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On Moving and (Inter)Disciplinarity: Thinking about Australian French Studies in the Active Voice

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Our aim in this introduction is to position all the articles that comprise this special issue of *Australian Journal of French Studies* within a framework of mobility while also highlighting how they each, individually, test and move (beyond) certain frames. We are also writing in response to the annual conference of the Australian Society for French Studies, which we co-convened in 2015 and at which the articles included here were presented.¹ As we began writing, as individuals working in collaboration, the tension between our singular and collective identities became visibly metonymic of the work that is generated in, and generates, French Studies. Clearly, one of us has a deeper understanding of the mobilities at play in Francophone Studies; one of us is more interested in the evolution of our disciplinarity, as French lecturers, in light of student mobility and flexible modes of delivery; and one of us cannot move in any direction without seeing Baudelaire. And yet, we came together, as every year, in 2015 with our colleagues from Australia and around the world with a clear sense of what it means – to all of us, despite the nuances of our institutional specificities – to work in French Studies. Thus, we decided to remove our individual “I”s here, however transparent they may be, in order to write this introduction not so much from the perspective of a royal, or even a republican, “we” but rather from that of the first person mobile.

* * *

In 2003 HarperCollins published an omnibus edition of three Hercule Poirot novels: *The Murder on the Links*, *The Mystery of the Blue Train* and *Death in the Clouds*. The title given to this marketing move was *Poirot: The French Collection*. The “move” here is a curious mix of opening out and closing down. Brought together, the three novels take on a stronger, more overt Frenchness, as if this is how best to read them, perhaps at the expense of what we might consider other modes of being. And at the same time we readers are also called on to think less of the murders than of their setting, which is one (or in fact never just *one*) of movement – physical, across borders, and linguistic. Poirot speaks in French and at times he is said to interpret, both of which he manages while the text remains in English; while on other occasions (notably in *The Murder on the Links*) English appears to be the lingua franca of all characters, French, English and Belgian, but it seems (even in the mouths of the English themselves) almost deliberately stilted. All types of links are promoted, then, and murdered by Agatha Christie. The question for French Studies that arises out of this is one of disciplinary setting. For HarperCollins, Poirot’s home is the one that he has made for himself, in London: “It seems Hercule Poirot can never escape murder. Crimes, motives and killers followed him across the Orient and now they have found him again – but this time much closer to home”.²

¹ Jarrod Hayes and Murray Pratt’s articles were both first presented as keynote addresses at ASFS 2015; Mireille Rosello was invited to contribute to this issue based on her work in the area of mobility.

² <http://www.harpercollins.com.au/9780007171132/poirot-the-french-collection> (accessed 15 December 2015).

Arguably, the setting of a crime novel is as, or perhaps more, important than the crimes on which it is (ostensibly) predicated.³ Place is, however, less set (rigidly defined) than one might think: settings are traversed in various modes of transport (Holmes liked a cab, Poirot a taxi and often, especially in and across France, a train, although more recently Sophie Hannah has him take a bus,⁴ and PIs tend to prefer their car). Readers may well want to settle back with a good book; the text, for its part is unsettled, unsettles. Poirot moves to and from home, as if home is in fact a place that inspires motion. We in French Studies might think of Fred Vargas's Commissaire Adamsberg novels, in which Paris is point of departure and return, key to the investigation and solution while only at times the scene of the crime. But why should we in French Studies think of and about Vargas rather than Christie? Does her Frenchness make us more at home in our study of her novels? At the 23rd annual conference of the Australian Society for French Studies,⁵ the theme, French Studies on the Move, engendered debate about French Studies identity, which was described as somehow essentially interdisciplinary. We are, of course, conscious of recalling this discussion through the lens of our own understanding, and are therefore representing this debate more paradoxically than was intended. Our point is that the idea of belonging to French Studies depends on an at-home-ness that aspires to the essential but which is also liminal in the way that it orients itself continuously in relation to contiguous (cognate) disciplines. Insofar as it eschews clear-cut taxonomies while quite clearly existing as a recognisable field of teaching and research, French Studies presents parallels to (the perception and reception of) *inter alia* Queer Theory. As Michael O'Rourke notes, in an attempt to grapple with what this recognisable but ineffable thing might be said to be,

[p]erhaps the appeal and the lasting power of queer theory then (and now) is that it is non-delimitable as a field and non-locatable in terms of a chrononormative temporal schema. Part of, perhaps all of, the attraction of queer theory is its very undefinability, its provisionality, its openness, and its not-yet-here-ness. Queer occupies a strange temporality; it is always, like Derrida's monstrous *arrivant*, to-come, whether from the past or from the future.⁶

This is a mobility that has caused Queer Theory both to die (indeed, for some, to be *always already* dead, according to O'Rourke) and, equally, to surge ever into various afterlives. At ASFS 2015 discussion of this, in relation to French film (in this case the work of Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose films were presented as difficult to pin down, problematically French-Film, if undeniably "French"⁷), turned around a desire not to talk of Queer in terms of performativity à la Judith Butler, but rather as a certain mode of being. A desire to recuperate the identity out of subversion was palpable.

It is not our intention here to argue for or against a quasi-essentialising *or* a foundationally unsettled identity for French Studies; instead, we should like to expand just a

³ Erdmann for one believes that atmosphere and setting trump the nationality of the author when defining the national characteristics of a crime novel. See Eva Erdmann, "Nationality International: Detective Fiction in the Late Twentieth Century", in Marieke Krajenbrink and Kate M. Quinn (eds), *Investigating Identities: Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 11-26.

⁴ Sophie Hannah, *The Monogram Murders* (New York: William Morrow, 2014).

⁵ Co-hosted in Newcastle, 8-11 December 2015, by the University of Newcastle, Australia and the University of Technology, Sydney.

⁶ Michael O'Rourke, "The Afterlives of Queer Theory", *continent*, 1: 2 (2011), 102-116 (p. 103).

⁷ Here we are synthesising a discussion arising from Craig Adams's paper on "Robbe-Grillet, Deleuze, and Genre" in which John Culbert made analogies to Queer identities. We apologise to them both for distorting their discussion in our attempt to rehouse them here.

little on some comments that we made (too often, undoubtedly) throughout the conference about Charles Baudelaire. Debate about Francophone Studies and the problematic nature of terms like ‘Francophonist’ recalled Mireille Rosello (herself, as she notes with typical playfulness, “a happy yet recalcitrant Francophonist”) and her positioning of herself inside and outside traditional Francophone curricula.⁸ The term that recurred throughout this debate was “dead white men”, amongst whom we imagined Baudelaire. While clearly dead and white, and also a man, Baudelaire remains also plural, and particularly *double*. If Baudelaire can be considered to have created the critical lens that many of us recognise as modernity, it is because of the new non-self-coinciding poetics that he developed for (in response to but also as an inextricable element of) a new urban condition. Paris, for the Baudelaire of the little prose poems, was a city that was at once itself (undeniably Paris) and other than itself (unrecognisable as Paris); his street-level negotiations of the city as lived space and events encountered in real time are necessarily deprived of those objective, overarching perspectives without which one cannot contextualise and know the city’s Truth (make it nameable, poeticise it); and, at the same time, this *flânerie* is always haunted, to use Ross Chambers’s term,⁹ by the signposting of the collection’s ever-present, ever-absent subtitle, Paris. What Baudelaire destroys, he also includes as a metonym: Poetry is made prose but Poetry remains. However unsettled Baudelaire’s home was, his wallowing in (self-)abasement participates in the creation of modern Paris. Non-self-coincidence unhomes (provides all kinds of contiguous spaces and metaphors for a lost home), but it also homes (never lets go, makes metonyms of all metaphors). It is for this reason that Paris is (always already) “any where out of the world”, and *vice versa*. Dead white men can be more than points of departure, counterpoints; like Queer Theory, their potential for subversion makes them as home in death as in (after)life.

A prose poetic reading of French Studies celebrates this oxymoronic state of affairs. Seeing Baudelaire in Murray Pratt and Jarrod Hayes’s articles in this volume attests to a blinkered, disciplinary vision. Steeped in Baudelaire and Roland Barthes, we are condemned to read the same text everywhere. But our failure to grapple with Houellebecq or Cajun poetry *qua* Houellebecq or *qua* Cajun poetry is both a failure to reread (and thus the imposition of our settled, and obvious, lens onto their textual specificity) and, *at the same time*, a rereading (through a Baudelairean lens that might not be otherwise obvious). For what else is Baudelairean prose poetics if not a lens for viewing the world as exotic travel in the overvalued framing of banal objects, of movement in stasis? And what is a *flâneur* if not someone who combines, under considerable tension, unsettled, unsettling streetwalking with settled, settling observation of the street? Prose poetics is a way of seeing *and* moving the space around us, of reading one’s home in the destabilisation of one’s home. In this way, the creative play on heads and tails offered here in Hayes’s reading of Beverly Matherne’s Louisiana speaks mobility across a number of boundaries. To appeal to Baudelaire’s letter to Arsène Houssaye (and not to White Creole writer Sidonie de la Houssaye) is very possibly an unnecessary whitening of Matherne’s poetry; it is also, it may be argued, suggestive of a hermeneutics of non-self-coincidence:

Mon cher ami, je vous envoie un petit ouvrage dont on ne pourrait pas dire, sans injustice, qu’il n’a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement. Considérez, je vous prie, quelles admirables commodités cette combinaison nous offre à tous, à vous, à moi et au lecteur. Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous

⁸ Mireille Rosello, “Unhoming Francophone Studies: A House in the Middle of the Current”, *Yale French Studies*, 103 (2003), 123-132 (p. 123).

⁹ Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture ; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d'une intrigue superflue.¹⁰

Here is another “strange temporality”, to return to O'Rourke's afterlives: in the place of an eternity of superfluous narrative, Baudelaire offers his texts for the cutting. Yet, as he notes immediately afterwards, “[e]nlevez une vertèbre, et les deux morceaux de cette tortueuse fantaisie se rejoindront sans peine”. Baudelairean punctuation of infinity recalls the singular, differentiated multiplicity of the Kristevan Intertext: all texts are interconnected; indeed individual texts' very autonomy as recognisable text (“La Chambre double” is not, for example, to be taken for “Je vas vendre mon chasse-neige”) depends on the borders across which one marks difference (defines self) by conjoining (and entering otherness, becoming other).

Without there being a need to perform a Baudelairean reading of Matherne or a Cajun reading of Baudelaire, the relevance of such muddling of heads and tails for French Studies may be glimpsed here. The disciplinary and the interdisciplinary are two sides of the same coin. As has been noted previously in this journal, Film Studies expert Edward Gallafent considers one of the highlights of Clint Eastwood's *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995) to be the moment when Francesca Johnson (Meryl Streep) asks photographer Robert Kincaid (Eastwood) to take her somewhere else in the world.¹¹ This clash of the traveller who fixes the moment with his photographs and the woman whose travels are unlimited but only of the mind is brutally, prose-poetically impossible. Mapped onto French Studies, it becomes *le merveilleux, le choc de la modernité*. Similarly, on board the Blue Train, Christie's mystery appeals to the mechanics of the locked room by placing its victim in a cabin that is partitioned to create two spaces, one for the victim and the other for her maid. This is, clearly, a double room, a Baudelairean space in which French Studies scholars find themselves, like Poirot, “closer to home”.

The practice of French Studies can take place in any number of arenas, in which case we may reasonably talk of a performance of interdisciplinarity; yet at the same time, so many of the stock tools of French Studies (from Baudelaire's oxymoronic Parisian poetics, to Existentialism's *être pour-soi* that pulls away from self-coincidence only to be reeled back in, to Surrealism's synthesis of binaries that appears possible but coincides in its convulsive actualisation with death, to deconstruction's inherent refusal of textual meaning's coincidence with the univocal reading of any given text) have difference built into their DNA. Interdisciplinary performativity is, of course, a form of subversion, but it is also a mode of being. It is how we recognise ourselves as French Studies.

* * *

We might question whether disciplinarity does not itself describe a tension, a double movement. In the absence of a word like “disciplineness”, disciplinarity is arguably to the discipline what both textuality and textness are to the text. As Judith Still and Michael Worton describe, the latter terms express, respectively, the ways in which a text intends beyond itself, reaching into the intertext (opening borders), and those in which, reflexively, it draws attention to itself as text (posing its borders as a means of confinement).¹² Still and

¹⁰ “A Arsène Houssaye”, in Charles Baudelaire, *Petits Poèmes en prose (Le Spleen de Paris)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 21-22 (p. 21).

¹¹ Alistair Rolls, “French Studies and Creative Writing: Writing Self and Other Any Where out of the World”, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 48: 3 (2011), 323-336.

¹² Judith Still and Michael Worton (eds), *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 1-68 (especially pp. 4-6).

Worton's point, of course, is that textuality and textness ultimately mean the same thing; each ultimately describes the tendency of text towards auto-differentiation. Disciplinarity, seen through this lens, may be considered to mark both the centripetal differentiation of French Studies from other cognate disciplines (with the caveat that it is difficult for two disciplines to be related when what defines the discipline is so hard to pin down) and also its centrifugal intentionality, its movement towards other disciplines.

This mobility certainly comes across in the titles "French" and "French Studies", which are typical identity markers in our Australian universities, as they are in the Anglo-Saxon sector more widely. In France, on the other hand, there is no such thing as a *département de "français"*. And if "English" is typically mapped unquestioningly onto the study of literature, these terms French and French Studies (the latter of which in particular is often used to express breadth, movement outwards) encompass both the study of language and those cultures in which the language is spoken. For insiders the word French tends to move beyond the purely linguistic, standing therefore implicitly for its "study" partner, whereas for those outside our borders the inclusion of the word Studies conjures the linguistic, closing down potential and highlighting the national adjective.¹³ If English Studies has a tautological ring to it, French Studies, if you are outside and have to ask, simply tolls.

Increasingly then, as an administrative term French denotes the study of a (and, as we shall see shortly, one) language.¹⁴ One of the perversities of this situation is that the idea of our being "just language teachers", transnational practitioners of a variant of *français langue étrangère*, implies a disciplinary narrowness that is quite absent from the French practice of *FLE*; indeed, the didactics of languages and cultures in the French system operates at the intersection of any number of disciplines, including linguistics, literature, sociology, anthropology and psychology. In other words, the teaching of language that has such a reductive tag in the Anglo-Saxon system (it reduces our discipline to one of its parts) connotes, beyond our borders, quite the opposite (it stands for all the parts over which we claim ownership, and then some).

The economic realities of our Australian university system tend to enhance further this ascendant centripetality, making it into something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Smaller disciplines have fewer staff and, if those staff want to continue to do their (typically non-language-related) research then the push is towards greater efficiencies. This can lead to a greater focus on language teaching at the expense of the cultural, of the Studies. Fewer posts leading to a paring back of curriculum to a linguistic core leads in turn to the recruitment of new staff with a focus on language teaching and an emphasis, at the recruitment stage, on linguistic ability. Things that once cleaved together naturally (studying French literature requires and breeds linguistic competency) are now being cleaved apart. In such a scenario French and Studies run the risk of parting company, especially when students, who are increasingly conscious of the career pathways that motivate their higher education choices, often want to study language for instrumental reasons. (Some of them even want just "to learn French" and not to get bogged down in grammar...) Add to this mix the increasing need to offer university students a chance to study languages that they did not learn at school, and the problem of *ab initio* cohorts being ill-prepared to engage in the study of French-language

¹³ This was originally the case, as Forsdick has noted: "French was present on university curricula from the eighteenth century, but as a supplementary activity and restricted to language acquisition alone." Charles Forsdick, "What's 'French' about French Studies?", *Nottingham French Studies*, 54: 3 (2015), 312-327 (p. 315).

¹⁴ The inclusion of the word "studies" can lead the unwary academic into an administrative minefield. While its addition can be intended to convey a breadth of research (to such problematic terms as Languages or Modern Languages), it can also have quite the opposite effect. French Studies in Australia, for example, has a very strong literary dimension, but for the purposes of data collection exercises research in this area comes under a field of research code entitled Literary Studies. Language(s) Studies suggests something purely linguistic and takes us back to a language-focused discipline.

texts in the target language looms large (especially when language is their perceived target). One option that then presents itself is the teaching of literature in translation, which poses as many pitfalls as it does opportunities. On the one hand, French Studies staff may find themselves teaching non-language-based subjects (perhaps their research specialism) to potentially far greater numbers of students; on the other hand, they may find themselves doing so in areas no longer prefixed FREN_ but ENGL_. For the centripetal force of English works as powerfully for its Studies as it does for its vocabulary. But is this really a problem, or is it perhaps a strength, just another edge to our mobility?

The economic reality that has it that languages are not popular in our universities has been belied by the success of Diplomas in Languages. It transpires, as we in languages suspected all along, students doing Medicine and Law also often want to learn languages. Versatility is here an important part of French Studies mobility. The use of virtual learning environments to make study more flexible for students locally opens up domestic markets and leads, inevitably, any where out of the world. For, perversely, the ability to study overseas without leaving home does not necessarily work against the study of foreign languages. Online language learning is surprisingly viable, and this viability is not merely a matter of breathing life back into the discipline; rather, it speaks to a disciplinary vitality, a mobility of languages, including French Studies. And in the present context, it speaks to the multimodal, pluridisciplinary viability of a discipline at home in mobility.

* * *

The *Australian Journal of French Studies* speaks, depending on how one interprets the title, alternately of two different locales or to a locale and a disciplinary field, itself predicated alternately on a location or a language. We reflect upon the title of this publication as a way to understand our own not-fully-at-home place within Australian French Studies and to prompt similar reflections from readers, some of whom might have obvious, others only tangential links to the locales, the language or the field. The journal's titular ambiguities, after all, provide openings that can accommodate the non-French and, to employ the term in its linguistic rather than euphemistic "anything but France" connotation, the non-Francophone. Even the link to Australia can be tenuous given the nature of global scholarship. Australian French Studies, a disciplinary concept that is ostensibly niche, accordingly allows for quite a few "non"s that defy expectations, broaden the journal's scope and move us away from its imputed geographies of Australia, France and the locations of the French-speaking world.

As Greg Hainge and Alistair Rolls remarked in the fiftieth anniversary of this journal, unanticipated professional trajectories, shifting research interests, institutional mandates, the decentring of France and even of the French language has expanded what might have begun as a more narrowly defined forum.¹⁵ Understanding the trajectory the discipline has taken is unquestionably important, but we would argue that questions about its moves beg to be asked. The most obvious of these moves is geographic but there are also, as was explored at the conference out of which most of the papers for this issue flowed, disciplinary moves that have taken place as well. In a nutshell, less France, more Francophone; less literature, more film, history, cultural studies, theatre, politics, etc. And looking around at our fellow presenters, less Australian as well.

Some of the evidence of such trends can be found in this very journal, an analysis of whose tables of contents throughout the years shows a first concern with the Francophone in

¹⁵ Greg Hainge and Alistair Rolls, "The Larrikin as Hero (in French Studies)", *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 51: 2-3 (2014), 269-280.

1967 with a piece on France's involvement in South-East Asia, a first consideration of the role of Francophone literature in the curriculum in 1978 and a first dossier within a large double issue to focus on texts originating outside of France, Quebec in this case, in 1991.¹⁶ It was not until 2008, however, that the first issue dedicated to *la Francophonie*, in whole or in part, appeared.¹⁷ Since then, studies of texts and authors considered to be "Francophone" have become a regular feature. Disciplinary shifts away from literature, toward topics such as film and popular culture, began to appear in the mid-1990s, with issues dedicated to teaching cultures and popular culture in 1996 and 1998, respectively, and film in 1999.¹⁸ Although still dominant, literary studies are by no means the only ones considered within the journal's remit. If the facts of these shifts are clear though, the "how?" and the "why?" are less so.

In his critical reflection on the diversity imperative in American universities Arjun Appadurai questions how disciplines, especially in their quest for diversity, are managed and organised.¹⁹ Implicit in his critique, which broaches questions of hiring and teaching the canon versus other texts, he raises the issue of agency and he contends, if we may permit ourselves a simplistic distillation of a nuanced argument, that disciplines don't move by themselves. If they are to move – to embrace new corpuses, methods, subjects – we must be the ones to move them and, following on from David Murphy, be the ones to either bear the responsibility or claim the credit for doing so.²⁰ As we may remark to our students when we press them to be more concrete in their writing and to show the strength of both their research and argumentation, the passive voice obscures agency. We must therefore think of our field in the active voice and recognise that as the editors, researchers and teachers, we are the agents of where our field goes from here. Agency though can be as accidental as it can be deliberate, both in terms of change and reinforcing the status quo. Australian French Studies is assuredly different to what it was at the time of the journal's founding in 1963 and such changes are as much the result of considered projects and choices as they are a matter of circumstance. Nonetheless, it has moved and we are the ones who have pushed it one direction or another.

Following the lead of what Charles Forsdick, who only a few years ago (and in this very journal) described as the French manifesto-driven turn toward a greater recognition of literature written in French but coming from outside of Europe or France itself, we see a reinvigorated critical embrace of diverse texts and contexts.²¹ This impetus has come from within the discipline through the interventions of senior scholars like Ross Chambers and Forsdick who set agendas for research and, more crucially, teaching that recognises the contributions to knowledge that come from studying a wider range of sources.

The university sector has also put pressure on academic and administrative units to meet key performance indicators tied to "diversity" and "internationalisation". As a result even the comparatively outward-looking foreign language departments and area studies

¹⁶ H. G. Gelber, "France and South-East Asia: Outlines for an Interpretation", *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 4: 1 (1967), pp. 1-22; R. J. Sherrington, "Why Black? African Literature in an Australian French Department", *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 15: 2 (1978), pp. 101-124; *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 28: 2.

¹⁷ *Voices from North Africa*, Jo McCormack and Alistair Rolls (guest co-editors), *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 45: 2 (2008).

¹⁸ *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 33: 2 (1996); 35: 1 (1998); 36: 1 (1999).

¹⁹ Arjun Appadurai, "Diversity and Disciplinarity as Cultural Artifacts", in Cameron McCarthy, Warren Crichlow, Greg Dimitriadis and Nadine Dolby (eds), *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 427-437.

²⁰ David Murphy, "French Studies and the Postcolonial: The Demise of the Rebirth of the French Department", in Philippe Lane and Michael Worton (eds), *French Studies in and for the Twenty-first Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 207-219.

²¹ Charles Forsdick, "Mobilising French Studies", *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 51: 2-3 (2014), 250-268.

programs have been compelled to adopt and demonstrate an ever more globalised learning focus. For some individuals this has meant broadening or even shifting their research and teaching interests; for some departments, following the North American model, it has meant targeted recruiting of a *francophoniste* to help steer toward these targets.²²

A similar mix of internal and external motivations also underpins the shift away from literary analysis toward a broader acceptance of non-literary aspects of culture as subjects of scholarly inquiry and the basis for syllabi. Evolving interests have undoubtedly pushed some, particularly those whose careers span many decades, to explore new fields and pursue different intellectual pursuits, often by bridging out from the subject of previous literary inquiries or by applying and modifying the methodologies of literary analysis, notably close reading, to different objects of study.

Institutional pressures in the form of fights for student numbers, funding and relevance have nonetheless spurred many of these disciplinary changes. Film, media and cultural studies in French and about French and Francophone subjects are deemed by administrators (and often students themselves) to be of greater interest and relevance than Renaissance literature. Competitive funding of research increasingly relies on us to demonstrate contemporary and national relevance, which can, at the least, bring us toward work of a more comparative or interdisciplinary nature than we might otherwise have envisioned. Moreover, as language programs close, move away from their traditional grounding in literary studies and/or merge into larger area studies programs, those who were trained in fields such as film studies, political science, history, art history and geography find themselves being “French Professors” and included in the community represented by this journal.

The role of staffing decisions, although so often considered an administrative precursor to scholarly pursuits of the kind that find their way into these pages, are also crucial to the orientation of the field. Where area studies disciplines both here and elsewhere have traditionally been staffed by locals with an interest in the language and culture of the chosen field or migrants from the countries or regions around which the discipline centres, there is an ever-expanding proportion of people in the field who fit into neither category. Australian French Studies has undergone a recent influx of overseas-trained scholars, many of whom have taken up positions as the *francophoniste*. While this owes something to the vicissitudes of the global academic job market, there is a correlation between the discipline’s overall orientation and those who have been hired to research and publish in outlets considered important to the Australian research community and teach in Australian universities. As discussed above, the ever-increasing focus on language acquisition, often for utilitarian purposes, has also been an increasingly important factor in recruitment.

Looking to the immediate context of this special issue, a volume that will itself contribute to the movement of the field, we see a conspicuous embrace of the “non”s afforded by the ambiguities in the journal’s title. The majority of the contributors take as the subject of their studies works that are not ‘French’. Pieces by Jarrod Hayes, Trudy Agar and Julie Robert feature works produced outside of France, an occurrence that is ever-less unusual where “French Studies” is now largely accepted as shorthand for “French and Francophone Studies”. Frenchness, however, also recedes linguistically in Joe Hardwick’s analysis of a Hebrew-language film. Even when the subjects rest firmly within the canons of the discipline though, as they do in pieces by Mireille Rosello, Murray Pratt and Chris Andrews, their analyses challenge the taken-for-granted nature of what makes the works and authors they study part of the ‘French Studies’ canon.

²² Karen Gould, “Nationalism, Feminism, Cultural Pluralism: American Interest in Quebec Literature and Culture”, *Yale French Studies*, 103 (2003), 24-32.

Whatever one thinks of the moves the field has made over the past decades, its future trajectory will be result of what we publish, what we deem relevant and worthy of study by including it in our subjects and the decisions we make about how we respond to the various external pressures of the higher education environment.

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