

## The Teaching of French at Sydney

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As the University of Sydney prepares to celebrate its sesquicentenary, it is worth recording that the history of the study of French language and culture at this institution is almost as long as that of the University itself. Although this article is in many ways a personal memoir, my own experience needs to be set in that broader context.<sup>1</sup> It was towards the end of 1853 that the first teacher of the language was appointed, but the subject did not become a degree course until 1866. Though Senate had agreed in August of 1853 to establish a full Chair of French, the actual first appointment was of a Reader (in both French and German), Dr Anselme Ricard, with a doctorate from Jena, who lasted in the position for fewer than two years.

Ricard's successor was a local, apparently without tertiary qualifications, Pierre-Ambroise Dutruc, who combined his part-time position with the profession of wine and spirits merchant, and at the same time published a number of French language textbooks. He continued in his post to 1868, when courses in French at the University were suspended until their reintroduction in 1882. Teaching in this new era was carried on first by Etienne Thibault, with Dr Rudolph Max, and then by A. V. A. Bulteau, until the appointment of Mungo MacCallum in 1887 to a chair in Modern Literature, covering both English and Modern Languages. Under MacCallum, the particular responsibility for French and German from 1889 to 1903 belonged to Dr Emile Trechman (an Oxford graduate whose doctorate was from Heidelberg), assisted by Max and Bulteau.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of all these vicissitudes, the University of Sydney

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preceded all other Australian institutions by many years in the teaching of French language and literature. The next institution to introduce French, the University of Melbourne, did not do so until the late 1880s, followed by Tasmania in 1892, Queensland in 1911, Western Australia in 1913 and Adelaide in 1918.<sup>3</sup> The Chair of French as such at the University of Sydney did not, however, come into existence until December 1920, as one of the positions founded as a result of the McCaughey bequest.<sup>4</sup> The first Professor of French was George Gibb Nicholson, who had been Assistant Lecturer under MacCallum from 1903 and Assistant Professor from 1913.

G. G. Nicholson, the foundation McCaughey Professor of French, took up his position in 1921 and held it for a quarter of a century, until his retirement in 1945. He developed a reputation for academic rigour, sometimes construed as linguistic pedantry, that marked generations of French graduates and created a legend that was still well and truly alive when I studied as a Sydney undergraduate.

In the years before his appointment to the Chair, Nicholson had been a strong proponent of what was then called the 'direct method', which sought to replace the traditional grammar-translation pedagogy with a new emphasis on oral proficiency through use of the foreign language as the medium of instruction.<sup>5</sup> As Professor of French, he placed great stress on the importance of accuracy in pronunciation (he was author of a phonetics textbook) and on contact with the living language (he maintained a regular rotation of native assistants in the Department) but otherwise returned to an older view of language learning as a mental discipline. His interest in 'free composition' as an exercise was that it should be a training in linguistic accuracy and logical thinking.<sup>6</sup> At the same time he published internationally in the field of French philology and had—to use today's terminology—a research profile that was to be for many years unusually high for the discipline. Nicholson's interests as both a teacher and a scholar were essentially linguistic, and in his curriculum literary study was reduced largely to an exercise in translation (of French texts) and in dictation (of background material that owed much to Lanson's history of French

literature). In spite of his reputation for ferociously high standards of language and discipline, there are many testimonies to his kindness and help to students.<sup>7</sup>

A figure of note in the Department of French during Nicholson's tenure of the Chair was Gladys Marks, whose career teaching French at the University began in 1917. She became a permanent staff member in 1921 and retired in 1943. Hers was a pioneering rôle as the first woman lecturer and the first woman to have headed a department, as Acting Professor, during Nicholson's absences overseas.<sup>8</sup>

The inter-war years were characterised by a strong contrast between the approach to the teaching of French at the University of Sydney and at the University of Melbourne. A. R. Chisholm, a student under Nicholson and a disciple of Christopher Brennan,<sup>9</sup> headed the Melbourne Department from 1921 and was the first of many Sydney graduates who have, during this century, staffed French departments throughout the country. He brought a new sensitivity to the study of literature and a new interest in modern works that gave the curriculum he developed a quite different emphasis from Sydney's dominant stress on language. In a long and distinguished career—from 1921 to 1956, although he was not made a full professor until 1938—Chisholm gained an international reputation and inspired generations of Australian French scholars.

G. G. Nicholson retired after more than forty years with the Department, and was succeeded in the Chair in 1946 by Ian Henning, who had first joined the staff in 1935. Under the new Professor, the extreme rigours of the previous régime were softened and far more emphasis was placed on the study of literature—still within a framework of literary and intellectual history but with a new emphasis on the individual appreciation of literary works. It is nevertheless true to say that the Nicholsonian stress on extremely high levels of linguistic competence was largely retained as a Sydney tradition, although marks below zero, the proliferation of grades of *theta*, and excessively high failure rates became a thing of the past. Henning was a cultivated and in many ways conservative man, but with a witty, original and even iconoclastic cast of mind

and a delight in surprising his interlocutors by turning many conventional wisdoms on their head. He shared with Nicholson great kindness to students and to his staff, without his predecessor's forbidding presence. He did not share Nicholson's interest in formal research and publication: his view was that postgraduate work was best carried out at French universities and that 'publish or perish' was a pernicious doctrine that only served to clutter up the world with second rate books and articles.

It was to the Department that had already been led for seven years by Ian Henning that I came as a first year student in 1953. The staff establishment was four. The Department was still housed on the upper floor of the northern or façade wing of the quadrangle building, as it had been in Nicholson's day. However, the Professor's study, formerly on that floor adjacent to the eastern landing, had been relocated downstairs, beside the anteroom to the Great Hall. (By the 1960s, the Department had crossed the Quadrangle to the area now occupied by the Faculty of Arts, the Professor's study being the present-day Dean's. From the 1970s, the Department has been situated in less grand surroundings, on the sixth floor of the somewhat uninspiring Brennan building.)

The first year course taken by my contemporaries and me in the 1950s consisted of a dictation on Monday, the translation of a choice of twentieth-century texts on Tuesday, a prose class (i.e. translation of a short literary passage from English to French) on Thursday, and a poetry class on Friday. (For many years, there were no lectures in French on Wednesday, as that was when staff corrected proeses to be ready for returning on Thursday morning.) A further hour of translation of relatively contemporary French texts was given to students who wished to enter the Honours stream. In addition, during the week all students attended in small groups a practical phonetics tutorial aimed essentially at improving pronunciation through awareness of the French sound system. The teaching of modern languages thus already involved more class hours, more staff contact, and more regular correcting than most other Arts disciplines—five or six hours of classes as against the more common two or at most three.

The second and third year courses were made up of a similarly

high number of contact hours. However, to maximise staff effectiveness, the two levels were combined for most classes (a device to which the Department of French Studies, with others, is returning in the current stringent funding situation at the end of the 1990s). Thus the literature programme one year covered texts of the seventeenth century, the next year of the eighteenth and the following year of the nineteenth. Students caught up with the century they had missed over second and third year only if they completed a fourth Honours year—and it was also in the fourth year that they returned to the twentieth century to which they had had some sort of introduction in their first year. The literature courses in the senior years abandoned translation for literary history and analytical commentary: one hour per week was a discursive lecture and a second hour was devoted to the typically French exercise of the *explication de texte*.<sup>10</sup> The second and third year prose classes were combined and the first year phonetics hour was replaced by an hour of conversation in small groups with the native speaker assistant. For students in the Honours stream there was a further course on the language and literature of the mediaeval period and the sixteenth century, in yearly rotation.

The handful of students who proceeded to the Honours year in French shared lectures with the second and third year students for prose translation and for the study of the literary century they had not previously covered. They had their own conversation groups and seminars on twentieth-century French writers. The equivalent of the Fourth Year dissertation was a formal oral paper on a chosen topic presented to the class, then commented on from the point of view of both language and content, in private interview, by the teacher concerned—usually Professor Henning.

This curriculum was based on the assumption that students had received a thorough grounding in reading and grammar during five years of study at high school—and that only students who had done well in French would choose to take the subject at tertiary level. French was the most widely taught language in the high schools and, perhaps because of the lingering reputation of being a ‘difficult’ subject, attracted a high proportion of students who had performed well at the then Leaving Certificate. The emphases

in the tertiary curriculum were clearly on areas of study that were considered to have been less well developed in the secondary system: accurate pronunciation, skills in translation into and out of French, together with the reading of and commentary on increasingly sophisticated literary texts within a chronological framework of literary history. (The stress on oral skills was exemplified by the long-standing tradition, regrettably in abeyance since the 1980s, of productions of classical and modern French plays acted by students of the Department.) This programme was academically successful at the very least in that it gave local students a very sound preparation for postgraduate work at French universities, the most common choice being the completion of a *doctorat d'Université*, usually at the Sorbonne.

That was the path that I followed, studying in Paris from late 1958 until early 1961, intending—as my prior completion of a Diploma of Education through the Sydney Teachers' College attests—to return to the NSW secondary system as a teacher of French and German. However, the expansion of the University sector as a result of the Murray report of 1957 changed not only the direction of my career with the offer of a position in the Department in which I had been an undergraduate, but also the future evolution of French studies at the university. I returned with my newly completed doctorate in literary history to a context where the assumptions of the past were already being strongly questioned, both inside and outside my discipline. At the same time, student numbers began to grow very considerably, moving from 165 student enrolments in 1955 (and 4 academic staff) to a peak of 670 (and 19 staff) by 1968.

With such an increase in staff numbers, teaching practices inevitably began to develop in new directions. The emphasis on a high level of language skills remained a characteristic of the Department, but the methodologies of language teaching were beginning to change. The so-called audio-lingual method (based on behaviourist theories of language acquisition through repetitive and imitative drills) and the use of language laboratory facilities began to be introduced, with a corresponding move away from the grammar-translation approach. Ian Henning himself was a prime

mover in the introduction of the then new technologies (although he was certainly less convinced by the more repetitive aspects of the methodology) and in the setting up of language laboratory facilities, which developed into the Faculty of Arts Language Centre.

It was particularly in the more varied approaches to the study of literature that the much larger staff began to have its influence. These were the days of the beginnings of French structuralism and of textual interpretation, and tensions began to grow between those who were eager to embrace the new 'hermeneutics' and those who had been trained in the French school of literary history (a local reflection, albeit far less dramatic, of the virulent quarrels that took place at the time in French academe). Course structures remained basically chronological, however, and, in a Faculty where the Department of English was going through the traumas of its Leavisite period<sup>11</sup> and where the approach to literature of the German Department had long been more theoretically based, French retained a reputation for considerable conservatism in its literary teaching. It should be noted that the Department maintained the strong interest in mediaeval studies that had begun with Nicholson, and at this period attracted (until he moved to North America in 1970) one of the foremost Australian scholars in this area, K. V. Sinclair.

In 1967, I left the Department to take up a position (in the first year of teaching) in the School of Modern Languages at newly established Macquarie University—a further instance of the effect that the Murray report was having on university careers in those days. The creation of the French Section at Macquarie was also a telling example of the Sydney Department's longstanding rôle in providing staff for other institutions: all four members of the new unit were recruited from it, and three of the four were in fact Sydney graduates.<sup>12</sup> Professor Henning remained in the Sydney Chair until his retirement in 1970.

The appointment of Henning's successor heralded a more radical break with the past during the 1970s than the gradual—if accelerating—change of the previous decade. Ross Chambers, who became McCaughey Professor of French in 1971, had been

one of the Sydney staff until he took a position in the new Department at the University of New South Wales in the early 1960s.<sup>13</sup> Already before this move he had been one of the strongest critics of the basically traditionalist approach of the Sydney Department and a forceful proponent of new methodologies. On his return, he was able—in spite of his relatively short tenure, until 1975, when he moved to North America—to make radical and positive changes to the curriculum, to pedagogy and to the staff. These were to give a new impetus to the Department and set some of the basic directions that were to be followed over the next twenty years. At the heart of these reforms was the insistence that the teaching of the Department, in both language and literature, be grounded in a sound and up-to-date theoretical context and that staff members have qualifications that enabled them to work efficiently within that context.

Literature courses moved away from a chronological to a thematic structure, and exploited the critical methodologies that structuralism and semiotics offered. Theory not only informed curriculum development but a training in theoretical methodologies formed part of the learning process. Research and postgraduate work were strongly developed, and by the time of Ross Chambers's departure there were over fifty postgraduate students (a sevenfold increase compared to ten years before). A beginners' course was introduced, and staff with a background in applied linguistics were brought in to develop courses based on the audio-visual methodologies then in vogue. This approach to language learning moved away from the mechanistic view of audio-lingualism to offer a richer and more complex context of sight and sound experience. A further innovation of the period was the introduction of an alternative major that concentrated not on literature, but on French culture and society more generally. This widening of the curriculum was signalled by a change in the Department's name from French to French Studies.

The rapid changes that the Department lived through at this time were not only an expression of a new view of the nature and practice of modern language disciplines but also a reaction to pressures brought on by changes in the broader educational context.

The reorganisation of the secondary programme with the implementation of the Wyndham scheme from 1962, to cater for a far broader population of students, moved language study from the central position it had held in the former high school curriculum. The result for the Sydney Department, as for others in the State (and indeed throughout the country where parallel secondary reforms were taking place), was that the reliable supply of well trained and well motivated students of French began to dry up. The University's specific matriculation requirement since 1959 of a foreign language (or mathematics) was dropped by 1969, and the decline in students who had studied French throughout their secondary career accelerated further.

The introduction of beginners' courses in French was a timely response to this new situation, as was the modernisation of pedagogy and broadening of the curriculum in order to make the study of the discipline more attractive to a wider range of students. These strategies were successful in that student numbers were maintained at the level of some 500 to 600 enrolments over the next twenty years, with a staff approaching twenty positions.

The process of reform and adaptation was continued during the fifteen-year tenure of the next McCaughey Professor, Ivan Barko, who came to Sydney from the Chair at Monash in 1975 and who combined the highest level of intellectual accomplishments and far-sighted academic vision with quite exceptional administrative, diplomatic and organisational talents. The structures of the Department developed by him are essentially those that are current today: not only did they mean that the continuing challenges of the 1980s were successfully met and that Sydney became once again the largest French Department in the country, but they have also proved a sound basis for weathering the storms of the recent years. Ivan Barko involved his staff in decision making processes through a comprehensive structure of advisory committees; he developed mechanisms for strong staff-student contacts and regular two-way feedback; he maintained a strong postgraduate school in spite of the decline in numbers as a result of the reintroduction of fees; he won a high profile in Faculty and University affairs, and he was instrumental in developing strong relations with other Australian

French departments and in attracting continuing support from the French cultural organisations and diplomatic missions. He was strongly committed to the professionalisation of the area of practical language teaching and to the relevance of linguistics, both theoretical and applied, within a department of French Studies. At the same time, he preserved Sydney's traditional attachment to mediaeval studies, at a time when this area was largely being abandoned throughout Australia. He also introduced an intermediate level first year language course, for students with some knowledge of French but who had not completed the equivalent of a full secondary programme. This period also saw a shift from the audio-visual methodologies in language teaching to the 'communicative' method, which puts the emphasis less on correct forms than on students' learning to use language for effective communication of their meaning within relevant socio-cultural contexts.

The senior course structures introduced during Ivan Barko's tenure were highly original and remain unique in the Australian context. They consist of three streams of specialisation: linguistics, literature (including drama and cinema), and social sciences—all treated, of course, from a French perspective and through the French language. The first of these streams is concerned with questions of theoretical and applied linguistics, and is separate from a strand of practical language acquisition, which continues throughout the senior curriculum. The broadening of the literature strand to the performing arts was, in the early 1970s, the responsibility of Gay McAuley (now Associate Professor), who went on to pioneer the creation of the Faculty's Centre for Performance Studies. The social sciences stream, as we have seen, also had its origins during that same period when the beginners' and French Studies curricula were first developed.

Within this tripartite structure, students choose an area of specialisation in their second year and typically continue through with it into their third year. Originally, each strand offered both an introduction to the topic and a further choice from a number of electives that illustrated the themes and methodologies of that basic option, but recent funding problems have meant that the

electives are no longer offered. A fourth area of specialisation, devoted to the study of the French speaking or 'Francophone' world, was one of the first such courses taught by any department world-wide when it was introduced in 1974 by Bob Sherrington (then Senior Lecturer, and later Associate Professor in the Department). Today this option is a sub-set of the social sciences strand that is concerned with aspects of French intellectual history and of current French society in the context of French sociological theory. Currently the social sciences stream is overall the one that attracts most students.

After Ivan Barko's retirement in early 1991, I returned in 1992 from my position in a personal chair at Macquarie University to take up the McCaughey Chair of French, from which I retired in July 1999. The past seven and a half years have been a period of extremely rapid change and, because of the decline in material resources, of increasing pressures on our capacity to maintain our core activities as well as our standards. The staff of the Department has been more than halved over that period, but we have managed to maintain the basic structures and the variety of our courses, by judicious pruning and by reintroducing a year-by-year rotation of a number of offerings. A further challenge of the 1990s was the introduction of a new structure for the Bachelor of Arts degree, which, in spite of its logically defensible aim of making all courses of study comparable if not equal in their weighting, had negative practical effects on the language departments.<sup>14</sup> We in French Studies face the problem that confronts all language disciplines, in that our teaching is inherently time consuming and hence more expensive than that typical in the humanities—both because of the intensive teaching and marking that is necessary for language acquisition, and because we are teaching not only competence in a language but, through our 'content' courses, the culture that the language serves to express. The government, the University and the Faculty funding formulae continue, rightly, to recognise this differential, but departments such as ours typically continue to rely on casual assistants in order to make ends meet. Whether or not, with the current competition for funds and changes to workplace conditions, we shall continue to be funded adequately

is a vital question for the very near future.

As in the past, the Department has, however, responded in innovative ways to external pressures during this period. The headship of the Department rotated between myself and Associate Professor Margaret Sankey, and for the first time in the history of the Department a staff member who was not the professor took on this rôle on other than an acting or transitional basis. Margaret and I agreed fully about finding an effective balance between the best of our traditions and the need for change, and I must pay tribute here to her vital contributions both within the Department and beyond.

French Studies has continued to be a leader in the development and the implementation of computer-aided instruction, the first year beginners' course being largely taught and examined through this medium. (Dr Marie-Thérèse Barbaux has been a major force in recent years in this area, both within her home discipline, and latterly in the Faculty as a whole, as Director of the Arts Information Technology Unit.) The Department has also moved into the area of standardised testing of language competence, now organising locally in co-operation with the Alliance Française the French DELF and DALF proficiency examinations and is shortly to introduce a course to prepare students for the high level DALF diplomas.<sup>15</sup> It has profited from the University's adoption of a modularised course structure to make its offerings more flexible and more attractive to students, who now can determine far more freely the balance between language courses and 'content' courses and can move more readily between the various specialised streams. More and more of our students are now able to make a period of study in France part of their course for a major, and the Faculty In-Country Scholarship Scheme has been vital in assisting the best of our Honours stream to take advantage of this opportunity. At the postgraduate level, students have for many years spent part of their Sydney candidature in France or have undertaken a French postgraduate degree, but now—thanks to the *co-tutelle* system promoted by this Department<sup>16</sup>—they can opt to work for a double degree, from both this institution and a French university. The overall research profile of the Department, locally

and internationally, has been raised markedly in recent years. Balancing the demands of teaching and research has always been something of a dilemma in Australian language departments, because of the strong investment of staff time in teaching and correction, and the strong stress on research output now current has meant new pressures on staff and a reassessment of priorities. At the same time, the Department has maintained and developed its links with the secondary school system and the HSC examination processes, with local French diplomatic and cultural representatives, with a number of national initiatives in defence of the humanities and of the library sector, and—very importantly—with its alumni.

The range of activities that the Department of French Studies undertakes currently is clearly broader and more ambitious than was the case during earlier years. And there have obviously been enormous changes in our concept of French as a discipline over the life of the Department. The ways in which competence in the language is acquired by students and the definition of this competence have altered radically. The nature and the range of topics in French culture that are studied—and the ways in which they are studied—have continued to evolve. The physical distance that separates us and our students from the object of our study has been reduced through the evolving technologies of travel, of electronic communication, and the media more generally. The needs of our students and the knowledge they bring with them have by no means remained constant. At the same time the qualifications of staff, their specialisations, their professional affiliations, and their range of research and community interests have become today richer and more diverse than ever.

And yet I believe that at least two basic constants remain. The first of these is the concept of the language as the key to our discipline. It is true that approaches to the acquisition of language skills have come and gone, as have definitions of what the necessary basic skills may be. But the curricula of this Department are still based on the belief that the point of modern language study is to enter and to understand another culture through the acquisition of the particular medium of linguistic expression that subtends that culture. This point of departure is clearly exemplified in the

Department's policy of conducting all classes in French, other than in quite exceptional cases. Our goal today is to give all our students this basic opportunity to widen their horizons, in terms of both personal development and potentially useful vocational skills, through the experience of another language and another culture—whilst preparing our specialist students to a level, culturally and linguistically, which will enable them to study in the French tertiary system or to work in an administrative, commercial or other vocational environment that requires familiarity with French.

A second constant is the stress that the Department has necessarily always put on questions of pedagogy long before an emphasis on good teaching became widespread in the tertiary area. The fact that our discipline is based on a language skill that most of our students need to learn (rather than acquiring it as a mother tongue) means that teachers are constantly brought face to face with questions that concern the means of learning and the end products of learning. The Sydney Department, at least since the days of the 'direct method' at the beginning of the century, arguably throughout the Nicholson and Henning eras, and certainly since the 1960s, has maintained a very strong interest in the methodologies of its discipline. This does not apply only to the aspect of language acquisition, but also to the content areas of the curriculum. Whilst Nicholson's approach to the teaching of literature was no doubt an idiosyncratic one, it was based on his own conclusions as to the most appropriate balance between language learning and cultural competence. Today's curriculum, with its broad range of content options and its strong theoretical basis, is a very different solution, but to the same unavoidable pedagogical problem. A continuing symbol of the Department's commitment to good teaching practice may be seen in its presentation of the Sonia Marks Memorial Lectures,<sup>17</sup> a series where experts in their field discuss questions of modern language pedagogy.

French Studies, together with the other language-based departments within the Faculty of Arts, is currently in the process of defining a new rôle and new structures within a larger administrative grouping—an Institute or School that will

necessarily preserve the identity of the individual languages and departments (we do after all speak in different tongues) but that will raise the profile of our disciplines and encourage collaborative and interdisciplinary initiatives. This is an exciting undertaking, and an affirmation of this University's belief in the value of the language disciplines, in terms of teaching, of research and of community and international outreach. These new structures will, of course, at the same time bring new challenges—but the story of the Department of French Studies, which I have attempted to outline succinctly in these pages, is clearly one of continuing adaptation and change. If the pace of transformation has accelerated in recent years and continues to do so, the Department's past record in responding successfully to new circumstances and new opportunities may be seen as an excellent precedent and a favourable augur for its future.

#### Notes

- 1 For more detail of the history of the University of Sydney Department of French Studies, see Ivan Barko, 'A Brief History of French at the University of Sydney', in *Seventy Years of the McCaughey Chair of French, 1921–1991*, University of Sydney, Department of French Studies, 1991, pp.7–31; and Ivan Barko and Angus Martin, 'A Short History of the Teaching of French in Australian Universities', in *Traditions and Mutations in French Studies: the Australian Scene*, eds Philippe Lane and John West-Sooby, Mount Nebo, Queensland, 1997, pp.19–20 (esp. pp.22–30; 32–42, 48–61, 85–88. These articles are the source of most of the historical material included in the present article. For a broader treatment of the teaching of French in Australia, including the primary and secondary sectors, see Peter Cryle, Anne Freadman, Barbara Hanna, *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential. Profiles of 9 Key Languages in Australia*, vol. III, *French*, Canberra, The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, 1993. Further sources on these topics will be found in all three publications. I am grateful for assistance in preparing my text to Ivan Barko, Anne Bates, and Margaret Sankey—errors and infelicities remaining all my own.
- 2 A. V. Bulteau is reputed to have drowned in Sydney Harbour, while attempting to recover student exercises blown overboard from a ferry on which he was commuting. The Department possesses a terra cotta relief portrait of Bulteau, donated by his family, one of the few pictorial

records still extant. See Barko, 'A Brief History', between pp.16 and 17 for some others.

- 3 See Barko and Martin, for further details.
- 4 The pastoralist, Sir Samuel McCaughey, left £458,000 to the University of Sydney in 1919. Nine named chairs were created.
- 5 See Cryle, *et al.*, pp.24–36 for further details on this and later methodologies.
- 6 The manuscript of an unpublished book on the subject (entitled typically *Thinking in French*) is held among the Nicholson papers in the archives of the University.
- 7 See Ivan Barko's entry on Nicholson in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1891–1939*, vol.XI, Melbourne, 1988, pp.26–27. This text is reproduced in Barko, 'A Brief History', pp.29–31, and includes an anecdote illustrating Nicholson's kindness that was edited out of the *ADB* entry.
- 8 See Margaret Maxwell's entry on Gladys Marks in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1891–1939*, vol.X, pp.411–12. See also the index to Ros Pesman's *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad*, Melbourne, 1996.
- 9 On Brennan's career at the University of Sydney, see Wallace Kirsop, 'Brennan, critic and scholar', *Southerly* 23 (1963): 203–10.
- 10 *Explication de texte* is an exercise with a quite rigid formal tradition that trains students to express in writing their understanding of the meaning, expression and context of a short literary or philosophical passage.
- 11 On this much debated phase of the history of the Department of English, see most recently Michael Wilding, 'Among Leavisites', *Southerly* 59 (1999): 67–93.
- 12 The graduates were Professor K. J. Goesch, as Head of School (a position he subsequently held for over thirty years, until 1997), K. R. Dutton (soon to become Professor of French at the University of Newcastle), and myself. The fourth member was the French native speaker, David Bensoussan. The Macquarie Department was one of six to be established in the 1960s: the others were Monash, New South Wales, James Cook, Flinders and La Trobe.
- 13 With Judith Robinson, a Sydney graduate, as foundation professor in 1963.
- 14 On this point and for a fuller treatment of the Sydney curriculum in the 1990s, see Margaret Sankey, Patrick Durel, Elizabeth Rechniewski and Bronwyn Winter, 'Reinventing Ourselves: the Changing Curriculum and the Teaching of French', in *Traditions and Mutations*, pp.105–34.
- 15 The *Diplôme d'études en langue française* and the *Diplôme approfondi de langue française* certify competence in oral and written French at a

variety of levels and are awarded by the French National Ministry of Education.

- 16 One of the important international ventures initiated by Margaret Sankey, who has continued as Head of Department since my retirement.
- 17 The lecture series is named in honour of the late Sonia Marks, who pioneered the Department's teaching of the beginners' stream and was a strong influence in modernising approaches to language teaching generally.