

# EARLY COLONIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS FRANCE AND THE FRENCH

KENNETH R. DUTTON

The British actor Arthur Lowe, best known for his appearance as Captain Mainwaring in the TV series *Dad's Army*, was again cast in his signature role as a pompous fool in the later series entitled *Potter*, written by Roy Clarke. As Redvers Potter, the retired owner of a confectionery firm ("Potter Mints the Hotter Mints"), he exemplified the same bourgeois pretentiousness that would be incarnated a generation later by Hyacinth Bucket (pronounced "Bouquet") in *Keeping Up Appearances*. In one particular episode, Potter is sampling a French wine he has just purchased—probably a *vin ordinaire*—which he treats as though it were a Mouton-Rothschild *premier grand cru classé*. Holding it up to the light, swirling it around in his glass, sniffing its aroma, and finally taking a mouthful, he eventually exclaims: "Aah! I love all things French." To which he adds, as an afterthought: "Except the French."

When one considers the early colonial society of New South Wales in its attitudes towards France and the French, one can hardly avoid the impression of a similar duality or ambiguity. In the present article, I would like to sketch out the general social context, before moving on to examine in closer detail two examples which seem to me to illustrate this point.

\* \* \*

It must be remembered, of course, that from the very earliest days of the colony France itself had been seen as a political threat, if not at all times an enemy. The Revolution of 1789 followed closely on the British settlement at Sydney Cove, and the consciousness of French interest in the region—stimulated by the visit of La Pérouse so soon after Phillip's raising of the British flag<sup>1</sup>—was a foretaste of that suspicion of France's presence in this part of the world which was to remain an undercurrent, at the very least, of Australian colonial polity for generations to come. The Revolution, which caused so much concern to the Home Government—particularly as it was seen as a potential pattern for an Irish uprising<sup>2</sup>—was merely a harbinger of worse to come, with the subsequent rise of Napoleon (First Consul in 1799 and Emperor in 1804) and the outbreak of the Peninsular War in 1808. From then, at least until the time of Waterloo (1815), not only in Britain itself but in the colony of New South Wales, France was seen not merely as "an enemy" but as "the enemy".

This is not the place for a detailed account of the often ambiguous relations between naturalists and explorers such as Baudin and Péron on the one hand, and the colonial authorities on the other. Recent work such as that of Edward Duyker and Christine Cornell on Péron,<sup>3</sup> and that of Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath and John West-Sooby on Baudin,<sup>4</sup> will be well known to readers of *Explorations*. Suffice it to recall here that Governor King was by no means inimical towards the French: as Anthony Brown has commented,

Captain Philip Gidley King RN, the third Governor of New South Wales (1800–1806), was mercifully free of the xenophobia common among senior officers of the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. Whereas Lord Nelson detested the French and habitually called them villains, King admired French culture and spoke the language fluently.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding this goodwill, Péron's patriotism led him to upset King and to make Matthew Flinders suspicious. Moreover, despite King's extending "a sincere welcome" and "every relief and assistance in my power" to Nicolas Baudin and his ships *Le Géographe* and *Le Naturaliste*,<sup>6</sup> Baudin's use of the nomenclature "Terre Napoléon" for those parts of the Australian south coast visited by him was so inflammatory as to cause King to hoist the British flag rather ostentatiously under Baudin's nose on King Island. Upon King's making it clear that Van Diemen's Land was British and that a settlement would be formed there within months, one frustrated French officer declared: "We are forestalled everywhere!"<sup>7</sup>

Nor did Wellington's victory at Waterloo put an end to Britain's concerns as to French ambitions in the Pacific generally and Australia in particular. When Louis-Claude de Freycinet, who had been one of Baudin's junior officers in his 1800–1803 expedition to Australia, made a further visit in 1819, he met with a similar wariness on the part of the authorities, despite being hospitably entertained (along with his stowaway wife Rose) by Governor and Mrs Macquarie. In his book *The Mermaid Tree*, an account of the voyages of Phillip Parker King and the international competition for antipodean bases after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Robert Tiley has written that Freycinet's voyage

was proposed as a voyage of scientific rather than geographic discovery—and sensibly so. Not only were its scientific aims bona fide and unarguable, but any geographic targets of interest might have been perceived as potential territorial claims. France was still paying

reparations for the Napoleonic Wars, with Allied occupation troops in Paris and their diplomats closely watching the French government.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the mission entrusted to Phillip Parker King (the son of Governor Philip Gidley King) was quite explicit: as Sir Joseph Banks wrote to Governor Macquarie, King's voyage was one "in which it is very much wished that he may anticipate the French who are fitting out a Ship for the same purposes".<sup>9</sup> While King's coastal surveys in the *Mermoid* and the *Bathurst* did not result in any significant new discoveries, he was able to open up a number of new sea-routes; his crowning achievement, however, as far as the British were concerned, was that he pre-empted the French around the Australian coastline.

The mid-1820s saw, if anything, a rise in French interest in the area. Right-wing forces in France during the reign of Charles X had renewed political enthusiasm for the establishment of penal colonies on the west coast of Australia, and this was certainly part of the motivation behind the 1822 voyage of Duperrey and Dumont d'Urville: though ostensibly (and, to be fair, in reality) a voyage for hydrographic and botanical purposes, the *Coquille* also had the mission of examining King George's Sound for suitability as a colony, noting France's existing claim to that coastline since 1772.<sup>10</sup> A similar mission was entrusted to Hyacinthe de Bougainville in 1824, who was instructed to survey the mouth of the Swan River—this particular voyage not even being carried out under the cloak of scientific investigation: Bougainville's *Thétis* was in fact a warship, carrying no scientists, artists or naturalists at all.

While Governor Brisbane had politely entertained Dumont d'Urville on Duperrey's earlier visit, the meeting in 1826 between Dumont d'Urville and Governor Darling was of a somewhat more fraught nature. Lord Bathurst had written privately to Darling, noting that the "sailing of two French ships on a Voyage of discovery" had caused concern within the British Government as to the possibility of the French establishing themselves on the West Australian coast.<sup>11</sup> By the time Dumont d'Urville met Darling, he learned with disappointment that the latter had despatched Major Lockyer to the west coast to destroy any French ambitions for settlement there. Rather than make a fuss over the fact that he had actually beaten Lockyer to King George's Sound, Dumont d'Urville instead set his sights on New Zealand.

Political instability in France following the July Revolution of 1830, which led to the expulsion of the Bourbon king Charles X and his replace-

ment by the duc d'Orléans (later to become King Louis-Philippe), took much of the heat out of the British establishment's almost pathological fear of French territorial ambitions, the more so as the new king was to embark on a policy of *entente* with Britain. Indeed, his influential minister Guizot was a decided admirer of Britain and its institutions. Dumont d'Urville's 1837 expedition to South America and the Pacific was to take in Australia, but no longer with any *arrière-pensée* involving territorial claims. French interest in the Pacific would turn instead to New Caledonia, Tahiti and French Polynesia generally.

Yet despite the atmosphere of suspicion and at times open enmity which had characterized relations between France and Britain (and, by extension, Britain's colonies) since the final decade or so of the previous century, there were a number of countervailing forces which need to be kept in mind. For one thing, French was still widely understood (if not necessarily spoken) as the major foreign language learned by the educated classes. If one looks, for instance, at the early governors of New South Wales, one is struck by the fact that—although many of them were of quite humble origin (at least until the time of the aristocratic Governor FitzRoy in the late 1840s)—most of them showed a high standard of education, including a knowledge of foreign languages. The first governor, Arthur Phillip, the son of a ship steward, was fluent in both French and Portuguese.<sup>12</sup> His successor John Hunter, son of a captain in the Merchant Navy, had been a good Latinist at school.<sup>13</sup> Ensign Francis Barrallier, the subject of a substantial article by Valerie Lhuedé in an earlier number of *Explorations*,<sup>14</sup> did not hesitate to send Governor King reports of his explorations written in French.<sup>15</sup> Nor did the convict-turned-entrepreneur François Girard have any qualms about using his own native language in writing to Governor Brisbane,<sup>16</sup> who was a corresponding member of the Institut.<sup>17</sup> Governor Bourke, for his part, was an excellent Spanish speaker,<sup>18</sup> and during his student days at the Royal Military College at High Wycombe had attended the lectures given in French by the College's co-founder General François Jarry.<sup>19</sup> Similar observations could be made about the increasing numbers of free settlers, especially those who were to make up the political and social establishment of the colony.

\* \* \*

An illuminating example of the experiences undergone by some French nationals who found themselves living in Australia is provided by

one of the people just named—François Girard, whose story I outlined in a recent number of *Explorations*<sup>20</sup> and who appears to have been a consistent victim of anti-French feeling on the part of Governor Darling and his Colonial Secretary Alexander McLeay.

Two points should be made immediately. In the first instance, Girard was not always an easy person to deal with. A man of volatile temper, he seems to have been involved in constant disputation with someone or other, the outcome often being a court case. Equally, the authoritarian Governor Ralph Darling was, outside his inner circle, deeply unpopular—a characteristic which was to lead to his ultimate recall to London amid accusations of maladministration. Though the claims were largely orchestrated by W. C. Wentworth and other emancipists, Darling saw Girard (“an alien and a convict”) as being implicated in them, relations between the two men having deteriorated from the polite to the venomous. To some extent, their relationship was as much a clash of personalities as a case (as Girard saw it) of xenophobia and victimization.

The second point which needs to be kept in mind is that a number of members of the young colony who were of French origin seem to have been well accepted by the establishment. One might cite, for instance, the case of Francis Barrallier, who was mentioned above. Though turned down by the Secretary of State for the Colonies for the position of Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales, he was given permission to go out with the new governor, Philip Gidley King and his family, and subsequently became a member of the governor’s household, conversing in French with King’s wife and daughter. King even took the step of appointing Barrallier an ensign in the New South Wales Corps “until His Majesty’s pleasure be known”.<sup>21</sup> Regrettably, the two men were later to fall out over a personal matter, and Barrallier submitted his resignation. Whilst annoyed at his protégé’s behaviour, King nonetheless wrote to Sir Joseph Banks describing him as a young man of talent. Though he added “but I fear not much sincerity”,<sup>22</sup> it is clear that he wrote as much in sorrow as in anger.

Another French-speaking member of colonial society who appears to have been well accepted, at least by the colonial authorities, was the Corsican Francis Nicholas Rossi (1776–1851), who had entered the British army in 1795 as ensign in an Anglo-Corsican battalion. In 1824, after a distinguished career in Mauritius, he accepted the invitation of Earl Bathurst to take up the post of Superintendent of Police in New South Wales. It is true that he was not spared a certain amount of hostility in the exercise of his duties, even necessitating his taking periods of what we today would call

“stress leave”: in addition to bureaucratic obstacles, he was never accepted by his subordinates, coming up against what Ivan Barko has called

damaging rumours about his past in England and Mauritius (all promptly disproved), allegations of corrupt conduct in NSW (broadly dismissed by the Chief Justice) and criticisms of his foreign background and accent.<sup>23</sup>

After his retirement in 1834, however, he was to receive sympathetic treatment from the colonial authorities. Having served in the British army, and relying on the fact that George III had assumed the crown of Corsica in 1794, he had long believed himself to be a British subject. In 1843, however, he was informed that he was considered an alien in the eyes of the law: as he had retired to his property Rossville near Goulburn, he now became anxious as to his right to tenure of this land. The response of the authorities has been described by Hazel King as follows:

On the representation of Governor Gipps in May 1844, the Colonial Office authorized the issue of letters of denization to Rossi. When the legal competency of denizens and naturalized aliens to hold land in the colony was questioned in 1845, Rossi's case was noticed by the governor as one of particular hardship. To relieve the situation, an amending Act (11 Vic. no 39 NSW) was passed by the Legislative Council in September 1847 and given royal assent in October 1848.<sup>24</sup>

Rossi's treatment at the hands of Gipps contrasts so markedly with that meted out to Girard by Governor Darling that one needs to be wary about making generalized claims as to discrimination or xenophobia directed at French residents in the colony.

Nonetheless, and despite the above caveats, Girard's experience does raise some interesting issues concerning attitudes towards non-British residents. As mentioned in the earlier article in *Explorations*, Girard was a veteran of Waterloo who had been convicted at the Old Bailey of stealing two watches and sentenced to seven years' transportation, his trial containing so many anomalies that it may well have been the case that he deliberately committed larceny in order to have himself transported to a land of opportunity (a not unprecedented occurrence<sup>25</sup>). His entrepreneurial activities, especially in regard to the acquisition of land, were constantly dispraised as duplicitous dealings by Darling, who repeatedly refused Girard various

grants of land whilst making large grants to his own senior officials such as the Colonial Secretary Alexander McLeay. At length, Girard's complaints reached the French Ambassador in London, who contacted the Secretary of State for the Colonies; the latter in turn sent Darling a number of "Please Explain" letters which further exacerbated relations between the two men.

Since the publication of the *Explorations* article, a further matter involving Girard has been documented by Carol Baxter in her book *An Irresistible Temptation: the True Story of Jane New and a Colonial Scandal*.<sup>26</sup> Jane New, née Wilkinson, had been sentenced to seven years' transportation for theft, arriving in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in February 1824. During her time as a convict assigned to a Hobart family, she met a fellow convict named James New, whom she married in July 1826. Being given permission by Governor Arthur to relocate to Sydney, James and Jane New arrived there in October 1827, finding lodgings in The Rocks. Despite the fact that her husband was far from indigent and was happy to indulge her, Jane seems to have been unable to resist the temptation to continue with her earlier life of thievery—the "irresistible temptation" referred to in the title of Carol Baxter's study.<sup>27</sup>

A French widow by the name of Mme Joséphine Rens<sup>28</sup> had arrived in Sydney in January 1827 with her twelve-year-old daughter Jeannette, and had settled in a two-room dwelling in George Street, establishing a business as a silk merchant and milliner. In December of that year, Jane New entered the premises and asked to see a number of items including a length of distinctive chocolate-coloured silk. Returning with a female companion the following day, she again asked to see the length of silk. Once the pair had left the shop, Mme Rens noticed that the silk was missing, and observed that Jane New was walking along the street carrying it in a basket. Having very little command of English (her daughter acted as her translator), she could not call for help; and in any case she did not know the identity of the thieves. Some time later, seeing the two perpetrators talking to a well-known merchant, she ascertained their names, at which point she decided to report the theft. She subsequently testified as follows:

When I went to the police, to make my complaint, I saw three or four persons with the appearance of gentlemen, who seemed to know all the business and they laughed. When I saw that they appeared to make a joke of it, I left the office. I heard the words "French lady", "silk". I understood that they spoke of me.<sup>29</sup>

The facetious treatment of her grievance was found, not unnaturally, somewhat humiliating by Mme Rens. Carol Baxter admits that it is impossible to know whether she embellished her story to support her claims of unsympathetic treatment by the constabulary, or whether she was telling the truth; but in any case, when Jane New was treated leniently in a magistrate's court on some unrelated charges of theft, Mme Rens was so moved by indignation that she wrote a letter of protest—in French—to the Superintendent of Police, Lieutenant Colonel Morisset.<sup>30</sup> Eventually brought before the magistrates' court on Mme Rens's shoplifting charges, Jane New was bound over to the Criminal Court for trial. Her case was finally heard by Sydney's Supreme Court on 5 January 1829.

At the trial before Judge James Dowling, Mme Rens rejected the court's interpreter and instead chose to have her testimony translated by François Girard, whom she had got to know as he had purchased the Sydney Hotel near Mme Rens's premises in George Street. After testimony had been given on both sides, the jury deliberated and brought in a verdict of guilty. However, Jane New's counsel, Sidney Stephen,<sup>31</sup> made written representations to Judge Dowling on the ground that a witness who could have given evidence in Jane New's favour had been prevented by illness from attending court. Dowling granted Stephen permission to make a further submission. Among the purported anomalies in the trial listed by Stephen was that Girard had misled the court by misinterpreting the questions posed to Mme Rens and the answers she provided. A French-speaking barrister, William Henry Kerr, who had been present at the trial, served as the source of this claim. He reported that

Girard seldom gave the meaning of the answers of Madame Rens, and whenever the prosecutrix's answer appeared favourable to Jane New he would argue the point with Madame Rens and elicit a different reply.

Yet Kerr had said nothing during the trial. Invited to account for his reticence, he explained: "Supposing the judge, counsel and jury to be equally well versed as myself in the French language, I did not presume to intrude myself on the Court." Carol Baxter comments that this seems an extraordinarily ignorant and indifferent response. "If the judge, counsel and jury had indeed understood French", she writes, "why would an interpreter be required?"<sup>32</sup> It is, of course, possible that an interpreter was used as much for Mme Rens's sake as for that of the court officers and jury, but in any

case Kerr's supposition that people of some education would naturally have a knowledge of French is, in our present context, instructive.

As it turned out, Dowling was unmoved, sentencing Jane New to the death penalty. A subsequent appeal to the Executive Council led to the commutation of her sentence to a period in the Moreton Bay penal settlement, but her conviction was later quashed on a technicality.<sup>33</sup> Though the subsequent story of Jane New was to be full of further twists and turns, the involvement of Mme Rens and François Girard ceases at this point. Their reaction to the proceedings before Judge Dowling, and their eventual outcome, can be readily guessed at.

For his part, Girard was to maintain an enormous chip on his shoulder for the rest of his life. A Swiss swagman by the name of Theodor Müller, who spent nineteen years in Australia between 1857 and 1876, worked for a while (in 1859) at Girard's property Branga Park at Walcha. By now, Girard was ill and close to death, but Müller was decidedly unimpressed by the "aloof and authoritarian manner" in which the station was run.<sup>34</sup> Undoubtedly in part a result of Girard's difficult and uncompromising character, his management style may also have been conditioned to some extent by resentment at the treatment handed out to him in what he had originally seen as a land of opportunity. From Müller's comments, it appears that François's two eldest sons Alfred Michael and Francis Napoleon Girard, who ran the property after their father's death, had inherited some of their father's character and attitudes: "Their demeanour and personality was of such arrogance towards the employees", he wrote, "that I decided to leave the place as soon as possible, even though Mrs. Girard wanted me to stay."<sup>35</sup>

\* \* \*

As mentioned earlier, there is another side to the ledger. As well as the early governors, a number of free settlers—and not only those who had had the benefit of an extended education—were entirely conversant with the French language, and well read in its literature. One example which has not previously been the subject of publication is that of Lieutenant Colonel Charles George Gray, whose diary for part of the year 1839 was recently located in the University of Newcastle Library.<sup>36</sup> Following its discovery, Colonel Gray's great-great-grandchildren made available to the present writer an autobiographical account that he had written of his early days as an army officer, and the material below is presented with the family's

permission. In order to place in context his use of French references, it may be helpful to give a brief account of his background.<sup>37</sup>

Charles George Lewis Gray was born on 28 November 1786 in Edinburgh, into a family of strong military traditions. His father, also called Charles, had been born in 1761, and on 8 November 1788 (one day earlier than his regimental colleague and fellow Scot, Lachlan Macquarie) became a Captain in the 77<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. Charles Gray senior, who later gained promotion to the rank of Major General, died of a fever in India while commanding his regiment there. A memorial was sent by officers of the regiment to the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army (the Duke of York) requesting the appointment of the young Charles Gray to his father's old regiment. Charles junior had in fact had a commission as Ensign since the age of 10, and later (at the age of 14) a Lieutenancy in the 78<sup>th</sup> Regiment, in which he was placed on half-pay until after the Peace of Amiens in 1803, at which point he was appointed to full pay in the regiment his father had commanded.

In 1804, Lieutenant Gray (now 16) set out for India, where he found himself fighting at the Siege of Bhurtপুর (or Baratpur). His regiment lost two-thirds of its officers and men in this celebrated siege, in which Gray was wounded by a shot in the chest. Returning to England in 1807, he led a reasonably leisured life with his regiment until 1809, when he resumed his military studies. On 1 January of that year he was admitted as a student at the Royal Military College, High Wycombe, an institution founded at the beginning of the century by Colonel John Gaspard Le Marchant and the French émigré General François Jarry. Gray's stay at the College was of short duration, as he was appointed in May that year, with the rank of Captain, to the 95<sup>th</sup> Regiment (the Rifle Corps, known as the "Royal Green Jackets"), which was then being raised for service in Spain. Arriving in Cadiz in March 1810, he was engaged first in the Battle of Barrosa (March 1811), then in the Battle of Seville and the Siege of Badajoz (April 1812), being wounded in the latter incident. In 1813 he fought in the Battles of Toulouse and Orthes, all of them significant battles in the Peninsular War.

In 1814, Gray was appointed Aide-de-Camp to his uncle Major General George Johnstone, who the following year was ordered to proceed with his troops to join the British Army in Flanders. At the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815, Johnstone commanded the 6<sup>th</sup> British Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, with Charles Gray still serving as his Aide-de-Camp. After the proclamation of peace, Gray was quartered in different parts of Great Britain and Ireland, being promoted Brevet Major in January 1819. In 1825, on his

promotion at the age of 39 to the substantive rank of Major, he married Jane, eldest daughter of Colonel George Grogan of Dublin. Shortly thereafter Gray was sent to Gibraltar, where he stayed for a little over a year; it was on his return to Scotland that his first child was born—a daughter named Elizabeth Ann (known as Bessy); her birth was followed in July 1829 by that of another girl, Maria Catherine, and the following year by the birth of a son, Charles Hastings. A second son, George Johnstone, was born in Edinburgh in 1831. Gray was subsequently ordered to India, where he remained for five years. Hardly back home again after the separation from his wife and young family, he was gazetted Lieutenant Colonel in the 44<sup>th</sup> (East Essex) Regiment. By now he was heartily sick of the constant separation from his family, so he applied for permission to retire from active military service. Permission was granted, and in 1837 the Grays left on the transport *John Barry* to settle in New South Wales.

Having looked around in Sydney for a while, Gray decided to settle in the area of Port Macquarie. He purchased a 400 hectare property some 30 kilometres inland, to which he gave the name Huntington and which was worked under his supervision by assigned convict servants. Gray, who was a Justice of the Peace, also served on the Bench of Magistrates from time to time, and was in charge of one of the convict road parties building the road from Port Macquarie to New England (subsequently the Oxley Highway). Three more children were born to Charles and Jane Gray during their time at Huntington: Hugh William (1838), Robert John (1840) and Henry Jardine (1842).

The later years of the 1840s were not a good time for the Settlement of Port Macquarie. Indeed, some of its wealthiest settlers such as the major landowner Archibald Clunes Innes were to suffer very badly in the depression that hit the colony severely. Gray, too, made up his mind to seek a position less precarious than that of running a property. After a brief stint in 1852 as a Gold Receiver in Sydney, he moved to Queensland the following year to take up an appointment as Police Magistrate at Ipswich; his family followed in 1855. At the request of the first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Bowen, Gray accepted the position of Usher of the Black Rod in the Legislative Council when the first Queensland Parliament was formed in 1860. He held this office, along with that of Parliamentary Librarian, until 1862, by which time he had reached the age of 76 and was finding the travelling by pony and trap on the notoriously rough roads between Ipswich and Brisbane to be too wearing. He was reappointed as Police Magistrate at Ipswich, and held this position until his retirement in 1867 at the age of 81.

He was to die five years later, on 6 September 1873. His funeral was the largest ever held in Ipswich, being attended by senior parliamentarians and involving a detachment of the Volunteer Artillery (complete with field gun), a detachment of police, the No. 2 Rifle Company and its band. His widow Jane was later buried in the Ipswich cemetery alongside her husband.

Apart from the diary he kept in 1839, which is essentially a chronicle of work being undertaken on his Huntington property, the sole document written by Colonel Gray which has come down to later generations<sup>38</sup> is an autobiographical memoir of his early days as an army officer. It appears to have been written in his later years, though no exact date can be attributed to it. The French references it contains may well be the result of his reading during the years of his maturity, but it seems improbable that he learned French only in adulthood: his early schooling, to which he makes no direct reference in his memoir,<sup>39</sup> must have included instruction in French even though it was primarily a military rather than a "classical" education. As this took place in Scotland, which was noted for the academic rigour of its educational system, one may assume that French was a part of the curriculum.

The French references in his memoir relate to his account of his time in India (1804–1807) and later in Spain (1810–1813). The earliest reference is to a well-known work, Molière's *L'Avare*. Gray paints a portrait of Lord Evelyn Stuart, who in 1802 was made Lieutenant-Colonel of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of Foot.<sup>40</sup>

In this capacity [Gray writes] he drew very considerable allowances, but was so penurious withal that he did not supply himself with the common necessaries of life, and certainly not the dress of a gentleman, by which conduct he had amassed a large sum of money. This he kept carefully locked in a trunk, the key of which he never for a moment permitted to be out of his possession, and miserlike he daily took a view of his beloved treasure.

On discovering that the contents of his trunk had been stolen, Stuart could only

deplore the loss of his treasure which he apostrophized much in the same manner as Harpagon is caused by Molière to do in *L'Avare*: "Hélas! mon pauvre argent, mon pauvre argent, mon cher ami! on m'a privé de toi; et puisque tu m'es enlevé, j'ai perdu mon support, ma

consolation, ma joie; tout est fini pour moi, et je n'ai plus que faire au monde; sans toi, il m'est impossible de vivre." 41

It was of no avail, however; the money was irrevocably lost.

In a later passage, also set in India, Gray is highly critical of the attitude of his commanding officer, Brigadier Mouston, who promised his men that if their assault on the town of Bhurtpore was successful he would permit the unreserved plunder of the town. This Gray found to be

highly reprehensible, as it not only impresses the soldiers with the idea that the difficulties must be great when the superior officers think it necessary to hold out a bribe in order to induce them to do what they in themselves never felt any repugnance to; but it also opens a door to insubordination, and gives them an excuse for committing excesses which the mind shudders to contemplate and which they in all possibility would not otherwise have thought of. The horrid scenes which this latitude naturally gives rise to must remain unpunished, because those whose imperious duty it is to restrain the licence of the rude and untutored soldier, are themselves thus implicated and made participators in the crime. On hearing of such events having taken place, one is inclined to exclaim with Placide in the *Battuécas*, "On verrait à la guerre bien peu de crimes de ce genre, si les fureurs des soldats déshonoraient le Général. Mais, comment peut-on s'asseoir tranquillement à côté du monstre qui autorise ceux qu'il commandait à profaner les temples, à déshonorer les vierges, à égorguer les vieillards, les femmes et les enfants! Car commettre un pillage, c'est exhorter à commettre toutes ces atrocités [. . .]" 42

The passage quoted is from *Les Battuécas*, a novel by Mme de Genlis published by Maradan in 1816. Stéphanie-Félicité Ducrest de Saint-Albin, comtesse de Genlis (1746-1830), was not only a hugely prolific writer, with over eighty works to her name, but extremely popular in her own time. Though her *Mémoires* are still quite widely read, her novels are largely forgotten today. *Les Battuécas* is a fictional work set in the Valle de Las Batuecas in Salamanca, Spain. Many legends attach to this valley, surrounded as it is by almost inaccessible mountains: it was widely believed that its inhabitants had lived for ages in a kind of Spanish Shangri-la, cut off from any communication with the outside world. The novel, which was admired by George Sand, presents a critique of nineteenth-century notions

of property, class structure and political power. It was widely translated (into Italian, Dutch, Portuguese and English), its English translation by Alexander Jameson being entitled *Placide*.

It is worthy of note that Gray's quotation is from the original French of Mme de Genlis, and not from Jameson's 1817 translation into English. More particularly, we may note that the novel's appearance postdates the Battle of Waterloo, belonging to a period when Gray was serving in peacetime conditions in various parts of Britain and Ireland. Presumably, this was a time when he had the leisure for reading which would have been denied him since 1810 owing to his war service, first in the Iberian Peninsula, and then at Waterloo. It is clear that his recent involvement in armed combat with Napoleon's army had by no means diminished his interest in keeping abreast of the literature of France.

The third quotation relates to observations made during his regiment's occupation of quarters in a town Gray calls "Futtypore Sickri"—actually Fatehpur Sikri, a town in the Agra district of Uttar Pradesh. Having admired "the ruins of what had been a magnificent palace, the favourite residence of the Emperor Ackbar"—the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542–1605)—he goes on to describe the local mosque (Jama Masjid), "a most beautiful mosque in perfect repair", and, standing in the centre of the quadrangle which forms the palace complex, what he refers to as "the tomb of one of Ackbar's wives, noted for her devotion, and who is here revered as a saint".<sup>43</sup> The behaviour of the shrine's guardians, however, does not impress him at all:

The Priests, like those of other countries in which superstition has attached particular virtues to certain shrines, enrich themselves by the ignorance of their visitors, whom they astonish by a trumped-up tale of pretended miracles; by which means they levy heavy contributions, to be appropriated (as they would fain make believe) to the service of so meritorious a Saint, but in reality they are intended for the purpose of pandering to their own vile appetites and of providing themselves with all the good things of this world; the indulgence in which is evident in their sleek and polished look, evincing beyond the possibility of denial that they do not put in practice any of the virtues of an ascetic. On the contrary, "les prêtres à table Immolent trente mets à leur faim indomptable."

The reference here is to Boileau's mock-heroic poem *Le Lutrin* (1674–1683), a treatment in epic style of a dispute between the treasurer and the precentor

of the Sainte-Chapelle regarding the correct position of a lectern (*un lutrin*) in the choir of the chapel. It seems highly unlikely reading for a military man such as Gray; but what is perhaps even more surprising is that he misquotes Boileau's words. What the latter in fact wrote was:

Loin du bruit cependant les chanoines à table  
Immolent trente mets à leur faim indomptable.

(Boileau, *Le Lutrin*, Chant V)<sup>44</sup>

One can only draw the conclusion that Gray was not copying out the words of the poem from an edition of Boileau that he had in his library, but that he had in fact committed some passages of the poem to memory—slightly incorrectly, as it happens.

The next French quotation is equally curious. Gray is describing the movement of his regiment in the Punjab—more particularly, in the area of the river Sutlej (one of the “Five Rivers”, tributaries of the Indus, which give the Punjab its name):

Our troops moved along the banks of the Settledge [*sic*] (by some considered to be the ancient Hysudius [*sic*],<sup>45</sup> by others the Hyphasis); in the course of their march, they by accident discovered the altars raised by Alexander the Great, at the extreme point to which he had carried the terror of his arms in India, and where the murmurs of his army were so loud as to force the Conqueror to stop in his career, and lead them back towards his own country. Robertson somewhere claims Apollonius of Tyana states his having seen them in their perfect state, and records some of their inscriptions which are fully indicative of the pride of this hero and of his belief in his divine origin.

\* \* \*

“Ensuite nos voyageurs arrivèrent au Hyphasis. A trente stades du fleuve ils trouvèrent des autels à cette inscription: ‘A mon Père Ammon, A mon frère Hercule, A Minerve Providence, A Jupiter Olympien, Aux Cabires de Samothrace, Au soleil des Indes, et mon frère Apollon.’ Ils rapportèrent aussi qu’ils trouvèrent une Colonne d’airain où étoient gravés ces mots: ‘C’est ici qu’Alexandre par ce monument marquoit les limites de son Empire, et que la colonne a été dressée par les gens qui demeurent au delà de l’Hyphasis, et qui se glorifient qu’il n’avoit pas été plus loin.’”

(Apollonius de Tyane, Chap. 43 Tome 3)<sup>46</sup>

The reference in this case is to the somewhat romanticized biography of Apollonius of Tyana written in the early third century by the Roman orator Philostratus. Even though it is clear from the above that Gray is aware of the work of the Scottish historian William Robertson (whose *Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge the Ancients had of India* appeared in 1794), the quotation from Philostratus is not from an English-language translation, but rather from the *Vie d'Apollonius de Tyane* edited by Marc-Michel Rey in 1779.<sup>47</sup> (The latter version does contain an English-language commentary by the seventeenth-century Deist Charles Blount,<sup>48</sup> but the translation of Philostratus is into French.)

Finally, in his account of the Siege of Cadiz in 1811, Gray is deeply critical of the Spanish General Manuel La Peña, who had overall command of the Anglo-Spanish force leading the siege against the French forces of Claude Victor-Perrin, duc de Belluno (usually referred to as Victor). The British contingent was led by Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Graham, who had been placed under La Peña for the sake of international harmony. In Gray's eyes, General Graham (a distant relative<sup>49</sup>) was a "modern example of the 'Preux Chevaliers', 'sans peur et sans reproche'".<sup>50</sup> Had Graham been in overall command, Gray writes, the siege would not have been the near-disaster that it became:

[. . .] After the action had commenced, had La Peña sent the Spanish cavalry along the beach, to form in the plain and turn the enemy's left, and had he ordered the infantry to march through the pine wood to turn his right, the happiest results might have been expected; the enemy to prevent total destruction must have retired, the British would have suffered but a comparatively small loss, and Chiclana<sup>51</sup> must have been the price of the victory. But the opportunity was lost, and never was there a more decisive victory productive of results so perfectly inadequate to the price at which it had been purchased. I agree entirely with Sarrazin who says: "Le siège de Cadix aurait été levé et le Corps de Victor, à moitié détruit, aurait été obligé de fuir vers Séville, si Graham, au lieu d'être commandé par La Peña, avait eu ce Général sous ses ordres."<sup>52</sup> La Peña retired in the course of two or three days into Cadiz, published his acct. of the expedition, animadverting on General Graham's conduct, was deprived of his command and sank into justly merited obscurity.

Gray is here quoting from a work by General Jean Sarrazin entitled *Histoire de la guerre d'Espagne et du Portugal de 1807 à 1814*, published in Paris

by J.-G. Dentu in 1814. It is at least possible that Gray purchased this work while in Belgium the following year. We do know, for example, that his library included a two-volume work entitled *Les Rêveries Ou Mémoires sur l'art de la Guerre Par Mr De Bonneville*, which contained his signature and bookplate.<sup>53</sup> On the title-page of the first volume he has written "Charles George Gray—Brussels 15<sup>th</sup> April 1815." This is actually the work of Maurice, comte de Saxe [Hermann Moritz Graf von Sachsen] (1696-1750), one of the greatest generals of his age, who became Maréchal de France. An important military strategist, he wrote this work on strategic military thinking between 1732 and 1738; it was published posthumously by Captain de Bonneville (1710-1780) in 1756. The work was much admired by Frederick the Great, who considered that its author "ought to be the teacher of all the generals in Europe". One wonders whether it might have been prescribed reading at the Royal Military College during Gray's time there, as the College's co-founder General François Jarry had spent twenty years as Director of Frederick the Great's *Kriegsschule* or military academy in Berlin.

Regrettably, we do not have an inventory of other French works that were on Colonel Gray's library shelves, though we can guess that they were reasonably numerous. Annabella Innes—niece of Archibald Clunes Innes and close friend of Gray's daughters Bessy and Maria—was to write that "both the girls were good French scholars and well read, as Colonel Grey [*sic*] possessed a good library. Their education had been carried on under his direction".<sup>54</sup>

\* \* \*

Lieutenant Colonel Gray presents us with an interesting variant of the attitudes towards France and the French mentioned above. In the Peninsular War and at Waterloo, he had fought against Napoleon's army, and would presumably have had as much reason as any other British soldier to harbour feelings of enmity and resentment against France and its people. And yet it is clear that he not only possessed a good knowledge of the French language, but had a keen and abiding interest in the literature and culture of France. His decision to emigrate to Australia in 1837 brought to the young colony a man of principle and refinement, indeed a colonial francophile.

## Notes

1. The six-week visit of La Pérouse in early 1788 was related primarily to scientific investigations, and his relations with Phillip, Hunter and the British colonists generally were cordial. Nonetheless, the Home Government was certainly wary of the intentions of Louis XVI in authorizing such expeditions as this.
2. James Auchmuty has pointed out that by the time of the Australian settlement one in three of the inhabitants of the British Isles was Irish, and that it was this statistic that made the possibility of an Irish Revolution the cause of such concern in the years following the 1789 Revolution in France. (J. J. Auchmuty, "The Anglo-Irish Influence in the Foundation of Australian Institutions", *University Gazette*, University of Melbourne, May 1969, p. 4.) Indeed, the French Revolution (along with the American) was a direct inspiration for the Irish Rebellion of 1798.
3. Edward Duyker, *François Péron: An Impetuous Life; Naturalist and Voyager*, Carlton, Vic., Melbourne University Publishing/Miegunyah Press, 2006; François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands [ . . . ] Books I-III*, translated by Christine Cornell, Adelaide, Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006.
4. Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath and John West-Sooby, *Encountering Terra Australis: the Australian Voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Mathew Flinders*, Kent Town, SA, Wakefield Press, 2004.
5. Anthony Brown, "The Tangled Fortunes of War: the Story of Robert Fowler and Pierre Bernard Milius", *Australian Heritage*, Winter 2007, p. 34.
6. Loc. cit.
7. Quoted by Philip Tardif in "John Bowen's Hobart", *Australian Heritage*, Spring 2006, p. 19.
8. Robert Tiley, *The Mermaid Tree*, Sydney, ABC Books, 2006, p. 11.
9. Quoted by Tiley, op. cit., p. 27.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
11. *Historical Records of Australia*, series 1, vol. XII, p. 195, quoted by Tiley, p. 120.
12. J. J. Auchmuty, "The Background to the Early Australian Governors", *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, VI, Nov. 1953 – May 1955, p. 303.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 302.
14. Valerie Lhuedé, "Francis Barrallier, Explorer, Surveyor, Engineer, Artillery Officer, Aide-de-Camp, Architect and Ship Designer: Three Years in New South Wales (1800–1803)", *Explorations*, n° 35, December 2003, pp. 6–25.
15. Ensign Barrallier to Governor King (King Papers), in *Historical Records of New South Wales*, ed. F. M. Bladen, Sydney, Charles Potter, 1896, part IV: Hunter and King, 1800, 1801, 1802.

16. See K. R. Dutton, "A Colonial Entrepreneur: François Girard (1792?-1859)", *Explorations*, n° 39, December 2005, p. 30.
17. Auchmuty, "The Background to the Early Australian Governors", p. 302.
18. Loc. cit.
19. See article "Jarry, François" in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and cf. note 36 below.
20. See note 16 above.
21. Vivienne Parsons, "Barrallier, Francis Louis (1773-1853)", *ADB* and in *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online* (accessed 8 January 2008).
22. Quoted by Lhuedé, art. cit., p. 17.
23. Ivan Barko, entry on Rossi in *Vive la différence! The French in NSW* [Guide], Sydney, State Library of New South Wales, 2004, pp. 12-13.
24. Hazel King, "Rossi, Francis Nicholas (1776-1851)", *ADB* and in *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online* (accessed 8 January 2008).
25. One of the charges laid by W. C. Wentworth against Governor Darling was that he had caused the execution of Private Sudds who, with Private Thompson of the 57<sup>th</sup> Foot, had deliberately committed larceny in order to be transported. See J. J. Auchmuty, "The Background to the Early Australian Governors", p. 308.
26. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2006.
27. Baxter, op. cit., pp. 12-38, *passim*.
28. Baxter does not indicate the maiden name of Mme Rens: it seems likely that her husband had been Dutch, the name "Rens" being decidedly un-French but reasonably common in the Netherlands as first name or surname. As Mme Rens had lived for some time in Batavia [Indonesia] (Baxter, p. 38), at that time part of the Dutch East Indies, it seems probable that she had met her husband there.
29. Quoted by Baxter, p. 39.
30. Baxter, pp. 76-77. Morisset was of French descent, the original family name being Morissette.
31. Sidney Stephen was the brother of John Stephen, the "black sheep" of a well-known legal family. John Stephen had been the constant champion of Jane New, with whom he was clearly having an affair.
32. Baxter, p. 92.
33. Baxter, pp. 99-107, *passim*. The technicality was that the statute under which Jane New had been charged had been repealed—a fact unknown, at the time of her trial, to both prosecution and defence.
34. See Maurie Garland and John Ramsland, eds, and Frank Pammer, trans., *The Swiss Swagman: Theodor Müller's Nineteen Years in Australia*, Melbourne, Brolga Publishing, 2007, p. 103.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
36. The University of Newcastle has published my account of the identification of Colonel Gray's diary under the title *A French General and a Scots Colonel: A Most Unusual Volume and the Search for its Authorship*. The French general

referred to is General François Jarry, a co-founder of the Royal Military College (subsequently the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst): his handwritten lecture material was bound into a volume which came into Gray's possession and was used by him to write his diary for the latter part of 1839.

37. My chief source of information concerning Colonel Gray has been material kindly made available by his great-great-granddaughters Mrs Ann Hancock and Mrs Helga Hill, to whom thanks are also due for their assistance with the present article. Information was also provided by the Port Macquarie Historical Society.
38. This is the sole document by Colonel Gray that is in the possession of his descendants. It is possible that other autobiographical material by him is still in existence, in which case it may come to light some day. He describes himself in the document, however, as "having lost all the journals that I have ever kept, and having no memoranda to which I can refer".
39. The memoir is prefaced by an undated letter addressed "To my highly esteemed and respected cousin Mrs Hacke", at whose request the account of his early days has been written. Writing it he describes as "a task which I cannot but deem arduous, educated entirely amongst Military men, amidst the bustle of camps and din of Arms, and for ten years of my existence in situations where books were not to be procured."
40. Lord Evelyn James Stuart (1772-1842) was the third son of the Third Earl of Bute, Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1762 to 1763. His appointment as Lieutenant-Colonel of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Foot was announced in the *Annual Register* for 1802, p. 490.
41. "Alas! my poor money, my poor money, my dear friend! I have been deprived of you; and now that you have been taken from me, I have lost my support, my consolation, my joy; it is all over for me, and I have no purpose left in the world; without you, it is not possible for me to go on living." (Molière, *L'Avare*, Act IV, Scene 7).
42. "One would see very few crimes of this kind committed in war, if the soldiers' excesses brought dishonour to their General. But how can one sit quietly alongside the monster who authorizes the men under his command to desecrate temples, to dishonour virgins, to slit the throats of old men, women and children! For to permit pillage is to encourage the committing of all these atrocities." In the typed transcription of Gray's handwriting, a number of words have been misspelt and accents omitted. I have corrected the transcript in the version given here.
43. Gray is probably referring to the Darga Salim Chishti, the shrine built by Akbar in gratitude to the Sufi saint Sheikh Salim Chishti. Being without an heir, Akbar prayed to him; shortly afterwards, one of Akbar's queens, the Christian Maryam from Goa, gave birth to a son, Jahangir. Gray seems to have confused this shrine, which is in the centre of the complex, with the nearby Palace of the Christian Queen.

44. "Meanwhile, far from all the commotion, the canons sitting at table / Offer up thirty courses to their insatiable hunger."
45. Gray's handwriting may have been incorrectly transcribed. He may be referring to the Hydaspes (the modern river Jhelum) or the Hydraotes (the modern river Ravi). The Hyphasis is the modern river Beas.
46. "Then our travellers reached the Hyphasis. At a distance of thirty *stadia* from the river they found altars bearing the following inscription: 'To my father Ammon, to my brother Hercules, to Minerva Providentia, to the Kabiroi of Samothrace, to the sun of India, and my brother Apollo.' They also reported that they found a bronze column on which were engraved the following words: 'This is where Alexander marked by this monument the limits of his Empire', and that the column had been set up by the people who dwell beyond the Hyphasis, who rejoiced in the fact that he had not gone any further." The words of the inscription are those of the dedication which Hephaistos, the god of fire and metal, blacksmith of the gods [the Roman Vulcan], had addressed to his father, his brother, and his sons the Kabiroi, who were particularly honoured at Samothrace.
47. Marc-Michel Rey's edition is entitled *Vie d'Apollonius de Tyane, par Philostrate, avec les commentaires donnés en anglois par Charles Blount sur les deux premiers livres de cet ouvrage, le tout traduit en français, écrit par Philostrate, édité par Marc-Michel Rey*, Amsterdam, chez Marc-Michel Rey, 1779. Rey was one of the major figures in the publishing history of the Enlightenment in the second half of the eighteenth century. A French translation of the same work was made during Gray's lifetime by the eminent scholar Alexis Chassang (*Apollonius de Tyane: Sa Vie, Ses Voyages, Ses Prodiges, par Philostrate, et ses lettres: ouvrages traduits du grec, avec Introduction, Notes, et Éclaircissements, par A. Chassang*, Paris, Didier, 1862). The version quoted by Gray is, however, taken from the Rey edition, which differs slightly from Chassang's. Chassang, for example, uses the more common French form "Hyphase" rather than "Hyphasis".
48. The commentary by Blount in his *The Two First Books of Philostratus concerning the Life of Apollonius Tyaneus* (1680) gave offence in some quarters by its attacks on "priestcraft", and may well have influenced Gray: cf. the third passage of his memoir quoted above.
49. Sir Thomas Graham (1748–1843) later became Lord Lynedoch. Gray's eldest daughter Bessy in 1846 married her distant relative Robert Graham; one of their sons was baptized Thomas Lynedoch Graham.
50. "Gallant knights, without fear and beyond reproach". The term *sans peur et sans reproche* is taken from the medieval *Chansons de geste*.
51. Chiclana de la Frontera is about eight kilometres north of the battlefield of the Battle of Barrosa, of which the Siege of Cadiz was one episode.
52. "The Siege of Cadiz would have been lifted and Victor's Corps, which was practically destroyed, would have been obliged to flee towards Seville, if Graham—instead of being under General La Peña's command—had been the

latter's superior officer." Elsewhere in his Memoir, Gray quotes from the work by P.-F. Guingret entitled *Relation historique et militaire de la campagne de Portugal sous le Maréchal Masséna Prince d'Essling* (Limoges, chez Bargeas, 1817). The transcription is, however, so deformed as to make the text unintelligible.

53. The work was recently advertised as being for sale in an antiquarian bookshop in Annerley, Queensland.
54. *Annabella Boswell's Journal: Australian Reminiscences illustrated with her own Watercolours and Contemporary Drawings and Sketches*, North Ryde, NSW, Angus & Robertson, 1987, p. 145. Annabella Innes, who married a member of the same family as Dr Johnson's biographer, was the daughter of Archibald Clunes Innes's brother George; the death of the latter in August 1839 is recorded in Colonel Gray's diary.