

THE MELBOURNE SALONS 2013

KERRY MULLAN

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The original idea for the Melbourne Salon came from an invitation to Kerry Mullan to speak with Sarah Turnbull at the LC (Lycée Condorcet) Salon in Sydney on French-Australian cultural differences in 2009. Stephen Alomes was also present, and with the participation of Kerry Boland, founder of the LC Salon, discussions began on the idea of a network of two Salons, one in Sydney and the other in Melbourne. The first Melbourne Salon was held in September 2010 with Jean-François Vernay in conversation with Elaine Lewis.

The July 2013 Melbourne Salon (the tenth) was special, given the important roles all the participants had played in the creation of the Melbourne Salon in 2009.

The Melbourne Salon is a collaborative venture between ISFAR, RMIT University and the Alliance Française de Melbourne. The Salon is a place where people can engage in French-Australian cross-cultural dialogues: it aims to broaden understanding of French and Australian perspectives on contemporary topics through debate and discussion. The Salon draws participants from a wide range of backgrounds: academics, journalists, writers, musicians and others who share an interest in discussing ideas in a convivial atmosphere.

The Melbourne Salon meets three times a year at the Alliance Française de Melbourne, 51 Grey Street, St Kilda. Talks are in English and subsequent discussions can be in French or English. For further details or to join our mailing list, contact Kerry Mullan at themelbournesalon@gmail.com or on (03) 9925 2264.

For more on the Melbourne Salon and details of forthcoming and previous events, please visit <http://www.rmit.edu.au/languages/french/melbournesalon>.

The other Napoleon: the extravagant gas-lit Second Empire of Napoleon III, presented by David Hood with assistance from Carl Ridgeway (April 2013)

The first Melbourne Salon for 2013 complemented last year's exhibition on Napoleon at the National Gallery of Victoria. By popular demand, following *The Existential Piano: Chopin, George Sand, Liszt, Marie d'Agoult and the Paris Salons* (Melbourne Salon July 2011), David Hood this time surveyed the career of the 'other Napoleon', Napoleon III (the nephew of Napoleon I), who ruled France between 1848 and 1870.

Napoleon III rebuilt Paris, but no boulevard bears his name. He brought stability and prosperity to France, yet is almost erased from French history. Why? Alas, his erratic foreign policy (and his reign) ended in the catastrophic war with Prussia which saw France invaded and the City of Light besieged.

Interspersed with excerpts of Chopin and Liszt at the keyboard, David's multi-media presentation used portraits, photographs, the spoken word, and items from his personal collection to survey this fascinating era and its personalities. Audience members were given the opportunity to reappraise the man who created the Paris we know today, and who ruled for longer than his famous uncle, in a period where art flourished and glamour ruled.

NOTES ON THE SPEAKER

David Hood is a musician and local celebrity. Long-time 3MBS FM broadcaster and former pre-concert speaker for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, he has been sharing his love of Franz Liszt for years and has been honoured by the Hungarian Government for his Liszt studies. Besides music, his many other artistic talents and interests include calligraphy and European history.

A City of Love and a *terre sauvage*: French Dreams, Australian Dreams, by Stephen Alomes, and Sarah Turnbull in conversation with Elaine Lewis (July 2013)

We all live partly through our dreams: they allow us to transcend what are sometimes the banalities of everyday life. A recurring Australian dream is that of being 'lost in France', of being transformed by experiencing Paris as a 'city

of love'. It is a powerful dream for artists past and present and a passionate dream for many women writers who tell tales of becoming 'almost French'. At the same time, the French have long had a fascination with the 'terre sauvage' and the 'indigènes'. These ideas also shape the journeys of young French working holiday travellers, and other tourists, as they explore the Australias of the frontier and are fascinated by Aboriginal culture and art.

This illustrated talk by Stephen Alomes explored dreams and present-day dreamers, from the north and from the south, and their fascination with the other side of the world.

As one of these southern dreamers herself, Sarah Turnbull's wryly observant and hugely entertaining story *Almost French* quickly became an international bestseller. For many Australians, finding the love of your life and moving to Paris would come pretty close to living the dream. So leaving Paris behind was never going to be easy. But it helps when your destination is known as paradise on earth. In conversation with Elaine Lewis, Sarah shared the next chapter of her story, memories from her life in French Polynesia.

NOTES ON THE SPEAKERS

Stephen Alomes is an Adjunct Professor in Global Studies at RMIT University, Vice-President of ISFAR and chairs the editorial committee of *Explorations*. His many publications include books on Australian expatriates in London, on sporting dreams and realities, and edited books on a changing France and Australia and France and the Pacific. Stephen's book *Australian Football The People's Game 1958–2058* was published in 2012 by Walla Walla Press.

Sarah Turnbull is the author of the international bestseller *Almost French*. Formerly a television journalist with SBS in Sydney, she began working as a freelance writer following her move to Paris in 1994. After nearly a decade in France, Sarah spent several years on an island in French Polynesia. She now lives in Sydney. Her latest book, *All Good Things*, was published in 2013 by HarperCollins.

Elaine Lewis founded the Australian Bookshop in Paris in 1996 to promote Australian writers. Her book *Left Bank Waltz: the Australian Bookshop in Paris* was published by Random House Australia in 2006. She is currently

a committee member of the Paris-based *Festival franco-anglais de poésie* association, AALITRA, the Melbourne PEN Centre, and co-editor of *Explorations*.

Colette's France: Her lives, her loves, by Jane Gilmour in conversation with Elaine Lewis (October 2013)

Colette's France, published in October 2013 by Hardie Grant Books, is both a memoir and the extraordinary life story of Colette, who was as famous for her novels as she was for her often controversial life. Author Jane Gilmour discussed her beautiful new book with Elaine Lewis in this final Melbourne Salon for 2013.

Colette's France presents Colette's life through the prism of the many different places where she lived in France. From her childhood in a small village in Burgundy, to her first marriage and the early beginnings of her literary career in Paris of the Belle Époque, to her holiday houses in Brittany and Saint-Tropez, the author invites the reader to follow in Colette's footsteps. The multiple lives and loves of this indomitable woman are revealed—prodigious writer and journalist, risqué performer, lover and seducer, mother and loyal friend, and finally revered grand old lady of letters. She was a passionate woman who realised early in her life that she alone was responsible for her own happiness. Her work celebrated the senses in all their forms, but also plumbed the depths of human feelings. Through the places of her heart, we come to know her.

NOTES ON THE SPEAKERS

Jane Gilmour lived in Paris from 1968 to 1972, where she completed her doctoral thesis on Colette. On her return to Australia in 1974, her career went in different directions—the arts and then as Executive Director of the *Earthwatch Institute*. She retained her interest in France and in Colette and when she retired from full-time employment embarked on researching and writing this book. Jane Gilmour is a non-executive director on a number of boards, a councillor of RMIT University and a trustee of a philanthropic foundation.

On Elaine Lewis, see above.