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**[Running heads]**

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<rh>FIRST FRUITS OF A BARRON FIELD<rh>

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Justin Clemens&lt;H4&gt;

&lt;H1&gt;

***First Fruits of a Barron Field***<H1>

In Australian literature, Barron Field is at once marginal and foundational. His usual claim to fame is that in 1819 he published the first book of poetry in Australia, a collection entitled *First Fruits of Australian Poetry* and comprised of two poems, which he then republished with four further poems in 1823.<sup>1</sup> Notably, the book was self-published using the official government printer, and bears on its title page the declaration ‘For Private Distribution’.

Field was influential in a range of important matters at a time in the fledgling colony when the vicissitudes of individuals could have highly significant consequences. Foremost, he was a barrister and colonial judge, duties for which he seems not to have been overly enthusiastic or well-regarded.<sup>2</sup> Field was also a wannabe literary critic and historian, a theatre critic for *The Times*, and a friend of Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt. He was a lifelong critic of and enthusiast for the Romantic poets, above all William Wordsworth. His putative *Memoirs of Wordsworth*, however, were scotched by none other than The Poet Himself: ‘After maturely considering the subject, however painful it may be to me, I must regret that I am decidedly against the publication of your *Critical Memoir*’.<sup>3</sup> Despite this setback, Field

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continued his labours as a literary editor. In his dotage, he was responsible for editions of Thomas Heywood and Thomas Legge for the Shakespeare Society.

Field was also an amateur scientist, providing detailed descriptions of the geography, fauna, and flora of the new colony. He was an enthusiastic participant in the colony's various societies, including the Philosophical Society of Australasia and the Society for Aborigines. He edited and introduced the memoirs of a notorious convict, and he contributed to the financial establishment of the colony's first bank.<sup>4</sup> This involved erroneously advising Governor Macquarie that 'the governor had power, under his commission, to grant a charter to the Bank of New South Wales'.<sup>5</sup> We shall return below to what further legal 'errors' Field may have committed in the course of his antipodean duties, as these seem to have had quite extraordinary, if underestimated, effects upon Australia's subsequent history.

Field generally seems to have been considered as a type of colonial Anglican jurist, bumptious and braggadocious, while his poetry was acknowledged more frequently by mockery than by praise.<sup>6</sup> Especially scathing was John Dunmore Lang, who skewers Field at some length in his Byronic 'A Voyage to New South Wales', written in 1822–1823:

<PEx>

'Tis strange to see a Justice turning poet

And writing doggerel verse! 'Tis passing strange!

'Tis wondrous pitiful, Judge Field! I'll show it

From some quotations! You ascend the range

Of Mount Parnassus! Mr Justice, No! it

Will never do! Down! Down! When once the mangle

Of rhyming doth infect a Judge's skin,

He'll scratch for ever if he once begin.<sup>7</sup><PEx>

Whereas Field regularly appears as a marginal, if somewhat tantalising figure in histories of early Australian colonial settlement, his poetry has never become a key reference for Australian poets or their anthologists. Bertram Stevens's classic *An Anthology of Australian Verse* (1906) includes no poems by Field, although its introduction makes passing

reference to them by way of Charles Lamb's review of *First Fruits*: 'one wishes for his [Lamb's] sake that [Field's] verses were more worthy'.<sup>8</sup> In his entry on Australian colonial poetry for *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, Vivian Smith notes only that Field's book is 'still valued for its depiction of the colonial scene and its local flora and fauna', and nominates Field's poem 'The Kangaroo' as 'an exuberant oddity'.<sup>9</sup> Field's work is not among the 'Most anthologised poems' nor is he among the 'Poets with most poems anthologised' tabled in Jim Berryman and Caitlin Stone's study of anthologies of Australian poetry, though he does appear in their list of 'Poets included in six+ anthologies'.<sup>10</sup> Despite being close to Hunt and Lamb, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and even, by some accounts, having their respect, Field still doesn't really rate. There's perhaps something emblematically Australian about such abiding marginality: a parasitic figure lingering attenuated in the borderlands of one of the great periods of European literary history.

Most of the attention to Field has come recently, as poets and critics have returned to his poetry with new eyes. Both David Brooks and Michael Farrell have discussed 'The Kangaroo'; Jaya Savige has emphasised the postmodern and pastoral elements of Field's poems more broadly; and A.D. Cousins and David Higgins have dedicated extended and detailed commentaries to the relationship between Field's situation and his compositions.<sup>11</sup> This somewhat belated 'return to Field as poet' bespeaks a certain transformation – or at least a kind of 'unsettlement'<sup>12</sup> – in the structures of Australian literary criticism.

This transformation involves a general turn in the humanities towards transnational concerns, as well as, more locally, an interest in revisioning Australia's early colonial history. Hence David Higgins writes that 'it is appropriate to see *First Fruits* as a "foundational" Australian text. This is precisely because of its troubled transnationalism.'<sup>13</sup> Field's 'transnationalism' is transacted according to a battery of familiar colonial strategies. In a superb account of *First Fruits*, Cousins writes that Field's poems

<Ex>

form a curious and important instance of a motif which can be seen in many different attempts at national identity-formation, a motif useful in the establishing and maintaining of colonies: *translatio imperii et studii*.

To be more specific, I shall argue that in his *First Fruits* Barron Field ponders a negation of *translatio studii*: the impossibility of translating what is in effect a Wordsworthian vision of nature to the antipodean New World and therefore of imposing comprehensively on that New World an English cultural identity.<sup>14</sup> <Ex>

Cousins contextualises and catalogues Field's attempts at *translatio studii*, examining the priority of Wordsworth as prime precursor; the pressure of the singularity of the colonial site of New South Wales; the inversions and displacements of scientific and aesthetic taxonomy which Field effects; the centrality of allusion in his work; and the work's debouching of romance into satire.

It is then no wonder that Field begins to look not only of his time, but out of his time too. As Savage has asserted, 'Field's "thefts" betray a poetics of appropriation and citation that wouldn't look entirely out of place in a Kenneth Goldsmith class'.<sup>15</sup> If this places Field squarely in the field of uncreative writing, it also returns us at once to a colonial Romantic frame: the first person to insinuate that Field's work has something thief-like about it was Lamb, in a private letter of 1817.<sup>16</sup> Savage cites Lamb's description, in a subsequent review of *First Fruits*, of Field's new residence as an 'inauspicious unliterary Thiefland'<sup>17</sup> and, drawing on the source-hunting of previous scholarship, Savage lists Virgil, Lucretius, William Shakespeare, Joseph Hall, John Milton, John Dryden, Aristotle, Juvenal, and Pliny the Elder among Field's major plunderings. Other booty includes Wordsworth, Coleridge, and John Skelton.

These accounts consider Field's colonial situation, his imperial operations, his Romantic literary techniques, and his figural deployments. Here, I will focus on Field's incessant revisions of his own paratextual apparatus and literary allusions, paying particular attention to his epigraphs and notes. I will suggest that Field's operations of citation show us something not only about the local construction of his poems, but also about their relation to their site and to their putative audiences. Field's citations show us the radical and deranging novelty of Australia to European apprehensions, and the consequences that that novelty has for any putative poeticising. I will suggest that one of the exemplary things about Field's

verses is that they explicitly envision the exception *as* exemplary, in reference to a concatenated canon of European satire. But, precisely because they do so, they risk being read as neither exceptional nor exemplary.

In essence, Field is what we could call a *splitter*: if, as we will see, he is certainly a hair-splitter in his legal and literary pedantry, he is also an heir-splitter in the sense of bifurcating his own literary inheritances; moreover, he presents himself as split in the verses themselves. We need also to underline Field's careful *splitting* in his form of address, between 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' audiences. I will suggest that his esoteric force is revealed in the extremely controlled play of his allusions. A set of poetical and political operations machinated and governed by allusion is key to Field's work, whether explicit or implicit, whether marked by name, image, metre, note, or some other means. As Geoffrey Little has carefully shown, Field was as committed to source-hunting in his reading of others' work as he was to deploying a range of sources in his own.<sup>18</sup> His skills in this regard are, at the very least, creditable: Field was probably the first to assert in print that Coleridge had adapted 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798) from George Shelvocke's *A Voyage Round The World by Way of the Great South Sea* (1726).<sup>19</sup>

Now, source-hunting means one thing for literary scholars, another thing for poets, and something else again for a personage who claims that there are, as yet, no local sources from which and about which he can write. Field also inserts several key allusions as a result of correspondence with friends, for whom they are intended to function as a form of socially ratified homosocial literary exchange, though for other readers they would go unnoticed or remain obscure. Furthermore, for Higgins, who is concerned with Field's allusions in the context of his transnational movements, Field's 'principal method in trying to make the strange sights and feelings of the voyage to New South Wales understandable to his readers is to provide literary quotations'.<sup>20</sup> Citation itself operates as a form of colonial *lingua franca*, attempting to explain and convey the strangeness of a strange land by adverting to strange satirical spots of literature itself. In doing so, as Higgins suggests, such citations efface the indigenous inhabitants, turning them into ciphers of Shakespeare's Poor Tom or Wordsworth's Old Cumberland Beggar rather than attending to their human specificity.

The problem of authority and authorship, priority and primacy, is evidently paramount in such allusions, a problem which the verses explicitly thematise. The volume's first poem, 'Botany-Bay Flowers' opens with precisely this difficulty:

<PQu>

GOD of this Planet! for that name best fits  
 The purblind view, which men of this 'dim spot'  
 Can take of THEE, the God of Suns and Spheres!  
 What desert forests, and what barren plains,  
 Lie unexplor'd by European eye,  
 In what our Fathers call'd *the Great South Land!*  
 Ev'n in those tracts, which we have visited,  
 Tho' thousands of thy vegetable works  
 Have, by the hand of Science (as 'tis call'd)  
 Been gather'd and dissected, press'd and dried,  
 Till all their blood and beauty are extinct;  
 And nam'd in barb'rous Latin, men's surnames,  
 With terminations of the Roman tongue;  
 Yet tens of thousands have escap'd the search,  
 The decimation, the alive-impaling,  
 Nick-naming of GOD'S creatures – 'scap'd it all.  
 Still fewer (perhaps none) of all these Flowers  
 Have been by Poet sung. Poets are few,  
 And Botanists are many, and good cheap.

(FF 1-2)<sup>21</sup><PQu>

The Wordworthianisms, Miltonisms, and Shakespearianisms are immediately evident. The allusions function at every level, from vocabulary through prosody to conceptual distinctions. The apostrophic blank verse opening proposes a distinction between the planetary and the interstellar, identifying the former with local European ignorance of the land. 'Dim spot' is a

direct quote from Milton's masque *Comus*, and it is quickly made clear that *it currently cannot be made clear* whether this spot is 'dim' (dark, dismal) due to European ignorance, because the spot itself is dim, or because the presence of Europeans dims the spot. Australia may even render Europeans dim, obscure to themselves.

Field's scare quotes alert us to the possibility that we are in a place where, as in *Comus*, malevolent sorcery – transformative conjurations – might happen. Yet the Miltonic devilry is quickly bound to a quite different set of allusions, predominantly Wordsworthian. For the sorcery may well be a *scientific* sorcery. Despite European ignorance of *Terra Australis*, the project of colonial science is already well under way: this science (here, indicatively, botany) finds, collects, kills, dissects, preserves, and names its objects. It, moreover, names these murdered and mutilated objects barbarously, that is, with a Babelish confection of Englishmen's names with Latin endings, the renowned binomial nomenclature of Linnaeus. The naming of science proves an ugly and disfiguring misnomination.

In 'The Tables Turned', Wordsworth announces:

<PEx>

Sweet is the lore which nature brings;

Our meddling intellect

Misshapes the beauteous forms of things;

– We murder to dissect.<sup>22</sup><PEx>

Field's use of the word 'dissected' is here apropos: to di-sect is literally to cut in two, if not bi-sect in a geometrical fashion. But the Wordsworthian ambience is patent not only in the key vocabulary, nor in the fact that Field was writing with a mind to send Wordsworth his book, but also in Field's reuptake of the opposition between books ('these barren leaves') and nature, in a place where that opposition is troubled by a deranging nature that *isn't* a dear perpetual place, that doesn't offer any familiar ready wealth, and where there are as yet no books to 'Close up'. Field lays out and complicates received oppositions of knowledge and ignorance, life and death, existence and nomination throughout this poem.

Partially this is because the site of the colony itself is both over-present *and* lacking: it cannot easily be written on because it has not already been written on. For Field, inscription breeds inscriptions, so that the lack of an existing palimpsest is prohibitive. The country's earth is foreign, seething with unknown land and life. It is a place you shouldn't be, a place you don't want to be, a place without any European memory and where history and time themselves are therefore unstable. To be (or to declare oneself to be) the *first* is to be riven by uncertainty and indirection.

As the poem's speaker announces, he is neither truly scientist nor poet, neither discoverer nor creator, neither truth-seeker nor fiction-maker. Instead, he is himself the incompetent mixed metaphor of which he speaks in his verses: a split subject, split in and by his encounter with the land. It is important to underline that Field's verses strongly imply that we are to identify him – Field 'himself' – with the speaker. As already noted, Field is primarily addressing these verses to personal friends and admired acquaintances, who are very aware of his personal situation as a colonial lawyer. Yet the poem also asserts that Field and the poet can only come together by explicitly but negatively denominating him as split, as *neither* this *nor* that, neither for nor against, and unable to make a clear decision for one or the other for reasons essential to his deranging encounter with the Australian flora.

Emphasis is thus placed on the problems of *naming*. 'Botany' – which is here simultaneously the name of a discipline *and* the name of the place in and of which the poem speaks – offers a nomination at once scientific and imperial. It is a discipline-place of the living dead (for example, the pressed flowers) created by and for the living dead (the surnames with Latin terminations). We also find homophonic play with Barron's first name – 'what barren plains' – which has *literally* been depropriated in moving from a proper name to an adjective. Indeed, the little scene that follows the passage cited above – in which Field has an adulterous dalliance with a local flower – restages colonisation as a phantasia of flowers. When he first landed 'on AUSTRALIA's Shore', Field tells us, he fell in love with a particular flower (*epacris grandiflora*, today merged into *epacris impressa*, the common heath). But then he encounters 'Th' Australian "fringed Violet"' (*FF* 3) and changes his tune in 'treason to my wedded Flower' (*FF* 2).

This botanical adultery requires the poet to call on a range of vocabularies and rhythms, from Elizabethan comic whimsy to cutting-edge science. Everything changes: the metre moves from blank verse to irregular four-beat rhyming couplets, and Shakespeare takes over, with allusions to *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Winter's Tale*, and other plays. Homophony and allusion sketch out a deranging event of encounter: the author of the verses, self-professedly split and incompetent, becomes dim to himself in the dim spot of Australia, which he can present only dimly, beyond Milton and Wordsworth, by mobilising the resources of Shakespearean fantasy.

The volume's second poem, 'The Kangaroo', is just as odd. As an epigraph Field offers Virgil's description of the Minotaur: '*Mixtumque genus, prolesque biformis*' ('mixed birth and biform offspring') (*Aeneid*, 6.25). The poem's first stanza runs:

<PQu>

KANGAROO, Kangaroo!

Thou Spirit of Australia,

That redeems from utter failure,

From perfect desolation,

And warrants the creation

Of this fifth part of the Earth,

Which would seem an after-birth,

Not conceiv'd in the Beginning

(For God bless'd His work at first,

And saw that it was good),

But emerg'd at the first sinning,

When the ground was therefore curst; –

And hence this barren wood!

(FF 7)<PQu>

The confronting uniqueness of the kangaroo seems to have expressed itself in a name – *kangaroo* – whose provenance, even today, remains uncertain, as do its orthography and

pronunciation.<sup>23</sup> How even are we to read the first line? The verses that follow could in other contexts be scanned as predominantly clumsy trimeter or tetrameter, which would make it all the more difficult to scan the biform opening line. Should we say KAN-ga-roo, KAN-ga-roo: two dactyls? Or kan-ga-ROO, kan-ga-ROO: two anapaests? Or KAN-ga-ROO, KAN-ga-ROO: a double cretic? Or kan-GA-roo, kan-GA-roo: amphibrachic? Whether bidactyllic or anapaestic or dicretic or amphibrachic, it's clearly not idyllic – even if it's possibly idiotic.

The poem evinces an off-putting arrhythmia of line, stanza, rhyme throughout. The metre could be an irregular anapaestic bimeter, so that, much like the kangaroo's supposedly anomalous 'bounding', the lines leap across syllables of odd number. The anapaest in English is often identified with comic form (for example, in the limerick); it is also notably the inverse of the dactyl, the spine of classical epic. But one could also read the metre as irregular four-beat, and there is a case to be made for a three-beat reading. The poem may well present itself as doggerel lines. And this is precisely the point: for Field the very peculiarity of the kangaroo (as name and creature) puts pressure on received prosody, as it does on received categorisations: it doesn't look or move like anything Europeans are familiar with.

Similarly, 'Australia' may rhyme, at a pinch, with 'failure', but the deliberate uncertainty of the rhyme is surely part of Field's *modus operandi*: how does it have to be pronounced to rhyme, and who can say for sure? Field's use of *Australia* was unusual at the time, when the country was commonly called New Holland and its only British settlements were New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. The publication in 1814 of Matthew Flinders' *A Voyage to Terra Australis* had inspired Macquarie to recommend a change of name to the Colonial Office, so Field's renomination of the entire country as, precisely, 'Australia', is in line with the leanings of the highest colonial administrators.<sup>24</sup> It seems that Australia was not commonly called 'Australia' until at least the late 1820s, and David Brooks has speculated that Field's use of the term is the first found in poetry anywhere.<sup>25</sup> If there may then seem to be a certain blowing with the winds of governmental fashion, there is also something else going on with Field's determined use of the name and its cognates in 'Australian poetry' and 'Austral Harmony'. 'Australia is the land of contrarities, where the laws of nature seem reversed', Field writes in the preface to his *Geographical Memoirs*.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps, then, the same goes for the laws of poetry too?

Whatever else it is, ‘Kangaroo’ is an enigmatic self-portrait, where the self-portraiture is conducted *through* the apparatus, as much as or even more so than in the express sense of the lines themselves. The provenance of the kangaroo can only be understood by Europeans in the terms provided by mythical and literary monstrosities: sphinx, mermaid, centaur, Pegasus, hippogriff. The poem offers a higgledy-piggledy, polylingual, and transnational inventory of European chimeras, forcing Europeans to have recourse to a fiction which, thereby, undoes pretensions to knowledge and, indeed, to museumification. The poem thus reports on the actualisation and *realisation* of imaginative monstrosity; and, in such actualisation, becomes itself existentially belated to the kangaroo:

<PQu>

She had made the squirrel fragile;

She had made the bounding hart;

But a third so strong and agile

Was beyond ev’n Nature’s art;

So she join’d the former two

In thee, Kangaroo!

(FF 8)<PQu>

This stanza is, moreover, well known in Field scholarship as an adaption of Dryden’s encomium on Milton.<sup>27</sup> Further allusions and epigraphs proliferate throughout the editions of *First Fruits*. The 1819 printing prefaces ‘Botany-Bay Flowers’ with two epigraphs, one from Lucretius’s *De rerum natura*, and one from Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor*, while the volume’s title page provides an orienting epigraph for both poems: ‘I first adventure. Follow me who list;/ And be the second Austral Harmonist.’ The 1823 printing then identifies the satirist and clergyman Bishop Joseph Hall (1574–1656) as the author of these two lines; introduces an extract from Robert Herrick’s ‘Discontents in Devon’ (1648) on a separate page; supplements the epigraph to ‘Botany-Bay Flowers’ by Lucretius with a note to an English translation by Mark Akenside; and supplements that poem’s second epigraph, by

Shakespeare, with a citation from Chaucer and an extended citation from George Wither's *Fair Virtue* (1622).

Field's escalating procedures of allusion should inspire us to reopen a question that has rarely been posed: why is *First Fruits of Australian Poetry* called *First Fruits of Australian Poetry* at all? The answer seems self-evident: Field knew that he was writing and publishing the first book of poetry on Australian soil, and he wittily marked this fact in the title. The title conforms to one of the most ancient and banal of literary tropes, which equates poetry with the fruits of *logos* or, more pertinently in this context, with the many fruits of the Bible, and not least of Genesis. The book proposes itself as coming from a soil that has previously been *barren* (that word again), a soil called 'Australian Poetry'. Yet, paradoxically, the book creates through this unprecedented nomination the very soil from which it claims to have emerged.

Yet there is even more to say on this matter. In accordance with his allusive method, I want to explore the resonances which Field's title has with Jonathan Swift's *Tale of a Tub* (1704). Certainly, other scholars have loosely drawn connections between *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and *First Fruits*, but I believe that it is Swift's early religious satire that is more determining here. Let me give some diverse (if circumstantial) evidence to support the claim for an implicit allusion, before drawing out some of its poetic and political implications.

*A Tale of a Tub* was Swift's first satire, written between 1694 and 1697, and first published in 1704.<sup>28</sup> At the time of its writing, Swift was working for Sir William Temple, who had retired to his estate, Moor Park, about which Temple very famously wrote in 'Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or, of Gardening, in the Year 1685' (and in which, naturally, 'good fruits' are an important topic).<sup>29</sup> Now, one of the epigraphs on Swift's title page is *precisely* the same as that which graces 'Botany-Bay Flowers': three lines from the Epicurean Lucretius's *De rerum natura*.<sup>30</sup> In the first edition of *First Fruits*, Field left the tag in Latin; in both subsequent versions, he provided a loose translation by Mark Akenside in a note:

<PEx>

But the love

Of Nature and the Muses bids explore,

Through secret paths erewhile untrod by man,  
 And shade my temples with unfading flow'rs  
 Cull'd from the laureate vale's profound recess,  
 Where never poet gain'd a wreath before.<sup>31</sup><PEX>

Furthermore, in the satirical 'Original Advertisement' that opens *A Tale* we find a list of forthcoming tracts by the same author, including the item 'A Voyage into *England*, by a Person of Quality in *Terra Australis incognita*, translated from the Original'.<sup>32</sup> Later in the book, Swift's narrator writes that the first undertaking of Lord Peter, the avatar of Roman Catholicism, 'was to purchase a large continent, lately said to have been discovered in *Terra Australis incognita*'.<sup>33</sup> The entrepreneurial Peter proceeds to sell this continent again and again at great profit.

The Swift intertext also returns us to the epigraph from Bishop Hall. Swift was of course self-consciously working in Hall's wake as a clergyman and satirist, and as a satirist Hall was the renowned author of a text on *Terra Australis*. As we have seen, Field took care to add 'Adapted from Bishop Hall' to the epigraph on the title page of the second edition of *First Fruits*. Why? Perhaps because he realised that the reference would make the implications of the adapted epigraph clearer, and because those implications were evidently decisive for something that he realised he wished to transmit beyond a small coterie of erudites.

Bishop Joseph Hall (1574–1656) is an extremely interesting figure. His *Virgidemiarum* (1597) opens with the assertion:

<PEX>  
 I first adventure, with fool-hardy might,  
 To tread the steps of perilous despite:  
 I first adventure, follow me who list,  
 And be the second English Satirist.<sup>34</sup><PEX>

Literary historians have not entirely ratified Hall's claim to priority in this regard. As Cousins notes: 'The opening of Hall's *Prologue*, to which Field alludes and which he rewrites, is therefore implicated in two arguments pertinent to *First Fruits of Australian Poetry*.'<sup>35</sup> The first is that Hall is signalling his deference to Spenser, insofar as Hall is acknowledging the heroic, romance, and epical ambitions of the former; the second is that the *Prologue* 'forms part of an implicit argument that the romance mode has had its day and must now be succeeded, supplanted by formal verse satire'.<sup>36</sup> For his part, Field takes up this structure in grafting satire onto Wordsworthian Romanticism: 'perhaps with hybridity in the two poems comes carnivalization; reconciliation does not'.<sup>37</sup> This seems correct, although I wish to add a different emphasis regarding its import for Field's work: following my remarks above regarding Wordsworth, I will not only suggest that, as Spenser is to Hall, Wordsworth is to Field, a prime precursor who cannot be followed due to a transformation in the real circumstances of writing; I will also add that, for Field, Australia is a land in which the satirical has been realised, literalised, thereby undermining the genre's critical *conatus*.

Hall was the author of a number of other important texts concerned with the figure of the new world. Take, for example, *Mundus alter et idem*, a satirical travelogue which, written in the early 1600s, had by 1609 been translated by John Healey as *The Discovery of a New World*.<sup>38</sup> Given that *Mundus alter et idem* is also a clerical satire, we can be assured of three further facts: first, that Hall is functioning as a model for Swift in *A Tale*; second, that Field must have been assiduously collecting references to *Terra Australis incognita* in the course of his reading, which encompassed Hall, Swift, and many more besides; and third, that Field was concerned that readers, or, at least, certain readers, understood that his poems expressly repurposed this satirical tradition in a context which was witnessing the *realisation* of what had been a central satirical trope. The Great Southern Land, *Terra Australis*, was now not just an empty space for the projections of satire, but an only-too-real place.

Yet it wasn't only a real place; its geography, flora, and fauna were so strange that they *literally* realised some of the great fantasies of the very same satirical tradition. Hence Field provides a footnote to 'The Kangaroo': 'The *cygnus niger* of Juvenal is no *rara avis* in Australia; and time has here given ample proof of the *ornythinchus paradoxus* [a now defunct name for the platypus].'<sup>39</sup> The *paradoxus* couldn't be more literal: Field is writing in

and of a *real* Australia, which his forebears treated as an un-real locus for their satires precisely because it was *incognita*, not only unknown but fantasmatic; it now turns out that what they thought was satire (the black swan, for example) is literal and real. In Australia, satyrs – and satire – are real. So satire becomes the only means available for describing the oddities of the site, in which every instance is exemplary because exceptional.

In any case, *First Fruits* and *A Tale of a Tub* present the same epigraph, both provide a sequence of satirical scenes of the southern land, and both offer a shared if telescoped set of literary allusions. *A Tale* is also stuffed with fruit jokes, presumably because of one of the (disputed) etymologies for the word *satire* itself:

<Ex>

Classical Latin *satura* is probably a specific application of *satura* medley.

According to the grammarians *satura* is short for *lanx satura* (lit. ‘full dish’ [...]), which is alleged to have been used for a dish containing various kinds of fruit.<sup>40</sup><Ex>

The formal medley that is satire, its ‘mixed fruits’ status, might suggest that it typically emerges in zones of generic aporia, where both inherited and recently fashioned formal modes seem to be untenable, yet exhaust the field; that is, where it is currently impossible to invent a new poetics. Instead, these pressures induce writers to the self-annihilating self-reflexive assemblage that is satire, in which moral laceration emerges as a symptom of a self-confessed incapacity to reinvent form. As such, satire is often a conservative mode pursued in the form of radical polyvocality: in the present context, we can at least assign such an approach to Hall, Swift, and Field.

Perhaps this recognition does nothing more than reinforce the strongly satirical intent of *First Fruits* – something we already knew. Flowers and kangaroos are not literally fruits, after all. Yet if, in Dr Johnson’s *Life of Swift*, we learn that an overindulgence in fruit produced Swift’s first episode of madness, we also discover that ‘He was employed (1710) by the Primate of Ireland to solicit the queen for a remission of the First Fruits and Twentieth Parts to the Irish Clergy’.<sup>41</sup> For *first fruits* not only denominates the earliest returns on labour;

it is also a *technicus terminus* in ecclesiastical and feudal law, indicating a form of payment ‘usually representing the amount of the first year’s income, formerly paid by each new holder of a feudal or ecclesiastical benefice, or any office of profit, to some superior’.<sup>42</sup> *First fruits*, as Justice Field well knew, is a form of professional income tax paid to the governor. The first self-confessed forms of income tax had been established in Great Britain in 1799.

The implications, however, don’t stop there. Stuart Banner has recently noted that Field had a decisive role in the development of the extraordinary doctrine of *terra nullius*: the contention that colonists were, legally speaking, settling unoccupied land. How this extreme doctrine came to be established in Australia remains a puzzle. After all, there was no question that the land was inhabited by the Australian indigenous peoples; moreover, though the doctrine had been applied in other colonial circumstances, by the eighteenth century the general policy was to acquire land through treaty and contract. The latter were plainly iniquitous, but they did not deny prior habitation.

Banner identifies at least four key factors in this peculiar colonial decree: (1) the land was sparsely inhabited, and much more sparsely than in other places; (2) the British saw no evidence of indigenous cultivation of land; (3) the indigenous peoples were not perceived to be a military risk of the same order as those in North America or New Zealand; and (4) indigenous Australians showed no interest whatsoever in European goods or trade.<sup>43</sup> The early settlers, moreover, were repulsed by the Aborigines’ appearance, comportment, supposed nomadism, and presumed lack of civilisation. According to Banner, then, *terra nullius* was *de facto* already enacted before it was formally declared as doctrine.

*Terra nullius* has been widely considered to be *the fundamental legal doctrine justifying European settlement in Australia*. It is not a minor or marginal fiction. Yet the question remains: how did *terra nullius* ever come to be declared or assumed as doctrine? ‘The first such statement’, Banner writes,

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appears to have been made in 1819, when a dispute arose between Lachlan Macquarie, the governor of New South Wales, and Barron Field, judge of the New South Wales Supreme Court, over whether the Crown, acting

through Macquarie, had the power to impose taxes on the residents of New South Wales, or whether that power was reserved to Parliament, as was the case with taxes imposed on residents of Britain.<sup>44</sup><Ex>

Field declared that the country was Parliament's. If Australia had indeed been invaded, that is, if the British had forcibly displaced a pre-existing people with a recognisable proprietary interest in the land, then Macquarie, as Governor and therefore as direct representative of the Crown in the colony, would have had the power to set taxes on the population. But *because Australia had been freely settled*, as Field argued, then, by legal retroaction, the land could not have been the property of any prior occupant; so that, even though people were already present on the soil when the British arrived, those people had had no proprietary interest in the earth; the British settlers, in bringing labour to the land, thereby made it their own property; therefore, as free settlers, they fell under the jurisdiction of Parliament and not the King; therefore, they could not be taxed by Macquarie.

The first formal statement of *terra nullius* thus derives from a tax dispute between the colonial governor of a penal colony and that colony's self-assured supreme justice, which had *no direct reference to the original inhabitants of the land*. Obviously, fruits as outcomes, as enjoyment, as taxes, above all refer in the history of European law to the primacy of a sedentary *agricultural* civilisation. And as the author of a textbook on William Blackstone, Field knew very well the master's dictum, itself following John Locke's dictum in the second treatise that labour fixes property, that 'the art of agriculture [...] introduced and established the idea of a more permanent property in the soil'.<sup>45</sup>

Just as Field is wrangling with Governor Macquarie over taxation, he produces these poems. *First Fruits* is a name, at once legal and satirical, for exactly the kind of real taxes he refuses to Macquarie, precisely because he believes Australia was settled and not invaded. And if it had been settled – à la logic of the legal fiction – there could have been no owners nor agriculture in the country before that settlement. By the same token, there could have been no culture either – and this is why Field is the first. But here the first culture isn't heroic, romance, or epic poetry – it is satirical. It is the satire of bourgeois tax evasion. Though there

is an abundance of floral life, it is a barren, not a Wordsworthian field, neither agriculture nor culture.

After all, the name *Australia* in Field's poetry is drawn from a modern English tradition of satire. *First Fruits* reflects upon what happens when what was once the satire of imaginary spaces becomes realised and, thereafter, is caught up in the imperialist spaces of futuristic calculations and projections. This is why Field's sources, citations, and allusions are neither simply erudite nor illustrative nor argumentative; they are *exhibitive* and *exemplary*: they draw attention to particular intertexts (Swift, Hall), to their matter (*Terra Australis*), to their genre (satire), and to their divided and paradoxical form of address (that is, to the gap or incapacity vis-à-vis their own site and hence the necessary failure of their propositions and form).

Field's poetry can thereby be understood as at once cruder and more sophisticated than has hitherto been realised. Certainly, previous commentators have decisively shown that Field takes up in a specifically Australian context an erudite history of satire in its High Anglican and legalistic modes, which he repurposes both to establish himself as temporally first in Australian poetry and to render his conservative project impervious to traditional forms of judgements of taste. Field's poems are apoems or false poems, faux-po, in which we discern the paradoxical lettered routines of the legal tax-dodger and entrepreneur as colonial judge.

But these poems go further still. To what or whom is this poetry addressed? Field may have been influenced by Wordsworth throughout his life, but this is not 'a man speaking to men'.<sup>46</sup> *First Fruits* presents the strange poetic address of a juridical non-poet to a divided community of persons and non-persons, some here and some there. Field is thus posing the question: will the local realisation of classical satire inspire unfreedom or freedom, a penal colony on invaded land, or the place for a potential new Athens? Either way, the original dwellers will be given neither choice nor place.

The address is first and foremost to Governor Macquarie: 'this book of satirical poems is all the "first fruits" you'll be getting from me'. The address is next to Field's erudite Romantic friends, Lamb above all, but also to his culture heroes, Wordsworth and Coleridge, who will be able to discern the fun. To the inhabitants of the colony, however, Field says:

‘this is not for you, it’s for “private distribution” only. No fruit for you!’<sup>47</sup> Yet, in subsequent editions of the book, Field disinters (some of) his buried apparatus of satirical erudition, acknowledging that the apparition of this apparatus is a necessary component of the work of colonisation.

Which brings us back to the problematic of historical poetics. Field looks like a man who is eminently capable, as Friedrich Kittler once wrote of the Pentagon’s development of the internet, of far-sighted planning, even in his apparently bumptious meddling with law, agriculture, banking, science, and letters.<sup>48</sup> Field’s disproportionate care for his self-confessedly light verses, his attention to memorials and memorialising, his mashed-up erudite citations, and his ever-aggregating allusive apparatus suggest that he was concerned to transform time into history, to inject his apoems about the absence, or what Jacques Lacan calls the ab-sense, of the site into the site itself. But this apoetry of the non-site is simultaneously the figure of a radical science and a reactionary politics, invoking the singular experiences of the local flora and fauna that necessitated a transformation of European taxonomies, as well as the effacement of human life in the name of bourgeois tax evasion. This is not historical poetics as a contemporary academic discipline concerned with mixing and matching, accessing and assessing historical prosodic theories, but historical poetics as designating places where history is made by poetry – without anybody in that history able to know or even imagine what would become of their poetic judgements.

What makes poetry poetry is an ancient and perennial question radicalised by the English and German Romantics; it is with them that the problematic of the relation of poem and prose becomes internal to poetry itself. This is the problem denominated by form, by the obscurity of what counts as form: rhythm, metre, imagery, rhyme, etc., all come into question as to their mechanism and implications. With Field, the publication of poetry in Australia begins as Romantic apparatchik satire, concatenating and compacting a sequence of literary allusions in order to turn *incognita* into *cognita*, and, in so doing, turning the Other, the monstrosity, into the norm and the priority. The very realisation of Australia as a real fiction, a state, turns out to be the consequence of the globalisation of European satire, which sinks into the barren fields of itself as a time-capsule of disavowed invasion.

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## <H5>Notes<H5>

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- <sup>1</sup> Barron Field, *First Fruits* (Sydney: Printed by George Howe, 1819). Hereafter abbreviated as *FF*. Barron Field, *First Fruits*, 2nd edn (Sydney: Printed by R. Howe, 1823).
- <sup>2</sup> See John McLaren, *Dewigged, Bothered & Bewildered: British Colonial Judges on Trial, 1800-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).
- <sup>3</sup> William Knight (ed.), *Letters of the Wordsworth Family from 1787 to 1855*, 3 vols (New York: Haskell House, 1907), vol. 3, 188.
- <sup>4</sup> See *Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux, written by himself in two volumes*, vol. 1 (London: W. Clowes, 1819). Field's 'Advertisement' at the beginning, signed 'B. F—D. Sydney, New South Wales, 18th May, 1817', is a rhetorical exercise in snide raillery, see pp.xi–xiv. For a pertinent account of early colonial banking, in which Field appears as a real player, see Leanne Johns and Simon Ville, 'Banking Records, Business and Networks in Colonial Sydney, 1817–24', *University of Wollongong Research Online* (2012) (accessed 29 November 2016).
- <sup>5</sup> C.H. Currey, 'Field, Barron (1786–1846)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University); <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/field-barron-2041/text2523> (accessed 19 June 2018).
- <sup>6</sup> See R.G. Howarth, 'Rude Remarks on *First Fruits*', *Southerly*, 6:4 (1945), 42.
- <sup>7</sup> John Dunmore Lang, *Poems: Sacred and Secular: Written Chiefly at Sea, Within the Last Half-Century* (Melbourne: Robert Mackay, 1873), 161.
- <sup>8</sup> Bertram Stevens, *The Golden Treasury of Australian Verse* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1906), xx.
- <sup>9</sup> Vivian Smith, 'Australian Colonial Poetry, 1788–1888: Claiming the Future, Restoring the Past', in Peter Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 74.
- <sup>10</sup> Jim Berryman and Caitlin Stone, 'Australian National Anthologies: A Study of Poems and Poets', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 41:1 (2017), 52–4.
- <sup>11</sup> See David Brooks, 'Field's Kangaroo', *Kenyon Review* (March/April 2017), 29–43; Michael Farrell, 'Affective and Transnational: The Bounding Kangaroo', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, 13:3 (2013), 1–13, and "'Deep Hanging Out": Native Species Images and Affective Labour', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, 17:1 (2017), 1–12; Jaya Savige, "'Creation's Holiday": On Silence and Monsters in Australian

Poetry’, *Poetry*, April 2016, 169–84; A.D. Cousins, ‘Barron Field and the Translation of Romanticism to Colonial Australia’, *Southerly*, 58:4 (1999), 157–74; David Higgins, ‘Writing to Colonial Australia: Barron Field and Charles Lamb’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 32:3 (2010), 219–33.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Farrell, *Writing Australian Unsettlement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Higgins, ‘Writing to Colonial Australia’, 221–2.

<sup>14</sup> Cousins, ‘Barron Field and the Translation of Romanticism’, 157.

<sup>15</sup> Savige, “‘Creation’s Holiday’”, 179.

<sup>16</sup> See Charles Lamb, ‘Distant Correspondents; in a Letter to B. F. Esq. at Sydney, New South Wales’, in *Elia* (London: Edward Moxon, 1836), 237–47; E.V. Lucas (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb* (London: Dent and Sons, Methuen, 1935), vol. 2, 209–211.

<sup>17</sup> [Charles Lamb], Review of Barron Field, *First Fruits of Australian Poetry* (1819), in *Examiner*, 16 January 1820, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey Little, ‘A Lesson in the Art of Poetry: Barron Field and Wordsworth’s Later Revisions’, *AUMLA*, 45 (1976), 189–205.

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Little, “‘The Far Distant Shores Where the Kangaroo Haunts’”: Barron Field’s Voyages and Expeditions’, *Arts: The Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association*, 19 (1997), 75.

<sup>20</sup> Higgins, ‘Writing to Colonial Australia’, 225.

<sup>21</sup> I quote from the 1819 edition; I will later discuss the significance of some of the changes Field made in subsequent editions.

<sup>22</sup> W. Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 106.

<sup>23</sup> See Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver, *The Kangaroo Hunt* (forthcoming). I would like to thank Ken and Rachael for an opportunity to see their manuscript in progress.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis* (London: G. and W. Nicol, Booksellers to His Majesty, 1814).

<sup>25</sup> Brooks, ‘Field’s Kangaroo’, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Field, *Geographical Memoirs*, viii.

<sup>27</sup> To establish Milton’s eminence, Dryden claims the Englishman as the coming together of Homer and Virgil: ‘To make a *Third* she joynd the former two’. See Byrnes, ‘Barron Field – Recultivated’, 14.

- <sup>28</sup> I refer to the late eighteenth-century edition of Swift's works, *Volume XX of the Author's Works. Containing, The Tale of a Tub* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1771).
- <sup>29</sup> See William Temple, *Works of Sir William Temple, Bart* (London: J. Clarke et al., 1757), vol. 3, 195–237.
- <sup>30</sup> A possible source for Field is Titus Lucretius Carus's 1805 bilingual edition *The Nature of Things: A Didactic Poem, Vol. 1*, trans. and ed. John Mason Good (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1805), bk 1, ll. 927–9, p.150. I suspect that this edition is the source for Field's use of Akenside, precisely because the latter's lines are cited in the note in this very volume on page 148.
- <sup>31</sup> Field, *First Fruits* (1823), 3. Another edition of Akenside that Field perhaps drew on was *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside, M.D., with The Virtuoso, A Fragment, Never Before Published and The Life of the Author* (London: W. Suttaby and C. Corrall, 1807) (see p.18), although Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination*, from which the quotation is drawn, was available in a number of editions before 1823.
- <sup>32</sup> Swift, *A Tale*, xxv.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>34</sup> Joseph Hall, *The Works of Joseph Hall* (Oxford: D.A. Talboys, 1839), vol. 12, 156.
- <sup>35</sup> Cousins, 'Barron Field and the Translation of Romanticism', 160.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.
- <sup>38</sup> Sarah Irving, 'Rethinking Corruption: Natural Knowledge and the New World in Joseph Hall's *Mundus Alter et Idem*', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 2:2 (2013), 150–68.
- <sup>39</sup> Field, *First Fruits* (1819), 9.
- <sup>40</sup> 'satire, n.', *OED Online*, June 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/171207?rskey=rltIfg&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed 11 August 2018).
- <sup>41</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (Dublin: J. Moore, 1795), 469.
- <sup>42</sup> 'first fruit, n.', *OED Online*, June 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/70617?rskey=oZAC7w&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed 11 August 2018).
- <sup>43</sup> Stuart Banner, 'Why Terra Nullius? Anthropology and Property Law in Early Australia', *Law and History Review*, 23:1 (2005), 95–131.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

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- <sup>45</sup> William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 9th edn (London: W. Strahan et al., 1783), vol. 2, 7. Cf. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Whitmore and Fenn, 1821), 213; and Barron Field, *An Analysis of Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England, in a Series of Questions, to which the Student is to Frame his Own Answers, by Reading that Work* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1811).
- <sup>46</sup> William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems, in Two Volumes*, 3rd edn (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1802), vol. 1, xxviii.
- <sup>47</sup> In a private communication, the historian of science Simon Schaffer has pointed out to me the research of Jonathan Lamb on Governor Macquarie's deliberate inculcation of scurvy as a kind of biopolitical experiment upon the convicts, by refusing to them the very fruit that by that time the British administrators and physicians knew was crucial to its prevention, raising the question: was the penal colony of NSW also the first concentration camp on earth? See Jonathan Lamb, *Scurvy: The Disease of Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).
- <sup>48</sup> Friedrich Kittler, *Literature, Media, Information Systems: Essays*, ed. and intro. John Johnston (Amsterdam: OPA, 1997), 168.<N>