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Paris: Capital of the World

Patrice Higonnet

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In an original and evocative journey through modern Paris from the mid-eighteenth century to World War II, Patrice Higonnet offers a delightful cultural portrait of a multifaceted, continually changing city. In examining the myths and countermyths of Paris that have been created and re-created over time, Higonnet reveals a magical urban alchemy in which each era absorbs the myths and perceptions of Paris past, adapts them to the cultural imperatives of its own time, and feeds them back into the city, creating a new environment.

Paris was central to the modern world in ways internal and external, genuine and imagined, progressive and decadent. Higonnet explores Paris as the capital of revolution, science, empire, literature, and art, describing such incarnations as Belle Epoque Paris, the Commune, the surrealists' city, and Paris as viewed through American eyes. He also evokes the more visceral Paris of alienation, crime, material excess, and sensual pleasure.

Insightful, informative, and gracefully written, *Paris* illuminates the intersection of collective and individual imaginations in a perpetually shifting urban dynamic. In describing his Paris of the real and of the imagination, Higonnet sheds brilliant new light on this endlessly intriguing city.

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