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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.