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Gerry Turcotte
University of Wollongong, Gerry.Turcotte@stmu.ca

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Vampiric Decolonization: Fanon, 'Terrorism' and Mudrooroo's Vampire Trilogy

Gerry Turcotte

Introduction

Long before the fact of Australia was ever confirmed by explorers and cartographers it had already been imagined as a grotesque space, a land peopled by monsters.[1] The idea of its existence was disputed, was even heretical for a time, and with the advent of the transportation of convicts its darkness seemed confirmed. The Antipodes was a world of reversals, the dark subconscious of Britain. It was, for all intents and purposes, Gothic *par excellence*, the dungeon of the world. It is perhaps for this reason that the Gothic as a mode has been a consistent presence in Australia since European settlement. Certainly the fact that settlement began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during the rise of the Gothic as a sensationalist and resonantly influential form, contributes to its impact on the literatures of Australia.

There are other reasons for its appeal. It is certainly possible to argue that the generic qualities of the Gothic mode lend themselves to articulating the colonial experience inasmuch as each emerges out of a condition of deracination and uncertainty, of the familiar transposed into unfamiliar space, and then forcibly 'naturalised'. It is this very quality which Freud identified as the condition of the uncanny, where the home becomes unhomely—where the *heimlich* becomes *unheimlich*—and yet remains sufficiently familiar to disorient and disempower.[2] All migrations represent a dislocation of sorts, but Australia posed particularly vexing questions for its European immigrants. Nature, it seemed to many, was out of kilter. To cite the familiar clichés: its trees shed their bark, swans were black rather than white, and the seasons were reversed. And while these features represented a physical

perversion, it was widely considered to be metonymic of an attendant spiritual dis/ease. This sense of spiritual malaise is often communicated through the Gothic mode, that is, through a literary form that emphasises the horror, uncertainty and desperation of the human experience, and represents the solitariness of that experience through characters trapped in a hostile environment, or pursued by an unspecified or unidentifiable danger. From its inception the Gothic has dealt with fears and themes that are endemic in the colonial experience: isolation, entrapment, fear of pursuit and fear of the unknown. The Gothic, moreover, is itself a hybrid form—a mode delineated by borrowings and conflations, by fragmentation and incompletion, by a rejection of set values and yet a dependence on establishment. In this sense it is ideal to articulate the colonial condition.

From the beginning, Gothic texts have used 'alien' spaces to mark or chart alienation, and to test their protagonists' attitudes, principles and fears. Where that alien space may once have been, to the English, say Paris or Transylvania, the New World soon became the ultimate signifier of extreme deprivation. Where once a character may have been taken to the wilds of Italy (for example, Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*), the colonies would become the register for all that was darkest and most obscene. Similarly, the notion of the monstrous would find a ready figure in which to be metaphorised—the Indigenous peoples of the New Worlds—peoples simultaneously primordial and newly discovered; peoples unknown and yet always already imagined and delineated.

For many Australian writers, then, the Gothic offered a useful mechanism through which to speak the new world contradictions. It allowed for a familiar representational gesture—where the unfamiliar could be accounted for through a Gothic style that in part provided a language to speak it. If the Indigenous proved terrifying,

then the Gothic could offer a ready-made discursive structure to represent the unrepresentable (or at least to account for the elusiveness of the sign).

If it is true that the Gothic was deemed useful for helping to establish a local Australian voice, it also functioned as a silencing discourse for some, in particular Aboriginal peoples. It is not surprising that Aboriginal writers have tended to avoid the Gothic mode until very recently, since it has generally represented for them a disabling, rather than an enabling, discourse. As has already been suggested, the Aboriginal peoples were themselves constructed as the monstrous figures haunting the Australian landscape, spectres more frightening than any European demon, because they represented a physical threat to settlers and to theories of enlightenment that expressed a faith in the indomitable civilising influence of whiteness.

Concomitantly, Aborigines posed a threat to the very fiction of *terra nullius*, the obscene construction in British law which made Australia 'a land owned by no one', and therefore a place which could be claimed for the Crown (a conceit only recently overturned by the Australian High Court through the *Native Title Act* of 1993, more popularly known as the 'Mabo' decision). The Aboriginal presence in itself unsettled—to use the full measure of the pun—the course of Empire.[3] In that respect, colonial policy dictated that Aborigines had to be obliterated or absorbed through assimilation policies. It is strange indeed, given the voraciousness of the european appetite, that it should be the Aborigines who were constructed as savage, monstrous and insatiable. And yet, it is a feature of master narratives to incorporate that which is feared, by way of addressing, at least in part, something profoundly disturbing to the national psyche. Increasingly, however, racialised writers have begun to utilise the Gothic mode and to deploy its uncanny structures in the service of a decolonisation practice. None have done so in a more sustained and explicitly politicized way than Colin Johnson/

Mudrooroo, one of Australia's most prolific and controversial figures. Johnson/Mudrooroo was born in 1938 in Western Australia. After a troubled youth in which he was removed by Welfare into foster care, and then later imprisoned in Fremantle Gaol, he emerged to become the first published Aboriginal novelist. His novel *Wild Cat Falling* appeared in 1960. Some 28 years later, and as one of Aboriginal Australia's most vocal writers and intellectuals, Johnson chose to change his name to Mudrooroo Narogin in protest of the Australian Bicentennial celebrations. Eventually he would adopt the single monicker, Mudrooroo, a Nyoongah word meaning the paperbark tree.

In 1996, journalist Victoria Laurie published a controversial article asserting that Mudrooroo was in fact not Aboriginal at all, but a child of a white mother and an African American father, facts that have since been debated by numerous Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars. Uncertainty continues to circulate around the level of Mudrooroo's own duplicity in the matter of his identity, the question of Mudrooroo's socialization as an Aboriginal man, and the high esteem many Indigenous scholars still hold for his work despite the current controversy. Perhaps not surprisingly, Mudrooroo himself has refused to comment publicly. His works have been withdrawn from many university subjects, he was forced to leave his position in academe, and has since returned to India where he lived for many years as a Buddhist monk.[4]

In the meantime, his work continues to challenge and trouble, asking questions about hybridity, whiteness, and the complicity of master narratives in the perpetuation of the colonizing enterprise. It will be the task of the remainder of this paper to examine the way Mudrooroo has turned to the Gothic mode, in particular via Frantz Fanon's notion of decolonization, vampires and terrorism, to re-write and resist

oppressive narratives. This study will conclude by gesturing towards the issue of Mudrooroo's identity crisis and the impact of this debate on his theories and work.

Mudrooroo's Vampires

In an earlier paper on Mudrooroo's tendency towards the Gothic mode, I examined the way Aboriginality itself was figured by master narratives as a macabre construct, a monstrous representation of the other that forever located Indigenous peoples in an antiquated, perverse space that they were never meant to escape. My focus was on the way minority writers have resisted such interpellations into categories of containment, precisely by returning to foundational european narratives and divesting them of meaning (or at least, to produce such a promiscuity of meaning that the fiction of their primacy and cohesiveness was inevitably revealed). Mudrooroo is arguably one of the most challenging writers to do this.[5] A not uncontroversial figure whose prolific output has frequently interrogated canonical structures, Mudrooroo has, both throughout his writing career, but in particular in his most recent trilogy of novels, specifically rewritten established texts of empire, and cannibalised the monstrous images of Indigenous peoples put forward by such texts. Indeed, he has gothicised the very notion of the invasion of Australia, and has referred to the British as *num*—literally ghosts—who haunt Aboriginal land.

In *The Undying*, *Underground* and *The Promised Land*—sequels of a sort to his much-praised *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*[6]—Mudrooroo focuses specifically on the notion of vampirism, literally feeding off *Dracula* (among a plethora of intertexts) to comment on the way Indigenous identity, mythology, spirituality and values have been fed on by european invaders, but also to suggest how Indigenous writers might conceivably bite back.

Mudrooroo devours the vampire legend, but not by way of attempting fictionally to erase the european presence. He is never content to write utopic fantasies that eradicate the political realities which impact on Indigenous communities. Instead, he interweaves the concept of european vampirism with Aboriginal Dreamtime stories and culture in order to comment directly on the very real impact of colonization/ contamination on the Aboriginal people of Australia. For Mudrooroo, vampires and ghosts are textual metaphors, representing colonizing predators, which he uses to transform hegemonic accounts of Indigenous peoples. European narratives, which literally (pre)figured the Indigenous as absent or insubstantial via the notion of *terra nullius*, are in turn potentially refuted by the very existence of his own 'ghostly' characters.

If Gillian Beer is correct when she suggests that the "usurpation of space by the immaterial [...] is one of the deepest terrors released by the ghost story" (Beer 260), then Mudrooroo's spectral imaginings are indeed horror stories of the most potent kind. If they are terrifying, however, it is because they haunt both ways. In Mudrooroo's tales, ghosts are always doubled in function. Certainly they signal the haunting of Indigenous Australia by Whites (or *num*), and they figure the power and spiritual strength of an Indigenous past (another kind of spirit), that will fight on into the future. But they also record the ongoing history of possession and consumption of Aboriginal peoples by the bloodlust of invading forces. In this sense, then, as Graham Huggan has argued, ghosts "are double agents: they are working for the 'other' side" (Huggan "Ghost" 129).

Ghosts, like vampires, represent the liminal space that separates structured and safe notions of reality from a noumenal, insubstantial realm that shadows and haunts the everyday. They are incarnations of the repressed. Both ghosts and vampires are also

simultaneously insubstantial and material—able to disappear at will, to dematerialise, but also to manifest themselves, usually in/through another. In this sense, then, they are also cannibals, incorporating the other. They are literally the past in the present, and frequently, they foretell the future. The "disruptive properties of ghosts" (129) as Huggan puts it, suggest why such vampiric imaginings provide an ideal medium for Mudrooroo's revisionist histories.

In the context of decolonization politics, the vampire who exists between worlds, this spectre that threatens the solidity of borders and the reality of a dominant imaginary, has much in common with other potentially destabilizing figures, such as terrorists, counter-revolutionaries, and of course writers (who can be all of these things). Indeed, Mudrooroo brings these beings together through the metaphor of the vampire to suggest a commensurability of experience and purpose.

In order to trace the way that Mudrooroo works through this vampiric figuration, in what I will hereafter refer to as the vampire trilogy, I want to consider one crucial point of entry into the vampiric which establishes a genealogy entirely in keeping with Mudrooroo's revisionist narratives. In other words, rather than locate the vampiric purely within the european frame, I would like to approach this through an important critical influence on Mudrooroo, the writings of Frantz Fanon, and in particular a superb article on Fanon's writings on violence and decolonization written by Samira Kawash.

Fanon's Vampires

Fanon, according to Kawash, identifies two different types of violence which frame the colonial reality:

> instrumental violence and absolute violence are two ways in which violence emerges into and operates on a reality that is always constituted and conceived

> discursively. It is characteristic of Fanon's text that every scene of violence oscillates between these two discursive attractors, the instrumental and the absolute. Instrumental violence in Fanon's text is the violence of revolt and of reversal, the violence whereby the colonized challenge and attempt to upend the domination that has oppressed them. At the same time, another violence (perhaps alongside or unleashed by instrumental acts of violence) emerges as the world-shattering violence of decolonization. Decolonization destroys both colonizer and colonized; in its wake, something altogether different and unknown, a "new humanity" will rise up (235).

It would be difficult to measure to what extent Mudrooroo is consciously invoking Fanon's specific model of violence in his own works. It is certain, however, that Mudrooroo has read Fanon carefully, and draws extensively on Fanon's work to explicate and contextualise Aboriginal Literature. In *Writing from the Fringe* Mudrooroo refers to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, and to his description of the three levels of development in the literature of a colonised people (Mudrooroo *Writing* 29). Mudrooroo speaks scathingly of works produced under the first two models: that is, works designed to show that Indigenous writers have successfully assimilated white forms, and works written from a position outside of Indigenous culture (29), comments which now take on an 'uncanny' and ironic feel in terms of the identity questions which now circulate around him (and which I will address later in the paper).

Mudrooroo is particularly taken with the third level, "the fighting phase in which there is an upsurge in literary production" with books that try to avoid "the encircling majority" and that refuse to "be dark imitations of the metropolitan culture" (Mudrooroo *Writing* 29). While it is dangerous to link notions of textual violence with 'actual' violence, the metaphoric connection between a textual terrorism and actual decolonization is one drawn by Mudrooroo throughout his creative and academic work. I do not mean by this that Mudrooroo promotes an armed uprising by Aboriginal peoples, but that he insists on recognising the very real discursive power of colonization

and that he celebrates a textual response to hegemonic controls as part of an overall revitalisation of Indigenous cultures. In this way, Fanon's model is a useful frame text.

The distinction that Fanon arguably produces between instrumental and absolute violence is reproduced in some measure through the complex structures of Mudrooroo's vampire trilogy, which comes into existence after the milder, more positive *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* where reversals as resistance abound. In the trilogy, a grimmer prognosis emerges, one that focuses on the ends of civilizations—Aboriginal and european. Through the metaphor of the vampire, Mudrooroo invokes the uncanny individual — the person who is both familiar and unfamiliar, both human and inhuman, both individual and communal, both black and white, simultaneously. And it would be possible, given the questioning of Mudrooroo's status as an Aboriginal man, to add Aboriginal/not-Aboriginal to this dichotomous structure. As Gelder and Jacobs have argued, the question of "simultaneity is important to stress since, in Freud's terms, it is not simply the unfamiliar in itself which generates the anxiety of the uncanny; it is specifically the combination of the familiar and unfamiliar—the way the one seems always to inhabit the other" (Gelder & Jacobs 23). For Mudrooroo, it is precisely this simultaneity that generates terror and uncertainty, both in the divided individual and in the observer, struggling for the simplicity of categories of oneness and containment. Arguably, the vampire as metaphor offers the potential to validate this state of in-betweenness—to signal the potential for action, self-affirmation, even revenge which this position affords.

My argument here locates the vampire (writer) metaphorically as terrorist, but only once Mudrooroo has inverted the traditional vampiric figure. In its initial configuration in *The Undying*, the vampire is european culture which descends upon and feeds off Indigenous peoples (neatly reversing the cannibalism stereotype). The

Indigenous are thus infected, colonized, by the vampiric. Their 'revolution'—their resistance either to death or full absorption—potentially marks an instance of reverse colonization. Mudrooroo deploys an Indigenous figure who does unto europeans what europeans did onto him. His vampire/ terrorist is both colonised and colonising. More than this, he suggests the potential for the destruction of the dominant social order—he is the ultimate terrorist.

As Samira Kawash argues,

> terrorism is a spectre that haunts the social order and public safety... terrorism is ubiquitous and constant. The danger of terrorism, the violence of terrorism, is thus in excess of the effects of any particular 'terrorist act'. This is what we might call a 'spectral violence', the measure of a violence that is never fully materialized, that is always in excess of its apparent material effects… (Kawash 238).[7]

In this sense then, as Kawash goes on to argue, "The terrorist is... structurally similar to the ghosts and vampires of the Victorian imagination, exemplary figures of the Freudian uncanny" (238-9).

As has been argued elsewhere, Freud's theorisation of the uncanny is particularly useful for understanding colonial encounters with 'new' worlds and with Indigenous peoples.[8] Indeed, the colonial enterprise frequently combines a discursive construction of an alien space as familiar, a figuration that is constantly ruptured by instances that contradict the fiction of familiarity. Hence, the homely repeatedly becomes unhomely—the secure becomes insecure.

According to Kawash, Lacan uses Freud's theory to understand/underline the way the uncanny can be a "disturbance to the bordering functions that separate inside and outside." Mladen Dolar, discussing Lacan's notion of *extimité*, argues that the "extimate is simultaneously the intimate kernel and the foreign body," itself an exemplary analogy for the figure of the vampire (qtd. in Kawash 239)." For Mudrooroo, the experience of invasion, of contamination, produces precisely this

horrific in-betweeness for his Indigenous vampire, as he becomes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous simultaneously. It is a particularly poignant rendering of the Indigenous figure between worlds who is a threat to both the European and his own people.[9] And it is a human category crisis made agonisingly complex in the context of Mudrooroo's own identity crisis, and debates about his 'belonging'.

In his very genetic composition, the in-between figure promises to impale/empale his own people—whilst simultaneously threatening the putatively inviolate category of whiteness. More to the point, what Mudrooroo's clever refigurations demonstrate is that the very idea of an isolated and pure whiteness has always been an impossibility—a pigment of the white imagination. If Kawash is correct in maintaining that, for Fanon, "on the other side" of the irruption of absolute violence is the "possibility of a 'new humanity'" (240), then it is possible to read Mudrooroo's strangely (and initially) upbeat, and undeniably 'contaminated' figure, in a similarly 'positive' sense, as suggesting a new world order, and another way forward. For Kawash, this new order is understandable via structures that avoid metaphors of 'progress' (themselves offensive figurations frequently applied to Indigenous lives by imperial forces), and instead present "not a transition to the future, but rather a "leap into the open air of history" (240).

Mudrooroo follows Fanon quite closely in writing out a discursive model of decolonisation. If, as Fanon suggests, "it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence," and similarly, if "the settler owes the fact of his very existence... to the colonial system" (Fanon *Black* 36), it is possible to see the female vampire Amelia (who first appears in *The Undying*) as acting out this relationship. What begins as mere reversal of dreamings in *Ghost* becomes in the later trilogy an attempt to explode the relationship entirely. For Fanon, decolonization will

produce a new type of being, one removed from the cultural instrumentalities of the colonialist project. The solution to Amelia's infection of George, which contaminates his Aboriginal Dreaming, is not to seek some pre-contact, and hence resistant, antiquity. Instead, it is to become something other—something which cannot be contained by discursive structures established by, and hence arguably in the service of, colonialism.

It seems to me that this notion of something other, figured via the vampiric, may have emerged as a result of Mudrooroo's reading of Fanon, even though, as we learn in *The Mudrooroo/Müller Project*, Mudrooroo was at one stage in his life steeped in Victorian Gothic novels.[10] Whilst Mudrooroo's vampire trilogy may operate on one level as a rewriting, even a satire, of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, to read it as merely a reversal is to miss its radical commentary on discursive decolonization, a narrative that owes much to Fanon. For Fanon, the notion of decolonization "is not the violence of the colonized that threatens bodies or properties; decolonization is rather the excessive violence that threatens reality as a whole. While the violence of reversal can be identified in terms of its material manifestations, the absolute violence of decolonization can only be 'symbolic violence,' violence that threatens the symbolic order, violence that bursts through history" (Kawash 243). Decolonization potentially disrupts the very boundaries between the real and the unreal, the historical and the ahistorical. Perhaps this is why Mudrooroo insists on speaking of a Maban reality, an alternate reality that cannot be contained by traditional humanist constructs of the real. As he puts it,

> [M]aban reality is political in that it seeks to establish an Indigenous reality which is counter to the dominant natural reality of the invaders, a so-called natural reality which permeates just about every genre of endeavour and constructs narratives such as history which serve to establish and maintain nothing but the dominant position of those in power.... What this means is that any ways of constructing an alternative history are driven from the 'real' and into the fictional or into fantasy or into the dark areas of occultism (Mudrooroo *Milli* 100).

His brutal initial attacks on Sally Morgan can be read according to this explanation. For Mudrooroo, Morgan's *My Place* was weak precisely because it "did not shout" at its white readership; in fact, he felt it "mirrored their concerns as to their place in Australia" (Mudrooroo *Milli* 195). Where the text was strong was in its "Gothic" elements, where it embraced "a different reality" (93). For Mudrooroo, the vampire is appealing: he or she has no reflection; he or she cannot be reflected, and hence cannot reflect—cannot *mirror*—the concerns of the dominant classes. And it foregrounds invader anxieties about their own (il)legitimate belonging.

The vampire, in my reading of Mudrooroo, is a non-representational figure, just as it was for Fanon. As Kawash has argued, the spectral figure that haunts Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*

> is a vampire, dreamed up by one of his patients who fears the vampire's predations.... The terror of the vampire marks the violence of 'deposing', a violence that cannot be represented within the normal modes of representation but which nonetheless signals a dangerous gap in reality, that is to say, a gap dangerous to the continuing existence of colonial reality (Kawash 245).

What is particularly fascinating in this account of Fanon's vampires is the way Mudrooroo, deliberately or otherwise, has produced a series of texts that initially enact Fanon's more radical theorisations on decolonization. Fanon's influential studies describe the way colonial subjects are made 'archaic', fixed, by a colonial history which insists that the colonized object be read as part of the landscape, as therefore inhuman, and thus as non-existent. It is this existential crisis that marks the colonized as the "living dead," but it is an existence that possesses the settler as well, who is "haunted by the persistence of the native as living being ... who nonetheless cannot appear as such. The 'empty' landscape perceived by the colonizer is shadowed by an uncanny double, a landscape traversed by the 'non-existent' colonized" (Kawash 253). Again, for those familiar with the construction of Australia as *terra nullius*, this (dis)figuration becomes

particularly haunting. For Mudrooroo, the parallels are clear. Indigenous Australians have been made insubstantial—ghosts haunting their own land—by invader discourses.[11]

It is not surprising then that Mudrooroo would turn to the ambiguous figure of the vampire to represent the state of Indigeneity in Australia today. Indeed, he must have been moved by one of Fanon's patients who literalized his feelings of existence and non-existence by claiming that he was haunted by nightmares of a vampire that sucked him dry. As Fanon writes, "the patient talked of his blood being spilt…. He implored us to stop the haemorrhage and not to let him be 'sucked by a vampire' within the very precincts of the hospital" (*Wretched* 210). As Kawash argues: "the distinctiveness of this patient's fantasy must not be overlooked" (Kawash 247). The fact that the nightmare is represented as a vampire "becomes the effect of a reality that simultaneously denies, defines, and contains the colonized... the corresponding name for its corporeal manifestation might be *living death*" (247).

For Mudrooroo, as for Fanon, the vampire is an ambiguous register since it is neither one thing nor another. It stands between. Like Plato's Pharmakon, it is both infection and cure. Mudrooroo mobilises first the figure of a female vampire, Amelia, herself a 'contaminated' rendition of the figure of Elisa Fraser,[12] and then the central Aboriginal character George, who is 'infected' by Amelia's bite. It is interesting to note that in Fanon's study, the vampire that haunts his patient is also figured as female, "a settler woman whom the patient himself has killed" (Kawash 248). The vampire is a metaphor for the invading colonial power, and for the 'fate' of the Indigenous colonized. But it is also more than this. The vampire—and this is true of Mudrooroo's vampire George — is a sign of the incompleteness of the colonial paradigm. As Kawash puts it:

> Where the colonial system claims to be 'all,' the persistence of the vampire exposes this 'all' to something else, a being neither living (as the colonizer) nor dead (as the landscape or the colonized bodies filling that landscape). The vampire marks the 'not-all' of colonial reality (249-50).

Kawash goes on to argue that the figure of the vampire produces the most terrifying threat to colonial stability: "The vampire is an inextricable element of the relation that brings settler and native into being. It is in this sense that we might conclude that the vampire terrorizes reality; the vampire is a terrorist" (254).

Mudrooroo's vampiric inversion can best be understood through this sequence of theorisations on vampirism. His vampire trilogy demonstrates a passion for revising european narratives, and for exposing the heinous practices of colonising discourses. These are satirised in a range of ways. In *Underground* Mudrooroo replicates the offensive practice of the British invaders of naming the Indigenous people they encountered with Greek and Roman names, so that one of the characters, for example, is known as Hercules. He retells well-known foundational narratives, such as the Eliza Fraser story, or popular fictions, such as *Dracula*, in order to cannibalise and divest these stories of meaning. *The Promised Land* begins in England with the slightly pornographic rendering of the story of Lucy and Mina (literalising the account that Stoker could only hint at), which is then realigned with the early George Augustus Robinson narrative, and a return of the soft-porn figure of Amelia.

But what is equally of interest is the way Mudrooroo mobilises the figure of George to haunt the landscape, to terrorize non-Maban reality. The main character in the latest trilogy is a young Aboriginal man who is bitten by a european female vampire, and the result of this bite is to make him an in-between figure—a man of mixed blood—neither in one world nor the other. Throughout the texts George struggles, in fact, between competing dreamings, Aboriginal and european. It is a poignant metaphor for the figure of many Aborigines in Australia. Given the recent

scandals about Mudrooroo's heritage, and claims that he is part African-American rather than part-Aboriginal, moreover, the notion of blurred bloodlines takes on a particular importance.

Perhaps this is why Mudrooroo's narratives about colonized spaces are filled with doppelgängers. There are two Georges who haunt the vampire trilogy, both impostors of sorts, neither one thing nor another. There is the 'mixed-blood' George, and the British George Augustus Robinson. Mudrooroo's oeuvre is itself haunted by this latter figure. As Maureen Clark has pointed out, Robinson becomes the spectre that Mudrooroo is least able to exorcise. He first appears as the bloodless parole officer in *Wild Cat Falling*, and he resurfaces in *Dr Wooreddy*, in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, and throughout the Vampire trilogy itself.[13] Indeed, we discover in *Underground* that he is George's real father—the absent, ever-present father. In one sense, they are one and the same, of course, although entirely different beings as well—simultaneously. The vampire George is both the colonised and the coloniser, just as he is both prey and hunter, the site of the brutalised and the brutalising. He is, in this sense, a quintessential vampire who bears always the marks of his/her maker, and what he/she was before. But he is also both and neither.

For Clark, the haunting represented by the figure of Robinson is a signal of a potentially insidious and deliberate act of imposture on Mudrooroo's behalf, a gesture of impersonation that he may well have been engaged in since the time of his first publication. However Mudrooroo's fraught identity is read, the vampire trilogy offers a remarkable opportunity for Mudrooroo to script yet another potential space for himself to inhabit, via the figure of the vampire hybrid, the model of undecidability and disruption. The vampire is always already both original (the person prior to infection)

and unoriginal (the infected)—an embodiment perhaps of the very questionability of authenticity debates that seek an origin for a source that cannot be traced.[14] Mudrooroo, in the course of numerous contradictory (and perhaps demonstrably false) public statements about his heritage,[15] has assumed a vampiric persona, at the same time, ironically, as he gradually rejects the hybridised figure as an empowered symbol of Aboriginal agency. He has remained 'intact', in a certain sense, but has maintained this cohesion through remarkable destabilisations, becoming a range of characters, foregrounding his hybridisation by way of disrupting any possibility of stable, containable identity narratives. In terms of minority discourse, Mudrooroo's racialised —if not Aboriginal—identity (he remains "a subject created by racism"[16]) refutes and refuses the 'containability narratives' that dominant culture so often insists on, imposes and of course produces. Similarly, in his texts (of which he himself is one[17]), there is a continual rewriting at work which resists stability in all its forms; hence the wildcat trilogy and the *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* quartet (which itself continues and rewrites the earlier *Dr Wooreddy*[18]). His novels rephrase, contradict and resist each other and any facile critical containment that would attend them. As Wendy Pearson puts it, "each novel in the *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* series reinvents itself, disrupting the possibility of a singular linear reading and suggesting a variety of potential modes of hybridized Aboriginality which can be read against each novel's reiterated yet individual response and resistance to discourses of authenticity" (199).[19]

Conclusion

How Mudrooroo's oeuvre will be judged in the future remains to be seen. The assertions that Mudrooroo is not Aboriginal will no doubt heavily impact on the weight given to his works as 'Aboriginal', though of course they will always speak as hybrid

texts—works by a person of colour—about decolonization politics. However he is judged on the question of imposture and performativity—and despite calls by some Aboriginal groups to have his books destroyed[20]—Mudrooroo's texts will remain powerful figurations of the dilemma of hybridity in the context of the fiction of cohesive nationalist identity formations. His writings, for all their misogynistic, judgemental and angry inflections, speak more pointedly about the violence of colonization than virtually any other contemporary Australian text. And the power of these texts is located precisely in the way Mudrooroo deploys the Gothic mode, to turn it against its traditional range and values, and yet also to enact the mode's own wonderfully promiscuous changeability. As Pearson asks, is the master of the ghost dreaming "on an extratextual level, a reference to Mudrooroo himself, who has mastered the European art of the novel in order to tell precisely those stories which have been suppressed, ignored or appropriated by non-Aboriginal writers (exactly the position to which Mudrooroo ironically finds himself condemned)? (200)"

Mudrooroo's work has always probed the impossibility (the undesirability) of reconciliative narratives, insisting on the need not to compromise, which he sees as a type of relinquishment. As Pearson puts it, "The possibility of reconciliation hinges on the larger resolution of society's desperate commitment to the very ideological binarisms that the immortal figure itself brings into question" (200). Mudrooroo's turn to the vampire as a symbol of the unquashable, forever unresolvable, nature of the post-colonial hybrid, is a powerful and poignant gesture of both resistance and self-awareness. The figure of the African Wadawaka may well become increasingly dominant and important in the trilogy; and in *The Promised Land* Mudrooroo appears to deliver a harsh blow against Aboriginal agency, with the vampire figure, George, reduced to a lap dog for most of the novel. One could certainly read this last gesture as

Mudrooroo's impassioned and angry response to what he no doubt feels is his abandonment by Aboriginal Australia. But despite these revisions, the figure of the vampire in the 'contaminated world' of the trilogy mobilises a fragile, contradictory space into which Mudrooroo's oeuvre might exist, and a space perhaps for his own controversial self to operate within—a space that is never fixed, always fluid, and unrepentantly hybrid. Again, whatever judgment is eventually brought to bear on the 'validity' and 'authenticity' of his works, there can be no question that this re-invention is a masterful stroke, a work of amazing *sang froid*, and surely still a work in progress.

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[1] This article is part of a larger research project on the Gothic and minority discourses. It emerges in part from a long-standing study of the Gothic in Australia. The introduction’ appeared as Turcotte “Australian” 10-19. The present paper focuses on Mudrooroo’s use of vampirism, and his debt to Fanon. For a more sustained reading of his use of the Gothic in The Undying, see Turcotte “Mudrooroo’s” 111-22. I’m grateful to my many students in my Fantasy & Popular Fiction subject for long-ranging discussions of Mudrooroo’s Gothic fiction, and in particular to two of my PhD students, Maureen Clark and Wendy Pearson, for their insightful work on Mudrooroo, referred to elsewhere in this paper.

[2] See Freud 368-407. The idea of the uncanny as a mechanism for understanding colonial and post-colonial structures has been addressed in a number of studies. It was a major focus of my doctoral thesis, Peripheral Fear: Australian and Canadian Gothic Fiction (University of Sydney) in 1991. This idea was further examined in a series of articles exploring the Gothic in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australian literature. See Turcotte “Speaking”; “Footnotes”; and “Dark.” It was also a focus of “The Gothic in Australia,” a 35-minute radio feature for ABC Radio’s Books & Writing, 24 July 1992. More recently, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs have developed this idea in an excellent study on “sacredness and identity in a postcolonial nation.”. See Gelder & Jacobs.

[3] For more extended readings of this particular issue see Penny van Toorn 87-97. See also Gelder and Jacobs. As they put it: “Freud’s ‘uncanny’ might well be applied directly to those emergent... procedures for determining rights over land. In this moment of decolonisation, what is ‘ours’ is also potentially, or even always already, ‘theirs’: the one is becoming the other, the familiar is becoming strange” (23).

[4] For a detailed account of this story see Clark 48-62. See also Laurie “Identity” for the original article that started the more public debate.

[5] See Turcotte “Mudrooroo’s” 333–46. For an extended version of the article see Turcotte “Re-mastering.”

[6] See Mudrooroo Undying; Underground; The Promised Land; and Master.
[7] It seems almost pointless to add that this model has been given a particular clarity for Western audiences by the events of September 11, 2001.
[8] See Turcotte "Australian" and Gelder & Jacobs.
[9] For my analysis of collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers in The Mudrooroo/Müller Project and The Book of Jessica, and the way these issues of "double agency" are negotiated, see Turcotte "Collaborating."
[10] See Mudrooroo "Aboriginalising" 22.
[11] See Gelder & Jacobs 135-36.
[12] For my reading of the Eliza Fraser/Amelia Fraser figure see Turcotte "Re-mastering" & "Mudrooroo's." For a more general account of the Eliza Fraser myth, see Schaffer; and Turcotte "Fraser's".
[13] See Clark 48-62 for a detailed discussion of Mudrooroo's use of G.A. Robinson.
[14] Many critics will no doubt argue, however, that this clever metaphorisation is merely self-serving, a disingenuous gesture by which Mudrooroo can attempt to avoid being 'judged' for his arguable duplicity. See Clark on this issue of accountability, and also Mudrooroo's defenders, such as Fischer and Shoemaker. For a general, and recent, discussion of authenticity issues see Huggan Postcolonial, although interestingly, Huggan discusses Mudrooroo's views of Morgan yet chooses not to engage in the identity issues surrounding Mudrooroo himself.
[15] See Clark for details regarding such comments.
[16] See Goldie 107.
[17] Although perhaps, initially, not of his own making. He speaks, for example, of having been 'textualised' by Mark Durack. See Mudrooroo "Tell."
[18] See Mudrooroo Doctor.
[19] See Pearson.
[20] See, for example, Robert Eddington's insistence that Mudrooroo's works be "mashed", in Jopson 5.