



New Novel, New Wave, New Politics: Fiction and the Representation of History in Postwar France

(Stages)

Lynn A. Higgins

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Until now, writings on the celebrated movements in literature and film that emerged in France in the mid-1950s—the New Novel and New Wave—have concentrated on their formal innovations, not on their engagement with history or politics. *New Novel, New Wave, New Politics* overturns this traditional approach. Lynn A. Higgins argues that the New Novelists (e.g., Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Marguerite Duras) and New Wave filmmakers (e.g., Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais) “engage in a kind of historiography. . . . They enact the conflicts, the double binds of postwar history and representation.” Higgins claims that what art historian Serge Guilbaut has said of American Abstract Expressionism is equally true of the New Novel and New Wave—that its aesthetic innovations “provided a way for avant-garde artists to preserve their sense of social ‘commitment’ . . . while eschewing the art of propaganda and illustration. It was in a sense a political apoliticism.” This lively account dramatically revises our view of a generation of important, influential artists.

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