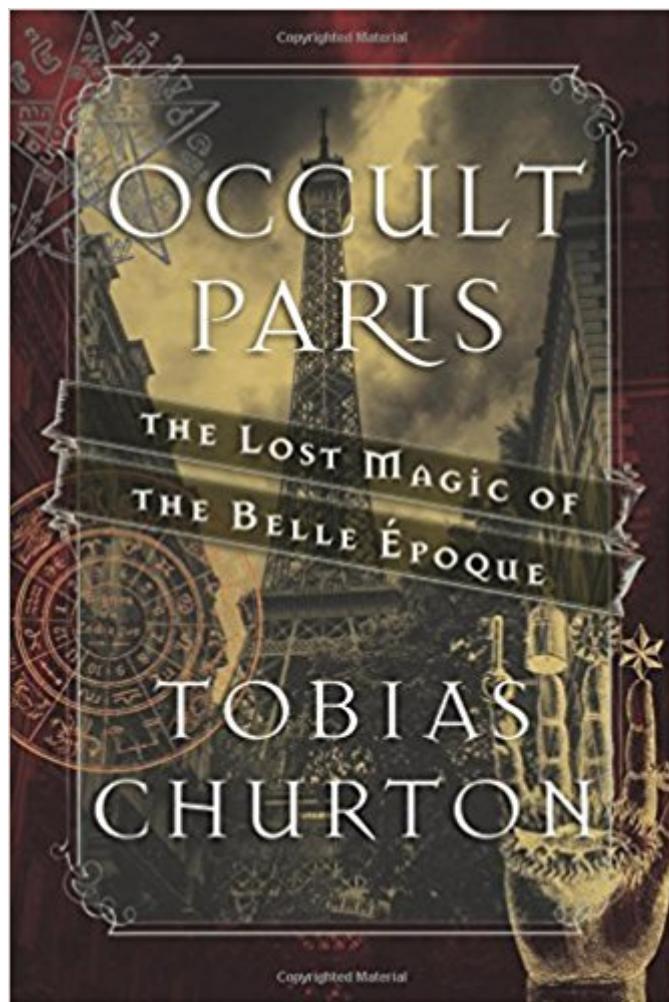


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# Occult Paris: The Lost Magic Of The Belle Époque



## Synopsis

How fin-de-siècle Paris became the locus for the most intense revival of magical practices and doctrines since the Renaissance • Examines the remarkable lives of occult practitioners Josaphin Peladan, Papus, Stanislas de Guaita, Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Jules Doinel, and others • Reveals how occult activity deeply influenced many well-known cultural movements, such as Symbolism, the Decadents, modern music, and the à opsychedelic 60s • During Paris's Belle Époque (1871-1914), many cultural movements and artistic styles flourished--Symbolism, Impressionism, Art Nouveau, the Decadents--all of which profoundly shaped modern culture. Inseparable from this cultural advancement was the explosion of occult activity taking place in the City of Light at the same time. Exploring the magical, artistic, and intellectual world of the Belle Époque, Tobias Churton shows how a wide variety of Theosophists, Rosicrucians, Martinists, Freemasons, Gnostics, and neo-Cathars called fin-de-siècle Paris home. He examines the precise interplay of occultists Josaphin Peladan, Papus, Stanislas de Guaita, and founder of the modern Gnostic Church Jules Doinel, along with lesser known figures such as Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Paul Sédir, Charles Barlet, Edmond Bailly, Albert Jounet, Abbé Lacuria, and Lady Caithness. He reveals how the work of many masters of modern culture such as composers Claude Debussy and Erik Satie, writers Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire, and painters Georges Seurat and Alphonse Osbert bear signs of immersion in the esoteric circles that were thriving in Paris at the time. The author demonstrates how the creative hermetic ferment that animated the City of Light in the decades leading up to World War I remains an enduring presence and powerful influence today. Where, he asks, would Aleister Crowley and all the magicians of today be without the Parisian source of so much creativity in this field? Conveying the living energy of Paris in this richly artistic period of history, Churton brings into full perspective the characters, personalities, and forces that made Paris a global magnet and which allowed later cultural movements, such as the à opsychedelic 60s, to rise from the ashes of post-war Europe.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

" . . . a massive, focused exploration of the relationship between the mystical and the creative. . . . This entertaining volume will please fans of esoterica and the City of Light." (Publishers Weekly) *With* Tobias Churton as the cicerone--or dare I say psychopomp?--the reader is expertly guided in the labyrinthine world of the Occult Paris of the Belle Èpoque (1871-1914). This is the best introduction to the French occult revival ever written in English. • (Henrik Bogdan, professor of religious studies at the University of Gothenburg) *Music, art, literature, mysticism--fin-de-siÈcle* Paris had it all in great abundance, and in Tobias Churton's latest tome he uncovers the hidden and not-so-hidden connections between Satie, Debussy, Redon, Rops, Khnopff, Gauguin, Crowley, LÈvi, Papus, Mathers, PÈladan, Michelet, Blavatsky, Reuss, Huysmans, Breton, and countless others. . . . Eminently readable and filled with meticulous historical details, this is a fabulous depiction of one of the most exciting and fervent periods of creativity in modern times. • (John Zorn, composer-performer) *A tour de force. A stunning account of fin-de-siÈcle Occult Paris and its lasting influence on the counterculture. . . . Churton gives comprehensive portrayals of such occult luminaries as PÈladan, Papus, and de Guaita as well as a portrayal of their movements and a seminal analysis of esoteric art--in particular the ÈRosicrucianÈ art of the salons--locating its place in the intellectual, cultural, and political milieu of the Belle Èpoque.* Tobias is as erudite as he is excited and exciting. His scholarship is alive with passion, imagination, humor, and, most of all, humanity. A must-read for students of European history, Art Nouveau, Symbolism, Idealism, Surrealism, and the Decadents as well as for neo-Rosicrucian, Templar and Gnostic esotericists, and modern-day alchemists and magicians. • (Stephen J. King (Shiva XÈ), Grand Master, Ordo Templi Orientis) *No one can evoke the feel of a place and an era like Tobias Churton! This is Paris in the Belle Èpoque, but behind the city of the can-can, Toulouse-Lautrec, and the Moulin Rouge, Churton shows us a Paris of seekers in mysterious worlds--magic, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, alchemy--and of artists, writers, and composers who were also drawn to those realms. The spirit of their compelling quest is stamped on every page of this book.* • (Christopher McIntosh, Ph.D., author of Eliphas LÈvi) *Tobias Churton brings this amazing era to life. Gnostics, Free Masons,*

Rosicrucians, Hermeticsâ |The echos of Parisâ™ Belle Epoque is still heard in cultural and spiritual movements today.â • (The Echo)

Tobias Churton is Britainâ™s leading scholar of Western Esotericism, a world authority on Gnosticism, Hermeticism, and Rosicrucianism. An Honorary Fellow of Exeter University, where he is a faculty lecturer, he holds a masterâ™s degree in Theology from Brasenose College, Oxford, and is the author of many books, including Gnostic Philosophy and Aleister Crowley: The Beast in Berlin. He lives in England.

Tobias Churton's work, OCCULT PARIS, is enjoyed like a strong Espresso - sipped slowly - or an aged Cognac savored drop by drop - at times a foamy and deliciously decadent Cappuccino; his work awakens the senses, yet takes the reader beyond the ordinary sense world. Most of all, this book is about the history of an era too often overlooked or forgotten, when genius emerged and art was still valued for art's sake. The author has succeeded in taking us into this forgotten esoteric world of hidden treasures where art and spirit collided not by accident, but as if guided by a strange magnetic field. Only a man who understands eternal verities and the important part art plays in its revelations, could have written this book. Tobias Churton is that man. His love for the city, its language, becomes obvious while reading. The hidden (occult) era of history and how it relates to our own understanding of symbolism, art and spirituality are addressed in detail. Yes, this book has some dense parts, due to the meticulous research and scholarly treatment of the subjects of discussion; including the colorful personalities of the artist brought together in the eclectic book shop and 'Salons' of Paris; however, when the book shines it is almost blinding in its magnificence, including the darker side, exposing the decadence, its edginess and the beauty of the city itself and how - art - is transmitted. I loved the book and learned a lot about the occult currents which created so much excitement in the minds and hearts of men and women, artists who allowed their inspiration to flow freely, understanding the value and power of inspiration creating the symbolism in art. What made this book such a good experience was the author's ability to take me to a place and time in history and make it come alive. At times I felt I was really there. I could feel myself riding in Pâïadan's carriage... could almost smell the air and feel the aura and vibration surrounding these people. Were some of these artists unusual and some considered strange? Of course! Do we want art to be boring? What good would that do for the observer or the experience? Symbolism was created to make us think and see the idea beyond what is depicted... leading us into unfamiliar realms, at times even make us feel uncomfortable. From my view, that's the whole

point! Remarkably, this book reveals a lot about the author himself, through his love for the city we see the flame in his heart shies brightly. He is at times electric in its deliverance as one can feel (if not see) Churton's own being overflowing with a deep appreciation for the true value of anything that is divinely inspired as seen by his enthusiasm not only for the truth in the characters he so beautifully describes, but also for a sense of place, Paris, which is alive and spiritually electrified by his command and choice of words and by the artists; men of inspiration brought together by destiny or fate; drawn together to create the symbolism in the art movement as well as in poetry, music and literature to create a state of transcendence; a state of seeing something beyond our ordinary existence. Churton has lifted the veil of the stage where it played out, giving these personalities a voice; bringing the artists out of obscurity as they enter a special place in our own hearts and minds. Paris, just before and at the turn of that century was THE place to be if you were an artist. Whether a painter, poet, writer or a composer of enchanting 'other worldly' music - Paris beckoned the elite; the crème de la crème of the intellectual world and esoteric spiritual movements. Filled with many portraits, illustrations and color plates, this book will stay with the reader forever.

Very erudite and requires lots and lots of background research, but, all in all, a gem of a book. Thanks.

Great book

I've always had an interest in the occult and I do have a penchant for books about France especially the history of France. I've read a few novels set in the time of the Belle Èpoque so it was nice to get a bit more of a historical context especially since many of the novels I have read deal with some of the people mentioned in the novels a background for me. I was a wee bit surprised by just how dense this tome was but in the end I found it very informative. Occult Paris was full of interesting tid-bits about the A-List people of the scene and I enjoyed reading how everyone seemed to know everyone else and learn a bit about how they got on with one another, have glimpses into some scandals and the motivations of the people who history has seem to have if not forgotten... require a little extra research. I found myself really appreciating the lengths that the author went through to present this book dealing with side of history that isn't really at the forefront for whatever reason. It deals with the underground community of artists, free thinkers and the odd revolutionary and I definitely learned a lot from reading The Occult Paris, and I am not afraid to say that I am going to have to re-read the book because there was so much to take in in terms of all the

details that I'm going to need another pass at it. I found the parts covering the topics of symbolism and mysticism particularly interesting and enjoyed how they were presented. I thought it was presented very well and my only critiques would be to perhaps transition more smoothly. I sometimes found the seques into different topics or lines of thought to be jumpy and/or rushed in some spots but it wasn't a deal breaker. I'd recommend this title to all those with an interest in France in particular during the early 1900s with an interest in the fringe factor of society at the time. If you want to know about the who's who of the Parisienne art and music scenes and other visionaries who were not afraid to test societal norms by asking the blasphemous questions and delving into religion. It's one the I recommend reading in parts else running the risk of being overwhelming but enjoyable and interesting nonetheless. I received this book free of charge from the author/publisher.

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