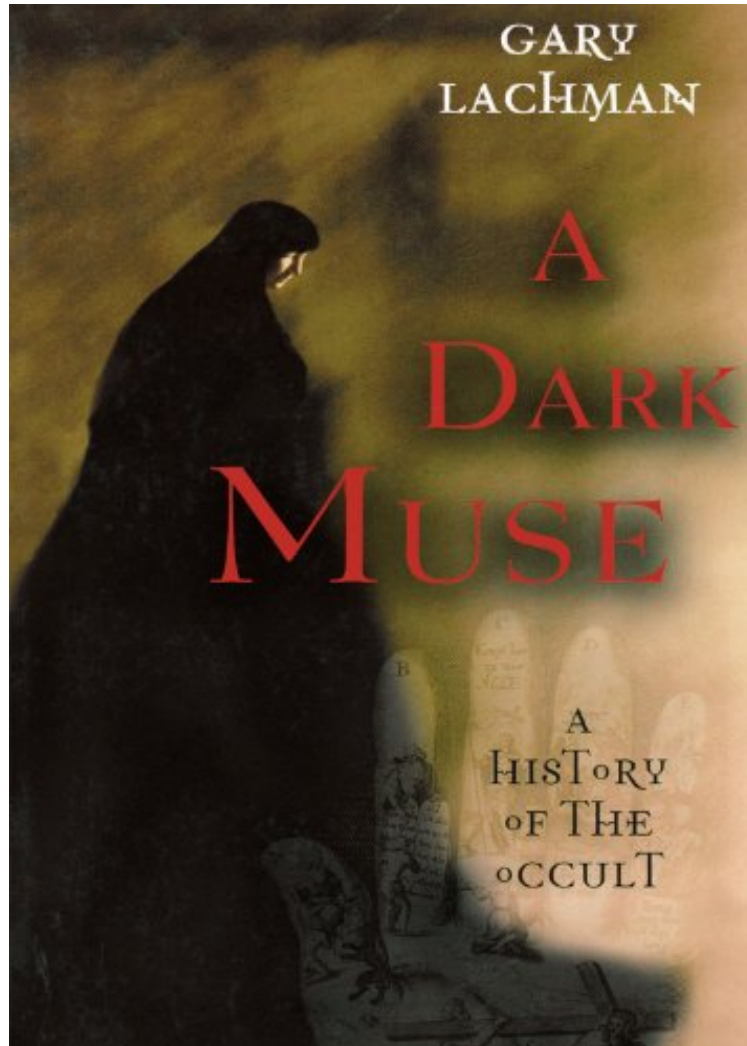


(Download ebook) A Dark Muse: A History of the Occult

A Dark Muse: A History of the Occult

Gary Lachman

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Gary Lachman : A Dark Muse: A History of the Occult before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Dark Muse: A History of the Occult:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Gary does it againBy Maeve RavenswayWell I just love Gary Lachman's writing style and the detail and research he's done with all his books. This is another example. I just enjoy his writings and biographys immensely, I think he uncovers things no one else has2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. a history of (primarily European) occultismBy Justin RitchieWhile Gary Lachman's A Dark Muse: A History of the Occult tackles many of the important writers that have made these claims, it still falls a bit short of the book I wish it was. And my disappointments aside, this is still an amazing work. Divided into two halves, the first is a series of essays on the specific eras of western esoteric development and the key players that defined it, the second

half containing excerpts from important writings by the authors introduced in the first half. This volume is keenly focused on authors and writers, and Lachman admits in the beginning that an equal number of pages should be devoted to musicians and other fields. Within *A Dark Muse* the esoteric enlightenment is broken into five eras: Enlightenment, Romantic, Satanic, Fin de siècle and Modernist, each highlighting Lachman's penchant to expose under-appreciated contributors to western thought. If you want to find a reading list for the next year and a half, this is the book to pick up. I've discovered quite a few writings that I will explore in depth over the next few months. While the public believes that 'the occult' and 'satanism' are synonymous, a simple survey of the ideas in this book will reveal quite the opposite. Occult studies are truly a deeper look at the hidden wisdom present in many of the holy books, cultures and humans on the planet. Most of the authors featured by Lachman deal with esoteric Christianity, the nature of God, metaphysics and spiritual practice (my areas of interest). The chapter on Satanic Occultism, while the most shocking, is also the shortest, simply because there aren't many writers along those lines. This is a grab bag and a good one at that. Read and find the teasers you'll need to dive further into many deeper ideas. Where the book fell short is in the failure to acknowledge some major influences of the 20th century in their own right. Rudolph Steiner, G.I. Gurdjieff, Israel Regardie, Manly P. Hall, the first two being mentioned and the last two entirely left out. Other important thinkers, such as Krishnamurti, while not being explicitly occult, was still the center of Blavatsky's Theosophical movement and would deserve more than the brief mention he receives. However, omissions make sense, jamming this much into 380 pages requires at least a few to be left aside.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A tour-de-force of occultism's impact on literature
By William Courson
A tour-de-force of occultism's impact on literature
Gary Lachman is the author of several books on the history of consciousness and western culture, including "Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius," "A Secret History of Consciousness" and "A Dark Muse: A History of the Occult." He was a founding member of the rock group Blondie and wrote some of the groups early hits and was also a guitarist with Iggy Pop. In 2006 he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He is a regular contributor to *The Guardian*, *Independent on Sunday*, *Fortean Times*, *Quest*, and other journals in the UK and US and frequently lectures on the meeting ground between consciousness, the occult, popular culture and the arts. In "A Dark Muse: A History of the Occult" Mr. Lachman has written a delightful and fascinating book, and I am very impressed by his encyclopedic knowledge of the Western esoteric tradition. His is an engaging and disarming writing style (much like that of his mentor, Colin Wilson): one senses that the author is there with one discussing these fascinating characters and themes, exploring the literary history of Western occultism, and more particularly the impact that occultism made on some of the leading literary and artistic figures of their respective eras. Notwithstanding the author's readable, conversational style the subjects of his scrutiny are very dark indeed, tortured souls all, reaching out for a horizon that recedes with their every step toward it. Madness and mayhem, depression, mental collapse, extreme self-consciousness and sensitivity, incarceration, impoverishment, disease and deprivation, addiction, alienation and ostracism are common themes in the lives of most of those included here, as was death at an early age. The only small comfort for some of these tragic geniuses was their belief in the spiritual, redemptive value of their suffering. Works of brilliance were indeed produced under the influence of occultism and it developed into a fertile source of inspiration for many important artists, yet, quite frequently, it also opened the door to a particularly horrific kind of madness. Chapters include the Enlightenment, the Romantic period, fin de siècle and modernist occultism, as well as a chapter on Satanic occultism. Iconic figures and movements of those periods are discussed, including Franz Mesmer, E.T.A. Hoffman, Huysmans, Nerval, Blavatsky; the Illuminati; the Rosicrucians; Baudelaire, Strindberg, Poe, Goethe, Swedenborg, Malcolm Lowry, Balzac and Aleister Crowley, among others. The book concludes with illustrative extracts from the works of Von Eckharthausen (*The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*), Blavatsky (*The Secret Doctrine*), Saint-Martin (*The Counsel of the Exile*), Strindberg (*The Hand of the Unseen*), P.D. Ouspensky (*The Symbolism of the Tarot*), Poe (*Mesmeric Revelation*), Crowley (*Hymn to Pan*) Swedenborg (*Heaven and Hell*) and Eliphas Levi (*Transcendental Magic*), among others. "Dark Muse" is a tour-de-force of the literary history of Western occultism amply documenting the historical reality that the esoteric has served as a foundation upon which many cultural endeavors have been focused, though many remain largely outside of and unrecognized by mainstream academic scholarship. This is a superb, beautifully written work for anyone interested in occultism generally and its literary impact particularly. The only fault I find with the effort is its lack of an index, which would have benefited its readers greatly.

The occult was a crucial influence on the Renaissance, and it obsessed the popular thinkers of the day. But with the Age of Reason, occultism was sidelined; only charlatans found any use for it. Occult ideas did not disappear, however, but rather went underground. It developed into a fruitful source of inspiration for many important artists. Works of brilliance, sometimes even of genius, were produced under its influence. In *A Dark Muse*, Lachman discusses the Enlightenment obsession with occult politics, the Romantic explosion, the futuristic occultism of the fin de siècle, and the deep occult roots of the modernist movement. Some of the writers and thinkers featured in this hidden history of western thought and sensibility are Emanuel Swedenborg, Charles Baudelaire, J. K. Huysmans, August Strindberg, William Blake, Goethe, Madame Blavatsky, H. G. Wells, Edgar Allan Poe, and Malcolm Lowry.

"It's a sure thing that anyone with a taste for literary esoterica and magical history will learn something from "A Dark Muse. It's a cavernous grotto full of dark, glittering jewels."