Few areas have been as extensively researched in recent years as those of nation-formation and national identity; few areas have seen the production of so many competing theories and methodologies. To impose order on this field it has become customary to make broad distinctions between contrasting approaches: modernists versus pre-modernists; essentialists versus constructivists, with what might be described as a “symbolic turn” over the past twenty years towards study of the discourses and representations of nationhood and national identity. In French historiography this latter approach can be illustrated by a number of influential works: Colette Beaune’s *Naissance de la nation France*, Suzanne Citron’s *Le Mythe national*, Myriam Yardeni’s *Enquêtes sur l’identité de la ‘nation France’*, offer detailed studies for different periods of French history of how signs, symbols and representations of the nation became powerful affective and ideological forces. Such studies recognise, as Yardeni writes: “la prépondérance des croyances et des représentations parmi les forces historiques agissantes, omnipuissantes et omniprésentes”. They do not attempt to pre-judge at what stage the modern nation emerged, but include within their scope the religious and dynastic signs and symbols of early forms of nationhood. This approach includes, importantly, drawing attention to the role of elites and intellectuals (historians, writers, artists) in creating representations of the nation, and of institutions and media in disseminating them to a wider public.

It is in the context of these and similar studies that the project “Communications and National Identity in Early Modern France” was undertaken in 2002, the aim of which was to cast light on the emergence and dissemination of discourses of nationhood in late seventeenth and eighteenth-century France, through the analysis of a variety of fiction and non-fiction genres. It posed questions such as: by what processes did people come to think of themselves as belonging to a national community, and, significantly, one that existed independently of state and king? What forms did that conceptualisation take, what was its content? What contrasts and comparisons helped to define that identity (notably

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4 Yardeni, p. 12.
the confrontation with the “Other”, whether European or non-European). For this issue of the *Australian Journal of French Studies* each of the chief investigators on the project, Elizabeth Rechniewski, Margaret Sankey and Angus Martin, has contributed an article about aspects of their work; three other researchers: Antony McKenna, Denise Yim and Althea Arguelles-Ling were invited to write on their own areas of expertise: religious dissent, the salons and the theatre respectively, areas which contributed to changing representations of national life.

These changes in discourse and representation could be identified, we believed, in a wide range of genres, not simply in the overtly political writings of the time. Benedict Anderson analysed the role of newspapers and the novel in promoting national consciousness in *Imagined Communities*. Other researchers have drawn attention to genres such as the mémoire judiciaire, directed at forming public opinion; academic eulogies and collective biographies which proposed virtuous models of citizenship; gazettes and political journals in which “de nouveaux styles journalistiques apparaissent, suscitant un nouveau lectorat et un nouveau mode de subjectivité politique.” Our project included novels and short stories; literary representations of the Middle Ages; the tales of travellers and explorers; scientific writing and natural history – genres that formed an essential part of the intellectual and cultural horizons of people at the time. It can be argued that the voyages of Cook or Marmontel’s short stories had at least as great a resonance in the collective imagination as the discussions within the elite over knotty constitutional questions, such as those that preoccupied the parlementaires in the 1770s-1780s.

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As this last point suggests, it is important to recognise the significance of the “slow revolution” in communications that was taking place in early modern France, spreading ideas amongst a wider public than that of the intellectual elite and the Parisian salons. Studies over the last twenty years have offered an increasingly detailed picture of the growth of print media in eighteenth-century France and of the influence of various forms of publishing on intellectual, political and social life.\(^{11}\) Our project examined the total context of communications and their evolution, together with the changing ways in which this broader spectrum of information channels affected the development of French national life. Early modern France is characterised by the rapid improvement and extension of transport and communications infrastructure, particularly roads, which were the object of sustained investment and development in the eighteenth century, and to a lesser extent canals and waterways.\(^{12}\)

To these infrastructural improvements can be added demographic changes, with an ever-increasing emigration from country to city, the overall rise in standards of living and of public health, together with the spread of literacy through increasing channels of elementary education, which all contributed to the creation of a less and less parochial society. Angus Martin has identified the diversity of the channels of communication, broadly defined,\(^{13}\) which include not only and crucially an efficient postal system, but a highly developed system of royal propaganda through public appearance, imposing architecture, court ceremonial, statues, printed portraits, street posters; the increasingly efficient administrative networks of the State administration which undertook cartography and economic and demographic studies of the “national space”\(^{14}\); the justice system, the Army and the Church, together with an increasingly mobile labour market and proliferating trade associations, and the general growth of lieux de sociabilité, from country festivals to elegant city salons.

We can identify the direct impact of these infrastructural changes on certain genres: for example the vogue for letter-writing is clearly dependent on an adequate postal system (the eighteenth century was “the


\(^{14}\) Roche, chapter 1, “Knowing France”.
century of letter-writing” writes Habermas), and the development of the novel is co-temporaneous with the rapid rise in literacy. Voyages of discovery inspired by Enlightenment ideals gave rise to journals and various manifestations of the sea log. But more generally these developing national institutions, practices and infrastructure provided the concrete means through which rational, progressive ideas about the nation could be disseminated and the identification of a growing number of citizens with a national community encouraged. The argument for the significance of communications in fostering national sentiment was first made by Karl Deutsch in the 1950s, more recently his ideas have been taken up by Miroslav Hroch, though with the important qualification that: “it is not enough to consider only the formal level of social communication reached in a given society - one must also look at the complex of contents mediated through it.” Our project sought to trace the constitution of that “public sphere” - famously identified by Habermas in the 1960s, and the object of much debate, criticism and development, particularly since the translation of his text appeared in 1989 - within which modern ideas about citizenship and nationhood could develop under the impetus of enlightenment thought.

Writing in 1990, Keith Baker claimed that there had been “no systematic effort to reconstitute the discourse of French public life in the decades preceding the French Revolution, nor has there been a full-scale attempt to recover the competing representations of social and political existence from which revolutionary language ultimately emerged”. The forms which politics took at the Revolution did not emerge, he emphasizes,

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19 “Private persons could be constituted as a reading public, Habermas maintains, only through the postal services, periodicals, and other communications systems that had grown in regularity with a market society”. Keith M. Baker, “Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France”, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 181-211, p. 184.

from a vacuum but from a field of competing discourses in which
distinct, often conflicting, representations of the nation and of the citizen,
and of the nature of legitimate power, had their ardent adherents. Calling
for a “discursive turn” he argues that the problem for the historian is to
show: “how the revolutionary script was invented, taking on its power
and contradictions, from within the political culture of the absolute
monarchy”.21

As the subtitle of Baker’s edited work suggests (Essays on French
Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century), his collection of articles is
heavily oriented towards the political life of the ancien régime with
articles on the use of the past to support political argument by Moreau
and by Mably; on “Political thought at Louis XVI’s succession”; on the
redefinition of ideas of political representation. Much research has been
done on the political aspects of the construction of ideas about the
national community: studies of the tempestuous relations between
parlements and king in which the parlements claimed to be representing
the patriotic, national interest;22 of the role of “royal patriotism” that
sought to mobilise the French people against the English during the
Seven Years War, aiming to define the conflict as one between nations, a
war between national characters;23 of the growing political disaffection of
the Third Estate. The cultural context has, however, been less fully
explored. While writers, notably Daniel Roche, have sought to fill the
gaps in our knowledge, the significance of the broader cultural context in
creating a climate in which members of the French nation began to
question and redefine their role, remains to be fully explored. Moreover,
studies of the nation and citizenship still remain heavily weighted towards
the period of the Revolution and its immediate aftermath, rather than, as
Baker had exhorted, seeking to locate their roots in the discourse of the
ancien régime.24

The project “Communications and National Identity” has therefore been
primarily focused on the nature of the cultural revolution which was
accomplished within the world of letters and disseminated to a wide

23 Edmond Dziembowski, Un nouveau patriotisme français, 1750-1770. La France
face à la puissance anglaise à l’époque de la guerre de Sept Ans (Oxford: Voltaire
24 A recent example: the collection of papers “Citoyens et citoyenneté sous la
Révolution française”, Actes du colloque international de Vizille des 24 et 25
septembre 2004 (Paris: Sté des études robespierristes, Etudes révolutionnaires no 9,
2005).
public through the expansion of the print media and the development of all the varied and diverse channels of communication and exchange in Enlightenment France. Sarah Maza refers to the “protracted cultural revolution covering roughly the second half of the eighteenth century”.\textsuperscript{25} Our analyses start earlier, at the beginnings of the “public sphere” which, Habermas emphasizes, had its origins in the world of letters, in the public discussions of art, literature and culture in salons and coffee houses: this was “the a-political form - the literary precursor of the public sphere operative in the political domain”.\textsuperscript{26} Exchanges and discussion within this sphere led, he argues, to the development of a subjectivity “barely known” at the beginning of the century. This exploration of self, which is of course a construction of self, accompanied the change in the relations between author, work and public: “they became intimate mutual relationships between privatised individuals who were psychologically interested in what was ‘human’, in self-knowledge and in empathy.”\textsuperscript{27}

As John B. Thompson argues, with the development of modern literate and urban societies, the process of self-formation is increasingly nourished by mediated symbolic materials, greatly expanding the range of options available to individuals and loosening the connection between self-formation and shared locale.\textsuperscript{28} As individuals gain access to mediated forms of communication they are able to draw on an expanding range of symbolic resources to construct the self into “a coherent and continuously revised biographical narrative”.\textsuperscript{29} A crucial feature of this subjectivity is, of course, the capacity to understand the self as belonging to a particular type or social group, to believe in the existence of common interests, emotions or character. As the traditional forms of collective meaning (religion and monarchy) decline, national consciousness and a sense of citizenship are clearly amongst the most significant of the new possibilities of constructing the self. Imagining the nation is also and crucially imagining the self, developing the subjective identification and modes of self-definition that replace, or rather compete with, earlier forms of identity. National consciousness is a new form of conscience collective, able, perhaps, to transcend the social and regional differences which must have been more rather than less visible to those increasingly thrown together on the roads of France.

\textsuperscript{25} Maza, p. 313.
\textsuperscript{26} Habermas, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{27} Habermas, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{29} Thompson, p. 212.
The project included both quantitative and discursive forms of textual analysis. The statistical exploitation of bibliographical data, through lexical and rhetorical analysis both of titles and of the texts themselves, can reveal the increasing use of certain key words such as nation, caractère national, patrie, in a range of contexts and define the ways in which these terms were used. The extraordinary growth in access to computerised library catalogues and texts through the internet has given a new impetus to this kind of bibliometrics. At the same time, historical studies of the changing nature of the literate public have proliferated in recent times, making it possible to put publication statistics into the context of a readership that was rapidly growing and broadening in its demographic and sociological character. Angus Martin’s article in this volume undertakes such a bibliometric study of the frequency of use of the term citoyen in the titles of eighteenth-century published texts. He is able to chart the growing use of the term and also identify the words most commonly associated with it, revealing the stock of qualities and functions that were being assigned to this figure.

To complement this statistical analysis, many of the texts identified by the bibliometric searches were located and studied, in order to extend our understanding of the contexts within which terms such as nation or citoyen were being used, and the normative and polemical force they were acquiring. An example of more detailed textual analysis is offered by Elizabeth Rechniewski’s article, which seeks to identify the trends in the figure of the citizen as it was constructed in a wide range of texts, of varied political orientation, between the 1750s-1780s. Taking up Habermas’ reference to the changing relationship between author and public, she pays particular attention to the incipit of the texts studied, seeking to show that the author assumed a new persona, and invoked in his address a new kind of reader, who would find common ground in their shared objective of the national good.

The first preoccupations of the public sphere, argues Habermas, had to do with psychology and individual experiences within the sphere of the family. The constitution of the private individual, paradoxically, lays the basis for involvement in the public sphere. It is the gradual extension of the preoccupations of the private sphere of the family into engagement with the broader community that can be detected in fiction such as Marmontel’s short stories, where the author shows the impact of private

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30 The project web site (http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/french/nation) contains extensive databases of the use of such terms, sorted by period and by genre.

31 Habermas pp. 27-31.
morality on public order and national citizenship. His innovation in the genre of the *conte moral* was precisely the insistence on the link between private morality and public virtue, as he demonstrates in his tales that the duties of the citizen extend beyond the family to the wider society, and that the individual actions of each member of the community affect the whole. However his tales also illustrate the growing tendency for certain categories of national individuals to be marked for exclusion from political life.

The growing misogyny of his later tales, with their detailed recipes for keeping women at home in the domestic sphere, raises the debate that has taken place particularly amongst feminist historians such as Joan Landes and Carole Pateman as to whether the bourgeois public space was not merely a neutral arena for discussion but rather part of the re-definition of citizenship which advocated the necessity for “masculine” qualities of republican virtue, a form of citizenship in which men alone could participate. Rousseau is held in particular responsible for the “ideology of republican motherhood” which required the exclusion of women from the public sphere. However our research has emphasised that a number of competing discourses circulated within the bourgeois public space, including the Enlightenment discourse of universal human reason and social progress which offered fewer constraints on women’s participation in the sphere of rational debate and which provided the basis, for example, of the critique by Condorcet, de Jaucourt, Gouges and others of women’s subordination. As Denise Yim demonstrates in her article in this volume, some of the most important cultural institutions were run by women, allowing the possibility for some women to gain an education and the opportunity to claim participation in the public sphere. It was the *salonnières*, she reminds us, who developed French taste and, by influencing the foreigners attending their salons, shaped the international perception of France. The role of the *salonnières* in forming French taste was indeed perhaps admired even more strongly outside the country than within: the manners, tastes, intellectual sophistication, “le naturel” cultivated in their salons, were the object of obsessive emulation by the European elite. Within the country, however, as Rechniewski’s article in this issue shows, voices were raised in opposition to the role of

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such women in encouraging the “French vice” of excessive sociability, with its enervating effect on national character.

Another discourse around women and the nation was offered by Olympe de Gouges. As Althea Arguelles-Ling’s article demonstrates, de Gouges was centrally concerned with the challenge of redefining citizen and nation, not only in her famous Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne but in her theatre, where she explored new configurations of the relationship between class, nation and gender. Her theatre is less wellknown to a modern reader - it is interesting to read here of her reworking of the popular genres of drame and comédie to incorporate national themes. As a monarchist and a Girondin, her views were, however, politically quite conservative, betraying a nostalgia for hierarchy and for the aristocracy from which she claimed to be descended. As Carla Hesse affirms: “she never challenged the notion of patrilineal political sovereignty”, a conviction that - when reflected in her support for the King in 1792 - led to her execution. Her eulogy of Dumouriez at the battle of Jemappes in her last play was not enough to save her from the guillotine.

The debate that revolved around women is an example of the fundamental tension in Enlightenment thought between the universal and the particular, between the potential of enlightenment for all and the belief in the existence of “natural” differences that could not be overcome. Different, indeed contradictory, answers to these questions can be found in the competing discourses of the Enlightenment and therefore in the representations of citizenship and nation. What is more significant and determining: that a person is French and possessed of a particular national character, or that he is a human being possessed of universal reason? Can education bring light to all or only to some? Are the lamentable traits of slaves and of women due to their inferior status or to their inferior nature? It is interesting to note that even Olympe de Gouges accepted the argument that under the ancien régime women had exercised power in a covert and underhand manner - she refers to “l’administration nocturne des femmes” - but she explains this as the only response possible to their lack of real power.

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37 Olympe de Gouges, Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne, postambule.
French national identity in the eighteenth century is formed not only along the fracture line between men and women, it is also defined in terms of its difference from other European and non-European peoples. This is a key period in the confrontation with the non-European Other, not only because of extensive voyages of exploration, and missionary and commercial activity, but also because it marked the intensification of the slave trade. We therefore included within our focus Enlightenment theorising of racial and cultural difference and work on travel literature and accounts of voyages of discovery. In this volume, Margaret Sankey’s article on the Abbé Paulmier offers a fascinating portrayal of the interweaving of temporal and spiritual considerations in the motivation for voyages of discovery. The arguments that the Abbé deploys in advocating an expedition to the terres australes, reveal the different interests of Church and State and call into question the nature of the alliance on which sovereign power was based in France. At the same time, Paulmier’s unexpected claim to descend from a native of the terres australes, abandoned in France, opens up questions of naturalisation and French citizenship. The Abbé’s argumentation, at the point of intersection of these different discursive formations, provides a unique snapshot of national identity and citizenship in mid seventeenth-century Catholic France and reveals the possibilities and limits of nationalistic discourse in this period.

For Jeffrey Merrick, the religious question and the conflict over the limits of temporal and spiritual power were crucial to the gradual uncoupling of religious and national identity. Antony McKenna’s article, “Yearning for the homeland”, on the plight of Huguenot refugees in the Netherlands, draws attention to the religious dimension of the debate over citizenship, a debate that lay close to the heart of many of the Protestant writers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: what conditions could and should the sovereign impose on his people? What role should he play in imposing religious orthodoxy? If the dissenters were ever to return, it must be to a France that no longer defined itself in exclusively Catholic terms; what they proposed, according to Yardeni, was “un patriotisme dépouillé de tout lien mystique entre Dieu et son pays élu, pour ne pas dire un patriotism et une conscience nationale sécularisées.” If Pierre Bayle’s intellectual itinerary is a complex one, in part, as McKenna demonstrates, in response to political manoeuvrings amongst the refugees

39 Yardeni, p. 21.
in Amsterdam, he remains faithful to the necessity “de distinguer radicalement l’espace du politique de cet espace privé où doit s’inscrire la religion”. McKenna makes clear, for the first time, that the “Glorious Revolution” was a defining moment for the Huguenot refugee community in their yearning for “the homeland” and that Bayle's split with Jurieu on this question provides the essential social and political background for understanding his anti-Jurieu polemics on other themes as well: moral rationalism, reason, faith.

The articles in this issue offer a partial response to Keith Baker’s call to uncover the diversity of the discourses about national identity of this period, the varied contexts in which they occurred, the sometimes contradictory ideas that laid the basis for the representations of nation and citizenship that were crystallised at the time of the Revolution - but with an emphasis on broad cultural changes rather than on narrowly political ideas. A cultural approach challenges some of the categories and distinctions with which we tend to understand the eighteenth century, insisting on the interpenetration of the private sphere and public life and the connection between political ideals and wider social values. It is hard to imagine that there could exist (as was once sought within science) a “Unified Theory” of the cultural field of early modern France. But perhaps in the emerging figure of the citizen - this ideal, even utopian figure with all his ambiguities and contradictions (reason and sensibility; universalism and love of patrie) - we can find a way of representing some of the key changes. Therefore, while the articles in this issue are published in roughly chronological order, the final articles focus on this figure, in an attempt to give an overview of the changes taking place.

Many of the studies of nation and national identity address what might be called the macro-level of analysis: the functioning of and conflict between institutions such as parlements, Monarchy and Church. Far less often examined is the problem of the “national individual”: in other words, how the individual is articulated with the nation. We need to be able to explain “why particular identities resonate with individuals as well as to explain the particular weight and value of the national identity in relation to other identities”. As John B. Thompson argues, the construction of new forms of subjecthood is central to the modern world:

by focusing on the self-motivated citizen and his attachment to that abstract entity that is the imagined nation, we can perhaps find a way to better understand the changes that were taking place. The figure of the citizen proposed by the lumières concerns the individual more intimately and personally even than the new conception of the nation, for it is via this figure that the individual discovers what his place might be in the rapidly-changing world of early modern France.