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Opening Extract from...

Reading on Location

Written by
Luisa Moncada and Scala Quin

Published by New Holland Publishers Ltd

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Published in 2011 by New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd
London • Cape Town • Sydney • Auckland
www.newhollandpublishers.com
Garfield House, 86–88 Edgware Road,
London W2 2EA, United Kingdom
80 McKenzie Street, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
Unit 1, 66 Gibbes Street, Chatswood, NSW 2067, Australia
218 Lake Road, Northcote, Auckland, New Zealand

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 84773 467 9

Publisher: Aruna Vasudevan
Senior Editor: Charlotte Macey
Editors: Jolyon Goddard, Sally Maceachern
Inside Design: Vanessa Green
Cover Design: Vanessa Green
Production: Melanie Dowland

Reproduction by Pica Digital Pte. Ltd, Singapore
Printed and bound in India by Replika Press

The paper used to produce this book is sourced from sustainable forests.

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ASIA

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ASIA

GENERAL

Non-fiction

***Empires of the Indus* (2008)**

Alice Albinia

In this beautifully written book, journalist Alice Albinia charts the history and course of this famous, mystical river. Albinia travels upstream through Pakistan, Afghanistan and India to Chinese-occupied Tibet, covering more than 3,220 km (2,000 miles) and more than 5,000 years of history. By the time, we reach the end of the book, the reader will have followed Albinia's many adventures and have met many different peoples, heard their stories and been introduced to different cultures and landscapes. Michael Holroyd has described this book as a 'masterpiece in the making'.

 <http://www.empiresoftheindus.co.uk/index.html> (book website)

BANGLADESH

Fiction

***A Golden Age* (2002)**

Tahmina Anam

Set during the Bangladesh War of Independence in 1971, Anam's moving *A Golden Age* is the story of Rehana, a mother battling to keep her family together first after the death of her husband and then as the war starts.

Non-fiction

***Songs at the River's Edge: Stories from a Bangladeshi Village* (1997)**

Katy Gardner

A lecturer in anthropology, Katy Gardner spent 15 months in a tiny village called Talukpur. This book, a series of carefully crafted narratives, brings the people she interacted with and their lives to vivid life.

BHUTAN

Non-fiction

***Buttertea at Sunrise: A Year in the Bhutan Himalaya* (1997)**

Britta Das

This is an intimate account of German-born Das's time in Bhutan while working for the VSO. Part travelogue, part love story and part voyage of self-discovery, the book describes Bhutan, a remote, gloriously beautiful kingdom that is inaccessible to most outsiders. Through Das's prose we are invited into the romance – and reality – of a foreign land.

 <http://www.brittadas.com/> (author site)

CAMBODIA

Fiction

***The King's Last Song* (2006)**

Geoff Ryman

Ryman's seventh novel *The King's Last Song* mixes two narrative strands

together, interweaving the past with the present. The life of Cambodia's first Buddhist king, Jayavarman VII of the Angkor dynasty, and the discovery of the King's final testimony centuries later make up the plot for this story. A former Khmer Rouge cadre steals the tablets and abducts its custodians, Luc Andrade, and a Cambodian general. As his friends try to find him, Luc agrees to translate the King's words so all Cambodians can understand them.

Non-fiction

***Swimming to Cambodia* (1985)**

Spalding Gray

Spurred on by Gray's small role in the 1984 movie *The Killing Fields*, he turned his experiences into a one-man show. Some people may find this book somewhat rambling in tone, but what emerges is Gray's thoughts on Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge regime and genocide.

 *Swimming to Cambodia* (1985)

***A Dragon Apparent: Travels in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam* (1951)**

Norman Lewis

Lewis's account of his travels through 1950s' Indochina as the Viet Minh and French make war is quite extraordinary. Mixing with ex-pats, French soldiers and locals, he visited the tribes of the central highlands who were to be so devastated by the war less than a decade later. Lewis's writing preserves them and

their way of live for us and provides a gripping travelogue of this region and times gone by.

 <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/china/travel-tips-and-articles/42/59689>

CHINA

Fiction

***Empire of the Sun* (1984)**

J. G. Ballard

Ballard's haunting book, based on his own childhood in Shanghai and in the civilian camp at Lunghua, where he was interned with his parents, is one of the best examples of the literature of war of this period. We see the history of this era first hand, through the eyes of the young boy, Jim.

 *Empire of the Sun* (1987), Stephen Spielberg's epic and award-winning adaptation starring the young Christian Bale as Jim

***When We Were Orphans* (2000)**

Kazuo Ishiguro

Ishiguro's compelling novel moves between the London and Shanghai of the 1930s. His protagonist, Christopher Banks, is a detective solving famous crimes in England. He is driven to return to Shanghai, where he lived as a child, to solve the disappearance of his own parents. As the Second Sino-Japanese War wages, Banks finds himself exploring the ruined city as he tries to find his missing parents.

Classic ancient Chinese literature

For those who want some grounding in ancient China, there are several classic novels to read on location that give some insight into the country's wealth of culture, history, folklore and philosophy. Here is a selection of what we feel are the best:

Journey to the West (Monkey)

Wu Ch'eng-en

Again known to generations of people through the cult TV series *Monkey*, Wu Ch'eng-en's entertaining *Journey to the West* mixes folklore, satire, history and philosophy with humour and compassion. Following the travels of a monk, it is based on the real-life figure Xuan Zang, who travelled to India on foot in the 7th century to bring the Buddhist scriptures back to China. Wu Ch'eng-en's monk, Tripitaka, is accompanied by the Monkey King, who emerged from an egg. He journeys with the monk to redeem himself. Along the way, they meet a host of colourful characters. The book also inspired an opera (*Monkey: Journey to the West*) and an album on which Damon Albarn of Blur fame collaborated.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms

Lo Kuan-Chung

Sometimes referred to as the 'Iliad of China', Lo Kuan-Chung's epic novel, written in the 14th century, tells of the final years of the Han dynasty during the 2nd and 3rd centuries and the struggle of three kingdoms to control China.

Outlaws of the Marsh (The Water Margin)

Shi Nai'An

This 14th-century classic is better known by the name under which it appeared in the cult TV series, *The Water Margin*. Filmed in Japanese it was dubbed in English and has fascinated audiences since it was first aired in the late 1970s. Shi Nai'An's book is set during the Song dynasty and tells the stories of the more than 100 people who lived on the outside of society and banded together to resist the corrupt and harsh government.

The Story of the Stone (The Dream of the Red Chamber)

Cao Xueqin

Written in about 1760, *The Story of the Stone* is viewed by many as one of the greatest pieces of Chinese literature. Evoking a world that would otherwise be lost to us, Cao Xueqin's epic tale is set in a Buddhist context and follows the gradual decline of the Jia dynasty in 18th-century China. It follows Jia Bao-yu, the reincarnation of a supernatural entity known as the Stone, and his cousin, Lin Dia-yu, the incarnation of the Crimson Pearl Flower, with whose fate the stone is entwined. Xue Bao-Chai, another cousin fascinated by Bao-yu, adds another dimension to their relationship. Reality merges with illusion in this vast tome and the book is filled with the main theme of the tragic love story of Dia-yu and Bao-yu, as well as a series of subplots concerning the vast and complicated family households. Once described as a 'Chinese *Upstairs Downstairs*', *The Story of the Stone* is steeped in Chinese culture, history and philosophy.

***The Vagrants* (2009)**

Yiyun Li

Yiyun Li's much-awaited first novel is based on a real-life event. Set in the time of the Democratic Wall Movement, in the late 1970s, the book opens in a small town called Muddy River on the day of the execution of a young woman for criticizing the Communist Party. After the girl is killed, it emerges that her execution was rushed through so that a party official could receive her kidneys. The villagers organize a demonstration to protest, with tragic consequences.



A Thousand Years of Good Prayers (2005), Yiyun Li's award-winning collection of short stories set in China

***Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* (2001)**

Dai Sijie

This tiny volume is a lyrical piece of work. Dai Sijie's story of two young men who are sent to a part of Szechuan for re-education and who meet the daughter of a local tailor with a secret pile of Western books, is beautiful. Illustrating the power of reading, the men are transformed through words, taken away to more lyrical places far away from the harsh reality of Mao's China.

***The Joy Luck Club* (1991)**

Amy Tan

Tan's best-selling book is set between San Francisco and China. Dealing essentially with the relationships

between Chinese mothers and their Chinese-American daughters, Tan also gives us an entertaining and poignant insight into the immigrant experience. Jing-Mei joins The Joy Luck Club to take her late mother Suyuan's place alongside three women with whom she met and played mah-jong each week, first in China and then in the United States. The other women inform Jing-Mei that her mother managed to locate her 'lost sisters', the daughters that Suyuan was forced to leave behind during the Japanese invasion of Kweilin and Jing-Mei journeys to China to meet her half-sisters and tell them about the mother they never knew.



The Joy Luck Club (1991)

***The Boat to Redemption* (2009)**

Su Tong

Probably best-known for his novella *Wives and Concubines* on which the film *Raise the Red Lantern* is based, Su Tong's *The Boat to Redemption* is set during the Cultural Revolution. Banished from the Party, a previously high-level official takes to the river with his son, Dongliang, joining a group of boat people who are treated with great suspicion by those on the shore. Dongliang finds himself isolated, belonging to neither group, and when an orphan, Huixian, arrives he becomes obsessed with her. Su Tong's descriptions of rural China and the divide between the river people and the shore people are extremely evocative. The author considers this to be his most important book to date.

***Soul Mountain* (2001)**

Gao Xingjian

Nobel prize-winning author and painter Gao Xingjian embarked on a 15,000 km- (9,320 mile) journey from Beijing into the mountains and forests of Sichuan in 1983 following a period of personal crisis. The author had been told that he had terminal lung cancer, only to find out weeks later that he did not. His work had been accused of being 'spiritual pollution' and rumours began to circulate that he was about to be arrested. *Soul Mountain* is the result of that ten-month journey. It is a lyrical piece of literature, using different forms and voices and combining among other things folklore, history and a travelogue to tell its story.

Non-fiction

***Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1991)**

Jung Chang

Chang's award-winning book about three generations of Chinese women is shocking, compelling, tragic and brutal. It is a very honest account of China's 20th-century history.

***Red Dust: A Path Through China* (2001)**

Ma Jian

On his 30th birthday poet, painter and writer Ma Jian, facing arrest for 'spiritual pollution', faked illness and escaped from Beijing to the hinterlands of China. A book of true

adventure, Jian lovingly describes the vastness of the land and the characters that he meets on his three-year trip.

HONG KONG

Fiction

***Noble House* (1981)**

James Clavell

The fifth book in Clavell's 'Asian Saga', *Noble House* is a riveting tale of bitter rivalry set in 1960s' corporate Hong Kong. Clavell vividly paints the city in which Ian Dunross heads Struan's, the 'Noble House' of the title and the largest business in Hong Kong. Others covet Dunross's position and he also becomes embroiled with the KGB, CIA and the People's Republic of China.

 *The Noble House* (1988), starring Pierce Brosnan

***Fragrant Harbour* (2002)**

John Lanchester

Lanchester's novel follows four people – a journalist, a hotelier, a nun and a young Chinese entrepreneur – from the 1930s to the end of 20th century in Hong Kong. Lanchester carefully describes the changing city during this time and we follow it through war and Hong Kong's growth in the post-war years to events such as the massacre at Tiananmen Square, Beijing, in 1989.

***The Painted Veil* (1925)**

W. Somerset Maugham

Moving between England and Hong Kong in the 1920s, Somerset Maugham's tale of betrayal and forgiveness finds beautiful, shallow Kitty Vane's husband discovering his wife's infidelity. He forces her to accompany him from Hong Kong to the cholera-ridden Mei-tan-fu.

 *The Painted Veil* (2006), starring Naomi Watts and Edward Norton

***The Monkey King* (1978)**

Timothy Mo

Mo's first novel, set in 1950s' Hong Kong, features Wallace Nolasco, a Macanese man, who marries May Ling, moving into the Poon family home in the old part of the island. Relegated to the bottom of the heap by his new wife's relatives, Wallace struggles to assert his independence.

***Kowloon Tong: A Novel of Hong Kong* (1998)**

Paul Theroux

Better known for his travel writing, author Paul Theroux sets this novel in Hong Kong in the late 1990s. Neville Mullard and his mother have a textile company in Hong Kong. They live a sheltered life apart from the Chinese but when the year arrives for the British to cede the island to China, their world is challenged. Suddenly, mainland China is closer than they thought and, with the arrival of the mysterious Mr Hung, matters become even worse.

INDIA

Fiction

***The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973)**

J. G. Farrell

This much acclaimed and award-winning masterpiece charts an important part of British-Indian history, that of the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Set in a remote outpost, Farrell sets the scene of the British daily life in the Raj. Rumours of violent clashes reach the residency but when the siege finally occurs it is a shock. As the food and water run out and disease breaks out, the very proper British residents are reduced to scrabbling around to eat insects and the siege brings out the very best and very worst of those involved.

***A Passage to India* (1924)**

E. M. Forster

Forster's elegant and poignant novel essentially asks if the British and Indians can really be friends. The answer is 'not really' in pre-partition India. When Aziz, a Muslim Indian doctor, who has asked himself this question already, is wrongly accused of attempting to rape Adela, an Englishwoman, his trial has tragic and long-lasting effects on British-Indian relations.

 *A Passage to India* (1984), directed by David Lean

 *Italy – A Room with a View*

EUROPE

Albania | Austria | Belgium | Cyprus | Czech Republic and Slovakia
Denmark | Estonia | Finland | Former Yugoslavia | France
Germany | Greece and the Islands | Greenland | Hungary
Iceland | Ireland | Italy | Latvia | Netherlands | Norway
Poland | Portugal | Romania | Russia | Spain | Sweden
Switzerland | Turkey | United Kingdom



sleeping and waking', was written on the cusp of the outbreak of the Second World War. West's book is far more than just a travelogue; it delves into the history of the area and is a snapshot of the politics of the time.

FRANCE

GENERAL

Non-fiction

Detour de France (2010)

Michael Simkins

Actor Michael Simkins spent 12 weeks journeying around France armed with just a smattering of French and with his wife's dire warnings of what would happen to him ringing in his ears. This memoir is the result. An amusing account of Simkins' dealings in and with France and the French, it is a very charming read.

Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes (1879)

Robert Louis Stevenson

This entertaining account by Robert Louis Stevenson is based on the author's 1878 journey through the Cévennes accompanied by Modestine, a donkey, and a notebook. The book reveals as much about the landscape, the people and the customs of the country as about the author himself.

PARIS AND ENVIRONS

Fiction

Murder in the Marais (1999)

Cara Black

The first in the 'Aimée Leduc' series, *Murder in the Marais* introduces the half-French, half-American computer security investigator, who lives in a charming town house in the Île St Louis. A rabbi hires Aimée to decipher an encrypted photograph and deliver her findings to a woman living in the Marais, the historic Jewish part of the city, but everything changes when Aimée finds her dead. The 'Aimée Leduc' series is set in Paris, largely in the Marais, which San Franciscan-based Black finds the most fascinating area.

 <http://www.carablack.com/>
(author website)

 *Murder in the Latin Quarter*

A Year in the Merde (2004)

Stephen Clarke

British author Stephen Clarke wrote *A Year in the Merde* while living in Paris, initially self-publishing it before it was picked up by a mainstream publisher and became a best-seller. An acerbic, bitterly funny and often unflattering look at the French through the eyes of protagonist Paul West, a Brit with a mission to set up an English tea room in Paris, *A Year in the Merde* gives the other side of the story about living in this beautiful city, such as where it's better to walk in the roads to avoid the mounds of dog poo on the pavements...

Maigret's Paris

Born in Liège, in Belgium, Georges Simenon used Paris as the location for his famous detective Jules Maigret, first introduced as a Chief Inspector in *The Strange Case of Peter the Lett* (1929). Over the next 42 years, Maigret appeared in more than 100 books and short stories.

In the Maigret books, the city is as much a character as the detective himself, as Maigret inhabits its cafes, working men's bistros and backstreets, but the Paris we see is a sanitized one, almost beyond recognition, seen through the eyes of a writer who was a visitor. Maigret fans can follow in the detective's footsteps, although the Paris of today is, for the most part, very different from the one often described in the books. The Les Halles that Simenon sketches for us, for example, is not the concrete shopping centre of today, but instead is the stomach of the city for Maigret. The lovely Places des Voges, with its beautiful geometric arches, as described by the writer, is still recognizable, however. The Brasserie Dauphine, where Maigret eats, didn't exist, but it is thought to have been based on the cafes that Simenon himself frequented, such as the Café Restaurant Aux Trois Marches, which was in the Rue de Harlay. The nearby Taverne Henri IV was also one of Simenon's local haunts; it is situated on the Pont Neuf, just minutes from Maigret's office at 36 Quai des Orfèvres on the Ile de la Cité. The tavern has framed photographs of Simenon and also of the French actor Yves Montand, who lived in the Place Dauphine.



Maigret series (1992), starring Michael Gambon



Simenon's Paris by Georges Simenon (1970)



<http://www.stephenclarkewriter.com/index.php> (author website)



Merde Actually, Merde Happens and *In the Merde for Love*

Les Misérables (1862)

Victor Hugo

Possibly one of the best-known books associated with the city, *Les Misérables* is a vivid portrait of the poor and dispossessed in the 19th century. Visitors to Paris can visit various monuments and places linked to the celebrated author, including the house where Hugo lived in the beautiful Place des Vosges, which is today a museum and research centre,

and Avenue Victor Hugo. Hugo actually lived in the avenue (formerly named Avenue d'Eylau but retitled on the author's 80th birthday); it is here that a statue of the writer was located until it was destroyed during the Nazi bombing of the city.



<http://www.paris.org/Musees/Hugo/>
(Maison de Victor Hugo)

The Phantom of the Opera (1910)

Gaston Leroux

Immortalized on film and at the theatre, Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* has thrilled audiences around the world. First published in 1910 as a serialization it originally didn't sell

that well as a book. It follows the story of Christine, who is given a position in the chorus at the Paris Opera House. She believes that the Angel of Music, who her father told her he would send to her before he died, is speaking to her, but it is, in fact, Erik, a talented composer and musician. Erik is so disfigured that he hides behind a mask. He 'haunts' the building, living in its secret catacombs. He loves Christine but she is torn between Erik and another man, Raoul, who also loves her.

 <http://www.operadeparis.fr/cns11/live/omp/> (Paris Opera House)

***Arc de Triomphe* (1946)**

Erich Maria Remarque

Set in Paris in the winter of 1938, when the author spent time there himself, and apparently inspired by his love of actress Marlene Dietrich, *Arc de Triomphe* focuses on the many refugees who came to the city, fleeing the Germans. Dr Ravic stalks his enemy Nazi Haake around the city; he meets Joan one stormy night and embarks on a doomed love affair. The book was made into a film in 1948.

 *Arch of Triumph* (1948), starring Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer and Charles Laughton

***Quartet* (1929)**

Jean Rhys

Rhys's novel is set in the bohemian Paris of the 1920s and explores the tense and complex relationship

between Marya, alone in the city after her husband is arrested, and the English couple who befriends her. Rhys apparently drew on her own affair with writer Ford Maddox Ford to write the book.

 **The Americas, Jamaica – Mrs Rochester's Jamaica (feature box)**

 ***Quartet* (1981)**

***Perfume* (1985)**

Patrick Suskind

Jean-Baptiste Grenouille is born into the slums of 18th-century France, but is graced with a truly exceptional sense of smell. As a boy, he apprentices himself to the most prominent perfumer in the country, who teaches him the secrets of his trade. A true genius, Grenouille pushes himself to capture every essence that he can, until he smells one that he must have – whatever the cost. This lovely book is set mostly in Paris and Grasse.

 ***Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2006)**

Non-fiction

***A Moveable Feast* (1964)**

Ernest Hemingway

Published posthumously and edited by his widow, Mary, *A Moveable Feast* tells of Hemingway's time living in Paris in the 1920s as part of the American expat community. As a struggling writer, married to first wife, Hadley Richardson, he met and mixed with such people

as James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound and Sylvia Beach, who ran the famous Shakespeare & Co. on the Left Bank. The Hemingway of this book is quite likeable as he plays with his son and his cat and gossips with friends in parks, restaurants and cafes around the city. It is possible to visit many of the places mentioned in the

book and to follow in Hemingway's footsteps around Paris. Locations in the book include the Hôtel d'Angleterre, in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés district, where Hemingway stayed in Room 14. Hadley found their first apartment at 74 Rue de Cardinale Lemoine, between the Sorbonne and the Faculté des Sciences, and Hemingway's favourite restaurant

Remembrance of Things Past (A la recherche du temps perdu)

Possibly one of the most beautiful pieces of French literature ever written, Marcel Proust's epic seven-volume book is considered by some to be a masterpiece. Yet, the writer André Gide advised the publisher Gaumont not to publish the first volume (*Swann's Way*), leading Proust to self-publish; Gide later apologized to Proust for this grave mistake and offered to publish the subsequent volumes.

The novel, which is largely autobiographical, covers the period from 1820 to 1870 and features finely drawn characters, who attend soirées and discuss and analyse the times. It is largely based on the memories of Marcel, the narrator, who in a seminal moment in the book tastes a piece of madeleine that his aunt has dipped into her tisane. This triggers the host of memories that inform the book.

The first part of the book focuses on Marcel's life in Combray (Illiers-Combray, about 110 km/70 miles south-west of Paris) and focuses on three families: the Jewish Swanns, the aristocratic de Guermantes and Marcel's own. Proust spent his holidays as a child in Illiers (which became Illiers-Combray in 1971) and today visitors to the village often go to Mme Benoit's patisserie to sample a madeleine or two. The grey house of Proust's aunt Elisabeth Amiot (Tante Léonie in the book), which features in the book as the place where Marcel and his parents spend his holidays, is situated near the shop. Today it is a national monument and also the site of the Proust Museum. Visitors can see the magic lantern in the narrator's room and Tante Léonie's madeleine in her bedroom. About 10 minutes from the house, across the Loire River, lies the 2 ha (5 acre) garden in which Proust's uncle, Jules Amiot, recreated the Pré Catalan, named after an area in Paris's Bois de Boulogne. This became the grounds of Tansonville, Swann's estate, in the book. The nearby medieval Château de Villebon, complete with formal gardens and moat, is the Château de Guermantes, country home of the Duchess of Guermantes, in Proust's book.

 ***Le temps retrouvé* (1999), starring Catherine Deneuve, Emmanuelle Béart and John Malkovich**

 http://www.retaworks.com/random_walk/random_htm/France/IlliersCombray/combray.htm (walk)

 ***Swann in Love* (1984), starring Jeremy Irons**

in the beginning of his stay was just east of there, Pré aux Clercs, on the corner of Rue Jacob and Rue Bonaparte. Hemingway and friends hung out at Café Falstaff at 14 Rue Delambre, where he first met Scott Fitzgerald (the original bar was at 10 Rue Delambre, before Jimmy, the barman, moved to the Falstaff next door).

 http://www.slowtrav.com/france/paris/rl_hemingway.htm (walk taking in Hemingway's favourite haunts in Paris)

 http://www.hotel-angleterre.com/hotel_angleterre_en.html (Hôtel Angleterre)

BRITTANY

Fiction

The Chouans (1829)

Honoré de Balzac

An early novel by Balzac, *The Chouans* combines the uprising in Fougères in 1799 with the love affair between aristocratic Marie de Verneuil and Chouan, Alphonse de Montauran. The Chouans were the French royalist rebels in Maine and Brittany.

Ninety-Three (1874)

Victor Hugo

The last of Hugo's novels, *Ninety-Three* opens in Brittany in 1793, where revolutionary forces are struggling to suppress the counter-revolutionary uprising of the Vendée. The revolutionaries are led by Gauvain, nephew of the Marquis de Lantenac,

himself the leader of the Vendean guard. A dramatic examination of this terrifying period of French history, *Ninety-Three* is perhaps not as good as Hugo's earlier work, but it is an interesting read.

 Paris – *Les Misérables*

Non-fiction

Over Strand and Field: A Record of Travel Through Brittany (1904)

Gustav Flaubert

Although much better known for his classic book *Madame Bovary* (1857), Flaubert also wrote about his travels around Brittany. The writer journeyed around Chateau de Chambord, Chateau de Clisson, Carnac, Quiberon, Quimper, Brest and Saint Malo, among other destinations.

 Normandy – *Madame Bovary*

LOIRE

Fiction

Le Grand Meaulnes (1913)

Alain-Fournier

One of the great novels of France – and a personal favourite – this was the only completed work of Alain-Fournier. It is a romantic and enchanting story of the friendship between 15-year-old narrator François and 17-year-old Augustin Meaulnes, a mysterious but charismatic figure who arrives to shake up François's world.

 *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1967)

Five Quarters of the Orange (2001)

Joanne Harris

Harris's book is set in the Loire Valley, near Angers, during the Nazi occupation of France. After the war a young woman returns to the village where she grew up, but no one realizes she is Framboise, the nine-year-old forced to leave the village with her mother, when she was accused of collaborating with the Nazis.

 <http://www.joanne-harris.co.uk/> (author website)

 *Chocolat*

NORMANDY

Fiction

Madame Bovary (1857)

Gustave Flaubert

Flaubert's first novel and masterpiece opens in north-west France, where the young Charles Bovary is studying. After finishing medical school in Rouen, Bovary sets up practice in Tostes in Normandy, where he marries a widow, who dies. His second wife, Emma, dreams of a better, more sophisticated life and quickly becomes frustrated with her banal and provincial existence. Emma's attention begins to drift to other men and she borrows a large sum of money from a moneylender to finance her expensive habits. After failing tragically in love, Emma finds that she has only one way to deal with her many problems. Originally serialized in *La Revue de Paris* between 1856 and 1857, it was viewed as offensive to morality

and religion and Flaubert was tried for obscenity, a charge of which he was acquitted. It became a best-seller soon afterwards.

 *Madame Bovary* (1991)

Strait is the Gate (1909)

André Gide

Another favourite, *Strait is the Gate* is set in Normandy, where the narrator Jerome spends his summers at his uncle's home. There, he falls in love with his cousin Alissa, a love that she returns, but gradually things change and Alissa convinces herself that she must give Jerome up for his own salvation.

Arsène Lupin vs Sherlock Holmes: The Hollow Needle (2001)

Maurice Leblanc

Leblanc's witty and charming aristocratic gentleman thief, Arsène Lupin, in this book, is set against Sherlock Holmes. Visitors can go to the picturesque town of Etretat, nestled between tall alabaster cliffs, and see its lovely 19th-century villas. This is Arsène Lupin's town. It's also a beautiful location, which made it a popular resort with the artists Monet and Courbet and also with Maupassant.

 http://www.etretat.net/office_de_tourisme_etretat/pages/anglais_accueil.php (tourist office)

Normandy Stories (1995)

Guy de Maupassant

Master of the short story, Guy de

Maupassant wrote about his beloved Normandy. This collection gathers together some of his most important work, detailing the land, people and society he loved. Visitors to Normandy can go to and stay in Maupassant's birthplace, Château de Miromesnil, Tourville-sur-Arques, which is situated in beautiful wooded parkland.

 <http://www.chateaumiromesnil.com>
(Château de Miromesnil)

Non-fiction

***D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (2009)**

Anthony Beevor

Beevor tells the story of D-Day in 1944, when the British launched one of the most important naval expeditions in history, the turning point in the Second World War. Master of detail, Beevor recounts this key piece of history from both sides, showing why we are right to celebrate its importance, but also showing that victory came at an enormous cost to all those involved. There are many tours operating in the area that visit key locations associated with D-Day. These include Pegasus Bridge and the Pegasus Museum, the Ranville British Cemetery, La Cambe German Cemetery, Point du Hoc and many of the beaches where the action took place such as Omaha Beach, where the cliffs are still pitted with shells and German bunkers.

 <http://www.overlordtour.com/>
(one of several tours of the battlefields)

 ***The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939***

PROVENCE

Fiction

***Super-Cannes* (2000)**

J. G. Ballard

Set in Eden-Olympia, a planned community, in the hills above Cannes, *Super-Cannes* is essentially a murder mystery. After a doctor goes on a shooting spree, killing 10 executives and then turning the gun on himself, young Dr Jane Sinclair is hired as his replacement and comes to live, with her middle-aged husband Paul, in the same house as her predecessor, with interesting results. Eden-Olympia is an elite business community, planned to turn Provence into the new Silicon Valley.

***Tender Is the Night* (1934)**

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Fitzgerald presents a decadent view of the French Riviera through the eyes of wealthy Americans Richard 'Dick' Diver and his wife Nicole, based loosely on the real-life couple Sara and Gerald Murphy.

 ***Tender Is the Night* (1962), starring Jennifer Jones as Nicole and Jason Robards as Dick**

***The Murdered House* (1999)**

Pierre Magnan

Haunted by memories of his mother's brutal death, Seraphin Monge returns home after the war in 1920 to the place where his family was killed. He destroys the house, but as the

stone crumbles, the secrets behind the murders are laid bare – with devastating results.

 ***Death in the Truffle Wood***

***The Water of the Hills* (1962)**

Marcel Pagnol

Pagnol's two books, *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*, which make up this volume and which were immortalized beautifully in film, are set in the Provençal village of Les Bastides Blanches, based on La Treille, just east of Marseille. Pagnol was born in nearby Aubagne. La Bastide Neuve was the farmhouse holiday home that became the home of Jean de Florette and Pagnol is buried in the little cemetery. The Provençal landscape of olive groves and lavender fields, as described in detail in *The Water of the Hills*, hasn't changed that much and it is possible to imagine the landscape on which the hunchback Jean Cadoret pinned his dreams and the old-time prejudices that led Cesar Soubeyrand and his nephew Ugolin to try to thwart them. Visitors can go to many of the places key to Pagnol's Provence.

 ***Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* (both 1986)**

 <http://www.walkaboutgourmet.com/Navigation/tours.htm> (tour)

***Bonjour Tristesse* (1954)**

Françoise Sagan

Initially seen as scandalous by French society when it was published in the

1950s, Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse* is now a classic. The plot follows 17-year-old Cecile's plotting and scheming over one summer in the South of France. Used to the ways of her playboy father, who loves and leaves women, Cecile is faced with the prospect of change when her father meets Anne. Determined that the status quo won't be upset, Cecile does everything possible to disrupt her father's relationship with Anne with devastating results.

 ***Bonjour Tristesse* (1958), directed by Otto Preminger and starring Deborah Kerr, David Niven and Jean Seberg**

Non-fiction

***A Year in Provence* (1989)**

Peter Mayle

A guilty pleasure, *A Year in Provence* is Mayle's extremely entertaining account of doing what most people dream of – buying a derelict farmhouse and moving to France (with his wife) to do it up. Written with great affection and wit, Mayle's book follows the trials and tribulations of an English couple and their dogs as they deal with lazy builders, truffle hunters and the mistral in the medieval village of Menerbes in the Luberon. Mayle's book has sold millions of copies all over the world and inspired a huge increase in tourism to Provence.

 ***A Year in Provence* (1993)**

 ***A Good Year***