

Candidates for the 2018 Literary Prize:

*Francis I: the maker of modern France*, by Leonie Frieda. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 352pp. £25. ISBN 9780297852117,

Biography of ‘the first Renaissance king’, a contemporary of Henry VIII, whom he famously met at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. A cultured, courageous, amorous but somewhat vainglorious and risk-taking man – like Henry VIII – he led France to a leading place in Europe while nearly ruining it through his feud with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

*Napoleon: the spirit of the age*, by Michael Broers. Faber & Faber. 536pp. £30. ISBN 9780571301522.

The second volume of Michael Broers’ multi-volume biography of Napoleon, covering the years 1805 – 1810 when Napoleon was at his military and political apogee, humbling Prussia and Austria in battle, incorporating great tracts of Germany, the Low Countries, Austria and Italy into the French Empire and (reluctantly discarding Josephine) making a dynastic marriage with Marie-Louise of Austria.

*Left Bank: art, passion and the rebirth of Paris 1940 – 1950*, by Agnes Poirier. Bloomsbury. 377pp. £25. ISBN 9781408857441.

Beginning with a description of intellectual life in Paris during the German occupation this book describes the great burst of artistic, philosophical and political activity in Paris in the years after the Liberation, led by those who had stayed (many - but not all – active or passive *resistants*), returning exiles and arrivals from America.

*Nobility and patrimony in modern France*, by Elizabeth C. Macknight. Manchester University Press. 291pp. £75. ISBN 9781526120519.

In this study of tangible and intangible cultural heritage the author explains the significance of nobles’ conservationist traditions for public engagement with the history of France, from the confiscations of aristocratic property during the Revolution to the participation of today’s nobility in the *Journées du Patrimoine*.

*Notes from the Cevennes: half a lifetime in provincial France*, by Adam Thorpe. Bloomsbury. 242pp. £16.99. ISBN 9781472951298.

Sketches and memoirs of life in the rural Cevennes and its urban neighbour Nimes by an English novelist and poet long resident in the area.

*Maurice Thorez: a biography*, by John Bulaitis. I B Tauris. 353pp. £75. ISBN 9781845117252.

This is the only biography in English of Maurice Thorez, for thirty years the Stalinist leader of the French Communist party in the days of its greatest influence and power; from the Popular Front in the 1930s, through his exile in the Soviet Union during World War II, the Party's short-lived participation in government after the war, the trauma of Khrushchev's 'secret speech' and the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, its opposition to the Algerian War and to de Gaulle, and, with the waning of Communist support, a half-hearted support of the de-Stalinisation of the Party.

*Revolution française: Emmanuel Macron and the quest to reinvent a nation*, by Sophie Pedder. Bloomsbury. 297pp. £25. ISBN 9781472948601.

Chronicles the irresistible rise of Emmanuel Macron to the presidency of France and the story of his first year in power; discusses his key reforms and lofty ambitions and wonders how far it is possible for Macron to reinvent a conservative nation uneasy about embracing the future.

*The experience of occupation in the Nord, 1914 – 1918: living with the enemy in First World War France*, by James E. Connolly. Manchester University Press. 333pp. £75. ISBN 9781526117809.

Describes the much less well-known story of German-occupied France in WW I, where the experiences of resistance, collaboration and post-liberation *epuration* provide a template for the French experience in WW II.

*The murderer of Warren Street: the true story of a nineteenth-century revolutionary*, by Marc Mulholland. Hutchinson. 372pp. £16.99. ISBN 9781786331137.

The story - which reads like a thriller in parts – of Emmanuel Barthelemy, a French socialist revolutionary who was sentenced for his part in the June Days of 1848, escaped from prison and fled to England where he mixed with radical exiles such as Karl Marx but was eventually hanged at Newgate for two murders committed in obscure circumstances.

*In Montparnasse: the emergence of Surrealism in Paris, from Duchamp to Dali*, by Sue Roe. Fig Tree. 310pp. £20. ISBN 9780241255599.

A portrait of Montparnasse, which had taken over the artistic crown of Paris from Montmartre just before the First World War, and its role in the development and flourishing of the Surrealist movement between the wars.

*A certain idea of France: the life of Charles de Gaulle*, by Julian Jackson. Allen Lane. 887pp. £35. ISBN 9781846143519.

Very thorough biography of Charles de Gaulle, from his early life through his role as leader of the Free French, his leaving of and returning to power after the war, his period as ‘Republican Monarch’ from 1959 to 1965, and his defeat of the revolutionary ‘evenements’ of 1968 but his retirement shortly thereafter.

*City of light: the reinvention of Paris*, by Rupert Christiansen. Head of Zeus. 183pp. £18.99. ISBN 9781786694546.

Concise, well-illustrated history of Baron Haussmann’s replanning and rebuilding of central Paris at the behest of Napoleon III.

*Versailles: landscape of power and pleasure*, by Colin Jones. Head of Zeus. 216pp. £18.99. ISBN 9781786693952.

Another concise and well-illustrated history describing the building of the Palace of Versailles and its subsequent role in French history – under the *Ancien regime*; during the Revolution, the Empire and the Restoration; as the site of the proclamation of the German Empire in 1871 and the dismantling of that empire

at the Versailles Conference in 1919; and now as a major tourist attraction and site of grand state occasions.

*Claude Duneton, Chroniqueur at Le Figaro*, by Mary Munro-Hill. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 146pp. £58.99. ISBN 9781527507692.

A memoir of Claude Duneton, for many years *Chroniqueur du langage* at *Le Figaro*, the guide for its readers to the French language in all its aspects.

*Napoleon: the man behind the myth*, by Adam Zamoyski. William Collins. 727pp. £30. ISBN 9780008116071.

Neither hatchet-job nor hagiography, this is a balanced appraisal of Napoleon's positive and negative qualities, his successes and failures, as politician, statesman, strategist, tactician, administrator, lover and ordinary human being.

*Landru's secret: the deadly seductions of France's lonely hearts serial killer*, by Richard Tomlinson. 312pp. Pen & Sword History. £25. ISBN 1526715295.

A re-investigation of the case of Henri Landru, the notorious swindler and lady-killer serial murderer of WW I Paris – the murders, the inept police investigation, the more fruitful efforts of the relatives of some of the victims, the sensational trial and the aftermath in life and legend.