

Candidates for the 2019 Literary Prize:

*The existential Englishman: Paris among the artists*, by Michael Peppiatt. Bloomsbury. 361pp. £25. ISBN 9781408601711.

A memoir of over 30 years spent in the midst of Parisian artistic and literary life that also paints a picture of Paris itself during this period.

*Victor Hugo*, by Bradley Stephens. Reaktion Books. 221pp. £11.99. ISBN9781789140842.

A biography of Victor Hugo setting his works within the context of his dramatic life.

*Becoming Beauvoir: a life*, by Kate Kirkpatrick. Bloomsbury. 476 pp. £20.

An account of the social and intellectual life of a woman who symbolised liberated womanhood and how she constructed her own intellectual personality at the side of but not subsumed by the ideas and personality of Jean-Paul Sartre.

*Stendhal*, by Francesco Mazzini. Reaktion Books. 204 pp. £11.99.

A study of the life and work of Stendhal, and a discussion of the main ideas which animated his literary works,

*Elizabeth's French wars 1562-1598: English intervention in the French wars of religion*, by William A. Heap. 336 pp. £20.

Describes the little-known story of Elizabeth I's intervention in the religious and civil wars in France by providing arms, men and money in support first of the French Protestants and later of the Royalist armies of Henri IV.

*Normandy '44: D-Day and the battle for France*, by James Holland. Bantam Press. 656pp. £25.

A very thorough and detailed history of the Normandy campaign from the planning, the invasion itself and the fighting up to the breakthrough at the end of August 1944, including many eyewitness accounts from both sides of the battle.

*King of the world: a life of Louis XIV*, by Philip Mansel. Allen Lane. 604pp. £30. 9781846145995.

After a preface summarising the history of France this biography details the progress of Louis XIV from the struggles and conspiracies of his youth, including the perils of the Fronde, to the zenith of his power and prestige, both military and cultural, in Europe and the wider world, and then outlines the difficulties and failures which eventually accrued to France and its royal family when the consequences of some of his policies, such as military expansionism and the persecution of the French Protestants, came home to roost.

*Marie Antoinette: the making of a French queen*, by John Hardman. Yale University Press. 376 pp. £20. ISBN 9780300243086.

John Hardman complements his biography of Louis XVI with a study of Marie-Antoinette which revises the conventional picture of her as a frivolous lightweight, showing her growing influence in affairs of state, especially during Louis XVI's periods of depression, and her strong efforts to salvage the situation during the Revolution.

*The fall of France in the Second World War: history and memory*, by Richard Carswell. Palgrave Macmillan. 283 pp. £64.99.

A study of the ways that the sudden and unexpected fall of France in 1940 have been interpreted by historians and by public memory. The initial – and still lingering – explanation of cultural and political rottenness has been succeeded among historians by a more nuanced analysis of the cultural, political and military mentalities and decisions that led to the disaster.

*The man in the red coat*, by Julian Barnes. Jonathan Cape. 266 pp. £18.99.

A portrait of the Parisian Belle Epoque, and of the cultural exchanges of the period between France and Britain, told through an examination of the life and career of Dr Samuel Pozzi (*The man in the red coat* of John Singer Sergant's portrait) and his friendship with Count Robert de Montesquiou and Prince Edmond de Polignac, two totemic figures of the culture and society of the time.

*A history of Fascism in France: from the first World War to the National Front*, by Chris Millington. Bloomsbury Academic. 235 pp. £58.50.

Traces the history of far-right organisations in France from their origins in the 1920s through their flourishing in the 1930s and hegemony in the Vichy period, a period of latency after the Liberation, and a revival in the 1980s fuelled by economic troubles and the arrival of immigrants after French decolonialisation, up to Marine Le Pen's attempts to broaden the appeal of the Front National to embrace those anxious about economic pressures as well as racial problems.