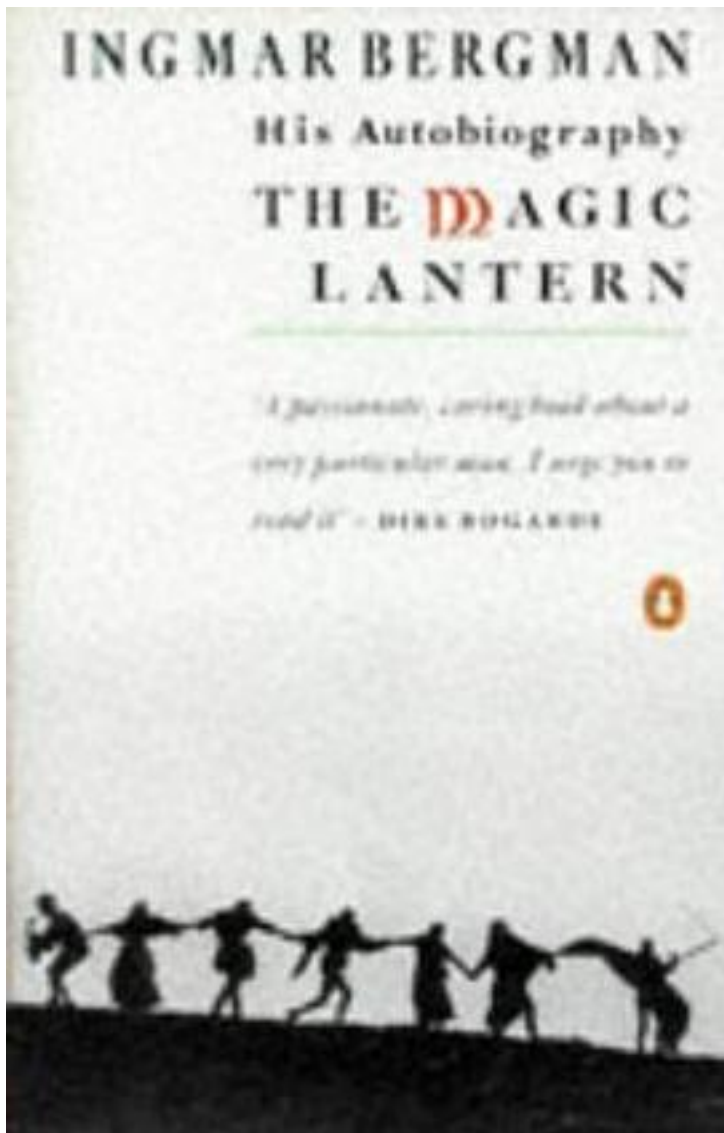


The Magic Lantern



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Jose Tomas de Cuellar (1830-1894) was a Mexican writer noted for his sharp sense of humor and gift for caricature. Having a Ball and Christmas Eve are two novellas written in the costumbrista style, made popular in the mid-nineteenth century by the periodical press in which these sketches of contemporary manners were first published. The stories are a sensitive reflection of the effects of modernization brought by an authoritarian regime dedicated to order and progress. Christmas Eve describes a volatile middle class in which people pursue pleasure and entertainment without regard to morality. Having a Ball depicts women and their dedication to fashion. It is through them that Cuellar examines a society susceptible to foreign values, the importation of which radically altered the face of Mexico and its traditional customs.

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目录:

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