

Candidates for the 2021 Literary Prize:

Henri Matisse, by Kathryn Brown, Reaktion Books. 223pp. £11.99. ISBN 978178914.

A study of the life and artistic career of Henri Matisse, combining biography with stylistic analysis of his work.

Silent village: life and death in occupied France, by Robert Pike. 382pp. £20. History Press. ISBN9780750991346.

A story of daily life in the rural French village of Oradour-sur-Glane and its sudden extinction on 10th June 1944 when the SS Division *Das Reich*, on its way to the Normandy battlefield, murdered the inhabitants and destroyed the village.

Victoire: a wartime story of resistance, collaboration and betrayal, by Roland Philipps. Bodley Head. 352pp. £20. ISBN 9781847925817.

The complicated story of Mathilde Carre, who in World War II became a member of the French Resistance, then became a double agent for the Germans, and then was extracted to England where she possibly became a triple agent working for both sides.

Letters to Camondo, by Edmund de Waal. Chatto & Windus. 182pp. £14.99. ISBN 9781784744311.

The story, told in somewhat literary, epistolary style, of Count Moise de Camondo, a rich Jewish merchant from Constantinople who moved to Paris, became assimilated into Belle Epoque high society and built a superb collection of French eighteenth century art. After his son Nissim died in World War I in 1936 he left, in his son's memory, his house and collection to the French state where it now, intact, forms the Musee Nissim de Camondo. The fate in World War II of other Jewish family members and their collections was not so fortunate.

Napoleon: a life in gardens and shadows, by Ruth Scurr. Chatto & Windus. xxi, 376 pp. £30. ISBN 9781784741006.

A life of Napoleon told through the gardens he knew and cultivated throughout his life, from his tiny garden plot at his military academy in Brienne through the gardens of the palaces of his pomp to the garden at Hougoumont, so fiercely fought over during the battle of Waterloo, and finally his garden at Longwood on St Helena. She uses the stories of gardens to exemplify his scientific and intellectual curiosity and his impulses for reform, modernisation and systematised order.

The fall of Robespierre: 24 hours in Revolutionary Paris, by Colin Jones. Oxford University Press. xx,571pp. £25. ISBN 9780198715955.

Written in the historic present, and almost like the scenario for a docudrama, this book covers the 24 hours – midnight to midnight - of 9 Thermidor (24th July) 1794, the day Robespierre fell from power. The scene switches constantly, hour by hour and minute by minute, to and fro between Robespierre's lodgings, the streets of Paris, the Revolutionary Tribunal, the Convention Hall in the Tuileries Palace and dozens of other locations, giving a vivid picture of the tumult and confusion of the day and of little happenings which turned out to have momentous consequences.

Louis-Ferdinand Celine: journeys to the extreme, by Damian Catani. Reaktion Books. 392pp. £27. 9781789144673.

A study of the life and work of Louis-Ferdinand Celine which discusses the power and influence of his writing and the extremes of his thoughts and character – his anti-Semitism, collaboration during the German occupation of France, his flight from France and self-exile for years afterwards and his eventual return and literary rehabilitation.

Mission France: the true story of the women of SOE, by Kate Vigurs. Yale University Press. xxii,301pp. £20. ISBN 9780300208573.

This book tells the story of the 39 women who were SOE agents in France (about 10% of the total SOE agents). A handful are well known and are included here but this book sets out to tell the interwoven stories of all of them. Some were very successful, some soon captured; some survived and others were killed.

To kidnap a Pope: Napoleon and Pius VII, by Ambrogio A Caiani. Yale University Press. ix,360pp. £20. ISBN 9780300251333.

Tells the story of the decade-long power struggle between Napoleon and Pius VII, which even included kidnapping the Pope and forcing him to attend (though not preside at) Napoleon's self-coronation as Emperor in Notre Dame. The struggle between secular modernising and papal authority set the tone for church-state relations in France and elsewhere in Europe for decades.

Europe divided: Huguenot refugee art and culture, by Tessa Murdoch. V&A Publishing. 320pp. £40. ISBN 9781838510121.

An encyclopaedic and scholarly large-format publication, lavishly illustrated, describing the artistic and cultural contribution of the Huguenot diaspora to the art and culture of the countries in which the Huguenot refugees settled. After an introductory chapter on the persecution and worldwide emigration of French Protestants before and after Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 the book concentrates its focus mainly on the British Isles, which received more Huguenot refugees than any other country, and especially on London, where the majority of these refugees settled. Chapters cover their many achievements in the fine and applied arts; not only in the well-known fields of textile design and production and of gold- and silversmithing, but in architecture, painting (including decorative painting), sculpture, print-making and -selling, and artistic training, in all of which fields they helped develop artistic standards and the spread of Baroque and then Rococo styles in Britain.