



# Shadows of Revolution: Reflections on France, Past and Present

*David A. Bell*

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## **Shadows of Revolution: Reflections on France, Past and Present** David A. Bell

Renowned historian, essayist, and journalist David A. Bell has long made France and its history the subject of his scholarly gaze and the object of his enduring affection. *Shadows of Revolution: Reflections on France, Past and Present* gathers together his writing, composed over a period of more than 25 years, into a single volume. As the title of this collection suggests, Bell views much of French history through the lens of the Revolutionary era. Within a space of a dozen years, from Bastille to Bonaparte, the country experimented with and experienced every form of governance, creating in the process, as Bell puts it, "the most intense political laboratory the world had ever known." The Revolution remains the country's defining era, delineating its sense of identity and overshadowing the events that followed it. Yet another, Bell argues, is the Vichy period and World War Two-France's dark night of the soul-with whose legacies the country continues to contend. These two moments of violent and transformative upheaval may dominate French history, but as this collection and Bell's observational powers reveal, the full range of topics involving France is endlessly rich and diverse. Divided into eight sections, it connects France's education to its national identity, the Enlightenment to the Revolution and human rights, Napoleon to Victor Hugo, and nineteenth-century anti-Semitism to such recent events such as the riots of 2006, the Arab Spring, and the Charlie Hebdo tragedy. *Shadows of Revolution* embodies and reflects the endlessly fascinating and entertaining complexity of French history, and shows the ways in which it has shaped world history.

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