

# French cultural diplomacy in early twentieth-century London

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## II. French cultural diplomacy in early twentieth-century London

*Charlotte Faucher and Philippe Lane*

France has long been engaged in very active cultural and scientific diplomacy, but state intervention is relatively recent and was embodied in the creation of different sections within the French Foreign Office, Quai d'Orsay, from 1910 onwards.<sup>1</sup> The absence of a government-planned foreign cultural policy did not prevent France from developing its international presence in the domains of culture, language, science and arts. In the *ancien régime*, French writers moved in diplomatic circles, as was the case with Joachim du Bellay who worked with his uncle in Rome, or Jean Jacques Rousseau who served as secretary for the Venice Embassy in 1743.<sup>2</sup>

Cultural diplomacy relies on networks of cultural co-operation services in embassies and cultural institutions, with numerous other operators including private and religious initiatives and transnational cultural transfers.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, cultural diplomacy must be comprehended in a broad sense and not solely as the product of a government's decision. Early twentieth-century London was no exception: most of the French cultural societies and associations were the result of individual or religious ventures and barely benefited from state funding; indeed, the multiple governments of the Third Republic did not have a specific external cultural policy. It was only after the First World War that both the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux Arts and the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères became aware of their impact on the projection of France abroad. After the Second World War, cultural diplomacy was mostly dealt with by the Quai d'Orsay.

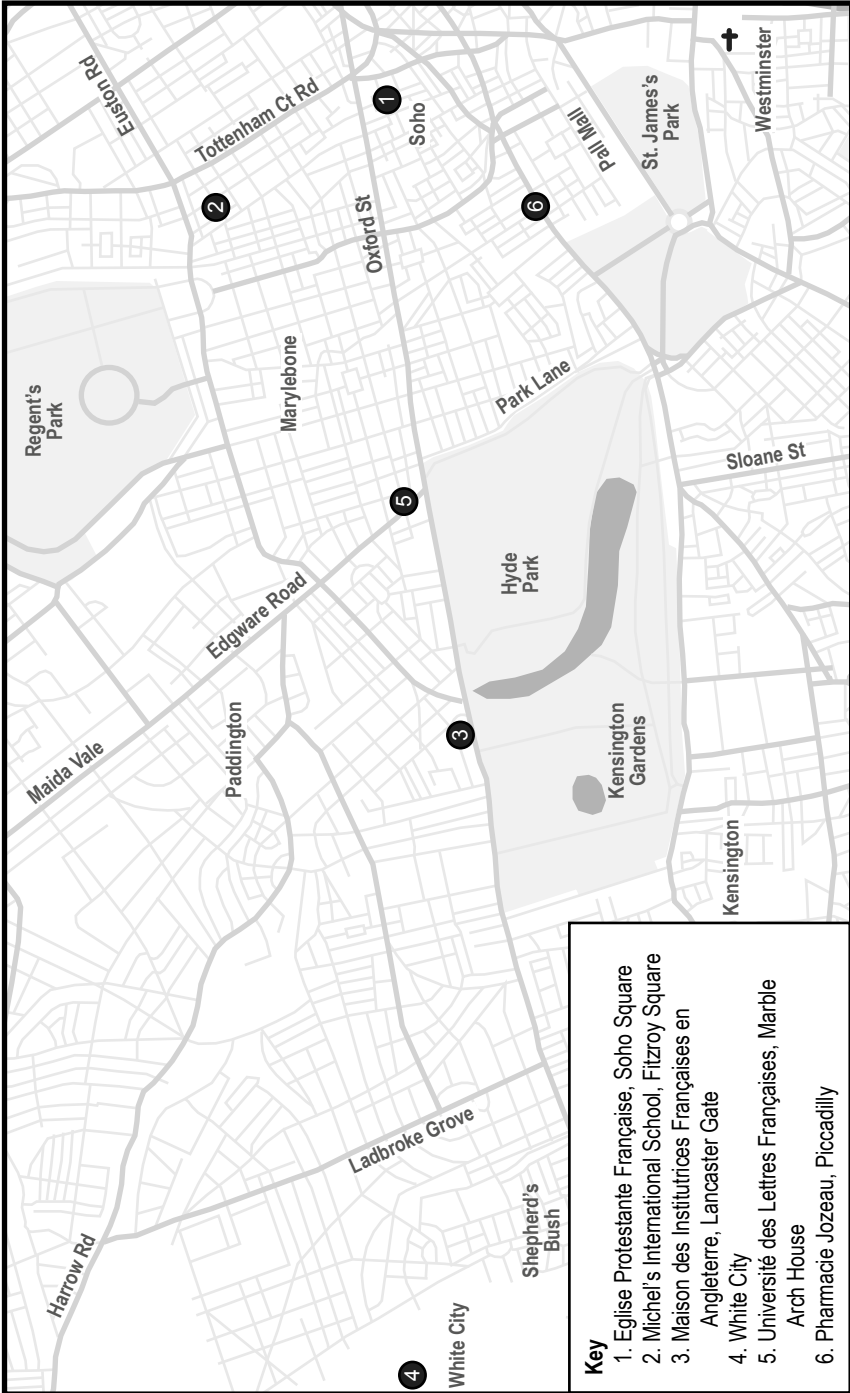
This chapter explores the promotion of French language and culture in early twentieth-century London, a tendency which was in tune with the

<sup>1</sup> Ph. Lane, *Présence française dans le monde – l'action culturelle et scientifique* (Paris, 2011) and *French Scientific and Cultural Diplomacy* (Liverpool 2013).

<sup>2</sup> F. Roche and B. Pigniau, *Histoires de diplomatie culturelle des origines à 1995* (Paris, 1995), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> See the conceptualization of cultural diplomacy suggested by P. Ory in the preface to *Entre rayonnement et réciprocité: contributions à l'histoire de la diplomatie culturelle*, ed. A. Dubosclard and others (Paris, 2002).

A history of the French in London



Map II.I. Places mentioned in the text (Base map: London c.1910)

dissemination of French throughout the world. Indeed, in addition to the existing religious congregations, societies such as the Alliance Française (1883) and the Mission Laïque Française (1905) were created at the turn of the century. These schemes were linked to the colonialist mentality of the time, an 'ideal civilisateur' which was used to assert France's power in the world. For example, the Alliance Française (AF) aimed, first, at spreading French in the French provinces (it had branches in almost all departments of the country), second, in France's colonies, and third, in the rest of the world.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will first briefly outline the linguistic and cultural foreign policies of France from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Then it will consider in more detail the dissemination of French culture through the French language and the role of French institutions in London from the late nineteenth century to 1914, concentrating mainly on the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni (IFRU), and examining the growing role of the state within this institution. It will trace a progressive shift in the IFRU's role, from cultural and linguistic to political.

### ***Background***

#### *1789–1870: the nation and cultural activities*

Albert Salon has shown that the French Revolution resulted in the 'nationalization'<sup>5</sup> of foreign cultural initiatives during the last decade of the eighteenth century when intellectual, diplomatic and military forces joined together to spread the new ideas of the Revolution. This almost evangelical sense of mission corresponded to the voluntarism of the spirit of the Enlightenment: it was a drive for the moral and intellectual perfecting of mankind. The belief in a never-ending progress of knowledge, as well as this strong desire to develop ideas in every sphere, belonged to the dominant philosophy of the eighteenth century.

There were other ways of spreading French culture and language outside the nation. François Roche and Bernard Pigniau consider that Napoleon Bonaparte's 1798 expedition to Egypt was the first embodiment of what is today described as cultural 'co-operation', as it included several scientists, engineers, intellectuals and artists who would contribute to the creation of Egyptology and to the cultural and scientific relations that followed.<sup>6</sup>

During the nineteenth century, cultural activities accompanied diplomacy. Culture, as well as other components such as religion or colonization, was

<sup>4</sup> M. Bruézière, *L'Alliance Française – histoire d'une institution* (Paris, 1983), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> A. Salon, 'L'action culturelle de la France dans le monde: analyse critique' (unpublished Université Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne PhD thesis, 3 vols., 1981) (abridged version in A. Salon, *L'Action Culturelle de la France dans le monde* (Paris, 1983)).

<sup>6</sup> Roche and Pigniau, *Histoires*, p. 12.

seen as a way to promote *l'esprit français*.<sup>7</sup> The Quai d'Orsay negotiated the first cultural agreements, which were mainly concerned with intellectual and artistic property. Two years before the end of the Second Empire, the Galatasaray *lycée* was opened in Istanbul. It was a co-operative project between France and the Ottoman government which would educate on a non-confessional basis generations of French-speakers who would constitute the Turkish elite in subsequent decades.<sup>8</sup> Until the end of the nineteenth century, the learning of the French language was aimed at the upper classes.

*1870–1914: the creation of the French cultural network in the world*

In this period political events impacted on the running of the cultural networks of France. Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia were competing in the same areas, mainly Africa and the Orient, and each aimed to maintain or enhance their influence on the elites of other nations;<sup>9</sup> they kept watch over each other through their diplomatic and consular staffs. The linguistic rivalry, which was one aspect of contention between France, Germany or England, also happened outside Europe. Therefore, in 1881, the vast majority of the Quai's budget was directed to the Oeuvres d'Orient.<sup>10</sup> Egypt was a focal point of this competition. The Quai d'Orsay talked of a 'languages war' occurring in this area in 1891, and a note produced by Paul Deschanel, future president of France, displayed French administrators' awareness of the danger represented by English officials who had recently started to 'invade' the field of public education in Cairo, which had so far been a French monopoly. Seeing that some students might 'escape' from French domination, the French Foreign Office decided to pay teachers and opened l'École de Droit du Caire.<sup>11</sup>

In Europe, the French language, which enjoyed prestige among the aristocracy and governing elite, began to lose some of its influence during this period. This can at least in part be explained by the rise of new nation-states such as Germany and Italy, which were often governed by individuals who had not received the classical education of the previous ruling elite and so had little or no knowledge of French.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> J.-M. Guéhenno, 'Diplomatie culturelle: culture de France, culture d'Europe', *Politique Étrangère*, li (1986), 165–71.

<sup>8</sup> S. Akşin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* (Lanham, Md., 2003), p. 94.

<sup>9</sup> Roche and Pigniau, *Histoires*, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> J.-M. Delaunay, *Des Palais en Espagne: l'École des Hautes Études Hispaniques et la Casa de Velázquez au cœur des relations franco-espagnoles du XXe siècle (1898–1979)* (Madrid, 1994), p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Roche and Pigniau, *Histoires*, pp. 14–22.

<sup>12</sup> S. Balous, *L'Action Culturelle de la France dans le monde* (Paris, 1970), p. 30.

The language war was also waged on the diplomatic field, as French diplomats defended the use of the French language in international organizations. Roche and Pigniau illustrate that in 1902, Jules Cambon, ambassador to Washington, realized that, in the conflict between the United States and Mexico, the Americans were trying to impose English as the working language at the International Court of Arbitration at The Hague.<sup>13</sup> Vigorous diplomatic action led by Théophile Delcassé, then minister of foreign affairs, convinced the Danish president of the court to recognize French as 'the universal language of law and diplomacy'. That situation prevailed until the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, when American president Woodrow Wilson insisted on its being expressed in both languages.

It was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that the Quai established a nascent cultural and linguistic policy specifically aimed at European countries. In order to co-ordinate the lecturers sent to work abroad, several bodies were created at the end of the 1900s. They embodied the beginning of France's foreign cultural policy in Europe. On 29 November 1907 the Comité Consultatif de l'Enseignement Français à l'Étranger was set up<sup>14</sup> and in 1910 the Office National des Universités et des Ecoles Françaises, a private association, was created. It was not a governmental body but was nevertheless backed by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Instruction.<sup>15</sup> In 1911, a Bureau des Ecoles et Œuvres Françaises à l'Étranger was created within the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was managed by two people.<sup>16</sup> This bureau was in charge of the co-ordination of information relating to the situation of educators and schools abroad, though in practice, teachers mainly dealt directly with the Embassy and consulates.

Alongside the policies set up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there existed an active network of associations (either Paris-based or locally-based) which aimed at promoting French. A landmark event was the birth of the Alliance Française in 1883, created thanks to the initiative of French notables who wished to assemble 'friends of France' in foreign parts. In many countries, local committees were established, incorporated locally and linked to the AF in Paris. In 1890, for example, the Alliance Française of Melbourne was formed by Frenchmen and Australians. The AF was to develop throughout the twentieth century and had numerous committees

<sup>13</sup> Roche and Pigniau, *Histoires*, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Delaunay, *Des Palais en Espagne*, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> B. Neveu, 'De l'instruction publique aux affaires étrangères: la politique culturelle extérieure de la France depuis 1910', *Commentaire*, xiii (1990), 351–4.

<sup>16</sup> A. Outrey, 'Histoire et principes de l'administration française des affaires étrangères', *Revue Française de Science politique*, iii (1953), 714–38.

in small provincial towns,<sup>17</sup> unlike the French institutes, which were only set up in important cities. The Mission Laïque Française was another association which focused on the creation of French schools outside Europe, opening a number of institutions in Salonica (1905), Ethiopia (1908), and Lebanon and Egypt (1909).

While the 1905 separation of church and state was detrimental to religious congregations within France, as the state withdrew its financial support, it was actually favourable for the dissemination of French language outside the Republic, as a few orders established themselves abroad, notably in Belgium and in the United Kingdom, to escape the French law.

Around 1910, the first French institutes were established in Florence (1907), Athens (1907), London (1910/13), Madrid (1910) and St. Petersburg (1911). In that respect, France was a pioneering country even though these cultural institutions did not directly emanate from the government and were either individual or semi-public ventures. State funding was available through several organizations, and notably the Pari Mutuel, a state betting organization similar to the Tote, managed by the Ministry of the Interior: in 1909 for example, it gave 20,000 francs to build the Institut Français in Madrid.<sup>18</sup> Some funding was also provided by the Colonial Office.

As a point of comparison, the British Council was founded only in 1934, though some British institutions existed independently, such as the Anglo-French Guild in Paris (1884), which was more akin to a university than a cultural association. The Deutsche Akademie was founded in 1925 and was to become the Goethe Institute in 1951. France was therefore a pioneering country in terms of cultural diplomacy.

### ***French culture in London in the early twentieth century***

In 1870–1914, there was a significant increase in the number of French nationals visiting or settling in London. There were about 10,000 French people living in the capital in 1911<sup>19</sup> and approximately 40,000 French people living in Britain.<sup>20</sup>

Relations between France and Britain were eased thanks to the 1904 Entente Cordiale, a convention and two declarations which settled their colonial disagreements. As John Keiger phrases it, ‘it physically pushed

<sup>17</sup> F. Chaubet, *La Politique Culturelle Française et la diplomatie de la langue: l'Alliance Française, 1883–1940* (Paris, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Delaunay, *Des Palais en Espagne*, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> P. Gerbod, *Les Voyageurs Français à la découverte des Îles Britanniques du XVIIIème siècle à nos jours* (Paris, 1995), p. 134.

<sup>20</sup> Chaubet, *Politique Culturelle Française*, p. III, table 9.

them apart by establishing respective spheres of influence in Siam and West Africa'. The most important point of this settlement was that France recognized Great Britain's position in Egypt, while the British did the same for France in Morocco. Interestingly enough, 'The agreements did not even contain a statement of general policy on friendlier relations'.<sup>21</sup> The Entente nevertheless provided fertile ground for future literary, intellectual and educational partnerships.

Various French societies were centralized in London: the Société Française de Bienfaisance (created 1842), the Société Nationale des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre (1881), the Union des Cuisiniers Pâtisseries Glaciers, the Société des Progrès de la Coiffure<sup>22</sup> and the Société Sportive Française de Londres<sup>23</sup> were among these. Some places were explicitly French, though not intended solely for the French community, such as the French Hospital (1867) the French Chamber of Commerce (1883), the Eglise Protestante Française (founded in 1550, and established in Soho Square since 1893) and the French Catholic chapels. There also existed societies aimed at promoting Franco-British relations which possessed branches in London, such as the Union Franco-Britannique du Tourisme. In terms of legal status, these societies did not come under France's 1901 law on associations but were governed by British law.<sup>24</sup>

French ambassadors in London played a key role in expanding intellectual relations between France and the United Kingdom. William Waddington (1883–93) was born in France but came from an Anglo-Scottish family and studied in France (Lycée St. Louis, Paris) and then at Trinity College, Cambridge. Waddington had been minister for public instruction (1873 and 1876–7), minister for foreign affairs (1877–9) and president of the council of ministers in 1879.<sup>25</sup> He has been largely overlooked by historians, but his political experiences, his nationality (he became French at the age of eighteen), his religious views (Protestant), his passion for archaeology and numismatics, and his election to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-

<sup>21</sup> J. Keiger, 'How the Entente Cordiale began', in *Cross-Channel Currents: 100 Years of the Entente Cordiale*, ed. R. Mayne, D. Johnson and R. Tombs (2004).

<sup>22</sup> La Courneuve, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (hereafter AMAE), correspondance politique et commerciale, 1896–1918, Grande Bretagne, 161CPCOM/84, 'demandes de renseignements', letter from the French Consulate in London to the French minister of foreign affairs, 25 Nov. 1908. See also Rapoport's chapter, for further details of such French associations and societies.

<sup>23</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/82, 'Français à l'étranger'.

<sup>24</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/82, 'Français à l'étranger'.

<sup>25</sup> 'Waddington (William)', entry in *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français: notices biographiques sur les ministres, sénateurs et députés français de 1889 à 1940*, ed. J. Jolly (8 vols., Paris, 1960–77), viii. 3211.



Lettres in 1865<sup>26</sup> made him a central character in the furthering of Franco-British relations in all domains at the end of the nineteenth century. The same can be said of Paul Cambon, vice-president of the Alliance Française in 1883, French ambassador in London (1898–1920) and signatory of the 1904 Entente Cordiale, who was actively involved in the life of French cultural societies and schools in London.

Other protagonists of the propagation of French culture in London include teachers of French such as Marie d’Orliac, who established the Université des Lettres Françaises, or personalities like Max O’Reil, who was a journalist and lectured in Britain and in the USA, creating characters such as Jacques Bonhomme, the supposed embodiment of the Frenchman.<sup>27</sup>

The following pages try to identify how French cultural diplomacy was carried out in early twentieth-century London, the extent to which the French state was involved in this and, more generally, on whom cultural diplomacy relied. The emphasis will be on an elite culture, mostly developing in West London, though we are fully aware that this is but one facet of French culture in London at the time. More research needs to be done on popular culture and the French communities in North and East London in the first decades of the twentieth century.

### ***The main component of France’s ‘soft power’ in London: the teaching of French***

The teaching of the French language was the core element of the dissemination of French culture in the early twentieth century, as it was thought that the best way to spread *l’esprit français* was through its language. In that respect, the emphasis on teaching in London was quite similar to other policies set up outside Europe by the government, individuals or religious communities.

The involvement of the state in the teaching of French began in the early twentieth century. Before that, it was carried out by religious communities, schools, live-in teachers or governesses and even internationalist ventures such as Louise Michel’s International School, founded in 1892 in Fitzroy Square, near Euston,<sup>28</sup> whose aims were rooted in the socialist tradition, endeavouring to diminish French nationalist ideas.<sup>29</sup> The suggestion of a

<sup>26</sup> M. Mopin, ‘Les trois vies de William Waddington’, *Mémoire de la Fédération des Sociétés d’Histoire et d’Archéologie de l’Aisne*, xlvii (2001), 79–105.

<sup>27</sup> J. Verhoeven, *Jovial Bigotry: Max O’Reil and the Transnational Debate over Manners and Morals in 19th-Century France, Britain and the United States* (2012).

<sup>28</sup> BL, ‘International school conducted by Louise Michel’, *Prospectus* (1892).

<sup>29</sup> C. Bantman, *Anarchismes et anarchistes en France et en Grande-Bretagne, 1880–1914: échanges, représentations, transferts* (unpublished Université de Paris XIII-Villetaneuse PhD thesis, 2007).

*lycée français* appeared in the correspondence of Gabriel Hanoteau, minister of foreign affairs, as early as April 1897. This project was recommended by a member of the Société Nationale des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre and was viewed positively by the French Embassy in London: 'Such a school could have benefits in a country where there are no French institutions of the kind and where the organization of local teaching is in every respect different from what exists in France'.<sup>30</sup> Yet such an institution was not to be mentioned again until the early days of the First World War, when the Lycée Français was created within the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni.

As has been shown by Adèle Thomas, French nationals teaching their language in the United Kingdom were given a hard time in nineteenth-century Britain. Popular consciousness held that they taught long and tedious lessons and they were consequently largely undervalued by the British. This stereotype changed in their favour when they started to associate themselves, notably within the Société Nationale des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre in 1881. This society propagated the idea that not every French speaker could be a good teacher – as had previously been assumed in the case of refugees and migrants – and that only trained men and women should be allowed to teach the language.<sup>31</sup>

The quality of teaching therefore became a major concern in the first decades of the twentieth century – so much so that the French ambassador was frequently sent reports about the teaching of French in specific schools.<sup>32</sup> Stress was also laid on teaching quality and training at the Maison des Institutrices Françaises en Angleterre, under the patronage of Paul Cambon and the archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster. This institution was founded in 1897 and was located at 18 Lancaster Gate, Hyde Park, West London. It was inaugurated in 1903 by Princess Henry de Battenberg, the youngest child of Queen Victoria, and several upper-class and aristocratic ladies were present on that day. A few months later the French president, Emile Loubet, visited this Maison during his official visit to King Edward VII. In 1903, 168 female schoolteachers lived there, either on a long- or a short-term basis. It was within this home that the Association des Institutrices Françaises was created, also in 1903. The

<sup>30</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/81 'Français en Angleterre', letter from the French Embassy in London (political direction) to Monsieur Hanoteau, minister of foreign affairs, 28 Apr. 1897: 'Un établissement de cette nature pourrait rendre des services dans un pays où il n'existe aucune institution française de ce genre et où l'organisation de l'enseignement local est de tous points différents du régime français'.

<sup>31</sup> A. Thomas, 'Les professeurs de français en Angleterre', in *Cordiale Angleterre: regards trans-Manche à la Belle Époque*, ed. F. Poirier (Paris, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/ 82.

Maison, which did not solely accommodate French teachers, was part of the London Francophile network, organizing literary conferences or musical evenings for its residents and literary benefactors.<sup>33</sup> Some members of the board were involved in other French societies in London, such as Eugène Karminsky, director of the *Crédit Lyonnais*, who was treasurer of the *Maison des Institutrices* and was to occupy the same position within the *Université des Lettres Françaises* in 1910. The female teachers selected to live in the Maison had to meet certain requirements, notably related to their own education, which was expected to be 'superior', their morals, and the likelihood of their succeeding as French teachers.

It was only in the early years of the twentieth century that the French government involved itself in education policy abroad, setting up teaching exchanges with Germany, Austria and Britain and therefore operating a selection of the individuals meant to teach French outside France. In the summer of 1904, the *Office d'Informations et d'Etude*, whose role was to register French and foreign students wishing to be language assistants either in France or abroad, formalized a link with the Board of Education which had two similar offices, one for England and the other for Scotland.<sup>34</sup> This marked the beginning of an active co-operation between the two countries and improved teaching quality.

Outside the educational system, associations such as the *Alliance Française* provided French courses for children and adults as well as various cultural activities. The British Federation of the *Alliance Française* (BFAF) was a prominent society in early twentieth-century London and still exists today, mostly as a language centre.<sup>35</sup> The AF's first English committee was formed under the name of *Comité Régional de Londres* in 1885 in London. Its first president was Charles Cassal, a member of the 1849 legislative assembly of the Second Republic who had fled France in 1852 following Bonaparte's *coup d'état*. He subsequently ended his days in London, where he lectured in French at University College London.<sup>36</sup> It was only in 1908 at the Franco-British Exhibition at White City that the British Federation of the *Alliance Française* was officially formed, with the endorsement of Paul Cambon.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> AMAE, Services des Œuvres Françaises à l'Étranger, 417QO/19, leaflet of the *Maison des Institutrices Françaises en Angleterre*.

<sup>34</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/47, letter from the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts to the minister of foreign affairs, 15 June 1904.

<sup>35</sup> The history of the British Federation of the *Alliance Française* is difficult to record as its archives are closed to the public, researchers included. It would be interesting to compare this institution with the *Institut Français du Royaume-Uni*, created a few decades later.

<sup>36</sup> 'Cassal (Hughes-Charles-Stanislas)', entry in *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français*, ed. A. Robert and G. Cougny (5 vols., Paris, 1889), i. 601.

<sup>37</sup> Website of the *Alliance Française de Londres* <[http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.uk/m\\_history.htm](http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.uk/m_history.htm)> [accessed 8 June 2012].

The BFAF was a pioneering society in London in that it organized talks throughout the British Isles as well as school exchanges, bestowed prizes to pupils and teachers and ran a book-lending service. The main aim of the British Federation was to inform audiences of what was happening in France, culturally and socially, and conversely, to make sure that 'the French would learn to understand the English'.<sup>38</sup>

Several societies were affiliated to the BFAF, consequently encouraging its dynamism. Both the Société Nationale Française à Londres and the Société Nationale des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre formed part of the regional committee of the British Isles. Similarly, following the 1904 Entente Cordiale, the Alliance Littéraire Scientifique et Artistique Franco-Anglaise joined the AF. The BFAF offered a large variety of lectures, a prominent feature in this kind of institution in the early twentieth century. What is more, it provides a typical example of London as the central point from where societies could spread out to the provinces, in Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, etc.

Finally, even though it was not their first priority, religious communities, such as the Catholic and Protestant churches, promoted the French language as well as a specific image of France through their activities, as the priests and ministers were French and delivered services in that language. Their ability to speak French was an essential requirement, as was made obvious after the death of M. Dégremont, the minister of the Protestant church in Soho Square in 1913. When looking for a successor, the Eglise Protestante Française demanded that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs should intercede with the British ambassador in Paris in favour of the appointment of a French Protestant minister. This linguistic issue was linked to broader questions of the French Protestant church of London, and in particular its audience.<sup>39</sup>

***Case study: the Université des Lettres Françaises (1910) – towards the creation of l'Institut Français du Royaume-Uni (1913)***

The French Institute of London was created under the name of the Université des Lettres Françaises (ULF) by Marie d'Orliac in October 1910.<sup>40</sup> It acquired its current title on 30 September 1913, when the ULF registered under the Companies Act of 1908, and still exists today in Queensberry

<sup>38</sup> 'Les Français apprendraient à connaître les Anglais' (website of the Alliance Française de Londres <[http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.uk/m\\_history.htm](http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.uk/m_history.htm)> [accessed 8 June 2012]).

<sup>39</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/82, letter from the French Embassy in London to M. Pichon, minister of foreign affairs, 29 Aug. 1913.

<sup>40</sup> L. Auer, 'Marie d'Orliac, fondatrice de l'Institut Français du Royaume-Uni', available at the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni, 2012.

Place, South Kensington (West London). It has been a leading institution in the furthering of French culture, through lectures, language classes, a library and drama plays in the first part of the twentieth century.

First established at Marble Arch, the ULF was predominantly managed by women. Marie d'Orliac, aged nineteen, arrived in the UK in 1907 from Auvergne. She attended a summer school in Oxford<sup>41</sup> and then became a teacher at South Hampstead High School, North London. Marie d'Orliac had connections in British society and the London Francophile elite. Her venture notably received the moral and financial support of Lord and Lady Askwith, the former having been appointed at the Board of Trade by Lloyd George in 1907 and subsequently becoming chief industrial commissioner in 1911. Between 1911 and 1919 he chaired the fair wages advisory committee. Lady Askwith published two novels under the name of Ellen Graham and was active on several government committees.<sup>42</sup>

The French Embassy in London acknowledged the necessity and value of such a venture and Ambassador Paul Cambon became its patron. The ULF was officially accredited by the British authorities (London County Council and the Board of Trade) in 1911 and the French government became linked to the project in 1913, through the Université de Lille. That year, the ULF became an academic department of the Université de Lille, and it was then that it became the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni.

The creation of the Université des Lettres Françaises in London was a unique undertaking, differing from that of the British branch of the Alliance Française, which was backed by the flagship association in Paris. It also differed from the establishment of other French institutes abroad. That of Florence was opened in 1907 thanks to the work of Julien Lachaire, who founded it as an annexe to the University of Grenoble, at which he was a lecturer. His objective was for French students reading Italian at Grenoble to have a pied-à-terre where Italian people would come as well, thus participating in a cultural and linguistic exchange.<sup>43</sup> From the very first days, the French Institute in Florence was a branch of Grenoble University, and this was the case for the institutes in Madrid and St. Petersburg, which belonged respectively to the universities of Toulouse and Paris.<sup>44</sup> By contrast

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Cyril Kinsky (grandson of Marie d'Orliac) conducted by Charlotte Faucher on 13 March 2012.

<sup>42</sup> R. Lowe, 'Askwith, George Ranken, Baron Askwith (1861–1942)', *ODNB*.

<sup>43</sup> I. Renard, *L'Institut Français de Florence 1900–1920, un épisode des relations franco-italiennes au début du 20ème siècle* (Rome, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> See the map of French institutes created by French universities in J.-M. Delaunay, *Méfiance cordiale: les relations Franco-Espagnoles de la fin du XIXe siècle à la première guerre mondiale* (2 vols., Paris, 2010), i. 638.

the Université des Lettres Françaises was during its first three years an independent body which then became part of a French university.

Besides, unlike the French Institute in Florence, d'Orliac did not aim her Université at French people willing to stay in London, but rather designed it as 'the extension in Great Britain, especially among women and young girls, of "la vraie culture française" by giving them the opportunity of attending courses of good French lectures on various subjects, and hearing at the monthly meetings some of the best known Parisian lecturers'.<sup>45</sup> In its first year, the Université was highly gender divided. The live-in teachers were all women,<sup>46</sup> but most of the members of the executive committee were men, and, more strikingly, Marie d'Orliac was never director or president of the executive council. Women of influence were not present in the managing body of the ULF, but some (the duchesses of Somerset and Rutland, Madame la duchesse de Rohan, Madame Alphonse Daudet)<sup>47</sup> were part of the comité d'honneur.

Early newspaper articles insisted on the role of the ULF for the furthering of girls' and women's education. The *Evening Standard* published a long article a couple of weeks after the opening of d'Orliac's Université on 'the Anglo-French club for women' opened in the premises of the Université. This club was described both as 'cours de jeunes filles ... to girls who are at an age when the little intimate talks on literature, art, music, and feminine matters have all charm of novelty' as well as 'a social club' and a lecturing place for women of experience.<sup>48</sup> Another journalist, reporting on the Université as a whole, stated that 'Special lectures on the art of women, reserved for the feminine public, and historical lectures, intended more particularly for men, completed the programme'.<sup>49</sup> In its first years, the Université was a place which celebrated the best Frenchwomen of the period. For instance, the novelist Marcelle Tinayre gave a lecture on 'Women and friendship'.<sup>50</sup> Although she is now relatively forgotten, Tinayre was extremely popular in her time, as demonstrated by the long chapter devoted to her in Winifred Stephens's *French Novelists To-day* (second series), where she is described as 'French of the French'.<sup>51</sup> Her novel *La Maison du péché*, published in 1900,

<sup>45</sup> Archives of the South Hampstead High School, school magazine, 1910.

<sup>46</sup> 1911 UK census.

<sup>47</sup> Anon., 'French thought in London', *Morning Leader*, 11 Oct. 1910.

<sup>48</sup> Anon., 'The new cercle-social and literary rendezvous for French and English women', *Evening Standard*, 10 Oct. 1910.

<sup>49</sup> Archives of the Institut du Français du Royaume-Uni, 'French literature – University in London', [no date].

<sup>50</sup> Anon., "'Les Femmes et l'Amitié", Conference by Mme Marcelle Tinayre', *The Times*, 31 March 1911.

<sup>51</sup> W. Stephens, *French Novelists of To-day* (2nd ser., London and New York, 1908), p. 46.

was also highly praised by James Joyce. Among the other guest-lecturers was Mlle. Hélène Miropolski, a twenty-four-year-old barrister from Paris.<sup>52</sup>

Louise Michel's aforementioned Université, the International School, relied on internationalist and socialist ideals, and was designed to cater for all classes; by contrast, d'Orliac's institution was much narrower in its aims. The Université des Lettres Françaises was an elite establishment which promoted a very restricted view of early twentieth-century French culture for 'ladies and girls of social position'.<sup>53</sup> Its location was in keeping with the audience that the Université wanted to attract: 'Marble Arch House, the home of the society, with its handsome rooms, spacious hall and staircases, and its atmosphere of social and intellectual Paris, is likely to become one of the most popular rendezvous during the coming winter'.<sup>54</sup>

In January 1913 the ULF started publishing *La Revue Française*, a short-lived monthly magazine of which only six issues appeared. It contained the programme of lectures and classes to be given at the institute, a portrait of a key personality in the life of the Université, book and drama reviews, extracts of novels, and exercises for the people taking the 'cours par correspondance'. There was a 'Femina' section devoted to women's fashion, and most advertisements targeted a female audience, either promoting hair salons or clothing shops where one could buy 'the latest Parisian creations'. French bookshops and pharmacies,<sup>55</sup> notably the Pharmacie Jozeau on Piccadilly, described as the pharmacy of the French Embassy and French Hospital, found their place in the commercial announcements.

The Université organized series of lectures on French literature, comparative literature, history, diction and drama, and 'arts de la femme'.<sup>56</sup> From spring 1913 it was divided into sections, namely the 'artistic and literary department', 'language classes and French institutions' and the 'commercial department'.<sup>57</sup>

Once the Université became the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni in 1913, the emphasis on women's education was to disappear in favour of the hosting of French academics and classes for Lille students and British people, thus becoming more similar to other French cultural institutes abroad. Nevertheless, it retained some features of the Université's internal

<sup>52</sup> Anon., 'French Portia in London, woman lawyer tells of her success, beautiful advocate' *Daily Express*, 7 Dec. 1911.

<sup>53</sup> Anon., 'Les Femmes et l'Amitié'.

<sup>54</sup> Anon., 'The new cercle-social'.

<sup>55</sup> *La Revue Française*, i (21 Jan. 1913).

<sup>56</sup> Nottinghamshire Archives, DD/H/178/161-55, Université des Lettres Françaises, Marble Arch House, London, programme of courses, 1911.

<sup>57</sup> 'Programme de l'Institut', *La Revue Française*, iv (25 Apr. 1913).

organization, notably the three main departments. In 1913, the Institut Français also spread geographically, opening branches in Liverpool, Manchester, Tunbridge Wells, Leeds, Bradford and Harrogate, and sending them lecturers and notable speakers, as the Alliance Française was also doing.

On the eve of the First World War, the Université des Lettres Françaises had transformed itself from an elitist society, primarily aimed at upper-class girls and women, into an Institut Français with roots in the Université de Lille which managed slightly to broaden its audience, through the *lycée* (1915) and its activities in the British provinces.

### ***Cultural diplomacy through fairs and events in London***

So far, cultural diplomacy has been examined as a phenomenon spread through institutions, societies and bi-national agreements mostly set up by the embassies. But it is also necessary to concentrate on specific events, as they illustrate the effort made to promote particular aspects and often resonate beyond the moment they occurred, bearing a strong ‘memory value’<sup>58</sup> and affecting popular consciousness.

The first major Franco-British cultural event of the twentieth century was the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908,<sup>59</sup> which was a decisive step in showcasing the ‘cordiality’ of the 1904 Entente and was studied in depth for its centenary anniversary in 2008.<sup>60</sup> This exhibition, held in White City from May to October, strengthened the cultural and commercial ties between the two countries and was described in laudatory terms by contemporaries.<sup>61</sup> Its success was visible in the numbers of visitors: nearly 8.5 million people came to ‘the Franco’ as it was commonly named. There were in total twenty palaces and eight buildings, each of them devoted to specific themes such as education, science, arts, textile, etc.,<sup>62</sup> embodying a testament to the progression towards genuine Franco-British friendship. Martyn Cornick shows that this commercial and cultural event had strong political and

<sup>58</sup> This phrase is used to describe the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition by D. Kelly and T. Jackson, ‘The Franco-British exhibition of 1908: legacies and memories 100 years on’, in *Synergies Royaume-Uni et Irlande: regards sur l’entente culturelle*, ii (2009), 11–23.

<sup>59</sup> M. Cornick, ‘Putting the seal on the Entente: the Franco-British exhibition, London, May–October 1908’, *Franco-British Studies*, xxxv (2004), 133–44.

<sup>60</sup> See *Synergies Royaume-Uni et Irlande: regards sur l’entente culturelle*, ii (2009).

<sup>61</sup> M. Cornick, ‘“Sceller l’Entente”: l’importance politique et internationale de l’exposition franco-britannique, Londres, 1908’, in *L’Entente Cordiale: cent ans de relations culturelles franco-britanniques (1904–2004)*, ed. D. Cooper-Richet and M. Rapoport (Paris, 2006), pp. 245–60, at p. 245.

<sup>62</sup> M. Cornick, ‘Sceller l’Entente’, p. 250.



diplomatic significance.<sup>63</sup> The French president Armand Fallières and the minister of foreign affairs Stephen Pichon came to England in late May 1908 and were invited to Buckingham Palace, where they delivered speeches stressing the collaboration of the two peoples. Commentators of the time saw in this visit the hope for a strong Franco-British alliance which could hinder the progress of Germany, which was acting against the French interest in northern Africa. What was designed as a pleasure exhibition thus also served as a means to assert Franco-British ties, spreading the hope of a peaceful situation within the European countries.

On a larger scale, the British issued repeated invitations to the *Musique de la Garde Républicaine*, the military marching bands of the French Republican Guard. In 1905, one of the conditions laid down for the bands to play in Britain was that their performances should only occur during charitable events. That year, the French Ministry of War replied positively to the Entente Cordiale League, which was organizing a series of events to raise money aimed at supporting the poorest members of the French community in London and Britain. These events were part of the Queen's Fund for the unemployed.<sup>64</sup> This example demonstrates that cultural diplomacy was not always initiated from Paris, even when it involved symbols of the French Republic, as it was the Entente Cordiale League, based in London, which first contacted the Ministry of War (which proved slightly reluctant to release its musicians). The concerts, which finally took place in London at the end of February 1906, helped with the promotion of French patriotism, and manifested Franco-British friendship and French support after the sudden death of Edward Grey, British minister of foreign affairs, which had occurred earlier that month.<sup>65</sup>

### ***The progressive engagement of the state in the field of cultural diplomacy***

'Culture is another name for propaganda',<sup>66</sup> stated Marc Fumaroli in his controversial essay on state and culture *L'État Culturel: essai sur une religion moderne*, published in 1991. It seems that the state started to rely partly on an institutionalized form of cultural action for its external propaganda in the early years of the Third Republic, and the case of London provides fruitful insight into the creation of a French cultural diplomacy.

<sup>63</sup> M. Cornick, 'Sceller l'Entente', pp. 250ff.

<sup>64</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/81, letter from Paul Cambon to Maurice Rouvier, président du conseil, 13 Dec. 1905.

<sup>65</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/81, letter from J. E. Lyndall to the minister of foreign affairs, 22 Feb. 1906.

<sup>66</sup> M. Fumaroli, *L'Etat Culturel: essai sur une religion moderne* (Paris, 1991), p. 20.

In the late nineteenth century the French government, through its ambassadors in London, encouraged French societies in the capital which were promoting French civilization by granting them medals and making small donations of money or books.<sup>67</sup> The government also took part in cultural exchanges. In 1901 the gift of a Sèvres vase was offered to the British Museum, and the following year the French Ministry of War sent over books and letters to the British Museum, the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission. The French state controlled the image of France, for example hindering the lending of flags, weapons and trophies related to the 1871 Paris Commune for the 1901 London military exhibition, on the grounds that: 'It seems inappropriate in any case to present souvenirs of our last civil war amongst the collections exhibited in a foreign city'.<sup>68</sup> The First World War speeded up the definition of the image of France, as the state delineated its foreign cultural policy. It was in this context that it partly took over the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni via the Université de Lille. Beyond its cultural and linguistic functions, the IFRU became a clearly political forum from 1914 onwards and was to be the preferred site for French and British politicians to unveil the aims of their respective country's policies, and developments in Franco-British relations. The inauguration of the Lycée Français in March 1915 gave the French ambassador to Britain, Paul Cambon, the opportunity to express his hopes that it would become a permanent institution, thus enabling 'the spreading of French culture as distinct from German culture'.<sup>69</sup> This was the first time in the history of the French Institute that one of its sections was pointed out as instrumental in diminishing the prestige of German civilization (which, according to a Belgian newspaper, Cambon had described as 'odious').<sup>70</sup> Cambon was to take this anti-German rhetoric further at various events at the Lycée, stressing the differences between French, Belgian and British cultures, on the one hand, and German culture, on the other.

Propaganda became one of the main concerns within the French Foreign Office during the First World War. In 1914, la Maison de la Presse was created, including a propaganda service within which a section was dedicated to propaganda in the Allied countries. Building on the 1911 Bureau des Ecoles et Œuvres Françaises à l'Étranger, the Service des Œuvres Françaises à l'Étranger (SOFE) was created in 1920, partly to manage the

<sup>67</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/81.

<sup>68</sup> AMAE, 161CPCOM/81: '[i]l ... paraît peu convenable en tout cas, de faire figurer, parmi les collections exposées dans une ville étrangère, des souvenirs de notre dernière guerre civile'.

<sup>69</sup> Anon., 'New French schools in London', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1915.

<sup>70</sup> Anon., *La Chronique*, 29 March 1915.

French institutes abroad and also because:

Our literature and humanities, our arts, our industrial civilization, our ideas, have at all times had a strong attraction for foreign nations. Our universities, our schools abroad are truly centres of propaganda in favour of France. They are a weapon in the hands of our public powers. This is why the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its agents abroad must direct and control initiatives, inspire and promote the diffusion of French thought and culture at all costs, with the conviction that it is one of the most efficient forms of action abroad.<sup>71</sup>

In the early nineteen-twenties, the creation of the SOFE therefore helped to establish the predominance of the Quai d'Orsay (over the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux Arts, and later the Ministère de la Culture) but did not prevent private initiatives from continuing to disseminate French culture abroad, which these bodies did all the more eagerly as they were in desperate need of money.

<sup>71</sup> 'Nos lettres, nos arts, notre civilisation industrielle, nos idées ont exercé de tout temps un puissant attrait sur les nations étrangères. Nos universités, nos écoles à l'étranger sont de véritables foyers de propagande en faveur de la France. Elles constituent une arme entre les mains de nos pouvoirs publics. C'est pourquoi le ministère des Affaires Etrangères et ses agents de l'extérieur doivent diriger et contrôler les initiatives, inspirer et favoriser à tout prix la pénétration intellectuelle française, avec la conviction qu'elle est une des formes les plus sûrement efficaces de notre action à l'étranger' (from a speech by the auditor of the budget at the Chambre des Députés, quoted in Roche and Pigniau, *Histoires*, p. 38).