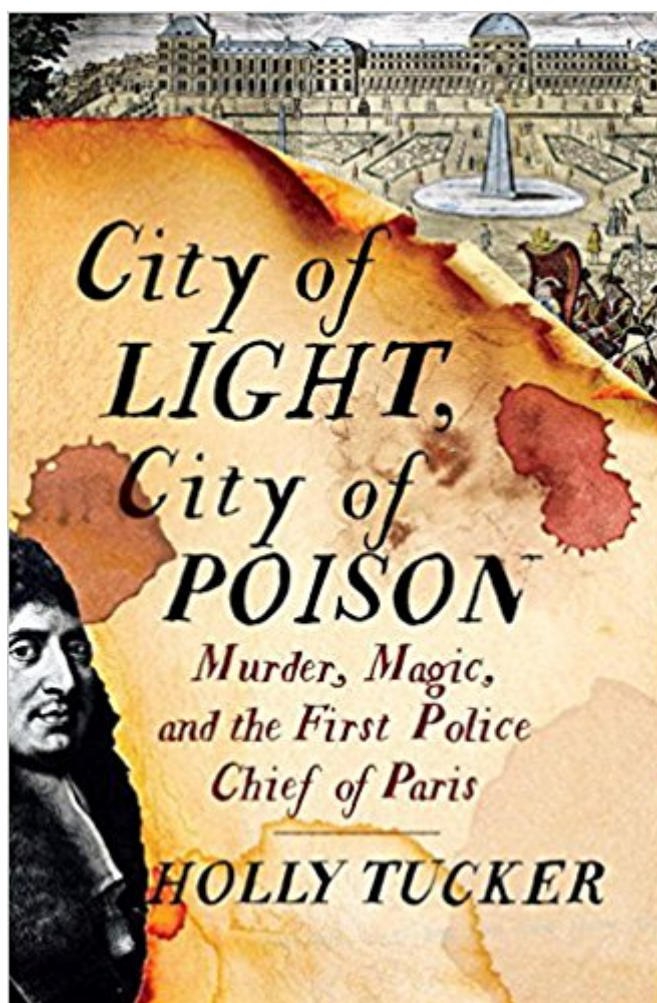


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City Of Light, City Of Poison: Murder, Magic, And The First Police Chief Of Paris



Synopsis

“A fierce tale of conspiracy and retribution” | Thanks to Tucker’s sympathetic necromancy and her luscious resurrection of everyday detail, even in gilded palaces the human psyche seems familiarly deceitful and self-justifying. • Michael Sims, author of *The Story of Charlotte’s Web* and *Arthur and Sherlock* Appointed to conquer the “crime capital of the world,” the first police chief of Paris faces an epidemic of murder in the late 1600s. Assigned by Louis XIV, Nicolas de La Reynie begins by clearing the streets of filth and installing lanterns throughout Paris, turning it into the City of Light. The fearless La Reynie pursues criminals through the labyrinthine neighborhoods of the city. He unearths a tightly knit cabal of poisoners, witches, and renegade priests. As he exposes their unholy work, he soon learns that no one is safe from black magic—not even the Sun King. In a world where a royal glance can turn success into disgrace, the distance between the quietly back-stabbing world of the king’s court and the criminal underground proves disturbingly short. Nobles settle scores by employing witches to craft poisons and by hiring priests to perform dark rituals in Paris’s most illustrious churches and cathedrals. As La Reynie continues his investigations, he is haunted by a single question: Could Louis’s mistresses could be involved in such nefarious plots? The pragmatic and principled La Reynie must decide just how far he will go to protect his king. From secret courtrooms to torture chambers, *City of Light, City of Poison* is a gripping true-crime tale of deception and murder. Based on thousands of pages of court transcripts and La Reynie’s compulsive note-taking, as well as on letters and diaries, Tucker’s riveting narrative makes the fascinating, real-life characters breathe on the page. 8 pages of illustrations; 1 map

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“A stylish study of crimes committed by the high and mighty during the 72-year reign of the Sun King. . . . Tucker writes with gusto . . . [and] finds high drama.” - Marilyn Stasio, New York Times Book Review

“In her fascinating book, Holly Tucker fuses history and mystery to create the dramatic effect of a novel while remaining true to the real-life plots and poisons of France’s seventeenth century.” | A genuinely illuminating study of a remarkably amoral moment in human history.” - Deborah Blum, author of *The Poisoner’s Handbook*

“The book reads like *Law and Order: 17th Century Parisian Poisoners Unit*.” - Kelly Faircloth, *Jezebel*

“An intriguing amalgam of historical evocation and crime narrative. . . . Tucker tells the story as if it were a classic whodunit, bringing alive an extremely complicated and baffling series of events.” - Thad Cahart, *Newsday*

“Holly Tucker tells [this] story . . . with great gusto and with an amazing array of facts. *City of Light, City of Poison* conjures up 17th century Paris and makes it seem close to the present day.” - Jonah Raskin, *New York Journal of Books*

“*City of Light, City of Poison* [is] a cop drama of sorts, intermingled with a historian’s tenacious pursuit of the evidence. . . . Tucker’s way with a lavish description will have you planning your all-star adaptation of the book. . . . Fascinating.” - Sharon Wheeler, *Times Higher Education*

“Tucker . . . vividly brings to life a slice of Parisian history in [a] rigorously researched true-crime epic . . . [that] reads like a combination of the most compelling mystery fiction and Dumas’s romances of twisted court intrigues.” - Publishers Weekly (starred review)

“*City of Light, City of Poison* . . . is part true crime, part history, and all scandal.” - Library Journal (Editors’ Pick)

Holly Tucker is a professor in the Department of French and Italian as well as in the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt University. She is the author of *Blood Work: A Tale of Medicine and Murder in the Scientific Revolution*, which was a Los Angeles Times Book Prize finalist and a Best Book of the Times Literary Supplement and Seattle Times. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and Aix-en-Provence, France.

With a highly accessible narrative style, *City of Light, City of Poison: Murder, Magic, and the First Police Chief of Paris* invites the modern reader back to reinvestigate a true extravagant scandal that involved a web of: suspicious deaths, damaging accusations, painful confessions and lasting

ciphers that have all become to be known under the bewitching title of The Affair of the Poisons (L'affaire des poisons). From 1677-1682 the city of Paris served as the backdrop to a deadly mystery that went unnoticed by many including medical professionals at the time, what was thought to be simply explained by gangrenous accumulations of bile or mistakes on inexperienced autopsy tables would soon be revealed in vile depositions to involve poisoned shirts and pulverized toads. As grisly as it all seems, those are all only parts of the baleful truths that Nicolas de La Reynie (the first police chief of Paris) would soon bring to light and the polite belief that stops at privilege or esteemed morals would be destroyed forever in society's eyes. As fascinating as City of Light, City of Poison ended for this reader who confesses to seek out and collect subjects of dark history; I wanted more and for the stories or cases to go on beyond 54% on her kindle. I also thought the beginning a little uneven (along with some spellings and wished for more photos of key names and locations in the final pages) but appreciated the strange ambiance this work eventually brought allowing the curious to fall in step with La Reynie's investigations and persistence in everything. I also found the back and forth private and public dramas presented from the halls of Versailles to the mean back alleys (and even in the dank reaches of frightening rooms meant for the Question) irresistibly beguiling but at the same time refined with an overall notable respectable approach. I admit not always easy topics to read in detail come about in the pages of City of Light, City of Poison: Murder, Magic, and the First Police Chief of Paris and it did have its unfortunate personal disappoints but Ms. Tucker has certainly researched and conjures all the distrustful notions from 17th-century Paris from watching what you wear, where you step and questioning who you can trust to rise and flame the mind to learn more about all presented and that's why this title is staying on my unique shelves.

This is the first nonfiction book I have read in awhile. I found the author, Holly Tucker, is able to pace the story in a gripping way that makes you feel that you are actually reading a work of great fiction. The fact that this incident really happened only helps to enhance the interest in the story. I learned so much about the time period, but never once felt like I was being beaten over the head with a history lesson. It amazes me how prevalent poisonings were at the time and how sophisticated the techniques were to make them hard to trace. I devoured every page of this book. That would be my one minor complaint with the story, it seemed to go by too quickly. Such is the case I guess when dealing with an actual account of history, but I still wanted more.

A dark page of history was coaxed into the light by author, Holly Tucker. City of Light, City of Poison

surpasses all previous attempts to harness a complicated story with a multitude of players. I have read them all, *Love and Louis XIV* by Antonia Fraser, *The Affair of the Poisons* by Anne Somerset, and *Athenais* by Lisa Hilton, but none tell the story in the manner of Ms. Tucker. The thorough research and pacing of the chapters keeps the reader on the edge for the next detailed development. My personal favorite is the description of La Voison's neighborhood in comparison to the surrounding city. Placing the events in their setting gives the reader a true sense of the times and the lives of the players. These dark corners where even darker deeds transpired are where the true story played out, not necessarily within vaunted Versailles. Holly Tucker unleashes a fascinating tale you might consider well-known, but in that belief, you will soon find yourself mistaken and enthralled. *City of Light, City of Poison* - worth every page.

Holly Tucker's history paints a fascinating portrait of the City of Paris, circa late 17th C., before a street-lighting program ultimately gave it the nickname, "City of Lights." Tucker's city is grim and violent with plenty of unsavory 'hoods. (One might think that the city was even more dangerous than contemporary London--quite a feat!) The main thread of history that she follows, and does very well at, are the murders of quite a few prominent people, mostly by discreet poisoning. As the poisonings begin to reach into the nobility surrounding the utterly autocratic king, Louis XIV, he reacts with genuine concern, appointing the city's first police chief to track down the evil-doers. The new chief is a real Type A who takes his job seriously--the perfect person for the task. Along the way, he decides that crime might be reduced with better public street lighting--all of which ultimately leads to Paris' subsequent new nickname. Not a "general" history for everyone, perhaps, but Ms Tucker shines a very bright light on a fascinating time in a leading city of Europe ... and the rats might surprise you.

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