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Paulo Coelho ([IPA](#): [ˈpauɫu ˈkoʁɐˈlu], born [August 24, 1947](#)) is a [Brazilian lyricist](#) and [novelist](#).

Biography

Coelho was born in [Rio de Janeiro](#), Brazil, where he attended law school, but in [1970](#) abandoned his studies to travel throughout [Mexico](#), [Peru](#), [Bolivia](#), and [Chile](#), as well as [Europe](#) and [North Africa](#).

Two years later he returned to [Brazil](#) and began composing popular music lyrics, working with such popular musicians as [Raul Seixas](#). As he confesses in an interview to Juan Arias, during that time he was introduced to the work of controversial English mystic [Aleister Crowley](#), which influenced their collaboration. The influence extended not only to music, but also to plans for the creation of the "Alternative Society," which was to be an anarchist community in the state of [Minas Gerais](#) based on Crowley's premise: "'Do what thou wilt' shall be the whole of the Law." The project was considered subversive by members of the Brazilian military, which imprisoned all prospective members of the group. Seixas and Coelho are reported to have been tortured during their imprisonment.

After a supernatural experience, described in [The Valkyries](#), Coelho left the society.

Later in [Holland](#) he met a person (whom he would refer to as "J" throughout *The Valkyries*, *The Pilgrimage* and his website "Warriors of Light online") who changed his life and Coelho was driven towards [Christianity](#). He became a member of a Catholic group known as RAM ([Regnus Agnus Mundi](#)) with "J" as his "Master". In [1986](#) he walked along the [Road of Santiago](#), an ancient Spanish pilgrimage and his book [The Pilgrimage](#) describes his final initiation.

He and his wife Christina live in [Rio de Janeiro, Brazil](#).

His works

In 1982 Coelho published his first book, Hell Archives, which failed to make any kind of impact. In 1985 he contributed to the Practical Manual of Vampirism, although he later tried to take it off the shelves, since he considered it "of bad quality". In 1986, Paulo Coelho did the pilgrimage to Saint James of Compostella, an experience later to be documented in his book *The Pilgrimage*.

In the following year, COELHO published *The Alchemist*. Slow initial sales convinced his first publisher to drop the novel, but it went on to become one of the best selling Brazilian books of all time.

Coelho has sold over 86 million books in over 150 countries worldwide and his works have been translated into 56 languages. He has received numerous literary awards from a variety of countries, including La Legion d'Honneur (France), Grinzane Cavour (Italy), His other novels include [The Alchemist](#), based on [Borges' Tale of two dreamers](#), which sold more than 11 million copies worldwide and has been translated into some 41 languages; it is also a movie in progress produced by [Laurence Fishburne](#), who is a fan of Coelho. In addition he has written the collection of his best columns published in the Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo entitled [Maktub, By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept](#), and [The Valkyries](#). Despite the popularity of Coelho's works in [Iran](#), his 2005 novel [The Zahir](#) was banned there, with 1,000 copies being confiscated [\[1\]](#), but a week later aforesaid book "The Zahir" appeared again in bookstores.

He also adapted *The Gift* (Henry Drummond) and *Love letters of a prophet* (Kalil Gibran).

His books have appeared on bestseller lists in countries not only in [Brazil](#), but in the [UK](#), the [USA](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Iran](#), [Canada](#), [Italy](#), [Israel](#), [Finland](#), [Serbia](#), [Greece](#), [Romania](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Russia](#), [Poland](#) and [Lithuania](#). He is the all time best-selling [Portuguese language](#) author.

Coelho writes a weekly column for more than 45 countries [\[2\]](#), including [Akşam](#), a [Turkish newspaper](#), and *Freizeit*, a weekly supplement published by the [Austrian Kurier](#).

Critical acclaims and criticism

Although Coelho has achieved great international success, his work has not been unanimously appreciated at home; his election to the [Brazilian Academy of Letters](#) proved controversial. Seen by some Brazilian literary critics as a lesser author whose material is too simplistic and similar to that of [self-help](#) books, criticism of his work arises mostly from his plain, direct style and borrowing of ideas from other authors. Additionally, his works in Portuguese contain grammatical errors and inaccuracies; some of these have been minimized in translation or altered in later editions.

Some consider his books incompatible with mainstream [Catholicism](#), due to their mixture of mysticism, spiritual exercises, meditation and supernatural experiences. Coelho in his website states that Catholicism is his personal way of enlightenment and knowing God, but also claims that religion has nothing to do with his spirituality; he considers that all religions are 'correct'. Despite spiritual themes, his works do not espouse any specific religion, apart from Catholic elements which figure in some plots. His books have also been translated into 56 other languages.

Bibliography

Note: Although the biography section of Coelho's website states that his first book was published in 1982, ^[1] ^[2] the Official Fan Club Paulo Coelho website lists two additional books published in [1974](#): The Manifest of Krig-há and Theater For Education. ^[3]

Year	Portuguese Title	English Title
1982	<i>Arquivos do Inferno</i>	<i>Hell Archives</i>
1986	<i>O Manual Prático do Vampirismo</i>	<i>Practical Manual of Vampirism</i>
1987	<i>O Diário de um Mago</i>	The Pilgrimage
1988	<i>O Alquimista</i>	The Alchemist
1990	<i>Brida</i>	<i>Brida</i>
1991	<i>O Dom Supremo</i>	<i>The Gift</i>
1992	<i>As Valkírias</i>	The Valkyries

	<i>Maktub</i>	<i>Maktub</i>
1994	<i>Na margem do rio Piedra eu sentei e chorei</i>	<i>By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept</i>
1996	<i>O Monte Cinco</i>	<i>The Fifth Mountain</i>
1997	<i>Manual do guerreiro da luz</i>	<i>The Manual of the Warrior of Light</i>
1998	<i>Veronika decide morrer</i>	<i>Veronika Decides to Die</i>
2000	<i>O Demônio e a srta Prym</i>	<i>The Devil and Miss Prym</i>
2001	<i>Histórias para pais, filhos e netos</i>	<i>Fathers, Sons and Grandsons</i>
2003	<i>Onze Minutos</i>	<i>Eleven Minutes</i>
2004	<i>O Gênio e as Rosas</i>	<i>The Genie and the Roses</i>
2005	<i>O Zahir</i>	<i>The Zahir</i>
2006	<i>Ser como um rio que flui</i>	<i>Like the Flowing River</i>
	<i>A bruxa de Portobello</i>	<i>The Witch of Portobello</i>

Notes

1. [^](#) Sant Jordi Associados Literary Agency: [Paulo Coelho's Titles](#). Retrieved on October 7, 2006.
2. [^](#) PauloCoelho.com: [Biography](#). Retrieved on October 7, 2006.
3. [^](#) Official Fanclub Paulo Coelho: [Books](#). Retrieved on October 7, 2006.

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