“It must be difficult to succeed in France where nearly everyone writes well” (*LII* 202).

“No so well as that. He [Flaubert] begins with a fault.” (quoted in *JIII* 492)

Reading the preceding quotes (the first written in Rome and the second said in Paris), one can describe Joyce’s relation to French literature, and specifically the nineteenth-century French novel, as one that moved between awe and qualified appreciation. Joyce’s attitude to Maupassant, conveyed in a 1905 letter from Trieste to his brother Stanislaus, provides another example: “I agree with you, however, about Maupassant. He is an excellent writer. His tales are a little slipshod but that was hardly to be avoided, given the circumstances of his life” (*LII* 107). Yet, one lesson of decades of Joyce studies is that Joyce’s affairs with writers as well as with countries and their national literatures are beyond love and hatred. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Joyce’s quest for a “style,” drove him in the direction of French literature (*JIII* 76): to the contemporary symbolist movement but also, more significantly to the *roman* that was the hallmark of the previous century.

If Joyce once mistakenly accused Flaubert of committing grammatical mistakes in *Trois Contes*, he also exhibited a continued imaginative engagement with the Flaubertian oeuvre as he overcame the difficulties involved in writing well and succeeding within and beyond France—a *succès de scandale* which grew in a similar way to the successes of Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola. This volume of essays on *Joyce and the...*
*Nineteenth-Century French Novel* examines many previously unexplored facets of the intricate Flaubert-Joyce relationship but its analyses also extend to both ends of the nineteenth-century with contributions on some of Joyce’s explicit and implicit responses to Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo and Émile Zola in *Dubliners, Portrait, Ulysses, Finnegans Wake*, and in his life, letters, and critical writings. It would take another volume—and it is an aim of this work that further research be carried out precisely in such a direction—to investigate further Joyce’s relations to other French prose writers of the 19th Century to whom Joyce refers such as: Chateaubriand, Daudet, Huysmans, Merimée, Villiers de L’Isle Adam, George Sand, Lautréamont, Michelet, Quinet, Verne, Dujardin, Mirbeau, and, insofar as they wrote prose, Baudelaire and Mallarmé.

A study of such a multilayered subject as “Joyce and the Nineteenth-century French Novel,” demands that we first delineate the boundaries and intersections of the intimidatingly expansive space-times: the nineteenth-century, France, the novel. Graham Robb’s recent study *The Discovery of France* provides us with probably the most appropriate basic metaphor in this respect. In Robb’s journey into some of the physically and conceptually uncharted territories of France, the nineteenth-century emerges as a decisive moment in the gradual “invention” of France as a modern nation while some nineteenth-century novelists, namely Balzac, appear as invisible guides along this exploratory journey. France’s nineteenth-century can be said to begin in the eighteenth-century, precisely in 1789, with the French Revolution and end in 1889, with Gustave Eiffel’s construction of the monumental tower. In this “century,” France established some of the foundations of the novel, which is a modern monument and anti-monument in the “edificidal” visions of Hugo in the mid-nineteenth century and Joyce in the early twentieth century. “Edificidal” thoughts and realities are endemic to the histories of nineteenth-century France and the nineteenth-century French novel since both were marked by successive and overlapping revolutions, revolutions of the word and the world, bringing down political, social, and aesthetic monuments and announcing the “new” that often prematurely died only to be revived in other forms in the twentieth century. A quick run of some key moments, personalities, and trends highlights this convulsive history: the 1789 French Revolution,

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5. See Finn Fordham’s essay in this volume.