

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Paulo Coelho is a Brazilian author. Before he turned to be a novelist, he used to work as a film director, actor, lyricist and journalist ("Goodreads"). These experiences make him a good novelist, and the words in his novels are very well chosen. His favorite style of writing is poetic prose; he also frequently uses philosophically meaningful words and symbolism (Hassapi) in his works. The language in his novels is also easily understood and that is why the novels are very well liked.

According to Trilling, "the novel is perpetual quest for reality, the field of its research being always the social world, the material of its analysis being always manners as the indication of the direction of man's soul" (qtd. in Trilling: 77). I believe Coelho's works present social life through the characters he has created. The characteristics of his characters usually represent real people's manners, and therefore, as the readers, we can learn about people's reactions in certain situations.

His best-known work, *The Alchemist*, has been translated into 67 languages and has sold more than 65 million copies (Coelho). *The Alchemist* has been edited in more than 150 countries and *Eleven Minutes* had the highest number of books sold worldwide and became the top of all popular booklists in the world ("Biography").

For my thesis, I choose to analyze one of Coelho's novels, entitled *By The River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*. It is very interesting when I read this love story and how the main character struggles to fight her fear. This is a story that tells about a journey in search of self-identity, wrapped inside a beautiful love story which embodies a message that "true love is an act of total surrender" (Hassapi). On a deeper level, Coelho gives "the message that as there are no rules when it comes to love, there are no rules when it comes to worshipping God." (Hassapi). This novel is said to be ". . . exquisitely written, the language direct, quotable, imaginative and at times, numinous" (Waples) and the story ". . . teaches us to break down rules, to stop asking questions, to stop looking for explanations and to just give freedom to the spirit inside of us. Let the spirit guide us to our paths, to our calling and have complete faith in a higher authority" (Neeraja).

I am interested in analyzing the protagonist in the novel. Protagonist is "the main character in a story, novel, drama, or either literary work, the character that the reader or audience empathizes with" (Wiehardt). In addition, according to Gass, "a character, first of all, is the noise of his name, and all the sounds and rhythms that proceed for him" (qtd. in Gass: 176). Interestingly, the protagonist's name in this novel is Pilar (in Spanish), which means "Pillar" in English.

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, pillar means “a large round stone, metal or wooden post that is used to support a bridge, the roof of a building” ("Pillar."). This is the quality that Pilar has in this novel. The word also implies the quality of being strong and firm. Thus, in my analysis, I am going to discuss the changes of Pilar's characteristics in the circumstances she faces and how her experiences help change those characteristics.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The statements of the problem in my thesis are:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed in the novel?
2. What is the purpose of the author in creating such a protagonist?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of the study in my major thesis are:

1. To analyze how the protagonist is portrayed in the novel.
2. To show the purpose of the author in creating such a protagonist.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

In analysing *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* by Paulo Coelho, I use library research. First, I read the novel as the primary text. Next, I find some literary criticisms about the author and the work from the Internet to help the writing of my thesis.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two consists of the analysis of the portrayal of the protagonist in *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. At the end of the thesis, there are Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.