Chapter 4

The Power of Narration

Fiction emerges from a writer’s experience and imagination. It embraces the present, the past and the future and proffers values to hold on to as well as dreams to reach for. At its best it makes us look at life from a new perspective. A work of fiction is an imaginative narrative writing in prose. Believable characters, convincing dialogue and an interesting plot are among the essential ingredients of fiction. Because fiction writers share their thoughts with us through words, the writer’s style—the words that the writer chooses and how he puts them together - are critical to our understanding of the craft of a given work and of its effect on us. Like any other work of art, fiction offers us a vicarious experience. The ways in which we derive enjoyment from reading fiction are countless. A story offers us a vicarious experience, a way out of reality, a means of escape. In whatever form the fiction may be, either oral or written, its beauty lies in how it is told. The style of telling the story concentrates on the order of events and on their detail in evaluating a writer’s technique.

A narrative is a story or part of a story. It may be spoken, written or imagined and it will have one or more points of view representing some or all of the participants or observers. In stories told orally, there is a person telling the story, a narrator whom the audience can see and / or hear who adds layers of meaning to the text non-verbally. The narrator also has the opportunity to monitor the audience’s response to the story and modify the manner of the telling to clarify content or enhance listener’s interest. This is distinguishable from the written form in which the author must gauge the reader’s likely reactions when they are decoding the text and make a final
choice of words in the hope of achieving the desired response. Whatever the form, the content may concern real world people and events; this is termed Personal Experience Narrative. Sometimes the narrator may be one of the characters in the story. Roland Berthas describes such characters as “paper beings” and fiction comprises their narratives of personal experience as created by the author. When their thoughts are included, this is termed Internal Focalization (Wikipedia the free encyclopedia <http:en. Wikipedia. Org/Wiki/Narrative>). When each character’s mind focuses on a particular event, the text reflects his reactions. Narrative can then be used to obtain a richer understanding of the complex issue.

The purpose of narration is to tell a story or to narrate an event or series of events. Narrative may exist in a variety of forms including biographies, anecdotes, short stories and novels. In its broadest context, narration encompasses all written fiction. Narrowly defined, narration is the fiction - writing mode whereby the narrator is communicating directly to the reader. The major objective of a narrative is to tell a story. All narrative essays start out defining character, setting and action in the very beginning. Then the action reaches the culmination in the middle and is resolved by the end of the story. A narrative essay can be used when a writer needs to tell a story, present an account of personal or fictional adventures or describe events. A well written narrative essay is creative and insightful. Various literary tools such as humour, suspense or fantasy are often utilized to make an effective presentation. The writer has to find a way to involve the reader in the story rather than simply telling the story. The details must be paid special role in establishing a link between the reader and the story being told by the writer (Anecdote-Narrative Techniques Workshop <http://www. anccdote. com. all/narrative - wkshp. html>). The fourth chapter of
this thesis sketches the meticulous employment of narrative techniques by the renowned author Paulo Coelho.

Coelho was always a nonconformist, a seeker after the new, leading him to try everything good and everything bad that appeared along the way. He took part in all the progressive movements and was part of the peace and love generation. It was then that Coelho began to experience his crisis of faith and went off in search of new spiritual experiences, resorting to drugs, hallucinogens, sects and magic, travelling all over Latin America in the footsteps of Carlos Castaneda. He began his life as a journalist, then as a lyricist with the help of the music producer Raul Seixas (the one whom he has mentioned in *The Valkyries*). There were also the years when he had his most intense experience with black magic, as inspired by Aleister Crowley, one of the hardest and most difficult experiences of his life, which he profoundly speaks about in depth in *Paulo Coelho Confessions of a Pilgrim*.

When Coelho managed to free himself from the chains of black magic that were dragging him to the edge of the abyss, he had to go through another of life’s cruel experiences: he was kidnapped and tortured by a group of paramilitaries during the Brazilian’s dictatorship. In 1981, with the money he had earned, he with his wife Christina Oiticica set out to travel the world for six months until, in Germany, in a concentration camp, he underwent a profound and intense spiritual experience that set off another change in his life, bringing him back to the catholic beliefs of his parent. It was then, with his spiritual master, he spent fifty-five days walking the seven hundred kilometers of the ancient road to Santiago-de-Compostela, in the footsteps of the pilgrims of the Middle Ages.
The experience of the pilgrimage to Santiago drove him to publish what would be his first literary text: *Diary of a Magus* (later re-titled *The Pilgrimage*). After this came his other books from *The Alchemist* to the recent *Veronica Decides to Die*, establishing him as one of the ten best-selling authors in the world, an author who stirs up controversy and extremes of passion, but who continues smiling and sure on his path to awaken the lost taste of mystery and magic in men and women at the beginning of this new millennium, overcoming tedium and helplessness in the bosom of a mechanized and bored society. Coelho often says he has enough money for three reincarnations. He earns so much that he has committed four hundred thousand lakh dollars a year of his author's royalties to a foundation that carries his name and which his wife, Christina administers. The money is used for the case of abandoned children in the worst slums of Rio, for the poor and needy elders, to promote the translation into other languages of Brazilian classics and for investigation of the fossil origin of his much-loved Brazil, which he considers the most magical country in the world because, as he says, in Brazil, there is no difference between the sacred and the profane and no one is ashamed to believe in the spirit (*Paulo Coelho Confessions of a Pilgrim* xii).

Many of Coelho’s readers will wonder what his private life is like, how one of the world’s most widely-read writers behave behind closed doors, what are his fears, his small satisfactions, and his worries? Those lucky enough to know the man well, might point out that such a celebrity does not really exist, because Paulo Coelho despite his fame, the millions of dollars his work earns him, the international demand for his presence - is a totally approachable, available, generous, simple person, almost childlike at times. A person who does not hide the black spots of past and the positive reception that greets his books, especially from young people. He tends to forget the
negative reactions as quickly as he hears them. He considers envy to be the greatest sin as well as the stupidest. Coelho is a character with great passions, great defects, sometimes with great genius, with his small burden of vanity, capable of being very tough when he wants to be. But at the sametime, he possesses a great capacity for dedication and a sincere desire to help others find their personal destiny. That is what has saved him from a difficult, sometimes tragic past and it is that which has taken him more than once to the edge of madness and death. When Coelho talks about the horrible death, he says, “I was never terrified of death because I saw it up close so many times” (Paulo Coelho Confessions 54).

Published in over 160 countries, translated into 42 different languages, with over 115 million copies of his book sold internationally, Paulo Coelho can truly claim to be one of the most popular writers in the world. The Independent on Sunday has called him a “publishing phenomenon”. Coelho’s writing is a visionary blend of spirituality, magical realism and folklore. His stories are simple and direct yet they have the power to change lives and inspire us with the courage to follow our dreams. He is a novelist who writes in a universal language. He is an excellent story teller but he is also an astute observer of the human condition and a philosopher whose work makes people delve into their own psyche to examine their own condition. His own life has been in many ways been as varied and unusual as the protagonists of his internationally acclaimed novels. Like them, he has followed a dream in a quest for fulfilment. His own dream, to be a writer, met with frustration throughout much of his early adult life, a time in which he worked at various professions, some of them materially rewarded but spiritually unfulfilling. “I always know”, he says, “my personal legend”, to use a term from alchemy “was to write” (Paulo Coelho Confessions 36). A winner of numerous literary prizes, Paulo Coelho is also a
prominent speaker for humanitarian causes. In 1999, he received a Crystal Award for Artistic Achievement at the Davos Economic Forum Conference; he is one of the few to deserve the term publishing phenomenon. Paulo Coelho’s novels are a lesson, fascinating and enriching.

Paulo Coelho once said that following one’s dream is like learning a foreign language; one will make mistakes but one will get there in the end. In 1988, he published *The Alchemist*. A novel that explores this theme and it launched him as an international bestselling author. Specifically, Paulo Coelho is recognized for his powerful storytelling technique and the profound spiritual insights he blends seamlessly into his parables. His personal life lays foundation for the creation of most of his novels. Part of his own hardships of life has been depicted through the protagonists of his works. His indulgence in the impact on black magic has been described in *The Valkyries*; his resuscitation from the evil society to spiritualism that has sprouted due to his pilgrimage to Santiago-de-Compostela has been recounted in *The Pilgrimage* and his strife to become an accomplished professional writer, has been traced in *The Zahir*.

For Paulo Coelho, the only crime against life is to believe in the word “impossible”. According to him, each person has a role to play, a life pattern that is uniquely designed for an individual. And fulfilment lies in following and understanding that pattern, being who you are, instead of walking on the trodden path (*An Interview with Brazilian Spiritual Asp Fiction Writer, Paulo Coelho* <http://www.life positive, com/spirit/traditional path 's/sorcery/coelho>). One of the salient features of Paulo’s narrative styles is usage of symbols: the magical sword which the protagonist goes in search of in *The Pilgrimage*, the hidden treasure of an Andalusian boy Santiago in *The Alchemist*, the Mojave desert in *The Valkyries*, sex in *Eleven*
Minutes, the bloodstained cloth in The Zahir, dance in The Witch of Portobello and the thirst for magic in Brída - these symbols enhance the searcher or the protagonist to arrive at their destiny.

In all the above mentioned novels, the author gives more significance to travel. In course of the journey undertaken by the protagonists, they refine their soul and seek spiritual enlightenment. The protagonist’s passion for his all powerful magical sword in The Pilgrimage stimulates him to travel all the way from Spain to Santiago. In the novel, the all powerful magical sword symbolizes the protagonist’s unquenchable thirst for magical power and his desire to become all powerful. On the way, he beholds tremendous impediments that whet his soul and he learns to tackle it even unguided. When he reaches the spot where his magical sword is hidden, after crossing a sea of obstacles, his anxiety, desires and monetary pleasures vanish. He extracts the essence of life through his journey. Similarly in the case of the Andalusian shepherd boy Santiago in The Alchemist, it is his hidden treasure which is symbolized to him through his dream. The novel does not talk about leaving everything to pursue one’s dreams. It just says that one should have dreams and move towards them. A vast number of books have been written about the interpretation of dreams. The protagonist has a dream of a distant treasure in the Egyptian Pyramids and the courage to follow it. He ventures to undertake his journey of exploration and self-discovery symbolically searching for the hidden treasure located near the pyramids in Egypt. The phenomenon of converting an ordinary metal into gold is alchemy.

The hidden treasure in The Alchemist acts like a catalyst in converting a shepherd boy into a visionary. He lacks his curiosity in accumulating money due to the struggles he encounters on the way towards the pyramids in Egypt where his
cherished treasure is said to have been hidden. The moment he becomes rich, he loses everything. Throughout his quest towards the treasure, he endures physiological and psychological torments. He judges that “when you desire something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it” (23). The protagonist arrives at the pyramids only to be beaten by the desert robbers. Finally when he discovers his buried treasure from under the sycamore tree, the precious stones and jewels inside the box do not tempt him. He cherishes them not as a pandora’s box but as a love of his beloved that has aflamed him to achieve his destiny. He affirms that “to realize one’s destiny is the real obligation of life” (23). Like the buried treasure in *The Alchemist* and the magical sword in *The Pilgrimage*, it is the Mojave desert in *The Valkyries*.

The protagonist and his wife’s channelling start in the Mojave desert. His wife, Chris, feels the state of euphoria at the extremity of the heat of the desert. They are rescued by Gene who assures them of meeting Valkyries on the desert. In a nutshell, the desert enables the author to discover new aspects of psyche, to develop new angles on his existing skills. The couple accomplishes all rituals on the desert. Till the end, the protagonist waits contemplating on the desert for his angel to appear. His halt on the desert imparts and replenishes his soul with patience and contentment. The desert here acts as an agent to establish the hidden treasures of human soul to rejuvenate itself. The serenity of the sand pacifies the tribulations of the travellers thereby enabling them to communicate with the mystical powers such as nature, universe, and the Superior energy that accompany them during their journey. The desert is a central setting in most of Coelho’s novels. The co-existing dual connotations of the desert being a harsh, lifeless place, and being the space where mysticism and transformation have taken place, make the desert a magical realist space. David Jasper explains in his book *The Sacred Desert*, that as the desert is physically the harshest place on earth, deserts also defy our sense of reality, its
proportions and the boundaries we set on our lives and experience \( \textit{Magical Realist Transformation in The Witch of Portobello} \) (http://www.flipkart.com/the-witch-of-portobello-paulo-coelho-book-0007278594). The desert becomes a space where body and soul exist amalgamated in oneness. According to Jasper, “Language and the desert sands, wherein dried but living roots are buried waiting for the rain, share a common life” (Magical Realist Transformation <http://www.flipkart.com/the-witch-of-portobello-paulo-coelho-book-0007278594>). The desert’s mystic connotation in relation to literature seems to transform the desert into a space where language exists within the silence of the place, and that the concept of time transforms into timelessness. Sex was always surrounded by taboos. But sexuality is first and foremost the way that God chooses for love in the physical plane, rather treating it as a manifestation of evil. It is the major exploration confronted by Maria in \textit{Eleven Minutes}. Paulo Coelho voices this sensitive issue in this novel. He tries to meditate the gap between the protagonist, Maria’s individual consciousness and the outer world that shapes the inner life of Maria. The most mysterious part of this book is the protagonist’s quest through sex which illuminates her inner glow. Here sexuality does not assume the guise of lust. On the other side this sexual introspection makes sex more sacred. In the beginning, Maria becomes dejected by disillusioned love that has resulted out of her adolescence but later she cherishes love. She feeds other’s thirst for lust by dedicating her physique but her soul remains unquenched until a genuine love (Ralf Hart) crosses her path. Her spirit overflows with the love of Ralf Hart, hence she declares that love never asks for permission nor does it appear when we feel we most need it. “Love is a universal entity that holds no shape and strikes down and stays clenched to the heart” (114). \textit{Eleven Minutes} is, on the surface, a book about sex - and all the good and bad associated with it. However, if one is able to get through the more graphic parts with an open mind, he will find that this is more a book about love and how one confuses sex and love - and how one no longer seems
Tu be ible to find the love in sex. The opening sentence “Once upon a time, there was a prostitute named Maria” (01) unfortunately sets a cold, impersonal tone that takes Coelho several chapters to overcome. It is clear that Maria is not an average P-O-tnute - if there can be such a person - and her unique perspective forms the soul of Eleven Minutes. It is a holy quest through sex. What is sex? This is what Coelho seems to be asking and ultimately answering in this unlikely novel. For, to Coelho, orgasm and the joy of sex apparently are the gates to the ultimate symbolic union with the divine. As a man, he explores a woman’s sexuality and the connection to spirituality.

In The Zahir, the author’s life is full of anxiety on account of the disappearance of his frustrated wife who has a mission of spreading the energy of love among the people by distributing a piece of blood stained cloth. The author’s wife Esther is a war correspondent. She gets the blood stained cloth from a soldier who was the first to realize the flow of love and he wishes it to continue. When the author begins to probe the reason for his wife’s disappearance, in each step he finds ordinary people preserving the blood stained cloth presented by Esther. Almost all walks of people possess a piece of blood stained cloth with a symbol in some form or other. The author ironically does not have this piece of blood stained cloth and realizes their mission of spreading the energy of love. He too longs to share that warmth of love and believes that the soul of the world has to allow him to find his Esther. He is mystified and yet awaits the mystery to unveil itself. On their meeting in Kazakhsatan, Esther gives him a piece of blood stained cloth of a soldier. He introspects himself only when he was able to understand the flow of love. Dance acts in a medium of quest in both The Witch of Portobello and Brida where the protagonists - Athena and Brida seek spiritual fulfillment. Their unrhymic dance to
the sounds either aroused by the surrounding or to the music played, enables them to step into a mysterious world where their souls feel elevated.

Dance is one of the major themes in both the novels. It becomes a symbol for transformation. In general, dance is an art form that refers to movements of the body, usually rhythmic and to music, used as a form of expression, social interaction or presented in a spiritual or performance setting. In *The Witch* and *Brida*, the protagonists do not dance in accordance to a particular rhythm. They dance to the unrhythmic music present in nature as a means of communication with divine. They dance in a nonsync motion, closing their eyes, lifting their hands until they are transformed into something unknown. This unrhythmic dance lights their inner soul and enables them to communicate with the Superior Being. Though the motive behind their transcendentalism is different, the path that they choose to reach that extent remains the same. Athena the protagonist of *The Witch* is more cautious that she should not be titled as ‘witch’ in course of her spiritual learning. Her only motive is to spread the energy of love among people like Esther in *The Zahir*. On the other hand Brida longs to become a witch and so she learns magic. But the destiny of these protagonists also vary that the former is misinterpreted as a witch and is believed to misguide people yet her disciples acknowledge her mysterious power of healing diseases and prophesying. As for Brida, through her witchcraft, she learns about “soulmate” and also discovers her true soulmate “the Magus” despite having fallen in love with Lorens, her beloved.

The protagonist in *The Pilgrimage* travels on the ancient road of pilgrims- Santiago de Compostela to discover his magic sword with which he has performed millions of brave deeds, which lies hidden in one of the Cathedrals. Coelho
introduces many strange things to us. He explicates one’s personal demon in the shape of a vicious dog. The protagonist conquers his fear with the unknown powers that manifest in him as if by magic. Trying to collect his thoughts and feelings, while almost being tricked by a supposed demon, Paulo Coelho comes across a handful of events that remind him that simplicity holds greater power over all. The road to Santiago is otherwise known as a road to self-realization. The journey to Santiago is to learn more about life and simple things that it has to offer. As far his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, Paulo Coelho agrees that

My turning point was my pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. It was then that I, who had dedicated most of my life to penetrate the secrets of the universe, realize that there are no secrets. Life is and will always be a mystery. We have to follow the omens and pay attention to others. Life is a constant miracle and this miracle manifests itself in encounters with other people. After the pilgrimage, I simplified my spiritual search a lot and instead of searching for answers, I started to understand that life itself is an answer. (An Interview with Brazilian Spiritual Asp Fiction Writer, Paulo Coelho <http://www.lifepositive.com/spirit/traditional path/sorcery/coelho>)

An account of this experience on the Road to Santiago has been shared by Paulo Coelho in The Pilgrimage. This ancient road, road to Santiago plays a prominent role in the life of Maria, the protagonist of Eleven Minutes. Maria, a prostitute, happens to walk on the road to Santiago that passes through Geneva a
common road for all. This incident brings a change in her life. When her feet touch the road, she becomes wiser. She feels the divine power on it. The moment she steps on the road, Maria’s body and soul begin to become reintegrated because of love. Some transformation takes place in Maria. She starts her spiritual quest with Ralf Hart- the man who recognizes her soul. In an interview on *Eleven Minutes*, Paulo Coelho’s response to a question which is based on the Road to Santiago is:

> What is the significance in the book of the references to the Road to Santiago? Is there something particularly significant about the fact that Maria meets the male character, Ralf, on a stretch of that particular pilgrimage route, even though she knows nothing about it? There’s a realistic aspect to it- the Road to Santiago does, in fact, pass through Geneva - and there’s a symbolic aspect too - because, from that moment on, Maria’s body and soul begin to become reintegrated, because of love. *(Paulo Coelho answers questions about Eleven Minutes <www.goodreads.com/book/show/1430>)*

*Eleven Minutes* stands apart from all the other novels. For, sex which is treated as a taboo, has been the hub of this novel. While other protagonists quest through various medium, Maria quests through sex to reach spiritual awakening. None prefers to become a prostitute but Maria prefers to be so. In her adolescent age, she too has the whims and fancies like other young girls of her age. Her dream flies farther than her approach [...] her prince charming would arrive, sweep her off her feet and take her away with him so that they could conquer the world together *(Eleven
01). The fanciful thoughts of an adolescent girl how she dreams to find a boy like a prince, of getting married to him, bearing children leading a sophisticated life in a lovely house with a sea view—are the general imaginations of all young girls. The disappointments that she meets with gentlemen force her to create a wrong notion about love because of which she becomes a prostitute. Coelho says,

Sex was always surrounded by taboos, and I don’t see it necessarily as a manifestation of evil. I think that sexuality is first and foremost the way that god chooses for us to be here on earth, to enjoy this energy of love in the physical plane. *(The Alchemy of Success 2003 <www. publishers weekly, com/pio/prints/... /24872 - the - alchemy -of- success -ht...>)*

In The Alchemist and The Valkyries, the protagonist’s travel on the desert teaches them largely, what they have aimed for. In The Alchemist, the shepherd boy Santiago sets off in search of his hidden treasure following his dream whereas in The Valkyries the author and his wife heading out to California to the starkly beautiful and sometimes dangerous Mojave Desert where they encounter more than they bargained for. Here his quest is to speak with his angels. When you really want something to happen, the whole universe conspires so that your wish comes true “When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it” (23) these words echo throughout the novel The Alchemist. The author insists that one should not shy away from his dreams and to find our personal myth and our mission on earth is the way to find God, happiness, fulfilment and is the ultimate purpose of creation. We dream sometimes with our eyes open and sometimes with our eyes closed. Ultimately dreams represent our innermost desires. The necessary question to be asked at this
How many of us would dare to take up a journey like the shepherd did? How many of us would go through all those adventures, - many losing everything and yet have more hope and faith to carry on. The book teaches us to go ahead and achieve our dreams. It teaches us that the path to our goal may not be easy, may be filled with losses and disappointments but ultimately tenacity will lead us to our goal. Along the way on the desert, he meets many spiritual messengers, who come in an unassuming form such as a camel driver, a well-read Englishman, an Alchemist, the robbers who finally give him a hint of his treasure and also his beloved. The camel driver teaches him about the war in desert; as the boy listens keenly to the hooves of the camel, he learns about the soul of the universe. The well-read Englishman perchance helps him to know what alchemy is. And the Alchemist in turn teaches him to read the omens on the desert, emboldens him and also teaches him alchemy.

Through *The Alchemist*, Coelho presents a simple fable, based on simple truths and places it in a highly unique situation. Not only Santiago learns about the process of alchemy but also the readers. It is believed that if a metal was heated for many years, it would free itself of all its individual properties and what was left would be the “soul of the world” (158). The ensuing student-teacher relationship between the Alchemist and the shepherd boy clarifies much of the boy’s misguided agenda, while also emboldening him to stay true of his dreams. “My heart is afraid that it will have to suffer” (137) the boy confides to the Alchemist one night. The Alchemist replies “Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself” (137). Similarly in *The Valkyries*, Coelho’s quest starts with the secret of his spiritual master’s (J) words.
And each man kills the thing he loves, by all let this be heard, some do it with a bitter look some with a flattering word, the coward does it with a kiss the brave man with a sword. (09)

As an author, Coelho creates a powerful setting which is tense and obscure. The real Coelho is human and full of his own questions. His knowledge of the desert is questioned when he and his wife set out on a long walk through the mysterious sand dunes. They set themselves free by letting their nude bodies be devoured by the scorching sun. Coelho coins a new term “second mind” (27) which his wife Christina first learns to quieten and figures out how to talk with her angel, before Coelho does. Feeling exhausted due to their tedious walk in the desert, they fall down on the sand unable to bear the extremity of the hot sun. Yet in such a situation, Chris feels a state of euphoria. She calls it as “her soul has grown” (45). On their long treacherous journey, they meet Valhalla and the Valkyries who take them to perform various rituals to enable them meet their angel. The exasperated Coelho finally meets his angel, after much disappointment, in the desert. A masterful blend of the exotic locales, dramatic adventure and magical storytelling, for which Coelho’s fictional works are renowned, this true life account is at once a modern-day adventure and a metaphysical odyssey.

Coelho has many profound insights regarding life and the pursuit of happiness and spirituality. His novels The Zahir, The Witch of Portobello and Brida -also speak about the person who is of paramount importance to the protagonist. A famous journalist’s perspective about his wife’s disappearance is the story of The Zahir which is extremely autobiographical. The mystery behind her disappearance becomes an
instant obsession that leads him into an inward spiral. Thereby the protagonist is forced to re-examine his own life and marriage as well. He is unable to figure out what led to Esther’s disappearance. In between trying to find answers and dealing with his constant affairs both extra-marital and professional, his life and career begin to make less and less sense. With traces of obsession, fame and the rigid possibility of forgiving oneself, the story presents concrete options on how to lose oneself in order to find oneself. Being the husband of the missing war correspondent Esther, Coelho becomes the main suspect. He, with the help of Mikhail (Esther’s friend) realizes that to find Esther, he must find his ownself. He quickly becomes obsessed with what he calls *The Zahir*. Obsession is something that all who live passionately can relate to.

Through the lives of the characters, Coelho shows us how obsession can often give our lives meaning if properly channelled. The term Zahir is derived from an Islamic tradition Zahir; in Arabic it translates as obvious, unable to go unnoticed, someone or something once in contact occupies our every thought. This state of mind could be considered holy or maddening. Coelho’s thought is preoccupied with the disappearance of Esther that in no way he is able to engage himself in other activities. He neither writes nor meets his fans. At this maelstrom point, the protagonist sets his quest. The quest to find a reason becomes the Zahir of the title which means “visible, present and unable to go unnoticed”. *The Zahir* deals with dark obsession and rebirth; a contemporary all encompassing story that leads us through an inner and outer encounter with our worst enemy, ourselves. This book ties in obsession and self-discovery, making them the novel’s key points. The delivery of perspective and the voyage into oneself sets the stage for the novel. Paulo Coelho indulges us with a story that captivates a feeling that is universal, the sensation of vanished outlooks,
dark obsessions and the real meaning of letting go. During his search to bring back his wife, we learn to look within ourselves and ask pertinent questions. We learn to re-evaluate what it means to be a celebrity and the element of that life style that gets lost in its false advertisement. Through his journey from Paris to Kazakhshtan, Coelho explores various meanings of love and life. The story teaches us to appreciate what we inadvertently take for granted.

_The Witch of Portobello_ has been woven with a very unique and compelling tale. Athena is a young woman who tries to fill the spaces, the silences in her life. In her early age, she has visions which are treated as premonitions. She was born to a gypsy mother who put her up for adoption in an orphanage in Romania, where the Khalils adopt her. From an early age, she takes on the self imposed name Athena and has an innate spiritual calling. She marries young, has a son and divorces her husband; all because she believes it is her spiritual purpose to do. From her initial beginnings as a devout member of the Catholic Church, to her humiliating dismissal from the church, Athena searches for a way to fit into the world on a spiritual level. She finds herself connecting to her spiritual self through music and dance and like any good prophet she shares her discovery with those around her. Through her newly embraced spirituality, she prospers in her life and is able to travel extensively and learn new ways to channel her mystic side. Whatever she learns newly she finds something is missing. Though she travels abroad and earns vastly, she discovers some emptiness or vacuum in herself. In order to fill this gap, she goes in search of her biological mother, a gypsy, who spends her entire life in longing to see her daughter at least once in her lifetime and caress her. This motherly sentiment is delicately drawn by Paulo Coelho. The wounded heart of a mother is reflected when Athena shoots her harsh questions of her abandoning.
Who am I? What blood runs in my veins? Yesterday, when I found out where you were, I was absolutely terrified. Where do I start? Suppose, like all gypsies, you can read the future in the cards. (140)

Athena’s mother Liliana is overwhelmed when she prepares breakfast for her daughter for the first time. The hours that she has spent with her daughter recovers her lost strength. She takes Athena to the Great Mother, organises rituals to be performed, teaches her to make amulets to ward off evil, shares her experience with her teacher and briefs out the gypsy’s tradition. It is a miracle for her to be with Athena, alive and healthy at least for few days. When Athena leaves for her home country, Liliana addresses herself as the mother for the first time.

‘I’m leaving tomorrow’, she said, ‘Before you do, come and say good bye to your mother; That was the first time, in all those days I had used the word. My voice didn’t tremble, my gaze was steady and I knew that despite everything, standing before me was the blood of my blood, the fruit of my womb, [...] It’s full of love, regardless of how that love is manifested, a love that forgives our mistakes and redeems our sins. (145)

This entertaining story is a mix of New Age Mysticism, personal enlightenment and modern spirituality. The more she tries to fill the gap the more dissatisfied she becomes, until she learns that it is the silences between the notes that make the music so powerful. When she learns to embrace the silence, the spaces, she finds a power-energy. She becomes a spiritual leader. The story of Athena’s life is told in the form of a series of interviews conducted by her journalist friend with the initial intention of
being a biography on “The Witch”. From the individual perspectives of Athena’s adoptive parents, her Pagan teacher, her student, her journalist friend, her ex-husband and several others, the tale of Sherine Khalil (Athena) is recounted. Narrated from multiple points of view, the portrait of Athena that emerges is as provocative and spiritually complex as one would expect from Paulo Coelho.

Paulo Coelho’s *Brida* is about the quest and eventual initiation into witchhood of a twenty one year old girl with a desire to learn magic. The story has a lot of religious fragments and messages as do most of Coelho’s books and they are nicely mixed into the Neopagan storyline and combined with lessons from nature and life in general. A young Irish girl has long been interested in various aspects of magic, but is searching for something-for something more, and her search leads her to people of great wisdom who begin to teach her about the world. Her teacher senses that Brida has a special “gift” but cannot tell what it is. The conflict within all of us - to be with someone whom we have known since long, or to be with someone whom we have known for a lesser time but who touches our heart more or to just leave everything and submit ourselves to a lone path with no partner forms the crux of this story.

Brida pursues her course even deeper into the mysteries of life, seeking to answer questions about who she is. The main character of this story has been portrayed beautifully. The internal conflict, external temptations, fears and joy are so beautifully penned that one would easily connect with the character and that is quite a brilliant quality for a writer to have. Coelho uses a strange idea of a “soulmate” which becomes the ultimate end of Brida’s rituals. He further terms the creation of nature as “God’s signature” (161). Paulo Coelho stands aloof for his meticulous language for which he is commended. As a process of magic, Brida learns two traditions - Tradition of the Sun and Tradition of the Moon. The novel *Brida* is an
outcome of Coelho’s experience with a woman whom he met on the “Road to Rome” 
(Paulo Coelho Confessions of a Pilgrim 93) after his pilgrimage to Santiago. In one 
fragment, Brida sits on a mountain together with Magus, one of her teachers and they 
watch the sunset. During the last moments of the sunset both of them say a prayer

Help me to understand that what moves me to seek out 
your truth is the same force that moved the saints, and 
the doubts I have are the same doubts that the saints had 
and my frailties are the same frailties. Help me to be 
humble enough to accept that I am no different from 
other people Amen. (21)

Coelho’s message through this prayer is, the saints are ordinary people, just 
like any human being. They are not special people; they have the doubts, questions 
and weaknesses too. We are the same; there may be a saint in all of us. The only way 
they have set themselves apart from us is by their actions. They do not give in to their 
weaknesses or to their actions. Their questions lead them along the path to new 
answers and to new questions accompanying those answers. They have a force 
driving them wanting to find a truth. It is by their actions that they become special, 
not by who they are. In this novel, Paulo Coelho deals with the subject - magic. We 
learn that one of the characters is the Magus who is recognized not as an ordinary 
person. In short, we are led directly into an impossible world filled with magics and 
at that point, the reader’s mind has no choice but to drop everything that is rational 
and real and simply accept that we are now in a different kind of world. In a sense, 
this technique in writing is a little like teaching someone to swim by throwing them 
into the water. The readers instantly forget everything they have learned about what 
is real and possible and from that point on, they just follow along with whatever
strange events or bizarre topics the author chooses to introduce. At the point, they are ready to believe in magic, at least for the time that they are reading the book.

The stream of love takes different dimensions in all his novels. In *The Pilgrimage* one of the characters named Petrus, one who guides the author towards the Road to Santiago, talks about three kinds of love “Eros, Philos or Agape” (95). The feeling of love that exists between two people is Eros. This is felt between a husband and a wife. In the process, each could begin to feel robbed of a means of expressing love. Eros is the spirit that unites them and would begin to reveal only its negative side in due course. God has provided this spirit to humans as their noblest sentiment which gradually becomes a source of hatred and destructiveness.

 [...] the face of Eros is never the same for any two people. And no one can escape eros, everyone needs its presence, despite the fact that many times eros makes us feel apart from the world, trapped in our solitude.

(96)

Philos is love in the form of friendship. When the flame of Eros stops burning, it is Philos that keeps a couple together. As far Agape, it is in both Eros and Philos. It is a divine spark, the purest and the total love. It is the love that consumes the person who experiences it. Whoever knows and experiences Agape learns that nothing else in the world is important -just love.

This was the kind of love that Jesus felt for humanity, and it was great that it shook the stars and changed the course of history [...] when Christ spoke of loving one’s enemies, he was referring to agape. (106)
According to Jesus Christ, it is impossible to like our enemies those who are cruel to us, those who tried to make our day-to-day suffering ever worse. But Coelho says Agape is much more than liking. It is a feeling that suffuses, that fills every space in us and turns our aggression to dust.

In *The Alchemist*, love is in the form of Eros between Santiago and the desert girl Fatima. Santiago comes in contact with Fatima in the desert near the Oasis. On seeing her, Santiago falls in love and decides to drop his journey towards the hidden treasure. For he fears that if he proceeds further on the desert, he may not come back and may tend to lose Fatima. It is she who encourages him to follow his dreams and treasure. She says

> You told me that you loved me. Then you taught me something of the universal language and the soul of the world. Because of that, I have become part of you [...]. It was the omens that brought you to me and I am really a part of your dream, you’ll come back one day. (102)

Love requires them with the people they love. In the desert, Santiago meets his twin soul and discovers that love is the core of existence and creation. As Coelho explains when we love, we always try to improve ourselves and that is when everything is possible. The subject of love inspires a beautiful lyricism in Coelho’s writing.

*The Valkyries* narrates the unexpressed love between the protagonist Paulo Coelho and his spouse Chris. Chris, through her channelling, is able to communicate with her guardian angel whereas Coelho fails in doing so. He grows envious over
Chris since she follows Coelho in search of his guardian angel with negligible interest. He becomes desperate due to his inability to meet his angel despite fulfilling the rituals. Seeing her troublesome life partner, Chris feels sorry and inwardly prays for the accomplishment of the task.

[...] to walk the deserted streets of Ajo imploring God to make a miracle because the man she loved needed to see his angel. Her heart was squeezed more tightly than ever. Perhaps she preferred a Paulo who was in doubt. A Paulo who needed a miracle. A Paulo who appeared to have lost his faith [...] if his angel appeared, fine; if not, he could always blame Valhalla for having erred in her teaching. That way, he would not have to learn the most bitter lesson that God taught when he closed the gates of paradise, the lesson of disappointment. (243)

A tale of innocence, journey, quest, dreams, success and joy that ends as true love walking painfully through prostitution: an act that is redefined as Eleven Minutes, a path that is revisited in Eleven Minutes, a pleasure that is rephrased as Eleven Minutes, a soul, a body, a passion and a life that is conquered in Eleven Minutes. Paulo Coelho reiterates love, in a tale that is overwhelmingly fresh, it defines our version of love and it defies our use of it. Maria though a prostitute, resembles everyone. A girl with a childhood dreams, passionate adolescence and successful career as a prostitute misses something surreptitiously. She knew she was selling only eleven minutes of her life. She looks within her. The protagonist Maria
traces her journey into the discovery of the deepest truth of life. It begins with her heart broken teen age, her quest for her dreams and how her ambition leads her to prostitution. Coelho lets us know the sacredness of sex and the sanctity of those eleven minutes in life.

Disillusioned by love, she becomes hardened and never fully opens her heart to anyone. When her expectations on love meet disappointment, she thinks, “love is, above all, a cause of suffering” (11). She goes from being a restaurant dancer to a high class prostitute. In her quests, she endures pain and suffering in all degrees, regains her spiritual virginity, falls in love and allows her heart to feel love again. In the end, Maria is compensated by the love of a man (Ralf Hart) who gives his love and asks nothing in return. She gives a new meaning to love after she begins a relationship with the young painter Ralf Hart, “the universes only make sense when we have someone to share our feelings with” (118). Love never asks for permission nor does it appear when we feel we most need it. Love is a universal entity that holds no shape and strikes down and stays clenched to the heart. In this novel Eleven Minutes, the reader is immediately transported into Maria’s soul; boarding the carousel of her life and the incidents that lead up to the opening of her long lost soul. The inner light spoken about by Coelho in the story indicates the light that emerges from the soul. It has no physical body and is only apparent to others who possess the same light. Love has no meaning, love just is. The bonding between the two people leads her to believe that what she is looking for is possible.

The war correspondent Esther, who has been a moral support to her husband Coelho in his writings, abandons him due to frustrations that she has faced in her loveless life. Her abandoning does not mean that she hates her husband rather she loves him and expects him to realize the necessity of her presence in his life. When
she is beside him, he never thinks of sharing his experiences as a writer. Her disappearance enables him to be obsessed with his zahir. She becomes the zahir. Her absence occupies his every thought and maddens him. He reminds himself of her support. She is the reason for his becoming a famous writer now. His zahir becomes ever more intolerable. Unable to concentrate on any other things, he sets out to find his wife, with the help of Mikhail. When he reaches his wife in the Steppes, she calls herself as Penelope who awaited her Ulysses. She refers to love as a disease. “Love is a disease no one wants to get rid of. Those who catch it never try to get better and those who suffer do not wish to be cured” (The Zahir 336).

The quest for love in Brida is woven with the young girl Brida’s mission to carry out her mystical calling. Her search for spirituality and magic leads her to learn about soulmate. Magus, her teacher teaches her to identify her soulmate through a light on his left shoulder. Through channelling, she is able to see the light on the left shoulder of the Magus. She is bewildered at this for, already she has been in love with Lorens. She is in a great confusion about what she has to do. She could not discard Lorens just like for not possessing the identity of a soulmate. At the same time, she cannot choose Magus as her life-partner. Her love swings between Loners and Magus. At last Magus allows her to share her life with her boyfriend, letting her know that he is the one who is made for her.

Characterization is another landmark in which Paulo Coelho makes his stand noticeable. In all the novels, apart from the protagonists, he gives a lot of significance to more than one character. He presents that character as a guide in some way or other who possesses extraordinary power than the protagonist himself. He makes it in such a way that it is through and from that concerned character, the protagonist
unfolds all secrets or mysteries of life. It is sometime one or more than one character who helps the protagonist to find his self. For instance, Paulo Coelho is guided throughout to Santiago de Compostela by Petrus in *The Pilgrimage*. Petrus learns about the good and evil well in advance; teaches the protagonist how to overcome all obstacles, equips him to defeat his demon and remains as a guardian until he reaches Santiago. Similarly in *The Alchemist*, there is a king named Melchizedek who clarifies the protagonist’s doubts regarding his dreams and the Alchemist who teaches him about omens and emboldens him. In *The Valkyries*, the couple is taken care of by Gene in the beginning until they meet the Valkyries and later they are governed by the Valkyries who are women riding on motorcycles. Ralf Hart and Terence are the two men who bring about a change in the life of Maria in *Eleven Minutes*. Terence teaches her delight through pain. However, Maria pays great tribute to Ralf Hart, an artist, who perceived the inner light of her soul. Mikhail in *The Zahir* comes as a rescuer of Esther and as a messenger to Paulo Coelho who gives more information about the author’s wife and the reason for her disappearance. Not only does he appear as a messenger but also remains as a cause for their reunion.

In *The Witch of Portobello* at first the house owner - Pavel who teaches the unrhythmic dance to Athena, then comes Natil Alaihi who teaches her the art of calligraphy that enables her to fill the blank spaces and finally it is Edda, a doctor cum teacher, who regulates her soul. Then in *Brida* obviously it is the Magus who teaches Brida the Tradition of Moon thereby dispelling her fear and Wicca, the teacher of the Tradition of Sun who converts her into a witch. Thus the protagonists of the novels have been perfectly guided by a supporting character who, in the words of Coelho, can be called as God’s messengers. For these are the characters who come for the rescue of the protagonists in their exigency.
Paulo Coelho presents himself as the protagonist of The Pilgrimage, The Valkyries and The Zahir, but in The Alchemist he assumes the role of a king Melchizedek. Whereas in other novels like Eleven Minutes, The Witch of Portobello and Brida, the protagonists are female. Wherever Paulo Coelho presents himself as the main character, it is sure that he shares his own experiences of life. Those novels become autobiographical where he expresses the part of his life through the mouth of the protagonist. Paulo Coelho has made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and has himself practised the RAM tradition as described in The Pilgrimage where Paulo Coelho is the protagonist who travels in search of his magical sword.

Until after having made the pilgrimage to Santiago, which was the most intense experience of my life, I decided to do what in the RAM tradition - a very old spiritual tradition, over five hundred years old, born in the heart of the catholic church and to which I belong, along with four other disciples - is known as the ‘feminine way’ Others call it the ‘Road to Rome’.

(Paulo Coelho Confessions of a Pilgrim 93)

The Pilgrimage to Santiago had been a radical experience for him. When he narrates about the pilgrimage, he says that as he started the pilgrimage, he also thought that finding one’s destiny, being able to penetrate the mysteries of the spirit, were things reserved for the chosen few but in the book The Pilgrimage, he has mentioned Castaneda, one of his idols whom he believes to have changed his life in the prologue and has identified Petrus with Don Juan. “That the extraordinary is not the birth right of a chosen and privileged few, but of all people, even the humblest. That is my one certainty: we are all the manifestation of the divinity of God” (178).
Further he adds that the Santiago pilgrimage has taught him the most important lesson.

The anecdotes that he refers to in his novels are from his own life. Before gaining fame as a writer, Paulo Coelho is known to the world as a Magus, attributed with special powers. In *Paulo Coelho Confessions* he reveals his painful past experiences not just with drugs but with all kinds of magic including the blackest of which he affirms satanic rituals paled in comparison. He got rid of them when he realized that those practices were leading him to the brink of evil. Coelho still believes in the magical dimensions of life, considering each of us capable of developing the potential lying buried within us and that anyone who wants to read, can read the hidden, secret language of things in their essence. He firmly believes that we all possess gifts that we do not develop, because official wisdom that empty space refuses them, labels them as superstitions. He calls himself a Magus for he is a person who tries to develop his gifts and power and that is what it means to be a Magus. This Magus is the one who appears in *Brida* as Brida’s teacher who is interested in developing his powers. And the gift he mentions is the special gift of Brida (discerning the spirits).

Coelho’s indulgence in black magic begins with his meeting with Aleister Crowley who has influenced great many people. The society founded in the beginning of the nineteenth century was The Alternative Society (*The Valkyries* 129). This society is mentioned by Coelho in *The Valkyries*, when Valhalla performs a ritual to break the pact which Coelho has made when he was twenty six years. Under the impact of the society, Coelho decided to write his experiences about it when he first crossed paths with Raul Seixes to the secret society which was totally open, free
of rules, where one could be a monster or a marvellous person. Everyone fitted in there. There was a total sexual freedom, freedom of thought, everything including oppressions. “It was about taking the experience of power to its maximum limits” (*Paulo Coelho Confessions* 114).

To Paulo Coelho, a writer is a catalyst rather than a transformational element. The function of a catalyst is precisely, not to mix with the element but to allow them to become manifest. People discover things as they go along. Paulo Coelho does not merely send messages to people in his books. He just narrates what has happened in his life. He talks about the happenings of his life; neither gives solution for everyone nor asks others to do the same because every life is different and personal. To quote his own words:

In fact, if we lined up all the human beings on the planet we wouldn’t find two identical [...] I believe in catalyzing incendiary element [...] I try to make it clear, through my own experience, that failing is not the same as being defeated. They fail who don’t even try to fight their battle and they are defeated those who are able to struggle. And this defeat is no shame. It can be a trampoline to new victories [...] there is no such thing as a definitive defeat or a definitive victory, because today’s defeat could become tomorrow’s victory. (*Paulo Coelho Confessions* 24)

This message is illustrated in *The Alchemist* through Santiago, the shepherd boy.
While he uses first person to describe his personal experiences in few of his novels, he uses third person in *The Witch of Portobello* which is typical of Paulo Coelho’s narration. He does not follow the traditional narrative structure in this novel. He justifies himself in using third person to represent himself.

[...] I wanted not only to discuss spiritual concepts, but also some important issues such as marriage. And I could describe my wife’s thoughts only if I used third person approach. (*An Interview with Brazilian Spiritual Asp Fiction Writer, Paulo Coelho* <http://www.lifepositive.com/spirit/traditional path 's/sorcery/coelho>)

Part of what draws the reader in is the story itself and part is the very unique way it is written. Rather than a straightforward narrative or a dialogue or even a series of letters this is a unique narrative technique. It is written as a series of first person accounts of the individuals’ interactions with the unusual heroine Athena. These stories, taped interviews and letters have been compiled by a narrator and kept unrevealed to the readers until the end of the story. Coelho has decided to let Athena’s story be told as other’s tell it, through their own words and with all of their emotions, anger, support, respect or disgust. What we learn from these accounts is Athena a bit of an enigma, and from these accounts we could almost assume that almost every person encountered a different Athena, an Athena of the making in their mind. The way the biography is written allows us to draw our own conclusions rather than a traditionally researched biography that is coloured by the lenses that cloud the vision of the biographer. The narrative tool used by Coelho is the story-told-by-many-view point’s technique in the book.
“Once upon a time there was a prostitute called Maria” (*Eleven Minutes*) thus begins Coelho’s latest novel *Eleven Minutes*, a book that cannot decide if it wants to be a fairy tale or saga of sequel discovery because the introductory line is entirely strange and impressive. The author explores the sacred and spiritual aspects of sex. In fact this book is a biography of Sonia (a professional prostitute) and many other prostitutes like her. The protagonist Maria is also a real person and is now married with two children - says one of the interviews of Paulo Coelho that was published in March 2003.

However, the book isn’t simply her biography, because I’ve also tried to make use of various other parallel elements. I think she would recognize her story in the book as a whole, but she wouldn’t necessarily have been confronted by the same situations with which my character is confronted. ([*Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative))

In short, this book is made up of a blend of different people. Not only does the author commemorate Sonia and Maria but he also conveys his deep felt gratitude to many others like Martha, Antenora, Isabella, Amy, Lucia, Andrei, Vanessa, Patrick, Theresa and Anna Christina in the epilogue of his book.

In *The Alchemist*, in a fragment, he talks about omens that enhances the perception of the shepherd boy to analyse the situations. In his *Paulo Coelho Confessions* Coelho has ornamented his first chapter entitled omens with the following words “omens are an alphabet you develop to talk to the world’s soul” (1).
To him omens are a language, the alphabet we develop to speak to the world’s soul, or the universe’s or God’s whatever name we give it. Like any alphabet, it is an individual, that can be learnt only by making mistakes and that keeps us from globalizing the spiritual quest. Coelho enumerates this concept thus:

 [...] at the beginning we hardly believe in anything, at a second stage we think we’re mistaken; at the third everything seems to be omen, then, only, at the end, when an omen crosses our path over and over again without being sought out, you realize you’re facing a language that goes beyond reality. (Paulo Coelho Confessions 8)

The shepherd travels endlessly knowing the existence of a treasure. He sees that treasure is guided by omens. For him, it is important to arrive at the treasure but when he gets there he sees that he is no longer the same, he has changed, he has become someone else. It is the path and the search that forges and changes us.

Much of a person’s understanding of the world around him comes from the knowledge that cannot be found in text books or taught in any classroom. Omen is a universal phenomenon in which people are deeply imbibed. By simply analysing events and experiences, a deeper insight into the world will result. Before starting any important activity, they wait until the expected omen appears. Butterflies, crickets, lizards and four leaf clovers are part of good omens. But when Coelho interprets omens, we cannot simply ignore them as superstitious one. In one of his interviews, he says
My turning point was my pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. It was then that I, who has dedicated most of my life to penetrate that ‘secrets’ of the Universe, realized that there are no secrets. Life is and will always be a mystery. We have to follow the omens and pay attention to it and others. Life is a constant miracle and this miracle manifests itself in encounters with other people. (An interview with Brazilian Spiritual Asp Fiction Writer, Paulo Coelho <http://www.lifepositive.com/spirit/traditionalpath's/sorcery/coelho>)

Omens in this novel are vital to the development of the plot. The first omen that Santiago encounters is his dream of the pyramids. The omen, revealed to Santiago, lead him to his personal legend and ultimately to his understanding of the soul of the world. Omen is a sign or happening which is supposed to tell us of the coming events. It signifies good or bad fortune. The signs are numerous and varied and include lighting, cloud movement, the flight of birds etc which foretold events. The omens that guide Santiago are his meeting with the crystal merchant, his encounter with the English man who knows about the precious stones Urim and Thummim. The best example of God speaking through omens occurs when Santiago is stopped in the Oasis in the desert. These examples show how far Santiago has come in his understanding of the universal languages.

Consequently, Coelho’s suggestion about symbols is inevitable. The Alchemist in The Alchemist finds God while searching for the elixir of life and the philosopher’s stone. The fact is that the symbolism of a text is a parallel to the
symbolism and symbolic language of alchemism and similarly the symbolism of dreams is presented as God’s language. It is also symbolic that Santiago finds his soulmate and the secrets of wisdom in the wildness of the desert. The wildness is a symbol that has been used by many great writers. In the desert, Santiago meets his twin-soul and discovers that love is the core of existence and creation. The character being a shepherd himself is symbolic for shepherds are dear to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself is phrased as good shepherd. Shepherds are symbols of innocence, peace, objectivity, care and divinity. Maria’s stroll in Eleven Minutes on the ancient road-Santiago de Compostela stands for the eventual purification of her body and soul. From then on she becomes sacred. Her inner self gets illuminated and so sex also becomes sacred. Sex is not just a symbol of sin. It is God’s creation in perfection, a piece of art and a trance. Though the novel is ostensibly about sensual pleasure, it is also about the sacredness and beauty of love. The blue butterfly fluttering around the shoulder of Paulo Coelho in The Valkyries while he makes a final attempt to meet his angel, is a perfect symbol of the appearance of his angel, though no winged angel in white robe appears as we imagine. It is a symbolic representation of God’s presence around him. A piece of blood stained cloth with an emblem represents the mutual exchange of love between the author and Esther in The Zahir which the author does not deserve till the end when he realizes the sanctity of love.

Besides, Coelho’s construction of sentences makes the readers get absorbed towards their reading. It might be one of his techniques to present catchy short sentences that deserve to be a maxim. For example,
We always know which is the best road to follow, but we follow only the road that we have become accustomed to (The Pilgrimage 53).

Death is our constant companion and it is death that gives each person’s life its true meaning (123).

To realize one’s destiny is a person’s only real obligation (The Alchemist 23).

When you desire something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it (23).

Love is the force that transforms and improves the soul of the world (158).

Everything that happens once can never happen again. But everything that happens twice will surely happen a third time (164).

When God wants to drive a person insane, he grants that person’s every wish (The Valkyries 236).

Love was work everything and couldn’t be exchanged for anything (225).

Follow your dreams and take your risks (142).

No one loses anyone because no one owns anyone (Eleven Minutes 92).

Really important meetings are planned by the souls long before the bodies see each other (140).

If you want to achieve your objectives, you have to be prepared for a daily dose of pain or discomfort (173).

When a teacher helps someone to discover something, the teacher always learns something new too (177).
Suffering occurs when we want other people to love us in the way we imagine we want to be loved and not in the way that love should manifest itself (The Zahir 337).

Loneliness gets stronger when we try to face it down, but gets weaker when we simply ignore it (The Witch of Portobello 66).

It is well to give when asked but it is better to give unasked (190).

Anyone who believes they have failed will always fail. Anyone who has decided that they cannot behave any differently will be destroyed by routine (239).

What you give you will receive, although it might sometimes come from the place you least expect (229).

Changes only happen when we go totally against everything we're used to doing (224).

Take great care with everything you say, the word has more power than many rituals (Brida 84).

Love between people is much more difficult to understand than love for a Supreme being (215).

Accept what life offers you and try to drink from every cup (254).

Simple incidents narrated with vivid descriptions and uncomplicated sentence constructions make these novels perfectly delightful. For Paulo Coelho, the only crime against life is to believe in the word impossible. According to him, each person has a role to play, a life pattern that is uniquely designed for an individual. And fulfilment lies in following and understanding that pattern, being whomever one is instead of walking on the trodden path. All his novels are autobiographical and
everything stated in them is fact. In *Paulo Coelho Confessions of a Pilgrim*, he declares

> Of course, in *The Alchemist* I’m the shepherd, the crystal merchant and even Fatima. In the other books I’m always the main character. I’m even *Brida*. In two books, I’m completely myself: in *The Valkyries* and *The Pilgrimage*. The fact is, the majority of my books, although they’re literary narratives, are not fiction. They are actual things I’ve experienced. (172)

Regarding life he opines, “everybody has a purpose. We know when we are closer to our goal by listening to our heart” (*An Interview with Brazilian Spiritual Asp Fiction Writer, Paulo Coelho* <http://www.life positive.com/spirit/traditional path ’s/sorcery/ Coelho>). Critics have praised his writing for the use of symbolic language, language that does not speak to our brain, but to our hearts. Like an Alchemist, Coelho adds just the right mix of mysticism and realism, love and fear to make his novels a wonderful experience. He is a master storyteller and the readers find it easy to be magically transported to an ancient parallel universe. Coelho calls his achievements “a very abstract success” and believes “an author only realizes, he has been understood when he sees someone reading his books!” (*From Publishers Weekly* 1993 <http://Sophomore, hiram.edu/reading/book reviews.html>). He really captures the psyche of man, who sacrifices fulfilment to conformity; who knows he can achieve greatness but shies away from the fear of loss and defeat and ends up living a life of void and regret. The secret of this author’s success lies in that he tells us exactly what we want to hear or rather he wishes us to wish and dream
without any fear of defeat and follow them till we get them. His novels have the comic charm, dramatic tension and psychological intensity of a fairy tale but full of specific wisdom as well about becoming self empowered, overcoming depression and be living in our dreams. His works skillfully combine words of wisdom, philosophy and simplicity of meaning and language which makes it particularly readable.

Coelho’s books tend to feature some sort of spiritual quest, written in accessibly pared down language which leads the reader inexorably towards thumping great moral climax. His books have about a million messages hidden inside of it like treasures. And the beautiful part of his writing is that he is accessible. Julia Roberts and Madonna are said to love his work. President Clinton was pictured with a copy of *The Alchemist* at the height of Monica-gate (*A mystery even to himself*<http://en.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/An-Interview>). The only writer who inspires the nations is the world-renowned spiritual writer Paulo Coelho. He knows who he is and yet he remains a mystery to himself. He remarks

I write from my soul. This is the reason that critics don’t hurt me because it is me. If it was not me, if I was pretending to be someone else, then this could unbalance my world but I know who I am. (*A mystery even to himself*<http://en.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/An-interview>)

His stories are simple and direct. His writing style is simple, linear and sprinkled with flashbacks. The author spends little time with scene-setting and gives readers only the minute, necessary details, concentrating more on his story’s message. Dialogue is what one would expect from characters in a mystical or inspirational
fable: anecdote exchanges, abstract ideologies that readers must interpret. His novels are read quickly, the readers do not suffer from a slow start and by no means are epic in its expanse. Coelho’s inspiration is this: that if people can identify the unnecessary things and relinquish them, they will realize what the world truly has in store. Obviously, he is a genre in himself and one must know how to set the expectations right before picking up his books. Anyone can read his work, understand it on their own level and take away an invaluable, yet totally different meaning from it than their neighbour did.