

MARIE CALLEGARI IN AUSTRALIA:  
THE IDENTITY OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS'S  
NARRATOR IN  
*LE JOURNAL DE MADAME GIOVANNI*

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In her 1982 study of *The French in Australia* Anny Stuer observed that ‘very few French people came to Australia’ before 1851 and, giving the example of a few French convicts who arrived before 1820, she concluded: ‘once they had served their sentence, these convicts resumed an active and honest life’. She added, ‘nearly two decades [1820–1840] elapsed without any more French settlers arriving in Australia (at least none that can be traced)’ (Stuer 1982, 40–46). Research methods have changed since 1982 and many French settlers and convicts can be traced. This is the story of one of those French convicts.

Early in 1855 a thirty-six year old French woman shared with Alexandre Dumas her account of ten years spent travelling in Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, California and Mexico. Dumas agreed to edit and publish her narrative, but she insisted her true identity should not be revealed. The story appeared in *Le Siècle* on 31 March 1855 under the title *Impressions de voyage : Journal de Madame Giovanni*, with the opening chapters being reprinted in *Le Mousquetaire* on 8 April 1855. It was not published in English until 1944 when it was translated by Marguerite Wilbur.<sup>1</sup>

Since the first publication, the identity of Madame Giovanni<sup>2</sup> became cause for speculation, but her identity has now become apparent through research into the lives of six men and women convicted of crimes in London and transported to Australia during the 1830s and 40s—Alexandre Julien Duchêne and Eugénie Caroline Lemaire, both from France; John Perez de Castaños, a Spaniard, and Pietro Callegari, an Italian—all transported in 1836; and Eugène

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<sup>1</sup> The Wilbur translation (Dumas 1944) will be cited throughout this article and referred to as the *Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive listing of her various identities, see Appendix.

Rossiet Lennon and Louisa La Grange, both from France, and transported in 1843 (Wilkie, 2011, Wilkie 2012, Wilkie 2013). Madame Giovanni's account of her husband's involvement in an 1849 discovery of gold in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales initially suggested a connection with Duchêne, who had a part in that discovery (*Journal*, 50–55). However, other episodes in the *Journal* closely reflected the exploits of La Grange, and some matched those of Callegari.

This article will present the case for identifying Madame Giovanni with the woman who was transported to Van Diemen's Land under the name Louisa La Grange.

Revisiting the *Journal of Madame Giovanni*, or reading it for the first time, in the context of Giovanni's real identity and situation, gives new meaning to the *Journal* as a source for understanding what non-British convicts did after they served their time in Australia—specifically an ex-convict Frenchwoman of real or imagined aristocratic background. It will not only clarify the mystery surrounding Giovanni's identity, but will also provide new insights into the circumstances of those who came, involuntarily, from the old world of Europe to the new world of Van Diemen's Land, New South Wales, and New Zealand. It was a world where old identities could readily be discarded and new lives created.

The *Journal* tells how, only eight days after their marriage, Madame Giovanni and her husband left Mauritius on board the *Petrel* and travelled to New Zealand, where they stayed for two years (1–5). In March 1845 they left Auckland on the brig *Victoria* and arrived at Hobart, Van Diemen's Land, after a six week voyage (15). The brig *Victoria* certainly left Port Nicholson, New Zealand, on 22 March 1845 and arrived at Hobart five weeks later—however, none of the listed passengers can be equated with the Giovannis (Hobart *Courier*, 22 April 1845, 2; CSO92/1/14 P74). Nevertheless, as Giovanni's ten years of voyaging commenced at Mauritius two years earlier, the journey must have started around March 1843. The woman known as Louisa La Grange also began her travels in March 1843—not through leaving Mauritius on the wet and leaky *Petrel*—but when she left London on the similarly wet and leaky convict transport *Margaret* to serve a ten year sentence in Van Diemen's Land (CON40/1/4; ADM101/48/7/2).

In *Le Mousquetaire* on 4 April 1855, Madame Giovanni introduced her story saying 'family considerations' meant she could not reveal her real name

because the publicity would bring ‘certain inconveniences’ to her ‘as a woman, and as a mother’. Indeed it would—the circumstances of the two trials of Louisa La Grange in London had been widely publicised (Wilkie 2011, 78–79; Wilkie 2012, 45). In 1841, using the name Louise Mirabello—but previously Lescadieu, D’Arcy, Schriedan and Mallevall, among others—she was found guilty of theft by deception and sentenced to twelve months’ detention at the Cold Bath Fields House of Correction (Old Bailey, ref. t18410510-1411; *The Times*, 15 May 1841).

George Chesterton, Governor of the prison, recalled

a very extraordinary person, who bore the name of Louise Mirabella [sic], and was connected with a gang of French swindlers in London, after Paris had become, in a common figure of speech, ‘too hot to hold her’. Knowing her untrustworthy disposition, I should not have confided in her own statement as to her name and connections; but a correspondence both with herself and [...] with me, by the then editor of *La Presse* journal, who had known her for years, made me cognisant of her true history.

(Chesterton 1853, 312–314)

The editor of *La Presse* was Emile de Girardin, friend of Alexandre Dumas, and closely acquainted with members of the La Grange, Lamartine and Mirabeau families (Luppé 1914; Whitehouse 1918, 102, 180; *Fraser’s Magazine*, 220–26). Apart from Chesterton’s account, reports in the London *Times* in April and May 1841 and details on her subsequent Convict Record suggest that Louise Mirabello also had close connections within this circle (*The Times* 27 April 1841, 30 April 1841, 15 May 1841; CON15/1/2). Mirabello assumed her numerous identities with such confidence that intimate knowledge of Parisian salon life might be assumed, even though the precise connections remain vague.

The salons of the Marquise de la Grange and Madame de Girardin were known for the musical and literary talent they attracted (Whitehouse 1918, 8, 20). On 29 June 1841, four weeks after Mirabello’s conviction, Madame de Girardin published one of her ‘Lettres Parisiennes’ in *La Presse*, and described an encounter with a young woman playing the piano—Mademoiselle Louise—

who with a ‘sly smile’ explained how she was scorned by her mother and four sisters—yet, ‘this little, obscure and despised Louise is simply the most seductive woman you have ever met’ (Girardin 1841, 2). Madame Girardin said that even though Louise ‘appeared to be so sullen’, she was in fact ‘one of the most distinguished women of Paris’, but she added, ‘we must keep to ourselves such discoveries’.

Chesterton related Louise Mirabello’s version of how she came to be in London:

[...] She asked my permission to write for her friend, the editor, [Girardin] a description of this establishment with its discipline and details; and her paper on the subject would have done credit to any periodical. Still she was a treacherous, bad woman, about twenty-three years of age, with a bright, but by no means handsome countenance, and a disposition replete with chicane and intrigue. The fraud which brought her here for one year displayed great  *finesse* and arch dissimulation. Indeed, her correspondent, the editor, far from writing her  *billets doux*, reproached her bitterly for former turpitude, and expressed a mistrust of any hopeful future improvement. The Viscount M. had, it appeared, married her for the little money she possessed, which, having obtained, he left her to her fate, and it was her misfortune to contract friendships which were ruinous to her principles.

(Chesterton 1853, 312–14)

Although *Viscount M* has not been identified, and Mirabello’s article has not been located in *La Presse*, already we see characteristics of Madame Giovanni—talent for writing, love of music, eloquence, chicanery and intrigue—and although Chesterton thought her friendships ruinous, like Madame Giovanni, Mirabello made use of those friendships, and never let a difficult situation get in her way. Chesterton’s description is complemented by that of Dumas in *Le Mousquetaire*:

Madame Giovanni is a young woman of thirty, of medium height, slender, pale [...]; mentally, she is a woman who is cold and grave,

who occasionally laughs, but who can hold you with a glance or a word at a considerable distance.

She spent ten years of her life travelling [...] and describes her experiences with a remarkable freshness and originality. [...] She was born at Auteuil, but during the ten years spent in Oceania, where she spoke nothing but English, she became quite English in accent and appearance, although at heart a French-woman.

(*Journal*, xv-xvi)

In January 1842 Louise Mirabello was released from Cold Bath Fields. She quickly renewed her devious activities, as Chesterton related: ‘After quitting this prison, she was again detected in a similar fraud, and was sentenced to transportation. I went to the New Prison, at Clerkenwell, after her second conviction [...]’ (Chesterton 1853, 312–314).

Using several new aliases—including ‘Madame Louisa La Grange’—she was now supported by an accomplice and lover, Eugène Rossiet Lennon, alias Eugène Ladent, to whom she was also known as Jeanne Hermierer. Ladent had arrived in London from Antwerp on 9 January 1842; his wife, a pianist travelling under her stage name ‘Marie Louisa La Grange’, arrived on 21 April (HO3/23; HO2/103; *Le Ménestrel*, 27 September 1833, 4). The story of their swindling of West End London jewellers is told in two articles in *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings* (Wilkie 2011 and Wilkie 2012). Their luck soon ran out and in October 1842 at the Old Bailey Louisa La Grange, alias Mirabello, was tried and convicted for theft of diamonds valued at £100. Lennon was found guilty of inciting her to carry out the theft. Both were sentenced to transportation (Wilkie 2011, 78). A few weeks after the trial, *The Musical World* announced:

Madame Marie Louise Grange.—A correspondent requests us to notice that this talented pianist and teacher, who gained the first prize at the Paris Conservatoire in 1833, has suffered considerably through the assumption of her name by the individual who recently figured in the criminal court, as Madame Louisa Grange, Contesse [sic] de Noailles—we are happy to have the means of relieving the lady from the injurious odium. Madame M. L. Grange, who

resides at No. 28, Davies Street, Berkeley Square, enjoys a large and fashionable professional connexion—the countess (!) is, we believe, on her travels to New South Wales.

(*The Musical World* 1842, 410)

Indeed she was—but to confuse matters, when Eugène Lennon, alias Ladent, arrived in Van Diemen’s Land, he claimed to be married to Louisa Grange [sic] and that the woman who had carried out the crime had used his wife’s name (CON14/1/20; CON33/1/39).

Nevertheless, Louise Mirabello, now Louisa La Grange, was not going to let transportation dampen her spirits. In December, while waiting for the convict transport *Margaret* to sail from England, a report in *Lloyds Illustrated London Newspaper* of 1 January 1843 described how,

Amongst the female convicts on board this vessel is Madame le [sic] Grange, whose case excited so much interest in London, by the stylish manner in which she succeeded in swindling several of the west-end tradesmen in London. Madame dresses very elegantly; her dark hair is parted gracefully in the usual French style over the forehead. She appears an accomplished woman, and can speak the English language fluently. Madame acknowledges the justness of her sentence, and allows she has done wrong, but says it would not have occurred had it not been for her “little heart,” which led her to be the dupe of her lover.

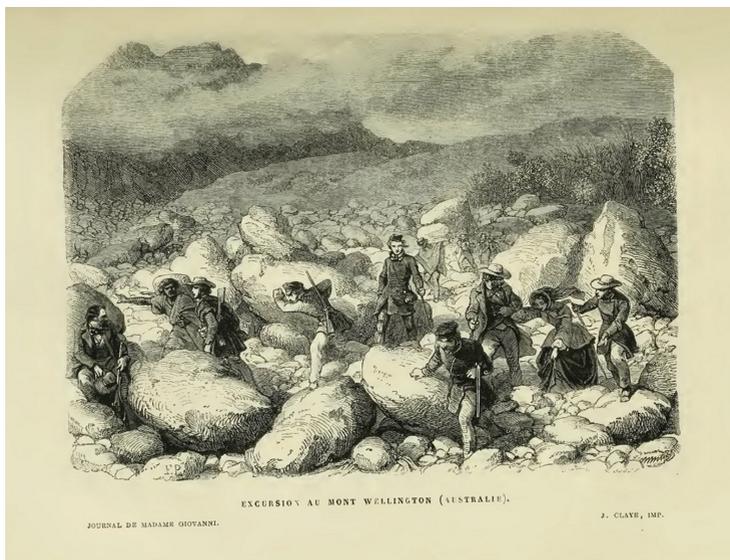
A similar report in *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* on 31 December 1842 added, ‘All she appears to regret is to be separated from her little daughter, now in Paris’. La Grange was later described as five feet tall (without shoes), brown hair, blue eyes, a fair complexion, a ‘slightly pockpitted’ face and a small scar under her chin (CON15/1/2; CON19/1/2).

The *Margaret* initially sailed in February 1843 but was forced back to port after sustaining damage and eventually left England in March (*SMH*, 18 July 1843, 2). It was leaky, the living quarters constantly damp and it encountered unfavourable winds; but they finally arrived at Hobart on 18 July 1843 (Hobart *Courier*, 21 July 1843, 2). La Grange told officials she

was twenty-six, a single woman from Bordeaux who had been working as Governess, teaching French and ‘Italian fancy work’. Her father was a captain in the French navy, her brother a sub-lieutenant and her sister was Madame Mullier. It was noted that she had previously used the names Mirabeau and Montcassier. La Grange made no mention of Eugène Lennon, but identified the father of her child as a ‘Mr Rime’ (CON40/1/4; CON15/1/2).

Unlike earlier convict arrivals, who were assigned to private employers or government service, the women on the *Margaret* had to spend two years in prison under the new Probationary System, and La Grange was sent to the Cascades Female Factory near Hobart (CON40/1/4). Indeed, Madame Giovanni’s *Journal* reveals a remarkably detailed knowledge and appreciation of conditions within that prison (46–47). Soon La Grange was granted a pass allowing her to work outside—her employer’s name is not given, but the *Journal* describes how Giovanni spent three weeks collecting birds with French naturalist Monsieur Véron (22). Louis Véron, editor of *Le Constitutionnel*, was a friend of Girardin and Dumas in Paris, but it was French naturalist Jules Verreaux who was in Hobart during 1843 (Collins 1999, 48; *Courier*, 30 December 1842, 2; *Maitland Mercury*, 15 March 1848, 3). In the *Journal* Madame Giovanni also claimed that the Governor, Sir John Eardley-Wilmot, who arrived in Hobart a month after La Grange, ‘was extremely kind to me, and received me graciously’ (48–49). Eardley-Wilmot was eventually dismissed from his post because of his reportedly excessively kind and gracious reception of the women of Hobart (Alexander 1999, 168–177).

David Forbes notes that the *Journal* ‘seems to gloss over several years’ at the beginning of the Hobart chapters (Forbes 2011, 160). However, given the reason for La Grange to be in Van Diemen’s Land in the first place, it is not surprising that in editing the *Journal* Dumas moved events and timelines not only to suit his story, but also to disguise hers. The *Journal* suggests that the travels began soon after Giovanni’s marriage, but in fact it was the other way round. Despite her earlier letters expressing love for Eugène Lennon, on 17 July 1844, barely a year after arriving in Hobart, Louisa La Grange married Pietro Callegari—an Italian merchant from near Venice, transported in 1836—at St Joseph’s Church, witnessed by Callegari’s former accomplice, John Perez de Castaños and his wife, Bedelina Richardson. The name is spelt *Callegari* on the Marriage Register and signed as such, however most other records give variations on this spelling (Wilkie 2012, 44; RGD37/4, 1844/1336).



Expedition up Mount Wellington (J. Claye, Imp.)

The *Journal* describes how the Giovannis went on an expedition up Mount Wellington about three weeks after they arrived in Hobart, and how they were caught in a violent snowstorm. They subsequently recovered at the house of Monsieur De Grave [sic] at the foot of the mountain (22–33). The Mount Wellington expedition took place not three weeks but three years after La Grange arrived in Hobart. John Frederick Mortlock, a convict constable stationed at the foot of Mount Wellington, near the house of Peter Degraives, ascended the mountain as a guide with ‘a party including a (transported) French lady Madame La Marquise de la Grange’ in 1847. The party ‘nearly perished in a snow-storm’ but was saved when Mortlock lit a roaring fire to keep them warm (Mortlock 1865, 91; CON33/1/76). The real Madame La Marquise de la Grange—not the pianist—was in Paris, president of the *Société de Patronage de Jeunes Filles*, a society she established in 1841 to protect wayward girls and make them ‘honest workers and good mothers’—the French lady climbing Mount Wellington was undoubtedly Madame Marie Louisa Callegari, formerly Mademoiselle La Grange, alias Mirabello—and perhaps one of the wayward

girls who reportedly had ‘relapsed into error’ (Barnard 1857, 104; Lamarque 1863, 237).<sup>3</sup>

In March 1848 Madame Callegari made her debut as a singer at Charles Packer’s Music Hall in Hobart. She was well received but the *Colonial Times* of 21 March thought she was rather nervous and would improve with practice (3). Seven years earlier, just after Louise Mirabello was sent to Cold Bath Fields, Delphine de Girardin, who knew her well, wrote of a young woman named Louise, who played the piano beautifully, but was despised by her mother and sisters: ‘In the house, everyone laughs at her. When she sings with expression, her mother says she looks silly and self-conscious, and has the air of an actress; her brother says she looks like a lioness and that it is in very bad taste [...] so she never sings’ (Girardin 1841). If, indeed, Delphine de Girardin was describing the family reaction to her singing, Louisa La Grange may well have been self-conscious about performing on stage in Hobart.

On 1 May 1848 Madame Callegari again featured in Packer’s *May Day Concert*, and sang ‘some curious Madrigals composed during the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries’ (*Colonial Times*, 25 April 1848, 2 also 26, 28, 29 April). Again the concert was well received. The *Journal* tells us that Madame Giovanni had a piano, a library of music, and was accompanied by the Abbé L—, the name by which Franz Liszt was known in Paris (1). But, despite catching birds, being received by the Governor, climbing mountains and performing curious madrigals, Madame Giovanni claimed she became bored with Hobart after ‘two months’ and her husband agreed it was time to leave (*Journal*, 50). They travelled to Launceston—but that town also ‘bored me to extinction after a few days’, so they decided to go to Sydney (*Journal*, 51).

Of course, Louisa La Grange could not just leave Van Diemen’s Land whenever she felt bored—she was serving a ten year sentence—and, as the *Journal* suggests, at the beginning Madame Giovanni’s ‘excursions were somewhat restricted’ (1). But, in true form, this legal technicality did not stop her, and it would appear that La Grange went to Launceston after the 1848 May Day Concert and, on 12 July, using the name Louisa Brooks, she left Launceston for Port Phillip on board the *Raven*, accompanied by John

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<sup>3</sup> Madame la Marquise de la Grange was born Constance-Madeleine-Louise Nompar in 1802 at Caumont-la-Force, near Bordeaux. She married the Count de Clermont-Lodève Devenue in 1823, then Edouard Le Lièvre, Marquis de la Grange in 1827. Louisa La Grange claimed to have been born about 1817 in Bordeaux.

Brooks, an ex-convict who had been transported to Hobart in 1836 but had been free since 1842 (POL220/1/1 9; CON31/1/3). To keep track of convicts, Van Demonian passenger lists required travellers to indicate the ship they arrived on and their current status—usually ‘Born in the Colony’, ‘Free by Servitude’, ‘Pardoned’, or ‘Arrived Free’. Louisa Brooks indicated she arrived on the *Margaret*, but conveniently avoided giving her status—the record was later annotated ‘Possibly formerly Louisa Grange’, as the only person named Louisa transported on the *Margaret* was Louisa La Grange. The *Port Phillip Herald* of 20 July 1848 (2) listed John Brooks and Louisa Brooks arriving as passengers on the *Raven*, but there is no record of their return. Even though published passenger lists of the time were often inaccurate, incomplete, or are now missing, La Grange was adept at using pseudonyms to suit the situation, and considering she did not have a pardon that would allow her to legally travel outside Van Diemen’s Land, she undoubtedly returned under another name.

In Launceston La Grange would have become aware that the *Petrel*, launched only in December 1847, regularly sailed from Van Diemen’s Land to Mauritius. The *Petrel* and other ships mentioned by Madame Giovanni—*Shamrock* and *Baretto Junior*—were owned or managed by Launceston merchants McKenzie, Thompson & Co, who were undoubtedly acquainted with her husband—fellow merchant, Pietro Callegari (*Cornwall Chronicle*, 24 December 1847, 3; 31 January 1849, 341; 8 October 1850, 682).

The conditional pardon Louisa La Grange was waiting for was granted on 30 January 1849—she had been in Van Diemen’s Land for nearly six years. The commendation for the pardon was that, during the voyage from England, she had acted as ‘Matron of the Females’—a task ‘rendered more onerous from the severe illness of the Surgeon Superintendent’—and her conduct since arriving had been equally admirable (HO10/60,118; *Launceston Examiner*, 3 February 1849, 8).

La Grange, now Callegari, could finally leave Van Diemen’s Land legally—the only condition being that she was not return to England before the period of her sentence expired, which would be in 1853. Within two weeks, on 15 February 1849, she left Launceston on the *Shamrock* bound for Sydney via Melbourne. She used the name ‘Galvan’ and promoted her status to ‘free by servitude’ (POL220/1/1,76). The newspapers, unable to decipher the

handwritten passenger list, gave the name variously as Louisa Galvin, Graham and Galvini.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Journal*, the Giovannis planned to remain in Port Phillip only twenty-four hours, had it not been for news that a shepherd had discovered gold (50–55). When Louisa Callegari arrived in Melbourne on 17 February 1849, the gold discovery was certainly in the news, but police and troopers had been sent to discourage the gold seekers (Wilkie 2013). However, there were many who ignored the police and went searching anyway. Louisa Callegari left Melbourne three days later on board the *Shamrock* and arrived in Sydney on 23 February.<sup>5</sup> Pietro Callegari's name is not in the published passenger lists, but it is probable, as the *Journal* suggests, that he unsuccessfully sought to turn the gold discovery into a profitable business venture.<sup>6</sup> While in Melbourne we might assume he made contact with fellow Italian, former Launceston jeweller and merchant, Charles Brentani and his wife—the 'Monsieur B' and 'Mrs B' of the *Journal*—who were also involved in the gold discovery (52–3).

The *Journal* describes how the Giovannis stayed at the Royal Hotel in Sydney; walked through the Domain beside the harbour; and, with the French Consul, Monsieur Faramond, attended a concert that included what she thought were some poorly sung works by Bellini (58–59). Indeed Bellini was performed 'before a crowded and fashionable audience' at the Royal Victoria Theatre on Friday 30 March 1849 (*Bell's Life*, 24 March 1849, 3; *Bell's Life*, 31 March 1849, 3; *SMH*, 30 March 1849, 1). Monsieur Faramond put his carriage at their disposal, and over the next few days their letters of introduction gave them entry to 'all the living rooms of Sydney'—*tous les salons de Sidney*—which Madame Giovanni observed 'parody those of Sir John Russell and of

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<sup>4</sup> Mrs Galvini, *Colonial Times*, 20 February 1849, 2; Madame Galvini, *Courier*, 21 February 1849, 2; *Launceston Examiner*, 17 February 1849, 6; Louisa Galvin, *Melbourne Morning Herald*, 19 February 1849, 4; Louisa Graham, *Argus*, 20 February 1849, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs Callairi [sic], *Argus*, 23 February 1849, 2; *Melbourne Morning Herald*, 21 February 1849, 2; Mrs Caliaii [sic], *Shipping Gazette*, 24 February 1849, 52; *Maitland Mercury*, 28 February 1849, 2.

<sup>6</sup> At first there appears to be no record of Pietro Callegari leaving Tasmania under any reasonable variation of his name, but a Mr Galvini arrived in Sydney from Melbourne or Launceston on the *Shamrock* on 29 April 1849. (*Shipping Gazette*, 5 May 1849, 124; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 April 1849, 2.)

Lord Palmerston', and had the 'same atmosphere'—but were probably no match for the salons of Paris (*Journal*, 61).

Several weeks after the concert Governor Charles Fitz Roy hosted a Levee and Ball in Sydney on 24 May in honour of Queen Victoria's Birthday. Although the attendance list for the Levee was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 25 May 1849 (2) there is no list of those who attended the ball. Nevertheless, the *Journal* tells how the Giovannis were invited to the ball, and, describing her preparations, Madame Giovanni noted that even in Australia there were French dressmakers and London fabrics, and she could dress to be 'queen of the ball'. Perhaps she visited the shop of Madame Protois who advertised her latest range of French millinery throughout May (*SMH*, 9 May 1849, 4). Madame Giovanni made a velvet dress with white lace, a necklace and earrings of fine pearls, and carried an 'enormous bouquet' of violets and, 'as I was already known as the French Lady, when Monsieur and Madame Giovanni were announced, everybody turned' (61–64, 322). She was clearly enjoying the attention in this colonial version of salon life.

Just as Hobart and Launceston had bored Madame Giovanni to extinction, and Bellini was sung with 'mediocrity', she also decided that, in Australia, 'nothing is impromptu, improvised, [or] spontaneous; everything is dull and correct' (*Journal*, 61). She was becoming restless. Then, as if to order, on Saturday 11 August 1849, *Bell's Life in Sydney* published an extensive extract from Eugène Delessert's *Voyage dans les deux Océans, Atlantique et Pacifique, 1844 à 1847* (1). Delessert had travelled to Brazil, Tahiti, Manila, and New Holland, and was perhaps the trigger that prompted the Giovannis—the Callegaris—to be spontaneous, and leave Sydney a week later.

The *Journal* states that, after three months in Sydney, the Giovannis sailed for New Zealand, spending 'three weeks at sea on an uncomfortable boat whose name escapes me' (64–65). In fact, they had been in Sydney closer to six months, and the boat was the brig *Susan*—Signor and Madame Callegari left Sydney on 19 August 1849 and arrived at Auckland on 30 August 1849. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 20 August 1849 listed P. Callaghan and Mrs Grange as departing passengers on the *Susan*, but, upon arriving in Auckland, the *New Zealander* of 1 September listed Signor and Madame Caligari [sic], as well as P. Callighani and Mrs Grange, while the *Daily Southern Cross* of 31 August listed Seignor & Madame Calligari [sic]. The transformation from

Louisa La Grange to Marie Callegari was as flexible as the spelling of their names.

When she arrived in Hobart in 1843 Louisa La Grange said she had worked in London as Governess teaching French and ‘Italian fancy work’ (CON40/1/4; CON15/1/2). Within two weeks of arriving in Auckland, she advertised her services:

MADAM CALLEGARI, native of Paris, will be happy to devote her time to giving instruction to Young Ladies, in the French and Italian Languages; also, in the ordinary branches of English Education, comprising, Geography and Astronomy, with the use of the Globes. Fancy Needleworks, with the useful and ornamental arts of Crochet and Knitting. Albert-street, (corner of Wyndham-street.) N.B. MUSIC COPIED IN THE BEST STYLE.

(*The New Zealander*, 15, 18, 20, and 22 September 1849)

Similar advertisements had regularly appeared in the Hobart press between 1843 and 1848, although none specifically named Madame Callegari. She would eventually add Spanish to her repertoire of languages. The advertisement in the *New Zealander* was published on 15, 18, 20, and 22 September 1849. Then, on 8 October the Callegaris left Auckland on board the *Esperanza* and arrived back in Hobart on 31 October—with a cask of New Zealand hams.<sup>7</sup>

There appear to be no further references to Louisa La Grange and Pietro Callegari in the Australian or New Zealand press—at least not under any reasonable variation of their names. The *Journal* claims the Giovannis left New Zealand and went to Tahiti, the Marquesas Islands and New Caledonia, where they encountered the French corvette *Alcmène* in December 1850 (107–111). They then returned to Tahiti where Monsieur Giovanni purchased the entire cargo of vegetables carried by an unnamed vessel, and arranged to ship it to San Francisco on the *Baretto Junior* (*Journal*, 115–117).

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<sup>7</sup> Mr and Mrs Callagari, *Daily Southern Cross*, 9 October 1849, 2; *New Zealander*, 10 October 1849, 2; Only Mr Calligarie in *Colonial Times*, 2 November 1849, 2; 9 November 1849, 2; *Courier*, 7 November 1849, 2.

In fact the Callegaris left Auckland and sailed back to Hobart on the *Esperanza* in October 1849, and it was probably the cargo of the *Petrel* that Giovanni was involved with, as the vegetables on the *Baretto Junior* were being shipped from Launceston to San Francisco by McKenzie, Thompson & Co (*Launceston Examiner*, 9 October 1850, 6). The *Petrel*, which was described by Madame Giovanni at the beginning of the *Journal*, left Hobart bound for San Francisco on 20 February 1850 with a cargo of vegetables that matches closely the cargo purchased by Monsieur Giovanni (*Hobart Courier*, 2 March 1850, 2). Indeed, after arriving at Honolulu, the cargo of the *Petrel* was sold and the ship returned to Hobart (*Launceston Examiner*, 13 July 1850, 6).

Not only have some names been changed, but events and dates in the early chapters of the *Journal de Madame Giovanni* have also been rearranged, either by Alexandre Dumas or Madame Callegari, or both, to disguise the early movements and identity of Louisa La Grange, and possibly in the belief that more adventure and romance was being added to the story. In fact, the true story of Louisa La Grange had more than enough adventure and romance without any rearranging, but then, La Grange was more than comfortable with adopting false identities. She had been accused and convicted of dishonesty; marriage gave her a new name and new respectability; and Dumas's telling of her story, an element of fame more desirable than her former notoriety—and, after all, 'status and identity could be re-invented in the colonies' (McKenzie 2004, 4). Being French helped. Colonial newspapers were fascinated by all things French and regularly carried the latest fashions from Paris; and as for being a French woman, as the *Sydney Gazette* observed a few years earlier:

When a French lady comes into a room the first thing that strikes you is, that she walks better, has her head and feet better dressed—her clothes better fancied and better put on than any woman you have ever seen. When she talks, she is the art of pleasing personified. Her eyes, her lips, her words, her gestures, are all prepossessing. Her language is the language of amiableness; her accents are the accents of grace.<sup>8</sup>

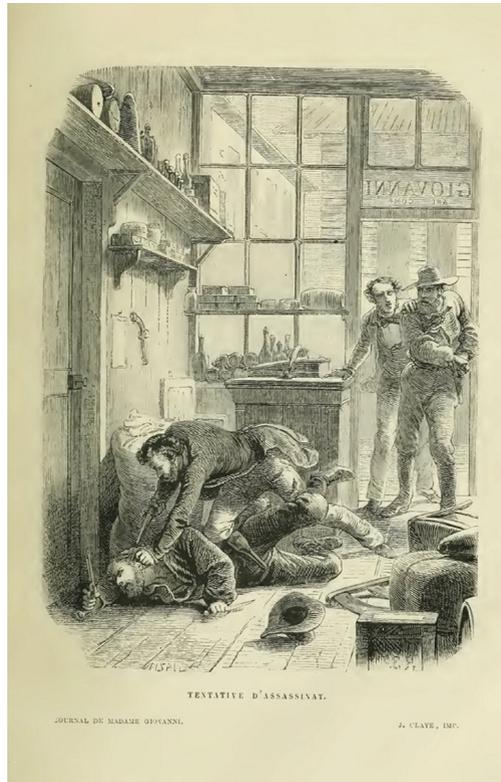
In such an environment Louisa La Grange found little difficulty in persuading the predominantly British colonial population of Australia and New Zealand

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<sup>8</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 2 July 1833, p. 3.

that she was whoever she said she was. In San Francisco, with its much larger French population, most of the time she could simply be Madame Callegari (Chalmers 2007).

The subsequent adventures of Madame Giovanni, as told by Alexandre Dumas, took her to the goldfields of California and to Mexico, and a brief account of these adventures provides further evidence that Monsieur and Madame Giovanni were actually Pietro and Marie Louisa Callegari. The *Journal* describes an altercation that took place in 1852 at Twist's Flat on the northern goldfields (215). The episode has its counterpart in the Californian press where 'Peter Callegari' and his wife are named as the central figures in the incident (*Sacramento Daily Union*, 20 October 1852, 2).



Incident at Twist's Flat, California (J. Claye, Imp.)

Towards the end of 1852 Giovanni told his wife that it was time she went home to France and Italy to visit her family in Paris, and his elderly father in Carrara San Giorgio. Indeed, 1852 marked the end of Louisa La Grange's ten year sentence, and heralded the point when she could return to England without fear of arrest. A common route back to Europe from California was by steamer to Acapulco, cross country to Mexico City and Vera Cruz, then by a choice of steamers to Southampton. Accompanied by a Doctor Dalliez, Madame Giovanni left San Francisco in March 1854 on board the steamship *Stevens*. She was carrying a despatch from the French Consul at San Francisco for Alphonse Dano at the French Embassy in Mexico City (*Journal*, 261).

Several months earlier the *Sacramento Daily Union* announced the arrival in San Francisco of 'a lady of extraordinary energy and daring who has made a tour of the world' (1 October 1853, 2). It was not Madame Callegari—it was Madame Ida Pfeiffer—and the *Daily Alta California* of 26 November 1853 looked forward to seeing 'an interesting work on California by one whose writings are universally read and admired' (1). Perhaps with the forthcoming adventures of Ida Pfeiffer in mind, in the three weeks between leaving San Francisco and reaching Mexico City, despite encountering a series of dangerous adventures, Madame Giovanni found time to begin writing comprehensive notes about her own travels (*Journal*, 297, 336–338).

In Mexico City she booked into the Hotel de la Gran Sociedad on 25 March 1854—the newspapers recorded her arrival as 'Maria Luisa Callegari' (*Journal*, 335; *El Universal*, 28 March 1854, 3). Soon, she and Doctor Dalliez met with Alphonse Dano and delivered their despatches (*Journal*, 322–329). A week later Dano wrote to Paris that he thought Madame Callegari was 'much smarter than Dalliez' (Wyllis 1932, 108; Nasatir 1945, 209–210).

After nine months in Mexico Madame Giovanni arrived at Vera Cruz and departed for Europe, arriving at Southampton late in December 1854 (HO3/76). She made her way to Paris and approached Alexandre Dumas to edit and publish her *Journal*—Dumas told his son 'we need a room for Madame Callegari' (Dumas 2008, 186). The first chapters of *Impressions de voyage : Journal de Madame Giovanni* were published in *Le Siècle* on 31 March 1855, the use of the name 'Madame Giovanni' immediately leading to speculation about her real identity. It was a mystery that remained unsolved for one hundred and sixty years.

Marie Callegari remained in Paris for a year and wrote further chapters of her *Journal* (xvi-xvii; *Le Mousquetaire*, 10 February 1856, 1). The Mexican chapters were published in Germany, not in France—perhaps her close connections with French officials in Mexico would risk revealing her identity. In 1856 she returned to Vera Cruz and joined her husband on a farm granted to them by President Santa Anna (Giovanni 1876; Cruz 2005, 185).

The *Journal de Madame Giovanni* was a great success in Europe—but nobody knew who Madame Giovanni really was, and Marie Callegari was unable to share the fame. To remedy this, she and her husband adopted the name Giovanni and became known as Peter and Marie Giovanni Callegari (San Antonio Directories, 1876–1899). Whenever she travelled she used the name Madame Giovanni (Giovanni 1876), and in 1858 when in New Orleans she obtained an interview with Placide Canonge at the *Courrier de la Louisiane* and told of the circumstances of how her *Journal* was published (*Courrier de la Louisiane*, 2 February 1858). She was again in New Orleans in 1861 and 1862 at the outbreak of the American Civil War (Giovanni 1876).

Peter and Marie Giovanni Callegari moved from Mexico to San Antonio, Texas, during the 1870s and lived there for the remainder of their lives (San Antonio Directories, 1876–1899). In 1876, travelling as Marie Giovanni, she was in Philadelphia on her way back to Europe and wrote to President Ulysses S. Grant offering to remove embarrassing revelations from a forthcoming book if he was willing to pay an appropriate ‘gratification’ (Giovanni 1876). The book supposedly revealed the corrupt practices of American officials in Mexico when they created false claims for compensation on behalf of American citizens against the Mexican government. Peter Callegari was one of the legitimate claimants who sought compensation for damage caused to his property by Mexican soldiers in 1861 (*Congressional Serial Set* 1870, 62).

In 1888, Marie Callegari sought to have the *Journal of Madame Giovanni* translated and published in English. She enlisted the aid of journalist Placide Canonge and poet Queyrouze at New Orleans, but after disagreement with Queyrouze about who would be given most credit, the project was not carried through. ‘Dishonest things of life are foreign to me’, she bitterly told Queyrouze (Callegari to Queyrouze 1888).

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s Marie Giovanni Callegari continued to teach languages in San Antonio, and regularly made visits back to Mexico (San Antonio Directories, 1876-1899).

It is possible that Marie Callegari finally returned to Paris—a Louisa Marie Callegari died at Montreuil, Paris, on 2 April 1901. Louisa La Grange would have been aged eighty-four at that time.

As her identity transformed from Mirabello and La Grange to Callegari and Giovanni—and everything in between—we might recognise traits that did not change. In the early 1840s she assumed a multitude of identities; wrote eloquent letters and was described as ‘a treacherous, bad woman’. ‘I have a big heart’, she told Placide Canonge in 1888. But, having once blamed her troubles on the weakness of her ‘little heart’, in 1855 Alexandre Dumas thought she was ‘cold and grave’. In protesting her honesty to Ulysses S. Grant, while at the same time seeking ‘a gratification’, was she displaying the chicanery of her youth?

Marie Giovanni was a complex and fascinating woman—but even though we can identify her with La Grange—Mirabello—Callegari, do we know who she really was, or where she came from? She claimed she was from Auteuil near Paris, but perhaps she left another clue by starting her story on the island of Mauritius. For many years Mauritius was known to the French as the *Ile de France*, and the La Grange family was from that part of France (Le Hir 2000, 270; *Noblesse Française*, 524; *Journal* 381). But then, as she said when introducing her story: ‘Those who know me will easily recognize who I am, despite the pseudonym I adopt’.

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## Appendix

### Madame Callegari’s Identities

1841 — *Louise Mirabello*: Name used at her 1841 trial. Supposedly married to the ‘Viscount M.’ and also reported in the London press as Baroness de Marible; Baroness Mandeville; Louise Marrolel; Madame la Baronne Marrolell. On one occasion she used the name Madame D’Arcy.

1842 — *Jeanne Hermier*: Used in a personal letter to Eugene Ladent

before her arrest. The name Jeanne was also used in intimate moments in the *Journal*.

1842 — *Louisa La Grange*: Name used at her 1842 trial. Her accomplice was Eugene Rossiet Lennon, also known as Eugene Ladent, husband of pianist Marie Louisa La Grange. She was also reported in the London press as using the names Viscountess La Grange and Countess de Noailles. Van Diemen's Land convict records use the name Louisa La Grange or Louisa Grange.

1843 — *Louisa Callegari*: Name adopted after her marriage to Pietro Callegari although convict records continued to use the name Louisa La Grange.

1848 — *Louisa Brooks*: Name used during an illegal visit to Melbourne from Launceston.

1849 — *Louisa Graham*: Transcription error in the Melbourne press when Louisa Callegari sailed from Launceston to Port Phillip. Other shipping list transcription errors include Callairi, Caliari, Caliaii, Caligari, and Calligari.

1854 — *Maria Luisa Callegari*: Name used when she checked into the *Hotel de la Gran Sociedad* in Mexico City.

1854 — *Marie Giovanni*: Name chosen for the publication of her *Journal* by Alexandre Dumas. From the 1860s she also used this as her 'travelling name'.

1860s — *Marie Giovanni Callegari*: Louisa and Pietro both adopted the name Giovanni as well as Callegari for the rest of their lives.

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