



The God of the Labyrinth

Colin Wilson

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"We have to master the strange trick of allowing the body to remain quiescent, while pushing the mind to explore interior savannahs and mountain ranges." —Colin Wilson

Gerard Sorme, the narrator of this fast-paced novel, sets out to master this trick. He finds himself on the trail of an Eighteenth Century rake named Esmond Donnelly and is soon entwined in the mysteries and extraordinary practices of an ancient, perverse secret society known as the Sect of the Phoenix...

God of the Labyrinth is the last of the Gerard Sorme trilogy, and the best.

The God of the Labyrinth Details

Date : Published September 28th 1982 by Wingbow Press (first published 1970)

ISBN : 9780914728399

Author : Colin Wilson

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Genre : Fiction, Occult, Fantasy, Psychology, Novels



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Colin Wilson Being Colin Wilson

'One of those book, with the punch of Wisdom'

Valancourt Books says

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Evan says

Super condition 1971 paperback of this obtained at Half Price Books. The come-ons of the text and cover art were too much for me to resist. This is the US release version of Wilson's "God of the Labyrinth" (published originally in the UK in 1970). I have to say I prefer the simpler more lurid title, obviously.

hope mohammed says

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Matt Harris says

Colin Wilson is quite an amazing writer, having put together compendiums of fascination about Occult, Crime, Poltergeists, and others. He has a great grasp on the psychology of humans, and what makes them tick... and explode too!

This book for Wilson is a departure from his canon in that it's fictional, or in my opinion is a fictional extrapolation of non-fictional events. The Outsider (which I haven't read) is another of his fictions, his first and acclaimed book.

The book follows the trail (through narrator Gerald Sorme's research) of an 18C rake, Esmond Donnely, who was apparently more attractive to the ladies than his kooky name would suggest. This guy, it seems, is a

lothario on a quest for sexual fulfillment, and the narrator researches his writings, his fantasies and depictions, until some very curious parallels start occurring for him.

Though the tone of the book is quite dry, when passing through descriptions of the sexual act it can be quite a thrilling ride, and not without humour. On discussion of the normal repetitive sexual act: "There is the story of the psychiatrist who advised an impotent man to try self-hypnosis; before he got into bed, he was to close his eyes and repeat over and over again: "She is not my wife, she is not my wife..."")"

The tone of the book contrasts with some of the breaking of or through the tight-lipped englishness in explicit depictions of desire.

Donnelly is a hard man to catch and to unwind, he seems to have reputations for all sorts of perversion, literary pretensions, genius, and more. Sorme is drawn deep into his spell and meets relatives and experts, somehow managing to spend weeks away from his wife and child, who seem to be generally ignored for most of the story.

There are some wonderful insights into the nature of sex and consciousness, and some scenes which are as erotic as Nin, with the element of consciousness research also. Recommended for fans of her, and of readers interested in altered states.

Murray Ewing says

Gerard Sorme — the hero of several of Wilson's previous novels, and something of an autobiographical one, I think — is hired to write an introduction to a book of 18th-century smut by the rakish Esmond Donnelly, and initially takes on the task simply for the money. Soon, though, he becomes increasingly fascinated by Donnelly's involvement with the mysterious Sect of the Phoenix, a secret group who aimed to 'raise vengery to the level of a religious feeling'. On his quest to find out more about Donnelly, Sorme meets a number of peculiar characters, including, in an odd way, the 18th-century rake himself...

I used to read a lot of Wilson, and revisit his books every so often. When I do, it's always to be reminded of both why I did read a lot of him, and why I don't so much now. On the plus side, Wilson makes a far better novelist than someone who thought of himself primarily as a philosopher ought to: he has a real feel for the little details that make a scene or a character feel realistic, as well as a sense of the breadth of little oddities and deeper peculiarities that make for such variety among people. Plus, he's always interested in what he's writing, and that interest is infectious.

On the minus side, Wilson admits that whatever he's writing, be it fiction or non-fiction, histories of the occult or books about murder, he's really only interested in expressing the one main idea that gripped him: the intensification of human consciousness. And, for me, it can get a little boring if he comes back to this point too often. Novels that attempt to do more than merely capture life — and Wilson's good at that — but actually *transcend* it, really need imaginative vision (of the likes of David Lindsay or Philip K Dick) to *enact* their ideas, rather than having people talk about them, otherwise they turn into a series of philosophical lectures. Wilson, I think, has the ideas, but not that imaginative vision — at least, not here. So, his evident abilities as a novelist serve him on the scene-by-scene level, but not in the ultimate development of the plot. After a while, **The God in the Labyrinth** begins to feel episodic. Each episode was gripping while I was reading it, but afterwards, I found myself wondering why it was there, and what it added to the plot.

There are a few bits of (quite well-written) mock-18th century pornography in **The God in the Labyrinth**,

in the extracts from letters and diaries and stories by Donnelly and his fellows; and, as the book itself is set at the end of the permissive 1960s, and Sorme finds himself involved with various ‘free-thinking’ or downright perverse individuals, there’s plenty in the novel’s modern day portion, too. The 18th-century bits at least felt like parody, and often have a humorous side, but the modern bits, less humorous, felt skewed by the 1960s’ casual misogyny, and it all started to feel a little sordid by the end.

Steve says

If you're looking for a sexy mystery involving orgone energy, secret societies and orgiastic rites, here it is. Well-written and intelligent.

Eugene Pustoshkin says

It’s the best book of the Gerard Sorme trilogy, indeed. Much food for thinking; and Colin Wilson intuits some transrational elements in quite an intriguing way. His phenomenology of sex and sexuality (and the ways it is related to intensity of consciousness—the thing he constantly strives for) is worth being acquainted with. One may only be sorry that Wilson was not probably familiar well enough with, e.g., nondual traditions of Vajrayana and Shaivism in order to understand the ultimate aim of complete liberation. Craving for intensity, if left to its own means, can be misleading; if, however, it is coupled with the proper view of reality and human spiritual quest in it (with a proper motivation), the search for intensity of conscious will becomes a powerful tool of inhabiting our lifeworlds.

Fuzi.qffaz says

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Ali M says

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Eugene Pustoshkin says

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Alan Smith says

There are very few authors who can invent an entirely new kind of hero. And fewer still who can write books in which sexuality is the main theme without descending into cheap softcore porn. Few would be ambitious enough to attempt both feats in a single trilogy - but the brilliant Colin Wilson achieves it with ease.

In his amazing Gerard Sorme trilogy - "Ritual in the Dark," "The Man without a Shadow, (published as "The Sex Diary of Gerard Sorme" in the US)" and "The God of the Labyrinth," Wilson brings his eponymous hero to the end of his quest for an understanding of the sexual experience via Sorme's investigation into an 18th Century libertine, Edmund Donnelly, in a climax (no pun intended) that is a treat for both the libido and the intellect.

Wilson is better known as a writer of popular philosophy, criminology and occultism, and it appears that writing fiction was originally only a literary sideline. Wilson's background in non-fiction is obvious when reading this trilogy, and does much to increase both the authenticity and the interest of the story. His underlying philosophy - that mankind is constantly striving for the next stage of mental evolution through the control of "peak experiences" - is evident here.

In Sorme's search, the orgasm, which (in the case of a male, at least) is ecstatic but transient, like (Wilson's phrase)"fairy gold," is just one of the methods used to aspire to this state of "super consciousness." The similarity between Sorme's (and, Wilson's) central idea and the Hindu belief in Tantric Sex is obvious.

But this is not just a philosophical treatise thinly disguised as a novel. It's an adventure tale in its own right, full of twists and turns (now, now, I didn't mean that, madam!) and genuine suspense. Forget that this was published in 1970 (and the other books in the trilogy even earlier) - Gerard Sorme truly is a hero for our times. Perhaps, in some ways, *the* hero for our times. Do not go past this one, I implore you!

Zakaria Zalt says

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Wendy 'windmill' says

Brilliant

Another excellent book from the author, Colin Wilson. I'm slowly digesting them all, & thoroughly enjoying every one. Full of excitement, thought, & psychological insight. A brilliant read.

John M. says

Writer Gerard Sorme, while on a lecture tour of the US, is approached by a publisher to write an introduction to a book entitled 'Memoirs of an Irish Rake'; one Esmond Donnelly. At first glance, Donnelly seems to be a run-of-the-mill pornographer but as Sorme delves deeper he discovers that Donnelly's was a first-rate mind and that he was known to many of the illustrious men of his era. From there the story goes into the possible existence of a secret society of a sexual nature. Go back to the 20th Century, throw some Reichian concepts into the brew and you have the novel's denouement. As always, Wilson entertains while discoursing on his own 'pet' theories... This novel is dated and not one of Wilson's finest, and while I gave it a high rating due to Wilson's inimitable style and certain passages of undeniable brilliance, I think it is a tepid conclusion to the Gerard Sorme trilogy.
