

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

The Missing Years of Georges Simenon as Man, Author and Protagonist(s)

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy
May 2021

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP)
Scholarship

Volume I



This painting is an original work of the author; sketches in the novel *The Missing Years* are also done by the author

Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisors, Associate Professor Alistair Rolls and Doctor Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan for their assistance, patient guidance and encouragement in the preparation of this thesis.

I wish to acknowledge support through an Australian Government Research Training Programme Scholarship via University of Newcastle, Callaghan, for the creation of this work.

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Volume 2: Novel, Notes and Glossary

Under separate cover

Abstract

This thesis comprises an historical novel, with an accompanying appendix of notes and a glossary, and a scholarly exegesis. It introduces a new way to interrogate the works of Belgian-born author Georges Simenon by responding to his trifold oeuvre, which includes his novels of the famed Commissaire Jules Maigret, his often overlooked noir novels and his multiple autobiographies. A major focus of the research has been an exploration of the author's relationship with his younger brother Christian and how he addresses his complex feelings towards him in four discrete works referred to here as the "brother novels". The novel, *The Missing Years*, which is at the heart of the present thesis, mirrors Simenon's output by taking the form of a triptych in which three fictional brothers are all representative of varying aspects of the author himself. The imaginative work involved in this novel, along with the notes and glossary, and the exegesis and bibliography that complete the creative archive, represents a comprehensive study of the author that is not merely biographical but that also becomes in effect a creative archive. The nexus of the creative and critical elements allows a previously unattempted reconstruction of the life of the author.

The focus of the novel aspect of the thesis is an interval of five years from the invasion of France by the German forces at the end of the *drôle de guerre* until towards the end of 1945. By having one persona in Paris and a second in La Rochelle, disparities of life under occupation can be contrasted to show different realities of war and occupation. In reality, Christian Simenon was charged with war crimes towards the end of the war and met his death in 1947, but the imaginative reconstruction has cathected both events within the Occupation period. The reason for choosing this timeframe is to address two aspects receiving attention from scholars, namely the charge that Simenon ignored World War Two in his writings and that his most famous protagonist, in novels spanning some four decades, does not experience the Occupation. It will be demonstrated that while the author attempted to redress the first charge by several novels written from 1947 to 1961, studies show that he tackled the subject of war and conflict in many of his novels through an indirect approach. While he may have had many reasons for keeping Maigret out of the war, this creative archive explores what a detective in that era and under those circumstances would have been able to achieve.