THE POSTCOLONIAL GHOST STORY

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Let us begin by noting that Australia's postcolonial condition is for the most part a consequence of claims made upon it — land claims, compensation claims, and so on — by its Aboriginal people. It would be possible to describe Aboriginal people at this point in Australia's modern history as *charismatic*, in their capacity to mobilise forces much larger than their "minority" status would suggest. When a claim is made on a sacred site, this feature is especially apparent: a government can look forward to losing millions of dollars through legal procedures that invariably bring together a "smorgasbord" (as one newspaper described it) of interest groups over a protracted period of time. In this climate, Aborigines certainly continue to receive sympathy for what they do not have — good health, adequate housing, and so on and yet at the same time they draw resentment from white Australians because they seem to be claiming more than their "fair share". We have elsewhere described this double-headed view of Aborigines as lacking on the one hand, and yet appearing on the other hand to have *too much*: too much land, too much national attention, too much "effect" (see Gelder and Jacobs, 1995b). It is surely a strange irony to hear white Australians these days — including some maverick Federal politicians — describing Aborigines as more franchised, more favoured, than they are. The benign side of this kind of racism works itself out in various polemics by white Australians which turn to Aboriginal spirituality as a way of healing a non-Aboriginal malaise (for example, Tacey 1995). Again, Aborigines are seen to have what "we" do not have: spirituality, sociality, charisma, cohesion: something extra.

We can nominate two important precursors which speak to this strange modern predicament. The sociologist Emile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915), drew an intimate connection between spirituality — religion — and sociality, using available material on Australian Aborigines to illustrate the point. For Durkheim, "primitive" religion provides the paradigm for modern society in the sense that it establishes a notion of the *social* — so that, from a certain point of view, the "primitive" and the modern ("the man of to-day") are more alike than one might at first imagine. Durkheim describes modernity in terms of "the development of luxury", as if it stands in a kind of superstructural relationship to the more "elementary" features of the "primitive" (Durkheim 1976:6). Yet even this distinction is compromised, as when he notes that "primitive" religion can *itself* be a "luxurious" thing: "it is not equivalent to saying that all luxury is lacking to the primitive" (ibid.: 6n). So modernity is seen to have something extra, something more than the "primitive" — which is lacking. And yet there is this concession which suggests that the "primitive" does *not* lack, that it, too, has that something extra which otherwise defines modernity. The paradox of this position is nicely expressed in Durkheim's subsequent description of "the lower religious" as "rudimentary and gross" (ibid.: 8). At first glance, such a description would seem simply to stabilise the "primitive" status of Aboriginal religion. But in fact, these two words flatly contradict each other. "Rudimentary" means

"underdeveloped" or "elemental", and maintains this sense that "primitive" religion is not modern. But "gross" means "luxuriant" or "flagrant" or "excessive": it has quite the opposite effect. In other words, this description suggests lack and plenitude *at the same time*, both distinguishing the "primitive" from the modern and yet allowing it to overflow *into* modernity on the grounds that it, too, can be a "luxurious" thing. We can write the following equation for this strange paradox: the "primitive" is (not) modern. And this is not dissimilar to the contradiction that underwrites postcolonial racism: that one (i.e. a minority culture, Aborigines) can lack and have that "something extra" at the same time.

Our second precursor for thinking through this strange paradox is Sigmund Freud's influential essay, ""The 'Uncanny'" (1919), published just four years after Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Freud's concern is also with the (dis)entanglement of the "primitive" and the modern, the past and the present. It is addressed primarily to the psyche, but it also speaks directly to the question of one's place in the world, attending to anxieties which were symptomatic of an on-going process of realignment in post-War Europe. It is well known that Freud elaborates the "uncanny" by way of two German words whose meanings, which at first seem diametrically opposed, in fact circulate through each other. These two words are: *heimlich*, which Freud glosses as "home", a familiar or accessible place; and *unheimlich*, which is unfamiliar, strange, inaccessible, unhomely (Freud 1987:342-7). An "uncanny" experience may occur when one's home — one's place — is rendered somehow and in some sense unfamiliar; one has the experience, in other words, of being in place and "out of place" *simultaneously*. This happens precisely at the moment when one is made aware that one has unfinished business with the past, at the moment when the past returns as an "elemental" force (and let us signal our interest in ghosts here through this word: "elemental") to haunt the present day. Freud's "uncanny" can be applied directly to conditions in postcolonial Australia, in particular after the Mabo decision in 1992 and the subsequent anxieties about who might come to own what. An Aboriginal claim to land is quite literally a claim concerning unfinished business, a claim which enables what should have been laid to rest to overflow into the otherwise "homely" realm of modernity. In this moment of decolonisation, what is "ours" is also potentially, or even always already, "theirs" — an aspect of the ongoing recovery of Aboriginal identity in the modern scene of postcolonial Australia. The past returns to the present as the think which was lacking but which — when it *does* return - then functions as that "something extra". An Aboriginal claim for land or for a sacred site (especially when it happens to be rich in mineral deposits) is often represented quite literally in this way, as something the nation cannot afford: a "luxury".

We have elsewhere (Gelder and Jacobs 1995a) used an evocative word to describe this return and the effects it generates, a word lifted from a footnote in Jacques Derrida's seminal essay "Diff_rance" (1970): *solicit*. Here, Derrida alerts us to some of the meanings embedded in the kind of structure which involves one thing (e.g. the past) *soliciting* another thing (e.g. the present) — when *solicit* is taken as an activating verb (Derrida 1982:16). But let us give a fuller picture of this word's activating possibilities here. It can mean, firstly, "to incite", "to allure",

"to attract" — definitions which rightly draw attention to the seductive features of Aboriginal spirituality, sociality, etc. for many modern non-Aboriginal Australians. But there are other, less benign meanings embedded in this word: "to disturb", "to make anxious", "to fill with concern". We can also cite a more dramatic definition of *solicit* given by Derrida's translator: "to shake the whole, to make something tremble in its entirety" (ibid.: 16n). Let us note that an Aboriginal claim for a sacred site, for example, can indeed work to "shake" the entire country, to unsettle the regulative, homely economies of a "settler" nation. One could equally as well read this force in a positive way, of course, as a way of inducing the kind of realignment of power that accompanies decolonisation. In this context, we should remember the more obvious meaning of the word *solicit:* "to conduct (a lawsuit)", "to press or represent a matter", "to transact or negotiate". This is a real feature of Aboriginal claims to land and sacred sites in Australia, which we always conducted through the law courts and which precisely involve transactions and negotiations — between the one and the other, the past and the present, Aborigines and modernity.

Let us just indicate some of the uses to which the "uncanny" can be put in the context of postcolonial Australia. We often speak of Australia as a "settler" nation — but the "uncanny" can remind us that a condition of *unsettled-ness* folds into this often taken-for-granted mode of occupation. We often imagine a (future) condition of "reconciliation", and indeed, a great deal is invested in the packaging of this image as a means of selling it to the nation - but the "uncanny" can remind us of just how unreconcilable this image is with itself. It is not simply that Aboriginal and white Australians will either be reconciled with each other or they will not; rather, these two possibilities (reconciliation; the impossibility of reconciliation) co-exist and flow through each other in what is often a productively unstable dynamic. Another, not unrelated, binary structure at work in contemporary Australia can also be mentioned here. In relation to Aborigines, modern white Australians can either be innocent, in the sense of not actually having participated in the earlier horrors of colonisation, in the traumas of the past; or they can be guilty, in the sense that even to be postcolonial is not to be free from these past horrors, which ceaselessly return to haunt us. How implicated are postcolonials in the past? Paradoxically enough, the appeal to innocence casts white Australians as "out of place", uninvolved in those formative colonial processes; while one's participation in what is sometimes cynically called "the guilt industry" would render white Australians as in fact *too* involved, too embedded in place in the sense that every one of the, even the most recent immigrant, automatically inherits the (mis)fortunes of Australia's colonial history. In postcolonial Australia, however, it may well be that both of these positions are inhabited at the same time: one can be both innocent ("out of place") *and* guilty ("in place"). And this is entirely consistent with postcoloniality as a contemporary condition, whereby one remains within the structures of colonialism (with all its attendant horrors) even as one is temporally located beyond them or "after" them. An Aboriginal claim for a sacred site it, as we have suggested, a salutary reminder that the past is always a matter of unfinished business. We may "innocently" imagine that there is no place for Aboriginal sacredness in a modern secular nation. But in fact it seems — to some commentators, at least — as if sacredness is

potentially *all over the place*, as if the nation has (reluctantly? willingly?) given itself over to the unleashed requirements of a previously diminished minority culture - as if it is ceaselessly being *solicited*, seduced, shaken up, taken to court.

The features we are describing here are, of course, by no means peculiar to contemporary Australia. Speaking broadly, this sense of modernity as a form of "unsettled settledness" — as an "uncanny" thing — is experienced only too often elsewhere in the world. When a nation (especially when it is imagined as "one nation", to use a phrase commonly invoked both in Australia and in Britain) engages with others — indigenous people, immigrants, separatists — a sense of national identity is both enabled and disabled. The presence of "foreigners at home" can intensify a nation's investment in the idea of a national "self" at the very moment at which such an idea is traumatically unsettled. Julia Kristeva's book, *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), is a mediation on this problematic which draws, inevitably perhaps, upon Freud's seminal essay. A nation's engagement with "foreigners" leads her to offer a definitive structure for modernity built around the tension between *union* and *separation* - what in Australia would be "reconciliation", and the impossibility of reconciliation (Kristeva 1991: 171-3). The problem here involves the fact that boundaries which might have distinguished the one from the other are no longer tenable or even recognisable. For Kristeva, a certain anxiety results which stems from the difficulty of disentangling what is one's "home" from what is not one's "home" — what is "foreign" or strange. As Kristeva notes, Freud's uncanny speaks to this anxiety directly:

> Freud wanted to demonstrate at the outset, on the basis of a semantic study of the German adjective *heimlich* and its antonym *unheimlich*, that a negative meaning close to that of the antonym is already tied to the positive term *heimlich*, "friendlily (sic) comfortable", which would also signify "concealed, kept from sight", "deceitful and malicious", "behind someone's back". Thus, in the very word *heimlich*, the familiar and intimate are reversed into their opposites, brought together with the contrary meaning of "uncanny strangeness" harboured in *unheimlich* (ibid.: 182).

In fact, "unheimlich" is further glossed by Freud as meaning "withdrawn from knowledge", obscure and inaccessible — as well as untrustworthy (Freud 1987: 346). It is worth noting that these have been available characterisations of Aboriginal relations to the sacred, where secrecy is often associated (by mining companies, by government officials, etc.) with deception. But even a racist charge of deception is open to the uncanny effect since it is spoken in structure which can never be subjected to any definitive kind of verification. If Aborigines say that a sacred site is here, and a non-Aboriginal "expert" says that this sacred site is somewhere else — which is the way some claims about sacredness fall out — what you actually get is two sacred sites for the price of one! The latter claim, in other words, by no means disproves the former — nor can it ever hope to do so in any "settled" way. In this context it is worth recalling that Freud himself had noted, "*heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence" (ibid.:347). Kristeva's strategy is to internalise and individuate this ambivalence, as a means of coping with it. We should, she suggests, come to

terms with the "stranger in ourselves": "The foreigner is within us. And when we flee from our struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious — that 'improper' facet of our impossible 'own and proper'" (Kristeva 1991: 191). So Kristeva draws a connection between a "foreigner" and the "improper" unconscious which solicits one's sense of a "proper" self, i.e., one's sense of property. It would be worth noting, however, that her advocation of a psychic coming-to-terms with the "foreigner" within us all is in itself a "reconciliatory" gesture which would remove the kinds of ambivalence that inhere in the uncanny. But there is no need to wish "improper" anxieties away — at least in the postcolonial context, where they may well have productive effects.

Australia may itself have been a "foreigner at home". At least, this is the account given by Ross Gibson in his book, *South of the West: Postcolonialism and the Narrative Construction of Australia* (1992). For Gibson, Australia has been "a duplicitous object" for the western world in the sense that it is "demonstrably a 'European' Society" (i.e. familiar) and yet also "fantastic and other-worldly" (i.e. unfamiliar):

> Westeners can recognise themselves there at the same time as they encounter an alluringly exotic and perverse entity, the phantasm called Australia. Westeners can look South and feel "at home", but, because the region has also served as a projective screen for European aspiration and anxiety, Australia also calls into question the assumptions and satisfaction's by which any society or individual feels at home (Gibson 1992: x).

The sense of this last sentence may not be entirely clear, but overall Gibson seems to be saying that — from the externalised position of the westener — one can imagine being "in place" in Australia only through the realisation that one is also "out of place". Gibson in fact invokes the uncanny in his description (although it is an unacknowledged invocation): Australia is "both strange and familiar, in other words, an enigma" (ibid.: xii). The problem with this book, however, is that although it is prepared to indulge this image of Australia as an "enigma" to the rest of the world (a view which, in our opinion, would need some qualifications since it sounds like a variant on the Australian "cultural cringe"), when it looks at Australia from *within* it produces an image of the country which is, in the first instance at least, far from uncanny.

Gibson is aware of the mythical teleogy of "settler" Australia, which fantasises about "reconciliation" or (using Kristeva's word) "union" — where a colony "would gradually 'belong', it would eventually be 'in place', and it would cease to be a colony" (ibid.: 72). However, he yearns for this teleogy himself from time to time, especially — as it happens — when he is drawn to consider Australian landscape poetry:

> It is the development of this sense of subjective immersion in place, this ability to place and to think oneself in systems of settlement other than the acquisitive process of a conquistadorial survey, that might be a reason for optimism as the third colonial century commences in the South Land (ibid:

18).

Oddly — through the "subjective" space of landscape poetry — Gibson creates the possibility of being "at home" in Australia, a possibility he had disavowed elsewhere. Even more oddly still, he maps out a route through which settlers can actually become, at some kind of final moment, *indigenous*. He can do this because in spite of his book's subtitle, he does not address the concept of postcolonialism at all (on this point, see McKee 1994: 311-5). Indeed, Aborigines themselves (the actual indigenes) barely feature in his discussion. Gibson's homely space, however, is not *entirely* bereft of otherness, as this long passage on a notorious outback Australian techno-military installation suggests:

> But this is not to say that everyone has redefined their understanding of their place in the landscape. The more militarist attitude, which sees the continent as a foe to be brought to rule, still ranges abroad. The submerged domes of Pine Gap are obvious talismans: white Australians' (mythically induced) sense of the untouchability of the geographical centre has been turned to military advantage: what better place to locate unknowable technology than the arcane heartland where Nature preserve the most occult of mysteries? It is a canny [i.e. not uncanny!] ploy. Whereas white Australia has traditionally looked for security *from* the landscape, a black magic promises to turn the world upside down by maintaining that there is security in the landscape ... When the land becomes so otherworldly that only a "masonic" class of technocrats can administer it, the conquistadorial class has taken its project to its end point ... (Gibson 1992: 91-2).

What Gibson produces here, strangely enough, is an image of a sacred site. We are directed to "the submerged domes of Pine Gap" at the "geographical centre" of Australia — rather than, say, to Uluru (Ayers Rock). This installation is made "otherworldly"; it is secretive and "masonic", returning us to Kristeva's gloss on *unheimlich*. It uses (in a strange invocation of the "primitive") "black magic"; it is unsettling to Gibson's yearning for homeliness-in-the-nation. There is an irony in noting that this particular sacred site — for all its "primitive" features — is indeed a *modern* one! And in fact it is modernity itself which produces the uncanny effect for Gibson's ideal of settlement, a modernity which is uncomfortably underwritten by globalised, "militarist" capital. Indeed, what we have with Gibson's image of Pine Gap is a text-book case of the uncanny effect whereby, through an act of repression, Pine Gap appears unfamiliar to Gibson precisely because it provides him with in image of modernity which is *all too familiar*. So Pine Gap is to Gibson what (in his account) Australia is to the rest of the world: "Both strange and familiar, in other words, an enigma". Of course, if, under modernity, Australia were able to be settled through any form other than capitalism, then it might truly be an enigma! By imagining an Australia divorced from globalised capital, Gibson gives us a nostalgic structure where one can be "subjectively immersed" in the former in order to remain alienated from the latter. In this arrangement, it is not that Australia is an "enigma" to the west, but the other way around.

When she thinks about one's relations to the "foreign", Julia Kristeva wonders

what kind of response might be forthcoming: "To worry or to smile, such is the choice when we are assailed by the strange; our decision depends on how familiar we are with our own ghosts" (Kristeva 1991: 191). We might well ask, how familiar is *Australia* with its own ghosts? Who "smiles" at them and who "worries" about them? Let us turn, as a way of thinking through this issue, to a genre of writing which tunes into the landscape in a very different way to the kind of poetry which Ross Gibson had privileged: the Australian ghost story.

Certainly the ghost story in Australia is a minor genre, a *marginal* genre. To recall Durkheim's telling phrase, the ghost story is "rudimentary" (an "elementary" form, something less than literature, even something "primitive") — and yet there is also something "gross" or luxurious about it, too. These contradictory characteristics are built into the sensationalism of this genre. Many Australian ghost stories are "over-the-top", hysterical, histrionic, spectacular, overflowing, meandering, "creaky", indulgent: all this unfolds through the constraints of a minor genre. Australian ghost stories are also generally site-based — and there is often an implied connection between a haunted site and a sacred site, as in William Sylvester Walker's evocative story, "The Evil of Yelcomorn Creek" (1899; see Gelder 1994). But these stories do not respect the localness of their sites; they are never constrained in this sense. Instead, they show how their sites work to influence or impress people who are always passing through - people who take the effects of those sites elsewhere when they leave (as they usually do), spreading them across the nation. So the Australian ghost story is built around a local site, but dramatically extends the influence or reach of that site. It produces a site-based impression which spirals out of itself to effect, or affect, one's sense of the nation's well-being. Indeed, one's sense of the nation's well-being may well be disturbed by the impression one has of a local, haunted site, and if a supposedly "marginal" thing can account for far more than its marginality would suggest.

A haunted site and a sacred site may, then, share certain features — and of course, the latter can also be associated with death, or with burial, and with the various powers which death (or the disturbance of the dead) has unleashed. A haunted site may appear empty or uninhabited; but in fact, it is always *more* than what it appears to be. To settle on a haunted site is to risk un-settlement, a postcolonial condition which acknowledges (rather than suppresses) the fact of previous, albeit displaced, inhabitation. The postcolonial ghost story is thus often quite literally about "the return of the repressed" — namely, the return of the "truth" (or a "truth effect") about colonisation. To dwell on a haunted site may produce a particular kind of postcolonial "worrying"; it is always better to pass through and, as we have suggested, the haunted site, like the sacred site, can spread its influence rather than restrict it simply to its precise location. We can think of Uluru as an example; the number of visitors who are drawn to it, pass through it and carry its effects away with them would suggest that tourism is not entirely inconsistent with sacredness in its modern form.

In ghost stories the haunted site is known primarily through its *effects*, which, because they are not always restricted to a locality, may touch Aborigines and non-Aborigines alike. This is not to say that these sites do not have a cause, a reason

why they are haunted. After all, the ghost story often depends upon an explanation of original causes. But the postcolonial ghost story tends to give more emphasis to effects rather than causes, to the impressions received by others from a haunted site which does not quite belong to them. Ghost stories are traditionally *about* possession; one takes possession of a haunted house and is possessed in return; all this happens on a property which is usually imagined as malevolent and overwhelming. But the postcolonial ghost story speaks more directly about *(dis)possession* through its emphasis on visiting or on passing through. The point about the postcolonial ghost story is that possession is there to be negotiated — - whereas in the traditional ghost story there is no negotiation. Its haunted site is in this sense more "open" and liable to be spread, so that there is less of a distinction between the site itself and what is beyond the site. This is what we mean by the postcolonial ghost story: it is an "elementary" or "rudimentary" form of expression which is enacted in the midst of modernity, and which is capable of producing "gross" or luxurious effects that are unsettling in the sense that they overflow their location to speak uncannily to the nation's modern conditions.

Australia has a ghost of its own, of course: the bunyip. There have been a number of stories, usually by non-Aboriginal writers, which have located the bunyip in swamps or waterholes and represented the creature as frightening, often foreboding death — as in Rosa Campbell Praed's "The Bunyip" (1891). Praed's evocative story, which may be more exactly designated as "late colonial", gives us a creature who is heard rather than seen: this particular ghost only signifies itself aurally, as a *sound*. The sound works both to spread this haunted site and to confuse its origins: "Though we tried to move in the direction of the voice, it was impossible to determine whence it came, so misleading and fitful and will-o'-wisp-like was the sound" (Gelder 1994: 108). So the haunted site in this story is all over the place. Just as it is without origins, so the bunyip also seems to have no cause; Praed is simply concerned with the effect this creature has on those settlers who pass through the bush. As Praed so beautifully puts it in her story — in a way that recalls Kristeva's "smiles" and "worries" — the bunyip "deals out promiscuously benefits and calamities from the same hand" (ibid.: 103). Let us just pause over this adverb "promiscuously" for a moment. It offers the possibility, already suggested by the term *solicit*, that the haunted site — like the sacred sit — is at least potentially an overflowing, luxurious thing which can reach across place indiscriminately. Praed's bunyip gives expression to these features, for it suggests that one cannot refuse it; the thing takes effect and draws you in, for better or worse, whether you like it or not.

The settlers in Praed's story have yet to become "homely", because they have been following a "dray, loaded with stores and furniture for the new home to which we were bound" (ibid.: 105). In other words, these settlers are still unsettled, and their talk about "eerier things" speaks directly to that condition. In a certain sense they contribute to their haunting and their own unsettlement, since the bunyip is animated when they talk it up ("as we talked a sort of chill seemed to creep over us", [ibid.: 106]). The creature "promiscuously" emanates its aura through the bush, touching the settlers, pre-occupying them, and forestalling their homely impulses. Far from being "subjectively immersed" in the landscape, they

are at least for the moment out of place or *displaced*. The bunyip becomes a figure for displacement, in effect, and in this sense it has a modern function.

We can contrast this with a later, more explicitly postcolonial ghost story told by an Aboriginal man to the well-known Australian anthologist and poet, Roland Robinson. In the first part of Percy Mumbulla's narrative, also titled "The Bunyip" (1958), this creature — which in Praed's story had been simultaneously "promiscuous" and evasive — is now monogamous and attached. The bunyip here belongs to a "clever old-man", an Aboriginal elder. It is known or familiar, rather than unknown, and it is empowering rather than unsettling. Mumbulla's narrative suggests that the Aboriginal clever-man derives his power directly from this bunyip:

> This old fellow had a bunyip. It was his power, his *moodjingarl*. This bunyip was high in the front and low at the back like a hyena, like a lion. It had a terrible big bull-head and it was milk-white. This bunyip could go down into the ground and take the old man with him. They could travel under the ground. They could come out anywhere. They could come out of that old tree over there (ibid.: 250).

Here, the Aboriginal clever-man and the bunyip travel together with outcomes which are already difficult to predict. It is not an issue of origins here, so much as a question of destination: there is no telling where the bunyip will end up. The description of this bunyip is worth noting, and aspects of it are repeated later on: "That's when I saw the bunyip. He was milk white. He had a terrible big bull-head, a queer-looking thing" (ibid.: 251). The creature here is both exotic ("like a hyena, like a lion", "queer-looking") and local; it seems to be both imported and indigenous. It is obviously associated with cattle, which would have frequented waterholes where bunyips are found, with attention drawn to its "milk-white" features. So in a certain sense, this bunyip produced by colonisation and embodies some of its features — the whiteness, the cattle-like anatomy, and so on.

Later, the Aboriginal clever-man argues with his sister, who was "as clever as he was". They magically cause each other's deaths through the resulting power-struggle - at which point the bunyip detaches himself and continues on his travels. So in the first part of the story, the bunyip was in a settled relationship to its Aboriginal host, albeit in the framework of an unsettled geography (mobility, unpredictable outcomes, etc.). It leaves only when that settled relationship breaks down through the mutually-inflicted deaths of the brother and sister, deaths which the bunyip seems helpless to prevent. In the second part of the story, the bunyip is set free and in the process takes on a much more active function. At one point, he arrives unannounced at the home of an Aboriginal family:

> My old dad was smoking his pipe by the chimney. Mum heard the bunyip coming, roaring. The ground started to shake. He was coming closer. He came out of the ground underneath the tank-stand. Went over to the chimney and started rubbing himself against it. He started to get savage. He started to roar. Mum told Dad to go out and talk to him in the language,

> tell him to go away, that we were all right.
> Dad went out and spoke to him in the language. He talked to him: "We are all right. No one doing any harm. You can go away" ... Every time Dad spoke to him, he'd roar. My old-man was talking: "Everything is all right. Don't get savage here" (ibid.: 250).

The narrative shows how this second Aboriginal man is now obliged to negotiate with this creature, to calm him down. The bunyip needs to be told that no one is "doing any harm" to this family, and that as a consequence his powers are not required. This Aboriginal family, in other words, does not want to play host to this bunyip: it now functions as an unwanted guest, whose concern for the welfare of the family (much like modern, paternalistic bureaucracies) is drastically misplaced. We might even say, *out* of place, since this bunyip has an "unhomely" effect on what is clearly now a "homely" (i.e. domesticated) scene. This is rendered in the story by having the bunyip appear to become "primitive" — a feature which in this context unsettles this Aboriginal couple, and they send it away. At the same time, as we have noted, the descriptions of this bunyip clearly draw attention to the creature's modern characteristics: far from being "primitive", it is quite literally an introduced or imported species.

A number of contradictions are thus mobilised in this story. The bunyip is a "milk white" thing that is metaphorically connected to cattle, those very things that signify the dispossession of Aborigines as cattle-based properties expanded across the country. And yet a creature which is so animated by colonisation is nevertheless, initially at least, shown to contribute to Aboriginal empowerment. Later on, however, the creature becomes wilder, more "savage", producing not empowerment so much as unsettlement. This savagery unsettles not the white settlers as the bunyip had in Praed's story, but Aboriginal people: the narrator's homely mother and father. In fact, as we have suggested this bunyip now quite literally has an *unhomely* character — turning up unannounced at their homestead, roaring wildly, suggestively rubbing himself up against the chimney, and so on. The creature itself is highly unsettled, highly mobile, marauding, his whereabouts now even more difficult to predict than before: "He travels around, up and down the coast ... He's even been seen in Victoria, at Lake Tyers Mission" (ibid.: 251). So the second part of this strange story unleashes the bunyip to produce unsettling effects not on whites this time, but on Aborigines. And this seems to be because it now signifies two contradictory things: the "primitive", from which this modern, homely Aboriginal couple has dissociated itself; and the postcolonial, which — precisely because it is itself a modern thing — shakes up (i.e. *solicits*: the sexuality implicit in this word is evident in the bunyip rubbing himself up against the chimney) the Aboriginal couple's home under the pretext of concern and demands their attention. And, of course, there is no essential contradiction here: the modern can indeed seem "savage" enough, although this no doubt depends on who is looking at it. This couple are thus caught in the middle of this contradictory movement between the "primitive" and the postcolonial. It unsettles them, certainly; but we should pay attention to the way in which this Aboriginal couple engage with the bunyip as a matter of course. If nothing else, the later part of this strange story shows these Aboriginal characters *keeping* their place — and their

sense of place — through direct negotiation [...].

We have wanted to highlight the genre of the Australian ghost story because of its potential in relation to this country's postcolonial condition. We can think of this genre in terms of an entangled kind of haunting, which gives expression to unsettlement (or, displacement) in both Aboriginal and white Australians alike. This may well be because of the paradoxical arrangement of difference and sameness here — which that word "alike" may too easily smooth over. "Ghosts" cannot function in a climate of sameness, in a country which fantasises about itself as "one nation" or which imagines a utopian future of "reconciliation" in which all the bad memories have been laid to rest. But neither can they function in a climate of difference, where the one can never resemble the other — as in a "divided" nation. A more "promiscuous" structure in which sameness and difference impact upon each other, spilling over each other's boundaries only to return again to their respective places, moving back and forth in an unpredictable, even unruly manner — a structure in which sameness and difference embrace and refuse each other simultaneously: this is where the "ghosts" which may cause us to "smile" or to "worry" can flourish.

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