

The Other Paris: The People's City, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

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A trip through Paris as it will never be again-dark and dank and poor and slapdash and truly bohemian

Paris, the City of Light, the city of fine dining and seductive couture and intellectual hauteur, was until fairly recently always accompanied by its shadow: the city of the poor, the outcast, the criminal, the eccentric, the willfully nonconforming. In *The Other Paris*, Luc Sante gives us a panoramic view of that second metropolis, which has nearly vanished but whose traces are in the bricks and stones of the contemporary city, in the culture of France itself, and, by extension, throughout the world. Drawing on testimony from a great range of witnesses—from Balzac and Hugo to assorted boulevardiers, rabble-rousers, and tramps—Sante, whose thorough research is matched only by the vividness of his narration, takes the reader on a whirlwind tour. Richly illustrated with more than three hundred images, *The Other Paris* scuttles through the knotted streets of pre-Haussmann Paris, through the improvised accommodations of the original bohemians, through the whorehouses and dance halls and hobo shelters of the old city.

A lively survey of labor conditions, prostitution, drinking, crime, and popular entertainment, and of the reporters, r? aliste singers, pamphleteers, and poets who chronicled their evolution, *The Other Paris* is a book meant to upend the story of the French capital, to reclaim the city from the bons vivants and the speculators, and to hold a light to the works and lives of those expunged from its center by the forces of profit.

Luc Sante was born in Verviers, Belgium. His other books include *Low Life*, *Evidence*, *The Factory of Facts*, and *Kill All Your Darlings*. He is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award, an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Grammy (for album notes), an Infinity Award for Writing from the International Center of Photography, and Guggenheim and Cullman fellowships. He has contributed to *The New York Review of Books* since 1981, and has written for many other magazines. He is the visiting professor of writing and the history of photography at Bard College and lives in Ulster County, New York.

"The elevation of the obscure and the overlooked, the discarded or hidden or marginal, to artistic status or cultural prominence has become a cottage industry for artists and writers of late, but as an anti-ghostbuster, Sante is in a class by himself . . . the pleasures to be had from the fruits of his research are considerable . . . [*The Other Paris's*] great virtue is to send the reader down investigative paths of his own." -Molly Haskell, *The New York Times Book Review*

"The city,' [Sante] insists, '-compact and curled within itself, a labyrinth-had to be played like a game.' This is an idea-I'll admit it-that I love, not just in regard to Paris but also to the very essence of urban life . . . Sante is highlighting the law of unintended consequences, which brings us back to d? rive again. Throughout "*The Other Paris*," he invokes the figure of the fl? neur, which is to say the one who walks to connect to the city through the soles of his or her feet . . . Here, we see the sneaky genius of *The Other Paris*, which, like *Low Life*,

conceals the complexity of its structure, masquerading as a popular history . . . until it reveals that it has been about circling all along." -David L. Ulin, Los Angeles Times

"Sante's knowledge of the voluminous Paris literature is prodigious . . . his great gift is his ability to draw on the 'verbal photography' of previous writers to send the reader back in time." -Arthur Goldhammer, BookForum

"The Other Paris is both eulogy and paean to the matrixes of anarchy, creativity, crime, and serendipity that once gave shape to the City of Light." -Anna Wiener, The New Republic

"[Sante] casts his lot with the ragpickers and streetwalkers, and his readers are better off for it." -Dmitry Samarov, The Chicago Tribune

"[Sante] has written a wonderfully rich book, packed with information, lively in style, evoking the turbulence of a vanished time and city." -Allan Massie, The Wall Street Journal

"This brilliant, beautifully written essay is the finest book I have ever read about Paris. Ever. Thank you, Luc Sante." -Paul Auster

"Nowadays, the old, crowded, swarming, surly cities are at least half-forgotten. But in this great chronicle, Luc Sante recalls when Paris was rougher, when the poor, the tough, the unregulated, the underworld, thrived there; maybe the city was also less rough, in that there was room for nearly everyone all the way down the social ladder. Hanging over The Other Paris is the contemporary curse that perhaps hit Paris first, of cities that have become bland transnational stopping places for the privileged. Magisterial as ever, Sante returns us to the flavor, texture, savor, shouts, and clashes of the bygone city." -Rebecca Solnit

"The Other Paris is a heartbreaking spectacle, immense in intellectual and political scope and emotional reach. Peopled by crooks and movie stars, gamblers and thinkers, the world's premier city of dreams is rendered, through Luc Sante's fine hand, historian's eye, and poet's heart, into a place we hardly knew—a world of hitherto unknown mysteries and realities. A grand journey in an epic work." -Hilton Als

"The good news is that Sante is a formidable guide to the Parisian past at ground and underground level . . . Sante ends his book with a hymn to flûte neurie, this lazy meandering pursuit of truth, drink and other goals, like the literary archaeology of a city that's no longer there. Following his path is worth the inevitable hangover." -David D'Arcy, San Francisco Chronicle

"Sante vividly captures this 'other' Paris . . . The Other Paris is immersive and enjoyable. The abundant pictures are fascinating." -Sarah Grant, Booklist

"'We have forgotten what a city was,' Luc Sante provocatively writes about Paris. By the last chapter of this absorbing book, we are convinced. Washerwomen and ragpickers,

bohemians and clochards, anarchists and apaches, all play their part in this alternative urban history. This is not the Gay Paree of Maurice Chevalier, though he too makes an appearance." -Witold Rybczynski

"All who love Paris will love this book." -Kirkus Reviews

Other Books

Littell's Living Age.

“... in the ratio that despotism tyrannizes over the human beings indeed, it appears as if both nature and government in ... of public opinion; and furnished, and wanting the luxury of a bed. In the too often silencing its own doubts ...”