

THE COLONIAL FIELD: SCIENCE, SYDNEY AND THE BAUDIN EXPEDITION (1802)¹

NICOLE STARBUCK

It had been decided in 1800, by a commission representing the Institut National de France, that there was no need for another round-the-world voyage of discovery. The expedition to be led by captain Nicolas Baudin would be a circumscribed and disciplined scientific mission—smaller in size, duration and scope. It would comprise an unprecedented 22 naturalists and concentrate strictly upon the least familiar coastlines, specific pre-determined points, ‘new’ archipelagoes and ‘unknown’ natural productions of Australia. It was not to include ‘sojourns of no use to science, in areas already known’.² Yet, plans laid down in the *cabinet* were not always carried out quite as intended *sur le terrain*. In 1802, Baudin diverged from his itinerary to visit the English colony at Port Jackson—a field already explored extensively by English natural historians. The French botanist and assistant gardener, the zoologist and the astronomer, the mineralogists, geographers and the artists, all moved ashore with their crates of specimens and equipment, and remained in port for over five months. Scientific voyagers and their superiors may typically have perceived stopovers in colonial ports in terms of respite and replenishment, yet this prolonged sojourn provided an opportunity for concentrated research and considerably augmented the Baudin expedition’s collection of natural history specimens and observations (see Starbuck 2010, 163–190).

¹ A version of this article will appear as a chapter in the author’s forthcoming monograph, *Baudin, Napoleon and the Exploration of Australia*, London, Pickering and Chatto, 2013.

² ‘Rapport sur le voyage entrepris par les ordres du gouvernement et sous la direction de l’Institut, par le Capitaine Baudin’, dated 26 December 1800, Muséum national d’histoire naturelle, Paris, ms 1214/6.

The fieldwork carried out by Baudin and his men at Port Jackson merits investigation, and, moreover, with particular attention to the significance of time and place. It occurred at a 'transitional moment' in the development of French science (Blanckaert 2000). Around the turn of the nineteenth century naturalists were moving on with all haste from the pursuit of an encyclopedic knowledge about the natural world to the more defined and rigorous approaches of the newly professionalised scientific disciplines. They favoured the shores of 'least familiar coastlines' and 'new archipelagoes', as natural history fields, because such places and their 'unknown natural productions' had by this time become rather few and far between. In practice, however, fieldwork was not so clearly focused on the 'new' or 'unknown'; indeed, the *voyageurs-naturalistes* continued to explore well-trodden ground and such terrain hindered their efforts to satisfy the increasingly rigorous demands of science. At Port Jackson, for instance, Baudin's men sought to observe natural features and to collect natural history specimens in an environment that had been altered by indigenous land management and then changed more drastically again by English settlers. It was a multi-layered field, French exploration of which was complicated further by the fact that it was shared with English naturalists and gentlemen collectors, and carefully guided by colonial officials. In this colonial field, the captain and his scientific staff would not simply gather specimens. Their research would be carried out via collaboration, negotiation and exchange with both English colonists and Aborigines. Furthermore, the extended length of time they spent in accommodation on shore, with space and time to work with their collections, allowed the possibility of crossing that line drawn by savants such as Georges Cuvier between the 'broken and fleeting' work of the field-naturalist and the 'leisurely' and 'illuminating' work of the sedentary naturalist (Outram 1996, 259–261). The Port Jackson sojourn therefore would not necessarily have been 'of no use to science'—it presented both obstacles and advantages to Baudin's staff. But what is of primary interest here is not so much the scientific value but the nature of this little-studied colonial 'field' and the rich insight it provides into how the ideologies of this transitional era in French history were manifested on the ground.

There is a strong body of literature which investigates the relationship that existed between the museum and the field, the centre and the periphery, theory and practice. Bruno Latour (1983, 203–236), followed by Marie-Noëlle Bourguet (1997, 163–196) and Richard Burckhardt (2001, 327–341), most

notably, have blazed a trail here by exploring the process from collection and observation on the ground to classification in the museum. However, the particular role played by the colonial field in this context has not previously been investigated. Indeed, Dorinda Outram points out that the concept of ‘the field’, in general, has remained unexplored and undefined (1996, 259). It is interpreted here as a physical space, for example a discovery ship, including all that one can observe and collect from there—for instance, the sea below and the sky above the ship. It is also a space that is distinguished by a defining characteristic such as European settlement. Accordingly, ‘the colonial field’ at Port Jackson, as it is used here, refers not to the entire region claimed by the British crown, which in fact encompassed almost half of the Australian continent, but specifically that area in which natural history research would be affected by the colonial presence—roughly, the County of Cumberland.³ This area of New South Wales includes the English townships, farms and gardens as well as the fringes of the settlements, which the colonists—particularly the English naturalists—had only ventured into by this point in time. The Frenchmen explored this hinterland only under the guidance of their English hosts and therefore, as far as their fieldwork was concerned, it was still part of the ‘colonial’ field. Of course, the region was shaped and coloured by Aboriginal tribes as well as by English colonists. Although an indigenous presence is not necessary to the definition of a colonial field in general, it was often a significant characteristic and, indeed, this was certainly the case in relation to the natural history field at Port Jackson. Finally, this space is also defined by the work that took place within it; that is, collecting and observing *in situ*, rather than receiving and analysing results from a distance. Even though the opportunity arose at Port Jackson for the French naturalists to set themselves up in a sort of *cabinet*, they still perceived themselves primarily as field-naturalists. Therefore, the ‘field’ is a type of context and the colonial field is a particularly rich one. Even before the expedition’s specimens had been loaded aboard the ships in crates, glass boxes and notebooks, they had typically passed through a number of hands and, similarly, the Frenchmen’s observations had been discussed in the bush, on the street, at the governor’s

³ The County of Cumberland (Sydney region) stretches from Broken Bay to the north, the Hawkesbury River to the north-west, the Nepean River to the west, the Cataract River to the south-west and the northern suburbs of Wollongong to the south.

table. In this context, ‘known’ and ‘unknown’ are ambiguous concepts. Indeed, while conceptions of ‘discovery’ were ever narrowing at the centre, the ways in which it was sought and represented on the periphery remained broad and complex—particularly in colonial fields.

But what exactly were the methods used at Port Jackson? What do they suggest about the Frenchmen’s notions of natural history research? How were these methods and notions affected by the particular nature of this environment? How did the naturalists make meaning of their collections and observations—how did they ‘make discoveries’—in this well-tilled field? It is only by zooming in on their activities during the sojourn that these questions may be resolved. There are three main routes to such a close-up view: the human (who carried out the research as well as with whom they carried it out or from whom they obtained their material and how they obtained it), the material (what was collected), and the textual (the descriptions, observations, images and charts put down in notebooks, journals, reports, letters and drawings). With consideration to the broader context of the sojourn, these not only shed light on the fieldwork of the voyager-naturalists but also elucidate the dynamics and values of the colonial field at turn-of-the-century Port Jackson.

French Science Embarks on the British Colony

Baudin’s visit to the nascent British colony may not have been planned but the governor of New South Wales, Philip Gidley King, had nonetheless been anticipating it. In January 1801 he had received a letter from Sir Joseph Banks, president of the Royal Society in London, which informed him of the French expedition’s imminent arrival in Australian waters and of the likelihood that the voyagers would visit Port Jackson. While Banks did mention that, in the event of such a visit, King should offer assistance to the voyagers—in the tradition of cooperation in the pursuit of human knowledge—he believed that their primary objectives lay in French colonial affairs rather than scientific endeavour.⁴ From the beginning then, the colonial field was to be about not only natural history but Anglo-French rivalry and the British colonial project. Although

⁴ Letter from Joseph Banks to Philip Gidley King, written at Soho Square and dated 1 January 1801. King Family, Correspondence and memoranda, 1775–1806, Mitchell Library, reference A 1980/2 CY 906, p. 37.

historians often write about King's 'extraordinary generosity' in receiving the French expedition, and indeed he did receive the voyagers readily enough, his welcome was in fact rather circumspect. Moreover, it was noticeably cooler than his reception of Baudin's second captain, Emmanuel Hamelin, who had visited two months earlier. After the *Géographe* and her consort the *Naturaliste* had become separated in Bass Strait, Hamelin had sought respite briefly at Port Jackson, before attempting to abandon his scientific mission and return to France. Perhaps the French captain had compounded his suspicions about the purpose of the voyage. Or, perhaps he was simply alarmed at the prospect of stretching the colony's limited resources even further: the Flinders expedition was already in port when Baudin arrived aboard the *Géographe*, and when the *Naturaliste* returned three weeks later King was faced with the responsibility of accommodating three discovery vessels and their large crews. No doubt it was for this reason that he required Baudin to purchase most of his supplies himself, directly from settlers and the government store. He also issued Baudin, as he had done earlier to Hamelin, a set of regulations compiled specially for the purpose and based on those that typically applied to crews aboard merchant vessels. They stipulated, for example, that all members of the expedition must obtain permission from the Governor to venture beyond Sydney Town, that they must abide by a strict evening curfew, and that they must not associate with the 'inhabitants' of the colony.⁵ The voyager-naturalists must have chafed at such restrictions.

In any case, as soon as the conditions of the sojourn had been duly established, Baudin and the scientific staff installed themselves and their effects on shore. Documents pertaining to the French activities at Port Jackson show that Baudin paid a sum for his use of a house in Sydney,⁶ and that astronomer

⁵ King, P.G., 'Regulations to be observed by the French Ship during her stay at Port Jackson', dated 27 April 1802. (*Historical Records of New South Wales*, vol. IV, p. 943 and *Table de loch* of the *Géographe*, 8 prairial to 13 messidor an X, entry made by François-Michel Ronsard and dated 3 messidor an X [22 June 1802])

⁶ For references to Baudin's accommodation in Sydney, see Bougainville, *Journal*, entry dated 6 messidor an X [25 June 1802]; Ronsard, *Journal*, t. I, ANF, SM, 5JJ29, entry dated 6 messidor an X [25 June 1802] and *Table de loch* of the *Géographe*, 8 prairial to 13 messidor an X, entry made by H. Freycinet and dated 6 messidor an X [25 June 1802]. The reference to his payment for this accommodation may be found in N. Baudin, 'Compte général des dépenses relatives aux bâtiments de la République,

François Bernier established himself in the observatory tents on Bennelong Point, but there is no record relating to other lodgings. The other naturalists seem to have been billeted with local settlers (Brown 2004, 254). The crew began very soon thereafter to disembark the natural history collection which had been amassed by the expeditioners during the outward voyage and the first campaign—that is, the exploration of the western and southern coasts of Australia as well as Tasmania which took place prior to the Port Jackson sojourn.⁷ First of all, the plants were taken ashore, some to be placed under guard in the sailmaker's tent (alongside the observatory tents) and others at Baudin's residence. Later, the zoological crates were also unloaded and placed under the care of zoologist François Péron and surgeon Jérôme Bellefin. It is important to note the importance which not only the natural history staff but also the officers—and no doubt certain of the crew members as well—placed on the safety and well-being of the collections. In the *Géographe's* log-book, the officers often referred to accidents that had befallen or threatened the condition of precious objects. On one occasion, for example, sub-lieutenant Joseph Ransonnet reported rather conscientiously that the gardener (presumably Guichenot) had opened a case of plants to search for some pots but closed it immediately.⁸ And, no doubt more alarmingly, his colleague, Louis Bonnefoy, later noted that some drunken sailors had dropped a crate of plants into the

le *Géographe*, le *Naturaliste* et le *Casuarina* pendant la relâche au Port Jackson, Nouvelle-Hollande', ANF, SM, 5JJ53.

⁷ Baudin's exploration of Australia is commonly considered as consisting of two campaigns separated by the extended sojourn at Port Jackson when Baudin made significant changes to the expedition; for example, by replacing the *Naturaliste* with the *Casuarina* and by sending a number of his men back to France. The first campaign began when the expedition reached the south-west coast of Australia in May 1801. It included a visit to Port Jackson by the *Naturaliste* under Captain Hamelin. The first campaign ended with the arrival of the *Géographe* at Port Jackson in mid-1802. The second campaign commenced with the expedition's departure from Port Jackson in November 1802 and ended in July 1803 when, on the north coast of Australia, Baudin decided to return to France.

⁸ *Table de Loch* of the *Géographe*, 13 messidor to 4 fructidor, Year X, entry made by Joseph Ransonnet and dated 29 messidor an X [18 July 1802], ANF, série marine 5JJ 25.

sea.⁹ Such accounts demonstrate further that the French naturalists had no intention of putting aside their pre-existing collection of specimens while they turned to the new field at hand; on the contrary, they continued to value and quite possibly to study these objects at the same time that they added to them.

By this point in the course of the voyage, Baudin's naturalists, including artists, numbered ten. Twelve had either died or quit the expedition since departing from Le Havre in October 1800. Despite some cross-over, each remaining member of the scientific staff was responsible for, and most had been trained in, a particular branch of natural history research. Bernier and Péron have already been mentioned. Bernier had been an esteemed student of the celebrated astronomer Jérôme Lalande, while Péron was a medical student responsible during the voyage for zoological and anthropological research. Théodore Leschenault de la Tour was a botanist, assisted by gardener Antoine Guichenot, and Charles Bailly and Louis Depuch were trained mineralogists. There were two geographers—Pierre Faure and Charles-Pierre Boullanger—and also two artists—Nicolas-Martin Petit and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur—who had received limited education in the discipline of fine art but had been chosen by Baudin to illustrate his journal. In fact, under Baudin's command in 1802 more naturalists, with greater and more various areas of expertise, arrived at Sydney than had arrived with any previous expedition in the history of the colony. Their arrival in the colonial field would be an event for the inhabitants of that field as well as for themselves.

Péron, Zoology and 'Making Discoveries'

Péron, certainly, welcomed the sojourn as an opportunity to 'observe the animals of this continent'. The first campaign had failed to satisfy his thirst for zoological discovery: 'this country so vast and still so new to the naturalist, seemed likely to provide us with the most plentiful and important collections, and yet they have to this point been almost non-existent'.¹⁰ The 'known' terrain

⁹ *Table de Loch* of the *Géographe*, 13 messidor to 4 fructidor, Year X, entry made by Louis-Charles Gaspard Bonnefoy de Montbazin and dated 6 thermidor an X [25 July 1802], ANF, série marine 5JJ 25.

¹⁰ 'La Nouvelle Hollande, cette contrée si vaste et si nouvelle encore pour le naturaliste, paraissait devoir nous fournir des collections et plus nombreuses et plus importantes,

would be more fruitful, he had come to hope, than the ‘unknown’ had been. It was known by the English, at least, but not to him— perhaps that was enough. In any case, before Péron could get his hunt underway, he was ordered by Baudin to compile a report on the zoological results of the first campaign (Péron, Tableau). As mentioned earlier, most of the collection was stored in the accommodation he shared with Bellefin. The specimens must have filled the space as, during those first days in Sydney, he immersed himself in the work of sorting, cataloguing, describing and recalling his earlier experiences on distant beaches. His report is coloured with details about the physical and emotional context of the zealous naturalists’ explorations, as well as of the animals themselves. During the course of this sedentary work, however, Péron was not isolated from his new field: he and Bellefin received regular visitors at their rooms: visitors wishing to see the large collection of specimens (Péron 1824, 352). One wonders how often these visitors donated their catches, or lingered to share their knowledge about Australian animals. Through the writing of the report, his previous fieldwork would thus have merged with the colonial field before he had even begun actively to explore that terrain.

No time was lost when the opportunity to begin that exploration finally arrived. It appears to have absorbed far more of his time, in fact, than further cataloguing and description of his subsequent collections. He must have labelled them, but the archives yield no report, like that which he wrote concerning the first campaign, specifically addressing the fieldwork carried out during these five months at Port Jackson.¹¹ Instead, the specimens gathered during this sojourn are mentioned alongside those from the subsequent campaign in notebooks written, seemingly, back in France.¹² He did, however, compile

et cependant elles ont été presque nulles encore jusqu’à ce jour’ (Péron, Tableau).

¹¹ Péron entitled one his notebooks : *Observations zoologiques de Port Jackson à la Nouvelle-Hollande* (CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 001), but this notebook only includes the catalogues relating to the second campaign. It would therefore appear that Péron intended also to describe or list the Port Jackson collection.

¹² Péron’s zoological collections from the Port Jackson sojourn and subsequent campaign are referred to in the following two notebooks: F. Péron, *Diarium zoographicum. No. XV. Ans XI et XII. Observationes generales de Collectionibus factis in Zoologiâ ex prefecturâ nostrâ Portû Jackson (27 Brumaire an XI) adusque Promontorium Monoe Spei inclusivè (30 Pluviose an XII). Péron, zoologiste, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 001*; F. Péron, *Suite du Catalogue général des Descriptions,*

lengthy reports on the state and administration of the colony itself (Péron, *Mémoire*). Lesueur, who collected a considerable number of quadrupeds, seems to have been similarly averse to recording the results of his zoological work on paper. Although he drew a number of Port Jackson animals, none of these illustrations appear to have been done *in situ*, as had some of his other zoological drawings.¹³ Perhaps, then, both Péron and Lesueur put the business of exploring, collecting and observing, as well no doubt as the amusement of social activities, above the indoor sedentary aspect of natural history work.

Péron did range widely across the County of Cumberland. His first excursion was to Botany Bay—the *lieu de mémoire* of the 1788 disappearance of the La Pérouse expedition (see Nugent 2005, 95–105). This foray was no doubt as much a pilgrimage as a natural history excursion. Péron disapproved of the ‘arid and sandy’ landscape of Botany Bay, which, he opined, ‘does not appear suitable for any type of cultivation’ and where indeed there were no European settlements to be found (Cornell 2006, 301).¹⁴ Furthermore, while in his account he names some of the trees seen there and mentions the ‘unfortunate tribes who live on these miserables shores’ (Cornell 2006, 301),¹⁵ he makes no mention of objects collected. His notes reveal that Mrs Paterson—the wife of William Paterson, Lieutenant-Colonel of the New South Wales Corps—gave him some shells from Botany Bay,¹⁶ but there is no evidence that he collected anything there himself. Given the tone of his account, Péron may have been attempting to fulfill the role of the ‘manly’ and courageous naturalist in the

dessins, journaux et collections remis au Cen Baudin commandt en chef de l'expédition en exécution de l'ordre du Ministre de la Marine par le Cen Péron zoologiste à bord du Géographe CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 002.

¹³ None of the zoological specimens collected at Port Jackson is included in the list of drawings made during the expedition. See F. Péron, *Tableau général de tous les dessins d'histoire Naturelle exécutés par M. Lesueur depuis notre départ de l'île de France pour les côtes de la Nouvelle-Hollande jusqu'à notre atterrissement sur les côtes de France*, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 001; F. Péron, *Journal No. VIII, Dessins et Plans Géographico-zoologiques, Tableau Général de tous les dessins zoologiques exécutés par M. Lesueur dans chacune des diverses branches du Règne Animal distribués par classes avec le No particulier de la description des divers objets auxquels chacun d'eux appartient*, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 002.

¹⁴ ‘Aride et sablonneux, ne paroît propre à aucune espèce de culture’ (Péron 1824, 287).

¹⁵ ‘Des hordes malheureuses qui vivent sur ces tristes rivages’ (Péron 1824, 287).

¹⁶ F. Péron, ‘Coquille donnée par Mme Paterson’, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 013.

field (Outram 1996, 261); however, if that is so, he fell short by providing no material discoveries as evidence of his accomplishment. Interestingly, both his attitude concerning the agricultural environs of Parramatta and Castle Hill as well as the results of his fieldwork there, were very different.

Péron was enraptured with this green and fertile landscape and, in particular, with all that the English had done with it. He waxes lyrical about the settlers' agricultural accomplishments, the 'pretty dwellings', and the township of Parramatta, and refers only fleetingly to the forests that separated the settlements or the rivers that ran through them. As his narrative skips from merino sheep to his zoological collection, one gets the impression that the specimens had been simply plucked out of this colonial Eden—the fruits, if not of the naturalist's courageous confrontation with the natural world, then of its European civilisation. Péron emphasises the size of the collection, and that part which came from the Parramatta region alone was considerable. He records finding 150 new species of insects, including forty butterflies (Péron 1824, 404 and Cornell 2006, 319)—which for one excursion constitutes an impressive proportion of the expedition's final total of 880 new insect species (see Jussieu 1804, 10). The lizards he found made up a quarter of the total number of new lizard species discovered by the French in Australia. And, notably, this was the only location in Australia, including Tasmania, where Péron found frogs, tree-frogs and—apart from one 'very small' specimen found under a log in Geographe Bay—toads (see Péron 1824, 332).¹⁷ Similarly, the platypus, emu and long-necked turtle were to be the only specimens of their kind in the expedition's collection.¹⁸ Péron was proud that these last three animals were 'sent by me to the *Muséum*';¹⁹ indeed, like much of the collection, they were not new to European science, but they were new acquisitions for the expedition and for the *Muséum* where metropolitan naturalists would store these finds.

Péron attributes all of these finds to himself, but, of course, he had not been alone in the field. During his first visit to Parramatta, he was accompanied

¹⁷ On the scientific significance of some of the specimens Péron collected at Parramatta, see Duyker 2006, 142–143. See also Péron's notebooks in the dossier 78 and notes entitled '3^e et 4^e Classes, Quadrupède-ovipares et Reptiles', CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 003-3.

¹⁸ See Péron's inventories of the zoological collection held in CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21, notebooks catalogued 21 001 and 21 002.

¹⁹ *Muséum national d'histoire naturelle*, Paris (henceforth *Muséum*).

by his companion Bellefin. Although the naval surgeon's journal is not available, it may be assumed that he collected alongside Péron and that, similarly, his medical skills were applied to the tasks of preparing, preserving and evaluating the specimens. He and Péron had been assigned a guide—a sergeant of the New South Wales regiment—whom Paterson had ordered 'to procure us the means of pursuing our studies as fully as possible' (Cornell 2006, 302).²⁰ Part of his duty may have been actually to contain the naturalists' explorations, for there was terrain which the English were determined to 'discover' themselves. For example, King flatly refused the requests of Péron, as well as of mineralogists Bailly and Depuch, to venture into the Blue Mountains—even in the company of colonial authorities (Péron 1824, 313). Nevertheless, the sergeant's role must otherwise have facilitated the naturalists' research. He obtained accommodation for them with some of the wealthiest proprietors in the colony, who were not only able to provide comfortable lodging and to facilitate multiple, unhurried excursions but also, no doubt, to share useful knowledge of the land and its productions. Sojourns with settlers such as James Larra, at whose inn Péron and Bellefin 'were consistently served with an elegance—a richness, even—that we should never have believed possible on these shores' (Cornell 2006, 323),²¹ could only have reinvigorated the naturalists and fuelled their research efforts.

In fact, even though Péron was usually vague about its results, collaboration was a central theme in his representation of this colonial field. His narrative of the Port Jackson sojourn is sprinkled with references to the support offered by the Governor, the assistance provided by prominent landowners, the interest in his work shown by the inhabitants of Sydney Town, and the participation of English collectors in his fieldwork. Péron was particularly enthusiastic about his experience of sharing the field with Patterson—gentleman naturalist and correspondent of Banks, as well as Lieutenant-Colonel—and George Caley, Banks' official natural history collector in the colony. He wrote in the *Voyage de découvertes*:

²⁰ 'Nous procurer les moyens de donner à nos recherches tout le développement possible.' (Péron 1824, 289.)

²¹ 'Nous y fûmes constamment servis avec une élégance et même avec un luxe que jamais nous n'aurions cru pouvoir exister sur ces bords, si nous n'en eussions été l'objet' (Péron 1824, 337). For further details about the hospitality of Larra, see Duyker 2006, 143–144.

How interesting it was to spend several days traversing these areas, so rich in objects new to Europe! With what enthusiasm did we vie with one another in the noble pleasure of making discoveries! And with what affectionate generosity did my honourable collaborators bestow upon me all the objects that my own searches had failed to uncover!

(Cornell 2006, 331)²²

Once more, Péron is more concerned with the context in which his collecting took place than in exactly what he collected. Of course, he kept inventories and notes of specimens obtained but, conversely, they lack context. The gentlemanly, civilised nature of the activity, and perhaps the respectable company in which it took place, were probably intended to give the unnamed specimens greater value. The claim about their scientific significance is unsubstantiated; instead, they are put forward as representations of the ‘honour’ and ‘nobility’ of European ‘discovery’. Péron sought no doubt to compensate for the fact that this colony was no ‘unknown’ beach.

He promoted the colonial field as a European space and, according to his narrative, the indigenous inhabitants were situated unambiguously on its fringes. However, historians such as Inga Clendinnen (2003, 145–167), Alan Atkinson (1997) and Grace Karskens (2009) demonstrate that the Aborigines of Port Jackson were in fact very much present within the colony around the turn of the nineteenth century. Karskens shows, further, that they also played an important role in the natural history economy that was flourishing at this time in the colony. George Caley, Karskens points out, employed a number of convicts to collect specimens for him, but his most valued collector was his Aboriginal companion Daniel Moowattin.²³ Indeed, Baudin’s correspondence

²² ‘Avec quel intérêt nous parcourûmes durant plusieurs jours ces lieux si riches en productions nouvelles pour l’Europe! Avec quelle ardeur nous nous disputions le noble plaisir des découvertes! Avec quelle affectueuse générosité mes honorables collaborateurs m’enrichissoient de tous les objets qui s’étoient soustraits à mes propres recherches.’ (Péron 1824, 358)

²³ Caley had declared that Aboriginal guides were extremely helpful to naturalists: they prevented collectors ‘getting lost and bewildered’, they were able to point out the tracks left by animals, and they were ‘excellent marksmen and quicker-sighted than our people’. (Quoted in Karskens 2009, 260)

with English settler Andrew Thompson provides further evidence of the involvement of Aboriginal people in the collecting process: ‘the cockatoo is lost’, wrote Thompson, ‘but I am endeavouring to get another and some young swans from the Natives which if I procure in due time shall be forwarded to you’.²⁴ In fact, here one sees the multi-stage process of exchange that collecting could become: from Aboriginal people to settlers to voyagers and, eventually, to the museum—European knowledge was developing largely out of a natural history economy. Péron did not acknowledge this directly, particularly not the role of indigenous collectors. However, he did describe a man named Ourou-Mare, called Bull-dog by the English, whom he ‘kept’ with him throughout the sojourn, and whose skill at catching lizards and snakes had impressed him.²⁵ These lizards and snakes would almost certainly have been added to Péron’s collection. Ourou-Mare was, no doubt, another of Péron’s collaborators in this colonial field—even if he did not fit into Péron’s representation of that space.

At Port Jackson, as Margaret Sankey demonstrates, Péron’s scientific gaze broadened, to encompass the development and administration of the colony itself (Sankey 2005).²⁶ That is not to suggest that his zoological work was put aside; it is clear that it was continued with enthusiasm. However, Péron sought to highlight his familiarity with the British colony—in fact, as Sankey suggests, to possess it with his knowledge—and to give greater significance to his natural history work at Port Jackson by presenting it in that context (Sankey 2005, 105).

His collecting was strongly affected by the culture of the colonial project and, in particular, by the Enlightenment concept of improvement through scientific knowledge.²⁷ In actual fact, Péron turned that notion around in his narrative—by representing knowledge as a product of improvement.

²⁴ Letter from Andrew Thompson to Nicolas Baudin, sent from Parramatta and dated 3 November 1802, ANF, SM, 5JJ53.

²⁵ Péron, ‘Conférence adressée à “Messieurs les Professeurs” décrivant les aborigènes et leurs mœurs près de Port Jackson’, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier n° 09 032, transcription J. Bonnemains.

²⁶ See also Fornasiero and West-Sooby 2002.

²⁷ On the role that this concept played in the establishment and development of the British colony in Australia, see Gascoigne 2002, 86–87.

Botanising the Colony

However, the same is not true for his fellow scientific voyager, botanist Leschenault. The one available record of the Port Jackson sojourn, authored by Leschenault himself—a report on the vegetation of New Holland and Van Diemen’s Land—shows that the young French botanist believed the colonists’ attempts to cultivate the land were not bringing any improvement to the environment at all but, in fact, were only proving unproductive for farmers and detrimental to the land. He explained:

When accidental causes have not *enriched* the soil, the farmer is often disappointed in the hopes that had been raised in him by a country covered in fine forests—the slow, gradual product of several centuries of growth, utterly undisturbed by human industry. Few years are needed to exhaust a land that he has painfully cleared. In the area surrounding Parramatta, I came upon a number of these farms that have been abandoned. After cultivation, the soil (after its return to Nature), is no longer covered by anything but puny bushes and a species of *Saccharum*, a dry, coarse, graminaceous plant, not suitable for feeding live-stock.

(Leschenault 2007, 105)²⁸

This concern for the destruction of native forests at the hands of European farmers would have been of interest to Baudin’s friend at the *Muséum*—botanist and conservationist André Thouin. Moreover, it was a concern stemming more from a scientific than an imperialist point of view.²⁹ Leschenault looked at

²⁸ ‘Mais lorsque des causes accidentelles n’ont pas *engraissé* le sol, le cultivateur est souvent déçu des espérances que lui avait données un terrain couvert de belles forêts, ouvrage lent et progressif de plusieurs siècles de végétation, que n’avait jamais troublé l’industrie des hommes. Peu d’années suffisent pour épuiser une terre qu’il a péniblement défrichée. J’ai rencontré, dans les environs de Parramatta, nombre de ces cultures abandonnées. Le sol, après avoir été cultivé, ne se couvre plus, lorsqu’il est rendu à la nature, que d’arbustes chétifs et d’une espèce de *saccharum*, plante graminée, sèche et rude, qui n’est pas propre à la nourriture des bestiaux’. (Leschenault 1824, 347–348)

²⁹ Leschenault’s comments were not approved of by first-lieutenant Louis Freycinet, who published the second edition of the *Voyage de découvertes*, in which this report

how the settlers were using and changing the land and its productions not in order to admire the march of civilisation but to further his understanding of the Australian environment: that is, to learn about the properties of the plants and the possibilities and limitations inherent in the land. Although his insight was limited by the common assumption that the land had been untouched, unmanaged prior to European settlement, the colonial nature of the field considerably facilitated his investigations to this end.

Leschenault did emphasise in his report the view that this scientific terrain was ‘already known’. The plants of this region, he declared, had been almost all described by English botanists. Accordingly, he went on to specify, describe and categorise only those particular plants in his collection which he deemed new and, therefore, of interest: a species of *Dianella*, another of *Exocarpos*, and several plants of the legume and myrtle families (Leschenault 1824, 349 and Leschenault 2007, 106). This more disciplined and scientific approach further sets Leschenault’s work at Port Jackson apart from that of Péron.

However, if this field was not untouched, that perceived disadvantage was offset by the various benefits—such as accommodation, transport, and prolonged time ashore—which the sojourn offered. Each of the discoveries Leschenault listed had been collected during an excursion to the foot of the Blue Mountains—a distance inland that he could not have reached during any of the expedition’s other stopovers on the Australian coastline. Furthermore, while specimens new to European science may have been difficult to find, no doubt most of the plants and seeds were, like Péron’s zoological specimens, new additions to the cabinets of the *Muséum*. Indeed, the Port Jackson sojourn produced an immense botanical collection. Towards the end of the sojourn, embarked aboard the *Naturaliste* for her homeward voyage were: seventy-nine tubs containing a total of 800 individual living plants (of around 250 species), 3,560 dried plants (of around 900 species) and, as mentioned above,

appears. Based on the word of Governor King rather than on personal observation, Louis Freycinet contradicted Leschenault’s claim that the colony was not harvesting enough grain to meet its needs. However, various other sources support Leschenault’s statement by indicating that the colony was often short of provisions, including grain. Freycinet also pointed out that it was not only European plants that the British had introduced to Australia but also tropical plants. (See Leschenault 1824, 346 and Leschenault 2007, 108–109)

three crates of seeds. It is not possible, based on sources currently available, to determine precisely what proportion of this collection had been gathered at Port Jackson and how much of it was the result of the first campaign. However, Michel Jangoux makes an interesting observation: as the work he had been undertaking at the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle in Paris suggests, most of the specimens collected by the Baudin expedition in Australia were from the County of Cumberland (Jangoux 2004, 66).

Like Péron's collection, Leschenault's crates of plants and seeds were gathered alongside fellow naturalists, under the supervision of English guides, and no doubt—in some cases—by hands other than his own. British records show that, during the *Naturaliste's* first visit to Port Jackson, Leschenault carried out field-work alongside the eminent botanist of the Flinders expedition, Robert Brown (Edwards 1981, 78). Presumably, they worked together again during the young Frenchman's second sojourn at Port Jackson—Brown was still in Sydney and it was to be almost another month before he departed aboard the *Investigator*.³⁰ Interestingly, however, Leschenault himself makes no mention of this connection or, indeed, of collaboration of any sort. His report is focused almost entirely on the practical uses and limitations as well as the scientific significance of Australia's vegetation, diverging only briefly to discuss his view of the Aboriginal people and their relationship with the land. It suggests a systematic approach to the voyager-botanist and, moreover, an attempt to represent Port Jackson first and foremost as a botanical field rather than as a European colony.

Leschenault no doubt believed that representing his work in this way, without reference to the assistance and exchanges that it had involved, lent greater scientific authority both to his specimens and observations as well as to himself as a voyager-botanist. Of course, in its style and content, Leschenault's report may be seen further as asserting superior French knowledge over the bumbling efforts of English farmers and less than thorough field-work of colonial collectors.

³⁰ On Robert Brown's sojourn at Port Jackson, see Vallance et al. 2001, 201–216. For references to Leschenault in this text, see the entry dated Tuesday 11 May 1802, p. 203 as well as the letters from Robert Brown to Joseph Banks, written at Sydney and dated 30 May 1802, p. 206, and from Robert Brown to Jonas Dryander, written at Sydney and dated 30 May 1802, p. 207.

Useful Mineralogy

To ensure that his efforts at Port Jackson would be deemed worthwhile, Leschenault needed to advance a body of botanical work that the English had been developing steadily since 1788. In the discipline of mineralogy, by contrast, his colleagues faced no such challenge. Apart from the Abbé Mongez of the Lapérouse expedition who in February 1788 advised Governor Phillip on the suitability of local white clay to ‘make good China’,³¹ Bailly and Depuch were the first mineralogists to set foot in Australia. This meant not only that they would be certain to make discoveries, and therefore to contribute significantly to the success of the expedition and to French scientific knowledge, but also that their colonial hosts at Port Jackson would deem their expertise of particular value. The relationships that Bailly and Depuch would enjoy with the colonial officials would therefore have been somewhat different from that experienced by Leschenault and Péron and, certainly, the way in which the young scientists would represent their work in this field would also differ distinctly.

The mineralogical records currently available are both authored by Bailly—Depuch died during the return voyage and his papers are yet to be recovered. Nonetheless, Bailly’s reports are written with reference to collective research, undertaken by the author in collaboration with the more senior Depuch (Mayer 2005, 107). They comprise an account of the excursion Bailly and Depuch made through the environs of Toongabbie and Hawkesbury, to the edge of the Blue Mountains, and a descriptive inventory of the specimens they collected and were donated during the course of the Port Jackson sojourn (Péron 1824, 377–397).³²

The first of these documents demonstrates that Bailly and Depuch were not solely interested in the region’s geological make-up. Using a narrative style similar to Péron’s, though more coherent, Bailly recounts the events of the mineralogists’ excursion and lays out the observations that they made along the way—observations that did mainly relate to the land but which otherwise focused squarely on the progress of the colonial project. He devotes particular

³¹ Letter from Arthur Phillip to Sir Joseph Banks, 16 November 1788, Papers of Sir Joseph Banks, Mitchell Library, http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/series_37/37_view.cfm.

³² See also Charles Bailly, ‘Catalogue des objets de Minéralogie’, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 004.

attention to the town of Toongabbie and, in particular, to the signs of order and wealth it revealed and the agricultural prosperity it represented. Thus, Bailly gives much more attention in this report to extra-disciplinary matters than does Leschenault in his own—Lechanault only writes about the colony through the lens of botanical analysis—yet he neither romanticises the colonial project nor glosses over his scientific work as Péron tends to do in the *Voyage de découvertes* narrative. While the mineralogists evidently saw merit in overtly combining the political with the scientific, it does not appear that they did so in order to boost the import of their mineralogical research but, rather, that they saw the colonial context both as integral to the nature of their findings and as worthy of comment in and of itself.

In fact, it is apparent that the mineralogists' knowledge was of greater value to the colonial officials than it was to the scientists at the *Muséum*. Bailly makes direct mention of the assistance that was given to him by the colonial administration: Governor King sent letters of recommendation and a request to host the Frenchmen to Mr Arndell—surgeon and first magistrate at Hawkesbury: Arndell gave Bailly and Depuch accommodation, a guide and local advice. Either King or Arndell also provided the mineralogists with an interpreter, equipment and supplies.³³ Similar assistance had of course been offered to the other French naturalists as well but, in this case, the contribution of the English consisted almost entirely of support and facilitation rather than, also, researching side-by-side with the French as fellow naturalists. True, Bailly's inventory shows that King and Paterson contributed several mineral samples to the expedition's collection;³⁴ however, the colonists were generally unqualified to share the task of mineralogical analysis with Bailly and Depuch. Instead, they sought to benefit from the Frenchmen's knowledge. Although King would not permit Depuch and Bailly to extend their research into the mountain range, he did give Depuch the opportunity to study some rock samples brought back from Francis Barrallier's expedition into the Blue Mountains.³⁵ Following his analysis, Depuch was able to inform King that the expedition had not reached the centre of the range, as the rocks they had collected did not include samples of its granitic core (Mayer 2005, 108). Based on analysis

³³ Bailly quoted in Péron 1824, 397.

³⁴ Bailly, 'Catalogue des objets de Minéralogie', CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 004.

³⁵ On Francis Barrallier see Lhuedé 2003.

of mineral samples from the banks of the Nepean River, as Mayer explains, Depuch had earlier been able to conclude that the core of the Blue Mountains was of an ancient or primitive composition. Furthermore, their research in the colonial field also revealed the existence of Triassic deposits of sandstone and shale, as well as indications of valuable coal layers—finds that are bound to have been of interest to participants in the colonial project.³⁶

In fact, it is worth noting that, of all of the research undertaken by Baudin's naturalists at Port Jackson, it was only that of Bailly King referred to specifically in his correspondence with Joseph Banks. He wrote:

While the *Naturaliste* was here the mineralogist made experiments on the ferruginous stones that abound here. He says they contain too small a portion of iron for working, but that a profitable substance might be got from them for glazing porcelain.³⁷

This said, the discoveries made during the voyage by Bailly and Depuch, and, it should be noted, also by Péron,³⁸ made little impression on the members of the *Institut National*. It seems Jussieu³⁹ even overlooked the work carried out at Port Jackson when he reported in 1804:

It is not surprising that, from research carried out mainly on desert or heavily wooded coasts, which offer neither rising mountains, nor ravines, for learning about the composition of the land, nor any work of exploitation, the minéralogists Depuch and Bailly could

³⁶ See the account provided by Mayer 2005, 107–108 and Bailly quoted in Péron 1824, 378–397, and in Cornell 2006, 339–347.

³⁷ Letter from Philip Gidley King to Joseph Banks, written in Sydney and dated 5 June 1802, reproduced in Bladen 1896, 782.

³⁸ Bailly in his *Catalogue des objets de Minéralogie appartenant au gouvernement qui m'ont été remis par le Cⁿ. Péron*, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 004, lists forty-five samples, from five different types of rock: coal, schist, sandstone, breccia and quartz. Péron himself lists seven samples in his list entitled 'Minéraux', CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier, 21 031.

³⁹ Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu, professor at the Muséum d'histoire naturelle, Paris.

collect only a small number of mineral samples, insufficient to give an exact idea of the geology of this country.⁴⁰

(Jussieu 1804, 7)

It is possible that the mineralogists' research at Port Jackson had been influenced more by the concerns of the English colonists, and indeed by Bailly's and Depuch's interest in the colony, than by the demands of science.

Charting the Settlement and the Stars

It was certainly most striking in relation to the mineralogical research but, colonial officials had been eager to participate in the French voyagers' production of knowledge throughout the duration of the sojourn. When it came to the expedition's astronomical work, King literally demanded a share in the results. He required Bernier to send to him each day, via one of the soldiers of the New South Wales Corps, a copy of all the data he had collected. This requirement may not have significantly influenced the quality or nature of Bernier's work, if at all; however, it is worth noting for how it highlights the shared and multi-purpose nature of the research carried out by voyager-scientists in the colonial field. While King may have demanded regular reports from Bernier due to a particular interest in astronomical research—for instance, he may have used the data to improve the accuracy with which the longitude of Sydney was known—it is worth considering, given that there is no evidence that such requirements were made of the other French scientists, that King's rationale was partly territorial. That is, that the colonial administration had a right to any data collected on colonial territory. And, as Bernier spent the majority of his time during the sojourn in the observatory tents, situated on Bennelong Point, King did not have ready access to his findings as he did to those of the other French field-workers. In lieu of casual exchanges of knowledge, regular

⁴⁰ 'On ne sera pas étonné que dans une recherche bornée à des côtes, la plupart désertes ou couvertes de bois, qui n'offroient ni montagnes élevées, ni ravins pour apercevoir les diverses couches de terre, ni aucun travail d'exploitation, les minéralogistes de Pusch et Bailly, n'aient pu recueillir qu'un petit nombre de minéraux insuffisans pour donner une idée exacte de la géologie de ce pays'.

reports provided a means of gaining access to the knowledge that was obtained within this colonial space.

Bernier, in his turn, made no claims upon the British colony. His journal entries diverge rarely from astronomical observations. By contrast, however, the French geographical work was focused distinctly, and quite naturally, on attaining a thorough familiarity with the layout and construction of the colony at Port Jackson. Although British maps had been available in France since the early years of the colony, the Baudin expedition's visit to Port Jackson provided the first opportunity for Frenchmen to produce, from personal observations, their own plans and charts of the region. As acknowledged in their titles, the two main charts were based on existing British charts: 'Plan du Port Jackson', which was based on those of former governor John Hunter,⁴¹ and the 'Plan du Comté de Cumberland', which was drawn up from 'les Cartes Anglaises'.⁴² Thus, from the beginning, these documents were to constitute a combination of British and French knowledge. However, the final result was not just a layering of French over British representations, but of French artistic, cartographic and geographical views over an official colonial view: the expedition's charts were based on observations made at Port Jackson by Boullanger, Lesueur and Louis Freycinet.

If the French version of the map of Port Jackson is compared to those drawn up for Hunter,⁴³ it is evident that the British charts were used only to provide a broad outline. Based on observations made aboard the French ships in 1802, as the titles indicate, the French maps provide detailed contemporary representations of the colony. The map of Port Jackson offers a closer view than the maps upon which it seems to have been based and therefore includes additional details such as the names of numerous points and coves along the

⁴¹ 'Plan du Port Jackson (Nouvelles Galles du Sud) d'après le Capitaine John Hunter assujetti aux observations faites à bord des Corvettes françaises en 1802', plate n° 29 in Freycinet 1812.

⁴² 'Plan du Comté de Cumberland (Nouvelles Galles du Sud) d'après les Cartes Anglaises assujetti aux observations faites à bord des Corvettes françaises en 1802', plate n° 29 in Freycinet 1812.

⁴³ See 'Chart of the coast between Botany Bay and Broken Bay: surveyed in 1788 and 1789 by Captain John Hunter' and 'A map of all those parts of the territory of New South Wales which have been seen by any person belonging to the settlement established at Port Jackson', in Hunter 1968.

coastline, locations of fresh water sources and Sydney Harbour's point of longitude from Paris. The map of the County of Cumberland shows the roads linking the colony's townships, indicates the size and shape of each town, as well as features such as waterfalls and rivers at the edge of the mountains and some notes about the fertility of land at different points near the mountain range. The Frenchmen's interest in the colony, however, was not limited to the layout of the country and the quality of its soil. Their map of Sydney is immensely detailed.⁴⁴ It was sketched by Lesueur according to bearings taken by Boullanger, and charts in fine detail the area from the southern edge of Palmer's Cove to the northern edge of the township, and from Sydney Cove inland to the village of Brickfield. Civil and military structures, docks and dockyards, gardens, even the cemetery, are carefully depicted and cross-referenced.

While, as shown, a great degree of detail was put into mapping and illustrating the colony at Port Jackson, there is as yet no evidence that the geographers, Boullanger and Faure, undertook any other geographical studies of this region during their five months ashore.⁴⁵ In fact, Faure does not appear to have recorded any geographical observations during the course of this sojourn at all—a circumstance which merits investigation. The importance of charting ports—particularly those that could hold military importance—had been made clear to Baudin, and presumably to his staff as well.⁴⁶ The opportunity to chart the British colony apparently engrossed Boullanger to the exclusion of the sort of comprehensive geographical studies that he normally carried out in on-shore fields.

⁴⁴ 'Plan de la ville de Sydney (capitale des colonies anglaises aux Terres australes) levé par M. Lesueur et assujetti aux relèvements de M. Boullanger. Novembre 1802', plate n° 30 in Freycinet 1812.

⁴⁵ Péron, who gave consideration to various fields of natural history while at Port Jackson, did write about the geography of the region in the *Voyage de découvertes*.

⁴⁶ These instructions are the same as those given to La Pérouse. See La Pérouse 1799, 42–47.

Studying the Colonised

Nonetheless, it was the expedition's anthropological study that was affected most deeply by the colonial environment. Philosopher Joseph-Marie Degérando had instructed the 'philosophical voyagers' of the Baudin expedition to consider, among other issues, the civilisability of the indigenous peoples they were to encounter (Moore 1969, 60–103); naturally, the colonial field at Port Jackson brought this problem swiftly to the fore. It had a profound influence on the Frenchmen's anthropological work. Baudin's naturalists had the opportunity to encounter Aboriginal people on a daily basis during their stay at Port Jackson. They would have passed them on the streets of Sydney, observed them on Bennelong Point, come across them in the colony's hinterland. As mentioned earlier, Péron 'kept' an Aboriginal man with him during the course of the sojourn: perhaps some of his fellow field-workers did similarly. However, as historians often note, although the Port Jackson sojourn provided the Baudin expedition with its most prolonged cross-cultural encounter, it was a 'relatively silent period' in terms of the expedition's observations of 'man' (Konishi 2004, 106). It did make a vital contribution to the anthropological results,⁴⁷ yet the naturalists' remarks were fewer and less detailed than one would expect from five months of contact. It is asserted here that these remarks were not only few but that, furthermore, they were problematised by the colonists' own views concerning the local Aboriginal people as well as by how the Frenchmen understood the nature of the colony and of the position Aboriginal people should have occupied within that space.

At the risk of over-simplifying the matter, we will divide the anthropological work which resulted from this encounter into two categories. The first comprises commentary on the capacity—usually the lack thereof—of the local indigenous people to 'improve' as a result of their prolonged contact with Europeans. In this, the largest of the two categories, is included such records as the results of Péron's dynamometer experiments, which argue that their contact with Europeans had improved the Port Jackson Aborigines (Péron

⁴⁷ Fornasiero and West-Sooby 2002, 66–70; Fornasiero et al. 2004, 319–321, 323, 362, 367 and 371; Konishi 2004; Sankey 2004; Starbuck 2010, 166–168. In order to situate the Port Jackson ethnographies in the broader context of the Baudin expedition's ethnographical work, see Hughes 1988a and Hughes 1988b.

1824, 400–459), as well as Petit’s complementary series of portraits.⁴⁸ It also comprises the drawings, journal entries and reports which concern public displays of sexual intercourse,⁴⁹ Péron’s narrative of the sojourn, and various reports coloured by references to perceived laziness, violence and inability to ‘adopt European ways’.⁵⁰ The second category consists of representations which largely exclude reference to the colony and its white inhabitants or at least separate them from Aboriginal people. This group includes the landscapes by Lesueur—which, as Jean Fornasiero and John West-Sooby note (2002, 66)—are notably few in comparison to his sketches of the English settlement, as well as written accounts composed by Lesueur and Boullanger.⁵¹ Both the artist and the geographer described fishing methods in some detail, while Boullanger also wrote about hunting and fighting techniques as well as burial and childbirth practices. These particular documents, however, do not appear to have reached the *Muséum* in Paris, and what emerges most prominently

⁴⁸ The portraits appear in F. Péron [and L. Freycinet] 1824 (Atlas) and are reproduced in J. Bonnemains et al. 1988, 137–180. For further discussion of Petit’s portraits of Port Jackson Aborigines, see R. Jones, ‘Images of Natural Man’, in Bonnemains et al. 1988, 58; Sankey 2004, 123–124; Fornasiero and West-Sooby 2002, 77–78 and Fornasiero et al. 2004, 367.

⁴⁹ Milius 1987, 48; F. Péron, ‘Conférence adressée aux Professeurs’; N.-M. Petit, ‘Scene showing Aborigines copulating’, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 16055 and C.A. Lesueur, ‘Scene showing Aborigines copulating’, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 16056.2, both reproduced in Bonnemains et al. 1988, 98 and 99. See also R. Jones, ‘Images of Natural Man’, in Bonnemains et al. 1988, 35–64 and for a particularly detailed study of the Baudin expedition’s representation of Aboriginal sexuality, see Konishi 2004.

⁵⁰ Milius 1987, 48–49; Nicolas Baudin to Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu, written at Port Jackson and dated 20 brumaire an X [11 November 1802], ms 2082, pièce n° 5; *Journal de St Cricq, Enseigne de Vaisseau sur la Corvette Le Naturaliste, commandée par le Citoyen Hamelin Cap^{ne} de freg^{te} Voyage de découvertes du Cap^{ne} Baudin*, ANF, SM, 5JJ48, entry dated 3 floréal an X [23 April 1802].

⁵¹ See Rivière 1953, 580 and C.A. Lesueur, ‘Pêche des aborigènes du Port Jackson’, transcribed J. Bonnemain, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 09 031. Lesueur’s drawings are held in the Collection Lesueur at the Muséum d’histoire naturelle, Le Havre. See also Péron 2008.

from the voyagers' records is a preoccupation with the issue of improvement or civilisation.⁵²

Baudin and his men saw the colony as a European space—this is evident from the way in which they described it in their journals and correspondence—and they struggled to place the Aboriginal people within this space. Ourou-Mare and the many other indigenous inhabitants of the Port Jackson region were deemed to be no longer in a pure 'state of nature' and therefore were not to be studied as previously-encountered Aboriginal people had been studied. Yet, at the same time, neither were they yet in a 'state of civilisation'—not europeanised—and, therefore, incongruent with the theme of progress and improvement which otherwise coloured the colonial backdrop. On the whole, through French eyes, at the same time that colonisation rendered these people less 'natural', it also highlighted their 'savagery'. In the colonial field, found Péron and his colleagues, Aboriginal couples did not just engage in sexual intercourse, but they copulated in public; Aboriginal men and women were not simply naked but, refusing to wear European clothing, or at least to wear it as intended, they stubbornly continued to be naked; seen immediately through the lens of European ideals of male-female relations, Aboriginal men were violent and cruel; and, set alongside scenes of settler industry, they were also idle and 'useless'.⁵³

As mentioned, the voyagers' anthropological view was also obscured by the colonists' perception. It is suggested above that Baudin's naturalists were surrounded by opportunities to communicate with the Aboriginal people of Port Jackson. As always, communication must have been limited by a language barrier—indigenous men and women living around Sydney were familiar with English, but not with French; no doubt British go-betweens here would often have contributed to French-Aboriginal exchanges. It is not unduly speculative to suppose that, if so, their interpretations and translations would have been affected by their own attitudes and would accordingly have altered the information being passed on. Unfortunately, the French records make no reference to such three-way exchanges, but they do frequently point to the influence of British verbal and textual accounts. For example, the *Voyage de*

⁵² For a more detailed discussion of this point of view, on the part of the members of the Baudin expedition, see Sankey 2004.

⁵³ Nicolas Baudin to Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu, written at Port Jackson and dated 20 brumaire an X [11 November 1802], ms 2082, pièce n° 5.

découvertes includes frequent references to colonial histories, particularly that composed by David Collins, while Lieutenant Pierre Milius refers repeatedly to stories he had heard from governor King and puts them forward as evidence of the indolence and violence of Aboriginal men (Milius 1987, 48). In fact, there is a strong likelihood that British accounts tended not only to colour the voyagers' view but also to restrict it. The fact that these Aboriginal people were already 'known', via ongoing contact as well as published accounts, and the possibility that this fact dampened the Frenchmen's desire to study them, could go a long way toward explaining why they figure so much less than expected in the expedition's anthropological results.

However, while the possession of knowledge of the Port Jackson Aborigines by the British may well have discouraged the Frenchmen from *describing* their anthropological observations in their usual manner, it did not restrict their *collecting* of anthropological material. Baudin was happy to receive, as highlighted by Péron, a donation which would constitute over three quarters of the expedition's final anthropological collection (Péron 1994, 159–167). It was a collection of 160 oceanic artefacts, offered by English explorer and merchant George Bass and intended for the nascent *Société des observateurs de l'Homme*.⁵⁴ The vocabulary and grammar of the 'savages' of Port Jackson were also donations—one, again, from Bass, and the other from Paterson.⁵⁵ Finally, an inventory compiled by Péron shows that more ethnographical objects were collected during this sojourn than at any other stage in the voyage; however, it does not indicate how or from whom the objects were obtained.⁵⁶ The French voyagers evidently deemed geographical provenance of objects as critical, but not necessarily their source. Regardless of how he and his men had come by them, the ethnographic objects were valued particularly highly by Baudin. Instead of sending this collection, with the other

⁵⁴ F. Péron, 'Tableau no VII^e, Tableau des différents objets d'histoire naturelle remis au C^{en} Péron par différentes personnes', *Observations zoologiques de Port Jackson à la Nouvelle-Hollande*, CL, MHN Le Havre, dossier 21 001 and Péron 1994.

⁵⁵ F. Péron, *État des manuscrits confiés à M. Volney*, CL, MHN, Le Havre, dossier 21 028.

⁵⁶ Péron's inventory of the anthropological collection lists only three pieces collected from Tasmania, one from King George Sound and two earrings from elsewhere in Australia, whereas it shows that ten different types of objects in various quantities were acquired in Port Jackson. See Péron 1994, 159–167.

natural history specimens, to France on the *Naturaliste*, Baudin kept it with him aboard the *Géographe* during the second campaign, presumably so that he might deliver it in person to the *Société* in Paris.

Baudin's Scientific Mission

As for the vast remainder of the expedition's natural history collection, gathered during the course of the first campaign and these months in port, it was Baudin's wish that it be sent to the *Muséum* without further delay. In fact, he had contributed much to this collection himself. Some of the expedition's most prized acquisitions—including a spotted quoll, a pair of black swans and emus—were the result of the captain's exchanges with English settlers during this sojourn. Many had been traded for quarts of rum or simply donated in

Sydney Town,⁵⁷ others were obtained during the course of Baudin's excursion in the company of governor King, which, he proudly boasted to Jussieu, took him 'beyond the furthest areas known to the English.'⁵⁸ If this comment seems to indicate a sense of intellectual rivalry on the part of the French captain, that impression is confirmed by another of his remarks to Jussieu concerning the pines from New Zealand and Norfolk Island that he had acquired: they would no doubt be 'most appreciated because no other European nation has been able to procure them', he pointed out.⁵⁹ Perhaps this sense of rivalry further

⁵⁷ N. Baudin, 'Compte général des dépenses relatives aux bâtiments de la République, le *Géographe*, le *Naturaliste* et le *Casuarina* pendant la relâche au Port Jackson, Nouvelle-Hollande', ANF, SM BB4997 and 'Commodore Rum Account', ANF, SM, 5JJ53 ; letter from Andrew Thompson to Nicolas Baudin, sent from Parramatta and dated 3 November 1802, ANF, SM, 5JJ53; Letter from H. Weld Noble to Nicolas Baudin, written at Sydney and dated 29 September 1802 ANF, SM, 5JJ53.

⁵⁸ 'Je suis allé au-delà des lieux les plus avancés connus des Anglais' (letter from Baudin to Jussieu, written at Port Jackson and dated 20 brumaire XI [11 November 1802], MNHN, ms 2082, pièce n° 5).

⁵⁹ 'Le pin de la Nouvelle Zélande et le pin de la Norfolk Island, seront sans doute parmi les plantes vivantes, celles dont le prix sera mieux senti, puisqu'aucune nation européenne n'est encore parvenue à se les procurer' (letter from Nicolas Baudin to the Minister of Marine and the Colonies, written at Port Jackson and dated 20 brumaire an X [11 November 1802]).

fuelled Baudin's determination to deliver the natural history collection to his superiors as quickly and safely as possible. In any case, the Port Jackson stay gave him the opportunity to attempt this with as much care as possible. He replaced the *Naturaliste* with a new vessel, purchased with governor King's permission because it would contribute to the pursuit of science and intended as a geographical tool for the second campaign, and ordered his men to load all of the botanical, zoological and mineralogical specimens aboard the original consort ship. Péron and his colleagues spent two weeks arranging the placement of live animals and plants and of crates and glass boxes aboard the *Naturaliste*—they needed to reach their destination in sound condition and in order. Organisation alone, however, would not suffice in Baudin's view. Before captain Hamelin set sail aboard the *Naturaliste* with his precious cargo, Baudin furnished him with a set of lengthy and detailed instructions on how to care for the specimens.⁶⁰ As it turned out, Hamelin was not the conscientious natural-history captain that was Baudin;⁶¹ however, while his specimens were being delivered to the scientists in Paris, Baudin and his naturalists would be busy gathering an even larger collection on the least familiar points of the Australian coastline (Starbuck 2010, 202–203 and 206–208 and Goy 1995, 25). This sojourn in an Australian colonial field, as Sankey reveals, enabled the captain and his naturalists to re-evaluate their scientific objectives (Sankey 2005, 104).

Conclusion

Two seasons on shore, with the facilities of a nascent colony at hand, had certainly provided Baudin's scientific staff with the space to consider and

⁶⁰ Nicolas Baudin to Emmanuel Hamelin, written at Port Jackson and dated 26 brumaire an XI [17 November 1802], MNHN, ms 2082, pièce n° 9.

⁶¹ The natural history collection transported to France on the *Naturaliste* arrived at its destination in a deplorable condition. For example, of the 800 live plants that Baudin had placed under Hamelin's care, only around twenty had survived the voyage—'a deplorable loss' which botanist of the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, André Thouin, attributed to ill-managed care. See A. Thouin, 'Extrait du Registre de délibérations de l'assemblée des Professeurs du Muséum d'histoire Naturelle', dated 10 messidor an XI [29 June 1803], Archives nationales de France, F17 (Ministry of Public Instructions), 3979 (miscellaneous affairs; grants; donations), dossier 12.

approach its field-work from a different angle than that permitted during beach excursions and stretches at sea. On the terrain of the colonial field, these turn-of-the-century voyager-naturalists had used a variety of methods to further their research. On the ground, augmenting their collections was of the utmost importance to them all—in town, on farms and in forests they bartered, collaborated, shared and discovered specimens both already known and yet unknown to natural historians. Their styles in the field are not easily categorised, yet one can observe in their work at Port Jackson the shift towards a clearer compartmentalisation of disciplines; that is, with the exception of Baudin and Péron, who contributed to a range of areas and who were just as interested in curiosities as in the advancement of science. Moreover, while their manner of collecting may have been fairly indiscriminate, there is no doubt that they were all concerned about the contribution they were making to French knowledge. They *represented* their findings with great care, trying in various ways to render their findings ‘new’: new to French collections if not to science, new to French understanding about the exploitation of land and the ‘civilisation’ of indigenous people, new by association with fresh geo-political knowledge.

It is clear that the type of meaning each of the men gave to his scientific findings depended heavily upon his own particular view of the colony—consider, for instance, the approach of Péron, in zoology and other fields, by contrast with that of botanist Leschenault. The findings were also given value, most notably in the discipline of mineralogy, by the colonial authorities on whose territory they were made. In fact, one of the most important characteristics of the French naturalists’ work in this colonial field is that it was carried out in a public space. Granted, the research of the voyager-naturalists was very often performed under the watchful, usually distant, eye of coastal Aborigines; however, at Port Jackson, its processes, results and representations were affected fundamentally by the contributions and surveillance of Aboriginal people and, most particularly, English colonists. The latter had a strong interest in their visitors’ research—it corresponded with their zeal for trading curiosities and, more importantly, it had the potential to benefit the colonial project. In fact, regardless of whether or not the knowledge obtained was of direct use to the colonists, it was nonetheless a valuable commodity and one gained on English territory. Governor King, for one, demanded a share in the possession of this knowledge. Correspondingly, just as he facilitated the Frenchmen’s research

not just in the service of the commonwealth of learning but also in the interests of the colonial project, so did the French naturalists themselves relate their work most often to issues of colonial endeavour. Their fieldwork here was by no means simply about collecting specimens or observing natural productions and indigenous people. By contrast, on the ground and in its representations, it was tied inextricably to the concerns and politics of the colonial project and the cosmopolitan pursuit of knowledge. And, in the end, Baudin's voyager-naturalists were able to present to the *Institut* not just specimens dredged up from a well-trodden terrain but something broader, less tangible and more political: a colonial field.

The University of Adelaide

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