

BOOK REVIEWS

Karlene Dimbrowsky, *The Mysterious Baron of Castle Hill: The Life and Times of Chevalier Verincourt Declambe*, privately published in an edition of 100 copies, May 2004, 56 pp., plates, illustrations, facsimiles, maps, paperback \$12.50 including postage, available from the Hills District Historical Society, P.O. Box 48, Castle Hill, NSW 2154. ISBN 0646 43591 4.

In October 2003 I received a request from Sydney historian Graham Wilson for information regarding a mysterious early-nineteenth-century French settler in the Castle Hill area, who had apparently deserted his family in Mauritius and had been known variously by the names "Vernicourt", "Verincourt" and "de Clambe". In my personal copy of Gaston Sarré's *Recueil de renseignements généalogiques sur les familles de l'île Maurice* (typescript circa 1944), I soon found details of the marriage of a Lieutenant Lalouette de Vernicourt, in Port Louis in 1787, and I forwarded the details to Graham Wilson. Ironically, I soon realized that Lalouette de Vernicourt had met my then biographical subject, François Péron (1775–1810), during the naturalist's visit to New South Wales with Baudin's expedition in 1802. In fact, Péron's *Voyage* contains a great deal of information about a certain "M. De La Clampe" (*sic*) at Castle Hill. Indeed, I had previously sought a copy of this man's service dossier at the Vincennes Military Archives (*Service historique de la Défense*), without realizing that he was the same man I had helped Graham Wilson with. Unfortunately I had been led astray by this Frenchman's *émigré* alias. Armed with his real name "Lalouette de Vernicourt" I made a fresh attempt and succeeded in obtaining Lalouette's surviving military records. Furthermore, with the aid of one of my Mauritian cousins, Henri Maurel, and the National Archives of Mauritius, I gained access to crucial documents which helped to piece together Lalouette de Vernicourt's movements in the Indian Ocean and even his physical description. All of this information provided valuable background material for my account of François Péron's visit to Castle Hill and the compatriot he encountered there. In the process I was able to pass on the fruits of my research to Graham Wilson and to share in his important research on the Portland Papers at the University of Nottingham. Finally, in the wake of all these efforts (which I summarized for the *Dictionnaire de Biographie mauricienne*), Ivan Barko drew my attention to Karlene Dimbrowsky's recently published monograph entitled *The Mysterious Baron of Castle Hill*. A good story is bound to attract more than one researcher!

Ms Dimbrowsky lives in the Castle Hill area and her publication is based on work she did for a B.A. degree at Macquarie University. I will not quibble with her survey of the local sources; she has given a good account of her subject's life in Australia. There is a wealth of material in the *Sydney Gazette* which I too was drawn to (on the advice of Dr Chris Cunneen, at Macquarie University). The principal problem with Ms Dimbrowsky's useful monograph is her failure to uncover who her man really was. To be fair, she acknowledges him as a mysterious and problematic character. Although she has retained reference to him as a "Chevalier" in her subtitle, she admits that his name does not appear among the list of 3,099 members of the Order of Saint-Louis held in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. This should have made her more cautious. She also retains the name "Verincourt" (*sic*) in her subtitle. The diversity of names that the so-called baron and so-called knight of Saint-Louis employed should also have rung alarm bells. In fact Pierre Lalouette came from a very recently ennobled family and was inclined to put on airs. This does not make him any less interesting or worthy of biographical attention. Dimbrowsky's account is welcome, but it is only half the story of his "life and times". In the interests of offering some historical symmetry, particularly with regard to Lalouette de Vernicourt's origins and life before arriving in Australia, I have appended the English text of my forthcoming entry in the *Dictionnaire de Biographie mauricienne*. Further information can be found in chapter 12 and the accompanying footnotes of my biography *François Péron: An Impetuous Life: Naturalist and Voyager* (Melbourne University Press/Miegunyah Press, 2006).

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Lalouette de Vernicourt [dit De Clambe], Pierre (1754–1804) Soldier, was born in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, on 4 April 1754, the second child of Pierre Lalouette (1711–1792), régent de la Faculté de Médecine à l'Université de Paris and his wife Françoise Julie Marie Le Dran. Lalouette's father, a distinguished anatomist who described the structure of the thyroid in 1750 (a lobe of the gland is named in his honour), was decorated with the Cordon noir de l'Ordre de Saint-Michel, ennobled in February 1773 and awarded a *rente viagère* (life annuity) after he developed a highly successful *boîte fumigatoire* to treat syphilis with mercury vapour in 1776. In the wake of his father's ennoblement, Pierre adopted the name Lalouette de Vernicourt and

joined the army. As a *sous-lieutenant* in the Isle de France Regiment he departed Lorient on the *Flamand* (Capt. Duclos Guyot) on 9 February 1778. He was promoted to lieutenant in the same regiment on 10 October 1784 and again departed for the Isle de France on the *Breton* (Capt. Guedon) from Lorient on 19 December 1786. In Port Louis, on 6 August 1787, he married *Légère* Anne Apoline Grandemange d'Anderny, daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel François Antoine Grandemange, Baron d'Anderny and Françoise Elisabeth Biet. They had three children: Pierre Léger François (born 1788), Jean Emile (1790–1792) and Françoise Marie Cécile (1791–1856). Vernicourt was promoted to the rank of captain on 2 June 1789. He later asserted that he served three years in three campaigns in India under the orders of Suffren (q.v.). On 24 August 1793, as *capitaine de grenadiers* in Pondichery he was given provisional permission to wear the ribbon of the *croix de Saint-Louis*, having satisfied the usual prerequisites for the decoration according to his royalist superior. This was seven months after Louis XVI's execution. In the wake of the tumultuous events in France he reportedly surrendered to British forces under John Floyd, then joined the military service of one or more Indian princes, before growing vines at Chingleput near Madras and seeking asylum in England as an *émigré*. Refusing to bear arms against France, but "disgusted with a life of indolence", on 25 July 1800 he sought permission from the Duke of Portland to settle in "la Nouvelle Hollande". In London, on 1 December of the same year, using the name Pierre Lalouette Declambe De Vernicourt, he requested of "Son Altesse Royale Monsieur" (presumably the exiled Louis XVIII) to be made Chevalier de l'Ordre royal et militaire de St Louis. On 14 December 1800, he was once more granted provisional permission to wear the ribbon of the order once he left England, but his request for the actual decoration was ultimately refused on 2 April 1801. Nevertheless he assumed the name "Chevalier de Clambe" and departed Spithead on the *Minorca* (Capt. Leith) for New South Wales on 21 June 1801. Sailing via Rio de Janeiro, he arrived in Port Jackson on 14 December 1801. On 1 February 1802 he was granted 100 acres of land at Castle Hill by Governor Philip Gidley King (q.v.), and assigned six convicts. There he was known under the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Declambe, although he was later referred to as "Vernicourt de Clamb" in his obituary in the *Sydney Gazette*. François Péron (q.v.), who met him when Nicolas Baudin's (q.v.) expedition visited Port Jackson, referred to him as "M. De La Clampe", and found him "*presque nu* [almost

naked]”, like his convict labourers. At Castle Hill, he built a house called the “Hermitage” which Péron described variously as a “*modeste habitation*” and a “*manoir champêtre* [rustic manor]”, the interior of which was an “*agréable alliance d’une extrême simplicité et d’une sorte d’élégance, qui prouvoit d’autant mieux l’esprit et le goût délicat de son auteur, qu’elle étoit plus complètement étrangère à toute espèce de luxe* [agreeable union of extreme simplicity and a sort of elegance, which proved the delicate taste of its owner, at the same time that he was an utter stranger to every sort of luxury]”. Just five feet two inches tall, with black eyes, very dark complexion and a greatly protruding underlip, Vernicourt lived an isolated and frugal existence—growing wheat and maize, but also planting coffee from “seeds he brought with him” and, according to Péron, cotton. Although he is said to have largely shunned colonial society, Matthew Flinders (q.v.) encountered him in August 1803, as did the visiting French merchant Louis Charles Ruault Coutance (q.v.). Earlier he found himself in the midst of tumultuous events. On 15 February 1803, his farm was attacked by 15 fugitives who had taken part in the failed rebellion of Irish convicts (largely nationalist political prisoners) at Castle Hill. The very first issue of the *Sydney Gazette* reported that his house was “ransaked, and stripped of many articles of plate, wearing apparel, some fire and side-arms, provisions, spiritous and vinous liquors”. On 4 April 1804 Vernicourt augmented his landholding by purchasing “Ramsay Farm”, part of William Cox’s estate at Dundas, for 37 guineas. Vernicourt was never reunited with his wife and died of what appears to have been apoplexy on the night of 4 June 1804. Ironically, he was on his way to a dance at Government House—one of the very few social invitations he appears to have accepted in the colony and one which fate prevented him from keeping. He was buried on his estate which was sold at auction by his administrator, Robert Campbell, on 3 August 1804. The advertisement offers a picture of his domain: “Several head of horn cattle, a Capital Mare, sixty-nine Sheep, two female Goats, and fifty-nine Pigs; with A Quantity of Wheat, Maize, and Farming Utensils, Household Furniture, &c &c And to be Let at the same time, for the Space of two Years, That Excellent Farm known by the Name of the Hermitage, containing One Hundred and Fourteen Acres, of which about Fifty are cleared, Eleven and a half under Wheat, and Three laid out in a Garden well stocked with Fruit-trees and Vegetables. On the Premises there is a small Dwelling House, Barn, &c.” On 25 June 1811, Major Barry (q.v.),

Chief Secretary of the Government of Mauritius, wrote to the Secretary of New South Wales and appended a memorial signed by “Madame Grande Mange de Vernicourt” seeking information on her husband known as the “Baron De Clambe”. A response advising her of her husband’s death was drafted on 21 March 1811 and dispatched on the *Guildford*. Vernicourt’s widow remarried at Grand Port on 15 September 1812 to Edouard François Rolandez, by whom she had another two daughters.

*Translation from the French by Edward Duyker
of his forthcoming entry in the
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Colin Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians 1772–1839*, St Lucia, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 2005, 240 pp., ISBN 0702235121, \$32.95.¹

Thanks to the efforts of a number of dedicated scholars, the accounts of early French explorers and naturalists have become increasingly accessible in English. Colin Dyer, himself an accomplished translator, has used these sources to broaden our understanding of Australia’s indigenous inhabitants and the experience of the French in “la Terre australe”.

Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne’s expedition was the first to encounter the Tasmanian Aborigines in 1772—Tasman’s expedition had met none—but it was also the first to take a Tasmanian Aboriginal life. Influenced by

¹ This is a slightly abridged version of a review that first appeared in the *Bulletin*, 7 June 2005.

the Enlightenment, however, the ten major French voyages that followed were remarkably free of violence. Dyer offers a wide-ranging survey from all these expeditions, in addition to Francis Barrallier's Blue Mountains journal. He examines physical descriptions of Aborigines, their clothing, food, dwellings, watercraft, use of fire, implements and utensils, languages and gender relations. Readers will find this a surprisingly non-judgmental work. Dyer declares: "My own interpretation of the French interpretations of the Aboriginal Australians [. . .] if expressed, could be but one among endless others, and could form an obstacle to readers who may wish to form their own opinion."

Although a generally unobtrusive surveyor of the historical canvas, Dyer is not without comment. While he does not predicate his account of François Péron's "uncomplimentary" comments on a pregnant West Australian Aboriginal woman as second-hand reportage—the zoologist never met her—he does acknowledge Péron in Tasmania as "more analytical [. . .] less generous" and "more precise" than his compatriots. Nor is Dyer afraid to consolidate reports on sensitive subjects such as Aboriginal communal violence and the exploitation of Aboriginal women by their men. Ranging further afield, some will see his very long quotation from Kaye McPherson as controversial legitimacy, but perhaps he is unaware of the feud in Tasmania over her claim to Aboriginality. Dyer largely orients his readers with quotations from published translations; however, aware of the nuances of language, he often provides inclusions in the original French.

There are some oversights: John Stockdale's 1800 translation of Labillardière's Tasmanian Aboriginal vocabulary, reproduced in its entirety, contains a number of errors. But vocabularies aside, this book is an easy, stimulating read.

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Bruce Poulson, *Recherche Bay: A Short History*, published by the Management Committee of the Southport Community Centre, Main Road, Southport, 7109, second edition 2005, 83 pp., illustrations, bibliography, maps, ISBN 09757950-6, paperback, \$24.95.

Bob Brown, *Tasmania's Recherche Bay*, published by Green Institute, GPO Box 927, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001, 2005, 56 pp., illustrations, maps, ISBN 0646448994, paperback, \$17.95.

Recherche Bay in Tasmania has a rich French heritage because of its discovery by Admiral Bruny d'Entrecasteaux's expedition in 1792. Indeed, two chapters of Bruce Poulson's book are devoted to this early French history. D'Entrecasteaux returned to Recherche Bay in 1793: members of his party recorded in their journals that contact with the local Aboriginal people was positive and joyous.¹ The bay also has an important place in the story of Australian science. D'Entrecasteaux's geophysicists established an observatory and undertook pioneering experiments that helped to prove for the first time that the earth's magnetic field intensifies north and south of the equator. The naturalists of the expedition also gathered many thousands of specimens, and the collections of the botanist Labillardière provided the basis for the first general flora of Australia: the *Novae Hollandiae plantarum specimen*. Recently, the discovery of the presumed location of Félix Delahaye's vegetable garden on the bay has captured the public imagination. Recherche Bay is also where 22-year-old Jacques-Laurent Boucher, a gunner from the expedition, was buried in February 1793. He was the first European to be laid to rest in Tasmanian soil. Bruce Poulson devotes one chapter of his book to another member of the expedition: "Louis" Girardin, who was actually a woman: Marie Louise Victoire Girardin. Although her true gender was soon suspected by her crewmates, Marie Louise maintained her assumed identity with dogged determination. With operatic dash, she even challenged an impertinent assistant pilot to a duel and received a slash on the arm.

There is, of course, much more to the history of Recherche Bay than its early French visits. Later chapters in Poulson's book deal with the mutiny on the *Cyprus*, settlement, whaling, fishing, coal mining, and timber cutting in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Tragically, Recherche Bay is now threatened with renewed logging. The final chapters of Bruce Poulson's book reflect on the logging issue and the search for Delahaye's historic garden site. Poulson is a former history teacher, retired principal of Elizabeth College and a former Fulbright Scholar. His book is steeped in local knowledge and personal experience.

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¹ See also Edward Duyker, "A French Garden in Tasmania" and Edward and Maryse Duyker, "The Gardener's Journals", *Explorations*, n° 37, December 2004, pp. 10–11 and 40–41 respectively; and Edward Duyker, "Uncovering Jean Piron: In Search of D'Entrecasteaux's Artist" *Explorations*, n° 39, June 2006, p. 40.

Bob Brown's book is an impassioned essay on the threatened north-east peninsula of Recherche Bay. It contains many splendid photographs of the area, mainly by Senator Brown himself, but also by Toby Smith, Tom Baxter, Geoffrey Lea and Heather Kirkpatrick. These photos will leave little doubt in the minds of those who have not actually visited the peninsula themselves that it is worthy of protection. Aside from being an impressive photo essay, Senator Brown's book also contains numerous extracts from the account and atlas of the naturalist Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière. It not only provides an engaging record of the peninsula's environmental and heritage struggle to date, it also offers readers suggestions for further action.

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Paul de Pierres, *Loyalty Sustained: The Story of the de Pierres Family in Australia and New Zealand, 1903–2003*, privately published, Wyalkatchem, Western Australia, c. 2003, 69 pp., plates, ill., facsimiles, genealogical tables, maps, paperback \$35 + postage, avail. from Paul de Pierres, De Pierres Road, Yorkrakine, W.A. 6409, e-mail: depierre@comswest.net.au ISBN 0646428500.

Western Australian farmer Paul de Pierres belongs to the third generation of a French-Australian family. In *Loyalty Sustained* he recounts his grandfather Vicomte Guy de Pierres' (1880–1954) emigration to Australia, early farming on the harsh lower reaches of Cooper Creek, service in France in World War One, and his bitter struggle to survive the Great Depression at Wyalkatchem in Western Australia. He also writes of his father's World War Two experience in Indo-China and then his own service in Vietnam thirty years later. Military service—in both the French and Australian armed forces—is a uniting thread in this story. The book provided the basis for the ABC Radio National "Verbatim" programme, broadcast in two parts in June 2005. *Loyalty Sustained* is richly illustrated with many charming family photographs, as well as letters, telegrams, certificates, identity cards, sketches and other documents. Paul de Pierres is clearly proud of his French heritage and of his family's achievements in Australia and in the service of this country. While the principal market for this book will be members of the de Pierre family, it deserves acknowledgement as a useful contribution to the record of French–Australian emigration. It is also a valuable contribution to Western Australian local history.

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Henrietta Taylor, *Veuve Taylor*, Pymble, New South Wales, Fourth Estate/HarperCollins, 2005, 280 pp., rrp \$29.95, ISBN 0 7322 8144 X.

Henrietta Taylor (née Gibson) studied French, German and Italian at the University of Sydney between 1976 and 1978 and went on to do a teaching diploma. She admits that she was not a diligent student: "There were just too many fun things to do for me to spend much time learning lists of irregular verbs . . . My days were idled away at the student bar, leering at young men and undressing them item by item while pretending to drink coffee and read highbrow articles on the poetry of space in the modern French novel." On page 26 she tells us she found the atmosphere of the University of Sydney stifling. She now regrets her lack of self-discipline. During her studies, however, she attended an intensive French program in Nice under the auspices of the Department of French Studies and laid the basis for her later fluency.

Henrietta taught French, German and Italian at Mosman High School—located in the suburb where she grew up. It was at this high school that she met her future husband Norman Taylor, but they did not marry until July 1987. By 1992 they had two children. Tragically, the following year their domestic happiness was ruptured when Norman developed an incurable cancer. He died in April 1995, heavily addicted to morphine and estranged from his wife. Henrietta later disputed the "secret" will her husband made during this period, which bequeathed her little more than a stipend. Although she eventually settled out-of-court with her in-laws, she continued to battle grief and enveloping suicidal despair with alcohol and a cocktail of anti-depressants and sedatives. Her self-esteem took a further battering during a subsequent trip to Europe. Travelling with young children is difficult. Travelling as a family traumatized by recent bereavement is even more difficult.

Gradually Henrietta overcame her dependence on alcohol and prescription medication, and reassembled her life. She returned to France and took a twenty-week lease on a house in Saignon, a *village perché* in the Lubéron. She would fall in love with this part of Provence and—with profits from stockmarket speculation—would purchase two properties in Saignon and another in St-Saturnin-lès-Apt. The last third of the book is devoted to Taylor's recent travails establishing a holiday rental cottage business.

Veuve Taylor is written with surprising frankness. The author navigates a great deal of intensely personal territory and at times her chronicle of shattered dreams is deeply moving. In contrast, there are amusing

accounts of her dealings with the French legal fraternity, bureaucracy and education system. However, there is virtually nothing of the broader canvas of French political life among her pages. Taylor's historical references are also little more than age descriptors for village streets and buildings. Nevertheless, *Veuve Taylor* is an unpretentious and very readable personal memoir with an engaging French–Australian focus.

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Mary Moody, *Au revoir*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 2001, 279 pp., ISBN 0732911095, \$22.00; *Last Tango in Toulouse*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 2003, 287 pp., ISBN 0732911761, \$25.00; *The Long Hot Summer: A French Heat Wave and a Marriage Meltdown*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 2005, 282 pp., ISBN 1405036702, \$30.00.

Prior to the publication of *Au revoir*, Mary Moody was better known to Australians as an exuberant gardening journalist and broadcaster. In 2000, the year of her 50th birthday, she decided to spend six months away from her family in order to experience life in the rural south-west of France. This decision would set the stage not only for a trilogy of travelogue, but also for extremely candid memoirs of childhood, family life, menopause, infidelities, marital disintegration and difficult reconciliation. *Au revoir* has already been reprinted seven times, so it has clearly played a role in shaping the impressions many Australians have of France.

Moody began her first sojourn in Nice, traversed Provence, visited Albi briefly (mentioning Toulouse-Lautrec but not La Pérouse!) and then boarded with a friend “Jock” in St Caprais near Cahors in the Lot. Later she rented an apartment in Villefranche-du-Périgord, before moving into a house in forested surroundings near Pomarède. Just before returning to Australia, she was joined by her husband, the film-maker David Hannay, and purchased a house in the village of Frayssinet-le-Gélat. While there is no doubt of Moody's spiritual bond with the region she has made her second home, except for a few local shopkeepers and restaurateurs her circle of friends in France seems to be made up largely of British, Australian and New Zealand expatriates. Clearly her limited French laid the foundations for this state of affairs, but it sometimes hints at a distorted prism. “On the whole,” she tells us, “French television is fairly abysmal, as any French person will readily agree.” Really? Earlier she had confided that she could only get

“one or two local channels” with fuzzy reception: it seems unlikely that either of these was Channel 5 or Canal +. Undoubtedly Moody’s French has improved considerably since writing *Au revoir*. In all her books she writes with passion about local wine and cuisine, but sometimes I am not sure how authoritatively. Is “Le Cresot” (sic, *The Long Hot Summer*, p. 151) a typographical error, or an imagined *Le Creuset*-like brand of enameled cast-iron pots? Her view is idyllic: “the scene is consistently one of mediaeval villages or perfectly groomed fields of maize or wheat. The livestock gleam with glossy coats and bulging bellies [. . .] more perfect than a picture postcard could ever depict [. . .] All around the landscape are stone walls, and almost every one has a rose growing against it, mostly deep vermilion or scarlet: it is the perfect colour against the bright light and piercing blue sky”. There are references to population decline, inheritance squabbles and empty family homes, but little on rural unemployment and alienated youth.

Aside from her emotions and her relations with the men in her life, what Moody really writes about best is the natural world. She also has genuine empathy for the owners of local *boucheries* and *alimentations* trying to sell fine local produce under tough new European Union health regulations. Yet she is silent on the same EU which heavily subsidizes these agricultural products, and thus her rural idyll, in the first place. While she certainly has a love for the vernacular architecture of the south-west, in *Last Tango in Toulouse* she reveals an obsession (like so many newly-arrived renovators) with removing *crépi* to expose the stone walls of her house. In the twentieth century many old French houses undoubtedly acquired an ugly grey skin of cement render, but Moody might care to reflect on the fact that the previous lime render (often pigmented with natural earthen hues) was a purposeful traditional process that protected the mortar between the stones and helped the walls shed water. While some French heritage architects may have concerns for the long-term aesthetic and structural integrity of such buildings, others are probably glad that they are at least occupied again.

Essentially, France is only a partial canvas for Moody’s three books. She writes frankly and honestly, often in a diary-like present tense, but with flashbacks to her Australian past. She recounts growing up as the daughter of the hard-drinking, womanizing, Communist journalist, Theo Moody, who drove his first wife to suicide and ultimately took his own life. In *Last Tango in Toulouse* she recounts being raped as a teenage virgin, but also about her loving sexual relationship with her husband and later a mysterious English-speaking French academic in Toulouse. In *The Long Hot*

Summer she writes about yet another affair and yet another sexual attack. Ironically, despite its title, this most recent book has only a limited amount to say about the 2003 canicular heatwave which took some 15,000 mainly elderly, French lives. In all her books Moody tells us about her mother, her husband, her children, her grandchildren, her journalistic career, her move to a farm near Bathurst and her search for her older half-sister Margaret, from whom she was separated for 50 years. Some repetition is inevitable. But, most of all, these books are about plotting a separate course and the devastating impact of Moody's two love affairs in France on her marriage to the remarkably stoic and loving David Hannay. As the trilogy unravels, the books, their revelations, the media attention they generate, all become incestuous subjects in themselves. It is not my intention to pass moral judgment on Mary Moody, other than to say that I admire her honesty and her ability to write about such deeply personal subjects.

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Damien Pignolet, *French*, with photography by Earl Carter, Camberwell, Vic., Lantern/Penguin, 2005, 388 pp., bibliography, index, colour and black-and-white plates, ISBN 1 920989 17 X, rrp \$69.95.

In 1883 Edmond Max Pignolet de Fresne emigrated to Melbourne from the former French island of Mauritius. (I am pleased to report that I mentioned him in my book *Of the Star and the Key: Mauritius, Mauritians and Australia!*) More than one hundred and twenty years later, his grandson Damien Pignolet remains passionate about his French heritage and especially about the brilliance of the French culinary tradition. Damien Pignolet studied hospitality and cooking (including *haute cuisine*) at the William Angliss College in Melbourne before embarking on a highly successful career as a chef and restaurateur. His book about French cuisine distils the knowledge he gained from his studies and from years of cooking and travel. It is written in a systematic style, as if the author were training a professional chef. Pignolet begins with stocks, *déglacage* and savoury sauce making. This foundation chapter is followed by chapters on entrées, salads, eggs, *charcuterie*, soups, pasta (and risotto and polenta), meat, poultry, seafood, vegetables and pastry. I found this an admirably methodical book with a useful glossary of ingredients, equipment and basic techniques. It is also exquisitely illustrated by photographer Earl Carter. With proper deference

Pignolet acknowledges the gastronomic works of his precursors Auguste Escoffier, Henri-Paul Pellaprat, Jane Grigson, Elizabeth David, Constance Spry, Gaston Lenôtre and Australia's own Stephanie Alexander. His own book now sits comfortably in such distinguished company.

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Elaine Lewis, *Left Bank Waltz: the Australian Bookshop in Paris*, Sydney, Vintage, 2006, 342 pp., \$27.95. ISBN 1 74051 349 5.

Sometimes a significant figure emerges in French–Australian relations whose influence extends well beyond the time they may have officially spent promoting their country. Such a person is Elaine Lewis. Her Australian Bookshop opened in Paris on the Quai des Grands Augustins in 1996, but by 1999 French bureaucracy was making her life difficult, finally forcing her to liquidate in 2001, despite hundreds of protests, many from the French community. Those few years, however, are far from the whole story: there was so much involved both before and after the shop began trading. What is more, although the Australian Bookshop as such no longer exists, Lewis's promotion of Australian literature still continues. This very readable book tells the story of her Bookshop in Paris from its conception, through its heyday, to its present "virtual" form.

A few brave women from other countries, such as Sylvia Beach and her Shakespeare & Co., had tried this enterprise before her, but Elaine Lewis was the first Australian to open a bookshop in central Paris. On the face of it, she was an unlikely candidate for such a daunting enterprise: she was fiftyish when the idea, or rather the dream, came to her, and sixtyish when it came to fruition. Not that she went into it with her eyes closed. Essentially a music educator, she nevertheless had some experience of the book trade, and took several business courses in readiness. None of this could have prepared her for the endless frustrations of French bureaucracy, during which she learned the hard way that in the end, *le système D* (resourcefulness, lateral thinking) and especially *le piston* (influence, who you know) are what really count. It is very interesting to see which official bodies and individuals gave practical help to her enterprise; not always those one might expect.

Lewis's aim was not only to sell all kinds of books on Australia but to promote Australian writers. Almost as soon as the doors opened, the shop

became a focal point for writers, translators, publishers, artists and musicians in Paris, as well as tourists and people of all nationalities interested in Australia. Many people, both French and Australian, regularly gave their time to help her in the shop—occasionally a mixed blessing. She began holding readings in the room at the back of the shop, which became very popular, and by the time the doors closed she had held more than seventy events for Australian artists of various kinds and in various venues. In fact, she became a virtual unpaid cultural attaché, receiving a long list of writers from the well-established David Malouf to the relative newcomer Steven Carroll.

These days the Australian Bookshop is registered in Australia as a small on-line business that still facilitates links between Australian writers and Europeans interested in our literature. It will also search for out-of-print Australian books that are difficult to find. Elaine Lewis still visits Paris at least once a year. Whenever she is there, she organizes a literary *rencontre* or participates in a book festival, such as the Franco-Anglais Festival of Poetry, with which the Bookshop has been involved since 1996.

It is now more than twenty years since she first began planning for the Australian Bookshop in Paris. Given her vision, enterprise, persistence, patience and achievement, if anyone in this country deserves an Order of Australia for promoting Australian literature in Europe, that person is surely Elaine Lewis.

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