

## FRENCH-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS: TOWARDS AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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This article<sup>1</sup> argues the need for the construction of a full-scale historical overview of French-Australian relations. In analysing a broad range of the achievements of French-Australian studies as a field of scholarship, it sketches out some of the areas where work still needs to be undertaken, and proposes some general structures to guide the development of the synthesis. The scope of the article does not permit a comprehensive review of existing literature, nor an exhaustive bibliography. Nonetheless, by selecting what I see as key and exemplary elements (which will perforce be open to debate), I hope to set up chronological and thematic scaffolding for a narrative that I believe should have its place in the histories of both France and Australia, and in the larger story of global historical change. I shall begin with an observation about a disjunction between what I describe as ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches to the issue.

First, ‘top-down’: in Paris, in January 2012, the Australian and French Governments signed a joint statement. It opens thus: ‘In order to mark 170 years of unbroken friendship between Australia and France, which began with the opening of the first French consulate in Australia in 1842, and in recognition of the historical links that underlie current bilateral relations [...], Australia and France are entering into a strategic partnership’. This partnership is based on a shared conviction: ‘Australia and France are both committed to democratic values and human rights. They share a common aspiration for a fairer, safer and more socially responsible world.’<sup>2</sup> The document goes on to list a large number of categories in which cooperation will occur: political, defence, security, economics (including trade and investment), energy and resources, transport, education, science, technology and culture; it makes special mention of the World Wars commemorations,

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this work was presented as a paper at the 19<sup>th</sup> George Rudé Seminar at Deakin University (Geelong) in July 2014. My thanks to Patricia Clancy and to the referees whose comments have allowed me to strengthen various elements.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/france/joint\\_statement.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/france/joint_statement.html)  
Accessed 4 July 2014.

of the environment and climate change, of international development, and of common interests in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Bracketing away for the time being what immediate fate the document might have, given its signature, on the Australian side, by a person (Kevin Rudd) to whom an incoming government was very hostile, one must admit that the declaration looks like a comprehensive determination undertaken by two mature nations in full *connaissance de cause*. (On the French side it was signed by the then French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé.) It projects French-Australian relations as a powerful and coherent existing reality, historically grounded, an undissolvable and symmetrical marriage, whose most productive years are yet to come. Many Australians, not least the many hundreds of teachers of French in schools and universities who have in recent years had to struggle both with the persistent national monolingual mindset and with the effects of policies favouring Asian languages, will be delighted by such an official policy statement, and so they should be.

However, let us now shift to the 'bottom-up' perspective. With its Australian Winter 2014 number, the journal of the Institute for the Study of French-Australian Relations changed its name from *Explorations* to the *French Australian Review*. This change corresponds to the maturing of the journal itself, which over the past ten years or so of its thirty year existence has become a highly regarded specialist publication, with fully refereed articles, a prestigious international editorial board and a strong bibliographical section. The change is also indicative of a maturing of the field of study to which the journal is devoted, namely those historical and ongoing relations between France and Australia to which the 2012 Joint Declaration refers. ISFAR and the *French Australian Review* are not the only space where serious academic study of the field has occurred—far from it—but their watching brief does give them considerable detailed knowledge of work done and being done, and they are hence useful as a prism through which to look at the Joint Declaration more critically.

Three interrelated problems immediately emerge. They have to do with the notion of an 'unbroken friendship' dating from the arrival of the first French consul, the time-span (170 years) of the relations, and the vagueness of the so-called 'historical links' described as underlying current bi-lateral relations. Studies of Australian reactions to the 1970s French nuclear testing in the Pacific or its resumption in the 1990s would be sufficient in themselves to undercut the claim to 'unbroken friendship' (Nossal 1997, Alomes and

Provis 1998, Piquet 2000), but they are not the only examples of rupture or extreme tension. Others would relate to the religious dimension, at least in colonial times, when for many in the Australian establishment it was difficult to feel friendship for a Catholic nation (Stuer 1982, 34ff), or to New Caledonia and the New Hebrides and indeed the general presence of France in the Pacific (Aldrich 1990, 1993). There was a reasonably serious trade war between France and Australia in the 1930s (Schedvin 2008, 25), and surely a most telling case is that in Syria, in 1941, when French and Australian soldiers were fighting and killing each other in a brutal if short-lived conflict (Wailly 2006). I shall return to this conflictual dimension below.

As for dating French-Australian relations to coincide with the arrival of the first French consul in Australia in 1842, this entails both an understatement from the French perspective and a serious anachronism from the Australian one. Actual French links to post-European settlement in Australia date to La Pérouse in 1788, and, as we shall see, other sightings and dreamings go back much further still. And from the Australian point of view, in 1842 Australia was still more than half a century away from any sense of integrated national awareness, and further still from any semblance of diplomatic autonomy (Edwards, 1983). In truth, while there are indeed many strong historical links that a French-Australian strategic partnership can be built on, it is important, indeed crucial, that those links be articulated in an historically verifiable way. All of the big areas designated by the 2012 Declaration for collaboration have in fact their own histories, which need to be worked through systematically so that the various threads can be drawn together into an overview. The usefulness of such an overview, for scholars, will be in the provision of a stronger framework for current research, and a stimulus for more concentrated research in the future. But, just as pressingly, it will also have value for the wider public, through whose increased understanding there will be a better chance for the aspirations outlined in the 2012 Declaration to be realised.

Simply to raise the question of French-Australian relations, of course, begs other questions that for the moment must be left unanswered: how, for example, would such a field compare to that of French-British relations, or the relations between France and Germany, France and Canada, France and America, France and New Zealand, France and former colony X or Y? (And similar questions arise from the Australian perspective.) Such comparative dimensions will inevitably impinge on the elaboration of any

work of reference that has the relationship between France and Australia as its focus. Here, however, the concentration will be on the particular field.

## Complex Beginnings

When should we set the beginning? Most of us are familiar with the story of how La Pérouse arrived at Botany Bay shortly after the First Fleet, which makes documented French presence in Australia almost co-extensive, from 1788, with the fledgling British colony. 1788 could thus be taken as a reasonably uncontroversial Year 1 of French-Australian relations. At the same time, if we bear in mind the account of the 1503 journey of Gonneville, subject of a great deal of controversy, most recently aired in a special number of the *Australian Journal of French Studies* edited by Margaret Sankey (2013), one might argue that the French had a connection with this particular *terre australe* well over two hundred years in advance of European settlement, even if it turned out to be only imaginary. John Dunmore (1965) and Leslie Marchant (1982) are not alone in pointing to the long-standing power of attraction of the Great Southern Land in the French imagination. Particularly worthy of attention is the thesis developed by Jean Garagnon (1982) that unrealised French proposals for the exploration and colonisation of the *terres australes* were in fact well known to the British and instrumental in the actual colonisation carried out by them. And there is a certain amount of evidence that Australia continues, through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and perhaps even to this day, to be cultivated in some French imaginings as an exotic dream-space, a kind of trope or paradigm of that which still needs to be discovered, or always needs to be discovered. This phenomenon was signalled by Patricia Clancy and Colin Thornton-Smith (1991) in relation to literary representation in colonial times, and more recently, by Andrew McGregor (2010) in relation to the French reception of Australian cinema.

Significantly, the Gonneville-Paulmier narrative has as a key element the arrival in France of an indigenous man, Essomericq, who founds a family, which must surely be the first claimed Australian presence in France. Whatever its veracity, we have here a predictive indicator of a crucial difference between French and British approaches to the newly discovered continent, and one which will have its role as the relationship develops: for the French, Australia was not perceived as *terra nullius* and,

as the records of various expeditions amply illustrate (see Blackman 1990, Dyer 2005), indigenous Australians were the object of attentive and mostly respectful curiosity. One can argue that things might have been different had the French had colonisation in mind; but they didn't. And while, as Dyer shows, there were plenty of negative encounters between French explorers and native 'savages' (p. x), it is on balance an idealistic humanism inherited from the Rousseauian Enlightenment that guides the French approach, and darkens their perception of a people being destroyed by alcohol and European diseases, and even hunted down and massacred.

All in all, the French voyages of discovery in the Pacific offer the most solid introduction to my proposed narrative overview project. Integral to French history, they have also been subject to systematic study from an Australian perspective. Beginning with Ernest Scott's pioneering work in 1910, the scrutiny of the French role in discovery, mapping and scientific research in and around Australia has never been neglected, so that today, including valuable translations into English of key documents, there are two or three dozen books available on the subject (e.g. Carey Taylor 1937, Triebel and Batt 1943, Dunmore 1965, 1969, Cornell 1965, Marchant 1969, 1982, Bonnemains et al. 1988, Duyker 2001, 2006, Fornasiero et al. 2004, 2014, West-Sooby 2013). The relationship between France and Australia has also, in this particular sector, been enhanced by a number of scholarly collaborations, notably through colleagues in various Australian universities with Jacqueline Bonnemains and the Muséum d'histoire naturelle in Le Havre, and most spectacularly in the Baudin Legacy Project, in which the contributions of many individuals have received international institutional support rarely, if ever, seen in a humanities research project in this country<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://sydney.edu.au/arts/research/baudin/project/>

Accessed 18 October 2014. The major project partners in Australia were the Universities of Adelaide and Sydney and the Australian Research Council. They were supported by the Fonds national de la recherche scientifique, Belgium, the French Embassy in Australia, the State Library of New South Wales, the Australian National Maritime Museum, the Muséum d'histoire naturelle, Le Havre, the French Archives nationales and the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, Paris. The research achievements of the project, as shown in the bibliography, are exceptional.

## Presence

A second major ‘landmark’ is the topos of a French *presence* in Australia. There are elements here of quite extensive historical coverage, though it is far from systematic, and some of it is seriously dated. Credit for the first serious reflection on this theme must go to Jeanine Miller (Meunier) (sister of the celebrated French-Australian scientist Jacques Miller), who in 1961 wrote a twelve-page essay for the *Annuaire français d’Australie*. Modestly entitled ‘French People in Australia’, the piece recalls the work of the explorers, and then moves on to cover an impressive litany of French contributions to the development of Australia: among other things, records of gold rush times experience (e.g. Fauchery 1859), participation in the budding wine industry, the religious orders which established schools, the role of various individuals in all kinds of industries, from pastoral to metallurgical, the cinema, aviation, trade and banking, music and the visual arts. Miller points to the formation of the French community in Sydney, the 1842 establishment of the consulate, the importance of the weekly newspaper, the *Courrier australien*, the founding of the Sydney Alliance Française and the French Chamber of Commerce. It looks at the historical role of French in the education system, and provides useful bibliographical information about French writings on Australia. In a general way, her list of categories overlaps a great deal with that of the 2012 Declaration, which inter alia allows us to distinguish readily between more long-standing patterns of interaction (e.g. trade, the Pacific Ocean, education, the arts), and the more recent areas of common interest or of a search for common ground (the environment, climate, the Indian Ocean).

Miller’s document remains something of a foundational text. It had strong influences on the next work dealing with the French in Australia, Anny Stuer’s 1982 *The French in Australia*. With an explicit focus on demography, Stuer tracks French migration to Australia from 1788 to 1947, showing that while actual numbers were always very small, and while many French failed to naturalise, the French contribution to the development of post-European settlement was disproportionate to their numbers in many of those areas sketched out by Miller. Stuer’s work, archivally based and subject to academic rigour, though not flawless, is the first published book-length study of the French presence in Australia. Its bibliography remains valuable. The book is also symbolic of the fragility of the field, partly

because of its chronological limitations, but also because its publication was never designed to reach a wide audience: it is an in-house ANU publication, and essentially, in material terms, a typescript in hard cover. It, and the field, deserve better.

That is no doubt what Jean Rosemberg believed when, having completed his MA thesis on the French in Australia in 1985, he wrote his own book for what was to be a commercial publication. Unfortunately, the project fell through, and Rosemberg himself died before alternatives could be found. (The manuscript survives, and is available to researchers through ISFAR at <http://www.isfar.org.au/resources/jean-rosemberg/>.) It extends Stuer's coverage both chronologically (into the 1970s) and thematically, paying attention in particular to the vitriolic conflicts that developed around France's nuclear testing program at Mururoa.

Other than these books, we have as resources on the 'presence' theme the 1984 Nisbet-Blackman edited volume, *The French-Australian Cultural Connection* (which marked the beginning of the short-lived UNSW French-Australian Research Centre) and the very handsome and helpful catalogue of a 1984 Melbourne exhibition, *The French Presence in Victoria 1800–1901*. We have catalogues from the more recent Sydney exhibitions, *Vive la différence ! The French in New South Wales*, (State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 2004) and *The French in Hunters Hill* (Hunters Hill Town Hall, 2012). And we have the fifty-six numbers of *Explorations* (now *The French Australian Review*), of which all but the most recent numbers are available on-line.

Finally, there is TROVE, the National Library's search engine. While there are limits on the NLA's digitisation process, and a continuing need for manual consultation of various periodicals, the resources available through TROVE are already enormous, and have made the tracking of individuals and institutions across time much quicker and easier. It is especially pleasing to note that, at the time of writing, TROVE has scheduled a digitised version of the long-running *Courrier australien* (1892–2011)<sup>4</sup>, which with its satellite publications (including the *Almanach*, 1985, and the *Annuaire*, 1957–1983) constitutes without doubt the single most informative source on the French presence in Australia.

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<sup>4</sup> The 1892–1984 holdings in the first instance.

## From presence to relationship

A problem with the ‘presence’ paradigm in terms of developing a narrative of ‘relationship’ is that it emphasises the lack of symmetry and synchronicity in the historical links between the two countries, particularly in the first century or so, and hence does not adequately allow for those developments of intercourse and exchange on which the friendship between Australia and France came to be based. It is true that for more than a hundred years after European settlement, Australian history was much more affected by connections with France than the reverse. Given the respective longevity, power, populations, and place in world affairs of the two nations, this is not surprising. There is, as will be shown below, a compelling case to include an account of Australians in France, and even of an Australian dreaming of France, but it simply doesn’t make much sense to talk about an Australian presence in France in the same way that we can do in respect to the French presence in Australia, and certainly not in the same time frame. Although their numbers were small, French people, both as individuals and as representatives of government or commercial concerns, coming to Australia out of curiosity or self-interest or a sense of duty, formed a community, set up institutions and contributed to the development of the wider community in all sorts of positive ways. Some of them became vectors for the dissemination in the new English colonies of many of the great achievements of French civilisation (including French literature), a fact which surely contributed to the high levels of francophilia evident in Australia even before Federation, and of particular significance at the time of the First World War. This was indeed a presence, in fact a formative and very largely beneficial influence, which needs to be retained as a distinct category. Bouvet’s work (2007) on more recent French migration is pertinent here, as is Duyker’s (e.g. 1988) on the francophone Mauritian community. Today, in a number of important social categories—food and hospitality, transport, fashion—the French presence in Australia remains a reality: a reality made more visible through the working visa scheme that over the past few years has been bringing over 20,000 young French people per annum to our shores.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.workpermit.com/news/2013-09-02/australia-issues-more-working-holiday-visas>. Accessed 10 October 2014.



At the same time, in looking to identify the steps that might permit an epistemological shift from ‘presence’ to the kind of ‘relationship’ assumed by the 2012 Declaration, it is helpful to turn towards some of the categories that emphasise the notion of *exchange* rather than one-way reception—and initially to trade, diplomacy, culture and education, where one can find important continuities running from the 19<sup>th</sup> century for a hundred years or more, making Australia’s 1901 date of Federation perhaps less of an absolute marker of the moment when Australian distinctiveness becomes an ingredient of loyalty to the Empire. I am suggesting, in other words, that in order to synthesise an historical overview, it will be necessary to shift a certain number of matters so far considered under the ‘French presence’ model into one or other of the categories dedicated to relationship.

Let us take three examples of this idea. Both Stuer and Rosemberg deal with the wool trade under the ‘presence’ model—as does Jacqueline Dwyer (1998) in her family history approach in *Flanders in Australia*. This is not in itself inaccurate, but in reflecting on a phenomenon that was hugely significant to the economies of both countries over a period that ran from the 1870s to the 1970s—involving several of Australia’s major cities as well as rural areas—it is easy to see that trade on this scale inevitably led to all kinds of infrastructural developments as well as to extended, multi-generational people-to-people exchanges. ‘Relationship’ acquired meaning at both the institutional/national levels and at the level of people, and we witness the development of a culture of partnership that opens the doors to all sorts of other kinds of development.<sup>6</sup> The well-accepted image of Australia riding to nationhood on the sheep’s back is of particular relevance here, but beyond wool, trade between Australia and France can be seen as an important indicator of a growing relationship. Even before Federation, French economists were eyeing Australia with an interest quite distinct from Australia’s associations with Britain and the Empire (Métin 1901); this process was accelerated with the 1918 French trade mission to Australia led by General Pau (see *Mission Française en Australie* 1919). As Boris Schedvin points out (2008, 12–24), during the long years when the development of an independent Australian foreign policy was hampered by the nation’s structural links to Britain, it was

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<sup>6</sup> Two Australian specialists of Economic History, Professors David Merret and Simon Ville, are presently engaged on a large project on the history of the wool trade.

significantly through trade, including with France, that the British shackles were challenged. When Prime Minister Hughes appointed Clive H. Voss<sup>7</sup> as Australia's trade representative in France (where he operated during the entire interwar period), it was a subversion, albeit admittedly a gentle one, of the authority of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, officially charged with representing Australia's interests.

As for diplomacy proper—my second example—it is hard to accept the 2012 Declaration's suggestion that the 1842 French establishment of a consulate in Sydney represents the beginning of any meaningful partnership. The early French diplomat stories are certainly part of the French 'presence', but in a project to show how the relationship did eventually develop, they might be better treated in a chapter that could be entitled 'From French diplomacy to bi-lateral relations', the chronology of which would run in two phases: from 1842 to the exchange of ambassadors<sup>8</sup> after World War II, and from there to the present. There are various key pressure points and moments. The most fraught is undoubtedly the French presence in the Pacific, seen by Australia, even in its colonial days, as its rightful sphere of influence<sup>9</sup>. This question is also linked to the broader one of Australia's position in relation to some of France's other colonial activities, in Indochina, and also in the

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<sup>7</sup> Voss is unjustly ignored by Australian history. His role in the development of French-Australian relations would seem to be considerable, and deserving of more extensive coverage.

<sup>8</sup> The Australian envoy, William Hodgson, first bore the title of 'Minister'. This was changed to 'Ambassador' in 1948. The first French Ambassador to Australia was Gabriel Padovani, who arrived in Canberra in June 1949 and died in office on 1st May 1952.

<sup>9</sup> There is an extensive and growing literature dealing with the different aspects of this area (e.g. Thompson 1980, Stuer 1982, Aldrich 1990, 1993, Forster 1996, Donohoo 2013, Fisher 2013). The 2014 Rudé seminar included a number of valuable research papers by young scholars, such as Alexis Bergantz (Australian National University), '*A Romance of Australia and New Caledonia*': *the development of Australian nationalism(s) and imperialism in the Pacific in relation to the French colony, 1853–1914*; Briony Neilson (University of Sydney), *Debating the Convict Stain: French Penal Colonization and the Legacy of the Australian Model in the Late Nineteenth Century*; and Ingrid Sykes (La Trobe University) *Leprosy and the French Colonial Imagination in late Nineteenth- and early Twentieth-Century New Caledonia: La lutte contre la lèpre*.

Indian Ocean. Further issues include Federation, States' residual autonomies and the progressive creep towards an independent national foreign policy; the ideological paradoxes of Australia purchasing French military hardware and supplying France with uranium while opposing nuclear power and the testing of nuclear weapons. During a period of tension between the two countries a joint personal initiative in 1989 by the Australian and French prime ministers Bob Hawke and Michel Rocard led to the 1991 Madrid protocol which provides for a comprehensive environmental protection of Antarctica, especially from mining.

The diplomacy area is one in which a great deal of research is still needed. Some valuable work has been done on a number of the French consuls (e.g. Thornton-Smith 1994, Barko 2002, Barrett 2011). But notwithstanding Ivan Barko's precious list of French consuls in Australia—still a work in progress<sup>10</sup>—the actual activity of the vast majority of them, both in Sydney and in Melbourne, remains unstudied. This matter also involves archival problems. The story has been told of the miraculous survival of the Melbourne consular archives after the departure of the Vichy-loyalist Charles Lancial in 1941 (Nettelbeck 1988); but were those of the Sydney consular archives indeed lost when the deeply loathed Consul General Jean Trémoulet left Australia in shame (Barrett 2011)? As for Australian diplomatic representation in France, a very great deal of fleshing out needs to be done of the few existing accounts (e.g. Edwards 1983).

My third example of the presence to relationship shift is the case of the Alliance Française, the history of which, in the Australian context, is certainly complex enough to merit a place of its own in the overview. The Alliance is undoubtedly a French organisation, founded explicitly for the propagation of the French language throughout the world. One can even argue that although it was initially a non-government initiative, it has over time taken on a much more official French character, through its close association with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; it is, not unreasonably, often seen as acting as a kind of extension of French cultural policy abroad. It is, for example, the principal vehicle of the annual French Film Festival, which draws nationwide audiences of over 100,000. First established in Melbourne in 1890, the Alliance now has branches in all major Australian

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<sup>10</sup> Ivan Barko intends to make the list available on the ISFAR Resources website.

cities and in many regional localities. It is indeed a striking exemplar of French presence.

It is also a model of French-Australian partnership. The more than thirty local branches are associations governed under Australian law, and they are managed by committees or boards responsible to local authorities. Where property is involved, its ownership is Australian. In practice, in those Alliances which benefit from the services of French-paid *détachés*, these tend to play major roles in the development of pedagogical and cultural programs, but the functioning of the institution is collaborative.

This does not mean that its history is free of conflict. Existing studies of the Alliance (e.g. Nettelbeck 1990, Thornton-Smith 1994, Barko 1999, Barko 2013–2014) offer some colourful insights into cultural interactions among French and Australians in different Australian settings over the past 125 years. They also show marked and interesting diversity in the way the Alliances have developed and functioned in those settings. The contrasts between Melbourne and Sydney are particularly dramatic, and can no doubt serve, among other things, to illuminate in new ways the acknowledged tensions between the nation's two biggest and most ambitious cities.

## **Other Likely Sections**

In line with the 2012 Declaration's recognition of shared memorial responsibility for the two World Wars, I would posit a special chapter on something like 'French-Australian Relations in Global Conflict'. The most obviously significant historical presence of Australians in France occurred in the western front battles of World War I. For Australia, 1914–1918 remains a period of crucial national importance and commemoration (notwithstanding the historical debates on its role in the formation of an autonomous national identity), and as we know there is a voluminous literature on the various battles fought in France by Australians. There is also a growing understanding, through the work of people like Bruce Scates (2008), on the residual drawing power of battle sites, cemeteries and memorials for subsequent generations of Australian visitors and pilgrims. Most of us now know the story of Villers-Bretonneux and its 'Never Forget Australia' motto, but how typical is it of French memory of the Australian sacrifice? Is Australia really remembered

beyond a few villages in the region of Amiens?<sup>11</sup> And there is another aspect of World War I that is pertinent to the French-Australian connection, and in need of further research: how many Australians—or French, for that matter—are aware that the two nations were companions in arms at that most iconic of campaigns, Gallipoli, and that French losses were similar to those of the Australians (Heyningen 2000)?

As for World War II, we need to consider, among other things, how it marks a moment when France begins to slip from being an acknowledged Great Power to being a ‘Middle-Sized Power’, and from being a strong imperial centre to becoming a more discreet participant in a changing world order that will produce, among other things, the European Union. Australia, during the same time, grows in population and self-confidence, but also concentrates more systematically on its place in the Asia-Pacific. Australian support of the Free French movement after France’s defeat in 1940, including in New Caledonia (Lawrey 1982, Munholland 2005), was surely beneficial to postwar relations, but there are still many unanswered questions about the nation’s involvement in the Franco-French civil war in Syria in 1941 (Wailly 2006); and the links still need to be established between that period and more recent defence collaborations, such as in twenty-first century Afghanistan.

Education is a field that offers rich scope for both historical and structural analysis. The French language permeates both secondary and tertiary education in Australia (and now, to an increasing degree, primary levels as well). Its continuing strengths are paradoxical in a context where general levels of LOTE (Languages Other Than English) learning have stagnated or fallen, and where government policies have favoured funding exclusively for a range of Asian languages. The factors that might help explain the paradox are numerous and complex: they include traditions inherited from our British forebears, but also the work of French teachers, including members of religious orders, who came to Australia in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An account of the study of France in Australian universities (Barko and Martin 1997) will document and analyse the shift from an exclusively

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<sup>11</sup>In addition to the towns ‘adopted’ by Australian cities after the war—Villers-Bretonneux (Melbourne), Poilcourt (Sydney) and Dernancourt (Adelaide), a close connection has been maintained with Pozières. For quite different reasons—associated with the trade in sheepskins—Mazamet, in the south of France, retains Australian connections through its street names.

literature-based curriculum to the much more diverse cultural offerings that exist in French programs today: as Margaret Sankey (2003, 82) has pointed out:

All these fields are part of the enterprise which aims at answering the questions regarding the past and present relationship of France to Australasia through the exploration of our intertwined destinies, and ultimately to contribute to the understanding of why we, as Antipodeans, are studying and teaching French.

This section will offer portraits of some of the ‘grand figures’ of the field, such as A. R. Chisholm and Judith Robinson-Valéry; it will use the examples of Australia’s two major French studies journals (*Australian Journal of French Studies* and *Essays in French Literature and Culture*), both of which have been in operation for more than fifty years. It will also include the work of historians of France, that of the George Rudé Society, that of various scholars in fine arts history (e.g. Galbally 2008) and that of ISFAR.

Australian academic study of France has its counterpoint in the French study of Australia. Beyond the exploration narratives, there is much early French writing about Australia (Poltzer 1952), but it was only in the late twentieth century that French universities began, through the work of people such as Victor Dupont (1967 to mid-seventies), Xavier Pons (1982, 1994, 2002) at the University of Toulouse Le Mirail (Bhreathnach 2009), and Sue Ryan-Fazilleau at the University of La Rochelle (Ramsland 2013) to offer sustained and targeted coverage of Australian literature and society. Systematic study of this phenomenon remains to be done (in part through oral history), but we can already observe that today there is a dense network of educational exchanges, involving undergraduates, academic teachers and researchers, and the double-badging of PhD programs across many different fields of specialisation.

The 1977 Australia-France Agreement on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation, as a bilateral government agreement, can be seen as a step on the way to the 2012 Declaration. In addition to the intergovernmental links, there are a number of relatively recent organisational structures which include the Australia France Foundation (established 1989) and the Australian French Association for Science and Technology (AFAS, which originated in the 1960s). Historiographically, this part of the field will probably require two sections, one for science and technology, and one

for the arts and culture. Perhaps because of the dominance of traditional academic interest in literature and culture, the scientific and technological terrain is one of the least well covered thus far, although there exist a number of stories enticing enough to ensure a lively chapter. Two early instances are the prodigious work of Ferdinand von Mueller, the long-serving director of the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens, who throughout much of the second half of the nineteenth century was exchanging knowledge and plants with France and its empire (Home and Maroske 1995); and the short-lived, but drama-filled activity of the Pasteur Institute in Sydney (Chaussivert and Blackman 1988). There is also, on the eve of the First World War, the impact on Australian aviation history by pilot Maurice Guillaux, not least through his conduct of the first Melbourne to Sydney mail run (Lockely 2014). Stuer (1982, 213) notes the significant French contributions to Australia's modernisation in engineering and telecommunications in the period after the Second World War, and we can expect to expand this analysis for the more contemporary period, to include—among other things—transport and diverse collaborations in the biomedical domain.

Arts and culture have always received a great deal of attention in discussions of Australian relations with France, and the main question here will be how to shape the vast and variegated mass of available material. I would argue that this would best be achieved, once again, through a structure that moves from influence to engagement, dialogue or exchange. Wallace Kirsop (1991, 1995) has argued long and convincingly for consideration of the book trade as an important indicator of the impact of French culture in Australia, particularly in relation to 'nagging questions about our place in the scheme of things and about our cultural identity' (1995, 1). The attraction to, and appreciation of French literature in Australia is indeed profound and enduring. But we can observe that Kirsop's position about the importance of books is equally validated in respect to the increasing flow of Australian writing into France via translation. Helen Frank (2007) has documented the French reception of Australian children's literature; but we can also note the very recent successes of the works of young Australian writers, such as Eliot Perlman, whose *Seven Types of Ambiguity* both drew critical acclaim and produced spectacular sales in France, and Anna Funder, whose *Stasiland* and *All that I am* were highly praised. Research in this area is much facilitated by Elaine Lewis' 'French-Australian Bibliographical Notes' in *Explorations* (now *The French Australian Review*).

Similar patterns can be discerned across other cultural activities. In cinema, for example, Australia's beginnings owed much to the Lumière Brothers' envoy, Marius Sestier, and to the initiatives of the Pathé Brothers (Burnett 1985); and as we have seen, Australian audiences continue to flock to French films; but for over four decades now, Australian cinema also has an attentive reception in France, albeit a sometimes idiosyncratic one (McGregor 2010). The debt of Australian painters to France is well understood, less so the role of Australian painters in France—although the 2014 Australian National Library exhibition on J. W. Power will help change that (Donaldson and Stephen 2014). At the same time, one might wonder how many of the tens of thousands who revelled in the National Gallery of Victoria's 2013 'Monet's Garden' exhibition were aware of the immense drawing power in today's Paris of Australian indigenous art.<sup>12</sup> Australian artists and other cultural agents have, over time, developed the confidence of their own identities, and if the encounter with French culture was undoubtedly a crucial influence in that process, it is now much more the case that France has become a space—among others, in the era of globalisation, but still a privileged one—where Australian cultural specificities can claim the right to be seen and heard. The triumph of choreographer Meryl Tankard's *Oracle* in Lyon (Tran 2011) makes the point in respect to the 'high' art of contemporary dance. While the Dior New Look collections in Sydney and Melbourne in 1946 were a major cultural event, the traffic can also move in the other direction as in the Paris presence of Collette Dinnigan, Martin Grant and others. And barista Tom Clark has carried Australian coffee taste to the heart of Parisian café culture (Jacobs 2012), while Tina Arena has become an import in popular music.

As a final chapter (bearing in mind that all these structural suggestions may be subject to modification as the project develops), it is tempting to posit an echo of the early 'French presence in Australia' notion. I have already noted the impact of an Australian presence in France during the world wars, especially the first. Today, almost half a million Australians

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to the substantial holdings of the Musée du Quai Branly and the major exhibition—'Aux sources de la peinture aborigène'—held there in 2012–2013, one can point to at least four Parisian commercial galleries specialising in Australian indigenous art. It is worth noting that the Louvre bought some Aboriginal paintings from Stéphane Jacob and, for the first time, in 1998, its journal featured aboriginal art (Le Fur 1998).



visit France each year, and considerable numbers of Australians have chosen to live—permanently or for extended periods—in France. The phenomena of tourism and expatriate residency are clearly elements in the development of Australian-French relationship, sometimes very important and enduring ones. Rosemary Lancaster, in her *Je suis australienne: remarkable women in France, 1880–1945* (2008), offers a series of portraits designed to show how sojourns in France, from the 1880s to the end of the Second World War, helped define ‘Australian women’s changing sense of self and place’ (xvi). From a quite different perspective, the story of Louise Hanson-Dyer (Davidson 1994) is that of an Australian woman’s significant contribution to French cultural life through the creation of the Oiseau-Lyre music publishing company. There are other stories as well, including some that take us into darker territory, such as that of Myrtle Jones, the Tasmanian farmer’s daughter who married Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, France’s evil commissioner for Jewish Affairs during the Nazi Occupation (Callil, 2006). A key research question in the ‘Australian presence in France’ area will be the degree to which, beyond these individual itineraries, communities of one kind or another have been formed and have lasted (e.g. Lewis 2006).

## Conclusions

In this article, I have argued the importance of creating a detailed historical synthesis of Australia’s relations with France from their beginnings until the present. Although vast in scope, the construction of such an overview has become a priority with the 2012 joint declaration of strategic partnership between the two nations. The ‘map’ proposed here outlines ten areas: voyages of discovery, the French presence and influences in Australia, trade, diplomacy, the world wars, the Alliance Française, education, science and technology, the arts and culture, and the Australian presence in France. Some indication has been given of work already accomplished in these categories, and of what gaps remain most prominent, and the resources available to help bridge them.

Is the proposed study likely to shake the pillars of existing history? It will at the very least, through its emphasis on different dimensions of relationship, introduce and illuminate some new facets of both Australian and French history. It will also contribute towards the elimination or reduction

of stubborn stereotypes on both sides. From the Australian perspective, it can be expected to do more. From what can already be seen, it is clear that the ‘French connections’ of Australian history offer a valuable angle for better understanding of the processes through which Australia developed its autonomies of self-perception and action in the world. Whether those connections are actually more instrumental in that development than has to date been recognised is a hypothesis that the proposed overview will confront and test.

The spirit of shared commitment to high ideals represented in the 2012 Declaration would seem to be a good chronological end-point of the narrative. If both sides hold up their part of the bargain, it will make for a splendid conclusion to a dramatic story, and one that, while giving due place to the shadows that have sometimes darkened the relationship between Australia and France, opens optimistically onto the future.

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