

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Dreams, symbols, signs, and adventure can be found easily in "*The Alchemist*". In this novel Coelho sends messages that we should not avoid our destinies and urges people to follow their dreams because to find their "Personal Myth" and find "God", this mean to find happiness and fulfillment, the ultimate purpose of creation.

Paulo Coelho was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He attended a Jesuit school. As a teenager, Coelho wanted to become a writer. Upon telling his mother this, she responded with "My dear, your father is an engineer. He's a logical, reasonable man with a very clear vision of the world. Do you actually know what it means to be a writer?" (Thind, 2007, p.1) After researching, Coelho concluded that a writer "always wears glasses and never combs his hair" and has a "duty and an obligation never to be understood by his own generation," amongst other things (Thind, 2007, p.1). At 17, Coelho's introversion and opposition to following a traditional path led to his parents committing him to a mental institution from which he escaped three times before being released at the age of 20. Coelho later remarked that "It wasn't that they wanted to hurt me, but they didn't know what to do... They did not do that to destroy me; they did that to save me." (Day, 2005). According to the

same source, at his parents' wishes, Coelho enrolled in Law school and abandoned his dream of becoming a writer. One year later, he dropped out and lived life as a hippie, traveling through South America, North Africa, Mexico, and Europe and becoming immersed in the drug culture of the 1960s. Upon his return to Brazil, Coelho worked as a songwriter, composing lyrics for Elis Regina, Rita Lee, and Brazilian icon, Raul Seixas. Composing with Raul led Paulo to being associated with satanism and occultism, due to the content of some songs. In 1974, Coelho was arrested for "subversive" activities by the ruling military government, who had taken power ten years earlier and viewed his lyrics as left-wing and dangerous. Coelho also worked as an actor, journalist, and theatre director before pursuing his writing career.

In 1986, Coelho walked the 500-plus mile Road of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, a turning point in his life. On the path, Coelho had a spiritual awakening, which he described autobiographically in *The Pilgrimage*. In an interview, Coelho stated:

[In 1986], I was very happy in the things I was doing. I was doing something that gave me food and water -- to use the metaphor in "*The Alchemist*", I was working, I had a person who I loved, I had money, but I was not fulfilling my dream. My dream was, and still is, to be a writer. (Live Positive, 2004, p.1)

Coelho would leave his lucrative career as a songwriter and pursue writing full-time.

The Alchemist is an allegorical novel by Paulo Coelho which was first published in 1988. According to *HarperCollins Publisher*, it has been

categorized as a modern classic. *The Alchemist* was originally written in Portuguese and has since been translated into 67 languages, winning the Guinness World Record for most translated book by a living author. It has sold more than 65 million copies in more than 150 countries, becoming one of the best-selling books in history (AFP, 2008).

This inspirational novel has been a bestseller all over the world. The story of Santiago, a shepherd boy, who dreams of seeing the world, is really interesting to follow especially the parts when Santiago learns many lessons during his adventures. He was traveling from Spain to Morocco to find worldly success when he finally arrived in Egypt where he met an alchemist who brings him at last to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment. The story is full of symbols representing specific wisdoms and dreams.

All language consists of symbols. A symbol is a particular mark that represents some piece of information. For example, a red octagon may be a symbol for "STOP". On a map, a picture of a table might represent a campsite. Numerals are symbols for numbers. Personal names are symbols representing individuals. On a color, red may symbolize passion, anger, sexuality, revolution, danger. (McDevitt, A, 1997, p 3). As the color of blood, red is the symbol of life; but blood, of course may also mean death. (McDevitt, A, 1997, p.3). White may signify pure and innocence, peace happiness, joy; but in the East it is associated with death and mourning (McDevitt, A, 1997, p. 4).

The writer found *The Alchemist* a wonderful tale of someone pursuing one's dreams. *The Alchemist* is like a simple, motivational novel that tells you that everything is possible as long as you really want it to happen. The main message, transmitted to readers is that "when you really want something to happen, the whole universe conspires so that your wish comes true"

1.2. Field of the Study

The field of this study is focused on literature

1.3. Scope of the Study

The study will be focused on literature; especially a novel entitled *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. The main focus of the study is symbol.

1.4. Problem Formulation

1. What are the symbols found in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*?
2. What are the meanings of the symbols in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*?

1.5. Objective of the Study

1. To know the symbols found in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*
2. To know the meanings of the symbols in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study concentrates on literature especially novel. The Writer hopes this study will help the readers more understand about the novel especially about the symbol.

1.7. Definition of Terms

In this thesis, there are some terms that need explanation in order to avoid confusion from the readers. Those terms are the words:

1. **Symbol:** A symbol is something such as a particular mark that represents some piece of information. (Hornby, A.S, 1995, p. 1211)
2. **Alchemist:** an Alchemist is a person who practiced alchemy. (Hornby, A.S, 1995, p. 28)
3. **Alchemy:** Alchemy is an ancient tradition, the primary objective of which was the creation of the mythical "philosopher's stone," which was said to be capable of turning base metals into gold or silver, and also act as an elixir of life that would confer youth and immortality upon its user. As practiced historically, alchemy can be viewed as a proto science, a precursor to modern chemistry, having provided procedures, equipment, and terminology that are still in use. However, alchemy also included various non-scientific mythological, religious, and spiritual concepts, theories and practices. (Hornby, A.S, 1995, p. 28)

4. Urim and Thummim: תומים (*Thummim*) is widely considered to be derived from the consonantal root תומים (t-m-m), meaning *innocent*, while אורים (*Urim*) has traditionally been taken to derive from a root meaning *lights*; these derivations are reflected in the Neqqudot of the masoretic text. In consequence, *Urim and Thummim* has traditionally been translated as *lights and perfections* (by Theodotion, for example), or, by taking the phrase allegorically, as meaning *revelation and truth, or doctrine and truth* (it appears in this form in the Vulgate, in the writing of Jerome, and in the Hexapla). It should be understood that "Thummim" is pronounced /tumim/ in Modern Hebrew (Funk, Wagnalls, 2002-2011)

