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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

THE FRENCH NOVEL

From 1800 to the present

Edited by Timothy Unwin

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This volume offers a unique and valuable insight into the novel in French over the past two centuries. In a series of essays, acknowledged experts discuss a variety of topics including nineteenth-century realism, women and fiction, popular fiction, experiment and innovation, war and the Holocaust, the Francophone novel and postmodern fiction. They offer a challenging reassessment of major figures, while deliberately reading traditional views of literary history against the grain. Theoretical discussion is combined with close reading of texts and exploration of context, comparison with other genres and other literatures, and reference to novels from earlier periods. This companionable introduction includes a chronology and guide to further reading. From it emerges a strong sense of the vitality and energy of the modern French novel, and of the debates surrounding it.

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EDITED BY
TIMOTHY UNWIN
University of Liverpool

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CONTENTS

Notes on contributors *page* ix
Preface xiii
Chronology xv
Note on literary prizes xxii
Note on presentation xxiii

1 On the novel and the writing of literary history 1
TIMOTHY UNWIN

2 Novels of testimony and the 'invention' of the modern French novel 16
JANN MATLOCK

3 Reality and its representation in the nineteenth-century novel 36
ALISON FINCH

4 Women and fiction in the nineteenth century 54
MARGARET COHEN

5 Popular fiction in the nineteenth century 73
DAVID COWARD

6 Decadence and the *fin-de-siècle* novel 93
LAURENCE M. PORTER

7 The Proustian revolution 111
CHRISTIE McDONALD

8 Formal experiment and innovation 126
DAVID H. WALKER

9 Existentialism, engagement, ideology 145
STEVEN UNGAR

10 War and the Holocaust 161
DENIS BOAK

11 From serious to popular fiction 179
STEPHEN F. NOREIKO

12 The colonial and postcolonial Francophone novel 194
FRANÇOISE LIONNET

13 The French-Canadian novel 214
DENIS BOAK

14 Gender and sexual identity in the modern French novel 223
JANE WINSTON

15 Postmodern French fiction: practice and theory 242
JOHNNIE GRATTON

General bibliography 261
Index 264

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to numerous articles, he has published two books on Gide: *André Gide* (London, 1990) and *Gide: 'Les Nourritures terrestres' and 'La Symphonie pastorale'* (London, 1990). He is also the editor of *Albert Camus: les extrêmes et l'équilibre* (Amsterdam, 1994) and the author of *Outrage and Insight: Modern French Writers and the 'fait divers'* (London, 1995). He has contributed to reference works including the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, the *International Dictionary of Theatre* and the *New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*.

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PREFACE

This book seeks to give a broad overview of developments in the French novel over approximately the last two centuries, and to provide the student or general reader with a challenging yet user-friendly work of reference. The modern French novel is a vast subject, the contours of which are constantly being redefined, and the aim here is not to give complete coverage to it or to do justice to every major novelist. Rather, each of the fifteen chapters of this volume presents insights into an area or problem, or an author or group of authors, combining background information with up-to-date critical perspectives and debate. Each of the contributors has been encouraged to offer an individual approach. Some concentrate on close readings of a few texts, others give a broader historical sweep, or introduce a more theoretical dimension; and some offer a variety of different perspectives within the space allotted. However, all are concerned to open up pathways for the reader and to provide a companionable introduction rather than a definitive scholarly statement. Suggestions for further reading will be found after each chapter, and the main bibliography at the end of the volume lists manuals and works which will guide the reader towards a fuller knowledge of the field, or of particular aspects of it.

The contributors to this volume were not only working within strict space limitations; they were also working to tight deadlines. My thanks go out to them all for their cheerful acceptance of, and for the most part adherence to, the constraints which this task imposed. I have enjoyed their enthusiastic co-operation, benefited from their knowledge and wisdom, and enjoyed meeting many of them, either virtually or in my real travels across three continents during the period of composition of this volume.

Special thanks are due to the (mainly anonymous) reviewers of the early plans. Their suggestions were gratefully and liberally incorporated into subsequent plans, and I trust that the final product is much the better for their interventions. I should like also to record sincere thanks to my former colleagues in the French Department at the University of Western Australia,

whose intellectual and moral support was invaluable at the inception of this project. While at the University of Western Australia, I was the recipient of a research award which enabled me to take time off teaching to carry out editorial duties and the writing of my own chapter. I would like here to record my thanks to that institution for its generous and vigorous promotion of travel and research.

Two individuals should also be singled out for thanks. Kate Brett of Cambridge University Press was the initiator of this project. Her advice was invaluable, her good humour unfailing, and the volume owes a great deal to her. Linda Bree then took over the editorial task in the final stages, and saw it through to completion with admirable care and wisdom. I trust that the end product is an expression of their editorial skills. Errors and lacunae remain my responsibility.

Finally, I should like to thank Michael, Alice and Anthony Unwin whose enveloping mirth was, and always is, the best antidote to the solemnity resulting from a long task.

Timothy Unwin

CHRONOLOGY

1800 Mme de Staël, *De la littérature.*

1802 Birth of Hugo. Mme de Staël, *Delphine.*

1804 Bonaparte crowned Emperor. Birth of George Sand.

1807 Mme de Staël, *Corinne.*

1814 Napoleon's first abdication followed by First Restoration.

1815 The 100 Days. Waterloo. Second Restoration.

1816 Constant, *Adolphe.*

1817 Death of Mme de Staël.

1820 Assassination of the duc de Berry.

1821 Death in exile of Napoleon. Birth of Flaubert.

1823 Mme de Duras, *Ourika.*

1824 Death of Louis XVIII.

1825 Coronation of Charles X.

1830 The July Revolution. Louis-Philippe, roi des Français. Death of Constant. Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir.* Relaxation of censorship laws.

1831 Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin*.

1832 Cholera epidemic. Sand, *Indiana*. Death of Goethe and Walter Scott.

1833 Sand, *Lélia*.

1835 Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*.

1836 First stirrings of popular press.

1837 Queen Victoria to the British throne. Opening of the Paris–Saint Germain railway line.

1839 Stendhal, *La Chartreuse de Parme*.

1840 Birth of Zola.

1842 Death of Stendhal.

1844 Dumas père, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*.

1846 Balzac, *La Cousine Bette*.

1848 Louis-Philippe flees after February Revolution. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte elected President of the Republic. Marx and Engels, *Communist Party Manifesto*. Death of Chateaubriand.

1849 Sand, *La Petite Fadette*.

1850 Death of Balzac.

1851 (December) Coup d'Etat. Louis-Napoléon becomes Emperor Napoléon III. Second Empire commences.

1856 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*.

1862 Hugo, *Les Misérables*.

1863 Fromentin, *Dominique*. Start of publication of Littré's *Dictionnaire*. Salon des Refusés.

1867 Marx, *Das Kapital.*

1869 Opening of Suez Canal. Flaubert, *L'Education sentimentale*. Birth of Gide.

1870 Franco-Prussian War. Death of Dumas père.

1871 Peace with Prussia. The Commune.

1872 Verne, *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours.*

1873 Birth of Colette.

1876 Death of Sand.

1877 Zola, *L'Assommoir.*

1878 Exposition universelle in Paris.

1879 *La Marseillaise* becomes national anthem.

1880 Death of Flaubert.

1881 Birth of Picasso.

1883 Brunetière, *Le Roman naturaliste*. Maupassant, *Une vie.*

1884 Legalisation of divorce in France. Huysmans, *A rebours*. Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus.*

1885 Zola, *Germinal.* Death of Hugo.

1886 Opening of the Statue of Liberty in New York.

1889 Eiffel Tower completed for the Exposition universelle.

1894 Condemnation of Dreyfus.

1895 First film projection by the Lumière brothers.

1898 Zola, 'J'accuse'.

1900 International Socialist Congress in Paris. Opening of first Métro line. Colette, *Claudine à l'école*. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (trans. into French 1926).

1902 Gide, *L'Immoraliste*. Death of Zola.

1903 First airborne flight by the Wright brothers. First Prix Goncourt awarded to *Force ennemie* by J.-A. Nau.

1905 Birth of Sartre.

1909 Blériot: first flight across the Channel.

1911 Marie Curie wins Nobel Prize for Chemistry.

1912 The Titanic sinks.

1913 Einstein, *Theory of Relativity*. Alain-Fournier, *Le Grand-Meaulnes*. Martin du Gard, *Jean Barois*. Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*.

1914 Start of First World War. Gide, *Les Caves du Vatican*.

1915 Absinthe made illegal. Romain Rolland wins Nobel Prize for Literature.

1916 Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*. Barbusse, *Le Feu* (winner of Prix Goncourt).

1917 Freud, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*.

1918 Armistice signed on 11 November.

1919 Treaty of Versailles. Proust, *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur* (winner of Prix Goncourt).

1920 Colette, *Chéri*.

1921 Nobel Prize for Literature to Anatole France. Start of regular radio broadcasts from Eiffel Tower.

1922 Martin du Gard, first volume of *Les Thibault* (final volume 1940). James Joyce, *Ulysses*.

1924 Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme*.

1925 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*.

1926 Gide, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*.

1927 First speaking films: Greta Garbo plays Anna Karenina. Mauriac, *Thérèse Desqueyroux*. Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*.

1929 The Wall Street Crash. Colette, *Sido*. Saint-Exupéry, *Courrier Sud*.

1930 Simenon, *Pietr le Letton* (first Maigret novel).

1931 Nizan, *Aden, Arabie*. Saint-Exupéry, *Vol de nuit*.

1932 First television images broadcast in Paris. Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. Mauriac, *Le Nœud de vipères*. Romains, first volume of *Les Hommes de bonne volonté* (final volume 1947).

1933 Malraux, *La Condition humaine*. Mauriac, *Le Romancier et ses personnages*.

1934 Jean Renoir, film of *Madame Bovary*.

1937 Exposition universelle in Paris. Spanish Civil War. Martin du Gard wins Nobel Prize for Literature.

1938 Nizan, *La Conspiration*. Sartre, *La Nausée*.

1939 Declaration of War on Germany by Britain and France (3 September).

1942 Camus, *L'Etranger, Le Mythe de Sisyphe*.

1943 Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*.

1944 Genet, *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*.

1945 Defeat of Germany. Death of Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt. First atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Sartre, first volume of *Les Chemins de la liberté* (final volume published 1949).

1946 Beginning of Indochina War. First Cannes Film Festival.

1947 Gide wins Nobel Prize for Literature. Beckett, *Murphy* (French translation). Camus, *La Peste*.

1949 Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*.

1950 Start of Korean War. Duras, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*. Nationwide television broadcasting begins in France.

1951 Gracq, *Le Rivage des Syrtes* (refuses to accept Prix Goncourt). Death of Gide.

1952 Mauriac wins Nobel Prize for Literature.

1953 Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*. Camara Laye, *L'Enfant noir*.

1954 Algerian War begins.

1955 Chraïbi, *Les Boucs*.

1956 Butor, *L'Emploi du temps*. Camus, *La Chute*. Sarraute, *L'Ere du soupçon*.

1957 Founding of Common Market. Camus wins Nobel Prize for Literature. Butor, *La Modification*. Robbe-Grillet, *La Jalousie*.

1958 Beginning of Fifth Republic. Duras, *Moderato Cantabile*.

1959 Queneau, *Zazie dans le métro*. Sarraute, *Le Planétarium*.

1960 Camus killed in car accident.

1961 Construction of Berlin Wall. Yuri Gagarin first man in space.

1963 Assassination of President Kennedy. Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman*.

1964 Sartre refuses Nobel Prize for Literature.

1968 Student insurrection and general strike in France. Assassination of Martin Luther King and of Robert Kennedy. The 'Prague Spring'. Modiano, *La Place de l'étoile.*

1969 De Gaulle resigns. Beckett wins Nobel Prize for Literature.

1970 Cixous, *Le Troisième Corps.* Anne Hébert, *Kamouraska.* Tournier, *Le Roi des Aulnes* (winner of Prix Goncourt).

1973 End of Vietnam War. Yourcenar, *Souvenirs pieux.*

1975 Emile Ajar (Romain Gary), *La Vie devant soi* (winner of Prix Goncourt).

1978 Modiano, *Rue des boutiques obscures.* Perec, *La Vie mode d'emploi.*

1979 Antonine Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (first Canadian to win Prix Goncourt).

1980 Death of Roland Barthes and Jean-Paul Sartre.

1981 François Mitterrand elected President (re-elected 1988).

1984 Duras, *L'Amant* (winner of Prix Goncourt).

1985 Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Claude Simon. Destruction of Berlin Wall.

1992 Daniel Pennac, *Comme un roman.* Passage through French parliament of Jacques Toubon's *projet de loi relatif à la langue française.*

1995 Jacques Chirac elected President. Andreï Makine, *Le Testament français* (first novel to win both the Prix Goncourt and Prix Médicis).

1996 Death of François Mitterrand.

NOTE ON LITERARY PRIZES

The 'big six' literary prizes in France have an extremely high profile and are, significantly, all awarded for novels. The best known and most prestigious is the Prix Goncourt, named after the Goncourt brothers Jules and Edmond. It is likely to boost an author's sales figures hugely (Marguerite Duras's *L'Amant*, the 1984 winner, eventually sold 1.5 million copies). First awarded in 1903, the Goncourt has included Proust, Malraux and Tournier among its winners – though noticeably absent from the list are Céline, Camus, Sartre and Yourcenar. Gracq, nominated for the prize in 1951 for *Le Rivage des Syrtes*, refused it. The other major literary prizes are the Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie Française, the Prix Fémina (awarded by a jury of women, though not necessarily to a female novelist), the Prix Renaudot, the Prix Interallié and the Prix Médicis. In 1995 Andreï Makine's *Le Testament français* became the first novel to win both the Prix Goncourt and the Prix Médicis.

Prizes for Francophone literature outside France include the Grand Prix de la Francophonie de l'Académie Française, and the Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Noire. French-speaking writers who have received the Nobel Prize for Literature include Roger Martin du Gard, André Gide, François Mauriac, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett and Claude Simon. In 1964 Sartre refused to accept the prize.

NOTE ON PRESENTATION

In order to facilitate the reading of this volume, footnotes have been kept to a minimum and, where possible, references have been included in parentheses in the text itself. Where references are to items listed in the Suggestions for further reading at the end of a chapter, the author's name alone is given, followed directly by the page number(s) in the listed work.

Many novels are referred to briefly in the pages of this volume. In such cases, only the author's name, the title of the novel, and the year of its publication are given. However, in cases where textual references are made, full publication details are given. Quotations given in French are accompanied by a translation unless they clearly present no difficulty to the Anglophone reader. Translations, unless otherwise stated, are those of the authors.

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