leads her to self-realization. As an example of the very essence of polyphony, Maria's diary

excerpts give the reader an insight to how her identity constantly changes by encountering *the*

other, as she negotiates her position in agreement or disagreement with other narrative voices. In

Bakhtinian terms, self-realization is represented Coelho's novels – and predicated upon – the

notion of *unfinalizability*. In reference to the works of Dostoyevsky, Bakhtin argues:

> …the characters no longer carry on a *literary* polemic with finalizing secondhand
> definitions of man (although the author himself sometimes does this for them, in
> very subtle ironic··parodic form), but they all do furious battle with such
> definitions of their personality in the mouths of other people. They all acutely
> sense their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from
> within and to render *untrue* any externalizing and finalizing definition of them. As
> long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has
> not yet uttered his ultimate word. (Bakhtin, "Problems" 59)

The unfinalizability of Maria's "soul" is a reflection of the author's own unfinalizability.

Coelho voices his own *language* within the discourse of his characters, as well as the *language*

of the real-life people on which his characters are partially based. Coelho explicitly and

repeatedly points out that his characters' journeys are his own journeys of self-realization in

paratextual material.

Incidentally, paratexts (introductions, forewords, prefaces, dedications, afterwords, cover

art, interviews, epigraphs, hypotexts, etc.) are extremely important to the interpretation of Paulo

Coelho because they play a crucial role in building his author persona and engaging his audience

through ethos and pathos appeals. In my opinion, there is virtually no separation from paratext

and main story in the audience experience of Coelho's novels: it is all one narrative. That is

especially the case in the context of cultural convergence where digital media further

complicates an aura of personal connection between the author persona and his narrative

audience, as I will discuss in Chapter 3.

In the afterword of *Eleven Minutes*, Coelho gives a detailed account of the writing

process of the book, including how Irving Wallace's *Seven Minutes* instilled his desire to write a

novel about sex from an early age, how a biographical unsolicited manuscript was handed to him

in Mantua, Italy, whose author-fan he met in person several years later in Zurich, how after an

interview to Swiss magazine where he mentioned the encounter prompted the attendance of

many prostitutes to his book signing in Geneva, including the one in whose life Coelho based the

character of Maria. Moreover, he writes:

> "*Eleven Minutes* does not set out to be a manual or a treatise about a man and a
> woman confronted by the unknown world of sexual relationships. […] It is an
> analysis of my own trajectory. Sex means, above all, having the courage to
> experience your own paradoxes, individually, and willingness to surrender. I
> wrote *Eleven Minutes* in order to find out if, at this stage of life, at fifty-five, I had
> the courage to learn everything that life has tried to teach me on the subject.
> ("Eleven Minutes" 296)

Paratextually, the writer sets up the mimetic components of his narrative: he claims his

fiction is based on real people, real events, real migration stories, real transnational settings,

contexts and interactions, and moreover, the author's own journey of self-realization (ethos).

Through personal experiences, they each form feelings, questions, and judgments about sex,

consequently gaining insight into the human condition (pathos). Thematically, the lesson is one

of "positive" essentialism, that is the self is by nature ever-evolving nature: Maria is unfinalized,

Paulo is unfinalized, the reader is unfinalized, the narrative is unfinalized. In this may reside the

audience's loyalty to the author: readers expect the more, newer Coelho self-realization novels,

even if autobiographic, because the implied author is not "done" self-improving in one journey.

1.3 *Veronika Decides to Die: Dialogism and Recognition*

      Veronika Decides to Die is yet another tale of self-discovery imbued with the author's voice. As I mentioned previously, the book is inspired by the author's personal experience in and out of psychiatric hospitals. This time, his writing process seems, understandably, more painful. One very descriptive scene from the book where a character undergoes electric-shock treatment comes straight from Coelho's diary, written during his second stay in a mental hospital.

      This novel tells the story of a Slovene woman who, at the age of 24, faces depression and anxiety by attempting suicide. With each pill Veronika takes in the solitude of her rented room in a convent in a small square in Ljubljana, the omniscient third person narrator describes the facets of the character's existential crisis: the existence of God, the meaning of life, the dullness of everyday routine, the inevitability of loss and suffering, etc. Veronika wakes up in a mental institution and is informed she had failed to kill herself, but that her heart had been so severely damaged, that she would die shortly after all. The information was part of an unofficial experimental treatment by which - her doctor hypnotizes – living with the threat of imminent, unavoidable death could prevent future suicide attempts.

      For the most part, despite the autobiographical elements imbued in the novel, Coelho remains an implied author. But, at this point in the narrative progression, he addresses the reader as *actual* author to tell the story of how he came to know of the "real-life" Veronika by the mouth of an acquaintance who was in fact the daughter of the doctor in the story. This time, the writer incorporates the paratext within the narrative. With that, Coelho paradoxically hails readers attention to the difference between narrative and reality via metafiction on the one hand and reaffirms the ethos argument of the text via mimesis on the other.

He then resumes narration as implied author, only one of the many voices (polyphony) and many languages (heteroglossia) that interact within the walls of the hospice, where doctor, nurses, and patients are given valid perspectives by the author. It is in fusing those voices that a character like Veronika achieves self-growth. Self-realization in Coelho's novels align with the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism. It comes from, first, recognizing another's perspective, second, engaging in continual inconclusive, but transformative conversations. Veronika at first resists to see herself as part of the "mad" world. She is an outsider looking in. As she slowly acknowledges the madness in the world and the saneness in hospice, she experiences a personal growth that comes out of intercultural *creative understanding*.

> In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only through the eyes of another culture that a foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly (but not maximally fully because there will be cultures that see and understand even more). A meaning only reveals its depth once it has encountered and come in contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that did not raised itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths. Without one's own questions, one cannot creatively understand anything other or foreigner (but of course, the questions must be serious and sincere). Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its unity and open totality. But they are mutually enriched. (Bakhtin, "Speech Genres" 7)

It is through dialogue with different voices that Veronika transforms as an individual - Mari, a once successful lawyer being treated for panic attacks, Zedka, a Serb woman treated for maniac depression, and Eduard, the son of a Yugoslavian diplomat whose schizophrenia had been set off when he abandoned art to follow his father's footsteps - that Veronika develops a new sense of self and a more optimistic perspective on life. She learns of the historical events, the political games and personal turning points that landed and kept each character in the mental institution.

Veronika and Eduard develop a romantic relationship and end up escaping the hospital together. Still thinking she could die at any moment of a heart attack Veronika ends her story in dialogue with Eduard:

> Thank you for giving meaning to my life. I came into this world in order to go through everything I've gone through, attempted suicide, ruining my heart, meeting you, coming up to this castle, letting you engrave my face on your soul. That is the only reason I came into the world to make you go back to the path you strayed from…' She closed her eyes and felt him doing the same. And a deep dreamless sleep came upon her. Death was sweet, it smelled of wine and it stroke her hair. (186)

As we see in stories of Veronika, Athena and Maria, the self-realization journey in Coelho's novels have a recurrent symbolic destination: the place you started from. The message here is that "happiness" had been there all along and that it takes a journey to come to such recognition. In this way, the central message in Coelho's most famous novel, *The Alchemist* (1988), foreshadows all the novels that come after. In it, after much traveling the main character, the Andalusian shepherd Santiago finds his treasure, his personal value – or Personal Legend, back home, under the tree where the narrative had started.

By returning home, conflicting selves (rooted and cosmopolitan identities) within the transnational character engage in dialogue, which results in a positive closure to identity conflicts. In other words, characters portrayed by Coelho conciliate who they've become with who they used to be before the transnational journey. The unfinalized, optimistic conclusions of his novels serve a specific rhetorical function. It is a positive message according to which diversity is not only essentially good, but that propels individuals to become better, to "find themselves," *despite* of the hardship inherent to multiculturalism in a violently uprooted world.

In *Politics of Recognition*, philosopher Charles Taylor speaks of such hardships in terms of a contemporary political need or demand for *recognition* in connection with *identity* in today's politics.

> […] the demand comes to the fore in a number of ways in today's politics, on behalf of minority or "subaltern" groups, in some forms of feminism and in what is today called the politics of "multiculturalism." The demand for recognition in these latter cases is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (25)

As societies became increasingly multicultural, they become more porous. Consequently, they become more open to diasporic and multinational migrants, which generates social issues such as xenophobia. This brings up the socio-political challenge of conciliating *universal* dignity principles with the recognition of *singular* and *different* cultural identities and their worth. It must be acknowledged that this challenge "has a lot to do with the imposition of some cultures on others, and with the assumed superiority that powers this imposition. Western liberal societies are thought to be supremely guilty in this regard, partly because of their colonial past, and partly because of their marginalization of segments of their populations that stem from other cultures" (Taylor 63).

The self-realization journey motif in Coelho's novels deal with those issues by recognizing them and by conciliating them dialogically. Indeed, recognizing and representing *the*

other is a driving creative force in transnational writing endeavors.[28] Moreover, and in line with

Rachel Trousdale proposition,

> Transnational writers, who claim active participation in more than one nation, provide a rooted approach to the problems posed by cultural synthesis. Rather than "negating" nationalism, their transnationalism co-opts and redefines it, drawing on identity-building techniques of nationalist movements to provide alternative identities not simply for members of diasporas or migrants from a single location but for what transnational writer Salman Rushdie calls a 'community of displaced persons,' each one of whom is simultaneously rooted in a place of origin and in the imagined world of transnationality. (13)

Recognition and *dialogue* demand that, as they undertake their self-realization journeys,

Coelho's characters navigate through issues of cultural hybridity, a second recurrent theme in his

novels.

2. Cultural Hybridity

Not only is cultural hybridity common ground in transnational novels and in the everyday

lives of transnational readers and writers, but it is also one of the most discussed issues among

literary scholars.[29] Mimetically, Coelho narratives appeals to the personal experience of

transnational audiences whose sense of self is profoundly impacted by cultural clashes.

Thematically, they embody the idea that self-improvement *follows* relationships and conflicts in

the *contact zone*.

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[28] Ariana Dagnino, *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 2015) 164, for a discussion on transnational writers' motivations.
[29] Among prominent theorists and critics of cultural hybridity are: Homi Bhabha (*The location of Culture* Routledge, 1994), Néstor García Cancline (*Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* University of Minnesota, 1995), Stuart Hall (*Questions of Cultural Identity* Sage, 1996), Gayatri Spivak (*A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* Harvard UP, 1999), Paul Gilroy (*The Black Atlantic* Harvard UP, 1993, and Peter Burke (*Cultural Hybridity*, Polity Press, 2009).

In contrast with that position stands a common criticism of globalization: The fear that, by encouraging cultural hybridism, globalization would have the evil effect of culturally Westernizing the world. This assumption is faulty because it spouses the notion that there is such a thing as "pure culture." Cultures are hybrid in nature, forged by the complex historical and economic conflicts. And, for that matter, Western culture itself has never been homogenous.

There is, of course, a danger in essentializing cultural hybridity. By deconstructing "cultural purity," and taking the position that "it is hybridity all the way down,"[30] one may strip the term of its explanatory value regarding culture and identity formation. In my opinion, however, that is a danger is feasible only insomuch as we define *hybridity* in opposition to *purity*. Even *essentialized* cultural hybridity retains a powerful insight into the process of formation and re-definition of subjectivities when framed in relationship to social and individual *agency*. Hybrid identities spring from *contact zones*, as conceptualized by Mary Louise Pratt and discussed in Chapter 1. To that effect, it matters less that all cultures are essentially hybrid and more that they result from the clash of asymmetrical intercultural relations and its entailed hegemonic struggles (dominance, resistance, negotiation).

The villainization of globalization as a cultural homogenizing/Westernizing agent frames cultural hybridity in opposition to agency. Paul Jay posits that "we tend to link agency to cultural autonomy in terms of a society's ability to protect its own cultural identity from being watered down or erased by alien cultural forms. But every culture is shaped by other cultures and agency has more to do with the intelligent and imaginative negotiation of cross-cultural contact than

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[30] Renato Rosaldo, foreword, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) xv. See also Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2010) 82.

with avoiding such contact" (3). In this sense, cultural hybridity carries the power of readership interpretation, resistance, dialogue, appropriation, and – in fact – agency.

As exemplified by Bhabha in his classic essay, *Signs Taken for Wonders*: "When the natives demand an Indianized Gospel, they are using the powers of hybridity to resist baptism and to put the project of conversion in an impossible position… When they make these intercultural, hybrid demands the natives are both challenging the boundaries of discourse and subtly changing its terms by setting up another specifically colonial space of power/knowledge" (Bhabha 160). Cultural hybridity, in Bhabha terms, is a product of the ambiguity that comes from textual displacement. It doesn't always infer a political act of opposition, nor does it always imply rejection of the contents of another culture. It does, however, presuppose an unconscious act of creative response.

Nevertheless, transcultural writers - unlike the Indian Christians in *Signs Taken for Wonders* - consciously portray cultural hybridism and transcultural readers consciously make use of it. Thus, cultural hybridity in Bhabha's sense isn't sufficient to understand the possibilities of transnational literature. Rachel Trousdale asserts that, to see hybridity only as cultural resistance, as a reaction to imbalance in colonial societies, is to miss the creative potential of hybridity to define one's cultural uniqueness. "Postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, or Robert Young who define hybridity as a phenomenon specific to the colony and colonial subject, stop short of showing how cultural hybridity has redefined identity throughout the twentieth – and twenty-first century literature" (3). Instead, Trousdale suggests a look at transnational hybridity not as a *misreading* in Bhabha's terms, but as a *dialogue* in Bakhtin's terms. This reframing allows hybridity to be defined as a product of ongoing responses and reactions – not definite solutions – on all sides in the contact zone (10).

Culture hybridity and hybrid identities are recurrently portrayed in transnational/transcultural literature, as defended by Rachel Trousdale and Arianna Dagnino. Likewise, a "hybrid look" at intercultural encounters is recurrent in Coelho's narratives. The author is notorious for fusing cultural-textual references, religious beliefs, and interpretations of historical accounts in his novels.

2.1 *The Pilgrimage and Aleph: Transnational Settings as Contact Zones*

In *The Pilgrimage* and *Aleph,* the self-realization journey is expressively about Paulo Coelho's personal journey – a sort of transcultural spiritualism/spirituality[31] that is self-improving by and in the *contact zone.* The first novel tells the story of how, by undertaking the Road to Santiago (Spain), and concluding his induction into the RAM order, Paulo came to be who he is. While in the second novel, Paulo deals with existential angst by undertaking a trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway (Russia) and renewing his faith on the principles learned in *The Pilgrimage* many years before.

The word "aleph" is ripe with mystical and transcultural meanings that Coelho explores in the homonymous novel, pulling from the Torah, the Bible, Astrology, Numerology, and even Mathematics. He explains that aleph is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, relates it to the origins of the universe in the Kabbalah, and references the seminal short story by Jorge Luis Borges – according to which "aleph" is the space that contains everything. This small space

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[31] Here I take spiritualism to mean a belief in superior being or supranatural entity that can be channeled through a medium, whereas spirituality is a person's path to discovering purpose in life, which translates into personal values and morals. At large, the terms are inseparable or interchangeable for Paulo Coelho. But I personally suppose that Coelho's readership tends to interpret/consume his novels as spirituality narratives.

where everything is infinite, that offers a clear perspective into the whole cosmos, is a special feature of the novel's setting: it a portal which "pulls" attuned individuals to itself. Upon finding the aleph in a manifest location in the train, Paulo and the other main character, Halil make a journey through time within their journey through space.

The story begins with Paulo facing a crisis of faith and the guilt that comes from the longing for spiritual things in a world troubled by practical global issues.

> Graduates leave university and can't find a job. Old people reach for retirement and have almost nothing to live on. Grown-ups have no time to dream, struggling from nine to five to support their families and pay for their children's education, all bumping up against the thing we all know as 'harsh reality.'
> The world has never been as divided as now, what with religious wars, genocides, lack of respect for the planet, economic crises, depression, poverty, with everyone wanting instant solutions to at least some of the world's problem or their own. And things look bleaker as we head into the future. What am I doing trying to make my way in a spiritual tradition whose roots are in the remote past, far from all the challenges of the present moment? (Coelho, "Aleph" 3)

Paulo's spiritual guide, J., first introduced in *The Pilgrimage* as the one who sets him on his way to the Road to Santiago, once more prescribes travel as way out of spiritual stagnation. Paulo resists the idea, especially after a Moroccan clairvoyant he meets at a dinner party prophesies that he would be in an accident and tells his wife that "the soul of Turkey" would give him all she possesses, but not until she spilled his blood and revealed her purposes. Paulo eventually puts aside his reservations against taking on another spiritual voyage upon being inspired by an article about the Chinese bamboo, which grows underground, invisible, for five years, before shooting up to impressive heights. Comparing himself to the plant, Paulo decides his "five years" of personal stagnation are up and the time grow (i.e. travel) has come once again.

The journey begins in Tunisia. Under the guidance of Samil, Paulo and his wife visit a beautiful building infamous for the murder of a man by the hands of his own brother in 1754, which was later turned into a palace-school by the father in memory of the murdered son. Paulo

reacts to the story by remarking the assassin's son would surely *also* be remembered. At this point the narrator gives voice to the *other* and, by doing so, allows himself the opportunity to be educated by another's perspective. "It's not quite like that," says Samil. "In our culture, the criminal shares his guilt with everyone who allows him to commit the crime. When a man is murdered, the person who sold him the weapon is also responsible before God. The only way in which the father could correct what he had perceived as his own mistake was to transform the tragedy into something useful to others" (37).

Conventionally, Coelho's narratives progress linearly but with intercuts where the narrator or a character stops at a certain location to retell local legends, histories, myths and axioms or to describe the local culture. The author makes a point of bringing up the human dimension and the latent history of these settings. In doing so, he reinforces mimesis by testimonial evidence (ethos and pathos): real people have passed through this place, they have experienced cultural clashes, they have created their own narratives. In those settings the literal physical journey becomes a figurative journey in time.

In *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo and his guide Petrus had been journeying non-stop for five days during which they had tried to learn of each other's country and personal life. The heat had forced the Brazilian and the Italian pilgrims to adopt the Spanish custom of *siesta*. In one of those two-to-four hour long breaks when the sun was at its hottest, they sat in a grove to rest. It was the spot "where love was murdered" and Petrus began to guide Paulo in a lesson on human cruelty and to teach him ritual exercise meant to control one's cruel thoughts.

> That afternoon, as we sat in an olive grove, the old man had come up to us and offered us a taste of wine. In spite of the heat, the habit of drinking wine had been part of life in that region for centuries. 'What do you mean, love was murdered here?' I asked since the old man seemed to want to strike up a conversation. 'Many centuries ago, a princess who was walking the Road to Santiago, Felicia de Aquitaine, decided on her way back to Compostela, to give

up everything and live here. She was love itself, because she divided all of her wealth among the poor people of the region and begun to care for the sick'. […] Her bother, Duke Guillermo, was sent by their father to bring her home. But Felicia refused to go. In desperation, Duke fatally stabbed her there in that small church … (56)

The folkloric or historic "side-narratives" in Coelho's novels bestow a transnational/transcultural aura to certain settings characterizing them as contact zones, where cultures clash, history pivots and people are changed. In *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo and Petrus came to an immense bridge that a long history of drought had made disproportional to the stream it now covered, a symbol to the fact that history changes power dynamics and social constructs. Petrus intends to teach Paulo about agape and the fire of madness that burns in each human soul He will to introduce the narrator to the shadow exercise, a ritual meant as decision-making technique based on the principle that, in order to solve a problem, one must first find all the wrong solutions. Petrus prompts the narrator to those lessons be recounting the centuries-long history of region where the bridge, known the "honorable passage," stands.

> These fields around us, were the site of some bloody battles between the Suevians and the Visigoths, and later between Alphonse III's soldiers and the Moors […] However, it wasn't the Visigoth hordes or the triumphant cries of Alphonse III that gave this bridge its name. It was another story of love and death. […]In 1434, a noble from the city of Leon fell in love with a woman. The man was Don Suero de Quiñones; he was powerful and rich and did everything in his power to win his lady's hand in marriage. But this woman – history has forgotten her name – did not even want to know about his grand passion and rejected his requests… He began a private war. He promised himself that he was going to perfume such an important feat that the woman would never forget his name. […] The epic was later to give rise to the Military Order of Santiago of the Sword. (186)

2.2 *Religions as Hybrid Cultures*

Cultural hybridity in Coelho's narrative often take the specific form of religious practices and principles. His hybridization of religions reveals a view of religion that akin to Bakhtin's

view of language.[32] There is, Coelho artistic device of representing the encounter of two or more

religious consciousness - normally separated by time, class, culture or any other factor – seems

to come from the idea that religious hybridization is part of the evolution of all religions, that

religions change historically by means of hybridization. Thus, the representation of religion in

intercultural encounters must be necessarily be a representation of religious hybridity: two or

more religious consciousness, one representing (the authorial religious beliefs) and the others

being represented (the character's religious beliefs), each belonging to a different religion

system.   Coelho narrates the perception of one religion by another religion, not intended to

produce a conclusion or merger, but to bring about illumination from one religious perspective

over the other. The following passage is an example:

> The Shaman is lighting a fire in a hollow he dug to protect the flamed from the wind that continues to blow. He places a kind of drum next to the fire and opens a bottle containing some unfamiliar liquid. The Shaman in Siberia – where the term originated – is following the same rituals as pajé in the Amazon jungle, as hechiceros in Mexico, as Candomblé priests from Africa, spiritualists in France, curandeiros in indigenous American tribes, arborigines in Australia, charismatics in the catholic church, Mormons in Utah, et cetera.
> That is what is so surprising about these traditions, which seem to live in eternal conflict with each other. They meet on the same spiritual plane. (Coelho, "Aleph" 223)

Coelho's oversimplifying amalgamation of religious practices may be misinformed and

downright offensive at times, but they work as a narrative simply by acknowledging the vital of

role hybridity in the transnational experience. More than that, his personal view of the *other* is a

display of the possibilities of cultural hybridity: appropriation, resistance, interpretation. It is an

obvious attempt to represent/recognize different cultures in terms of what they share rather than

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[32] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981) 358-360.

how they differ without completely discounting that difference, under the accepting spirit of transnational humanism.

In *Aleph*, after a foreshadowing an out-of-body experience, Paulo asks his guide Samil what the Islam would say about reincarnation and allows him time to research the answer. Samil comes back with the responses of three different Islam scholars, one of which had referred him to Koran verses that mentioned the issue. The conversation ends with Coelho making parallels to the Bible.

It is important to pause here to understand the cultural significance of Paulo's enquiry, which may stem from the way national culture plays a role on cultural identity, even in an overtly transnational context. Paulo's hybrid look results from a particularly Brazilian attitude towards religion. The principle of reincarnation is the main tenant of Spiritism, a spiritualist belief system with a controversial history in the country. Today, Spiritism is popularly professed – sometimes unofficially - by practicing members of hegemonic organized religions in Brazil. There is no shortage of celebrities, politicians, artist, hospital, humanitarian organizations, subscribing to Spiritism in the country. In fact, it is the theme of a very popular literary genre of novels and poetry written through mediums – living persons channeling the spirit of artists, a process called *psicografia* (psychography). Novels that narrate past lives are also common in that genre. Spiritism is likewise thematic in the heart of Brazilian cultural production: the *telenovelas*.

Similar to the widely studied *Candomblé,* a syncretic form of African religions and Catholicism, Spiritism is *par excellence* a product of cultural hybridity – only without the historical racial elements. At the end of the 19th century, it made its way to Brazil from France, where Allan Kardec had codified it as religious philosophy by combining scientific principles (positivism, evolutionism and empiricism) to spiritualism (especially the Hindu principles of

Karma and reincarnation). In *Dead Man Talking*, historian Laura Premack explains that Spiritism

has gained such a strong hold in Brazil in spite of the country's traditional Catholicism and

recent evangelical phenomena because Brazilians view religion from a pragmatic rather than

systematic point of view. That is, Brazilian don't see religions mutually exclusive doctrinal

systems: That which "works" is valid.

> Unlike in the United States, where people are generally expected to confess just
> one religion at a time, in Brazil, denominational boundaries are porous and
> fluidity the norm. Indeed, fluidity is a national legacy, the result of centuries of
> syncretism among indigenous, African, and European beliefs. Just as Brazil's
> enslaved Africans and Afro-Brazilians found covert ways to synthesize faith in
> West African deities and Catholic saints, so today Brazilians of all kinds practice
> the art of spiritual bricolage. It is entirely unsurprising to meet a Brazilian who
> calls herself Catholic, belonged to an evangelical youth group as a teenager, was
> married by a priest, attends a local Methodist church, reads Spiritist books, draws
> mandalas to relax, and consults an Umbanda priest for advice. (65)

Coelho's understanding of religion as evolving from hybridization and his curiosity for or

open-mindedness to different religious practices and beliefs all over the globe is, in some ways, a

reflection of his upbringing in Brazil. He seems to honestly believe in dialogue and common-

ground between religious and that different religions can shed light one on another, much like

Bakhtin's perspective on language. In that one might find an explanation for Coelho's popularity

among such a religiously diverse global audience.

2.3 *Cultural Hybridity as Transcendence*

Tunisia had served Paulo as a productive cultural/religious contact zone. From there he

travels to Moscow. Upon arriving at the hotel with his publisher and his editor, he meets a fan

waiting out in the cold for him. Her name is Hilal. She had read the author's blog about his

forthcoming journey through Russia and felt that he had been talking directly to her. The party dismissively invites her to a book signing the next day. Hilal replies that she had come to take the journey with Paulo because he needed her. Long before, she had read his book and heard a voice saying he had once lit a sacred fire for her and the time would come to repay the favor. After an unwavering persistence, Paulo allows the Hilal, a Turk violinist to accompany his party on the train voyage.

Paulo and Hilal would share deeply emotional moments in the trip that would lead them to discover the location of the aleph. Here the literal physical journey becomes a literal journey in time. In a past life during the Spanish Inquisition, Paulo had loved Hilal and he had fatally betrayed her. The narrator traces his present spiritual stagnation to that time. Accused of witchcraft, Hilal had been tortured and burned at the stake. Paulo was then in position to save her, but in a moment of weakness, he omitted help and caved to the town's religious upheaval. Like foretold by the Moroccan clairvoyant, Hilal was the "soul of Turkey" and their emotionally grueling train/time travel had figuratively but productively spilled Paulo's blood. By the end of the journey Hilal's forgiveness (pathos) and retrieval of a curse over Paulo sets them both free in the present (catharsis). The character's name foreshadows the book ending: Hilal is Arabic for "crescent," the moon insignia in Islamic flags, by which the Muslim calendar is calculated - growth after new beginnings.

Coelho's novels generally end in similar utopian tones: transcultural encounters in contact zones *dialogically* yield self-realization and the betterment or re-definition of the self. That is a conventional authorial attitude in transnational discourse which, as Trousdale posits, "emphasizes that identity is a process, not a stable product, subject to reaffirmation and reconstruction, during which an individual's attributes and affiliations can be reinterpreted as the

grounds of similarity to or difference from the people she encounters" (194). Specifically, in the case of Coelho, the lesson of identity formation as a transnational process is more significant in the anti-mimetic narrative elements of his narrative. For only the highly hybrid individual is allowed passage – a literal portal in the case of *Aleph* – from reality to the fantastic with its respective magic powers, miracles and spiritual transcendence.

In *The Alchemist*, Santiago has a dream of a buried treasure in the Pyramids, which he is told to be a prophecy. He sets off to North Africa, then into Egypt in search of his treasure. Santiago is detained in Tangier after being robbed, where he works for a crystal merchant until he has enough money to proceed in his journey through the Sahara Desert. There, after encounters with fascinating characters, tribal warfare forces Santiago to an unforeseen stay at the Al-Fayoum Oasis, where he falls in love with an Arabic girl named Fatima. After visions and other spiritual experiences, an alchemist offers to cross Santiago through the desert onto the Egyptian Pyramids.

Once more beaten and robbed at the place where his treasure supposedly is, Santiago hears the story of another dream, told by one of his assailants, about a treasure buried under a sycamore in Andalusia. Santiago understands where his treasure indeed is. Along the journey, and in pursuit of his "Personal Legend," Santiago helps a merchant to grow his business almost miraculously, learns about the art of alchemy, experiences omens and visions, communicates with the elements to the point of conjuring up a sandstorm, and ends his journey by finding the treasure he's been looking for right where he started.

In *Cultural Hybridity, Magical Realism, and Language of Magic in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist*, Latin America scholar Stephen Hart observes:

> First, it is important to note that Santiago's name (main character) is chosen deliberately – alluding to the patron Saint of Spain – and yet his journey will take

him to the heart of the Arabian culture, understood in a generic sense, through Morocco and on toward the Pyramids of Egypt, such that his journey reenacts some of the topoi of *The Arabian Nights*… The first person he meets is a mysterious individual who turns out to be a high priest of the Old Testament (because he possesses the Urim and Thummin, that is the divinatory devices contained within the breastplates of judgement worn by the high priest described in the Book of Exodus 28.15). Right from the beginning, therefore, the protagonist is portrayed as standing at the crosswords between various ancient cultures; he simultaneously is intersected by Christian, Hebraic, and Arabian Cultures. This is what I think Coelho means when he says that he sees the world with Brazilian eyes. His eyes are those of the hybrid in which there is no single overriding, monofocal vision of reality. Instead, it is a culture of palimpsest in which different cultural surfaces slide over one another, supplanting each other momentarily (311).

To Hart, a worldview characterized by hybridity is at the core of why, despite negative and controversial critical reception, Paulo Coelho novels have become a sociological phenomenon. Perceptively, Hart sees in Coelho, and his character Santiago, the privileged position that hybrid identities afford. Hart argues that it is precisely because he is a stranger – I'd say a transcultural individual – that Santiago is, in a Joseph of Egypt manner, able to divine the future and to see the magical elements in everyday life. In other words, in *The Alchemist*, Coelho represent cultural hybridity not as a hinderance of the human potential, but on the contrary, as an amplification of it.

Hart's article is concerned with how *The Alchemist* compares to other works in the genre of magical realism. He identifies the differences and similarities between neo-magical-realist novels, such as Coelho's, and their predecessors, such as García Márquez' novels. "Whereas the Colombian's fiction is predicted on an ideology that verges on the nihilistic, viewing Latin American history as repeating the mistakes of its past with depressing regularity, Coelho's fiction grows from a vision that reality is […] 'life-enhancing'" (311). The scholar describes how this positive, even superior, quality to cultural hybridity is articulated *in the text*. Inasmuch as Rhetorical criticism is primarily concerned with the efficacy of text as designed by the author to

affect its readers in a certain way (i.e. the "feedback loop" among authorial agency, textual phenomenon, and readers response),[33] I'd like to connect Hart's arguments to the implications it has on how readers may respond to Coelho's textual articulations.

I believe that the anti-mimetic elements, or the magic side in magical-realist hybrid, play an important role in how readers face Coelho's narrative world as contact zones. In that sense, after the author and his character have forged their transnational, hybrid identities within the text, readers will participate a similar experience through the act of reading. That is, readers are empowered by textual ambiguity like the Christian Indians of Bhabha, only in a conscious rather than accidental fashion. Utilizing of their personal cultural background, readers interpret, resist, appropriate, transform transnational narratives. Ultimately, they re-define their own cultural identities.

3. Anti-mimesis

So far, I have mostly approached Paulo Coelho's works from a mimetic narrative approach: the recognizability of his characters, themes and settings, especially to a transnational audience or an audience that lives in a mobile/transcultural global context. The underlying assumption of mimetic models of narrative study is that the more verisimilar, realist, believable a narrative element (character, setting, event, etc.), the more persuasive, or perhaps more useful, is the novel.

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[33] David Herman, et.al. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2012) 5.

In this sense, anti-mimesis corresponds to the narrative elements in Paulo Coelho's writings that are not "real-world-like" representations, that are "impossible" in the physical world or that transcend it. In other words: that which is fantastic, magical, supernatural. Insomuch as anti-mimetic elements are as typical of Coelho's narratives as are their mimetic counterparts, I propose a turn from traditional rhetorical criticism, which is generally concerned with the mimetic qualities of a text, to an approach I believe deals more appropriately with anti-mimetic narrative elements. In doing so, incidentally, I turn from a mimetic/thematic correlation to a thematic/synthetic correlation among narrative elements. That is, I will discuss how anti-mimesis as a theme attracts an audience response of the synthetic type: the artificially of narrative and social constructs.

What is traditionally defined as anti-mimetic narrative elements bears important significance in the study of Paulo Coelho because it is anti-mimesis that places the author in a postmodern group of Latin American neo-Magical Realism with writers such as Isabel Allende and Laura Esquivel. Furthermore, in the context of transnational literature, they serve an important function:

> The transnational use of fantastic, science-fictional, and alternate historical worlds teaches readers to recognize how subjective their own interpretations of the world are, to negotiate between constructed and absolute fact, and to take authorial control of their constructions of reality. Perhaps more daringly still, the transnational fantastic reframes that authorial control as participatory rather than authoritarian, transforming both readership and group membership into active, powerful positions. The world of the text teaches us not only to negotiate the real world but also to recreate it, both within our own polyphonic inner lives and in our own understanding of what we have in common with the people around us. (Trousdale 194)

As I have argued previously, the mimetic aspects of his novels seem to strengthen the rhetorical possibilities of text, especially considering his transnational readership to whom transnational characters, narrators, settings, certain motifs, "rings true." But contrary to

traditional mimetic narrative models, I believe that rather than undermining the persuasiveness or usefulness of the text, anti-mimesis may expand them instead. The two approaches are not to be seen as contradictory or mutually exclusive, but as complimentary at a minimum or dialogic at best. In keeping up with a transnational/hybrid mindset, both mimesis and anti-mimesis are important in Paulo Coelho writings. In the contact zone of the narrative, they work synergistically.

Before I turn to Unnatural Narratology, a few considerations must be made. First, 'unnatural' here does not correspond to the negatively charged use of the word as meaning (sexually) deviant or inorganic/humanly-adulterated, nor is it linked to the nature vs. culture debate. Simply, it refers to that which is not a mimetic representation. Secondly, it is important to reaffirm that all fictional narratives are constituted by mimetic *and* anti-mimetic aspects, both of which *construct* parts of the world in which we live. To look at the "oddities" in a text is not the same as to discount the "normalcy" in it. Moreover, narratives vary widely in the degree to which they conceal or call attention to the "constructedness" of what they represent. Unnatural narratives are the ones located on the more revealing side of that spectrum. Furthermore, all unnatural narratologists are captivated by texts that portray the highly implausible, the otherworldly, the bizarre, and they share a desire to explore to the possible meanings and intertextualities in those narratives. Yet, there is great divergency among them as to the nature of unnatural texts and how they can be interpreted. This multi-voiced narratology has proliferated and yielded many interesting narrative analyses in the past two decades, but it seems to be still in the process of refining itself .[34]

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[34] For debates on unnatural narratology as a narrative theory and model, see Monika Fludernik, "How Natural Is "Unnatural Narratology," *Narrative* 20.3 (2012); Jan Alber, et.al. "What Is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology? A Response to Monika Fludernik," *Narrative* 20.3

In *What is Unnatural Narrative Theory*?, Brian Richardson, a pioneer in the field, explains that this approach is concerned with narratives that conspicuously violate standard narrative forms. Speaking from a synchronic perspective, Richardson excludes from the scope of unnatural narratology the conventional works of science fiction, alternative-history, fantasy, or allegorical novels. He considers them non-mimetic, as opposed to anti-mimetic. His ostensive definition of unnatural, i.e. anti-mimetic, texts is:

> They are "works like Borges' most unreal stories, Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* (1953), Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy* (1957), Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (1969), and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988)" to start with paradigmatic examples. It is immediately apparent that these works all transgress mimetic expectations, the canons of realism, and the conventions of natural narrative. Such works can be found in most periods; they range from Aristophanes' plays to Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel (1534) to Shakespeare's more extravagant creations such as The Winter's Tale (1611) to Diderot's Jacques le fatalist et son maitre (1796) to the latest postmodern and avant-garde texts" (23).

Based on Richardson definition, Coelho novels might be non-mimetic rather than anti-mimetic. Richardson's theory is aimed at supplementing existing narrative theory, which he alleges to be "mimetically-biased" and usually marginalizing of anti-mimetic narratives. But, by the same token, Richardson's distinction of mimetic, anti-mimetic and non-mimetic narratives marginalizes the latter. I prefer Jan Alber's version of unnatural narratology because of its inclusionary corpus, its diachronic understanding of unnatural narratives as it implicates genre and genre formation, and its useful overview of reader interpretation of the unnatural.

In *The Diachronic Development of Unnaturalness: A New View on Genre*, Alber defines as unnatural all narratives that present physically impossible spaces or events that are impossible as to accepted the laws of logic. He divides unnatural narratives into two groups. One category

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(2012); and James Phelan, "Unnatural Narratives and the Task of Theory Construction," Style 50.4 (2016).

contains narratives whose unnaturalness have not yet been naturalized or conventionalized and retain their capacity to cause readership estrangement. Richardson's corpus would fit in this group only. The other category accounts for the unnatural narratives that have been *naturalized* or c*onventionalized*, in other words, narratives that defy "real" world logic, but don't strike us as defamiliarizing anymore. In this sense, the supernatural novels of Paulo Coelho could be considered a conventionalized unnatural narrative. The implications of this perspective are tied to intertextuality and genre, an idea adjacent to Alber's argument:

> As a thesis that needs further testing, I would like to propose that the development of new literary genres often goes hand in hand with the naturalization or conventionalization of the unnatural. In other words, new genres are frequently created as physical or logical impossibilities are converted into a new perceptual frame (such as 'the speaking animal' in beast fables, super-natural elements in fairy tales, the 'omniscient' narrator in realist fiction, or time travel in science fiction). One way of explaining these various literary outbursts of the unnatural would perhaps be to see them as a human impulse to avoid having the possible calcify into the necessary. (43)

3.1 Reader response: Cognitive pathways

Working from a Cognitive Narratology model - which seeks to describe the possible cognitive process in which readers engage as they make sense of fiction – in *What Is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology?,* Alber proposes nine cognitive strategies that readers might use to make sense of unnatural narrative elements, specifically: "The Zen way," "do it yourself," the transcendence realm, unnatural as satire, narrator/character interiority, thematic interpretation, allegorical reading, genre recognition, and blending/ frame enrichment (378). The first one, a "Zen way" of interpreting occurs when a stoic reader refuses to apply the limitations of "reality" to the interpretation of the unnatural and is perfectly comfortable with aesthetically appreciating it for what it is – unnatural - with all the discomfort or estrangement it entails. Among the

interpretative strategies suggested by Alber, this is the only one that doesn't reveal an underlying drive to "mimeticize" the anti-mimetic. All others imply seeing the supernatural through some degree of "earthly" logic.

Some narratives are unnatural because they present fragmented or contradictory passages, narrative snapshots, to the reader who must use them as a construction kit[35] from which to build their own fictional narratives. They demand that the reader rationalize multiple realities. A Coelho narrative that somewhat lends itself to this interpretation is *The Witch of Portobello*. In reading the fragmented storyline, multi-perspective narrations of the main character, the reader must piece together an Athena of their own, and to personally determine what "actuality" happens to the character in terms of her spiritual gifts.

A reader can also assume the supernatural to belong to the transcendental realm such as haven, purgatory and hell. Since those are also narratively constructed in the world outside the text, the reader might use similar pre-exiting schemas to negotiate unnatural narrative elements. A Coelho portrayal of the supernatural would lend itself to this interpretative strategy especially when worldly transcendence is already part of the reader's paradigms. When he brings up the concept of reincarnation in *Aleph*, for example, Coelho appeals to the schemata of the Buddhist reader, the Hindu reader, The New Age reader, and some groups of readers within Christianism, Islamism and Judaism, as I previously mentioned.

Sometimes the unnatural can merge with grotesque representations or overexaggerated narrative elements that are meant to ridicule an aspect of reality, in which case, it can be "read" as satire. Also, unnatural narrative elements might be explained in the minds of readers as

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[35] James Thomas Zebroski, "From Parallel Universes to Possible Worlds" *Poetics Today, 27.4* (2006) 671.

constitutive of the character/narrator's *interiority*, as if they resulted of a dream, a hallucination or the effects of drugs. Zedka's astral travel in *Veronika Decides to Die* could be interpreted as side effects of insulin treatment.

"The Zen way," "Do it yourself," the transcendence realm are possible meaning creation strategies in which readers engage when dealing with anti-mimesis in Coelho's novels. His novels, however, don't organically invite the cognitive strategies of reading unnatural elements as satire or as narrator/character internal state. The remaining strategies – i.e. allegory/thematic reading, genre convention, and blending/frame enrichment – are, however, the most relevant to the present study because I envision them to be transformative forms of interpretation. Even though they attempt to make mimetic sense of the unnatural, they may lead to critical reflection of our socially constructed reality by means of intertextuality.

In the late 1960's, psycholinguist critic Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality, a term we she deduced from her interpretations of Bakhtinian theory. Originally, Kristeva aspired *intertextuality* to synthesize the Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia, polyphony and dialogism. But the term has found many uses and meanings in literary scholarship since then.[36] At its most generous definition, intertextuality refers to the dialogue among many texts which are intrinsic to the literary word. In *Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept*, contemporary narrative critic María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro explains the implications of intertextuality for literary criticism:

> There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures.

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[36] For additional discussion on the origins and uses of Kristeva's notion of intertextuality, see Andrea Lesic-Thomas, "Behind Bakhtin: Russian Formalism and Kristeva's Intertextuality," *Paragraph*, 28.3 (2005):1-4.

> […] One of the most immediate consequences of such a proliferation of intertextual theories has been the progressive dissolution of the text as a coherent and self-contained unit of meaning, which has led, in turn, to a shift of emphasis from the individual text to the way in which texts relate to one another. (268)

The first two reading paths I highlight - thematic/allegorical and generic readings - are straightforward exercises in intertextuality, where characters and events are understood in relationship to the reader and the writer's cultural repertoire.

3.2 Thematic/Allegorical readings

The first intertextual cognitive process of unnatural literary elements is to read them as allegorical or foregrounding of a theme. In the same way that the self-realization journey and cultural hybridism are transnational themes in Paulo Coelho novels, the fantastic, magical, transcendent elements of his narrative foreground issues of transnationality. For instance, in *Aleph*, Coelho uses events and settings that aren't mimetic. That is, it defies commonly held physical logic to have portal into past life laying around trains, even if that is conceivable to the reader. But the *aleph* can be read, for instance, as an allegory for global mobility experiences, expressing of the concept of identity formation as a bi-product of historical forces and cultural contamination in the contact zone. To Paulo and Hilal, the *aleph* is a portal that allows them to enter a time-travel contact zone. Confronting who they were in a violent historical past has a liberating effect, leading to a positive re-definition of their present identities. Further, a reader can connect the *aleph* in Coelho with the *aleph* in Borges – who Coelho regularly references as his major literary influence. Jan Alber interprets Borges' *aleph* this way:

> One might read this story as accentuating that absolute transcendence and absolute knowledge are both impossible and irrelevant. The narrator immediately realizes that it is impossible to represent the Aleph through verbal art. After the

incident he describes the Aleph as "one hell of a? yes one hell of a," while later on he simply refuses "to discuss the Aleph" (28). The "total vision" is only relevant in so far as the narrator recognizes himself and his problems in the Aleph. He notably sees "unbelievable, obscene, detailed letters, which [his beloved] Beatriz had written to Carlos Argentino" (27), and probably due to his feelings of jealousy, he starts to believe that the Aleph "was a false Aleph" (30). The unnatural universe of the Aleph might be seen as highlighting the human desire to think the unthinkable, or to represent the unrepresentable. However, it also illustrates that even the most unnatural scenario ultimately takes us back to ourselves, that is, to the nature of the human mind. ("Impossible Storyworlds" 87)

Thus, taken intertextually, the *aleph* contains extra layers of significance to a reader. At the very least, it stands as display of reader interpretation as Coelho appropriates Borges' text and wovens it into a contemporary transnational narrative. In turn, I, the reader-critic, interpret it as a meaningful philosophical stance on the hybrid nature of identity in the context of global mobility. Likewise, the vast number of Coelho readers will individually or collectively (as an interpretative community) appropriate the potential meanings of the *aleph*. One potential message being, as literary critic Marie-Laure Ryan puts it in *From Parallel Universes to Possible Worlds,* that *multiverse* narratives' appeal "to a magical change as 'explanation' is a veiled admission of the irrational, or fantastic, nature of this world" (670).

Rachel Trousdale also infers that the "impossible worlds" created by transnational writers are meant to disrupt the reader's sense of reality and, at the same time, to convey the idea that although disparate, the author's world-experience and his fictional juxtapositions, are compatible locations. In other words, anti-mimesis in transnational literature evokes the sense of instability and displacements – a cognitive estrangement - which are common to the life experience of migrant readers. However, she says, "many of the incompatible worlds of transnational writers blur the line between postmodern impossibility and fairy tale coherence" (19). It seems to me

that Trousdale sees anti-mimetic storyworlds as an allegory of "real-world" contact zones faced

by transnational writers.

> […] postmodern texts demand that readers recognize the impossibility of their fictional worlds; transnational fiction, by contrast, teaches us to recognize that the boundaries and cultural demarcations in our mental geographies are subjective and can be re-drawn. Transnational fiction instigates a series of real and possible worlds: the home country and the adopted country, both of which exist in the real world but are understood through competing epistemologies, the world of the book, which juxtaposes and synthesizes the home and the adopted countries, and the implied fourth world brought into being by that synthesis. This forth world, produced by the text, also exist by implication outside the text in the minds of the participating readers, it thus becomes the product of the novels' pedagogical and community-forming projects. (19)

Trousdale sees transnational literature in general as a unique take on postmodernism.

While, as previously discussed, Stephen Hart sees Coelho narratives in particular as a unique

take on Magical Realism. Trousdale and Hart point us to a commonality, extensible to most other

critical approaches to anti-mimetic literature, including unnatural narratologists: that thematic

readings of the unnatural are often correlated to genre, be it transnational literature, unnatural

literature, postmodern literature, Spiritist genre or Magical realism.

3.3 Generic readings

This takes us to the second intertextual cognitive processing of unnatural narrative

elements. As suggested by Alber, the unnatural can be interpreted as typical of a genre. For

instance, flying cars aren't that unnatural in the context of sci-fi narratives, hobbits and orcs are

in fact expected in fantasy narratives, magic spells are "natural" in fairy tales, and so on. If we

take Rachel Trousdale's argument that anti-mimesis is recurrent in contemporary transnational

literature, then a genre interpretation path might be useful to its readership. In this sense, on a

contemporary cognitive framework, Coelho's readers might process the estrangement of his fantastic elements as pertaining to a transnational literature convention, or even a Paulo Coelho convention, since they tend to be faithful fans of the author.

Here I mean *genre* as reframed by the notion of intertextuality instead notion of genre as the standardizing repressive mechanism by which cultural institutions force artistic production into conformity. Although, especially in the case of Coelho, market demand and genre might be strongly correlated. But for the moment, I'd like to focus on the reader interpretation side of the literary experience in which I align with genre scholar David Duff's argument, as stated in *Intertextuality versus Genre Theory*:

> One of the salient attractions of the theory of intertextuality, as I have already intimated, is that it appears to offer a solution to the problems of genre, or at least a way to circumvent it. Reconceived in terms of intertextuality, genre could shed its authoritarian connotations, remove the taint of prescriptiveness and rid itself of its traditional role as arbiter or policeman of the writing and reading process. Within this new theoretical matrix, generic norms and conventions become just one of the threads that bind texts to one another, their coercive, restrictive force dispersed by the many other forms of intertextuality with which they coexist. (57)

In this sense, reading Paulo Coelho magical-fantastic elements as a generic convention is an intellectual process that requires the reader to borrow from her or his pre-existing cognitive frames by comparing texts that surround him or her to the many texts imbued in the novel at hand. It is on this larger literary context that a generic interpretation of Coelho owes a debt to texts that have historically "conventionalized" anti-mimesis. As Alber posits:

> Supernatural forces do not only play a crucial role in medieval fairy tales but also in later fantastic literature. As already said in Section 2, supernatural creatures (such as ghosts, vampires, werewolves, witches, or wizards) and events (such as miracles, spells, curses, and divination) are also physically impossible and hence unnatural. I would like to argue that medieval fairy tales had already naturalized the supernatural and turned it into a basic perceptual frame, and fantastic texts continued to use the supernatural as a cognitive category. When we read a

fantastic text today, the impossible forces of the supernatural do not strike us as odd or strange; we can easily accept them as a part of the projected storyworld. ("Diachronic" 52)

However, Alber also points out that some contemporary texts in which the *supernatural* is replaced by the *paranormal* still retain their *estrangement* effect. These are narratives where the natural paradigm has absorbed anti-mimesis, where the storyworld is a hybrid of the real and the magical. Paulo Coelho's novels, I think, take the readers beyond the naturalized framework set by medieval fairy tales, ghost, werewolf, vampire stories because they present fantastic element *as* mimesis, that is, they are more paranormal than supernatural, they strike us as odd or strange.

For instance, in *Pilgrimage*, Paulo's story progression is marked by his passage through spiritual/meditation exercises/rituals that are evocative of Western mysticism. Descriptions of eleven rituals intermingle the novel's chapters in the order in which they are learned by the narrator, but apart from the narrative itself. Coelho invites the readers to engage in those rituals in a testimonial tone. Except for one which he considers "incomplete" and against which dangers he warns the novice practitioner in the narrative audience. That is, the *Messenger Ritual*:

> 1. Sit down and relax completely. Let your mind wander and your thinking flow without restraint. After a while, begin to repeat to yourself, Now I am relaxed, and I am in the deepest kind of sleep.
> 2. When you feel that your mind is no longer concerned with anything, imagine a billow of fire to your right. Make the flames lively and brilliant. Then quietly say, I order my subconscious to show itself. I order it to open and reveal its magic secrets. Wait a bit and concentrate only on the fire. If an image appears, it will be a manifestation of your subconscious. Try to keep it alive.
> […]
> 5. When your conversation has ended, dismiss the messenger with the following words: I thank the Lamb for the miracle I have performed. May (name of messenger) return whenever he is invoked, and when he is far away, may he help me to carry on my work.
> Note: On the first invocation or during the first invocations, depending on the ability of the person performing the ritual to concentrate do not say the name of the messenger. […] The more the ritual is repeated, the stronger the presence of

the messenger will be and the more rapid his actions. (Coelho, "Pilgrimage" 82-83)

He ends by explaining that the more the ritual is repeated, the more effective will be the communication between the exercise practitioner and his/her spirit messenger. As we can see, more so than in other transnational narratives, a Coelho reader faces a hybrid storyworld where mimesis and anti-mimesis interpolate. And, they do so in a doctrinal/instructional manner. In this sense, I posit that the anti-mimesis in Coelho's novel are in the same *unfinished* process of conventionalization that scholars – especially unnatural narratologists - recognize in postmodern novels. Personal development books aren't commonly fictionalized and even more rarely are they unnatural, anti-mimetic. Meanwhile, unnatural literature is hardly instructional or doctrinal. Coelho pushes "pushes the envelope" in both genres.

When considering self-help *conventions* as an *innovation* introduced to the anti-mimetic genre, one narrative element is worth singling out: The second-person narration. Personal development narrators tend address the reader directly through "you" statements, which changes the communicative dynamics between author and reader in a significant way. In *'Self-Help' for narratee and narrative audience: how "I" - and "You"? - read "How,"* James Phelan discusses the relationship between the structuralist term *narratee* and the rhetorical term *narrative audience* in second-person narration. The narratee refers to the person addressed by the narrator which is seen as an extratextual character, someone "out there" that the readers may not interpret as themselves but as part of the narrative structure. Whereas the narrative audience is made up of those who the author imagines s/he is addressing - the counterpart of the implied author, which leaves out the way readers might assume an observer role within the narrative. With Coelho narratives, the boundaries between the two are blurred and the pathos appeal is thus enhanced.

For example, *The Alchemist*, is an overtly anti-mimetic narrative, is often classified as suggested by therapists, influencers, motivational speakers. It even makes the reading list of certain entrepreneurship and sales training programs, alongside with strictly non-fictional sources.[37] Because of that, many readers approach the novel with a clear intent to learn a lesson or a recipe for life. Thus, even though the story is told in third-person narration, this reading context creates an *implied second-person narration*: Readers perceive the narrative as speaking directly to them. They may not be the narratee (you), though in Coelho's case they often are. But they are positively the "ideal" narrative audience, that is "the audience for which the author wishes he were writing" (Phelan, "Self-help").

Consider for example a training manual for sales and office performance titled *The Six-figure Summer*. The manual provides a suggested readings list to trainees that is comprised of five non-fictional books (e.g. *As Man Thinketh*, by James Allen), two poems (e.g. Invictus, by William Ernest Henley) and two fictional novels (e.g. Siddhartha, by Herman). Only *The Alchemist*, listed third in the manual, is an anti-mimetic narrative. Intertextually, the manual prompts its trainees to a *synthetic response* to the texts they suggest by preceding the list with the reminder: "You chose reality and create it with your own thoughts. Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can be achieved" (Webb 88).

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[37] Examples of articles recommending The Alchemist for personal development in different fields: In Mental Health, Juliet Carr, "The Alchemist," 2014 http://attemptedsuicidehelp.com; In Therapy/Psychology, Lauri Leinwand, "5 Life Lessons Driven Home by Paulo Coelho's 'The Alchemist'," 2016, https://www.goodtherapy.org; In Business/Leadership, Jeff Desjardins, "The Most Prolific Startup Investors Read These Books," 2016, http://www.businessinsider.com; In Entrepreneurship, Thai Nguyen, "10 Powerful Lessons from "The Alchemist," 2015, http://www.asianentrepreneur.org, In Real Estate Investment, Mindy Jensen, "7 Fiction Books Every Entrepreneur Should Read," 2017, https://www.biggerpockets.com.

Transnational novels, magical-realist novels and unnatural novels are in general considered postmodern narratives precisely because they potentially evoke synthetic reader response. That is, they may cause readers to question authorial authority, the constructiveness of reality, grand narratives, etc. They are also considered postmodern because of they are highly intertextual, tending to the bricolage of forms and contents, as exemplified by the self-help/autobiography/anti-mimesis narration in Coelho's *Pilgrimage* or by the documentary/fiction format parodied in his *Witch of Portobello*. Surprisingly, however, few critics have looked at Coelho from a postmodern framework.

One of such few is literary scholar Sonia Kotiah. In her article *A la Brasileña: Pilgrimage in Paulo Coelho's Writings*, Kotiah borrows from Jean François Lyotard's theory of postmodernism to assess Paulo Coelho *pilgrimage* narratives. She concludes that pilgrimages in Coelho's novels function as an alternative, celebratory space for Brazilian religious syncretism, where the bonds with official religious discourse are broken.

> Like Lyotard, Coelho also espouses a brand of postmodernism which advocates this incredulity and its effects throughout society. In exhibiting incredulity towards official religion, for example, several of Coelho's protagonists instead identify and celebrate free pilgrimages as the be-all and end-all of religious possibilities. Religion therefore morphs into its porous, accessible and unmistakably postmodern counterpart, that is, spirituality devoid of official markers […] Associating narrative with eclecticism, assemblages of discordant parts and loose ends, Lyotard argues that story and history impose continuity and closure on the gaps and silences of reality. Paulo is certainly not the archetypal Biblical hero, but an ordinary broken man in quest of meaning, a 'subaltern' figure whose pilgrimage is artistic and imaginative and which certainly does not fit into the mold of the 'master' narrative. According to Coelho's novels, it is the nature of the protagonist's free spiritual experience that connects his peregrination to renunciation. It is not so much the philosophical implication, but how renunciation recognizes its emancipatory potential through the 'little' narrative and is transformed into a meaningful individual experience. (40)

Literary critic Rajendra Kumar Dash also looks at Paulo Coelho from a postmodern framework. But, unlike Kotiah, Dash believes that Coelho narratives are dissonant voices within postmodernist thought because of their utopian tones. Kumar Dash is particularly interested in the uses of alchemy, the ancient belief system according to which perfection is an attainable birthright of Man, Matter and Nature, as a theme throughout literature history and in contemporary novels like Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* or J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels. In *Is Postmodernism Dead?*, he explores this anti-mimetic theme in Coelho's *The Alchemist*, and posits that alchemy – the transformation of base metals like lead into gold – is narratively akin to an ordinary individual, like the shepherd Santiago, achieving selfhood.

> Paulo Coelho speaks of unity in diversity through alchemy, the metamodel of reality. As we see, Paulo Coelho seems to have roped in alchemy to speak a different voice, strike a dissimilar note which runs counter to postmodernist ideas and techniques. His is a positive affirmation of the immense possibilities and latent potentialities in an individual; and he has an invincible faith in it. He is aware that the human race has survived modernism and postmodernism […] Coelho forwards a philosophy of life that transcends the modernist and postmodernist attitudes to life and the world: he preaches that in spite of the 'postmodern condition,' one can not only undertake a modernist quest for meaning but, unlike the modernists, one can also realize the Self. Santiago's basic identity of a shepherd metamorphosed into a 'realized self' at the end testifies to this point. It is not like Yeats' dismal picture of things fall apart and the inability of the centre to hold ('The Second Coming') and the unleashing of devastating force of ruin and destruction. The Alchemist does not state a note of cacophony but a symphony preaching the message of love, the unifying force, and the resultant harmony that facilitates the attainment of selfhood. In reality, with a note of dissent, Coelho has blown the conch announcing the death of postmodernism in literature. (246)

Thematic/Allegoric and Generic interpretations are, as I argued previously, plain intertextual endeavors. The last reading path foreground here, Blending/Enriching Cognitive Frames, on the other hand, demands that readers go beyond what their cultural repertoire already contains.

3.4 Blending/Enriching Cognitive Frames

Any generic interpretation of anti-mimetic can lead to synthetic responses because it primes the reader with *a priori* expectations that s/he will be invited to consider alternative worldviews, transcendental storyworlds. In turn, considering alternative worldviews may lead readers to reflect on the relativity of social constructs, textual authority, ideological discourse, or any other narrative fabric. In *Veronika Decides to Die*, for example, the main character is invited to reconsider her pre-conceived notions about "sanity" with an anti-mimetic anecdote.

> 'I'm going to tell you a story,' said Zedka, 'a powerful wizard, who wanted to destroy an entire kingdom, placed a magical portion in the well from which all the inhabitants drank. Whoever drank that water would go mad. The following morning, the whole population drank from the well and they all went mad, apart from the king and his family, who had a well set aside for them alone. […] The king was worried and tried to control the whole population by issuing a series of edicts governing security and public health. The policemen and inspectors, however, had drunk the poisoned water and they thought the king's decisions were absurd and resolved to take no notice of them. When the inhabitants of this kingdom heard of these decrees, they became convinced that the king had gone mad and was now giving nonsensical orders. […] In despair, the king prepared to step down from the throne, but the queen stopped him saying: "Let's go and drink for the communal well. Then, we will be the same as them." […] The country continued to live in peace although its inhabitants behaved very differently from those of its neighbors. And the king was able to govern until the end of his days.' (Coelho, "Veronika" 30-31)

The story sounds so wise to Veronika that she can no longer see Zedka as madwoman interned in a hospice, which led the young woman to question the sanity of those outside its walls. Narratives that invites the reader to demystify "reality" go beyond generic and allegorical interpretations because they demand more than a simple exercise in intertextuality. They demand that the reader blends, expands or alters her or his existing cognitive parameters. The last possible interpretation path suggested by Alber – Blending/Frame Enrichment – refers to the

moments when the reader must create new cognitive frames before they can infer meaning to unnatural narrative elements.

Take the issue of 'astral travel' from *Veronika Decides to Die*, for example. With Veronika by her bedside, Zedka is undergoes an insulin treatment meant to induce a state of coma. In sequence, the narrators take the perspective of the comatose patient, describing the the hospital room from the ceiling where Zedka's spirit observes her seemingly lifeless body and the desperate reaction of Veronika. Zedka pities Veronika misreading of the situation. She wasn't dead, but engaged in a profoundly peaceful astral travel. In the hospital, Zedka she had learned that skill learned from esoteric books and from trial-and-error. Every night, the chronically depression patient would travel anywhere she wanted in spirit. From the room ceiling, Zedka describe the stages of astral travel: white noise, followed by shock, then by loss of consciousness, leading to a floating sensation as the spirit is only attached to the body by an infinite silvery cord only breakable the traveler's acceptance of death. With time, Zedka had learned how to "push" herself into different places through mysterious tunnels that resembled space travelling in sci-fi narratives. There were "intercultural" encounters in astral travels, too.

> Her first reaction was to assume that these were dead people, ghosts hunting the hospital. Then, with the help of books and her own experience, she realized that although there were a few disembodied spirits wandering about there, amongst them were people who had either developed the technique of leaving their bodies, or who were not even aware of what was happening to them because, in some other part of the world, they were sleeping deeply, while their spirits roamed freely abroad. (Coelho, "Veronika" 46)

Zedka is yet another culturally-hybrid character who is granted active participation in supernatural events and who achieves an omniscient, wise point of view of the mimetic world. If astral travel is not part of the reader's cognitive architecture, s/he is required to reach out to schemas about people in a state of unconsciousness, such as coma patients or persons under

general anesthesia – in the case of Zedka, induced coma by insulin treatment. Then the reader

must activate the mimetic schemas about mind and body being inseparable, at least in life, and if

not, at least never separable at one's will. Then, readers must stretch out their cognitive

categories to conceive a world in which they have agency over the mind-body attachment and

are capable of omniscient observation of their surroundings. Lastly, the reader may assign

meanings and messages to the novel. Time-travel, astral travel, communication with divinities,

command of the weather, alchemy and other anti-mimetic elements typical of Coelho's novels

can be explained in terms of the human frustration with the limits the physical body, or our

unwillingness to accept our bounded rationality, or yet – specifically for transnational audiences

– a rebellion against the oppression of space and territory.

Two points are to be made after we consider all these possible meaning-making

strategies. One refers to the dismissal of popular literature as "mind" anesthesia mentioned in

Chapter 1. It becomes salient that the act of reading, especially unnatural narratives, involves

critical and complex thought processes. Secondly, the combination of transnational motifs,

characters, and settings are already hybrid and dialogic in the text. By engaging with the novel,

the reader is cognitively engaged in similar hybrid /dialogic processes of meaning creation.

In this sense, conventionalized or not, popular or canonic, simple and straightforward or

linguistically complex, the unnaturalness of narratives retains potentially transformative

messages. As Alber postulates:

> Many narratives urge us to develop new frames of reading before we can
> formulate hypotheses about their potential messages. If this were not the case, it
> would be difficult (if not impossible) to account for literary change, and the
> reading of narratives would correlate with the eternal reproduction of the same
> cognitive frames (which would actually be quite boring). Narratives often widen
> our mental universe beyond the actual and the familiar, and provide playfields for
> interesting thought experiments. Jerome Bruner points out that "the innovative
> storyteller" goes "beyond the conventional scripts, leading people to see human

happenings in a fresh way, indeed, in a way they had never before 'noticed' or even dreamed." And such innovations significantly shape "our narrative versions of everyday reality as well as [...] the course of literary history, the two perhaps being not that different" (1991:12). ("Impossible Storyworlds" 93)

This chapter echoes Alber's assertion.

4.   Final Thoughts

In this chapter, I have identified themes in Paulo Coelho's novels that are especially relevant in the context of contemporary transnational literature. The first two, the self-realization journey and cultural hybridity, are discussed from a rhetorical approach in terms of their mimetic traits. Anti-mimesis, the third and last theme, is analyzed under the optics of Unnatural Narratology.

Borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theory and from his interpreter Julia Kristeva, I have also explored the concepts of polysemy, heteroglossia, dialogism and intertextuality as they relate to Coelho's narratives and the implications of such for a transnational/transcultural readership. Lastly, I have discussed the cognitive processes or interpretation paths in which readers possibly engage when reading Coelho. I posit that reading popular transnational literature is a creative performance that invites readers to reflect on the artificiality of narrative constructs.

Chapter 2 considered the relationship between author and audience as mediated by the transnational text. In turn, Chapter 3 looks at the material conditions in which said author-text-readers dynamics occur. That is, Paulo Coelho narratives are examined in terms of how popular transnational literature are produced and consumed in the globalized economy.

Chapter 3

Paulo Coelho and The Cultural Economy

At the age of 41, a former rock lyricist and novice novelist faced a writer's worse nightmare: his most beloved work, published in a modest number of three thousand copies, had sold so poorly that it was dropped by the publisher, leaving the author with nothing but the rights to his own book. The year was 1988; the novel, *The Alchemist*, by Paulo Coelho. Thirty years later, the same novel would sell over 65 million copies worldwide, remain in the New York Time's bestseller list for 317 consecutive weeks, and be translated into 80 languages for which the Guinness World Record named it the most translated book by a living author. [38] In several interviews, including to TV host Oprah,[39] Coelho has denied knowing the reason for this unlikely turn of events, except that - the author frequently refers to the novel's most quoted passage on this matter – "when you want something, the whole universe conspires to help you achieve it" (22).

This argument may have more substance than Coelho's optimistic spirituality leads one to believe. Universe conspiracy or not, indeed worldwide economic and cultural changes that followed the first publication of the book created the context that brought the novel from a national publishing failure to a global publishing success of unprecedented proportions. As a transnational publishing phenomenon, Paulo Coelho's popularity owes much to the cultural economy afforded by globalization. Such conditions include the advent of instant translations,

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[38] Ana Ban, "Brazilian Books for Export," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 31 (2015): 290.
[39] For an example of such video or written interviews, see "Paulo Coelho Explains How 'The Alchemist' Went from Flop to Record-Breaking Bestseller." The Huffington Post, 4 September 2014. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/04/the-alchemist-paulo-coelho-oprah_n_5762092.html>

publishing conglomerates, digital platforms, literary branding, and even Coelho's own pioneer attitude towards intellectual property.

The first two chapters of this dissertation explored some of the changes – transnationalism, global mobile audiences, etc. - that favored *The Alchemist* from the 90's forward. Chapter 1 remained focused on critical issues in World Literature, whereas Chapter 2 concerned mostly the narrative elements of Coelho's books and reader-responses to them. While both chapters look at issues that stem from Coelho's narrative and how they help us understand their context, Chapter 3, inversely, aims at examining the context that surround Coelho's novels and how they help us understand his narratives.

If the first two chapters are mostly concerned with the cultural dimensions that contextualize Coelho's novels, chapter three aims at examining material dimensions. Clearly, "when commodities travel, culture travels, and when culture travels, commodities travel."[40] *In Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*, Paul Jay fittingly argues that the classic scholarly debate over the most important aspect of globalization, whether cultural or economic - and consequently, whether it is more appropriately studied from a culturalist or a materialist model – is a discussion based on a false distinction. Both economic and cultural dimensions of globalization are inexorably connected and equally important to the understanding of contemporary literature.

Once established that both models, material and cultural, are necessary to an accurate study of globalization – and all to which it relates, particularly popular world literature - we are left with the task of defining globalization. As Jay posits, definitions of globalization highly

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[40] Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studie*s (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2010): 3.

depend on how the phenomenon is historicized. There are two main perspectives on the history

of globalization. On the one hand, globalization can be understood as a contemporary

phenomenon marked by a cultural-economic rupture with the past brought by a dramatic

expansion of international trade, capital and investment, intensified migrations of people, and

explosion of new media and technologies. This standpoint, espoused by many influential cultural

scholars,[41] sees globalization as a postnational, postmodern, Western phenomenon (34-35).

On the other hand, globalization can be seen as the development of cultural and economic

forces which take part in a long history of global relationships "facilitated by successive

historical shifts in forms of travel, communication, exploration, conquests and trade that

periodically accelerate in ways keyed to technological, economic, and political change" (34).

From this broader historical perspective, which also has seminal scholarly proponents,[42]

globalization has taken place within and outside the West since at least the late 16th century.

The first perspective is often taken as more politically incisive, whereas the second is

criticized for being largely celebratory. Critics of this second view, often position

postcolonialism as dichotomous to globalization. Paul Jay argues this to be a faulty assessment,

however - one that disregards the inseparability of the histories of postcolonialism and

globalization and discounts the dialectic relationship between the two. He defends that it is in the

interest of transnational studies to integrate postcolonial and globalization theories.

> For literary studies, this framework suggests a context in which the literatures of
> postcolonialism and globalization ought to be studied in relationship to each

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[41] For scholarly works, other than Arjun Appadurai's, that define globalization as a historical rupture, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 199); Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990)

[42] For scholarly works, other than Paul Jay's, that define globalization as a long historical process, see Roland Robertson, *Globalization* (London: Sage, 1992); Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

other. Indeed, if we accept the idea that I have been advocating here that globalization has a long history in the East as well as the West, encompassing various epochs of colonization, decolonization, and postcolonialism in all their historical complexity, it becomes difficult to draw distinctions between postcolonial literature and literature engaged more specifically with the contemporary effects of globalization. We ought to recognize that globalization in the areas of conquest and colonization was tied to the long epoch of modernity and the rise to dominance of the nation-states, and that globalization in the postmodern era complicates the power of nation-states and facilitates the creation of radically unpredictable and transnational cultural forms and hybrid subjectivities. (51)

It is my argument that we will do well in studying Coelho's narratives from a standpoint that understands globalization as a long history of intercultural relations of which postcolonialism is part. By doing so, I think, we eliminate some of the risks of defining globalization as an exclusively contemporary, Western, postnational, and postmodern phenomenon. That is, we avoid the risk of downplaying the brevity of the nation-state era in the grand historical scheme or the risk of discounting the influence of nationalisms and neocolonialism within the globalized world.[43] This premise underlies chapter 3's examination of the publishing industry that contextualizes Coelho's novels as it examines issues such as global versus national publishing, the convergence culture, and the advent of born-translated novels.

1 - The International Literary Space

In his 1994 *Location of Culture*, speaking of a "new" internationalism, Homi Bhabha issued the prophetic argument that "the very concept of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or 'organic' ethnic communities –

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[43] Paul Jay, Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2010): 35, 39, 47.

as the ground of cultural comparativism – are in profound process of redefinition" (7). Referring

to Bhabha's statement, translation scholar Rebecca Walkowitz postulates:

> A decade or more later, essays and reports about the future of literary studies
> assume the heterogeneity and discontinuity of national cultures, and many
> scholars now emphasize "networks" of traditions and the social processes through
> which those networks are established […] Literary studies will have to examine
> the global writing of books, in addition to their classification, design, publication,
> anthologizing, and reception across multiple geographies. Books are no longer
> imagined to exist in a single literary system but may exist, now and in the future,
> in several literary systems, through various and uneven practices of world
> circulation. ("Location of Literature" 528).

Recent public policies and private efforts in the Brazilian publishing industry, aimed at

leveling competition and opportunities imposed/afforded by the global literary market, can be

taken as examples of how networks are established between uneven literary systems. Brazil's

literary industry experienced an exciting booming period following the re-democratization,

destatization, and international-trade-deregulation in the decade preceding the new millennium.

Recently, however, the industry has seen a steady deacceleration caused, in great part, by

political and economic turmoil. In *Brazilian Books for Export*, Ana Ban discusses some of the

strategies and programs employed by governmental agencies, publishing houses, and other

interested organizations to reverse this deacceleration. Mostly, they aim at counterbalancing the

fact that the country currently imports 90% of the literary works it consumes. One such initiative

is the "Support Program for Translation and Publication of Brazilian Authors" sponsored by the

National Library and the Ministry of Culture, which grants up to $8K to the publication of

Brazilian authors abroad by any country. Ban cites other examples:

> In 2008, CBL (Brazilian Book Chamber, a not-for-profit independent entity aimed
> at promoting the book industry) and Apex-Brasil (Brazilian Trade and Investment
> Promotion Agency, connected to the Ministry of Development, Industry and
> Foreign Trade) founded Brazilian Publishers, a project encouraging export of
> content. With about seventy associated publishers, the group promotes actions
> such as the Buyer Project, bringing potential foreign buyers to Brazil, and the

Seller Project, promoting editorial content in countries that offer prospective future business. The entity organizes Brazilian delegations and presence at international book fairs and catalogs in English and Spanish with titles available for acquisition. These initiatives combined resulted in Brazil's stronger presence in international book fairs: with Brazil as guest of honor in Frankfurt in October 2013, members of Brazilian Publishers saw their sales grow 82 %, from $410,000 in 2012 to $750,000 (286).

Though private and public efforts have shown success, Brazilian publishers and local authors still face two significant obstacles: they can't compete with the massively imported literature, on the one hand, and they find it difficult to carve a space in the international market to export their books, on the other.

This literary production/consumption dilemma is rooted in a lingering nationalist paradigm in Brazil, against which the industry is now pushing. An article by Saskia Vogel covering the 2014 Göteborg Book Fair for the online magazine *Publishing Perspectives*'s reported Brazilian National Library's president, Renato Lessa, expressively stating that the ultimate goal of the programs aforementioned is to "de-nationalize" Brazilian literature. Lessa used the example of James Joyce, who didn't set out to diffuse Irish culture, but is read as part of a global cultural conversation: "You can compare it to listening to Bossa Nova while drinking sake in Tokyo. It feels natural and no one questions it" (publishingperspectives.com).[44]

De-nationalizing Brazil's cultural economy is a more than challenging endeavor, however. On the material side, while new media and digitalization have opened doors to independent press, self and micro publishers, and increased consumer participation in economically strong countries, Brazilian authors are evidently dependent on conglomerate publishers who, by market demand, privilege well-established foreign authors unless they are the exotic representative of national culture. Additionally – and maybe consequently – Brazilian

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[44] Translation mine.

authors are highly dependent on the federal government, which is responsible for one-fourth of the all book sales revenue in the country.[45]

On the cultural side, as a major influence in the publishing industry, the federal government supplies schools and libraries with literary works that are preferentially "national," which is a reflection of the strong nationalist tradition in Brazilian cultural economy. From the colonial period to subsequent movements (romanticism, realism, modernism, etc.), each with their unique perspective and from their particular historical context, Brazilian literature has been acutely preoccupied with defining, negotiating, re-defining *national* identity, often utilizing the indigenous figure as its symbol. Taking globalization as a long historical process, we can see literary reflections of national identity struggles in each period against the colonizer, or the foreigner, or the military regime, or the "Americanizing" influence, etc.

Thus, it isn't far-fetched to speculate that the transnational nature of the *The Alchemist* could account for its poor initial reception. Even after a second publisher gave the novel another chance, its popularity was timid. Eight months after the re-release, an American tourist took interested in the book and intermediated the contact between Coelho and the American publisher HarperCollins, who released the book's English translation in 1993. In 1994, the French edition propagated across Europe. From then on, each new market and new language has added to the popularity of the book, which only later became a bestseller even in Brazil. Unfortunately, the Brazilian publishing industry failed to capitalize on the international success of Paulo Coelho. In a prestigious media outlet, literary agent and scholar Luciana Villas-Boas posits:

> No Brazilian author has entered foreign lands without a history of unequivocal national recognition. Except for Paulo Coelho, whose literature was not perceived in foreign countries as being Brazilian. At the same time, Brazil foolishly did not claim his identity, including here literary critics and his fellow writers. His

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[45] Ana Ban, "Brazilian Books for Export," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 31 (2015): 284.

intercontinental popularity was then unable of opening doors for other Brazilian works.[46] (http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima)

Villas-Boas touches on two key issues here: the global perception of Coelho's narrative as de-nationalized – or transnational – and the local critical repudiation of the author. Combined, these factors have led to a publishing paradox: *The Alchemist*, the most best-selling novel in the history of the Portuguese language, is "consumed" in Brazil in a manner similar to translated bestsellers. Coelho's commercial success and concomitant scholarly rejection in Brazil is not surprising given that not only are they *popular culture*, but also – for literature written in Portuguese, nonetheless – they certainly fail the much-valued *nationalist aesthetics*.

In 2003, Brazilian scholars reacted with perplexity to news reporting that seven countries (U.S.A., Italy, Norway, Argentina, Mexico, France, and Spain) had incorporated *The Alchemist* to public schools' required reading lists. After careful consideration on whether Brazil should do the same, pedagogy scholars Maria Helena Bastos and Fernanda Busnello concluded by derisively citing Schopenhauer's *On Books and Reading* in his assertions that people detrimentally prefer the more recent to best literary works, and that even the writings of a mediocre spirit can be instructional. From this standpoint, they recommended: "anything is likely to result in learning and education. Paulo Coelho's oeuvre, particularly *The Alchemist*, can also conquest the classroom, but only as a cultural artifact, subject to critical analysis and reflection in its appropriation process" (207). [47]

Evidently, Brazilians hold a very controversial perception of Paulo Coelho who faces a convoluted road to canonization even after being elected to the notoriously selective Brazilian Academy of Letters. The way I see it, in a country where the production and distribution of

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[46] Translation mine.
[47] Translation mine.

books is highly dependent on government-sponsored programs, such nationalist and anti-popular

culture biases are much more detrimental to democratic access to literary goods than it will ever

be to old elitist humanist ideals of "intellectual refinement."

2. The Convergence Culture

Clearly, the contemporary cultural economy is full of contractions, globally and locally.

But, to understand globalization as a long historical process does not imply neglecting its

particularities in the contemporary context. One very useful contribution to cultural studies –

especially popular culture – that comes from scholars who understand globalization as a recent

phenomenon is the emphasis they place on the impact of accelerated convergences, new media,

and communication technology.

For example, cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai sees globalization as a "new" global

cultural economy characterized by an overlapping, disjunctive order. In his seminal book

Modernity at Large, Appadurai proposes five perspectival dimensions of cultural flow -

ethnoscape, technoscape, finanscape, ideoscape, and mediascape - with which to study such

"new" disjunctive order (33). The overlapping of his concepts of mediascape and technoscape is

particularly fitting to understand contemporary popular transnational literature. Even if we don't

see globalization as a rupture with the past, but as an acceleration of old historical dynamics, this

overlap gives us important insights to the 21st century circulation of literary goods. According to

the scholar, technoscape is related to an unprecedented flow of technological exchange, while

mediascape refers to the production and distribution of information and electronic capabilities to

audiences around the world who, in turn, negotiate new subjectivities across nation-states as they

experience image-centered, narrative-based information via a complex, integrated mediatic repertoire (35).

Transnational literature conventionally illustrates this concept *in-text*, the works of Salman Rushdie being seminal examples. Paulo Coelho isn't an exception, as exemplified in this excerpt: "I fought for the socialist ideals, went to prison and came out and went on fighting, feeling like a working-class hero – until, that is, I heard The Beatles and decided that rock music was much more fun than Marx" (Coelho, "Zahir" 9).

In its contemporary configuration, the landscape of media and technology is constituted by an accelerated flow of exchanges that once depended on literal travel and is now exponentially intensified by virtual travel. In *Global Matters*, Paul Jay articulates that the dynamics at the core of Appadurai's landscapes have lead up to what media scholar Henry Jenkins named the *convergence culture*. Indeed, as Jay posits, "the history of globalization, to a significant degree, is the history of accelerating convergences" (38).

In his seminal book *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins speaks of a polarized market in terms of the flow of content across multiple platforms through different media industries with an increased, but unequal participation of migratory consumers. Jenkins furthers Appadurai's arguments by postulating that media convergence happens within the same appliance, company, franchise, consumer brain, or fandom. The concept is fluid enough to account for the many diverging characteristics of today's literary market:

> One the one hand, media technologies have lowered production and distribution costs, expanded the range of available delivery channels, and enabled consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways. At the same time, there has been an alarming concentration of the ownership of mainstream commercial media in a small handful of multinational media conglomerates dominating all sectors of the entertainment industry. […] Some fear that media is out of control, others that it is too controlled. Some see a world without gatekeepers, others a world where gatekeepers have unprecedent

power. […] Convergence, as we can see, is both top-down corporate-driven and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. (18)

I believe it's fair to state apropos that transnational literature in general and Paulo Coelho novels in specific are not only hybrid identities narratives, but also products of a hybrid industry. And like hybrid identities, the global publishing industry is at the same time related to and superseding of national borders. The consumption of fiction in Brazil bears the impact of cultural convergence just the same as the international literary markets, as evident in the discussion of the literary de-nationalization efforts in Brazil.

One facet of the convergence culture is the influence that corporate conglomerates exert on cultural production, or the top-down processes in Jenkins' terms. To an unprecedented degree, media conglomerates formed through mergers and acquisitions in the past 30 years came to dominate all sectors of the entertainment industry and dictate practices in transnational media, including print. In *The Global Book: Micropublishing, Conglomerate Production and Digital Market Structure*, Publishing Studies scholar Ann Steiner discusses implications of this facet:

> The largest publishing corporations in the world in 2015 were Pearson, Thomson Reuters, Reed Elsevier, Wolters Kluwer, and Penguin Random House. These five media conglomerates span a very great number and variety of book trade companies, including sales and technology, and the restructuring of the business has led to increased vertical and horizontal integration. The link between publishing and the film and entertainment industry has been strengthened, and cross-media synergies have become increasingly important for all forms of book publishing, but particularly in certain segments such as young adult. There are different kinds of publishing synergies: there is the transfer of content to other media formats (films, games, apps); there are tie-in products (a book about a film based on a book, or a book about the characters of the story); and there is merchandise (posters, jewelry, clothes, action dolls, and so on). All these products enhance the brand, and are particularly important in conglomerate publishing, to the point where it can be argued that the book has become but one of many products in the large-scale media company. (120)

Additionally, because of innovations in the system of production, distribution and consumption - the e-book, apps and social media interaction, etc. - big corporations outside

traditional publishing houses, such as Apple, Google, and Amazon have also come to exert a strong influence on today's literary industry. Moreover, chain bookstores such as Barnes & Noble in the U.S., Waterstones in the U.K., or Saraiva in Brazil, have re-branded the entire reading experience. In their prime locations, adjacent to well-established retail stores, endowed with trendy coffees shops, 21st century bookshops promote the act of reading as an around-the-clock socio-cultural consumer activity.

Since Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1439, production and circulation of literary goods was made continuously cheaper and prolific. New technologies in the 21th century exponentially accentuated this phenomenon to a saturation point, propelling industrial expansion to the global market. Brazil came in as an attractive option to American and European publishing multinationals: an old story with different traded goods. Valued at $3.5 billion, Brazil is the 9th book market in the world, second only to China among developing countries and the driving influence in Latin America.

In turn, Brazil has had to re-structure its own industry to cope with international market pressures, adopting processes that mirror worldwide practices. Penguin Random House Brasil (PRHB) and HarperCollins were created in 2014 and 2015, respectively. PRHB, now the third largest trade publisher, incorporated the catalogues of once traditional national publishers *Companhia das Letras* and *Objetiva*. HarperCollins Publishers have partnered with *Ediouro* Group, combining the operations of *Thomas Nelson Brasil* and Harlequin Brasil. [48]

In order to reduce risk and maximize profits, major publishers - both internationally and in Brazil – have focused on the bestseller list. Let's remember that, by at least one definition, bestseller literature is popular culture. Both internationally and in Brazil, contemporary popular

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[48] Ana Ban, "Brazilian Books for Export," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 31 (2015): 284.

literature fits a certain profile: it is originally written in English, it takes part on a well-

established books series, and/or has been adapted to film or TV. Examples of such are Jojo

Moyes' *Still Me*, Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, Stephen King's *It*, John Green's *The Fault in*

our Stars and J. K. Rolling's *Harry Porter* (series), all featuring in Bestseller lists internationally

and in Brazil.[49]

As I mentioned before, another facet of the convergence culture is that the global trade

and digitalization of cultural goods opened opportunities for micropublishers, self-publishing and

independent press, augmenting consumer's input on what literary goods are put forth by the

industry. In Jenkins' terms, those are the bottom-up processes associated with "participatory

culture." In today's cultural industry, many supply chain links between the reader and the author

were removed, increasing consumer communication and participation in the publishing process,

including, for example, the advent of fan fiction websites. Sometimes those will rend mainstream

bestsellers like the E.L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* series, reportedly originated on Stephenie

Meyer's *Twilight* series' fan-fiction site.

One distinction must be made when considering this side of the convergence culture coin:

the issue of independent or small media ownership and the issue of consumer/reader

participation in the publishing industry. Speaking of a variety of small publishers made possible

by digitalizing technologies – micropublishers, self-publishers, small presses, and others – Ann

Steiner affirms:

> The publishers are a mix of book professionals and amateurs, testing possibilities,
> while established companies outside the book trade use the same channels as an
> additional output for their material. The variety of individuals, agents, companies,
> purposes, profits, ambitions, and abilities is striking. What they have in common
> is the expansion of e-books and digital publishing and the use of new technologies

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[49] Ann Steiner, "The Global Book: Micropublishing, Conglomerate Production, and Digital
Market Structures," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 38 (2018): 123.

and digital systems to disseminate, sell and market their books. The expansion of this sort of publishing has been mainly dependent on a disintermediation of the book business. (125)

However, as Steiner points out, publishing against big conglomerates means only a relative independence on the *media ownership* front. Though digital publishing strategies and products – vlog portals, print-on-demand, e-book software, audiobooks, etc. – have certainly made it possible to compete with media conglomerates outside of the print book circuit, small publishers are still reliant on media corporations that act agents of transfer, such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google, and Apple. Perhaps, then, a more empowering consumer-turned-producer phenomenon lies on the bottom-up influence on *cultural content*, also afforded by the disintermediation of the literary industry. As aforementioned, Jenkins refers to this as *participatory culture*.

> Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers. The promises of this new media environment raise expectations of a freer flow of ideas and content. Inspired by those ideals, consumers are fighting for the right to participate more fully in their culture. Sometimes, corporate and grassroot convergence reinforce each other, creating closer, more rewarding relations between media producers and consumers. (18)

It is important to note that even this empowering side of convergence culture occurs in uneven conditions. In fact, the bottom-up convergence – greater participation of consumers-turned-producers of content – may very well reinforce old patterns of marginalization. For one, in the international literary space, those who don't speak English and those who have little to no access to digital technology are excluded. The same goes for national literary spaces, such as Brazil, where a great deal of the population still lacks literacy and/or access to digital technology. Secondly, cultural-economic concentration in largely urbanized areas also exclude part of the consumer-population. In economies where uneven industrialization is endemic, this

exclusion is even more troublesome. In Brazil, the Southeastern region – where large urban

centers like Rio and São Paulo are located – retains 60% of book sales nationwide, marginalizing

the rest of the country and accentuating its dependence on government initiatives. Convergence

culture is a scenario made of new technologies, global subjectivities, new and empowering

opportunities, but *also* of old socioeconomic localized power imbalances. In *Evolution of the*

Brazilian Publishing Market, Gerson Ramos posits:

> Much has been said about the fact that over the past 20 years, more than 29
> million Brazilians have risen above the line of poverty, and that this represents a
> large number of new consumers equivalent to the entire population of Peru.
> However, when these new consumers will begin to turn into book readers is the
> challenge faced by both the book publishers and booksellers, as well as by the
> government which has made several investments in the assembly of library
> collections and programs to encourage reading thereby strengthening the market
> […] Sadly, until nowadays 'Brazilian publishing market is like a Mercedes
> circulating on bare steel rim wheels.' (165)

Paulo Coelho is an exceptional case in the Brazilian national market as I discussed

previously. Furthermore, the author is an exception to the international literary space. In the

global market, as Ann Steiner posits, very few book titles sell in great quantities in many

different countries and become world literature, and if they do, it's only for a brief period (122).

Paulo Coelho writes in Portuguese, and with over 365 million books sold worldwide, remains on

bestselling lists for seven years, including 317 consecutive weeks on the New York Times

Bestseller's list. At least *The Alchemist* is considered world literature – at least outside of Brazil -

and grouped with books such as Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* or Yann Martel's

Life of Pi.

3. Revival of the Author

Much has changed since Barthes pronounced "The Death of the Author" in 1967.[50] Not that the paradigm shift from author to reader as creator of meaning has been reversed. But, by market rules, the parenting figure of the author is once again foregrounded and symbolically re-configured. As historian Juliet Gardiner posits in *What is an author? Contemporary Publishing Discourse and the Author Figure*, the author has become a unitary sign for all publishing processes: s/he represents the text and the text represents her or him. Today, authors spend much more time and effort on the promotion of the book than on the actual writing of it, including taking part on internationally synchronized book launches, press interviews, bookshop readings, writing workshops for aspiring authors, periodic column writing, literary festivals, prize awarding panels, etc. "The author is still the 'author of' but has come to represent an accretion of cultural capital of which his or her books form an increasingly small part" (69).

It can be said that Paulo Coelho's oeuvre is characterized by metaliterature in the sense that he conventionally brings the publishing industry into his narrative. Because his novels are so often semi-biographical, Coelho portrays the recent history of the international literary space. His own road to creating texts, his online and in-person relationship with readers, snapshots of the daily life of a transnational writer, are all woven into the plot of the novel. In other words, his novels stand as an embodiment of the contemporary publishing.

One of Coelho's novels will serve as textual background in this chapter. Published in 2005, *The Zahir* is another semi-autobiographical novel about a physical and symbolic self-

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[50] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image-Music-Text* trans. and ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977).

realization journey themed by cultural hybridity and intertextuality inspired on – among other seminal texts – the anti-mimetic fictional work of Jorge Luis Borges. Translated into 44 languages and published first in Farsi in Iran, the book was the center of controversies on Intellectual Property and Political censorship, that will later be discussed. The narrator of the novels travels from France to Central Asia in search of his wife, a war correspondent who had mysteriously disappeared. Intercultural encounters and mystical experiences, in company of a young Kazakhstani translator, will lead the narrator to refine his character and understand the reasons that led him to lose the love of his life, his obsession, his *zahir*. Many characters in this book are connected to the publishing industry and multiple scenes are set in publishing events, which the narrator describes in detail. As the reader follow the story, s/he gets a sense of the writer's world, which bears a striking resemblance to Juliet Gardiner's previously mentioned description:

> I started taking part in book signings again. I accepted invitations to give lectures, write articles, attend charity dinners, appear on TV programmes, help out with projects for up-and-coming young artists. I did everything except what I should have been doing, i.e. writing a book. This didn't matter to me, however, for in my heart of hearts I believed that my career as a writer was over, because the woman who had made me begin was no longer there. (Coelho, "Zahir" 58)

In an argument similar to Gardiner's, Ann Steiner asserts that, to became world literature – a classic, a bestseller or a longstanding popular novel – a book depends on many more factors than the text itself. It depends on its marketing, author, publisher, timing, or even – what would probably delight Paulo Coelho – pure serendipity (127). At first, Paulo Coelho enjoyed remarkable timing by writing transnational literature and investing on the international literary space right as cultural-economic paradigms shifted from nationalist to transnationalist and globalizing cultural-economic forces accelerated. Note how the narrator in *The Zahir* reminisces about some of those changes:

I am the shepherd boy crossing the desert. But where is the alchemist who helps him carry on? When I finish the novel, I don't entirely understand what I have written: It's like a fairy tale for grown-ups, and grown-ups are interested in war, sex, or stories about power. Nevertheless, the publisher accepts it […] The first translation appears, then the second, and success slowly but surely takes my work into the four corners of the earth.

I decide to move to Paris because of its cafes, its writers and its cultural life. I discover that none of this exists anymore: the cafes are full of tourists and photographs of the people who made those places famous. […] The internet in its simple language is all it takes to change the world. A parallel world emerges in Paris. New writers struggle to make their words and their souls understood. I join these new writers in cafes that no one has ever heard of […] I develop my own style and learn from a publisher all I need to know about mutual support. (32-33)

Now that he is a well-established author, Paulo Coelho's novels enter the international market as a sure bet and under carefully coordinated marketing strategies executed by major multinational publishing companies. These strategies are carried out by networks of literary gatekeepers, such as rights agents, translators, critics, journalists, librarians, marketing specialists, school teachers, educational institutions, social media influencers, etc. As Gardiner argues, the sale of a book has happened long before it reached a bookseller (65-66). Note how those relationships are woven into the narrative in *The Zahir* in this inner monologue about the critiques on the narrator's recently published novel:

The literary supplements, which have never been kind to me, redoubled their attacks. […] "…once again, despite the troubled times we live in, the author offers us an escape from reality with a story about love…" (as if we could live without love). "…short sentences, superficial style…" (as if long sentences equaled profundity). "The author has discovered the secret of success – marketing…" (as if I had been born in a country with a long literary tradition and had had millions to invest in my first book). "…It will sell as well as all his other books, which just proved how unprepared human beings are not to face up to the encircling tragedy…" (as if they knew what it meant to be prepared). (Coelho, "Zahir" 65)

In dialogue with a publisher, the narrator discusses the principles of a favor bank once mentioned by "an American writer." Referring to Tom Wolfe's 1987 novel *The Bonfire of Vanities*, who described New York's justice system as a systematic network of favors, and

Coelho's book, applied to the publishing industry. The narrator explains and exemplifies through the novel the idea that career advancement comes from "depositing" favors – introductions to the influential people, deal arrangements, etc. – that will be inevitably withdrawn later, attracting even more deposits from other "investors."

This passage gives us a glimpse into the first stages of an author's personal branding, and to some extent, explains the online persona that Paulo Coelho has built based on promoting some of his readers, as will be discussed shortly. Author branding, one the most important marketing strategies in the publishing industry today – bottom-up or top-down - is a concept built on *perception* and *representation*, which straightforwardly takes us to the concept of *simulacra*.

There's nothing new about an idealized representation of the self. From Plato to Baudrillard and Deleuze, philosophers have long explored the concept of simulacrum, that is, the representation of something real by mirroring, distorting, or even growing to bear no semblance to its signifier - in the case of hyperreality. Philosopher Jean Baudrillard explains in *Simulacra and Simulations*, that "abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (166).

In a more positive take on simulacra, philosopher Gilles Deleuze doesn't see simulacra as artificiality or disempowering alienation. In *Plato and the Simulacrum*, Deleuze asserts: "The simulacrum includes within itself the differential point of view, and the spectator is made part of the simulacrum, which is transformed and deformed according to his point of view" (49).

Although simulacra are not a novel phenomenon, the convergence culture has changed its meaning and performance. If before the 21st century simulacra were associated with media

spectacle,[51] in the context of digitalized/globalized publishing, they take the form of *online presence* (social media, website development, blogging, search engine optimization, etc.). In *Communication Power*, media scholar Manuel Castells explains that new interactive media continuously blur the boundaries between mass media and other forms of communication, ushering in a new communication practice: mass self-communication.

> It is mass communication because it can potentially reach a global audience as in the posting of a video on YouTube, a blog with RSS links to a number of web sources, or a message to a massive e-mail list. At the same time, it is self-communication because the production of the message is self-generated, the definition of the potential receiver(s) is self-directed, and the retrieval of specific messages or content from the World Wide Web and electronic communication networks is self-selected. The three forms of communication (interpersonal, mass communication, and mass self-communication) coexist, interact, and complement each other rather than substituting for one another. What is historically novel, with considerable consequences for social organization and cultural change, is the articulation of all forms of communication into a composite, interactive, digital hyper-text that includes, mixes, and recombines in their diversity the whole range of cultural expressions conveyed by human interaction. (55)

I would argue that, furthermore, "mass self-communication" incorporates simulacra multi-directionally. For one, the author imagines an ideal audience for whom s/he creates virtual content (hyperreal simulacrum of a collective entity). In turn, such virtual content which is paratextual to her or his books, foments the author's personal brand (hyperreal simulacrum of the author). Finally, the online reader engages in a perceived close-relationship with the author online, as well as in filiation to other readers, oftentimes appropriating of these relationships to generate virtual content, build, and perform their own online identities (hyperreal simulacrum of relationships and identities).

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[51] Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

4. Online Persona

As the book market shifted from product-centered to market-centered and the process of cultural convergence intensified, Paulo Coelho expertly maintained, and capitalized on, his initial success through somewhat risky attitudes: For one, he pioneered the disintermediation of publishing; Secondly, he built personal branding and online presence in untried ways; and third, he challenged traditional ideas of intellectual property.

As I have been discussing, publishing is a market-driven endeavor, disintermediated by digital technologies and woven into convergent networks of production, circulation and consumption. Because of that, the industry is ever more dependent on *online presence*, the processes by which brands are constructed from the online traffic they are able to attract. The author's personal brand has become his or her online persona. Paulo Coelho's online persona is notorious for the unusually warm relationship he maintains with his readers in the virtual sphere. In *The Magus: The Astonishing Appeal of Paulo Coelho*, Dana Goodyear describes Coelho's website as kind of New Age chatroom with ample space for comments and exchange of ideas among his followers. She recounts an event that sprung from that site: while reading responses from readers to a page devoted to daily miracles on his own website, Coelho felt inspired to post an invitation to the first ten responding readers to join him for a party in Spain, the Feast of St. Joseph. The next day, the site was flooded with a hundred responses from all over the world. Coelho, who used to hold six-hour long book signings, decided to honor his invitation just the same, even if feeling a bit guilty about the travel expenses which the fans would incur for such a limited time in his company.

Coelho's remarkable virtual persona may very well have surpassed his fame as author of *The Alchemist*. He initiated his online presence with MySpace, developing partnership in projects and events, such as the "Experimental Witch Film Competition," also promoted on YouTube and Vimeo. Coelho invited his filmmaker and musician readers to adapt his novel, *The Witch of Portobello* to a short film. He personally promoted the winners among six thousand submissions and received a *Special Cinema for Peace Award* for the project in Germany. In 2008, when MySpace was still the biggest site in terms of traffic and Facebook was picking up growth, Coelho issued a phrase that went viral: "MySpace is my wife, Facebook is my mistress."[52] Ten years later, he accumulates 29 million likes on his Facebook page, 15.3 million followers on Twitter, 2.1 million subscribers on Google +, and over 400 videos on his YouTube channels. His social media numbers surpass those of J. K Rowling, Dan Brown, John Green, and even Madonna.

For the most part, Coelho personally manages his online presence and admittedly loves doing it. To him, virtual interaction leads to more – and more personal – connection with his readers/followers. In his online article *Paulo Coelho, Digital Juggernaut*, writer Keith Parkins, remarks that through personal management, Coelho leaped where others celebrity authors like Stephen King and Dan Brown step-sided; King for joining Twitter only much later than Coelho and Brown for delegating social media feed to his office.

Coelho, in turn, proactively uses his approachable-writer persona to turn his readers into collaborators of future literary narratives, further enhancing the audience perception of self-representation: "Media producers and advertisers now speak about "emotional capital" or

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[52] Michael Arrington, "Paulo Coelho: MySpace is My Wife, Facebook is My Mistress." The Huffington Post, 9 December 2008. TechCrunch <https://techcrunch.com/2008/12/09/paulo-coelho-myspace-is-my-wife-facebook-is-my-mistress>

"lovemarks" to refer to the importance of audience investment and participation in media content. At the same time, consumers are using new media technologies to engage with old media content" (Jenkins 169).

As an example, in 2013, Coelho's tweets were compiled and published in South Korea in a book titled *The Magical Moment*, with rights sold in Korean, Indonesian, Japanese, and Chinese. The "Tweetbook" is illustrated by Korean multimedia producer/journalist/cartoonist Joong Hwan Hwang. In 2014, while researching for his novel, *Adultery*, Coelho received over a thousand emails from fans sharing their personal experiences with infidelity. Another example is Coelho's *Manuscript Found in Accra* (2012) which fictionally represents reader-responses to a tweet from Coelho: "Share your fears that I might offer hope and comfort." Topics suggested by Twitter followers were courage, solitude, anxiety, beauty, love, success, loss, etc.

The exposition of *Manuscript Found in Accra* is quite elaborate. First, the preface relays the story of two brothers who found an urn containing papyruses in an Egyptian cave. After a much-convoluted journey that rendered them the titles of Jung Codex and Nag Hammadi codices, the papyruses eventually wind up in the Coptic Museum in Cairo in the present day. They are also known as the Apocryphal Gospels. In explaining how and why those texts were kept from the Bible, Coelho questions the biases of official texts accusing them, for example, of purposely excluding women writers (The Gospel According to Mary Magdalene, specifically). The narrative becomes fictional at the end of its preface when it turns to an English archaeologist who, in 1974, discovered one of the manuscripts, passed it down to his son, an acquaintance of the writer who, then, proceeds to transcribe it.

The manuscript contains the story narrated by a young Christian man who, with his childhood friend, a Jew named Yakob, joins a group of people gathered to listen to the words of

wisdom of a mysterious wise Greek known as "the Copt" in the same square where once Pilate had handed Jesus to the mob to be crucified. The year is 1099 – 4859 to Yakob's family – and it is the eve of the Crusaders invasion of Jerusalem. Muslims are gathered at the Al-Aqsa mosque, Jews are assembled in Mihrab Dawud, Christians are quartered south of the city, and war chants from the far-superior French army can be heard by Copt and his small crowd anguished by the threat of eminent annihilation.

This is as far as elaboration goes. From then on, the narrative consists of Copt answering to the queries of his distinctively diverse group of people: a merchant, a wealthy bride, a young boy, a seamstress, an old unmarried woman, the wife of a trader, a soldier, and so on. A rabbi, an imam, and a Christian priest who accompanied the Copt also get their chance to address and comfort the audience. Much of what is preached is trite, but there are moments of philosophic insight. Copt often paraphrases the Koran, the Bible, and even the poetry of Octavio Paz and Lord Alfred Tennyson, though no credit is given.

What is really significant, however, is that the issues addressed by the orator perfectly match the concerns brought up in response to Paulo Coelho's Tweet. *Manuscript Found in Accra* is a conversation between Paulo Coelho and his online followers, only lengthier, in a different setting, and through a different medium. Note how the language and content of the following passage is consistent with the author's persona:

> The same man who had asked about work asked another question: "Why are some people luckier than others? And he answered:
> Success does not come from having one's work recognized by others. It is the fruit of a seed that you lovingly planted. When harvest time arrives, you can say to yourself: "I succeeded." You succeeded in gaining respect for your work because you did not work only to survive, but to demonstrate your love for others. You managed to finish what you began even though you did not foresee all the traps along the way. And when your enthusiasm waned because of the difficulties you encountered, you reached for discipline. And when discipline seemed about to disappear because you were tired, you used your moments of repose to think

about what steps you needed to take in the future. You were not paralyzed by the defeats that are inevitable in the lives of those who take risks. You didn't sit agonizing over what you lost when you had an idea that didn't work. You didn't stop when you experienced moments of glory, because you had not yet reached your goal. And when you realized that you would have to ask for help, you did not feel humiliated. […] To he who knocks, the door will open. He who asks will receive. (Coelho, "Accra" 125)

In managing their brand/online presence, celebrity writers like Coelho must navigate through different systems of virtual representation, be it on their own or under the patronage, guidance, or collaboration of marketing teams. *In Authors Influencing Others to Follow: An Analysis of a Social Media Platform through the Framework of Persuasion Theory*, Philip Rothschild distinguishes three possible virtual marketing pathways: homebase, embassies and outposts (253). Homebase refers to digital property owned and fully controlled by the author, like websites and blogs, which depend on expert design and regular in-depth content creation. Embassies are those sites neither owned nor controlled by authors where they create profiles and engage in conversation with other users, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; content creation here is quick and superficial, more frequent and maybe more time-consuming, and independent from technical acumen. Mostly delegated to online marketing specialists, outposts are locations where the author can monitor and manage their online presence, such as Hootsuite and Google alerts.

In keeping up with the transnational nature of his persona, Paulo Coelho's homebase, that is, his official website, can be accessed in 104 languages. The site's main feature and homepage is his blog which averages 10 short posts monthly, consisting of original content, self-promoting material, inspirational texts, and personal development guest posts. Post titles that exemplify each respectively are: *The Talking Donkey* (December 14, 2017), *Character of the Week: Brida* (March 30, 2017), *Two Sufi Prayers* (June 7, 2013), and *6 Mistakes that Smart People Never*

Make Twice, by Piyush Sharma (April 22, 2018). The site also features sneak peek chapters of

unpublished works, like the Portuguese edition of his upcoming novel *Hippie* (2018), as well as

selected free eBooks. Further, the site contains links to Coelho's biography, photos for media

producers, the Paulo Coelho and Christina Oiticica Foundation (in Geneva), and the Paulo

Coelho Institute (Brazilian charities). Despite its increasingly standard design, Coelho's website

is still remarkably personal and interactive and it follows an adaptive publishing logic:

According to Jeff Gomes, in *Thinking Outside the Blog: Navigating the Literary Blogsphere*,

publishers have become clearly aware that consumers of books and blog readers are one and the

same and that blogs are to the 21st century what book clubs were to the 90's (6).

Though the on-the-road hectic life of a "promotable author" certainly describes Paulo

Coelho – and is described by him in his novels – his author-persona is increasingly more virtual

than physical. That is, these days Coelho rarely travels to promote his books. He prefers instead

to write "at least one kind word to 30 people a day and reach 10K a year" on social media. On

embassies such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, Coelho steadily posts the raw thoughts and

inspirational quotes so strongly associated with his persona in both words and images. Twitter

has become his embassy of choice: the author averages 12 to 15 daily posts, originally or

automatedly. (Parkins)

Differently than Instagram and even more so than Facebook, Twitter is a microblogging

site whose dominant communication practices are private, albeit enabling the private exchange

of messages. In *I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and

the Imagined Audience*, Marwick and Boyd state:

> Social media thus combines elements of broadcast media and face-to-face
> communication. Like broadcast television, social media collapse diverse social
> contexts into one, making it difficult for people to engage in the complex
> negotiations needed to vary identity presentation, manage impressions, and save

face. But unlike broadcast television, social media users are not professional image-makers, and rather than giving a speech on television, they are often corresponding with friends and family. By necessity, Twitter users maintain impressions by balancing personal/public information, avoiding certain topics, and maintaining authenticity. (Marwick and Boyd 124)

Marwick and Bold explain that there is a unique disconnect between followed and followers on Twitter (117). As way of example, 15.4M Twitter users follow Paulo Coelho, but the author only follows 289 people. Nevertheless, it is evident Paulo Coelho manages to revert the public, impersonal, old-media-like platform that Twitter has become. Decidedly a major social media influencer, the author strives to maintain the aura of personal touch and audience participation even in the most impersonal of social media platforms. In 2012, after tweeting "@paulocoelho Really enjoyed #Aleph. Thanks for writing what Aleph means to me on my current pilgrimage," blogger Matthew Trinetti recounted the following experience:

> I was literally shaking from an adrenaline high. Paulo Coelho just sent my blog post to his 5.8 million+ followers. […] Epiphany: Twitter has the power to give you instant credibility, validate your offering, and make you famous. This is a variation of "The Oprah Effect," where books or products featured by Oprah on her show would gain instant fame and generate millions of sales within a few short days […] This Paulo tweet was my five minutes of fame. Literally. After five minutes, he removed the tweet, saying the link wasn't working. The link did work, however, because in those five short minutes 150 people visited my site from around the world. (*Trinetti*)

It is evident that Coelho systematically monitors online mentions of his brand. Not differently than with his homebase and embassies, Coelho tends to manage outposts with little delegation to his team even thought this requires specialized understanding of search engines optimization, indexing, linking, etc. Incidentally, in his book *What Would Google Do?*, journalist Jeff Jarvis names Paulo Coelho the "googliest" author he knows.[53] Coelho's online visibility may

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[53] Jeff Jarvis, *What Would Google Do?* (New York: Collins, 2009): 141.

have less to do with intentional marketing strategy per se and more to do with Coelho's attitude towards intellectual property.

Publishers have a longstanding history of protecting content, a history that has been brought to prominence and into question in the context of cultural convergence. Digitalization made necessary a globalization of measures on Intellectual Property Rights in the form of international conventions and agreements, such as TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) signed in 1994 by the member nations of the WTO (World Trade Organization). A great part of the publishing community voices their concerns with the internet becoming a deregulated, unruly medium and pines for legislative solutions to protect the sustainability of the industry. Conversely, others advocate for open access and a paradigm shift in the concept of copyrights. One such voice is the above-cited journalism scholar Jeff Jarvis, a guru in the world of digital publication, who advocates for the open web movement, which strives for collaborative, public standards for online communication in place of private, proprietary policies.

During the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2008, on his blog Buzzmachine.com. Jarvis reproduced a report on the contrasting talks given by the director of the German Publishers & Booksellers Association, Gottfried Honnefelder, and Paulo Coelho. The journalist then invited his readers to compare the opposing messages and take a stand, though Jarvis clearly sides with Coelho. Titled *Past, Meet Present*, Jarvis' blog post stands as an illustration of the contemporary controversies over copyright regimes. One of the comments to the post caught my attention for how illustrative it is of Jenkins' participatory culture and its complications of intellectual properties:

> Coelho wins. Entrenched media companies are scared because they are simply not needed anymore to content and filter artists work (which can now effectively be

done by the consumer due to low transaction costs of the internet), and therefore won't be able to rape artists for profit as they have done previously. A new model needs to be created. What about all authors release their work to their internet (free or for a cost, totally up to the author), and then people have an option to purchase a soft copy. But this soft copy is handled by an independent book printing company who will only print once a critical mass of consumers who want to purchase the book is reached. That way the costs for bringing a book to print is done democratically - not force fed by what a publisher thinks is "in" at the time and establishes an existing market for the author to sell. (John Pana, comment on Jeff Jarvis)

Coelho's activism for open web became an integral aspect of his persona over the years. In 1999, a fan of *The Alchemist* published online an unauthorized Russian translation of the book. Instead of hindering profit, the pirated online version, openly condoned by Coelho, caused the sales of official physical copies of the novel to jump from three thousand to one million in less than three years with no additional publicity and even in the face of paper scarcity in Russia at the time. Coelho, to whom a falling leaf can be an omen of good luck, became an advocate for network sharing of his writings ever since. It wasn't long before he turned infamous for "pirating his own books." The writer collected pirated versions of all his novels in several languages using the communication protocol for peer-to-peer (p2p) file-sharing BitTorrent. He then created the blog *PirateCoelho.com* where he published his collection in free shareable full-text links and audiobooks. In 2012, the novelist joined the file-sharing site Pirate Bay with a promotional campaign in which he called on his audience to pirate everything he had ever written.[54] It is common practice now for Coelho to grant reader access to selected novels and ask them to pay for them only afterwards, if they enjoyed the book.

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[54] Alison Flood, "Paulo Coelho Calls on Readers to Pirate His Books," The Guardian, 1 February 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/feb/01/paulo-coelho-readers-pirate-books>; Martha Bausells, Paulo Coelho Tells Readers: Buy My Book After You've Read It – If You Liked It," The Guardian, 9 June 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/jun/09/paulo-coelho-buy-my-book-after-youve-read-it-only-if-you-liked-it>

A more politically overt episode occurred in 2011, when the Iranian government unofficially and without explanation banned *The Zahir*.[55] Up to that date, six million of Coelho's books had been sold in Iran. The controversy began when Coelho's local editor and translator, Arash Hejarzi, was featured in a viral video trying to revive a young woman shot during the street protests of 2009 over the disputed Iranian presidential elections. Allegedly, the ban came in response to Coelho's social media campaign against the subsequent official scrutiny levied on Hejarsi. Paulo Coelho's immediate reaction to the ban was to digitalize and publish Farsi editions of 16 of his novels online, for free.

Currently, the webpage dedicated to the Farsi edition of *Aleph* reads: "As I don't have a publishing house in Farsi, Dr. Hejazi translated the book. He did it for free and I am posting it for free here. Please be welcome to share this link (or the copies) with your friends." One aspect of the contemporary international literary space illustrated here is the symbiotic relationship between Intellectual Property and translation, which incidentally is built-in Paulo Coelho's persona.

5. Improving with translation

English and French translations of *The Alchemist* "saved" the novel from its initial obscurity in Brazil and placed Paulo Coelho in the international market and on the map of World Literature. Perhaps in lieu of the title of 'most translated book by a living author' given to the novel by the Guinness Book of Records, Coelho's subsequent novels were *born translated* - to

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[55] Mac Margolis, "Paulo Coelho Banned in Iran," Newsweek, 13 January 2011. <http://www.newsweek.com/paulo-coehlo-banned-iran-67049>; "Paulo Coelho Says Iran Bans His Books"<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-iran-author-idUSTRE7094KL20110110>.

borrow Rebecca Walkowitz's term.[56] That is, they've been written *for* translation and translation

practices are woven into the narrative. For example, Coelho's novel *Adultery* was launched in

Portuguese on April 2014. In August of the same year, 75,000 hardcover copies of the book were

published in English and Spanish simultaneously for the American market alone.[57] Furthermore,

due to the author's signature narrative simplicity, Paulo Coelho's novels are *born-translatable*,

containing a built-in portability across diverse cultures.

Translation has been a key issue in World Literature scholarship since Goethe declared

the age of *Weltliteratur* had begun. In his 1877's *The Present Task of Comparative Literature*,

scholar Hugo Meltzl stated that literature and language had a symbiotic relationship, "the latter

being substantially subservient to the former, without which the servant would have not only no

autonomy but no existence at all" (19). A defender of polyglottism, Meltzl argued that works of

World Literature should only be compared in their original language because the national

identity of a literary work ought to be sacred and inviolable.

Conversely, in his 1911's *The Unity of Literature and the Conception of World

Literature*, theorist Richard Moulton argued that the study of literature, disentangled of language,

depended upon the free use of translation. He asked: "If a man, instead of reading Homer in

Greek, reads him in English, he has unquestionably lost something. But the question arises, is

what he has lost literature?" (30). Defending that language is only one factor in literature,

Moulton affirmed that such reader would have not literature; not even all of languages, but

specifically Greek and only partially depending on the skill of the translator.

> One who accepts the use of translation where necessary secures all factors of
> literature except language, and a considerable part even of that. One who refused

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[56] Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born Translated: A Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, (Chichester, NY: Columbia UP, 2017) 3.

[57] Ana Ban, "Brazilian Books for Export," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 31 (2015): 290.

translation by that fact cuts himself off from the major part of the literary field; his scholarship, however polished and precise, can never rise above the provincial. (30)

In his 1940's *The Indispensable Instrument: Translation*, Albert Guérard, wrote: "There are cases in which translation stands condemned; there are others in which, however inadequate, it will serve; there are others still in which the gain is immeasurably greater than the loss" (59). Guérard argued that translation means *proud collaboration* and that every book is inherently translated anyway through the lenses of the reader's personal experiences, even in language of origin. In *Born Translated: A Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, translation scholar Rebecca Walkowitz echoes the thoughts of Moulton and Guérard. She argues that, in fact, "translation is the engine rather than the caboose of literary history" (5)

Defining globalization in a broader historical sense clarifies the role of translation in World Literature. The increasing interdependence of the two, just like globalization – or better, *as a function of* globalization – is not a new phenomenon. Speaking of authors who mitigate the need for translation by choosing to write in a dominant language - like Vladimir Nabokov, for example - translation historian Rebecca Walkowitz explains:

> Late Medieval and early modern European writers often circulated their work both in Latin and in vernacular languages in order to reach secular as well as clerical audiences. A language of commerce and internal exchange, read and sometimes spoken across geographies, Latin allowed merchants and scholars to communicate without having to manage local idioms. Eleventh century Iranian philosophers wrote not in Persian, but in Arabic, while Chinese, Japanese, and Korean intellectuals used Chinese for nearly a thousand years. From the perspective of the past, it is in some ways a misnomer to call this practice translation or even preemptive translation since it is a relatively new assumption to that one's writing language and one's speaking language would naturally be the same" ("Born Translated" 11).

Moreover, understanding literary translation in terms of the long development of global relations not only reveals its historical importance, but also contextualizes its celebration *and* its

rejection as a tool of literary and cultural exchange. Rejections of literary translation are associated with periods of nationalism, whereas its opponents tend to uphold a more cosmopolitan point of view. The first fear cultural and political homogenization via translation, and more contemporarily, the overpowering dominium of the English language, whereas the latter recognizes agency in reader interpretation, in translator skillful creativity, and in the open-system nature of language. This second position has a much longer stance in History than the first, even though – it seems – academically the first has had a stronger hold.

Walkowitz associates this dichotomy to two main paradigms related to the effects of books on political communities: possessive collectivism vs. imagined communities. The first correlates to nationalist approaches to literature and the second to the transnational/postnational view of literature that I've been discussing in this dissertation. The possessive collectivistic paradigm espouses the idea that literary works embody the spirit and genius of the nations that render them unique. "Among minorities and colonized subjects, possessive collectivism has had the positive effect of validating intellectual labor and justifying political sovereignty" (26). It isn't difficult to deduce that, from this standpoint, the translation of a novel comes across as threatening to the preservation of individual and national identity. A Bakhtinian notion of languages as open systems is antithetical to possessive collectivism. In a context where born-translated books originate almost simultaneously in multiple languages, this paradigm loses its explanatory power.

On the other hand, it is perfectly compatible to think of polyphony and heteroglossia when it comes to born-translated novels without necessarily compromising local and even national identities, if the working paradigm is that of imagined communities. Walkowitz draws on Benedict Anderson's seminal theory of imagined communities, according to which a group's

sense of identity is decoupled with physical location and is, instead, based on imagined or perceived collective values among strangers. She argues that his work "shows us that global disarticulation – belonging to nowhere – is not the only alternative to national simultaneity. Moreover, it suggests that the repression of translation may be tied, as it is in Anderson's text, to the transnational impulses within national projects" (28).

It is important to note that, just as with the participatory dimension of the convergence culture, the global practice of translation is uneven and reflects socio-economic imbalances. We need only to refer to my early discussion on the efforts of the Brazilian publishing industry and government agencies to promote the translation of Brazilian books in order to invigorate the industry. Not to mention that 90% of the fiction consumed in the country is not written originally in Portuguese (Ban 283).

But, in terms of translation history, a positive result of accelerated globalizing forces is the advent of born-translated novels. Contemporary literary works enter the international market at an exceptional speed and in multiple languages simultaneously - or near simultaneously. As Walkowitz defends, contrary to literature that is written in a dominant language, born-translated novels engage us in remembrance that fiction benefits from and is influenced by many languages (24).

> While many books produced today seek to entice or accommodate translation, aiming to increase their audiences and the market-share of their publishers, born-translated works are notable because they highlight the effects of circulation on production. Not only are they quickly and widely translated, they are also engaged in thinking about the process. They increase translation's visibility, both historically and proleptically: they are trying to be translated, but in important ways they are also trying to keep being translated. They find ways to register their debts to translation even as they travel into additional languages. Most of all, whether or not they manage to circulate globally, today's born-translated works block readers from being "native readers," those who assume that the book they are holding was written for them or that the language they are encountering is, in some proprietary or intrinsic way, theirs. Refusing to match language to

geography, many contemporary works will seem to occupy more than one place, to be produced in more than one language, or to address multiple audiences at the same time. They build translation into their form. ("Born Translated" 6)

Paulo Coelho's novels are born-translated not only because today's global publishing industry and readership demand instant translation, but also because they lend themselves to translation in their content and form. As the infamous anecdote goes, Brazilian literary critics often dismiss the international acclamation of Paulo Coelho by saying that "his prose must improve with translation."[58] I agree with that argument, but not in the disdainful ways in which it has been used. By being born-translated, his prose recognizes the debt that various languages, literatures, and cultures have to one another. In fact, literary scholar David Damrosch defines World Literature *as* writing which gains in translation, whereas untranslatable works are necessarily constrained to their local or national context, "never achieving an effective life as world literature" (203).

Paulo Coelho's novels improve with translation also in the sense that their linguistic simplicity make them born-translatable, better suiting to the transnational paradigm I discussed in Chapter 1, and more expertly adapting to international literary space. As explained by literary critic Sonia Kotiah: "Because Coelho rarely uses complex allegories, metaphors or idioms, his works display a consistent awareness of 'local' narratives and structure traditionally associated with enchanting old tales, soothsayers, idealistic lovers, mysterious maps and parchments, exotic strangers and a network of ancient beliefs which he converts into contemporary yet accessible quests for truth and self-enlightenment. ("Pilgrimage" 32).

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[58] Dana Goodyear, "The Magus: The Astonishing Appeal of Paulo Coelho," *New Yorker*, 7 May 2007. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/05/07/the-magus>.

In *The Coming of Age of a Brazilian Phenomenon*, novelist and linguist Glauco Ortolano articulates Coelho's writings style to the long-standing rejection of Paulo Coelho by much of the Brazilian literary community which, he argues, is likely due to the author's mastery of narrative simplicity: his fablelike language, his avoidance of complex allegories, metaphors and idioms, etc. (57). Ortolano's argument is evident in, at least, three literary scholarly books that have been published in Brazil to disparaged Paulo Coelho's writings, namely, *Por que Não Ler Paulo Coelho* (Why Not To Read Paulo Coelho) by Janilton Andrade, *Os 10 Pecados de Paulo Coelho* (Paulo Coelho's Ten Sins) by Eloésio Paulo, and *Por que Paulo Coelho Teve Sucesso* (Why Paulo Coelho was Successful), by Mario Maestri.[59] These books focus on the supposed literary and linguistic shortcoming of Coelho narratives, that is, his uncomplicated characters and plots, short paragraphs and chapters, grammatical inaccuracies, literary clichés, etc.

Although characteristic of critics of Paulo Coelho, this type of analysis, strongly linked to possessive collectivism and nationalism paradigm, is not unique to one author or even one national/linguistic analysis. Instead it is part of a larger political stance tied to clear differentiations of high versus low culture, to invoke my discussion on the question of value in Chapter 1. Historian Juliet Gardiner explains this phenomenon brilliantly in her discussion of a new author/editor relationship created by current literary market conditions: "The current outcry in Britain and the U.S. about declining editorial standards is partly an attack on a liberal education philosophy and practice that supposedly privileges creativity, innovation and cultural plurality over the teaching and spelling and the study of canonical texts, represented as a defense of the English language" ("What is an Author?" 67).

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[59] Translation mine.

This same traditional ideological point of view of authorship as primary source of textual creation fails to acknowledge that all novels are collaborative endeavors which have always drawn from previous literature and have owed their finality to editors, translators and other publishing agents. More importantly, they imply a condescending attitude towards readers by overlooking their role as ultimate generators of meaning. So, yes, if the Paulo Coelho novels are so largely appreciated by the most diverse imagined communities in the world, translation absolutely improves his prose. What traditional critics of the novelist call "literary poverty," his proponents celebrate as authentically transnational, accurately postmodern, humanistic, pragmatic or holistic.[60] In *Postmodern Penelope: Coelho's The Zahir and the Metamorphosis in Gender Relations*, scholar Wisam Mansour posits:

> Coelho's narrator tells us "if a book isn't self-explanatory, then the book is not worth reading" (248). Though such a statement may not appeal to a Formalist critic in the sense that literature should alienate, defamiliarize and make difficult the literary experience, Coelho proves in *The Zahir* the assumption of his narrator. The book is so simple and its narrative flows so smoothly like a running stream of water in the early months of spring. Coelho's narrative magically transfixes its readers and absorbs them into the mystical and mythical world of its narrator. (92)

Because of their narrative simplicity, Coelho's novels are not only born-translated, but they are also *born- translatable*. This aspect of Coelho's novels eliminates traditional anxieties about translation: namely, that translations lack local linguistic specificities and that they dilute original literary traditions. Because Coelho's are simple narratives, there is little difficulty in transporting grammatical structures into other languages, shifting the cultural focus from the original language to the target language, and to interpretation based on the readers' cultural background. The translatability of Coelho's narratives is not much different than the

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[60] Among scholars that have recently proposed a more favorable perspective on Paulo Coelho are Glauco Ortolano, Sonia Kotiah and Wisam Mansour.

universalization of immemorial fairy tales spoken of by Albert Guérard, as I discussed in Chapter 1.

In my opinion, it matters less whether Paulo Coelho's novel could "impoverish" Portuguese and more whether his translators and readers could enrich their language and culture by appropriating his texts, or even by using it to subvert economic and political restrictions on access to cultural goods, as exemplified in the cases of the unauthorized Russian translation of *The Alchemist* and the digital Farsi publication of *The Zahir* after the Iranian ban.

Drawing on Damrosch's work, Rebecca Walkowitz fittingly likens translated works to migrants, who can make their "homes" many times, some more easily than others. For their literary and linguistic simplicity, Coelho's books are examples of novels who enable the making of multiple homes by means of translation. One implication of such is that they remind us, or should, that "books can begin more than once, and that literary traditions are regularly interrupted, transformed, and initiated by the circulation of works into and out of many languages and many versions of languages" ("Born Translated" 174).

Another reason why Coelho's books are born-translated reside in their transnational nature. They are what Walkowitz calls world-shaped and world-theme novels. That is, they feature traveling characters engaged in transnational activities who speak different languages and operate between and across sovereign states, often featuring translators and scenes of translation ("Born Translated" 122). I have argued previously that because of their semi-autobiographic content, Coelho's novels narrate or embody contemporary publishing practices. Likewise, because they are world-shaped and themed novels, Coelho's novels narrate or embody processes of translation.

It can be argued that every time a Coelho narrator or character re-tells a legend, recounts historical events or describes aspects of a local culture, as they often do, readers witness the author's performance of translation and interpretation. Certain terms receive translations laden with intertextuality through his novels, especially when the term in question is the title, as I noted in chapter 2 about *Aleph*. Likewise, the preface of *The Zahir* reads: "*Zahir*, in Arabic means visible, present, incapable of going unnoticed." Later in the novel, Coelho retakes interpreting the word:

> In Buenos Aires, the Zahir is a common 20-centavo coin […] In Gujarat, at the end of the eighteenth century, the Zahir was a tiger; in Java it was a blind man from the Surakarta mosque who was stoned by the faithful; in Persia, an astrolabe that Nadir Shah ordered to be thrown into the sea; in Mahdi's prisons, in around 1892, a small compass that had been touched by Rudolph Von Slatin […] A year later I awake thinking about the story by Jorge Luis Borges, about something which, once touched or seen, can never be forgotten, and which gradually so feels our thoughts that we are driven to madness. My Zahir is not a romantic metaphor – a blind man, a compass, a tiger, or a coin. It has a name, and her name is Esther. (Coelho, "Zahir" 53)

Additionally, there are many moments in which linguistic interpretation is the topic of the scene. The narrator of the Zahir is bemused at how a speaker tells his story through present instead of past statements (I "am" born, instead of I "was" born). There is cause for his perplexity: Unlike in English, the present tense rarely assumes a story-telling function in Portuguese – though the influence of American TV shows and movies might be changing that. What's more: Unlike the futured languages[61] English, Portuguese, and French – which we

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[61] Future Time Reference – linguistic typology based on when and how languages require speakers to mark the timing of events. Strong FTR ("futured languages") require speakers to grammatically signal future event more expressively that Weak FTR ("futureless languages"). See Östen Dahl, "The Grammer of Future Time Reference in European Languages," *Empirical Approaches to Language Typology,* (NY: Mourton de Gruyter, 2000) 310-325. For an application of these, see Keith Chen, "The Effect of Language on Economic Behavior: Evidence from Savings Rates, Health Behaviors, and Retirement Assets," *American Economic Review* 103 (2013). "English forces its speakers to habitually divide time between the present and future in a

assume is being spoken in the scene to the addressed crowd in France – the original language spoken by the character in question is Russian, a futureless language. In Coelho's narratives, cultural differences are often mediated linguistically.

But the more concrete embodiment of translation in Coelho's narrative comes in form of the translator-character. In Aleph, for example, a translator is part of the group that accompanies Coelho in his Trans-Siberian journey. They develop a friendship over drinking vodka and practicing aikido throughout the trip at the end of which much of the enlightenment acquired from by narrator comes from conversing with the translator.

> I'm introduced to the narrator who will be traveling with me. His name is Yao. He was born in China but went to Brazil as a refugee during the civil war in his country. He then studied in Japan and is now is a retired language teacher from the University of Moscow. He must be about seventy. He is tall and the only one in the group who is impeccably dressed in a suit and tie. "My name means 'very distant'," he says to break the ice. "My name means 'little rock'," I tell him, smiling. (Coelho, "Aleph" 63)

This is a very illustrative passage. As I argue in chapter one, Coelho's characters are often mimetic transnational individuals. In chapter two, I added that it was through transnational encounters that the main character of the novel advanced their self-realization journey. Furthermore, I talked about how the cultural hybridism resulting from such encounters granted the main character access to the magical, fantastic realm. In the beginning of this chapter I pointed out that Coelho narrates practices of the publishing industry. Not surprisingly, Coelho novels feature "based-on-real-people" translators who are culturally hybrid individuals by the

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way that Mandarin (which has no tenses) does not. Of course, this does not mean that Mandarin speakers are unable (or even less able) to understand the difference between the present and future, only that they are not required to attend to it every time they speak (693).

very nature of their profession, and who are granted an aura of wisdom and a role of guide in the main character's self-realization journey.

It is in *The Zahir*, however, that the translator-character – like *The Alchemist*'s Santiago – is given access to anti-mimetic elements of the narrative. As one of the main characters of the novel, Mikhail is the most developed of Coelho's translator-characters. Before she disappears, the narrator's wife, a war correspondent, hires the young translator to help her cross Central America in order to investigate the impending Iraqi war. Realizing that the only way to get in contact with his missing wife is through her possible lover, Mikhail, the narrator develops a relationship with the translator and learns about his life.

Mikhail is an immigrant from a small village in the Kazakhstan steppes who comes to France in search of employment. In Paris, he organizes weekly meetings at an Armenian restaurant where improvised interactive storytelling performances take place, normally ending in cathartic collective experiences. Mikhail narrates a great deal about the history of Kazakhstan: the communist regime, famine, nuclear tests, the fall of communism and subsequent massive migration, etc. Especially, he talks about Tengri, the traditions of his nomadic ancestors, Mongolian and Greek myths. His Russian father was a war hero betrayed by the communist government and sent to live in Siberia until old age. Once released, the old man found his way to Kazakhstan, where he starts a new life and rewrites his personal history amidst the hospitable Muslim family of a much younger woman whom he marries – Mikhail's mother.

Since childhood, Mikhail has visions and hallucinations, which is often concealed in fear of governmental censure or social judgment. His trances tend to end in bouts of epilepsy. Because of the associated learning disability, a museum director takes over tutoring the young man in various subjects including the English language, which Mikhail considers vital to his

future. Soon after, he leaves his small village, which was devastated by the rampant unemployment that followed the fall of communism, for the nearest big city. Eventually and by chance, he meets Esther, of whom he had dreamed as a child, and is hired by her as an interpreter. Encouraged by Esther, he learns French and moves to Paris, where the two take Mikhail's restaurant performances to console groups of street beggars who also narrate their stories.

Years after Esther's disappearance, the narrator is all but over his loss, when Mikhail walks into one of his book signings, reviving the narrator's will to find his missing wife. In the end, Mikhail accompanies the narrator to Esther's undisclosed location in Kazakhstan. They travel by car and on horseback through a web of Asian roads that had historically hosted much of globalization's early history: "although almost everything passed along that route – gold, strange animals, ivory, seeds, political ideas, refugees from civil war, armed bandits, private armies to protect caravans – silk was the rarest and most coveted item. It was thanks to one of these branch roads that Buddhism traveled from India to Sri Lanka and Tibet" (314). In his journey through the steppes of Kazakhstan, the narrator becomes acquainted with and highly affected by the local culture. But most importantly, he reinvents himself and finds peace even before he finally reaches "his zahir."

It is important to note that all the progressive transformation in the narrator's identity is mediated by the translator-character, who albeit being much younger guides him through the personal history of the wife he only thought he knew, and whose gradual estrangement he finally understands. Ultimately, Mikhail more than translates language or interprets culture: He translates the narrator's significant other:

'You were only interested in finding your wife.'

> 'I still am, but that didn't just make me travel across the Kazakhstan steppes: it made me travel through the whole of my past life. I saw where I went wrong, I saw where I stopped, I saw the moment I lost Esther, the moment that the Mexican Indians call the *acomodator* – The giving up point. I experienced things I never imagined I would experience at my age. And all because you were by my side, guiding me […]. (Coelho, "Zahir" 332)

By building translation into the content and form of his narratives, Paulo Coelho emphasizes the history and relevance of literary translation. He tasks the readers with seeing literary translations as instruments of cultural circulation/exchange and even personal growth, rather than tools of cultural/political homogenization.

6. Final Thoughts

In this chapter, I have examined issues related to the cultural economy that contextualizes Paulo Coelho's novels. As contemporary narratives, these novels are products of a moment in the history of globalization that is as hybrid as the author, his novels and his readers. Characterized by a contradictory and uneven state of cultural convergence, the publishing industry shelters at once the powerful control of media conglomerates and the reiteration of old patterns of national and international economic imbalance, on the one hand, and the empowerment of consumer-turned-producers made possible by digitalization and interactive media platforms.

In its current configuration, the publishing industry thrives on the figure of the author, whose persona – especially in the form of online presence – is an increasingly superseding narrative to that of the books themselves. As a mass self-communicator, Paulo Coelho's online image is tied to the perception of a warm and disintermediated relationship with his readers and to his free access activism, generating an aura of democratic participation that furthers the popularity of his books.

Coelho's novels embody the publishing industry by narrating its practices and incorporating reader-generated content. But the author's persona is also permeated by contradictions. As an international bestselling author, Coelho's novels "break the mold" of the bestseller for not being originally written in English and for its long-standing success across many countries, having achieved in some cases the status of world literature. Nationally, in Brazil, they challenge traditional expectations of national aesthetics and their popular reception is notoriously downgraded by scholarly criticism.

Lastly, Coelho's novels are *born-translated* narratives because, by market demand, they are launched almost simultaneously in many languages and because, more importantly, they are narrative embodiments of translation practices in a transnational world. They are *born-translatable* because of their narrative simplicity and universal transportability across diverse cultures. As born-translated and translatable novels, they lead us to recognize the collaborative nature of published narratives, the reader agency in meaning creation, and the open system quality of language itself.

Conclusion

In 2008, on a remote village in Nepal, altitude 7200 feet, an international group of trekkers awaited to proceed in their six-day journey. The strategic stop, just a few meters short of their main destination, Poon Hill, was meant to grant them the breathtaking view of the sun rising over the Himalayas. Among the group, was a young adventure/travel blogger named Cecilia. As she visited a small bookstore in this hosting village, Cecilia observed something curious. Not many titles were available in that quaint local shop, but an entire bookshelf displayed books by her compatriot Paulo Coelho. Finding Coelho's novels was fairly easy everywhere she visited. But what really impressed Cecilia that day was the sheer quantity of his books in a village to where goods were transported solely on foot. As the infamous quote goes, "quantity has a quality of its own."[62] Cecilia told me this story in 2013 at the teacher's lounge of the Brazilian ESL school where we worked. She ended on this note: "Say what you will about Paulo Coelho, but that made me think: Man, what a small world!" This dissertation has been guided by a curiosity akin to that of my good friend Cecilia and it has aimed at explaining and contextualizing Paulo Coelho's narratives as a contemporary literary phenomenon.

The first question to guide this study was: "Where does Paulo Coelho fit in the scholarly discourse on World Literature? To address this question, I reviewed key issues in theory and criticism of World Literature, a field of study that regained scholarly interest in the context of accelerated globalization and postnational politics. However valuable the new directions this revived scholarly debate has produced, it remains focused on canonic and critically acclaimed literary works. Consequently, popular literature such as the novels of Paulo Coelho has benefited less from it, despite its *de facto* worldwide reach. Therefore, I have argued here for a remapping

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[62] Quote commonly and allegedly attributed to Joseph Stalin.

of World Literature, one that is necessarily aligned with a postmodern, neo-humanist and transnational standpoint.

In order to include Coelho narratives, World Literature theory and criticism must be postmodern in the sense that it does away with the politically-biased distinction between "high" and "low" culture and the erroneous, view of mass-produced art as exclusively commercial and consequently disreputable. All art is commercial in one way or another and devaluing that which is categorized as "popular" has often represented the position of dominant ideologies. On the other hand, recognizing popular culture as mirror and site of power struggles, in and out of the cultural artifact itself, can render a valuable insight into its social-economic-historic context. Likewise, World Literature theory and criticism must be neo-humanist in the sense that it acknowledges the "I" and the "other" in non-hierarchical, no-discriminatory ways, recognizing the potential of literature in the agency of readers as creative interpreters, appropriators, resistors, and transformers of meaning. Lastly, World Literature theory and criticism must stem from a transnational paradigm which understands that identities are more accurately based on affiliations rather than national borders, accounting for how subjectivities are transformed by global mobility, and considering the complex ties between international and national literary spaces. It is my hope that the parameters set here will be useful for future studies of contemporary popular culture narratives.

Having then situated Paulo Coelho in World Literature as a transnational popular novelist in all the cultural significance that this entails, especially for his readers, a second research question naturally followed. I'll illustrate it using Cecilia's anecdote: How do readers like the Buddhist Nepalese hosts of my agnostic polyglot travel-blogger friend "use" the novels of a Catholic Brazilian writer to "work out" socio-political issues in their everyday lives? To answer

that question, I resorted to the rhetorical narrative analysis of three recurrent themes in Paulo Coelho's novels: the self-realization journey, cultural hybridity and anti-mimesis. One conclusion drawn here is that the transnational identity of the author, his novels, and their readers make up most of the appeal and significance of Coelho's oeuvre in the lived-cultures of his imagined interpretative communities.

A nostalgic response to postmodern life, Coelho's narratives are about physical journeys that lead to the betterment of the individual by means of transcultural social relations. Narrative progression in his novels is propelled by the hybrid subjectivities that are forged dialogically in the contact zone between culturally diverse characters. Ethos and pathos appeals run through his fiction in the form of mimetic narrative elements such semi-biographic characters, recognizably transnational symbolic settings, intertextual references to local history and folklore, etc. In fact, some narrative elements of Coelho's novels closely resemble Cecilia's story: her international group of trekkers improve their lives throughout a physical journey, recognized by world travelers, as they meet the histories and ways of life of others who are so culturally different from them, and yet so humanly similar. Reinforced by a semi-biographical textual form, the mimetic elements in Coelho's fiction – i.e. settings, characters and events that are possible in the physical world - argue for an understanding of the transnational experience as a continuous process of identity formation, understood here as beneficial to all involved.

Unlike Cecilia's anecdote, however, a typical Coelho narrative moves beyond mimetic elements by granting the most culturally hybrid characters access to anti-mimetic events, that is events which defy "real-world" logos, like weather control by one's will, paranormal encounters, time and astral travel, spells, curses, divination, etc. Beyond reiterating the argument that diversity and cultural hybridity are inherently positive, the anti-mimesis in Coelho's fiction

invites readers to follow several cognitive processing paths and, ultimately, to question narrative constructs - especially those that might run opposite to transnationalism, such as "national identity," dogmas of organized religion, or cultural "purity." It is my hope that this view of semi-biographical narratives and of unnatural narratives will be useful to the study of other narrative forms, especially popular ones.

But, to invert cultural scholar Richard Johnson's assertion,[63] *text-as-read* is a different object from the *text-as-produced*. His novels are not only a site and mirror, but also a product of the cultural economy from which they stem. Hence, my third research question is related to the cultural production "moment" of Coelho's novels: What are the material conditions that contextualize his narratives? Firstly, his novels are contextualized by the acceleration of global practices and cultural convergences. Said conditions harbor at once diametrically opposed phenomena, such as the control of powerful media conglomerates paralleled by the empowerment of consumers-turned-producers digital media platforms enabled. Secondly, these cultural-material conditions both shape and are reproduced in Coelho's narratives in significant ways. For instance, digital technology fosters a greater participation of readers in the content of Coelho's books, while large publishing conglomerates carefully articulate his marketing strategies, including the construction of his online persona and the simultaneous publications of translated versions of his novels.

Examining the contemporary publishing industry yielded noteworthy observations. For one, as a *mass self-communicator*, Paulo Coelho maintains a persona – increasingly virtual - characterized by an aura of disintermediated relationships with his readers. Secondly, his novels

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[63] Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies, Anyway?" What is Cultural Studies? A Reader, ed. John Storey (London: Arnold, 1996), 93. Original quote: "*text-as-produced* is a different object from the *text-as-read*."

embody the publishing industry by narrating its practices semi-biographically. Thirdly, his narratives contradict international market expectations simply by being non-English literary works of long-standing commercial and critical success across nations. This phenomenon is replicated in the Brazilian publishing industry commercially, but not critically, likely because local literary gatekeepers are highly influenced by nationalist ideals. Cecilia's preface - "say what you will about Paulo Coelho" – wasn't by chance: the historical resistance to Coelho's narratives by the Brazilian literary community is well documented. Fourth, Coelho's novels belong to a contemporary trend of *born-translated* novels and, as such, the importance of translation to a transnational mode of thinking is woven into his narratives. Furthermore, his works are *born-translatable*: their narrative simplicity and universal transportability allow them to travel across diverse cultures in an organic manner. It is my hope that these insights on Paulo Coelho narratives will shed initial light on similar cultural studies in the future.

Clearly, this dissertation is aligned with critical theories that stress the cosmopolitan nature of World Literature. It draws on David Damrosch's definition of World Literature *as* a mode of reading - rather than a set canon - that gains with translation as novels circulate beyond their "original culture" and across national borders (201). This study is also indebted to the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Pascale Casanova on the complexities of literary systems and the particular *modus operandi* of national and international literary spaces in a globalized cultural economy. This dissertation is especially aligned with the works of Paul Jay on the transnational paradigm shift in literary studies. Furthermore, it has been greatly informed by the analyses of transnational novels by Rachel Trousdale and of transcultural authors by Arianna Dagnino.

This dissertation understands globalization as a long worldwide historical process rather than an exclusively Western contemporary phenomenon. However, it recognizes – and draws on

– the critical contribution of scholars who see it differently, such Appadurai's concept of techno and mediascapes, and Frederic Jameson's postulations on postmodernism. On the other hand, this dissertation stands in clear opposition to critical theories that are fearful of globalization as a "culturally homogenizing" process that, for example, view the production and consumption of *translated* novels as menacing to local and national cultures. An obvious underlying assumption here is that cultures and languages are essentially hybrid and that hybrid identities, continuously formed in the contact zone, are essentially creative entities. Thus, this dissertation disagrees with critical theories that privilege narratives that are difficult to translate - due to their extreme ties to national cultures - over portable, border crossing narratives. Therefore, this dissertation clashes with literary studies that hold surpassed humanist values according to which "the right" books read by specific groups of "competent" readers represent a superior experience to the consumption of translatable narratives, which they vilify as "popular" culture that sacrifices aesthetic "quality" for commercial purposes. Thus, this dissertation questions the intellectually aristocratic biases of some scholars on popular narratives in general, and of Paulo Coelho in specific. Personally, I find them highly patronizing of Coelho's readers who in fact make up such a uniquely diverse readership.

Though authorial audience and reader-response receive a prominent position in this study, the text itself is considered here an important site of dialogical cultural hybridity, built on heteroglossia, polyphony and intertextuality, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva. Likewise, the implied author takes prominence in the reading experiences in the context of digital media platforms and the practices of the contemporary publishing industry in which the persona of the author is an increasingly crucial part of the narratives themselves. Mine has been

but an initial conversation, rather narrow in scope, on the reconfiguration of the author in the

digital era, which should be expanded by further research.

I have attempted an all-encompassing study of Paulo Coelho's oeuvre by approaching it

from different moments of its contextual existence: production, text, readings, and lived-cultures.

Ironically, in my ambition to develop an exhaustive study of Coelho narratives, I have not

presented an in-dept analysis on the individual moments or works here studied, and they merit

focused research in the future. This has been an all-embracing narrative analysis, at times

focused on narratology – the narrative forms and elements within the story – at others, attentive

to employment[64] – the social context in which stories are read and produced. Furthermore,

because narrative studies like mine can be highly conjectural, I believe it would gain immensely

from empirical studies of "real" audience research approaches, such as ethnographies, focus

groups, interviews, etc.

Lastly, rhetorical narrative analyses, thematic readings, and discussions of material

conditions are all double-edge-sword endeavors. Because I rely on my own interpretation, I risk

finding patterns that I subconsciously set out to find in the first place,[65] or patterns that were

never envisioned by the author, or yet patterns that may not reflect the interpretations of the

"real" audience. But, I believe it's a risk worth taking, for meaning is actively and rhetorically

created in the decoding part of communication, of doing cultural and literary criticism, and of

simply reading Paulo Coelho. In that complex process, I am but one voice that joins my fellow

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[64] Steph Lawler, "Stories and the Social World," *Research Methods for Cultural Studies,* ed. Michael Pickering (Edinburgh: Edinburg UP, 1988), 43.

[65] "Theories always work and they will always produce exactly the results they predict, results that will be immediately compelling to those for whom the theory's assumptions and enabling principles are self-evident." Stanley Fish *Is There a Text in This Class* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982) 68.

academic colleagues, as well as the international trekkers and their local Nepalese hosts in

Cecilia's story.

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