

Meredith Sherlock (1955–2020)

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Meredith Sherlock died suddenly on 3 November, 2020 after a long and extenuating battle against cancer. The news came as a shock to many of her friends and associates because of the isolation we had known during long COVID-19 months in Melbourne. ISFAR owes it to the readers of *The French Australian Review* to explain why Meredith was important for the history of *Explorations* and, more recently, for publications of French interest produced by Monash University's Ancora Press.

The Sherlock and related families had long been in Victoria and had a particular association with Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs. One of Meredith's ancestors was Charles Nettleton (1826–1902), the celebrated photographic recorder of the life and buildings of the colony and of its capital in the decades following the gold rush. For Meredith herself, schooling in Blackburn preceded secondary studies at Tintern Grammar, which gave her a faithful group of lifelong friends.

After an Arts degree at the University of Melbourne, where she majored in German and History, Meredith worked as a medical secretary at the Alfred Hospital. This phase of her life ended when she was afflicted with chronic fatigue syndrome, whose effects she described recently as worse than the suffering induced by chemotherapy. The condition would remain with her for more than two decades, although the attacks came to be more spaced out. This determined a new approach to employment: it had to be part-time, casual and often freelance. She thus entered into the more and more precarious existence of many people plying intellectual trades in our time.

In the 1980s Meredith was a research assistant to economic historians and musicologists at La Trobe University. Given her constant interest in early music performance—she owned a replica Renaissance violin—this was not surprising. Indeed, it was another member of the Early Music

Society, the late Harold Love, who recruited her to be his research assistant at Monash University in 1989.

For the next two decades Meredith was on the Monash payroll supported by Harold's successful research grants, then by the *Australian Journal of French Studies* and by the Centre for the Book. She was recommended to *AJFS* by Harold in 1992 and thus began a connection with French buttressed by quite effective school studies of the language. We were to work together till her death, since, after the Centre for the Book changed direction at the end of 2009, she joined me as Editor at the Ancora Press and remained a Monash affiliate.

Meredith's assistance to Harold Love was in the highly specialised field of the preparation of critical old-spelling editions of seventeenth-century English literary texts. She served Harold in this capacity for nearly a decade and a half and—given the generous prefatory acknowledgments he made of her work—shared in some of the glory of what remain exceptional international achievements in scholarship. Meredith came to be recognised as almost without peer in this field in Australia, hence invitations by other Monash colleagues and researchers elsewhere in the country to work on editorial projects concerning nineteenth- and early twentieth-century authors.

For *AJFS* Meredith was the Technical Editor, in other words she prepared camera-ready copy for our offset printers. This activity continued from 1992 till the end of 2003. At the same time she performed a similar function for *Explorations* from number 12 of June 1992 to number 21 of December 1996 and then, after a period when the journal was edited by a committee of ISFAR colleagues, from number 31 of December 2001 to number 43 of December 2007. The frequent delays in appearance were imputable to the Editor alone and not to the Technical Editor, who was a model of efficiency.

Over time Meredith continued to hone her skills in preparing copy and illustrations. In addition she became an accomplished copy editor and structural editor, attributes that were essential for the publications of the Centre for the Book and the Ancora Press. Recognition of this competence came in the form of invitations to do this sort of work for many other Monash colleagues and for people outside the university. Meredith, the consummate perfectionist, would always underquote for what she did. Her customers had the benefit of her meticulous attention to detail.

It is perhaps enough to cite four recent French-related examples of her efforts: *Études bibliographiques à la mémoire de Jeanne Veyrin-Forrer* (Ancora Press, 2017); *Censorship in the Ancien Regime* (Ancora Press, 2018); *Shorthand at the Sorbonne in the late 1820s, or Experiments in Publishing* (The Chaskett Press, 2019); Stan Scott, *Chis: The Life and Work of Alan Rowland Chisholm (1888–1981)* (Ancora Press, 2019). Dozens of other volumes and monographs since the mid-1990s demonstrate her achievement.

Several projects left unfinished at the time of Meredith's death will have to be completed by other hands. Predictably, since nobody else has her range of skills, more than one person will have to be involved. However, it must happen to secure the legacy of an exceptional woman who contended with a good deal of suffering—severe lower-back pain for more than a decade—in order to meet what she saw as her obligations.

It should be added that Meredith's life was by no means confined to academic pursuits. Apart from music, instrumental and choral, she was interested in film and joined Actors' Equity to play walk-on roles in TV and even one feature. She was an environmental activist AND a mainstay of the Friends of French Island, whose newsletter she edited. For a dozen years she represented the Ancora Press on the State Library User Organisations' Council and served, inevitably, as that body's secretary. Almost everywhere people recognized her competence and put her on committees.

In short it is easy to see why she will be missed by many, not least those who enjoyed her friendship, and why she deserves to be saluted as a genuine contributor to the intellectual and cultural life of this country.

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