

IN SEARCH OF THE “OTHER”: OCTAVIO PAZ’S THE LABYRINTH OF SOLITUDE AND IN LIGHT OF INDIA

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*Abstract: In 1949, while living in Paris, Mexican poet-essayist Octavio Paz wrote his first major work, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), a hermeneutical text of self-examination based on observing the everyday phenomena of Mexican life while in search of “the other.” Two years later, he had a glimpse of “the other” in India to which he returned in 1962. In *Light of India* (1995) narrates how India became Paz’s “one and the other.” The writing of these works reveals an intellectual consciousness of the relationships between Heidegger and Asian thought, offhandedly revealed in 1991, in which Paz uses a quote by Heidegger of a Buddhist saying, “the Other, Share” basic to both these thinkers in their search for “the other.” Paz’s initial major work of 1950 and the final work on India in 1995 are read as face-to-face reflections of the One and the Other.*

NEARING THE END of a life given to inventions in language and consequently thought, Octavio Paz completed a circular trajectory uniting the discourse that emerged in his first major work, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), and the primary confrontation with the “Other,” in 1951, when he travelled to India. In 1993, five years before his death, he published *Itinerario*, informing the ground that led to *The Labyrinth of Solitude*’s conception and in 1995 two years later, he wrote *In Light of India*, a work mirroring and interpreting his *being* in India, the history, geography, religion, politics and above all, his feelings from his first visit and the recurring moments that he experienced there.

Underlying these works is a critique of modernity, for in engaging himself with and within the world he inhabited, Paz explored the problem and project of modernity as it surfaces in the world-at-large through experience, language and thought viewing it in its dialectical role of reform and de(con)struction of history, culture, society. He underscores modernity’s role in both accepting and condemning violence, terrorism, humanity and dehumanization. Yet his gift lies in inscribing and challenging the *writing* of the modern era by eradicating barriers between reason and instinct in a dialectic of thought and feeling. Paz opens the door to an interpretation of the phenomenon, to a hermeneutic interpretation of his being-in-the-world.

Going beyond the traditional pre-set rational boundaries of the essay as conceived in the West, Paz examines the phenomena of his everyday life, as a male, as a Mexican, but above all, as a human living in the modern era. It is a world of extreme identities, of excursions into nothingness, of the irrational joy of the Fiesta and simultaneously, of the confrontation with death, of the ‘other side’ of the self, of history as a rite of passage and of absolution, and of a dialectic with solitude and finally, communion. If this, his first major work, initiated a journey charged with the confrontation with “the other” within himself and through the examination of the *things* around him, *In Light of India* was a final excursion

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through a world that was essentially “the other” when he first went there, and that became, “the other, Share.”¹

The Labyrinth of Solitude first appeared in *Cuadernos Americanos*; a journal founded in 1942 by Latin American and exiled Spanish intellectuals published by the University of Mexico (UNAM). Written in Paris during the summer of 1949, where Paz held a diplomatic post, the work flowed from interrogations emerging from confrontations with and of his world-view: Mexico, its cultural and ancestral history and its role in his life; his initial childhood experience in Los Angeles, California, at the age of 5; the year spent as a Guggenheim Fellow in Berkeley in the early forties; and the detached view of these events from Paris amidst the multi-lingual and multi-cultural intellectual environment in which he found himself:

I reached Paris in December, 1945. In France, the years in the wake of the Second World War were of dearth but of great intellectual liveliness. It was a period of great riches, not so much in the domain of literature itself, of poetry and novels, but in ideas and essays. I zealously followed the philosophical and political debates. A burning atmosphere: passion for ideas, intellectual rigor and at the same time, a marvelous sense of freedom . . . I soon met friends who shared my intellectual and aesthetic anxieties. In those cosmopolitan circles - Frenchmen, Greeks, Spaniards, Rumanians, Argentines, North Americans - I could breathe freely . . . I did not belong there, and yet I felt I had found an intellectual homeland. A homeland that did not demand identity papers and documentation. But the question about Mexico was still there. Having made a decision to face up to it, I drew up a plan--I never managed to follow it completely--and I began to write. It was the summer of 1949. (Paz 1999, 3)

In an interview in *the Paris Review* he goes on to say:

I wrote *The Labyrinth of Solitude* in Paris. The idea came to me in the United States when I tried to analyze the situation of the Mexicans living in Los Angeles . . . a kind of mirror for me--the autobiographical dimension you like to see . . . There are two situations for every human being. The first is the solitude we feel when we are born. Our first situation is that of orphanhood . . . later we discover the opposite: filial attachment . . . because we are thrown, as Heidegger says, into this world, we feel we must find what the Buddhists call “The Other, Share.” This is the thirst for community. I think philosophy and religion derive from this original situation or predicament. Every country and every individual tries to resolve it in different ways. Poetry is a bridge between solitude and communion. Communion, even for a mystic like Saint John of the Cross can never be absolute.

INTERVIEWER: Is that why the language of mysticism is so erotic?

OP: Yes because lovers, which is what mystics are, constitute the greatest image of communion . . . we are always with someone, even if it is only our shadow. We are never one, we are always *we*. These extremes are the poles of human life. (MacAdam 1991, 11-13)

¹Aspects of this essay come from my long and sustained friendship with Octavio Paz: a mentor and a friend with whom I was privileged to share discussions, thoughts, silence laughter and a “time-out-of-time.”

These observations slip lightly into our consciousness, informing the intellectual circumstances that supported Paz's observations. I have referred to the hermeneutical construct of this work based on numerous readings of the work. Studies and essays by Paz scholars including Enrico Mario Santí, Enrique Krause, Rafael Segovia, Anthony Stanton and Álvaro Matute observe the influence of José Ortega y Gasset, and of the Mexican intellectuals of the day: Samuel Ramos, Alfonso Reyes, the exiled Spaniard, José Gaos and Leopoldo Zea among others.² Yet there is yet much to be read into Paz's reflections about the intellectual ferment outside of Mexico. Beginning with his encounter with a circle of poets in Berkeley, including Josephine Miles and Muriel Rukeyser and resuming his friendship with Benjamin Péret in Paris:

Through him (Péret) I finally met Breton . . . The Surrealists embodied something the French had forgotten: the other side of reason, love, freedom, poetry. The French have a tendency to be too rationalistic, to reduce everything to ideas and then to fight over them. When I reached Paris, Jean-Paul Sartre was the dominant figure.

INTERVIEWER: But for you existentialism would have been old hat.

OP: That's right. In Madrid, . . . Ortega y Gasset and later his disciples in Mexico City and Buenos Aires had published all the main texts of phenomenology and existentialism, from Husserl to Heidegger, so Sartre represented more a clever variation than an innovation. (MacAdam 1991, 11)

Yes, "Existentialism was old hat," because the major philosophical texts of German philosophy had already appeared in and through *La Revista de Occidente*, directed by José Ortega y Gasset.³ But Existentialism is only part of the question, as we shall see later.

Surrealism, a movement that sought out the Irrational as a door to perception, is one of the apertures to the writing of *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, a springboard toward a narrative that mingles a scholarly discourse with interpolations of poetry. In a text fraught with imagery and rhythm, the presence of the *dasein*, the life of everyday action is omnipresent. References to history and politics, conquest, colonialism, independence and revolution, all form a structure against which the reflective silence and word illustrate the "being-ness" of Mexico.

Pre-judgment, a constant mark and objective of Western criticism disappears. The telling quotation I mentioned earlier "because we are thrown, as Heidegger says, into this world, we feel we must find what the Buddhists call 'The Other, Share'" is the aperture to "the Other" the homeland Paz is seeking and finds as we shall see, in the East.

This seemingly off-hand response brings two issues to light: The first is Paz's knowledge of an area of Heideggerian scholarship that has been, at best, ignored and the second is the relationship between Heidegger and Paz regarding "the other."

²Fondo de Cultura Económica. Memoria Del Coloquio Internacional "Por El Laberinto De La Soledad a 50 Años De Su Publicación". Anuario De La Fundación Octavio Paz 2001 (Spanish Edition). (Mexico D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001.)

³See Segura Covari, E. *Índice de la Revista de Occidente*, an alphabetical list of the works published under Ortega y Gasset's direction. As a consequence, Spanish-speaking readers read major texts by the leading German philosophers approximately fifty years before they were available in English.

I am speaking of a parallel history of ideas, of Heidegger's utilization of the Buddhist concept of "the other, Share." It affirms Heidegger's appropriation of Asian philosophy, an area that the West has slowly and only begun to recognize since the 1960s. That Martin Heidegger had been reading and discussing Asian philosophy with a number of scholars from the East since the 1930s involves an intellectual discourse that Octavio Paz must have been aware of.⁴

The Labyrinth of Solitude (Paz, 1961) begins with an epigraph from the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, citing one of the poet's alter-voices:

The other does not exist; this is rational faith, the incurable belief of human reason. Identity=reality, as if, in the end, everything must necessarily and absolutely be one and the same. But the other refuses to disappear; it subsists, it persists; it is the hard bone on which reason breaks its teeth. Abel Martín with a poetic faith, as human as rational faith, believed in the other, "in "the essential Heterogeneity of being," in what might be called the incurable otherness from which oneness must always suffer.

This epigraph, the portal to the text itself provides the pathway toward the reading of this work. We enter into a world in search of "the other." As stated before, the chapters explore one after the other, the *dasein*, the everyday actions that characterize the Mexican being-in-the-world.⁵

This hermeneutical entry defines the ontology of the text. And given the world of interpretations that Paz enters in this long journey exploring "the other," a review of the history of the interactions between the ranking Western philosopher, Heidegger and Asian philosophers that took place over two to three decades demands our attention.

In 1969, Graham Parkes organized a symposium at the University of Hawaii, "Heidegger and Eastern Thought" in celebration of the philosopher's eightieth birthday. The proceedings were published in 1987 in *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Parkes 1990). Essays by philosophers from the Kyoto School notably Keiji Nishitami, Tetsauki Kotoh, Kohei Mizaguchi, Akihiro Takeichi, the Heideggerian J.L. Mehta, Heidegger's student, Otto Pöggeler, and Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, the translator into Italian of Lao-Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* and who had also collaborated with Martin Heidegger on a German translation of this classic text (Parkes 1990; May 1996; Stanford 2010).

This event began a renewed examination into East-West comparative philosophical communication. In his introduction to *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Parkes reviews this history, a field initiated by Leibnitz's interest in Neo-Confucianism and the *I Ching*. It is Hegel who brought a momentary end to this widening interest by declaring his thinking to be "the culmination of Western metaphysics" even as ideas from Eastern Thought were embedded in his own.

⁴Paz's close friendships and associations in the Paris of the Fifties, his dismissal of Sartre's "variations," seem to confirm that he was not only aware of Heidegger but that he had read him. In *El Arco y la Lira* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956) he references frequently Heidegger.

⁵The idea of the other in contemporary philosophical thought is often defined as "that which the one is not." It appears in Hegel and his concept of consciousness and subsequently to Husserl (intersubjectivity). A basic concept of contemporary philosophy it functions as well in Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*), in the works of Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and the Frankfurt School.

Schopenhauer above all, understood the need to learn more from the East and Nietzsche began to acknowledge that Eastern Thought is not that different from his. (Parkes 1990, 1)

Parkes also discusses the question of "comparative philosophies" and of the problems inherent in such studies given the difference in language, above all, and point of view. He concludes this discussion by stating that:

There can be a genuine problem concerning the significance of the "and" titles of books or papers which engage in comparisons, and the question, "So what?" can often be posed legitimately.... But ultimately the criteria for the success of a comparative study of two thinkers from different traditions are no different from those pertaining to a discussion of a single philosopher. The question in both cases is, simply: does the study enhance the understanding of the philosopher's thought, of the problems engaged by it-and of ourselves and the world? (Parkes 1990, 4-5)

Heidegger's incursions into Eastern philosophy can be traced back to the his questioning Nietzsche's inability to break from the Western Metaphysical tradition and stating that it was he, Heidegger, who was the first to *overcome* that tradition. From that point on, Heidegger's dialectic with Eastern thought appears from the 1920s on. One major reason why this issue remained hidden for so long is the disinterest of Western scholars to "legitimize" Eastern thought within their consciousness. Moreover, it has been difficult to track the reading and exchange between Asian scholars and Heidegger. Over half a century of writing and publishing, there are only two references to Taoist thought in his works. Parkes clarifies this omission in two references to Hans Georg Gadamer about this issue:

You have to understand that a scholar of the generation to which Heidegger belongs would be very reluctant to say anything in print about a philosophy if he were himself unable to read and understand the relevant texts in the original language (May 1996, 18).

In Reinhard May's monograph, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources* (1996) the translator, Graham Parkes refers to this *absence-presence* in a text from the mid-fifties, an idea from the Japanese philosopher, Kuki Shūzo that Lao Tzu had mentioned a year earlier. May's contribution says Parkes is:

... to document Heidegger's familiarity with several German translations of Chinese and Japanese philosophical texts, and by showing the similarity between vocabulary and locutions in those translations-especially concerning key formulations of Heidegger's principal ideas-especially Being (*sein*) and Nothing (*Nichts*). The parallels are far too significant to be merely coincidental, and they become even more expressive in the context of Heidegger's close relations with a number of Japanese thinkers. (Mays 1996, viii)

Parkes traces Heidegger's direct contact with Eastern Thought "at least as far back as 1922." In that year, he begins his interaction with Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962) one of the most prominent Japanese scholars. From that point on, he became personally acquainted with Japanese philosophers who became known as the Kyoto School. These included Miki Kiyoshi (later exiled on account of his

Marxist leanings), Kuki Shūzo, and Keiji Nishitani.⁶ Although affiliated with Kyoto University and its ties to ancient Japanese tradition and located in what been the ancient capital, the Kyoto School was the first group of thinkers that explored philosophical thought beyond the confines of Eastern Thought. These intellectual excursions led both Nishitani and Kuki to Germany and to Heidegger along with the Chinese philosopher Paul Shih-yi Hsiao and Tezumi Tomio.

These four figures left concrete evidence of their interaction with Heidegger. Both May and Parkes detail these encounters and point out that these scholars had already published major works before meeting Heidegger. Kuki is the subject of the fictional “Conversation on Language” subtitled, “Between a Japanese and an Inquirer” based on a conversation with Kuki that focused on a poem by Bashō and on the Japanese word for “language” (kotoba) and then for “appearance and essence.”⁷ Tomio also published the account of his meeting with Heidegger shortly before Heidegger’s death in 1976 that began with a conversation of a photograph of Kuki’s tombstone and in which he touched again, upon the poem by Bashō, the word for “language” and its possible correlation to “thing” a concept that also came up in the “Conversation on Language.”

Paul Shih-yi Hsiao spent the summer of 1946 collaborating with Heidegger on a translation of the *Tao Te Ching* that Heidegger had read through Martin Buber’s 1910 translation along with texts by D.T. Suzuki and Chan Chung-yuan (May 1996, 1). But the project was abandoned the following year and while the two met again, Heidegger made it clear that it would not continue (Hsiao 1990, 93-101). Yet its influence remains in Heidegger’s 1959 work, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* in which he utilizes the word, “*dao*” as equivalent to the “way” (May 1996, 18).

This beguiling history of East-West studies between one of the most influential Western philosophers and his Eastern counterparts deserves much more attention. My purpose in presenting it within the context of this essay is to complete the partial view we have of the range of intellectual ferment that greeted Octavio Paz in the Paris of the 1950s. Recalling his friendship with Albert Camus and María Cásares, he speaks of the Celebration of the 18th of July, the anniversary of the Franco Uprising, during which he read chapters of *L’Homme Révolté*

... and Camus himself recounted to me, so to speak, the overall argument of the book. We argued a great deal about certain points- his critiques of Heidegger and Surrealism for example – and I warned him that his chapter on Lautréamont would arouse Breton’s wrath. And so it did (Paz 1990, 104).

Paz, possessed as he was, of such boundless intellectual curiosity could not but be aware of Heidegger’s works and of his Asian studies in a world in which Henri Corbin was a professor of Islamic Studies at the Sorbonne, translating Heidegger into French and writing on Hermeneutics and Islam. “Existentialism is old hat” says his interlocutor in the *Paris Review* interview reflecting current generalities

⁶Graham Parkes uses the Japanese traditional usage of the name, listing the surname before the given name. I have followed that usage in referring to his text.

⁷This text appears in *On the Way to Language* (*Unterwegs zur Sprache*) translated into English in 1971 and into Japanese by Tomio in 1988.

about the philosophical tenets of that era but Paz responds with Heidegger's Buddhist appropriation, *The Other, Share*.⁸

The opening paragraph of the first essay of *The Labyrinth of Solitude* prepares the reader for the examination and interpretation that follows:

All of us, at some moment, have had a vision of our existence as something unique, untransferable and very precious. This revelation almost always takes place during adolescence. Self-discovery is above all the realization that we are alone: it is the opening of an impalpable, transparent wall-that of our consciousness-between the world and ourselves (Paz 1961, 9)

The "problem" exists as well in nations and peoples. Even though, the only territory or space he can confront is Mexico:

My thoughts are not concerned with the total population of our country, but rather with a specific group made up of those who are conscious of themselves, for one reason or another as Mexicans. Despite general opinions to the contrary, this group is quite small (Paz 1961, 11).

The mirror for this awareness, this consciousness of being "Mexican" commands a scrutiny, a self-reflective mirror. Paz relentlessly uncovers and peels back the varnished surface of the un-examined, the smug self-satisfaction of national pride, accepted behavior, a proud history that lamentably escapes scrutiny through a ". . . language of reticence, of metaphors and allusions, of unfinished phrases" while his (the Mexicans) silence is "full of tints, folds, thunderheads, sudden rainbows, indecipherable threats" (Paz 1961, 29).

A continuum throughout the text is the relationship between the United States and Mexico, a study in extremes between developing and developed economies, Anglo versus Latin and Indigenous, Protestant and Catholic, and the resentment of a war that still exists in the history of Mexico but that the United States has erased from its conscience, save for the taking over of the Southwest.

He reaches the matrix, the root of Mexican passion, the mythical Mothers: Guadalupe the Sacred, the intercessor, and *Malinche, La Chingada*, the One whose name is not uttered except as a whispered curse and occasionally shouted.

He unearths *Mestizaje*, the mixture of Spanish and indigenous bloodlines, and a symbol of the Conquest as an unreconciled issue that divides the Mexicans between tacit social acceptance or rejection and the question of being European or of indigenous origin.

Every *thing*, every belief, every mythology is laid out and dissected, forming a dialectic of oppositions, language and silence, fiesta and death, white and brown, male and female, viewed as the active and the passive. And beyond these, the question of Humanity and Technology, the fear confronting the optimistic future that will never arrive. He condemns the dehumanization thrust upon the

⁸In "Modern Japanese Philosophy and Heidegger" in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Yusuo Yuasa relates that: Shuzo Kuki spent eight years studying German philosophy at Heidelberg, Marburg and Freiburg under Rickett, Husserl and Heidegger. He then went to Paris to study under Bergson. During that time he learned French from a young French student. This student was Jean-Paul Sartre. Although probably not known outside Japan it was Kuki who instilled in Sartre an interest in Heidegger's philosophy" (Yuasa 1990, 158).

factory worker, evoking the individual and human pride of the craftsman. He raises the clean technological advancement of death, of violence and terrorism, of a sleek thought process that uses language to cover up inadequacies and the horrors of mass murder through war and invasion. Yet, he arrives at a communion, a final dialectic between solitude and communion, love and community. Dismissing the convention of marriage, Paz seeks to go beyond the social barriers:

. . . but modern society attempts to do this by suppressing the dialectic of solitude which alone can make love possible . . . Our social life prevents every possibility of true erotic communion. Love is one of the clearest examples of that double instinct which cause us to dig deeper into our own selves and, at the same time to emerge from ourselves and realize ourselves in another: death and re-creation, solitude and communion. In the life of every and there are periods that are both departures and reunions, separations and reconciliations. Each of these phases is an attempt to transcend our solitude and is followed by an immersion in a strange environment (Paz 1961, 201-202).

In 1951, two years after writing *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Fate intervened and Paz was posted to “the Other,” New Delhi. In an essay “Changing India-West Cultural Dialectics” published in 2010, R.S. Khare uses the cases of four figures, the French anthropologist, Louis Dumont, Wilhelm Halblaus, the German Indologist and philosopher, Octavio Paz and the economist and social philosopher, Amartya Sen.

Speaking of Paz he states:

Once in India, in 1951, Paz, as it were, never left India. Given his many comings and goings, travels and his deeply etched poetic-aesthetic works and his comparative philosophical disquisitions, Paz had interiorized India (Khare 2009, 232)

Paz arrived by ship in November, 1951 landing in Bombay:

We arrived in Bombay on an early morning in November, 1951. I remember the light despite the early hour. An enormous of liquid mercury, barely undulating, vague hills in the distance, flocks of birds and scraps of pink clouds. (Paz 1995)

Checking into the hotel, he doesn't rest. He wanders throughout the city, dazed and intoxicated, seduced by what he sees, hears and smells, all senses open to the New. Returning exhausted to his hotel, there is no containment. After a brief shower, he again takes to the streets and as he remembers that first view, the prose becomes short poems in prose.

Paz's initial reaction to India is "Humankind cannot bear much reality." This phrase comes to him after venturing again into the night, as he becomes conscious of looking at what? At what lies beyond and is still nameless. A brief visit, but filled with friendships, readings, observations, it would be followed eleven years later by a much longer stay (Khare 2009, 232).

In 1962, he returns as Mexico's Ambassador to India. But a series of coincidences (a useless Western concept) bring about a significant entry on his

journey toward Love and Communion. In Paris, he met the novelist-essayist Raja Rao, and sharing a mutual interest in Catharism, they became friends. In 1963 again in India, he was received the news that he would be granted, the International Poetry Prize, Knokke le Zoute. He began undergoing a crisis: this was a public recognition of a secret, his poetry. Accepting the prize became a conundrum. What to do? Quite by chance, he met Rao and upon hearing about the dilemma, nodded and told Paz that while he could not advise him, he knew someone who could:

They went to a modest dwelling, entered, and met a woman in her fifties, seated on the floor. She smiled and continued playing with a basket of oranges at her side. Suddenly she tossed one to him. Paz caught it right away. She attended to other visitors and then said, "Raja has told me your problem. What do you think? I responded, and she laughed. "What vanity. Accept the prize with humility. But accept it knowing that it has little or no value. To not do so, is to make it important. True disinterest is to accept it as you accepted the orange I threw to you." (Paz 1995, 8)

Paz accepted the Prize and on his way to Belgium, he stopped in Paris and there, one morning, he ran into Mari-José Tramini whom he had met in India. They met again and decided to return to India together. Fate, a cosmic re-union, for Mari-Jo became the other, "the love that leads the being out of the labyrinthine jungle" (Paz 1995, 22-26).

She was destined to be his companion, love, guide and muse until he crossed over to the other side in April, 1998.

Paz left India under the shadow of the 1968 student movements that were in part "against the values and ideas of modern society" (Paz 1995, 212). These protests quickly turned violent and upon returning to New Delhi, he was informed that in Mexico, students were also protesting, putting the Administration into a quandary given that the Olympics were scheduled to open that fall, in Mexico City. He wrote to his superiors supporting the students' demands for democratic reform, that force not be utilized against the movement, and that the protest be settled through political means. He was informed that the Government, that is, the President had read his message. Ten days later, on October 3, 1968, he learned of the Tlatelolco Massacre. Paz had no choice. He could not continue representing such a repressive Administration.

Accompanied by his wife, Paz left India, and India sent him off rendering homage by poets, artists and students offering garlands of flowers. But he remained there. India never left the Octavio Paz that returned to Mexico after a self-exile in 1971 (Paz 1995, 197-205).

In the *Labyrinth of Solitude*, Paz peered into the mirror reflecting the self. *In Light of India* will become the recognition of the self in "the other." History, language, religion, daily life, and food support the intellectual journey that Paz takes into the beyond, violent and subtle time. Not successively like in the West but in conjunction. It is a logic that rules over almost all Indian creations . . . as a Mexican, he meaningfully triangulated India, Mexico and Europe across a wide swath of historical and cultural difference . . . A co-traveler with humanity whether these were the learned, the rich or the poor of India, Mexico, Europe or anywhere else. He not only critically examined and

recognized the work of modernity and globalization but also the fanaticism and violence (Khare 2009, 232).

In an interview with the Mexican journalist, Braulio Peralta in 1995, shortly before *In Light of India* appeared, Paz states:

The most radical critique of time comes from the Hindus. For the time is an illusion, time is *maya*.

PERALTA: A lie?

OP: Not a lie, an illusion. Everything is a reality that evaporates, leaves and nothing remains. There are two extreme positions about time: the Hindu that states that time is *maya* or the Western that states that the only real thing is time, that is, progress and the conquest of the future (Peralta 1996, 121).

Paz's life journey followed an itinerary that spirals into an ever-widening circle, from Mexico to California, New York, Paris, Spain, Bombay, New Delhi and Tokyo. But in and through India, East and West confront one another face to face, Paz understands and interprets for us that we are one and the same, only transformed by our "Other." Forty-five years later the spiralling circle intertwines and comes together. *The Labyrinth of Solitude* finds its counterpart in the text of *In Light of India*.⁹

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