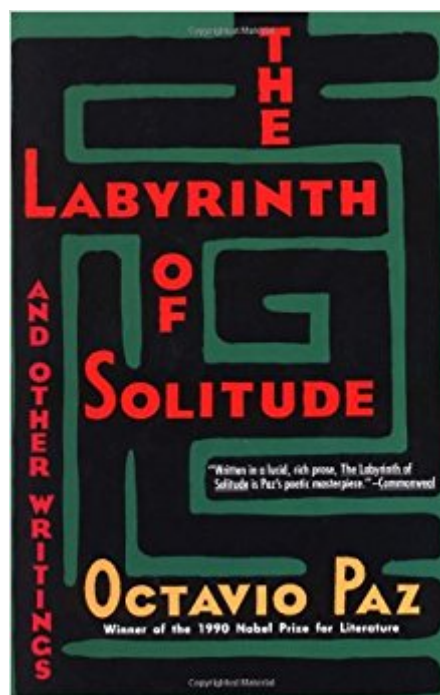




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The Labyrinth Of Solitude: The Other Mexico, Return To The Labyrinth Of Solitude, Mexico And The United States, The Philanthropic Ogre



Synopsis

Octavio Paz has long been acknowledged as Mexico's foremost writer and critic. In this international classic, Paz has written one of the most enduring and powerful works ever created on Mexico and its people, character, and culture. Compared to Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses* for its trenchant analysis, this collection contains his most famous work, "The Labyrinth of Solitude," a beautifully written and deeply felt discourse on Mexico's quest for identity that gives us an unequalled look at the country hidden behind "the mask." Also included are "The Other Mexico," "Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude," "Mexico and the United States," and "The Philanthropic Ogre," all of which develop the themes of the title essay and extend his penetrating commentary to the United States and Latin America.

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Customer Reviews

First published in 1950, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* addresses issues that are both seemingly eternal and resoundingly contemporary: the nature of political power in post-conquest Mexico, the relation of Native Americans to Europeans, the ubiquity of official corruption. Noting these matters earned Paz no small amount of trouble from the Mexican leadership, but it also brought him renown as a social critic. Paz, who went on to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, later voiced his disillusionment with all political systems--as the Mexican proverb has it, "all revolutions degenerate into governments"--but his call for democracy in this book has lately been reverberating throughout Mexico, making it timely once again.

Originally issued in 1962, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Grove Weidenfeld. (ISBN 0-8021-5042-X. pap. \$10.95; reprint) "contains nine beautifully written, deeply felt essays . . . whose concern is the Mexican's solitariness and quest for identity" (LJ 4/15/62). The expanded volume contains additional essays written in the spirit of *Labyrinth* and other important works. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The captive Elements and the ancient Laws of the Earth break loose Like maddened horses. And then a desire to return To chaos rises incessantly. There is much To defend, and the faithful are much needed." - Hölderlin (26) "The faithful are much needed because there is "much to defend". . . But exile, expiation and penitence should proceed from the reconciliation of man with the Universe. Neither the Mexican nor the North American has achieved this reconciliation." (26) Laws need 'faithful defenders'. Chaos does not. "What is even more serious, I am afraid we have lost our sense of the very meaning of all human activity, which is to assure the operation of an order in which knowledge and innocence, man and nature are in harmony. If the solitude of the Mexican is like a stagnant pool, that of the North American is like a mirror." (27) Mirror only reflects what is already there. Can't give anything more. "We have ceased to be springs of living water." (27) (Probably Biblical reference to Jeremiah's warning to apostate Jews . . . "Because my people have done two bad things: They have abandoned me, the source of living water, And dug for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, that cannot hold water." Paz received Nobel prize for this work. Comes from deep within his soul. Heartfelt, insightful, torn from anguish and love. Astounding! Chapters - The Pachuco and other extremes Mexican Masks The Day of the Dead The Sons of La Malinche The conquest and Colonialism From independence to the revolution The Mexican Intelligentsia The present day The Dialectic of Solitude Paz starts with a psychological/philosophical explanation of the Mexican mind. For example . . . "Past epochs never vanish completely, and blood drips from all their wounds, even the most ancient. Sometimes the most remote or hostile beliefs and feelings are found together in one city or one soul, or are superimposed like those pre-Cortesian pyramids that always conceal others." (12) Paz then adds a fascinating footnote . . . "In our history there are many examples of this superimposition: the neofeudalism of the Porfirio Díaz regime, using positivism to justify itself historically; Antonio Caso and José Vasconcelos, the intellectual initiators of the revolution, using the ideas of Boutroux and Bergson to combat positivism; socialist education in a country at least incipiently capitalist. These apparent contradictions all demand a new examination of our history and also our culture." (12) This work includes the essay - "Mexico and the United States". . . "In 1917 the October revolution in

Russia kindled the hopes of millions' in 1979, the word "gulag" has become synonymous with Soviet socialism. The founders of the socialist movement firmly believed would put an end not only to the exploitation of men but to war' in the second half of the twentieth century, totalitarian "socialism" have enslaved the working class by stripping it of its basic rights. . . . The ideological wars of the twentieth century are no less ferocious than the wars of religion of the seventeenth century." (374)"When I was young, the idea that we were witnessing the final crisis of capitalism was fashionable among intellectuals. Now we understand that the crisis is not of a socioeconomic system but that of our whole civilization." (374)"The sickness of the west is moral rather than social and economic. . . . But the real, most profound discord lies in the soul. The future has become the realm of horror, and the present has turned into a desert." (374)"The empty place left by Christianity in the modern soul is filled not by philosophy but by the crudest superstitions." (375)This edition has no bibliography or index.(See also, "Portrait of Mexico", by Diego Rivera/Bertram Wolfe; "The Revolt of the Masses" by José Ortega y Gasset. Fascinating!)

This book is priceless. It is about Mexican history in the context of American Continents and the world. It is a book of analysis of how Mexico emerged as the country it is today (or 1970 as that was the time the book was completed, by adding new chapters to previous ones written even before that) and its place in the world and its relationship with US. It is not a book for the masses, but once started it flows. I found it easy to read because Octavio Paz presents ideas in a very clear manner. Like Alexander Solzhenitzin, Octavio Paz writes books for the ages, explaining history and social issues in a very direct, open, critical way. I am not Mexican. This book is a must read by anybody who wants to understand the "whys" of our times.

An interesting read, if a bit reductive and over-negative about the Mexican identity. A professor of mine criticized some Mexican schools' decision to have high school students read it--he thinks they are too young and will internalize negativity and become desolate of their heritage/history. Even still, I found this book extremely transformative and enjoyable. I bought a copy in the original Spanish for my father.

Wonderful book. Written before Mexico became a Narco-state

Octavio Paz pulls no punches in a self examination of his country's psyche and culture. We are expats residing in Mexico and know there are things here that easily perturb and frustrate

foreigners, and I bet to their own also. But, when a Mexican gets that way he shrugs his shoulders, "it's life" as they know it. Foreigners on the other hand will complain and moan. We will shake our heads in dismay, highly critical the way they do things here. But, a study of Paz's book can be quite revelatory, helping the resident alien or tourist to understand this culture's mental make up.....why things are the way they are.

This book brings the conception of one's consciousness as a Mexican into writing. The author is very eloquent and convincing in his analysis.

Incredibly intelligent look at what makes a Mexican a Mexican, Great history for those of us who know little.

Although outdated in many ways, for those who lived during the 60s and beyond, it gives an excellent analysis of how a Mexican perceives the world and will substantially add to how an American will understand Mexicans. I highly recommend it for any serious readers who are interested in other cultures.

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