

## Book Notes

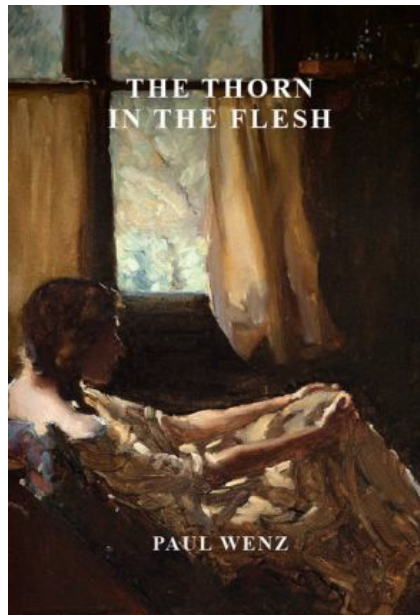
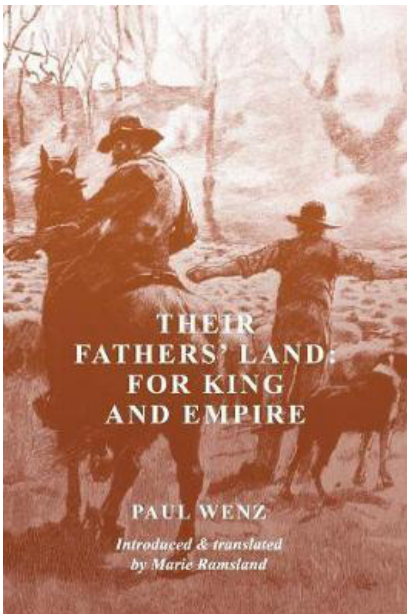
Paul Wenz, *Their Fathers' Land: for King and Empire*, introduced and translated by Marie Ramsland, Exile Bay, Sydney, ETT Imprint, 2018, 179 pp., rrp AU\$ 30.00, ISBN 978-1-92570-646-8.

*E-book available.*

Paul Wenz, *The Thorn in the Flesh*, introduced by Helen Garner and translated by Maurice Blackman, Exile Bay, Sydney, ETT Imprint, 2018, 152 pp., rrp AU\$ 25.00, ISBN 978-1-92570-651-2.

*E-book available.*

Tom Thompson's ETT Imprint has brought out two books by French-Australian author Paul Wenz, translated respectively by Marie Ramsland and Maurice Blackman.



### *Their Fathers' Land: for King and Empire*

Marie Ramsland's translation is the first English language version of *Le Pays de leurs pères*, originally published in 1918 in serial form in the *Revue de Paris* and subsequently in book form by Calmann-Lévy (Paris, 1919). The volume also contains a substantial introduction by Marie Ramsland presenting the life of the author and the context of the novel, as well as three short stories by Paul Wenz and a short text by his great nephew Denis Wenz. An earlier version of Marie Ramsland's work on Paul Wenz appeared in a 2014 issue of *The French Australian Review* (n° 56, pp. 51–64).

*Le Pays de leurs pères* is not merely fiction: Paul Wenz was keen to acquaint the French reader with his vision and experience of Australia. As a grazier and co-owner with his wife Hettie of *Nanima*, a property on the Lachlan River between Forbes and Cowra, Wenz wanted to share his love of the Australian bush with the French public.

The plot focusses on the life of Jim Clarke, a young Australian who, on the outbreak of World War 1, enlists to defend 'King and Empire'. He is seriously wounded at Gallipoli and loses his eyesight. The rest of the story follows him and his friend Dick, another wounded Australian, to London where they convalesce. Jim returns to Australia and marries the nurse he fell in love with in England, while Dick remains in England where he has discovered his estranged grandfather. The First World War is presented in this book through Wenz's experience of the war as a Red Cross and liaison officer, travelling between France and England. He presents a somewhat idealised image of both Australia and the people featured in the story.

ETT Imprint must be congratulated on making this book available for the first time in English in this very attractively presented volume.

### *The Thorn in the Flesh*

Maurice Blackman's translation of *L'Écharde* first appeared in 2004, preceded by Helen Garner's insightful introduction. The original French text was first published in 1931 (Paris, Éditions de la vraie France) and was re-issued in 1986 by Jean-Paul Delamotte's publishing house, La Petite Maison (Boulogne), and again in 2010 by Éditions Zulma (Paris).

This is arguably Paul Wenz's most accomplished and formally satisfying novel. Again the action is situated on a station in central New South Wales

but with Adelaide as the focal point for its characters. It has been suggested that the story may be partly based on Wenz's familiarity with the large Darling River pastoral property *Netley*, now called *Bindara*, then owned by his wife's family, the Dunnes.

Curiously, while all the characters in *Their Fathers' Land* are characterised by a complete lack of malice, the central theme in *The Thorn in the Flesh*, as suggested by the title, is the jealousy and venom of the main female character, who, unable to accept that she was ignored by the man she had served as a housekeeper, spends her entire life trying to wreak vengeance on him, thereby destroying herself and her own family.

The story is simple but well told: Helen Garner is right in pointing out the lack of complexity in the presentation of characters but she comments on Wenz as a 'brilliant *noticer*': 'in Maurice Blackman's graceful and self-effacing translation leaps a sharp fizz of life, sparked by a writer alert in every nerve to the physical world and its poetry'. Interestingly, she chooses to judge a 'work of art according to whether it bestows energy on us or deprives us of it, and Wenz's novel passes the test with flying colours'.

**Note:**

Texts relevant to Paul Wenz published in *Explorations* and *The French Australian Review*:

***Explorations*, n° 23, December 1997**

M. Blackman, 'Transculturalism and Hybridity in the French-Australian Writer Paul Wenz', pp. 3–11.

***Explorations*, n° 24, June 1998**

C. B. Thornton-Smith, 'The Delamotte Phenomenon—Cultural Reciprocity', pp. 6–16.

Jean-Paul Delamotte, 'Reciprocity', pp.18–37.

***Explorations*, n° 42, June 2007**

Wallace Kirsop, 'Paul Wenz and Forbes', pp. 39–40.

***The French Australian Review*, n° 56, Australian Winter 2014**

Marie Ramsland, 'War, Writing and the Wenz Family', pp. 51–64.

**Babette Hayes**, *Food for Friends*, illustrated by Francis Yin, Sydney, ETT Imprint, 2017, 82 pp., rrp AU\$ 24.95, 978-1-92570-627-7.  
*E-book available.*

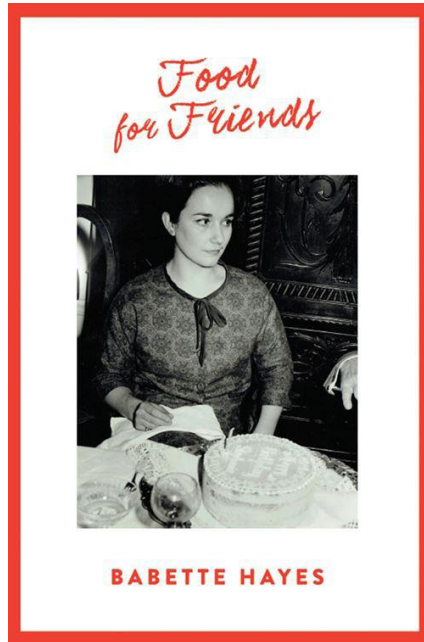
Some people like to cook, others like to eat, and still others enjoy reading about food and foodies. For the latter there is certainly no lack of books by expatriate French chefs and wine growers who describe their family background and the villages, towns and regions where they grew up. These publications, which include recipes, are usually very attractive, large format and beautifully illustrated. They delight the eye, stimulate the taste buds and grace the coffee table.

Babette Hayes' contribution to the genre is different in several ways. In the first place she is not a chef or a professional cook. This modest paperback reprint (234x156 mm perfect bound) was first published by Rigby in 1979 under the title *Babette Hayes Talks About Food*, as part of a series of well-known people like the Blackmans and Leo Schofield in which each contributor talks about food. Hayes writes that it came after ten years of research and writing about cooking and lifestyle, at a time when Australians were becoming more and more interested in food. Though red chapter and recipe headings provide the only colour, the additional black and white family photos in this edition help bring her story to life, as do the pen and ink drawings by the multi-talented Francis Yin. The book is not so much an autobiography with recipes as a glimpse into the background of what *MasterChef* would call Babette Hayes' 'food journey', and especially her enjoyment in sharing her cooking with family and friends.

Like Colette Rossant, author of *Apricots on the Nile*, Babette was not born in France, but began life in an exotic foreign country. As she describes it, she was 'a French girl in Syria, a foreigner in London during my teen years, an English cousin when I went back to France for holidays and an English/French woman by the time I came to Australia.' That was 1965. In Sydney her career flourished, as she was not only a good editor and writer on food and entertaining, but also a talented stylist and photographer.

Hayes was one of those who were very influential in introducing French cooking to Australia. She would later become very knowledgeable about Australian cookery. She herself was inspired by her French mother, as well as by Elizabeth David and Mapie de Toulouse Lautrec's writing in *Elle*.

Not as famous as her good friend Margaret Fulton, her name was still very well-known, especially in Sydney. Babette Hayes has a long list of publishing credits to her name. Some of the highlights are art director and stylist of *Australian and New Zealand Complete Book of Cookery*, cookery editor for *House and Garden*, photographic editor for *Australian Home Journal*, and articles in *Belle* and *Vogue Living*. She has also written several books on Australian cookery, both historical and contemporary, including *200 Years of Australian Cooking*, *The Australian Cook Book in Colour*, *Australian Country Cooking Style*, as well as a book of her own recipes.



The recipes in *Food for Friends*, some familiar some not, are a selection of those Babette Hayes served when entertaining at home or outdoors on picnics, which she enjoyed enormously. These were unforgettable occasions for all her guests, and readers of this edition, more than forty years later, will no doubt be tempted to try several of her dishes.

Patricia Clancy

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