Colonial Hauntings: Settler Colonialism and the Abject in Kenneth Cook's *Fear Is the Rider*[1]

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Kenneth Cook is perhaps a lesser-known name in Australian literature. While Ted Kotcheff's 1971 film adaptation of Cook's debut novel *Wake in Fright* (1961), picturing the descent of a Sydney teacher into madness in a remote outback town, has achieved cult status among cineastes, the book itself has received relatively little attention. Apart from *Wake in Fright*, Cook wrote seventeen other novels and many more short stories (see author record), but his early death at the age of 57 in 1987 cut short his writing career. Almost thirty years after the author's death, however, a hitherto unknown novel by Cook was discovered and, in 2016, published under the title *Fear Is the Rider*. With its bleak depiction of the Australian outback, the newly discovered novel echoes *Wake in Fright* in many ways, but it is more than simply a Gothic narrative about the Red Centre. In fact, as I suggest in this article, one of its main interests is settler colonialism. In this context, drawing on Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject, I argue that *Fear Is the Rider* constructs Australian settler colonialism as an abject structure by envisioning it as something that, despite efforts to do so, cannot be banished and instead haunts the nation uncomfortably. The narrative of *Fear Is the Rider* centres on the pervasiveness of colonialist structures and discourses and in this way eventually provokes readers to question them.

Theoretical Considerations: Settler Colonialism and Abjection

In recent years, the field of settler colonial studies has emerged as a distinct area of scholarly research. Its main aim is to consider the conditions under which settler colonialism could develop. Settler colonialism, in this line of thought, is a distinct form of colonialism. In contrast to other manifestations of colonialism, as Patrick Wolfe has pointed out, it is not guided by an interest in exploiting native populations economically (1). Rather, the eventual goal of settler colonial societies is to exterminate Indigenous populations and suppress any traces that would give away the non-primacy of the colonisers (Veracini, 'Introduction' 4; Wolfe 2). For Wolfe, settler colonialism is, therefore, 'a structure not an event' (2), since the intention of the invaders is to normalise their presence in the colonised areas. In this sense, its aim is 'to ultimately supersede the conditions of its operation' (Veracini, '*Settler Colonial Studies*' 3). Another crucial discrepancy between settler colonialism and 'exploitative' colonialism concerns the question from where the colonial endeavour emanates. While, as Lorenzo Veracini points out, 'settler colonialism constitutes a circumstance where the colonising effort is exercised from *within* the bounds of a settler colonising political entity, colonialism is driven by an expanding metropole that remains permanently distinct from it' (*Settler Colonialism* 6). Yet, this difference does not mean that the two represent irreconcilable opposites. In fact, as Veracini himself argues, Australia is an example of how a colonial society can become a settler colonial society over time. Though it was founded as a colonial outpost governed from Britain, the wish to part from the metropole that began to be articulated in the nineteenth century marked its transition to a settler colonial society (Veracini, 'Turner's' 307). As such, Australia gradually became home for the settlers. In this context, Sarah Heinz has noted the ambivalent quality of 'settler homemaking' (1). Even though, on the one hand, it 'depends on the disturbance of Indigenous Australians' homelands via dispossession, exclusion and genocide,' on the other

hand, 'it equally depends upon the creation of a white settler subject that is presented as innocent' (Heinz 1–2). In other words, even though the eradication of Indigenous populations is most important to the settler colonial endeavour, the actual processes of extermination remain unacknowledged. At the same time, the aim of settler colonial society to fully overcome its own conditions is illusory. After all, as Veracini rightly recognises, 'unsettling anxieties remain, and references to a postcolonial condition appear hollow as soon as indigenous disadvantage is taken into account' ('*Settler Colonial Studies*' 3). Indigenous critics indeed often point out how colonial structures persist with regard to the position of Indigenous people (Weaver 223). Aileen Moreton-Robinson, for instance, argues that Australia is not 'postcolonial but … *postcolonizing*' (30), since Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still suffer under ongoing colonialism—a proposition with which other Indigenous scholars and writers agree (see Lucashenko; Scott). *Fear Is the Rider*, as I will discuss in my textual reading, is well aware of the contradictory conditions of settler colonialism, especially the problematic relationship between its ultimate goal of dissociating itself from its originary violence, on the one hand, and the legacy that this violence nonetheless leaves behind, on the other.

To grasp the specific ways in which Cook's novel represents settler colonialism, Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject proves particularly helpful. Her conceptualisation of abjection is borne out of her preoccupation with specifically Lacanian theory. For her, the abject 'is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object' (Kristeva 4). In this sense, it 'is the expression of both a division (between the subject and the body) and a merging (of self and Other, the social)' (Gross 92). It blurs the boundaries between subject and object, between inside and outside. Kristeva focuses on the body and identifies the abject in particular with bodily fluids such as 'tears, saliva, feces, urine, vomit, and mucus,' which 'cannot be totally expelled or rejected' (Bouson 4). In fact, as is typical of abjection, these fluids 'haunt the edges of the subject's identity with the threat of disruption or even dissolution' (McClintock 71). Such an understanding of the abject is productive for a reading of *Fear Is the Rider* in that it can account for how the text constructs the eventual aim of settler colonialism to overcome its conditions as utopian. Just as it is impossible for the subject to fully repudiate the bodily fluids through which it is constituted, Cook's novel pictures settler colonial Australia as being in the end unable to distance itself permanently from colonialist discourses, since it is only through them that it has come into being in the first place. How the text does this will be the focus of my subsequent textual analysis.

Problematic Beginnings: The Outback, Settlers and the White Settler Colonial Gaze

With its bleak portrayal of the outback, Kenneth Cook's best known novel *Wake in Fright* is commonly associated with the mode of the Gothic, and specifically the antipodean Gothic (Haynes 192; Lynch 77; Turcotte 'Postcolonial' 205). *Fear Is the Rider*, as will be discussed, continues this tradition. Set in the Australian centre, the narrative revolves around a young man, John Shaw, who, in the desert heat on a notoriously dangerous track, comes across a desperate woman all alone who asks for his help. An analepsis lets the reader know that Shaw and the woman, Katie, have already met the day before. Katie is a journalist who wants to photograph 'some Aboriginal carvings' (*FItR* 10)[2] in the desert; Shaw is on his way from Sydney to Adelaide to start a new job in the South Australian capital (*FItR* 8). After this information is offered, the narrative returns to the main plot line. A monster, she tells him, has got hold of her car and is now chasing her. Katie joins Shaw and both try to escape from the mysterious creature, but Shaw's car, in contrast to Katie's four-wheel drive, performs badly in

the outback environment and the distance to the next inhabited place is long. The monster seems to be particularly cruel, instantly killing people whom it comes across on its path of destruction. Katie and Shaw's attempt at flight seems hopeless until, eventually, they stumble across sand dunes and manage to kill the monster there. They return to the outback town from which they have set out and, at the end of the novel, everything has returned to a state where it seems as if nothing has happened; all traces of the dead monster have vanished.

As this short summary shows, Douglas Kennedy is right when he notes in his foreword to the novel that '[t]he plot is simplicity itself' (vii). Jacqueline Kent, Cook's widow, may also have a point when she, in her review of the novel, asserts that *Fear Is the Rider* 'is probably not the best of Cook's novels.' Indeed, the novel might not represent the pinnacle of Australian fiction, but it is a valuable literary engagement with the nation's colonial legacy. This engagement is enabled through the narrative's Gothic mode. After all, as Gerry Turcotte has pointed out, '[f]rom its inception, the Gothic has dealt with fears and themes which are endemic in the colonial experience: isolation, entrapment, fear of pursuit and fear of the unknown' ('Australian' 11).

Consider the spatial setting of the novel. On the one hand, it reflects Cook's interest in the outback and continues the narrative of the unforgiving Australian centre that is so characteristic of his oeuvre. At the same time, it provides important insights for my consideration of the novel in the context of settler colonialism. Already in its second sentence, the narrative foregrounds the apparently barbarous conditions of the outback: 'The temperature was fifty degrees centigrade, there wasn't a house within two hundred kilometres and a girl was running out of the scrub' (*FItR* 1). Like *Wake in Fright*, the text repeatedly returns to the image of the inhospitable Australian centre: '[t]he heat was lethal' (*FItR* 3) and '[t]he desert is many different worlds. … The only constant is the immense isolation. The isolation and the eternal killing sun' (*FItR* 84). This isolation becomes evident when the narrative attempts to locate the setting in geographical terms: 'A girl running under the deadly sun, out there, two thousand kilometres west of Sydney, fifteen hundred south of Darwin, a thousand north of Adelaide' (*FItR* 1). What is striking here is how the narrative does not situate the events in a local context but uses distance from large Australian cities, all situated on the coast, to locate where Shaw is. By being unable to describe the desert without referring to the cities, the text constructs Australia's relationship to its interior as uneasy. The outback is indeed a curious space. On the one hand, as David Carter has rightly observed, 'the desert landscapes of the Red Center,' rather than the bush, 'now must fully signify the nation' (51). For Roslynn D. Haynes, this shift has had the effect of 'liberat[ing] Australian landscape and consciousness from its subservience to European dominance' (6). Yet, as Haynes herself has noted, such a re-evaluation of the Australian centre has perhaps been driven most by the desire of the tourism industry to market Australia to travellers from overseas (6). For many settler Australians, on the other hand, the outback as a space continues to be foreign. Cook's novel perpetuates the idea that Shaw and Katie are in the wrong spot and in this sense makes use of a typical Gothic trope according to which characters find themselves in unknown and typically unfavourable surroundings (Scott and Biron 314). By taking Sydney, Darwin, and Adelaide as reference points to describe the outback setting, rather than acknowledging its environmental specificity, its Otherness, *Fear Is the Rider* assumes what Django Paris calls the 'white settler colonial gaze'—the tendency to view 'whiteness as the norm' (218). The text creates a distance between the large agglomerations of Australia's population, where the nation's white settler colonial legacy manifests itself perhaps most clearly, and the seemingly harsh and unforgiving outback, a vision that is, however, itself a product of an intrinsically settler colonial viewpoint. Both the

relativity and preposterousness of the notion of isolation are, then, an effect of the white settler colonial gaze that is normalised and whose contingencies therefore remain unacknowledged.

In *Fear Is the Rider*, the white settler colonial gaze manifests itself through Katie and Shaw, both of whom represent settler Australia more generally. Cook's novel emphasises this when it notes at the beginning that '[t]hey were people from the same environment sending out signals to each other in this alien territory' (*FItR* 9). For the text, this is primarily a sign of their shared class status: 'Each of them knew instinctively that the other depended more on family money than their own earnings, at present, and because he was driving a new car and she was driving a very well-equipped four-wheel-drive vehicle, that their respective family money was not meagre' (*FItR* 9). Still, even though similarities between Katie and Shaw exist first and foremost in terms of their material wealth, they are not limited to wealth. Rather, through their class positions, Cook's novel also marks them ethnically as settler Australians. In this regard, the text shows how material wealth and ethnic position frequently intersect. At this point, however, the novel does not offer a critique of this circumstance. Rather, the narrative perpetuates a precarious settler consciousness that does not question its complicity in the dispossession of Indigenous Australians and the continuation of settler colonial discourses.

Settler Colonialism as the Abject: The Monster in *Fear Is the Rider*

As representatives of settler Australia, Katie and Shaw venture out into what to them seems a foreign space. Soon, they come across a strange creature that they are not able to describe. It is unclear how to best identify it. For Katie, it is 'a man, wild, a savage … a dreadful man' (*FItR* 19). The term 'savage' identifies the beast in decisively colonialist terms and aligns it with how early European settlers have made sense of Indigenous peoples worldwide. Yet, while the clothes that it wears 'made it human,' its 'stench was animal' (*FItR* 22–23). Not only does it, therefore, transgress the boundary between the apparently civilised and the barbaric, it also transgresses the boundary between human and animal in that it is neither one nor the other. Like Kristeva's notion of the abject, it is both Self and Other, something that the two main characters simultaneously can and cannot make sense of.

The appearance of this being in Cook's text is curious. While monsters form an integral part of the European Gothic tradition, they are largely absent in the Australian context, where 'there is nothing to fear but space itself' (Scott and Biron 317). In this respect, *Fear Is the Rider* differs from other Australian Gothic texts such as *Wake in Fright*, in which the protagonist, John Grant, is not so much confronted with a physical monster as with the outback and its inhabitants, which assume monstrous characteristics. At the same time, Cook's monster in his later text is an effect of the land, a point that *Fear Is the Rider* shares, for instance, with the more recent film *Wolf Creek* (2005). In *Wolf Creek*, the central character Mick Taylor, a psychopath who kills several backpackers, embodies the repressed side of the bushman myth and through this becomes an important representation of settler colonialism.

Like Taylor, the creature in *Fear Is the Rider* is portrayed as utterly destructive, killing three people in the course of the narrative. Against the background of settler colonialism, it is perhaps telling that its first victim is an Aboriginal man, Jimmy, who does not believe Katie and Shaw when they say they are being chased by a monster and refuses to sell his gun to the two (*FItR* 60, 64). His death serves as an apt reminder that Indigenous people were the first to be affected negatively by settler colonialism and continue to be so into the present moment. In contrast to Jimmy, the other two victims are white: an elderly couple, Jimmy's employers, who own a hotel that offers the only apparent sanctuary for Shaw and Katie in the remote part of the

outback where the novel is set. The construction of the hotel as a potential refuge is significant in that it departs from the European Gothic tradition, in which the Gothic is often associated with buildings as sites of danger which characters enter at their peril (Scott and Biron 315). Here, by contrast, in line with the Australian tradition, the couple's home promises to serve as a safe haven from the horrors of the land. Yet, for Katie and Shaw, this is more a desire than a reality, since, instead of aiding them, the two elderly characters want them to leave. When Shaw asks for their help, the woman simply rejects his request: '"[We could help you] if we want to go to the trouble of starting the generator," said the old lady, "but frankly, young man, we don't. We just wish you'd go away and let us go to bed"' (*FItR* 147). The woman does not understand Shaw's concerns and, perhaps even more importantly, does not in any way want to engage with him. In this respect, within the narrative she represents a white Australia that has not yet recognised how settler colonialism, as an abject structure, cannot simply be ignored, precisely because it constitutes the self in the first place. Her attempt to banish that which cannot be banished therefore cannot succeed. Through her eventual death, then, the narrative points to the futility of such behaviour (*FItR* 153).

The monster's embodiment of settler colonialism as abject is most evident in a scene towards the end of the novel that, at first glance, may seem misplaced. After leaving the station where the elderly couple is killed, Katie and Shaw arrive at a bewilderingly unfamiliar spot. It is a 'strange, silent place' that lies before them 'like the ruins of some ancient temple among the trees' (*FItR* 175). Both immediately notice that 'each rock face was covered with Aboriginal paintings' (*FItR* 175). As becomes clear, the place has previously been inhabited by Aboriginal people. In this context, the text's diction, in particular its use of the word 'temple,' is striking, since it evokes associations with well-known ancient cultures such as ancient Greece or Egypt. Here, *Fear Is the Rider* does not represent Australia's Indigenous people as primitive hunter-gatherers—a construction that has been as untrue as it has been pervasive (Moore et al. 55; Pascoe 13–67). Rather, it suggests an image of a highly complex culture that could rival some of the most respected ancient cultures globally. Importantly, this seems to be at odds with the earlier dismissive portrayal of the desert as barren and unforgiving. Now, at last, the novel openly challenges such an understanding by disclosing the narrowness and bias of the white settler colonial gaze through its recognition of the productivity of Indigenous cultures.

When Shaw and Katie take a closer look, they notice a painting that stands out from the rest. In it, '[t]wo male figures were confronting each other on the rock face. One was much larger than the other. There were white lines around his head and face that could have been hair and beard. The smaller figure had something in its hands, possibly a stick or a spear. The other held above its head a weapon that was unmistakably an axe' (*FItR* 177). Both immediately recognise the larger figure as the creature that is chasing them. Through its references to 'a stick or a spear' that the 'smaller figure' holds, the text explicitly constructs her/him as Indigenous. At the same time, the reference to the 'axe' that the other is carrying does not preclude that he too is Indigenous. After all, archaeological evidence suggests that Australian Indigenous cultures were at the forefront of using axes (see Hiscock et al.). Yet, note that this context alludes to '*white* lines' (my emphasis). It is true that the narrative suggests that they represent 'hair and beard,' but, importantly, this is only Shaw and Katie's interpretation, which is stressed linguistically through their past-tense deduction 'could have been.' By emphasising the contingencies of such an explanation, the text does not present a fixed meaning of the adjective 'white' here, but instead triggers readers to put this reference in a broader context. One of the most immediate associations, at least in the spatial context of the passage being set at an Aboriginal site, is to think of white in the context of race. Following this line of thought provides one more indication that the figure can be productively read as a manifestation of

settler colonialism, a reading that the text foregrounds by emphasising that the 'white' creature 'was much larger than the other.' The size difference, then, does not merely indicate the monster's physical height, but also metaphorically points to the dominance and destructiveness of settler colonialism.

Such a reading is supported by the fact that it is an Indigenous painting that shows this scene. Shaw is mesmerised by it and repeatedly exclaims: 'It's an old painting,' 'It's an Aboriginal painting.' 'It's an old Aboriginal painting . . .' (*FItR* 177). His repetitions foreground first the age of the painting and then its cultural background and finally both at once—and this has two immediate effects. Firstly, it reveals how, in contrast to what most of the characters and perhaps readers alike have thought, the creature that Shaw and Katie have witnessed is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, as I have already observed, Indigenous peoples worldwide were the first to be impacted by the enterprise of settler colonialism. Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, it indicates how the local Aboriginal people hold an advantage over the two white protagonists of the novel in that they have known of the danger of the monster all along. While settlers cannot see the impact of settler colonial structures precisely because of their abject character, Indigenous people can. In this sense, the text emphasises how non-Indigenous people, personified by Katie and Shaw, can learn from Indigenous cultures, embodied by the painting.

The paintings also point to the brutality of settler colonialism more explicitly. At one point, the text notes how the paintings 'seemed to declare that they had nothing to do with these people, that the paintings themselves were the inhabitants and these strangers were of no consequence, should not be there, would not be there for long' (*FItR* 176). Here, it is as if the paintings were speaking themselves, foregrounding the stark opposition between themselves, on the one hand, and the white visitors on the other. Textually, the reference to 'these people' stands out, since its vagueness suggests that it does not merely refer to Katie and Shaw in particular. Rather, considering their shared ethnic status as Anglo-Celtic Australians, it addresses settlers as a whole. As such, the narrative suggests, 'these people'—settlers—are not welcome. In *Fear Is the Rider*, Shaw and Katie do leave the sacred site, but on a more general level, the insistence that settlers 'should not be there, would not be there for long' has hitherto seemed to have gone unheard. In fact, as I have discussed earlier, settler colonialism typically holds the opposite position—that it is the Indigenous population that will come under threat. The pugnacious and even aggressive tone of the text, then, clearly challenges such an idea of settler colonial societies and implies that settlers, not Indigenous peoples, are in the wrong location, in this case not merely in the desert, but the whole continent. Here, the roles of Indigenous and settler Australia are reversed for it is the former that, in a self-confident manner, tells the latter to leave. While, at the beginning of the novel, the white settler colonial gaze is normalised and therefore unconsciously taken for granted, *Fear Is the Rider* now highlights its historical contingency by recognising the special position of settlers explicitly. In this way, Cook's novel hints at the need to challenge settler colonial structures.

At this point, it is necessary to consider the passage in the context of the novel as a whole. *Fear Is the Rider* presents a largely chronological narrative that, apart from the beginning where it describes how Shaw comes to rescue Katie after she has fled the monster, chronicles what happens between Shaw's arrival in the outback and his killing of the mysterious creature. As the narrative progresses, the situation for the protagonists becomes increasingly hopeless and the most important question that hangs over the text is whether they can eventually escape. With this in mind, the whole passage relating to their visit to the Aboriginal site seems to fit uneasily in the text. After all, it does not in any way advance the plot in this action-packed

narrative. However, at the same time, it is the only scene in the entire novel that in any way reflects on the origins of the monster. It does not explain its existence, but the insistence with which the text associates the monster with the misery of Aboriginal people strengthens my reading of its relationship to settler colonialism. Importantly, however, for the novel, settler colonialism is also shown to have negative consequences for the settlers. In a society that only came into being through Indigenous dispossession, questions of rightful ownership can potentially never be resolved. Rather, these questions haunt the nation and—keeping in mind McClintock's point about the ability of the abject to upset the self—disturb notions of settler belonging that do not take into account Indigenous disadvantage. Katie and Shaw become aware of this exactly at the point when they visit the Aboriginal site.

The interdependence between Cook's monster and settler colonialism becomes more obvious when the reader moves beyond the borders of the narrative itself, while still remaining within the boundaries of the novel. In a short 'author's note' appended to the narrative, Cook explicitly reflects on the figure of the monster. Here, he recognises the long history of creatures similar to his Feral Man in European and Middle Eastern cultures (*FItR* 195–96). As Cook notes, '[t]raditionally, the Feral Man has had a single prey—man' (*FItR* 196). This summarises the workings of settler colonialism particularly well, showing how Cook's novel addresses the violence of the settler colonial endeavour.

Fear Is the Rider, then, explicitly engages with the issue of violence, which has been a major preoccupation for Kenneth Cook and with which he has dealt extensively in many of his texts. In 1977, Cook gave an interview in which he foregrounds the importance of violence in his oeuvre (Cook, 'Interview' 80). For him, violence 'is simply evil' (Cook, 'Interview' 80). The monster of *Fear Is the Rider* epitomises such a conception of violence. In this interview, Cook also notes his interest in the issue of 'guilt in a society' (Cook, 'Interview' 81). For him, guilt manifests itself in individuals but resides in a society. Cook says: 'You can home in on this which became so terribly obvious and which destroyed to a large extent any form of moral coherence in argument during the Vietnam war when you had society, this Australian society, for the first time being sheerly, unequivocally guilty, and nothing happened. Everyone was going around, living and all the normal things' (Cook, 'Interview' 81).

For Cook, the Vietnam war is one instance that illustrates how violence works in and through society. Yet, in Australia, it is the settler colonial system itself through which violence manifests most powerfully. On the one hand, settler colonial structures may seem to have little impact on the general population. Still, it is these structures that make the existence of the general population, i.e. the settlers, possible in the first place and they do so only through violence against those who are unable to occupy a mainstream position. There is no recognition of the violence of the abjection of settler colonial structures, which continue to shape the Australian social, political and legal environment. The 1992 *Mabo* decision may be a case in point. It stipulates that '[a] native title which has ceased with the abandoning of laws and customs based on tradition cannot be revived for contemporary recognition' ('Mabo v Queensland' par. 66). Here, as Elizabeth A. Povinelli has rightly noted, 'indigenous subjects are called on to perform an authentic difference in exchange for the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state' (6). This is a form of violence from which settlers still profit at the expense of Indigenous Australians, even if they do so largely unconsciously.

In *Fear Is the Rider*, a mysterious and destructive creature points to this violence of settler colonialism as a pervading structure. Keeping in mind that Shaw eventually triumphantly kills the beast, such a reading could lead to the highly problematic conclusion that Australia has

moved beyond colonialism, a proposition that, as I have already noted before, many Indigenous people rightly oppose strongly. Perhaps, however, the killing of the monster is more an expression of hope, outlining something that *could* be, rather than something that already *is*. After all, one must not forget that Katie and Shaw are the only characters in the novel who took the danger of the monster seriously and they are similarly the only ones that survive their contact with it. Their fight with the monster, then, represents and emphasises the need to fight settler colonialism. At the same time, the fact that the monster disappears into the land and becomes part of it emphasises the novel's point that Australia cannot readily dissociate itself from settler colonialism. The monster becomes Australia and Australia becomes the monster, precisely because settler colonialism, as Kristeva's abject, is intrinsic to the idea of Australia. *Wake in Fright*, too, shows how Australia cannot be thought independent of settler colonialism, though, at the end Grant is more or less reconciled with the inhabitants of the outback. He understands that as 'much as he may wish to set himself apart on the grounds of culture and education, he has proven to be as capable of carnal, base savagery as any local' (Stadler 345). *Fear Is the Rider* lacks such a conciliatory ending. In contrast to Cook's earlier novel, it rejects any form of closure. In this way, the text highlights how the combat against settler colonialism as an abject structure may possibly never be won, but it still articulates the necessity to question settler colonial structures and discourses.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that in *Fear Is the Rider*, settler colonialism is an abject structure. Although, at the beginning, the novel uncritically reproduces the white settler colonial gaze, in the course of the narrative the text's engagement with settler colonialism becomes more critical. In particular, Cook's monster comes to represent settler colonialism in terms of abjection. In line with the Kristevan notion of the abject that denotes something which constructs the self, but from which the self incessantly wants to distance itself, the monster becomes a symbol of how Australia can only be what it is through the perpetuation of settler colonial structures. Ongoing attempts to consciously ignore persisting settler colonial structures therefore have to fail. As such, the monster reminds the text's characters and readers alike of the haunting character of settler colonialism. At the same time, the text does not suggest that one simply has to endure the pervasiveness of settler colonial structures for lack of viable alternatives. Instead, by making readers aware of the ubiquity of these structures, it may eventually inspire readers to challenge settler colonial discourses and question their own positions within the nation. Considering the increasingly urgent need for such questioning over recent years, a reappraisal of Kenneth Cook's 2016 *Fear Is the Rider* is perhaps timely.

NOTES

[1] I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.
[2] In my in-text references, I refer to *Fear Is the Rider* as *FItR*.

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