

Introduction

In 2010, as it has done every two years for more than three decades, the George Rudé Seminar in French History and Civilization brought together scholars from Australia and New Zealand with colleagues from North America and Europe for a three-day conference. In July 2010, the conference was held at the University of Sydney, and our special guest was Professor Olivier Wieviorka of the École Normale Supérieure at Cachan. “History and memory” was a topic for several sessions and a number of papers, but – as is our practice – the themes covered ranged over a broad area of early and late modern French history. This volume presents twenty-one papers from the more than sixty presented at the conference.

These papers have each been peer-reviewed by two specialists on the subjects that they treat and have been revised by the authors in light of the anonymous reports received from the readers and editors of the collection.

The first set of papers examines various aspects of life in France during the *ancien régime*, the Revolution and the Napoleonic period, and (in several cases) the memory and legacy of these ages. Jean-Dominique Mellot looks at the history and historiography of the book and editorial Gallicanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hamish Graham focuses on seigneurial courts in the provinces in the eighteenth century, and David Garrioch examines mutual aid societies in eighteenth-century Paris. Garry Trompf reflects on French theories of political cycles in French Enlightenment thought. Jennifer Milam’s paper explores Sofia Coppola’s representation of Marie Antoinette as a figure of “cool” in her recent film. Turning to the Revolution, Timothy Tackett’s investigates the central role played by rumour in the September massacres, while Helen Davies traces circles of friendship among Sephardic Jews in Bordeaux in the 1790s. Peter McPhee looks at the private and public lives of Robespierre, and Michael Sibalis considers variations over the centuries of the legend of a conspiracy to murder Napoleon on St Helena.

A second group of papers concern nineteenth- and twentieth-century French metropolitan history. Susan Foley examines Léon Gambetta and arts policy in the early Third Republic. Two papers look at St Thérèse in the *fin de siècle*: Vesna Drapac focuses on Thérèse in France, and Julie Thorpe takes a comparative perspective on the French saint in Austria. Moving from saints to surrealists, Raymond Spiteri’s subject is a 1929 crisis in the surrealist movement which highlighted tensions between culture and politics. Colin Nettelbeck writes on the

topic of primary school children in Vichy France and calls for the recovery and recording of their experiences. Greg Burgess addresses the question of immigration and racial selection of migrants immediately after the Liberation, focusing on the particular figure of Georges Mauco. Elizabeth Rechniewski, bringing the question of the past into the present, examines Nicolas Sarkozy's controversial plans to establish a museum of French history.

The third section of papers is about overseas France. Reine-Claude Grondin examines memories of colonialism in France in the 1800s and 1900s, and Robert Aldrich looks at heritage policy in the French empire. John Strachan discusses the Flatters expedition and the politics of memory in French North Africa. Barbara Creed and Jeanette Hoorn focus on documentary films about Indochina and the French civilizing mission. And Denise Fisher analyses the recent history of France's territories in the South Pacific.

These papers show a variety of strategies for studying France's past – social history, cultural history, colonial history, biography, cultural and literary studies. They also point to the ways in which the past, and memories of the past, remain contested ground in contemporary France. They show the vibrancy of historical study of France in Australasia and around the world and the way that French history engages with many present-day issues.

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