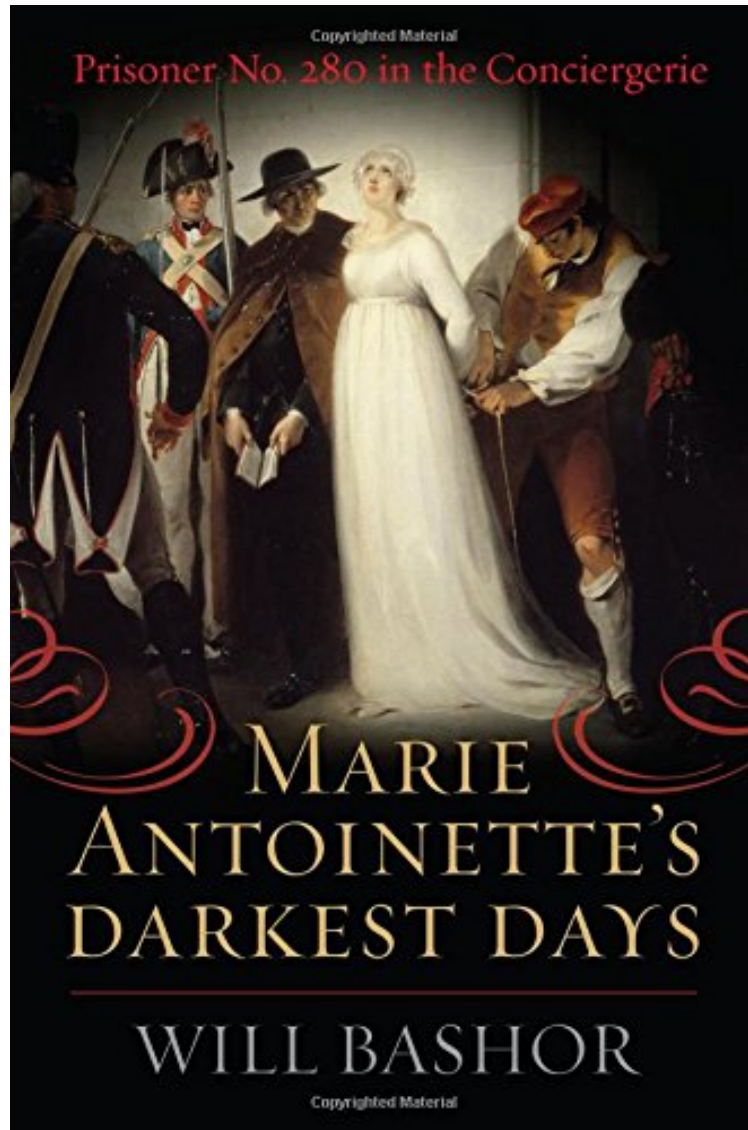


(Download pdf ebook) Marie Antoinette's Darkest Days: Prisoner No. 280 in the Conciergerie

## Marie Antoinette's Darkest Days: Prisoner No. 280 in the Conciergerie

*Will Bashor*

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**Will Bashor : Marie Antoinette's Darkest Days: Prisoner No. 280 in the Conciergerie** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Marie Antoinette's Darkest Days: Prisoner No. 280 in the Conciergerie:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent account of Marie Antoinettes last days. By THOMAS

BWell written and researched. A unique book on the final days of a tragic and somewhat misunderstood queen. Heart wrenching description of her being cruelly taken from her children. Final description of her trial and trip to the guillotine in an open cart through the streets of Paris were vivid. I would recommend this book highly to anyone that's interested in this tumultuous time in French history.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Scholarly analysis and lively narrative: brilliant

By wordsandpeace

Scholarly analysis and lively narrative combine here to provide us with a magnificent presentation of Marie-Antoinettes last days. For all history buffs.

In Marie Antoinettes Darkest Days, Bashors aim is to document Marie-Antoinettes last days of imprisonment in the fairest way, helping readers find sense between numerous conflicting accounts, without taking part. He does it brilliantly and I thoroughly enjoyed this book, as much as I did the previous one by the author, on Marie-Antoinette and her hairdresser.

This book is based on archived documents and second sources material (from the 18th and 19th centuries). All the quotes have been (correctly!) translated by the author, with the original French text provided by the author in end notes (a total of 43 pages, where you can find all the references alluded to).

The former queen was first imprisoned with her children in the Temple prison. Then, her son Louis-Charles was separated from her and incarcerated in worse conditions. After rumors of conspiracy, she was taken to the Conciergerie prison, in the middle of the night. Her main trials also happened by night!

Amidst the general hatred towards her, it was interesting to see mentions of goodness and compassionate help given to her, for instance through the prison wardens. Common workers and small merchants even joined forces to organize plots. Along those months, many plots were actually organized to save the queen (even one by a British actress!), but last minute details blocked the plans, as well as originally her refusal to escape without her children.

Some scenes (for instance the scene of separation when she was transferred from one prison to the other, and when she was led from la Conciergerie to her place of execution) are recounted in a very lively style. You could easily imagine following the events through your own eyes.

There are also amazing descriptions of the horrific conditions of the prisoners in la Conciergerie, which fit what I saw when I visited it myself a few years ago. Add to that the heavy hemorrhaging the queen was constantly suffering from, and the records of cold temperature in France that October, and you understand this was a far cry from Versailles, to say the least!

The author provides a very detailed presentation of the major interrogation series (the first after the Carnation plot, and the other one of course right before Marie-Antoinettes execution), with everyone involved. Her very long final indictment is analyzed paragraph by paragraph.

Here and there, I found interesting tidbits I had not read about, for instance the fees she was charged for book rentals while at la Conciergerie!

She spent 76 days in prison, longer than usual for the prisoners of the time, waiting for their execution. Originally, instead of killing her, the idea was to use her as a hostage to exchange for Austrias ending of the war, going on at the same time!

After the execution, the author examines what happened to her children and the other main actors of the story. Plus the whole question of her burial, her disinterment and reburial at Saint-Denis (all the pictures are mine), with the possible questions about the real identity of the remains considered hers.

Bashor provides a scholarly, fair, and lively analysis of Marie-Antoinettes last days, always choosing the dignity and respect due any human being.

Each chapter ends with some extra material on points of related interest.

The narrative is accompanied with beautiful black and white illustrations.

After the end notes, one can also find 11 pages of selected bibliography as well as a complete alphabetical index.

All these fascinating data should help you get a glimpse at Marie-Antoinettes real portrait. She was mostly used as a political pawn, from her early years, when her mother sent her to be married to a Bourbon, hoping to strengthen an alliance with Austrias enemy. Political parties still tried to use her image after her death.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Learning about Marie Antoinette!

By Jessica Johnson

I will admit I do not know much at all about Marie Antoinette. I read a fiction book with an alternate history about her that piqued my curiosity in regard to her life (Insatiable: A Macabre History of France by Ginger Myrick).

Darkest Days does not deal with her whole life, it focuses on the last few months of her life, specifically her 76 days in the Conciergerie.

Will Bashor obviously did his homework! He researched this topic very well and was able to provide specific details of Marie Antoinettes life in the Conciergerie. It wasnt much of a life. Her husband was executed, her children taken away from her, and subpar living quarters with no privacy. Her health went downhill during her time in the Conciergerie. Regardless of your opinion of Marie Antoinette, her last days were horrible. As she left the Conciergerie for the guillotine, she was mistreated even then. It was a horrible way to end a life. I felt sorry and sad for her. You also learn about plans to rescue her that failed.

Will Bashor writes the book in form of a novel which made it easy to read. Some historical books can be dry and flat, but at times this book was hard to put down. I also enjoyed seeing the pictures and maps provided in the book: that made some things in the book seem more real as the book was being read.

Reasons the book could not be given 5 stars:

The book doesnt seem meant to be read in e-reader form:-It was hard to read on a kindle as I wasnt easily able to go back and forth to look at the map then read the description of places in the map.

-Footnotes in the book were in the middle of paragraphs which broke the flow of reading.

-There were several paragraphs where the paragraph was one sentence. The sentences were not necessarily run on sentences, but those long sentences make it hard to read the book. I had to read some paragraphs multiple times because of this.

(Please note: My copy was an electronic ARC- so maybe these will be corrected by the publication date).

If you are a fan of French history or even Marie Antoinette, check this book out. Despite the issues mentioned above, I do recommend the book.

I received a copy from NetGalley that I voluntarily read.

This compelling book begins on the 2nd of August 1793, the day Marie Antoinette was torn from her family's arms and escorted from the Temple to the Conciergerie, a thick-walled fortress turned prison. It was also known as the waiting room for the guillotine because prisoners only spent a day or two here before their conviction and subsequent execution. The ex-queen surely knew her days were numbered, but she could never have known that two and a half months would pass before she would finally stand trial and be convicted of the most ungodly charges. Will Bashor traces the final days of the prisoner registered only as Widow Capet, No. 280, a time that was a cruel mixture of grandeur, humiliation, and terror. Marie Antoinette's reign amidst the splendors of the court of Versailles is a familiar story, but her final imprisonment in a fetid, dank dungeon is a little-known coda to a once-charmed life. Her seventy-six days in this terrifying prison can only be described as the darkest and most horrific of the fallen queen's life, vividly recaptured in this richly researched history.

A fascinating book that brings eighteenth-century France to vivid life. Mixing memory and archives with great skill and rich writing, Will Bashor pulls the reader into the dark cell where the queen of France, Marie Antoinette, spent her last days. Nothing escapes the acute vision of this historian-novelist: the prices of meals, the barking of the dogs, the tiny notes written by the queen a year before, the weather on the fatal day October 16, 1793 and, of course, the scaffold in front of the Tuileries. No better proof that Grande Histoire can be understood with Petite Histoire. Un rgal! (Jean-Clement Martin, Universit Paris, Panthon-Sorbonne) A brilliant and ambitious tour de force. Will Bashor is the first historian to focus on this most dramatic period of the queen's life. Impressively documented and researched, his intriguing book will be a must-read for all who are passionate about the most pivotal epoch in French history.

(Professor Yolande Aline Helm, Ohio University) A fascinating portrayal of Marie Antoinette's last days. Anyone who is in thrall to her story, as I am, will find this a compelling account of her tragic fate. Will Bashor's meticulous research creates a vivid and memorable image of the people with whom she interacted, the prisons where she was confined, her journey to the guillotine, and her final resting place. (Dana Ivey, Obie-award-winning actress) In meticulous detail and with a seemingly sense of empathy, Will Bashor recounts the last tragic days of Marie Antoinette. Her confinement, trial, and execution are recorded with supreme precision. The fear and insecurity of the fallen queen in her stinking dungeon and on her way to the guillotine are almost palpable. Written in a lucid style that reads like a novel, this impressive book on the fate of France's last queen reminds us ruthlessly of the cruel side of the French Revolution. Will Bashor at his best. (Cor Speksnijder, De Volkskrant, the Netherlands) Thoroughly documents Marie Antoinette's imprisonment, trial, and execution. Bashor . . . tells the story of Marie Antoinette's last 10 weeks by drawing on contemporary sources as well as modern scholarship. The king was executed in January 1793; on Aug. 2, 1793, when this book begins, Marie Antoinette was taken to the Conciergerie prison in Paris. Her trial began on Oct. 14, and two days later she was found guilty and sent to the guillotine. Bashor describes the damp, filthy prison's privations; attempts to help or rescue the queen; the revolutionary tribunal and the monarch's trial with its prosecutor, indictment, jury, witnesses, testimony, and sentencing; and Marie Antoinette's final moments. In all this, the author provides novelistic and empathetic attention to detail and personalities, as when he notes that Marie Antoinette recorded the heights of her children on the prison wall or how she kept busy by converting toothpicks into tapestry needles. He marshals a wide array of evidence, carefully distinguishing likely and trustworthy accounts from less believable ones and sorting out confusing episodes such as the Carnation Plot. In his readable book, Bashor shows that the Vienna-born Marie Antoinette, as a foreigner (and, probably, as a woman), became a scapegoat for the mob's rage and that her trial was a sham. . . .

Impressive, well-researched, useful, and accessible. (Kirkus) Marie Antoinette's Darkest Days recreates in compelling detail the short but intensely agonizing period of the ex-queen's incarceration in the Conciergerie, including attempts to rescue her and the absurd show trial that led to her execution. Will Bashor traces the final days of the prisoner registered only as Widow Capet, No. 280, a time that was a cruel mixture of grandeur, humiliation, and terror. Marie Antoinette's reign amidst the splendors of the court of Versailles is a familiar story, but her final imprisonment in a fetid, dank dungeon is a little-known coda to a once-charmed life. Her seventy-six days in this terrifying prison can only be described as the darkest and most horrific of the fallen queen's life, vividly recaptured in this richly researched history. For Marie Antoinette's Head: Entertaining . . . captures details of an extraordinary time and place. An engaging . . . narrative of a celebrity hairstylist, circa 1789. Biography buffs and lovers of historical fiction will enjoy this work. . . . (Library Journal) For Marie Antoinette's Head: An informative examination of a little-known player on a great stage. . . . An entertaining, well-researched work that will particularly interest students of cultural history and the French Revolution. (Kirkus) For Marie Antoinette's Head: . . . most intriguing and immaculately researched (France Today) For Marie Antoinette's Head: Compelling. . . . Bashor weaves history, politics, French court customs, into a movie-worthy tale of ambition, luck, romance, and tragedy. . . . (Santa Fe New Mexican) About the Author Will Bashor is the author of the award-winning Marie Antoinette's Head: The Royal Hairdresser, the Queen, and the Revolution. He holds a doctorate in International Studies from the American Graduate School in Paris and is professor of global issues at Franklin University. Visit him at [www.willbashor.com](http://www.willbashor.com).