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Chris Rudge

Introduction: Whence Terror Australis?

THE ONLINE PUBLICATION OF *PHILAMENT 21*: Terror Australis comes only weeks after the Australia Day celebrations of this year, marked as they were (and have so been marked before) by a range of reflections on the European colonial settlement of this country. Among these reflections were the speeches delivered by the elder representatives of the Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities—the Gadigal people and others of the Eora Darug—at the Yabun Festival in Victoria Park, adjacent to the University of Sydney. For many of the speakers and listeners at this event, terror doubtless featured prominently among the myriad emotions accompanying the collective historical introspection. The speakers’ words seemed to demonstrate a crucial point: that to think about Australia’s history of Indigenous culture is to be prompted to consider the cultural and moral terror of its loss, and to commiserate its near disappearance. Yet for those accustomed to the literature and discourses of terror, such moments are not to be avoided, but embraced for what they can teach us.

Critics of horror fiction have long recognised that, together, terror and fear can form a “powerful instrument” for epistemic thought, in fiction as in reality, providing what remains just about “the most intense reaction to an experience, aesthetic or otherwise.”¹ Some have noted that the genre holds a particular valence for politics: “Horror, politically,” Leigh Blackmore notes, “is the most potentially radical fictional mode.” But feelings of terror can be equally radical when the subject is not fiction but history. And just as one’s encounter with terror in fiction can shock a reader,

engendering in them a new knot of memories and sensitivities, so can an open-eyed encounter with the past, and the terror of its distant, different ways, “break us out of our ‘reality-tunnel,’” and allow “the irruption of the irrational or the supernatural into the everyday.”² But reality tunnels are exigent and pervasive, and opportunities to break out of them rare. And in our everyday experience we raise manifold defenses to shock and fear, all of them devised to vitiate the threat of terror, and all of them also precluding the more rewarding effects of these feelings.

Attempts to countermand terror often seek to disavow its basis in fact, to *derealise* that which terrifies. Even in the wake of the High Court’s 1992 judgment in *Mabo and Others v State of Queensland (No 2)*, a robust but unsettling debate persists about whether *terra nullius* actually operated in the eighteenth century, and into what particular juridical category of space this continent might have in fact been placed by the colonists, if not this one.³ The debate is robust because its analyses are technical and meticulous. And to be sure, an attentive and exacting history of the term, such as in Andrew Fitzmaurice’s genealogy, will confirm that *terra nullius* had not yet been “invented,” had never been uttered, when the British First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay.⁴ What is more unsettling, though, is the debate’s implications. As David Ritter reminds us, to deny that there had ever been a declaration or finding of *terra nullius* controverts “repeated wisdom”—our knowledge that “the High Court in *Mabo* ‘rejected’ the ‘doctrine of *terra nullius*.” For if the original operation or utterance of *terra nullius* is to be disputed, what might have the High Court *actually* rejected when it found in favour of *sui generis* native title rights in *Mabo*? An optimistic perspective might argue that, if the court did not reject *terra nullius* as such, it rejected an “unjust and discriminatory doctrine of that kind”; after all, these were the words of Justice Brennan, who wrote the leading judgment.⁵ More optimistic still would be the view that the court utilised the term *terra nullius* simply as a shorthand, and that by it the court meant to include the assortment of other terms in circulation throughout the “pre-nineteenth century discussion of colonisation” which expressed the same essential doctrine, such as *res nullius* and *ferae bestiae*.⁶

But if we remain only this much embroiled in these complex questions of language and doctrine, we shall already see how such a debate can be unsettling, even terrifying. For now even to do “good history,” as Ritter calls it, is to differentiate between multiple statutory concepts, each of them more or less a legal basis for colonial imperialism, and to second guess which of them the English settlers bore in mind when landing at Botany Bay. Clearly, *Mabo*’s juridical finding was that *terra nullius* is the

right concept to impute to the colonists—that they bore *this* doctrine in mind and acted as though guided by *its* principles. But after *Mabo*, the historical and scholarly discussion has found differently; it is argued that no category is perfectly cogent, including *terra nullius*. The observation is an almost ironic reproduction of the court’s own determination about native title rights as *sui generis*, or “one of a kind”: perhaps the colonists’ doctrine was *sui generis* too. But if we are to accept the view of the scholars and historians on the basis of only one piece of evidence—that the words *terra nullius* were never actually uttered around the eighteenth-century landing at Botany Bay, and that no records bear out such an utterance—then how easy it becomes to regard *Mabo*’s “rejection” of *terra nullius* as baseless, otiose, and even hubristic.

The intellectual situation recalls the disquieting logic of a horror story, its plot detailing the exploits of some mendacious spectre who cannot be seen—indeed, cannot be *slain*—since its original existence cannot, and will never, it seems, be proved. As in such a horror story, a tale wherein each character begins to dispute the spectre’s very possibility, so is the spectre of *terra nullius* now disputed, and its persistent residue and influence largely ignored. But Ritter seems to detect an even more frightful logic at work than this—although not in the historian who exerts that *terra nullius* never existed, but in *Mabo*’s “stage-managed” reasoning. For Ritter, *Mabo*’s judges should have found “no need to ‘reject’ any ‘doctrine of *terra nullius*’” and, had they more carefully historicised colonisation, should have never addressed the question of the legal status of colonisation. Indeed, such questions are unjusticiable. But in doing just so, Ritter argues, the High Court acted not simply in vain but, worse, as the new vanguard of the same longstanding harm it seemed intent to discredit: “If the ‘rejection of *terra nullius*’ as such marked a judicial revolution at all,” he writes, “it was a stage-managed one: things were changed in order for things to remain the same.”⁷

One soon discovers how the courts and historians of colonisation have arbitrated that history, have understood *terra nullius* as a “discursive crisis” or “discursive breakdown.”⁸ But for the continent’s First Peoples, the various disputations have probably constituted only so many fruitless recitations of the same catastrophic narrative—a story in which what begins as dispossession ends in cultural decimation. Just the same, what conclusions have been reached seem only more disturbing still: they remind us of just how difficult it is, some would say impossible, to restore past wrongs when their originary structures are preserved as of right. Ritter’s insight is that what vaunted changes have taken place at common law in relation to

Aboriginal sovereignty have not, in fact, constituted “changes” at all. They have rather only permitted the repetition of the same. It might even be said then that, in the zones of juridical and governmental arbitration, every movement has been a self-preserving stratagem—here, every admission a surrogation; there, every gesture of deference really only a deferral—and nothing ever appearing that might engender a bona fide reconciliation of past and present, sovereign and “other.” One might say this has been the mode in which the historical and juridical work on colonial Australia has always moved: always rethinking itself into predomination, persistently imposing second concepts over failed first ones, and ever discovering the hardest questions to be “unjusticiable” and “inviolable.”⁹ Of course, perhaps this is just but one symptom cluster at the coalface of power—a discursive mirror, behind which lurks a broader malaise—and all of these words now just the indices of an endemic, perhaps terminal pathology. Ghassan Hage classifies this infection “Australia’s colonial paranoia” and, perceptively, its “core element,” which is to say its aetiology, the “fear of loss of European-ness or Whiteness.”¹⁰

Of course, much of this will already be obvious—especially for those attuned to the curious and ludic morphology of language. For them, such rehearsals of the *terra nullius* debate will have already led to some registration of a deeper, more beguiling signification at the core of this “discursive crisis.” They know that no demonstration of any one term’s historical presence—of *terra nullius*, the related *territorium nullius*, or the longstanding *terra australis*—could ever displace what lies at the “aural surface” of these designations. Nor could such a demonstration undo that sound which operates hauntologically in these terms, their homophonic echoes.¹¹ Hence the title of this issue—“Terror” Australis—which makes visible, if not indeed literal, the very thing which it has always been possible for literature and poetry to identify in the Latin *terra*: the sound of “terror” itself (or, at least the sound of *the word* itself).

The title of this issue affirms two claims, then: the first, that the perception of such linguistic coincidences, of such language games, should not be readily dismissed; and the second, that just such procedures can form new, productive knowledges, unique among the common epistemological or ontological categories. Such knowledges can resist fixity, inaugurate recursive, endless quivers and *rapprochements* between words, and prompt a “closing” of two meanings otherwise unthinkable.¹² And we should recall the quiet esteem in which these knowledges have been held already: to say nothing of Freud’s thoughts on puns, Wittgenstein understood the “grammatical joke” to be as “deep” as any imaginable phi-

losophy—and perhaps as deep as all of philosophy put together.¹³ And so it is for *terra australis*, a phrase in which the word “terror” functions in a deep and abiding way, as a strange creature of meaning and non-meaning alike, a thing which sounds a note to signify itself silently yet vividly, ever remaining an uncanny, living thing, like a zombie now raised from the dead language that bore it.

At least as interesting as the sound of *terra australis* is its etymology. Many centuries before the words *terra nullius* had ever been written, the words *terra australis* denoted the supposed southern land at the bottom of the earth.¹⁴ For the Romans who uttered the latter phrase, “terra” simply meant land or “earth,” its history an uncomplicated story. The complications would appear much later, and long after the Latin ceased to spoken, when Europe’s expansionist ideology came under the scrutiny of international law in the late nineteenth century. Then, the meaning of “terra” in *terra nullius* came to be modified, its meaning displaced by the juridical invention of the term *territorium nullius* (from “territory”), coined, or at least ratified, at a meeting of European powers in 1884 Berlin to establish the rules by which the parties might divide the territories of Africa among themselves.¹⁵ After long debate, both *terra nullius* and *territorium nullius* were found to imply the absence of sovereignty. Except that where the latter, by using the Latin word for “territory,” served to acknowledge the existence of Indigenous property rights, the former, *terra nullius*, could only refute them.¹⁶ This legal exercise, of course, would occur some one hundred years after the First Fleet had landed, as a meeting of minds geared more to the future than the past. But if the juridical history of the word “terra” is complex, then the classical history of “australis” is more intricate again.

Commonly taken to mean “southern,” *australis* actually derives from “Auster,” the pronoun that appears in so many Roman texts: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,¹⁷ Virgil’s *Aeneid*,¹⁸ Seneca’s *Medea*,¹⁹ Statius’s *Thebaid*,²⁰ and Vegetius’s influential handbook for the naval commander, *Epitoma rei militaris*, among many others.²¹ In each of these books, Auster appears as the god of the wet, storm-bringing wind of the south: he is the gale of Aithiopia—the southernmost realm in the mythic geography. Sometimes depicted as a boy, Auster swept up from the southern seas, his presence emerging from far beyond the hinterlands of European knowledge, and his essence offering the Romans a brief glimpse of the unimaginable land lying wait beyond the vast Indian Ocean. Reflecting the Romans’ lack of knowledge about Australia, the early usages of *australis* are notable for their association with notions of nothingness. One such usage occurs in

Dream of Scipio, a fantastical story in Cicero's *De Republica*. Early in the second chapter, the eponymous protagonist travels far beyond the earth and deep into space, discovering the earth's antipodes in a realistic dream vision quite unlike anything else in literary or mythical history.

Indeed, in a narrative that seems almost prescient of Isaac Asimov's twentieth-century *Foundation* series, Scipio finds himself suspended far above the earth, his gaze fixed on the Roman "empire," its lineaments now but a few minuscule flecks in the northern part of the planet. Reeling from this startling vision of his distant sovereign realm, Scipio begins to feel greatly "ashamed," for from his elevated perspective above the earth, the planet appears "so small," and his domain now but a "point on its surface." Rome, he laments, represents only a meager share in the vast deposits of land scattered across the habitable world; it is far from the grand empire he had imagined. By the voyager's side floats Scipio's grandfather, the sage who can explain to Scipio the mysteries of the astral regions. The "celestial sphere," the elder man notes, both confines and contains "all the other spheres." And while "below the moon all is mortal and transitory," the "exception" is, he says, "the souls bestowed upon the human race by the benevolence of the gods," which can rise up to the height of the stars.²² When Scipio's grandfather notices his grandson's increasing obsession with the size of Rome, perceives him to dwell on the earth's small scale, he feels moved to reassure his grandson that all such things are inconsequential, and that to seek "fame from these men, or glory" while on earth, is a mistake—a fool's errand. He advises his grandson to "forget" the world, to fix his "attention upon the heavens, and contemn what is mortal." After all, the earth's "inhabitants are so cut off" from one another "that there can be no communication among different groups." Only two parts or "belts" of the earth are inhabitable, he notes, and "Those who dwell in the southern one press their feet against you, and have nothing to do with your people."

In Cicero's narrative, we can see the grandfather to project at least two prophetic ideas onto this ancient *australis*: it is a faraway place, and an irrelevancy to the northerners; but it is also land populated by an unwelcoming, even hostile people. Readers of Cicero's narrative might well imagine the southerners effectively trampling on the Romans, and on Scipio personally; they might also see the story as a subtle narrativisation of the very word *antipodes* (in the Greek *anti* means opposite and *pous* means foot). We might also imagine the southerners as arrogant or elitist, and their having "nothing to do with" Scipio and his countrymen as much their choice, as simply a practical impossibility. But this suggestive vision of the antipodean others becomes even more paranoid, and more suspicious

still, when Scipio's grandfather advises his grandson to prepare for a life of anonymity outside of Rome, for "who will ever hear of your name in the remaining portions of the globe?" he asks. The message is that Scipio should never assume his renown a guaranteed thing—not even *within* Rome: "And how long," the elder asks, "will those who praise us now continue to do so?" And so in *Scipio's Dream*, and many centuries before Europe's colonial expansion has begun, we can already detect what Hage calls the "fear of loss of Europeaness." And while, in his wisdom, Scipio's grandfather instructs his grandson to do away with his mortal ambitions, lest he might forever fear the loss of Rome's predominance, Scipio in turn resists the elder's advice. Refusing to abandon his dream of unalloyed power, Scipio will come to project all his frustrations on that southern continent, this place to which his voice, and indeed his body, cannot travel.

Cicero's fascinating vision of Australia comes long before its European discovery. And yet we cannot credit Cicero with having first intuited the southern lands. Indeed, the Roman conceptions of the south are preceded by Greek antecedents both scientific and mythical. The south wind Auster, for instance, has long been identified as only the Romans' later reincarnation of the Greek god Notus. One among the four wind-controlling deities called the Anemoi, Notus regulated the same southerly gusts that Auster controlled, the governor of a mysterious antipodean plane.²³ Nevertheless, if *Dream of Scipio* deals only marginally with the south wind, it is more conscious of the shape and size of the earth than many of its Greek antecedents, offering a more innovative vision of the world than its precursors. Even so, at least one Greek story precedes Scipio's journey into the cosmic domain. As Alfred Hiatt suggests, this is the story of Er, a dead soldier who returns to earth to speak of his soul's ascension to the celestial domain, appearing in Plato's *Republic*.²⁴ Cicero's narrative is something of a fusion of Plato's visionary narrative and the principles of Greek meteorological science; after all, it is obvious that Cicero borrows the salient geographical facts in *Dream of Scipio* from Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, a work commonly dated to roughly 350 BC. It was in that book that Aristotle proposed the existence of some "torrid zone" at the bottom of the earth; and it was from this place, Aristotle wrote, that the southerly torrents—those he had so often observed as "greater, stronger, and warmer" than those originating in "the north"—must blow.²⁵ This great southern region, Aristotle proposed would be an "open" expanse far "greater in extent" than any land in the northern hemisphere, its "proximity to the sun" ensuring that no "stream or pasture land" could be found there. It is a vision of the south more or less reproduced in Scipio's dream vision.

The specific relation between Aristotle's speculations and Cicero's narrative, as with the relation of the Greek and Roman preconceptions of Australia, warrants further study. But a rather more specific node of interest in this history is the connection between Notus and Auster—or, rather, the difference in the names of these gods, and their diacritical relations to the toponym "Australia." The questions worth asking are these: Why did the Romans not adopt the Greek word, Notus, when naming their god? And where did the Romans' Auster come from? Etymologists of Indo-European languages consider much of the Latin to have derived from the Greek: "Latin is not a sister of the Greek," writes Valpy in his nineteenth-century dictionary, "but proceeds from it, as a daughter from a mother." Such an observation leads one to imagine that the Romans might have coined "Auster" from the Greek language itself. Indeed, *austerus*, a Latin word that comes from the Greek *austeros* (αὐστηρός), seems a likely origin for the Roman pronoun, and some etymological dictionaries bear out this extraction. An adjective meaning "dry, harsh [and] severe," *austeros* gives us in modern English the word "austere."²⁶ But if Auster (and later *australis*) can be thus linked to *austeros*, at least two things can be extrapolated from, can be speculated about this apparent derivation.

The first is that the Romans might have named their god Auster to highlight the dryness and harshness of the southern wind, which, rising up from an austere place, brought with it the sapour of a foreign people, and perhaps the cruel odour of those who, in the words of Scipio's grandfather, will "have nothing to do" with the Romans. Indeed, as Marilina Cesario recently notes, "it was believed that one wind in particular, *Auster* was responsible for corrupting the air and spreading diseases to other regions."²⁷ Thus a harsh and corrupting effluvium, Auster's winds might have reflected the harsh nature of the lands from which, and of the people from whom, they arose. A second, similar possibility if one assumes Auster derives from *austeros*, is that the Roman god's name might have also connoted the phenomenon of "making the tongue dry," which meaning the Greek word *austeros* is often observed to have had.²⁸ If the Romans had been conscious of projecting this connotative meaning, then their adoption of Auster qua *austeros* might be understood to mark the start of a broader shift in the onomastics of nature in the Roman centuries. After all, the Greek name Notus implies only the Greeks' "knowledge" of the southern wind, since *notus* itself is derived from the past participle of "know," and defined by Valpy as "an innate knowledge or perception."²⁹ In this context, it is tantalising to imagine that the Romans' new name for the south wind prefigures a larger move during this classical period toward a

more sense-descriptive taxonomisation of nature. Here, no longer is the southern wind simply “known” to exist, but is renamed to acknowledge its effects on the human body—specifically that this wind dries the tongue. Reflecting a new interest in defining the principles of ecological-biological interaction, the wind’s new name might have served to illustrate nature’s “natural” effects on the human body.³⁰

IN ANY CASE, WHAT IS true is that both the Romans and Greeks found some answers about *australis* blowing in the southern wind—however inchoate or peripheral they seem today. And after them, many thinkers—Claudius Ptolemy in the second century AD, mathematician Johann Schöner in the sixteenth century, and Ferdinand de Quir in the seventeenth century—would take steps to more reliably validate the existence of *terra australis*. By the mid-eighteenth century, speculation about Australia’s existence had reached such frenzied heights that new research on the subject seemed likely to be thieved. In 1766, the minor Scottish writer John Callander translated into English a detailed historical work by French magistrate and politician Charles de Brosses, a two-volume series that de Brosses had titled *Histoire des navigations aux terres Australes*.³¹ While de Brosses did not inscribe his name on his work, Callander would recklessly go on to claim this work as his own, thus effecting one of the most significant acts of plagiarism in modern history. Callander’s volume, titled *Terra Australis Cognita, or Voyages to the Southern Hemisphere during the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries*, was a three-volume work published between 1766 and 1769. Like many before it, Callander’s book appealed to a spatial or physicalist proof to verify Australia’s existence:

In this vast tract, it is impossible but there must be, to the south of Asia, some immense continent to keep our globe in equilibrio during rotation, by serving as a counterpoise to the map of Northern Asia.³²

Almost certainly without his knowing it, Callander had inherited this general principle of earthly equilibrium from Aristotle (after all, the original work had been done by de Brosses). In *Meteorologica*, Aristotle had argued that “there must be a region which bears to the other pole the same relation as that which we inhabit bears to our pole.”³³ The same notion would be proposed many times after Aristotle until, in the sixteenth century, mathematicians Johann Schöner, Oronce Fine, and Gerard Mercator would articulate the principle in slightly more formal terms, hypothesising that, if the ratios of land and sea were assumed the same in the southern

and northern hemispheres, Australia must exist.³⁴ And while Ptolemy had written in his *Geographia* of c. 150 AD of *Terra Incognita secundum Ptolemeum* [Unknown land according to Ptolemy], the first inscription of the name *Terra Australis* on a map was by Fine, whose bicordiform world map of 1531 featured a large southern continent just so named.³⁵ Notably, though, some attribute the name *Terra Australis* to Schöner, who is believed to have christened the continent as such by writing *Terra Australis recenter inventa sed nondum plene cognita* [Southern land found recently but not fully known] on his globe of 1523, now presumed lost.³⁶ Nevertheless, it was de Brosse who first coined the modern form of the word in his usage of *Australasie*, soon to be translated into “Australasia” by Callander.³⁷

Although Callander’s words are almost entirely plagiarised from de Brosse’s opus, it was only through the dissemination of Callander’s copy of the earlier work that such toponyms as *Polynesia* (meaning “many islands”) and *Australis*, together with such “associated ideas of diverse ‘savage’ racial groups and societal types coexisting in the Pacific, formally entered English language and thought.”³⁸ Yet there can be no denying that de Brosse laid the foundation for the British settlement of Australia; it was he who performed the painstaking work of compiling its navigational history, and he who managed the impressive synthesis of all the geographic knowledge theretofore accumulated about the southern lands. In fact, in the decades following its publication, de Brosse’s *Histoire des navigations aux terres Australes* became, as Ryan suggests, a “turning-point in the European understanding of the lands and peoples of the South Seas.”³⁹ So great was the influence and creditworthiness of de Brosse’s history that James Cook’s *Endeavour* expedition was arranged around its assertions, and the volumes themselves included in the 40-book *Endeavour* library compiled by the voyage’s scientist, Joseph Banks.⁴⁰

But Callander’s English translation of the prominent French book represents less his own ambitions than the fraught and desperate cultural contest that roiled between France and England at the time. This was a culture in which each state became ever more eager than the other to colonise and invade these southern lands.⁴¹ There are minor elements in Callander’s translation that appear to be quite different from the original, even when one accounts for the licences of translation; and many emendations are immediately conspicuous when the words “Great Britain” appear where before had lain “France.”⁴² Some sections of the book, particularly those that recommend the exploitation both of Australia’s land and its criminal importees, receive a much more spirited treatment in Callander’s translation, its autocratic language enhancing the abjection of de Brosse’s already

saturnine socio-economic fantasy. As John Beaglehole notes, Callander gives de Brosses's arguments for the expulsion of "beggars, orphans, and criminals" to Australia "a fiercely British twist,"⁴³ at one point proposing that the "Half-citizens" or "Foundlings" of the southern land—meaning those children who will be abandoned and orphaned—should be acquired by the colonists and "employed to good advantage." After all, writes Callander, such "species" of children form a "branch of the Publick revenue which she has full power to dispose of," their abandonment in fact *requiring* the colonists to "take" them, "even when very young, in hopes of rendering them useful to them when they grow up."⁴⁴

Few historians have underlined that Callander's language is more vicious, even more terrifying, than de Brosses's plaintive prose, or Callander's argument about the rights of the "Publick revenue" more phlegmatic and bloated than any appeal in de Brosses's original. Mercifully, though, only few parallels obtain between Callendar's brutal vision of colonial life and the reality (though still a harsh one) of early settlement. In the first five years after settlement, some twenty percent of children were recorded as orphans or abandoned, their survival in this milieu's terrible conditions a mystery to this day.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the "prospect" that these orphans might inherit "their abandoned parents' profligate infamy" prompted the newly formed colony, led by Governor Phillip King, to establish a valuable orphanage system, its costs partly defrayed by a new system of fines levied on polluters of freshwater tank streams.⁴⁶ These early orphanages represented a humanitarian impulse among the settlers; indeed, they marked the start of social welfare in Australia.⁴⁷ In fact, the most galling, probably most terrifying thought that one may have about Callander's and de Brosses's early visions of child exploitation in *australis* is not so much that their plans were realised in eighteenth-century Sydney, for they were not. It is rather that their visions seemed to reverberate into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their goals of exploitation later fructifying in Australia's post-colonial history. More than a century after the publication of Callendar's book, for instance, hundreds of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander children would be snatched from their parents under the *Aboriginal Protection Act 1869* (Cth), producing a stolen generation of de facto "foundlings," their seizure the result of "persistent demands by settlers to erase the Aboriginal presence."⁴⁸ And today, in the context of Australia's asylum seeker crisis, changes to the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) have allowed for children born in Australia to detained asylum seekers to be effectively deported or expelled from the country, sent to "regional processing centres" in the Republic of Nauru, formerly Pleasant Island.⁴⁹

To suggest, as I have, that Callander's and de Brosses's visions have in part been realised in these postcolonial events—and to name such events the “reverberations” of their precolonial texts—is to carry the original words through time. It is to suggest that this southern land had always been predestined for terror. But this is also to reaffirm the “metaphysics of presence” of which Derrida speaks: the idea that time itself consists in positing peak moments—in knowing “*ousia* as *Parousia*,” or in knowing “being” itself as a kind of “arrival or presence”—and in observing these moments' reappearance at other times (these are all ideas that began with Aristotle).⁵⁰ Of course, Aristotle's model of meteorological equilibrium, which I introduced earlier, suggests something else again: namely, that an “arrival” as such (*parousia*) is not necessary for one to know a thing's “being” (*ousia*). For just as the south wind (Notus) could allow Aristotle to “know” the “being” of *australis* long before its presence or “arrival,” so today can fast computing technologies and advanced physical models of the universe allow for one's “arrival” at some knowledge before it is possible to confirm it, to know its “being.” An example is the case of the astronomers who have recently revived the long-wagered theory that a “distant eccentric planet” joins our solar system, joins our “extended scattered disc,” but lies more than five hundred astronomical units away from earth. To determine the existence of this planet—which has been known variously as Planet X, Planet Nine, or even “Nibiru”—these astronomers apply just the same logic as Aristotle once applied: a principle of meteorological equilibrium.⁵¹ But perhaps what is even more intriguing, even more curious, is the way in which these procedures of detection—be they geographical, cosmological, or even social—seem to be reflected in the many chiasmic valences that appear within the language we use to describe them: Notus and knowledge, *terra* and terror, *austeros* and *australis*, to name but a few.

JUST SUCH CHIASMI HAVE BEEN the inspiration for this issue's title. And doubtless a similar series of observations inspired Sydney writer Leigh Blackmore to begin a journal of the same name, *Terror Australis*, in 1998. In the first and second issues of this short-lived Australian horror curio (only three issues were published, and each in limited number), Blackmore calls her introduction “The Black Stump.” In so doing, she calls into being the image of a truncated husk, burnt to charcoal black by fire. It is a thoughtful synecdoche for Australia's remoteness, and for its immutable otherness, the familiar husk here forming a *topos* for the “imaginary or mythical marker of the extent of civilisation,” for that point beyond which nothing real is knowable.⁵² In 1993, following the publication of *Terror Australis*'s third

issue, Blackmore would edit a book of the same name, bringing together several of the fictional works originally published in the journal. In the title of her introduction to this book, Blackmore would employ another *topos* to illustrate the procedures of horror fiction. “The Uneasy Chair,” she wrote, aptly describes the dialectic or “discourse” between the “horror writer” and “reader.” For while horror fiction seeks to make its reader feel “unsafe,” perhaps its most paradoxical function is that it allows its participants—its writers and readers alike—to explore so many “threatening issues from the comparative safety of the armchair.”⁵³

This issue of *Philament* welcomes its reader to find their place in just such an “uneasy chair,” and prepare to be taken “beyond the black stump” by a collection of writings by turns threatening and provocative. Opening this issue is Sharon Jane Mee’s erudite analysis of *The Horseman*, an Australian film that bestrides the much neglected genres of splatter and exploitation cinema. What, Mee asks, can *The Horseman* tell us about the operations of Jean-François Lyotard’s libidinal economy—about the *dispositif*, and the complex system in which energy and its expenditure produce “surpluses” and “losses”? Answering this question in a rich study of cinema spectatorship, Mee’s essay allows us to consider the perverse pleasure of terror cinema, a genre whose markers can bring “spectators to the brink of catastrophe in ecstasy.” A different kind of terror pervades the second essay, Philippa Specker’s original analysis of the contemporary problems of Indigenous hyper-imprisonment in Australia. Thoughtfully surveying the nineteenth-century rationales for imprisonment and their ill-fitting application in today’s political world, Specker argues that Australia’s extraordinarily high rate of Indigenous imprisonment effectively sustains the Commonwealth government’s claim to sovereignty, sidelining others’ interests.

At least as unsettling as this issue’s essays are its Excursions—its creative works of fiction and poetry. D. Bruno Starrs’s “Weelow” is a disquieting narrative about the sexual assault of a young Indigenous woman, Dorothea, and its devastating impact on her life and on that of her friend, Eugene, a navigator of the “White Man’s bureaucracy.” Patrick Condliffe’s “Myxomatosis Dreams” returns us to the delicate milieu of the childhood home only to imbue this innocent venue with the trauma of death. Some time after the protagonist’s brother dies, he is reincarnated in the form of a pet rabbit, “Mixi”—a creature of malice and a symbol familial division. Finally, the fragmented verses of Nathalie Camerlynck’s short, minimalistic poem hauntingly articulate the paranoid thoughts of a dark, freighted mind. To conclude this issue, three detailed reviews focus on recently pub-

lished creative and scholarly works to further illumine the theme of terror and Australia. Overall, it is hoped that this twenty-first issue of *Philament*, focused as it is on the myriad connections between Australia and terror, proves not only exciting and disturbing for its readers, but a catalyst for further scholarship at this frightful but productive intersection.

Notes

- 1 Nicole Birch-Bailey, "Terror in Horror Genres The Global Media and the Millennial Zombie," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 45, no. 6 (2012): 1137.
- 2 Leigh Blackmore (ed.), "Introduction: The Uneasy Chair," in *Terror Australis: The Best of Australian Horror* (Sydney: Coronet, 1993), vii.
- 3 See *Mabo and Others v State of Queensland (No 2)* [1992] HCA 23; (1992) 175 CLR 1 (3 June 1992); Andrew Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*," *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 1–15; David Ritter, "The 'Rejection of *Terra Nullius*' in *Mabo*: A Critical Analysis," *Sydney Law Review* 18, no. 1 (1996): 5–33.
- 4 Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*," 6.
- 5 *Mabo and Others v State of Queensland*, per Brennan J at [42].
- 6 Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*," 6. Cf. Ritter, "The 'Rejection of *Terra Nullius*,'" 5; and Michael Connor, *The Invention of Terra Nullius: Historical and Legal Fictions on the Foundation of Australia* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2005).
- 7 Ritter, "The 'Rejection of *Terra Nullius*,'" 33.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 16, 17.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 10 Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press 2003), 49.
- 11 Of course, Freud argued that "play upon words, and similarity of sound" serves to "obtain a yield of pleasure... permitted at the stage of play" but usually "dammed up by rational criticism in the course of intellectual development": Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, tr. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1960 [1905]), 169.
- 12 See Patrick McGuinness's thoughtful discussion of such homophonic "clos-enings" in his essay "Mallarmé and the Poetics of Explosion," *MLN* 124, no. 4 (2009): 819.
- 13 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (London: Basil Blackwell, 2958), section 111, 47.
- 14 As I have already suggested, the term did not exist at the time. Fitzmaurice

notes that “our understanding of the history of the law colonial occupation would be very superficial if we did not attempt to understand how the idea of *terra nullius* was generated by nineteenth- and pre-nineteenth century discussions of colonisation” rather than eighteenth century ones. See Fitzmaurice, “The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*,” 6.

- 15 Fitzmaurice, “The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*,” 10–11.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 12–13 and 13n38.
- 17 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, tr. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 5, book 1, line 66.
- 18 Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. T.E. Page (London: Macmillan, 1967), 31, book 2, lines 304–7: “... in segetum veluti cum flamma furentibus Austris / incidit.”
- 19 Seneca, *Medea*, tr. Frank Miller, in *Seneca’s Tragedies* (London: Heinemann, 1938), 281, line 581.
- 20 Statius, *Thebaid*, tr. J.H. Mozley (London: Heinemann, 1927, vol. 2), 54–5, book 5, line 705.
- 21 Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, ed. M. D. Reeve (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 150, 4.38.9: “... Notus, id est Auster...”
- 22 Cicero, “Scipio’s Dream,” in Macrobius [Theodosius], *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, tr. William Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 73.
- 23 See Christopher Wortham, “Meanings of the South: From the Mappae-mundi to Shakespeare’s Othello,” in Anne M. Scott, et al., *European Perceptions of Terra Australis* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 61–2.
- 24 See Alfred Hiatt, “*Terra Australis* and the Idea of the Antipodes,” in *European Perceptions of Terra Australis*, 18; Plato, *The Republic*, tr. Paul Shorey (London, 1935), 614B–21B.
- 25 Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, tr. H.D.P. Lee (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 183–5.
- 26 James Donald (ed.), *Chambers’s English Dictionary: Pronouncing, Explanatory, and Etymological* (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1872), 55, s.v. “Auster” and “Austere”; cf. Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 64, s.v. “Auster.” Some etymological dictionaries dispute the connection: see, for instance, George William Lemon, *English Etymology; or, A Derivative Dictionary of the English language: In Two Alphabets* (London: G. Robinson, 1783), s.v. “Auster.”
- 27 See Marilina Cesario, “An English Source for a Latin Text? Wind Prognostication in Oxford, Bodleian, Hatton 115 and Ashmole 345,” *Studies in Philology* 112, no. 2 (2015): 219n28. Also see *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi, Etymologiarum sive originum, libri XX*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford:

- Oxford University Press, 1911), XIII.xi.6.
- 28 Francis Jackson Valpy, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language* (London: A.J. Valpy, 1828), iii.
- 29 Ibid., 289, s.v. “Nōtus.”
- 30 See Wortham, “Meanings of the South,” 62.
- 31 See Charles de Brosses (although unattributed), *Histoire des navigations aux terres Australes. Contenant ce que l’on sçait des moeurs & des productions des contrées découvertes jusqu’à ce jour; & où il est traité de l’utilité d’y faire de plus amples découvertes, & des moyens d’y former un établissement* (Paris: Chez Durand, 1756).
- 32 John Callander, *Terra Australis Cognita or Voyages to the Terra Australis* (New York: De Capo, 1967), 1: 8.
- 33 Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, 183.
- 34 Hiatt, “*Terra Australis* and the Idea of the Antipodes,” 30; also see Oronce Fine, “Nova, Et Integra Universi Orbis Descriptio” (1531), <http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/enlarge/26260>.
- 35 See, for instance, Anthony Brown, *Ill-Starred Captains: Flinders and Baudian* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2004), 14.
- 36 Although a German article of 2005 suggests a globe pair published in 1533 is “to be definitely attributed to Johannes Schöner.” See Sven Hauschke, “Kurfürst Johann Friedrich Von Sachsen Und Der Astronom Und Mathematiker Johannes Schöner: Das Globenpaar Von 1533/1534 In Weimar,” *Der Globusfreund* 51/52 (2005): 9–19.
- 37 See Chris Gibson, “Australasia,” in Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (New York: Elsevier, 2009), 225.
- 38 Tom Ryan, “‘Le Président des Terra Australes’: Charles de Brosses and the French Enlightenment Beginnings of Oceanic Anthropology,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 37, no. 2 (2002): 180.
- 39 Ibid., 157; and see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 116–7.
- 40 Gibson, “Australasia,” 226.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 See Callander, *Terra Australis Cognita*, 1: 15; cf. de Brosses, 22. For assistance in translating De Brosses’s text, I am indebted to Serena May of Sydney Law School.
- 43 J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 120.
- 44 Callander, *Terra Australis Cognita*, 1: 22–3.
- 45 Brian Gandevia, *Tears Often Shed: Child Health and Welfare in Australia from 1788* (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1978), 55–6.

- 46 Ibid., 56.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Anna Haebich, “‘Clearing the Wheat Belt’: Erasing the Indigenous Presence in the Southwest of Western Australia,” in A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society: frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 286.
- 49 See Sean Rubinsztein–Dunlop and Alex McDonald, “Asylum seeker mother voices fears about being returned Nauru immigration detention centre,” 7.30, *ABC News*, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-03/asylum-seeker-mother-voices-fears-about-nauru/7137924>.
- 50 Jacques Derrida, “Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), 61.
- 51 The principle is extremely technical; however, its affinity with Aristotle’s mathematical principle in his *Meteorologica*, I think, should be obvious. The newer principle is based on a calculation that about one hundred times more mass would be needed for the small objects in the Kuiper Belt to move in the way that they do, and that such mass may exist in the form of a giant planet: see Konstantin Batygin and Michael E. Brown, “Evidence for a Distant Giant Planet in the Solar System,” *The Astronomical Journal* 151, no. 2 (2016): 1–12.
- 52 Leigh Blackmore (ed.), *Terror Australis* 1, no. 1 (1988): 4. This issue of the journal was printed in Sydney by Printer’s Devil, and designed by R’LyeH Texts.
- 53 Blackmore (ed.), “The Uneasy Chair,” vii.

Sharon Jane Mee

A Terrifying Spectatorship: Jean-François Lyotard's *Dispositif* and the Expenditure of Intensities in Steven Kastrissios's *The Horseman*

In lighting the match the child enjoys this diversion (*détournement*, a word dear to Klossowski) that misspends energy.¹

WHEN JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD DISCOVERED THE kind of misspending of energy that he writes of in “Acinema,” the essay from which I take my epigraph, he observed how such a misspending is visible in a diverse array of texts and events: it appeared, Lyotard noted, in John G. Avildsen’s film *Joe* (1970); in the experimental and abstract cinema of Hans Richter, Gianfranco Baruchello, and Viking Eggeling; in the pyrotechnics of fireworks; and even in the practice of “Swedish posing.” The last of these sites of misspending, Lyotard observed, involved a situation in which women would pose for their almost invariably male clients: men who were prevented from touching the immobile poser before them and—perhaps precisely because they are prevented from touching—were soon “overtaken by the liveliest agitation.”² By way of supplementing these examples of misspent energy, this article will propose another site in which Lyotard’s conception of this kind of wasteful disbursement can be identified: namely, exploitation cinema. More specifically, the following pages will focus on an Australian exploitation film directed by Steven Kastrissios, *The Horseman*

(2008), which I want to posit as an exemplary proof both of the genre of exploitation film and of Lyotard's notion.

Kastrissios's film demonstrates continuity editing systems interspersed with affective "splatter" shots.³ And so even while the real life situations of these "splatter" shots might place the film in the category of a "snuff" film, I want to more closely interrogate the spectatorial effects of this work by suggesting that, faced with these "splatter" shots, the spectator undergoes an expenditure of intensity that renders them "overtaken by the liveliest agitation" at the level of the micro-movements of their body.⁴ While other commentators have analysed *The Horseman* in terms of the film's thematics of identity, family, and survival or responsibility, this study will adopt Lyotard's particular formulation of the *dispositif* to highlight the ways in which cinema, and particularly exploitation cinema, functions as an artful and energetic arrangement whose purpose is to produce the sensations and affects to be "felt" by the spectators of these films.⁵

Lyotard's formulation of the *dispositif* can be used as an axiom through which his articulation of "misspending"—and what this implies for the cinematic spectator—can be elaborated on and more clearly understood. What Lyotard calls the *dispositif* describes a channelling and subsequent exploitation of intensities in an arrangement that allows those same intensities or affects to circulate. However, as I argue, the libidinal economy of the *dispositif*—which is to say the superstructure within which these libidinal dispositions and expulsions arise—must also generate a range of "uncompensated losses."⁶ That is, while the *dispositif* is energetic, it also constitutes intensities that cannot be—or simply are not—channelled into energetic exchanges of the kind that can be exploited by that *dispositif*. The *dispositif*, in this sense, both witnesses and facilitates a "misspending" of energy.

In addition to the above described Lyotardian conceptualisation, this paper will also pay close attention to three of Lyotard's essays: first, "Fis-course Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy," originally published in French in 1971, and second—as I have already indicated—an essay titled "Acinema," which Lyotard first published in French in 1973, together with, thirdly, his "Prescription," published in English in 1999. My primary aim is to analyse the force of ecstasy or *jouissance*, which I shall identify both in the body of the spectator and in the cinematic image. In short, this article asks the following: What are the expenditures that are channelled and exploited by the *dispositif*, and how does this ramify in terms of the spectator's *enjoyment* of exploitation film, including "splatter"

or “snuff” cinema? In an attempt to better understand what Lyotard means when he describes a kind of cinema—or rather a sort of “acinema”—that engages in expenditure in such a way as to constitute a “misspending” of energy, I will attend not only to how the *dispositif* results in “uncompensated losses” but to the way these losses promulgate the emergence of movement and pleasure in the *dispositif*. Thus, I argue that we may readily identify a distinction between “propagative” movements on the one hand, and “sterility,” or expenditure as an uncompensated loss, on the other. I shall also propose that this distinction signals the difference between commercial cinema and acinema and that, within this dichotomy, exploitation cinema may be understood as an example of the latter.

Jean-François Lyotard's *Dispositif*: Towards a Libidinal Economy

The Horseman is about a father figure, Christian Forteski (Peter Marshall), who, following the death of his daughter, Jessica (Hannah Levien), receives a copy of a sex tape in the mail. The sex tape captures three men—or “four men” according to the police—having sex with Forteski’s very drugged daughter only moments before her death. Forteski hunts down the adult film company that produced the tape—the morosely yet aptly named “Bloodsports”—and purchases every copy of the video before murdering the director of the production company. As the narrative develops, it is revealed that Jesse had turned to pornography to satiate her heroin addiction. But Forteski, unperturbed, continues on a bloody rampage to avenge his daughter’s death, tracking down, torturing, and finally killing the men involved, using such gruesome instruments as a crowbar, a handheld pneumatic pump, a hammer, and fish hooks. Forteski “finishes off” his victims with a small knife on whose blade are engraved the words “love Jesse.” As Forteski tracks down each of the men whom he sees as responsible for his daughter’s death—discovering the name of the next man from the last—he encounters a hitchhiker named Alice (Caroline Marohasy). A kind of surrogate for his deceased daughter, Alice, Forteski learns, is travelling to Rockhampton to discuss with the father of her unborn child her wish to terminate her pregnancy. As the pair travel between Brisbane and Rockhampton, they form an intimate father/daughter bond and, as Forteski comes ever closer to locating and killing the last of the men on his list, Alice becomes caught in the crossfire and is captured by Forteski’s

final victim and his accomplices. These men then threaten to repeat the events that led to Jesse's death.

How are we to understand *The Horseman* in terms of what Lyotard calls the "misspending" of energy? The economy of cinema is an energetic one, and it is on the basis of this first observation that we can define the *dispositif* as primarily an energetic arrangement. But the economy of cinema is also complex in that it inaugurates a combination of two economies: that of the mechanical apparatus of the screen and image itself and that of the spectatorial body. Yet to name these two economies separately is also too simplistic a formulation—and one that is not generally accepted in film theory. Based on my reading of Gilles Deleuze's theoretical formulation in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983), such a simplistic distinction fails because it envisions the image of cinema as a kind of suspended midpoint between the mechanical efforts of the cinematic apparatus (the production and reproduction of the image) and the biomechanical efforts of the spectator (the perception of the image). But cinema, I assert, represents no such midpoint; it is rather an inseparable imbrication of the image and the spectator in a homogeneous unfolding Deleuze names the "movement-image."⁷ To accept this Deleuzian formulation—one that Deleuze notes preceded cinema itself when it first appeared in Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896), a book that arose "before the official birth of cinema"—is to conceive of cinema not as an object in the realm of the spectator's "natural perception," but as a movement towards an "Opening" to the whole of the world.⁸ For just as the world is infinitely "Open" and in this way unconquerable for the beholder—and thus always productive of "something new"—"the movement-image," as Deleuze writes, is also "beyond the conditions of natural perception."⁹ The image of cinema is thus Open insofar as it is constituted by the "matter-flux" in which a range of forms are actualised, the space in which these forms become mobile and thus "transition from one form to another." Here each of these forms become a "mobile section of duration"—a series of "concrete duration[s]" or *durées*.¹⁰ But, following Deleuze, I describe cinema not only as "Open" but as "the Open," because cinema refers to a *particular* space or matter-flux, one whose parameters are defined not by the biomechanical movement of the spectators's bodies, but by the space in which there arises this coiled imbrication of the spectator and image.

The point at which drawing this distinction between the mechanical economy and the biomechanical economy for cinema might be constructive, however, is where it enables us to understand cinema's economy as one that transcends Marx's *political* economy—the model in which "liv-

ing labour” is defined most simply as that which can be exploited. Tania Modleski has demonstrated the constructiveness of comparing these economies, for instance, in her study of horror films, where she relates the economy of human labour to the mechanical apparatus. It is Marx, Modleski writes, who describes the capitalist as having a “werewolf hunger” or “insatiable appetite” that “drives him to replace ‘living labor’ with ‘dead labor’ (that is, human beings with machines).”¹¹ For Marx, as Modleski observes, the mechanical apparatuses that replace human labour should create a state of affairs in which, because “dead labor” cannot be exploited to the same degree as “living labor,” the rate of profit will eventually come to fall in a “dead labor” economy, leading to the consequent downfall of capitalism.¹² That is, in Marx’s analysis, only “living labor” can produce the surplus value that can be exploited to the sufficient degree that is required to sustain the capitalistic system. The “dead labor” of the machine cannot be exploited in this way, for it can neither produce nor attain a value greater than that value for which it has been designed: the machine always gives, that is, only the same value—but also never anything less than the value—for which it can be exchanged for profit. Despite Marx’s conclusions, machines also represent the “liberation from burdensome toil.”¹³ And even while this is a dream supplied by capitalism, it is in consequence of this faithfulness in machines that the mechanical apparatus of cinema stands for another form of liberation.

To clarify, if cinema does not yield this kind of capitalist liberation, it can also be understood to produce another kind of liberation: the liberation of affect. That is, cinema may be understood to enter into the economy of surplus value because, while it produces a kind of “living labor,” it entails nothing of the kind of liberation from exploitation that this procedure normally entails. Cinema, rather, has a stranger relation to the economy than do other mechanical or machinic apparatuses. The cinematic-mechanical apparatus demonstrates that the “dead labor” of the machine (at least in the hands of an auteur or director) *can* produce surplus value in the form of affect—one that can be sensed by the spectator—and thus produces a form of surplus value that can be exploited. By contrast, however, it is only because Lyotard describes all mechanical apparatuses (and among them we may count the cinematic apparatus) as objects that are invested with *libidinality* that the kinds of “exorbitant” intensities—those that I have just referred to as the surplus value of spectatorial affect—are possible at all.¹⁴

Along these lines, Pierre Klossowski writes that these kinds of intensities have no “equivalent” in the political economy.¹⁵ But if this is so, then

Lyotard shows us how the broader libidinal economy might *invest* the political economy, even if (or perhaps precisely because) the latter offers none of the intensities that we may find in the former.¹⁶ No longer simply “dead labor,” the economy of the mechanical apparatus of cinema, imbued as it is with libidinal energies, may thus be defined as a libidinal economy that *invests* the political one. Of course, the cinematic libidinal economy is not free of the setups, arrangements or *dispositifs* that channel and exploit libidinal energies in a way that is ultimately political. In other words, to theorise the cinematic apparatus in terms of a *dispositif* does not stop us also conceiving of that apparatus as an Open energetic arrangement or setup—even as libidinal energies may be channelled or exploited by this *dispositif* in a way that makes the apparatus also appear, at one level, to be a political instrument.

If we may put to one side the investment of libidinal energy by the cinematic mechanical apparatus in the political economy, we may conceive of cinema as a *dispositif* and, in the process, demonstrate the way in which cinema cannot generally be divided so that it consists simply of the economy of the mechanical apparatus and that of the biomechanical apparatus. Cinema is a particular kind of setup/apparatus/*dispositif*: it is an energetic apparatus that is not *inorganic*. The *dispositif* describes an energetic arrangement that is invested with libidinal energies: it thus contains the organic elements that the spectator him- or herself invests in it (that they, as per the French, “dis-place” to or “dispose” of in it), but also of many other organic elements, some of them not the product of the spectator.¹⁷ As Lisa Trahair writes, “In the *dispositif*, the thetic subject is only a partial and momentary component of a more fundamental flow of cathetic energy.”¹⁸ The economy of cinema is thus an energetic one in which the subject-spectator is an important component, but only one component among the many that give rise to the *dispositif*’s overall “flow” or matter-flux of libidinal and cathetic energy.

The *dispositif* is, moreover, different from the mechanical apparatus, because—even though the *dispositif* can be invested with energy in a way that indicates a stable structure—it is also open to change, or to the creation of new potentials. That is, although the word *dispositif* can be translated from the French to mean “apparatus”—a fact that Iain Hamilton Grant notes in his glossary of Lyotard’s *Libidinal Economy*—Lyotard’s *dispositif* does not actually refer to the *mechanical* aspects of the apparatus. Rather, it can be defined as an energetic arrangement that exhibits both a “disposition to invest” in external agents or events and to be “invested in” by these agents or events.¹⁹ Thus, as I have already indicated, the *dispositif* is a setup

or arrangement that channels and exploits energy, even as it may become “subject to economic movements and displacements.”²⁰

In this way the economy of the mechanical apparatus is different from the economy of the *dispositif*: the economy of the former produces, as Lyotard notes, a “material memory.” It thus allows for the “accumulation” or “stock-piling” of historical or diachronic “remains”—a procedure that suggests not only the apparatus’s “past activity” and its potential exchange for capital, but indicates the way in which the apparatus’s history accumulates in both directions.²¹ The economy of the *dispositif*, by contrast, is an energetic “disposition to invest,” one that, while it also allows for the channelling and exploitation of libidinal energies, neither fabricates nor constitutes a “place” as such. It is by these means that the *dispositif* may be described as the energetic “disposition to invest” and to be invested of the libidinal band or “skin.” In other words, the *dispositif* is an ephemeral and heterogeneous event whose parameters remain unamenable to material collection or accumulation despite the named “skin.”²² Libidinal intensities, then, are affects or feelings that find expression in the events that take place in the world but are themselves “structured” or exploited by *dispositifs*. The *dispositif* thus works with an “idea of an intensity” that, “far from setting itself up on a producer-body,” actually “determines it.”²³ The difference between the economy of the mechanical apparatus and the economy of the *dispositif* is therefore a difference of production—or, rather, a difference between these apparatus’s conceptions of the *time* of production (where “production” refers to the creation of either a product or of intensities). To put it differently again, the difference obtains between, for the mechanical apparatus, a mode of production or “accumulation” that allows for capital exchange(s) and, for the *dispositif*, a mode of production by which intensities arise that are not determined by their exploitation, but by the extent to which their ephemeral and heterogeneous “passage” (even duration) produces a new *space* of production (constitutive of the *dispositif* itself).

In “Acinema,” Lyotard describes two different kinds of movement. The first is the cinematographic inscription of movement—a movement that facilitates a “potential return and profit,” one that may be then recorded on the “ledger book” that is at once the recorder of the film’s economic “value” and “is the film” itself.²⁴ The second kind of movement, which consists of two poles—namely, “immobility and excessive movement”—incites an expenditure that has no such reproductive “return” or propagative function.²⁵ I want to suggest that it is this second kind of movement that is more crucially important to the *dispositif*, for it is

this movement that generates the “uncompensated losses” in consumption that are central to the notion of misspent energy. More than this, however, I want to propose that it is this latter kind of movement that enacts the particular form of spectatorship engendered by exploitation cinema, one that comprises, as Lyotard notes, “intense enjoyment and sexual pleasure (*la jouissance*).”²⁶

A comparable description of this arrangement or *dispositif* of intensities appears in Lyotard’s “Fiscourse Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy,” the essay in which Lyotard undertakes to read Freud’s phantasy, “A Child Is Being Beaten,” which Freud recorded in 1919. The relationship between the victim who is beaten (that is, the child or children) and the agent who does the beating (the father or adult), and the place of the subject who functions as an onlooker to the beating (the analysand), constitutes the arrangement or *dispositif* in which, as Lyotard posits, an array of intensities flourish. Victim-spectator, anal-genital, sadism-masochism, are blocked together in a strict beat that itself beats to the possibility of interruption in “A Child Is Being Beaten.” That is, the beating of the child constitutes a beat that beats to “bad form” because, as Lyotard suggests, this beating is not seen but rather lies behind the repression of the phantasy, derived as it is from desire—as well as from desire’s tendency not to delineate between those things that it desires, but to invest incomparably in all regions.²⁷ Here the “block” of desire is the phantasmatic *matrix-figure*: the transgressive element of the beat that “blocks” together contradictory—or what Lyotard calls “logically impossible”—desires.²⁸

Important for this reading of Freud’s phantasy is that one of the phantasy’s components is the onlooker/analysand/subject in whom a perverse kind of pleasure—one comprising ecstasy and shame—is always generated.²⁹ The precise and similar action of *ecstasy* (another perverse form of pleasure) in the *dispositif* will become apparent later in this paper, where I will explain its effect on and position with regard to the onlooker/subject/spectator. The point of rearticulating the Lyotardian view of Freud, however, is to point to the ways in which Lyotard evidences his essential claim that the *dispositif* channels and exploits intensities, and particularly to show how distinct Lyotard’s formulation is from the psychoanalytic one. But I also want to suggest that cinema can exploit and channel the kinds of intensities of which Lyotard writes. The profound extent to which these intensities are produced and exploited in exploitation films in the form of horror images—or what might be simply called “splatter”—is already apparent in the genre’s name; but what is there to say regarding the intensities that are outside *all* forms of exchange?

Despite the limiting structures of the mechanical apparatus (what Lyotard calls the “this” and “not-this”), the energetic and functioning systems of such apparatuses are also Open to the investment of libidinal energies. The mechanical apparatus is itself a stable and thetic structure; however, in the case of the *cinematic* mechanical apparatus, the *instability* of the image allows the whole apparatus to transmute into an “Open” entity—a structure that is open, that is, to the investment of libidinal energies, as well as to the structuring *dispositifs* through each of which the spectator component may, or *must*, channel and exploit an intensity, like so many portals inviting entry. Thus, a profusion of libidinal intensities invest all *dispositifs*, affording them the energetic potentials that they require to effect such changes as are needed to allow them to flow into new *dispositifs*.³⁰ It is in this way that *dispositifs* channel and exploit intensities, but remain open to new intensities too.

In such a theorisation of the libidinal economy, it is hard to determine whether libidinal intensities bring the *dispositif* into existence (when certain intensities invest regions of the libidinal band or skin so as to form an intensive arrangement), or the *dispositif* is an already extant arrangement of energies, one that merely channels and exploits the intensities that are invested in it. This is the dissimulating effect, which is to say the duplicity, of *dispositifs*, all of which conceal their own aetiology—their cause and origin as merely the teleology, the movement—of the intensities that appear to constitute them. It is equally the case, however, that the intensities that appear to constitute the *dispositifs* also serve to actually structure them; they are indispensable, for without these intensities, the *dispositifs* would be nothing.³¹ Such a duplicity—or, in another sense, such an interdependence—means that these intensities and their structuring *dispositifs* are open to the radical possibilities of reversal and recursion: intensities, that is, may be just as readily channelled and exploited to render the system stable as they may be channelled and exploited to intensely disrupt the same system.

This presents another possibility for intensities, one that conceives of them as more than simply those elements that are regulated by the *dispositif*: for intensities, we learn, can also destabilise the system. For Lyotard, as much can be seen in the example of the child with the match:

[when] a child strikes the match-head [he does so] *to see* what happens—just for the fun of it—[and] he enjoys the movement itself, the changing colours, the light flashing at the height of the blaze, the death of the tiny piece of wood, the hissing of the tiny flame.³²

In striking the match-head, the child is involved in certain expenditures—physical gestures and propulsions that result in “uncompensated losses” and the “dissipation of energy.”³³ Since these movements are unproductive—and in fact incapable of production or reproduction—Lyotard calls such forms of movement “sterile motion.”³⁴ This motion allows for no production of a vendible product or form of merchandise through labour, and so facilitates no return of capital or value. What is to be discovered in this movement, rather, is only an “intense enjoyment and sexual pleasure (*la jouissance*).”³⁵

Movement as Pleasure in the *Dispositif*

If “immobility and excessive movement” are the “two poles” of the cinema that produces “true, that is, vain, simulacrum, blissful intensities, instead of productive/consumable objects,” then such a movement conforms to what Lyotard elsewhere describes as “acinema.” Static, immutable stillness—just as much as radical kinesis—disrupt a film’s rhythm, diegesis, and cuts; the compositional techniques that more broadly constitute commercial cinema’s “impression of reality,” where energy is invested into an otherwise stable system.³⁶ In other words, cinema’s movements may be understood either as “subordinated” to “narrative meaning,” or in experimental cinema, as “useless to the narrative whole of the film.”³⁷ In spite of their uselessness, however, movements of the latter kind generate uncompensated losses in consumption; they enact or allow for a spectatorship that involves the *jouissance* to which Lyotard refers.³⁸ This second kind of movement, however, is also perverse, since it has no reproductive capacity, and inaugurates no economy of exchange. In all of this, however, what I have described as uncompensated losses are not in fact losses of form (although Lyotard does elsewhere refer to the “good form” and the “transgression of form”).³⁹ Rather, these losses produce a kind of mutable, ill-defined form that remains unamenable to the system of (commercial) exchange; they are types of energy that have no price.

In Marx’s and Lyotard’s distinctive analyses (respectively of the political economy and of film) we discover an economy of “surplus values” and “uncompensated losses.” These are forms of non-economic value (or value that transcends a measurable worth) that I want to argue also pervade splatter or snuff films. But to identify these kinds of values in snuff films is not simply to speak of the *circulation* of splatter images in this kind of cinema—even though these images do enter circulation, even if only for a select, cult viewership. The point is rather to suggest that the libidinal

economy is incompatible with and amenable to the indices of capital in a political economy, which is to say a non-libidinal economic.

The libidinal body is everywhere and everything, intensive and unconditional. And yet, precisely because the body has no limits—because it possesses a libidinal or surplus value that goes beyond economics and enters into politics, into the political economy—it is a thing that can be exploited. And exploitation is a phenomenon that is peculiar to the political economy, even though the intensities of the libidinal economy that invest the political economy are beyond control. As James Williams writes, “although the [libidinal] economy exploits intensities, it never fully understands or controls them.”⁴⁰ But this is a different take to that which Klossowski expresses in his *Living Currency* (1970), where intensities, which are generated by the fantasy or simulacrum, are “non-exchangeable” because their domain “falls outside of the realm of prices.”⁴¹ Intensities, in other words, are not perceptible to the political economy; rather, they are perverse, and for this reason not exploitable. And although, in “Acinema,” Lyotard describes all “intense enjoyment” as perverse (because whatever expenditure they inaugurate is a non-productive one, a non-exploitable *jouissance*) in Lyotard’s *Libidinal Economy* such intensities seem capable even of investing the “constitutive negations” that lie “beyond the circuits of capital,” for they are willing to “sacrifice the most exorbitant ‘price’” for “whatever [additional] intensities it can glean from” these spaces too (those of the libidinal and political economies).⁴² Thus, while they do not find much equivalence with a monetary currency, intensities can make up and inhere in positive economies by investing in the libido in a way that presupposes no limits; and such an investment, Lyotard argues, is the “exorbitant” and “polymorphous” one that makes these intensities so infinitely exploitable.⁴³ Just as new intensities arise, then, new *dispositifs* come into being to exploit them. The investment of the libido is thus the “opening out” of the libidinal surface (“band/skin”), an opening that is continuous with this originary investment and that re-invests in it endlessly.⁴⁴

We can consider the “price” or “value” of intensities, Lyotard notes, by reference to the analogy or allegory of prostitution. For prostitution is one among a range of prototypal sites, Lyotard proposes, at which we may witness the exchange of intensities and capital. Grant explains the “libidinal exchange in prostitution” as one that “invests the prostitute’s desire” precisely because the “foreclosure” of this desire is demanded by “capital (and the pimp),” which is required for capital to “profit from the prostitute’s body.” In this example, Grant notes, the exorbitancy of the libidinal exchange becomes clear; the exorbitant has no equivalent, he writes, and

so is “inevaluable and unaccountable”—beyond measurability. And yet the libidinal economy is not merely divorced from the political one; it is, rather, a force that is capable of engaging the latter economy. Its perverse tenacity and polymorphousness means that it is prepared to “sacrifice” whatever it has to sacrifice in order to exploit its own interest—and it is, in this way, a threat to the political economy.⁴

For exploitation film to exploit the spectator’s sensations, then, intensities cannot simply be exploited for the sake of a capital return. An exploitation film, like the intensities Lyotard describes, is “exorbitant” and, indeed, not equal to the amount that is exchanged for it. It is not, in other words, about what has been *paid* by the spectator for the intensities they will experience, for capital return is not a goal—or at least not a relevant goal—of the production of such a cinema as this. For a film production company working in this mode, the intensities that are engendered by means of “splatter” may well enter circulation as politico-economic *and* libidinal intensities, among other kinds; however, they do so only to gain a value that is, in an important sense, *beyond* value. In terms of exploitation films, though, it is the spectator themselves who is prepared to “sacrifice” the most exorbitant “price” to glean something from these intensities; and by extension, the “uncompensated losses” of energetic expenditure constitute a form, if not the very form, of that “something” that may be gleaned from the affective experience of the film. In other words, there is a “price” *beyond* an economic value involved in exploitation film—one that is paid by the viewer in return for the experience of such intensities.

In turning our attention to *The Horseman*, we might consider how prostitution functions in the film to elicit an affective response from the father, Christian Forteski—a man who never truly accepts the death of his daughter, Jesse. In one kind of structural and narratological analysis, Jesse’s death may be read as the too-high and exorbitant price that she inexorably pays to stave off the symptoms of her drug dependency, for it is the promise of satiation—and of the capital return that enables it—that foregrounds her “willingness” to participate in the pornographic shoot. However, Jesse’s death means that from the expenditure of intensities arising from her engagement in sex work, Jesse gains no such return. Her death means that her sex acts as a sex worker have generated a series of “uncompensated losses” including, in fact, a fatal loss. These are damages that, both for Jesse and the spectator, cannot be understood in terms of a “price,” since the loss of life transcends value, both in economic and narratological terms.

But the question remains: What is the nature of this expenditure for particular kinds of cinema? If the direction of commercial cinema means that such films as *The Horseman* communicate intensities that are, as Ashley Woodward observes, “eliminated or dampened by the director’s work” (because this kind of cinema “subordinates the sensuous immediacy of the cinematic material to a narrative meaning”) then acinema may be understood to do something different to this. Acinema, unlike commercial cinema, is constituted by those libidinal intensities that *escape* narrative meaning, by those that are not subordinated to narrative, but enact and perform that “sensuous immediacy” of the image to which Woodward refers.⁴⁶ In this context, it may be proposed that extreme immobilisation and mobilisation are unproductive and even disruptive to the narrative whole, for these extremes constitute different kinds of uncompensated losses. The disruptions to the *dispositif*—such as those that enlarge or “open out” the libidinal band/skin through its increasing “intensification”—are nothing more than examples of the processes of ecstasy and *jouissance* at work. And yet, *jouissance* grates against the ethical demands posed to spectators of such films as *The Horseman*, where the uncompensated loss also functions as an extreme form of violence—one that, in *The Horseman*, leads to a character’s gruesome death. And this brings us face to face with the implicit problem: How are we to understand or account for the spectatorship of splatter or snuff cinema in a way that is unethical—in a way that formulates these intensities only as libidinal values? It is a question that returns us to Lyotard’s interlocution with Freud.

The Cinematic and Subjective Topology of Loss

In the *dispositif* that Lyotard identifies in Freud’s “A Child Is Being Beaten,” the “beat,” which is a “contact... between two surfaces,” is said to “[open] up a spacing.”⁴⁷ As a result of this opening-up, which is also an artefact of the crucial disparity between the “charge and discharge of tension,” a certain *jouissance* arises. However, as Lyotard clarifies, this opening-up less resembles the parting of two level masses (or “terms”) than a tectonic shift as between two distinctly non-level “ridges.” That is, it is

not a matter of separating terms that belong on the same plane, forming part of a single area, of which they would merely delineate the lines of cleavage. It is rather a fracture, marking the subsidence, the cav-

ing-in of a surface, a fracture that leaves two ridges of widely differing altitudes suspended on either side of the chasm it has opened up.⁴⁸

For Lyotard, *jouissance* has an economy that transgresses the “form” or “rhythmics” of the ridges (beats) that lie on either side of this interstice, and which “opens” onto the chasm. This is the case even as it may be said that it is really the *disparity* of tension between either side of this gap—the beats—that constitutes the fracture and the chasm itself. *Jouissance*, in other words, envisages only the *product* and the *result* of the topological dehiscence; it pays little, and perhaps no attention to the structural elements that enframe or create it. However, this *jouissance* economy overlooks not only these spatial distances that constitute the chasm, but also the time that has been lost between the world and subject during the time (*durée*) at which the subject is “open” upon the chasm; for this period, the subject is engulfed in the chasm, becoming the chasm.

Interrogating the “opening” of the subject into this object (the chasm) is one important way of re-evaluating the cinematic experience; it allows us not only to understand the way in which both subject and object are “lost” in the experience of cinema, but also the way in which Lyotard conceptualised such a loss. In this formulation of “loss,” the cinematic experience is no longer discernible as a spatial configuration of the subject or spectator before the object or film; it is rather to be seen as a transmission between these agents or entities of energy and expenditure—one in which “loss” is key. This “loss” is the fracturing explosion and expenditure of *jouissance* that results from the “difference” in tension between beats. Ecstasy or *jouissance* is predicated not just on affective proximity, but on the uncompensated losses experienced by the subject for whom an expenditure of energy is, though inevitable, subject to variation.⁴⁹ Here, both distance and mastery is lost in relation to *jouissance* so that it is not simply the case that the spectator exercises their mastery over space and time from one point to the next. Rather, the spectator loses herself in the very difference between a charge and discharge in tension; mastery becomes nugatory as the subject and object collapse in a procedure that, infinitely variable, represents no more than the *operation* of expenditure.

The Horseman belongs to a particular mode of production in a situated politico-economic moment, and it produces a correspondingly unique economy of spectatorship. Originally a short film, *The Horseman* was remade as a feature after it received accolades of critical acclaim at the Queensland New Filmmaker Awards in 2006. While Australia has a history of producing exploitation or so-called “Ozploitation” in films (examples

include Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (1971), Brian Trenchard-Smith's *Turkey Shoot/Escape 2000* (1982), and Russell Mulcahy's *Razorback* (1984)), the genre of the snuff film only seldom appears in Australian cinemas. One could argue that this paucity of Australian snuff films relates to the way in which Government funding is so often a determinative factor in the process of Australian film production. However, in the wake of digital technologies that allow for cinematic work to be produced at a much reduced cost, it should be unsurprising that we see different kinds of representations of real deaths—for instance, in social media and documentary forms—representations that generates for snuff films an ethical dilemma related to its production.⁵⁰

To define *The Horseman* as a “splatter” film might be to suggest that the film engages in a kind of unreal or over-the-top production of blood imagery without availing viewed of any moral or epistemological thematic. This is because the splatter film often disregards any pretension to a moral or religious code, and frequently avoids meditating on the ethical motivations that lie behind its violence, setting up one splatter tableau only to build a nexus to the next one. However, *The Horseman* is a different kind of film to ordinary splatter films, for in it we witness the collision of the splatter effects, which are exemplary of exploitation, and the real life representation of death, which is exemplary of the snuff film. This combination means that, while *The Horseman* provides much spattering of blood, this is for the purpose of playing out an emotionally heightened and melodramatic (but, as in the best melodrama, always potentially real) moral narrative.

The sex tape that Forteski receives is also exemplary of the way in which “real death” is the impetus that motivates the characters in snuff film. (*The Horseman* has, it could be said, closer links to the sub-genre known as “torture porn” than to splatter cinema.) The film is a moral tale structured in three acts; its narrative is motivated by the desire of father figure, Forteski, to hunt down men involved in a pornographic film that resulted in the death of his daughter.

And yet, consonant with the splatter film, *The Horseman*'s narrative comprises a string of violent, blood spattering tableaux, all of them shot at high speed, and each of them leading to the next instance of another such killing. Offering a description of splatter cinema that conforms neatly with these scenes, Michael A. Arnzen writes that in such films

all is disjointed for the sake of shock... and the spectacle of violence replaces any pretensions to narrative structure, because gore is the only part of the film that is reliably consistent.⁵¹

It is the goriness of the blood splatter that generates the investment and exploitation of intensities, then, for these spectacularly blood-soaked tableaux create an “opening out” of intensities that also “opens out” the viewer (not to mention the victims). Splatter, according to this argument, engenders an affect best described as *jouissance*; its liquefied presence on screen has the effect of transmitting the “sensuous immediacy of the cinematic material” to the spectator in an intensive, unalloyed manner.⁵² However, splatter is also a substance and effect that exploits the spectator; it produces sensations that are intended to be “felt” by them, thus eliciting from them something that they may have otherwise been loath to expel or expend. What makes exploitation cinema exploitative, then, is—much apart from the exploitation of its actors, characters, or themes—this intensive and spectatorial exploitation: the exploitation of those intensities at first instance produced by the film and at second instance felt by its spectators.

Of course, it is not uncommon in cinema studies for films to be described as just such sites of affective spectatorship, as zones wherein affect—or what the spectator “feels”—routinely exceeds the visual image. Modleski’s study of “The Terror of Pleasure,” for instance, is as important as any among such studies, not least because it underlines the singular status of the “contemporary horror film—the so-called exploitation or slasher film,” which “assault[s]... all that bourgeois culture is supposed to cherish.”⁵³ As well as drawing together the economy of cinema and the affect of terror, however, Modleski’s essay is also notable for its acute analysis of mass art and mass culture. Modleski writes, for example, about the value of mass art as a “mass-mediated experience,” whose pleasures, at least when afforded by technology, are false and vacuous, not unlike those provided by other older forms of entertainment or amusement.⁵⁴ Describing mass culture, its relation to technology, and the pleasures produced thereby, Modleski recalls one aspect of our received wisdom:

The masses, it is said, are offered various forms of easy, false pleasure as a way of keeping them unaware of their own desperate vacuity. And so, apparently, we are caught in the toils of the great monster, mass culture.⁵⁵

What is at stake here, Modleski writes, is precisely what the Frankfurt School cautioned us about: namely, the “manipulative contrivance” of ideology.⁵⁶ And it is ideology, in this sense, that the *dispositif* channels and exploits, serving to restrict and curtail the economy of communication,

where that economy is understood as a disruptable, destabilisable transmission and exchange.

But as I suggested earlier, Modleski's essay is also instructive because it focuses specifically on the modern horror film—which she calls the exploitation genre—singling out these kinds of films for their counteractive approach to the prevailing orthodoxy. And as she avers, *pleasure* is the diacritical variable in the horror equation; it is crucially important, that is, because it is anathema to the production of a counternormative, counter-capitalistic cinema. Thus pleasure, Modleski writes,

remains the enemy for the postmodernist thinker because it is judged to be the means by which the consumer is reconciled to the prevailing cultural policy, or the “dominant ideology.”

However, as Modleski continues, the contemporary horror film “provides an interesting counterexample” to this pleasure principle.⁵⁷ Modleski in fact goes on to describe those horror films that assault the prevailing ideology as generative of their own kind of *jouissance*: a pleasurable subversion that takes the form of an avowedly “adversarial relation to contemporary culture and society.”⁵⁸

Another noteworthy virtue of Modleski's essay is that it offers more than simply a description of these films; it also furnishes critical insights about their structural operation. Thus, the economy of horror films, she writes, involves both a dismemberment of the body, and a dismantling of the text, a dual procedure that operates as a grand rupture both of body and text—and one which culminates in the spectatorial sensation of pleasure as terror.⁵⁹ In other words, it is most palpably in exploitation films that pleasure, which is to say that part of the film that audaciously disconforms to the “dominant ideology,” becomes terror, which is the film's affective exploitation of this very heterodox element, the one that sometimes “strikingly recapitulates the very terms adopted by culture critics,” and moves us away from traditional pleasure and, as Modleski avows, “nearer to so-called *jouissance*, discussions of which privilege terms like ‘gaps,’ ‘wounds,’ ‘fissures,’ ‘splits,’ ‘cleavages,’” and—as in this essay—“chasms” and “dehiscences.”⁶⁰ Thus focusing on *jouissance*, we can understand pleasure and terror as the rupturing affects produced by the cinematic apparatus; further, though, we could think of both pleasure and terror as possessing surplus values of various kinds: the former entails leisure, contemplation, and distance, while the latter connotes expenditure, intensity, and proximity. It does not matter

that pleasure and terror can both be exploited, that they can enter an economy of exchange; what matters is that these intensities are exploited by exploitation film in such a way that the film “opens” the spectator to terror, producing the gaps, lacunae, and uncompensated losses that remains always unamenable to future exchange.

Understood as the master system within which these exchanges occur, the *dispositif* channels and exploits energies, thus allowing for cinema’s possibility. But in “opening out” these intensities, the *dispositif* necessarily generates many “losses” too. We may thus reconsider our notion of what “exploitation” denotes in the generic description of exploitation cinema; the sub-genre’s exploitation of texts and of bodies is less important than its exploitation of these intensities, which engender certain expenditures on the part of the spectator. And these are expenditures that, by their very nature, are outside exchange, and cannot in any sense be exploited after they have been expended. The expenditures are, as Patricia MacCormack writes in “Zombies without Organs: Gender, Flesh, and Fissure” (2008), a commonplace in horror cinema, wherein

the affective nature of [its] images puts end to the stratification and significations of the demand that we “read” images by deferring them to their meanings and possibility of existence in the real world. Horror is all about exploiting—not bodies, but the impossible in the real becoming possible through cinema.⁶¹

To put it another way, horror exploits, but what it exploits are certain intensities that are not exploitable anywhere other than *in* cinema, *within* the cinematic frame. The visceral effects so engendered by film have no real presence other than their cinematic presence (a metaphysics of presence limited to the screen itself). But these *sui generis* or cinema-specific intensities also have *values* “beyond their worth,” for their production signifies a sacrifice: namely, a sacrifice of the spectator herself by and to cinema. Nevertheless, the spectator, who is now part of the film’s expenditure, is prepared to participate in this ritual, inaugurating a communion between herself and the film qua the site of such an intensity. But of course, ultimately this sacrifice is also a loss; it is an energetic divestment that is felt by the spectator, who, wounded, senses it as an affect. Considering this, we may now refine our definition of exploitation: when we use the word in relation to films, we should not mean simply the exploitation of texts and bodies, but the exploitation of energies that consist not of actual acts but of intensities.

There is a relationship engendered in the cinematic experience that directs our attention to something beyond ideology, ethics, or social commentary and toward a particular articulation of the body and the body's operation within the *dispositif*, one that we can think of as its own economy. Steven Shaviro writes that films are “*machines for generating affect*, and for capitalising upon, or extracting value from, this affect.”⁶² I want to add that horror films, and especially splatter films, are more efficient machines for performing this task than are many, if not all, other kinds of films. The *dispositifs* that these films instantiate, moreover, are less ideologically inflected (as they are for Jean-Louis Baudry) than they are enmeshed with the affective effects that distinguish them.⁶³ And yet, *The Horseman* also comprises ideological structures, such as those expressed in the moral code and in the protective instincts of Forteski, the father, so that even as the affective apparatus of the splatter film is preeminent among its effects, it can also be read in terms of its ideology.

But what in the splatter film distinguishes the moral or ethical from the affective? The diacritical element is, of course, the blood. Blood is the genre's master signifier. And splatter film blood, I propose, may and *should* be understood in aesthetic rather than ethical terms, because the splattering *movement* of blood—its chaotic and explosive dispersion through space, captured in the cinematic frame—gestures at the primitive, savage and affective body that is before the law, unbounded and chaotic, a pre-medicalised and horrifying body, defiled and torn asunder. As Lyotard writes in “Prescription,” there is a “savage or alien space and time that are foreign to the law” called *aisthesis*.⁶⁴ Relevantly for splatter films, Lyotard describes the relation of *aisthesis* to blood that circulates freely, that is, to blood which is foreign to the “law” because it expresses and performs a spatial freedom that the “law” cannot control (except insofar as it can predict or bear witness to the blood's inevitable spillage). The “law” that touches the body and spills the blood, Lyotard observes, touches it in both particular and transcendental ways—particular because each encounter with the body has “particularity” (both in physical and aesthetic terms), and transcendental because the “law” seeks to parse the body in a singular and “pure” signification, reducing it to a universal meaning whose truth (as blood) is evident in every body (a process that generates an “ethics”).

In relation to *The Horseman*, the splattering and spattering of blood invokes a particular sensation that I want to suggest puts the body “before the law.” The overwhelming emotional grief that Christian Forteski encounters when faced with the news of his daughter's death drives, for

instance, promptly compels him to plan the murder of those whom he learns is responsible for the tragedy. These men are put “before the law” insofar as the law is Forteski’s ethical program, and his vengeance, exacted as it is on the bodies of his targets, is confirmed by the spillage of these targets’s bodies’s blood. In this configuration of blood revenge (an ancient one), it is the “law”—which is to say Forteski’s ethical or moral code—that “touches” what Lyotard describes as the “savage” body. That is, Forteski’s moral code comes to function as that force through which he is himself “touched” by something savage and through which his own savage touch is communicated to the savage bodies of his targets. It is this law qua ethical program that inscribes itself on all of these agents’s “savage” bodies, so that these aesthetic bodies (“*aesthetic*” in Lyotard’s terms) are thus now “before” the law just as a horse is “before” a cart. Of course, if the formal performance of this law functions as a programmatisation of an interior, “savage” impulse, then this is merely the acting out of something for which the body is always already primed; as Lyotard writes, “this savagery or this sinful peregrination... is always there as a potentiality of the body... [since] for the law, the body is in excess.”⁶⁵ However, for the body to act out the law, the law must first touch it in a way that it will register as sensible—in a manner, that is, by dint of which it will be enlivened to act. It must “touch” the body in an *aesthetic* way—in a manner, for instance, that will cause it, in one way or another, to spill blood.⁶⁶

When Forteski kills his victims in *The Horseman*, the splatter of the blood—its sudden, capricious, and unruly movement in space, and its lurid, deeply scarlet colour—engenders an aesthetics of disarray and disorder, albeit one that is also counterpoised or grounded by the moral code of Forteski’s “law,” the latter of which is itself an attempt to enforce and master the world. In fact, Forteski’s law seems to attain an even higher ethical meaning and universality than does the official law of the film, that which the stock detective character, Detective Adams (Ron Kelly), wields and enforces. When Adams flags Forteski and Alice down on the road, somewhere between Rockhampton and Brisbane, his own ethical code is absorbed by capital exchange. Accepting a money bribe for Forteski and Alice, Adams directs the pair to the men whom he knows to be involved in the pornography ring. That such an exchange is possible demonstrates the detective’s belief in capital as a key or pass through whose use one may legitimately access certain intensities, notwithstanding that there is, according to his formal procedures, a rule that seeks to keep such intensities occulted. Adams’s act of tipping off the pornography ring, of course, is an exploitative one, but it cannot predict the real nature of the exchange or the ambit of

what will later become its uncompensated losses. The detective cannot foresee, for instance, that directing the pair to the men will allow for a repetition of the original events that led to Jessica's death in the first place, for later in the film it is implied that Alice, intoxicated by disorienting drugs, will come to participate in a porn shoot just as Jessica had, her body like Jessica's becoming used and subjugated for the gratification of others.

As I have already suggested, in those scenes of *The Horseman* in which we see the movement and splattering blood, these images serve both as aesthetic and intensive phenomena. However, the form of this on-screen bloodshed may also emblematised other features of motion and mobility in cinema to which Lyotard refers in "Acinema." In that essay, for instance, Lyotard writes of what he calls the "tableau vivant" (a living picture): a space in which certain forms of immobility—as well as lyric abstraction, and forms of agitation—may appear. But while in one way these phenomena may be understood as discrete elements within the picture space (the *mise en scène*), they can also be understood collectively as intensities within the film's libidinal economy. And these intensities—for instance, immobility and agitation—may also become entwined, thus becoming so imbricated and irreducibly coiled that whether they are "incompatible" or not becomes unclear.⁶⁷ Where this occurs, the spectator of the film may sense the intensity of immobility, for instance, as one of the most *agitating* of sensations (or vice versa); and this affective experience may take the form of a debilitating paralysis that strikes at, while intensifying the micro-movements of the body.

Elaborating on these pseudo-biological descriptions, Lyotard writes of how intensities of emotion should be understood as a particularly inflected category of motion, an invariant state of stillness at one end of the scale or spectrum of mobility: "We should read the term *emotion* as a *motion* moving towards its own exhaustion, an immobilizing motion, an immobilized mobilization."⁶⁸ In *The Horseman*, just such an "immobilizing motion" or "immobilized mobilization" strikes at the father figure, Forteski, who becomes paralytic and ossified as he watches the sex tape on which his daughter appears. In later scenes, by contrast, the spectator might be thought to see Forteski as "liveliest agitation." As the conjuror of a gruesome series of splatter scenes in which he avenges his daughter's death, Forteski is a spectacle away from which we cannot look. While they are shot at high speed, the dynamism of these scenes echoes something of what Lyotard described in his observations of posing models—those engaged in what he called "Swedish posering"—albeit that in this film, faced with Forteski, it is the spectator who becomes the poser's client, and we are overwhelmed

by the lively agitation before us, a client or spectator whose intensity is only heightened, and which reaches a sublime and disturbing nadir, by the presence and dynamism of the blood. It is the spectator's immobility before this blood, in other words, that forms the site in which this "liveliest agitation" can be felt. Structuring these intensive forces of movement and its relations with the spectator, as I have argued, is the *dispositif*, which I define as a kind of tableau vivant: an arrangement in which movement and immobility become the primary forces of intersection and interaction.

Conclusion

The first argument I have advanced in this essay is that exploitation cinema may be understood as a mode in which the spectator's sensations are channelled and exploited by the film's movement. In this regard, the spectator might be thought of as a component of or agent within the *dispositif*—that is, as one who channels and exploits intensities at the same time as she is herself exploited and channelled. The paradox of exploitation film that I have aimed to articulate is as follows: in the energy exchange between film and spectator a surplus of energy arises; then, the spectator of the exploitation film "misspends" this energy so as to generate a "loss" of energy; finally, this loss, which is borne by the spectator alone, remains uncompensated, embodied and absorbed rather than returned to the exchange system—to the *dispositif*—itself.⁶⁹ This spectatorial expenditure, then, involves all those elements in a film that are beyond the spectator's mastery. Of course, thinking of cinematic expenditure in this way—as the spectator's unmitigated loss—might lead us to understand cinema less as a recuperative system of exchange that prompts the dialectical order than that of the pleasurable terror that brings spectators to the brink of catastrophe in ecstasy: pleasures that are in surplus and unproductive in their expenditure. The critical area of the "surplus" and "loss" of energy and its expenditure is associated with the work of Georges Bataille. Lyotard's shift from the inscription of cinematographic movement to "uncompensated loss" in his essay "Acinema" makes relevant a Bataillean understanding of "loss" as sacrificial expenditure.⁷⁰ While this essay has not elaborated on the way in which film might be understood as this sort of sacrificial expenditure, it is hoped that future studies might be moved to imagine cinema in precisely this way.

In addition to the above, this paper has advanced the argument that intensities imply a certain telos for the spectator. If cinematic intensities

enable the spectator to experience an ecstasy or *jouissance*—and if the “opening-up” of the subject to these intensities also represents a loss of identity—then cinema may be seen as the facilitator of the spectator’s “libidinal passage.” In other words, films may be seen in a Lyotardian formulation as conduits through which the “communication” of energetic intensities transpire, imbricating the cinematic image and spectator in what is the energetic arrangement.

Having made these arguments, this article has also asked how we might understand the exploitation of the spectator’s sensations in *The Horseman*. It has made the point that we may draw on exploitation films such as this one to elaborate the ways in which certain aesthetics of cinematographic movement may diverge from the “propagative” models of movement that pervade commercial cinema, and offer a more chaotic and disordered tableau vivant. As I have underlined, much of *The Horseman* consists of what might be called sequences of splatter tableaux. There are many scenes in the film that this essay has not addressed, such as the opening scene in which Forteski, arriving in a van to a house, takes a crowbar to the man who greets him at the door, violently attacking him in a way that causes blood to splatter against walls. In scenes such as this, the various elements of the sequence—the crowbar, the attacked man, and Forteski himself—all function as moving, momentary, and intense components of the *dispositif*. Made up of such constituents, the *dispositif* of the splatter film is a deeply disturbing affective structure, one that is infinitely variable but invariably exploitative.

Notes

- 1 Jean-François Lyotard, “Acinema,” in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 177.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Michael A. Arnzen describes the “splatter film” as “a filmic text that promotes itself in the marketplace as one of ‘horror,’ and self-consciously revels in the special effects of gore as an artform”: Arnzen, “Who’s Laughing Now? The Postmodern Splatter Film,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 21, no. 4 (1994): 178.
- 4 Lyotard, “Acinema,” 177.
- 5 See Alexandra Heller Nicholas, “Fatal distractions: Australian Horror Beyond National Cinema,” *Metro* 164 (2010): 26–31; Brian McFarlane, “Family Business: An Australian Genre,” *Metro* 166 (2010): 42–7; and Steve

- Jones, "Torture Born: Representing Pregnancy and Abortion in Contemporary Survival-Horror," *Sexuality & Culture* 19, no. 3 (2015): 426-43.
- 6 Lyotard, "Acinema," 171.
- 7 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), ix.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 1-8.
- 11 Tania Modleski, "The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory," in Modleski (ed.), *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 155.
- 12 See Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 363.
- 13 Isaac Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 41, qtd. in Modleski, "The Terror of Pleasure," 155.
- 14 Iain Hamilton Grant suggests that the image, as a simulacrum—or what Lyotard also calls the "exorbitant"—is libidinally invested in an exorbitant manner. See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, tr. Iain Hamilton Grant (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), xvi.
- 15 See Pierre Klossowski, *Living Currency*, tr. Jordan Levinson, http://monoskop.org/images/b/b0/Klossowski_Pierre_Living_Currency.pdf
- 16 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 109.
- 17 *Ibid.*, x.
- 18 Lisa Trahair, "Jean-François Lyotard" in *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers*, ed. Felicity Colman (Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 223.
- 19 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, x.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 24 Lyotard, "Acinema," 170.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 171-2.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 171.
- 27 See Lyotard, "Desire's Complicity with the Figural," in *Discourse, Figure*, tr. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1971] 2011), 275; Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy," in *Discourse, Figure*, 351; and, on cinematic "rhythm," see Jean Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, tr.

- Christopher King (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997 [1963]), 119.
- 28 Lyotard, "The Unconscious as *Mise-en-scène*" in *Performance and Post-modern Culture*, ed. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Milwaukee: Codapress, 1977), 94; Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy," 328.
- 29 Sigmund Freud, "A Child Is Being Beaten," in James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1959 [1911]), 17: 179; and Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," in Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition*, 19: 253–4.
- 30 See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 12.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 16–17.
- 32 Lyotard, "Acinema," 170–1.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 170.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*, 171.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 170; cf. Ashley Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image: Lyotard on Cinema," *Angelaki* 19, no. 4 (2014): 144.
- 37 Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image," 143–4.
- 38 Lyotard, "Acinema," 171.
- 39 See Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure," 351.
- 40 James Williams, *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 40.
- 41 Klossowski, *Living Currency*.
- 42 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, xvi.
- 43 *Ibid.*, xvi.
- 44 On the first page (1) of his *Libidinal Economy* Lyotard begins with the following invocation: "Open the so-called body and spread out all its surfaces."
- 45 Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, xvi.
- 46 Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image," 143.
- 47 Lyotard, "Fiscourse Digure," 351.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 Lyotard, "Acinema," 171.
- 50 John Bailey, "Viewing death: Disturbing New Genre of Snuff Films Create an Ethical Paradox," *The Age*, 5 July 5, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/viewing-death-disturbing-new-genre-of-snuff-films-create-an-ethical-paradox-20150701-gi26zx.html>.
- 51 Arnzen, "Who's Laughing Now?" 179.
- 52 Woodward, "A Sacrificial Economy of the Image," 143.

- 53 Modleski, “The Terror of Pleasure,” 158.
- 54 Ibid., 163.
- 55 Ibid., 156.
- 56 Ibid., 156. On this same page, Modleski elaborates the point thus: “For the Frankfurt School, in fact, mass culture affected a major transformation in the nature of ideology from Marx’s time: once ‘socially necessary illusion,’ it has now become ‘manipulative contrivance’...”
- 57 Ibid., 158.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid., 159–60.
- 60 Ibid., 159.
- 61 Patricia MacCormack, “Zombies without Organs: Gender, Flesh, and Fissure,” in *Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead*, ed. Shawn McIntosh and Marc Leverette (Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2008), 98.
- 62 Steven Shaviro, “Post-Cinematic Affect: On Grace Jones, *Boarding Gate* and *Southland Tales*,” *Film-Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2010): 3.
- 63 Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 286–98.
- 64 Lyotard, “Prescription,” in *Toward the Postmodern*, ed. Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 179.
- 65 Ibid., 179.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 As Lyotard writes in “Acinema” (at 177): “It is only for *thought* that these two modes are incompatible [whereas in] a libidinal economy they are, on the contrary, necessarily associated; stupefaction, terror, anger, hate, pleasure—all the intensities—are always displacements in place.”
- 68 Lyotard, “Acinema,” 177.
- 69 Ibid., 171.
- 70 See, for instance, Georges Bataille, “The Notion of Expenditure,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, tr. Stoekl et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 116–29.

Philippa Specker

Human Warehouses for Marginalised Peoples: The Mundane Terror of Imprisonment in the Indigenous Australian Context¹

SOME OF THE MOST INSIDIOUS forms of terror in our historical moment are enacted and justified by government policy. And some of the most shocking examples of this terror appear in the form of the statistical and factual realities of imprisonment in the criminal justice systems of our time. An example is the terrifying fact that, across the world, Indigenous populations are overrepresented in prisons and, more specifically in Australia, that the number of imprisoned indigenous persons is statistically among the highest in the world.² Despite comprising less than 3 percent of Australia's population, Indigenous Australians constitute more than 27 percent of Australia's incarcerated population.³ This gross inequity has prompted a myriad of scholarly articles to call into question the integrity of Australia's criminal justice system.⁴ At the same time, statistical facts such as these also exemplify the extent to which the terrifying reality of modern society is often reduced to what I describe as "mundane terrors"—that is, to formulations whose abstract numerical and statistical data

serve to diminish and minimise the cultural significance and real-world experience of these incarcerated humans.

Beyond the sheer facts themselves, however, the procedures that produce these circumstances may also be understood as examples of mundane terror. These procedures include the judicial functions and enforcement methodologies by which criminals are tried and incarcerated in Australia: practices that involve acts both complex and prone to failure. Focusing on the policy frameworks that produce these practices, this essay will compare the apparent aims of imprisonment—at least insofar as they have been codified in various Australian statutes, legislative provisions, and other legal discourse—with the bleak reality of these policies as they are operationalised in Australian jurisdictions. In doing so, this essay aims to demonstrate how the terror of Australia's incarceration predicament is rooted both in the mundane application of the law and what I propose are the insidious motivations underlying imprisonment of Indigenous Australians. Although the industrial prison complex is, at least on one level, a function of the broader system of modern capitalism, the economic and political benefits that indigenous incarceration allows white Australians to enjoy presents, I argue, a remarkable and disturbing reality, one that is contiguous with Australia's history of colonial genocide and dispossession. In arguing this case, the paper will draw on the work of Angela Davis and Chris Cunneen, two scholars whose work variously indicates the ways in which the imprisonment of indigenous populations is crucially tethered to questions of sovereignty, colonial history, and profit-led economic ideology.⁵

Rationales for Imprisonment

Despite evolutions in the ways in which state powers punish individuals, contemporary advocates for imprisonment do not offer arguments that appear significantly different from the traditional discourse on the subject. For example, those who approach the problem from a utilitarian standpoint argue (and have long argued) that the goal of punishment is twofold. Punishment, they propose, is firstly aimed at preventing the specifically punished offender from committing any future crime; however, it is secondly aimed at deterring society at large from committing criminal acts, for the punishment, as a public condemnation of the act itself, exemplifies its intolerability.⁶ A different but related justification for imprisonment, summarised by R. A. Duff and David Garland in their

Oxford University Press *A Reader on Punishment*, uses a retributivist logic that avows modern society's ethical duty to actually perform the legal orders of justice through exacting the punishment that it threatens.⁷ Still, other commentators, exemplary among whom is Angela Davis, take a historical perspective, arguing that when imprisonment superseded more directly corporeal forms of punishment (such as torture), a new belief system arose in which punitive institutions could henceforth begin to be seen as places of rehabilitation.⁸ Of course, the traditional aims of deterrence, punishment, protection and rehabilitation remain codified in various Australian statutes, such as in the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999* (NSW).⁹ And yet, despite the NSW state government's clear attempt to legitimise the continued development of punitive policy through the moral and ethical framework of the law—an attempt well exemplified by the legal provisions themselves—the example of Indigenous Australians allows us to see the extent to which Australia's tiers of government and the legal system have comprehensively failed to achieve their own stated goals.

In a detailed study of the contemporary problem of Indigenous imprisonment, Chris Cunneen observes that, despite the large-scale incarceration of Indigenous people, the incarceration model has failed to achieve its avowed aims in the Indigenous context. Prison, Cunneen suggests, seems neither to protect nor to deter Indigenous offenders, and almost never does a term of imprisonment rehabilitate the offender. As Cunneen suggests, prisons cannot guarantee the protection or safety of Indigenous communities, however, higher rates of incarceration more readily predicts Indigenous communities's exposure to victimisation. Logically speaking, if prisons were successful at rehabilitating individuals then communities with high levels of incarceration should expect low victimisation rates. However, this is not the reality for Indigenous communities, as Cunneen notes, as the recorded rates of victimisation among Aboriginal people, and especially among women, are drastically higher than those that are recorded in relation to the population in general (which is to say the non-Indigenous population). For instance, Indigenous women are forty-five times more likely to experience domestic violence than non-Indigenous women.¹⁰ The data show that the imprisonment of Indigenous men seldom deters these offenders from re-offending, and even more rarely allows for rehabilitation; rather, the rate of recidivism among Indigenous men remains the highest among all Australian demographic categories, suggesting that the incarceration model, in the Indigenous Australian context, deviates considerably from the stated aims of

rehabilitation and protection and instead serves to create a recidivistic class of disadvantaged, and sometimes violent, individuals.¹¹

Davis argues that the practical realities of the modern prison system preclude any possibility of rehabilitation, not only because prisons have long been shaped by the principle of “less eligibility”—which effectively strips these institutions of any rehabilitation facilities—but also because, as neoliberal societies witness the increasing privatisation of their prisons, the focus of those who own and operate these prisons has shifted from rehabilitation to retention.¹² As Davis suggests, it seems hard to imagine how an institution that is effectively designed under the aegis of less eligibility to deprive its prisoners both of liberty and resources might help to foster “productive members of society.”¹³ Rather, it seems easier to agree with the evidence that “imprisoned men return” from prison “more violent” than they had been before entering prison.¹⁴ Indeed, the failure of the traditional aims of the prison system in general, and of less eligibility in particular, demonstrates just how outmoded our theories of punishment have become. And since so little attention has been paid to the penal system’s negative outcomes, recent history has allowed governments to increasingly entrench the prison system’s operations, promoting it as a disciplinary apparatus rather than a conduit of social reform and rehabilitation, even as a range of complex private interests and prejudicial social ideologies undergird its modern operations.

The way in which the Australian law has developed in respect of the retributivist model expresses, at least implicitly, an aspiration to homogenise or make uniform the application of the law in the face of the heterogeneous range of defendants who come before the courts in Australia, distinguished by race, gender, and class. This, of course, has long been in keeping with the principle of eligibility, a central tenet of which has been, as a report of 1834—the British Royal Commission on the Poor Law—indicates, the “application of administrative uniformity.”¹⁵ In a contemporary context, however, politically conservative governments have co-opted the retributivist argument that a punishment should be proportionate to the relevant crime, using it to introduce mandatory sentencing rules that restrict judicial autonomy, and hamstringing the judiciary’s ability to give due consideration to the effects that social inequality have had on the nature and frequency of certain offences.¹⁶ In other words, a legal discourse espousing equality and consistency has been misapplied, through mandatory sentencing procedures, to systematically disadvantage socially and economically marginalised individuals, especially Indigenous Australians, who may commit offences for reasons other than an inherent criminality.

It is important to acknowledge that the modern application of imprisonment rationalities and practices has had a disproportionate effect on Australia's Indigenous population. This is reflected in the fact that the rate of incarceration of Indigenous people in Australia greatly outstrips the incarceration rate of Australia's non-Indigenous population. In June 2015, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported that "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners represented 28% of the total full-time adult prisoner population" while this group accounted for only "approximately 2% of the total Australian population aged 18 years and over."¹⁷ What should also be of interest to criminologists and scholars of punishment, however, is that the rate of Indigenous imprisonment in Australia is almost equal to the overall crime rate in the country for approximately the same period.¹⁸ For instance, the ABS reported in February 2015 that there was a "national offender rate of 1,997 offenders per 100,000 persons aged 10 years and over in 2013-14," which equates to an Australian crime rate of 1.997 percent.¹⁹ In a separate report published in June 2014, the ABS reported that, in 2013, the "age standardised imprisonment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners at 30 June 2013 was 1,959 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners per 100,000 adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population."²⁰ That is, the rate of imprisonment within the Aboriginal population is approximately 1.95 percent. So, for the approximate period of 2013-14, the rate of imprisonment within the Aboriginal population almost equalled the total crime rate for Australia: while just under 2 percent of all Australians were prosecuted (but not necessarily convicted) for crimes, about the same figure, 2 percent, of all Indigenous Australians were imprisoned.

Additionally, the systematic hyper-imprisonment of Indigenous people in Australian prisons is further demonstrated by a comparison of the imprisonment rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian adults. The same ABS report also noted that "the equivalent imprisonment rate for non-Indigenous prisoners was 131 non-Indigenous prisoners per 100,000 adult non-Indigenous population": approximately 0.13 percent. To put this in perspective, this means that, for the approximate period of 2013-14, the incarceration rate of the non-Indigenous population was only 0.13 percent while, for the Indigenous population, it almost totalled 2 percent.²¹ The ABS reported in the same June 2014 report that the "rate of imprisonment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners was 15 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous prisoners" at 30 June 2013, and that the "highest ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to non-Indigenous imprisonment rates in Australia was in Western Australia," where there are 21 times

more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners than non-Indigenous prisoners.²²

Faced with these and similar statistics, commentators in both the global and Australian contexts have recently argued that no positive link can be drawn between crime rates and incarceration rates.²³ In Australia, this finding is suggested by an alarming statistical juxtaposition: since 2000, the imprisonment rate of Indigenous Australians has increased by more than 57 percent, while for non-Indigenous Australians the imprisonment rate has remained almost stable.²⁴ That such a staggering increase in imprisonment rates has arisen for only Indigenous Australians is telling: it indicates, if not confirms, that Indigenous Australians have been subject to prison penalties in cases where non-Indigenous Australians might have escaped incarceration. And, if we accept the increasingly commonplace view of criminological and sociological scholars that there is no deducible or correlative relationship between crime rates and imprisonment rates, then the staggering rates at which Indigenous Australians are imprisoned begins to appear even more egregious, highlighting the urgent need for academics and politicians alike to reevaluate the fundamental aims of imprisonment. Among the many questions raised by these reports, one that most readily arises is not simply *cui bono*, “Who is it that benefits?” but *quid bonum*, “What is the benefit?” More specifically, what political, social and economic advantages does Australia enjoy when it disproportionately imprisons its Indigenous population?

Scholars who answer this question often suggest that the Australian government has sought to criminalise the Indigenous population for one or more of three reasons—or in the pursuit of one or more of three advantages: imprisonment allows the state to advance its colonial claim to sovereignty; it enables it to legitimise the institutional authority of the criminal justice system; and imprisonment serves to render an otherwise “problematic” native population either incapacitated or “profitable” within the normative capitalist framework.

Imprisonment as a Means for Asserting Colonial Sovereignty

Affirming the first of these reasons, Cunneen identifies a strong relationship between sovereignty and Indigenous prison over-representation.²⁵ Because sovereignty was never ceded, Cunneen observes, and because Indigenous people across the world have not consented to “the exercise of

sovereign powers in relation to criminal jurisdiction,” many Indigenous peoples—and I would include Indigenous Australians among them—continue to possess a competing claim to sovereignty. “From an Indigenous perspective,” Cunneen further notes, “sovereignty can be conceptualised in terms of jurisdictional multiplicity and divisibility rather than monopoly and unity.”²⁶ To conceive of a nation’s sovereignty as a monopolistic or monolithic jurisdictional authority—one that seeks not to divide its own authority with an Indigenous population, but only to maintain its own unity—is to acknowledge the absence of authority from which that state governs its Indigenous peoples. It is to consider the illegitimate origin of any of the institutions that the state imposes on the native population, and the wholesale disregard for that population’s own laws and its own long established methods of self-governance.²⁷

In her recent book titled *The White Possessive*, Aileen Moreton-Robinson introduces her history of Australian sovereignty in the unambiguous language of legal wrongdoing:

Patriarchal white sovereignty is a regime of power that in the Australian context derives from the illegal act of possession and is most acutely manifested in the form of the state and the judiciary.²⁸

The way in which this regime of power persists, however, was made somewhat clear in the finding of the Australian High Court in the *Yorta Yorta* decision of 2002,²⁹ where the court reasoned that, once the British Crown’s assertion of sovereignty had been made, it was impossible at law for two systems of governance to concurrently exist: “what the assertion of sovereignty by the British Crown necessarily entailed was that there could thereafter be no parallel law-making system in the territory over which it asserted sovereignty” (44). The essential feature of this judicial observation, of course, is that from the very moment in which the British Crown asserted its sovereignty the development of an Indigenous system of governance was frozen in time. And yet while the court noted that no Indigenous laws could be developed after that moment of the assertion of a new sovereignty, it also suggested that what laws and customs *had* been developed prior to the new sovereign claim—albeit *only* those laws—should remain legally recognisable today. The court put this principle in the following way:

Because there could be no parallel law-making system after the assertion of sovereignty it also follows that the only rights or interests in

relation to land or waters, originating otherwise than in the new sovereign order, which will be recognised after the assertion of that new sovereignty are those that find their origin in pre-sovereignty law and custom (44).

As such, Indigenous Australia's claim that it enjoys a sovereign right that precedes the more recently asserted sovereignty of the British Crown is a legitimate assertion. Indeed, it is a claim that poses a very real threat to patriarchal white sovereignty. And it is toward the eradication of such a threat, I argue, that the criminal justice system can be—and has been—directed in Australia.

In other words, the authority and legitimacy of the criminal justice system plays a crucial role in maintaining the *assumption* of patriarchal white sovereignty in Australia. Or, to put it another way (in the way that Moreton-Robinson articulates), it is within the very *assumption* of white sovereignty that “the roots of strategies of exclusion and assimilation”—one of them the criminal justice system itself—“are epistemologically and ontologically buried.” Indeed, the very “existence” of Indigenous sovereignty, as Moreton-Robinson continues, is “both refused and acknowledged through an anxiety of dispossession, which rises to the surface when the nation as a white possession is perceived to be threatened.” The fear and terror of the return of Indigenous sovereignty manifests in the form of this anxiety of dispossession; and this is most effectively reflected and repressed in Australia's criminalisation and hyper-imprisonment of Indigenous Australians. Denying Indigenous Australians their implied constitutional freedoms allows patriarchal white Australia to maintain its sovereignty, and also functions to undermine that group's political power, to deny them their right to self-determination, and to perpetuate their oppression, all the while weakening their claims to sovereignty and nullifying their political agency.³⁰

Although the above assertions may appear both to oversimplify and overstress what is a complex political and legal issue, Australia's colonial history of punishment makes readily intelligible the fact that the aim of imprisoning the Indigenous population is to reinforce the claim to white patriarchal imperialism. Sharon McIvor, an Indigenous women's rights advocate featured in a filmed panel discussion titled *Let's Talk Incarceration*, explains how this history of isolating Indigenous people—politically, socially, economically, and territorially—was the necessary means used by the colonialists to achieve their end: to free up land for settlers and assert their sovereign dominance.³¹ In this way, the hyper-imprisonment of

Indigenous Australians can be understood similarly to the way in which Davis views the disproportionate incarceration of African Americans: both represent the modern extension of a history of racialised punishment, the object of which is to secure and guarantee white dominance.³²

Imprisonment as a Mechanism from which to Derive Political and Economic Profit

Another one of the apparent aims of hyper-imprisonment is the exploitation and monetisation of the prison industry in a modern capitalist society. Davis argues that the increasing privatisation of prisons and the emergence of the prison industrial complex have driven, and continue to drive, the aims of imprisonment towards a capitalist logic predicated on profit.³³ This notion is relevant in Australia where, as Cunneen notes, prisons are increasingly privatised and expanded.³⁴ In another sense, imprisonment in Australia can also be understood as achieving the aim of economic “waste management” by making Indigenous people “profitable.” Coined in the context of the modern prison system by Jonathan Simon in 2007, the expression “waste management” refers to the practice by which individuals deemed “unprofitable” due to their social economic status (SES) or the threat they pose to the wider community are physically separated or sequestered from that wider community.³⁵ In the Australian context, Indigenous Australians may be considered “unprofitable” on at least two counts: not only do they constitute the poorest demographic within society, but their very existence threatens to destabilise the fragile claim that white patriarchal Australia has made to sovereignty, together with the economic privileges that accompany such a claim. More broadly, the rise of global capitalism has deprived groups of people (already marginalised by race, class and gender) of such basic modern human necessities as health-care, housing, and education. Within the profit-driven, neoliberal system, marginalised groups are rendered only ever as a surplus expense, the cost of their lives a problem to be remedied. As Davis observes, no sooner do policymakers turn to the question of how to transform this human expense into a profitable investment than they conclude “the only way to make them profitable is to put them in prison.”³⁶

But the aim of “waste management” extends beyond the actual facilitation of imprisonment, for it affects the Australian Government’s budget re-allocations for other penal matters too.³⁷ While government budgets have increased their spending on the prison industry, they have

done so at the expense of rehabilitation services, Indigenous Affairs programs, and welfare.³⁸ If one seriously considers the fact that Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group in Australia—both in terms of socio-economic status and access to services³⁹—the additional fact that this same group has the highest incarceration and recidivism rate in the country makes clear that the prison system, at least in effect, operates to contain and isolate these socially and economically “problematic” citizens. For it is, at least in the cold language of rational economics, a more “profitable” option to imprison such citizens than to assist this group in the community.⁴⁰ In this way, Indigenous bodies become the “raw material” of a prison system governed by neoliberal economic principles—principles that prioritise the most politically expedient method by which to invest in the Indigenous population. This most expedient method involves spending money on prisons rather than on developing social reforms and policies aimed at equality. In such a context, it cannot be surprising that, in Indigenous communities, Australia records higher re-imprisonment rates than high-school retention rates.⁴¹

The Insidious Cycle of Imprisonment

Perhaps the most sinister terror to be addressed concerning Indigenous imprisonment is the fact of its very invisibility. Entrenched, legally explicable, self-justifying and self-affirming, the incarceration model has inaugurated a vicious cycle of criminalisation whose proportions seem largely unknown among those in the wider community. It is self-perpetuating in that the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prison allows the state and its authorities to perpetuate a racialised discourse about crime while many of those affected by it are silenced—a discourse that serves only to reaffirm an array of misguided and outmoded models of criminality, such as the proposition that those in the Indigenous population, by dint of their ethnicity alone, are more likely to be criminals.⁴² This racialised discourse has particularly affected Indigenous males, who are represented as delinquent (because they experience higher rates of alcoholism, incarceration and unemployment) and dangerous (because higher rates of domestic violence within Indigenous communities, as well as higher levels of recidivism, have been recorded). Furthermore, policymaking and large-scale interventionist government projects—such as, most notably, the so-called NT Intervention under the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*—construct Indigenous masculinity as sexually predatory.⁴³ A

discourse that valorises the autonomy, responsibility and rights of the individual, assumes the possibility of free and rational choice, and devalorises communitarian initiatives, including social welfare: this racialised discourse has become a familiar one in neoliberal states.⁴⁴ In other words, the modern neoliberal state develops a governmental climate of praise and blame (*epideixis*), espousing a “responsibilising” narrative that assigns blame to the individual for offending.⁴⁵ But in doing so, the state also conceals or obscures the social reality of inequality, depriving those affected of a voice, and disguising its operations in narratives of praise, aspiration, and adulation: nationalism, economic growth, and freedom.

The criminalisation of the Indigenous population is profoundly disempowering. Considering the paranoid nationalism of the Western globalised world post 9/11, it is “conceivable,” as one critic notes, that it is at least in the interest of representatives of such states to “incite and exploit public fear (perhaps through media coverage) in order to achieve some set of related political goals,” including such goals as supplemented governmental powers through tougher stances on crime.⁴⁶ This has seen, as Cunneen writes, the “development of technologies for identifying, classifying and managing groups sorted by ‘dangerousness,’” technologies which, coincidentally, involve indices that effectively target Indigenous populations—indices such as school absenteeism, histories of drug and alcohol problems, and domestic homicide—to assess risk characteristics.⁴⁷ This, in turn, grants government a mandate to implement panoptic forms of surveillance in relation to Indigenous communities, which, as Foucault suggests, equips the state to criminalise an entire social demographic, and foster an environment that produces a predictably delinquent and recidivistic class of offenders.⁴⁸

There can be little doubt that imprisonment has devastating effects on Indigenous individuals and communities. The hyper-incarceration of Indigenous Australians not only dispossesses and disconnects this group from their culture and community, but criminalises this group in such a way that future minoritisation, oppression, and imprisonment are virtually guaranteed. From these observations, one may draw at least two firm conclusions about the aims of imprisonment in Australia: the first, that multiple governments have failed to achieve the state’s traditionally stated goals of protection, rehabilitation, and deterrence; and the second, that these governments have succeeded in affirming white colonial sovereignty, entrenching institutional legitimacy, and rendering a population at first problematic, and then profitable. This essay has aimed to propose a series of reasons as to why the rates of incarceration of Indigenous Australians

are demonstrably higher than those with respect to non-Indigenous Australians. It has argued that the practices and policies of imprisonment in Australia represent not merely the functional processes of governmental criminalisation but the systematic continuation of a colonialist history—one whose existence in fact depends on the suppression of its Indigenous population. It is hoped that this paper has made clear that this system and its aims will require significant re-evaluation if they are to serve the ends of making the Indigenous right to sovereignty and self-determination a reality. Without drastic and far-reaching reform, prisons will tragically remain what Cunneen calls “human warehouses for marginalised peoples,” and continue to represent one of the most pernicious terrors for Indigenous Australia.⁴⁹

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Kate O’Halloran and Rafi Alam for their comments on the initial paper that I produced on this subject, and Chris Rudge and the editors of *Philament* for their assistance in preparing this article for publication.
- 2 Gino Vumbaca, “Prison is not the answer but perhaps justice reinvestment is,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/prison-is-not-the-answer-but-perhaps-justice-reinvestment-is-20150203-135hgi.html#ixzz3mANwGxMA>.
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Prisoners in Australia*, catalogue no. 4517.0 (ABS: Canberra, 2014), <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4517.0>.
- 4 Eileen Baldry, David Brown, Mark Brown, Chris Cunneen, Melanie Schwartz and Alex Steel, “Imprisoning Rationalities,” *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 44, no. 1 (2011): 36–37; Chris Cunneen, “Fear: Crime and Punishment,” *Dialogue* (2010): 44; Cunneen, “Indigeneity, Sovereignty, and the Law: Challenging the Processes of Criminalization,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (2011): 310; Cunneen, “Punishment: Two Decades of Penal Expansionism and its Effects on Indigenous Imprisonment,” *Australian Indigenous Law Review* 15, no. 1 (2011): 10.
- 5 See Cunneen, “Fear: Crime and Punishment,” 44–54; and Angela Y. Davis, “Race, Gender and Prison History: From the Convict Lease System to the Supermax Prison,” in Don Sabo, Terry A. Kupers, and Willie London (eds.), *Prison Masculinities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 35–45.
- 6 See Jeremy Bentham, *The Rationale of Punishment* (New York: Pro-

- metheus Books, 2009), 45.
- 7 R. A. Duff and David Garland, "Introduction: Thinking about punishment," in *A Reader on Punishment*, ed. Duff, R.A and Garland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10.
 - 8 Angela Y. Davis, *Let's Talk Incarceration* (Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA), 2014), <https://vimeo.com/109103262>.
 - 9 See *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999* (NSW), s 3A (a)-(g) ("Purposes of Sentencing").
 - 10 Cunneen, "Indigeneity, Sovereignty, and the Law," 311.
 - 11 Cunneen, "Punishment," 12.
 - 12 Modern prisons are designed on the principle of less eligibility, which proposes that prisons should not feature conditions any better than those faced by the lowest or poorest social class outside of the prison. Generally acknowledged to have been first proposed by Jeremy Bentham, the principle rests on the assumption that prisons cannot be effective deterrents for individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds if the conditions faced by prisoners are superior to those they would otherwise face outside of prison. Moreover, the principle is often understood as a safeguard against the possibility that prisoners will become dependent on the perceived relative benefits of prison life. See Edward W. Sieh, "Less Eligibility: The Upper Limits of Penal Policy," *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 3, no. 2 (1989): 159 and 162; and Davis, "Race, Gender and Prison History," 36.
 - 13 See Davis, *Let's Talk Incarceration*.
 - 14 Cunneen, "Indigeneity, Sovereignty, and the Law," 323.
 - 15 Sieh, "Less Eligibility," 162.
 - 16 On these issues, see Tammy Solonec, "'Tough on Crime': Discrimination by Any Other Name, The Legacy of Mandatory Sentencing in Western Australia," *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8, no. 18 (2015): 8; and Suvendrini Perera, "Commentary: Australia: Racialised Punishment and Mandatory Sentencing," *Race & Class* 42, no. 1 (2007): 73-81.
 - 17 See Australian Bureau of Statistics, "4512.0 - Corrective Services, Australia, June Quarter 2015," 10 September, 2015, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats%5Cabs@.nsf/miaredleasesbyCatalogue/01A3C2BE96FA-6185CA2568A90013631C?Opendocument>.
 - 18 See Cunneen, "Fear: Crime and Punishment," 45; also see Australian Bureau of Statistics, "4519.0 - Recorded Crime - Offenders, 2013-14," 25 February, 2015, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4519.0/>.
 - 19 Australian Bureau of Statistics, "4519.0 - Recorded Crime - Offenders, 2013-14," 25 February, 2015, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4519.0~2013-14~Main%20Features~Offenders,%20>

- Australia-3.
- 20 Australian Bureau of Statistics, “4517.0 - Prisoners in Australia, 2013,” 13 June, 2014, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4517.0main+features322013>.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 See, for example, Bronywn Naylor, “The Evidence Is In: You Can’t Link Imprisonment to Crime Rates, *The Conversation* (April, 2015), <http://theconversation.com/the-evidence-is-in-you-cant-link-imprisonment-to-crime-rates-40074>.
- 24 Jessica Kidd, “Over-representation of Indigenous Australians in prison a catastrophe, says Mick Godda, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner,” *ABC News*, 5 December 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-04/number-of-indigenous-australians-in-prison-a-catastrophe/5945504>.
- 25 Cunneen, “Indigeneity, Sovereignty, and the Law,” 309.
- 26 Ibid., 316.
- 27 Ibid., 310-317.
- 28 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property Power and Indigenous Sovereignty* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 138.
- 29 *Members of the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Community v Victoria* [2002] HCA 58; 214 CLR 422; 194 ALR 538; 77 ALJR 356 (12 December 2002). Also see Shaunnagh Dorsett and Shaun McVeigh, “Section 223 and the Shape of Native Title: The Limits of Jurisdictional Thinking,” in Lisa Ford and Tim Rouse (eds.), *Between Indigenous and Settler Governance* (London: Routledge, 2013), 164-5.
- 30 Cunneen, “Indigeneity, Sovereignty, and the Law,” 310-317.
- 31 Davis, *Let’s Talk Incarceration*.
- 32 Davis, “Race, Gender and Prison History,” 38. On this issue, Elizabeth Povinelli further explains the philosophical and practical dilemma in which one group’s happiness and “corporeal well-being” is largely contingent on another group’s “corporeal misery”: see “The Child in the Broom Closet: States of Killing and Letting Die,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, no. 3 (2008): 511. In the Australian context, the competition between claims to sovereignty has seen the development of a nation-state that comes at the cost of repressing another nation-state’s existence.
- 33 Davis, “Race, Gender and Prison History,” 41.
- 34 Cunneen, “Punishment,” 14.
- 35 See Jonathan Simon, *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear* (Oxford

- University Press, 2007), 143.
- 36 Davis, *Let's Talk Incarceration*.
- 37 Cunneen, "Punishment," 14.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Povinelli, "The Child in the Broom Closet," 512.
- 40 Davis, *Let's Talk Incarceration*.
- 41 Cunneen, "Punishment," 14.
- 42 Cuneen, "Indigeneity, Sovereignty, and the Law," 318.
- 43 Ibid., and Cunneen, "Punishment," 10. While there can be little doubt that, in modern Australian history, male Indigenous bodies have been subject to more punishment than any other kind of body, my aim in this essay has been to highlight the way in which racial politics—rather than gender politics—affects the Australian criminal justice system. Notably, however, the fastest growing imprisonment rate in Australia is for Indigenous women, which is more than fifty per cent higher than the rate of imprisonment for non-Indigenous males.
- 44 See Cunneen's summary of neoliberal values in Cunneen, "Punishment," 15.
- 45 On the "responsibilising" narrative, see Povinelli, "The Child in the Broom Closet," 515.
- 46 See, for example, Alex Braithwaite, "The Logic of Public Fear in Terrorism and Counter-terrorism," *Journal of Police Criminal Psychology* 28, no. 2 (2013): 100.
- 47 Cunneen, "Indigeneity, Sovereignty, and the Law," 318-19.
- 48 Cunneen, "Punishment," 11; also see Michel Foucault, "On Attica," trans. John K. Simon, J, in Sylvère Lotringer (ed.), *Foucault Live: Interviews 1961-1984* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 114.
- 49 Cunneen, "Punishment," 14.

P.G. Condliffe

Myxomatosis Dreams

MY MOTHER LIKED TO TELL STORIES. I loved my mother. I loved her novels. I loved her stories. I remember when I was young and she used to just make them up, just like that—on the fly. She'd just start talking and this delicate world would ramble out of her lips, coming to rest in my imagination like seeds in loam. It was magic. One minute I'd be a small girl in bed, posters of Winnie the Pooh, Iron Man, and the White Rabbit on my pale blue bedroom walls, The Hulk angry on my doona cover, a Ghostbusters light plug casting its reassuring glow over the two of us while we imagined—and in the next minute I'd be in another place altogether. Much like the traditions of fire-light, my Ghostbusters plug set my Mum's fiery, curly mane into burning undulations while she spoke. I'd close my eyes and fall into those worlds for a few minutes, conscious of forgetting her as she spoke. That was her gift.

Mum believed in totems, you know, those little idols that cultures worship as family or gods or divine entities? But they were more to her than even that. Our house is full of them; they drip into rooms and hallways and flood our living room. They represent a collection of too many people, and beings for one house—possibly, no *probably*, too many for our whole family, deluging our spaces as they do. Our backyard is a forest of them; short and tall, they erupt around our Hills-Hoist as if in some corroboree that outsiders cannot and should not understand. Other stragglers sprout like weeds around our outhouse. Most guests find it unsettling. I can understand that; sometimes it creeps me out. They always watch you, talk about you, tell stories about you, and bring your life and past in parallel to their present. Sometimes I get momentarily confused and feel like one of their fictions, and no longer one of my own.

When I was a young girl and she would prepare to make up a story for me, Mum would always have a totem with her. Sometimes it was a small one, plucked from one of the windowsills; other times, it would be a great carved thing. She'd lumber it in with heaves and sweat, putting about the general fear that she was going to birth an expletive-laden hernia rather than a third child. Some were scary and some were just silly. Either way, she had to have them around to write, or to "tell." That's what she'd call it: "telling."

Mum's study is full of more totems than any other room in our house. It's a large room with an inset floor that is tiered up like one of the medical lecture theatres you see on TV. Instead of a metal slab for cadavers or operations, though, there is a desk made of pine. It's a plain desk, unvarnished and barely-finished, one that was evidently spat out half-formed and yet whole by some peculiar tree. It certainly doesn't look purposefully made. It looks odd, even more so in the midst of that room where the floor descends in great wide steps.

The steps themselves are full of rough carved figures, all of them animals, and some barely crawling out from lumps of rock or wood. The carvers must have seen something in the stone or the wood or the bone that gave them pause, or scared them, or terrified them into stopping, into only leaving a half-carving, a half-creature, trapped inside the material, to remain there until the universe finally cools and stills.

* * *

I REMEMBER THE NIGHT WELL, ALTHOUGH not the when, but the what. I was about nine, perhaps ten; it was a summer's night and I was still in my Batman pyjamas. It was a few hours before the strangeness of dawn would chase down night's certitude. The rain had finished and the humidity was dragging its warm odour into the house. The windows in her study were open and the post-storm cloy groped blindly in. But the spectral moon was not enough lit, so I pulled the cord by the door. The bauble on the end of the pull was a brass trinket, a grotesque trifle that looked, in that moment, as if somebody had taken a shrunken head—a lonely cannibal's head—and cast it in bronze. Time had rubbed and wearied the metal into a distorted and worn visage, a sneering, coldly commanding memory of itself.

I let the door snick softly into its latch as I descended the tiers to the desk. I felt closely observed by all those animal apostles arranged round the room on their perches. It seemed that they were divided along tribal divisions.

I pulled out the chair and clambered up onto it. It was difficult. The chair wasn't quite right; it was uneven, and seemed to have been designed to be uncomfortable. The intervening spaces between me and the walls—those tiers—were cast in a shadow that disfigured the statues and totems.

Directly before me was my mother's old typewriter. She still cherishes it, the Underwood Universal Portable, and won't consider typing a word on anything else. The keys are worn to blindness. A blank sheet slept in the embrace of the machine's paper fingers. It had been always loaded and waiting for her. I remember looking at the audience of miniatures staring bemusedly at me, a child, and had commanded them from the chair. Although now I'm not sure that was how it worked.

I imagine I am my mother and, for a couple of minutes, I am her. Not her exactly—that's not possible, or at least I don't believe it is, not quite. Yet, in that chair, with her subjects around me, I felt like her, like more than simply my imaginary projection of her. I am not above the totems, but amongst them and, in a peculiar manner, I am here for their benefit. But then the chair bit into my supple arse, forcing me to hear. The shadows hid the figures in the darkness and forced me to see the stories that they seemed to want to tell me.

"Tell me your stories. I want to hear them. I want to tell them," I mumbled, scared to rouse the house from its quiet.

I'd heard my mum say that before, muffled as it was through the dampening of the thick oak door, when I'd press my ear to its knots and inhale the wonderful smell of its antique carpentry.

And it started in that moment, when the wind from outside had died down and a whisper of it had snuck into the room and careened off the walls. I closed my eyes, just as I would when my mother would "tell." And the statues spoke to me in a roaring cascade of whispers and gurgled breaths.

They told of places much older than me, of the majestic ancient palaces they'd known. They whispered of places and times before the cities and farms and tribes. I strained to hear of the civilisations they described, all of them now buried by aeons of dirt. Some saw Gilgamesh fight terrible angels; others had seen the sword leave and return to the lake; and one had even witnessed, from his place around a neck, the coming of the metal gods from the ocean. Amidst this cacophony of voices and history, I opened my eyes. I was typing, dreaming of my fingers flying over the keys and massaging fractured sentences and half-formed clauses out of the old machine. Afterwards I scanned the page of what writing my pudgy fingers had bashed out, labouring, as my schoolmates often did, over difficult clause constructions. But these were more difficult than what we had cov-

ered in school then—these seemed impossible. I understood them, but the stories the sentences told were unfinished, portals to silences.

And then, half glimpsing over the top of the page, I saw things move. The shadows shifted, and the murmurs began again. They sounded like streams, conversing in trickles and gurgles. Only it was the totems, the rows of animal totems that were all around me. And it seemed that they were jostling me, pushing in front of each other so as to be better heard, and yet unwilling to set foot within the radiance of the overhead light, and unwilling or unable to clamour over each other. I didn't get scared; it seemed odd, but natural. I knew then that the past needed a voice and in that moment and in that chair I knew that I was it. And they lulled me to sleep.

I awoke in the warm morning-light embrace of the open curtains, somehow back in my bed, but my doona cast off. It was the evidence of a fitful night's sleep. My sheets were wet like I'd been feverish. All I could remember for sure was at one point seeing through half-closed lids something regarding me curiously, as if that something was interested in me—and as interested in me as my juvenile mind was interested in it. At breakfast, still in the same pyjamas, I mentioned my night's experiment to Dad. He laughed and said I'd been busy. My brother, Ryder, heard over my shoulder, and snickered.

My brother was older than me, and my father and he both ribbed me for sleepwalking all the time. The running joke was that next time they'd find me asleep on a golf course or in a cinema. I didn't tell them I hadn't been sleepwalking, that I was no somnambulist. After breakfast, Mum called me into the study, her space. The lights weren't on, but it was bright. The sun intruded from all eight of the high, wide windows that framed the room. The figures in the space were silent and still and secretive as my mother hauled me up onto her hip.

In the sunlight, the totems merely looked like cheap antiques, too rough and shabby even for the dusty shops my parents frequented. In the daylight they had no lustre; they needed not only a good clean but, many of them, some repair, or perhaps should have found a new home in the trash. The desk drawer squealed as Mum opened it. And what did she retrieve from the darkness of that misshapen coffer? Pages and pages of convoluted gibberish. It took me several minutes to realise that it was my gibberish of the previous night. I was proud of it, and Mum praised me for it. I was set to become a writer, like her, she told me. I had the imagination for it, she said, and I could picture history as it wanted to be, could understand it as

it wanted to be told. I remember sitting on her lap for a while, the scent of her thyme and coriander deodorant soothing my mood as it enveloped me.

* * *

IT WASN'T AS IF MY writing was a secret between me and Mum, but she seemed disappointed that I'd shared it with others, especially with Dad and Ryder. It's not like we weren't a loving family who all got along. We were. Right up until the accident. But they never understood the writing. Dad always found Mum's stories strange, perhaps threatening in their intensity, like they would overwhelm him. Though Dad related to Mum, I don't think he could ever relate to her writing. And while Ryder had enjoyed the stories he went to sleep with until he was a teenager, he got over them or grew out of them, I'm not sure which. I can't recall the period when Mum stopped going into his room to recount to him such tales after she'd left mine. I think Ryder just lost interest. I never saw him reading Mum's books or stories.

Unenthused by books, Ryder preferred films and sports. By the time I'd had my adventure in the "lair," I think Ryder had given up on telly as well, instead relying on rugby clashes for entertainment.

But Ryder became curious. There must have been fervour in my voice, in the way that I recounted my adventure. After all, boys are curious in the strangest ways. He started visiting the "lair" at night, lurking around when he thought everyone else was asleep. While I was burning Mum's fantasies and worlds into my mind till the early hours from her books, Ryder was communing with her muses. So, for a while, my brother and I were always tired-eyed in the morning. My parents, I think, chalked it up to the nascent rumblings of my puberty and to the peak of Ryder's. Our thunderous arrival at the gates of maturity had caught them off guard. To them it was "The Teens." So I'd pad quietly to the door of the study, and I'd crack the door and watch my brother. He'd always leave the lights off. And he never typed, never wrote. It wasn't his thing, his passion; he'd just stare at the shadows as they jostled for his attention. I used to think he was categorising the totems, trying to discern patterns among their jumbled communities and alliances. I don't think he knew I used to watch him, and for some reason I now imagine that if he had known, he'd have been ashamed.

And so the story continued into Ryder's adolescence, the last vestiges of his boyhood shedding violently as his body threatened us all with the

knowledge that he was bludgeoning the door of manhood. And then his attention wavered and faded, possibly from the lack of sleep.

While I was entering into the rich vein of knowledge that was my second year of high school, my brother started getting into trouble. He'd knock round with the wrong crowd during the day, skip school—the usual things.

Dad was always gruff. He tried to be the gentle giant, bearded and gruff and strong. But his hands were too coarse; he couldn't hold the fragility of his son's adolescence in his sandpaper palms. Dad understood wood: he could build cabinets, fashioning his tenderness into a bed or a table. I remember how loving he was when he taught me how to sand. The gentle motions were like petting something soft and small. It was a touch of tenderness, but it was limited to the stuff of trees.

He must have known adolescence. Somewhere, buried beneath his ink and his hair and his undulating muscles, there must have been interred a memory of that change. If it was there, though, he couldn't find it. And so the hands that used to pick us up and carry us and cuddle us were helplessly balled into fists. And then he began to obsess.

Dad's obsession would have begun like Ryder's, I guess—but I can't ever actually know. The statues won't tell me. Maybe he sought to understand through mimicry. Maybe he did it to quell his fears, or to feel less threatened, as if it were possible for a gruff-bearded lumber of tattoos to be afraid. The late nights of his stalking after Ryder, taking him to his bed after he had snuck out of it, and lying in the warmth and cloy of his son's room, achieved something. Some connection was made, and there they found something in the sphere of their sorrows.

Mum thought it was because he couldn't control their son that he became distant and withdrawn, disappearing from the marital boudoir after midnight, and fading first from conversations and then from the family, just like the boy. But I thought it was because I couldn't solve the puzzling configuration that was my "Big Bro" that they both went.

And then, one night, there was that mid-conversation interruption, that brring brring brring of the old phones, the ones that once littered the house, anchoring it in a different age, and in that moment they, through those phones, had forever invaded the peace and the stillness of the place. Brring brringing now meant bad news. And then, returned to its cradle, the phone left us only with silence. After Mum got off the phone she was ashen, and I was cold and damp. I was suddenly aware that the house that should have been full was only half full. It was still packed to the rafters

with totems of various shapes and sizes, but aside from that there was only Mum, myself, and the neighbour's one-eyed cat, Tamora.

Mum's car was in the garage. Me and Ryder had always planned to go on a road trip in it, an old beaten Suzuki Sierra. Dad labelled it an unecological death-trap, an ironic description when one knew that he rode a petrol-guzzling Triumph. But mostly Dad drove his three-year-old Prius—and it was in that car that Mum and Dad had gone to Sydney Park.

On the way, my mind wandered over peculiar things. From Kutz Avenue to Sydney Park, the Prius, I calculated, wouldn't have even used petrol. By contrast, the Sierra over the same distance probably digested several barrels of fuel—and it didn't give a shit about seatbelts. I thought of these differences while we drove to St Peters, from the brick pit to the brick works, from quarry to furnace. Mum said nothing.

The chimney stacks, hulking brick figures, loomed among flashing blue and red lights. We slowed cautiously as we neared the park. There had been a fire in one of the stacks, and it still smoked and smouldered. The chimney and half of the southbound lanes of the Princess Highway had been cordoned off.

Out of the base of the unstable tower protruded the blackened mass of an automobile; it looked like some giant had failed to properly stoke its fire. There was still a yellow slash amongst the char and flames—Dad's yellow car. I recognised his vanity plates, and felt hollow at the pun. His car had swung off at the start of the highway and into one of the fenced-off kilns in the old brick factory. The Prius must have been going pretty fast when it hit the fencing, having entirely sealed the base of the kiln. It had almost gone clean through the bricks on the other side. The chimney looked like it could collapse at any moment. The chimney is still there. I don't know how they got the car out. And at some point the kiln had fired up for one final burn.

Way back when the chimney was used to fire terracotta tiles and bricks, the raw materials were carried from a large quarry near our home in Newington. The clay was dug and shaped and set by weary and dying convicts first, and then, later, by proud and impoverished labourers. Perhaps that is why the bodies burned so well: the kiln shaped the heat. Dad and Ryder burned all the way to a charcoal, to a colour so dark that it seemed the fire had combusted all the colour from them.

The coroner, at the inquest, called it an accident. That was a nice platitude, but it was a false one—as false as any. Mum and I called it what it was: a suicide. There is no way to say it nicely. You can't say it happily. Social workers, stiffened with too much starch, prodded me with both benign and insidious questions, offering their embarrassing condolences. They

wondered if Mum had something to do with it—an affair perhaps. In time they left us alone.

At the funeral, with the two closed and near-empty caskets going into the fire for (irony upon irony) a cremation, we eulogised it as tragedy. It was Aristotle, I think, who is thought to have perfected the art of speaking only good of the dead. We tried our best.

We went for coffee after the wake. I had to escape the claustrophobia of the house, which was so full of friends and relatives, but still so empty. Her name was Milena, and she was Filipino. She was friendly enough, and one of Ryder's circle from school. She dragged me to a café only moments after I had been besieged by so many condoling faces. She could sense it was too much. She was so composed, in control, and her dress had been the only colour at the funeral.

We remembered his ups and his downs, his concerns and selfishness. We cried a lot. And we'd smile when our fingers touched by chance, and when they did not. Mostly over coffee we spoke about him, sister and almost-lover—or perhaps actual lover. I never asked. She was older than my brother, and he used to chase after her. He used to try and beg kisses from her in our garden among the gathering totems.

And that's where we first made love, under the Hills Hoist, while it was draped with drying sheets, on a February afternoon. It rained that afternoon, a thunderous summer southerly. I thought of Gilgamesh. There I was, drowning in us and that moment, and picturing the two of us floating off in some archaic construction—four hundred cubits of love. Instead of animals, we would take all the totems and statues from the house as our precious cargo, and would repopulate the world, just her and me and the totems, and what they remembered. And for the whole time while we fucked in that downpour, trying to find something secret between us, I was lost in a fantasy. I existed in a world of the possible that I had once known, but had completely forgotten. On that wet afternoon, only a week after scattering the ashes of my brother and father, I grieved for the first time. Later, Milena told me I had howled, like something primal was escaping. And then she fell in love with me. And then she fell away from me as I changed.

I abandoned my mother for five years. When she needed her daughter, I ran. But after what? Drugs. Sex. Boys. Girls. The rush, any rush. Life. Unlife. In hindsight, I can see I was trying to be my brother when my mum needed her daughter, a friend, just an ear. Even while we lived in the same house as each other, we rarely talked over all those thousand-and-a-half days and nights. As long as we didn't talk about loss or grief or before, then it was always fine. But those nights and days were too brief, and too few

There were two other kinds of remains in the wreck apart from the charred corpses of my father and brother. One was stone and the other already carbon before the fire had lovingly welcomed it back. Both had been smaller idols from Mum's study. They had taken one each but, after the police were done with them, Mum fetched them back, returning them to their multi-cultural village.

The stone one Mum had cleaned as best she could. It was a tiger, or some other great cat, suckling its young, its teats all sagging and chipped. Somehow it had escaped the wreck and evaded the fire's touch, emerging almost as it once must have appeared from its stone womb. The other was not back on the steps. The fire had damaged it too much, and it now stood pride of place on mother's desk, a black shapeless lump, twice damaged but not discarded.

Then, I don't know why, but for the first time in years I went back into the study. It was night, long after Mum had retired to bed, and in the winter, when the room was cold. I was rugged up heavily, appalled in an old navy sweater, nursing an angry belly full of white rum and psilocybin. The lights were on and the windows open, yet the freezing cold outside had been reduced to a mere chill inside. And suddenly I was enveloped by that silent whispering that had waited, mute, for me to return. The once familiar smell came back and seeped through my pores, as if I could smell, not just through my nose, but my skin. The murmurs massaged the tension from my limbs. I was completely relaxed and, even though I was high, I was more in control than I'd ever been before the accident.

This time, before I took my mother's chair and sat before her mystical writing apparatus, I tip-toed the circumference of the room like the delicate little girl I once had been, carefully making my way up those wide tiers and delicately stepping around and between the sculptures and carvings that called them home. I wanted to see the room from their perspective. I needed to understand how the light seemed to project a thousand shiny mirrors from the shoddy fixtures. Walking amidst that jumbled illumination, it was difficult to discern the floor. With each step a congregation of dust motes would rise up; disturbed, they would float before me, levitating like little refugees from Freud or Barrie, in a neighbourhood of children's dreams.

Nobody had stepped among the figures for a long time. When I had made my way up to the walls, I looked down at the desk in the centre and again realised that the effect of the room wasn't like a lecture theatre as I had thought; no, it looked more like the desk down below was a conduit, a transceiver for the collection of knowledge. Walking around the walls, I

noted the uneven lighting and saw that no electrician had wired the room. I was surprised she had managed to wire the place herself, and from that surprise sprang a sense of charm to realise how intimate the space had been for her. It wasn't just her "lair" or her study, but something she'd built, and long contributed to. It was a part of Mum, and Mum a part of it. I made my way round the corners, trailing my fingers along the walls.

I walked behind the ranks of sculptures and realised that they lingered just out of reach of the light, nesting in shadows, perhaps moving to avoid the light. I reached down and picked one up. It was a weightless stone. Possibly it was pumice, or something volcanic; dark and glittering, it stole the dreams of precious minerals. Turning it in my hands, under one of the lights, I strained at it, my eyes boring through its age and wear. I had to trace it with my fingers. It was smooth in parts, and almost soft, like basalt or velvet, but sharp in other sections, with chips and ragged patches as coarse as sandstone or hessian. It felt like the unremembered past. I decided it was meant to be a bear. It was curled and sleeping. Its snout was chipped, its bulk had been worn down in places, and it was missing a paw, or part of one. I put it down and made my way down to the desk and sat, regarding the menagerie before me. One of the figures on the bottom step was just caught by the light. It was the one they'd pulled from the clenched grip of the incinerated remains that the coroner had determined was my father's body. It was just in the light, and close to the edge of the step. It looked like it was burrowing slowly through the shadows, journeying slowly to the desk where Mum would write.

Sitting in the chair and looking at her Underwood, I began to type. I don't know what prompted me. But I decided it was them.

I had them write my term paper.

I had dreams of books and half whispers and breeze-tossed murmurs. In that conch-shell roar of whispers, it was that indistinguishable, misshapen hunk of charcoal, sitting pride of place on mother's desk, wanted me to imagine loudest.

I awoke in there at dawn, the cold fingers of winter sun starting me to alertness. My head hurt and the walls still breathed faintly. I could hear a padding, scratching sound nearby. Disoriented and sluggish, I initially thought it was Tamora, the neighbour's cat, but this scurrying and the scratching wasn't like a cat's sound. It was up by the walls, white and furry, with pink eyes that seemed, well, resentful, but also knowledgeable. Even its little fluffy tail had something of the non-conformist about it, like it should have been tattooed or blue and undercut. I lumbered up the tiers and collected it. Once I'd scooped it up, I fed the Underwood a blank sheaf

and collected my pile of essay. I never read it, and I can't claim to have written it—not really. I just stumbled to the submissions box and scrawled my name, student number, and page numbers on the top of each page, and dropped it in to the slot.

At first, I didn't know what to do with the rabbit. I dumped it in my room and showered my hangover away. Then we went to uni. The rabbit seemed happy to be out of the house. I was content to ignore the strange looks we received from the passengers on the bus, and then the train, the many furtive glances that stopped at me as if I'd smuggled a leopard aboard when I pulled the rabbit from my pocket and petted it. The smell of something wild, even of a domesticated wildness, was pleasant to inhale over the scents of white-collar commuters who drowned those around them in cologne and perfume.

At university we sat in the quadrangle for a bit, and I named it Mixi. It bounded around and nibbled the freshly-mowed lawn, stopping occasionally to hunch and re-digest what he'd previously consumed. Some of the girls studying nearby on the grass thought he was cute.

I took Mixi everywhere after that, even to my tutorials where I was told he wasn't welcome; unceremoniously, I'd leave him in my backpack. He was good at first, never doing anything untoward in there. I think he must have just slept. And for the first couple of days it became a routine: attend university regularly, stop at Manning Bar till late, stumble home and work in Mum's lair, pummelling the keys of her Underwood. The drinking stopped, then the drugs stopped, and then I didn't miss them.

I woke in my room one night to see Mixy mounting one of my plush toys, thrusting frantically. It was a furry green dog with a vivid afro. Branded "Afroken," it was a piece of borderline-racist Japanese kitsch; but at that instant it confirmed my presumption that Mixi was a male. I pulled him off it a couple of times, but he wasn't satisfied till he'd gone back and corrupted the toy. It became a regular thing with him. Eventually, he moved on from my pile of plush animals and superheroes. For a while, Mixi started trying to seduce Tamora, preening in front of the cat like a nervous Lothario. It was so strange, so strangely adolescent.

* * *

IT WAS IN FISHER LIBRARY where things began to make sense. Milena was there one day. It had been a few years since we'd spoken. She was older, and looked more mature. She still had that beautiful confidence and poise. She

was a master's candidate. She smirked to see me cradling a rabbit, then laughed and cringed at his name, at the morbidity of it: Myxomatosis.

"You're such a child," she said.

But she stroked Mixi, absently, as we stood there talking. Mixi enjoyed the attention.

Something old ignited as we spoke. First, there was a miniature spark, and then an ember that began to glow and burn brighter with every breath and syllable, and then a cadence that pulsed and began to fan the burn between those almost-comfortable silences. It was right that we organised drinks. Then Milena kissed my cheek, squeezed my hip, and wandered away. I sat down on one of the armchairs. Mixi was becoming more and more agitated, his eyes a moist red. Normally the eyes were pink, but now they were enflamed and wet with tears. Then, he bit me hard on the meat between my thumb and forefinger. It bled a lot, and it hurt like fuck. I learned from that episode that rabbits have good biting teeth.

Milena and I started wearing each other like old clothes. We fit each other nicely, and it was beautiful to revisit how we looked on each other. But eventually I had to stop taking Mixi with me when we went out, and would leave him in Mum's "lair," or in my brother's old unused room, since he'd become such a furry torment. And it was then, when I began leaving him like this, that Mixi became truly unruly. He would attack me as I kissed Milena, as I feasted on the plump musk of her lips. He would scramble, a psychotic white ball of fur, over her dark skin and then launch at me, all buck teeth and red eyes and malicious claws. Sometimes his wrath seemed too strong for a rabbit. Eventually I'd toss him in the hall and slam the door, and Milena would clean me up. She'd joke that I should get him some Xanax, and then we'd try and finish what we'd started, if it hadn't already been lost.

But because of it all, an odd idea started to entertain itself in my mind. I didn't or couldn't believe I was right, though, until one of my university lecturers booted me out of a tutorial on account of the white furry bastard.

That day, after I'd packed away my notes and collected Mixi, having tissueed up his waste from the carpet, I lost control of him as I passed Professor Jardin's office. Mixi got restless in my hands, and Jardin must have left the latch to his door ajar. Mixi got in and went nuts. I tried to stop him, to pick him up, but he knocked over bookcases and smashed up Jardin's things. When he was done there, my blood was all over Jardin's pretty Afghan rugs, and his iMac, which seemed well and truly dead, was cracked. Mixi was too strong, far too strong, for a mere rabbit. He was a manic, dis-

illusioned, and violent teenager. Jardin berated me when he came in, but I didn't say anything, other than my gurgled apologies, which he dismissed. And as security came to take me outside, where I would wait for the police to arrive, I accepted that Mixi wasn't a rabbit, but my brother.

At home I told Mum everything. She bundled us into the car—the Sierra. It was the first time we'd both been in it since that night. Mum had bought a new yellow Prius; it was all she drove now.

We talked for all the eight hours to Broken Hill. We took turns driving. Nick Cave growled from the speakers about weeping men and loss. Mum stroked Ryder, occasionally talking to him before returning him to me. She cried at times, and I cried too. I wanted to pretend it was just the cold night wind stinging the tears from my eyes.

We rediscovered each other.

The night was clear, beautiful, and crisp. And as I pulled away from the lights of Bathurst, I watched the Southern Cross sail across the heavens. It was the first time I noticed its different colours. In the city, you can't tell. But out there, away from the lights and the pollution, there is clarity, and that cluster of stars winked red and orange and aqua and bright. We went west, and above us, those stars watched the three of us journey.

The woman who let us into the Broken Hill Hotel was not amused by the late hour of our arrival. But she showed us to a double room. The three of us went to sleep in that cold space, Mum and I still clothed. In the morning, all of us looked out through the frosted balcony doors at the cold fingers of the rising dawn. Broken Hill lacked beauty in the day; it had wide dusty streets that sang of inequality, poverty, and voicelessness. The sun was high when we left; it was hot for June. We drove out to the Broken Hill Sculpture walk. And on the way, as she stroked him, Mum told me about the totem that Ryder came from.

First, she told me about other cultures's totems and familiars, or at least what she knew of them—how they tried to keep their family members close after they'd died, and how they kept them close in the form of animals, like dingoes, or in carvings. I asked, "Why not Dad?" and she spoke haltingly about the wooden rabbit and the sweaty, busy, fragrant marketplace in Marrakesh where she'd haggled for it. She spoke of how she and Dad had come to the sculptures when they were still fresh in the dirt, when they were bursting and full of each other. She spoke of how they sat down to picnic among the desert stones and eerie sculptures. She spoke mournfully of how the dusk fell, all reds and passions falling up to the horizon in the desert as they'd made love.

I imagined them surrounded by silence, enveloped in a bubble of their own desire, her keychain with the rabbit slipping to the edge of the fire, getting too close, and how, right at that moment, another ember lit up deep inside her. Maybe (I held the thought for a moment) they were forever connected in that fiery moment. The rabbit had lost its form, but she kept it as a memento. It was her memento of Ryder.

She was lost in the horizon by the time she finished telling me and Ryder the story. We sat and watched the sun begin to dip. Ryder bounded round the scrub and bracken and stones. Perhaps he had memories of the place from that day, long ago. Mum let him frolic, and I watched. Ryder would wander for a while and return, enjoying the warmth and freedom. Mum and I didn't talk. We just watched the rabbit bound around and eat what it could scavenge amidst the dirt. When it cooled and the sun threatened to twilight the place, Ryder came back and lay down and slept.

We killed him quickly, with a crumbling shale rock, while he slept. Afterwards, we built a small fire from bracken and burnt him. It sounds horrible, even now, and so awful, what we did. It might have been the original holocaust, I told myself, back when it might have meant something positive, and when a sacrifice by fire wasn't as overwhelmingly senseless as it now seemed. We sacrificed him through fire so he could rest, consuming what flesh the flames had not consumed. And under the chewy slivers of meat and gristle, we found wood.

Content note: The following story contains references to sexual assault and other possibly disturbing themes.

D. Bruno Starrs

Weelow

WITH SUCCESS COMES NOTORIETY, EVEN to a low-level clerk in the mid-1970s Australian Public Service. Nerdy little Eugene Fairbairn suddenly found himself the focus of previously undreamt attention at the National War Memorial, simply for identifying the problems with an apparently authentic photo of the ANZAC's Light Horse Brigade. Sycophants asked to sit with him at lunch in the cafeteria. Others slipped him the drafts of papers, asking for constructive criticism, or just a little feedback. And some at the War Memorial, it must be said, viewed him in friendlier, slightly-less-than-professional terms. One such colleague was a woman named Dorothea although she, unlike many who accosted him, had a genuine "in" with the newly popular Eugene. She had met his activist brother Kenny at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

"Excuse me, you're Eugene Fairbairn, right? The guy who proved the Beersheba photo was a fake?"

"Uh... yes, that's me."

"Forgive me, cuz, but are you related to Kenny Fairbairn? I mean, well, you guys have the same surname."

At the unexpected mention of his dimwit brother, Eugene grimaced and turned away.

But Dorothea was very hard to ignore.

She was a strikingly good-looking Aboriginal woman, interning at the War Memorial as part of her Bachelor of Social Sciences at Canberra's Australian National University. Her skin, Eugene couldn't help but notice, was the darkest of browns, for she was a full-blood, and her mob were the Kalkadoons of distant North Queensland. But she looked nothing like the Kalkadoon women most people knew from the Mt. Isa riverbed: all pencil-thin limbs, expansive pot-bellies, and drooping dugs, crawling with flies, caring little for their health or appearance, and snarling at onlookers through tawny port-flagon fumes. Nope, she looked "bugger-all like a clapped-out Boong from the long grass of the Isa," as the womaniser Gary Foley from the Tent Embassy would have said, slouching as he lecherously tried to score her phone number.

Dorothea looked like a magnificent black princess hand-carved out of ebony.

Her childhood had been happily lived in far North Queensland: in Townsville, a place inexplicably unashamed of being named after a slave trader. There, she learnt to be proud of her Aboriginal Australian heritage, but ashamed of her brother's and sister's dismal socio-economic conditions, which she knew were endured country-wide: the significantly higher rates of suicide, infant mortality, and imprisonment; the significantly lower rates of high school completion and university enrolment; the significantly reduced life expectancy and employment opportunities. She knew that these were issues that demanded healing. She also knew there was nothing she could do in the White Man's bureaucracy to redress these historic imbalances, except slowly climb its ladders to an eventual position of influence, but she was not above haranguing other students on campus with a history lecture when she got the chance. With her easy confidence, Eugene found her alluring and he soon deemed her company acceptable. Over several lunches at the War Memorial staff cafeteria, a friendship blossomed. And, it must be noted, Eugene began to rethink the possibility of his own indigeneity in the presence of one so stunning and proud of her heritage.

His brother accepted their part-Aboriginality. Should he reconsider? He thought: "Perhaps—while my skin is the canvas, the product of my very own palette and easel, with a dull base coat the colour of nothing more glamorous than wet Arnott's Arrowroot biscuits—perhaps, if I connect the dots of this skin painting before me in the mirror, I can trace the outline of a tree, a rare tree, like a boab tree? Perhaps," he continued to think, "but it is a plant in which some branches are indistinct. There is Scottish in the boughs, to be sure, phloem and xylem like inlets of the Scotland coastline,

secured by the good family name of Fairbairn. The trunk that holds me aloft is as erect as any British flagpole: is there a part of it that is Aboriginal? Over here the bark is stringy; there it is papery. In other places it is smooth, white and cross-hatched with rosacea and acne—like a sprinkling of red desert ochre.” These were the new thoughts, inspired by Dorothea.

“My epidermis is a bark painting, but I can’t yet decide how to categorise it,” he admitted.

He was beginning to concede that maybe, just maybe, there was some truth to his mother’s revelation about their great grandmother being Aboriginal, years ago, around their dining table as his father carved the saddle of roast mutton.

He decided he would visit this Aboriginal Tent Embassy with her, as an anthropological field trip, so to speak, and see how it felt in their company. And in his part-Aboriginal brother’s company.

But then, Dorothea met with a life-changing tragedy. She was raped. Brutally and unforgivably. It was something that came as a real shock to him.

Prior to the attack, Dorothea was fond of losing herself in exercise. She was a Blackfella Valkyrie. With her black, kinky hair scraped back into a severe bun, she’d don moth-eaten sweats and train like the Wiradjuri woman, Evonne Goolagong, preparing for Wimbledon glory.

There were weights sessions with forced reps and every set was completed to failure, the lactic acid burning into her muscles like liquid fire. Her resting heartrate nearly tripled in the aerobic sessions, which aimed at metabolising all unnecessary body fat. And then there was Pilates learnt from a French chick she knew at uni for flexibility, and yoga taught by the Hare Krishnas for focus and mental acuity.

And because it could be squeezed in around any university lecture timetable and interning schedule, she sweated through many miles of road running. So she was out jogging one Sunday afternoon, feeling strong and confident. After setting off from the Australian National University campus she passed through the residential streets of Acton, where the pets and children of tenured academics played freely, as if they were living next door to a police station.

Dorothea was no easy push over, so she was right to feel confident. Instead, she ran then safely along the high concrete wall of Scrivener Dam, which first impeded the Molonglo River’s progress in 1963, forming the mighty lake’s catchment, and past the secluded grounds of Government House, until, as she was nearing the leafy, rich suburb of Yarralumla, she was gliding high on endorphins and covering ground fast, when she was

tripped over by a wire strung taut across the jogging and bicycle path that winds around the perimeter of Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin.

But before she knew what was happening she was felled, flat. Nasal bones smashed in by the attacker's fist. Dragged under the cover of a thick row of neatly-pruned ornamental bushes. Grimy handkerchief stuffed in her mouth, her cries for help cut off, silenced.

He sliced through her lycra shorts with his little knife, pulling down his greasy King Gee work trousers, rejoicing in the pain he was inflicting. He felt, in the brief seconds of his violence, that he owned her, that his savagery and chaos made him the master.

It only took a few thrusts before the creep finished and disappeared in exactly the same way nightmares don't, leaving Dorothea bleeding and shocked beside the otherwise picturesque bike-path. Looping around the National Capital's shining jewel, a man-made lake, it made for an idyllic picture of bucolic scenery. Such acts are foreseen neither by landscape artists nor city planners. "What a scumbag, low-life, complete and utter waste of space he was," Gary Foley would have declared, as he would've also sworn to avenge his black sista's injury. "The weakest of dogs, the shabbiest of crooks, the scabbiest of filth, the vilest of suburban vipers," he would have said, but Eugene learnt nothing of these details.

Glimpses of other injustices were sung mournfully by the Australian landscape that never forgets crimes as unspeakable as this—for as clumsy as it can be at times, the good, stable Earth remembers all. But Dorothea was sobbing uncontrollably, too shocked to move, too insulted to scream, too hurt to listen to her Country trying to sing to her, trying to soothe her. Twenty five minutes later another jogger heard her low choking moans, found her dazed, semi-conscious form, and called the ambulance from a phone box a half kilometre away.

The hospital discharged her three days later and, although she remained convinced otherwise, the brutal offence she had suffered had nothing to do with her Aboriginality. A woman, any woman, might have done for him. With her mouth twisted forever by the bitter taste of betrayal, she withdrew.

Like the totem she subsequently adopted, the nocturnal Stone Bush Curlew (or Weelow, according to the Kalkadoon lingo of her mob), Dorothea withdrew from all contact with people, from all people's sight, from all people's hearing. Not inappropriately, the song of this Weelow sounds like the scream of a woman as it rises through the high-pitched registers of prehistoric terror, and through to peals of maniacal laughter before subsiding into desperate keening. It is a heart-wrenching noise, much like the

sounds made by an abandoned refugee, or a woman mourning for her lost or stolen children. Unhappy night shrieks are often heard around Townsville and the Isa, where the ungainly, grey birds gather. Tall and haughty, their long hard beaks held high, there they regard their lonely reflections in the night-time, mirror-glass walls of petrol stations on the outskirts of tiny Queensland towns.

And so Dorothea became a Weelow in all but physical form. She returned to Mt Isa, got on the grog, and never went back to the university, or the War Memorial.

And so Dorothea disappeared from Eugene's life, suddenly and without explanation, and the lonely Fairbairn brother felt confused rejection.

And so his bitterness towards Aboriginal Australians was reborn, his vindictiveness growing even stronger. And he finally declared himself to be not one little bit blackfella.

Nathalie Camerlynck

Untitled

Nothing. Wants you hear.

Can you hear it quietly heaving.

Underneath the cicadas.

Can you hear it quietly retching.

What if. It knew.

Doesn't matter when. Wasn't you.

But what if. It knew.

Michael Potts

A review of *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot* by Tom Butler (ORO Editions-Goff Books, 2015), 330 pages.

EARLIER THIS YEAR *THE GUARDIAN* ran a photo feature, “Overpopulation, Overconsumption – in Pictures,” which announced and allied itself with the publication of a new book, *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot*.¹ Edited by Tom Butler of the Foundation for Deep Ecology, and with an introduction by William Ryerson of the Population Institute, the book is a glossy and expensively produced hardbound collection of photographs documenting the environmental damage we are currently inflicting on the planet. Photographs of burning oil slicks and seas full of trash are interspersed with aerial photographs of slum areas of burgeoning cities in developing nations. The presentation may be slick and professional, but the message is sombre: the sheer weight of human numbers is causing crushing poverty, climate change, loss of biodiversity and general environmental catastrophe.

Overdevelopment is clearly intended to be what is popularly known as a “coffee table book,” a digest intended more for casual browsing and conversation starting than for careful study and analysis. In this respect it follows on from Butler’s previous work, and particularly the photographic collection *Wildlands Philanthropy: The Great American Tradition* (2008),

which celebrated the role of private wealth in protecting wild areas. The bulk of *Overdevelopment* consists of photo essays designed to communicate a narrative of population growth and overconsumption brought on by greed and an increasing separation from nature in a globalised world. The first of these photo essays, “Lord Man,” uses quasi-biblical language to tell the story of how “in the beginning the world was whole, and beauty prevailed” until humanity’s “cleverness grew [and] so did his ambitions, until he declared himself ruler of all”. Personifying all of humanity as a god or as *God* the story notes that “His work he named ‘Progress’ [and] his numbers became multitudes”. Other essays such as “Demographic Explosion” or “Human Tide” are simply images of humanity *en masse* with brief quotations accompanying them. Ryerson’s introduction and the afterword by Eileen Crist offer arguments for restraining population growth and development and for moving towards a “deep ecological” ethos of re-wilding; but these pieces also consider the benefits of living in a world with substantially lower numbers of people (Crist names two billion, instead of the current seven billion, as a desirable target).

The narrative that *Overdevelopment* conveys will be a familiar one to anyone with even a passing interest in environmental issues. It links population growth with growth in both development and consumption and reminds us that, in a finite world, continued growth is simply not sustainable. It succeeds on a visceral level in portraying the relentless damage that is undeniably being done to the environment and the heavy toll that is paid by other species for humanity’s success. Each image in the book, whether a dismaying shot of the pervasiveness of rubbish in a third world slum or a record of a crowd of thousands in China, is accompanied by a quotation to drive home the points being made.

However, those readers with a longer-standing interest in environmental issues may well recognise and perhaps be troubled by some of the quotes here. William Vogt, for instance, is quoted as warning that “every area has a limited carrying capacity” and that this capacity “is shrinking and the demand growing.” Vogt was best known for his 1948 book *Road to Survival*, a work that bewailed efforts to ameliorate living standards in third world countries through industrial development and the application of medical advances. Commenting in that book on the then parlous state of India, for example, Vogt takes a ruthlessly instrumentalist view of the effects of war, famine and disease on the population:

A heavily industrialized India, backed up by such population pressure, would be a danger to the entire world. Disorders following the British

withdrawal seem to be imposing once more the Malthusian checks that held the pre-British population within reasonable bounds. It appears probable that the turmoil will also stultify any considerable industrial development. This is a result piously to be desired.²

Vogt's argument is brutally simple in its Malthusian logic: aid and development of poorer countries are dangerously misguided policies because they upset the "natural" equilibrium of births and deaths; and any significant development is thus overdevelopment which must lead to overpopulation. Therefore, as Vogt argues, "from the world point of view" widespread famine in countries such as China and India might be "not only desirable but indispensable."³

Similar arguments have been made by other controversial figures who are quoted in the book such as Garret Hardin, a Malthusian and eugenicist who railed against aid to poor countries in "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor" (1974). While Vogt and Hardin were key figures in their time, it seems curious that a work published in 2015 should be retrieving and republishing statements from such currently dubious sources, especially given the wealth of more recent and more credible work on ecology, climate change, and the environment. What seems to be anomalous, however, soon becomes a pattern when one encounters quotations from contemporary sources in the book. The section titled "Human Tide" quotes the extremist Finnish Malthusian Pentti Linkola on "the enormous growth of the human population - the human flood." Outside of his native Finland, Linkola is known mainly for his book *Can Life Prevail?* published in translation by the far right publisher Arktos. In *Can Life Prevail?* Linkola espouses a fringe form of Malthusianism that advocates culling the human population, ending aid and development to third world countries and preventing immigration to developed Western nations. Picking up on Hardin's depiction of Western nations as lifeboats surrounded by a sea of poorer nations, Linkola asks the following:

What to do when a ship carrying a hundred passengers has suddenly capsized, and only one lifeboat is available for ten people in the water? When the lifeboat is full, those who hate life will try to pull more people onto it, thus drowning everyone. Those who love and respect life will instead grab an axe and sever the hands clinging to the gunwales.⁴

It should be remarked that as well as quoting such dubious figures as Vogt, Hardin, and Linkola, the book also cites far better respected mainstream figures such as the Dalai Lama. What makes this problematic rather than inclusive, however, is that there is no context or analysis for these quotations, implying a level of equivalence between world leaders such as the Dalai Lama and extremists like Linkola.

In a more general sense, though, the problem with this book is the *lack* of context. The history of colonisation and appropriation, ongoing inequalities between rich and poor countries and the exploitation and destabilisation of developing nations by wealthier ones are not adequately analysed and discussed here, but instead elided in favour of a vague and ill-defined complaint against “progress” and techno-utopianism. But while population pressure on the environment is undoubtedly a real and pressing concern, it is one which must be discussed explicitly in the context of historical and ongoing inequalities and injustices, for otherwise criticism of development and population growth equates all too easily to a lifeboat mentality that sees poorer countries as a threat to the established way of life enjoyed in wealthy western nations, an outcome which, it must be said, this book’s selection of quotations does little to dispel. What, for instance, is the reader supposed to make of the inclusion of D. H. Lawrence’s line from *St Mawr* that “mankind would abolish death, multiply itself million upon million, rear up city upon city, save every parasite alive, until the accumulation of mere existence is swollen to a horror”? And who exactly are the “parasites” that should not be saved?

As this review has noted, Malthusian literature has an unfortunate and disgraceful history of portraying development in poorer nations as somehow unnatural and a threat to Western society. As the American anti-racist organisation *Imagine2050* put it in a review of *Overdevelopment*, “this photo essay is part of a long history of the use of fear of overpopulation to advance policies that are biased, unjust, or often downright racist”.⁵ In failing to properly and adequately contextualise and discuss issues of exploitation and inequality and how they relate to the issue of population growth and over-consumption *Overdevelopment* ultimately fails to move the debate forward, instead perpetuating the same unbalanced westernised perspective that has traditionally inspired so many other Malthusian works.

Notes

- 1 See "Overpopulation, Overconsumption—In Pictures," *The Guardian*, 1 April, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/gallery/2015/apr/01/over-population-over-consumption-in-pictures>
- 2 William Vogt, *Road to Survival* (London: Gollancz, 1949), 229.
- 3 Ibid. 238.
- 4 Pentti Linkola, *Can Life Prevail? A Radical Approach to the Environmental Crisis*, tr. Eetu Rautio and Olli S. (London: Arktos, 1999), 130–1; see Garrett Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor," *Psychology Today* 8, no. 4 (1974): 38–42.
- 5 See Lindsay Schubiner, "Don't Get Tricked Into Scapegoating Immigrants On Earth Day," *Imagine2050*, <http://imagine2050.newcomm.org/2015/04/22/dont-get-tricked-into-scapegoating-immigrants-on-earth-day/>

N. Cyril Fischer

***A Review of Empathy and
the Psychology of Literary
Modernism* by Meghan Marie
Hammond (Edinburgh University
Press, 2014), 203 pages.**

EMPATHY IS A HOT TOPIC. Recently attracting the attention of many scholars, it has been studied in numerous disciplines, from philosophy of the mind, through developmental and behavioural psychology, to cognitive science, ethics, and aesthetics. As a result, there are now as many definitions of empathy as there are theoretical frameworks for its study, leaving one to conclude, as does Amy Coplan in the introduction to *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives* (2011), that “whatever empathy is, it’s important.”

In literary studies, it was Suzanne Keen who first expressed this view in her foundational study *Empathy and the Novel* (2007). Unlike scholars such as Martha Nussbaum and Wayne Booth, who have advocated the social value of empathically reading literature and its beneficial effects on emotional intelligence, Keen offered a more neutral conception of empathetic reading as a matter of affective sharing rather than a correlative of improved moral or prosocial behavior. Since the publication of Keen’s book, empathy has been picked up in many different branches of

literary studies, and its reception has broadened to the extent that it no longer includes only the apprehension and sharing of affective states, but addresses mental states too. As such, empathy now seems to belong to the sphere of intersubjectivity and is related to what is known as the problem of other minds which stands at the center of Meghan Marie Hammond's *Empathy and the Psychology of Modernism*.

As the title of the book signals, Hammond's interest is in the various psychological theories that arose at the turn of the twentieth century during a time when psychology was only just beginning to come into its own as an academic discipline separate from the branches of philosophy. However, instead of focusing on the litany of thinkers so commonly associated with the aesthetics of literary modernism, such as Freud and Bergson, Hammond introduces a number of lesser known psychologists and aesthetic theorists whose names have found only a marginal place in literary studies thus far. In each of her five chapters Hammond pairs one already well-known literary figure with one or two of these thinkers: Henry James with his brother William and the psychologist E. B. Titchener, the last of whom coined the term "empathy" as translation of the German *Einfühlung* in 1909; Dorothy Richardson with Robert Vischer, an expert on optical theory among other things, and the psychologist Theodor Lipps; Katherine Mansfield with the philosopher Max Scheler; Ford Maddox Ford with the aesthetic theorists Wilhelm Worringer, Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), and T. E. Hulme; and, finally, Virginia Woolf with phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein.

The sheer number of names and the various theoretical backgrounds brought together in Hammond's study accounts for the kaleidoscopic nature of the book; it is a sprawling examination held together by the author's steady focus on the problem of other minds. According to Hammond, modernism saw the question of whether and how we can access the minds of others emerge as an "epistemological crisis," pushing psychologists in new directions, and prompting many to think more acutely about the nature of "fellow feeling," which in turn led to innovations in literature, such as in narrative technique. When Hammond uses it, the term fellow feeling invokes the tradition of eighteenth-century moral theory generally associated with the works of David Hume and Adam Smith, and recalls the notion of sympathy. Indeed, sympathy, which is the etymological precursor to the later term empathy, looms large within empathy studies; although when it is used, the antecedent term serves primarily as a counter-example to empathy within literary and other discourses. As Hammond avers, sympathy may be understood as a form

of fellow feeling that relies on the distance between the self and other, whereas empathy strives for something closer, seeking to obliterate this distance in an intersubjective merging. In fact the opposition of the sympathetic “feeling for” and the empathic “feeling with” has had a direct bearing, Hammond suggests, on how the concepts of sympathy and empathy contribute to literary aesthetics.

As scholars such as Rae Greiner have shown, Victorian realism can be understood as a heavily *sympathetic* textual mode, since the genre is itself built around the axiomatic recognition that the other is ineluctably foreign to the self, as well as around the notion that others can become only the patient objects of an intersubjective encounter with the reader. By contrast, modernist writing seeks new representational forms that allow for a more immediate sharing of inner experience between the reader and character, one that is less *sympathetic* than *empathic*. Although to juxtapose realism and modernism in this way has only a technical and heuristic value—an observation that Hammond fully acknowledges—the comparison also serves Hammond’s study, allowing her both to investigate the nexus between empathy and modernism, and to ask how the two might “work together to usher in narrative paradigm shifts.”

The shifts themselves are manifold but they have in common a striving for the mental, affective, and interior immediacy associated with literary modernism. Discussing Henry James’s late autobiographical text *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), Hammond demonstrates how James employs a highly wrought and difficult style in order to lay open a narrating consciousness—in this case James’s own consciousness—to the empathic reader. By slowing down the speed of reading and comprehension, Hammond argues, James spatialises the narrator’s ontology, “making us feel like we are ‘in’ the represented space—that is, ‘in’ James’s own mind in the act of memory—rather than observing it from outside, thus disrupting our sense of ourselves.” But slow pace also takes the reader out of their own time and aligns them with the time of the narrator, establishing an intersubjective encounter that is non-hierarchical, and thus more empathic than sympathetic.

Similarly, Hammond reads the self-effacing narration of Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*, the first volume of which appeared in 1915, through the perceiving mind of Miriam Henderson as a form of “cognitive training in which we feel ourselves into Miriam’s way of thinking and suspend certain knowledge that we are looking at her from across an intersubjective divide.” Whether this empathic merging is an effect of abandoning the reader to the seemingly unmediated narrative—a technique David Foster Wallace

memorably describes as “being left narratively alone in the self-sufficiency of... narrative”—or not, is of course difficult to ascertain; but Hammond’s claim that Richardson’s stream-of-consciousness narration offers a different mode of relating to a character than techniques traditionally associated with Victorian realism, such as free indirect discourse, is convincing—albeit not necessarily new. Generally, Hammond reads certain literary techniques as affording a particular type of empathic response, which is completely feasible, but will not satisfy every reader equally. Consider, for example, her reading of the following passage from Ford’s *Parade’s End* in which the protagonist Tietjens describes being bombed at the front line:

He was looking at Aranjuez from a considerable height. He was enjoying a considerable view. Aranjuez’s face had a rapt expression—like that of a man composing poetry. Long dollops of liquid mud surrounded them in the air. Like black pancakes being tossed. He thought: “Thank God I did not write to her. We are being blown up!” The earth turned like a weary hippopotamus. It settled down slowly over the face of Lance-Corporal Duckett who lay on his side, and went on in a slow wave.

Hammond compares the slowing down of time to James’s use of pace in his autobiographical texts and concludes that Ford allows readers to “feel into this traumatic moment” and that “we come to learn something about Tietjens’s experience.” Both claims are plausible but betray a problem involved in the attempt to establish a stable relationship between a literary representation and its effect. Ultimately, despite the fact that certain techniques can successfully induce empathy in the reader, what the quality of the “feeling into” is and what exactly one can learn from such a moment will always remain a matter of speculation. This problem does not apply exclusively to Hammond’s study, however, but inheres generally in the murky territory of literary effect and reader reception. Much more central to Hammond’s study, though, is the problem of other minds and how it shapes the efficacy and possibility of empathy.

Hammond’s reading of Mansfield, whom she posits as a counterpart to Richardson, focuses on the former’s proclivity for shifting between various perspectives and focalisations, which do not allow, she writes, “the kind of sustained perspective-sharing of cognitive overlap” that can be located in *A Small Boy and Others* and *Pilgrimage*. However, rather than offering Mansfield merely as a counterpoint to these writers, Hammond demonstrates how her interest in the “ephemerality” of moments of consciousness destabilises empathy as a form of fellow feeling. After all,

if states of mind are constantly passing one into the next in the stream of consciousness, empathic sharing runs the risk of fixing a state in time, and thereby distorting its very nature, all in an attempt to manifest an illusory moment of fellow feeling in which the subject projects her own state of mind into the other rather than truly sharing in their inner experience. This is the basic crux of the problem of other minds and the one that becomes increasingly more prominent in the last two chapters of the book, dedicated to Ford and Woolf.

Although Hammond finds empathic tendencies in both of these authors, she likens Ford's literary impressionism to Richardson's attempt to obliterate the mediating voice of the narrator; in Woolf's late writing Hammond finds the desire to achieve "oneness" with another for the specific purpose of gaining self-knowledge and political agency—her readings lay open the writers's skepticism towards empathy. This skepticism is inherent in the modernist tension between the celebration of the individual and the desire for its dissolution within a collective subjectivity or voice. In particular, Hammond argues that both writers are keenly aware of the potential violence done by empathic encounters, a violence which, in the case of Richardson, Mansfield, and Woolf, is rendered real by the gendered and classed nature and form of the demands for fellow feeling expressed by upper-class males—demands that abnegate the possibility of reciprocation. More generally, Hammond claims that Woolf's political writing seeks a new form of relating to others that is located somewhere between the distance of sympathy and the immediacy of empathy, a form of experiencing foreign consciousness that "does not make two into one" and does not compromise the integrity of the empathising subject or its object.

If the problem of other minds and its concomitant anxieties about empathy sufficiently justifies the selection of writers whose work Hammond examines in the book, her approach to theory will find its critics. Aside from the pairing of William James and E. B. Titchener (whose professional association is well documented) with Henry James, or the nexus between Ford and Vernon Lee (where the former is familiar with latter's work), Hammond's rationale for coupling certain thinkers with writers bears no obvious rationale of directness. Instead of a model of direct influence, that is, Hammond relies on a "contagion" model, arguing that certain ideas and theories were "in the air" (borrowing a phrase from Judith Ryan). While this approach may irritate some readers, it may be of little consequence for others. And in any case, her book is proof of the fact that straying outside the established narratives of influence can be highly

productive. Even if Hammond's readings of her authors do not radically reconfigure the way in which they can be interpreted—and novelty or radicality alone should not be the measurement of a work's achievement—her study opens modernism to a myriad of new psychological, phenomenological, and aesthetic approaches.

Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism is a highly engaging study that will establish Hammond as a prominent voice in the study of literature and empathy. This is a prospect made all the more likely by the publication of her co-edited collection of essays on the subject in 2014, *Rethinking Empathy Through Literature*, which includes contributions by such eminent figures as Keen. Thom Gunn once complained that empathy is “too big a word” and recommended that we stick to the much more practicable and realistic “sympathy.” It is thanks to studies like Hammond's, however, that empathy remains not just available as a productive concept for literary studies, but that its “bigness” represents less a foil than an incentive to empathy scholarship. Whatever empathy will turn out to be for literary studies in the long run, Hammond's study makes sure that it is indeed important.

Tegan Schetrumpf

**Terror Down Under? A review
of Todd Turner's *Woodsmoke*
(Black Pepper Press, 2014) and
Melinda Smith's *Drag Down to
Unlock or Place an Emergency
Call* (Pitt Street Poetry, 2013)**

FOR MANY INHABITANTS OF THIS great southern continent, sublime fear forms part of a healthy respect for the environment. As we are often reminded, Australia is a place of environmental extremes, deadly creatures, and vast, flat distances. For those of us that are non-indigenous, this dormant terror can also take the form of a dreadful certainty—a firm knowledge that, even if we have been born in this country, we remain its trespassers. Indeed, this may be the only land that we know; and yet, if we were to be confronted by its spirit or will, we may feel that this land might resent or reject us. It is therefore not surprising that much Australian poetry entertains some thematic consideration of place. Often, Australian poets engage with a beautiful scene: a creek that twists around a gum forest, or the iconic larrikin image of a cheeky sulphur-crested cockatoo. But among these tropes there also appear the worldlier concerns of ecopoetry. Poems in this genre are often imbued with a sense of approaching doom, a sense that forebodes the effects of anthropogenic climate change.

While conventionally Gothic approaches to place are now uncommon—at least of the kind that Henry Lawson and Kendall might have written—the hauntings, doublings, and uncanny elements that pervade these early Australian poets’s works have arguably been revived by a new generation. Known as the “new lyricists,” this group of Australian poets has been celebrated in two anthologies, both published in 2011: *Thirty Australian Poets* and *Young Poets: An Australian Anthology*.¹ But the emergence of Gothic traits in this generation perhaps also suggests a return to the Romantic tradition as well, for these poets, like the Romantics, seem to envision themselves as sincere, intimate individuals who reject larger techno-capitalist narratives of progress—except that, where the Romantics rejected the Industrial Revolution, this new generation abjures the *digital* revolution. However, it is more likely that, at least in regard to the articulation of Australian place, these Gothic concerns never really left. Indeed, many Australian poets *outside* of this new generation utilise aspects of the gothic on occasion, including the poets I shall review here. Perhaps it is the case that there is no other way to conceive of this *unheimlich* or “unhomely” home than gothically.

In keeping with the sense of anachronism often associated with the antipodes, this review focuses on collections that have been published in 2014, and may thus be regarded as dated. Yet, since the reach of contemporary Australian poetry is limited, it is also very likely that I am introducing these collections to the reader for the first time. The first of these collections—Todd Turner’s debut *Woodsmoke*—is set largely in the rural Australia of the poet’s youth.² The title suggests a transformation from one state to another—one that is both mystical and practical, alluding to the “smokiness” of a chimera and the commonplace burning of wood. Over and over in the collection, Turner’s poems underscore nature’s inexorable process of entropy. The collection opens with a poem titled “Shelling Peas,” which describes the poet’s farmhouse routine thus:

Snap off the ends, tear open the strip,
split the hull and with a run of the thumb
rake the peas into the pot. Repeat.

Descriptions of an eerie familiarity with death, decay, and life’s transformative processes recur throughout *Woodsmoke*, whether the characters are weeding, observing bush fires, or wandering in abandoned lots. In “Homecoming,” the poet offers details about the sudden death of his brother and his trip home from England for the funeral:

I wanted to shut his eyelids
 but they wouldn't close. I placed my hand
 over the scar the seatbelt made [...]

Dad invited the driver to sit beside us in the pew.
 That was eighteen years ago. Mum, she was gone
 within six. She rests alongside her youngest.

My father, there's a spot, we'll lay him there too.

At times in Turner's collection, the poet expresses a macabre complacency that appears typical of the affective experience of rural Australia. This is a latent but ever-present melancholy that suggests habitual terror, hardness, and emotional distance, all of which seem the almost inevitable characteristics of a people whose lives are tied to a rugged landscape. This profound sense of unease is amplified in Turner's "Fieldwork," a poem for which the poet won the Cecily Jean Drake-Brockman poetry prize in 2013, and received high commendations from the Blake poetry prize judges in 2011. "Fieldwork" begins with the poet's discovery and subsequent burial of a dead magpie. While this process begins tenderly, the poet goes on to exhume the decomposed bird with all the enthusiasm of a pre-teen boy:

I stepped back and stood staring
 into the hollowed out eyes, the gone brain,
 spiralling and turning it upside down,
 prying the underside with my eye, thumbing
 and spinning it into a circle thinking,

and even speaking: I know what the cycle
 serves, but what is being served by
 the cycle? It's arguable, I know—best
 to just walk and fall in love with the field,
 the beloved range of the ubiquitous grass.

In these lines Turner cuts off his own metaphysical question to offer some seemingly pragmatic advice: it is better to love the landscape than to try to understand it, the implication being that the landscape and its complex, beautiful, and dangerous processes of entropy are beyond our comprehension. This attitude highlights the tension of Australian spaces: what is most

frightening about the landscape is not its volatility or danger, but its scale, together with its unknowable quality, which defies any reduction.

Poet Melinda Smith also deals with the unknowable in her latest work, but Smith is in many other ways Turner's opposite: while Turner is a new poet, Smith is well-established. In 2014, Smith bagged the Prime Minister's award for *Drag Down to Unlock or Place an Emergency Call*, a collection that leaves rural Australia far behind, and deals with the terror that arises when the public bleeds into the private in manifold urban, and even digital spaces.³ The collection is informed by the cultivated culture of emergency and terror that was commonly associated with the 2013-15 Abbott government's sloganism, and the variously sensationalist media responses to it. Adopting the largely disembodied yet authoritative voices of certain public spaces, Smith's poems take place on Cityrail trains, in courtrooms, at hospitals and churches, and even in the digital "non-place" of a Skype conversation. Indeed, the banality of the title of Smith's collection—an unambiguous reference to the "unlock" procedure of the modern-day smartphone—reminds us of the unspoken barriers we must overcome, and the myriad instructions we must follow, so as to engage in acts of communication in modern society.

As a prize-winning collection, *Drag Down to Unlock or Place an Emergency Call* has been the subject of many reviews already. But many of these reviews neglect or underplay the genuineness of Smith's fears for the world—probably due to Smith's glib and playful tone, and the apparent banality of her poems. But Smith considers her poetry to be audience-focused, and identifies as the intention of her work her desire that it be "educating, informing and entertaining... but mostly entertaining" on her professional website. Yet Smith's poetry also demonstrates a confessionalist aim: her poems utilise personal experience to engender public engagement, and thus allow for a kind of catharsis whose effects are sincere. This aim is perhaps most evident in *Drag Down to Unlock or Place an Emergency Call* in the poems "Confess" (which deals with the tensions between the individual and society) and "Song of the Anti-depressant" (which praises modern mental health remedies). But even these revealing and candid poems find more explicit confessionalist precedents in Smith's 2012 collection, *First...Then...: Poems from Planet Autism*,⁴ which relates the poet's many difficult experiences coming to terms with her son's autism. In "Confess," though, Smith incorporates material from the political landscape, albeit only ever in an allusive way:

Information wants to be free

Tell me
 Tell the priest
 Pent up. Repent. Released.

We the jury have found
 Tell a hole in the ground
 Tell yourself

The italics throughout the poem imply the use of a public voice—one that has some dominion or authority over the individual. “*Information wants to be free*,” for instance—a slogan generally attributed to the writer Stewart Brand—describes the paradox in which information, while having a high value when preserved, becomes less valuable the more it is circulated. So while the authoritative voice speaks on behalf of the information, this information is “free” only when it is more *freely available*.⁵ In this way the phrase also expresses an objection to various governments’s surveillance and national security agendas, urging for the freedom of information.

The following lines—which accumulatively instruct the reader to “free” information by “telling” it to various people—thus imitate the ways in which many of us feel compelled to share and express our stories, as well as our personal data. The poem thus reflects shifting notions of personal privacy in the digital era, a period in which an individual’s personal information often circulates or is sold while the individual remains complicit or unaware. Information’s “desire to be free,” therefore, appears morally ambiguous, and in the context of the anaphoric imperatives deployed in the succeeding stanzas of the poem—where the reader is instructed to “tell whoever is in control”—this desire becomes all the more sinister and exploitative.

Of course, the reader is probably expected to identify with the “me” of the poem introduced in line 2, an agent whose curiosity and voyeurism spurs their participation in the information-extraction economy. Smith indicates that this culture of the confession, though, is not created by such twenty-first century phenomena as the digital “overshare;” rather, it has firmer originary roots in a more traditionalist and community-driven command: “Tell the priest.” The truncated, staccato process of the confession—which is limned by the trimeter of “Pent up. Repent. Released”—indicates the repressed status of narrow-minded communities, and sonically indicates that the reader will also “repeat” this programmatic cycle. The

collective voice that follows in “*We the jury*” invokes the confessor’s judgment by their peers, the poem sifting through the layered voyeuristic, religious, literary and legal dimensions of the term “confession.”

Gina Wisker has analysed the confessional poets, of whom Sylvia Plath is exemplary, in terms of their utilisation of aspects of the gothic, referring to confessionalism as a kind of “domestic gothic.”⁶ This is perhaps also a useful way to approach Smith’s poetry, which is doggedly “everyday” in its language and thematics, and yet probes for something darker, lying beneath common experience. In “Passengers are reminded,” Smith blends the unwanted intrusion of the train announcement with her anxiety about being late for a funeral:

This service is experiencing a slight delay due to a sick customer at
Town Hall
I have been carrying the lilies too long
This service is experiencing continuing delays due to a sick customer at
Town Hall
the petal edges fray to a bruised brown, like old lettuce

Here the euphemistic reference to a “sick customer” glosses over the trauma experienced by another person elsewhere; and it adds a sense of foreboding to the locked-in space of the train. But this claustrophobic outlook is also contrasted with the personal connection signified by the flowers, whose gothic imagery—with their bruised, fraying edges—now symbolises Smith’s own frayed nerves. The poem thus reads as the expression of a private grief, a ventilation of strain by a figure subjected to the commonplace traumas attendant to inhabiting a public space. In this space, public announcements, delays, and the inability of the individual to express their feelings of grief conspire to engender the speaker’s sense of disturbance—and all of this is amplified by the presence of her fellow commuters. Likewise, the allusions to hymns and children’s songs in “Dialogue” are borrowed, banal phrases, intended to exteriorise or “unlock” that which is hidden. For example, witness the following scene of a child being abused by a priest:

incy wincy spider
here is my handle, here is my
spout
the Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not
want

The child's voice in the dialogue begins with "let me out," which implies—figuratively or literally—that they are locked in a confessional box:

I want to go home
 it's dark in here
 I can't feel my feet

But perhaps the most chilling reference woven into Smith's poem is the Anzac Ode "We Will Remember Them"—an allusion here not to the servicemen of war but to the victims of child abuse. The allusion reminds the reader that it is not merely the priest who keeps the child trapped, but a complicit public that turns a blind eye. To "remember" the victims in this way suggests a generation of children "lost" to and traumatised by sexual abuse. And in many ways it might be startling to recall that "Dialogue" is part of a collection previously awarded a prize by a Government sometimes criticised for unjustifiably expressing support for senior figures in the Catholic church with regard to this same issue.⁷

Smith's and Turner's poetry depict Australian spaces that lie on contested ground, spaces in which the individual is never far from harm—whether that threat takes the deceptive form of natural beauty or the banal shape of bureaucracy. The tension of these spaces, Turner suggests, is ubiquitous—an inescapable part of human experience. By contrast, Smith's poetry suggests how the net of banal, often digital language that we continue to spin and circulate is closing in around us, and if not confronted soon, will constitute an emergency situation. But is it right to call these kinds of fears forms of "terror"? It would perhaps be easier to call them "dreads," for they are not unanticipated, but normalised. Indeed, both poets take pains to show how close we live to these fears, and how domestic they have become. Ultimately, I myself can only return to the Freud's oft-cited notion of the *unheimlich*—a mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar—to explain them fully. While these gothic experiences might generally be understood to constitute the more terrifying aspects of an individual's daily repression, as well as their incorporation of a postmodern culture stretching back to 1945 (and punctuated by trauma, from the use of the atomic bomb through to the Holocaust), they also seem particular to the Australian experience. After all, Australia has lived with terror for much longer.

Notes

- 1 Felicity Plunkett (ed.), *Thirty Australian Poets* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011); and John Leonard (ed.), *Young Poets: An Australian Anthology* (St Kilda: John Leonard Press, 2011).
- 2 Todd Turner, *Woodsmoke* (North Fitzroy: Black Pepper, 2014).
- 3 Melinda Smith, *Pull Down to Unlock or Place an Emergency Call* (World Square: Pitt Street Poetry, 2014).
- 4 Melinda Smith, *First... Then... : Poems from Planet Autism* (Port Adelaide: Ginninderra Press, 2012).
- 5 See Stewart Brand, *The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at M. I. T.* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1987); also see R. Polk Wagner, "Information Wants to be Free: Intellectual Property and the Mythologies of Control," *Columbia Law Review* 103 (2003): 999n14.
- 6 Gina Wisker, "Viciousness in the Kitchen: Sylvia Plath's Gothic," *Gothic Studies* 6, no 1 (2004): 103-119.
- 7 See, for instance, Barney Zwartz, "Abbott's Response to Child Sexual Abuse by Clergy Angers Victims," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 November, 2013, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/abbotts-response-to-child-sexual-abuse-by-clergy-angers-victims-20131114-2xjpo.html>.

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