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Finding the Self through Travel: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Self-Discovery and Transformation in Travel Writing

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Abstract

My thesis addresses the themes of self-discovery and transformation in travel literature. The travel writing narrative reinforces a cultural and personal consciousness in which mobility, observation, curiosity, accuracy, and imagination become qualities fundamental to understanding oneself. Journeys of self-discovery are a popular form of narrative in travel literature. Using Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, William Least Heat-Moon's *Blue Highways: A Journey into America*, and Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*, I argue that the combination of the characters being in a foreign environment and searching for their identities reflects the reader's dreams and desire for exploration and self-discovery. The characters in these novels go on a journey where they not only discover new parts of the world but also something new about themselves. I will address these themes using the reader theory from psychoanalytic criticism as well as look at how writing and reading materialize unconscious thoughts. Understanding these theories allows for a study of the reader's response, reaction, and interpretation of the text. In the end, change and transformation in travel literature are both physical and mental, affecting not only the places visited but also the characters and the reader's mind. This transformation can sometimes be difficult to accept but travel narratives encourage us not to resist change but to adapt to it.

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1 Introduction

The world's an inn; and I her guest.

I eat; I drink; I take my rest.

My hostess, nature, does deny me

Nothing, wherewith she can supply me;

Where, having stayed a while, I pay

Her lavish bills, and go my way.

("On The World" by Francis Quarles)

The quest for self-discovery and transformation is present in many literary works, be it through character development in Bildungsroman or in exciting journeys in adventure novels. The way one interacts with the world creates an experience that affects how one perceives oneself and others, thus influencing one's personality and how one sees the world. It is interesting that outside circumstances have such an effect on the self and how well they show people's ability to adapt to their environment both physically and psychologically. The relationship between the reader and the novel is similar. The novel is a tool that the reader might use to experience something new or revive an already existing experience through a different perspective. The reader might also gain acknowledgment or feel understood by projecting a fantasy into the novel, causing adaptations that are effective because they arise from the reader's identity theme. It is not a strange occurrence when the reader relates to the character in a story; they might have the same dreams, wishes, and desires, or have similar emotions or familiarity with a certain setting or event. However, stories may also awaken unconscious thoughts in the reader. The literary text cannot be subjected to further changes while being read, but there is enough material in the figures of the text that can be interpreted by readers according to their associations. The interpretation originates from the meaning associated with the event in the text, in which the unconscious mind of the reader becomes active, producing an associative meaning. Being able to relate to the character in the novel and, at the same time, being influenced by their actions has an effect on the reader's self-identity and can be the catalyst for their journey of personal development.

One way to analyze the theme of self-discovery and transformation is by looking at the travel writing genre where characters are exposed to "otherness" in order to find themselves. Travel writing is quite difficult to define since it is a hybrid genre that connects different

categories and disciplines. The genre ranges from "picaresque adventure to philosophical treatise, political commentary, ecological parable, and spiritual quest" (Holland and Huggan 8). Travel writing incorporates history, geography, anthropology, and social science with extended knowledge in those studies without conforming to the conventional rules that govern them. Furthermore, travel writers freely mix fact and fiction, and they even exaggerate or invent their stories. In other words, travel writing uses factual events to claim validity, but then adapts those events and places to a highly personal image. Travel writing thus "charts the tension between the writers" compulsion to report the world they see and their often repressed desire to make the world conform to their preconception of it (Holland and Huggan 10). Historically, travel writing has capitalized on cultural differences, making a virtue of and a profit from the strangeness of foreign places and cultures. It helps support the perception of "otherness" in, for the most part, non-European people and places. However, travel writing was also useful for the reassessment and potential critique of domestic culture. Some travel writing narratives have autobiographical elements where it seeks to make a reflection out of experiences, to convert a collection of impressions into a coherent narrative. Conversely, unlike most autobiographies seen from a traditional perspective, "travel narratives are less concerned with recuperating, or reinventing a single self than with following the trajectory of a series of selves in transit" (Holland and Huggan 14). The problem with this distinction is that it fails to account for progressive studies of autobiography where the instability of both writing and written subject, and the multiplicity of personas are linked with the autobiographical text-in-process. It remains true, however, that this instability is exaggerated, and the self-inquiries made by travel writers often reveal a conflicted sense of belonging and allegiance.

Looking at the connection between the reader and the text, where both are working on each other and the ambiguity of travel writing, its perception of otherness, and personas, this thesis seeks to address how travel writing novels explore the theme of self-discovery and transformation. The thesis argues that the characters going on a journey and being in a foreign environment are unconsciously undergoing personal change and development which are then transferred and associated with the reader, thus reflecting the readers' own dreams and desires for exploration and self-identity. To support this argument, I will analyze the following novels: *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, *Blue Highways: A Journey into America* by William Least Heat-Moon, *and Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. I will be focusing on the protagonist of each novel: Santiago in *The Alchemist*, Heat-Moon in *Blue Highways*, and Gilbert in *Eat, Pray, Love*, as they are the characters of whose circumstances we have a more

in-depth understanding, and we follow their journey. The journey depicted in the novels acts as a narrative frame for the characters' development, even though their original goal and reason for the travel itself is to visit or run away from a specific place. The travel journey then moves away from or towards to a location that allows for the encounter of foreign cultures, environments, and people that affect the character's understanding of themselves by subjecting them to new experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. The text then reinforces a cultural and personal consciousness in which mobility, observation, curiosity, accuracy, and imagination become qualities fundamental to understanding oneself. My aim for this thesis is to use psychoanalytic concepts such as transference/countertransference and desire to showcase the characters' and readers' unconscious desire for change in their lives and wish to better understand themselves.

<p style="text-align:center">**********************************</p>

To better understand how to interpret personal development and self-discovery in travel writing we need first to have a strong theoretical understanding of travel literature. Chapter 2, the theory chapter, explains the literary theory used for this thesis. Chapter 2.1 starts with information on travel writing as a popular genre. For the history of travel literature, I will be relying on Barbara Korte's book, *English Travel Writing: From Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, where she mentions that between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, accounts of travel were among the most read texts (2). However, it was only after the 1970s that the genre receive attention and was analyzed for its projection of culture-specific mentalities, their representations of "otherness" and imaging of foreign countries. Early travel accounts were written by diplomats, explorers, or entrepreneurs who, according to Stacy Burton in her book Travel Narrative and Ends of Modernity, wrote ethnographic studies with truthful accounts of firsthand experience and thus important sources of knowledge (3). The literary genre allows for a mixture of personal experience, cultural observation, historical storytelling, and political comments, making travel writing a fundamentally hybrid genre, able to incorporate many different themes and genres within its own. Nowadays, travel writing is defined by the interaction of the human subject with the world. It lets us participate in acts of both understanding and misunderstanding, (inter)cultural awareness and cultural construction, by witnessing the different environments, places, and people. The process of understanding the journey happens during the trip itself but also when the author writes the story. These processes are also, however, experienced by the reader as

they are reading the text. In a way, travel accounts offer us a triple opportunity for exploration: abroad, into the author's mind, and into our own.

In Chapter 2.2, we will then focus on psychoanalytic theory. The theory started as a dream analysis shown in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* and evolved to many different concepts including transference and the levels of consciousness. Freud's psychoanalytic theory will help us understand the unconscious dreams, desires, and motivations of the characters in the novel and further see how they may influence the readers. In the novels, the characters have a wish for exploration in some form and that wish arises from a repressed experience. In Freud's theory of primitive, he suggests that when an experience is repressed, it creates desires which are then attached to a particular image or idea outside of the conscious awareness (Wright 1). These desires then represent unconscious wishes. The repressed experience can also cause emotions that will be ingrained in the individual's consciousness. This may indicate that no experience the body has is totally erased from the mind as it can surface again if the individual experiences a particular event, or word, that can awaken the same emotion. Following this explanation, we will look at the reader's theory of psychoanalysis and, more specifically, the concept of transference and countertransference. This will allow us to interpret how the author transfers their unconscious desires and feelings into the characters or objects in the book which are then transferred to the reader as they read the story. In this way, the theory will help us argue that the characters had a repressed experience which led to the travel journey. There they will undergo many challenges that will help them with their personal development and self-identity. As the character evolves in the novel, so does the reader's unconscious as the text is working on the reader themselves, absorbing the characters's, and therefore the author's, wish for self-discovery, change, and transformation.

In the last part of the theory chapter, Chapter 2.3, we will look at the coherent meaning in a text as well as in language. Here we will mainly focus on Derrida's meaning for language, expressed in the book *Superstructuralism* by Richard Harland. For Derrida, meaning is understood not just in the sense that words mean, but in the sense that someone means them to mean something (Harland 126). Signification happens first as an interior monologue where the meaning of a word is already defined by the person thinking of the word. However, when the word is written and read by others, it becomes subject to what Derrida calls *différance*. The term différance suggests that the differential nature of meanings in language defers or postpones any determinate meaning (Baldick 88). The meaning of words can represent what is added later and what was there in the first place, meaning that,

when working on a text, the reader must consider not only that the author might be dead but also that their "their meaning is liable to be quite disconnected from the facts of their life, even in an apparently autobiographical poem" (Harland 133). Moreover, the act of writing travel narratives gives language a structure where the writer and the reader can understand their experience and its impact better. By writing and reading the journey, the reader and author are perhaps more aware of the meaning of the words because they would want their feelings and experiences to be acknowledged. Having this concept in mind, we can understand that the way an author or character portrays an event or uses a word can have a different impact on the reader's perception of the text than intended as it evokes a different meaning in their mind that is more adequate to their circumstances and experience.

The first novel analyzed in this thesis is *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. This analysis will be done in Chapter 3 where we look at the main character, Santiago, his journey in the novel, and how it affects the reader. The story follows Santiago in Andalucía. He is a shepherd and enjoys traveling the south of Spain with his sheep. However, Santiago has been having reoccurring dreams about being transported to the Pyramids of Egypt and finding a treasure there. Santiago was dismissive of his dreams but was still curious enough to ask a Romani person about them. He enjoyed his life as a shepherd and was happy to be able to travel around Spain; however, unconsciously it seemed that he wanted to explore the world but the lifestyle that he was so used to was restricting him. In this chapter, we will look at Santiago's dreams of traveling to Egypt and the way he is unconsciously repressing them. We will then analyze the journey through Morocco and Egypt, what events he had to endure, and how they changed him. During his journey, Santiago meets many people who will influence him to continue to follow his dream. In many ways, Santiago is becoming the journey by absorbing the outside and attaching his individuality to the actions and circumstances he has experienced. Finally, the last part of this chapter will focus on the reader response analysis. We will look at what thoughts the novel can awaken in the reader such as the feeling that the reader is missing more of his life and not following his dreams. We will also look at how the reader can experience an adventure by following Santiago's journey. Ultimately, the chapter is meant to show how this type of travel narrative gives hope and inspiration to its reader.

The second novel we will analyze is *Blue Highways: A Journey into America* by William Least Heat-Moon and it will be in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Here we will look at the protagonist who is the author himself, Heat-Moon, and will look at his road trip through rural America. The chapter consists of a character analysis where we discover what prompted Heat-Moon to start his journey and what kind of state of mind he is in. Heat-Moon had just lost his

job and was divorcing his wife, so he wanted to get away from the situation in his home and look for companionship elsewhere. Heat-Moon was aware that he was running away from his problems and probably having a mid-life crisis since he was 37 years when he started his journey, but one could say that unconsciously, Heat-Moon was feeling very lonely, thus actively searching for people on the road to start a conversation with. In this chapter, we will also discuss Heat-Moon's interest in rural, untouched America and how it had adapted and progressed without losing its uniqueness. Heat-Moon's interest in the identity of a place, such as how it got its name, what kind of history it has, and how people live there, symbolizes his own search for his identity. He felt that he had lived in a foreign land and since nothing was keeping him at his home in Missouri, he decided to leave and see the land for himself. His journey was filled with different people whom he got to talk to, different landscapes that he got to see, and different towns where he saw how they grew and adapted to technology or tourism. The final part of this chapter talks about Heat-Moon's view on travelers and tourists and how they are interchangeable in a way. We will look at how the reader can interpret this conflict between being a traveler and a tourist and if one should even identify oneself as one or the other. Lastly, we will also look at what change is in this novel and how it can be perceived by its readers.

The final book analysis for this thesis is on Chapter 5 and consists of the novel *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. Here we follow the protagonist and author Gilbert on her one-year trip to Italy, India, and Indonesia. Similarly to Heat-Moon, Gilbert was also undergoing a divorce and was having mental health issues such as depression. She was not happy with her marriage simply because she did not want to be married anymore or have kids. She has been following what one would consider a typical American life by having a successful career in New York, married and brought an apartment with her husband, and is now ready to start a family. However, Gilbert was not interested in such things. She felt stuck and wanted to get away from all she had accomplished so far. In the first part of this chapter, we will analyze the character, Gilbert. We will look at how the novel can be seen as a pilgrimage where Gilbert is searching for some form of spiritual awakening. Her self-discovery journey does not come from the place of critical reflection on the self and society but from the spiritual consumption throughout her journey. With this spiritual approach to traveling, Gilbert can be seen as a neoliberal spiritual tourist who is adopting a romanticized view of her experience with native cultures. The novel promotes a type of travel experience that allows women to access the same spiritual awakening that Gilbert had by following her journey through Italy, India, and Indonesia or similar places. This combination of a travel

account with a self-help memoir seems to have resonated with many readers, making *Eat, Pray, Love*, a very well-known and popular novel. However, a spiritual journey through the East encourages a spiritual and cultural consumption of a place, where the protagonist or traveler can always go back home and continue their life after doing what they intended to do in their travel journey.

In the last two chapters of this thesis, we will be discussing language in travel narratives, the connection between mobility and self-discovery, and analyzing the characters in relation to the backpacker's personal development scale. In Chapter 6 we will discuss how writing materializes language the same way the act of travel writing materializes the character's wish for self-discovery and transformation, making writing the expression of the writer's subjectivity that can come from their unconscious mind. The process of writing can then be used as a method of self-therapy where people can journey within themselves to find a sense of balance between the self and the world. The act of writing a travel narrative can then be transformative to a person, where the author tries to find themselves through displacement and otherness. Later in this chapter, we will look at the freedom of movement in the characters of the novels. The characters are not bound by any specific place anymore and are free to roam and explore not just the world, but themselves as well. Freedom is a privilege many do not have, and it will be interesting to look at how freedom affects one's self-discovery and transformation. Lastly, we will look at the characters' personal development by analyzing the backpacker's personal development scale created by Ganghua Chen, Jigang Bao, and Songshan (Sam) Huang. None of the characters analyzed identify themselves as backpackers, but the scale applies more generally to travelers, as there are many similarities between how backpackers claim to develop and what kind of personal development these characters gain through their journeys. In Chapter 7, we will look at what other areas of study can be explored within travel narratives and how they can evolve based on the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual reality and artificial intelligence, and environmental issues such as climate change.

2 Theory Chapter

The following chapter provides a closer look at the theories utilized in this thesis. To better understand how a travel writing narrative is composed and affects its reader we should first describe what it entails and its significance to literature in general. The chapter starts with an in-depth description of travel writing, focusing on its evolution from being a popular genre in the mid seventeenth-century to adapting to modern themes and interests such as globalization and environmental issues. Since travel narratives have shifted from an objective view to a more personal and subjective one, we will then describe how we can interpret the characters and readers of the novel by using psychoanalytic theory. I will focus on Freud's theory of transference, desires, and consciousness. I will also focus on Derrida's ideas of language and writing, according to which one word can have multiple meanings because someone means them to mean something. In other words, the meaning is already created in the person's mind; however, when it is written, it can have multiple meanings to those who read it. This idea of language will be used as a clarification for how the reader might react and interpret travel narratives.

2.1 Travel Writing, Travel Narrative, and Travel Literature

Travel literature has evolved through the centuries as it was formed alongside the history of travel. It has even existed since the beginning of oral and written literature (Adams 38). Like other forms of literature, travel literature's quantity and nature have varied because of political, religious, economic, and other social and human factors. This form of literature also includes subtypes that continually "approach, separate, join, overlap, and consistently defy neat classification" (Adams 38). Travel literature can also be classified according to form. During the seventeenth century, most of the travel literature was found in notes. Travelers often did not record their story but told it to someone else who would write it out from the third- or first-person point of view. The letter has been the most abundant form of travel narrative, whether it be informal or formal (Adams 43). A second popular narrative throughout the centuries consisted of diaries or journals. And finally, a third common form of travel literature is the simple narrative. This form was not always written in the first person, and it customarily gives dates and names of places. The narrative normally "leaps and lingers" while moving forward with the journey, and often includes descriptions of nature or

the benefits of travel (Adams 44). Poems, or prose that contained poems, were also among the most used forms of travel literature. Nevertheless, when considering the history of travel literature, one must concentrate on the letters, journals, first-person narratives, and third-person rewritings that are most popular.

With the wide range that travel literature brings, its impact on every phase of history has been incredibly broad and deep. Many geographers and students have been aware of this influence, but now it is being valued and described more and more in special studies and other realms of thought (Adams 77). Travelers have existed for a very long time, but the history of the literature on travel has yet to be written, despite the number of volumes about exploration and discovery or travel in a particular country or period (Adams 45). The importance of travel extends to every significant business, political, religious, academic, or creative enterprise undertaken during the centuries when the European novel was maturing. Nowadays, the importance of travel continues to affect these themes but also extends to the identification and exploration of oneself amidst a different culture and environment.

Travel writing represents individual experience in a foreign country and aims to tell the story of a journey. It remains a popular genre and was among the most read texts between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries (Korte 2). The popularity of travel writing is most likely due to the themes of exploration, exoticism, historical account, and many others, as well as its massive assembly of observations, experiences, and reflections. What travel writing does particularly well is incorporating other genres in their narrative: "everything can potentially be included which the traveler/writer sees fit" (Korte 5). The term "omnium-gatherum" perfect to describe the genre. Travel writing accounts, also known as travelogues, were usually written by diplomats, explorers, or entrepreneurs whose purpose was to retell truthful accounts of firsthand experience and provide knowledge afterward. It shows the interaction between the human subject and the world, and lets the reader participate in acts of (inter)cultural perception and construction. However, there is an unclear line between fact and fiction in travel writing. Even if travelers claim their texts are authentic, there is still a possibility that their observations are stained with presumed authority towards unfamiliar cultures, and that the journey itself is fictionalized (Burton 5). The debate about the literariness of travel writing goes together with a narrow view of the genre. To acknowledge travel writing as literature only when it is embedded in literary language and poetic prose is very restrictive. As Korte has argued, the question of the literariness in travel writing must be seen with the same flexibility that the genre has (Korte 17). This gives the reader a literary ground that is untrodden and unmapped, and in which there is a lot to discover. Nevertheless,

travel writing continues to evolve since its history is bound up with the history of travel, and to travel is something that the human subject still does to this day.

Travel writing has received little scholarly attention, even though the genre has existed for many centuries and includes many writers in "established" fields of English literature (Burton 2 and Korte 2). However, as we will see, literary scholars have acknowledged various literary characteristics attributed to the genre. Travel writing displays various modes of presentation: the narration in the texts is intermingled with description, exposition, and prescription which is included in other genres, but the blend between fact and fiction and the incorporation of other genres within the travel narrative makes it a hybrid or androgynous literary form. The texts have a narrative core which consists of the story of a journey. The storytelling in the travelogue can be fictional which contradicts the criterion that travel accounts depict journeys that have taken place. For many writers and readers, the stamp of authenticity and the distinction between authentic and "fantasized" is essential. However, a reader's sense of reality lies in his or her "assumption that the text is based on travel facts" (Korte 10). When it comes to the text and its narrative techniques, there is no distinction between the travel account and purely fictional forms of travel literature. In essence, what they do is recreate the experience of the journey by translating it into a travel plot. The journey, according to Jonathan Raban (1987), is "a shapeless, unsifted, endlessly shifting accumulation of experience" (quoted in Korte 11). This means that the experience of a journey is reconstructed and therefore fictionalized, even in travelogues in the form of diaries and letters. Another feature of travel writing that relates to the element of authenticity is autobiography. In this type of text, the author, the narrator, and the traveler persona are fused together in first-person narration (Korte 12). If one were to make a narratological analysis of autobiographical travel writing, one must distinguish between these three voices. Other characters are also subject to manipulations, where they may or may not be real people the author has encountered dependent on what effect and purpose they have for the story.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, a shift towards the traveling subject can be detected. Travelogues are no longer restricted to a description of the countries traveled, but they depict the personality and the emotions of the traveling subject (Korte 57). The person who travels exposes the structures of their personality, mind, and emotions to a new process of experience and thus they are deeply affected by everything that happens to them during the journey (Korte 57). These tendencies became an important generic feature of the genre. As the emphasis on the subject becomes evident in travel accounts in the 1750s, the description of landscape and other traits of Romanticism became apparent as well (Korte 62). The

landscape is "a construct of the mind as well as a physical and measurable entity" (Korte 62). The enjoyment of landscape is a natural part of the travel experience, and so is its romanticism: people have a natural tendency to enjoy landscape and Romanticism made it fashionable to include emotional landscape descriptions. These descriptions then became a set piece in travelogues. The traveler's concerns were shifted towards how he or she can "confront and make sense of the world, how the journey can become a meaningful experience, and how the subject constitutes itself" (Korte 144). The meaningful experience that comes with travel will emerge with the act of travel writing itself where one gets to put their emotions and experience during the journey in retrospect. In other words, the journey gains more significance through the act of writing. The subjectivity in the travel writing can also be observed in the explorer-scientist type journey where exploration not only served a scientific purpose but also affected the traveler himself (Korte 61).

In the 1930s, travel writing became one of the most important genres and, according to Samuel Hynes (1976), travel was the basic trope for that period. The journeys were often symbolic. As Korte puts it, they represented the "self-conscious crossings of the frontier between the known and the unknown" and the traveler was "in search for some reality not visible at home" (Korte 139). Since the 1930s, traveling has become a common leisure activity and the urge to escape from civilization increased. The urge to escape created an openness of the genre that includes an explicit critique of society. In the postcolonial world, a younger generation of writers tends to be more outspoken about the traveler's postcoloniality (Lindsay 25). The writers seem to display a special sensitivity to the colonial history of the countries they visit and have a huge interest in political issues and the mechanism of power in said countries. "Postcolonialism" is used as an umbrella term and blurs the distinctions between settled and conquered colonies, colonies that became independent, and postcolonial cultures (Korte 152). The specific concern of the postcolonial traveler is determined by his or her cultural background, but one thing they have in common with travel writers, in general, is the critique of mass tourism (Korte 152). However, many texts in postcolonial writing are still preoccupied with questions of origin, belonging, identity, and nationality (Korte 170). They have the urge to find their roots and define their homes. A mutual interest of both the studies of travel narratives and enquiries into the condition of postcoloniality is "the question of canon," along with a concern about the persistence of and resistance to orthodox forms and epistemologies (Lindsay 25). This type of travel writing added a range of "other" sensitivities, perfectives, and attitudes that enrich and makes a significant contribution to the genre of travel literature. Postcolonial scholarship on travel and its narratives is seen in studies such as

Ali Behdad's *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (1994) and David Spurr's *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (1993).

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Travel narrative involves positioning texts not as documentary studies but as stories told from the narrator's subjective experiences (Burton 8). By focusing on the narrative, the readers approach these texts in search of exciting engagement with the experiences, peoples, and places they represent. Because these texts are written as stories, they put the travel narrative among other narrative genres such as novels, which it freely borrows from. Helen Carr suggests that the travel narrative underwent a modernist transition in the 1920s and 1930s where it went from being a "detailed, realistic text" to "a more impressionist style" of writing with a focus on the "traveler's responses or consciousness" during their journey (Burton 9).   The protagonist and the journey plot not only serve as a means of social commentary, but it also combines the local detail with exoticism. Iain Chambers suggests that "in an age in which anthropology increasingly turns into autobiography, the observer, seeking to capture… is now caught in the net of critical observation" (Burton 10). To understand the travel narrative, one must examine the observer, because they show how and why a form that could be paralleled with the "death of the novel" has evolved into a surprisingly agile means of engaging with geopolitical issues by the beginning of the new millennium. The "death of the novel" is used as a theoretical discussion of the declining importance of the novel as a literary form. The comparison here highlights the disinterest in travel writing in literary theory, but the genre continues to evolve due to the observer who actively participates in ecological or political issues using travel narratives.

The survival of the travel narrative is due to the novelization of the genre among a set of other qualities. The novelization of the genre means adapting the travelogues or travel diaries written in the seventeenth century into novels. In a literary world dominated by the novel, the novelization of travel writing offers "liberation from all that serves as a brake on their unique development" (Burton 14). The travel narrative has evolved in the last century due to a set of different factors. First, the travel narrative evolved by adapting to the changing social and historical circumstances: from writing about newly discovered countries during the imperial times to describing political issues in postcolonial countries. Second, as stated above, the novelization of the genre allowed it to appear less outmoded, mannered, and

conservative as it followed the literary context that dominates the most. Third, the travel narrative has borrowed from other novelistic discourse, which includes "extraliterary heteroglossia," irony, and critical self-consciousness. Lastly, novelized genres evolve by embracing open-endedness, un-finalizability, and self-scrutiny. Modernization and globalization also contributed to the evolution of the travel narrative. Homelands are becoming multi-cultured, and the internet will soon give the possibility of virtual travel. However, electronic media only give the impression of "being there and not being there" (Korte 143). I believe that the travel narrative will constantly evolve as long as the writers, travelers, and explorers keep documenting their experiences regardless of the media they chose to portray their journey.

These new forms of media produce rivalry between "inauthentic" and "authentic" experiences. As stated above, travel claims to provide a first-hand authentic experience of the world. The authentic experience involves "being so fully in place, so engaged in the present, that the fragmentation modern subjects experience as anxious self-consciousness or malaise dissipates" (Burton 164). Every aspect of travel and its representation is attached to the notions of authenticity to the point that authenticity becomes the purpose of both journey and narrative (Burton 164). Many travelers seek authenticity to restructure their internal chaos by visiting a place that is linked to them. These places could either be a rural village or the place one's great-grandfather was born. The narrative serves to showcase that the travelers' journey is an authentic event; however, "the relationship between occurrence, perception, narration, and reception is anything but straightforward" (Burton 166). According to sociologist Dean MacCannell (1940), what motivates the traveler to travel is the desire for authenticity (Burton 163). Other motives can be a mix of religious and secular interests. For example, pilgrim travelers wish to become witnesses of an already known authentic by experiencing the journey themselves. As we transition to the twentieth century, the travel narrative becomes more "deliberately subjective, more fragmented, and more self-conscious of its own narrativity" (Burton 16). The travelers/writers start focusing more on personal testimony and individual experience and therefore, they use the platform to voice radical political ideas about the consequence of wars, violence, and postcolonial transformation (Burton 18). The search for authenticity correlates with the perpetual transformation and dislocations caused by modernization and globalization. However, the authenticity of the travel narrative lies in bridging the past and the present as well as in bridging the present moment and its potential for the future (Burton 169).

The demonstration of nostalgia in travel narratives raises and questions modernity's structural oppositions, particularly when they take cultural and political change as central themes. As the world becomes more open and there is no new information to report, travelers have decided to focus on personal experience by narrating modernization, cultural transformation, and violence caused by geopolitical events. To examine this new concern, one needs to understand the concept of nostalgia for imagined worlds. Nostalgic imagined worlds are usually worlds before the war, before urbanization, and before the end (or beginnings) of empires (Burton 85). Patrick Holland (1977) and Graham Huggan (1958) discussed the tendency for writers to seek "solace for a troubled present in nostalgic cultural myths" (Burton 87). Nostalgia occurs and must be understood in the cultural and political contexts of modernity (Burton 87). It signals the complexity of the present and it privileges some stories while suppressing others, mixing cultural and political constraints. Nostalgia is thus used to deal with modernity's consequences: "to 'have' nostalgia is to 'be' modern" (Burton 87). According to Burton, this means that nostalgia only exists because of modernity, and it proves to be "an irreducibly plural phenomenon" that "takes on very different forms and dimensions" (Burton 87). Travelers then become more focused on preserving the past and its uniqueness and resisting the modernization and urbanization of places. They seek the roots of a town and are nostalgic for the things that were before, even if they have not experienced it themselves firsthand.

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Having an idea of what travel writing entails is beneficial for this thesis as the novels analyzed are characterized as travel literature. They have a mixture of both fictional and factual prose where the authors write a travel narrative with autobiographical features. In the novels *Blue Highways* and *Eat, Pray, Love*, we are following a part of the author's life where they escaped their traumatic divorce by going on a journey. In *The Alchemist*, we have a purely fictional story of a boy named Santiago who travels to Egypt in search of his dreams. Even if two of the novels claim to be authentic, with *Blue Highways* even including pictures to legitimate itself, it is up to the reader to believe or not the encounters of the story. The blend of other literary genres is also present in the novels analyzed. *The Alchemist* blends travel writing with what looks like a fable or a children's book where forces of nature are personified, and the story leads to a particular moral lesson. *Blue Highways* has some elements of historical fiction and *Eat, Pray, Love* has some hints of feminist literature. Some

of the novels also are concerned with postcolonial issues such as finding the character's roots by discovering their home country, as well as adapting and learning new cultures through participating in their community. The knowledge of travel writing's history, evolution, and characteristics clarifies the novel's central themes and narrative tools, which are then used to strengthen the thesis's argument.

2.2 Reader Theory in Freudian Psychoanalysis

Readers are unconsciously searching for their identity through travel narratives even if they initially gravitated towards this type of literature because of either nostalgia, religion, politics, or the pure wish to travel to a specific place. However, the travel narrative has shifted from an objective overview to a subjective one where the experience and emotions of the subject are highlighted. These experiences and emotions are then transferred to the reader, and perhaps it makes them question their individuality.

To analyze the reader's response, reaction, and interpretation of travel literature, one should look at the psychoanalytic theory which is a theory of interpretation that questions consciousness (Wright 2). According to Oxford English Dictionary, consciousness is defined as an internal knowledge where one is being mentally aware of something (322). It is the capacity to be aware of impressions, thoughts, and feelings, which make up a person's sense of self or define a person's identity (322). Psychoanalysis originated in the method of dream-analysis shown in Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) and in similar analyses of jokes, slips of the tongue, and neurotic symptoms in his later writings (Baldick 296). Freud argues that a dream is the disguised expression of a wish coming from the unconscious mind (Baldick 296). To understand this theory, we must first establish the levels of consciousness of which the unconscious is a part. There are different levels of consciousness and Freud describes them as the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. The conscious mind is our awareness, it is knowing that we exist and are alive (Kelland 52). For example, while reading this thesis or while talking to a friend, the subject is aware of their actions. They are conscious that they are reading or are actively listening and responding to their friend. The unconscious mind is, according to Freud, "the true psychic reality" (Kelland 52). Freud views all conscious thoughts as a result of the unconscious stage; however, the unconscious mind is inaccessible. In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud described the unconscious mind:

in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs. (607)

Between the conscious and unconscious mind, there is a negotiator called the preconscious which is where the impulses arising in the unconscious enter the conscious awareness (Kelland 52). This suggests that unconscious thoughts cannot enter consciousness without being filtered by the preconscious. What decides the level of consciousness, also which one is activated, is the "cathexis of libidinal energy (or perhaps energy related to the death instinct) and repression" (Kelland 52). The theory of consciousness suggests that there are interactions between different elements of the mind where some of them are beyond our awareness, but still influence why we think and act the way we do.

Freud is also interested in exploring what happens when primitive desire gets directed into social goals, thus drawing attention to the effects of desire in language and symbolic interactions (Wright 1). What is of particular interest to this theory is the aspect of the experience that has been ignored or prohibited by the rules of language. When an experience is repressed, it creates what Freud calls desire. These desires attached themselves to a particular image or idea outside of conscious awareness, thus representing unconscious wishes. Another effect of ignored or prohibited experience is that it can cause emotions that may be taken as evidence that no experience the body has, is ever totally erased from the mind (Wright 2). Psychoanalysis is now being used to show how clever literature is by analyzing how the body is caught up in the tropes and figures of language (Wright 175-6). Analysts and critics who use this theory are engaged in pursuing "undecidable" meanings by using ambiguity, ambivalence, fantasy, illusion, and play as their device to analyze the figurations of the text in terms of the identity problems of the characters, and the struggle between the subject and the society (Wright 176, 179).

The psychoanalysis of literary characters is crucial for this thesis as it focuses on the theory of personality. Psychoanalytic theory is based on the deep longing or desires and strong inner force that influence human behavior through the unconscious mind (Revathy and Aruna 4923). According to Freud, the mind is divided by the id, the ego, and the superego. In the theory of personality, Freud states that these three elements are used to explore the human's unconscious desires, feelings, and passions (Revathy and Aruna 4923). He emphasizes that the id, ego, and superego are not different compartments within the mind, but rather they blend (Ewen 17). However, for a better understanding of them, it is necessary to

look at these concepts one at a time. The id represents the instinctual drives that arise from the "constitutional needs" of the body (Wright 11). It is the only component that is present at birth and is entirely unconscious. Freud describes the id as "the dark, inaccessible part of our personality … a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations" (Ewen 17). The ego is then developed out of the id to be a mediator that regulates and opposes the drives of the body (Wright 11). Unlike the id, the ego spans the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious and it is the only component of personality that can interact with the environment (Ewen 18). Its rationality is meant to form realistic plans of action to satisfy the needs of the id. Ego has a difficult task of "owing service to their masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, … from the id, and from the severity of the superego" thus resulting in anxiety which is an unpleasant emotion (Ewen 18). To cope with this anxiety, the ego creates defense mechanisms where the most important one is repression (Ewen 19). Repression consists of unconsciously eliminating threatening material from awareness and being unable to recall it on demand. Lastly, the superego characterizes the parental and social influences upon the drives (Wright 11). The ego begins to internalize (introject) the standards of the parents and society, leading to the formation of the superego. The superego is partially conscious and partially unconscious and consists of two components: the conscience which punishes illicit thoughts and actions, and the ego ideal which rewards desirable behavior (Ewen 23). This can be exemplified as a person who refuses to cheat even though no one else is watching, who is responding to the superego and is therefore rewarded with feelings of pride and virtue.

Ego-psychology lies in bridging the primary process into play at the ego's command and is a type of psychoanalytic criticism that emphasizes the maintenance of identity (Wright 56-7). It is another way of analyzing the response of the reader where one goes from the wish-fulfilling fantasy of the author to a shared wish-fulfillment fantasy of the reader and the author (Wright 62). Both reader and author are seeking pleasure from literature and Holland explains that this pleasure derives from the "transformation of unconscious wishes and fears into culturally acceptable meanings" (quoted in Wright 63). The reader's response is defined by Holland as essentially a search for reassurance and relatability which will eventually ward off anxiety and the disturbance in pleasure (Wright 65). The reader gains this security of being understood by projecting a safe fantasy into the work. They "transact" with the work, causing adaptations that are effective for the reader since those alterations arise from the reader's identity theme (Wright 65). Holland uses the same technique as Green where he becomes the reader/analysand as well as the analyst. He conducts a self-analysis on himself,

examining his response as a reader. In this way, Holland is both the patient in transference and the analyst in countertransference. Ultimately, Ego-psychology demonstrates that the reader associates his own wishes and fantasies with the text to fulfill a repressed desire.

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When looking at the reader theory of psychoanalysis, one should understand what transference and countertransference are. "Transference is a mode of investing persons and objects with positive and negative qualities, according to early memories of significant experience of familial figures and the expectations founded thereon" while countertransference manifests in "the 'knots' which result from the unending chain of mutual misreading" (Wright 15). In other words, this means that the author transfers their unconscious desires and feelings into the characters or objects of the book based on what they have experienced growing up. Then, these same desires and feelings are further transferred to the reader. Countertransference is thus when the reader "misreads" the desire and feelings of the character/objects (and therefore of the author) by applying their unconscious desires gained through past experiences. Here the analyst (the reader) catches the analysand's (the author's) unconscious with his own unconscious and they come into dialogue with each other "without the remotest conception of this on the part of the consciousness of either" (Eulert-Fuchs 159). Paula Heimann claims that the unconscious relationship is essential to the point that the unconscious perception of the analyst is "more acute and in advance" of the conscious conception of the situation itself (Eulert-Fuchs 159).

Psychoanalytic reader theory aims to look for points of resistance in both readers and texts happening when the repressed desire from the analyst or analysand is in danger of emerging. This is a constant communication between the text and the reader where they both are working unto the other, involving a complex double dialectic of two bodies carved in the language (Wright 17). According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, transference was the displacement of feelings from one idea to another (Wright 16). It works the same way as described above where intense feeling, or "affect," is transferred to the analyst. These intense feelings then become organized around a group of intimidating or attractive wishes. By transferring the wishes to the analyst, the analysand attempts to undermine the analyst's authority, so that the repressed wish may be granted (Wright 16). The key technique of psychoanalysis is the interpretation of the resistance from the analysand, where they are blocking access to the unconscious by using words and actions. Freud also uncovers a second

kind of transference named "transference neurosis" which is developed during the treatment (Wright 16). Freud suggests that "the nearer the analyst gets to the repressed complex which induced the illness the more the patient's behavior becomes pure repetition and divorced from present reality" (Wright 16). When it comes to his views on countertransference, Freud sees it as the analyst's unconscious response to the patient's transference resulting in an unsuitable reaction (Wright 16). This thesis mainly focuses on the transference between the author/character and the reader. The reader and the text are constantly communicating; however, the reader's unconscious wishes might be granted by forcing their interpretation of the experience onto the text.

The new structural approach to psychoanalysis suggests that the text is not the property of either the author or the reader (Wright 116). Both author and reader find a lure and pleasure in the text in which their unconscious is personified. In the literary text, and in the "text of life," the history has already been written before the subject arrives at the scene meaning that it is the reader who is transformed rather than the text (Wright 123). However, the distinction between the writer and the reader is no longer valid because the scene of the text implicates both. The subject becomes the reader of their own writing and thus is self-consciously displaying the various effects of transference (Wright 123). The writer is speaking from the position of a "subject to the system that places him, inseparable from his act, defined by the system" (Wright 124). In other words, the writer/reader of the text is influenced by its environment, which could be determined by the history of a particular place. This means that the historical events that occurred in the text are transforming the writer/reader. Lacan's model of transference suggests that the analyst is "absent in order [for the] analysand to do the analyzing" (Wright 130). The writer/reader, or the analysands, are refusing to play the role of a "subject presumed to know" or "dummy." Lacan's approach emphasizes that both readers and writers were determined by the text and were written by the text while they were reading it (Wright 133). What then does it mean to interpret transference? Lacan suggests that the interpretation of transference is "nothing but to fill the emptiness of this standstill with a lure, [b]ut even though it is deceptive, this lure serves a purpose by setting the whole process in motion anew," consequently, "transference does not fall under any mysterious property of affectivity and, even when it reveals itself in an emotional guise, this guise has a meaning only as a function of the dialectical moment at which it occurs" (Lacan 184).

Even though the text cannot be changed while being read, the reader can still influence what the text is saying by being biased about its meaning to further accomplish their desire.

Andre Green has explored the relationship between the analytic encounter of writer and reader. He focused on the two conscious and two unconscious minds that are at work here. In his analytic overview, Green suggests that both analyst and analysand are "operating with hypotheses about self and other" (Wright 99). The analyst and analysand obtain gestures and speech from each other that have not existed before. These interactions have evolved out of the relations between the two. Green explains that there is an "I" and a "me" for both the analyst and the analysand, the "I" being the "subjective play," and the "me" being what the "other side picks up" (Wright 100). With this, Green suggests there is a resemblance between the writer/reader communication, which is analogous, and what goes on between the analyst and patient (Wright 100). In both cases, the subjects are engaged in producing the analytic "text" (for the analyst/patient) and the literary text (for the writer/reader) (Wright 100). The literary text cannot be subjected to further changes while being read, but there is enough material in the figures of the text that can be interpreted by the analysand according to his associations. This encounter is described by Green as "trans-narcissistic," where the analyst interpreter seeks to decode the emotions the text awakens in them (Wright 100).

The strength of Andre Green's approach is that it accounts for strong emotions in the text. Instead of positioning the author as the subject or analyzing a character as the subject, Green illustrates how the configuration of character "stages the castration complex in terms of a set of shared power-relations" (Wright 103). He makes characters and readers into analysands while he becomes both the analysand and his own analyst. When there is a double match of conscious ordering and unconscious experience, there is a type of negotiation that needs to take place (Wright 104). The intentions of the authors and readers are "subjected to this negotiation in the 'potential space' of reading/writing" where emotions are involved on both sides (Wright 104). Andre Green's work lies in acknowledging this communication between writer and reader both in theory and practice.

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To understand how travel narratives affect the reader's self-discovery and identity we must look at how the reader interprets the text. Psychoanalytic theory helps do so by providing Freud's interpretation of dreams as well as the concept of transference. In studying those concepts, we get an idea of how consciousness works, linking the thoughts created there with a possible reaction. It is not an easy theory to understand because the mind and human behavior are very complex. To only use the text as our tool for interpreting the reader's

wishes is challenging, but this theory helps us have a theoretical ground where we can explore the character's emotions and unconscious thoughts. Using the protagonist of the novels as our main interpretational point, we can then transfer their observations and experience to the reader. It is important to note that the text is working on the reader the same way the reader is working on the text. Based on readers' own experience they may interpret an experience in a different way than the text is portraying. Hence why, when analyzing the novels, it is important to showcase different aspects for the interpretation of the novels and consider what actions or events led the characters to do the journey. Furthermore, one should be attentive to the readers' reactions and thoughts to the new and foreign environment because those will shape how the reader reacts to the travel experience portrayed in the novel.

2.3 Language and Writing

Readers and writers are simultaneously determined by the text and being written by it while reading. This is a Lacanian approach to reading. However, Derrida's deconstructive approach to reading questions the possibility of coherent meaning in a text as well as in language (Baldick 88). Words, whether spoken or written, are subject to "différance" (Derrida 211). This implies that words are differing from and deferring any transient fixation of meaning. Using Freud's theory of consciousness, Derrida suggests that the unconscious becomes active in the production of meaning. Derrida looks at the text to undermine their power over subjects (Wright 134). His theory describes a dominant Western tradition where thoughts attempt to have an established ground of certainty and truth by repressing the instability of language. This tradition requested some absolute source or guarantee of meaning causing "violent hierarchies" favoring a central term over a marginal one: "nature over culture, male over female, and speech over writing" (Baldick 88). Derrida then has a subversive approach to Western philosophy, in which he reverses and dissolves conceptual hierarchies to show that the repressed or marginalized term has always been a part of the privileged or central term. He argues that the "stable self-identity which we attribute to speech as the authentic source of meaning is illusory since language operates as a self-contained system of internal differences rather than of positive terms or presences" (Baldick 88). Derrida's central concept comes from the term différance and suggests that the differential nature of meanings in language constantly defers or postpones any determinate meaning (Baldick 88).

According to Derrida, meaning is understood not just in the sense that words mean, but in the sense that someone means them to mean something (Harland 126). This is first

done as an interior monologue and implies that the person already knows everything one is going to say before saying it. By having an interior monologue, the meaning of a word is shared between the emitting and receiving halves of the mind, even before being formulated into words. Derrida argues that true language is self-sufficient and even independent of human beings (Harland 127). Therefore, it is the opposite extreme of writing (Harland 127). Writing represents the passage of thought out of consciousness (Harland 128). In other words, while language is mainly in the conscious mind, writing makes it tangible and real in the 3D world. Voice is also a way of conveying the language that is in the human mind. Thus, language as we know it, in text and speech, derives from the inner monologue in our minds, making it an independent phenomenon.

It is the act of writing that gives the meaning of words. Derrida explains that what is on the writer's mind has no priority over the meaning of their words (Harland 131). The meaning of words can represent what was there in the first place and what is then added later. When looking at literature, one must consider that not only might the writer be dead, but "their meaning is liable to be quite disconnected from the facts of their life, even in an apparently autobiographical poem" (Harland 133). We have to bear in mind that, when a word is written, the movement of any single word ultimately spreads out across every other word in the whole language (Harland 133). Looking at Derrida's theory of language, signifiers inert physical marks on the page and are merely signifying, which is, pointing away from themselves and pointing to other signifiers (Derrida 25). In linguistics and semiotics, a signifier is the material form of a sign as opposed to the idea or concept indicated (the signified). For example, the word "cool" can in one context or situation refer to temperature, but in another, it might refer to something "popular" or "stylish." Derrida suggests that one signifier points away to another signifier, which in turn points away to another signifier, and so on:

> The meaning of meaning . . . is infinite implication, the indefinite referral of signifier to signifier . . . its force is a certain pure and infinite equivocality which gives signified meaning no respite, no rest, but engages it in its own economy so that it always signifies again and differs (Derrida quoted in Harland 135).

The movement of signifiers signifying continues ad infinitum. Signifying is referred to when signifiers are in motion, where writing exists not only in terms of spatially independent signifiers but spatially independent movement running through them. This stage of language

is called dissemination and it is that state of perpetual unfulfilled meaning that exists in the absence of all signifieds (Harland 135). If one were to remove the signified, one would remove the last human control over language. Derrida specifies that in the absence of all signifieds, language takes on its own kind of energy and creativity which is very different from any subjective energy or creativity on the part of the writers or readers (Harland 135). Language, when in the state of dissemination, manages to avoid both social and individual responsibility. It reveals an anarchic and unpredictable level of functioning, "subversive of all rigid proper meanings on the ordinary socially controlled level" (Harland 136). Although a word cannot stand still and stable by itself, it can stand still and stable by leaning up against other words. Therefore, Derrida claims that language in the mode of dissemination is endlessly unbalanced and out of equilibrium as it tilts and leans towards other words. Signifiers are fundamental when understanding Derrida's theory. Signifiers are to be conceived first as signifying before they are things; they point away from themselves before they are themselves (Harland 147). Derrida's theory of language is a movement of hyper-meaning so far beyond the ordinary meaning that it takes on many characteristics associated with signifiers.

Writing materializes language and it materializes subjectivity. Derrida argues that the unconscious mind exists in the form of writing and that it motivates the conscious mind (Harland 142). Writing is thus a materialized version of the unconscious mind that expresses the writer's subjectivity. Using Freud's concept of Nachträglichkeit, which is when there is a delayed effect of the experience which only surfaces to consciousness a long time after the actual event, Derrida suggests that the case of delayed effect represents the fundamental case of all experiences where even our most seemingly immediate experience is not a direct reflection of the outside world but a contact with what has already been inscribed unconsciously, in the memory (Harland 144). The use of hypnosis can indicate that the unconscious mind records more than consciousness has even inspected, suggesting that the unconscious mind keeps a record of everything in very fine detail. According to Derrida, consciousness is an illusion that human beings have invented because they have feared the consequences of a materialist conception of the brain (Harland 146). However, Derrida's general theory of writing is the materialization of consciousness.

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Lacan's famous phrase, "the unconscious is structured like a language," suggests that the basic level of the mind is simply a functioning sign-system of structural differentiations (Harland 33). In other words, it is just one big signifier signifying. To best understand Lacanian psychoanalysis, is it best to see how consciousness works in the phenomenon of hypnotism. Hypnosis works primarily by verbal communication, and it reaches the underlying levels of the mind called the unconscious (Harland 34). When hypnosis is used for the psychoanalytic purpose, one could say that the unconscious answers to language, therefore language has acquired a remarkable power over the unconscious (Harland 35). When the hypnotist says a word to the patient, the patient can react a certain way. The patient's reaction depends upon the language that is spoken to them; however, the language that is spoken to the patient also depends on the language that was first spoken to them. The hypnotist is mainly triggering memories that the patient could not or would not recollect consciously, but the memories must be there in the first place. I believe that reading a book can trigger the same reactions as the hypnotist. The reader, stumbling upon a word, might recollect memories or emotions that were deeply buried in the unconscious. The response of the reader can then be shifted depending on how the story progresses and the reader's own wishes. The text helps the reader become aware of repressed feelings and possibly find a way to cope with them. Our unconscious mind can thus be activated by words, provoking emotions or memories that have been suppressed.

Lacan's psychoanalysis suggests that the "individual self derives not from some real inner sense of self, but from the 'other,' from outside" (Harland 39). He uses two life stages to describe this phenomenon. The first one is when a six-month child first sees themselves in a mirror and becomes fascinated by their image when they recognize it as their own. In this example, Lacan insinuates that when the child sees their image, they also see an image of themselves as they aspire to be and, in a way, "they fall in love with themselves as seen from the outside and from a distance, as seen in the gaze of the 'other'" (Harland 39). The second stage occurs when the child is eighteen months old and enters society and society's language. The acquisition of language depends upon the mechanism developed during the mirror phase. Language belongs to society and for the children to acquire it, they must surrender something of the self and learn to speak from the position of the "other" (Harland 39). In both stages, we see that the individual is shaped by the "other" which can be an external object such as a mirror, or by the society, with which one surrounds themselves. "The sense of being an individual self is unnecessary to the Conscious or Pre-conscious – and downright untrue to the Unconscious" because, in the unconscious, the society and the "other" have already preceded

individuality and the self (Harland 38). Lacan suggests then that if the loss of individual selfhood is the ultimate fear, then the confirmation of individual selfhood is the ultimate desire, and it is this desire that dominates over the basic needs of the organism. Desire thus is not a matter of self-interest when spoken in society's language, but it is used by the child from the perspective of the "other" upon "I" (Harland 40). Ultimately, the negative drive Lacan associates with the "I" does not come from biology but from culture, especially Western culture because it is the Western culture that especially emphasizes the individuality and selfhood of a person (Harland 40).

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Language has a very big significance for our lives. We use it every day to communicate with others, both through speech and written text. When looking at the reader's response to the following novels for this thesis, it is essential to have Derrida's theory of différance in mind. Words can have different meanings depending on what the overarching meaning of the word is, what the author intended it to be, and what other meanings the word may have. These differences in meanings affect how the reader reacts and responds to the text based on what they perceive the author is trying to say or what they associate with that specific word. Derrida's materialization theory is also important. Writing materializes subjectivity. It materializes our unconscious thoughts, and it is no wonder that journaling can be a great tool for self-help. Putting our thoughts and emotions onto paper is very beneficial for the writer as it highlights issues that might have gone unnoticed. This is fundamental for our analysis of the novel. As the reader reads the travel accounts, they encounter the existential issues the author portrayed using the characters. The reader's unconscious mind will then answer to the language in the text based on their previous experiences, just like hypnosis. Both the reader and the writer are using language, which they acquired from society (the other), to create or express a version of themselves. Having the theory of travel writing, psychoanalysis, and language outlined, we can now use these findings to analyze the novels and see how reading travel narratives affect the reader's unconscious wish for self-discovery and transformation.

3 *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

Paulo Coelho's novel, *The Alchemist*, was written in 1988 in Portuguese and went on to become the world's most translated novel, selling over 350 million copies. Coelho's novel is based on a fable that appears in book VI of The Mathanawi written by the thirteenth-century Iranian poet Rumi and is also found in the Arabian One Thousand and One Nights (Sebastian 2). The story describes the physical and psychological journey of the protagonist, Santiago, in his quest to find a hidden treasure in the Pyramids of Egypt. During his journey, he meets an alchemist that teaches him about the Soul of the World. In the novel, alchemy is a symbol of Santiago's spiritual enlightenment, and the process usually refers to heating metals in the laboratory to transform them into higher or better ones. In *The Alchemist*, alchemy thus symbolizes the "spiritual enlightenment transforms human consciousness from a lower to a higher level" (Sebastian 2). One can see this transformation in Santiago during the journey as he learns more about himself, what he is capable of, and how everything around him is interconnected. The protagonist's journey is symbolic of self-transformation. Since the narrative includes generally recognizable migrant experiences such as religious differences, cultural shock, longing, and identity crisis, it can create an emotional chord with a transnational audience which in turn can lead to self-improvement. When reading this novel, the reader gets a chance to see what it takes to follow one's dreams and what makes one decide not to follow them as well. They can project their fantasy of wish-fulfillment through Santiago's journey but also be triggered as to why they themselves do not follow their dreams.

This chapter analyzes Santiago, exploring his dreams of traveling to Egypt, how he tries to repress them at the beginning of his journey, and the symbols and omens that push him to continue his travels through Egypt. Following this analysis, we will focus on Santiago's journey in the desert and what it represents, as well as dive into Santiago's personal development where he is becoming his destiny and understanding his own individuality. Lastly, we focus on readers' response to the novel, suggesting that many readers have not read the novel in search of an authentic travel account but rather for a source of inspiration, hope, and courage.

3.1 Character: Santiago from Andalusia

Santiago is a shepherd boy from a small town in Andalusia, which he left to be able to travel. Initially, Santiago was supposed to become a priest, which was his parents' wish. It was "a source of pride for a simple farm family" to have a child become a priest, but Santiago "wanted to travel" (Coelho 8). His family was poor so for Santiago to be able to travel he had to become a shepherd which, we learn in the novel, is seen as a low-status profession. "Bakers are more important people than shepherds." (Coelho 21). At the beginning of the novel, Santiago is cheerful, curious, and truthful to his religion. He seems to be content with his life and his sheep. Santiago is able to travel all around Andalusia, and discovers many new cities while making sure that his sheep have enough grass to eat and water to drink. He is adventurous and makes many friends in the cities that he visits. However, he has a reoccurring dream of a child transporting him to the Pyramids in Egypt where he discovers a treasure.

One can argue that the first conflict in the novel is Santiago and his dreams. As we have seen, Santiago likes to travel and chooses to give up a religious position to fulfill what he wants regardless of social status. However, it seems that his life as a shepherd is not enough as it manifests in his dreams. Santiago manages to travel within the south of Spain, but his heart wants more and wants to go further. It is unclear whether Santiago is conscious of what this dream represents. He seems to be unsure about it and goes to a dream interpreter, even though it is against his religion. The interpreter mainly says that Santiago must go to the Pyramids of Egypt, discover the treasure, and give her one-tenth of it. Santiago is disappointed because that is exactly what happens in the dream. From the reader's perspective, this might suggest that he knows what the dream wants him to do but is in denial. But why is he in denial? Santiago is brave enough to go after his dream, he has done it before when choosing to become a shepherd. What is stopping him right now?

Santiago is unconsciously repressing his dream because he has gotten used to his life as a shepherd to the point that his and the sheep's schedules are synchronized. "They are so used to me that they know my schedule," he says (Coelho 4). Santiago and his sheep have a routine that they followed for many years and the only thing that could perhaps change it was the merchant's daughter whom Santiago falls for. She is the only one who makes him "desire to live in one place forever" (Coelho 6). I would not say the wish of staying in one place forever is expected from Santiago. He is not afraid of change because of his nomadic lifestyle, and he does not seem afraid of doing something different from the masses either because he left a

high religious position to be a shepherd. But for him to give up his adventurous spirit to be in one place goes against his wish for travel. In other words, he is repressing his dreams. According to Freud, when an experience is repressed, it creates desire (Wright 2). The desire will be the driving force that will push Santiago forward to his destiny. The more Santiago is repressing his destiny, the more he wants to fulfill it. However, there is also fear involved in Santiago's journey. One can argue that fear is his primary obstacle in successfully achieving his destiny. He wants the adventure, but he also fears it. This creates one of Santiago's most important qualities which is his bravery. Despite the fear, he pursues his destiny. Even when he gets help from the omens around him, it is his own choice to continue the journey. Many let fear rule their life as Santiago will soon see when he meets the baker in Tarifa and the crystal merchant in Tangiers.

Santiago has a distant relationship with the people in his life. By not binding himself to anyone, he is able to become the person he wants to be rather than being criticized by the people around him to change according to what they want. We learn that Santiago has many acquaintances, and he manages to keep the relationship even when he is far away by periodically visiting them. In this way, his friends and acquaintances do not become a part of Santiago's life and therefore, he is not bound to anyone and can travel through Andalucía with his sheep. He concludes this reflection with "everyone seems to have a clear idea of how others should lead their lives, but none about his or her own" (Coelho 15). This statement is perhaps unintentionally ironic. Throughout the book, Santiago is seen as someone who does what he wants, but there are multiple times when he is advised to stay or do something else for the purpose of following his destiny. I understand the concept of the novel is to inspire the reader to follow their destiny, but I also think that people should do that at their own pace and not be pushed by others. Throughout the novel, it is shown that ultimately Santiago makes the final decision. However, we do not see him go against anyone's decisions except the initial one of not becoming a priest.

The novel uses the word omen about coincidences, symbols, and even people who appear at the right place and the right time to help Santiago further pursue his destiny. By using a psychoanalytic approach to omens, I would argue that Santiago's desires have attached themselves to particular images or ideas outside of conscious awareness, thus representing unconscious wishes. When Santiago is in Tarifa, a port in the southernmost point of Continental Europe, he encounters his first two omens in the form of a book and an old man after visiting a bookshop where he exchanges his older book for a new one. Santiago does not understand the context of the book, which I interpret as another confirmation that he

does not want to accept his dream. The book that he picks up is about people not being able to pursue their destinies and that their lives are controlled by fate. The book tells us that fate is a lie and that people have an inner choice. It is not easy to follow one's destiny as it brings people into difficult and uncomfortable situations that make them want to give up. But Santiago has done this before and now it is time to do it again as this book is another call for him to go to Egypt and find his treasure. The omens usually tell Santiago to continue his journey and function "as a kind of an enigma to be deciphered" (Al-Shammari 5).

Another way to see Santiago's unconscious attachment to the omens is seen when Melchizedek, the King of Salem, appears. Melchizedek can appear in many forms necessary to give the people faith in their destinies and has done the same for Santiago while appearing as an old man. He says that "Sometimes I appear in form of a solution, or a good idea. At other times, at a crucial moment, I make it easier for things to happen" (Coelho 22). The old one represents wisdom and experience acquired throughout life and this was passed to Santiago as he begins to understand how to recognize omens:

> Before the boy could reply, a butterfly appeared and fluttered between him and the old man. He remembered something his grandfather had once told him: that butterflies were a good omen. Like crickets, and like expectations; like lizards and four-leaf clovers (Coelho 28).

The conversation with the old man was a good omen for Santiago and made him realize that nothing is stopping him from traveling to Egypt. During his talk with Melchizedek, he learned that he was not the first one to dream about travel. There were others before him, but not everyone can follow their dream. The old man was there to motivate Santiago, but it is his own choice to follow the dream. The King of Salem later tells that "Whoever you are, or whatever it is that you do when you really want something, it's because that desire originated in the soul of the universe. It's your mission on earth" (Coelho 21). Even if he decided to continue to be a shepherd and marry the girl from the city, he still would have the same dream of being transported to the pyramids of Egypt and searching for his treasure there as a contrast to his? mundane life: "every day was the same […] each day is the same as the next" (Coelho 26). It is safe to say that Santiago does not wish for this kind of life. He "felt jealous of the freedom of the wind and saw that he could have the same freedom" (Coelho 27). However, Santiago did not have any reason for not traveling to Egypt. There are solutions for the sheep, he can sell them to his friend. The merchant's daughter can wait another year or two, or

perhaps she has already found a suitable man for herself. Santiago has left his hometown and his family a long time ago so there is no need to be preoccupied with them. There is nothing preventing him from following his destiny, so Santiago does so. He buys a ticket to Africa and embarks on his journey.

When looking at Santiago's responses through a psychoanalytic lens, it seems that the ego is creating a defense mechanism by repressing Santiago's dreams. But what is the ego defending from? I believe Santiago is unconsciously afraid of losing the lifestyle and routine he has accomplished because there is no real, threatening reason for him not to travel to Egypt. It is merely his curiosity about the world that pushes him to go on this journey. When one travels, one subjects oneself to experiences that may be transformative. Santiago will have to learn a new language, which is seemingly something he completely forgot until he got to Morocco. He is also someone very religious. The reason he knows how to read was that he was supposed to be a priest, but in Egypt, they have different religions that he must accept. We know that Santiago can make friends in the cities he travels to, but now he has to meet different people in different circumstances and make an effort to create relationships with them. To travel is to expose one's personality, mind, and emotions to new experiences which can transform them. This transformation, this change, is what the ego is trying to protect Santiago from. His journey will be difficult and uncomfortable, which is something consciousness, or other parts of the mind, does not like.

3.2 Environment: The Desert and Al-Fayoum

When Santiago arrives in Tangiers, Morocco, he becomes the kind of person that travelers disparage as tourists and ends up losing everything he had, including his naivety and innocence. He is insensitive and ignorant, believing that his worldview is the correct one. Santiago's ignorance and naivety will cost him a lot in this trip. It is easy to take advantage of tourists when they don't come well-prepared and that is what happens to Santiago. He gets his first culture shock, forgetting that the people there speak a different language and calling them "infidels" for believing in a different religion. Then, he befriends someone who speaks his language at a bar only to later to be robbed by them. In the few hours Santiago is there, he loses a lot: "He was no longer a shepherd, and he had nothing, not even the money to return and start everything over. All this happened between sunrise and sunset…" (Coelho 37). He has lost his sheep, lost the familiar place and culture of Andalucía, lost his money, and maybe even his naivety and innocence. He feels sorry for himself for being in a worse position than

he was the same morning. However, to go after one's dreams is to grow. Santiago is used to what he knew of Andalucía, but now it is time to discover a new place and get out of his comfort zone.

During his first days in Morocco, Santiago understands that feeling pity for himself will not help him in his quest to Egypt and that he has a lot of knowledge that is helpful to him for the precarious situation he is in. Santiago understands that he has to choose "between thinking of himself as the poor victim of a thief and as an adventurer in quest of his treasure" (Coelho 40). He decides to use the knowledge he has from Spain to survive and discovers that, even without words, he is able to communicate with people in the same way he was able to "talk" to his sheep, that "there must be a language that doesn't depend on words" (Coelho 41). According to Laxmi Manogna et al., this is the language of enthusiasm, "of things accomplished with love and purpose," and it is "a part of the search for something believed in and desired" (2). With his willpower and motivation, Santiago is able to find himself a job at a crystal store where he meets a crystal merchant. Unfortunately, he is told by the merchant that it will be very difficult to acquire the amount of money necessary for his travels. Feeling defeated, Santiago loses hope again and decides to earn just enough to buy himself a herd of sheep. Santiago's reactions are understandable and can even be relatable to the reader because, even though he has a lot of curiosity and motivation, he loses hope as soon as an inconvenience occurs. When he lost his money, he felt pity for himself, and when he understands that he needs a lot more money, he loses faith. It is easy to feel sorry for oneself when confronted with challenges, but it is necessary to go through these difficulties for one to grow. Furthermore, the crystal merchant might be projecting his own insecurities onto Santiago because he also has a wish for travel, but he sees himself as too old to do something new and is too used to his life as a crystal merchant. Later we understand that the merchant does not wish to fulfil his dreams because if he does, he will have nothing else to look forward to. He prefers that his dreams stay as dreams, which is completely different from what Santiago wants. Santiago works at the shop for a long time, preferring to find effective ways to boost their business rather than thinking about his destiny and how to fulfill it. And when he does think about it, he tries to convince himself that what he wants is to go back to Spain and back to his old life. It feels like he is starting to forget his dream and why he started this journey in the first place. Not thinking about his journey to Egypt is another way Santiago is repressing his dreams.

Both the crystal merchant and Santiago are afraid of leaving their routine and the lifestyle they created. They got too used to it. The merchant openly tells Santiago that he will

not follow his dreams because he does not like change while Santiago was scared of changing his routine with the sheep in Andalucía. However, Santiago decided to go after his dreams anyway and is able to see how much he has accomplished: "Making a decision was only the beginning of things. When someone makes a decision, he is really diving into a strong current that will carry him to places he had never dreamed of when he first made the decision" (Coelho 65). Santiago now knows Arabic and has the knowledge of working at a shop in a foreign country. It is more than what other shepherds have accomplished and more than he thought he could do since he never imagined himself working at a crystal shop in Morocco. With this knowledge, Santiago shows the crystal merchant what he would have accomplished which in turn becomes a curse for the merchant since he could see what he could have done. After a year of working for the crystal merchant, Santiago finally has enough money to double the number of sheep he has, go back to Spain, and import some products from Africa. However, there is a moment of hope here because the reader gets reassured that Santiago has not given up on his destiny completely. Santiago goes back and forth, convincing himself that it is best to return to the old ways. But he learned a lot in his year in Africa. And he could always go back to being a shepherd or a crystal merchant, but the opportunity to continue his quest was right there in front of him. Ultimately, Santiago decides to continue his journey to the Pyramids of Egypt and find his treasure.

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When Santiago starts his desert journey, one of the biggest themes becomes the universal language, where people, animals, objects, and circumstances seem to be talking to each other in order to accomplish a goal. With the money Santiago earned from working at the shop, he buys himself a ticket to the desert. In the journey he meets an Englishman searching for the universal language that would help him transform metal into gold. In a way, both the Englishman and Santiago are headed toward Al-Fayoum in Egypt in search of a treasure. To get to Al-Fayoum they have to go through the desert, with camels, other travelers, and desert drivers. If they did everything as the desert drivers said, all would be fine, and they would arrive at their destination safely even though wars are arising in the desert. During the journey, Santiago realizes that all that's been happening to him lately is like a "mysterious chain that links one thing to another, the same chain that had caused him to become a shepherd, that had caused his recurring dream, that had brought him to a city near Africa, to find a king, and to be robbed in order to meet a crystal merchant…" (Coelho 69).

Santiago is becoming his destiny and the experiences he has are affecting him because everything is interconnected. Santiago will continue to learn and have new experiences the further he precedes with his journey and the knowledge he already has will help him get closer to his treasure. Because of this growth, Santiago is also gaining more confidence and has less fear of the unknown, thus less fear of change. He knows that change is what led him to where he is now and will lead him to his treasure because the desert, the guides, and the caravan speak the same language.

The idea that Santiago is becoming his destiny, that he is becoming the journey and the events that he is encountering can be linked to Lacan's suggestion that the individual comes from the outside. Santiago is attaching his individuality to the actions and circumstances he has experienced. I would not imply that he is seeing himself from the outside perspective, as when the infant is seeing themselves for the first time in a mirror and recognizing the image as their own. It is more like Santiago's individuality is shaped by the society he finds himself in. By learning the universal language, Santiago is forced to, as Lacan said, "surrender something of the self and learn to speak from the position of the other" (Harland 39). By doing so, Santiago becomes capable of navigating his life and fulfilling his destiny. The idea that the outside shapes the individual is also present in the novel when Santiago notices that everything is interconnected. The people he has met, including the thief, and the obstacles he has encountered are now a part of him because, by learning and adapting to them, Santiago has gained more confidence in himself and in what he can do.

Even though we have established that individuality is shaped by the outside or by others, the novel also showcases instances where Santiago understands that there are some things he must do his own way. During the desert journey, Santiago speaks to the Englishman a few times and discovers that most of what the Englishman knows, he has learned from the books he carries while Santiago learns by observing and experiencing the world. The Englishman knows about the Soul of the World and understands that it is the language in which all things communicate. He learned it by reading his books but Santiago challenges him to observe what is happening around him while he will try the Englishman's method and read his book. In the end, Santiago realizes that people have different ways of learning and thus, different ways of achieving their destinies. The Englishman and Santiago are learning the same thing, but one is reading while the other is observing. Even though they have different approaches, Santiago still respects the Englishman's decisions since they were "both in search of [their] destinies, and [he] respect[s] him for that" (Coelho 80). This is a big

improvement from when he first arrived in Morocco and was taken aback by the different approaches to religion the community had.

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It seems that there is a pattern in this novel. When Santiago is ready to give up on his dream, someone comes and gives him advice. It happened with the old king in Spain, the crystal merchant in Morocco, and now with an alchemist in Egypt. During a stay in an Oasis called Al-Fayoum, where they have to seek shelter because of the war in the desert, Santiago meets an alchemist. The alchemist tells him that he must continue his quest for the treasure but to continue means that he has to abandon Fatima, a girl he fell in love with at the oasis. The alchemist suggests that fear is what keeps Santiago from going forward: "Because what kept you at the oasis was your own fear that you might never come back. At that point, the omens will tell you that your treasure is buried forever" (Coelho 114-5). Ultimately, Santiago decides to pursue his destiny and continue his journey through the desert, even if it was dangerous because of the war. I would also argue that deep inside him, Santiago truly wants to pursue his destiny, but he also has valid reasons for staying back. Santiago wanted to stay in the oasis and be together with Fatima. He was ready to give up his destiny because he believed that coming to the oasis was his journey and Fatima his treasure. The problem is that if he stays, he will regret not following his dreams like the baker in Spain and the crystal merchant in Morocco. As Santiago departs into the desert with the alchemist, Fatima says that "from that day on, the desert would represent only one thing to her: the hope for his return" (118). The desert now shifts from being a challenging place that brings war and death to a place of hope from which Santiago can return to his lover.

The desert gains a new meaning. It first symbolizes the difficulties that one must confront when pursuing one's destiny. We saw it with the harsh conditions during the caravan trip and the tribal wars. However, now it is seen as a symbol of hope both for Santiago and for Fatima. It now means that they have a chance of seeing each other again. The desert is also an important teacher to Santiago as it puts him to test which is necessary for anyone who is pursuing their destiny. Santiago's biggest test comes when he and the alchemist are confronted by a dangerous tribesman. For them to survive for three days, they give all of Santiago's money to them and receives the task to transform into the wind. One could say that Santiago's transformation into the wind is his spiritual awakening, as he encounters the desert, the wind, the sun, and "the hand that wrote all" (Coelho 144). Santiago understands

the Soul of the World, that he has inside of him "the winds, the deserts, the oceans, the stars, and everything created in the universe. We were all made by the same hand, and we have the same soul" (Coelho 140). It goes back to the realization that everything is interconnected. "It's what makes the game become the falcon, the falcon become man, and man, in his turn, the desert. It's what turns lead into gold and makes the gold return to the earth" (Coelho 138). Santiago begins to understand what the desert is to him. It is more than just the heat and emptiness, it also contains life, because it is also a part of the Soul of the World. And since everything is part of the Soul of the World, the desert is a part of him as well. With this mentality, a shepherd boy from Andalucía performs a miracle and transforms himself into the wind. This is his final test. By transforming into the wind, Santiago has put all he has learned during the journey to a test.

3.3 Reader Response: Inspirational Novel

The novel *The Alchemist* is very successful and was read by many. The book is suitable for any type of audience because its objective is to inspire people to pursue their destinies. In the case of our main character, his destiny was to travel to the pyramids of Egypt, but the journey was not that straightforward. When someone travels, they are subject to changes both physically and mentally. I do agree that everything is interconnected, hence why being in a specific place, or meeting someone can have a huge impact on someone's life. When traveling, we are bound to meet different cultures and societies and it is up to us to decide how we react to them. Santiago started as a young, naïve boy and matured drastically during his journey. I wouldn't say that he learned something new, just that he became more aware of something that he had been doing for a long time. He always wanted to travel, and that is why he became a shepherd. But his deepest desire was to go further. Why was he motivated to travel further? I believe that Santiago is a courageous and curious person at heart, and this does not change throughout the novel. He proceeds even when he doubts himself and is not afraid to learn something new. With this, I would argue that he initially gravitated towards this journey out of curiosity and out of wondering what he could be able to do. I do also believe that, unconsciously, Santiago was getting bored with his life as a shepherd and wanted to do something new. It was not that being a shepherd did not bring him joy, as it seems he enjoys his time with his sheep, but perhaps something was missing. Santiago also knew about the language of the world but was not conscious of it. He knew how to communicate with his sheep, and even with locals without knowing their language. As a shepherd, he was attentive

to his surroundings because he has to find food and water for his sheep. When traveling, he also understood that he needed to be attentive to his surroundings as well because people can take advantage of foreigners just like when the thief stole all his money in Morocco, or when he met the dangerous tribesman in the desert with the alchemist.

What exactly is the reader searching for while reading this novel? The reader might be looking for an adventure that would put the characters skills to a test. The story is a fictional one, however, so the reader isn't looking for a journey that they can recreate in reality. Though I must say, I found myself looking up the real cities of Tarifa and Tangier in the south of Spain and north of Morocco. Al-Fayoum oasis is however a fictional place, though the city Faiyum, which is similar in name to Al-Fayoum, does exist and is located south of Cairo, in Egypt. Even if the novel takes liberties in using real places as references, one must not confuse the fictional places with reality. The author uses some cultural references such as religion to identify each place: Christianity with Spain, and Islam with Morocco, which can give some sense of authenticity to the story, but in the end, the story is fictional as the author creates a new religion called Soul of the World, with alchemists as their priest or prophets, the emerald with the language of the world as the bible or Koran, and "the hand that created all" as the God or Allah. The desire for authenticity is not what brings the reader to this novel. Santiago does not wish to travel because he is in search of authenticity. He chooses to travel because it is his dream to do so. The same can be said for a reader of this novel. A reader is not in search of authenticity in this book, the reader is rather looking to fulfill their dream, or more precisely, be inspired to pursue their dream by reading this novel.

The novel uses symbolism to attribute an air of mystery to the narrative, thus "awakening the reader's imagination" (Al-Shammari 5). There are also many instances when the text leads the readers to think about their existence and daily life, because "people fail to recognize the good things that happen in their lives every day that the sun rises" (Coelho 26). The readers might identify with the protagonist, Santiago, who finds himself the hero of the story. According to Al-Shammari, it is easy to identify with him as a reader because Santiago is a hero of "everyday life," he is "very close to ordinary people, which favors the identification with him" (7). The antagonist of this novel is the obstacles that Santiago has to confront when pursuing his destiny. I would argue that most of the time, it is fear that is in the way. There are other significant characters in the book: the old man, the crystal merchant, and the Englishman, who represent "the common people" but the aim of the novel is for the reader to gravitate toward Santiago or whoever has found and followed their destiny (Al-Shammari 5). The reader would strive to be like Santiago because he shows that a person can adapt to

adverse circumstances and overcome obstacles, therefore the reader identifies with him. The other characters in the novel have different functions, but they all contribute to Santiago's spiritual evolution, causing him to find his treasure. The reader might not be as attracted to them because some are there just to inflict reflection on the reader. The crystal merchant, for example, is shown as a person who works hard, saving his money for a pilgrimage that would never happen, but he is also seen as an individual who is afraid to take risks and go after his destiny. This makes the reader reflect on their life and whether they are pursuing their dreams.

There are two important things that the reader can take from the crystal merchant that I would like to point out. The first one is that the crystal merchant symbolizes the people who "are afraid to pursue their most important dreams because they feel that they do not deserve them, or that they will be unable to achieve them" (Coelho 124). So instead, they live their lives wishing for something, but never actively pursuing it. The alchemist explains that "wherever your heart is, that is where you'll find your treasure" (Coelho 123). However, "very few follow the path laid out for them – the path to their destinies, and happiness. Most people see the world as a threatening place, and, because they do, the world turns out, indeed, to be a threatening place" (Coelho 125). The crystal merchant highlights what the reader might be missing and can trigger some hidden emotions. The reader gets a chance to see what it takes to follow one's dreams and what makes one decide not to follow them as well. They can project their fantasy of wish-fulfillment through Santiago's journey but also be triggered as to why they themselves do not follow theirs through the crystal merchant. The second thing I want to point out is the word the crystal merchant taught Santiago: maktub. The word was repeated seven times in the novel and means "it is written" in Arabic (Coelho 56). According to Al-Shammari, it comes from the Islamic belief that "major events are fated and decreed by God; this allows one to affirm the underlying uniformity and rationality of the universe" (5). This also showcases the author's approach to existence: everything is already set in stone by a divine predestination that does not include the actual freedom of the individual's will (Al-Shammari 6). I find the definition of maktub quite interesting because I stated earlier that even though Santiago continually chooses to pursue his destiny, there is always someone instigating him to go forward when he wants to give up, which again questions how much of the journey is Santiago's true intentions. As the novel says, it is already written. Santiago is going to the pyramids, he will find a treasure, even when he met Fatima, she said that "If I am really a part of your dream, you'll come back one day" (Coelho 93). If they are meant to be together, they will be, because it is written. This might also give a sense of hopelessness to the reader, which is unusual as the aim of the novel is to give hope and be inspiring. But when

things are already predestined as the novel implies, how much can one individual really impact it?

Coelho has spent a great deal of his life traveling and manages to make the reader identify themselves with Santiago or get interested in the storyline by appealing to their imagination of the places he visits. Coelho presents those places as "different, mysterious, and culturally wrapped in tradition" to make them more appealing to the foreign reader (Al-Shammari 7). Nevertheless, the novel is a type of reading that is not difficult to understand, which is the reason it attracts a large readership "who exploit the work with the unusual and creative language" (Al-Shammari 8). With that being said, I would argue that the novel follows a typical, cliché trope where the protagonist has an unsurprising ending: he overcomes all obstacles and conquers love, money, and happiness. It shows that being good, honest, loving, and dedicated makes one overcome difficulty and achieve all one's desires. What the reader should take out of this story is that Santiago would not have achieved his dream if he did not believe in himself, his potential, and his inner strength. The reference to this inner strength is the great allegory of the book (Al-Shammari 8). The story wants the reader to "feel that each of them has a magical dream buried down within them and that it is up to them to search the reality around them until they finally discover where the magic is" (Sebastian 3). The hope, inspiration, and courage this novel brings to the reader might give them the impression that they too can conquer their dreams. However, it is important to have in mind the risks and challenges Santiago went through the journey. To follow one's dreams comes with the risk of economic losses, loneliness and even being put in life-or-death situations. In other words, there is a great treasure in pursing one's dreams but there is also great danger.

4 *Blue Highways: A Journey into America* by William Least Heat-Moon

William Least Heat-Moon's first travel-writing novel, *Blue Highways: A Journey into America*, was originally published in 1983. However, the events in the story are from 1978 when Least Heat-Moon started his adventure with the wish for the road to lead him into a new life, away from his failures (Least Heat-Moon 418). The narrator of the story being the author is a feature of travel writing that relates to autobiography. When analyzing these types of texts, one should distinguish between the narrator, the author, and the travel persona as they usually are fused in the first-person narration, which is the case for this novel. For this book, I use the narrator when describing important plot or objective observations that is essential for the novel since we, as the readers, don't get a direct insight on the characters. I use the author or Heat-Moon when we get an insight of what he is thinking and/or feeling as these are the author's perception and understanding of the situations. Lastly, I use the travel persona when describing travel observations such as the history of a village or cuisine because of the authoritative tone that implies the author is a traveler and not a tourist. By using the author as the narrator of the journey, the novel depicts a travel account that has taken place in the author's life, making it seem authentic. Burton claims that authenticity in the travel narrative lies in bridging the past, the present, and their potential for the future (169) which is an important theme for the novel as it deals with how to adapt, but preserve, the past. Furthermore, often the traveler's search for authenticity comes from a place of chaos (Burton 166) linked to their wish to find order. That is precisely why Least Heat-Moon decided to go on this journey. Readers lean towards these texts in search of exciting experiences, people, and places, but they also have an unconscious urge to find their roots, identity, and nationality.

This chapter will include a character analysis of Least-Moon where we uncover his motives for the journey, the fears he has, and how they are manifested in the dialogue and actions he takes, as well as how he reacts to change. Later we explore the history and culture of the highways of America and how they affect a traveler. Lastly, we discuss what being a traveler and a tourist means and how the author's unconscious bias might affect the reader. At the end of this chapter, we should have an understanding that change and transformation in travel literature are both physical and mental, affecting not only the places visited but also the

characters and the reader's mind. This transformation can sometimes be difficult to accept but one should learn not to resist change but rather adapt to it.

4.1 Character: The narrator (William Least Heat-Moon)

Blue Highways highlights the story of Heat-Moon who wishes to uncover a different America that has evolved in the last century, but unconsciously he is looking for change both in the country and in himself. The novel follows the journey of the narrator, into rural America, where he visits old towns that nobody seems to know the exact origin of and with a population of below one hundred. At the beginning of the novel, we find Heat-Moon in a difficult situation where his career and love life are sensitive topics that he wishes to run away from, and he does so in the form of traveling around the blue highways on his car called Ghost Dancing. Renée Bryzik suggests that Heat-Moon is searching for small towns where the population's lifestyle is still connected with their environments (669). Heat-Moon documents the journey through stories and observations of regional lifestyles but also considers environmental tensions between humans and land. I use Heat-Moon here because we are getting an insight into what is happening in his personal life, right before his journey started.

The most important clues of what kind of state of mind Heat-Moon is come on the "day of canceled expectations" (Least Heat-Moon 3). The narrator explains that, on February 17th, he learned that his job teaching English "was finished because of declining enrollment at the college" and his wife, from whom he has been separated for nine months, "let slip about her 'friend'" (Least Heat-Moon 3). These turns of events are the catalyst for his decision to leave Missouri and explore the country. The narrator explains that "a man who couldn't make things go right could at least go" (Least Heat-Moon 3) meaning that if something is not turning the way it was "expected," then they should not force it to go the way they think it is supposed to. Literary critic Mark Allister, in Constructing a Self on the Road, argues that the main character in *Blue Highways* simply moves along, that the "just go attitude creates a nearly desperate need to perform an act of self-creation" (102). However, we see that Heat-Moon acknowledges this radical decision and knows that it could be a mid-life crisis since he is thirty-eight years old, "an age that carries its own madness and futility" (Heat-Moon 5). His life has completely changed, and he sees this new reality as a foreigner and lonesome, where he has a "desperate sense of isolation" and the suspicion that he "lived in an alien land" (Least Heat-Moon 5). With these feelings and emotions, Heat-Moon took the road in hopes to find

"places where change did not mean ruin and where time and men and deeds connected" (Least Heat-Moon 5). Allister criticizes that the novel spends most of the time describing the relationship between human life and a place rather than focusing on a self-creative act (102). However, one could say that the curiosity for his homeland was one of the reasons for Heat-Moon to travel, but we can go even further and say that the alienation he is feeling towards the land is a symbol of him losing his sense of self in which he tries to find it specifically by meeting other people throughout his journey. He is hoping that the change and collapse of his core life give meaning.

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The need for companionship is predominant in the novel, as the feeling of isolation leads to a desire for company. Heat-Moon had a repressed experience both in his career and his private life which creates a desire for what he didn't have. Since Heat-Moon is the author and narrator of the book, we are experiencing what Freud called an act of transference by the author where his unconscious desires and feelings are transferred into the character and/or objects in the book, based on what the author has experienced in life. Interestingly, the author avoids any type of conversation about his career or love life, stating that he has "nothing to say about marriage" (Least Heat-Moon 164) or simply stating that he is "out of work" (Least Heat-Moon 211). The narrator and the author are purposefully repressing their emotions of unfulfilled love life and the end of a career.

As readers, we find that his way to cope with loneliness is by actively searching for people to strike up a conversation with. He explains that "being alone in the road makes you ready to meet someone when you stop. You get sociable traveling alone" (Least Heat-Moon 28). There are, however, many instances where Heat-Moon "couldn't quench [his] thirst… for a conversation at any place other than the softserve stand" (Least Heat-Moon 66). During his journey, the narrator took in many hitchhikers for a ride, which meant he got to learn about them and listen to good stories. Nonetheless, these passengers always had a destination to go to and when it was time to leave, the author would feel lonely again: "Ghost Dancing seems empty, and I was lonely as I was after every rider left who shared some miles. It would pass, but for a while, the quiet always bothered me" (Least Heat-Moon 288). Heat-Moon hoped for "people who had good stories, people who sometimes took you to see their collection of carved peach pits" (Least Heat-Moon 172). He wanted to feel the warmth and hospitality that brings people together. One of his highlights in the journey, where the narrator figured out

why he came to such places, was when he found a family in Nameless, Tennessee. There, the family welcomed him with food, cake, and good stories. It was a wholesome moment that didn't last long since loneliness is part of the long-distance traveler (Least Heat-Moon 233). Here, the author tries to "forget it. [To] look at the land" because "it too is medicine" (Least Heat-Moon 233). The methods for repressing the author's loneliness are effective, but temporary, and he is aware of that. Before Heat-Moon confronts his problems, he will enjoy his journey through rural America by meeting new people and observing the land.

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Heat-Moon finds comfort and healing while looking at people and how they go about life, and this is showcased in the novel by the number of observational narratives and explicit passages about how it affects him. He states that "maybe the road could provide a therapy through observation of the ordinary and obvious, a means where by the outer eye opens an inner one" (Least Heat-Moon 17). With these observations, Heat-Moon is trying to make a sense of himself by observing the world. It suggests that a person can find himself through traveling, being in foreign places, and acquiring new experiences that can shape how they view the world and themselves. The narrator highlights that he "was just looking into things" (Least Heat-Moon 68). He wants to go out in his own country and be a witness to all the things he meets and shares in this book even before he knew what he was looking into (Least Heat-Moon 406). The essence of his observations is simple: "Why should a man pretend to know where he's going or to understand what he sees?" (Least Heat-Moon 192). In other words, the narrator does not need to comprehend everything to appreciate its beauty. Along the journey, he met many people of different backgrounds who shared their struggles, food, and religion with him. For example, the narrator was not always comfortable with a Christian hitchhiker he met or the food he tried in the South, but he was appreciative of the things he got to see and experience. It showcased how little he was compared to what was going on around the world: "The immensity of the sky and desert, their vast absences, reduced me. It was as if I were evaporating, and it was calming and cleansing to be absorbed by that vacancy" (Least Heat-Moon 189). The journey reveals how vast the country is and how diverse its people are, and these observations leave a deep impact on the author.

By observing his surroundings, Heat-Moon gets to understand his mind and how it is affected by its environment. When the narrator visited a monastery, he met a couple of monks who devoted their lives to solitude. In his observations, Heat-Moon stated that he "looked at

the faces" and saw a "quietude" that he desired but didn't understand how to get: "What burned in those men that didn't burn in me? A difference of focus or something outside me? A lack or too much of something?" (Least Heat-Moon 83). However, as we read the novel, we understand that Heat-Moon obtained this quietness by observing and being in the moment: "I was there too, but my presence I felt more than saw. It was as if I had been reduced to mind, to an edge of consciousness" (Least Heat-Moon 150). With this awareness, the author was able to see himself through the nature he passed by, quoting De la Mare "a mirror may not reflect, but a man's response to landscapes, faces, events does" (Least Heat-Moon 219). He further expands on this observation by stating that his "vision was of a man looking at himself by looking at what he looks at" (Least Heat-Moon 219). In other words, people are what they see and the moment they become conscious of that is the moment that they get to understand themselves. In this novel, the narrator sees their people and sees their country, therefore the narrator's self is the country and the people. Humans are constituted by the environment they live in and the people they surround themselves with so when "they change their angle of vision" they can also "change the future" (Least Heat-Moon 379).

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Leaving Missouri and his life behind for a journey through the smallest roads in America was necessary for Heat-Moon because leaving meant that he was free and gave him an opportunity to change. In the novel, he reflects that he "felt for the first time at rest" after leaving home (Least Heat-Moon 17). This suggests that he could have felt trapped in the marriage or job even when those endings were unexpected. Nevertheless, these endings were necessary for him to leave as "at any particular moment in a man's life, he can say that everything he has done and not done, that has been done and not been done to him, has brought him to that moment (Least Heat-Moon 180). Heat-Moon was exactly where he needed to be and experienced what he needed to see in this journey so that he could change. In the novel, he acknowledges when meeting Porfirio Sanchez, near Eldorado, Texas, that "a year earlier, had [Least Heat-Moon] been where he was, he would have believed he'd accomplished nothing. Now, [Least Heat-Moon] didn't see it that way. Not at all" (Least Heat-Moon 148). Throughout his travels, the author gained more clarity about his home country and therefore of himself because "when traveling, you are what you are right there and then" (Least Heat-Moon 163). So, what did leaving mean to the author? It means facing hardships and discomfort. He even stated that "the trip was to be inconvenienced" and what

came from it was "severe irritability" (Least Heat-Moon 284). The author understood that to grow and to change, one has to subject oneself to a certain type of discomfort even when the unconscious is trying to force one into feeling irritable since it doesn't like distress. Overall, leaving was not what was difficult for Heat-Moon. In fact, "leaving was one of the easiest big decisions [he]'d ever made" but to follow through with the journey until he reached some kind of epiphany was "one of the hardest things [he]'d attempted" (Least Heat-Moon 417).

One can say that the narrator, and the author, of this novel, are very courageous and open-minded, which are qualities necessary for making this journey and venture into the vast country that is the United States. The journey came full circle like most things in life, but the author is a changed person after this trip. His problems and worries are still there when he comes back, but he has a new mentality and determination to take risks, such as becoming an author and publishing this book. This willpower was gained throughout the journey because he saw who he was and what he and other people were capable of doing.

4.2 Environment: To be a traveler on the highways of America

Driving in the smallest backroads of America is traveling back in time to, as Descartes put it, talk with men from other centuries, and see how the past influences the present (Least Heat-Moon 377). The novel focuses on different local histories of the cities the narrator visits; paying attention to how historical events shape the people. Here we get to meet the travel persona who explains that "no place, in theory, is boring itself. Boredom lies only with the traveler's limited perception and his failure to explore deeply enough" (Least Heat-Moon 273). So, the narrator does so. The travel persona in this novel is very interested in the history of the country. One of his frequently asked questions is how the name of a city came to be. One example is Frenchman, Nevada, which got its name because a French man operated the station there and had a difficult name to pronounce so it just became Frenchman (Least Heat-Moon 201). Melvin village, New Hampshire, got its name "during the war with the Indians in the seventeen twenties," when "some settler apparently explored upriver and found a sign or a tree carved with the word Melvin" (Least Heat-Moon 335).

The travel persona was not only interested in the names of the cities but also their historical events. In Selma, Alabama, the travel persona wanted to know what the Martin Luther King's march has changed and was "two blocks from Brown's Chapel," where it all started (Least Heat-Moon 95). By talking with the local people, the narrator was told that things are better, even if just a little bit, but the reality was that the African American

community must "always have [their] back in the air" which "wears you down, just like they want" (Least Heat-Moon 101). Heat-Moon experienced this paranoid behavior just because he was an outsider asking questions. He was being observed and "hardly took [his] eyes off the rearview mirror" (Least Heat-Moon 103). Not only did the travel persona learn of what changed during the march, but he also got to experience first-hand how it is to live under such circumstances, making him deeply immersed in the culture and history of the city. Renée Bryzik suggests Least Heat-Moon's initial observations convey an outsider-environmentalist perspective (673), but later Least Heat-Moon gains a totalizing perspective from his experience by being both an observer and a participant.

In the novel, American history is portrayed in the land. It is shown in the architecture, the roads, and in the people that live there. The land symbolizes "solidity, goodness and hope" to an American and many try to preserve it (Least Heat-Moon 62). Bryzik highlights that Least Heat-Moon approaches local environmental imaginations through stories of how people adapt to the topography, animals, water, and other environmental features of their region (673). We learn through the narrator that "people retained an interest in the continuity of their past, and they made the new blend with the old" (Least Heat-Moon 66). The interconnectedness of the old and new is seen in a city called New Bern, in North Carolina, where "the Old South still shows on the streets rather than in a museum" (Least Heat-Moon 66). In another city, Fredericksburg, Texas, "a few Americans were beginning to acknowledge the civilizing influence of historical continuity" (Least Heat-Moon 145). This can be seen as Americans trying to rescue the old by protecting it. One character named Bob Andriot, from Shelbyville, Kentucky, restored a building that he didn't know exactly what it was but dates back to eighteen twenty-nine. He reasoned that rescuing the building makes him feel like he has done "something to last… to be reminded" and he was using it to "build something new" (Least Heat-Moon 14). In a different town, the people had turned "the old-court-house into a library and community hall" (Least Heat-Moon 145). There is a theme of growing from the past in the American history of this novel. The people, the Americans, are acknowledging "the civilizing influence of historical continuity" (Least Heat-Moon 145). They are not forgetting or demolishing their past, but rather using it to make something new. This preservation of history is not seen in all towns. Newport, in Rhode Island, is now parking lots and a mall. It is interesting that "they," presumably the government, "trashed the place to save it," said a young man to the travel persona, who found himself disappointed that "American history is parking lots" now (Least Heat-Moon 361). The notion of saving American history is noticeable in the novel and the author is taking a part in it as well by

preserving it in his travel stories. It is important to take care of the land and be reminded of the past so one can grow from it, but as the author stated, "things remain even when we think they don't" (Least Heat-Moon 335). The Americans will always be affected by their history even if they try to obliterate it.

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The descriptions of the landscape in the *Blue Highways* show the vastness and diversity of the United States, highlighting a country full of unseen beauty and wilderness which is hidden in the remote, just like geodes. Thurmond, in Nameless, Tennessee, says that the country is full of "them round rocks all sparkly inside" and this passage can be associated with all the beautiful landscapes the narrator encounters in his journey (Least Heat-Moon 35). On the road, the narrator got to experience nature firsthand, such as waking up in a morning that "makes a man doubt the reality of death: warm sun, cool air, clear water, bird notes flying out of the hard-woods like sparks from an anvil" (Least Heat-Moon 167). As a traveler in the backroad of America, the narrator describes "the immensity of sky and desert" which made the author see how little he was in the scale of things (Least Heat-Moon 189). Observing nature can be seen as a form of therapy for the author, through which his problems were diminished by the grandness of the American landscape. Not only did the author find rest and peace through his journey by observing, but he also got to experience the Blue Mountains that go into Oalouse, "one of the most visually striking topographical regions in America" where the "treeless, rounded hills, shaped by ice and wind and water to a sensuous nudity, were sprouting an intensely green fuzz of winter wheat" (Least Heat-Moon 244). The description of these landscapes is one of the various modes of presentation in travel writing. The purpose of these narrations is to create engagement with the readers searching for these types of experiences, peoples, and places, with an aim to activate their response or consciousness (Burton 9). As traveling becomes leisure for many people, they wish to have these experiences themselves, hoping to capture the same scenes as the narrator is describing. However, we must remember that the author is recreating the experience of the journey by translating it into a travel plot where the storytelling can be fictional.

The landscape not only affects the reader, but also is shown in "the road, towns, houses, farms, crops, machinery, politics, economics, and naturally, ways of thinking" (Least Heat-Moon 132). It can create discipline, like the desert which sometimes mocks the man's "instinct and makes his construction look feeble and temporary," yet man keeps looking for

inhospitableness in "places pointy and poisonous" (Least Heat-Moon 160). The landscape can also be seen in the people's lives, in the way that "erosion control, crop rotation, fertilizer, and pesticide have changed the face of the South" (Least Heat-Moon 70). It is to say that in warmer places, the people are warm and welcoming while in cold places, the people are more reserved. This is born out near the Adirondack Mountains, where snowfall can hit hundred forty-two inches (Least Heat-Moon 320). There, "the forest became heavier, sky darker, mountains higher, settlements farther apart" (Least Heat-Moon 320). While observing his surrounding, the narrator noted that "what few people were here the black flies and weather kept indoors that day" (Least Heat-Moon 320). However, the travel persona in this story understands that to see the wilderness, is to see the untouched because if it doesn't mean untouched, "then it doesn't mean anything worth anything" (Least Heat-Moon 322). To be on the road is to be on an adventure where the travel persona is hoping for an opportunity to see the unseen and hoping the unseen will "poke back" (Least Heat-Moon 409). I would say that I understand what the travel persona is conveying because it is exciting to see a rare beauty, but one should not forget that beauty can be found in all places. It can be seen in remote and wild areas such as the desert or at the top of a snowy mountain, or it can be seen in populated places such as the small villages the narrator visited on his journey. I don't agree that the untouched is the only thing worth seeing and believe that this mentality is related to the tourist versus traveler critic that will be explored later in this chapter.

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Authenticity in the novel is showcased in the descriptions of food. When traveling, it is natural to experience the cuisine of the place one is visiting so it is no surprise that food is an important part of the novel as the narrator experiences many types of traditional food related to the specific places he visits. Food observations in the novel are there to again, enhance the reader's mind, when the narrator describes the most exotic dishes he can find. The descriptions go from homemade sweet pie in Nameless, Tennessee to gumbo eaten in Lafayette, Louisiana: "the oysters were fresh and fat, the shrimp succulent, the spiced sausage meaty, okra sweet, rice soft, and the roux – the essence – the roux was right" (Least Heat-Moon 114). The narrator also drove to Breaux Bridge, "the crawfish capital of the world" to try on a pile of "boiled, whole crawfish glowing the color of Louisiana hot sauce" (Least Heat-Moon 116). It is noted that Heat-Moon was not accustomed to all the food because, while "the meat was soft and piquant, sweeter than shrimp," the author did not have the

"stomach for the buttery, yellow fat the Cajuns were sucking from the shells" (Least Heat-Moon 116). These descriptions of food make for realistic travel experiences, as the narrator describes popular dishes from different places and even acknowledges that not everything can be eaten by the traveler. The food tour in the novel continues with "mouth-watering, eye-watering, nose-watering" New Mexican salsas that can "clean the pipes, ducts, tracts, tubes; and like venom, they can turn innards to liquid" (Least Heat-Moon 154). The travel persona complains that the Mexican cuisine in other places in The United States is made by a "guy who pronounces the l's in tortilla," meaning that the food is inauthentic, but in Deming, New Mexico, he encounters "cocinero" who serves "squash blossom enchilada, shrimp marinated in jalapeños, lime soup, chicken breast pudding, chicken-in-a-shirt" (Least Heat-Moon 154). The narrator is experiencing what can be described as authentic cuisine and not an imitation of Mexican food. This authenticity makes the story more believable which is central for travel writing with elements of autobiography.

David Teague, who wrote Least Heat-Moon's biography in American Nature Writers, explains that Least Heat-Moon's accounts of land and people through food and environment demonstrate a "multi-perspectival non-linear approach to landscape" that includes people and histories (513). The author places the humans within the context of the landscape by using particular dialects and photography in order to represent the uniqueness of a place. His references to historical events, observations of food, photography of the people he talked to, and the dialect in the text also strengthen the authenticity of the novel. This is further highlighted by Teague when he explains that Least Heat-Moon's sensitivity to detail appeals to the realistic notion that this is a transcription, stating that the author records people so that he can write the conversations correctly (513). This shows the multi-perspectival approach that Least Heat-Moon takes, where he lets go of the travelogue's imagination to produce a more realistic impression.

4.3 Reader Response: Traveler, tourist, and change

When looking at the debate between tourists versus travelers, the novel makes a clear distinction between those two and favors being a traveler over a tourist, which can create a bias in the reader's mind as it insinuates that being a tourist is shameful. On different occasions, the travel persona in *Blue Highways* searches for towns where tourism is not the main source of income. However, the travel persona stumbles upon many cities where tourism exists, such as Manteo or Frenchman. There, we learn that tourists want the "'olden'

days with all the conveniences" (Least Heat-Moon 58) or the locals had a preferred type of visitors, like the ones "who remember Ninety-Six from before or history buffs who come out to mentally reconstruct the battle" (Least Heat-Moon 75). These passages have a diminishing tone towards what I assume are ignorant tourists who have a certain expectation of a place without taking the time to learn about its culture and history. Postcolonial travel writing commonly criticizes mass tourism, modernization, and globalization because they represent the opposite of what postcolonial travel writing is concerned with: origin, belonging, and identity. These are common themes for this novel as well because it not only questions personal individuality but also questions a place's uniqueness, where the towns have historical monuments or cultural events that are typical of that region and are not filled with parking lots or shopping centers that can be found all over the country. Being a traveler in the novel means looking for an authentic, individual, specific experience while a tourist seeks trivial, material possessions. Highlighting the differences between tourists and travelers influences the reader's mind as it asks them to characterize themselves between one and the other. However, my view on this matter is that one can both be a tourist and a traveler as shown many times in the novel by the travel persona themselves.

The fusion of tourism and town life can be compared with the identification of being a tourist and a traveler. One represents the modernized, globalized world or the outside experiences that affects a person, while the other represents the roots and homes of the population or the true, authentic self. The merging of this duality is seen in a town called Woodstock, Vermont. In this town, the shop windows displayed a variety of local and imported products, one can find inns, restaurants, and real estate offices. In the mountains, one can go skiing on the slopes, hike, or go on horse trails, or they can head to the south end of the valley to find a tennis court, skating rink, and golf courses (Least Heat-Moon 324). The narrator stated that there are a few places where tourism and town life can coexist but "[i]n Woodstock, they were parts of the whole" (Least Heat-Moon 324). In the same way that tourist attractions and local community can be a part of one specific place, so can be said for being a tourist and a traveler. The travel persona in this novel is also both. Even when they insist that "tourists want half-timbered facades and stained-plastic windows" while they are "headed toward the town that hadn't seen neon light" (Least Heat-Moon 58), they still ask questions that they assume are typical of "idling tourists" such as why give up Wall Street to become a monk? (Least Heat-Moon 79). From my perspective, this is a valid question from a curious person such as the travel persona and it is certainly not something to feel "simple and abashed" for (Least Heat-Moon 79). The reader should not feel ashamed for asking questions

because, after that, they will gain knowledge. They also shouldn't regret enjoying tourist activities such as ski resorts or golf courses. As long as one is respectful of the customs and culture of the local place, one can enjoy both being a tourist and being a traveler since, in postcolonial travel writing, both experiences are valid and sometimes interchangeable.

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To be a traveler, a tourist, and a reader in this novel, is to accept and embrace change. Change is what made Heat-Moon start his journey in the first place and finding how one can cooperate with it was Heat-Moon's unconscious goal. The foreword of the novel, written by Bill McKibben, states that rural America is a story of change and adaptation, that the internet and technology are a part of it but so is the past (Least Heat-Moon xi). The story of the traveler, the man, and nature is also about change. However, change is a natural course that is experienced by both man and nature, so it is futile to go against it: "The nature of things is resistance to change, while the nature of process is resistance to stasis, yet things and process are one, and the line from inorganic to organic and back again is uninterrupted and unbroken" (Least Heat-Moon 241). This suggests that change is a continuous part of us that stems from the past, affects the present, and transforms the future. One should understand that "[b]y seeing both the futility in trying to relive the old life and the danger in trying to obliterate it, man can gain the capacity to make anew" (Least Heat-Moon 400). I believe that this is the message that the book aims to give to the reader. Change is inevitable, but one should make the best of it because it still is a part of oneself. It isn't something you can escape from. However, one can try. Heat-Moon tried to escape the loss of his marriage and job, but it followed him throughout the journey. Hence why he was fascinated by how rural America adapted to change. The search for a place not touched by technology is futile and Heat-Moon sees this when talking to the local people who adapted to these changes while also preserving the old. In them, Heat-Moon understood that both can coexist. By being very fond of rural America, Heat-Moon was transferring his unconscious feelings of the past into his journey.

Heat-Moon's unconscious desires and wishes have an impact on the reader as these intense feelings become organized into a group of either intimidating or adoring wishes, where both the reader and the author find pleasure since their wishes are given shape. One of those wishes is to go on an adventure. The book quotes Helen Keller, who argued that life is either an adventure or nothing (Least Heat-Moon 37). This mindset is central in the novel, as the travel persona often chooses to move forward in his journey by following dangerous

roads. Readers who wish to travel in a snowstorm or drive the Clinch Mountains can now have this experience through the novel. But going on an adventure has another meaning in the novel: "Adventure – an advent. But no coming without a going. Death and rebirth" (Least Heat-Moon 37). To go on an adventure is to look for a new beginning, which again is about change. One looks for a new place to visit, a new experience, or a new flavor. The newness in the journey creates change in the traveler since they get to see new ways of living. To be on the road is also an excellent way of experiencing change, as the weather and landscape are continuous, visible change (Least Heat-Moon 343). I believe that after finishing this book, the reader may have an enormous courage to accept change in their life. It is an exceptional book of a travel journey in America with many beautiful places and mouthwatering food descriptions, but the reader leaves this story the same way Heat-Moon finished his journey: "I can't say, over the miles, that I had learned what I had wanted to know because I hadn't known what I wanted to know. But I did learn what I didn't know I wanted to know" (Least Heat-Moon 411). The reader might have come to this book expecting something else, but in the end, they came for what they unconsciously were looking for: an adventure, a new start, and change.

5 *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert

The question of whether identities change by moving from one place to another has always been raised by psychoanalysts. Harre in Gay referred to the self as being located in the body, so where the body is, the sense of self is present (Zaki Al-Hasan and Bani-Khair 1). By going on a journey, the protagonists renounce their former lives, examine their past mistakes, undergo some transformation, and finally regain control of their lives and themselves. Paradoxically, travel is no longer represented in these texts as a requirement for self-redemption by confronting oneself with the outer world, rather it is represented as a "solipsistic practice" (Rutkowska 99). By adopting the role of a pilgrim, the protagonists agree to follow certain routines, examine their minds and hearts so they can make peace with the past, and then acquire a new sense of self. In the case of *Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert is presented as both transformed and saved. At the age of thirty-one, despite a fairly successful career as a writer, Gilbert found herself stuck in an unhappy marriage, struggling with acute depression. Gilbert then begins a year-long journey of body (Eat), spirit (Pray), and mind (Love) where she eats her way through Italy, prays and meditates in India, and learns to love again in Indonesia. In this book, travel is regarded primarily as self-therapy and not as a liberating experience in which the self is transformed through encounters and confrontations with the foreign and otherness. Gilbert is more focused on healing herself than on freeing herself though new experiences.

For this chapter, we are going to analyze the protagonist Elizabeth Gilbert's narrative persona, through whom we learn about her spiritual motivation for the journey and how the freedom of movement affects her and her choices. Then we move on to discussing how the travel experience in India, Indonesia, and Italy is viewed as a spiritual product and how Gilbert might be perceived as a neoliberal spiritual tourist. Lastly, we will touch upon how the novel empowers women to travel and put themselves first and what consequences it can have for other cultures. At the end of this chapter, we should have an understanding that self-discovery and transformation in travel literature can be achieved by using the global South as a salvation place or stereotyping different cultures in order to achieve their spiritual goals. However, travel literature can also empower and give hope to people, in this case, women, to leave the patriarchal norms behind and go after their interests. In the end, I think Gilbert is using travel writing as an empowerment tool rather than stereotyping cultures because she is

aware of both how different experiences can heal her and the privilege she has in consuming them.

5.1 Character: The narrator (Elizabeth Gilbert)

The novel *Eat, Pray, Love* portrays the story of the author and protagonist, Elizabeth Gilbert, in search of pleasure, spirituality, and balance. Gilbert felt lost and disappointed in her life even though she had everything she has worked for. After dealing with a difficult divorce and mental illness, she embarked on a journey of self-discovery in order to find happiness again. Maureen Mulligan in Women's Travel Writing and the Legacy of Romanticism suggests that the journey in the novel is a metaphor of, and solution to, "some kind of identity crisis" (Rutkowska 99) where the narrator is more interested in exploring their own selves rather than the foreign cultures and places they visit. Gilbert's reason for traveling is to find solutions to her individual crisis and regain control of her life, treating it as a form of self-imposed therapy to battle depression, recover from divorce and overcome other traumatic experiences. To do so, Gilbert redeems and transforms her life through being in contact with spirituality. In an ashram in India, Gilbert battles metaphorical demons which take the form of unpleasant memories of her past mistakes and failed relationships. According to Rutkowska, Gilbert tries hard to convince the readers that "both her anguish and the obstacles she encounters on the way to spiritual development are real and demand plenty of effort and courage to overcome… [but are] nothing more than the feelings of boredom, frustration, and occasional anger" (101). Indeed, Gilbert's character can be perceived as privileged because of her financial status, race, and social position which makes her travel experience easy and pleasurable, but one should not diminish her feelings even when sometimes the narrative seems exaggerated. Gilbert's journey was easy because she could afford to tour the world since her book was purchased by a publisher in advance, she was admitted to the ashram because she had already met the Guru and it is easy to befriend people because they share similar worldviews and values. However, it is important to note that the majority of Western women, let alone those living in developing countries, cannot travel the way Gilbert did in order to overcome depression and discontentment.

Gilbert's journey of self-discovery does not originate from critical reflection on the self and society, but from spiritual consumption throughout her journey. Her life's philosophy consists of the claim that "God dwells within you, as you" (Gilbert 201). This suggests that to find the divine, one does not have to make any change of their "natural character," but rather

one must merge with God (Gilbert 201). Rutkowska argues that, after Gilbert found God in India, she did not become a devoted Hindu nor show evidence that her stay at the ashram was a meaningful spiritual experience that will influence her life (107). I agree that one does not become a Hindu after a few months of living in an ashram, but we constantly see that Gilbert keeps her meditational practices even after leaving the sacred place. One must note that in travel literature with autobiographical elements, the narrator and the author have different personas, and it is not possible to say if the author herself kept the mediational practices she learned during her stay at the ashram. Nevertheless, *Eat, Pray, Love* is meant to be a "redemption narrative" or a "self-help memoir" that became popularized at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Rutkowska 100). Feminist theorist and author Leigh Gilmore define this subgenre as "the American neoconfessional" where the narrative is deprived of such wider social and political context as it locates "the cause, experience, and end of suffering within the framework of the individual" (Rutkowska 100). Gilbert's framework is spiritual self-discovery, finding her identity through meditation techniques that involve looking at the deepest part of her mind and making peace with her mistakes.

Throughout the novel, there seems to be a clash between the spiritual search for God and the talkative, cheeky, and rather superficial narrative persona Gilbert has adopted to narrate her experiences. Heavy and dark themes such as depression, suicidal thoughts, and spiritual enlightenment have a light-hearted air of "everything will be fine". Jennifer Egan points out that the book lacks "a ballast of gravitas or grit", which results in the magical thinking that "nothing Gilbert touches seems to turn out wrong; not a single wish goes unfulfilled" (Rutkowska 102). It seems like Gilbert is purposely pushing away real-life issues in order to appear less dull or downbeat and instead she focuses more on a "chick-lit" plot where she finds romance and a happy ending. The novel ends with Gilbert not only successfully finding pleasure and devotion as she planned but also a new love interest. Many critics find Gilbert's use of Oriental spiritual techniques for self-improvement —to be materialistic, narcissistic, self-indulgent, and based on a shallow New Age spirituality (Rutkowska 107). When reading this novel, I found Gilbert's narrative persona quite childish, and it felt like I was reading from the point of view of a teenager and not a woman in her thirties. However, Gilbert is figuring herself out again and finding who she really is, which are typical attributes we associate with teenagers or coming-of-age novels, so it does make sense for the persona to act this way.

During Gilbert's stay in Bali, the juxtaposition between the lack of self and where she belongs with the search for balance highlights the inner and outer conflict of Gilbert's wishes

and the necessary requirements to achieve them. One of Gilbert's new friends, Mario, explains that in order for him to be happy and find balance, he must maintain "himself – mentally and spiritually at the intersection between a vertical line and horizontal one, in a state of perfect balance" (Gilbert 238). This means that he has to "know exactly where he is located at every moment, both in his relationship to the divine and to his family here on earth. If he loses that balance, he loses his power" (Gilbert 238). The purpose of Gilbert's journey is to find this balance, but she is not only confused about who she is or what she is doing, but she is also out of place and did not know where she belonged. Thus, Gilbert has a lot of external help in her self-discovery journey. To differentiate between what is inside (self-help) and what is outside (outer help) is challenging, but according to Derrida, it can be accomplished. He suggests that "it is the act of spatial differentiation that allows one to think of inside and outside... in the first place" (Zaki Al-Hasan and Bani-Khair 4). In the novel, Gilbert spends her last travel months in Indonesia living the prophecy of a medicine man who told her she would be back to Indonesia to meet him. The man was named Ketut and his advice was external forces since they were from other than Gilbert herself. However, to acknowledge this outer help, Gilbert must first make a choice herself if she wants to travel or not. Ketut offered to teach Gilbert everything he knew if she came to Indonesia and, according to Zaki Al-Hasan and Bani-Khair, he was a positive force that helped Gilbert choose Bali over other countries in her journey of self-discovery (4). Nevertheless, one can say that it was Gilbert's inner self that prompted her intuition and desire to believe in the medicine man in the first place. With that, it is not easy to say who initiated Gilbert's self-discovery journey, but both her inner strength and outside help made the journey possible.

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Eat, Pray, Love can be read as a pilgrim account where the character leaves their ordinary life behind and experiences difficult situations to undergo a spiritual transformation. During Gilbert's stay in the Ashram in India, she had to battle metaphorical demons or "residual demons" which take the form of unpleasant memories of her past mistakes and depressing times (Gilbert 155). These struggles are referred to as an internal battle between "the heart" and "the mind" (Gilbert 155). Only after the heart wins over the mind, does the process of healing begin. Gilbert's struggle in the ashram can thus be read as a pilgrim account. Gilbert can also be considered a pilgrim traveler because her motives were religious and her interests secular. Burton informs that pilgrim travelers wish to become witnesses of

an already known authentic by experiencing the journey themselves (163), and this correlates to Gilbert's journey. She was introduced to her Guru in New York, during her complicated divorce and wished to travel to her Guru's ashram like many other devotes have done. Gilbert wishes to witness the spiritual journey firsthand and it encourages her to stop in India during her year-long trip. A pilgrim journey ends with the protagonist going home and reintegrating themselves into the community again (Rutkowska 101). However, the novel ends with Gilbert still in Bali enjoying one of the islands with her lover. The reader never gets how exactly the protagonist was integrated back into society after her pilgrimage.

Gilbert's free spirit and the unplanned journey are a consequence of her freedom of movement after leaving "everything" behind. When people move, they become freer to do the things they want to do. In this case, Gilbert was free to explore her quest for self-discovery. By partially detaching herself from her job, relationships, and material wealth, she allowed herself to accept the change that might result from this movement. Guy Debord introduced this concept as dérive (from the French "drift") which means that people "drop their relations, their work, and leisure activities" for the purpose of "movement and action" (Zaki Al-Hasan and Bani-Khair 2). In the novel, Gilbert left her husband, left her work temporarily, and stopped her social activities. Merlin Coverley has an alternative definition for dérive: "Derive was a continuous flow in which protagonists embarked upon a surrealist trip, a dreamy trek through varied Parisian passageways, forever on foot, wandering for hours" (Zaki Al-Hasan and Bani-Khair 2). The wandering forever on foot is seen when Gilbert is in Italy without a guide. She did not plan where she wanted to go or what she wanted to do, but she did know that she needed a break from her home. Gilbert's spontaneity and, I dare say, faith, continue throughout the journey when she goes to see Ketut in India without an appointment or even knowing if he would remember her. She purposelessly drifted throughout the city until she stumbled upon him. The study of the impact of movement on literary characters is relatively new and was introduced by Debord as "psychogeography" in the fifties (Zaki Al-Hasan and Bani-Khair 2). The term is defined as "[t]he study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (Zaki Al-Hasan and Bani-Khair 2). In Eat, Pray Love, there is a constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects where movement on characters allows for both separation from people and the meeting of new ones.

The freedom of movement is a newfound concept in Gilbert's life as she struggles to live a life defined by her own desires because of romantic relationships. In the first section of the novel, she reflects on the impediment that has been her relationships with men: ''I barely

had an adolescence before I had my first boyfriend, and I have consistently had a boy or a man (or sometimes both) in my life ever since I was fifteen years old . . . That's almost two solid decades I have been entwined in some kind of drama with some kind of guy'' (Gilbert 68). Throughout the journey, Gilbert reflects on her self-sabotaging patterns when in romantic relationships where she will give her all and more until she exhausts both herself and her partner and runs towards the next, infatuated lover (Gilbert 68-69). She declares: ''I could use a little break from this cycle, to give myself some space to discover what I look like and talk like when I'm not trying to merge with someone'' (Gilbert 69). Through her journey, Gilbert has learned how to be aware of her behaviors and act accordingly thus recreating what seems to be a healthier relationship by the end of the novel with a Brazilian man named Philip in Bali. This implies that Gilbert was not only discovering how to be with herself but also how to be with others, especially with men and in romantic relationships. This is a great accomplishment and shows how much Gilbert has grown emotionally during her journey.

5.2 Environment: Spiritual tourist India and spiritual preparation in Italy

Gilbert's journey through Italy, India, and Indonesia can be seen as a form of neocolonial performative travel to and in the global South where the privileged attempt to save or support the less fortunate is an act of superiority. Rumya Sree Putcha argues that the "global North forms of engagement, established during the colonial era and in the name of the 'White man's burden,' have today become popular and legible" referring to these forms of travel as cartographies of salvation (451). Cartographies of salvation were also theorized by Cherie Ndaliko and in her work with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the East Congo. She refers to it as a form of "charitable imperialism . . . which is often more charitable for the intervener than for the intervened upon but also illuminates how this dynamic works in an age when people believe they know better" (Putcha 451). In the novel, Gilbert's travels to South Asia shows formerly colonized areas as a place where one can travel to find a true purpose and saviorhood and these areas are centered on ingrained Orientalist notions in which they can and will teach you how "to engage, surrender, and transform your body, mind, and spirit" (Putcha 452). Gilbert's curiosity towards healing meditations in India and her economic help towards a woman she met in Bali who wanted to buy a house might come across as performative travel. She not only uses important cultural rituals for her own purposes, which relates to the notion of cartographies of salvation but also financially helps people from the global south, which can be seen as an act of charitable

imperialism. Nevertheless, the intention of the character is important, and in this case, Gilbert intends to find herself by exploring her interests and healing from the divorce and failed relationships she had in the past. I don't believe she is purposely being a white savior, but rather just trying to integrate into the communities she travels to.

The model of tourism that is represented in *Eat, Pray, Love* views local culture as a spiritual product that, once consumed, allows Gilbert's spiritual enlightenment. During her journey, Gilbert learns about herself via her encounters with the native culture in Italy, India, and Indonesia: ''It wasn't so much that I wanted to thoroughly explore the countries themselves... It was more that I wanted to thoroughly explore one aspect of myself . . . in a place that has traditionally done that one thing very well. I wanted to explore the art of pleasure in Italy, the art of devotion in India, and, in Indonesia, the art of balancing the two'' (Gilbert 31). In Ruth Williams's "Eat, Pray, Love: Producing the Female Neoliberal Spiritual Subject", she claims that the interactions between Gilbert and the natives, especially those in India and Bali, are generally framed within the context of Gilbert's spiritual search (624). Gilbert has searched for contentment in so many ways for so many years by pursuing all these acquisitions and accomplishments, but none of it worked (Gilbert 163). That is why she turned to spirituality in order to find herself again. In what seems an act of desperation, she approached God as it was what people did in her type of state: "I had finally noticed that I seemed to have reached a state of hopeless and life-threatening despair, and it occurred to me that sometimes people in this state will approach God for help" (Gilbert 15). Gilbert's choice of India and Indonesia as her travel destinations shows that these places and their culture are seen as consumable if one wants to get in touch with their spirituality.

With this spiritual approach to traveling, Gilbert can then be considered a neoliberal spiritual tourist who is adopting a romanticized view of her experience with native cultures. One example is when Gilbert is sitting outside of the ashram in India. She describes her surroundings as "all dust and poverty," but amidst this, she meets an Indian boy whose "aura" she finds "incredibly compelling" (Gilbert 132-133). The Indian boy wears the same clothes every day, suggesting that he is poor, yet in Gilbert's eyes, he seems to possess a ''face drenched with luminescence'' that moves Gilbert every time she sees it (Gilbert 133). One can say that Gilbert is romanticizing poverty or suggesting that part of this Indian boy's beauty lies in his ability to transcend his own poverty. This can also be taken to suggest that even though Gilbert is in an environment where the economy is not the best, she still finds beauty around her and in the mundane. Again, such an attitude can come across as very pretentious and showcases Gilbert's privilege as she is able to be an outsider and an observer

of the natives. Another example of Gilbert's romanticized views occurs when she admires ''women doing road work, busting up rocks under the sweltering sun . . . looking so strangely beautiful in their jewel-colored saris and their necklaces and bracelets'' (Gilbert 168). She wonders, ''How can they be happy doing this rough work under such terrible conditions?'' (Gilbert 168). By observing the poverty around her, Gilbert seems to be inspired, and, according to Williams, she considers how she too can take up a more serious emotional life (625). However, there are not many instances where Gilbert contemplates what forces have caused this poverty or how her presence and participation in the local economy affect the native community.

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Author and social theorist Bert Olivier suggests that the spiritual awakening of the protagonist in *Eat, Pray, Love* is "seceded by a kind of 'carnival,' followed by something that resembles the Lent of the Christian tradition" (21). This means that Gilbert's journey takes her from sensuous pleasure in food, to spiritual sacrifice, and eventually to romantic love. Before she is able to achieve spiritual commitment, it is argued that she must first experience sensuous, culinary enjoyment in order to then be able to sacrifice it for spiritual enlightenment. Initially, Gilbert wanted to go to Rome because of her desire to learn Italian, and she did it for some time since she found the language beautiful. There was no specific reason for Gilbert to visit Italy other than the beauty of the language and there is no better place to learn a language than the place it is spoken. However, when Gilbert visits Italy, her account of pleasure is largely restricted to the enjoyment of food. Gilbert and her Swedish friend Sofie visited Naples just to come to Pizzeria da Michele where each ordered one piece of pizza: "I love my pizza so much, in fact, that I have come to believe in my delirium that my pizza might actually love me, in return" (Gilbert 83). She has also indulged in sweets by "... including a gelateria that serves a frozen rice pudding" in her itinerary and ate "not only lamb and truffles and carpaccio rolled around hazelnut mousse but an exotic little serving of pickled lampascione" (Gilbert 59). The enjoyment Gilbert has of food in Italy is temporary, and not "forever" which Olivier suggests emphasizes the temporal and earthly essence of the novel in contrast with an illusory attempt to escape into eternity (24): "Of course, one can't live like this forever. Real life and wars and traumas and mortality will interfere eventually" (Gilbert 119). The escape into eternity Olivier is highlighting can be seen as Gilbert escaping to her idea of spiritual eternity, but I interpret it as the desire to not go back to the mistakes

and depression she suffered early in the novel. However, she is aware that in the real world, it is impossible to escape from suffering as it arises in unexpected ways.

The culinary trip to Italy is mainly a preparation for her body for the spiritual awakening she is about to experience in India and Indonesia. Throughout the novel, we notice that Gilbert's preferred senses are gustatory (taste) and auditory (hearing), but she uses visual descriptions of different dishes to evoke their taste. Following her pizza discovery in Naples, Gilbert describes that:

> They have only two varieties of pizza here – regular and extra cheese. None of this new age California olives-and-sun-dried-tomato wannabe pizza twaddle- The dough, it takes me half my meal to figure it out, tastes more like Indian nan than like any pizza dough I ever tried. It's soft and chewy and yielding, but incredibly thin… Thin, doughy, strong, gummy, yummy, chewy, salty pizza paradise. On top, there is a sweet tomato sauce that foams up all bubbly and creamy when it melts the fresh buffalo mozzarella… (84).

Bert Olivier argues that Gilbert's diction symbolizes the thread between this paradise-like, heavenly food and what it is spiritually valorized, "namely a hallowed space, or the thought of paradise as the place where nothing is lacking, and everything exists in abundance" (25). The highest point of Gilbert's "carnival" is in the last chapter of her trip to Italy, where she visits Sicily and, despite the urban ugliness and signs of poverty, she discovers that the place serves many Italian culinary delights. The spiritual experience in the indulgence of gastronomic delights is a preparation for Gilbert's spiritual awakening. She is physically putting her body in a better place by enjoying good food so that later she has the strength to endure the spiritual battles she must confront in India. One could say that Gilbert's attempt to find her identity and become herself starts with the sacrifice of culinary enjoyment by continuing her journey to the Indian Ashram. Her reward for surviving her own spiritual demons will then be a romantic love interest in Indonesia.

5.3 Reader Response: Traveler and tourist, women's empowerment, and cultural exploitation

Gilbert's narrative persona identifies neither with travelers nor with tourists by downplaying her skills as a traveler and satirizing the yearnings of the tourist. When dealing with twentieth-

century travel books, the distinction between a traveler and a tourist is one of the staple elements for ensuring their authenticity. To convince the readers that the author belongs to the prestigious club of real travelers, they may resort to a wide variety of strategies (Holland and Huggan 2). By analyzing Gilbert's travel persona as a spiritual pilgrim, readers see the protagonist as superior to an ordinary tourist because she renounces the pleasures of sightseeing for a higher, spiritual purpose. In Italy, Gilbert focuses on the sensual pleasures of eating and flirting with handsome Italian men. Even though she lives in Rome, there are almost no descriptions of the monuments or the city's rich past in the pages of the book. In Bali, Gilbert lives in a bungalow surrounded by a lush garden and befriends locals who offer her not only spiritual guidance but also practical life advice. With these experiences in mind, Jessa Crispin argues that *Eat, Pray, Love* represents a subgenre called "faux travel writing" because "Gilbert hardly ever goes beyond the beautiful locale" and it only becomes "the backdrop of the real action, which is interior psychodrama" (Rutkowska 107). We can see that in all the places Gilbert visits, she stays in a comfortable and safe environment that offers the pleasures of the foreign or exotic without any inconveniences. With that, one could argue that her travels do not differ from the typical tourist experience (Rutkowska 108), but because she stayed in one place for a longer time period, four months in each country, she still manages to experience the local culture that might have gone unnoticed if she were a regular tourist, only there for a couple of weeks. In this book, the reader partakes in Gilbert's experience of both being a tourist and being a traveler.

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The novel supports a feminist vision of women's empowerment in which women put themselves first and resist patriarchal social norms. Gilbert was aware of her tendencies of satisfying others at the expense of her own happiness, especially when it came to romantic relationships. In the novel, she explains the coincidence that brought her to discovering herself: "I wanted to explore the art of pleasure in Italy, the art of devotion in India, and, in Indonesia, the art of balancing the two. It was only later, after admitting this dream that I noticed the happy coincidence that all these countries begin with the letter I" (Gilbert, 30). The "I" in the places she was visiting was taken as a sign of the need to discover herself and her "I." To do that, she made small steps in the direction of eliminating everything that was holding her back so that she could be free from the inside and assert her individuality. Gilbert used to always have a justification for every move she made, so her interests and crushes had

to have an explanation. However, during her trips, she let herself free and was able to enjoy the things she wanted without any specific reason. She wanted to learn Italian, so she did so, and she wanted to have a lover, so she did that as well.

The novel promotes a gendered travel experience that allows women to access Gilbert's spiritual enlightenment by following her journey through Italy, India, and Indonesia. The attractive combination of a travel account with a self-help memoir seems to have resonated with readers. Not only did the protagonist have a narrative persona of "a high-achieving, professionally successful but unhappily married upper-middle class heroine" but she is also presented as unable to follow "prescribed gender roles of a career woman and a mother simultaneously" (Rutkowska 107). This characterization is then meant to elicit the readers' compassion and identification at the same time. Such messages of liberation and self-rescue seem to support a feminist vision of women's empowerment by resisting patriarchal social norms and rather focusing on women's own spiritual development and happiness. Ruth Williams suggests that Gilbert's tale can lead readers to develop a critical consciousness that would result in "not only a greater awareness of their own desires but also the larger social forces that seek to rob them of the capacity to live out those desires" (615). Nevertheless, *Eat, Pray, Love* is not meant to be followed or replicated but rather be used as a source of inspiration and thought-provoking questions for women who might find themselves in similar situations. In an interview with Oprah, Gilbert explained that ''[y]ou don't need to go and do exactly the things that I did . . . The only thing you need to do is ask yourself the questions I was asking myself'' (quoted in Williams 616). However, it appears that many women are tapping into the spiritual growth portrayed in the novel by choosing to travel to experience holistic forms of healing (Williams 616).

In the article "After Eat, Pray, Love: Tourism, Orientalism, and Cartographies of Salvation" by Rumya Sree Putcha, it's implied that novels like *Eat, Pray, Love* utilize travel and escapism to deal with difficult emotions through the use of "feminism" or "spirituality" (456). The article explains that a large set of work emerged in the global South in the post 9/11 era where yoga and alternative forms of spirituality and medicine were used on well-to-do White women who wished to either "identify with them, find themselves… [or] claim their sexuality outside of the confines of marriage (Putcha 456). This goes back to the use of oriental cultures to save the white woman and feminist scholar Shefali Chandra noted that:

> Skillfully navigating between twentieth-century imperial history, the rise of the War on Terror, and a barely-contained obsession with Hindu female sexuality, each of

these texts is driven by the conviction that in India, and Indian women, will heal the mind and body of the white woman. India enables the American woman to cure herself. (Putcha 488)

Even though the intentions of *Eat, Pray, Love* were genuine, and it highlighted important aspects of feminist empowerment, it also had a negative impact on how the global South and their already highly stereotyped culture is used by the West. By analyzing the novel from this perspective, we can say that the journey of self-discovery and transformation relied on the appropriation of culture and the use of Indian, or Southeast Asian, women.

Twenty-first-century travel narratives have a more sensitive and psychological influence by addressing themes such as self-identity and globalization. Sanip Roy argues that EPL depicts a new type of colonialism: ''The new breed is more sensitive, less overt. They want to spend a year in a faraway place on a 'journey.' But the journey is all about what they can get . . . They want food, the spiritual wisdom, the romance'' (Williams 625). This type of colonialism has elements from the recent travel narrative characterizations. He continues with: ''The natives mostly have clearly assigned roles. Language teacher. Hangover healer. The dispenser of fortune cookie-style wisdom (knowledge is never so meaningful as when it comes in broken English, served up with puckish grins) . . . [the natives] are there as a means for her self-discovery. After that is done, it's time to book the next flight'' (Williams 615). With this, it is suggested that even though recent travel narratives are more aware of unconscious racial bias and privilege, the protagonists can always go back home and continue their life after doing what they intended to do in their travel journey. Again, it confronts the unlaying element that self-discovery in the travel narrative genre is constituted by the exploitation of poorer countries and cultures. The use of other cultures for their own benefits can go unnoticed by readers when dealing with *Eat, Pray, Love*, or similar self-discovering books as they focus more on self-help and transformation but not on what consequences it can have for the native culture.

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Gilbert's journey to the three countries can be seen as an escape from her bad divorce, her routine life, and her cycle of friends and family meaning that moving from one place to another may be a discovery of oneself or an escape. The journey helped Gilbert shape and construct her new identity and without this act of movement, it might have been difficult for

her to accomplish that. Ruth Williams claims that "many women are choosing to travel as a way of tapping into the spiritual growth Gilbert experiences during her own travels" (616). Regardless of whether the travel was a form of escapism or was to actually rediscover herself, Gilbert achieved what she had intended to do. In Italy, she found beauty and nurtured her body, something she was not able to do in New York. In India, she could gain her soul back by devoting herself to a higher power. Aya Fayiz Zaki Al-Hasan and Baker M Bani-Khair state that one does not have to live in the country in order to nurture their body and soul and I agree with them (6). It really depends on the individual to decide if they want to heal themselves at home or by traveling, they may even have financial problems or responsibilities that they have to attend to and the possibility of traveling might be out of reach. Aya Fayiz Zaki Al-Hasan and Baker M Bani-Khair also suggest that the change and healing that happens in Gilbert is psychological rather than geographical: "If people change their place and keep their mind shut, their trip would have been for nothing" (6). There is no guarantee that a travel experience will change and transform one's identity. Indeed, if they choose to close themselves off from the outside world, either being at home or traveling, most of this self-discovery journey has to be internal. However, people usually travel with a specific purpose; they are either a tourist, a traveler, or both, and their experience in the different countries can help them reflect on their past mistakes and take accountability for their actions, just as what happened with Gilbert.

6 Discussion

Contemporary travel writers are increasingly focused on their inner journeys. The self-actualization of a character appears to be a core motif in the texts and can be seen in the classics of literature, from Odysseus to Jules Verne, who wrote to discover themselves (McWha et. al. 14). Sociology lecturer at Kalmar University, Torun Elsrud, suggests that travel narratives symbolize much more than the events being described. They also express "a story about who he or she [the author] is or wants to be" (McWha et. al. 14). Travel narratives, then, have the potential to reveal more about the author and their point of view than the place visited. *The Alchemist* can be used as an example. Out of the novels analyzed in this thesis, *The Alchemist* was the one with the least information about the location. This perhaps is because Santiago's main quest was to find a treasure. He was not sightseeing or on vacation. We could say that he was on a mission. As readers, we are following the point of view of the character which in this case is centered on his journey to the Pyramids of Egypt. Initially, the end goal was the focus but the more we read, the more we find about Santiago's growth, spiritual awakening, and ability to follow his dreams. In the other novels, the characters are motivated by the desire to escape their past, heal, and change through traveling so it is only natural to have more detailed observations about the local culture, including the landscape and cuisine. Nevertheless, the travel journey and the act of writing the journey itself can be very transformative for the author and the reader who absorbs this information. For this chapter, we will discuss the connection between language and writing and how it affects travel writing both in the way that it materializes the character's self-discovery and transformation, and it is used as a form of self-therapy. Then we will discuss the importance of movement in the novels and how each character acted and reacted to the newfound freedom of movement. Lastly, we will look at interesting articles about how personal development can evolve through travel. There we will discuss the backpacker's personal development scale and see how it applies to the characters analyzed in this thesis.

6.1 Language and Travel Writing Narrative

Language and culture are intermingled and mutually serve each other. Their collective entity constructs identity in individuals and communities alike (Bahrami 113). Language is almost nonexistent if it does not surround itself with culture. Therefore, having a culture-free

language is just creating a frame with "no contents and ingredients, for culture is the substance and language is the frame to provide it a manifestable shape and the possibility of exchange" (Bahrami 113). Writing, then, gives structure to the language, highlighting an intimate interpretation of the emotions and experiences one has. The traveler's concerns when it comes to writing are shifted towards how he or she can "confront and make sense of the world, how the journey can become a meaningful experience, and how the subject constitutes itself" (Korte 144). The meaningful experience that comes with travel will only appear with the act of travel writing itself. The journey gains significance only when it is put in the text. Derrida explains that what is on the writer's mind has no priority over the meaning of their words (Harland 131). We could say that language is in the consciousness but it is only when it is written that it becomes tangible and three-dimensional. Compared to the act of writing travel narrative, what we learn from the journey is simply conscious, and only when it is written can we see all the knowledge and experience that has been acquired from it. Considering the partly autobiographical travel narratives analyzed in this thesis, we can see that the authors, and their character persona, did not fully understand the impact of their journey until the end. Heat-Moon in Blue Highways did not know what he was looking for, but in the end, he found what he didn't know he was looking for. Gilbert, on the other hand, knew that she had to heal herself, but she only fully understood the growth she had undergone by writing the novel and seeing how it influenced other women into doing the same. Writing then materializes language the same way the act of travel writing materializes the character's wish for self-discovery and transformation. Derrida argues that the unconscious mind motivates the conscious mind and that the unconscious mind exists in the form of Writing (Harland 142). Writing is then the expression of the writer's subjectivity which can come from their unconscious mind. Derrida further suggests that, when producing the meaning of a word, the unconscious becomes active (Wright 134). Meaning is then understood not just in the sense that words mean, but in the sense that someone means them to mean something (Harland 126). Hence why, when analyzing how readers interpret the transformation and personal development of the characters in the novels, the meaning of certain actions and behaviors can be seen differently.

Using writing as self-therapy is a method where people can journey within themselves in order to find a sense of balance between themselves and the word (McWha et. al. 16). Travel writing has then been used as a therapeutic or cathartic tool for re-establishing a sense of self, but it does not mean that it needs to be traumatic to be transformative to a person. The act of travel writing is traveling itself where one can notice the overlap between the

transformative nature of travel and the transformative experience of writing about travel (McWha et. al. 16). Zilscosky explains that, by traveling (metaphysically) where one is not, "the author attempts to find itself through displacement," using "the imaginative process of creating suspended places that exist in writing" (McWha et. al. 16). In other words, while a person can be changed and transformed through travel and new cultural experiences, as well as through the therapeutic and transformative process of writing, the true self that the author or reader are trying to find only exists at a specific moment in time. This true self is called the essentialist self where the new self-identities are found in the writing of stories about their travel journey. The discoverable essential self is "discovering" or "understanding" themselves through their writing which allows some of the writers to search for their sense of self in the story (McWha et. al. 19).

6.2 Mobility and Self-Discovery

In *The Alchemist*, Santiago is not bound by anyone or anything. He can freely travel both when he is a shepherd and when he decides to go on his journey to Egypt. With this freedom of movement, Santiago is able to not only explore the world but also explore himself freely without judgment and criticism from outsiders. He acknowledges that everyone has an opinion about how someone else should live their life, but they don't do much about their own. The message in this book is straightforward: don't be afraid to go after your dreams. If one wishes to follow their dream, the universe will open itself to them and grant them passage. Santiago's dream was asking him to go on an adventure, for him to go to Egypt and discover a treasure. Even though Santiago discovered a physical, material treasure he also discovered many important things such as spiritual value, personal development, and confidence.

The journey allowed him to have a spiritual awakening through understanding the Soul of the World and that everything is interconnected. *The Alchemist* is an idealistic novel where the main character has a happy ending. It suggests that, if one has the ability to move and explore other places with different languages and cultures, one will have a deeper understanding of oneself. In Santiago's case, it showed how much determination he had. He could have given up on his journey many times, but he continued to go after his dreams, even when he was robbed three times. It also showed how resilient he is, by creating a business in Morocco and helping the elders in the desert town. Most importantly though, the journey taught Santiago about his spirituality, it taught him how to talk to nature because he is a part

of it as well, as everything connects with the other. As much as the novel promotes individuality by instigating existential questions to the reader of what the reader's dreams are and what is stopping them from going after them, the novel also refers to the world and everything that resides in it as a community. If one follows their destiny and goes after their dreams, they will be in harmony with the world and its natural order. What one does individually affects the community as a whole which makes me think that self-discovery is not only beneficial for the person involved but also for the community around them. Nevertheless, gaining awareness of oneself is not easy. Santiago had to confront many difficulties during the journey, one of them being the desert itself. The harsh conditions of the desert and the tribal wars happening in it were a challenge for Santiago. However, the desert was also an important teacher because it allowed Santiago to warn the desert town against an attack from the tribal wars. It gave him a vision so he could help the town because it was also a part of the desert.

The Alchemist story is inspirational and there is no wonder why many have read this book and found it fascinating. It poses difficult questions about oneself in a narrative that is easy to read and follow. This novel almost seems like a fable or a children's book that sets out to teach us something. The journey in the novel is not meant to be replicated by the readers because it is fiction: it does not try to be authentic like other travel narratives, but the reader still wants to follow the protagonist or at least have the same courage as him by identifying what their wishes and dreams are and going after them. The novel not only shows what can happen to those who follow their dreams but also shows characters who decide to not go after their dreams willingly. This creates different perspectives in the reader's mind to highlight what is stopping them from pursuing their dreams and why. It could maybe be financial problems, concerns about low status, fear of criticism from others, and even self-denial, which afflics Santiago at the beginning of the novel.

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Heat-Moon's mode of transformation was perfect for what *Blue Highways* is trying to convey. While driving the car, Ghost Dancing, the narrative observations of the landscape and its people changed with every mile. Mobility in this novel means change. Change in the landscape, change in the weather, change in people, and ultimately, change in perspective for the character and the reader. Heat-Moon's character went through a very difficult change in his life before starting his journey. He lost his job and his marriage and because he had

nothing else to lose, he decided to go on a road trip through the backroads of America. By losing what made him stay in one place, he was able to travel and explore the country that he felt was alien and strange to him.

The ability to move and explore allowed Heat-Moon to see that change was not always bad and that the past will always affect the present and the future. During his journey, Heat-Moon met many people and documented his trip with pictures. The photography element of the novel helps it seem more authentic and the book appears more like a travel diary than a novel. It is filled with observations from the towns he went through and the people he met. However, I feel like out of the three books I have analyzed, *Blue Highways* is the one where the protagonist changed the least or that his transformation was not as prevalent as the other two. The reason is that Heat-Moon's journey was mainly to escape the reality of his lost job and broken marriage—however, when the trip was over, he had to go back to Missouri and confront those changes.

Looking at his personality and identity, Heat-Moon did not change much, but what was different on his journey was his change in perspective. Throughout the novel, we see how Americans adapt for the future, but still preserve the past. Heat-Moon can, in the same way, adapt to his new circumstances in life, but without eliminating what he had experienced before, namely his job and marriage. The situation he was in was tough, but he learned to live with it and find comfort and courage in changes. It's also interesting to note that, in the other novels, the protagonists ended up in different places than where they started. Santiago settled in a desert town in Egypt while Gilbert lived between America, Australia, Bali, and Brazil. However, Heat-Moon went back to Missouri. He went back to the same place he started so it can symbolize that he has not changed much or just changed enough to deal with the problems he had before the trip. As the critic Mark Allister noted, Heat-Moon's actions were very passive. He drove and talked to people during his journey, and he had very little action regarding his self-discovery and transformation.

The novel combined with Allister's criticism can even be used against my argument suggesting that people who travel will encounter different cultures and environments, but they will ultimately go back home and back to how things were. Travel narratives utilize foreign cultures and experiences as consumable for the characters where they explore the environment for their own benefit and return home to the same knowledge and awareness they had before. I would not say this explanation is untrue: this novel and the other two can be used to argue against my thesis. However, as shown in the previous chapter, self-discovery, and transformation is mainly an unconscious desire. The protagonists choose to travel because

they had a dream, they want to escape or they simply want to enjoy life, but during the trip, they come across people, cultures, food, and costumes that transform the way they think and see the world. Santiago understood how everything is interconnected through a spiritual awakening, Heat-Moon understood that change is inevitable, and that one should learn how to adapt but preserve the past. The last novel analyzed in this thesis shows how Gilbert healed herself, both physically and mentally, through enjoying good food in Italy, meditating in India, and finding love and balance in Indonesia.

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Similar to *Blue Highways*, *Eat, Pray, Love*, portrays the story of a divorced person (Elizabeth Gilbert) looking for healing after a broken marriage. The novel is also similar to *The Alchemist*, as the protagonist is consciously looking for a spiritual awakening where she can confront herself and her co-dependent tendencies when it comes to love. Gilbert was able to travel for a year to three different countries after her divorce was settled, thus gaining the same freedom of movement that Santiago and Heat-Moon had. With this ability to move anywhere she wants, Gilbert was not bound by anything anymore. She could finally enjoy doing the things that she wanted without giving any explanation. One of those things was to travel to Italy to learn Italian and eat good food. There was no purpose in learning the language and Gilbert simply did it because she wanted to. She was also free to explore the different cities in Italy and get lost in them because she acknowledges that she can go everywhere she wants. Being able to move and discover the world was a big part of Gilbert's self-identity and transformation.

The difference between her self-discovery journey and the other two characters analyzed in this thesis is that Gilbert was looking for this transformation. She wanted to know who she really was without any romantic interest in her mind or the unwanted married life. It seems like she followed what was expected of a woman in New York, such as having a high-paying job, marrying, and having kids. But Gilbert did not actually want any of those things. She was very unhappy with the life that she had, and she was trying to, in a way, find happiness again by doing the things she wanted and following her dreams. I wouldn't say that *Eat, Pray, Love* was an inspiring novel to me the same way *The Alchemist* was, even though both characters follow their desires and go against societal norms. Many critics say that Gilbert's experiences are due to her privilege of being able to travel even before her novel was published because the writing agency already bought the story. Her romanticism of

poverty in India and lack of self-awareness on how she impacts the place she visits also raise many questions. Those details alone mean that the novel is not relatable to everyone. However, *Eat, Pray, Love* has a great audience. The novel was well received, and many women decided to go on adventures similar to what Gilbert did. It even boosted the economy in India since they created Ashram's and activities catered for what the novel entails, which is spiritual awakening and confronting their past traumas. This suggests that *Eat, Pray, Love* was indeed an inspiring book for a very specific audience. It catered to wealthy white women who wanted to experience being free and had the financial ability and security to explore the world. These readers wanted to experience the food, the spiritual wisdom, and the romance themselves while escaping their unhappy lives.

Despite Gilbert's privilege and race, the journey through Italy, India, and Indonesia was very important for her self-discovery and transformation because she not only understood but was able to identify her bad habits when it comes to relationships and acted accordingly. She healed her body through food and a routine in her life where she could continue to take care of herself through meditation. Even if readers cannot relate to the ways Gilbert describes herself and her narrative persona, they can still benefit from the important aspects the novel highlights such as the importance of the freedom of movement in a self-discovery journey where characters are able to go and do what they really desire despite criticism and societal norms.

6.3 Personal Development through Travel

None of the novels in this thesis identify themselves as backpacking travel narratives but I would argue that they contain elements of learning and personal developments that are characteristic of backpackers. In the tourism literature, backpacking has been generally regarded as a way of learning and self-development (Chen and Huang 276, 2018). This form of travel contributes to personal development in which the travelers not only acquire personal skills but also experience changes in worldview and discover positive values that help them achieve a higher quality of human life (Chen and Huang 276, 2018). Santiago and Gilbert are good examples of this since they learned new skills throughout their journey; Santiago learned how to run a business with the crystal merchant and Gilbert learned about meditation. However, they also achieve a better quality of life as Santiago accomplished his dreams and understood the Soul of the World while Gilbert healed her depression and acknowledged her problematic attachments and behavior. More and more often, travel involves self-

development through cross-cultural encounters and interactions. Though, it is important to note that short periods of exposure to a different culture can hardly create in-depth appreciation, but rather superficial learning of other cultures (Chen and Huang 277, 2018).

There has been a lot of research on the benefits of travel and tourism, tourism experience, quality of life (QOL), and tourists' life satisfaction that can be used to theorize the concept of personal development that we have explored in this thesis. Personal development occurs in various stages of human life, from infancy to the adult stage and senility (Chen and Huang 630, 2017). At a certain age, a person could achieve personal development through tourism experiences and activities. Thus, the growing literature on tourists' quality of life responds to the fast-changing demands and behavior of the tourist market; that is, travelers are now seeking various benefits from travel experiences Chen and Huang 630-1, 2017). Different types of travel may generate different forms of benefits in personal development. Following the backpacker's theory from the previous paragraph, backpacking is defined as a "travel form or style in which travelers prefer budget accommodation, longer holidays, itinerary flexibility, meeting other travelers, and social and participatory holiday activities" (Chen and Huang 631, 2017). All the novels analyzed in this thesis have longer holidays and two of the protagonists even move to a different country. They also include itinerary flexibility. In *The Alchemist*, Santiago had to be flexible in his journey because he was robbed in Morocco, so he had to stay for a while to earn money, and he also had to stay in the desert town because of the wars. In *Blue Highways*, Heat-Moon was also quite flexible as he could choose to which obscure town he wanted to drive next. Gilbert in Eat, Pray Love, had no itinerary in Italy and Indonesia and decided to stay in the Ashram longer than she had planned. All three of the protagonists met other travelers: Santiago met the Englishman, Heat-Moon met other hitchhikers and Gilbert found a lover from Brazil. We can see that the travelers in the novels have many similarities with backpackers and thus it can be interesting to look at the backpacker personal development scale (BPDS) created by Ganghua Chen, Jigang Bao, and Songshan (Sam) Huang.

The original backpacker personal development scale was developed using a Chinese backpacker sample. Although backpackers from different countries and regions have different motivations, travel styles, and travel lengths, the BPD has been tested on backpackers that represent a cross-cultural setting that is significantly different from the Chinese context, namely Western backpackers (Chen and Huang 631, 2017). The definition of backpackers is yet to be fully agreed upon, but many researchers define them as "travelers who prefer budget accommodation, longer holidays, itinerary flexibility, meeting other travelers, and

involvement in participatory activities" (Chen and Huang 631, 2017). In such situations, backpackers are motivated to "learn more about other cultures," "learn more about [them]self," and "interact with the local people" (Chen and Huang 631, 2017). They also spend some time helping poverty-stricken communities or conserving environments. All the protagonists analyzed in this thesis have been involved in one or multiple activities defined by backpackers. Throughout their journey, they also learn more about the cultures they visit. Santiago and Gilbert learn a new language, which is a big part of the culture of a place. Heat-Moon, even though he did not leave his home country, gets involved with the locals by understanding their customs, and trying their food, since the United States is composed of many different ethnicities. Furthermore, Chen and Huang's article explains that backpackers also demonstrate motivations such as "experiencing a different culture," "self-fulfillment," "social interactions," and "escapism" (631, 2017). "Escapism" was evident in both Heat-Moon and Gilbert as they both stated that they needed to get away from their situations to find what they were looking for. Heat-Moon had nothing else to lose after the failures in work and marriage, while Gilbert had just finished a difficult divorce and an unhealthy relationship. The need to escape somewhere else to find self-fulfillment is common for many types of travelers and I would argue that since these characters have lost a lot, especially mentally, they are more inclined to let go of the little they had in order to find contentment.

The measurement scale for the backpacker's personal development consists of five domains: capability, emotion, skill, worldview, and self-consciousness (Chen and Huang 631-2, 2017). Travelers will measure themselves in how much they have evolved in these different domains. For example, for capability, they could see if their capability to adapt to new environments or resolve problems has improved. For emotion, they could explain how their negative emotions, anxiety, and/or stress have been relieved. The domain for skills consists of travelers measuring their money or time management skills. Worldview measures the traveler's view about the world and their life, and lastly, self-consciousness measures their confidence, self-discipline, and if they have changed at all after the journey. By looking at these measurement domains for personal development in backpackers, we can see that the characters in the novels have evolved in these specific categories. Santiago in *The Alchemist* adapted to a new culture (capability). He came from a very Christian family but moved to a country where people were primarily Muslim. He also gained business skills by selling coffee with the crystal merchant (skill). Heat-Moon in *Blue Highways* was more conscious about change both in himself, others, and his environment (self-consciousness). His worldview also changed because he understood that one could preserve but adapt to change (worldview).

Gilbert in *Eat, Pray, Love* developed a lot emotionally. She was aware of her bad habits towards relationships, her traumas, and her depression (emotion). Furthermore, I do believe she was already quite disciplined because she had a successful career and lived the fast-paced life of a New Yorker, but her self-control went even further during her meditations and her time at the Ashram (self-consciousness). Based on the BPD scale, the characters in the novels have achieved some form of personal development throughout their journey by attaining better mental and physical health as well as understanding how both they and the world work. The journey was important for their lives as they developed many personal qualities. The backpacker personal development scale can be used as a tool to classify and categorize the character's development even though they are meant to be used for specifically Chinese backpackers. Many individuals have studied the scale and applied the information to Western travelers. The same can be done to describe the development of the protagonists analyzed in this thesis as they experience growth in their capabilities, emotions, skills, worldview, and self-consciousness.

Not all modern individuals are alienated from society, and many may be driven by things other than the search for authenticity. This has generated an increasing literature critique on the nature of authenticity, many tourist typologies, and discussions about other travel motives such as the desire to escape the ordinary and see and experience something different. In this thesis, we have looked at two novels where the protagonist escaped from their current life through travel. In the article "Do Tourists Travel for the Discovery of 'Self' or Search for the 'Other,'" Moscardo et. al. suggests that the personal escape in travel was designed to get away from one's normal self while the interpersonal escape was to get away from other people (84). I do not see these two categories as mutually exclusive because Heat-Moon and Gilbert both had simultaneously a personal escape and an interpersonal escape. Heat-Moon lost his ordinary life and instead of confronting his new reality, he decided to take to the road. However, I would argue that he also escaped his ex-wife as he mentioned that he found her talking to someone's new friend shortly after their divorce. Gilbert had a very traumatic divorce as well. It was very difficult to communicate and collaborate with her ex-husband and the new relationship she found herself in was not going so well. Both these cases illustrate how personal and interpersonal escape can come together to result in personal development—not just through traveling but through travel writing.

7 Future Research

The travel narrative has evolved in the last century due to a set of different factors. As stated in the theory chapter, the travel narrative has evolved first by adapting to the changing social and historical circumstances. Second, the novelization of the genre allowed it to appear less outmoded, mannered, and conservative as it followed the literary context that dominates the most. Third, the travel narrative has borrowed from other narrative genres, which includes "extraliterary heteroglossia," irony, and critical self-consciousness. Lastly, novelized genres evolve by embracing open-endedness, un-finalizability, and self-scrutiny (Burton 14). The same parameters can be used today to predict how travel writing will maintain the interest of the general public.

By looking at the first step in the evolution of travel writing, adapting to social and historical circumstances, it would be interesting to see how the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevents many to move and travel freely, will affect this genre. Freedom of movement is very important for the self-discovery of the character and thus the reader. By having the ability to travel around, they can experience different challenges that would affect their personal development. With the COVID-19 restrictions, one can argue that travel writing would be redirected to home tours, where the characters explore their home country and find a sense of belonging and community. *Blue Highways* would be a good example of what travel literature could be after this historic event as the protagonist goes on a road trip through his own country and finds companionship in the people of rural America.

Travel narrative has followed the literary context that dominates the most and due to the modernization of humanity, it is safe to say that it will continue doing so. With the advancement in technology we have in this century, the internet may soon give the possibility of virtual travel. However, Korte stated that electronic media only gives the impression of "being there and not being there" (143). The same can be argued with reading a physical book. The readers are experiencing a country and their culture by not being there physically so we could say that the experience of reading a travel narrative and walking through a VR version of a different country would be the same. However, I would argue that having a physical book makes the experience more authentic than experiencing it through virtual reality. It is also the act of travel writing itself that shows the unconscious development and transformation that a character has and thus can be transferred to the reader. I would say that, for virtual reality to become a real competitor to physical books, they would have to involve

more senses so that the user can fully immerse themselves in the experience. Even then, one could argue that, after they fully experience a country with all the senses involved, the user might have to write it down in order to recognize the effects the experience has caused on their self-development.

Following the third step of travel writing evolution, the genre's ability to borrow other discourses is useful as it can, for example, utilize environmentalists' discourse and mass tourism in its stories. We are more aware of the effects of climate change today than ever before and this knowledge can be used in travel writing narratives to highlight for example, how the biology of a region is in danger because of economic development, globalization, and modernization. The stories can now focus on cultural and nature preservation and give a voice to these countries that are being affected by capitalism, climate change, and mass tourism. It is interesting to note that it is economic development, globalization, and modernization that have contributed to the evolution of the travel narrative. As the economy evolves, more and more people can travel and re-tell their experiences. They can stay an extended period of time in a different country and have the means to travel effectively. It would be interesting to see how these aspects that help the travel narrative adapt and evolve will be used in the environmental problems we have today. Because of the excess of CO_2 emissions, moral objections might be raised against taking airplanes for pleasure, indicating that people might be inclined to travel locally. Circumstances that are out of our hands can also alter the trajectory of travel writing since physical travel might become more difficult because of extreme weather patterns, natural catastrophes, and global economic crises resulting from losses in the energy sector and resources.

Lastly, the travel narrative will continue embracing open-endedness, un-finalizability, and self-scrutiny. As the genre is so diverse, it will continue exploring different themes and genres in order for it to evolve. For this thesis, we only analyzed the aspect of self-discovery that is both happening consciously and unconsciously by the character and the reader. But there are many more themes one could explore in this genre, everything from political and postcolonial to historical and social. I believe that there is a lot more the study in travel literature and as long as we keep traveling, there will always be something to explore.

8 Conclusion

Travel writing is a genre that I have always been interested in. I have been fortunate enough to travel around the world at a young age, and I have always been fascinated by other cultures, languages, and people. To write a thesis about this subject was an amazing experience for me and to dive into existential themes such as identity and self-discovery was challenging but rewarding. By writing this thesis, I have gained knowledge and a greater understanding of travel literature. This form of literature has been around for a long time, and it is fascinating to see it flourish and transform throughout the centuries. In a way, the genre adapts and develops by looking at our society and utilizing tools from other areas of study such as anthropology, politics, and social science. One could say that the genre itself changes by self-discovering and exploring itself using outside research such as people and technology. The genre's ability to utilize elements from other literary genres, like autobiography, allows travel writing to be a very ambiguous and complex form of literature, creating a literary genre that changes over time, borrows from and differentiates itself from other genres, and exists in relation to changing social and political relations. When looking at a genre that is so complex and has so many facets, I decided to focus on the characters and the readers of travel literature to see how they interact with each other. I was interested in what made them travel in the first place and what they expected to find in such travels. This interest turned into the idea of using travel as a tool for self-discovery where the characters and the reader have a reason for starting the journey or reading travel narratives but are unconsciously looking for a change in themselves.

Throughout this thesis, I have learned a lot about interpretation theory and how to become both the analyst and the analysand, which is the technique Holland and Green used mentioned on chapter 2.2. By using Freud's dream and desire theory, I understood how the primitive part of the brain works. It is interesting to see how our mind can store several different emotions and experiences and both consciously and unconsciously bring those memories forward when we encounter one specific event. The ability to create desire by repressing a wish was also fascinating to learn and was showcased so easily in the novels analyzed in this thesis. It reminds me of the cliché that humans want what they cannot have, thus they search for it in other ways. If one wishes to travel to Egypt and discover the immense treasures the country has to offer, one can do so by reading *The Alchemist*. Or for me, who have never been to America, it was mesmerizing to read *Blue Highways* and follow

Heat-Moon along his journey in the little towns he discovers on the road. I was especially captivated by his descriptions of food and how diverse they were throughout the journey. Nonetheless, studying transference was also very interesting to me. The novel makes the reader question their dreams or asks them why they are stuck in one place when they can just go, and this creates a conversation between the book and the reader. We then see how the author's dreams and desires are transferred to the characters in the novel, which then are interpreted based on the reader's experience or desires. The opposite effect was also interesting to me, especially when reading *Eat, Pray, Love*. As I have been to Italy before and found the country absolutely breathtaking, I found myself reminiscing about my trip there, relating to Gilbert's curiosity for the food and the language.

Even though my argument is that readers are unconsciously undergoing a self-discovery journey while reading travel narratives, there are many different reasons why literature can affect us and why we read them. Many become inspired to travel in their own home country the same way Heat-Moon did. Readers may like to visit those remote towns and see how the community is there and how they adapt to urbanization and technological advancements. Others may become inspired to travel and live abroad, just for the sake of having a new challenge and experience, and to know that they are capable of confronting issues such as culture shock and language barriers. For many, it can also be psychologically beneficial to just leave so they can have a fresh perspective when they come back. However, travel is a privilege. Some people cannot make trips at home, let alone international ones. The reasons may vary, but most of them boil down to the economic issues and responsibilities they cannot leave behind. In some cases, they live under oppression and are not even allowed to leave the country. Therefore, travel narratives are an excellent tool that helps others have a different experience and live through the characters in the novel. In this way, the readers can experience a new country, culture, and people without subjecting themselves to extreme economic losses or without having to leave their responsibilities behind. Travel writing is such a diverse genre that people are attracted to it for different reasons, one of them being the self-discovery and personal development trope, where the reader gets to reflect on their own identity, fears, dreams, repressed feelings, and problematic behaviors and thoughts about another culture, food, or people. It is a genre that impacts many and is probably one of the many reasons it has survived for so long.

This thesis aims to highlight the unconscious impact travel narratives have on the characters and the reader's self-discovery and transformation journey. The thesis also shows that change is not something to be afraid of. Many of the characters analyzed needed to

change in order to grow. Some even needed to see that change is not something bad at all and learned to embrace it. The protagonist in *The Alchemist*, Santiago, learned that by following his dreams, he will always be on the right path. Through this character, the reader learns how to trust in themselves and gains the courage to follow their dreams. The reader and Santiago then learn that everything is interconnected, that people, the desert, and the sun are working together and, if one wishes to fulfill their destiny, the world will help them conquer those dreams. The moral in this novel is very idealistic. Not everyone has the possibility to follow their dreams. However, the novel also suggests that everyone has a choice if they want to follow their destiny or not because it is challenging. Santiago lost money three times, had to work for a year, and was tangled in the war issues of the desert, but in the end, he received all that back and more. In the second novel analyzed, the thesis highlights what the past can do for us. The past is there to help us learn and to grow but is also there to be reminded. Heat-Moon had a hard time dealing with change in his life, but seeing how people preserved but adapted to those changes made him more confident that he could do the same. The past will always be a part of him, but he could learn and grow from it. In the last novel, *Eat, Pray, Love,* the thesis shows how therapeutic and spiritual travel can be. One gets to experience different cultures when traveling and they have an impact on one's well-being. Just the fact that one has the ability to move freely is already helpful enough for one's mental health and this can be seen in the character Gilbert. All the characters analyzed had gone through some form of change, either mentally or physically, due to their journey showing how impactful it was for them.

The relevance of this thesis to the different novels analyzed shows how travel writing has evolved in the new millennium. There is a 24-year gap between *Blue Highways'* first publication, in 1982, and *Eat, Pray, Love* in 2006. However, both novels were centered on a character who got divorced and wanted to see the world for themselves. In *Blue Highways*, the self-discovery journey was in the character's homeland while in *Eat, Pray, Love*, it was an international trip. This shows how the modes of travel have evolved and the accessibility of international travel has increased. This thesis then shows that travel literature will further evolve not only according to technological advancements but also our societal interests. In *Eat, Pray, Love*, themes such as the impact of tourism in the East, and women's resistance to patriarchal social norms were highlighted, and even though such themes are important nowadays, travel literature will continue to adapt to our society's needs and perhaps, in a couple of decades, will focus on self-taught matters like the impact of tourism in regards to climate change and how to ethically observe, or even consume, other cultures through virtual

reality. I believe it is important to observe and study travel narratives from the past decades since it is a genre that rapidly evolves, and we have undergone so many changes just in the past few years. To see how these changes have affected and will affect travel writing and its readers is essential for understanding how and why travel literature has survived and will probably survive in the years to come. Nevertheless, this thesis is meant to be educational and to highlight themes I find interesting not only in travel writing but in literature in general. We are always evolving as humans and no matter our age, social status, or life circumstances, there is always something new to explore. Our capacity to adapt to change is tremendous and our ability to create something is outstanding as well. I find that travel literature has the same essence as humans since it is so versatile and is able to adapt to new themes, genres, and narrative forms. Travel writing is a genre that should be observed and studied more as I believe it still has a lot to offer. It is a genre that teaches so much about the world but about us as well, subjecting us to experiences, people, and places that challenge our perspective on identity, roots, and transformation.

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