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Conclusion: a temporal and spatial mapping of the French in London

Debra Kelly

This book has provided a history of the social, cultural, political and – to some extent – economic presence of the French in London, and explored the many ways in which this presence has contributed to the life of the British capital city. Within a dual historical and contemporary focus, the varied exchanges that have characterized the relationship between French ‘exile’, ‘migrant’, ‘visitor’ (any term used to describe those various French citizens who took up residence in London at different times, and for different lengths of time, is fraught with caveats) and host city have been discussed. As has been seen, the British capital has often provided a place of refuge and/or opportunity to very different French men and women from across the political spectrum, of differing religious and social beliefs, and from different social classes. Successive chapters have analysed in detail some of the well-known and less well-known stories in the history of these varied French citizens; from monarchs and aristocrats to revolutionaries, and on to today’s high profile sportsmen and business people together with their several hundred thousand lesser known compatriots.¹

Many French artists and writers have also been previously vividly brought to life in, for example, David Arkell’s vignettes of Stéphane Mallarmé in Piccadilly, both Emile Zola and Camille Pissarro in Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood, Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud in Camden Town, Jules Vallès in Fitzrovia, James Tissot in St. John’s Wood, Paul Valéry in Bloomsbury and the City, Guillaume Apollinaire in Clapham, and more.² Some stayed for a short time, others for longer than intended, some never

¹ Several contemporary French people have high public/media profiles in the UK for different reasons. Examples range from Arsène Wenger as the manager of Arsenal, Thierry Henry and several other French and francophone football players, to P.-Y. Gerbeau, nicknamed ‘the Gerbil’ by the British press at the time of the ill-fated Millennium Dome project (now the O2 in Docklands); the chef Raymond Blanc; the fashion designer Nicole Farhi; and the list could go on.

² D. Arkell, *Ententes Cordiales: the French in London and Other Adventures* (1989). Others included are: Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, Alphonse Daudet, Alain-Fournier, Marcel Schwob, Valéry Larbaud, Louis Hémon, Céline, Jean de Boschère, Maurice Sachs, Simone Weil and Michel Butor.

departing and becoming part of the fabric of the city, and almost all leaving a legacy of some kind: the Huguenots, the French Revolution émigrés and later monarchist exiles often living in some considerable comfort, the various exile communities during the nineteenth century usually living in rather less comfort, the small but varied French communities operating in different spheres of the capital's life in the early twentieth century and the inter-war period, the complex histories of the Free French in the Second World War, and the increasingly numerous and diverse French and francophone contemporary residents of the capital.

Throughout these chapters, knowledge that we already have on the French in London is sometimes reinforced, and sometimes modified, with long-standing perceptions sometimes challenged. For example, Elizabeth Randall's work (further developed by the detailed examples provided by Paul Boucher and Tessa Murdoch) shows the ways in which the French bring skills and knowledge – in printing, silk and luxury goods, medicine, sculpture, silver- and goldsmithing, clock-making, tailoring, music and dance, engineering, teaching and translation, as craftsmen, artists and intellectuals, financiers – to London, but also shows that Protestant immigration at the time was not always for religious purposes, and already many claimed to have come to London to seek a new living and opportunities. Máire Cross shows how exiles who found London a less welcoming place nonetheless interacted with both their hosts and other French citizens, reinforcing a French identity while spreading knowledge (not always flattering or positive) of London. Importantly for a comparison with today's London French, she also shows how French visitors played a part in the construction of London's identity as a world city. Furthermore, the significance of London as an important and clearly defined political space for the French is added to that of a place of refuge (although that is also, of course, political) and of economic opportunity. The 'multiple dimensions' of being French in London in earlier centuries become more and more apparent, and in a way that resonates with the contemporary London French experience. Thomas Jones and Robert Tombs's work reinforces London as a centre of politics, the press and publishing, with the capital city and its refugees having an impact on each other in these domains; but political exiles established businesses and institutions too, while some exiled artisans and labourers also continued their old trades. In nineteenth-century London there was strong demand for French labour in some of these trades, including cooks, cobblers and tailors and also, again like the Huguenots before them, as designers and for language instruction, and (for example) as wine merchants.

As a counterpoint to those settling into trades and business, Constance Bantman stresses the strangeness and 'otherness' of the political exiles; for the anarchists there was an almost complete lack of integration into the

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host society, and strikingly they ‘appeared as a foreign body in the city’. Life for many French refugees and exiles in the city was very hard; London and Londoners were unappealing, and their experiences and their accounts (where they exist) were sometimes harsh and negative. The terrible poverty in which many lived gave rise to another enduring feature of French life in London today: charitable ventures that also generated around them important social activities.³

Michel Rapoport however, focuses on the numbers of French citizens who participated in and contributed more successfully to London’s economic growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are again striking comparisons with today’s French population – statistics difficult to obtain because of numbers not being included in official documentation; a largely young population; and the attractions of an open labour market and of a level of professional and social success seen as not possible in France. Four groups are identified in the ‘French colony’ which would be recognizable today and, as the previous chapters show, are identifiable since the settlement of the Huguenots: commercial, educational, social and charitable, with the French working in food – and Valerie Mars’s chapter discusses the many facets (myths and realities) of the development of French cuisine in London which again endure to this day – and fashion, and as workmen, craftsmen and engineers; in the City of London (including young people being sent to London to be trained in British business and financial practices), in the service industry, as performers of various kinds, as booksellers, as painters and sculptors, and as teachers. It was in the nineteenth century that the importance of the French associations and societies in London begins to crystallize, another important aspect of French life in London for many professional people right up until today. The Federation of French Associations in Great Britain (founded in 1942) still thrives and is emblematic of a certain kind of French community in London, with close links to the French Embassy and to established professional associations, businesses and cultural groups, many with historic roots in London.⁴

³ With reference to today’s London, see the work and research commissioned in 2010 by the French Consulate ‘The Forgotten of St Pancras’ (‘Les Oubliés de St Pancras’), referenced in the final chapter here, a testament to the continuing difficulties of some young French people arriving in the capital today; as is the Centre Charles Péguy, a French non-profit-making association in Shoreditch, established in 1954, which helps those struggling to find work and somewhere to live.

⁴ Fédération des Associations Françaises de Grande Bretagne (FAFGB), established in 1942. Its categories of associations include Alumni and Parents; Cultural (e.g., the Alliance Française, Drama Groups); Leisure (including a Bridge Group); Regional (e.g., for those from the Auvergne, Alsace, Corsica); Professional (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce,

The problems faced by these predecessors would also be recognized by contemporary French Londoners, not least the issue of schooling their children, as is evident in the final chapter, but here again attitudes and experiences are not necessarily those that might be expected. There is, then, continuity in the pre-war French colony that can be seen to have its roots in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ways of adapting to London (although these necessarily evolved down the centuries with the successive needs and desires of very different French exiles, refugees and economic migrants), a continuity that is still perceptible in contemporary London. There is however, one important rupture in the middle of the twentieth century:

At the beginning of the Second World War the components of London's French colony had undergone a change over the previous sixty years and now consisted largely of two groups. On the one hand, were those connected with business ... On the other hand, were people from the world of culture ... The colony was structured around a number of institutions – cultural ones such as the Institut Français, the French schools and churches; economic ones like the French Chamber of Commerce; the many professional societies; and charitable institutions such as the French Hospital.⁵

Essentially, such an analysis suggests that there was cohesion in the colony, despite the many divisions that France had endured during this period, but the outbreak of war, and especially the collapse of France in May–June 1940, brought about a radical change in the French colony in London. The chapters by Debra Kelly, Martyn Cornick and David Drake analyse some of those changes. French citizens of all classes and professions were forced to choose whether to support the legal government of France in Vichy; to support the continuing British resistance to Nazi Germany; to put their families first in the face of likely attack on London, and return to their kin in France, from whom they risked being separated for an unknown length of time; or perhaps to join the partisans backing General de Gaulle or another resistance group. Many returned to France, while different types of French people arrived in London – officers, ordinary soldiers, civilians from every sphere of French society, and politicians, often from opposing sides. It was a period of rupture in every sense, and 'Free French London', except for a few remaining traces from the popular (Soho restaurants) to the official (de Gaulle's statue and the plaque in Carlton Gardens), would

Franco-British Lawyers, London Expat Entrepreneurs Group); Charitable Institutions; Sport; Health; Culinary; Education; Military; and Religious (both Protestant and Catholic churches in London). A number of Franco-British societies also belong.

⁵ See the conclusion here to Michel Rapoport's chapter.

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be less recognizable, for all its temporary visibility in the host city, to the contemporary London French than the French colony before the war, even though certain businesses endured.

Throughout this history of the French in London considerable new research has therefore been presented, and areas where comparatively more research already existed (for example, work on the Huguenots and on various nineteenth-century exiles) have been re-evaluated within the larger context provided by this first continuous history. Current cultural, political, media, economic, academic and public interest (considered in more detail below) in the contemporary French presence in London is situated for the first time in a comprehensive historical contextualization of the presence of various French communities from the seventeenth century to the present day. Several broad areas of interest become apparent: the traffic of social, political and cultural ideas between France and London; the interchange of skilled workers between London and France and its effects; the traffic of technological knowledge and design ideas; ideas about French superiority in (for example) fashion, gastronomy and luxury goods; French visitors to London and London's image in France; and both commercial and cultural exchanges on a number of levels.

The fundamental questions that have been asked, either implicitly or explicitly, are numerous, and the answers vary in intriguing and important ways across the centuries. Who are the French nationals who come to London? When do they arrive? Why at that particular time? Why is London chosen as a destination? Where did and do the French live in London? Why that area, that street, that house? Has this remained the same, or evolved over the centuries, and why or why not for certain places? How do the French live in the capital? If they work, why do they work in that particular trade, profession, place? How do they build and develop their networks? How did and do the French in London act as a community? Is there indeed something that can be termed a French community (or communities) in London? Do the French in London consider themselves to be a community? Do other London citizens consider the French to be a community? If so why, and if not why not? Has this varied at different times and in different places? What are the other perceptions of Londoners by the French who have lived there at various times? What kinds of contributions do the French make socially, culturally and/or politically both to French community(ies) in London and to the host city? What has been and is their impact? Whether short-lived or longer term, like the lengths of stay of these French residents, what are the legacies that they have left? Successive chapters, each in their own way, answer these questions, and the first 'big picture' has

emerged of how the French have made use of the liberty – sometimes the equality, sometimes the fraternity (left out of the book's title ...) – and the opportunity afforded by London.

The narrative structure used has been that of a chronological mapping, intersected by a number of themes traced across the centuries and across the spaces and places of London: exile and refuge; politics; gastronomy; fashion; art, literature and music; leisure and pleasure; survival, opportunity and entrepreneurship; but above all, place and space. This 'picture' has also been given visual form in the series of maps created for each chapter as, collectively, the authors' analyses map those places in the capital most frequented and settled by the French, and the effects on those places across the centuries. From Hampstead in the north to Spitalfields in the east, from Soho in the centre to South Kensington in the south-west, and beyond, the physical traces of the French presence in London are many and varied, and are manifest in diverse places and institutions from the religious to the political, via the educational to the commercial. Mapping the places frequented and settled by the French, and the effects on those places across the centuries, facilitates an analysis of patterns of the London French according to class, gender, places of origin, historical period, and political and religious affiliation, leading to a further layer of conceptual considerations.

First, there is the question of the 'visibility' and 'invisibility' of the French during various historical periods. A partial answer to one of the fundamental questions listed earlier is that at certain times there has been a recognizable French community (or communities) in London, but not at others. The issue of the present day is particularly complex and it is clear that there is much more work to do on these aspects of charting and understanding more of the French presence. A further aspect of this book is that of making connections between the lives of contemporary French residents and their historical predecessors (whether seeking refuge or new opportunities), thereby giving further depth and significance to contemporary experience.

Second, on a more conceptual level, the transformation of places and spaces by the French presence in London has been considered: what are the lasting traces of this presence in diverse places and institutions from the religious to the political, from the educational to the creative to the commercial? Again, throughout the various chapters, these traces are apparent in the areas of London settled by the French, or in the institutions or professions with which they engaged, developed their ideas, and earned their living. As for the present day: how can contemporary traces of the large French presence (and this would need

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to include both real and virtual presences in the digital age) best be documented and analysed?⁶

Third, the preservation of values and/or identities by various categories of French exiles/migrants (for example on a religious or political level – Huguenots, monarchists, republicans) has been discussed; what difference did London make historically to these groups? It is clear that at various times, London offered a place to re-group, to re-evaluate strategies, to review relationships with France. How are French values and identities preserved by today's French migrants? What sorts of values and identities are important, and why? Finally, what are the old perceptions and new realities of the historical and contemporary French presence both for the French and for other Londoners, and indeed for French Londoners?

The point of tracing of links between where and how we find the French in London is certainly not to reinforce stereotypes, nor to 'essentialize' them in categories when there are clearly complex individual motives at work, even when these individuals are caught up in historical and political events. Quite the opposite. However, this first history clearly points to patterns among these complex sets of cultural and socio-economic interactions between already assimilated populations living in London, and French subjects or citizens arriving (both from France and from French overseas territories) in the capital over several centuries. These apparently simplistic 'categorizations' therefore reflect trends over time towards the clustering of French Londoners in certain trades and professions, from booksellers, luxury goods manufacturers and sellers, cooks and restaurateurs, and teachers, to financiers and entrepreneurs. However, further historical and contemporary research will no doubt disturb and revise such starting points, removing any risk of a unified or deterministic approach to historical and cultural analysis. Certainly in today's London, the younger generation of French and francophone residents present ever more and ever-evolving facets of what it is to live and work in the British capital. A search for understanding and meaning both in representations of the French in London (from within and from outside those communities) and in their experiences, motives, practices, organization and contributions, is necessarily an ongoing interpretive task, and one that analyses cultural change over time. The approach taken here as a starting point therefore analyses cultural exchange and transformation at the site of the encounter between French and British cultures, in a London that is itself constantly changing.

⁶ Saskia Huc-Hepher, the co-author of the final chapter, is also the curator (working with the British Library) of the 'London French special collection' in the UK Web Archive, which documents the online presence of the contemporary London French.

This book ends by providing insights into the contemporary French presence by assessing the motives and lives of a cross section of French, and French-speaking, people seeking new opportunities in London in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This final attention to the present day marks the book out as a timely history on a number of levels. In the contemporary social context, the French Consulate estimates that between 300,000 and 400,000 French citizens reside in the UK, with the majority choosing to live and work in London and the south-east. The numbers are large enough for Nicolas Sarkozy to urge 'France's Children' to return home, in a highly mediated campaign speech made in London in January 2007, marking the first time that a French presidential candidate campaigned in Britain, and highlighting what he called 'the intelligence, imagination and passion for work and desire for success' that the French have brought to London and that 'Paris needs so much'. Both the French and British press commented a great deal on the trip.⁷ The Sarkozy visit to London and the appeal to French citizens living outside France also highlighted an element of the ambiguous attitudes that the French state holds with regard to those who choose to live and work outside France, and of political reforms in France from 2008 onwards, as is discussed in more detail below.

A further contemporary manifestation of the contribution made by the French to London was the establishment in 2007 of the 'Français of the Year Award', which celebrates the achievements of prominent French men and women in, for example, business, sport, fashion, the arts and gastronomy. Voted for by French citizens residing in London, recipients have included Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger, captain of the French rugby team and London Wasps player Raphaël Ibañez, fashion designer Nicole Farhi, actress Eva Green, writer Marc Levy, chefs Hélène Darroze and Raymond Blanc, business tycoon Vincent de Rivaz (EDF) and financier Yoël Zaoui (Goldman Sachs).⁸ These well-known personalities serve as an identifiable reminder of the myriad living and working patterns of many thousands of their compatriots and of their historical predecessors in the capital, and have prompted headlines over the last five years or so in London's *Evening Standard* such as 'Zut alors! The French Are Taking Over' (1 November

⁷ See, e.g., 'Sarkozy drague les expatriés', available at <<http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/sarkozy-drague-les-expatries>> [accessed 2 Nov. 2012]. The press also reported that a crowd of around 1,000 were unable enter the conference hall in Old Billingsgate Market, which was already full.

⁸ The award was created in 2007 by Laurent Feniou, an investment banker with Rothschild who had then lived in London for 13 years; he was also president of the Association Grandes Ecoles City Circle. In the inaugural year some 3,500 French people in London took part in the voting. In 2011, the awards were taken up by the Chez Gérard restaurant group.

2007) and 'The French Invasion' (2 March 2011). Other media reports from both sides of the Channel focus on the contribution to business: 'La City est (un peu) française' ('The City is (a little) French', *Le Point*, 3 January 2008); 'Ces Français qu'on s'arrache à la City' ('The Frenchmen who are fought over in the City', *La Tribune*, 6 February, 2008; including subheadings on 'The Three Musketeers of Goldman Sachs' and asking 'Are they lost forever?'); 'Le roi des fusion-acquisitions en Europe couronné par la City' ('The king of mergers and acquisitions in Europe crowned by the City', on Moroccan-born banker Yoël Zaoui, *La Tribune*, 27 November 2008). There are also surveys of the more general image of prominent French people in London, often recycling (sometimes in an interesting way) old stereotypes and resonant images and worth quoting in some detail to show the types of discourse used: 'Election des meilleurs "Frenchies" de l'année à Londres' ('Election of the best Frenchies of the Year in London', *Le Figaro*, 27 November 2008); 'Ici Londres, les Français parlent aux Français' (*Les Echos*, using the 'London Calling' signal and the title of the programmes broadcast from London to Occupied France during the Second World War); 'Des lauriers pour les exilés français de Londres' ('Laurels for the French exiles in London', *Le Figaro*, 1 November 2007); 'French making themselves at home in London' (*International Herald Tribune*, 25 January 2008); 'Paris-on-Thames' (*The Economist*, 24 February 2011; the same heading had been used in the *Financial Times*, 12 July 2008); 'The Accidental Englishman, France's Other Ambassador' (*The Independent*, 2 November 2007 on the writer Marc Levy); 'New awards to toast London's French quarter' (*Evening Standard*, 13 July 2007); 'Expats vote on the crème de la crème of French in London' (*Evening Standard*, 11 July 2008); 'Les Français sont arrivés, successful French immigrants', (*The Independent*, 4 July 2008; the term 'émigrés' is also used in the headlining paragraph); 'French expats vote for their London crème de la crème' (*Evening Standard*, 10 July 2009); and 'London's French Foreign Legion Shuns Sarkozy Plea to Come Home' (Bloomberg.com, 17 January 2008).

The national events organized to commemorate the seventieth anniversary (June 2010) of the arrival of de Gaulle in London in June 1940, and the presence of the Free French in London during the war, attracted large audiences at the French Institute and considerable media interest in the UK and France, as did the visit by the French president to Carlton Gardens, the BBC and the Chelsea Hospital; and the event was used for a key moment in new developments in Franco-British military strategy, as discussed further below. In a further contemporary manifestation of the French presence in the British capital (but also of British interest in 'things French'), in November 2010 potential audience numbers were sufficient

to see the successful establishment of a commercial French-language radio station, French Radio London (FRL). Broadcast on Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) reaching the area bordered by the M25 and online, twenty-four hours a day, FRL, 'the French Voice of London', hit its first year targets after just five months, with its success attributed to its mix of music and other programming including interviews, reviews, interactive debates on topical issues, news of events in London, etc. Its current commercial partners are diverse, but often also reflect strong French business interests in London and the UK: Renault UK, EDF, Eurostar, Cityjet, Nicolas Wine Merchants, the hotel and restaurant group Relais and Chateaux, the French Chamber of Commerce, and also other media corporations – France 24 and TV5 Monde.⁹ FRL was notably featured in the opening sequence of BBC2's *This is Britain* series presented by Andrew Marr, which aimed to reveal unexpected trends and facts about Britain – 'a country we only think we know' according to the programme-makers – at the time of the 2011 census. The facts that there are up to 400,000 French people living in Britain, and that London is said to be the fifth (or sixth) biggest 'French' city, were chosen to headline the 'unexpected stories and strange twists' in Britain's story promised by Marr, and those figures also found their way into the British press. An additional irony in Franco-British relations revealed by the figures was pointed out by *The Telegraph*: 'This [the current numbers of French residents] is apparently the case, despite the fact that the original 1801 census was partly intended to discover whether or not we had enough men fit enough to fight Napoleon'.¹⁰ It is the 2011 census which should finally be able to provide the evidence for these suspected numbers.

There continues to be sporadic media interest in the London French as one or other element of the phenomenon attracts the interest of journalists. Radio 4's May 2012 radio programme on the 'French East End' noted that today's London French community is racially and culturally diverse and has grown far beyond the bourgeois confines of 'Frog Valley' in 'well-heeled South Kensington'. The East End's 'French connections' were explored from the seventeenth century, when French Protestants settled in Spitalfields (represented today by the Denis Severs' House museum and in street names such as Fournier Street, Fleur de Lys Street and Nantes Passage), to the present, for example in a large sixth-form college in Newham with a considerable number of francophone pupils from former French overseas departments or colonies such as Réunion, Guadeloupe and

⁹ Previous partners have ranged from luxury holiday resorts company ClubMed, to World First Foreign Exchange (its first sponsor), to the Barbican.

¹⁰ P. Smith, review of *This is Britain*, in *The Telegraph*, 25 March 2011.

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Algeria, and providing a contrast with the Lycée Charles de Gaulle in South Kensington.¹¹ The Radio 4 programme also featured Hackney and a group of young French designers, artists and digital media specialists working there.¹² In June 2012, the *Sunday Times Magazine* ran an eight-page cover story feature entitled ‘Londres calling, why 400,000 French people are colonising the capital’, complete with a Transport for London poster with often witty French names given to London’s tube stations from ‘Parc de la Reine’ in the north-east and ‘Morningson Croissant’ in the north-west, to the renamed ‘Gare de Napoléon’ replacing Waterloo.¹³ The opinions of the interviewees echo many of those in the final chapter here – the attractions of free enterprise, less racism, Britain as more meritocratic and less socially hierarchical, London having a more creative atmosphere.¹⁴

At the time of final preparation of this book, a further spate of headlines concerning the French in London was generated around the 2012 French elections. Even before the May 2012 French presidential election took place there was press speculation about how London might vote, provoked partly around the Socialist presidential candidate François Hollande’s London visit in February 2012. The high-profile visit to London aimed also to boost his international profile, but the fact that London has become a crucial campaign destination for candidates in the French presidential race was also noted, and the echoes of Sarkozy’s 2007 campaign urging expats to return home were not missed. The visit took place in an atmosphere of tension for a number of reasons: David Cameron’s ‘good luck’ message to Sarkozy at a Paris summit earlier that month, and then the British government’s refusal to sign up to the new EU treaty; Hollande’s desire for more rules for the financial markets; and the recent announcement in France of his plans for a 75 per cent tax bracket on annual earnings above one million euros. Hollande’s visit began with lunch with the Labour leader Ed Miliband and the shadow cabinet at Westminster, while Cameron refused to see him, putting the decision down to protocol, with the British prime minister not wishing to meet French presidential candidates during an election period. Cameron went on to compound antagonism to Hollande at the G20 summit in June 2012 by promising to ‘lay out the red carpet’ for French

¹¹ Therefore the same historical spread as this book. The same Newham College was also previously visited for the research in the final chapter here and a focus group carried out with students there.

¹² L. Ash, ‘The French East End’, BBC Radio 4, 30 May 2012; see also <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01j5nw4>> [accessed 30 May 2012].

¹³ *Sunday Times Magazine* cover, 10 June 2012; image also used here as book cover.

¹⁴ A. Turner, ‘Vive la différence. Lower taxes, more creativity and innovation, less racism. Why the French are taking a fancy to London’, *Sunday Times Magazine*, 10 June 2012.

businesses and entrepreneurs wishing to move to Britain when the top marginal tax rate in France was increased.¹⁵

In the run-up to the elections, it was already being noted that the traditional right leanings of London's expat community may be challenged by younger, less wealthy and more diverse French residents in the capital. At the time Axelle Lemaire, the Socialist party's Northern Europe candidate in the June legislative elections, based in London, presciently analysed changes in the London French, saying that the French community is 'more diverse' than often thought; she went on to win the new seat (discussed further below).¹⁶ Other political analyses concur with this evolution over the last ten to fifteen years, with London's French residents diversifying from those primarily in diplomacy and business circles to less wealthy people working in services, public services and education, and students attracted by British universities.¹⁷ A month later, in the 2012 French legislative elections, eleven new deputies were elected, representing newly-created constituencies for the French expatriate community across the world, and ending in unexpected results, especially for the right-wing Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) that initiated the legislation.¹⁸

¹⁵ See, e.g., A. Chrisafis, 'French presidential forerunner makes campaign stop in London', *The Guardian*, 29 Feb. 2012; A. Chrisafis, 'François Hollande seeks to reassure UK and City of London', *The Guardian*, 14 Feb. 2012; G. Parker, 'Cameron avoids French Socialist candidate', *Financial Times*, 27 Feb. 2012, available at <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a7b4eb14-6155-11e1-8a8e-00144feabdco.html>> [accessed 2 Nov. 2012]; G. Rachman, 'The tactless Mr Cameron and the Eurozone blame game', *Financial Times*, 19 June 2012, available at <<http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2012/06/the-tactless-mr-cameron-the-eurozone-blame-game>> [accessed 2 Nov. 2012].

¹⁶ L. Davies, 'French elections: how will London vote?', *The Guardian*, 13 Apr. 2012, available at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/13/french-elections-how-london-vote>> [accessed 16 Apr. 2012].

¹⁷ L. Davies, news blog, 'The French in London: bienvenue, François Hollande?', 29 Feb. 2012, available at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/french-london-francois-hollande>> [accessed 16 Apr. 2012]. The random people interviewed for the blog ranged from a number of staunch Sarkozy voters, to those planning to vote for Hollande, to those who voted Sarkozy last time and were planning to change because of disappointment with him. Philippe Marlière kept an election diary on the French presidential election at <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/philippe-marli%C3%A8re/marli%C3%A8re-across-la-manche-diary-of-2012-french-presidential-election>> [accessed 16 Apr. 2012]. He also gave an informal snapshot on his own experience of voting in the newly established Kentish Town bi-lingual French-English school, where, standing in a long queue for a couple of hours, he saw the diverse social make-up of French voters; he notes that Hollande won in that area but Sarkozy won in South Kensington, reflecting the 'two worlds' of official France and newer arrivals (informal interview with Debra Kelly, London, 12 Sept. 2012).

¹⁸ The right-wing UMP expected to create a number of safe seats for its own party 'because expatriate voters have, since extra-territorial voting was introduced in 1981,

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French public discourse also reveals ambivalence about describing its expatriates, using terms such as ‘The French settled outside France’ (*Les Français établis hors de France*), as employed in the constitution, and two terms that can be translated as the ‘French abroad’, but reveal a subtle difference in the relationship to France: ‘*Les Français de l'étranger*’ (with a greater sense of attachment to the country of residence) and ‘*Les Français à l'étranger*’ (with a sense of continued greater attachment to France).¹⁹ The Northern European constituency – which includes Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, the UK and Sweden – is dominated by the French population in the UK – and within the UK, London (the French Consulate recorded around 123,000 French citizens registered for the elections, far outstripping the next highest number of almost 9,000 in Ireland; Estonia recorded 182).²⁰ All of the main parties chose candidates based in London, and of the twenty official candidates for the seat, nine were based in London, and another three in other regions of the UK. Unsurprisingly, for the British press the deputy for Northern

always given massive support to the right. Yet although this trend was maintained for the presidential election, the outcome was unexpectedly reversed for the legislative elections, when only 3 of the 11 new seats were won by the UMP’ (S. Collard, ‘The expatriate vote in the French presidential and legislative elections of 2012: a case of unintended consequences’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, vi (2013), 213–33, at p. 213). The initiative was taken by the then newly-elected President Sarkozy to fulfil an electoral pledge to French voters abroad who, for a long time, had demanded better political representation. Part of his campaign message, first in London in Jan. 2007 (as previously referred to) and then in March 2007 in a written message, targeted the French outside France, urging them to return home by saying that the France they had left because of its outmoded systems and obstacles to innovation was changing and needed their energy and initiative (see again Collard, ‘The expatriate vote’, for a very detailed analysis of the context in which the reforms came into existence and of the unexpected results and their significance; see also P. Marlière, ‘A quoi vont servir les députés des Français de l'étranger?’, available at <http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/07/10/a-quoi-vont-servir-les-deputes-des-francais-de-l-etranger_1730960_3232.html> [accessed 13 Sept. 2012]). One of his main arguments is that it is difficult to see how the French abroad can place demands on the government as many do not pay taxes in France).

¹⁹ See Collard, ‘The expatriate vote’, again, as above. She also notes that the only official use of the word ‘expatrié’ is in the title of the Senate’s dedicated website <<http://www.expatries.senat.fr>> [accessed 13 Sept. 2012]. The same conversation was held with the editors of this book by members of the French diplomatic service around whether to use ‘*Les Français de/à Londres*’ for the French version of the ‘French in London’ or of the ‘London French’ when this book project and its further research were conceived. Compare also the beginning of this conclusion and the caveats around the ways to describe the French ‘exiles’, ‘migrants’, ‘visitors’ who took up residence in London at different times and for different lengths of time.

²⁰ See, e.g., the BBC news item, D. Finnerty, ‘Why are the French getting an MP for London?’, available at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-17893296>> [accessed 11 Sept. 2012].

Europe immediately became the 'MP for South Kensington': 'French to elect first "Kensington MP"' (*The Independent*, 31 May 2012); 'France elects left-wing Parti Socialiste candidate in so-called "MP for South Kensington" seat' (*The Independent*, 18 June 2012). Axelle Lemaire of the Socialist party won the first round vote by a clear margin, and went on to win the second round with 54.76 per cent of the vote, followed by the UMP's Emmanuelle Savarit with 45.24 per cent (turnout was around 18,000, just 20 per cent).²¹

More visibility, then, for the French presence in London, but one that serves also to show how far from these perceptions of the French in London those citizens have, in all senses, travelled. Across the spaces and places of London, the sites of the London French, real and virtual, continue to evolve. Is there something 'different' about French migration in the capital? Are they an 'a-typical' group of migrants, even when compared with other European migrants historically and in contemporary society? More work needs to be done on comparative analyses before these question can be answered. If, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, it has been argued that French immigrants came to exchange their poverty for English prosperity, the opposite argument that immigrants enrich the country has also endured, and the French have been admired for doing so much to help themselves once arrived in London.²²

Perhaps the continued shared fascination is due to the observation that the French and British are not so different, while appearing to be very much so. As Kirsty Carpenter writes here of the French exiles during the Revolution: 'they provided the British with a living example of deep-rooted similarities between their two cultures that were in many ways more powerful and persuasive than the superficial differences suggested by dress and language'. Despite continued and persistent French-baiting in certain sectors of the British press and of the political classes, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries may represent another 'Anglo-French moment', as defined by Philip Mansel here for the period from the late eighteenth century to the end of the First World War. Then, as now, London plays a role in French politics, and London continues to offer 'proximity, modernity and freedom' as suggested by Mansel for the earlier historical period. Although the picture may be more complex, the research carried out by Saskia Huc-Hepher and Helen Drake in the final chapter certainly echoes in places those positive perceptions, and the image of a stultifying social and economic atmosphere

²¹ See, e.g., 'Législatives: tous les résultats des Français de l'étranger', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 4 June 2012; 'Résultats du 2^{ème} tour dans la 3^{ème} circonscription – Europe du Nord', *Le Monde*, 17 June 2012.

²² See the first chapter here; reference to the *Rights and Liberties of Englishmen Asserted* (1701) and *England's Interest and Improvement* (1663).

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in France is a recurring one both in the testimonials here, and in media and other discourses both in France and in the UK. Discrimination in France against various minority groups, or because of education and social status, may be real or perceived; but it is real to those who experience it, and a common thread runs through many of the motivations and experiences of those French (and francophone) people who come to London.

But, of course, London is no utopia and all may not be as it seems. To take just one example, consider an area of long-established French expertise and innovation, gastronomy and the restaurant business: seen by food critics and other food professionals as having fallen behind London in culinary terms,²³ Paris is nonetheless currently witnessing a renewed, young restaurant scene.²⁴ And although French labour laws and the bureaucracy which London French entrepreneurs complain about and are pleased to leave behind are a reality, setting up a business in Paris can be cheaper. The traffic between London and Paris runs both ways: 'I can't imagine we could have opened [even in East London] for less than half a million; here [in Paris] we did it for £150k. Our rent is expensive by Parisian standards, but cheap for London. We'd love to do something in London, but we'd need serious investment', says a young British chef who has travelled in the other direction and moved to Paris.²⁵ There is much more to say about this two-way traffic, again through a historical and contemporary lens, and further comparative study would be revealing.

As Huc-Hepher and Drake note, the French in London very often remain attached to, and indeed part of, France, by virtue of its proximity. It is questionable, therefore, whether they feel a real necessity to integrate into the host culture (although some do), or to form a 'distinct, homogeneous community apart from it'. The notion of a French community or communities in London remains nebulous, and at the very least in evolution. Perhaps instead it is rather a fluid community (or communities) with French residents in London trying on and using their various French and Londoner identities at different times and in different ways, and it is important to note that while French citizens quite often readily accept that they feel like 'Londoners', they do not admit to feeling English (although

²³ The Francophile American journalist Michael Steinberger's *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine and the End of France* (2009) provided arguments linking the decline in gastronomic prowess to that of France's political and economic status.

²⁴ Especially in 'bistronomie', a move away from classic haute cuisine towards a more experimental type of cooking, offered in more relaxed surroundings and at more affordable prices.

²⁵ Michael Greenwold, a British chef in Paris, co-owner of the 'Roseval' restaurant in the 20th *arrondissement*; 'Bistronomie Paris', *The Independent on Sunday Magazine*, 7 Oct. 2012.

the identification with being a Londoner is also true of many other migrants to the capital, including UK citizens born outside it). On the micro, individual level London seems to have a transformative effect on French identities and behaviours, as the final chapter also notes, and the city is still seen as offering space, openness and freedom. On the macro, national level there has been increased Franco-British co-operation on various levels in recent years, despite continuing tensions in the European debate.

One of the most obvious examples of this is in the area of military co-operation. London and Paris signed British-French security treaties in November 2010 and began to implement many of the military capability development issues contained in the Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO) protocol in the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) on a bilateral basis, such as the creation of multinational forces; harmonization of their military needs by pooling and specializing capabilities; co-operation on training and logistics; enhancing their forces' interoperability and deployability, and so on. London and Paris also agreed on the development of a new Combined Joint Expeditionary Force and the sharing of aircraft carriers. They also intend to co-operate on training and support for A400M military transport aircraft; joint development of technologies regarding submarine systems; aligning plans in maritime mine counter-measures to enhance interoperability; and military satellite communications and the possible French use of British spare capacities in the field of air-to-air refuelling. Furthermore, they agreed to work together on a new equipment programme of unmanned air systems, as well as a more efficient defence industry.²⁶

In 2010, the British press widely reported this 'landmark defence alliance', ranging from military operations on land, sea and in the air to nuclear weapons.²⁷ In 2011, Britain and France worked together in Libya, supporting the opposition fighters against Colonel Gaddafi's regime, with British and French special forces sent in on the ground. In January 2013, as this book was being prepared for publication, Britain supported the French mission to drive Islamist militants from its former colony, Mali. Britain supplied transporter and reconnaissance aircraft to the French and expressed its willingness to send troops to assist logistics, intelligence and

²⁶ B. Németh, 'PESCO and British-French military co-operation', in *European Geostrategy*, ed. J. Rogers and L. Simon, 14 Feb. 2012, available at <<http://europeangeostrategy.ideasoneurope.eu/2012/02/14/pesco-and-british-french-military-co-operation>> [accessed 5 Nov. 2012].

²⁷ See, e.g., K. Sengupta, 'Anglo-French deal re-writes military history', *The Independent*, 2 Nov. 2010, available at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/anglofrench-deal-rewrites-military-history-2122617.html>> [accessed 5 Nov. 2012].

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surveillance, without engaging in combat.²⁸ During these periods and since, French diplomatic teams in London have repeatedly stressed the importance of this close military alliance.

The importance of French approaches to diplomacy, especially cultural diplomacy and what is now termed 'soft power', is documented here by Charlotte Faucher and Philippe Lane,²⁹ and the continuing evidence of this was also very apparent in, for example, the 2010 de Gaulle anniversary (already discussed), and previously in 2004 for the centenary of the Entente Cordiale. With the 500th anniversary of Agincourt and the 200th anniversary of Waterloo approaching in 2015, perhaps a more fully rounded counter-discourse of Anglo-French co-operation and of long-established and enduring cultural, social and economic exchanges may yet emerge to challenge old perceptions with new realities, and with London providing a site of evidence.³⁰

²⁸ See, e.g., *The Guardian*, 29 Jan. 2013.

²⁹ See also Ph. Lane, *Présence française dans le monde: l'action culturelle et scientifique* (2011); published in English as *French Scientific and Cultural Diplomacy* (Liverpool, 2013).

³⁰ For thoughtful histories of Franco-British relations, see, e.g., I. Tombs and R. Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: the French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (2006), which tells the story of the relationship between the French and the British over more than three centuries and whose authors believe that 'this relationship is unique in the modern world, not only for its duration and the breadth of its cultural, economic and political ramifications, but also for its global consequences' (p. 686). Robert Gibson, in *Best of Enemies: Anglo-French Relations since the Norman Conquest* (Exeter, 1995; 2nd edn. 2004, re-published for the centenary of the Entente Cordiale, and updated to include the Second Gulf War), says: 'no two other countries have a heritage that has been enriched over so long a period of time as England and France. And no two countries have made so powerful and protracted an impact as these two have upon the lives of one another. Over a span of almost a thousand years, no nation has had so many dealings with the English as the French' (p. 304). Diana Cooper-Richet and Michel Rapoport, in *L'Entente Cordiale: cent ans de relations culturelles franco-britanniques, 1904-2004* (Paris, 2006), state: 'Dérision and undisguised admiration rub shoulders, revealing the ambiguity of relations between the two countries. This ambivalence is no doubt what best characterises the ties that unite these two great nations in the areas studied here' (p. 390) (Dérision et admiration non déguisée se côtoient montrant, par là même, l'ambiguïté des relations entre les deux pays. Cette ambivalence est sans doute ce qui caractérise le mieux les liens qui unissent ces deux grandes nations dans les domaines étudiés).

