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Note generali

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Nota di contenuto

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Sommario/riassunto

This volume draws contributors from around the globe who represent the full range of approaches to scholarship in nineteenth-century French studies: historical, literary, cultural, art historical, philosophical, and comparative. The theme of the volume – Birth and Death – is one with particular resonance for nineteenth-century French studies, since the nineteenth century is commonly perceived as an age of new life and renovation. It is the epoch that witnessed an efflorescence of industrial and artistic progress, the birth of the individual and the birth of the novel, and the creation of an urban population in the major demographic shift from the rural provinces to Paris. At the same time, however, it is the century of Decadence and degeneration theory, marked by a prominent morbid aesthetic in the artistic sphere and a fascination with criminality, moral decay and the pathologization of racial and sexual minorities in the scientific discourses. It is also the century in which reflection on processes of artistic creation begins to problematize concepts of mimetic representation, the function of the author and the status of the text. In the context of the dialectical quality of nineteenth-century French culture, caught between an obsession with the new and innovative and a paranoid sense of its own encroaching decay, the twin themes of birth and death open onto a variety of issues – literary, social, historical, artistic – which are explored, interrogated and reassessed in the essays contained in this volume.