

Destined Journeys: Decoding Free Will in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* Through Narrative Stylistics

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Abstract—This study delves into the nuanced exploration of destiny and free will within Paulo Coelho's acclaimed novel, *The Alchemist* (1988), meticulously employing the framework of narrative stylistics. Through a detailed examination utilizing various narrative techniques and literary devices such as, prolepses, heteroglossia, focalization, causation and an array of narrative stylistic elements, this research critically examines the interplay between fate and individual agency in Santiago's transformative odyssey. By intricately dissecting narrative structure, dialogue, symbolism, character perspectives, and language use, the study unpacks the narrative's portrayal of destiny as both predestined paths guided by omens and the manifestations of characters' expressions of free will through their deliberate decisions and actions. In presenting this argumentative stance, this investigation illuminates Coelho's masterful creation of a multi-dimensional narrative tapestry that artfully interweaves themes of destiny and free will, ultimately urging readers to introspect on life's complexities and the pivotal nature of the choices that chart their courses.

Index Terms—destiny, narrative stylistics, prolepses, heteroglossia, focalization

I. INTRODUCTION

Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* (1988) delves into profound philosophical themes, inviting readers to ponder the interplay between fate and individual autonomy through the intricate tapestry of narrative stylistics. The narrative follows Santiago's transformative journey toward his personal legend, defying societal norms for a path rich in personal significance. This journey unravels a conflict between predestined fate and individual free will, prompting thought-provoking inquiries about human existence and the power to carve one's destiny. Santiago's initial choice to embrace his personal legend signifies a strong belief in individual autonomy, a departure from imposed limitations. However, as he embarks on this transformative odyssey, the subtle influence of destiny surfaces through the novel's storytelling, with omens and signs guiding him toward his predetermined path, underscoring the presence of a harmoniously arranged universe.

Amid Santiago's encounters, diverse viewpoints on destiny and personal agency contribute depth to the exploration of the novel's thematic elements, intricately interwoven through Coelho's use of narrative stylistics. The author masterfully integrates techniques like foreshadowing, symbolism, repetition, causation, focalization, and introspective dialogue into the narrative fabric. These literary tools meticulously highlight the inherent tension between fate and free will, prompting readers to contemplate the extent to which Santiago's choices are predetermined or influenced by personal volition. This study aims to provide insights into inquiries raised by *The Alchemist* regarding the delicate balance between destiny and determination, exploring whether individuals can shape their paths or are confined by an unchangeable fate. These fundamental questions underpin this analysis, delving into narrative dynamics, character motivation, and symbolic elements crafted by Coelho, contributing to the complex thematic tapestry of fate versus free will within the realms of narrative stylistics.

Narrative stylistics refers to the study of the stylistic elements and mechanisms used in narrative discourse. It involves analyzing the narrative strategies, such as narrative voice, character discourse expression, and stylistic features, which contribute to the overall effectiveness of a narrative. The use of narrative stylistics can provide insights into the translation of novels, the teaching of poetry, and the analysis of different languages and their preferred patterns in storytelling (Iqbal et al., 2021; Perkins, 2021; Yao, 2020; Taheri et al., 2020; Acim, 2021).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The conflict between fate and free will remains a recurring and multifaceted subject within literary narratives, offering diverse perspectives across various works. Scholars have extensively examined this theme, investigating how characters grapple with their destinies and exercise agency within the confines of fate.

Rao (2020) proposes a perspective that advocates for a harmonious fusion of fate and free will, seeking to reconcile the observed inequities in life. The author introduces a synthesis that attempts to address the ongoing debate of Fate Versus Free Will while acknowledging individual agency.

Alonso-Bastarache (2016) delves into Scheler's conceptualization of freedom, offering a distinct viewpoint on the coexistence of freedom and destiny. Scheler posits that while freedom exists, destiny acts as a limit to free will, suggesting constraints on human agency.

Cahya et al. (2022) adopt an existentialists approach to explore existential freedom in *The Alchemist*. Through this unique approach, they focus on Santiago's journey, emphasizing his path toward existential freedom through self-awareness, comprehension of life's purpose, and conscious decision-making. The study employs narrative stylistics to analyze how Santiago's liberation is portrayed and realized within the narrative.

Additionally, a study investigating fate and free will in the *Harry Potter* series sheds light on how the protagonist, Voldemort, confronts the forces of destiny and individual choice. The narrative in *The Deathly Hallows* acknowledges the inevitability of fate while acknowledging the role of individual decisions in fulfilling prophecies (Pond, 2010).

What distinguishes this study from the other mentioned works is its unique utilization of the narrative stylistics' lens. In the realm of literary theory, various scholars have extensively explored the role of linguistic devices in shaping narrative style within literature. Bakhtin (1984), renowned for his theories on dialogism and the novel, highlighted the pivotal role of dialogue in character development and dynamic character interactions, essential for crafting narrative style. The work of Gerard Genette's (1980) on narrative discourse elucidated how narrative elements like voice, point of view, and structure influence a narrative's overall style. The discussions of Booth's (1961) on unreliable narration underscored how an author's linguistic choices and narrative voice contribute to constructing narrative style. Barthes (1975) delved into the significance of symbolism and the author's voice in narrative, emphasizing their role in crafting style and conveying layers of meaning. Tzvetan Todorov's structuralist approach (1969) explored narrative devices such as structure, repetition, and point of view, shedding light on their impact on narrative style and reader engagement.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section delves into Paulo Coelho's novel *The Alchemist* through the lens of narrative stylistics to explore the theme of destiny versus free will. It utilizes tools provided by narrative stylistics to analyze the book's narrative structure, storytelling techniques, and the role of the narrator in presenting the conflicting concepts of destiny and free will. The study aims to deepen understanding of how Coelho addresses this central theme and its effects on the characters' journeys by closely examining narrative elements and referencing relevant excerpts from the novel and scholarly sources.

Narratology, stemming from structuralism and linguistic theory, investigates narrative structures (Barry, 2022). The initial focus is on narrative structure, denoting a story's organization and framework, encompassing event arrangement for coherence. In *The Alchemist*, Coelho adeptly crafts a tale interweaving destiny and free will, prompting readers to ponder these contrasting forces. The novel's narrative structure is a linear, sequential account following Santiago's pursuit of his personal legend. Yet, amidst this primary plotline, other narratives entwine. The story's events unfold chronologically, effectively highlighting the interplay of destiny and free will. From the very beginning, Santiago chooses to become a shepherd based on his own will disregarding his father's desire for him to become a priest. Despite this act of free will, destiny begins to send Santiago messages through dreams about a hidden treasure. Intrigued, Santiago decides to seek interpretation for his dream of his own volition and consults a gypsy. At this point, destiny intervenes again and sends Melchizedek to convince Santiago to pursue his dream. Encouraged, Santiago, by his own choice, decides to sell his flock of sheep and embarks on a journey to Egypt. Along the way, due to his biases towards Arabs, Santiago falls victim to a foreigner whom fate places in his path resulting in his belongings being stolen. Despite this setback, Santiago, by his own will, finds work in a crystal shop. Although he accumulates a significant amount of money, he still chooses to continue pursuing his dream. Santiago has not actively sought out Fatima or the Alchemist, but destiny brings them into his life. Finally, when he arrives in Egypt and finds himself robbed and left with nothing; destiny intervenes once again to reveal the location of his treasure. This chronological narrative order aids in comprehending how both destiny and Santiago's will ultimately lead him to his dream (Coelho, 1988).

Moreover, heteroglossia, the coexistence of diverse voices within a narrative (Park-Fuller, 1986), subtly permeates *The Alchemist*. The incorporation of various perspectives, dialogues, and cultural elements among characters enriches the storytelling, contributing to a tapestry of conflicting viewpoints on destiny and free will. Santiago's encounters with different individuals, each embodying distinct beliefs and backgrounds, exemplify the multifaceted nature of heteroglossia in shaping the narrative landscape. Abbott (2008) explores not only linear narrative structures, but also he explores the framing narratives that are embedded narratives within another narrative. These embedded narratives in Coelho's *The Alchemist* serve to highlight the theme of destiny versus free will. For instance, the story of the baker who yearns to travel but succumbs to his father's wishes and becomes a baker. He demonstrates a surrender to destiny without

fighting for his own dream. Another embedded narrative involves the Englishman who travels across continents to meet the alchemist. He chooses to embark on this journey based on his own will believing that he shapes his own destiny. Additionally, there is the story of the crystal merchant whose ultimate desire is to go on a pilgrimage. However, he decides, of his own volition, not to go. Initially, he justifies this decision by citing a lack of money, and later, when he does have enough money, he rationalizes his failure to achieve his dream by invoking the term "maktub", which is closely tied to the concept of destiny. The term 'maktub' is a translation of the Arabic word 'fate' that suggests human's inability to alter their destiny regardless of their attempts:

You dream about your sheep and the Pyramids, but you're different from me, because you want to realize your dreams. I just want to dream about Mecca. I've already imagined a thousand times crossing the desert, arriving at the Plaza of the Sacred Stone, the seven times I walk around it before allowing myself to touch it. I've already imagined the people who would be at my side, and those in front of me, and the conversations and prayers we would share. But I'm afraid that it would all be a disappointment, so I prefer just to dream about it. I'm already used to the way things are. Before you came, I was thinking about how much time I had wasted in the same place, while my friends had moved on, and either went bankrupt or did better than they had before. It made me very depressed. Now, I can see that it hasn't been too bad. The shop is exactly the size I always wanted it to be. I don't want to change anything, because I don't know how to deal with change. I'm used to the way I am. (Coelho, 1988, p. 56)

The speaker acknowledges a fear of disappointment in pursuing dreams, preferring to fantasize rather than take action, feeling content with the familiar, fearing change, and expressing reluctance to alter their life's course. Conversely, they contrast their own stagnation with another's determination to realize their aspirations, highlighting the fear of change and comfort in familiarity as obstacles to pursuing one's destiny.

Similarly, Fatima also repeatedly mentions "maktub", indicating her belief in destiny over personal will. These ideas about wholeheartedly embracing destiny contradict the Alchemist's viewpoint, as he believes in free will and action. He states, "There is only one way to learn. It's through action. Everything you need to know, you have learned through your journey" (Coelho, 1988, p. 112).

Apparently, "Coelho's works are known for their profound symbolism and philosophical ideas" (Sebastian, 2023, p. 1). Symbolism and allegory play a vital role in conveying the theme of destiny versus free will within *The Alchemist*. Throughout the novel, these narrative elements deepen the understanding of the protagonist's journey and the choices he faces. In the context of destiny and free will, the symbols of dreams in *The Alchemist* play a significant role in shaping the characters' paths and guiding them towards their Personal Legends. Dreams represent a connection to one's inner desires and serve as means of communication with the Soul of the World which can be seen as a higher power or a representation of destiny. The protagonist, Santiago, experiences a dream about a treasure in Egypt which becomes a pivotal moment in the story. This dream leads to him his Personal Legend, his true purpose or destiny in life. It sets the plot into motion as Santiago embarks on a journey to pursue his dream and fulfil his destiny. This illustrates the idea that dreams can provide insights into one's path and guide them towards their destined purpose. The belief in dreams becomes a defining factor that separates the enlightened characters from the unenlightened ones in the novel. The tribal chieftain, for example, takes Santiago's dream of the hawks seriously and interprets it as a message foretelling an impending assault. He understands the power and significance of dreams, drawing a parallel to the story of Joseph who was gifted with the Divine ability to interpret dreams accurately. This suggests that those who truly believe in dreams possess the ability to decipher their meanings and act accordingly. The chief's belief in dreams empowers him to successfully defend the oasis against attack. This demonstrates the potential influence dreams can have on shaping outcomes and altering one's destiny. Conversely, the man who beats Santiago in the novel does not believe in his own dream. However, when he describes the dream to Santiago, the protagonist recognizes it as an omen guiding him to the location of the treasure. Here, Santiago's awareness of the symbolic nature of dreams allows him to align his actions with his ultimate goal emphasizing the connection between dreams and the pursuit of one's Personal Legend. The importance of dreams, experienced during rest, parallels the significance of symbolic dreams that represent Personal Legends. Both types of dreams provide valuable insights and guidance allowing individuals to tap into their destinies and exercise their free will in pursuing them. While destiny may present itself through dreams, it is ultimately up to individuals to choose whether they will believe in and act upon the messages conveyed through these dreams. The theme of free will is intertwined with the interpretation and response to dreams highlighting the power of choice in shaping one's destiny (Coelho, 1988).

Omens serve as a source of guidance for Santiago on his journey acting as signs that reassure him of the endorsement of the Soul of the World. Melchizedek explains that omens are part of the Universal Language of the World, and by attuning himself to this language, Santiago can find meaning in his surroundings. When the stones Urim and Thummim drop from Santiago's pocket, he chooses to interpret it as an omen reinforcing his belief that the universe conspires to assist him (Coelho, 1988, p. 45). By recognizing and interpreting omens, Santiago exercises his free will to find significance in seemingly random events reinforcing the idea that individuals have agency in understanding and responding to the signs presented to them. Furthermore, the symbol of omens reflects Santiago's spiritual growth throughout the story that he obtained during his journey in Egypt. Initially, the omens he encounters are small and limited events, but as his understanding deepens, they become more significant and have broader implications. The vision of the hawks and approaching armies in Al-Fayoum, for example, informs Santiago about an impending assault on the oasis that

could result in widespread casualties. The increasing importance of these omens signifies Santiago's progress in grasping the pure Language of the World, the universal knowledge and wisdom that governs the interconnectedness of all things. This growth highlights the theme of destiny, as Santiago moves closer to comprehending his predetermined path and the larger forces at play in the world.

Omens reinforce the unity of nature and the interconnectedness of individuals with their destinies. While omens provide guidance and serve as indicators of destiny, it is the individual's free will and interpretation that determine how they respond to these signs. Santiago's evolving understanding of omens demonstrates his development in aligning his actions with his destiny and the Language of the World emphasizing the interplay between destiny and free will in shaping one's journey.

In Coelho's novel *The Alchemist*, the exploration of the theme of fate versus free will is skillfully executed through narrative techniques. According to Abbott (2008), narratives organize events to fulfill the human need for order, particularly in perceiving cause-and-effect relationships. Causation plays a pivotal role in portraying how Santiago's choices shape his transformative journey. Initially, Santiago interprets his dream as a message from destiny, igniting a sequence of subsequent actions. This establishes a clear cause-and-effect chain, with the dream acting as a driving force behind subsequent events. However, Santiago's exercise of free will also significantly influences the narrative. Independently choosing to pursue his treasure, he sells his sheep and sets off on his quest to fulfill his Personal Legend. This critical decision initiates a series of interconnected events. Ultimately, the theme of destiny versus free will is effectively depicted through the lens of causation in *The Alchemist*. One example of this interplay can be seen when Santiago, influenced by stereotypes, chooses not to engage with an Arab man, instead placing his trust in a foreigner (Coelho, 1988, p. 41). While this decision is driven by his own free will, destiny places that specific individual in Santiago's path. Consequently, the foreigner betrays him and steals his belongings challenging Santiago's perception of people. Destiny again intervenes by guiding Santiago to the crystal merchant. Motivated by his desire to accumulate wealth, Santiago willingly works at the crystal shop. Destiny continues its influence as Santiago overhears a conversation between two men expressing their longing for drinking tea from crystal cups (Coelho, 1988, p. 57). Inspired by this, Santiago takes the initiative to serve tea in crystal cups resulting in his work becoming successful and leading to financial prosperity. Through his own will, Santiago decides not to return to Spain and instead persistently pursues his dream. Destiny once more intervenes guiding him to encounter the professional alchemist. Further signs from destiny come in the form of visions and dreams, such as the vision of two hawks fighting and the dream interpreted as a war in the desert (Coelho, 1988, p. 93). In response to these destined signs, Santiago decides of his own accord to share his insights with the tribal chief. As a result, they reward Santiago when his vision becomes reality, and they defeat their enemy due to Santiago's awareness.

Even in the concluding moments of the novel, causation continues to emphasize the theme of destiny versus free will. Santiago, having reached the end of his journey, finds himself digging for his treasure to no avail. Destiny intervenes once more by sending two thieves who reveal their dream about the location of the treasure. Santiago, exercising his free will, chooses to follow their directions and eventually discovers his treasure in Sparta (Coelho, 1988, p. 143). Causation, intricately woven into the narrative, serves as a lens to comprehend the complex relationship between destiny and free will in the novel.

Mieke Bal (1997) indicates that focalization refers to the perspective or point of view through which a story is narrated or perceived. Focalization in a narrative defines how vision connects the viewer, observer, and the subject observed. It involves telling what one person sees to another, sometimes blurring the distinction, yet remains distinct from the actual experiences being conveyed (Coelho, 1988, p. 135). In simpler terms, it means that when a character in a story describes what another character is seeing or experiencing, it affects the content and presentation of the narrative. Sometimes, the distinction between different observing characters is not important because the reader is directly presented with the experience or vision as it happens. In these cases, the observing entities merge or coincide, and the focus is more on the immediate perception rather than the specific observer (Coelho, 1988, p. 132). The narrative point of view in *The Alchemist* is the third person omniscient as the narrator always refers to the characters as she, he or they. Focalization, presented through Santiago's perspective, allows readers to experience his internal struggles, dilemmas, and the choices he faces on his quest. Focalization allows readers to gain insight into the characters' perspectives on destiny and free will with a particular focus on Santiago and the Alchemist. The concept of destiny and free will is encapsulated in Melchizedek's statement, "to realize one's destiny is a person's only obligation" (Coelho, 1988, p. 30). This quote suggests that Melchizedek believes that every individual has a predetermined destiny, but it is the person's responsibility to recognize and actively pursue it using their own willpower. Similarly, another quotation that shows his belief is when he states: "And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" (Coelho, 1988, p. 30). The quotation clearly indicates that when people exercise their free will and align their desires with their destined path, the universe conspires in unison, working tirelessly to aid them in achieving their aspirations.

The alchemist's perspective on destiny versus free will is captured in the following quotations: "There is only one way to learn. It's through action. Everything you need to know you have learned through your journey" (Coelho, 1988, p. 112), and "At a certain point in our lives, we lose control of what's happening to us, and our lives become controlled by fate. That's the world's greatest lie" (Coelho, 1988, p. 27). These quotes highlight the alchemist's belief in the importance of personal agency and active engagement with life. According to the alchemist, true knowledge and understanding can only

be attained through taking action and embarking on one's own journey. He suggests that individuals have the ability to shape their destinies through their choices and actions. However, the alchemist also acknowledges that there comes a time when external circumstances may seem to overpower our control leading to a perception of fate. Despite this, he sees this notion as a deception emphasizing the idea that our lives are not predetermined and that we can still exercise our free will to shape our own paths. Ultimately, the alchemist's viewpoint suggests that while destiny may play a role, it is our active participation and choices that truly determine our personal outcomes.

Santiago's perspective on the interplay between free will and destiny is eloquently reflected in the following quotations: "They wanted me to be a priest, but I decided to become a shepherd" (Coelho, 1988, p. 27), and "when two such people encounter each other, and their eyes meet, the past and the future become unimportant. There is only that moment, and the incredible certainty that everything under the sun has been written by one hand only" (Coelho, 1988, p. 87). These quotes encapsulate Santiago's belief in the power of personal choice and the significance of seizing the opportunities that align with one's own desires and aspirations. Despite societal expectations and pressures, Santiago exercised his free will and followed his own path as a shepherd rather than conforming to the predetermined path of becoming a priest. This decision embodies his belief in the ability to shape his own destiny. Furthermore, Santiago's encounter with someone who shares a deep connection and understanding represents a transformative moment for him. In that encounter, the past and future fade away emphasizing the importance of living in the present moment. Santiago perceives that everything in the universe is intricately interconnected and guided by a singular divine force. This belief suggests that while destiny may exist, it is through the exercise of free will and the recognition of meaningful connections that individuals can truly align themselves with their intended paths. In essence, Santiago's perspective portrays the coexistence of free will and destiny. He acknowledges the importance of personal choices and decisions in shaping one's journey while also recognizing the larger cosmic design at play. It is through the delicate balance between personal agency and a faith in the guiding hand of destiny that Santiago finds purpose and fulfilment in his quest for his Personal Legend.

Genette defines prolepsis as the evocation of an action or event earlier in the narration than when it is mentioned (1979). The narrative of *The Alchemist* effectively employs this technique to propel the story's actions, encouraging the characters to pursue their personal legends. Foreshadowing, identified by Bal (1997) as a powerful technique for creating suspense, is also notably utilized in the novel. The role of foreshadowing in *The Alchemist* is pivotal, notably evident through Santiago's recurring dreams and omens. These premonitions offer glimpses of the challenges and opportunities that await him on his journey, hinting at the future while underscoring the presence of fate and the significance of personal choices. Santiago's reflection on his dreams, encapsulated in the statement, "The secret of happiness is to see all the marvels of the world and never to forget the drops of oil on the spoon" (Coelho, 1988, p. 38), invites readers to contemplate the intricate balance between destiny and free will and the influence of personal decisions on one's destiny.

Particularly striking is Santiago's recurring dream of a treasure, which serves as a foreshadowing element hinting at the predetermined outcome of discovering the treasure. This recurring dream essentially acts as a prophecy, subtly guiding the subsequent events that shape Santiago's journey. Al-Shara (2009) explains that when prolepsis (foreshadowing) is tied to a major event, it functions as a prophecy for that event. This aligns with Santiago's recurring dreams, which foreshadow significant events that unfold throughout the story, serving as a guide for the protagonist's path.

Ultimately, the first dream Santiago experiences serves as a prophetic element that sets the trajectory for the entire narrative. It becomes a pivotal moment that not only hints at the discovery of the treasure but also influences the sequence of events, directing Santiago's journey and serving as a cornerstone for the overarching narrative in *The Alchemist*.

In another instance highlighted by the moment when Santiago reads Narcissus' novel and witnesses a change in the ending (Coelho, 1988, p. 12), the narrative provides yet another example. The lake's expression of sadness within the story introduces a touch of magical realism, serving as foreshadowing for Santiago's own destiny as a magician. This foreshadowing implies that possessing magical abilities is Santiago's fate, a notion later affirmed when he transforms into the wind during a pivotal moment in the story. Through the use of foreshadowing, the novel establishes connections between events and the ultimate destiny of the protagonist. It interlaces elements of fate and free will by implying predetermined aspects while allowing room for Santiago's choices and actions to shape his journey. These foreshadowing elements consistently remind readers of the overarching destiny guiding Santiago's path while still acknowledging the influence of his free will within that framework.

Abbott (2008) asserts that within narratives, gaps are an inevitable aspect. These gaps, integral to storytelling, hold significance as essential narrative stylistics. This notion of narrative gaps is indeed prevalent in *The Alchemist*, and it intertwines with the themes of destiny and free will. Throughout the novel, there are instances where certain events or details are left unexplained or omitted creating gaps (or cruxes) in the narrative. These gaps serve multiple purposes, such as stimulating the reader's imagination, encouraging active participation in interpreting the story (Iser, 1978, p. 57), and allowing for the exploration of themes like destiny and free will. For example, one notable narrative gap occurs when Santiago finds himself in the oasis and is faced with the dilemma of choosing between pursuing his personal legend or staying with Fatima with whom he has fallen in love. The outcome of this decision is not explicitly revealed in the narrative leaving a gap that prompts readers to contemplate the implications of Santiago's choice. This gap invites readers to consider the role of free will in shaping one's destiny and whether Santiago's decision aligns with his intended path. In relation to Abbott's viewpoint, Iser, a prominent literary theorist, adds to the discussion of narrative gaps. He argues that these gaps invite readers to actively engage with the text filling in the missing information with their own interpretations

and assumptions. In *The Alchemist*, readers encounter various gaps that prompt them to reflect on the themes of destiny and free will. For instance, Santiago's transformation into the wind during his final confrontation with the alchemist is presented in a way that leaves gaps in readers' understanding of the precise mechanics and implications of this event (Coelho, 1988, p. 134). The narrative leaves room for interpretation inviting readers to contemplate the significance of this transformation and its connection to Santiago's destiny and the exercise of his free will. Santiago's transformation into the wind raises questions about the significance of this event and its connection to his destiny and free will. After the transformation occurs, Santiago finds himself in a state of awe and wonder. He engages in conversations with various entities, including the sun and the wind, which implies a newfound connection with the elements of nature. This transformation, along with Santiago's subsequent interactions, suggests that it may indeed be his destiny to experience this metamorphosis. Santiago himself does not fully comprehend how or why he has been transformed into the wind, but he acknowledges the power and significance of the experience. It is as if the universe has conspired to bring him to this pivotal moment guiding him towards a deeper understanding of his purpose and his place within the larger scheme of things. Furthermore, Santiago's encounter with these ethereal beings highlights the idea that his transformation is beyond the realm of ordinary human experience. It transcends the boundaries of logic and rationality symbolizing a profound spiritual and metaphysical journey. Through this transformation, Santiago is confronted with the magnitude of the universe's influence on his destiny emphasizing the notion that there are forces at play that surpass individual comprehension and control. In this way, Santiago's transformation into the wind underscores the intricate relationship between destiny and free will. While he exercises his free will in making choices throughout his journey, the transformation itself appears to be orchestrated by a higher power aligning with his predetermined path. It signifies the interplay between personal agency and the guiding hand of destiny suggesting that Santiago's ultimate purpose goes beyond his conscious understanding and necessitates a surrender to the forces that shape his destiny. Overall, Santiago's transformation into the wind serves as a powerful metaphor for his spiritual and transformative journey. It invites readers to reflect on the complexity of destiny versus free will raising profound questions about the nature of personal agency, the role of predetermined paths, and the profound interconnectedness of the universe.

In summary, narrative gaps in *The Alchemist*, as emphasized by Abbott and Iser, serve as deliberate techniques that engage readers allowing them to actively participate in the story and fill in missing details. These gaps provide fertile ground for contemplating the themes of destiny and free will encouraging readers to ponder the implications of the characters' choices and actions within the larger narrative framework.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of *The Alchemist* through the lens of narrative stylistics provides profound insights into the theme of destiny versus free will, revealing the intricate interplay between predetermined fate and personal agency. Through an analysis of narrative structure and techniques, heteroglossia, symbolism, causation, focalization, foreshadowing, and narrative gaps, valuable insights are gained into Paulo Coelho's portrayal of these themes.

The circular narrative structure of *The Alchemist* reflects the cyclical nature of personal journeys and emphasizes the idea that while destiny may guide individuals, their choices and actions ultimately shape their outcomes. Symbolic elements, such as omens, dreams, and the concept of the Personal Legend, convey the presence of destiny and its influence on the characters' lives. The development of key characters, such as Santiago, the Alchemist, and Fatima, highlights the significance of personal choices and the transformative power of following one's dreams.

The philosophical concept explored in *The Alchemist* suggests that every individual possesses a predetermined destiny containing multiple potential paths. This destiny is filled with opportunities and possibilities, and the universe sends signals or omens guiding a person toward their best potential destiny. However, crucially, individuals have the free will to interpret and choose whether to follow these omens or not. Ultimately, it is through their own decisions and choices that they shape and fulfill their destiny from among the myriad paths available.

The book portrays the idea that while there might be a grand design or purpose for each person, it is not predetermined in a strict sense. Instead, the universe offers hints, signs, and opportunities along various paths, leaving it to individuals to decide whether to heed these signs and actively pursue their destined path or to ignore them and forge their own way. This concept highlights the interplay between fate and free will, suggesting that destiny is not a fixed and unchangeable outcome but rather a journey shaped by the choices one makes.

In light of these findings, *The Alchemist* stands as a remarkable work that prompts reflection on personal journeys and the balance between destiny and personal agency in lives. Coelho's narrative choices, rich symbolism, and captivating characters contribute to a thought-provoking exploration of these themes. Ultimately, *The Alchemist* serves as a testament to the human pursuit of dreams, the transformative power of personal choices, and the belief that destiny unfolds through a harmonious interplay of fate and free will. The enduring relevance of *The Alchemist* is recognized, inspiring readers to embark on their own personal quests seeking the balance between destiny and determination in their own lives.

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