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DOES DON JUAN LIVE ON CAMPUS?

by PAUL PREUSS

Who's been calling don Juan's famous disciple a trickster and a fraud? Why believe him, anyway?

Paul Preuss is a freelance writer living in San Francisco.

All knowledge, all information between human beings, can be exchanged only within a play of tolerance. And that is true whether the exchange is in science, or in literature, or in religion, or in politics . . .
—J. Bronowski, 1973

On first glance, two events scheduled at the 77th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in Los Angeles have little in common. One, titled "Extrasensory Phenomena and Medical Anthropology," features Jule Eisenbud, Charles Tart, D. Scott Rogo and many others whose names are familiar to fans of the paranormal; the other is titled "Fraud and Publishing Ethics." Both were organized by Joseph K. Long, an associate professor of anthropology at Plymouth State College of the University of New Hampshire. Both are intended to promote the cause of parapsychology within the anthropological profession; and a featured speaker at both events is Richard de Mille, perhaps the best informed and so far the most effective of Carlos Castaneda's numerous detractors.

What do fraud, publishing ethics and Carlos Castaneda have to do with the advance of parapsychology? The explanation is not simple. It begins with the person of Richard de Mille. De Mille is a very youthful 56, a man with wavy brown hair, a bristling mustache, a direct and penetrating gaze and the same military bearing and contained energy that characterized his famous father, Cecil B.

De Mille *fils* holds a doctorate in psychology and is preparing his second book on Castaneda. His career has been varied; he started as a television director but has devoted much of his time to education. In the early '50s, he was an associate of L. Ron Hubbard, aiding Hubbard to articulate his philosophy of Dianetics (Scientology)—at one point, de Mille assisted Hubbard in securing a quicky PhD from a Los Angeles outfit called Sequoia University, which de Mille says "was run out of a desk drawer." Indeed, long before receiving his own legitimate degrees from Pepperdine and the University of Southern California, de Mille helped himself to a PhD from Sequoia U., and nowadays he'll tell you, with a fierce grin, "that degree's about as good as the one UCLA gave Carlos Castaneda."

A quarter of a century later, de Mille is on the opposite side of the epistemological fence. He serves on the editorial boards of *The Zetetic Scholar* and *The Skeptical Inquirer* (both born from the earlier *Zetetic*, the magazine of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), and de Mille is a very skeptical inquirer, indeed, into the academic and scientific credentials of others—specifically, those of Carlos Castaneda.

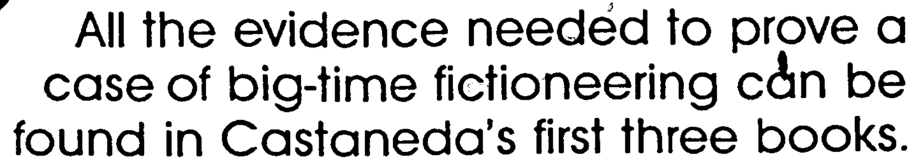
De Mille came late to don Juan's knee. Although friends kept urging him to read Castaneda's books, de Mille refused to believe that "an old Indian could have that kind of philosophy." But after the publication of *Tales of Power*, he read all the books at a sitting. "And I was right," he says—convinced that Castaneda never met anyone like don Juan and never worked much farther afield than the UCLA research library, only a few steps from the offices of the anthropology department. When he casually mentioned this opinion to his Santa Barbara publisher, he was told, "If you think you can prove it, we'll print it." The result, after more than a year's research, was *Castaneda's Journey, The Power and the Allegory* (Capra Press, Santa Barbara, 1976).

It is a work often impressive, frequently funny, sometimes infuriating but always entertaining. De Mille pored over the Castaneda texts with the dedication of a biblical scholar; he did legwork his legendary Santa Barbara neighbor, Lew Archer, would be proud of; he tracked down myriad literary references like the "whizz in the stacks" he supposes Castaneda to be. If he sometimes finds patterns that may not exist, that is an occupational danger of creative people, as Carl Sagan has suggested.

De Mille wrote up the results of his researches in a breezy style that constantly displays his native wit and cultivated erudition, but also frequently descends to what Daniel C. Noel calls "enviably awful puns" (don Juan as "sham-man," for example)—leading Noel to inquire, "Will de Mille's ridicule lead us to the wisecrack between the worlds?"

De Mille does seem congenitally unable to resist a gaudy story; he spills a good deal of ink on Inca atrocity tales for no good reason other than that Castaneda was born in Peru. He mocks Castaneda's style in a silly little fable for the mere purpose of demonstrating that he, de Mille, has learned a few words and phrases of Yaqui, which Castaneda either never learned or never bothered to flaunt. (As if this were not a sufficient non sequitur, de Mille reveals in his copious notes that some of his own Yaqui is spurious, for example "untsoweiter—und so weiter, German

Illustration by Gary Van der Steur



All the evidence needed to prove a case of big-time fictioneering can be found in Castaneda's first three books.

for etcetera." De Mille does his argument a disservice with these feeble attempts to imitate the "trickster" he sees in Castaneda.)

De Mille, however, has done enough serious and thoughtful work to require close attention to his two major theses: that *all* of Castaneda's books are fakes, and that one or more persons on the UCLA faculty knew it from the start. These accusations are vastly different in their implications.

All responsible argument about the validity of Castaneda's work, whether from other anthropologists or from such literary bloodhounds as de Mille, advances the science if only by clarifying issues and defining anthropology's proper scope. It would be an even more exciting and worthwhile argument if Castaneda would deign to get into it, but there seems little immediate prospect of that. Until he does, anthropologists who choose to ignore the whole thing and regard Castaneda's work as irrelevant (whether as hoax or simply as unsupported anecdote) are free to do so. Scientists who cite his work run the risk of someday having to eat their references.

The charge that members of the UCLA faculty would deliberately deceive their colleagues, however, is far more serious and different in kind. The suggestion should not be made unless the accuser is confident it can be proved, because the only benefit to be derived is negative, that is, drumming the miscreants out of the corps. A charge that can be neither proved nor disproved is a handful of mud that sticks to everyone, guilty, innocent and accuser alike.

How persuasively does de Mille argue? His second accusation depends on his first, that the first three books were fake. *The Teachings of Don Juan* helped gain Castaneda reentry into the graduate school; *A Separate Reality* was published while he was a student; and *Journey to Ixtlan* was, as *Time* magazine first suggested and Richard de Mille conclusively proved (by finding it in the UCLA library stacks), Castaneda's doctoral dissertation—which he had given the more academic sounding title of "Sorcery: a description of the world." For the last two books, UCLA bears no responsibility, and one of Castaneda's former teachers says with a snort, "Anyone reading the later books would naturally conclude he was a fraud." (Even now, however, this opinion is not universal, at UCLA or elsewhere.)

All of de Mille's evidence is circumstantial, as it must be unless he can induce Castaneda (and coconspirators, if any) to confess all. Much of it, on close examination, seems curiously beside the point. He asks several experts to decide—on the basis of selected phrases that strike him as Anglicisms —which came first, Castaneda's English or Juan Tovar's Spanish translation of that English (as de Mille puts it, "The Chicken or the Huevo?") *Mirabile dictu*, the majority of experts conclude that of the two texts presented, the English was the original! It is unclear why de Mille thought this exercise could help him establish the Ur-language of Castaneda's field notes. By stressing Castaneda's Peruvian birth, de Mille has already given the man an iron-clad alibi for idiomatic blunders.

Less quixotic are de Mille's efforts to establish that Castaneda derived his knowledge of Mexican Indians, shamanism, sorcery, psychotropic plants (not to mention don Juan's philosophy) from other people's work—for example, Michael Harner's experiences with the Jivaro Indians of the Amazon or the Wassons' research into the "divine mushroom" of Mexico. Most of this discussion is reasonable and interesting, much of it is also tedious and argumentative, and no former English major would find any of it ultimately persuasive.

De Mille does make some points that demand consideration. Take, for example, his skeptical insistence on the unlikelihood that a tired, nervous, inexperienced young anthropologist could sew up the eyes of a piddling-sized lizard (at dusk, using a cactus thorn for a needle)—this reported in the first and most easily credible of all the books.

But the centerpiece of de Mille's work is his painstaking reconstruction of Castaneda's chronology. Castaneda carefully dates each incident in his books, and, writes de Mille, "all the evidence ever needed to prove a case of big-time fictioneering can be found in Castaneda's first three books. The secret is to make a chronological list of the events." De Mille's list reveals numerous apparent inconsistencies between *The Teachings of Don Juan* and *A Separate Reality* on the one hand, and *Journey to Ixtlan* on the other. He discusses two classes of phenomena at length: Castaneda's progress in learning don Juan's special use of the concept *seeing* (ESP, perhaps, or just plain trusting hunches, if one is a confirmed pragmatist), and Castaneda's various dramatic encounters with the witch La Catalina.

"Carlos first heard about *seeing* six years after he *saw*," de Mille asserts. "That is not the way things work in the ordinary world." De Mille's chronology supports him, but the reader might object that perhaps Castaneda did not recognize his early success at *seeing* for what it was, and a rereading of the books shows that this interpretation is clearly what Castaneda intends.

With regard to La Catalina, "we are asked to believe that a flesh-and-blood anthropologist who enjoyed this tumultuous supernatural affair with a glorious witch in 1962 did not recall her name in 1965 . . . " Surely Castaneda is caught here *in flagrante delicto*. The loyal reader might still defend him, although it requires some sophistry to do so, and why bother? Let Castaneda defend himself; for the sake of argument, at least, grant de Mille a half-point: "Either *The Teachings of Don Juan* or *Journey to Ixtlan* is categorically a work of fiction."

De Mille recognizes that this is a long way from proving that *both* are works of fiction; whether de Mille makes the rest of his case is arguable but not germane. Consider the struggle

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de Mille has gone through to establish this much of it, as he states in a truly stupendous collision of metaphors, "Perhaps only a chronic puzzle addict would have traced that twisting timelike trail down past the ethnographic event horizon to discover the Einstein-Castaneda bridge from world to world buried under a pile of skillful flashbacks and plausible introductory remarks."

Yet de Mille believes that the members of Castaneda's doctoral committee "must have known they were dealing with an illusionist rather than a fieldworker." How were they to know? Unlike de Mille, they were hampered by other duties, were presented with Castaneda's books at widely spaced intervals, had no preconceptions about the philosophical propensities of old Indians and were not blessed with the instincts of "a chronic puzzle addict." What should have motivated them to trace Castaneda's "twisting timelike trail?"

For one thing, the trail was only twisting back there on page 38 of *Castaneda's Journey* when de Mille was following it. By page 76, when the professors get into the act (in a skillful flashback), the *Journey to Ixtlan* is now "easily shown to be logically incompatible with *The Teachings*."

What de Mille wants to prove is stated most explicitly in a letter he wrote to the *Zetetic* (Fall/Winter 1977): "My guess was that Castaneda seduced one or more faculty members into an early prank—publishing *The Teachings* as ethnography—which others later covered up by accepting *Ixtlan* as a dissertation." De Mille continues, "No plausible refutation of that scenario has yet come forth."

Before any kind of refutation is called for, de Mille's scenario must be established as rather more than a "guess." But in fact his arguments for what he calls the "Sonoragate" hypothesis amount to no more than ingenious innuendo. The UCLA profs should have sent a "referee" to verify the existence of don Juan, says de Mille—insinuating that they had good reason to doubt Castaneda's veracity. But that, of course, is precisely what de Mille is supposed to prove.

The key members of Castaneda's doctoral committee had known the man for 10 years or more by the time they granted him a PhD. Clement Meighan, an archaeologist who had interest in the datura cult, had taught a course on California Indians when Castaneda was an undergraduate in the late '50s and early '60s. Meighan encouraged his students to "talk to an Indian, any Indian" (something he no longer advises since Indians suffer neither undergraduates nor anthropologists gladly these days). Castaneda took him up on it, "one of three or four who did."

Philip Newman, a cultural anthropologist who joined the faculty in the early '60s, says Castaneda showed him what Carlos called "revised field notes" (in English) no later than the spring of 1962. "They were different because they recorded very long conversations." Taken by their content, Newman showed them to at least one other ethnographer who had recently returned from New Guinea, but who found them of only mild interest. Harold Garfinkel, Castaneda's sociology teacher, saw more in them; Newman remembers that Castaneda, Garfinkel and he had casual discussions about the chances of forming an "expedition" to Sonora, which never developed.

Castaneda received his BA in September 1962 and was accepted into the graduate program. At the same time, he applied for and received a small grant to help him pursue his researches with an unnamed Southwestern Indian. Castaneda was frequently absent from school and finally dropped out before receiving his MA (because of both financial and family problems, Newman believes).

Two or three years later, in 1967, Castaneda visited an old classmate, anthropologist Robert Edgerton, who was by now "a junior assistant professor" at UCLA. Castaneda showed Edgerton a long, handwritten manuscript. Edgerton read it and found it exciting; he urged Castaneda to take it to the University Press, feeling that if it were accepted, Castaneda would have a better chance of being readmitted. But Castaneda was unable to avoid anthropologist Walter Goldschmidt, of whom "he was terrified," according to Edgerton.

Goldschmidt, a robust, sharp-tongued man then in his early 50s, is a distinguished scientist who was the chairperson of the anthropology department at the time, and a member of the University Press' editorial board to boot. Castaneda's manuscript came to him with the recommendations of Edgerton, Meighan and Garfinkel. Goldschmidt didn't know Castaneda personally, having been in Africa during Castaneda's earlier sojourn at the grad school, and he didn't get a chance to know him much better. "He was always overly polite to me," says Goldschmidt, "almost obsequious. It was a way of distancing himself."

Goldschmidt was charmed by the manuscript. The only thing he wanted was for Castaneda "to cut down on that Structural Analysis . . . originally it was about three times as long."

A former student of Harold Garfinkel's says the much-maligned Structural Analysis was "pure Garfinkel"—that is, in the true spirit of ethnomethodology, a scientific philosophy Richard de Mille characterizes as "ethnographic nihilism." De Mille doubts that Castaneda created don Juan in a desperate attempt to "out-Garfinkel Garfinkel" (as first suggested by Arnold Mandell, HUMAN BEHAVIOR, January 1975)—don Juan's genesis was too early for that. However, "I suspect the two men found each other perfect partners," de Mille writes. " . . . It may have been a beautiful collaboration."

Who else may have been in on the joke? De Mille makes much of Walter Goldschmidt's foreword to the manuscript that became *The Teachings of Don Juan*, a foreword that Goldschmidt

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wrote at his own suggestion, in order to establish Castaneda's credentials as a UCLA graduate student. Goldschmidt's theme is partially expressed in his first sentence: "This book is both ethnography and allegory."

Fixing on the *Oxford Dictionary's* definition of *allegory* ("describing a subject under the guise of some other subject"), de Mille concludes that Goldschmidt is using *code*: "The common meaning of that word compels us to suppose the book is not what it seems to be (a report of fieldwork) but something else (an imitation of reporting, a fairy tale about fieldwork)." Does this sound dangerously like an accusation? Perhaps, and de Mille doesn't let it stand, winding up his discussion of the foreword with the suggestion that Goldschmidt really meant to say something else.

What *did* Goldschmidt really mean, according to Goldschmidt? "I meant that the book has a moral," he says. When presenting the manuscript to the other members of the editorial board, Goldschmidt read them the section where don Juan explicates the four enemies of a man of knowledge (fear, clarity, power and, finally—the invincible enemy—old age). "It gets us all where we live," says Goldschmidt with a smile.

Granted the word *allegory* is not code for "fairy tale," does Goldschmidt use it precisely? This definition from the *American Heritage Dictionary* is worth quoting at length: "A literary, dramatic or pictorial representation the apparent or superficial sense of which both parallels and illustrates a deeper sense just as, for example, the story of the search for the actual Holy Grail may illustrate an inner spiritual search." Or, as conversations with an actual old Indian may illustrate a search for the nature of reality . . . ?

But, of course, *ethnography* and *literature* (or even decent prose) may be mutually exclusive terms. It's an argument that's been going on since virtually the beginning of anthropology. In fact, de Mille's scenario for "Sonoragate" includes rival currents within the UCLA anthropology department of the late '60s, which provided muddy waters wherein Castaneda could fish for his degree. He suggests that Castaneda seduced (or was seduced by) the "emicists" (relativist doves) and used them (or was used by them) to attack the "eticists" (empirical hawks).

Castaneda got back into the graduate school. He asked Phil Newman to chair his doctoral committee, which included Edgerton, Meighan and Garfinkel. For a time, it also included Ted Graves, a man who vigorously supported Castaneda (before leaving for a new post in New Zealand) and who is best remembered for having been a leader of those hard-nosed "eticists" supposedly spoofed by Castaneda. By this time, university regulations no longer required a doctoral candidate first to earn an MA, although this did not excuse Castaneda from completing his courses or passing his written and oral exams. "He was just like every other doctoral candidate," says Clem Meighan, "except he was a hell of a lot better writer."

How convincing is de Mille's case for "what happened at UCLA"? Recall that de Mille thinks Castaneda "seduced" one or more faculty members, and others later covered for them. Just who did Castaneda seduce? Garfinkel? If so, it seems extremely unlikely anyone would have covered for him; it's almost impossible to find anyone who has a good word to say for the man, except perhaps Castaneda himself. Goldschmidt did his best to persuade Castaneda to cut down on the most characteristically Garfinkelian sections of his book. Goldschmidt himself, then? If Carlos "seduced" Goldschmidt, it was at long range, and through the oddest imaginable assortment of intermediaries (Garfinkel, Edgerton and Meighan). Indeed, if there is any single term to characterize the various members of Carlos Castaneda's committee (of which Goldschmidt was never a member), it is their *differences*—personal, political, theoretical and so on. It is hard to imagine any two of them covering for a third.

De Mille's theory of what happened at UCLA depends entirely upon assumptions about the mental processes of men de Mille has never met, and about what they were thinking five years before he ever heard of most of them. The UCLA faculty wouldn't open up to de Mille, probably because they sensed (from his first letters to them) that they were being asked if they still beat their wives. De Mille's October 1975 letter to Goldschmidt stated that he took ethnography and allegory to be mutually exclusive categories, "roughly equivalent to fact and fiction." Goldschmidt complained to both the AAA and the American Psychological Association about the letter, before replying to tell de Mille, in effect, that he would have to figure out the relationship between ethnography and allegory for himself.

To those with the wisdom of hindsight, it may seem there were better ways of handling Carlos Castaneda's candidacy. The available facts will admit of various interpretations, but they will stretch to fit a conspiracy theory only at the cost of calling a lot of people liars. Richard de Mille, for one, is not willing to do so. One reason he gives for not naming names is that "the responsible persons have been sufficiently embarrassed by now to satisfy anyone's Calvinistic cravings."

When *Castaneda's Journey* reached the public in 1977, no reviewer's enthusiasm exceeded that of Marcello Truzzi, sociologist and editor of the *Zetetic*. In the Spring/Summer issue, he wrote, "De Mille's expose is particularly valuable for what it demonstrates about the state of contemporary anthropology, especially at UCLA." And in the next issue, Truzzi replies to a reader who complains that he has bought de Mille "lock, stock and barrel" with this stern admonition: "The simple fact is that doctoral dissertations accused of being hoaxes should call for investiga-

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tion, and if fraud is established, should call for the rescinding of the degree granted for such work." Before calling for the inquisition, Professor Truzzi would do well to inquire rather more skeptically into the claims of the accuser; a clever literary argument does not make a legal case nor even a logical one.

Truzzi invited Richard de Mille to become a consultant to his magazine, which, as noted above, shortly fissioned into two other magazines (each more than half as skeptical, one hopes). Earlier this year, de Mille wrote a perceptive and balanced review for *The Skeptical Inquirer* of a book with a rather odd title, *Extrasensory Ecology* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1977), edited by Joseph K. Long. ("Ecology" in the title is borrowed, for the most tenuous reasons, from the theory of cultural ecology.)

Long is a mild-mannered and soft-spoken man in his early 40s, who strikes some people as shy—an impression contradicted by his written words. Long became interested in the paranormal after studying Jamaican witchcraft in the early '70s; certain "eccentricities in the data" alerted him to the possibility of a parapsychological explanation of voodoo death. After learning of physicist Evan Harris Walker's quantum mechanical theory of psi, Long was persuaded of the reality of paranormal forces. He organized a symposium on anthropology and parapsychology at the 1974 meeting of the AAA in Mexico City, and his book grew out of that session.

De Mille's intelligent review of *Extrasensory Ecology* weighs the merits of each paper, finds many of them wanting and is especially harsh on Long's uneven and uncritical editorial treatment. Nevertheless, de Mille finds the book an interesting and significant documentary.

Long wasn't happy with the review, but when he contacted de Mille to complain, de Mille chose not to defend his view on its merits, but rather to explain that only a critical writeup stood a realistic chance of acceptance by *The Skeptical Inquirer*.

Long denies that he complained. "I told de Mille that the review contained inaccuracies and misinterpretations," he says. "But I would not challenge these or even point them out because *The Skeptial Inquirer* was by its nature a biased magazine and, hence, unworthy of any scientific contributions by way of challenges."

As a result of this discussion, Long was (incidentally) sold on de Mille's book. In *Extrasensory Ecology*, he'd called *The Teachings of Don Juan* "one of the most important books in the history of anthropology." *Journey to Ixtlan*, however, had been a disappointment (as he explained in a phone conversation) because he'd "expected Castaneda to get into the parapsychological explanation . . . he didn't, and I thought he was dumb."

"He read my book and changed his mind," says de Mille, noting that Long "got hot under the collar" and, de Mille speculates (though Long did not say so), "he wanted to punish someone; wanted to punish UCLA." On April 3rd of this year, Long wrote to Edward Lehman, executive director of the AAA, calling for "condemnatory motions" against UCLA. Yet at about the same time he was writing to James Sackett, current chairperson of UCLA's anthropology department, reportedly to the effect that things were getting out of his control and that the people he'd lined up to speak at the annual meeting were out to "tar and feather" Castaneda!

When questioned directly, Long is quite frank about the chances of establishing fraud: "UCLA's role is not established at all, because people are not talking or are criticizing de Mille . . . it's the same procedure Castaneda uses: ask him, you get nothing . . . we still haven't proved fraud."

So one must assume that Long hopes to advance the cause of parapsychology by putting as much distance as possible between Castaneda and other chroniclers of "anomalistic anthropology" (de Mille's felicitous phrase)—even at the considerable personal risk of making charges he has little or no hope of proving.

How do his fellow "symposiasts" *really* feel about this strategy? Jule Eisenbud, the Denver psychoanalyst who sponsored the "psychic thoughtographer" Ted Serios, is listed as co-chairperson of the "Extrasensory Phenomena" symposium. Long's proposal notwithstanding, Eisenbud will have little or nothing to do with the "Fraud" session. He says, bluntly enough, "No attack on Castaneda should be made . . . why he should be pilloried is beyond me." As for Castaneda's scientific utility, "He rates no higher than anybody else who tells tall tales of this sort . . . I don't call them fraudulent, but they are anecdotal tales of no particular significance."

Perhaps the truth or falsehood of Castaneda is not, after all, the root issue. Even Richard de Mille is kindly disposed toward Castaneda, whom he concedes has masterfully tricked us into ever-wider awareness. It seems deliciously ironic that in 1978 we indignantly question the "reality" of don Juan, having internalized (in the decade just past) his most basic teaching—that reality is what we make of it.

Science, however, cannot get by with this kind of slippery answer, nor should it settle for mere sophistry. Science advances by identifying and discarding falsehood. Yet not even the science of anthropology advances by *ad hominem* attacks.

Marcello Truzzi compares Castaneda's books to Piltdown Man; let us consider the analogy carefully: Piltdown's discoverer, Charles Dawson, is widely assumed to be the perpetrator of this hoax (and not even this much can be proved). When Bruner, Oakley and Le Gros Clark exposed the fake, science benefited by disposing of false and apparently anomalous data.

It was not necessary to drag in the unfortunate Dawson's teachers to achieve that benefit. HB