

# THE BAUDIN EXPEDITION IN PORT JACKSON, 1802: CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AND ENLIGHTENMENT POLITICS

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When the members of the Baudin expedition, the French officers, scientists and crew on the two ships the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste*, spent five months in the English colony of Port Jackson from June to November 1802, several different kinds of cultural encounters took place. Firstly, there were those between the French and their English hosts; then with other Frenchmen living in the colony. Lastly, and almost marginally, there were the encounters with the native Aboriginal inhabitants. Given that one of the express aims of the expedition was to observe the native peoples, it has remained a puzzle for all those who have studied the written records of the expedition that in Port Jackson observation of, and encounters with, the Aborigines should have assumed less importance for the French travellers than they had at previous stages of the voyage.

In this paper, I shall piece together the different records of the expedition's stay in Port Jackson and the other documents that it generated in order to shed new light on the French attitude towards the Aborigines, but also on the encounters of the French voyagers with the English and the French inhabitants of the colony. I will argue that these three kinds of encounter must be read in parallel in order to answer the questions raised by each one individually. In short, I shall comment on the nature of the French anthropological enterprise by placing it in its social and political context.

The expedition to the Southern Hemisphere, commissioned by Napoleon, then First Consul, and led by Captain Nicolas Baudin, took place between 1800 and 1804. Amongst other things, it was inspired by the Enlightenment drive to accumulate knowledge through the scientific exploration of the natural world. One of its main aims, underscored by the preparation of a treatise by the philosopher Jean-Marie Degérando, a tract by the naturalist François Péron, and instructions from the zoologist Georges Cuvier, was to observe and document the native inhabitants of Australia.

The expedition was the third in a series of French voyages to the Southern Hemisphere devoted explicitly to furthering scientific knowledge, the first being that of La Pérouse in 1785 and the second that of Bruny D'Entrecasteaux, in search of La Pérouse, six years later. In line with Enlightenment ideals of humaneness and tolerance, specific instructions were issued to La Pérouse as to how he should treat the native inhabitants of the places he visited and these were to serve also for the two subsequent voyages.

The Sieur de La Pérouse, on all occasions, will treat the different peoples visited during his voyage with much gentleness and humanity. He will zealously and interestedly employ all means capable of improving their condition by procuring for their countries useful European vegetables, fruits, and trees, which he will teach them to plant and cultivate.<sup>1</sup>

The additional instructions that Baudin received concerning the study of the native inhabitants of the lands visited represent the first codification of a scientific method for observing man.

Interest in the nature of man had been gathering momentum during the Enlightenment, and anthropology as a science was emerging within discursive formations such as those of medicine and political philosophy. The word "anthropology" was first used in its modern sense of cross-cultural comparison by the German physical anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in 1794. It was to be used in this sense by the *Société des Observateurs de l'homme* founded in 1799 by Louis-François Jauffret and a group of friends, among them the Abbé Sicard, Cuvier, Pinel and Jussieu. Its aim was to undertake the scientific study of man in all his diversity and to promote anthropological fieldwork of different kinds. The scientific aims of the Baudin expedition, and its destination, made it the ideal site for a systematic analysis of primitive man. Degérando was commissioned to write a treatise on anthropological method expressly to guide the expedition. This detailed, forty-page document, entitled *Considérations sur les diverses méthodes à suivre dans l'observation des peuples sauvages*, which was addressed to Captain Baudin and likewise to Citizen Levaillant, who was about to undertake his third expedition to the interior of Africa, provided a general method

for the observation of "any society differing in its moral and political forms from those of Europe".<sup>2</sup>

Inspired by Rousseau, Degérando linked moral virtue with knowledge and opposed scientific observation to the "vain agitation [...] in vain theories".<sup>3</sup> For him, the "savage peoples"<sup>4</sup> furthered the understanding of European man by providing a picture of "the first periods of [his] own history":

The philosophical traveller, sailing to the ends of the earth, is in fact travelling in time; he is exploring the past; every step he makes is the passage of an age. Those unknown islands that he reaches are for him the cradle of human society.<sup>5</sup>

Degérando listed in detail the observations to be made concerning "savage" man: his appearance and physical conformation, environment, activities, customs, psycho-social behaviour, language ("it is by learning their language that we shall become their fellow citizens"),<sup>6</sup> writing, art, justice system, tools, artefacts, commerce, burial customs and religious practices. Particular attention was to be paid to his notion of property,<sup>7</sup> and to patriotism.<sup>8</sup>

Degérando's *Considérations* gave details as to how best acquire the knowledge sought and set out a code of conduct that respected the rights of the peoples observed. Advocating cultural relativism, he enjoined the observer to guard against attributing his own modes of thought and behaviour to the objects of his gaze. In this imaginative blueprint for anthropological fieldwork, Degérando took great pains to go beyond Eurocentric preconceptions.<sup>9</sup>

As well as increasing their own knowledge of the world and opening up, as a by-product, new possibilities for trade, the "illustrious messengers of philosophy",<sup>10</sup> as Degérando calls the scientific voyagers, were to bring the people visited into their own future, avoiding the mistakes of European civilization:

perhaps a new world forming itself at the extremities of the earth; the whole globe covered with happier and wiser inhabitants, more equally provided for, more closely joined, society raising itself to more rapid progress by greater competition and reaching perhaps by these unexpected changes that perfection on which our prayers call, but to which

our enlightenment, our methods, and our books, contribute so little! [...] See how much Columbus changed the face of society [...] but Columbus put in the New World only greedy conquerors; and you are proceeding towards the peoples of the South only as pacifiers and friends.<sup>11</sup>

Cuvier, who had founded the science of comparative anatomy, also provided the expedition with specialized anthropological instructions. Influenced by Blumenbach, whose work involved the collection and measurement of skulls, he directed the artists to draw exactly what they saw and not to be influenced by drawings made during previous voyages of discovery:

The drawings that one finds in modern voyages, although done on site, are more or less influenced by the rules and proportions that the artist has learnt in the schools of Europe, and almost none of them are reliable enough to be used by naturalists as a basis for future research.<sup>12</sup>

Cuvier believed that there was a direct correlation between the shape of the skull and moral qualities:

The influence that these various structures may have on the moral and intellectual faculties of the different races has been known to a certain extent, and experience seems reasonably in agreement with the theory in everything that concerns the relationship between the perfection of the mind and the beauty of the face.<sup>13</sup>

Péron, having just completed his medical studies, composed a pamphlet entitled *Observations sur l'Anthropologie et l'Histoire naturelle de l'homme*<sup>14</sup> in order to gain a place in the expedition. Not only did he achieve his aim, but it was also he who would later write the official account of the voyage.

For Péron, the science of man was a branch of medicine. Strongly influenced by the Rousseau of the *Second Discourse*, he assumed that the natives of the far-distant lands to be visited were closer to the original natural man and therefore enjoyed robust health. He set up an opposition between natural man and "degenerate and vile social man" whose illnesses had no other cause than the "very progress of

civilization"<sup>15</sup> and hoped to find traces of natural man in the indigenous peoples encountered. It is in this context that the physical strength of the natives was to be tested. This had already been suggested in La Pérouse's instructions, and the dynamometer, a newly invented instrument, was to be used to make the measurements. However, true to Rousseau, Péron was interested in the relationship between man's moral sense and his physical state. This led him to pose the following questions:

1. Must not moral perfection be in inverse ratio to physical perfection?
2. Does not physical perfection exclude not only moral, but even physical sensitivity itself?<sup>16</sup>

With the different focuses of Degérando, Cuvier and Péron, the intellectual baggage of the French travellers consisted of a complex series of presuppositions to be negotiated. From Degérando, the presupposition was that the travellers would find human beings whom they could both observe and civilize. But how at one and the same time to observe dispassionately and to civilize? There was already a potential source of conflict inherent in these instructions: natural man (the French word for these indigenous peoples was *naturel*), free of the corrupting influences of European society, was a source of instruction for the Europeans, but at the same time the Europeans were advised to exercise an "improving" influence on the indigenous people they observed, changing them for ever.

From the time of La Pérouse, the newly emergent and ill-defined notion of progress had been a key element at the heart of French voyages of exploration. Degérando's utopian ideal, based on the idea that progress was somehow independent of the social context in which it took place, highlighted the contradictions inherent in the proposed enterprise. Progress became a yardstick by which to measure the peoples of these lands, and the two aims of the proposed encounter, to observe and to civilize or change, posed problems and created tensions which the members of the Baudin expedition were to negotiate in different ways.

Following Cuvier's instructions, the expedition's artists were to draw faithfully what they observed rather than bending their art to European aesthetic canons, but there was a sting in the tail of Cuvier's message: for him perfection of mind and facial beauty went hand in

hand, and it is clear that for him beauty was a universal. The idea that beauty might be culturally specific does not appear to have been entertained. For Péron, the quest was even more weighted against the objects of anthropological observation. Following Rousseau, he suggested that if the indigenes were splendid physical specimens, they would lack moral qualities: the physically perfect savage opposed to the civilized, and thus moral, European. The "scientific" observations of the expedition were thus to be made in the context of these tensions, biases and dichotomies inherent in the theoretical background of the instructions.

The Baudin expedition left Le Havre on 19 October 1800 in two ships, the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste*, captained by Nicolas Baudin and Emmanuel Hamelin respectively. Aboard were 22 scientists and 32 officers and midshipmen, together with 184 crew. There were more scientists than on any previous French expedition. In the course of the four years, the itinerary of the expedition took the voyagers along the west, south, east and north coasts of Australia, as well as to Timor. Numerous encounters took place between the voyagers and the inhabitants of the places they visited, as is documented in the written records of the voyage. These consist of the official account by Péron, *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*, the first volume of which was published in 1807<sup>17</sup> and the second in 1816,<sup>18</sup> continued by Louis Freycinet after Péron's death in 1810, and Baudin's journals, first appearing in print only in the latter part of the last century.<sup>19</sup> As well as these, there are the journals and logbooks of other members of the expedition. In addition to the written records, some of the most important sources of information are the many paintings and drawings made by Lesueur and Petit, who became the ships' artists after the defection of Milbert and Lebrun at the Ile de France.

As we have said, the nature of the encounters with the Aborigines was determined by the preconceptions of the voyagers, but also by those of the indigenes, who in some cases had seen Europeans previously, and sometimes had not. Furthermore, the individual French voyagers reacted in different ways to what they saw and recounted in different terms their experiences.<sup>20</sup> Péron and Baudin, for example, diverged considerably in their attitude towards the Aborigines. As various commentators have remarked, it was the perceptive sea-captain whose view was the most "scientific". In his observations, he limited himself to describing what he could see and drew conclusions without

making judgments, whereas Péron's observations were laden with implicit and explicit judgments and his theoretical presuppositions interfered with dispassionate observation.<sup>21</sup>

The most detailed accounts of encounters with Aborigines are of those that took place in Van Diemen's Land between January and June 1802. Together with those of the previous D'Entrecasteaux expedition, these valuable anthropological documents remain the most detailed descriptions of the Tasmanian Aborigines before English settlement. After initial delight and enchantment with the peoples encountered, Péron's final observations were marked by his disappointment:

With such shy and savage [*farouche*] men, our contacts have been, either rare, or at least difficult and dangerous, and most of our interviews [...] have finished in hostile aggressions on their part.<sup>22</sup>

The numerous encounters with Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land must have been fresh in their minds when the French reached Port Jackson shortly afterwards. The French spent five months in Port Jackson, the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste*<sup>23</sup> finally leaving together with the *Casuarina*, an additional ship purchased by them, on 18 November. There is no record of any of the voyagers having kept a day-to-day account of this period and what we know must be constructed from various partial accounts and from letters.

The fullest account of the stay in Port Jackson is that of Péron. Baudin's *Journal* stops on his arrival in Sydney and only resumes on his leaving the colony. Other records of the stay in Sydney include correspondence from Baudin to Jussieu and comments in the journals of several other members of the expedition.

The first impressions of the tired and ill French (many had scurvy) on arriving in Sydney Cove was that they had come upon an Antipodean paradise in which wild and unruly Nature had been tamed and ordered. Pierre-Bernard Milius, second-in-command on the *Naturaliste*, recorded his surprise and delight on his first view of the neatly laid out English colony:

The streets and houses appeared before our eyes like a game of dominos laid out on a carpet of greenery.<sup>24</sup>

Baudin was likewise impressed with what he saw:

I was astonished and amazed to see the immense amount of work that the English had accomplished in the twelve years since they had been established in Port Jackson; although they began with considerable means and spent lavishly, it is nonetheless difficult to understand how they arrived so promptly at the state of splendour and ease in which they at present find themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Péron's first impressions are equally favourable as he expresses his amazement at the magnificent port and the abundance of supplies to be found there:

how could we not have been astonished [...] by the flourishing state of this singular and distant colony! The beauty of the harbour attracted everyone's attention.<sup>26</sup>

From all the French accounts, the English welcomed the newcomers warmly, providing care for the ill and hospitality to all, in spite of believing that the two countries were still at war. The news soon came through, however, that the Paix d'Amiens had been signed on 25 March 1802, and the English and French celebrated together.<sup>27</sup> The French were entertained royally by Governor King and other members of the colony for the duration of their stay, and Péron records his admiration of, and gratitude towards the English:

While these diverse objects provoked thus our deepest meditations, all the administrators and citizens of the colony flocked around us to repair our ills, and to make us forget them [...] All possible resources that the colony could offer us were put at our disposal.<sup>28</sup>

In the spirit of scientific cooperation,<sup>29</sup> the English gave the French all the support they needed, allowing them to set up an observatory on the northernmost tip of the east side of Sydney Cove (Bennelong Point) and provided guides and interpreters so that the French naturalists could explore the countryside. The Lieutenant-Governor, Colonel William Paterson, accompanied them on their excursion to Parramatta.



The French were free to roam around the colony, and it is in describing one of these occasions that Péron mentions in passing the Aborigines. Going towards Botany Bay, he notes the less fertile soil and, in the distance, "the smoke of several fires: those of the unfortunate hordes who live on these dismal shores".<sup>30</sup> The Aborigines, pushed to the outskirts of the colony, became in a similar fashion peripheral to Péron's narrative. His focus was on the English, who now, rather than the marginalized Aborigines, became the privileged Other of his gaze. His account of the sojourn in Port Jackson moves without transition from one subject to another. It consists of three distinct strands: the first of these, based on his travels around the countryside as far as Rose Hill and Parramatta, is concerned with the organization of the colony and presents a glowing picture of the English achievements both in taming the "wild and savage land" and in setting up a model penal colony; the second consists of musings on natural phenomena unfamiliar to the Europeans; and the third consists of portraits of several Frenchmen who for various reasons were members of the colony.

Péron travelled to Parramatta and Rose Hill with Bellefin, the surgeon from the *Naturaliste*, and from the account he gives of his observations it is clear that he viewed the colony as an Antipodean Arcadia. Whether he is describing the countryside or the English achievements, his discourse is studded with superlatives. The transplanted sheep produce the finest wool, the pigs are bigger and fatter, and all the farms and animals are more magnificent than their counterparts in Europe. Such bounty extends its effects to the human inhabitants. In this earthly paradise, sinners are redeemed by hard work and wrongs righted.

The interest of the traveller increases further when he comes to see inside the habitations that he encounters. Under these rustic roofs, in the midst of these deep forests, live peacefully brigands who were only yesterday the terror of Europe [. . .] All these unfortunate creatures, formerly the dregs and shame of their country, have become, through the most inconceivable of metamorphoses, hardworking farmers, happy and peaceful citizens. Nowhere, indeed, is heard talk of murders or thefts; the most perfect security reigns in this respect in the whole colony.<sup>31</sup>

As well as his meetings with the notables amongst the English settlers, whom he mentions but does not describe, Péron met several French colonists whose stories he tells in considerable detail. The description of each of these French exiles profiles an aspect of Franco-British relations and reveals some of Péron's underlying preoccupations.

Firstly, there was the French Jew, Larra, deported to the colony because of his activities in England as a thief and forger. Now a free man, Larra had served out his sentence and been given a land grant. He entertained Péron and Bellefin in style in his house at Parramatta and served "the best Madeira, sherry, port and wines from the Cape and Bordeaux, [...] in crystal glasses", accompanying a meal prepared by a French cook and two other young Frenchmen, both convicts. The redemptive nature of the Antipodean colonial paradise, and of penitence allied with hard work are continuing themes for Péron.

Péron contrasts Larra's attitude with that of another Frenchman in the colony, Morand. Morand shows no remorse for his criminal past and claims that his only crime is to have "attempted to associate himself with the Bank of England without depositing money there". Morand recounts that when war broke out between France and England he had decided, as a good patriot, to ruin England financially, just as effective a method of destruction as the use of weapons. Arriving in England, he associated himself with an Irishman, no less bent than himself on bringing about England's destruction and set about forging banknotes. Disaster struck, however, and there was no honour among the thieves. The Irishman stole some of the forged banknotes from his accomplice and was apprehended when trying to pass them. Not only that, he betrayed Morand. Both men were imprisoned and their tools seized. Fearing that he would be condemned to death if the cowardly Irishman revealed any more of their grand plan, Morand tricked his accomplice into suiciding by impressing on him the shame he would bring on his family if he were to await his inevitable death by hanging.

Morand was sentenced to deportation to New South Wales and, having served his time, had become wealthy as a goldsmith and watchmaker, employing others whom he despised. His wealth would make him happy, he says, if only he had not failed in the execution of his "honourable" enterprise. As a good patriot, he regretted that his noble sacrifice was not recognized and appreciated by his French countrymen.

Why does Péron dwell in such detail on the strange and devious behaviour of his fellow countryman? We shall return later to a consideration of this peculiar form of patriotism and its relevance to Péron's own behaviour.

Another Frenchman, introduced to Péron by Paterson, was the Baron de la Clampe, a former French colonel who had sought refuge in England because of the Revolution but refused to fight against his native country. La Clampe had settled at Castle Hill and was leading a hermit-like existence, having refused to go to Sydney-Town for the previous three years. With the aid of six convicts, he had devoted himself to agriculture. When Paterson and Péron arrived to visit him, La Clampe, labouring with the convicts, hurriedly dressed himself to receive the visitors, whom he impressed with his simplicity and elegant hospitality. Péron informed him of the state of things in France and did not lose the opportunity to sing Napoleon's praises:

With what sweet satisfaction did I hasten to recount to this interesting fellow countryman the series of miracles by which a great man had at last succeeded in bringing happiness and peace to our common country! With what interest my story was listened to! With what heartfelt outpourings did good Monsieur de la Clampe beseech heaven to grant happiness and long life to the First Consul.<sup>32</sup>

We shall return shortly to a wider contextualization of these cameos of the French convict colonists.

In Port Jackson, it is clear that Péron's focus on the one hand on the nature of the English settlement and, on the other, on the French residents of the colony, was at the expense of any thoroughgoing attempt to engage with the native inhabitants. One would have expected that during their extended stay in Port Jackson the scientists would have taken advantage of the opportunity to carry out the recommendations of Degérando's treatise and to have observed in detail the way of life and behaviour of the Aborigines. However, the reassuring and ordered world in the Antipodes that Péron describes in the *Voyage* is one built on a belief in the redemptive power of work and the ideology of progress. After the disappointments and difficulties of the previous months, and the ultimately unsatisfactory encounters with the Aborigines on the west coast of New Holland and on the east coast of Van Diemen's Land,

Péron, in a curious transposition, abandons the difficult and problematic encounter with the Aboriginal Other to focus, as we have seen, on the familiar English Other, both friend and foe, whom he sees as living in a constructed Antipodean utopia from which natural man, indolent and feckless, is banished. No mention is made in Péron's selective account of the problems besetting the colony, detailed in contemporary English accounts, such as food and alcohol shortages, rebellions, criminal activity and other difficulties.

The only interest Péron seems to have in the Aborigines of Port Jackson is in the results provided by tests of their physical strength by means of the dynamometer which the naturalist had already used to test the Timorese and Diemenese. The dynamometer was a machine invented by an engineer, E. Régnier, in 1798 at the suggestion of Buffon, who had wanted some objective measure of muscular strength amongst various groups of people in France. Force was applied to a spring attached to a dial so that the strength of the arms and that of the legs and lower back could be tested. In Port Jackson, Péron tested the Aborigines, as well as the French and English. The results of the experiments are recorded in tables in the *Voyage*. In all cases, those who took part are listed by name and described. There is, however, no description of how the experiments were set up and how they were conducted, or how the natives were persuaded to be involved.

For Péron, the experiments with the dynamometer provided conclusive evidence of the inferiority of the native peoples. The Diemenese, whom he saw as prototypical natural man, had been reluctant to participate, and those who did had refused to test their "force rénale", the strength of the lower back. The low scores of the Diemenese, compared with their French counterparts, proved conclusively for Péron that natural man was inferior on all fronts to civilized man:

How he differs [. . .] both morally and physically, from the seductive tableaux that imagination and enthusiasm created for him, and the systematic mind attempted accordingly to oppose to our social state!<sup>33</sup>

Likewise, Péron noted that New Holland Aborigines were of a different physical type from the Diemenese, that they had a more developed social organization, that their dwellings and canoes were better constructed and they had domesticated dogs. But Péron found the New Holland

Aborigines even more hostile to foreigners than the Diemenese and writes that the French scientists were obliged to retreat in the face of the Aborigines' aggressiveness. He nevertheless managed to test seventeen of them with the dynamometer, and a young man, named Ourou-Maré, pushed the needle to 19, the highest score obtained by an Aborigine, but still lower than that of most of the Europeans tested. From the overall results, Péron concluded that, of the non-Europeans, the Timorese were strongest, followed by the New Hollanders who were slightly stronger than the Diemenese. The French were considerably stronger than all these and the English slightly stronger than the French. Péron prudently concluded that

The development of physical strength is not always in direct ratio to the lack of civilization; it is not a constant product, it is not a necessary result of the savage state.<sup>34</sup>

Triumphantly contradicting Rousseau, Péron concluded that he had refuted by scientific experiment "the opinion which is too prevalent [...] *that the physical degeneration of man is in proportion to the improvement of civilization*". As Rhys Jones remarks, Péron "had [...] rejected the very views by which he had gained a berth on the expedition in the first place. The Aborigines of Tasmania had become symbols of his own reversal of mind".<sup>35</sup>

But Péron believed that the physical weakness of the New Hollanders was due, at least in part, to their living in a state of nature and thus being ill-fed and ill-housed. He held hopes that these "natural men", if they were to embrace European values and the benefits of civilization, would improve their lot. In an idyllic scene, he imagined the Aborigines settling down to a sedentary existence, domesticating kangaroos, emus, lyrebirds and black swans:

let us suppose for a moment that these disinherited children of nature were to lay down their ferocious, nomadic ways; let us suppose that, grouped in more numerous tribes, they would come together in villages; [...] let us suppose that the right of property were to arouse in them the will to improve their lot; [...] How the resources of man would multiply! How far he would be from the deplorable state of impoverishment in which he ekes out his precarious existence!

One can already see the different kinds of kangaroo, now domesticated, thronging around his hut.<sup>36</sup>

Several other members of the expedition comment on the Aborigines in Port Jackson, and their remarks in general carry the same bias as those of Péron. Only the geographer Boullanger seems to have written at any length on Aboriginal customs, burial and childbirth, but as we have access only to extracts in an article by one of his descendants who possessed his *Journal* we cannot at the present time explore this contribution further.<sup>37</sup> Baudin's letters, although recording at considerable length his observations concerning the Van Diemenese (about eight pages) contain little on the Aborigines at Port Jackson. He remarks that the Aborigines have withdrawn from the parts of the coast occupied by the English:

Most of them have withdrawn far into the interior of the country where they continue to live in their own manner, they habitually stroll in the town and in the country, they are of no use.<sup>38</sup>

In line with Péron's focus, Baudin's emphasis on the "uselessness" of the Aborigines clearly refers to their refusal to embrace civilization and engage in productive work.

Milius also comments in his diary on the laziness of the Aborigines:

It will appear most astonishing, no doubt, that civilization has made no progress amongst these people in the fifteen years since the English have inhabited the island. They were first of all frightened of their new guests, but gradually became used to seeing them, without expressing any desire to change their state. The governor made several attempts to have them work for them. He took several into his service. But hardly had they spent two or three days with them, when they abandoned them to go back to their natural penchant which is indolence.<sup>39</sup>

Milius had numerous contacts with an Aborigine called Banedou, who had been to London and back and who liked to visit Milius and drink the health of ladies he had known there. Milius asked Banedou if he would like to accompany him to France and Banedou's answer was an unequivocal refusal. He said:

that there was no better country in the the world than his and he didn't want to leave it.<sup>40</sup>

It is clear that the Aborigines were not interested in, and had no use themselves for the benefits of civilization that the "philosophical travellers" wished to bestow on them. That the Aborigines had no desire to be civilized was a source of puzzlement and frustration to the Europeans. Milius concluded that "judging from the repugnance Banedou showed concerning our customs, it is impossible to hope to bring the savages of this country to some notion of civilization".<sup>41</sup> Both Baudin and Milius, however, commented on the Aborigines' command of English, not matched by the English's command of Aboriginal languages; but the European focus on "productive" work, linked to the late-Enlightenment evolutionary teleology of progress, biased the French view of the Aborigines, making them blind to any attributes which did not mirror this ideology.

It is interesting to compare this attitude with the dispassionate and relativistic observations of James Cook, thirty years earlier, untainted as they are by the preoccupation with conquest and possession, the corollary of the ideology of progress:

From what I have said of the Natives of New Holland they may appear to be some of the most wretched People upon Earth; but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans, being wholly unacquainted not only with the Superfluous, but with the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe; they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition. The earth and Sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for Life. They covet not Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff, etc.; they live in a Warm and fine Climate, and enjoy every wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Cloathing; and this they seem to be fully sensible of, for many to whom we gave Cloth, etc. left it carelessly upon the Sea bench and in the Woods, as a thing they had no manner of use for; in short, they seem'd to set no Value upon anything we gave them, nor would they ever part with anything of their own for any one Article we could offer them. This, in my opinion, Argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessaries of life, and that they have no Superfluities.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting traces of the French cultural encounters with the Aborigines in Port Jackson, and the most faithful to Degérando's and Cuvier's instructions, are to be found in the drawings, watercolours and sketches made by Lesueur and Petit, the artists of the expedition.<sup>43</sup> Many of the drawings are accompanied by short notes identifying the individuals, or explaining the scene depicted. It is as if the lack of an overarching narrative had stripped the observers of the need to mythologize their subjects, and the fragmentary, discontinuous nature of the illustrations, like juxtaposed snapshots, provides an alternative shadowy narrative. A number of the drawings were selected for engraving and incorporation in the *Atlas* accompanying the official account of the expedition.

There are two versions of the *Atlas*. The first, published to accompany the first volume of the *Voyage de découvertes* in 1807, contains 28 plates; nine of these are of Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land and there are seven of the Aborigines of Port Jackson. The second edition, in 1824, is augmented to 68 plates, with nine of the Van Diemenese and 15 of the Aborigines at Port Jackson, as well as two views and a map of Sydney. Most of the illustrations are portraits, the others are scenes depicting Aborigines and their habitations. Whereas only two of the Aborigines from Van Diemen's Land are named, in Port Jackson all those illustrated have names and many of these individuals participated in the dynamometer experiments. Thus there must have been sustained interaction between the French and the Aborigines, not otherwise recorded. Together with the descriptions given in the tables of experimental results, there is here a considerable amount of non-discursive information imparted as to how the Europeans saw the Aborigines. The portraits, mostly by Petit, portray a sympathy with and admiration for their subjects, and a loving attention to detail, not encountered in British portraits of the same period.

As we have said, the French visitors focused on the English settlement during their stay in Port Jackson but there is little mention of the French in English records of the time. This is not surprising in that the French were, after all, not the main focus of attention for the English, who had other more pressing preoccupations. In spite of the warm relations between the French and English there were, however, undercurrents of suspicion and distrust on both sides with respect to territorial ambitions.



In a letter to Jussieu, Baudin describes the English nervousness concerning the French presence in Port Jackson, occasioned by the arrival of another French ship, a trading vessel with a Scottish captain:

they fear [...] that we are planning to establish ourselves in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel in that they claim sovereignty over Van Diemen's Land by virtue of the taking of possession in 1788 of which the limits are reported in Phillip's voyage. I am convinced that fearing to have us as neighbours they occupy that part of Van Diemen's Land so as to attempt to authenticate their property right; if such is the case it will be a real loss for France, for an establishment in the south of Van Diemen's Land can only procure great advantages for commerce and seems to be what politics would dictate. The soil of this area is incontrovertibly better than that of Port Jackson and its surroundings and its ports as numerous as those of the English either in Sydney or in Port Jackson.<sup>44</sup>

After the French left Port Jackson, they encountered on King Island a newly arrived English schooner, the *Cumberland*, sent by Governor King to take possession of the island in the name of England. This was because rumours had been rife in the colony that the French were planning some kind of act of possession of lands that England considered it owned. It can be seen from Baudin's letter that the French were indeed discussing some kind of settlement and it is certain that fear of the French was what motivated Governor King in September 1803 to establish the first British settlement in Tasmania.

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of evidence to suggest that not only was the idea of settlement of part of the New Holland coast present in the minds of some members of the Baudin expedition, but that even an invasion of the English colony at Port Jackson was projected.<sup>45</sup> In particular, a group of manuscript documents from the Muséum d'Histoire naturelle in Le Havre shed light on the French activities in Port Jackson. These documents, transcribed and edited by Roger Martin and published together under the title of *Mémoire sur les établissements anglais à la Nouvelle Hollande, à la Terre de Diémen et dans les archipels du grand océan Pacifique*, can be read as complementary to Péron's official account in the *Voyage* and allow one to contextualize certain puzzling aspects of the earlier record.<sup>46</sup>

Péron's contention in the 100-page *Mémoire* is that he had, at an early stage, realized that the political aspect of the expedition was more important than the scientific aspect and that the latter was merely a cover for the real business of spying on the English:

The wisdom of the hero who commanded it, his profound views, as well as those of the new Council that he had just created, caused me at an early stage to envisage it much less as a scientific mission than as one of those combinations of enlightened and useful politics [. . .] Such was, Citizen Conseiller d'Etat, the real idea that I had from the beginning concerning the aims of our voyage and it was evident to me that the whole scientific apparatus brought into play on this occasion was merely an indispensable and safe way both to allay the jealous suspicions of the anxious English, and to supply the government with the most full and diverse information concerning everything it needed to discover and know.<sup>47</sup>

The *Mémoire* argues that the prosperity of the English colony and the imperialistic and arrogant annexation of New Holland by the English justify a French invasion and conquest of the colony at Port Jackson. Péron suggests why this would be useful as a global strategy for the French, and details the means by which such an invasion could be accomplished. The *Mémoire* is divided into five chapters: the first chapter gives a general tableau of all the English establishments in *Terra australis*; the second deals with the administrative and commercial state of the colonies, and the third with political considerations; the fourth and fifth chapters set out a plan for French conquest of the colony at Port Jackson and the strategies to be used to keep the colony once annexed.

Because of internal references, Martin believes that Péron may have begun writing the *Mémoire* as early as 1803 (during the voyage back to France) and that most of it was written by 1808, although the whole might not have been finished until 1810. The first document is addressed to Citizen Fourcroy, a member of the Conseil d'Etat,<sup>48</sup> and the following ones to "Monseigneur", indicating that these parts were written after the institution of the Empire on 18 May 1804.

The composition of the *Mémoire* is contemporaneous with that of the first volume of the *Voyage* and it becomes evident that there is more than a synchronic relationship between the two documents. When

one reads them in parallel, it is clear that the sections concerning Port Jackson were written each in relation to the other. Not only does Péron quote himself in one and the other document, but also the two accounts are complementary in their focus. The *Mémoire* with its overtly propagandist and political message and its systematically organized and closely argued proposal for conquest would appear to be the primary document, whereas the *Voyage*, as we have seen, anecdotal and disjointed when read alone, provides additional support for the arguments in the *Mémoire*, when read in that context.

The *Voyage*, then, can be read as a text supporting the political message of the *Mémoire*. Péron aimed at whetting the appetite of the French potential conquerors. He emphasized the desirability of the colony of Port Jackson, described in Utopian terms, and totally omitted any mention of the problems besetting the colony. Likewise, in his detailed descriptions of the French inhabitants he signalled to readers that there were compatriot allies living near Port Jackson who he had ascertained would be likely to be loyal to France in the event of an invasion. In the *Mémoire*, the primary document, Péron constructs a spy story in which he plays the role of the patriot hero. One is irresistibly reminded of the *modus operandi* of the misguided French patriot, Morand, whose story Péron had told in his *Voyage*.

Péron prides himself on having, as a patriotic duty, cultivated close relationships with and gained the confidence of the governor, Philip Gidley King, and other high-ranking members of the colony expressly in order to observe more closely and gain information about the workings of the colony and the intentions of the English:

The details into which I am about to enter in this respect will perhaps be sufficient to prove it to you [ . . . ] I nevertheless feel bound to observe that I may be the person who was most particularly engaged in this kind of research, and my relationships with the cream of Port Jackson society, as well as my position which made it possible for me to ask many questions which, from anyone else, could have appeared indiscreet, these reports, I can tell you, allowed me to gain my information from the most impeccable sources.<sup>49</sup>

The tone of his document alternates between admiration for the perfection of English colonial organization, and indignation at the English

appropriation of New South Wales. He asks "By what means has England been able to bring about such a vast, monstrous plan of invasion?"<sup>50</sup> But, ironically, the invasion about which he is indignant is not related to the rights of the indigenous peoples, whom he does not mention, but is referring rather to the English-French relationship.

In the second chapter, Péron describes the English colony. It is textually the same, except for the added introduction, as Péron's *Tableau général des Colonies Angloises aux Terres Australes en 1802*, which Freycinet included as Chapter XL of the second volume of the *Voyage*, published in 1816.<sup>51</sup> In a footnote, Freycinet noted Péron's omission of the Aborigines, but justified it, because there were not many of them and they stayed away from the English settlement.<sup>52</sup>

Péron believed that the English had purposefully misled Europe as to the nature of the colony, making believe that it "was inhabited only by a band of fearsome bandits and brigands, left as it were to their own devices"<sup>53</sup> in order to discourage interest from other nations. He cites the apocryphal *Memoirs* of Barrington, an Irish pickpocket, who after he had served his sentence was made police commissioner at Parramatta. Barrington's pseudo-memoirs were translated into French in 1804.<sup>54</sup>

Thus Péron considers the counterpropaganda represented by his commentaries in the *Voyage* necessary to achieve his aims. He describes in glowing terms the penal colony which he considers to be an amazing example of successful social engineering:

Never, perhaps, has a more interesting and curious subject for meditation been offered to the man of state or the philosopher, never, perhaps, has there been a more striking example of the absolute power of laws and institutions over individuals and peoples. The most perverse inclinations can be overcome by the strength of a good and strong administration. Botany Bay was to give us striking proof of this.<sup>55</sup>

Péron sees the redemptive power of hard labour as moulding the characters and bodies of the convicts, making them even more fitted than the free settlers to exploit the land and carve out an existence for themselves. Violent criminals become responsible landowners and prostitutes modest and model wives and mothers—the Antipodean Utopian dream. He sees the colony as becoming progressively more respectable as it is purged of its criminal elements. The most hardened are set the most

difficult and back-breaking tasks, which destroy them. Of the rest Péron observes:

Other more honest families soon enjoy the fruit of this work which could only be completed through the sacrifice of some individuals, and doubtless it is better that these be profoundly perverse men sullied by the most hideous crimes and who should meet with public opprobrium for all the days of their lives.<sup>56</sup>

Work in the colony, and likewise on Norfolk Island, is described as having the virtue of progressively purifying the colonists and their settlements. But the other side of the coin of these "wise and philanthropic institutions" is the motivation behind the English colonization, which Péron sees as being characterized by "ambition, injustice and exclusive domination".

Péron's third chapter, then, will deal with these political considerations. The main thrust of his argument is that the English have claimed possession of New Holland as a strategic base for taking over the islands of the Pacific and for an attack on the Spanish possessions in South America. According to this scenario, the English, rather than conquering the Peruvians, will persuade them to get rid of the Spanish and to govern themselves. This will provoke an uprising that will see the Spanish driven out and the English entering into a successful trading relationship with the Peruvians. Péron urges that the French conquer the English colony before it can carry out these plans.

In Chapter 4, Péron analyses the defences of Port Jackson and then sets out a strategy for the French invasion of the colony. He proposes that, after subduing the English settlement in the D'Entrecasteaux channel, the French annex Port Jackson and the other English possessions likewise. His plan is that the French invaders land in Botany Bay and cross the country separating it from Sydney Cove, surprising the English in the dead of night.<sup>57</sup> Péron foresees little resistance as, although he has great respect for Paterson, he believes that the English soldiers under his command are inexperienced and cowardly. As allies, he believes that the French can count on the Irish political deportees to aid them in the conquest and then subsequently to aid in maintaining control of the colony:

How many times did we see all these unfortunate deportees, with tears in their eyes, curse England, implore Bonaparte and call for vengeance on their oppressors?<sup>58</sup>

Péron, in his grand plan, imagines the French then creating an alliance with the Spanish to keep the English away from the coasts of South America. Napoleon, who inspired these delirious extravagances, would have been the only person capable of entering into them. Napoleon's pre-occupations, however, were at that time centred squarely on blocking Britain's access to European markets for trading the products of its colonies, rather than seeking conquests further afield. However, too late, and in the context of the defence of the Ile de France in 1810, he does suggest that he is cognisant of Péron's suggestions:

It is to be suggested that on the arrival of these expeditions the English colony of Jackson to the South of the Ile de France could be taken as it has considerable resources.<sup>59</sup>

Taken together, it is clear that the focus of the two documents centred on Port Jackson is on the colony's desirability as a strategic possession. What is most unexpected in Péron's *Mémoire* is the dismissive way in which he speaks of the avowedly scientific aims of the expedition, relegating them to a mere cover for France's territorial ambitions. This is surprising for two reasons, the first being the elaborate detail of the instructions given to the members of the expedition and the hopes expressed by so many eminent French scientists for its success, and secondly because Péron, as well as the other scientists, in general carried out their scientific observations in a detailed and scrupulous manner.

But it is important to remember that Péron's account was written after the event, and that Péron was responding to the political climate in which he found himself on his return to France in 1804 and constructing his narrative in that context. It is well documented that, on their return, the members of the expedition did not receive the recognition they had hoped. Baudin had died in the Ile de France on the return journey and his reputation had suffered because of various accusations made, not the least of which was Péron's criticism of him. In spite of the rich documentation and the many natural specimens brought back to France, there was a lack of interest in the expedition on the return of the voyagers and it was

generally considered to have been a failure. Péron only obtained permission to write the official account after much argument.

In this climate, it is perhaps then understandable that Péron's focus turned towards the political arena, which corresponded more closely to the interest of those in power. When in the Ile de France, he had been asked by the Governor, Decaen, to provide him with a report on the colony at Port Jackson, some elements of which he was to use in the *Mémoire*. This report, allied to Péron's negative judgments of the Aborigines in Van Diemen's Land, and his consequent marginalization of the Aborigines of Port Jackson, gave him a positive theme in which the ideologies of work, progress and wealth creation, all found lacking in the Aborigines, formed the basis for his imperialistic dream. Péron died in 1810. It is possible that he was planning to write a study of the Aborigines, as Louis Freycinet suggested in the second edition of the *Voyage*, published in 1824.<sup>60</sup> However, knowing that he was ill, Péron gave priority to the political over the anthropological, just as Eurocentric preoccupations were favoured over more broadly anthropological ones in the overweening territorialism of the Napoleonic years.

All in all, then, the Baudin expedition's stay in Port Jackson signalled a failure in its own terms, as it neither generated detailed anthropological observations of the native inhabitants, nor the blueprint for the successful invasion of the colony by the French. However, in the traces it left, both the rich iconography and the many written documents, it provides on the one hand, almost inadvertently, a glimpse of an Aboriginal world long gone from the shores of Sydney, and on the other an interesting sidelight on French-English relations at the other end of the world at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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#### Notes

1. "Le Sieur de La Pérouse, dans toutes les occasions, en usera avec beaucoup de douceur et d'humanité envers les différents peuples qu'il visitera dans le cours de son voyage. Il s'occupera avec zèle et intérêt de tous les moyens possibles qui peuvent améliorer leur condition, en procurant à leur pays les légumes, les fruits et les arbres utiles d'Europe; en leur enseignant la manière de les semer

- et de les cultiver". *Voyage de La Pérouse autour du Monde*, publié conformément au décret du 22 avril 1791 et rédigé par M. L. A. Milet-Mureau, t. 1, Paris, Imprimerie de la République, 1797, p. 54.
2. Joseph-Marie Degérando, *Considerations on the Various Methods to Follow in the Observation of Savage Peoples*, [1800], trans. F. C. T. Moore with a preface by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1969, p. 60. In French in *Aux Origines de l'anthropologie française*, textes publiés et présentés par Jean Copans et Jean Jamin, Paris, Ed. Le Sycomore, 1978.
  3. "en vain agité [. . .] dans de vaines théories". *Considérations*, p. 130.
  4. In French, the terms *sauvages* and *naturels* are used interchangeably at this time.
  5. *Considerations*, p. 63. "Le voyageur philosophe qui navigue vers les extrémités de la terre, traverse en effet la suite des âges; il voyage dans le passé; chaque pas qu'il fait est un siècle qu'il franchit. Ces îles inconnues auxquelles il atteint, sont pour lui le berceau de la société humaine." *Considérations*, p. 131.
  6. *Considerations*, p. 68.
  7. "Has a savage people the idea of property? If it is a grazing or hunting tribe, it lacks no doubt the idea of territorial property; but then, has it not at least the idea of property in its instruments, and in the objects won by its efforts?". *Considerations*, p. 94.
  8. "What is patriotism in the heart of the savage? Is it a feeling of affection for all those who live with him in a common society? Is it attachment to the soil on which he lives, to the life that he leads, to the habits by which he is ruled? [. . .] What is the force of this patriotism, and by what outer signs is it displayed?". *Considerations*, p. 99.
  9. However, what should we think of his idea that the travellers should attempt to persuade a family of Savages to transplant themselves to Europe so that anthropologists might observe them? Eurocentrism and the strong nexus between knowledge and possession that it implies are never far from the Enlightenment consciousness. "[. . .] it would be desirable if a whole family could be persuaded to come back with them. In that case, the individuals composing it, [. . .] would [. . .] preserve their natural character [. . .] the relations between them would make the spectacle of their life at once more interesting and more instructive for us. We should have in miniature the model of that society in which they were reared. So the naturalist is not content to bring back a branch, a flower that is soon withered. He tries to transplant the whole tree or plant, to give it a second life on our soil". *Considerations*, p. 101.
  10. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 103. "un monde nouveau se formant peut-être aux extrémités de la terre; le globe entier couvert d'habitants plus heureux et plus sages, plus également partagés, plus étroitement unis, la société s'élevant à de plus rapides progrès par une plus grande émulation, et atteignant peut-être par ces



révolutions inattendues, cette perfection qu'invoquent nos vœux, mais auquel contribuent si peu et nos lumières, et nos méthodes, et nos livres! [...] Voyez combien les découvertes de Colomb changèrent la face de la société [...] Mais Colomb ne jeta dans le Nouveau Monde que d'avidés conquérants; et vous ne vous avancez vers les peuples du Sud qu'en pacificateurs et en amis". *Considérations*, pp. 168-169.

12. My translation. "Les dessins qui se trouvent dans les voyages modernes, quoique faits sur les lieux, se ressentent plus ou moins des règles et des proportions que le dessinateur avait apprises dans les écoles d'Europe, et il n'en est presque aucun sur lequel le naturaliste puisse assez compter pour en faire la base de recherches ultérieures." Georges-Léopold-Chrétien-Frédéric-Dagobert Cuvier, *Instructions sur l'anthropologie et les recherches à faire en faveur de cette branche de la science, dans un voyage autour du monde, rédigées par Cuvier, en 1800, pour l'expédition commandée par le capitaine Baudin, et ayant servi de guide à Péron pour ses recherches pendant toute la durée de l'expédition*, quoted in M. Girard, *François Péron, Naturaliste, voyageur aux terres australes*, Paris, Moulins, 1857, p. 266.
13. "L'influence que ces diverses structures peuvent avoir sur les facultés morales et intellectuelles de ces diverses races a été appréciée jusqu'à un certain point, et l'expérience semble assez d'accord avec la théorie dans tout ce qui concerne les rapports entre la perfection de l'esprit et la beauté de la figure." *Ibid.*, p. 265.
14. *Observations sur l'Anthropologie et l'Histoire naturelle de l'homme, la nécessité de s'occuper de l'avancement de cette science et l'importance de l'Admission sur la Flotte du Capitaine Baudin d'un ou plusieurs Naturalistes spécialement chargés de recherches à faire sur cet objet*, Paris, Imprimerie de Stoupe, l'an 8.
15. "l'homme dégénéré et vil de la société", "le progrès même de notre civilisation".
16. "1. La perfection morale ne doit-elle pas être en raison inverse de la perfection physique? 2. Cette perfection physique n'exclut-elle pas non seulement la sensibilité morale, mais encore la sensibilité physique elle-même?" *Ibid.*, p. 12.
17. *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes, exécuté par ordre de sa majesté l'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes Le Géographe et Le Naturaliste et la goëlette Le Casuarina pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*, publié par décret impérial sous le ministère de M. de Champagny, et rédigé par M. F. Péron, naturaliste de l'expédition, correspondant de l'Institut de France, de la Société de l'Ecole de Médecine de Paris, des Sociétés philomatique et médicale de la même ville, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807.
18. The title-page of the second volume reads: *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes, exécuté sur les corvettes Le Géographe et Le Naturaliste et la goëlette Le Casuarina pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*; publié par ordre de son excellence le ministre secrétaire d'état de l'intérieur. Historique, tome second. Rédigé en partie par feu F. Péron, et continué par

Louis Freycinet, Capitaine de frégate, Chevalier de Saint-Louis et de la Légion d'honneur, Correspondant de l'Académie royale des sciences de Paris, de la Société des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Rochefort, de la Société philomatique, &c.; Commandant du Casuarina pendant l'expédition, Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1816.

19. Baudin's "Journal historique" has only recently been published as *Mon Voyage aux Terres australes: Journal personnel du commandant Baudin*, texte établi par Jacqueline Bonnemains, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 2000. The "Journal de mer" appeared in English translation as *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin, Commander in Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste; assigned by order of the government to a voyage of discovery*, ed. and trans. Christine Cornell, Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974.
20. On this see my previous articles: "F.-A. Péron et l'écriture de la science", in *Les Français et l'Australie: Voyages de découvertes et missions scientifiques de 1756 à nos jours*, ed. A. Dommergues and Maryvonne Nedeljkovic, Le Havre, Université de Paris X, 1989, pp. 121-132 (also published in *Cahiers de sociologie économique et culturelle*, 9, 1988, pp. 37-46 and a later version in English: "Anthropology and Myth: the Antipodean Other in F.-A. Péron's *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes*", in *Australian Aborigines and the French*, ed. Maurice Blackman, Kensington, N.S.W., University of New South Wales, The French-Australian Research Centre, Occasional Monograph n° 3, 1990, pp. 137-147); "The Baudin Expedition: Natural Man and the Imaginary Antipodean", in *Two Hundred Years of the French Revolution: Proceedings of the Sixth George Rudé Seminar, Melbourne, 2-4 July 1988*, ed. David Garrioch, Clayton, Vic., Dept of History, Monash University, 1989, pp. 149-159; "Perceptions of the Aborigines Recorded during the Baudin Expedition: the Dynamics of First Encounter", in *Australia In Between Cultures: Specialist Session Papers from the 1998 Australian Academy of the Humanities Symposium*, ed. Bruce Bennett, Canberra, Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1999, pp. 55-76.
21. Miranda Hughes, "Philosophical Travellers at the Ends of the Earth: Baudin, Péron and the Tasmanians", in *Australian Science in the Making*, ed. R. W. Home, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 23-44.
22. "Avec des hommes aussi farouches, nos rapports ont été, sinon rares, au moins difficiles et périlleux, et la plupart de nos entrevues [...] se sont terminées par des agressions hostiles de leur part." *Voyage de découvertes*, I, p. 448.
23. The *Naturaliste* had arrived there first on 26 April, but left again on 18 May, returning a week after the arrival of the *Géographe* on 17 June 1802.
24. "Les rues et les maisons se montrèrent à nos yeux comme un jeu de Domino placé sur un tapis de verdure". Pierre-Bernard Milius, *Voyage aux Terres australes*, transcribed and edited by Jacqueline Bonnemains and Pascale Hauguel, Le Havre, Société havraise d'études diverses et Muséum d'histoire naturelle, 1987, p. 42.

25. "[J]e n'ai pas vu sans un étonnement meslé d'admiration les travaux immenses qu'ont faits les Anglais depuis douze ans qu'ils sont établis au Port Jackson, quoiqu'ils aient commencé avec de grands moyens et fait de grandes dépenses, il n'en est pas moins difficile de concevoir comment ils sont si promptement parvenus à l'état de splendeur et d'aisance dans lesquels ils se trouvent presentement...". Lettre de Baudin à Jussieu, le 13 vendémiaire, an 10, Bibliothèque du Muséum d'Histoire naturelle, Ms 2082, fol. 4<sup>r</sup>.
26. "combien ne dûmes-nous pas être étonnés [...] de l'état florissant de cette colonie singulière et lointaine! La beauté du port fixoit tous les regards". *Voyage de découvertes*, I, p. 368.
27. Peace treaty between France and England, according to which England agreed to return the colonies conquered, except Trinity and Ceylon, to France and her allies, Spain and Holland, and the French agreed to leave the ports of Otranto, Taranto and Brindisi. The peace lasted only thirteen months.
28. "Tandis que ces divers objets appeloient ainsi nos méditations les plus profondes, tous les administrateurs et tous les citoyens de la colonie se pressaient autour de nous pour réparer nos maux, pour nous les faire oublier [...] Tout ce que le pays pouvoit offrir de ressources fut mis à notre disposition". *Voyage de découvertes*, I, p. 377.
29. Péron evokes France's help of Cook and Vancouver and says that the English often repeated the axiom "que la France inscrivit la première au code des nations Européennes: 'la cause des sciences est la cause des peuples'". Ibid., I, p. 378.
30. "on distingue la fumée de quelques feux: ce sont ceux des hordes malheureuses qui vivent sur ces tristes rivages". Ibid., I, p. 379.
31. "L'intérêt du voyageur s'accroît encore, lorsqu'il vient à visiter l'intérieur des habitations qu'il rencontre. Sous ces toits agrestes, au milieu de ces forêts profondes, habitent en paix des brigands qui étoient naguère la terreur de l'Europe [...] Tous ces malheureux, jadis le rebut et la honte de leur patrie, sont devenus, par la plus inconcevable des métamorphoses, des cultivateurs laborieux, des citoyens heureux et paisibles. Nulle part, en effet, on n'entend parler de meurtres ou de vols; la sécurité la plus parfaite règne à cet égard dans toute la colonie". Ibid., I, p. 382.
32. "Avec quelle douce satisfaction je m'empressai de raconter à cet intéressant compatriote toute cette suite de prodiges par lesquels un grand homme étoit enfin parvenu à rendre le bonheur et la paix à notre patrie commune! Avec quel intérêt mon récit fut écouté! Avec quelle effusion de cœur le bon M. DE LA CLAMPE adressa des vœux au ciel pour le bonheur du PREMIER CONSUL et pour sa conservation!". Ibid., I, p. 432.
33. "Combien il diffère [...] soit au moral, soit au physique, de ces tableaux séduisants que l'imagination et l'enthousiasme créèrent pour lui, et que l'esprit de système voulut ensuite opposer à notre état social!". Ibid., I, p. 448.

34. "Le développement de la force physique n'est pas toujours en raison directe du défaut de civilisation; il n'est pas un produit constant, il n'est pas un résultat nécessaire de l'état sauvage". Ibid., I, p. 457.
35. "Images of Natural Man", in *Baudin in Australian Waters*, ed. Jacqueline Bonnemains, Elliott Forsyth and Bernard Smith, Melbourne, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988, pp. 35-64, esp. p. 46.
36. "supposons pour un instant que ces enfans déshérités de la nature viennent à déposer leurs mœurs féroces et vagabondes; supposons que, réunis en tribus plus nombreuses, ils se rassemblent dans des villages; [...] supposons que le droit de propriété vienne exciter au milieu d'eux une heureuse émulation; [...] Combien les ressources de l'homme ne vont-elles pas se multiplier! Combien ne va-t-il pas se trouver loin de ce dénuement déplorable dans lequel il traîne maintenant sa précaire existence!  
Déjà ne croit-on pas voir les diverses espèces de Kangaroos, devenues domestiques, pululler autour de sa cabane!" *Voyage de découvertes*, I, pp. 466-467.
37. "La plupart et c'est le plus grand nombre se sont retirés très avant dans l'intérieur du pays où ils continuent à vivre à leur manière, ils se promènent habituellement dans la ville et dans la campagne, ils ne sont d'aucune utilité". Louis P. Rivière, "Un périple en Nouvelle Hollande au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Comptes-rendus mensuels des séances de l'Académie des Sciences coloniales*, 13, 1953, pp. 571-589.
38. "Le Gouvernement anglais malgré différentes tentatives n'a point encore trouvé le moyen de fixer dans les environs de ces Etablissements les Naturels qui occupoient le terrain dont ils se sont emparé. La plupart et c'est le plus grand nombre se sont retirés très avant dans l'intérieur du pays où ils continuent vivre à leur manière, ils se promènent habituellement dans la ville et dans la campagne, ils ne sont d'aucune utilité. La seule remarque qui puisse intéresser à l'égard de ces derniers c'est qu'ils ont fait beaucoup plus de progrès dans la langue Anglaise que les anglois dans la leur". Letter cited, fol. 47<sup>r</sup>.
39. "Il paraîtra bien étonnant, sans doute, que la civilisation n'ait fait aucun progrès parmi ces peuples depuis plus de quinze ans que les anglais habitent cette isle. Ils furent d'abord effrayés de leurs nouveaux hôtes, mais cependant ils se familiarisèrent peu à peu à les voir, sans témoigner aucun desir de changer de condition. Le gouverneur fit plusieurs tentatives pour les engager à s'occuper chez les européens. Il en prit plusieurs à son service. Mais à peine avaient ils passé deux ou trois jours avec eux, qu'ils les abandonnaient pour se livrer à leur penchant naturel qui est l'indolence". *Voyage aux Terres australes*, p. 48.
40. "qu'il n'y avait pas de meilleur pays au monde que le sien et qu'il ne voulait pas le quitter". Ibid., p. 49.
41. "D'après la répugnance que Banedou a témoigné pour nos usages, il est impossible d'espérer de ramener les sauvages de ce pays à quelques idées de civi-

lisation. Ce sont de véritables bêtes brutes qu'il faut laisser vivre à leurs manières". Loc. cit.

42. *Captain Cook in Australia. Extracts from the Journals of Captain James Cook*, ed. A. W. Reed, Sydney, 1969, pp. 136-137, "Some Account of New South Wales". Quoted by Walter Veit in *Australia and the European Imagination*, ed. Ian Donaldson, Canberra, Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, 1982, p. 131.
43. Most are to be found in the collections of the Muséum d'Histoire naturelle in Le Havre and some in the Muséum National d'Histoire naturelle in Paris.
44. "ils craignent [...] que nous n'ayons le projet de nous établir dans le Canal d'Entrecasteaux en ce qu'ils prétendent à la Souveraineté de l'Isle de Diemen en vertu de la prise de possession faite en l'an 1788 dont les limites sont rapportées dans le voyage de Philipès. Je suis persuadé que par la crainte de nous avoir pour voisin ils vont faire occuper cette partie de la Terre de Diémen afin de tacher de constater d'une manière authentique leur droit de propriété; s'il en est ainsi ce sera véritablement une perte pour la France car un Etablissement au sud de la Terre de Diemen ne peut que procurer de grands avantages de commerce et que la politique semble même nous commander. Le sol de cette partie est sans contredite meilleur que celui de Port Jackson et de ses environs et les ports tout aussi multipliés que ceux des anglais soit à Sydney, soit à Port Jackson". Letter cited, fol. 46<sup>v</sup>.
45. In his recent book, *Ill-Starred Captains: Flinders and Baudin* (Adelaide, Crawford House Publishing, 2000, pp. 266-268), Anthony J. Brown discusses the documents from the young Irish political prisoner, William Maum, contending that the French had attempted to persuade him to give information about the colony in exchange for his being enlisted in the French Republican army in Mauritius, preparatory to a French invasion of Port Jackson.
46. *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon*, 176, 1998, pp. 11-172. Some of the material in these documents is also to be found in the report Péron made to Decaen.
47. "La sagesse du héros qui l'ordonnait, ses vues profondes et celles aussi du nouveau Conseil qu'il venait de former, me la firent envisager de bonne heure bien moins comme une opération scientifique que comme une de ces combinaisons de la politique la plus éclairée, la plus utile [...] Tel fut, Citoyen Conseiller d'Etat, l'idée réelle que je me suis faite d'abord du but de notre voyage et tout l'appareil scientifique déployé à son occasion ne me parut qu'un moyen indispensable autant qu'il était sûr, soit pour écarter les soupçons jaloux de l'inquiète Angleterre, soit aussi pour fournir au gouvernement des renseignements plus divers et plus nombreux aussi sur tout ce qu'il importait de connaître et d'apprendre". Ibid., pp. 22-23. Baudin had received "Instructions particulières" before his departure from Forfait, the Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies, dated 29 September 1800. They concerned the economic and military observations to be carried out. Forfait wanted both a scientific expedition, principally on the science of man, but also a political

mission: "trouver quelque part, comme Pondichéry dans l'Indoustan, planter l'étendard de Bonaparte sur le premier point convenable".

48. Antoine François de Fourcroy had taught chemistry at the Muséum d'Histoire naturelle and other establishments since 1793. He was a member of the Conseil d'Etat from 25 December 1799 and Directeur Général de l'Instruction publique from 20 September 1802.

49. "Les détails dans lesquels je vais entrer à cet égard suffiront peut-être pour vous le prouver [...] Je crois néanmoins devoir vous observer ici que je peux être celui qui me suis le plus spécialement livré aux recherches de ce genre, et mes rapports avec les personnes les plus recommandables du Port Jackson joint à mon titre qui me permettait de faire beaucoup de questions qui, de la part de tout autre, auraient pu paraître indiscrettes, ces rapports, dis-je, m'ont permis de puiser mes renseignements aux meilleures sources". *Mémoire*, pp. 23–24. There are several pieces of evidence to suggest that Péron's intentions were recognized. A remark from George Paterson in a work published in 1811 gives a key to English suspicions:

Already has the nascent colony of New South Wales excited the cupidity of the la grande nation; for it is clearly evident that the sole object of Bonaparte in dispatching Peron and Baudit [sic] on a pretended voyage of discovery round the world, was to observe what our colonists were doing, and what was left to the French to do, on this great continent in the event of peace; to find some port in the neighbourhood of our settlements, which should be to them what Pondicherry was to Hindostan; to rear the standard of Napoleon [sic], the First Consul, on the first convenient spot; and finally, to gratify his vanity by snatching the merit of discovery from its rightful possessors, and imposing his name on nine hundred leagues of coast.

(*The History of New South Wales, from its first discovery to the present time: comprising an accurate and interesting description of that vast and remarkable country*, compiled from the best and most recent authorities by G. Paterson, Newcastle-on-Tyne, MacKenzie and Dent, 1811.)

Sir John Barrow's (Second Secretary to the Admiralty) review of Péron's *Voyage* (*Quarterly Review*, IV, n° VII, August 1810, quoted by Brown, *Ill-Starred Captains*, p. 262) echoes Forfait and Paterson:

The perusal of M. Péron's book has convinced us that [the French] application was grounded on false pretences and that the passport was fraudulently obtained; that there never was any intention to send these vessels on a voyage of discovery *around the world* as stated, but that the sole object of it was to ascertain the real state of New Holland; to discover what our colonists were doing, and what was left for the French to do, on this great continent, in the event of a peace; to find some port in the neighbourhood of our settlements [and] rear the standard of Buonaparte, then First Consul, on the first convenient spot; and finally, that the only

circumnavigation intended in this *voyage d'espionage*, was that of Australia.

50. "Par quels moyens l'Angleterre aura-t-elle pu consommer un projet d'envahissement aussi vaste, aussi monstrueux?". *Mémoire*, p. 49.
51. Freycinet notes that he considers this title preferable to that of "'Histoire des Colonies Angloises' qui avait été annoncé".
52. "On pourroit y ajouter les indigènes; mais ces derniers, qui sont peu nombreux et vivent avec les Anglois en assez bonne intelligence, n'ont pu encore être amenés aux premiers commencemens de la civilisation. Les Anglois laissent à ces sauvages toute liberté de suivre leurs goûts et leurs habitudes, et ne cherchent point à les asservir; rarement ils ont été obligés de se garantir de leurs coups, même dans l'origine de la fondation de la colonie." *Voyage de découvertes*, II, p. 394.
53. "n'est habitée que par une bande de bandits et de brigands redoutables, abandonnés en quelque sorte à leurs propres volontés". *Mémoire*, p. 54.
54. *Voyage et transportation du fameux Barrington à Botany Bay, dans la Nouvelle Hollande*, A Paris chez J. E. Gabriel Dufour, an XII, 1804.
55. "Jamais peut-être un sujet plus intéressant et plus curieux ne s'offrait à la méditation de l'homme d'Etat et du philosophe, jamais peut-être l'on n'eut d'exemple plus éclatant de la toute puissance des lois et des institutions sur le caractère des individus et des peuples. Les inclinations les plus perverses peuvent céder à la force d'une bonne et vigoureuse administration. Botany Bay va nous en fournir la preuve éclatante". *Mémoires*, p. 54.
56. "D'autres familles plus honnêtes jouissent bientôt du fruit de ce travail qui ne pouvait être achevé que par le sacrifice de quelques individus, et sans doute il vaut mieux que ce soient des hommes profondément pervers que les crimes les plus hideux ont souillés et que le mépris public doit accabler durant tout le cours de leur existence". *Ibid.*, p. 69.
57. Another document in the hands of Decaen (*Ill-Starred Captains*, p. 268, and thought by Brown to be from Milius) suggests an attack from Broken Bay, a possibility rejected by Péron because of the difficult terrain between Broken Bay and Port Jackson.
58. "Combien de fois n'avons-nous pas vu tous ces malheureux déportés, les yeux baignés de larmes, se répandre en imprécations contre l'Angleterre, implorer Bonaparte et appeler sur leurs oppresseurs le moment de la vengeance?". *Mémoire*, p. 147.
59. "On proposerait, à l'arrivée de ces expéditions, de faire prendre la colonie anglaise de Jackson qui est au Sud de l'Île de France et où l'on trouverait des ressources considérables". *Napoléon I<sup>er</sup> Correspondance*, t. xx, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1866, 9 juin 1810, n° 16, 544, p. 467, cited in Jean-Paul Faivre, *L'Expansion française dans le Pacifique de 1800 à 1842*, Paris, Nouvelles Editions latines, 1953, p. 182.

60. *Voyage de découvertes*, Seconde édition revue, corrigée et augmentée par M. Louis de Freycinet, Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824. p. xv: "un ouvrage sur les peuples sauvages visités pendant l'expédition, mais que la mort prématurée de Péron n'a pas permis de composer".