



Towards a History of Australian Studies in France

Marilyne Brun

‘[...] we know well enough how much Australian studies in Europe owe to the initiative and perseverance of individuals.’ (Senn 54)

Although Australia might be less evoked in the press and less at the centre of preoccupations in France than other countries which are closer neighbours or influential powers, French interest in Australia exists at a number of levels in the general public. Many who reside in France try to keep in touch with Australia: expatriate Australians, individuals fascinated by the country and its culture, former exchange students, and people who have travelled or lived in the country. A number of events have fostered ‘Australia’s appearance on the symbolic map of the world’ (Alomes 1993, 20) since the 1970s: the revival of Australian cinema in the 1970s (Bolton 1984, 178), Aboriginal art, dance and music in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Australian rock music, the translation of Australian writers (Alomes, 20–21), and the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Since the late 1990s, Australia has been distinctly identified as an exciting travel location, present in the French imagination as a destination of choice for expensive, but breathtaking, holidays. Several associations tirelessly promote Australian culture and organise regular events focusing on the country.¹ In 2014 and 2015 *Terra Australis*, a graphic novel, about early Australian history, was published, Rolf de Heer’s movie *Charlie’s Country*

¹ A number of festivals, such as the Australian and New Zealand film festival *Cinéma des Antipodes*, also promote Australian culture. The website of the Embassy of Australia in France lists a (non-exhaustive) number of organisations that focus on Australian culture in France: <http://france.embassy.gov.au/pari/AustinFrance.html>.





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received wide general publicity, and the International Festival of Geography of Saint-Dié-des-Vosges, an annual festival focusing on one guest country each year, selected Australia as its guest country for 2015.² Several events were also organised around the 100-year anniversary of the First World War, such as ANZAC Week in Vignacourt, Somme, from 21 to 25 April 2015.

‘Australian studies’, from an inclusive and wide perspective, may refer to anyone interested in Australia and creating or disseminating knowledge about the country. My exploration of Australian studies in France however focuses on the academic study of Australia, particularly teaching and research in French institutions. While the contribution of all actors interested in Australia is important, the phrase ‘Australian studies’ is used here in a narrow, academic sense.

In a 1992 issue of *Hungarian Studies in English* devoted to Australian studies in Europe and Australia, Bruce Bennett remarked that ‘Australian studies’ is difficult to define:

At first sight the answer to the question ‘What is Australian Studies?’ seems crystal clear: Australian studies are those which deal with distinctive Australian subject matter. But here the problems commence. Close observers will have noticed a semantic glide in the verb from the singular ‘What is Australian Studies?’ to the plural ‘Australian studies *are*.’ (Bennett 29)

In the same issue of the same journal, Chris Wallace-Crabbe argued that Australian studies as an expression ‘has both a singular and a plural face’, ‘like politics or aesthetics’ (35). Using the singular encourages a more synthetic, unified approach to Australian studies, while the plural suggests the multiplicities of approaches, disciplines and objects of study. For Wallace-Crabbe, Australian studies is a ‘transdiscipline’ that involves ‘a dizzily diverse array of practices and priorities’ (35). This diversity of ‘practices and priorities’ is the topic of this article, which maps evolutions in Australian studies, specifically during the last twenty years.

First discussing how one might define Australianists and their relation to disciplinary formations, I will then seek to trace the history and evolution of the field in France, and will finally focus on the academic study of Australia: teaching and research within the French institutional context.

² <http://www.fig.saint-die-des-vosges.fr/>.





1. Australianists and disciplinary formations

My exploration of the history of Australian studies starts with a question: who are Australianists, and who belongs to the field of Australian studies in France? While some colleagues who have been working exclusively in Australian studies for years—sometimes decades—are clearly identifiable, a more difficult task is to find a reliable way to identify younger colleagues and those in different disciplinary circles. Not all academics working on Australia work exclusively on the country; some identify as Australianists, while others define themselves in a wider way, or even avoid the label of Australianist to reflect the comparative and/or transnational nature of their work. Some do research in Australian studies but do not teach it; others teach Australian studies without identifying as Australianists because they do research in other disciplines.

I include, in the term ‘Australianist’, colleagues in the social and human sciences who either define themselves as Australianists or identify with Australian studies, even temporarily. I also consider as Australianists academics who teach or research Australian studies: as mentioned above, some research Australian studies but do not have the opportunity to teach it; others teach Australian studies without doing research in it, introducing students to the subject and potentially building up interest in the field.

In this article ‘France’ includes French overseas departments and territories; ‘French’ Australian studies are not, from my point of view, studies done by French nationals, but studies done in France. Therefore ‘French’ Australianists include any person—whether French, Australian, or of another nationality—working intensively or intermittently on topics related to Australia in the social and human sciences in metropolitan France and its overseas departments and territories.

My research focus is to identify elements working towards the stability, continuity and long-term development of the field. There are dozens of highly motivated and brilliant individuals working in Australian studies; unfortunately if no one can supervise PhD theses the energy spent in generating interest in Australian studies is attenuated. The conditions for the emergence of a stable, continuing field include recognition by elite universities, ‘sufficient students and lecturers being recruited to study and teach it, learned societies and journals forming around it, and recognized career structures developing, usually based on the acquisition of a Ph.D. in that subject’ (Moran 2002, 13). Stable courses and supervisors at masters



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and doctoral levels are crucial factors in the maintenance and development of a field. Similarly essential are the creation of full-time appointments and the recruitment of Australianists in positions that are not in Australian studies but can provide a stable basis from which to conduct research and/or teaching in the field.

With this focus on factors for stability in Australian studies, I have centred my study on tenured staff. PhD theses will be discussed, but not the sessional teaching that may sometimes be done by doctoral students. There are numerous sessional tutors, *lecteurs* (language assistants), PhD students, and other non-permanent staff who contribute to Australian studies in France, but the precarious nature of their positions unfortunately rarely allows them to build and manage projects, or to have a long-term impact. This choice is artificial and contestable, but my intent is to identify possibilities for development. The focus of my study will not be on individuals but on Australian studies as a whole.

Beginning with my personal knowledge of Australian studies in France, I extended my investigations by researching a variety of databases listing or including Australianists, collecting articles on Australian studies in France and Europe, interviewing colleagues, compiling conference programmes and announcements of publications on Australia, and sending out requests for information and a questionnaire to colleagues on their teaching and/or research in Australian studies. I would like to express my gratitude to those colleagues who generously responded to my questions and to the questionnaire; their knowledge, time and generosity are highly valued and indispensable.³

Australian studies in France today are characterised by variety. The most striking aspect of this variety is the multiplicity of disciplinary affiliations of Australianists. Specialists of Australia can be found across disciplines in the social and human sciences, from English studies to anthropology, ethnology, political science, history, geography, economics, law, philosophy, comparative literature and art, to mention a few.⁴ Today there are some

³ I especially thank Estelle Castro, Deirdre Gilfedder, Helen Goethals and Xavier Pons for their time and precious advice.

⁴ Although this article focuses on the study of Australia in the human and social sciences, there are also specialists of Australia in microbiology, marine biology, climate change, and other fields of study in the natural sciences.





thirty to forty Australianists in stable positions in France.⁵ Within this group, colleagues in English studies (*anglicistes*) represent 81% of Australianists today. Anthropology and ethnology form the largest group after *anglicistes*, representing 11% of Australianists in France, while all other disciplines in the social and human sciences belong to the remaining 8%. The approach adopted varies greatly depending on the discipline: while anthropologists generally focus on Aboriginal society, colleagues working in political science tend to focus on government actions and geopolitical issues.

Statistics should not, however, eclipse the complexity of situations; my choice to exclude non-permanent staff does not do justice to the amount of work done by dedicated individuals doing PhD theses or postdoctoral research in the field. Neither do the figures take into account the wide variety of staff interested in Australia, but who do not work regularly on Australia. This is notably the case in literature, where a number of colleagues in American or British literature may take an interest for one or two years in an Australian author or work. Some doctoral candidates who complete a thesis on Patrick White might move on, after their PhD, to study British and/or American authors, and will not see themselves as Australianists or seek to continue working on Australian literature. The figures do not give a sense of upcoming retirements or transfers, and they fail to differentiate academics who teach Australian studies but do not do research in it, from those who do research in Australian studies but never have the opportunity to teach it. Those who teach Australian studies might teach it to physics or biology majors, not necessarily to anthropology, history or English majors, while researchers in Australian studies might work from a comparative perspective only, or might be moderately active, with occasional publications on Australia.

French institutional structures strongly centralise the organisation of teaching and research. Academic positions are defined and regulated by the French government.⁶ Academic staff are divided between those employed on short-term contracts that can only exist for a limited number of years or under very strict conditions (*enseignant associé*, *ATER*,

⁵ Considering that this study is necessarily incomplete, there are possibly forty to fifty Australianists in stable positions in France.

⁶ Technically, the French government manages issues pertaining to university education through the Ministry for National Education Higher Education and Research (*Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche*).





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contrat doctoral, vacataire)⁷, and three main types of permanent, tenured positions: teaching-only staff (*PRCE, PRAG*),⁸ research-only staff (*chargé de recherche* and *directeur de recherche*)⁹ and research and teaching staff, referred to collectively as *enseignants-chercheurs* (literally: teachers-researchers), which include *maître de conférences* and *professeur*.¹⁰

⁷ *Enseignants associés* are temporary teaching staff who may work either full-time at university for a maximum of three years, or part-time for a longer period if they have a separate full-time job. *ATER (Attaché Temporaire d'Enseignement et de Recherche)* is a contract available only to students who are completing or have just completed their PhD. *Contrat doctoral* is a three-year PhD scholarship that can include some teaching duties. *Vacataires*, officially called *chargé d'enseignement vacataire* (temporary teaching assistant), are sessional tutors who are paid on an hourly basis and recruited under strict conditions with limits on the number of hours they can teach. (*Vacataires* have the most precarious and lowest-paid position of all university staff). Two other fixed-term positions exist for native speakers of English for a maximum of two one-year contracts—*lecteurs* and *maîtres de langue*, for language assistants who have completed at least an undergraduate degree.

⁸ *PRCE (PRofesseur CERtifié)* and *PRAG (PRofesseur AGRégé)* are staff who have passed a national competitive exam to become secondary-school teachers—either *CAPES (Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement du Second degré)* for *PRCE*, or *Agrégation* for *PRAG*, *Agrégation* being the more difficult and prestigious of the two. Holders of *CAPES* or *Agrégation* may be recruited by universities; they do not carry out research, and have a full-time teaching load.

⁹ *Chargé de recherche* (post-doctoral research associates) and *directeur de recherche* (senior research fellowships) are tenured, research-only positions. The latter are prestigious appointments. Their existence and availability vary depending on the discipline; while they are common in hard sciences, in social and human sciences they tend to be rare. In Australian studies, positions for *chargé de recherche* or *directeur de recherche* exist in the fields of anthropology or ethnology, but are particularly rare in English studies. In contrast, *PRCE* and *PRAG* positions are rather common in English studies because student numbers are high and require teaching-only staff. However, such positions are not found in the fields of anthropology and ethnology, since *CAPES* and *Agrégation* do not exist in these disciplines—they exist only for disciplines taught in secondary education.

¹⁰ *Maître de conférences* may be translated as tenured lecturer or tenured assistant/associate professor. *Professeur* corresponds to a full and tenured professor, and is therefore a higher position than *maître de conférences*. *Maîtres de conférences* and *professeurs* do half their load in teaching, and the other half in research. Globally, these two categories represent the majority of permanent staff in French universities, with more *maître de conférences* than *professeur* positions.



Access to tenured positions is strictly regulated and centralised: to be recruited as a *maître de conférences*, one needs to have a PhD, but also to apply to be ‘qualified’ by the *Conseil National des Universités* (CNU) as a *maître de conférences* in a given discipline. This procedure takes place once a year, and only those ‘qualified’ may apply for a position. HDR (*Habilitation à diriger des recherches*—the formal authorisation to supervise research) is of central importance in the supervision of PhD students. Although this has recently evolved in some universities, only tenured academic staff who have passed HDR may supervise PhD students.¹¹ In practical terms, this means that *professeur* positions are crucial to the survival of a field: without *professeurs*—academics formally able to supervise graduate students—the consolidation and expansion of a given field can be highly limited.

The CNU qualifies candidates in ‘sections’, which correspond to disciplines or clusters of disciplines.¹² While candidates may apply to be qualified in several sections, university positions always mention the section of the position, therefore candidates for recruitment by a French university need to fit in some way into the established sections. Although the sections can provide a welcome structure for identifying colleagues as well as a sense of connection across geographical divides, they can also foster divisions. Jean-Claude Deschamps has pointed out that categorisation is an essential process that allows individuals to classify and memorise information (40). However, the process of organising reality into categories systematises and schematises

¹¹ HDR can be compared to a ‘second PhD thesis’. Candidates for HDR need to have published at least the equivalent of a monograph (on a different topic from their PhD thesis), and to have written an analytical ‘synthesis’ of their whole research work. HDR is evaluated during an oral defence. Only candidates who have obtained HDR may apply for *professeur* positions (once they have qualified to apply for these positions, in a similar process to the qualification for *maître de conférences* detailed above).

The utmost importance of HDR in the supervision of PhD students has recently evolved. Some universities now allow *maîtres de conférences* to co-supervise PhD students along with a *professeur*. Although this is a distinct shift, *maître de conférences* are only allowed to co-supervise, which restates the importance of HDR status in PhD supervisions.

¹² For instance, section 11 corresponds to English studies (its official name is *Langues et littératures anglaises et anglo-saxonnes*—English and Anglo-Saxon Languages and Literatures). The list of the 87 CNU sections can be found at <http://www.cpcnu.fr/listes-des-sections-cnu>.



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reality, and therefore simplifies it. Objects belonging to the same category will seem more closely connected than they might be, while the difference between objects belonging to two distinct categories might be excessively amplified (41). Naoki Sakai argues that 'It is not because objects of knowledge are preparatorily given that certain disciplines are formed to investigate them; on the contrary the objects are engendered because the disciplines are in place' (40–41). In the case of Australian studies, CNU sections have more often than not increased the distance between Australianists working in different fields of study such as English studies, anthropology, history, or geography; the existence—and relative autonomy—of the CNU sections tends to create wider gaps than the disciplinary differences that necessarily exist between them.

The field of feminist studies demonstrates the impact of disciplinary formations in French academia. As Claude Zaidman has argued, one main issue was whether feminist studies should be integrated within existing disciplinary fields or become a fully autonomous field (1995). The first option was adopted:

the creation of positions in Feminist Studies was designed as a research specialisation within a discipline, one of the essential reasons for this being the difficulty of managing academic positions which would not have been connected to an already recognised disciplinary field. (Zaidman)¹³

Zaidman discerns a clear 'tendency towards hierarchising research fields' ('Il y a de fait, tendance à une hiérarchisation des champs de recherche') with many specialists of feminist studies identifying first as 'a nineteenth-century historian or as a political sociologist, the feminist dimension of their research being integrated as a subsequent dimension' ('on se considérera d'abord comme historienne du 19e siècle ou comme sociologue politique, la dimension féministe des recherches s'intégrant comme dimension seconde'). This concern to remain within existing disciplines often corresponds to a desire to convey a more universal message, and to introduce debates and issues within existing disciplines to maximise impact (Zaidman).

¹³ 'la création des postes en Études Féministes a été conçue comme une spécialisation de recherche à l'intérieur d'une discipline, une des raisons essentielles étant la difficulté de gestion de postes d'enseignants qui ne seraient pas rattachés à un secteur disciplinaire déjà reconnu.' All translations from the French are mine unless otherwise stated.





Similarly, regarding Australian studies, Australianists tend to hierarchise their research affiliations to identify first as *anglicistes* or anthropologists, then possibly as Commonwealth or Pacific specialists, and finally as Australianists. As in feminist studies, primary identification with existing fields is both a practical necessity for recruitment, teaching and research, and the result of a desire to introduce certain debates and issues (such as settler colonial dynamics, colonisation, or more generally opening up dialogues to other regions) within existing disciplines.

The strong centralisation of the French university system is evident in recruitment and CNU sections, but also at teaching and course levels. University degrees may only be delivered by universities that have received the approval of the French government, and university departments need to submit their proposals for degree structures for government approval every four years.¹⁴ Since these proposals need to fit government recommendations, this ensures that degrees have an equivalent value and content throughout France.¹⁵ However, it also makes the creation of new degrees a slow and often complex process. As a result, French undergraduate degrees are limited in number, and markedly less flexible than existing degrees in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand or Australia. As Bowen and Bentaboulet have remarked, France's 'markedly conservative' creation of undergraduate degrees is partly a result of the strong connection between university degrees and secondary school teaching in the human and social sciences: since 'university graduates were trained to teach lycée [high school] subjects, university degrees themselves were largely limited to those subjects' (2002, 539).

Contrary to the US or Australia, where students decide on a major (possibly a minor) and then choose the courses that they would like to attend, university students in France cannot choose their courses, but have to enrol in set programmes. Students wishing to study English can enrol in two types of degrees, either LLCE (*Langues, Littératures et Civilisations Étrangères*

¹⁴ 'Contracts', as they are called, used to be five-year contracts, and are at the moment four-year contracts.

¹⁵ For instance, government directives impose a number of hours of teaching and/or study per year (generally around 250 hours of teaching per academic year for undergraduate degrees), as well as the number of courses and course units (*unité d'enseignement*) that should exist. These directives change rather often, which is highly time-consuming for academics.





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et Régionales—Foreign and Regional Languages, Literatures and Civilisations) to study English language, literature and history; or LEA (*Langues Étrangères Appliquées*—Applied Foreign Languages), where students study two languages (most of the time English and another language) from an applied point of view, with introductory courses in law, marketing and management. As Imelda Bonel-Elliott has remarked in her overview of English studies in France, centralisation is a mixed blessing: it ensures conformity and uniformity on a national level (77), and therefore limits change, while allowing the government to push reforms through; however, centralisation also means that academics may defend their interests on a national level (83).

Centralisation has practical consequences for Australianists. If we limit the discussion to language degrees, students majoring in English may only study it as part of the two set programmes of LLCE and LEA. There is no structural (let alone financial) possibility for the existence of an undergraduate degree in Australian or even postcolonial studies, which restricts Australian studies to being a subpart of a larger degree in English studies. While centralisation limits institutional change and degree creation, in reality ‘there is considerable room for autonomy in undergraduate degrees and in the taught masters programmes’ (Bonel-Elliott 2000, 82), little windows of opportunity that allow Australian studies courses to exist (often temporarily) within the interstices of centralised categories.

In English studies, Australianists are integrated into the category of ‘Commonwealth’ or ‘postcolonial’ studies, a wider disciplinary affiliation used more often than the term ‘Australianist’. English studies is a vast field which ranges from historians of medieval England to linguists specialising in South African English. The three main specialisations are: literature, linguistics and civilisation—the latter a hybrid field at the crossroads of history, sociology and cultural studies.¹⁶ While the boundaries between the specialisations are fluid—some colleagues work both in literature

¹⁶ The academic discipline of ‘civilisation’ was established and institutionalised later than literature and linguistics: it was developed by academics in the 1960s and recognised by a law in 1966 (the Fouchet reform) (Bonel-Elliott, 74). The first thesis in the field was completed in 1971, and civilisation rapidly expanded in the 1970s (Bonel-Elliott, 75). Civilisation was only integrated into the prestigious *Agrégation* as an option in 1977, and on an equal footing with literature and linguistics in the main part of the syllabus in 1998 (Bonel-Elliott, 75–76).





and civilisation for instance—each of the three main specialisations contains a variety of subfields.

Since French degrees in English (LLCE and LEA) focus generally on the English-speaking world, British and general American studies dominate courses, whether in civilisation, literature or linguistics, where standard British English and American English are taught as the norm and are most often used for comprehension tests. A third area exists, that of ‘Commonwealth’ or ‘postcolonial’ studies, which broadly refers to any English-speaking country outside the US and the UK.¹⁷ Australian studies are one small part of an already minor field. Using David Camroux’s analysis, Zoltán Abádi-Nagy and Richard Nile remark that an *angliciste* working in Australian studies often finds him/herself ‘defending his/her chosen specialisation against those of his/her (hostile) colleagues’ (8).

Scholars working on ‘Commonwealth’ countries find themselves lumped together because of the domination of British and American studies; they also tend to collaborate because they work on similar issues (colonial and postcolonial dynamics for instance), and can benefit from comparative work. Institutional factors thus favoured the emergence of ‘Commonwealth’ studies in France, less so of independent Australian, Barbadian, Canadian, Kenyan, etc. studies, which could never have the weight that ‘Commonwealth’ colleagues, by working together, often through the academic association SEPC (*Société d’Étude des Pays du Commonwealth*—Association for the Study of Commonwealth Countries), can have in the more general field of English studies. This situation is by no means specific to France. Australian studies are often integrated into larger departments in European countries, and priority is often similarly given to British and American studies. Wallace-Crabbe mentions that Australian studies in Europe ‘have sprung from the diversified offerings of English departments’, which ‘first moved beyond the traditional canon

¹⁷ The term ‘Commonwealth’ is used in France to refer to English-speaking countries outside the UK and the US, but it is not limited to countries that are or have been part of the Commonwealth of Nations. This use of the term can seem somewhat old-fashioned; it dates back to the discovery of ‘Commonwealth’ and ‘new’ literatures, and has been kept in France as a term to refer generally to any country from the former British Empire and/or which has English as an official language, such as Australia, Barbados, Canada, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, New Zealand, Nigeria and South Africa among others.





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into twentieth-century literature, then into American, and then into Commonwealth literature' (1992, 38).

This leads to a central question: who wants to be defined as an Australianist? The question might seem inappropriate, but the reality of academia in France is such that choosing to define oneself as an Australianist is not necessarily an advantage. For an academic with teaching responsibilities it is impossible to fulfill one's load teaching Australian studies, since there is no specific degree in Australian studies. All academics in highly specialised fields must complete part of their teaching load outside their specialisation; in English studies, courses may range from literatures in English and the history of the British Empire to English grammar, translation, or phonetics. One can be therefore never solely an Australianist, but is integrated into a team that delivers a degree. In terms of recruitment, defining oneself solely as an Australianist is risky, considering that selection committees appreciate versatile and adaptable candidates. The need to market oneself in the recruitment race is a reality, and in English studies the category of Commonwealth or postcolonial studies is more readily understood than 'Australianist'. The small number of Australianists also encourages colleagues to have wider disciplinary identifications, and to be part of large, active networks, whether they are Pacific studies, as is often the case for anthropologists or geographers, postcolonial studies or any other field. The influence of established categories is crucial: CNU sections, the need to demonstrate one's ability to teach a variety of courses in national degrees, and the minor status of Australian studies in many disciplines often encourage wider disciplinary affiliations.

This brief overview of French disciplinary structures shows the conditions under which Australian studies exist. Set degree programmes and the national centralisation of degrees limit the creation of new degrees; degrees focusing exclusively on Australian studies cannot exist in these conditions, and courses on Australia are therefore part of wider curricula. The development of Australian studies in France is also highly dependent on the recruitment of specialists. Although a few courses on Australia are taught by non-tenured staff, sometimes for several years, the continued development of the field requires the presence of staff in *maitre de conférences* and, most importantly for the development of research, in *professeur* positions.





2. From the early days to present-day Australianists

Australian studies were first developed by Professor Victor Dupont in the late 1960s at the University of Toulouse—in 1967 he established a research centre, the ‘*Centre du Commonwealth*’ (Bhreathnach 2009, 46). He started a postgraduate (MA) course on Commonwealth literature in 1968, as well as more undergraduate courses in the following years (Pons 1988, 126). Dupont’s research interests centred mostly on Australasia (Alomes, 19), with a particular interest in New Zealand (Bhreathnach, 48). The research centre and initial postgraduate course focused essentially on Australia, New Zealand and English-speaking Africa; other countries from the Commonwealth such as India and the West Indies were later included (Bhreathnach 2009, 46). The development of Commonwealth studies in Toulouse came from the discovery of what were then called ‘new’ literatures, and took place in parallel with a major evolution in English studies, the development of civilisation as a distinct field in the 1960s, in which Dupont was an important figure (Alomes, 19; see also footnote 16).

Dupont’s initiatives to develop Commonwealth and Australian studies received strong support from Australian institutions. Xavier Pons, one of Dupont’s former students, has mentioned that the Literature Board of the then Australia Council (now the Australia Council for the Arts) provided ‘unfailing support’: ‘Its gifts of books formed the core of our specialised library which is now second to none in this country’ (Pons 1988, 126). The Australian Embassy in Paris also regularly donated books (Pons 2015). Such generosity was essential to the development of Australian studies in Toulouse, and needs to be fully acknowledged (Pons 2015). The establishment of Commonwealth studies was not however a smooth road. As Pons recalls, problems in obtaining books and textbooks could make teaching and researching the field particularly difficult, and giving legitimacy to Commonwealth and Australian studies was arduous, many colleagues questioning the literary merits of authors outside the traditional canon (1988, 126).

One major event in French Commonwealth studies was the founding meeting of Commonwealth specialists working on English-speaking Africa, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand during the annual SAES (*Société des Anglicistes de l’Enseignement Supérieur*, Association of Higher Education Specialists of English Studies) congress in 1971 (Pons 2015). The meeting created the basis for the coordination of Commonwealth studies





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in France, and led to the creation of the SEPC (*Société d'Étude des Pays du Commonwealth*, Society for the Study of Commonwealth Countries) and its peer-reviewed academic journal, *Commonwealth*, whose first issue was published in 1975. As Jean-Pierre Durix has remarked, the emergence of the field was part of a more general movement in Europe towards the institutionalisation of postcolonial studies (2001).

Dupont retired in the mid-1970s and, while New Zealand studies dwindled after his retirement (Bhreathnach, 48), Australian studies prospered at the University of Toulouse for some forty years thanks to one of his students, Xavier Pons. Pons was the first scholar to complete a PhD in Australian literature in France (in 1978) with a thesis on Henry Lawson (Pons 2015; Bhreathnach, 48). His long career at the University of Toulouse, from the early 1970s until his retirement in 2010, allowed him to develop courses on Australia, to ensure the continuity and stability of Australian studies in Toulouse, and to develop the Australian section of the library, which is one of the most important—if not the most important—public collections on Australia in France today.¹⁸ Pons has published extensively on Australia,¹⁹ and has supervised eleven completed PhD theses on Australia.²⁰ He has also organised a number of conferences on Australia, and has arranged numerous visits by Australian authors and academics

¹⁸ In 2009, Bhreathnach estimated the Toulouse Australia collection to contain 1,500 to 2,000 titles (46).

¹⁹ Besides numerous articles, Pons has also written a large number of monographs on Australia which have helped the development of Australian studies in France: *L'Australie et ses populations* (Bruxelles, Complexe, 1983), *Le Géant du Pacifique* (Paris, Economica, 1988), *A Sheltered Land* (St Leonards, NSW, 1994), *Le Multiculturalisme en Australie : au delà de Babel* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996), *L'Australie : entre Occident et Orient* (Paris, La Documentation française, 2000), *Les Mots de l'Australie* (Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2005), *L'Australie* (Paris, Le Cavalier Bleu, 2007), *Messengers of Eros: Representations of Sex in Australian Writing* (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009). Pons has also translated Brian Castro's *Birds of Passage* (*Les Oiseaux de passage*), (Toulouse, Éditions Ombres, 1988), Peter Carey's *Bliss* (*Les Chemins du paradis*), (Paris, Les Éditions du Félin, 1996), and Kit Denton's *The Breaker* (*L'Homme d'aventures*), (Paris, Éditions Vernal, 1990).

²⁰ This figure is based on the data of the *Fichier central des thèses* (central database of PhD theses). Since 1974 French universities have to list all PhD theses in progress in this database; created in 1968, the database is available at <http://www.theses.fr/> and lists current as well as completed theses in France.





to Toulouse.²¹ As Pons himself has remarked, Australian studies never represented a massive proportion of the curriculum even in Toulouse, but the Australian content was firmly established as an important part of the LLCE degree. In 1988, Pons estimated Australian studies to be ‘doing fairly well’ in Toulouse, with ‘four courses on the subject, attended by nearly 100 students’ (Pons 1988, 127). Although circumstances changed depending on the year and decade, there was generally the possibility for students in LLCE to choose courses on Australia from their second to their fourth year in Toulouse (Pons 2015).

Australian studies gradually expanded at a national level also—Alomes remarks that Australian studies developed mostly from the early 1980s onwards (20). Data from the national database on PhD theses show that the majority of theses were completed in the 1990s and later. In 2001, the SAES published a white paper on English studies in France which assessed the status of each specialisation, including a section on Commonwealth studies written by Jean-Pierre Durix. In 2001, out of eleven research centres specialising in Commonwealth studies listed by Durix, three had a general focus on the Commonwealth (Paris 8, Paris 12, Toulouse 2); one centred on Anglo-Indian society (Rennes 2), one on Africa and the Indian Ocean (La Réunion), and an impressive six on Canadian studies (Bordeaux 3, Dijon, Paris 3, Rennes 2, Rouen, Strasbourg 2).²² Durix listed no centre that focused exclusively on Australian studies, but listed the institutions where each sub-specialisation could be found; for Australian studies, he identified Le Havre, Paris 9-Dauphine, and Toulouse (the list seems to refer to *professeurs* in Australian studies).²³ While the 2001 SAES white paper is a still frame that captures only a moment in the history of Australian studies in France, it is worth comparing Australian studies to other areas of sub-specialisation in

²¹ Bhreathnach mentions the visits of Australian authors Janette Turner Hospital, Frank Moorhouse, David Williamson and Bobbie Sykes (48); numerous other Australian writers and academics have been invited to Toulouse over the years.

²² I will discuss some of the reasons explaining the differences between Australian and Canadian studies below.

²³ It seems that Durix’s list of research centres only specified centres exclusively specialising in a field, and did not include centres that had an Australian studies component. This might explain why Paris 9-Dauphine, home of the CICLaS research group, features in his list of locations for Australian studies, but not in his list of research centres. See below for more information on the CICLaS.





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Durix's appraisal: while he listed three locations for Australian studies, he identified three for Indian and Pakistani literatures, four for New Zealand/South Pacific studies, six for African literatures, six for Canadian literature, and eight for Caribbean studies. Although statistics can simplify or distort reality depending on the chosen criteria, Australian studies were not well represented in French universities in 2001, and were not the most popular sub-specialisation in postcolonial studies. Durix mentioned supervisors in postcolonial studies, listing two professors in Australian studies (Martine Piquet at Paris 9-Dauphine and Xavier Pons in Toulouse), one working on the Pacific (Maryvonne Nedeljkovic in Le Havre) and one on Commonwealth literatures (Jean-Claude Redonnet at Paris 4). In comparison, Durix mentioned one supervisor for New Zealand studies, two for Canadian studies, three for Caribbean studies, four for Indo-Pakistani studies and seven in African studies. While the situation is constantly shifting and more flexible than statistics make it appear, one can see that Australian studies were developing, but not as much as some other studies.

If one does the same inventory as Durix, but in 2015, one finds a different map for Australian studies altogether. Le Havre, Paris 9-Dauphine and Toulouse are still important universities for Australian studies, but many other universities now host Australianists. The thirty to forty academics working in Australian studies today can be found in almost thirty different universities all over France.²⁴

In anthropology and ethnology, the CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*) in Paris and the EHESS (*École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*) in Marseille and Paris are crucial centres for Australian studies. Toulouse remains an important location, with three academics (soon to be two, because of a retirement) interested in Australian studies, although its strength has decreased because of administrative shifts in the department and research centre and the retirement of Pons. Paris Dauphine (previously Paris 9), which hosts three Australianists, including two *professeurs*, is also an important location for Australian studies; Dauphine does not include LLCE or LEA courses, so courses on Australia are taught to mathematics, management or economics majors. La Rochelle hosts a number of Australianists and has had a specific LEA programme on the

²⁴ As I remarked above, Durix's list of Le Havre, Paris 9 and Toulouse seems to refer to the presence of professeurs in Australian studies; one should therefore not conclude that there were Australianists in only three universities in 2001.





Asia-Pacific region since the 1990s, with students choosing to study English together with Chinese, Indonesian or Korean; students attend specialised courses on the civilisation of English-speaking countries in the Pacific, including Australia. Much needs to be said in honour of Professor Sue Ryan-Fazilleau, a specialist in Australian literature and the works of Peter Carey, and an important figure in French Australian studies who passed away in September 2012 at the untimely age of fifty-seven. She developed Australian studies in La Rochelle and more generally in France with tireless energy, generosity and kindness.

The universities of Bordeaux, Le Havre and Bretagne Occidentale (Brest) also host two Australianists each, and numerous other universities have permanent staff doing research and/or teaching in Australian studies. They are located in (in alphabetical order): Aix-Marseille, Caen, Clermont-Ferrand, Grenoble, Lille, Montpellier, Nancy, Paris, Rennes, Rouen, Saint-Étienne, Tours, Valenciennes, Versailles, as well as in the French overseas territories of La Réunion and New Caledonia.²⁵ This geographical distribution may evolve rapidly depending on the individual career paths of academics; a series of transfers (change of university), retirements, or local changes in university politics can redraw the map of Australian studies in France altogether. One may create a number of different maps of Australian studies, which will vary depending on whether one focuses on teaching, research centres, HDR, PhD theses (completed or in progress), or publications. Australian studies are much more developed than in the 1990s and early 2000s, with many more academics with research interests in Australia than Durix reported in 2001. Since then, the list of potential thesis supervisors has also changed, with the majority of the Commonwealth professors listed by Durix having retired, leaving other *professeurs* to supervise theses with younger academics in the process of preparing their HDRs, now shaping the future of the field.

In terms of status, the vast majority of tenured Australianists are *maître de conférences*, with a limited number of *professeurs*, *chargés de recherche* and *directeurs de recherche*. In anthropology, teaching-researching positions are rare; the number of *chargés de recherche* and *maîtres de conférences* without

²⁵ My apologies if I have omitted to mention institutions where Australianists are present. Drawing the inventory of Australianists is a complex task, and I have sought the help of many colleagues in order to avoid any omissions; if omissions remain they are mine and are wholly unintentional.





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HDR is close to the number of HDR staff.²⁶ In English studies however, the ratio between HDR and non-HDR is striking, with only 20% of staff having an HDR and 13% being in the process of preparing one. Altogether, there are few professors in Australian literature, there being more civilisation *professeurs* at the moment, although this may change in the near future. There are definite trends regarding the sub-fields of *angliciste* Australianists: 40% work in both literature and civilisation/cultural studies; 40% work in civilisation only; 13% in literature only; and 7% in linguistics. As can be seen from these figures, civilisation dominates much more than literature, a few academics work on the linguistics of Australian English, and numerous Australianists work across several fields, many covering both literature and civilisation.

French academic positions have their pros and cons. Obtaining tenure can take markedly less time than in English-speaking countries. Candidates recruited as *maître de conférences* are tenured after one year if their department and research centre approve of it, and it is possible to obtain such a position after completing one's PhD, something that has unfortunately become unimaginable in English-speaking countries today. Being tenured provides a stability that allows individuals to develop projects in the long term, including courses, library collections, research programmes and, more generally, student interest in their field. The other side of the coin is that the strict recruitment conditions for non-tenured positions (see footnote 7) make it very difficult for candidates 'waiting' for a tenured position to survive both financially and academically, with difficulties in remaining connected to the academic world in the years before they obtain a position. As in Australia, some brilliant and talented researchers never obtain a tenured position, and numerous PhD students who haven't managed to secure a tenured position within a few years sadly 'disappear' from the academic world.

3. Shift and stasis in Australian studies: financial support, the Internet and individual initiatives

Access to documents about Australia—such as novels and primary historical documents—has become much easier over the last forty years, thus changing the field. Thanks to the Internet, Australian news is much

²⁶ Anthropology includes a large number of postdoctoral researchers who are looking for stable positions, so the balance between HDR and non-HDR is completely different if one takes into account these non-permanent academics.





more accessible, and academics can keep up with evolutions in Australian politics or society from Europe in a way that wasn't possible in the 1970s or 1980s. The possibility of purchasing Australian books, either from large resellers or directly from bookshops in Australia, has also improved access to information, particularly to more recent publications.²⁷ The French system of university interlibrary loans, which is inexpensive and efficient, also simplifies access to documents, notably to those that are out of print.²⁸

However, French academics still face issues that also exist—although to a lesser degree—in Australia. In order for universities to teach Australian studies, students need to be able to buy the books, and potential topics are often limited because of the lack of availability of documents, even with the Internet. Designing a course in Australian literature starts with background research on whether the books are available for purchase by students. Many novels and books of poetry by indigenous Australians are often out of print or too difficult to obtain: syllabi and courses are often determined by what is readily available.

A second shift occurred in funding. In the 2001 SAES White Paper, Durix argued that certain regions or nations which generously funded their own cultures encouraged the creation of 'almost autonomous sub-disciplines', and cited Australian and Canadian studies as examples. While this may have been true for the 1970s and 1980s in Australian studies, the situation

²⁷ Although buying books via the Internet has helped academics access documents in a simple and fast way, a consequence of the importance of Internet orders has been the closing of many specialised bookshops. Elaine Lewis's former Australian Bookshop in Paris was affected by the development of the Internet, and so were other iconic independent bookshops such as the Village Voice, which closed in 2012 after thirty years of presence in Paris. As Olivia Snaije reports, the Village Voice could not brave 'the deregulation of book prices in the English-speaking publishing world, the rise of Amazon, and more recently the advent of e-books', as well as the 'growing trend of "showroomers"—people who browse in the shop and pull out their iPhones and order books from Amazon, copying the titles from the volumes on the shelves'. Books may be more easily ordered and received, but it has become increasingly difficult to find the community feeling and depth of knowledge provided by bookshops. Editors' Note: Excessive freight costs for books sent from Australia also contribute to the difficulties in obtaining books published only in Australia.

²⁸ Bhreathnach mentions that the Toulouse library received on average ten requests for interlibrary loans per month—a significant number—most of which were for books from their Australian collection (50).





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has changed today. The generous financial support provided by Australian institutions and agencies to promote Australian studies abroad has dwindled since the 1990s. Pons's first trip to Australia in the mid-1970s, when he was working on his PhD, was funded by the Literature Board of the then Australia Council (now the Australia Council for the Arts), which also donated a large number of books that formed the basis of the Toulouse collection (Pons 1988, 126). He benefited from a number of other scholarships including, in 1985, a programme that funded tours of Australia for overseas academics to discover the country and teach courses on it, a programme that ended soon after (Pons 2015). The Whitlam era is often singled out as a period of great support for overseas study of Australia, while the 1980s and especially the 1990s saw a decrease in support (Pons 2015). The then Literature Board of the Australia Council funded a number of conferences, festivals and cultural events, including *Les Belles Étrangères* annual literary festival organised by the *Centre national du livre* (CNL), which focussed on Australia in 1990 (Pons 2015).²⁹ The last funding offered by the Board to Toulouse was for the 1999 EASA (European Association for Studies of Australia) conference (Pons 2015). Walter mentioned a similar trend in other European countries in 1992: in the UK, government funding for the Australian Studies Centre in London was withdrawn in 1988, while he estimates that 'For the most part, European scholars have had only the most intermittent and ad hoc support from Australia's official agencies, with a few notable exceptions' (1992, 25).³⁰

Many grants, notably library scholarships, are unfortunately restricted to permanent Australian residents or citizens. Official support no longer includes book donations, and scholarships are few, highly competitive, and often available only in the natural sciences.³¹ The decrease in funding, which started in the mid-1980s and was very visible by the end of the 1990s, means that there is today very little direct funding of research for the social and human sciences, and no specific support to help the development of Australian studies.

²⁹ The website of *Les Belles Étrangères* cites the following invited artists for 1990: 'Glenda Adams, Peter Carey, Rosemary Dobson, Rodney Hall, Mark Henshaw, David Malouf, Frank Moorhouse, Mudrooroo Nyoongah, John A. Scott, David Williamson, Tim Winton.'

³⁰ One exception mentioned by Walter was Hungary.

³¹ Scholarships still exist, but they are less numerous than in the past.





As many academics have remarked, financial support is essential for the maintenance and development of Australian studies, but also more alarmingly for their very survival. Germany has a coherent policy of developing German studies abroad through Goethe Institutes and numerous scholarships are available for graduate, postgraduate, and academic research, which give a level of stability to the development of German programmes abroad. As Abádi-Nagy and Nile argue, embassies and ambassadors can also play a crucial part in the creation, maintenance and development of Australian studies programmes overseas (10). In France, where university budgets are limited, libraries cannot hope to create sizeable collections in less than a decade. Library-building remains, as Wallace-Crabbe remarked in 1992, 'slow, hard and expensive' (38). Australian studies can exist without official support from Australia, but they cannot prosper without it.

This situation contrasts with Canadian studies, which have benefited from long-term support from the Canadian government. A number of scholarships exist for PhD students, *cotutelles* (double-badged PhDs), as well as for academics. The 2001 SAES White Paper listed six centres dedicated to Canadian studies, as opposed to none in Australian studies. As Bennett has argued, Canadian studies are 'pushier and better-travelled cousins' of Australian studies (1992, 31). Although in recent years support from the Canadian government has declined and some centres have closed following major moves towards larger research centres in France, the situation remains much more favourable for those working in Canadian studies than for Australianists.³²

A constant feature in Australian studies since its early days has been the central importance of individual initiatives. Since there is no long-term support for the development of the field, Australian studies are highly dependent on the initiatives of individual researchers, and their stability in the long-term depends on the continued enthusiasm of these dedicated

³² As one colleague who works comparatively on Canada and Australia has pointed out, she has been able to organise events in Canadian studies (but none in Australian studies) because funding can be found for events on Canada. A personal anecdote also shows the role of funding in the development of the field: before I started my PhD in Australian studies I was warned by professors that there was hardly any funding in Australian studies, and was advised to do my PhD in Canadian studies (or at least in a comparative perspective with Canada) in order to access funding more easily.





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individuals.³³ As Alomes remarked, Australian studies in France are limited because they consist of a ‘few isolated individuals in different institutions’, with ‘the consequent lack of long-term guarantees of development’ which can only come from institutional support (1993, 21).

In 1988, Pons similarly identified one ‘glaring weakness of Australian studies in Toulouse: they depend almost entirely on me’ (1988, 127). If he transferred to another university,

it is likely that Australian studies would disappear from the curriculum simply because there’d be nobody else to do the job here. It goes to show that it is still an offbeat or minor subject which attracts very few PhD candidates. As a result there are practically no younger academics who could take up where I left off—if I were to leave off. (1988, 127)

He concluded: ‘the relative good health now enjoyed by Australian studies in Toulouse offers no guarantee for the future. Our achievement is genuine but limited.’ (1988, 127)

In 2015, as in 1988, the development of Australian studies depends on individual academics; no wider institutional dynamic encourages their development. Events in Australian studies take place, but they only exist thanks to the dedication or initiative of individual academics. More alarmingly, the geographical move of an Australianist from one university to another often leads to the immediate end of Australian studies in the original institution; in the case of retirements, ensuring the continuation of Australian studies in the university is often difficult. Claude Zaidman made similar remarks regarding feminist studies, the development of which depends on ‘the personal commitment of professors who have reached a dominant hierarchical position’ (1995, 4).³⁴

³³ One example of dedication outside academia is Elaine Lewis’s Australian Bookshop in Paris. Lewis opened an Australian Bookshop in August 1996 in Paris. The bookshop, which left its location on the Quai des Grands Augustins in central Paris at the end of November 1998, continued as an online business in the early 2000s, but could not compete with major Internet resellers. The bookshop sold ‘both new and second-hand Australian books, in English and in French’, and ‘support[ed] and promote[d] Australian artists who visit[ed] Paris’ (Lewis 75). The Australian Bookshop is an example of the importance of individual initiatives in the creation of structures centred on Australia, and demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining such vital ventures in the long term.

³⁴ ‘l’engagement personnel de professeurs parvenus à une place hiérarchique dominante.’





She also remarked that ‘retirements, career advancements, and transfers from one university to another change the conditions of existence’ of the field (4), and that the problems of institutional stability and generational renewal of academics are particularly acute (4–5).³⁵

The importance of individual initiatives can also be seen in other countries throughout Europe. Walter argues that in Europe Australian studies have

been brought to life by a scattering of shoestring, under-resourced and overstretched enterprises, along with dedicated individual European academics and Australian officials prepared to work for the cause in the margins of their real jobs. (27)

Macdermott similarly emphasises the importance of dedicated individuals ‘often working very much alone and swimming against the current’, who manage to establish a field through ‘sheer persistence’ (1992, 61). It is to the result of this ‘sheer persistence’ that I now wish to turn, by discussing contemporary teaching and research in Australian studies.

4. Contemporary courses in Australian studies

How many courses on Australia have been taught in the last ten years? How many are currently taught? What do they focus on, and do they exclusively deal with Australia? Other elements need to be identified to understand contemporary courses in Australian studies: the institutions where they are taught, what they deal with, to which audiences they are taught, and with what degree of stability.

Information on courses taught at French universities is difficult to access. Official course titles—‘literature’, ‘cultural anthropology’, ‘contemporary history’—are often vague for practical and administrative reasons and few universities provide detailed information on individual courses either on their website or through booklets. Information on courses that include Australia can thus only come from those who teach them, and the following statistics on courses in Australian studies come from questionnaires I sent out to Australianists working in France. The questionnaire included questions about institutional affiliation, research and courses taught. Twenty-two colleagues kindly accepted to take the time to fill in the questionnaire and I thank them warmly for their time and generosity.

³⁵ ‘Les départs en retraite, les promotions, les mutations d’une université à l’autre, changent les conditions d’existence du secteur Études Féministes.’





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The twenty-two questionnaires received came from a large majority of *anglicistes* (86%), with two anthropologists (9%) and one geographer (4.5%). I have previously mentioned that 'French' Australianists include 81% *anglicistes*, 11% in anthropology and ethnology, and 8% from other disciplines. The disciplinary affiliation of those who filled in the questionnaire corresponds roughly to the distribution of disciplines for Australianists. Therefore the data collected on courses overwhelmingly concerns English studies, and should be considered as fragmentary; the twenty-two questionnaires received represent about 60% of all Australianists in France, so statistics mentioned in this section should be considered as *indications* of the types of courses in existence, not as an exhaustive list.

The questionnaires revealed that almost seventy courses have been taught in the past ten years, some of which are currently taught, and some of which no longer exist. This number should not be regarded as a precise or reliable number, since some colleagues were unable to recall details of the courses they taught a few years back, but it shows that Australian studies is an active field in terms of teaching.

A variety of courses have Australian content: from courses that mention the country as part of a wider study of the Asia-Pacific region or of the former British Empire to those that focus on Australia; from introductory courses to the country to highly specific courses (for instance on Native Title or Australian gothic fiction); from introducing chemistry students to Australian history to teaching fifth-year LLCE research students; from a few hours over the semester to several hours each week. Courses on Australia exist because academics offer them; there is no institutional pressure to include them in curricula, so the presence of an enthusiastic Australianist is a pre-requisite for the existence of any course.

Four academics out of twenty-two mentioned that they did not teach courses in Australian studies but that they do research in the field (this includes research-only staff as well as staff who do research on Australia but cannot teach it in their institution); one colleague teaches a number of courses but does research in another field. For those who are lucky enough to be able to teach Australian studies, about 45% teach only one course. Of the almost seventy courses listed, 61% are courses in civilisation as opposed to 19% in literature, and the remaining 20% account for courses in anthropology, linguistics, geography and art.





The importance of civilisation in courses on Australia can be explained by the sizeable percentage of civilisation specialists amongst Australianists, but also by the higher number of courses in civilisation than in literature or other sub-fields in English studies, because of the difficulty of teaching Australian literature without first introducing students to Australian history and culture, and because Australian history and culture typically generate more interest from students than Australian literature.³⁶

Of all courses mentioned in the questionnaires, 79% are taught to LLCE students, and most courses are taught to students in second, third, fourth or fifth year. Between 60 to 70% of all courses are not electives and are therefore attended by all students in the year of the degree. 42% of the courses are exclusively on Australia, while 58% of courses deal with Australia for a few weeks only. In terms of content, courses range from introductions to the English-speaking world, to postcolonial literature, to courses on Australian English, contemporary Australian literature and Aboriginal land rights. Courses on Australian literature include a variety of writers—David Malouf, Patrick White, Tim Winton, Alexis Wright, Kim Scott, Peter Carey, Marcus Clarke, Richard Flanagan, Janette Turner Hospital and Judith Wright, to mention the most recurrent. 55% of courses are currently taught, while 45% were taught in the past, which means that there are currently at least between thirty to forty courses that deal (at least partly) with Australia in almost twenty institutions—probably many more.³⁷

These figures, however, are limited and cannot mirror the shifting reality of courses on Australia. Few courses exist permanently within degree programs; changes coming from government, university, faculty, or departmental levels, or pressure from colleagues in other specialisations may rule a course out of existence. Courses focusing on Australia are mostly

³⁶ As Elaine Lewis has remarked, there is a fascination in France with Aboriginal art and culture (2006, 79) and more generally with the exotic features of Australian life, which can be felt all the way into classrooms. Pons mentioned in 1988 that he felt a marked shift from literature to civilisation in students' interests, and that unfortunately the progress of Australian civilisation courses took place at the expense of Australian literature courses (1988, 127). Loss of interest in literature courses can be observed more generally in LLCE degrees, with students overall often taking less interest in reading novels and poetry than in the past.

³⁷ Again, these figures are necessarily incomplete, and mostly concern courses taught by colleagues in English studies.





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one-off courses and are not necessarily part of a wider set of courses in Australian studies. Courses on Australia are therefore often limited to one or two semesters, sometimes three, often from the second year onwards. Australian studies emerge in all of the interstices where they may exist, but their existence can be ephemeral if institutional conditions change.³⁸

Moving away from the data provided by the questionnaires, a discussion of courses in Australian studies would not be complete without reference to the *Agrégation* syllabi. One specificity of English studies in France is the influence of the two national competitive exams for the recruitment of secondary-school teachers, CAPES and *Agrégation*, two important career pathways for many students in LLCE. The degree is partly designed to train students for these exams, and the place of Australian and Commonwealth studies in the *Agrégation* syllabi reflects quite well their status within English studies.³⁹ About half of the syllabus for *Agrégation* changes every year. The syllabus includes five literary works, two civilisation questions (that is, two periods to be studied), linguistics, and one optional course that students need to choose from either literature (two extra works), civilisation (one extra question) or linguistics.

As Durix argued in 2001, featuring in the *Agrégation* syllabus is a significant fact which not only gives wide visibility to the topic during its time in the syllabus, but which also, by extension, may generate students' interest in it, bring legitimacy to the field, and encourage the recruitment of more specialists in the future. Being part of the *Agrégation* syllabus contributes 'to the development of the discipline and its generalisation in all English departments in France' ('au développement de la discipline et à sa généralisation dans toutes les sections d'anglais de France') (Durix).

³⁸ Another important though indirect factor in the development of Australian studies is the existence of student exchanges with Australia. Many of the universities where courses on Australia are taught have student exchange agreements with one or several universities in Australia, although a number of these French universities do not have any existing exchanges; exchanges with Australia can also exist in universities with no courses in Australian studies. Exchange agreements often allow selected students to travel to Australia; many choose courses on Australia during their exchange, and some choose upon their return to do the research component of their Masters' degree or even a PhD thesis on Australia. The roads leading students to take an interest in Australia are many and not limited to—though largely helped by—courses taught in France.

³⁹ CAPES no longer has a specific syllabus as it used to, and as Bhreathnach remarks 'Australia has never been part of the CAPES syllabus' (when CAPES still had one) (47).





In 2001, Durix argued for a ‘more regular inclusion of postcolonial topics’ (‘[u]ne inscription plus régulière de sujets postcoloniaux’) in the *Agrégation* syllabus, which has to an extent taken place.

Commonwealth topics were present in the core *Agrégation* literature syllabus in 1971 (Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*), 1992 (Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel*), 1993 (J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*) and 1999 (Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale*).⁴⁰ Only one postcolonial topic was included in the core civilisation syllabus, in 2013–2014: British Decolonisation (1919–1984).

Postcolonial works were included in the literature option in 1977, 1987, 1990, 1998, 2003, 2007, and since 2009 the two extra works of the literature option have always included one postcolonial work.⁴¹ Postcolonial topics were part of the civilisation option in 1998 (the republican debate in Australia from its beginning until today), 2002 (reconciliation in Commonwealth multicultural societies: the example of South Africa, Australia, Canada and New Zealand in the 1990s) and—if this can be considered a Commonwealth topic—2009–2010 (the debate on the abolition of slavery in Great-Britain: 1787–1840).

Australia has thus featured three times in the *Agrégation* syllabus, always as an elective: once in literature (White’s *Voss* in 1977), and twice in civilisation, including once by itself (the republican debate in 1998), and once from a comparative perspective with other countries (reconciliation in 2002).

⁴⁰ Most of the syllabi mentioned in this section were found in the *concours* archives on the website of the SAES (<http://www.saesfrance.org/>). The year mentioned for each topic refers to the syllabus for ‘*Agrégation externe*’, the national competitive exam open to all European nationals. ‘*Agrégation interne*’ is a similar exam, often with a smaller syllabus, for candidates who have already worked for the French Ministry of Education for a number of years.

⁴¹ Since 2009, topics remain in the *Agrégation* syllabus for two years rather than one. The postcolonial works included in the literature option were: Patrick White’s *Voss* (1977), V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr Biswas* (1987), Wole Soyinka’s *A Dance of the Forests* (1990), Katherine Mansfield’s *Selected Stories (1920–1924)* (1998), Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (2003), Derek Walcott’s *The Collected Poems* (2007), Anita Desai’s *In Custody* (2009–2010), Janet Frame’s *The Lagoon and Other Stories* (2011–2012), Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (2013–2014), Alice Munro’s *Dance of the Happy Shades* (2014–2015).



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Australia has fared rather well, in terms of civilisation, as the only Commonwealth country to have featured by itself in the *Agrégation* syllabus; Australian literature, however, has been particularly absent—it was last in the syllabus 38 years ago—especially in comparison with Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, India and Nigeria.⁴² Whether or not the presence of Australia in more civilisation content is a reflection of academics' greater interest in civilisation or of the overwhelming importance of literature in Canadian and other studies is a matter for discussion, but the future inclusion of more Australian literature and civilisation in the *Agrégation* syllabus would no doubt bring even more dynamism to the field and generate long-term student interest in it.

5. Contemporary research in Australian studies

My investigations on research in Australian studies in the last twenty years included research on Australianists and their themes of research, research centres, networks and associations, conferences organised, publications, current and completed PhD theses, qualifications for *maîtres de conférences* and *professeurs*, and positions advertised by French universities.

Research reveals yet another map of contemporary Australian studies in France. From art to government policies, from early to contemporary history, French researchers are working on a variety of topics. A number of them work from a comparative perspective or more generally on the Australasian, Oceanian or Pacific region. Comparative work with New Zealand, other Pacific nations, other former settler colonies, Canada, diasporic communities across the world, countries from the Commonwealth of Nations and the UK is carried out on a wide variety of themes—indigenous populations, tourism, mining, welfare benefits, multicultural policies and literature.

Other academics focus solely on Australia, with interests in Aboriginal literature, art, culture and politics, non-indigenous Australian literature, Australian films and documentaries, Australian English, Australian gender studies and masculinities, racial relations, the national imaginary, memory and museum studies, relations with Asia and the wider region, eating habits and mixed race identity, to name a few. In literature, the separation of indigenous and non-indigenous literature which often exists in Australia,

⁴² Australian texts can also regularly be found in the oral exams for *Agrégation*, notably in oral and written comprehension.





with separate departments and the specialisation of many academics in either one or the other, is less common in France. While some colleagues work only on Aboriginal literature and others on non-indigenous Australian literature, just as many work on both.

Authors studied include, but are not limited to (in alphabetical order): Brian Castro, Jack Davis, Robert Drewe, Richard Flanagan, Kate Grenville, Gail Jones, Nicholas Jose, Philip McLaren, Romaine Moreton, Kim Scott, Patrick White, Tim Winton and Alexis Wright. As these names show, there is a slight trend in current research to focus on contemporary—or at least twentieth-century—Australian literature, with slightly less emphasis on colonial productions; the study of Patrick White's novels—the 'Patrick White industry' (Alomes, 20)—does not have more prominence than other authors' works in contemporary France. One characteristic of French research on Australian literature is, as Durix remarked in 2001, close reading. The traditions of *explication de texte* (detailed text analyses) and narratology remain important in France, and are one of the characteristics and strengths of the research produced. More generally, strong connections with Australian researchers, integration into international research projects and regular research trips to Australia make French study of Australia a dynamic and valuable field.

Research is structured around research centres in France. Teaching-researching staff and research-only staff have to be officially affiliated with a research centre. Individual universities all have a number of research centres, which can be discipline-specific (in sociology for instance), or transdisciplinary (on the study of the medieval world through a variety of disciplines). Research centres, like departments, need to submit their projects for approval by the French government. This process, referred to as *contractualisation*, involves the definition of 'a four-year scientific policy for the university, and the role of each laboratory (research centre) in that policy' (Bowen & Bentaboulet, 550).⁴³ Research centres are evaluated every four to five years by a visiting academic committee and their proposed

⁴³ The term 'contract' should not mislead readers unfamiliar with the French system into thinking that research centres are funded by private companies or interests. 'Contractualisation' refers to the funding of research centres by public institutions, although academics are increasingly required to find their own funding. In a way, the 'contract' that binds research centres and the government is a commitment to produce scientific research in exchange for public funding.





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programme often tries—or is encouraged—to fit the general direction chosen by the wider structures into which it is included.⁴⁴ Centres define a number of major themes or areas on which they will work for the next few years, and thereby partly orient the research of their members. In this light, the existence (or lack) of research centres in specific fields of study is influential.

Since tenured staff, whose load includes research, need to be part of a centre, centres both mirror and define current research. Recent changes show that successive governments have been moving towards larger units and clusters rather than smaller, specialised structures. Many individual universities have been—or are in the process of being—grouped into larger university clusters.⁴⁵ Research centres have similarly been encouraged to federate smaller structures into larger wholes. As a result, highly specialised research centres which had existed in the past are often today integrated as a theme or subgroup within larger centres. In practical terms, this means that in current institutional conditions it is difficult for a centre focusing exclusively on Australian studies to exist, and this—along with the isolation of Australianists and their presence in separate universities—explains the lack of research centres focusing exclusively on Australia.

There are however some research centres that include an Australian, Pacific or postcolonial dimension. In anthropology, the CREDO research centre (*Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie*—Centre for Research and Documentation on Oceania), located in Marseille and grouping staff from three different institutions (CNRS, EHESS and Université d'Aix-Marseille), focuses on Oceania and South Pacific societies, and is a central structure in Australian research in France. In Paris, the *Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale* (LAS) (Laboratory of Social Anthropology), a research unit that is part of the Collège de France, CNRS and EHESS, includes, thanks to the work of Barbara Glowczewski, regular research projects on Australia and the Pacific.

⁴⁴ The modes of evaluation of research centres change regularly, and are currently being redesigned.

⁴⁵ Examples are numerous: the different Strasbourg universities (Strasbourg 1–Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg 2–Marc Bloch, and Strasbourg 3–Robert Schuman) were all brought together under the larger umbrella of 'Université de Strasbourg' in 2009; the several universities present in Metz and Nancy were similarly merged into Université de Lorraine in 2012, and Paris universities are in the process of being partly merged with a series of *regroupements* (regroupings).





One recent three-year project (2012–2015), which was part of a larger network created with James Cook University, ‘*TransOceanik*’, dealt with the anthropology of perception across the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans.

In English studies, the presence of Australian studies in research centres is more diffuse. There is today no research centre that focuses exclusively on Australian or Commonwealth studies, and the fields are present at best as subgroups in research teams. Because government contracts are re-established every four or five years for research centres, these subgroups are often re-modelled for new contracts and can therefore evolve very quickly. Research centres that have a clear research focus on postcolonial or Commonwealth studies, with the presence of Australianists, include but are not limited to: the LERMA (*Laboratoire d’Étude et de Recherche sur le Monde Anglophone*—Laboratory for the Study of and Research on the English-Speaking World) at Aix-Marseille University, with a research focus (*axe*) on British and Commonwealth cultures; a subgroup on literatures and histories of the Indian Ocean (CRLHOI) at La Réunion University’s research centre, *Contacts de Cultures, Littératures et Civilisations* (Contacts between Cultures, Literatures and Civilisations); and ERIBIA (*Équipe de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur la Grande-Bretagne, l’Irlande et l’Amérique du nord*—Interdisciplinary Research Team on Great Britain, Ireland and North America) at Caen University which includes a postcolonial and diasporic dimension. Another important centre is the GRER (*Groupe de Recherche sur l’Eugénisme et le Racisme*—Research Group on Eugenics and Racism), based in Paris 7, which organises conferences, a seminar series and annual publications that regularly include contributions on Australia. Directed by Michel Prum, the dynamism of the GRER contributes to the development of Australian and Commonwealth studies in France.

The English studies research team of the University of Toulouse, CAS (*Cultures Anglo-Saxonnes*), used to include a research group focusing on postcolonial studies. The projects proposed by the team up to 2019 are however centred on three main themes.⁴⁶ Despite positive feedback from the evaluation committee on the postcolonial research group, the centre was restructured around these three large themes which, although they

⁴⁶ The three themes are *faire désordre* (creating disorder), *lieux communs* (common places), and *construction(s) de l’individu et du collectif* (constructing individuals and the collective).





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may each still include a postcolonial dimension, unfortunately dilute what had until recently constituted Toulouse's strong research focus. Postcolonial studies still exist in Toulouse, but the loss of specialised units within the centre diminishes their visibility and specificity.

A similar example of restructuring has caused the disappearance of the CICLaS (*Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Identités, les Interactions Culturelles et les Langues de Spécialité*—Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Identities, Cultural Interactions and Specialised Languages), a dynamic research centre formerly based at Paris-Dauphine. The CICLaS brought together Dauphine academics working in languages, and included a strong and active Australian studies group, with Martine Piquet and Deirdre Gilfedder organising numerous events and conferences.⁴⁷ It was created in the early 2000s, and despite good reviews from the evaluation committee, was closed; its last publication was in 2011. Martine Piquet, a well-known figure in Australian studies, directed the CICLaS, and the centre brought much dynamism to the field. The centre's activities also included the publication of an academic journal, *Les Cahiers du CICLaS*, which included numerous articles on Australia. Published from 2002 to 2011, more than half of the issues included one or more articles on Australia, with many special issues on postcolonial or Australian themes. The closing of the CICLaS, which demonstrates how difficult it is to maintain institutional structures in the long term despite excellent research quality, was a great loss for Australian and Commonwealth studies.⁴⁸

Many research centres in France include a postcolonial dimension and take an interest in racial relations, multiculturalism, indigenous peoples or settler colonial dynamics, but Australian studies are not particularly identifiable at the level of research centres. Again, there are understandable

⁴⁷ Guests to the CICLaS's conferences and seminars included Australian studies researchers (Ghassan Hage, Sylvia Lawson, Stephen Muecke, Xavier Pons, Lyndall Ryan, Stuart Ward, McKenzie Wark) as well as speakers from the Australian Embassy in Paris (Nicholas Baker, for instance).

⁴⁸ In 1993 Alomes mentions the CERI (*Centre de Recherches Internationales*—Centre for International Research) of Sciences Po Paris and the CEEA (*Centre Européen d'Études Australiennes*—European Centre for Australian Studies) created by Maryvonne Nedeljkovic as important locations for Australian studies (1993, 22). As far as I can tell, the CEEA no longer exists; and while there is an Australian researcher at the CERI, the centre today does not include a subgroup or research focus (axe) on Australia, Oceania or the Pacific.





reasons for the lack of Australian studies centres or specialised units: departments rarely need or recruit more than one Australianist, which makes a dedicated centre difficult to create; and the trend towards larger, more inclusive and inter- or pluri-disciplinary structures tends to give less visibility to smaller fields. While dozens of centres include Australianists, coordinated research on Australia rather takes place through associations and networks, most of which are of a European dimension.

There is no 'French Association for Australian Studies' as exists in the United Kingdom, Germany or the United States. The lack of a 'French Association for Australian Studies' comes from the fact that a number of wider associations include and connect French Australianists. I have already commented on the gap that may be artificially fostered by different disciplinary affiliations; this gap also exists at the level of networks and associations, which tend to follow disciplinary divisions. In France, anthropologists and *anglicistes* often evolve in different circles; several academics are in both circles, but the disciplinary separation can be seen in existing networks and associations. *Angliciste* networks include the SEPC and the SAES, which respectively federate Commonwealth specialists and *anglicistes*. The SEPC's doctoral award, the Jacqueline Bardolph award, attributed biennially to the best PhD thesis in postcolonial studies, encourages recent PhD graduates to publicise their research and brings vitality and visibility to the field. Other important networks for French Australianists include the European Association for Studies of Australia (EASA), which was created in 1989 (Abádi-Nagy & Nile, 7).

Other Australian studies associations in Germany (GASt—*Gesellschaft für Australienstudien*) and the UK (BASA—British Australian Studies Association) bring welcome dynamism to the field. The Institute for the Study of French-Australian Relations (ISFAR), created in Australia in 1985, also helps forge connections between France and Australia. A number of networks focus more on the Oceanic or Pacific region, and are often more oriented towards anthropology or ethnology: these include *e-Toile Pacifique*, an informal francophone network of human and social sciences academics working on Oceania; Pacific Studies, a database of skills and resources on the Pacific, which includes a list of experts on the region and is part of the larger European Consortium for Pacific Studies (ECOPAS), which in turn focuses on issues relating to climate change; the francophone *Société des océanistes*, created in 1945, which includes Australia but mostly deals with French-speaking Pacific countries; *La Société des études océaniques*, founded





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in 1917, and based in French Polynesia; ESfO, the European Society for Oceanists, which has existed since 1992 and organises regular conferences; and finally there are the *Réseau Asie et Pacifique* and the European Asia-Pacific Network of Research and Expertise (EURASIANE).

A number of annual academic events provide a platform for Australianists: the two SEPC workshops on civilisations and literatures of the Commonwealth take place during the SAES conference in May or June each year; the GRER seminar series; seminars on Pacific studies at the Paris EHESS, which often include content on Aboriginal Australia; and the PAC (*Phonologie et phonétique de l'anglais contemporain*) conferences.⁴⁹

Conferences on Australia are a regular occurrence but remain dependent upon individual initiatives. Many conferences address Australia within its broader region—together with New Zealand or in the Asia-Pacific context—or from a comparative perspective (indigenous issues, settler colonial dynamics, multicultural policies, etc.); these wider conferences may attract more participants and foster transnational dialogues and analyses.

In the last twenty years, major conferences focusing on Australia have included: the hosting of the EASA conference in 1999 in Toulouse; 'Economics and Culture in Australia' in 2001 at Paris-Dauphine; 'Mapping the Colonial "Self" / Mapping the Indigenous "Other" in the Literatures of Australia and New Zealand' in 2003 at Paris 10; 'L'Australie à la rencontre de l'Autre : Faces and Interfaces / Dealing with the Other: Australia's Faces and Interfaces' in 2005 at Paris 4; two events in La Rochelle in 2005: a one-day seminar on New Zealand and Australian Studies entitled 'Stories/her-story/his-story/History', and an international conference entitled 'Here's Looking at You: France/Australia–La Rochelle/Newcastle'; 'Americanisation, Asianisation, or Pacific-isation of Australasia' in 2006 at Paris-Dauphine; a one-day conference on 'Cultural violence and Identity in Australia and New Zealand' at Bordeaux in 2006; a series of conferences on Australia in 2007 organised by the Atelier Littéraire Franco-Australien and Éditions La Petite Maison; 'Researching the Other, Transfers of Self: Egohistoire, Europe and Indigenous Australia' in 2011 at Paris 13; 'Australian Aboriginal Anthropology Today: Critical Perspectives from Europe' in 2013 at the Musée du Quai Branly;

⁴⁹ Anne Przewozny mentions that the PAC conferences regularly include papers on Australian English: there were three at the 2012 PAC conference in Toulouse, one in 2014 in Montpellier and two in Toulouse in 2015.



the hosting of the EASA conference in 2013 in Bordeaux.⁵⁰ As this non-exhaustive list shows, conferences on Australia occur regularly, but some years are more prolific than others. To this list must be added a whole number of conferences on postcolonial or Asia-Pacific themes, which often include contributions or specialised panels on Australia.⁵¹ Universities hosting such postcolonial or Pacific conferences over the last ten years have included Amiens, Bordeaux, Grenoble, La Rochelle, Lille, Montpellier, Nancy, Orléans, Paris-Dauphine, Paris 8, Paris 13 and Savoie, to mention a few.

The rich and diverse nature of Australian studies in France is also apparent in the publications of French Australianists. It would be impossible to list all publications by French scholars, and I can only mention a few of the many significant publications. Numerous articles, chapters and edited works have also been published on—or partly on—Australia. I will, however, for practical reasons, cite a few monographs published in the last twenty years⁵² by French academics and PhD graduates dealing *exclusively* with Australia. These include, year by year and in alphabetical order:⁵³

⁵⁰ This list is a selection of conferences with strong or exclusive focuses on Australia; it is not exhaustive and does not take into account interdisciplinary conferences that include an Australian component.

⁵¹ Another important type of event is art exhibitions—whether they are commercial or take place in museums—some of which have a clear connection with Australia, such as ‘Mémoires Vives: Une Histoire de l’Art Aborigène’ at the *Musée d’Aquitaine* in Bordeaux in 2013–2014. (Thanks to Estelle Castro for bringing this exhibition to my attention.) Editors’ Note: since 1998 *Arts d’Australie* : Stéphane Jacob has promoted Australian Aboriginal and ‘Western’ artists in France and Europe.

⁵² Collective works are not included in this list for two main reasons: they are too numerous to be cited in an article; collective works may be authored by several Australianists including colleagues working outside France, and may contain contributions from non-French Australianists, so they do not necessarily reflect research produced in France.

⁵³ One element which colleagues in Australia rarely need to take into account when publishing is that of language. In France, choosing to publish in French or English is a strategic choice. A work in English can be read by colleagues from all over the world, and takes part in transnational and transdisciplinary dialogues that contribute to international academic research. Publishing in French reduces the potential audience of specialists, but exposes the work to the French-speaking market, and therefore enters a wholly different dialogue; given French book regulations, works in French are often less expensive to purchase than those in English, an important point in terms of accessibility.





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1995

Bernard, Michel, *Histoire de l'Australie de 1770 à nos jours : naissance d'une nation du Pacifique*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Moisseff, Marika, *Un long chemin semé d'objets culturels : le cycle initiatique aranda*, Paris, Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

1996⁵⁴

Pons, Xavier, *Le Multiculturalisme en Australie : au delà de Babel*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

1997

Bernard, Michel, *L'Âge d'or australien : la ruée vers l'or (1851) et ses conséquences*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Coad, David, *Prophète dans le désert : essais sur Patrick White*, Villeneuve d'Ascq, Septentrion.

Redonnet, Jean-Claude and Steve Garner, *The Debate on a Republic for Australia*, Paris, Didier / CNED.

1999

Bernard, Michel, *La Colonisation pénitentiaire en Australie 1788–1868*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Moisseff, Marika, *An Aboriginal Village in South Australia: A Snapshot of Davenport*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press.

2000

Le Cam, Georges-Goulven, *L'Australie : naissance d'une nation*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

Pons, Xavier, *L'Australie : entre Occident et Orient*, Paris, La Documentation française.

2002

Coad, David, *Gender Trouble Down Under: Australian Masculinities*, Valenciennes, Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes.

2004

Glowczewski, Barbara, *Rêves en colère : alliances aborigènes dans le Nord-Ouest australien*, Paris, Plon.

⁵⁴ 1996 is also the year of publication of Georges-Goulven Le Cam's *L'Australie et la Nouvelle-Zélande* (Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes), which contains a large section on Australia.





Piquet, Martine, *Australie plurielle : gestion de la diversité ethnique en Australie de 1788 à nos jours*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

2005

Castejon, Vanessa, *Les Aborigènes et l'apartheid politique australien*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Dousset, Laurent, *Assimilating Identities: Social Networks and the Diffusion of Sections*, Sydney, Oceania Publications.

Glowczewski, Barbara and Jessica De Largy Healy, artists from Lajamanu and Galiwin'ku, *Pistes de rêves : voyage en terres aborigènes*, Paris, Éditions du Chêne.

2006

Argounès, Fabrice, *Géopolitique de l'Australie*, Bruxelles, Complexe.

Ben-Messahel, Salhia, *Mind the Country: Tim Winton's Fiction*, Crawley, University of Western Australia Press.

Duthil, Fanny, *Histoires de femmes aborigènes*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

Glowczewski, Barbara, *Les Rêveurs du désert : peuples Warlpiri d'Australie*, Arles, Actes Sud.

2007

Pons, Xavier, *L'Australie*, Paris, Cavalier Bleu.

Ryan-Fazilleau, Sue, *Peter Carey et la quête postcoloniale d'une identité australienne*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Vernay, Jean-François, *Water from the Moon: Illusion and Reality in the Works of Australian Novelist Christopher Koch*, Youngstown, NY, Cambria.

2008

Auguste, Isabelle, *L'Administration des affaires aborigènes en Australie depuis 1972 : l'autodétermination en question*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Glowczewski, Barbara (with a contribution from Lex Wotton), *Guerriers pour la paix : la condition politique des Aborigènes vue de Palm Island*, Montpellier, Indigène Éditions.

Ponsonnet, Maïa and Pierre Grundmann, *Australie : Histoire, Société, Culture*, Paris, La Découverte.





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2009

Pons, Xavier, *Messengers of Eros: Representations of Sex in Australian Writing*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars.

Vernay, Jean-François, *Panorama du roman australien des origines à nos jours*, Paris, Hermann.

2011

Dousset, Laurent, *Australian Aboriginal Kinship: An Introductory Handbook with Particular Emphasis on the Western Desert*, Marseille, Pacific-CREDO Publications.

Dousset, Laurent, *Mythes, missiles et cannibales : le récit d'un premier contact en Australie*, Paris, Société des Océanistes.

Le Cam, Georges-Goulven, *L'Australie au delà du rêve*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

2015

Gilfedder, Deirdre, *L'Australie et la Grande Guerre*, Paris, Michel Houdiard.

Regarding academic papers, regular contributions on Australia have appeared in *Les Cahiers du CICLaS*, the L'Harmattan collection entitled 'Racisme et eugénisme', and the two peer-reviewed journals of the SEPC, *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* and *Cultures of the Commonwealth*, whose first issues appeared in 1975 and 1996 respectively. The SEPC originally published one journal, *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*; a separate journal centering on civilisation, *Cultures of the Commonwealth*, was launched in 1995 and first published in 1996, and has resulted in a deeper emphasis on literature in *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*. As Durix recalls, the impetus for the beginning of *Cultures of the Commonwealth* came from Martine Piquet and Francine Tolron (a New Zealand specialist). The journals of the SEPC are a good indicator of the vitality of Australian studies in France. Three issues have focused exclusively on Australia: volumes 4 (1979–1980) and 6.2 (1984) of *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, which centred on 'Australian Literature Today' and 'Australia and Continental Europe'; and a special issue on 'The Republican Debate in Australia (1788–1997)', a topic in the *Agrégation*, in issue 3 (1997) of *Cultures of the Commonwealth*. One can note a slight decrease in the number of publications on Australian literature in *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* since 2007, which is part of an overall small decrease in the number of articles published in each issue—



nevertheless publications remain regular and stable. Articles on Australia have, on average, represented between a quarter to a half of the articles published in issues of *Cultures of the Commonwealth*, with an average, since its first issue in 1996, of a third of all articles on Australia, which demonstrates the stability and richness of Australian studies.⁵⁵

Another essential element of research on Australia is PhDs in Australian studies in France. The decision to do one's PhD in Australian studies deserves a word of explanation. Doing one's PhD on Australia implies choosing to work against the grain and being part of a marginal field. It also implies higher costs for students. For students of English studies, travelling to the UK is inexpensive and uncomplicated, with no visa requirements, and trips to the US are also less expensive than travelling to Australia. Since some Commonwealth fields such as Canadian studies include clear funding possibilities while Australian studies mostly do not—and when they do, not in the same proportions—and since being an Australianist is not necessarily an advantage for future recruitment, a high degree of motivation is required to undertake a PhD in the field. Doctoral students working on Australia need to be able to work independently; few PhD students starting work on Australia have been able to undertake previous courses in Australian studies, unlike students working on more mainstream topics, and many need to make up for the relatively small place given to Australian studies in degree programmes. As Yasue Arimitsu has remarked concerning Australian studies in Japan, students often have to work by themselves when there is no specialised supervisor to help them (2011, 11). Students in English studies hesitating between Canadian and Australian studies, or between British and Australian, may make a purely practical choice which unfortunately often goes against Australian studies.

Fortunately, some highly motivated students choose against the odds to do their PhD in Australian studies. As Luc Vacher remarked in 2002, PhD theses on Australia are characterised by their dispersal into numerous disciplines. In the last decade thirty-five students completed a PhD in Australian studies

⁵⁵ In contrast, there has been an average of 18% of articles on Australia in *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* issues, not including special issues. These figures cannot be compared directly, since *Cultures of the Commonwealth* is a much more recent publication. The higher number of articles published on civilisation might be connected to the fact that civilisation is slightly more prominent than literature in French Australian studies.





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(either exclusively or comparatively, in the social and human sciences) according to the central database of French PhD theses. This represents an overall average of three PhD theses per year, although numbers vary highly depending on the year.⁵⁶ In terms of disciplinary affiliation, twenty-two were in English studies (63%), six in anthropology or ethnology (17%), and one in each of the following disciplines: communication sciences, pedagogy, French literature (*lettres modernes*), geography, law, political science, and philosophy. Of the twenty-two PhDs in English studies, ten were in civilisation (45.5%), ten in literature (45.5%), and two in linguistics (9%). Five out of the ten PhD theses in civilisation centred on Aboriginal issues, two in literature dealt with Aboriginal literature or representation, and one in linguistics dealt with Australian Kriol from a comparative perspective. Supervisors have included well-known figures in Australian studies (Laurent Dousset, Barbara Glowczewski, Martine Piquet, and retired academics Maryvonne Nedeljkovic, Xavier Pons and Jean-Claude Redonnet), but also a large number of non-Australianists, due to geographical factors (some students cannot change regions or move to another university for personal reasons) or due to the lack of Australianist supervisors in some fields (law, but also in some sub-fields in English studies, depending on the decade). Another characteristic of Australian studies PhDs is the large proportion of theses done as *cotutelles* (double-badged PhDs)—twelve out of thirty-five (34%), a much higher figure than in other fields, which demonstrates both the openness of Australian institutions to double-badged degrees with France and the commitment of PhD students to doing long-term field or archival work in Australia.

There are seventeen theses in Australian studies currently listed as being in progress in the national central database of PhD theses. Some of these students have probably dropped out (some theses ‘in progress’ were started in 2005 or 2006...), so it is difficult to evaluate the number of theses that are truly in progress and that might eventually be completed, but based on colleagues’ reports, I would estimate that around twelve PhD theses are currently in progress, including eight in English studies (six of which

⁵⁶ Not all PhD theses on Australia contain the keyword Australia, which makes a reliable survey of PhD theses in the field difficult to achieve. I have sought to find all PhD theses in the social and human sciences by using my personal knowledge of existing students, looking at conference programmes, asking colleagues, and looking up numerous keywords on the French national PhD database. Despite these efforts, a few PhD theses may have been overlooked.





are in civilisation and two in literature, which marks a clear emphasis on civilisation), two in history, one in anthropology, and one in economics.⁵⁷ As for completed theses, supervisors include well-known figures in Australian studies mentioned above (with the addition of Françoise Král, a specialist of diasporic and postcolonial literatures), as well as a few surprising choices of supervisors, some of whom have little connection with Australia.

While many PhD students never finish their thesis or choose not to continue in academia, for those who do complete their PhD and wish to become academics, the road to tenure can be long, especially when one specialises in a minor field. As discussed earlier, PhD graduates wishing to become *maître de conférences* need to request their *qualification aux fonctions de maître de conférences* to be able to apply for lecturing jobs. Statistics in English studies for 2013 and 2014 show how minor Australian studies are in terms of candidates for *qualification* and advertised positions.⁵⁸ In 2013, for the eleventh CNU section (English studies), there were two qualified candidates in Australian civilisation and two in Australian literature, out of a total of ten qualified candidates in Commonwealth studies, and an overall total of 127 candidates qualified in English studies; candidates qualified in Australian and Commonwealth studies thus represented respectively 3% and 8% of the candidates qualified in English studies. The positions advertised during the synchronised session that year included no positions in postcolonial or Commonwealth studies, although some positions were open to Commonwealth specialists. In 2014, there were no qualified candidates

⁵⁷ The trend towards more theses in civilisation is a recent evolution. With civilisation developing only in the 1960s and becoming a legitimate field of study from the 1970s onwards (its final inclusion in the *Agrégation* syllabus on an equal footing with literature dating only to 1998), literature long dominated PhD theses in Australian studies. As Durix remarks, the topics of PhD theses in Commonwealth studies had a distinct evolution: while in the 1970s the first PhD theses in the field mostly dealt with the historiography of 'new' literatures, in the 1980s these foundations being established, theses became more specialised and often focused more closely on specific authors or works (2001). Bonel-Elliott remarks in 2000 that in English studies literature still remained supreme over civilisation and linguistics in the number of doctoral theses completed (83).

⁵⁸ My analysis focuses on 2013 and 2014 because for these years precise statistics on the specialisation of qualified candidates in English studies are available on the SAES website (<http://www.saesfrance.org/>); detailed statistics for 2015 are not available at the time of writing.





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in Australian studies, as opposed to seven in Commonwealth studies out of a total of 129 qualified candidates in English. The profiles of advertised positions were the same as the previous year, with no position explicitly in postcolonial studies, but with several positions open to ‘anglophone’ literatures and civilisations. While 2013 and 2014 are not necessarily representative of qualifications or positions in the longer term—positions in postcolonial studies do exist, although their number seems to have decreased in the last few years—they demonstrate the difficult recruiting conditions facing PhD students. Considering that *qualifications* for positions are four-year entitlements, and that candidates qualified in previous years may also be applying for positions in a given year, one can imagine the degree of competition in obtaining a tenured post, and the difficulty of securing a position. With often only one or two ‘postcolonial’ staff in each English department—because of small teaching loads in the field—recruitment is necessarily limited, and many brilliant Australianists are never recruited, or are recruited to teach the English language only (sometimes to non-specialists), with few opportunities to teach Australian studies, if any at all.

Regarding qualifications to become a *professeur*, in 2013, out of thirty-three qualified candidates, there were no candidates qualified in Australian studies and, in 2014, only one candidate out of twenty-nine was qualified in Australian civilisation (3.5%). There were no positions specifically in postcolonial studies in 2013, but one in ‘Civilisation de la Grande-Bretagne et des Pays du Commonwealth’ in 2014. Traditionally, however, professorial positions tend to be more open than lecturing positions, with a number of headings only specifying ‘Études anglophones’ (anglophone studies).

With some professors already in tenured positions, four *Habilitations à diriger des recherches* (the formal authorisation to supervise research) in progress by Australianists, and some younger academics who will probably start their *Habilitations* in coming years, the pool of candidates should, in the medium to long term, make up for retirements and ensure continuity across generations. More than in mainstream fields, individual academics in Australian studies are aware of their responsibility to ensure the continuation of the field, and of the need to consolidate Australian studies by developing courses, conferences, publications and networks, and by securing the all-important institutional support from relevant governments, ministries, universities and academic departments.





Conclusion

In conclusion, if one considers Australian studies to exist through specialised departments or research centres only, Australian studies have a very limited existence in France. No university department concentrates solely on Australian studies, and no research centre has Australia as its unique country of focus. Yet if one goes beyond such strict considerations, 'Australian Studies in France' is a rich field that exists in a variety of disciplines, with a polyphony of voices and initiatives, developed by dynamic and dedicated individuals. Australian studies are primarily characterised by their multiplicity, and it is this complexity—which can be found in Australian studies in Australia as well as in France—which makes writing the history of Australian studies in France a non-exhaustive and fundamentally complex undertaking.

Several different maps of Australian studies in France can be drawn depending on the selected criteria: courses for specialists and non-specialists, research specialisations and themes, research centres, networks and associations, conferences, publications, PhD theses—completed or in progress—advertised positions, professorships. This study demonstrates not only the vitality of the field, but also the pressing need for coordination and institutional support. In 1992, Pons argued that

the few pockets of Australian studies [in France] are indeed islands in the ocean, holding their own against the tide, but aware of their frailty and isolation with regard to the vast expanse where the Anglo-American canon holds sway. (Quoted in Alomes, 21)

Australian studies have proven to be resilient, but their reliance on individual initiatives and the lack of institutional—and therefore financial—support limits their long-term stability. The current trend towards larger research units, broader departments, and trans- or inter-disciplinary formations, while having its merits, does not work in favour of the consolidation of a specialised field such as Australian studies. Strengthening Australian studies requires institutional recognition, be it through a more regular inclusion in the *Agrégation* syllabus, support from Australian institutions, an increase in the number of academic positions and career prospects, or a recognition of the essential importance of opening up students' horizons to the Pacific region. In English studies in particular, the importance of Commonwealth studies cannot always be taken for granted, and academics have to work tirelessly for the preservation of established courses, research centres with their specialised units and positions in the





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field. Despite the numerous rigidities of the French university system, there is considerable room for autonomy within its constraints, and enough energy in the field to develop it. As Alomes suggested, 'The archipelago of Australian studies in France may need bridges between the "islands in the ocean" in the form of either a working party or even an association' (1993, 23). The creation of a French Association of Australian Studies is a project regularly discussed by colleagues, and one which I hope will emerge in the next few years.

Université de Lorraine, Nancy

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Editors' Note

The following Media Release was issued by the Office of the Minister for Education and Training in September 2015:

The Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Noumea on 23rd September 2015 to allow for the development of an Australian curriculum section in the French Baccalaureate.

Mr Pyne signed the Memorandum of Understanding with French High Commissioner to New Caledonia, Mr Vincent Bouvier, and the President of the Government of New Caledonia, Mr Philippe Germain.

'This Memorandum of Understanding for the inclusion of defined Australian content in the Baccalaureate represents a significant step in the wider recognition of Australian history and culture in the realm of education internationally', Minister Pyne said.

'The proposed Australian section of the Baccalaureate will build on similar international sections in the French high school curriculum for the United States, United Kingdom and several other countries.

Once the curriculum is established, the Australian section will be trialled in a number of secondary schools in New Caledonia, requiring students to invest about six hours a week on Australian literature and four hours a week on Australian history and geography.

Upon successful completion of the trial, secondary schools in France could incorporate the Australian section into their Baccalaureate.'