

# Fatal Purity Robespierre And The French Revolution

The Giant of the French Revolution  
 French Lightning, American Light  
 Robespierre  
 From Notebooks and Diaries of the Period  
 The Days of the French Revolution  
 24 Hours in Revolutionary Paris  
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 The Thirties  
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 An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre

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## MARTINEZ BOND

**The Giant of the French Revolution** Metropolitan Books

In changing forever the political landscape of the modern world, the French Revolution was driven by a new personality: the confirmed, self-aware revolutionary. Maximilien Robespierre originated the role, inspiring such devoted twentieth-century disciples as Lenin—who deemed Robespierre a Bolshevik avant la lettre. Although he dominated the Committee for Public Safety only during the last year of his life, Robespierre was the Revolution in flesh and blood. He embodies its ideological essence, its unprecedented extremes, its absolutist virtues and vices; he incarnated a new, completely politicized self to lead a new, wholly regenerated society. Yet as historian David P. Jordan observes, Robespierre has remained an enigma. While his revolutionary career embraced the most crucial years of the Revolutions—1789 to 1794—it was little presaged by the unremarkable course of his early life. The Jacobin leader to whom the revolutionary masses clung is thus both as mysterious as his remote provincial past and as awesome as the world-shaking regicide he inspired. Confronted by these extremes, historians have often contented themselves to caricature Robespierre as an antichrist, a bourgeois manipulator of the rabble, or a canny political tactician. Jordan looks to Robespierre's own self-conception for a true understanding of the man and his Revolution. Indeed, Robespierre wrote about himself often, and at length. Influenced by Enlightenment rationalism and the new literary genre of autobiography, he left behind a voluminous body of speeches, newspaper articles, and pamphlets laced with reflections and revelations about his self-created destiny as living martyr and revolutionary Everyman. From these thoughts and words, Jordan attempts to uncover Robespierre, to reveal what made this unlikely figure—onetime provincial lawyer, small-town académicien, and uninspired versifier—the most important in revolutionary France.

**Fatal Lightning, American Light** Fatal Purity Robespierre and the French Revolution Best Books of the Year • Financial Times, The Times (of London), History Today Marking the 200th anniversary of his death, Napoleon is an unprecedented portrait of the emperor told through his engagement with the natural world. “How should one envisage this subject? With a great pomp of words, or with simplicity?” —Charlotte Brontë, “The Death of Napoleon” The most celebrated general in history, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) has for centuries attracted eminent male writers. Since Thomas Carlyle first christened him “our last Great Man,” regiments of biographers have marched across the same territory, weighing campaigns and conflicts, military tactics and power politics. Yet in all this time, no definitive portrait of Napoleon has endured, and a mere handful of women have written his biography—a fact that surely would have pleased him. With Napoleon, Ruth Scurr, one of our most eloquent and original historians, emphatically rejects the shibboleth of the “Great Man” theory of history, instead following the dramatic trajectory of Napoleon's life through gardens, parks, and forests. As Scurr reveals, gardening was the first and last love of Napoleon, offering him a retreat from the manifold frustrations of war and politics. Gardens were, at the same time, a mirror image to the battlefields on which he fought, discrete settings in which terrain and weather were as important as they were in combat, but for creative rather than destructive purposes. Drawing on a wealth of contemporary and historical scholarship, and taking us from his early days at the military school in Brienne-le-Château through his canny seizure of power and eventual exile, Napoleon frames the general's story through the green spaces he cultivated. Amid Corsican olive groves, ornate menageries in Paris, and lone garden plots on the island of Saint Helena, Scurr introduces a diverse cast of scientists, architects, family members, and gardeners, all of whom stood in the shadows of Napoleon's meteoric rise and fall. Building a cumulative panorama, she offers indelible portraits of Augustin Bon Joseph de Robespierre, the younger brother of Maximilien Robespierre, who used his position to advance Napoleon's career; Marianne Peusol, the fourteen-year-old girl manipulated into a Christmas-Eve assassination attempt

on Napoleon that resulted in her death; and Emmanuel, comte de Las Cases, the atlas maker to whom Napoleon dictated his memoirs. As Scurr contends, Napoleon's dealings with these people offer unusual and unguarded opportunities to see how he grafted a new empire onto the remnants of the ancien régime and the French Revolution. Epic in scale and novelistic in its detail, Napoleon, with stunning illustrations, is a work of revelatory range and depth, revealing the contours of the general's personality and power as no conventional biography can.

**Robespierre** Oxford University Press

A timely look at the atmosphere of political hostility surrounding the Civil War, and the venom faced by America's sixteenth president. Today, Abraham Lincoln is a beloved American icon, widely considered to be our best president. It was not always so. This book takes a look at what Lincoln's contemporaries actually thought and said about him during his lifetime, when political hostilities, and ultimately civil war, raged. The era in which our sixteenth president lived and governed was the most rough-and-tumble in the history of American politics. The hostility behind the criticism aimed at Lincoln by the great men of his time, on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, is startling, the spectacular prejudice against him often shocking for its cruelty, intensity, and unrelenting vigor. The plain truth is that Lincoln was deeply reviled by many in his time. This book is both an entertaining read and a well-researched, serious look at the political context that begat the president's predicament. Lincoln's humanity has been unintentionally trivialized by some historians and writers who have hidden away the real man in a patina of bronze. This book helps us better understand the man he was, and how history is better and more clearly viewed through a long-distance lens. “Not the warm and fuzzy portrait we're used to seeing . . . An eye-opening study, the first of its kind to focus on what Lincoln's contemporaries really thought of him. On the other hand, this is not mean-spirited Lincoln-bashing . . . Tagg assesses his presidency through the social and political context of mid-19th century America. It was a time, for example, when ‘the rabid press routinely destroyed the reputations of public men,’ when the stature of the presidency, ‘stained by feeble performances from a string of the poorest presidents in the nation's history,’ had plunged over decades.” —Civil War Times Magazine

**From Notebooks and Diaries of the Period** Farrar, Straus and Giroux

“A game-changer in the world of biography.” —Mary Beard, The Guardian Shortlisted for the Costa Biography Award Born on the brink of the modern world, John Aubrey was witness to the great intellectual and political upheavals of the seventeenth century. He knew everyone of note in England—writers, philosophers, mathematicians, doctors, astrologers, lawyers, statesmen—and wrote about them all, leaving behind a great gift to posterity: a compilation of biographical information titled Brief Lives, which in a strikingly modest and radical way invented the art of biography. Aubrey was born in Wiltshire, England, in 1626. The reign of Queen Elizabeth and, earlier, the dissolution of the monasteries were not too far distant in memory during his boyhood. He lived through England's Civil War, the execution of Charles I, the brief rule of Oliver Cromwell and his son, and the restoration of Charles II. Experiencing these constitutional crises and regime changes, Aubrey was impassioned by the preservation of traces of Ancient Britain, of English monuments, manor houses, monasteries, abbeys, and churches. He was a natural philosopher, an antiquary, a book collector, and a chronicler of the world around him and of the lives of his friends, both men and women. His method of writing was characteristic of his manner: modest, self-deprecating, witty, and concerned above all with the collection of facts that would otherwise be lost to time. John Aubrey, My Own Life is an extraordinary book about the first modern biographer, which reimagines what biography can be. This intimate diary of Aubrey's days is composed of his own words, collected, collated, and enlarged upon by Ruth Scurr in an act of meticulous scholarship and daring imagination. Scurr's biography honors and echoes Aubrey's own innovations in the art of biography. Rather than subject his life to a conventional narrative, Scurr has collected the evidence—the remnants of a life from manuscripts, letters, and books—and arranged it chronologically,

modernizing words and spellings, and adding explanations when necessary, with sources provided in the extensive endnotes. Here are Aubrey's intricate drawings of Stonehenge and the ancient Avebury stones; Aubrey on Charles I's execution ("On this day, the King was executed. It was bitter cold, so he wore two heavy shirts, lest he should shiver and seem afraid"); and Aubrey on antiquity ("Matters of antiquity are like the light after sunset—clear at first—but by and by and by crepusculum—the twilight—comes—then total darkness"). From the darkness, Scurr has wrested a vibrant, intimate account of the life of an ingenious man.

**The Days of the French Revolution** Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Impeccably researched, and written like a thriller, Edmund Richardson's *The King's Shadow* is the extraordinary untold and wild journey of Charles Masson - think Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid meets Indiana Jones - and his search for the Lost City of Alexandria in the "Wild East" during the age of empires, kings, and spies. For centuries the city of Alexandria Beneath the Mountains was a meeting point of East and West. Then it vanished. In 1833 it was discovered in Afghanistan by the unlikely person imaginable: Charles Masson, deserter, pilgrim, doctor, archaeologist, spy, one of the most respected scholars in Asia, and the greatest of nineteenth-century travelers. On the way into one of history's most extraordinary stories, he would take tea with kings, travel with holy men and become the master of a hundred disguises; he would see things no westerner had glimpsed before and few have glimpsed since. He would spy for the East India Company and be suspected of spying for Russia at the same time, for this was the era of the Great Game, when imperial powers confronted each other in these staggeringly beautiful lands. Masson discovered tens of thousands of pieces of Afghan history, including the 2,000-year-old Bimaran golden casket, which has upon it the earliest known face of the Buddha. He would be offered his own kingdom; he would change the world, and the world would destroy him. This is a wild journey through nineteenth-century India and Afghanistan, with impeccably researched storytelling that shows us a world of espionage and dreamers, ne'er-do-wells and opportunists, extreme violence both personal and military, and boundless hope. At the edge of empire, amid the deserts and the mountains, it is the story of an obsession passed down the centuries.

*24 Hours in Revolutionary Paris* Simon and Schuster

From one of America's greatest literary critics comes Edmund Wilson's insightful and candid record of the 1930's, *The Thirties: From Notebooks and Diaries of the Period*. Here, continuing from Wilson's previous journal, *The Twenties*, the narrator moves from the youthful concerns of the Jazz Age to his more substantial middle years, exploring the decade's plunge from affluence and exploring the tenets of Communism. His personal life is also amply represented, from his marriage to Margaret Canby and her subsequent tragic death to various erotic episodes with unidentified women.

*Three Lives* Penguin

How did the French Revolution's ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity descend into violence and terror? Timothy Tackett offers a new interpretation of this turning point in world history. Penetrating the mentality of Revolutionary elites on the eve of the Terror, he reveals how suspicion and mistrust escalated and helped propel their actions.

**Age of Cage** Simon and Schuster

One of the Western world's most epic uprisings, the French Revolution ended a monarchy that had ruled for almost a thousand years. George-Jacques Danton was the driving force behind it. In the first biography of Danton in over forty years, David Lawday reveals the larger-than-life figure who joined the fray at the storming of the Bastille in 1789 and was dead five years later. To hear Danton speak, his booming voice a roll of thunder, excited bourgeois reformers and the street alike; his impassioned speeches, often hours long, drove the sans culottes to action and kept the Revolution alive. But as the newly appointed Minister of Justice, Danton struggled to steer the increasingly divided Revolutionary government. Working tirelessly to halt the bloodshed of Robespierre's Terror, he ultimately became another of its victims. True to form, Danton did not go easily to the guillotine; at his trial, he defended himself with such vehemence that the tribunal convicted him before he could rally the crowd in his favor. In vivid, almost novelistic prose, Lawday leads us from Danton's humble roots to the streets of Revolutionary Paris, where this political legend acted on the stage of the revolution that altered Western civilization.

**How Lincoln Mastered his Enemies to Win the Civil War, Free the Slaves, and Preserve the Union** Princeton University Press

Works from Les Misérables by Victor Hugo to *Citizens* by Simon Schama have been inspired by the French Revolution. Now available for the first time in years, *The Days of the French Revolution* brings to life the events that changed the future of Western civilization. As compelling as any fiction thriller, this real-life drama moves from the storming of the Bastille to the doomed court of Louis XVI, the salon of Madame Roland, and even the boudoir of Marie Antoinette. Hibbert recounts the events that swirled around Napoleon, Mirabeau, Danton, Marat, and Robespierre with eyewitness accounts and his "usual grace and flair for divulging interesting detail" (Booklist). This trade paperback edition has twenty-eight pages of black-and-white illustrations, and will be published in time for Bastille Day.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

The search for a republican morality provides an exciting new study of an important event in the French Revolution and a defining moment in the career of its principal actor, Maximilien Robespierre, the Festival of the Supreme Being. This day of national celebration was held to inaugurate the new state religion, the Cult of the Supreme Being, and whilst traditionally it has been dismissed as a compulsory political event, this book redefines its importance as a hugely popular national event. Hitherto unused or disregarded source material is used to offer new perspective to the national reaction to Robespierre's creation of the Festival and of his search for a new republican morality. It is the first ever detailed study in English of this area of French Revolutionary history, the

first in any language since 1988 and will be welcomed by scholars and students of this period.

**Dare Call It Treason** Liveright Publishing

A detailed examination of Jacques Necker's ministry in the government of Louis XVI during the first period of the French Revolution.

*The Sixties* Macmillan

The day of 9 Thermidor (27 July 1794) is universally acknowledged as a major turning-point in the history of the French Revolution. At 12.00 midnight, Maximilien Robespierre, the most prominent member of the Committee of Public Safety which had for more than a year directed the Reign of Terror, was planning to destroy one of the most dangerous plots that the Revolution had faced. By 12.00 midnight at the close of the day, following a day of uncertainty, surprises, upsets and reverses, his world had been turned upside down. He was an outlaw, on the run, and himself wanted for conspiracy against the Republic. He felt that his whole life and his Revolutionary career were drawing to an end. As indeed they were. He shot himself shortly afterwards. Half-dead, the guillotine finished him off in grisly fashion the next day. *The Fall of Robespierre* provides an hour-by-hour analysis of these 24 hours.

*The search for a republican morality* Manchester University Press

A riveting biography of the French Revolution's most enigmatic figure that restores him to his pivotal historic place. Since his execution by guillotine in July 1794, Maximilien Robespierre has been contested terrain for historians, at once the most notorious leader of the French Revolution and the least comprehensible. Was he a bloodthirsty charlatan or the only true defender of revolutionary ideals? Was his extreme moralism—he was known as "The Incorruptible"—a heroic virtue or a ruinous flaw? Was he the first modern dictator or the earliest democrat? Against the dramatic backdrop of the French Revolution, historian Ruth Scurr follows the trajectory of Robespierre's paradoxical life, from his unprepossessing beginnings as a provincial lawyer opposed to repressive authority and the death penalty, to his meteoric rise in Paris politics as a devastatingly efficient revolutionary leader, righteous and paranoid in equal measure. She explores his reformist zeal, his role in the trial of the king and the fall of the monarchy, his passionate attempt to design a modern republic, even his extraordinary effort to found a perfect religion. And she follows him into the depths of the Terror, as he makes summary execution the order of the day, himself falling victim to the violence at the age of thirty-six. Written with epic sweep, full of nuance and insight, *Fatal Purity* is a fascinating portrait of a man who identified with the Revolution to the point of madness, and in so doing changed the course of history.

*Liberty or Death* St. Martin's Press

The last of Edmund Wilson's posthumously published journals turned out to be one of his major books, *The Sixties: the Last Journal, 1960-1972*--a personal history that is also brilliant social comedy and an anatomy of the times. Wilson catches the flavor of an international elite -- Stravinsky, Auden, Andre Malraux, and Isaiah Berlin -- as well as the New York literati and the Kennedy White House, but he never strays too far from the common life, whether noting the routines of his normal neighbors or the struggle of his own aging. "Candor and intelligence come through on every page--in this always absorbing journal by perhaps the last great man of American letters." - Kirkus Reviews

*A Revolutionary Life* Princeton University Press

A bold new history of the French Revolution from the standpoint of the peasants, workers, women and sans culottes. The legacy of the French Revolution has remained a fascinating and contentious subject for over two centuries. Instead of seeing the revolution as an aberrant bloodbath on the path to a liberal society, this new book, the first significant history of the French Revolution in over twenty years, maintains that it fundamentally changed the Western world. Looking at history from the bottom up, the history of working people and peasants, Hazan asks: How did they see their opportunities? What were they fighting for? What was the Terror and could it be justified? And how was the revolution stopped in its tracks? This is vivid historical writing - the multitude of voices of the Revolution come to life. Hazan shows how only through the people can we fully understand the legacy of the French Revolution.

*Robespierre and the Festival of the Supreme Being* Verso Books

*The Mutiny by the French Army Soldiers in 1917 in World War One*

**Robespierre** Macmillan

A compelling biography of a key figure of the French Revolution captures the paradoxical life of Maximilien Robespierre, from his beginnings as a provincial lawyer, to his rise to power as a revolutionary leader, to his eventual end on the guillotine that had taken the lives of so many during the Terror that he had orchestrated. Reprint.

**The King's Shadow** Grub Street Publishers

Few names bring with it such controversy as Maximilian Robespierre. Jacobin, Revolutionary, Martyr, above it all, Robespierre remained The Incorruptable. Here are some of his more notable writings and speeches in a collection designed for easy review. From his Prospectus for "Le Défenseur de la Constitution" to *The King Must Die*, here is a way to access the brilliance, and controversy, of his work for yourself.

**Napoleon: A Life Told in Gardens and Shadows** Random House

The author applies the philosophies of Alexis de Tocqueville and Augustin Cochin to both historical and contemporary explanations of the French Revolution.

**Necker and the Revolution of 1789** Verso Books

An incisive new interpretation of the French Revolution and its violent upheaval looks at troubling parallels between the Terror and the rise of today's political and religious fundamentalism, arguing that the violence of the French Revolution resulted from dogmatic and fundamental thinking that led to a pointless bloodletting. Reprint.

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