

Magical Realism in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*

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Abstract:

Paulo Coelho portrays 'magical realism' and meaning for a life through the character, Santiago. Santiago is a shepherd boy who is from Andalusia. He wishes to travel around the world yet he wants to learn through his travel. The author connotatively took the tool dream as magical realism in this novel, through the character Santiago. He believes that his recurrent dream would fulfill his wishes if he finds the treasure. In his dream, he gets to meet many person, they are the old woman, the old king, the crystal merchant, the English man, the Alchemist, the caravan driver and several figures. He learns various things from them and one day he finds out where the treasure is. He gets particular answer from the heads of the persons who are all coming into his dream.

Key Words : Magical Realism, dream, travel, treasure

Paulo Coelho is a prolific and living writer in Latin American literature. His novels reveal quest for knowledge, longing to learn necromancy and life's depression. Coelho, himself narrated his own experiences in many of his novels. During his life in mental Asylum, he implemented his experiences in one of his novels. The narrative techniques adopted by him in his novels are fantasy, realistic attitude and true love of women. Coelho would be an innovator of implementing extraordinary techniques in all of his works. In his novels characters are seeker of true love and to know the tradition of moon, sun that leads eternal search of life treasure. Coelho's writing style could have been called unique in literary writing. He had depicted life, love and magic as a great impact chosen by him. Life struggles towards true identity of women; recognition of values in everyone's life is well established in his novels. He had given equal importance for traditional aspects, life values through his experiences travel around many European countries. Coelho's characters are soft in nature, seeker of something in their life. His place in Latin American literature is well equipped. He got reputation for his novels best seller, internationally recognized by Economic forum. He received best seller award for his debuted novels ***The Alchemist***, ***Eleven Minutes*** and ***The Zahir; A Novel of Obsession***.

Paulo Coelho was born in Brazil in August 24, 1947. He is a Brazilian novelist. Coelho became one of the most widely read authors in the world today. Especially renowned for ***The Alchemist*** and ***Eleven Minutes***, he has sold more than 140 million books worldwide and has been translated into 72 languages. He is the recipient of numerous prestigious international awards amongst them the crystal Award by the World Economic Forum.

The Alchemist in Portuguese titled ***O Alquimista*** was published in 1988. Santiago is a young shepherd boy who is from Andalusia is the protagonist of the novel. He is a shepherd boy who believes recurring dream which he has every night. An old woman appears in his

dream and she directs him to find the hidden treasure in Egypt's Pyramid. Early his journey, he meets her, but she promises to give one tenth of the treasure. She took his palms into her hand and read thoroughly. Finally she regretted not to need the treasure which he finds later. Later he meets an old king then he shells his sheep travel to Egypt. During his travel, he happened to see a beautiful young Arabian woman in the desert named Fatima. He falls in love with Fatima who explains her about his life. At the end of the novel, Santiago finds out where the treasure is. Thus, Fatima told him, she already knew a young boy from Andalusia comes here. And he fell in love with her. Coelho narrated the novel with symbol of sycamore tree, merchants shop and Egypt's pyramid.

The most important thing is that, he always lives in his dream. Dream world is entirely different from the real world. He thinks that there are some possibility of having dream comes true that makes life interesting. He suddenly remembers his dreamt hat, in Tarifa, there is an old woman who places his hands her hands and begins to pray quiet which is like a gypsy prayer. The boy becomes nervous and he pulls his hands. The old woman says that "you came so that you could learn about your dreams and Dreams are the language of God"(T.A 12). As a reply he reveals his dream to her. In his dream, he is in Andalusia field with his sheep.

The boy follows the old proverb "Hard work never fails". He thinks that if he works for a year, he will buy some sheep. He suggests some idea to sell the crystals. By the boy's suggestion, the merchant displays the crystals outside. At the time two customers buy three crystal glasses. The boy receives good commission. The merchant enquires about purpose of the boy to go Egypt. He shows deaf ear to him because he does not want to think over the painful memory of his dream. The merchant says about his dreams. Later, the merchant gives

his blessings to the boy. The boy still remembers the king's saying "Never stop dreaming", "Follows the Omens" (59).

He speaks himself that he has to work hard to make his dream true, but now he loses his confidence. He convinces and believes himself that the two magical stones give strength to him. He thinks that "I can always go back to being a shepherd, the boy thought, I learned how to care for sheep, and I have not forgotten how that's done. But maybe I'll never have another chance to get to the Pyramids in Egypt" (T.A 61). His mental attitudes change often and make him more confused. He wishes to go back to his sheep; because they are friendly to him. He does not know whether the desert will be friendly with him.

In this novel one can find two men Santiago and the Englishman pursuing their dreams with utmost sincerity. In the end it is only Santiago who reaches his destination and it seems that the English man still has a long way to go. The reason for this can be seen in the different attitudes of these two men. The English man though genuinely interested in alchemy has only bookish knowledge. He is not able to understand the caravan, the desert, or the wind. Santiago on the hand is unable to understand the bulky and scholarly books on alchemy he is contact to study the language without words of the animals and people around him and this knowledge leads him to his treasure. During his journey Santiago once got distracted towards worldly pleasure which almost broke his courageous soul. In Africa he was attracted by the beauty of a sword displayed in the market. At this time a thief stole all his money. He was left dejected and the words of the old king brought joy to his dampened spirits and he continued with his journey. The wind, water, sun, and the desert speak a common language the language of the soul of the world. When he realized this miracle of nature Santiago reached his quest for life treasure through his dream.

The boy meets an English man on the caravan. The Englishman tries to become a great Alchemist. His interest is to read books. He has been filling his suitcase with books. The boy and the English man buys two camels. Different people live in the desert and they follow different religion. The boy often believes Jesus Christ. "... Each was swearing quietly to his or her own god. The boy sore to Jesus Christ" (T.A, 68). Because Christ is also a shepherd that he believes Jesus will save his life and his sheep too. The caravan moves towards the desert. The sound of the eternal wind only revolves around him, and the boy speaks to himself.

I have learned things from the sheep, and I've learned things
from crystal but now I can learn something from the
desert too. The wind never stopped, and the boy
remembered the day he had sat at the fort in Tarifa with
this same wind blowing in his face. It reminded him of the
wool from his sheep....his sheep who were now seeking
food and water in the fields of Andalusia, as they always had (T.A,70).

The boy reads some while he is travelling to Egypt. After he is interested to listen the caravan and the wind. He throws his books away. The boy quietly harmonious with the camel driver who frightens the boy "one you get in to the desert, there's no going back"(T.A,74). The English man advises to the boy "When you want something with all your heart, that's when you are closest to the soul of the world. It is always a positive force" (T.A, 75). The English man speaks about the soul of the earth,

Everything on the earth is being continuously transformed

Because the earth is alive.... and it has a soul. We are part of

that soul, so we rarely recognize that it is working for us.

But in the crystal sop you probably realized that even the

glasses were collaborating in your success. (T.A, 75).

The English man has lot of books that deals about Kings, Mercury, Salt and dragons. But one of the books deals with Alchemy who has a power to transform any metals into gold. In the mean time the boy remembers about his treasure. He realizes his dream slowly that the boy seeks help from the Englishman to find out a well versed Alchemist.

. In the novel, The Alchemist Coelho has adopted Post-Modern elements through the character Santiago. He staunchly believed his recurring dream usually he had under the sycamore tree and some other elements directs him to arrive the desert. Even the wind, sun, and the water could speak with him through his journey.

Often he thinks about his lover who said to the boy “Everything is written in the soul of the world, and there it will stay forever” (T.A, 118). It means his lover often waiting for his arrival. Santiago says to The Alchemist he wants to learn something. The Alchemist replies “Everything you need to know you have learned through your journey” (T.A, 120). Probably the Alchemist greets the boy for achieving his destiny. The boy continues to search his treasure. He keenly looked his heart often. In his earlier days his heart that he staunchly believed speaks about the treasure. He becomes quiet later his heart speaks about his lover. He thinks that his heart says him to return Oasis. The boy still speaks with his heart,

When I have been truly searching for my treasure, everyday

Has been luminous, because I've known that every hour
Was a part of the dream that I would find it. When I have
Been truly something for my treasure, I've discovered things along the
way that I never would have seen had I not had the courage to try things
that seemed impossible for a shepherd to achieve (T.A, 125).

The boy's heart replies that "Everyone on Earth has a treasure that awaits him (T.A, 125). Santiago does not stop his heart that he hears the alarm sound inside his heart. The sound gives some message to the boy that 'Before a dream is realized, the soul of the world tests everything was learned along the way' (T.A, 126). He remembers an old proverb his country "Every search begins with beginner's luck. And every search ends with the victor's being severely tested" (T.A, 127). People are living in the world, they are able to understand the language, same things the boy follows and he tries to understand the language of the desert and the wind. The boy and the Alchemist are going towards pyramids. Both of them are caught by the tribesman and are taken to a nearby Military camp. Tribesman thinks that both of them have the power to transform him into the wind. Tribesman orders the boy to change himself as wind. If he does not do, the chief will take their lives. The boy has only three days to accomplish the tasks. He asks The Alchemist how to turn himself as wind. The Alchemist answers "..... The worlds are only that visible aspect of god. And that what Alchemy does to bring spiritual perfection in to contact with the material plane" (T.A, 136).

He becomes friendly with nature so he speaks with wind. The boy wants to help wind because the military camp threatens the boy. The wind understands the situation of the boy, when he caught by the military camp. If a person wants to achieve something in the world lot

of distraction will come. He has to face every problem then he will reach the goal. The boy lives in the difficult situation that is the military camp which distracts him to find out the hidden treasure. The wind helps the boy by raising its power and destroys the military camp. It is one of the kinds of Magical Realism. In this time readers know nature and human become one. Without nature one cannot survive the world. Human beings do not the nature, that only saves human life.

Coelho is a post-modernist writer yet he elevated postmodern elements and techniques in this novel. It is about full of playfulness and the story revolving around journey. Even the journey can be of two types, both spiritual journey and mental journey. These all elements could have been well merged in post-modern theory so Coelho is a post-modern writer.

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