

## PUBLISHED VERSION

Jean Fornasiero

### **Framing New Holland or framing a narrative? A representation of Sydney according to Charles-Alexandre Lesueur**

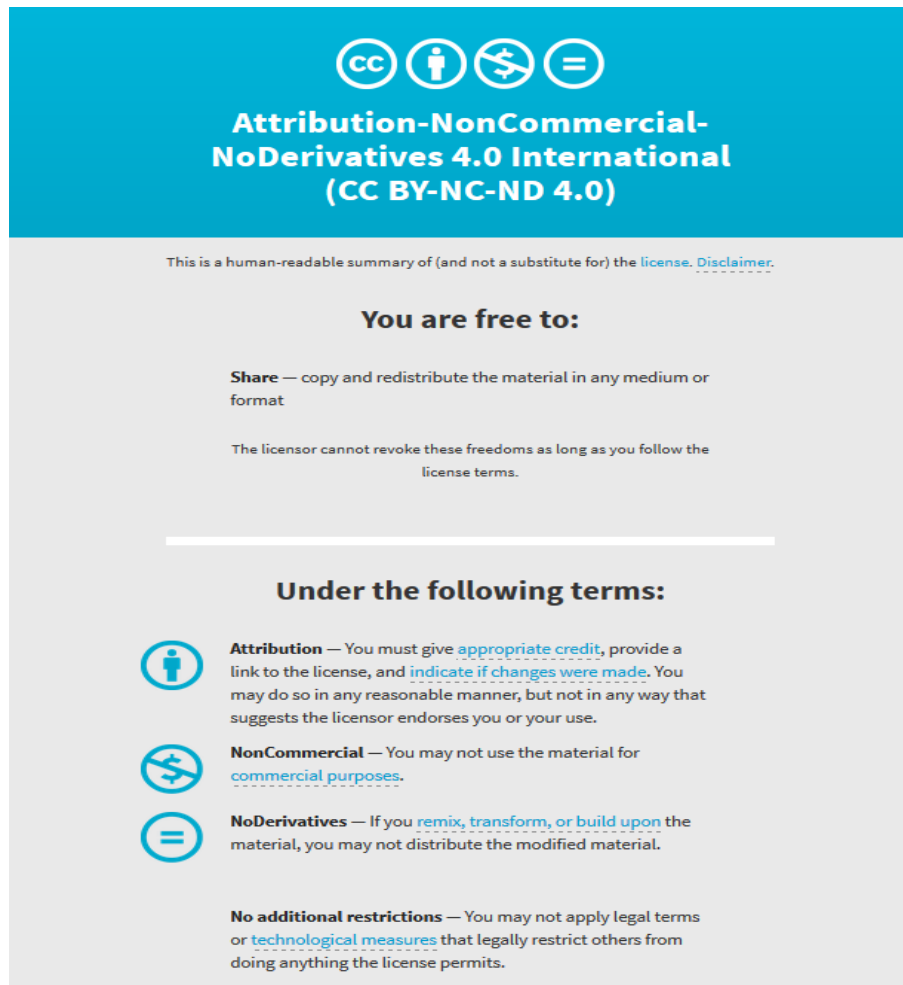
Framing French Culture, 2015 / Edwards, N., McCann, B., Poiana, P. (ed./s), Ch.4, pp.81-102

© 2015 The authors. This work is licenced under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercialNoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) License. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA. This licence allows for the copying, distribution, display and performance of this work for non-commercial purposes providing the work is clearly attributed to the copyright holders. Address all inquiries to the Director at the above address.

Published version <http://dx.doi.org/10.20851/framing-french-04>

### PERMISSIONS

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



The image shows a summary of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license. It features a blue header with the license name and icons for CC, person, crossed-out dollar sign, and equals sign. Below the header, it states: "This is a human-readable summary of (and not a substitute for) the license. [Disclaimer.](#)"

**You are free to:**

- Share** — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

---

**Under the following terms:**

- Attribution** — You must give [appropriate credit](#), provide a link to the license, and [indicate if changes were made](#). You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- NonCommercial** — You may not use the material for [commercial purposes](#).
- NoDerivatives** — If you [remix, transform, or build upon](#) the material, you may not distribute the modified material.

**No additional restrictions** — You may not apply legal terms or [technological measures](#) that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

23 October 2017

<http://hdl.handle.net/2440/108348>

# 4

## Framing New Holland or framing a narrative? A representation of Sydney according to Charles-Alexandre Lesueur

*Jean Fornasiero, The University of Adelaide*

The artists on the Baudin expedition, Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Nicolas-Martin Petit, left us a substantial legacy in terms of the drawings of antipodean peoples, landscapes and coastal profiles which they executed during and after their voyage of scientific discovery to Australia between 1800 and 1804.<sup>1</sup> Many of these works are now well known, thanks to the publication of the various *Atlases* of the official account of the expedition, the *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*, and their modern facsimile editions.<sup>2</sup> Other images, which have remained

---

1 For a detailed catalogue of the works of Petit and Lesueur and a commentary on their background, see the following studies: G. Baglione and C. Crémère, *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, peintre voyageur: Un trésor oublié* (Paris, Éditions de Conti, 2009); and J. Bonnemains, E. Forsyth and B. Smith, *Baudin in Australian waters: The artwork of the French voyage of discovery to the southern lands, 1800-1804* (Melbourne/New York, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988).

2 François Péron and Louis Freycinet published the official voyage account in two volumes: *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes: exécuté par ordre de sa Majesté L'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste; et la goëlette le Casuarina, pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, et 1804, Historique*, t. 1 (Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807); *Historique*, t. 2



Figure 4.1: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Nouvelle Hollande'. Le Havre, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection Lesueur, 16074-2.

unpublished, demand to be better known, given the energy that emanates from them, their sense of engagement with their subjects, and, not least, the information encoded within them of the new worlds and people they encountered. Although there are some exquisite watercolours of antipodean marine life to be found in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, by far the most important repository of the unpublished drawings and sketches of Lesueur and Petit is the Lesueur Collection in the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle of Le Havre.<sup>3</sup> Within

(Paris, Imprimerie royale, 1816). The details of the atlases accompanying the official account are as follows: C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 1<sup>re</sup> partie (Paris, Imprimerie Impériale, 1807); C.-A. Lesueur, N.-M. Petit and L. Freycinet, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>ème</sup> partie (Paris, Imprimerie Impériale, 1811). A second edition of the official account or, in French, *Historique*, combining the two parts of the *Atlas* in a single volume, appeared in 1824; it was published in English translation in 2008. See C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Atlas, an historical record*, ed. and trans. P.S. Hambly (Adelaide, The Friends of the State Library).

<sup>3</sup> Some significant works of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur are to be found in the Bibliothèque centrale, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, in the collection entitled 'Manuscrits de Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (1778-1846), en partie publiés', Ms 1715-1749. A catalogue of the manuscripts can be found online at <http://www.calames.abes.fr/pub/#details?id=FileId-1348>. For a sample of the holdings of the Lesueur collection at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle at Le Havre, see <http://www.museum-lehavre.fr/fr/>

the Australian subjects of the collection, one vividly coloured map stands out, as much for its attractiveness as for its picturesque detail: this is the watercolour entitled 'Nouvelle Hollande', executed by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (Figure 4.1).<sup>4</sup> Although the form and presentation of its title, 'Nouvelle Hollande', indicate that Lesueur originally intended this work for the *Atlas* of the official account of the *Voyage*, it ultimately remained unpublished. Given the formal beauty of the image, we are quite naturally led to regret its exclusion from the *Atlas*, especially since the engraved map of Sydney that does feature in it singularly lacks the aesthetic appeal of the watercolour (Figure 4.2).

However, this substitution is only too easily explained. Unlike the engraving, which Lesueur drew to scale, based on a survey by the expedition's hydrographer, Charles Boullanger, the watercolour bears no such endorsement as to its accuracy. As Robert Irving has pointed out: 'Lesueur's map is exquisite, but he was no surveyor. The map is wrong in a number of respects, including the waterline'.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, is it even a map? Paul Carter describes Lesueur's work more generally as 'poised between rival visions, between the first impressions appropriate to a logbook and the scientific figures fit to adorn a scientific treatise'. Lesueur's dual vision thus provides the explanation for Carter as to why, in the watercolour of Sydney, 'a town plan bends over at its northern edge to become the distant view of land, the panoptic survey beloved of the scientific geographer regressing to the record of a traveller's optic turned towards strange coasts'.<sup>6</sup> In any case, as a hybrid representation, the strangely framed town plan, bearing no indication of scale, could have no place in the scientific record of the expedition and hence in its *Atlas*.

[collections/ca-lesueur/lesueur-peintre-voyageur.](#)

4 I would like to express my grateful thanks to the Curator of the Lesueur Collection, Gabrielle Baglione, for supplying the images of *New Holland* (16074-2) and *Terre de Diemen: Tombeaux des Naturels de l'Île Maria* (18020), which inspired these reflections. I would also like to thank the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle of Le Havre for granting permission to print these images.

5 R. Irving, 'Sydney Town as seen by the Baudin expedition', in A.-M. Nisbet and M. Blackman (eds), *The French-Australian cultural connection* (Kensington, School of French at the University of New South Wales, 1984), p. 164.

6 P. Carter, 'Looking for Baudin', in S. Hunt and P. Carter (eds), *Terre Napoléon: Australia through French eyes 1800-1804* (Sydney, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1999), p. 29.

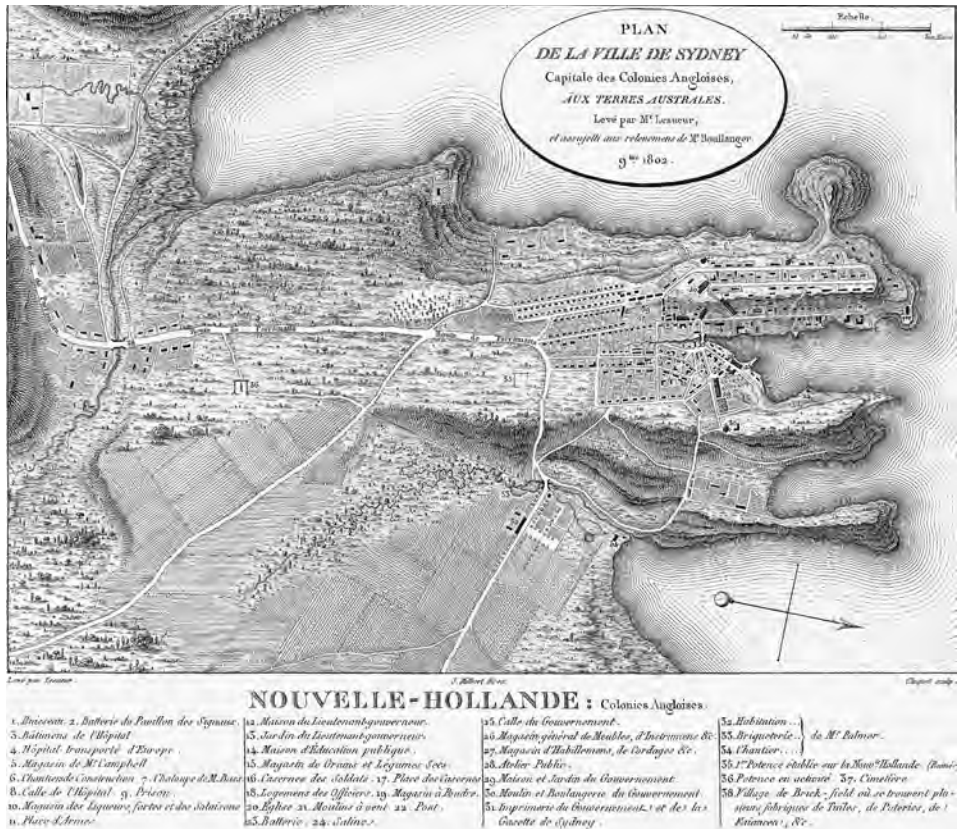


Figure 4.2: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Nouvelle Hollande: Colonies anglaises'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 17.

What, then, was Lesueur's intention in composing his work as he did? There are a number of idiosyncracies present in the painting that may hold a clue. One feature that is particularly unusual is that Lesueur's watercolour incorporates into the framework of his map of Sydney and its position on the east coast of the Australian continent an insert that has no obvious connection to it — that is, a detail from Geographe Bay, which is situated on the western Australian coast (Figure 4.3). Furthermore, Lesueur did not personally sight the 'sacred grove' he depicted in the inset; he reconstructed it from François Péron's report. The existence of this disparate detail within the main frame of the image is surely another reason why the watercolour was never intended to be a map *per se*, but a series of impressions grouped together to form a narrative about the expedition as a whole.

There is some evidence to support this view, namely that the detail from Geographe Bay which Lesueur inserted into his 'Nouvelle Hollande' watercolour is different from the representation of the same feature in the map of Geographe Bay which appears in the *Atlas* of the *Voyage* (Figure 4.4). The watercolour version demonstrates a higher level of attention to the hieroglyphic signs that Péron described as traced in the sand. It takes us away from mere geographical considerations and into the musings of Péron about the significance of the 'sacred grove' that he was the only voyager to see and that Lesueur could only imagine. In contrast, the *Atlas* version confers on the 'sacred grove' a fixed geographical location within a known locality. At the same time, the use of a question mark in the title is querying rather than affirming its religious significance. All things considered, the *Atlas* version has all of the qualities of a map, albeit one in which some detail is unverified and hence uncertain; but in the unpublished watercolour the artist is directing us towards something else altogether.

What, then, are we looking at and why did Lesueur lavish such care and minute attention to detail on his map of Sydney and its detail of Geographe Bay, if these disparate elements meant that the map would not meet the standards of geographical representation required for its inclusion in the *Atlas*?

Does this mean that Lesueur intended for it to serve other purposes? Since he left little in the way of correspondence or commentary on his work, we must seek the answers to these questions principally within the detail of the maps in question, but also in the context of the artist's own personal style and vision.

Lesueur was an adept practitioner of landscape and possessed a fineness of touch that enabled him to work to a level of detail bordering on the microscopic, since it is only with a zoom feature



Figure 4.3: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Plan d'un bosquet à la baie du Géographe'. Detail from 'Nouvelle Hollande'. Le Havre, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection Lesueur, 16074-2.

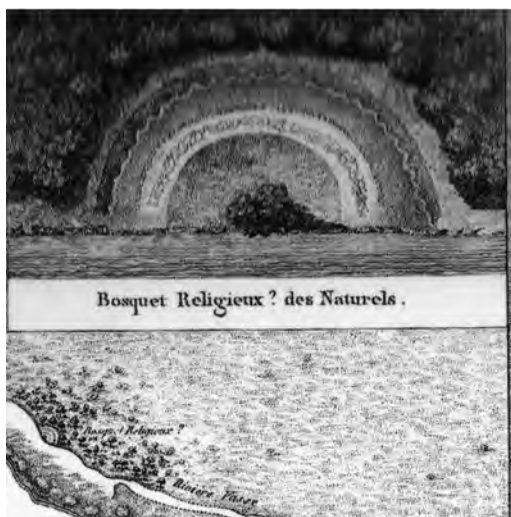


Figure 4.4: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Bosquet religieux? des Naturels'. Detail from 'Plan de la baie du Géographe'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 15.

(or magnifying glass) that we can clearly perceive the intricacy of his brushwork. This is evident both in the coastal profiles on which he collaborated with Petit, but also in his zoological subjects, where he was able to capture minute features of tiny marine animals that he often had only a few precious moments to observe in all of their movement and colour.<sup>7</sup> Even so, he found ways of representing his subjects which reflected his own artistic tastes. For example, Lesueur decided to group the scientific illustrations of molluscs and zoophytes that were approved for the *Atlas* in a highly decorative

configuration that expressed his sensitivity to their beauty (Figure 4.5). Indeed, in many of his works that were ostensibly drawn for the purposes of providing support for scientific observations, he found a means of self-expression that could be ironic, disarming and often charming — as we can see from his 'family portrait' of the wombat (Figure 4.6).<sup>8</sup> However, he did not just restrict this tendency to his zoological drawings. His depictions of artefacts in a landscape can also reveal an idiosyncratic view of his subject or a reflection on his choice of how to represent it.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed study of Lesueur's representations of marine life, see J. Goy, *Les Méduses de Péron et Lesueur, un autre regard sur l'expédition Baudin* (Paris, Éditions du C.T.H.S., 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Lesueur represented a group of wombats as a 'caring family', attributing to them a set of behaviours that he could hardly have experienced through scientific observation. Though he accurately represented the wombats themselves, he imagined their habits and expressions. Wombats are solitary animals and they only produce one baby annually; see M.L. and R. Bauchot, 'Dessins de poisson et de mammifères de la collection Lesueur du Muséum d'Histoire naturelle du Havre', *Bulletin trimestriel de la Société géologique de Normandie et des Amis du Muséum du Havre*, 88: 2-4 (2011), pp. 82-3. Lesueur's drawings of animals often possess an anthropomorphic character — for example, the plates in the *Atlas* that depict emus or elephant seals. See Lesueur and Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), plates 62 and 66).

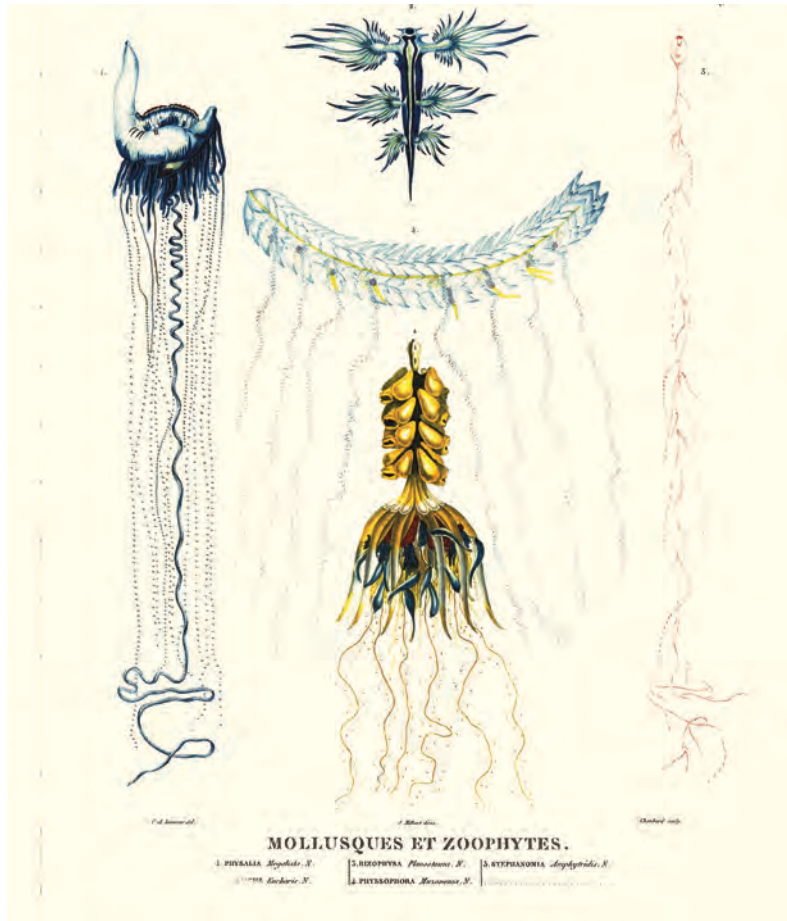


Figure 4.5: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Mollusques et zoophytes'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 59.



Figure 4.6: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Nouvelle-Hollande: Île King; Le Wombat'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 58.



To examine but one such example, let us consider the depiction that the artist made of his friend, François Péron, as he went about his work on Maria Island in Tasmania (Figure 4.7).

The exploration of Maria Island had indeed been an important moment for the expedition; with the discovery of two native tombs, Péron was now able to make the kind of detailed ethnographic report his commander had requested of him.<sup>9</sup> Making this find vindicated Péron, who felt slighted by Nicolas Baudin's

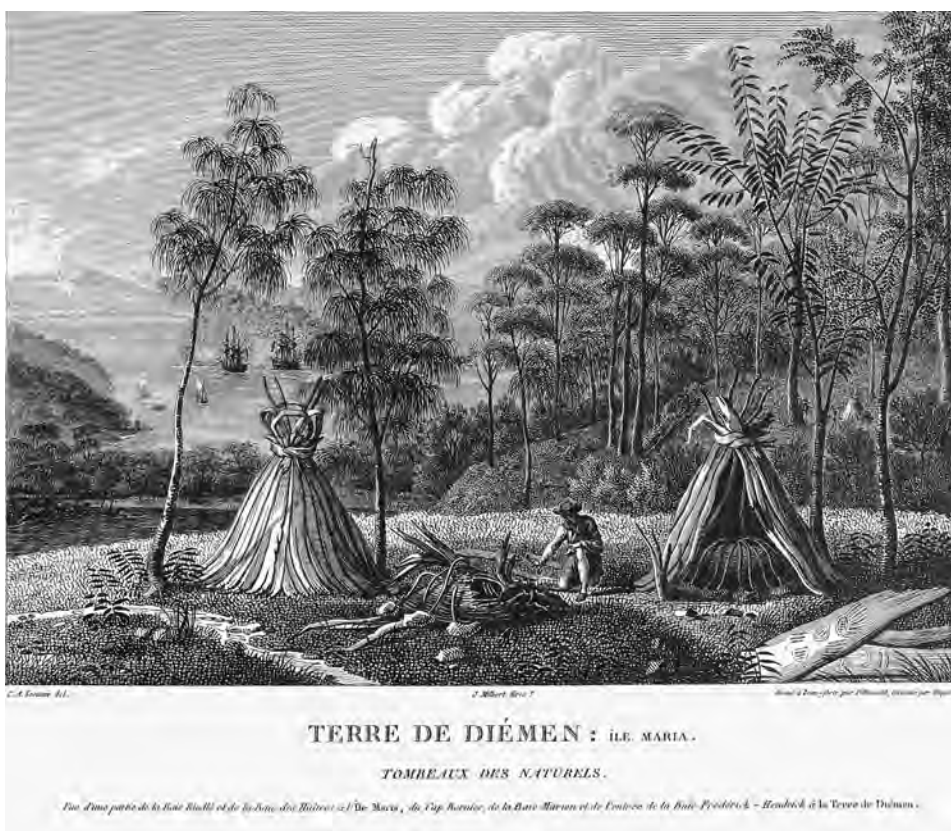


Figure 4.7: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Terre de Diemen: Île Maria. Tombeaux des naturels'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 12.

<sup>9</sup> This report, whose catalogue number is 18040, forms part of dossier 18 in the Lesueur Collection at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle of Le Havre. It has been transcribed and translated into English as Chapter 6 in Brian Plomley's *The Baudin expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802* (Hobart, Blubber Head Press, 1983), pp. 80-95.

insinuation, in requesting a report, that he had hitherto neglected this task.<sup>10</sup> In Lesueur's representation of the event, Péron appears centrestage, actively making a crucial discovery and acting as lead player in the expedition. With ships and other expeditioners depicted at the margins or in the background, Lesueur is clearly affirming his friend's status and authority and his own strong belief in Péron's right to hold them. The care he takes to present the bark engravings in the foreground (and the bone in Péron's hand) underlines the fact that Péron's authority is scientific and that the ethnographic dimension to the entire presentation is what lends it its credibility (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).

The fact, too, that Péron is the only expeditioner to be presented as a central figure in the *Atlas* of the voyage is even stronger testimony to the seriousness of Lesueur's intent and his homage.

However, is the panegyric the only genre of narrative to be explored within the engraving? If we look this time at the background to the image, in the vicinity of the second Aboriginal tomb, another story begins to emerge (Figure 4.10).

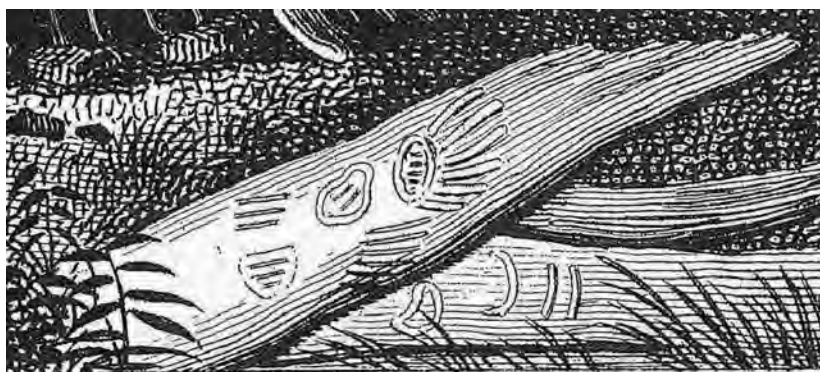


Figure 4.8: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Detail from 'Terre de Diemen: Île Maria. Tombeaux des naturels'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 12.

10 Péron confirms in his introduction that Baudin had 'imposed on [him] the obligation to occupy [himself]' with the report and, by way of expressing his personal discomfort that such a request should be made, offers a series of excuses for having neglected this work up until that time (Plomley, pp. 83-4).



Figure 4.9: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Detail from 'Terre de Diemen: Île Maria. Tombeaux des naturels'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 12.



Figure 4.10: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Detail from 'Terre de Diemen: Île Maria. Tombeaux des naturels'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 12.

We see that Péron is not completely alone in his explorations, but that there are other Europeans present. The botanist Théodore Leschenault, as the discoverer of the second tomb, is perhaps the figure in this section of the engraving who is portrayed as closest to the tomb.<sup>11</sup> Was Lesueur also being playful by including two other figures in the frame? Perhaps, since their occupation is not clear — indeed, they appear to be lurking behind a tree. Yet nothing in this playful background detail erases the significance of the foreground; it simply adds a human dimension, and demonstrates that, in Lesueur's eyes, Péron is at the heart of a team enterprise, as well as leading it. Even though the presence of the tombs adds a note of solemnity to the scene, the emphasis is not on death itself, but on the activities of the living — in this case, experiencing the joy of discovery. In this sense, the scene can be described as an idyll: under sunny skies, in a park-like setting, the expeditioners display a harmony of purpose which is perfectly in keeping with the natural harmony of the landscape.

We could dwell at length on an image that participates in a complex set of historical narratives that speak of more than the voyage itself. Indeed, we could add

<sup>11</sup> Leschenault left a description of his discovery in his journal, which is held in the Archives Nationales de France, Paris, série Marine, 5JJ56. The extract containing his description of the native tomb is to be found in Plomley, pp. 138-9.

a contemporary judgement on the bone or the destruction of the tomb, on the link between exploration and colonisation and the fate of a decimated people, and much more; but if our intent is to decode Lesueur's own intentions, it is his mode of representation that is most revealing. Lesueur could have represented the tomb or tombs alone if he were simply attempting to illustrate the importance of a scientific find. The fact that he did execute just such a series of drawings, and that these are set out according to the conventions of the *Atlas*, confirms that he had seriously contemplated this form of scientific representation (Figure 4.11).



**Figure 4.11: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Terre de Diemen: Tombeaux des Naturels de l'Île Maria'. Le Havre, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection Lesueur, 18020.**

In the version finally chosen for the *Atlas*, Lesueur's attention was clearly not focused on the tombs alone, nor was his work guided by purely scientific instructions. If he included three expeditioners as well as Péron in the depiction of the glorious find, it was to these three — who must have been recognisable to their fellow travellers — that Lesueur was also transmitting a message of solidarity and recognition. The hymn of praise that is the work as a whole is therefore personal on more than one level.

If we turn our attention back to 'Nouvelle Hollande', we can see the same processes operating (Figure 4.1). Firstly, Lesueur clearly did not produce the image in response to the requirements of a single genre — that is, as a map — as we have seen from its geographically disparate and unscientific elements. Secondly, its name, in cartographical terms, is problematic: *New Holland* is intended to be the all-inclusive title, as it is for all of the images of mainland Australia in the *Atlas*, but does the fact that the name is incomplete in the unpublished watercolour have any particular significance? Thirdly, the relationship between the vignette and the flow of water at the top of the map is awkward and does not completely bind all of the sections of the map together. Finally, as we have previously seen, there are no measurements to indicate the accuracy of the survey upon which Lesueur designed the map — a sure sign that we are in the presence less of a map than of a work based on personal

reflections, beliefs or feelings. Given that the subject that the artist foregrounds is a British colony, it may be appropriate, too, to extend our analysis to matters ideological or even philosophical.

Let us start by examining the separate sections of the work one by one before attempting to determine what may be the general theme and preoccupations to emerge. To the left, the section that is the continuation of the map of Sydney is unfinished (Figure 4.12).



Figure 4.12: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Detail from 'Nouvelle Hollande'. Le Havre, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection Lesueur, 16074-2.

It is unframed and does not therefore counterbalance the right-hand section, which leads us to ask whether it is an afterthought or a last-minute extension that would give a better idea of the expansion of the Colony of Port Jackson to the west. Since this section does find its way into the map Lesueur eventually published in the *Atlas*, the push to the west must have been deemed an important development for the Colony. The Blue Mountains, in 1802, still constituted a formidable barrier to unlocking the secrets of the unknown country which lay to the west of Sydney.<sup>12</sup> In the unfinished version of the layout of Sydney that we have before us here, we can only speculate as to why there was some hesitation in Lesueur's use of his framing device. But it does seem evident that he intends to feature Sydney's size and its expansion, an intention which echoes the point Péron made in the official account — that is, that Sydney had achieved a remarkable degree of growth and development in the short years of its existence.<sup>13</sup> Sydney, according to Lesueur, is thus even challenging the frames and boundaries of his map as he constructs it.

In contrast, if we then look at the section to the right, the control of the frame

<sup>12</sup> See Figure 4.2.

<sup>13</sup> Péron's enthusiastic description of Sydney's prosperity is to be found in volume 1, chapter XIX of the 1824 edition of the *Voyage*, translated as *Voyage to the southern lands* by Christine Cornell (Adelaide, The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006), pp. 293-349.



Figure 4.13: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Detail from 'Nouvelle Hollande'. Le Havre, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection Lesueur, 16074-2.

is assured and the viewer's perspective of the Colony is oriented to the east, as the title of the section indicates (Figure 4.13).

Here Lesueur is highlighting the situation of the Colony in relation to its complex system of waterways and to its natural eastern barrier, the Pacific Ocean. This inset has none of the accuracy of the map of the same area that featured in the *Atlas*, but its function does not appear to be to provide a map *per se* — rather, its function is to depict the unique natural setting of Sydney and give some indication of its terrain. By adopting a bird's-eye view here, Lesueur also makes its protected situation much clearer than in the conventional map. Sydney, with its narrow entrance and its myriad inlets, has natural defences. All of the expedition journals, as well as Péron's plan to invade Sydney<sup>14</sup>, discuss the difficulty of negotiating access to the harbour, and Lesueur's emphasis is little different.

If we move to the top and centre of the image, the impression that Lesueur is providing information on his subject is unequivocally reinforced (Figure 4.14). Within the vignette, however, he supplies two sets of information. The first is a set of scientific information — the expedition excelled in its collection and description of native flora and fauna, many examples of which adorn the central section of the vignette itself. This kind of heraldry forms part of the techniques deployed in the *Atlas* maps, where the use of vignettes magnifies the scientific achievements of the expedition.<sup>15</sup> The range of live animals on display surpasses those which were collected at Port Jackson, which means that part of the message that the vignette transmits relates to the entire expedition and its contribution to the natural sciences — and

14 The manuscript of the Memoir in which Péron develops a plan to take over the Colony of Port Jackson is to be found in dossier 12 of the Lesueur Collection at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle of Le Havre. It was first published in French by Roger Martin as 'Mémoire sur les établissements anglais à la Nouvelle Hollande, à la terre de Diémen et dans les archipels du grand océan Pacifique', in R. Martin (ed.), 'Le Rêve australien de Napoléon: Description et projet secret de conquête française', *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon*, 176: 1 (1998), pp. 4-187. It has been published in English translation by Jean Fornasiero and John West-Sooby as *French designs on colonial New South Wales: François Péron's memoir on the English settlements in New Holland, Van Diemen's Land and the Archipelagos of the Great Pacific Ocean, with an introduction, notes and appendices* (Adelaide, The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2014).

15 On the use of vignettes, see J. Fornasiero and J. West-Sooby, 'Cartography as narrative: The maps of the Baudin expedition', in R. Gerritsen, R. King and A. Eliason (eds), *The Freycinet map of 1811: 200th anniversary of the publication of the first map of Australia* (Canberra, Australia on the Map Division of the Australasian Hydrographic Society, 2012), pp. 20-32.

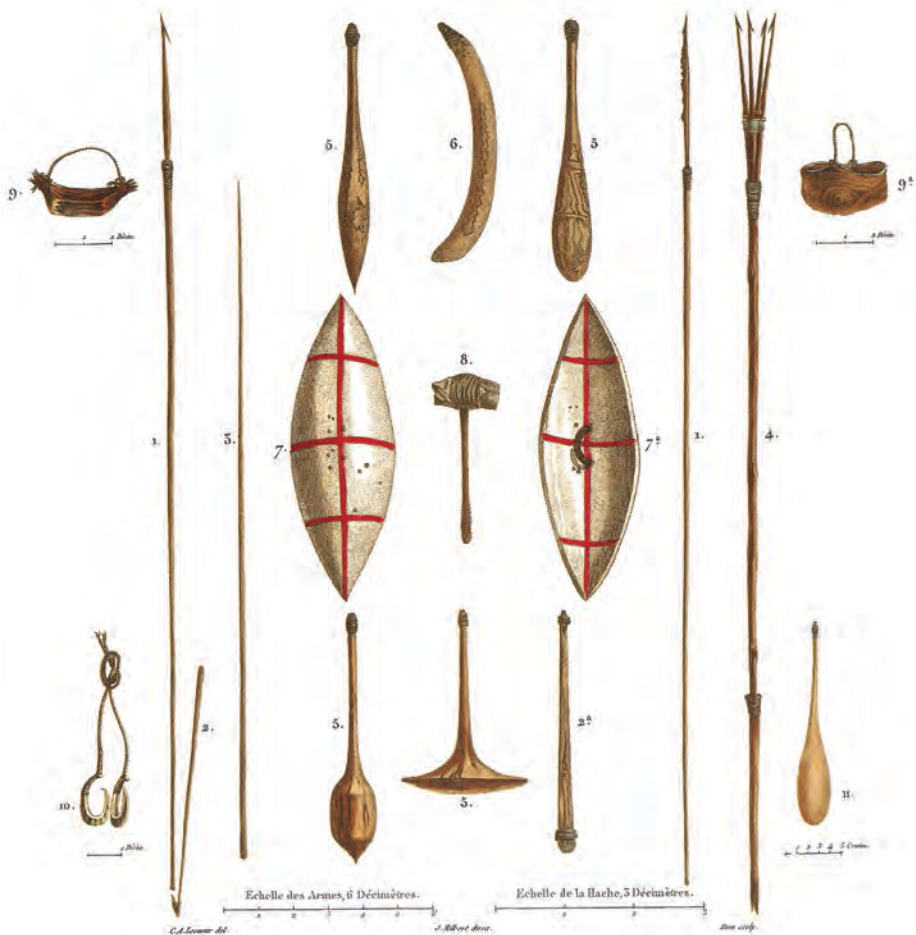


Figure 4.14: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Detail from 'Nouvelle Hollande'. Le Havre, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection Lesueur, 16074-2.

even more specifically to the achievements of François Péron. The ethnographic objects that also feature in the vignette leave us in no doubt that the praise the artist intends is for Péron, whose presence in Lesueur's life and work is inescapable. The objects themselves were collected in New Holland, as we know from the depiction of these same artefacts in the *Atlas* (Figure 4.15). This gives an affirmation of the importance of the anthropological work during this part of the expedition and a sense of continuity to Péron's endeavours.

If we return to the question of location, Sydney, from the perspective of scientific collecting, is not being viewed in isolation; the animals are characteristic of Australia as a whole and ethnography is a key part of the expedition's mission. In this way the vignette shows Sydney as central to the entire enterprise that was the Baudin voyage to Australia, even though the Colony was not originally designated as one of the expedition's stopovers. Sydney, in this representation, also appears as an integral part of the land known as New Holland, a fact which the expedition also helped to clarify through its cartographic work. By charting the unknown south coast of Australia and by confirming, along with Matthew Flinders, that the west coast of New Holland did indeed join the east coast of New South Wales, Baudin and his men acquired the certainty that New Holland was part of a continent, of which Sydney was the hub in terms of economic development. The vignette metaphorically contributes to our understanding of the title, 'New Holland', which appears, incomplete, hesitant, immediately above. In contrast to the barely articulated title, Lesueur's painting as a whole affirms confidently that New South Wales and New Holland are part of the same landmass.





NOUVELLE-HOLLANDE.

VASES, ARMES, PÊCHE.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Saigüe de trait .  | 5. Saigüe de main .                    | 6. Sabre à rivochel .                                |
| 2. Instrumēt à lancer la saigüe ou<br>de profil 2 <sup>o</sup> le même ou de face . | 4. Saigüe de pêche, opposée brisée .   | 7. & 7 <sup>o</sup> Boutelet ou sur-ou deux fibres . |
| 3. Tasse décorée. 3 <sup>o</sup> Tasse de Bois .                                    | 5. Cases-Téles de différentes formes . | 8. Bache de pierre .                                 |
|   | 10. Hamacans de Coquillages .          | 11. Rame .   |

Figure 4.15: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 'Nouvelle-Hollande: Vases, armes, pêche'. In C.-A. Lesueur and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824), Plate 30.

However, this is by no means all that the vignette has to say. If we turn to the list contained within it, we can see that Lesueur is supplying, through the list of buildings in the Colony, a second set of information that we could consider strategic. It is not, after all, akin to a tourist map, for the buildings' names speak of resources, industries

and economic development, but they also tell of defences and means of communication. In short, the buildings are the sites associated with authority and the protection of the Colony, its organisation and its social fabric. As a group of buildings they are strategically significant. One might well argue that the few buildings Lesueur designated were all that existed, but this is belied by the completed map, with its greatly expanded list of sites (Figure 4.2).<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 4.16:** Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Detail from 'Nouvelle Hollande'. Le Havre, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection Lesueur, 16074-2.

The final version is a bona fide map, as we have seen. Its function is to be as informative as possible to the reader of the voyage account — a reader who would also be seeking to follow the adventures of the *Voyage's* narrator as he travels through an unfamiliar location. The extreme degree of the details reinforces this impression — the body attached to the gibbet being a salutary reminder that the adventurer in question is in a land of moral challenges and marked social contrasts (Figure 4.16).

In the case of Lesueur's vignette, however, the details are less numerous, the buildings more significant in their set of strategic functions. Interestingly, they are also set within an image that reflects Lesueur's desire to show the countryside as partly in relief and partly reflecting the garden-type verdure that so greatly impressed Baudin and his men. This is a desirable location, its defences exposed to the gaze of the covetous viewer. This is again a representation that reinforces Péron's conviction that the Colony is a prize that needs to be captured.

Thus far, the message that we can derive from this group of images is clear and unambiguous. Lesueur's representation of Sydney parallels the message that Péron expressed in covert terms in the *Voyage* and openly in the *Memoir*, in which he proposed the conquest of Sydney, now seen to be the key to access and colonial success in New Holland and in the Pacific region onto which it abuts. Lesueur's acquiescence to Péron's views and his continued admiration for his friend's scientific

<sup>16</sup> The number of buildings and sites listed in the plan of Sydney that features in the *Atlas* is thirty-eight, in contrast with the twelve locations that feature in the watercolour.

and ethnographic accomplishments also underpin this set of images, as they do his more homogeneous depiction of the Maria Island tombs. Before we draw our final conclusions on the artistic form of support which Lesueur offers to Péron's narrative — a form of support and dependency that is, so far, quite conventional in terms of the production of a travel account and its illustrations — let us consider one last important element, one that is both distinctly less susceptible to the same kind of explanation and offers the same kind of personal intervention that is akin to the image of the men lurking behind the tree on Maria Island. I refer to the third inset, to the left of the vignette (Figure 4.3).

How do we explain the presence of an inset here of a map of a grove in Geographe Bay? It is true that we have now established that, for the expeditioners, New South Wales and New Holland were part of the same continent. This means that a location on the west coast of Australia fits well enough under the general title of 'New Holland', which is ascribed to the image as a whole. But why does Lesueur depict it here and how does it relate exactly to the map of Sydney, with all of its strategic implications and scientific importance? Firstly, it is unlike the other sections of the drawing, in that the map of the grove represents no known and surveyed locality. The only knowledge of its existence stems from the description of it given by Péron, who reported that he stumbled upon a clearing that had every appearance of being a meeting place for Aboriginal peoples of the area — and a site of religious significance at that, in the light of the carefully designed space and what Péron took to be a series of symbols marked out by reed segments and traced in the sand. No other expeditioners sighted it and Péron saw no Aboriginal people frequenting it. Yet Péron was so struck by the sight that he speculated at length about its significance in the report on Geographe Bay that he made to his commander.<sup>17</sup>

In the *Voyage*, he insisted that an image of the grove, as he himself had sketched it, must appear as an inset to the map of Geographe Bay.<sup>18</sup> For him, the reason was two-fold. The grove was a sacred site which provided him with the evidence that the Aborigines had an active spiritual life and were capable of abstract thinking, as evidenced by the forms of symbolic writing that were inscribed into their site and that

17 Péron's description of the 'sacred grove' is to be found in volume 1, chapter V of *Voyage to the southern lands*, pp. 65-7.

18 See Figure 4.3. Péron mentions in the same chapter of the *Voyage* that he specifically instructed Lesueur to include the 'sacred grove' in the chart of Geographe Bay (p. 67).

he likened to both Runic figures and hieroglyphs. He believed himself to be in the presence of a high civilisation like that of the ancient Egyptians. Péron had not met any Aborigines in this part of Australia and his opinion stood in stark contrast to those of his companions who had experienced disappointing and aggressive encounters and were not unaware of Dampier's view that here were to be found the 'miserablest people in the world'.<sup>19</sup> Péron was himself to be disappointed some months later by the encounters he finally experienced with the Indigenous inhabitants of D'Entrecasteaux Channel.<sup>20</sup> His conclusions concerning the future prospects of Aboriginal culture were formulated as a result — namely that the only way for the native peoples of Australia to thrive was for them to be integrated into European civilisation.<sup>21</sup> This being so, what are we to make of Péron's belief that persisted well beyond his time in Australia, and well after he had expressed his thoughts on the native population of Australia, that the 'sacred grove' of Geographe Bay was a major find in anthropological terms and must be recorded in the *Voyage* and in its illustrations? How was this find compatible with all that Péron had observed and concluded?

The only possible explanation is that Péron needed to retain his major anthropological moment on the Australian continent.<sup>22</sup> The rest of his research had not produced the conclusions he had originally hoped for, nor had it brought

---

19 W. Dampier, *A new voyage round the world* (London, The Argonaut Press, 1927), p. 312. Dampier's work, originally published in 1697, was included in the library of both the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste*, and Baudin referred to it frequently in his journal. See N. Baudin, *The journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin, Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste assigned by order of the Government to a voyage of discovery*, trans. C. Cornell (Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974), pp. 592-3, 600. Even Péron concluded, upon seeing some native huts in Geographe Bay, that 'we were a very long way from having observed on these shores the extreme limit of ignorance and misery ...' (*Voyage to the southern lands*, vol. 1, p. 71).

20 See the full account of the evolution in Péron's thinking in R. Jones, 'Images of natural man', in Bonnemains, Forsyth and Smith, pp. 35-64.

21 See, for example, Péron's musings about bringing the Aboriginal populations of Sydney to a 'civilised' state, *Voyage to the southern lands*, vol. 1, p. 367.

22 Susan Hunt and Paul Carter also attach to the inset of the 'sacred grove' of Geographe Bay a desire on the artist's part to reflect on the anthropological record of the expedition. For them, this detail in the watercolour of Sydney 'seems incongruous but is perhaps intended as a reference to the spiritual life of a culture, certainly only imperfectly glimpsed, but that in Sydney had only too clearly been fractured'. (See Hunt and Carter, Notes, p. 60.) I disagree with the second term of the contrast they make, in that there is nothing in the watercolour itself to suggest the degradation of Aboriginal life. The overall message that emanates from the work is positive and harmonious.

release from his commander's critical gaze. Psychologically, at least, he required a space in which he observed, collected and analysed material on his own — no longer the trainee, but already the chief scientist. He had a narrative that no-one could contradict; it was uplifting and gave him a role which he was only too content to play, that of interpreter of higher truths, the mediator between higher forms of culture and language. If other members of the expedition were not entirely convinced by Péron's experience of Aboriginal culture, in that it in no way mirrored their actual experience of contact, Lesueur as always demonstrated his fidelity to, if not admiration for, the man who had helped him to enter a new and more highly intellectual world. By taking the young artist under his wing and teaching him how to make his art co-habit with scientific precision, Péron had done much more than find an exemplary partner; he had helped to form an artist who would serve the cause of Péron himself as much as the cause of scientific accuracy. The inclusion of the 'sacred grove' from Geographe Bay reflects Lesueur's view that Australia is a single continent and that Péron has left his indelible mark upon it. This territory extended from Geographe Bay, where Péron obtained insights of which no other was capable, to Sydney, which he intended to conquer and possess.

This is the subtext to the inset of the grove, which no doubt provides the principal thread of the narrative which Lesueur has inscribed within his representation of Sydney. If the 'sacred grove' is the key to decoding a message in Lesueur's 'New Holland', then it is a message that is truly personal, for there is no overwhelmingly practical reason why this element would feature in a map of Sydney. This inset thus adds a level of commentary that the other sections do not convey and it makes sense of the stuttered title of the work as a whole. Indeed, it makes sense of the stutter and, finally, gives us an even stronger sense of why Lesueur was unable to complete his work than simply the inaccuracy of his map.

Inaccuracies can be fixed; an overly idiosyncratic and lyrical view of place cannot be so readily transformed. The discreet man that was Lesueur had perhaps gone further than he had intended in his lyrical assessment of a colony, a voyage and a friend, and he may even have realised himself that his view of Sydney was inappropriate for an illustration that was meant to highlight the geographical. Indeed, his work had spoken words that he was incapable of expressing in conventional ways. If he had managed to include a similar narrative in his *Atlas* illustration of the Tasmanian tombs, it was precisely because he had remained within the limits of convention,

except for the microscopic detail. In his 'Nouvelle Hollande', his framing devices had breached the borders of his ostensible subject. However, while he did not ever publish his lyrical tableau, he did not suppress its message. He preserved it amongst his papers, as a tribute to Péron, and as a narrative that can now be deciphered by a far greater audience than the readership of the *Voyage* for which it was once hesitantly intended.

## References

- Baglione, G. and C. Crémière, *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, peintre voyageur: Un Trésor oublié* (Paris, Éditions de Conti, 2009).
- Bauchot, M.L. and R., 'Dessins de poisson et de mammifères de la collection Lesueur du Muséum d'Histoire naturelle du Havre', *Bulletin trimestriel de la Société géologique de Normandie et des Amis du Muséum du Havre*, 88: 2-4 (2011), pp. 82-3.
- Baudin, N., *The journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin, Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste assigned by order of the Government to a voyage of discovery*, trans. C. Cornell (Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974).
- Bonnemains, J., E. Forsyth and B. Smith, *Baudin in Australian waters: The artwork of the French voyage of discovery to the southern lands, 1800-1804* (Melbourne/New York, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988).
- Carter, P., 'Looking for Baudin', in S. Hunt and P. Carter (eds), *Terre Napoléon: Australia through French eyes 1800-1804* (Sydney, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1999), pp. 21-31.
- Collection Lesueur, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Havre, dossier 12: 'Relations avec les Anglais'; dossier 16: 'Nouvelle Hollande'; dossier 18: 'Terre de Diémen'.
- Dampier, W., *A new voyage round the world* (London, The Argonaut Press, 1927 [1697]).
- Fornasiero, J. and J. West-Sooby, 'Cartography as narrative: The maps of the Baudin expedition', in R. Gerritsen, R. King and A. Eliason (eds), *The Freycinet map of 1811: 200th anniversary of the publication of the first map of Australia* (Canberra, Australia on the Map Division of the Australasian Hydrographic

- Society, 2012), pp. 20-32.
- Fornasiero, J. and J. West-Sooby, *French designs on colonial New South Wales: François Péron's memoir on the English settlements in New Holland, Van Diemen's Land and the Archipelagos of the Great Pacific Ocean, with an introduction, notes and appendices* (Adelaide, The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2014).
- Goy, J., *Les Méduses de Péron et Lesueur, un autre regard sur l'expédition Baudin* (Paris, Éditions du C.T.H.S., 1995).
- Hunt, S. and P. Carter (eds), *Terre Napoléon: Australia through French eyes 1800-1804* (Sydney, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1999).
- Irving, R., 'Sydney Town as seen by the Baudin expedition', in A.-M. Nisbet and M. Blackman (eds), *The French-Australian cultural connection* (Kensington, School of French at the University of New South Wales, 1984), pp. 163-8.
- Jones, R., 'Images of natural man', in J. Bonnemains, E. Forsyth and B. Smith, *Baudin in Australian waters: The artwork of the French voyage of discovery to the southern lands 1800-1804* (Melbourne/New York, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988), pp. 35-64.
- Leschenault de la Tour, T., *Extrait de la relation de l'expédition de découverte commandée par le Citn. Baudin, Capitaine de Vaisseau, du Citn. Théodore Leschenault, Botaniste* (Paris, Archives Nationales de France, série Marine 5JJ56).
- Lesueur, C.-A. and N.-M. Petit, *Historique, Atlas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, Arthus Bertrand, 1824); in English translation, *Atlas, an Historical Record*, ed. and trans. P.S. Hambly (Adelaide, The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2008).
- Martin, R. (ed.), 'Le rêve australien de Napoléon: Description et projet secret de conquête française', *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon*, 176: 1 (1998), pp. 4-187.
- Péron, F., *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes, Historique*, vol. 1 (Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807); in English translation, *Voyage to the southern lands*, vol. 1, trans. C. Cornell (Adelaide, The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006).
- Plomley, B., *The Baudin expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802* (Hobart, Blubber Head Press, 1983).