



City of God: A Novel

By Paulo Lins



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The searing novel on which the internationally acclaimed hit film was based, *City of God* is a gritty, gorgeous tour de force from one of Brazil's most notorious slums. Cidade de Deus: a place where the streets are awash with narcotics, where violence can erupt at any moment over drugs, money, and love—but also a place where the samba beat rocks till dawn, where the women are the most beautiful on earth, and where one young man wants to escape his background and become a photographer. When *City of God* erupted on screens worldwide, it became one of the most critically and commercially successful foreign films of recent years. But few were aware of the story behind the film. Written by Paulo Lins, who grew up in the favela (shantytown) Cidade de Deus in Rio e Janeiro and who spent years researching its gang history, *City of God* began life as a coruscating, harrowing novelistic account of twenty years in the illicit pursuits of the youth gangs born from the favela. Now available in English for the first time, *City of God* is a raw, powerful portrait of the countless millions of poor people all over the world.

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City of God: A Novel By Paulo Lins Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Lins's 1997 fiction debut—the source of the 2002 film published in English for the first time—chronicles two generations over three decades in the infamous Rio de Janeiro City of God, "a neo-slum of concrete, brimming dealer-doorways, sinister-silences and cries of despair." From the slum's creation in the early 1960s for flood victims, through the rise of disco and cocaine in the 1970s, to the horrific gang wars of the 1980s, Lins traces the rise and fall of myriad, often teenaged gangsters for whom guns, girls and drugs are the tools of power. While the film traces the divergent paths of two childhood friends, the novel rushes from vignette to vignette, with an ever-changing cast of characters with names like "Good Life," "Beelzebub" and "Hellraiser." Years, and pages, pass in a haze of smoking, drinking, snorting lines of cocaine, dancing sambas, swearing and planning the next big score. Guns dispense justice; the price for disrespect, whether to a spouse, a friend or the favela, is torture or death. Lins, who grew up in the City, lets the horror speak for itself. He serves up a *Scarface*-like urban epic, bursting with encyclopedic, graphic descriptions of violence, punctuated with lyricism and longing. (Oct.)

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From [Booklist](#)

First published in Brazil (as *Cidade de Deus*) in 1997 and adapted for the screen (as *City of God*) in 2002, this translation makes the book finally available to English-reading audiences. City of God is a housing project in Rio de Janeiro, initially intended for displaced flood victims. In a kind of dreamlike reportage that covers three decades (the 1960s to the 1980s), Lins contrasts the diminishing beauty of the nearby river and jungle with the growing ugliness of the crime-plagued, poverty-stricken project. He focuses mostly on the short, chaotic lives of gangsters, though he also keeps an eye on pot-smoking Rocket (perhaps a stand-in for Lins), a more gentle soul who escapes to become a photographer. Fernando Meirelles' film was cartoonishly violent, and although the book is startlingly so, Lins shows us more, chronicling longing, lust, ambition, superstition, hope, grief, and despair. With plot devices sometimes as minimal as the dawning of a new day, *City of God* seems more like a mosaic than a novel, but it's a mosaic with unforgettably vibrant colors. *Keir Graff*

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About the Author

No Bio

No Bio

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Stephen Porter:

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