

The Voice of a Repentant: Paulo Coelho

One of Crowley's adepts that modern readers would not suspect, was the best-selling Brazilian author Paulo Coelho. He has in fact long since changed his tune and come out clean, offering us an inside view of a prominent part of the modern entertainment industry, how it works, and what works behind it. He is an example of a modern Snape figure. Many, who have been trapped in situations like his, have tried to turnaround without success. Coelho has become a household name and a source of inspiration for thousands worldwide. Few know what lay in his past, though he makes veiled references to it here and there in his own writings.

Coelho is a figure that crossed from the world of music into literature, one who certainly knows the world of modern culture. He is now the well-known world best-seller author of *The Alchemist*, *The Pilgrimage*, *The Valkyries* and many other novels mostly exploring metaphysical topics and the question of good and evil at great depth.

In 1966, at age nineteen, Paulo had been placed by his parents in a psychiatric hospital where he had to undergo electro-shock. In 1970 he wrote an article about extraterrestrials that called the attention of another youth, Raul Seixas, a great fan of rock 'n roll. The two struck an instant friendship and started writing songs that became hits, such as on the album *Há 10 Mil Anos Atrás* (Ten Thousand Years Ago) and the box set *Maluco Beleza* (Crazy Beautiful). Seixas died young of a pancreatitis aggravated by alcohol.

In 1972 the two had joined an occult society and founded their Alternative Society on the blueprint of the Thelema doctrine of Aleister Crowley. The Crowleyan signature is recognizable in the hymn/title song of the Alternative Society: "But if I want and you want to bathe in a hat / Or discuss Carlos Gardel / Or wait for Santa Claus / Then go! Do what you want / Well, that's all From the law! / From the law! Hooray! Hooray! / Long live The Alternative Society." Paulo and Raul had decided to put their music "at the service of the secret society. ... The verses of the songs contained declarations of principle of the sect, perceptible in a very subliminal way. They were mantras, totally technical, precise, perfect: because evil is really something quite exact," Coelho reported to Juan Arias in an interview.¹ In fact there was a double meaning running throughout the artistic production. What on the surface appeared as messages of peace and freedom were in reality songs celebrating the above-mentioned messages in a veiled form.

Coelho explains to Juan Arias that he had been educated in a Jesuit school, and there lost his faith in what he describes as a negative experience. From there he found refuge first in Marxism, then in a hippie movement with a Theosophical overlay. He met various masters and explored sects and philosophies, until he

¹ Juan Arias, *Paulo Coelho: le Confessioni del pellegrino*, p. 128 in Enrica Perucchetti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 266, author's translation.

looked for something stronger, "what you find to the left of the left in spiritual research." By path of the left is intended the spirituality that deliberately practices grey or black magic. This led him to reading three or four books by Aleister Crowley.

Sex had been a great appeal leading Coelho to Crowley, according to his own admissions. The sect he landed in was "a more philosophical sect, more structured, more dangerous in its roots. Within it were celebrated the conventional rituals of magic, but that was the realm of pure power. At times we invoked evil with very concrete results, but nothing was like the blackness that invaded my house [in 1974]." In 2012 in an interview with the *Sued-deutsche Zeitung Magazin* he admitted the order he had joined was a Brazilian branch of the O.T.O. (*Ordo Templi Orientis*) named Luz Eterna.

Referring to the frightening episode, he says: "It was very early, and as I told you, I started to see everything turn black; I had the feeling I would die. It was a very real black, physical, visible. It was not a product of my imagination, it was something tangible. As I told you, my first impression was that of dying. ... It was as if all of a sudden this candle started to make smoke, and the smoke started to invade the house: it was a very black smoke that condensed, blocking our sight for some moments, but most of all drowning us in panic. ... Maybe the worst thing was a series of noises that I would not be able to describe: they accompanied the forming of this black smoke."² And further, "I sank into panic, because that phenomenon witnessed the presence of evil."

Although Coelho decided to go to church, something held him back. "A kind of force prevented me from getting out of the house and I had very powerful sensations of imminent death. In that moment arrived the partner I had then, she too belonging to the sect. She had just experienced the same blackness. And, little by little we came to know that all the adepts had experienced the same thing. ... The presence of evil was something visible and tangible. It was as if evil were to say 'You have called me here I am.'"

Coelho corroborated much of what he said in the interview in the very largely autobiographic *An Encounter with Angels: The Valkyries*.³ Here many things are confirmed and others added. In relating to a particular, unspecified, song he explains "It wasn't really a song—it was a mantra from a magic ritual, with the words of the Beast of the Apocalypse being read in the background in a low voice. Whoever sang the song would be invoking the forces of darkness. And everyone was singing it."⁴ He later adds that "He had practiced magic for six years. Performed

² Enrica Perucchietti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 269–270. A similar description of darkness comes from the experience of those who have survived suicide and remembered their experience on the other side. An example: "The darkness continued in all directions and seemed to have no end, but it wasn't just blackness, it was an endless void, an absence of light. I knew that it had its own life and purpose. ... The place was filled with a crackling energy ... a state of molecules of intense darkness, and it was purely negative, even evil" (Angie Fenimore, *Beyond the Darkness: My Near Death Journey to the Edge of Hell*, 92).

³ Paulo Coelho, *An Encounter with Angels: The Valkyries*, 110–137.

⁴ Ibid, 116.

all the rituals." Coelho was fascinated by the Beast: "The Beast was just for the chosen few! 'The law of the powerful,' one of his books talked about." One would imagine he is referring to Crowley's books, with which he was familiar. At the height of the experience of darkness, Coelho remembers: "He was going to die ... for so much evil spread about in the name of what was good. ... His years in the Jesuit school came back to him, and he prayed for the strength needed to get back to a church, ask forgiveness, pray that list God would save his soul."

Adding to accurate biographical events—like being placed in custody of the Brazilian political police—he then relates splitting up with his partner, disgusted by his betrayal, and distancing himself from the members of the Order, who had all successfully passed through the initiation on the same day. Coelho adds, he "was expelled from the world of music for a long time. No one would give him a job. But it was a trade."

The window that Coelho opens over aspects of an important segment of pop music and entertainment culture is confirmed, most interestingly by one who is completely part of it, harboring no second thoughts, unlike the Brazilian. He just happens to be more open and verbal than most.