Chapter 6

The Narrative Perspectives: An Analysis of

the Select Novels of Paulo Coelho

"I believe that each reader creates his own film inside his head, gives

faces to the characters, constructs every scene, hears the voices, smells

the smells." (Coelho qtd. in *The Zahir* 120)

The novels of Paulo Coelho connote transnational literature and represent his multicultural readership. Coelho's fictional narratives fascinate "his readers for the "real-life- like" qualities of the implied author, authorial audience, characters and settings" (Murta 67). In the narratives of his novels, the melange of cultures, the process of cultural hybridization is universal. These include the fusions of religious philosophies, cultural-textual allusions, transcultural contexts and multicultural interpretations. The located discourse or acts between the characters direct the narratives in his novels to focus on the personal legends of the protagonists. As mentioned in chapter 3, personal legend is the term coined by Coelho and it first emerged in his transnational best-selling novel, *The Alchemist* (1988). It is described as a person's aspirations to fulfil his or her dreams in life. Personal Legend is "what you have always wanted to accomplish" (*Alchemist* 20). In *The Alchemist* (1988), the Englishman explains to Santiago that, in alchemy it is a positive force and it is known as "the Soul of the World", he further illustrates that when "you want something with all your heart, that's when you are closest to the Soul of the World" (*Alchemist* 75). It serves as the means through which a person perceives life to be entirely fulfilling. It is similar to the Japanese idea of 'Ikigai', which signifies pursuing one's ultimate motive in life, the achievement of an object or entity that leads to happiness. During an interview with Brazilian author and poet Roseana Murray in *Paulo Coelho: Confessions of a Pilgrim* (1999), Coelho mentions that in his fictional world, the characters

on the personal plane acknowledge that one can never be alienated by their uncertainties as they travel on the path of their own personal legends.   On a collective plane, however, the characters proceed with their quest for legends by resisting every aspects of cultural, political, or religious conservatism and by eagerly embracing every new experience through transcultural contacts. Consequently, personal legend illustrates that humans are all intertwined. And thus, their cultures are correlated. Through cultural mutations, the characters in Coelho's novels experience self-enlightenment and achieve their personal legends. As mentioned earlier, he also employs narrative of magical realism along with the narrative involving personal legend in his novels. The narrative of personal legend associated to the theme of cultural hybridity is associated to "the mimetic-thematic dimension" and the narrative of magic realism is related to "the anti-mimetic dimension" (Murta 67-68). In this context, the two types of narrative techniques, rhetorical narratology and unnatural narratology are considered for the analysis of Coelho's narrative perspectives in his select novels since "truthful to his hybrid/transnational identity, the author strives for both mimesis and anti-mimesis equally, and one exponentializes the narrative effects/possibilities of the other" (Murta 68). Thus, the narratives in his novels involving the personal legends of the characters highlight the mimetic-thematic perspective whereas the narratives of the magical, supernatural and fantastical elements highlight the anti-mimetic perspective. In this chapter, the select novels of Coelho namely *The Alchemist* (1988), *The Zahir* (2005), *The Witch of Portobello* (2006) and *Aleph* (2010) are analyzed through the narrative techniques proposed in rhetorical narratology by Bakhtin (1934/ 1963) and unnatural narratology by Kristeva (1980).

6.1. Rhetorical Narratology: Personal Legend Narratives in Coelho's Fictional World

In *Rhetorical Narratology* (1999), Michael Kearns combines the approaches for observing audiences used in rhetoric with those used in traditional narratology. In his method, the speech-act theory serves as the theoretical foundation emphasizing the rule-governed perspective in which any

text is created and interpreted and providing the means for articulating how the structures of a narrative may effect different audiences in different ways. He constantly emphasizes that as a result of rhetoric the relationship between text and reader develops over time and in particular cultural settings. His approach of rhetorical narratology includes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, which is associated to the notion of dialogism. In *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (1981), in the essay "Discourse in the Novel" (1934), Mikhail Bakhtin introduces the idea of heteroglossia, which refers to multiple voices or points of view, with the understanding that it is a reflection in the language of different techniques for assessing, comprehending, and experiencing the world. He denotes that the "social dialogue reverberates in all aspects of discourse, in those relating to "content" as well as the "formal" aspects themselves (Bakhtin 300). He therefore argues that the form and content (ideology) in a discourse of the narrative are unified, implying that the form of a novel is ideological and that ideology must at the same time embody a particular kind of form. Therefore, he suggests that a novel is motivated from the discipline of linguistics to understand a comprehensive assortment of distinct perspectives and approaches. The novel overall is seen as "a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice" (Bakhtin 261). It is "a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (Bakhtin 262). And consequently, according to Bakhtin, a novel implicitly incorporates a "sociological stylistics", which is the combination of several heterogeneous stylistics positioned on multiple language stages emphasizing on specific stylistic controls (259). Then, the heterogeneous stylistic unities "upon entering the novel, combine to form a structured artistic system", and are subservient "to a higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole, a unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it" (Bakhtin 261-262). In this approach, the writer utilizes diverse social and historical viewpoints to interpret the various languages and discursive styles in the form of a novel in order to postulate diverse layers of morphological connotation and probability planes. According to Bakhtin, the novel is

characterized as an artistically structured multiplicity of social-speech types, languages, and impartial individual voices. Therefore, heteroglossia becomes the distinctive feature of a novel. Thus, when heteroglossia emerges, the novel "becomes subject to an artistic reworking" (Bakhtin 300). The novel is organized into a structured stylistic system that articulates the author's diversified socio-ideological position within the heteroglossia of his period through the social and historical voices "populating language, all of its words, all of its forms, which provide language its particular concrete conceptualizations" (Bakhtin 300). In this context, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), Bakhtin developed the theory of polyphony, which is derived from music. In a narrative, polyphony signifies multiplicity of unmerged voices and consciousness besides point of views. He, emphasizing the works of Dostoevsky connotes that in novels there are numerous diverse voices, which is not submissive to the authorial consciousness, ruptured into a solitary perspective, "*a plurality of consciousness, with equal rights and each with its own world*, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event" (Bakhtin 6). Coelho's portrayal of a narrative includes multiplicity of vocalities indicating Bakhtin's concept of intricate linguistic discourse. And it provides information on the social and cultural structures shaping the linguistic flux.

Paulo Coelho establishes the mimetic-thematic perspective of his rhetorical narratives through the use of paratext, stating that his fiction is based on actual people, events, migration stories, transnational settings, contexts, and encounters, as well as the author's personal journey of self-enlightenment. In the select novels of Coelho, the characters individually develop sentiments, inquiries, and opinions regarding numerous issues through personal experiences, acquiring understanding of the human condition. The mimetic features in rhetorical narratives emphasize the theme of cultural hybridity by following the journey of personal legend of the characters, thus, articulating ethos and pathos developing the reader's concern in the depicted theme. The main motif of Coelho's novels is the journey of self-enlightenment in order to achieve the personal legend. The characters in the narratives of Coelho's select novels attain self-enlightenment through the intercultural encounters initiating

self-motivated changes in them. And therefore, his novels are constructed on the subject of "self-actualization or spiritual fulfillment through self-awareness, self-exploration, heart-searching and action" (Kumar and Sivapriya 1). The narratives of Coelho's select novels are also set in the familiar actual locations of diverse countries portraying characters belonging to diverse cultures. Moreover, this specific phenomenon amazes his transnational readers. In Coelho's narratives the audiences are let to follow the protagonists as they tour across many countries. It is amid the countries, in road and train journeys, flight voyages that the major plot development occurs and the characters undergo transformations leading to self-enlightenment. The realistic setting postulates a credible preliminary location intensifying the transnational form of his narratives. In *The Alchemist* (1988), the central plot occurs in Andalusia, Spanish prairies, Tarifa, Tangier in Africa, Egypt, Egyptian pyramids, Sahara Desert and Al-Fayoum Oasis:

> "The hills of Andalusia were only two hours away, but there
>
>   was an entire desert between him and the Pyramids." (*Alchemist* 61)

The Zahir (2005) involves a setting that takes place in Europe, France, Spain and the landscape of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Croatia. For instance, in the section, "I Am a Free Man" of *The Zahir* (2005), the narrator gives a vivid description of numerous places he is willing to visit, which then indicates the setting of the novel:

> "I must go to Madrid, where I'll catch up to the Pyrenees,
>
> on the border with France. That's where a medieval
>
> pilgrimage route begins: the road to Santiago." (*Zahir* 23)

 In *The Witch of Portobello* (2006), the plot is revolved around the setting of Romania, Transylvania, Middle East, Dubai, Lebanon, London and Scotland. The interview of "Deidre O'Neill, known as Edda" where she told about the numerous places that Athena had lived implicitly indicate the setting of the novel:

"'I'm going to Sibiu,' she said. 'My bus leaves in an hour. I'm

looking for my mother, if that's what you want to know. I work

as a real estate agent in the Middle East, I have a son of nearly

four, I'm divorced, and my parents, of course, because I was

abandoned as a baby.'" (*Witch of Portobello* 116)

The novel *Aleph* (2010) is set in in Europe, Tunisia in Africa and Asia, and the Trans-Siberian Railway route. In the chapter, "9, 288", the narrator gives the description of the journey he is going to embark in Trans-Siberian Railway:

"The Trans-Siberian railway is one of the longest railways in the

world. You can start your journey at any station in Europe, but

Russian section is 9,288 kilometres long, connecting hundreds of

small and large cities, traversing 76 per cent of the country and

passing through seven different time zones." (*Aleph* 64)

Coelho's select novels consist of prologues, epilogues, dedications, author's notes, epigraph, interviews and allusions. And they become the essential segments in his novels, which contribute in understanding and deciphering the procedures of cultural mutations in the narratives, connecting the readers to his multicultural personality. *The Alchemist* (1988) comprises of "Author's Note" at the very beginning, in it he reminisces the moment when he realized that his novel had turned transnational and inspired his multicultural readers. In addition, he describes his own personal experience while introducing the concept of a personal legend, which helps the audience to better understand and relate to the concept:

"the path that God chose for you here on Earth: Whenever we

do something that fills us with enthusiasm, we are following

our legend." (*Alchemist* viii)

He states that he was struggling to establish himself as a writer and to follow his path, despite all the voices telling him it was impossible and he ultimately became a celebrated author all over the globe:

"Some time later, when I was in Turkey, I opened the

magazine *Vanity Fair* and there was Julia Roberts,

declaring that she adored the book." (*Alchemist* vii)

In *The Zahir* (2005), the epigraph from the Bible exists in the very beginning of the narrative and it hints that the main plot is aligned to the theme of personal legend through the *zahir*, meaning the 'obvious' in Arabic:

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, he loses one

of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness,

and go after that which is lost, until he find it? Luke 15:4"

(*Zahir*, Epigraph)

In the "Author's Note" at the end of the novel, Coelho gives transitory information about the various events and incidents that inspired him to create the transcultural narrative of *The Zahir* (2005). For instance he "met Tasmagambetov, author of the book *The Centaurs of the Great Steppe* and an expert on Kazakh culture, who provided" him with ample "information about the political and cultural situation in Kazakhstan" (*Zahir* 342). He also mentions that some of the characters are inspired from his interactions with the real people from other cultural backgrounds:

"Lastly, I owe many magical experiences on the steppes to my

three very patient companions: Kaisar Alimkulov, Dos (Dosbol

Kasymov), an extremely talented painter, on whom I based

the character of the same name who appears at the of the book,

and Marie Nimirovskaya, who initially, was just my interpreter

but soon became my friend." (*Zahir* 342)

Similarly, in *The Witch of Portobello* (2006), the epigraph, epilogue, author's note and the interview of Coelho by Valerie Reiss in the end of the novel provide ample information about the transcultural perspective of the narrative. In the author's note section entitled "The Genesis of Athena: Writing *The Witch of Portobello*" mentions that the narrative of Athena is inspired from a Romani stewardess whom he met in Transylvania. Like Athena in the novel, an Austrian family adopted her but she persevered her gypsy roots. He further highlights the fact that numerous pieces of the novel originated from a "myriad of situations and people" he met in his life (*Witch of Portobello* 335). And thus, his reflection is also portrayed in the character of Athena. Towards the end of the book, there is a segment "Paulo Coelho Dances with Angels: Interview by Valerie Reiss" in which Coelho articulates that the novel highlights a character who transcends beyond the perspective of established conventional doctrines to achieve her personal legend. The novel, *Aleph* (2010) consists of an epigraph from the Bible that indicates the narrator's transcultural spiritual journey in search of his personal legend:

> "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for
>
> himself a kingdom, and to return. Luke 19:12" (*Aleph* Epigraph)

Thus, the paratextual contexts, peritexts and epitexts in the novels of Coelho contribute to comprehend the narrative perspectives of self-enlightenment through cultural syntheses employing the technique of multiple viewpoints.

In the narratives of Coelho's fictional world, the protagonists attain self-enlightenment through the process of cultural hybridity and it can be analyzed using the key concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia and polyphony proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin. And it is derived by "first, recognizing another's perspective, second, engaging in continual inconclusive, but transformative conversations" (Murat 80). The narrative in *The Alchemist* (1988) follows the path of the Santiago's personal legend and his achievement of self-enlightenment. His journey is observed and narrated by an anonymous third person omniscient point of view. The narrative perspectives in the plot

implicate that the pursuit of his personal legend is motivated through interactions with and imitations of multiple voices from myriad cultural backgrounds. Santiago is a boy from Andalusia and his interactions with the numerous characters like the Moroccan crystal merchant from Tangier, two hundred years old alchemist, Melchizedek (a King of Salem) and the Englishman transform the outlook of his own self and direct him to attain self-knowledge. For instance, Santiago's dialog with Melchizedek, who resembles an Arab man, enlightens the former about the concept of personal legend:

> ""Why would a king be talking with a shepherd?" the
>
> boy asked, awed and embarrassed. "For several reasons.
>
> But let's say that you have succeeded in discovering your
>
> destiny."…"It's what you have always wanted to accomplish
>
> …your mission on earth." (*Alchemis* 21)

The Zahir (2005) is an account about the personal journey of an unnamed author and is narrated from the first person narrative point of view. The main action of the novel arises when the narrator encounters a transcultural character named Mikhail, a Kazakh from Kazakhstan in Paris. The unnamed narrator's cathartic conversations, the metamorphic dialogue exchanges with and his imitation of Mikhail's cultural perspectives assist him in his journey to pursue personal legend and attain self-enlightenment. For instance, the unnamed narrator while listening to Mikhail's tale about Theseus, a Greek hero is inspired to seek his *zahir*, the obvious associated to his personal legend:

> "Sitting with those people, listening to Mikhail's story,
>
> it occurs to me that I have not experienced anything like
>
> this for a long time–the taste of the unknown, of adventure."
>
> (*Zahir* 188)

In the section, "The Return to Ithaca" in *The Zahir* (2005), the culmination point of the novel takes place when the unnamed narrator and Mikhail land in Kazakhstan to meet Dos. By indulging in dialogs with Dos he selects a new name 'Nobody' alluding to Ulysses' self-enlightenment in order to set his foot on the steppes of the mountains of Kazakhstan to meet Esther.

The Witch of Portobello (2006) is a pseudo-biography of a woman named Athena aka Sherine Khalil who is presumed to be dead in the beginning of the narrative. The narrative in the novel revolves around Athena's pursuit of her personal legend. The narrative is told by a multiple narrators who participate in the discourse that is organised as a sequence of interviews and in which the chronicle of Athena's life is recollected in the form of anecdotes. Coelho employs multiple narrative techniques in which the multiple characters from multifarious cultural practices share their involvement in building and helping Athena pursue her personal legend. The multiple characters narrate the anecdotes to an unnamed intradiegetic narrator who is Athena's boyfriend and also the policeman investigating the murder case of Athena. He apparently acts as the interviewer who transcribes the other characters' viewpoints about Athena and the transcripts acquire the form of multiple narratives. The multiple narrators involved are the characters who are related to Athena like Edda, a Scottish doctor, her mentor and a protector; Samira R. Khalil, her Lebanese foster mother; Lukas Jessen Petersen, her ex-husband; Pavel Podbielski, her Polish landlord and a friend; Natil Alaihi, an Arabian Bedouin; Vosho 'Bushalo', a Romani gipsy who is a Rom Baro and Liliana, her Romani Gipsy biological mother. Through the multiple viewpoints of the multicultural charaters it is evident that their rendezvous, interactions with Athena contributed in Athena's pursuit of her personal legend through self-enlightenment. For instance, in Edda's interview it is revealed that Athena's dialog with her emphasizes that Athena had acknowleged the fact that certain people from diverse cultural surroundings have inspired her and her imitation of their diverse cultural ideologies reflected in her self which ultimately helped her to attain self-enlightenment:

"'Certain people have been very important in my life,'she went

on. 'My landlord, for example, or the calligrapher I met in the

desert near Dubai. Who knows, you might have things to say to me

that I can share with them, and repay them for all they taught me.'"

(*Witch of Portobello* 122)

The narrative of *Aleph* (2010) follows the quest of personal legend of a fifty-nine years old worldwide acclaimed author. *Aleph* (2010) comprises an autobiographical narrative and the narrator is Coelho himself. The narrative is narrated from the first person point of view. The narrator considers himself to be a born pilgrim and travels on the Trans-Siberian railroad, the world's longest route from Moscow to Vladivostok completing 9,288 kilometres. The narrator encounters other charaters like Hilal, a Turkish transcultural woman; J., his transcultural mentor; Yao, a Chinese transcultural man who is his translator and a friend in Russia and Samil, a Tunisian man, throughout his journey of self-enlightenment. And they all belong to diverse cultures and traditions. The life-changing conversations with these multiple transcultural characters and his imitations of their philosophies transformed his ideologies and beliefs, ultimately guiding him to achieve his personal legend. They provide the multiple voices to the narrative of the narrator's journey to pursue self-enlightenment. For instance, the dialog between him and Samil about the concept of reincarnation in Quran assist him to comprehend the notion of *aleph* which serves an important role in his pursuit of personal legend:

"'What does Islam have to say about reincarnation?' I ask."

(*Aleph* 9)

6.2. Unnatural Narratology: Intertextuality and Magic Realism in Coelho's Fictional World

An unnatural narratology is a sort of narrative technique that comprises of storytelling elements like characters, spaces, narrators, settings, events which are not conceivable to occur in the real world. Unnatural narratives subvert the rules of conventional storytelling practices and therefore "unnatural narratives are anti-mimetic texts" that transcend beyond the principles of natural narratives "i.e. the mimesis of actual speech situations" (Alber and Heinze 3). The narratives in the postmodernist literature specifically consists elements like that of ethereal and irrational contexts contradicting the rules of logic and tangible world. The unnatural narrative technique comprises two distinct types of narratives: the first, narrative is "unnatural" in the sense that there exists ethereal, irrational and illogical possibilities and it is conceived by the audiences in a defamiliarizing manner and therefore, not conventionalized. The second, unnatural narrative consists of intangible, irrational and illogical possibilities which have been familiarized progressively with time, for example "'the speaking animal' in beast fables, super-natural elements in fairy tales, the 'omniscient' narrator in realist fiction, or time travel in science fiction" (Alber 43). The second type of unnatural narrative is correlated to the concept of intertextuality and magic realism. Julia Kristeva invented the term 'intertextuality' in the essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" in the 1960s, which was published in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980). Intertextuality is defined as a narrative device by which the correlation of a literary work with the other texts and the structures of language by which the audience's interpretation of a text is reflected and influenced. This technique indicates that the meaning of one text is influenced by another one and is "constructed by mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva 37). Julia Kristeva refers to the literary phenomenon of intertextuality as a permutation of texts, in which "the space of a given text, several utterances taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one-another" (qtd. in Abdurrahmani 118). Thus, intertextuality is a technique that creates a new structure for a text by employing references from the past,

which includes pieces of code, formulations, "rhythmic models, fragments of social language pass into the text and are redistributed within it for there is always language before and around the text" (Barthes, qtd. in Abrahams 120).

A German art critic, Franz Roh first introduced the term *magischer Realismus* that is translated to 'magic realism' in his book *Nach Expressionismus*: *Magischer Realismus: Probleme de neuesten europaischen Malerei* (*1925)*. The book is an artistic discourse and the term was use to illuminate a style of painting known as New Objectivity. The term emphasizes that the fantastic and mystifying objects can exist in the perceptible world and it is explored through the lens of magic realism. Angel Flores coined the term 'magical realism' and in 1955, he introduced the concept of "magical realism" to the literary world. A literary technique known as "magic realism" combines fantastical and mystifying elements with realistic ones. The magic realism narrative is an approach "suited to exploring and/or transgressing boundaries, it often facilitates the fusion or co-existence of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction" (Abdurrahmani 118). There are numerous aspects to magic realism, some of which highlight the concept of legends and folklore as well as narratives that represent multiple points of view about the same occurrence. Coelho's use of intertextuality is intended to demonstrate the different ways in which cultures interact. Therefore, his metaphorization of the process of intertextuality is ultimately the result of the ways in which the cultural products of one community interact with and influences another. This said, in Coelho's select novels, in terms of the concept of intertextuality, the fusion of texts and textualities serves as a metaphor for the blending of cultures in a society, indicating that all cultures are intrinsically plural and intertextual, and that any ideological assertion upon purity, isolation, and singularity is a misrepresentation of culture. Thus, the narrative of legends and folklores represent intertextuality in the form of a unnartural narrative to highlight the notions of a particular culture in order to comprehend the meaning of a certain social or spiritual elements shared by multiple voices from diverse cultural backgrounds, dissolving the margins between indigenous and hybridized selves

of a man. In this sense, Coelho's concept of intertextuality and that of hybridity are closely related. The characters obtain impressions and beliefs from his multicultural surroundings which tend to "become reality, especially in cultures with a determinate religious and cultish background" (Abdurrahmani 118).

The unnatural narratives in the select novels of Coelho can be considered as conventionalized and anti-mimetic. In the narratives of Coelho's fictional world, it is seen that the linear narration of the plot is often interposed at a specific setting at a certain time period by a subnarrative in which the narrator, the protagonist or other character recite particular legends and folklores, histories and proverbs related to an indigenous culture of a certain ethnic group. This subnarrative is anti-mimetic as it is emphasized by referring to legends, folklores and histories, which also highlight that the different individuals have travel through the signified setting in different time period experiencing intercultural phenomena and transformations in their selves, and thus, constructing their personal journey as an allegory for that particular setting and time. In *The Alchemist* (1988), The Prologue postulates a complimentary sub-narrative to the central narrative with the use of magic realism technique. In it, somewhere in a caravan an unnamed alchemist reads a transformed version of the Greek myth of Narcissus and is inspired. In the original Greek myth, Narcissus is "a youth who knelt daily beside a lake to contemplate his own beauty" (*Alchemist* xiii). One fine morning while musing his own reflection in the lake, he was so enchanted by himself that he fell and drowned. The allegory ended with an annotation that a flower called the narcissus was born in the site where he fell. However in the altered version, the lake is in love with its own beauty reflected in the depths of Narcissus' eyes:

> "I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks,
>
> I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty
>
> reflected." (*Alchemist* xiv)

This plot reveals the priorities of Coelho's narrative motives and highlights that the plot of the main narrative consists of a magic realism technique in a form of a postmodern allegory. In the main narrative, the name of the protagonist, Santiago is intentionally chosen "alluding to the patron Saint of Spain – and yet

his journey will take him to the heart of the Arabian culture, understood in a generic sense, through Morocco and on toward the Pyramids of Egypt, such that his journey reenacts some of the topoi of *The Arabian Nights*" (Hart 311). Also, Santiago meets an enigmatic man named Melchizedek, the king of Salem in Tarifa who possesses magical abilities and the stones, *Urim* and *Thummin*. Thus, it can be concluded that he resembles the high priest, a biblical figure from "The Old Testament" in biblical canon. Santiago, throughout the narrative of his journey of personal legend encounters the Arabian, Christian and Hebraic cultures; he is "portrayed as standing at the crosswords between various ancient cultures" (Hart 311). The narrative voices further reveals that Santiago alludes to Joseph from *Book of Exodus*. Like Joseph, Santiago is a foreigner in a foreign country. Santiago, like Joseph travels to Egypt in pursuit of his personal legend. And similarly, like Joseph, he deciphers the omens seen in the Al-Fayoum Oasis. The people of the oasis willingly believe Santiago's interpretation despite of him belonging to a different culture.

The Zahir (2005) consists of an intertextual narrative, which consists of an allusion of a poem "Ithaca" composed by a Greek poet Constantine Cavafy that acts as a sub-narrative of the discourse. The poem addresses the tale of Odysseus, a legendary Greek king of Ithaca from the Greek mythology who was also known as Ulysses to Romans. It asserts that Odysseus sets off his journey to Ithaca after the end of the Trojan War and he is returning home to his wife Penelope. His journey way back to Ithaca is filled with adventure and knowledge. At the same time he faces many hurdles like the Lestrygonians, half-men and half-giant entities, the Cyclops, one-eyed goliaths and Greek God of Sea, Poseidon. His encounters with the entities from the other world transform him from within. And despite, all the hurdles, his love and anticipation to meet his wife after so many years helps him to complete his personal journey. Ithaca, in the poem signifies a journey in pursuit of a personal legend to ultimately attained self-enlightenment. The poet addresses the meaning of life through assortment of experiences and significance of personal legend following the voyage of epic hero Odysseys to Ithaca:

> "Wise as you have become, with so much experience,
>
> you must already have understood what Ithacas mean."
>
> (*Zahir*, Epigraph)

The main fragment of the novel in *The Zahir* (2005) is the quest narrative and it articulates the journey of a personal legend of the narrator, who is an unnamed author. He goes in a spiritual journey in seek of his *zahir*, meaning the 'obvious' in Arabic and it is believed that the term was introduced during the eighteenth century in the Islamic tradition. It means a discernible charisma of a person or a thing, which cannot go unnoticed. Thus, it implies someone or something, which "once touched or seen, can never be forgotten, and which gradually so fills our thoughts that we are driven to madness" (Coelho 51). In this quest narrative, the unnamed narrator's wife, Esther, who is presumed to be missing in the beginning of the narrative, is his *zahir*:

> "My Zahir is not a romantic metaphor – a blind man, a compass,
>
> a tiger, or a coin. It has a name, and her name is Esther."
>
> (*Zahir* 51)

In search of his *zahir*, the narrator takes a spiritual journey from Paris to Kazakhstan, and on the way he comes across other characters from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is seen that the narrator's voyage resembles Odyssey's and many similarities can be seen, like both the characters are in seek of their *zahir*. To Odyssey, Penelope is his *zahir* and to the unnamed narrator, Esther. There is an instance in the narrative where magic realism narrative technique is used to highlight that like Odysseus, the narrator anticipates for the right time to meet his *zahir*. When the unnamed narrator meets with an accident in Paris, in his unconscious state of mind, he hallucinates and perceives a voice talking to him:

> "The voice says that it will only allow these things to happen when
>
> the time is right." (*Zahir* 165)

The unnamed narrator like Odysseus decides to relish and gain knowledge through diverse experiences on his voyage to Kazakhstan, a metaphor for Ithaca. In the final section of the narrative, "The Return to Ithaca" when the

character Dos advices the narrator who is a Christian and from France to choose a name according to the Tengri culture of the steppes, in order to enter the mountains of Kazakhstan to meet Esther, the narrator chooses the name 'Nobody' alluding to Odysseus. The magic realism narrative uses the intertextual technique in order to explain the basic concept of the *zahir*. The section, "Han's Question" begins with a transcription from Jorge Luis Borges short story entitled, "The Zahir" included in the book *The Aleph and Other Stories* (1949):

> "*In Buenos Aires, the Zahir is a common 20-centavo coin…*
>
> *(In Gujarat, at the end of the eighteenth century, the Zahir*
>
> *was a tiger; in Javaa…*"
>
> (*Zahir* 51)

The description of *zahir* by Borges highlight that the *zahir* that originated in Islamic tradition has a multicultural perspective.

In *The Witch of Portobello* (2006), Coelho with the usage of intertextual technique introduces an epigraph in the prologue and it consists of an allusion from the Bible that indicates that through his personal experiences Jesus Christ became the illumination to usher the humanity towards purposeful life:

> "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret
>
> place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they
>
> which come in may see the light. Luke 11:33"
>
> (*Witch of Portobello,* Epigraph)

The prologue acts as an allegory. It hints the key perspective of the viewpoint in the narrative. Like Jesus Christ, Athena is an individual who think and act beyond her horizon to guide the humanity towards meaningful life. The Protestants in London failed to understand Athena's perception of worshipping 'the Great Mother', the Goddess of Creation, which she had discovered following the journey of her personal legend through the crossroads of diverse cultures. And thus, like Jesus Christ she was condemned for blasphemy and

heresy and ultimately to dishonour her, she was marked as 'the witch of Portobello':

> "Her greatest problem was that she was a woman of the twenty-second
>
> century living in the twenty-first, and making no secret of the fact
>
> either." (*Witch of Portobello* 14)

The lines from Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" (1916) is quoted in *The Witch of Portobello* (2006). It is a narrative poem and like the narrator in the poem, Athena follows the unconventional path and "unveil the shackles of dogma" (*Witch of Portobello* 336). To quote Coelho:

> "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
>
>   I took the one less traveled by,
>
>   And that has made all the difference."
>
> (*Witch of Portobello* 35)

Coelho employs the magic realism narrative technique to highlight the feminine side of divinity in Athena. While preaching her disciples, Athena performed an esoteric dance and transformed to Hagia Sofia, the spirit of omniscient goddess. Hagia Sofia, an alter ego of Athena represents that she has a hybridized identity.

Aleph (2010) contains an intertextual allusion from "The Aleph" (1945), a short story by Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, which is included in the short story collection, *The Aleph and Other Stories* (1949). It acts as an epigraph and consists the description of the concept of *aleph* by Borges. According to Borges, it is a locus in a cosmic space that includes all the other loci. The one who enters this locus could perceive "it from every point on the universe" concurrently exclusive of disorder, converging or alteration of the loci (*Aleph* Epigraph). This epigraph highlights the narrative perspective of the novel, which involves the concept of *aleph* as described by Borges. Coelho, in *Paulo Coelho: Confessions of a Pilgrim* (1999) indicates that according to Borges, the *aleph* is "the point where all things are" and it "embraces all things

at once" (Arias 148). The protagonist in Borges' "The Aleph" (1945) is a fictionalized form of the author himself. Inspired by Borges, the protagonist who is the narrator in the narrative of *Aleph* (2010) is also a fictionalized form of Coelho. Coelho states that the protagonist in Borges' "The Aleph" (1945) "completely by accident enters this point where he sees everything at the same time: all the people, all the jungles, the rivers, all the universes" (Arias 148). The narrator experiences *aleph* just like Borges' protagonist:

> "I'm looking at the light, at a sacred…filling me with peace
>
> and love, two things that rarely come together. I can see myself.
>
> But at the same time, I can see elephants in Africa waving their
>
> trunks,… a pilgrim arriving at the cathedral in Santiago de
>
> Compostela,…– and everything is simultaneously very clear and
>
> very large, very large and very quiet. I am in the Aleph, the
>
> point at which everything is in the same place at the same time."
>
> (*Aleph* 79)

Coelho, through the magic realism narrative technique portrays *aleph* in the novel. *Aleph* is depicted as a portal through which the narrator visits the realm of his past life. For instance, when the narrator and Hilal, a Turkish woman discover a patent point in the train, they enter the portal of *aleph* and travel through time and space. The concept of *aleph* in the narrative of Coelho's *Aleph* (2010) consists of "mystical and transcultural meanings that Coelho explores in the homonymous novel, pulling from the Torah, the Bible, Astrology, Numerology, and even Mathematics" (Murat 86).

In examining Coelho's narrative techniques in the select novels of Coelho, *The Alchemist* (1988), *The Zahir* (2005), *The Witch of Portobello* (2006) and *Aleph* (2010) it is revealed that Coelho true to his hybridized transnational identity, attempts for both mimesis (rhetorical narratives and anti-mimesis (unnatural narratives) equally, and these narratives complement each other increasing the narrative effects of the select novels. His select novels

consist of the narratives about the personal legends of the protagonists that emphasize the mimetic-thematic perspective, while those about magical, paranormal, and mythical components emphasize the anti-mimetic perspective. In Coelho's select novels, the paratextual settings, peritexts, and epitexts assist readers in comprehending the mimetic-thematic perspective in rhetorical narrative aspects associated to the pursuit of personal legend, which is attained through the fusion of intercultural contexts by using the approach of multiple viewpoints. The transcultural experiences are introduced in the consciousness of the characters and they learn to understand the human condition as they form their own thoughts, questions, and ideas about a wide range of topics. The mimetic perspective in rhetorical narrative highlights the theme of cultural hybridity and follows the journey of personal legends of the characters, effectively combining the ethos and pathos to raise the reader's awareness of the theme being represented. In this context, the fundamental ideas of heteroglossia, polyphony, and dialogism are used to analyze the mimetic perspective in rhetorical narrative which is obtained in Coelho's novels by first acknowledging another person's perspective and then enduring continuous, inconclusive, yet transformative conversations as proposed by Bakhtin (1934/ 1963). The rhetorical narratives in Coelho's select novels are also represented in the familiar real life situations and locations of diverse nations, with characters from multiple cultures. The main plot developments take place while the characters travel between multiple nations, interacting with individuals from diverse characters in the pursuit of their personal legends.

The unnatural narratives in Coelho's select novels can be characterised as conventionalized anti-mimetic dimension. The linear narration of the plot is frequently interrupted in Coelho's fictional world's narratives by a sub-narrative in which the narrator, the protagonist or another character narrates specific legends and folklore, histories, and proverbs related to an indigenous culture of a certain ethnic group. In the anti-memitic perspective of the unnatural narrative in his select novels, such kind of sub-narratives are included in the paratextual settings, especially in peritexts. Consequently, the

sub-narratives in Coelho's select novels indicate that he employs the technique of intertextuality proposed by Kristeva (1980) and uses a mosaic of parts from other texts to construct the meaning of his unnatural narratives. Coelho employs the technique of intertextuality in terms of cultural contexts highlighting the traditions, myths, folklores and histories to implicitly indicate the process of cultural hybridity. Thus, in his select novels a multiplicity of writings blend and merge in a multi-dimensional space indicating that his narratives are composed of a variety of excerpts assembled from diverse cultural locations. It can be considered that both the narrative perspectives: rhetorical and unnatural in the select novels of Coelho are connected to highlight the overall narrative, which is associated with the pursuit of personal legend by the characters. The characters in his select novels are postmodern subjects who experience and encounter the elements from diverse cultures ultimately attaining self-enlightenment and pursuing what Coelho calls their personal legends. Additionally, the characters acquire transcultural outlook on a wide range of beliefs towards the end of the select novels. The narrative perspectives in his novels are a "culture of palimpsest in which different cultural surfaces slide over one another, supplanting each other momentarily" (Hart 311). Coelho's notion of postmodernism in his select novels is a result of cultural fusion rather than textuality or language alone, in which the free play of signifiers occurs within the literary text.

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