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Parallel futures? Indigenous resurgence and the haunting of the settler

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ABSTRACT

Two kinds of futures have emerged in the shadow of colonialism: the haunted futures of a white settler society that suppresses or denies knowledge of the 'founding wound' of colonial invasion; and Indigenous futures constituted by a refusal of defeat and a 'radical resurgence.' While they appear as parallel and irreconcilable trajectories, we suggest, after Ahlqvist and Rhisiart (2015, 'Emerging pathways for critical futures research: Changing contexts and impacts of social theory', *Futures*, vol. 71, pp. 91–104), that a haunting continues to link them; projects of Indigenous refusal and resurgence continue to alert non-Indigenous settler societies to a past not done with, and a futures trajectory based on denial and deception that must be unlearned. We describe one such project of Indigenous resurgence in South West Queensland, Australia, and suggest that it is an example of a local resurgence that performs, through its truth-telling, a 'generative haunting' of white settler society. In doing so, it forges a link between Indigenous and non-Indigenous futures, disturbing, and making more contingent, white settler imaginaries of the past and the future.

1. Introduction

We examine in this paper two kinds of futures that have emerged as a response to colonialism. One is the haunted future of a white settler society that suppresses or denies knowledge of the 'founding wound' of colonial invasion and its ongoing legacy for Indigenous peoples; it is a future based on the principles of 'moving on', and the economic projects of acquisition and consumption. The other kind is those Indigenous futures constituted by a refusal of defeat and a 'radical resurgence'; in these futures, creative imaginaries show pathways out of a dystopian present to relational futures that connect all things, human and nonhuman. These contrasting futures are not the only possible kinds, but they are those that attach themselves most clearly to colonialism's shadow. While they appear as parallel and irreconcilable trajectories, we suggest, after Ahlqvist et al. (2015, p. 99), that a haunting continues to link them; projects of Indigenous refusal and resurgence continue to alert, in the indirect way of the spectre, non-Indigenous settler societies to a past not done with, and alternative futures they are not yet willing to see. The spectre is 'an address to the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future' (Davis, 2005, p. 379).

We describe one such project of Indigenous resurgence in South West Queensland, Australia, a project instigated by Angelia Walsh, then manager of the Surat Aboriginal Corporation and co-author of this paper. Development of the South West Queensland Indigenous Cultural Trail included the gathering of stories from Aboriginal people across the region, with the clear aim of both preserving

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Indigenous historical knowledge and alerting non-Indigenous consciousness to Aboriginal people's ongoing presence and contribution to towns and Country. The Trail stories and the material produced for tourists are not the writing of a new grand historical narrative but 'small histories' that point to an 'absent-presence' in the largely white settler histories of those places. The Trail project is, we argue, one point of Indigenous resurgence that raises for settler society the spectre of Australia's larger hidden history of invasion, dispossession, massacres and exploitation, and hence its own fear of future dispossession. By making available stories of Aboriginal people now and in the past in towns and on pastoral stations, it gently pushes at the edges of the settler narratives of 'pioneer' and 'civilization' that brought about white ownership and control. The Trail constitutes an Aboriginal refusal to become invisible in the past, the present or the future but, in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's terms, it is a generative refusal that 'embodies an Indigenous alternative' (2017, p. 35). We suggest that the Trail is an example of a project of local resurgence that also performs, through its stories, a 'generative haunting' – a link between Indigenous and non-Indigenous futures, now forged on Indigenous peoples' own terms.

In describing some of the experiences of the non-Indigenous research team employed by the Surat Aboriginal Corporation, authors Palmer (a member of the research team) and Batorowicz are mindful that historically and still today, non-Indigenous authors have co-opted Indigenous stories to lend colour to their own writing (Pascoe, 2007, p. 211), part of the extractivist legacy of colonialism (Chazan & Cole, 2020, p. 4, citing Canadian Sto:lō scholar Dylan Robinson). Palyku (Western Australia) writer and academic Ambelin Kwaymullina (2018, p. 145) notes that the commonly used term 'informants' does not 'capture anything like the full weight of the intellectual property' that belongs to Indigenous people (citing Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2015). She suggests (p. 148) that non-Indigenous writers need to 'step away from (rather than into) Indigenous peoples' story spaces'. Worimi historian John Maynard (2017, p. 238) notes that '[o]nly an Aboriginal historian can bring to bear an Aboriginal understanding of the voices of the past', and Noonuccal scholar Martin (Booran Mirraboopa) (2003, p. 211) states more broadly: 'To represent our worlds is ultimately something we can only do for ourselves'.

This paper results from a collaboration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers that 'requires us to know our place and histories' (A. S. Smith, Smith, Wright, Hodge, & Dale, 2020, p. 941). The authors include the late Angelia Walsh, a proud Kamilaroi woman who was the Manager and Cultural Officer of the Surat Aboriginal Corporation and leader of the South West Queensland Indigenous Cultural Trail project. She continues to walk beside us on the Trail and in her work to raise awareness of the Aboriginal histories of her Country. The paper draws particularly upon a presentation made by Walsh and Palmer (Palmer, Walsh, & Burton, 2017) at a biennial research conference of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra, the ensuing co-authored journal paper (Palmer, Burton, & Walsh, 2020), and preceding discussions between Walsh and Palmer. Jane Palmer is an Australian ethnographer of settler descent who has worked with life stories as a source of understanding potential alternative futures (Palmer, 2014, 2017), and Beata Batorowicz is a Polish Australian artist and academic whose art and writing critically examine the spectre as a force disturbing the periphery of consciousness through personal accounts of historical trauma (Batorowicz, 2012; Gildersleeve & Batorowicz, 2018). During the development of the Trail project, both Palmer and Batorowicz were living and working as researchers in Toowoomba, Southern Queensland, from which it is a few hours' drive inland to the west to Surat and the other communities that worked with Walsh to develop the Trail.

In presenting this paper now, non-Indigenous authors Palmer and Batorowicz have also been conscious that it could become yet another attempt to place the settler 'at the centre of the narrative of redemption and moral recuperation', at the expense of addressing the more fundamental issues of historical injustice and continuing oppression of Indigenous peoples (Edmonds, 2016, p. 134); or that we are seen as presenting another piece of 'damage-centred' research that focuses, as does much of settler studies, solely on histories of Indigenous pain and oppression (Unangax̂ (Alaska) scholar Eve Tuck, 2010, p. 638; Tuck & Yang, 2014). However, rather than focusing on settler redemption or Indigenous pain, we have strived to remain true to Angelia's vision in drawing attention to the power of Indigenous people's own futures thinking and enactments of truth-telling and sovereignty to 'make established [settler] certainties vacillate' (Davis, 2005, p. 376) and thus to condition settler futures. Our intent is to demonstrate how the capacity of projects such as the South West Indigenous Cultural Trail to unsettle the settler – to act as spectre – might lead to an unlearning and/or eradicating of settler ways of 'futuring' life.

A spectre acts affectively, bringing about some new 'transformative recognition' (Gordon & Radway, 2008, p. 8). Our discussion of the haunting of the white settler therefore acknowledges the power of the spectre to change thinking: to exert 'its barely suppressed capacity to disturb and *obligate us to the new*' (Drabinski, 2013, p. 131, emphasis added). The truth about the past, suggests U.S.-based Black Studies scholar John Drabinski, 'brings injustice into view', but is 'only a prompt to the most urgent work ahead of us.' This work Drabinski describes as 'conciliation' rather than '*re*conciliation': to be open to 'a remaking of the world, not some [imaginary] prior community' (2013, pp. 124, 128). Geoffrey Bright, in his description of politically marginalized and impoverished coal-mining communities in the United Kingdom, describes social haunting in Avery Gordon's terms as a 'socio-political-psychological state' when 'people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving' and hence '*something else… seems like it must be done*' (2016, p. 148, citing Gordon). Connecting the spectre with such calls to action suggests the possibility of white settlers responding to the work of Indigenous peoples by re-imagining their own futures. In their description of 'living protocols' by which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples might 'shift camp together,' Aunty Shaa Smith et al. argue that non-Indigenous co-researchers 'must talk back to dominant knowledge institutions and … create openings' for Indigenous knowledge 'to shine through' (2020, p. 943). We hope that in juxtaposing – separating and then connecting – Indigenous futures activism with the haunting of the settler's future, we might be part of a discursive shift in settler imaginaries beyond (re)conciliation and towards futures of reparation and support for Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and resurgence.

In the next sections, we look at ways in which Western and Indigenous scholars and writers have connected past and present with the future, including the role of the spectre, particularly as it relates to Australian colonialism. Finally, we look at the Trail project as an example of both Indigenous resurgence and a generative haunting.

2. History denied

> Settlers, in the end, tended not to emigrate to assimilate into Indigenous societies, but rather emigrated to replace them (Banivanua Mar & Edmonds, 2010a, p. 2).

Art historian Bernard Smith described the process of forgetting and marginalization of Australian Aboriginal people as a 'white blanket of forgetfulness' (Smith, 1980 p. 22), and anthropologist William Stanner (2010 (1969)) referred to it as 'the great Australian silence'. To a significant extent still, history courses taught in Australian schools give only minimal attention to post-contact Aboriginal history, focusing instead on post-contact white exploration and settlement. Even today, as the Trail research team discovered in speaking with Aboriginal people in South-West Queensland, there is little knowledge or acknowledgement on the part of non-Indigenous people of the Aboriginal history of towns, nor of the hard labour performed by Aboriginal women and men in the construction of infrastructure and in the development of Australia's pastoral industry. Even less is there acknowledgement of the resistance wars fought by Aboriginal people against invasion. Denis Byrne (2002, p. 136) points out that '[i]n the heritage sphere, … the Aboriginal post-contact experience has remained largely invisible;' more generally, there is an illusion among white people of an 'occupational hiatus' between pre-contact Aboriginal inhabitants and 'modern' Aboriginal people in cities and towns. Post-settlement Australia has been built on grand narratives that marginalize Indigenous peoples: the explorer/pioneer narrative, the White Australia narrative, and the narrative of Aboriginal pre-ordained disappearance in the face of a 'superior' civilization: 'Aboriginal people were out of time and done for' (Attwood, 2017, pp. 35–36).

In response to histories of oppression in Australia and elsewhere, there is always a push by the oppressors for the oppressed to 'move on' and let go of grievance so that 'we' can move towards a more equitable and reconciled future. Elsewhere (Palmer & Pocock, 2020), we have discussed the 'affect aliens' (Da Costa, 2016, p. 31) who are perceived as holding onto past injustice rather than celebrating the 'happy affect' of reconciliation. These 'kill-joys' are urged to move on: 'The black woman must let go of her anger for the white woman to move on' (Ahmed, 2010, p. 39). In the words of Trawlwoolway and Pinterrairer Aboriginal activist Michael Mansell: '[t]he foundation for equality appears to be based on a fresh start. Indigenous peoples forget what they had, and whites what they took' (Mansell, 2003, p. 14). Ahmed (2005, p. 78) notes that (unsuccessful) demands by members of the Australian public for then Prime Minister John Howard to apologise to Indigenous Australians for the stealing of Aboriginal children from their families were also 'a plea that the nation move beyond the past, and enter into a future where pride can itself be "re-covered."' Much of the non-Indigenous advocacy for reconciliation, suggests Penelope Edmonds (2016, p. 98), is 'empty of history and meaningful legal pathways for political change and redress'.

Indigenous peoples have always passed on histories and knowledge across generations, knowledge that provides an understanding of relations between all things, and an orientation towards the world that is both very different and more sophisticated than the colonizer's. More recently this includes written histories, geographies and narratives of post-contact life (Banivanua Mar & Edmonds, 2010b; B. Griffiths & Russell, 2018; Konishi, 2007, 2008; J. M. Maynard, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Russell, 2012, 2018). (For an overview of work based on oral histories see Forsyth and Gavranovic (2018, p. 484)). The autobiographical publications of the Aboriginal writers who contributed to the South West Queensland Indigenous Cultural Trail also enact in specific ways a subversion of the settler's past in their descriptions of the difficult and often unpaid work performed by Aboriginal people (Mailman, 2014; M. R. Mitchell, 2016; Wharton, 1999). Elsewhere, the documentation of Aboriginal land claims, the mapping of massacre sites (Ryan, Debenham, Brown, & Pascoe, 2017), the emergence of alternative histories such as that of the Native Mounted Police (Burke et al., 2018; Richards, 2008), revelations of past government attitudes and policy (Kidd, 1997), and the long-term work of historians such as Heather Goodall (1996, 2001; Goodall & Cadzow, 2009), Henry Reynolds (1998, 2006, 2013) and others, all uncover the violent colonial past.

Nonetheless, despite this detailed and careful work, the denial or suppression of Aboriginal history continues, in criticisms of 'black armband' histories (Clark, 2002), in limited school curricula (Lowe & Galstaun, 2020), in the 'just move on' approach of politically dominant groups (Ahmed, 2005; Augoustinos, Hastie, & Callaghan, 2018), in the cries of protest about the idea of renaming Australia Day as Invasion Day (Pearson, 2021) and in the absence of local memorials, archives and museums in towns that still mainly commemorate white pioneers and explorers (Byrne, 2002). It continues to emerge in weak government responses to the Uluru Statement,[1] and in the ongoing disadvantaging of Aboriginal Australians in employment, housing, health and education (Lowitja Institute, 2021).

Discomfort about the past continues to haunt white Australia in this contradiction between what is known and what is refused:

> Australian settler sovereignty does not deny recognition to Indigenous sovereignty so much as it denies having recognised it… responding to dangerous assertions by forming new means of enveloping them, never succeeding in resolving the contradiction but instead constituting itself as antagonistic (Silverstein, 2020, p. 53).

This contradiction, and the discomfort it produces, is described in the comment by Goenpul writer and academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015, p. 179) that '[t]he possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty is compelled to deny and refuse what it

[1] The 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' arose from a meeting of Aboriginal representatives from across Australia, convened as part of the Referendum Council's response to its brief from the Commonwealth Government 'to advise the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition on options for constitutional reform' . The Uluru Statement called for a 'First Nations Voice' in the Australian Constitution and a 'Makarrata Commission' to supervise a process of agreement-making and truth-telling between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

cannot own – the sovereignty of the Indigenous other,' creating 'an ontological disturbance/fracture'. In Australia, white paranoia and anxiety about 'illegal immigrants' and an 'Asian invasion' reflect a haunting awareness that the land was taken illegally and violently from its original inhabitants; Xu (2018, p. 486) notes that a politics that plays to fear and paranoia about 'Oriental Otherness' 'surreptitiously effaces the violent history of the past and transfers the horror and devastation of invasion into an apocalyptic warning'. Haunting is thus 'a relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society's assurances of innocence and reconciliation' (Tuck & Ree, 2016, p. 642). Moreover, as Moreton-Robinson (2015, p. 144) makes clear, this paranoia continues to shape futures in Australian government foreign policy and national security. White Australia is thus 'unable to give her ghosts a proper burial, entangled in the web of haunting repetitions' (Tumarkin, 2001, p. 205). We suggest that rather than a burial of ghosts, there is, and needs to be, an insistent spectre; it will only be in addressing the tension between Aboriginal peoples' own refusal to be colonized out of existence and settler Australia's refusal to address colonization and its consequences, that the settler has the opportunity to unlearn their own convenient histories and apparently pre-ordained future.

Denis Byrne (2002, p. 138) makes the point that just as local and specific non-Indigenous stories have been used to construct a 'white' history of towns that excludes Aboriginal people, 'local Aboriginal history writing, almost by definition, subverts it'. The South West Indigenous Cultural Trail project discussed below is one such subversion, pushing into consciousness a past that has always been there and hence revealing an absence in the dominant historical narratives of towns and community. We suggest in what follows that such projects operate spectrally upon settler society, gesturing, in Jane Lydon's (2018, p. 411) words, at a 'blind spot' in Australia's consciousness.

3. Pasts and possible futures

It has been argued that any conception of our futures needs *storying* and that the stories we tell ourselves about the past determine the way we story – and see – our futures (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015; Paschen & Ison, 2014; Van Assche, Verschraegen, & Gruezmacher, 2021). Canadian Indigenous scholars use the idea of 're-storying,' and 'counter narrative' as a way of reclaiming the past from dominant non-Indigenous narratives (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is & T'lakwadzi, 2009; Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Anne Thomas), 2005). As Canadian First Nations scholar Lee Maracle says:

> … I wanted to write books so that Canada could see us, and change the way they thought about us (in Leanne B Simpson & Maracle, 2014).

The past can also be seen as a 'weight': a dragging that prevents us from opening ourselves to alternative futures, and prevents us from seeing the limitations of existing 'structuring discourses' and those of our potential futures that have already been denied or 'disowned' (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015, pp. 160, 159; Van Assche et al., 2021). Johan Galtung (1971, pp. 86, 91) provides an example of this 'weight' in his chronology of the historical processes through which imperialism establishes and tightens its hold on every aspect of the colonized – economic, political, communication, cultural and military – so that the future itself becomes colonized.

Futures studies often operate within a specific 'forward-looking socio-economic paradigm' (Ahlqvist & Rhisiart, 2015, p. 92), where futures become 'an arena of economic conquest' (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 41); however more recently, futures studies have become a platform for critical thinking about power dynamics and assumptions that determine whose future is prioritised – 'What future is silenced?' (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 44) – and whose voices are heard in futures debates (Ahlqvist & Rhisiart, 2015, pp. 95–97; Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015, p. 160). In a futures-themed issue of *The New Inquiry* magazine, the editors (Editors, 2015) note an assumption that 'we are moving through the same present together, as a unified population, a mass'. However, 'our futures are as fragmented as our presents, and just as fissured by race, gender, class, and ability.'.

One approach taken by futures practitioners to decolonizing futures is to enable disruptive narratives that 'surfac[e] problematic assumptions in order to explore alternative scenarios' (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015, p. 160). Later in this paper we shall see that Indigenous futures scholars in colonized societies have taken further the idea of 'disruptive narrative', envisaging and enacting pathways to decolonized futures with a stance towards the world that is profoundly different from that upon which settler society makes its plans. This strong Indigenous sense of futurity refuses a still-colonized future, re-connects with the land and all living beings, and seeks a path for Indigenous peoples to live 'uncolonized despite everything' (A. S. Smith et al., 2020, p. 957). Milojević (2018) describes a workshop for Aboriginal participants on workforce futures in which participants, while stating that often 'new hope is being overwhelmed by past knowing,' nevertheless developed a scenario of a radically different future:

> In this future, BabaKiueria (Barbecue Area)/Code Black scenario sees reversal in power and empowerment of Aboriginal nation. The world is upside down compared to today: … there is the Aboriginal prime minister and the Aboriginal passport/identity. … Aboriginal citizens create a new future from outside the system and create new rules. …Metrics of a life well-lived are reinvented. What is valued is a reconnection with nature and connection to the country, cultural connection, family relationships, life satisfaction, economic freedom, and freedom from aches and pains of modern life's expectations. … (Milojević, 2018).

The weight of historic oppression and trauma is not simply an obstruction to reaching a desired future, but, as we explore further below, a knowledge that can either power radical alternatives, or become a spectre that haunts those who deny it. Ahlqvist et al. (2015, p. 99), taking up Žižek's (2006) idea of irreconcilable differing points of view (the 'parallax' effect), suggest the possibility of irreconcilable – parallel – future trajectories arising from some originary point of conjunction. They point however, to a significant connection between two such apparently disconnected trajectories: a haunting of one by the other as a 'trace' or 'absent-presence' 'that is not directly graspable in the surface features of the temporal path, but more as spectral presences that haunt, and ultimately condition, their expressions and impacts' (p. 100 and citing Elisabeth Roberts, 2013). Van Assche et al. (2021, p. 8) describe such traces

as 'discursive fragments or half-forgotten institutions' as well as 'excluded discourses and actors or methods of constructing reality and measuring success'. We argue below that in the case of Indigenous versus colonisers' futures, the 'founding wound' of colonisation may be a point of conjunction from which have unfurled vastly different imaginaries of the future; the white settler's denial of the founding wound (Drabinski, 2013) and its legacy ensures that this 'absent-presence' will continue to haunt settler futures.

Science fiction and utopian thought have also been used to envisage radically alternative futures: to 'think the unthinkable', for example through new archetypes generated from an analysis of science fiction (Fergnani & Song, 2020, p. 18). Significantly for marginalized peoples who resist dominant discourses about the future, utopian thought 'is always more or less subversive, and thus will always provoke existing relationships and question current ways of life, ways of thinking, power relationships' (Hedrén & Linnér, 2009, p. 198). Moreover, while utopia 'is always a place of otherness—a "no-place"' (Hedrén & Linnér, 2009, p. 197), Indigenous scholars have argued that its opposite, dystopia, is a present reality for many Indigenous peoples. We discuss below the adoption by Indigenous writers of science fiction and other genres in order to create and maintain imaginaries of a decolonized future. These are more than aspiration and critique; they constitute, in Leanne Simpson's (2017) terms, acts of radical resurgence.

Recurring in much of this writing is the idea of an 'absent-presence', 'the elephant in the room' (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015, pp. 154, 157), a trace of a past or present that has been made invisible, a 'discursive fragment' or 'excluded actor' that is other but which nonetheless conditions our futures in the form of a haunting. As is evident from the above brief history of denialism in Australia, it is in the *non*-Indigenous world that we see clear evidence of an ongoing haunting, in 'selective memory, a troubled conscience, a brazen rationalisation, denial, unconscious habit, the destruction of physical evidence or the erection of monuments' (T. Griffiths, 1996, p. 106). Frontier violence 'perpetually haunts the settler state and lives on in multifarious guises within it' (Edmonds, 2016, p. 10). While the pain of the past for Indigenous people continues in a powerful sense to haunt – as an unforgotten and lasting legacy – their wellbeing and happiness, our focus in this paper is on a more active haunting, the spectre as a figure 'of otherness and subversion, … that disturb[s] analytical customs and perceptions' (Lorek-Jezińska & Więckowska, 2017, p. 11), a 'presence and absence' that represents an opportunity – often not seized – to open up to 'an essential unknowing' (Davis, 2005, pp. 376, 377). This resonates with the call by Neeyan Smith, the daughter of Gumbaynggirr story-holder Aunty Shaa Smith, for people to come together 'not knowing, otherwise they're gonna learn nothing!' (A. S. Smith et al., 2020, p. 958).

4. Indigenous futurisms/futures activism

> In the colonial imaginary, indigenous life is not only separate from the present time but also out of place in the future, a time defined by the progress of distinctively western technology (Cornum, 2015).

In introducing a special journal issue on settler colonial studies, historian Lynette Russell noted that Aboriginal scholars are already working 'outside the realm of settler colonial interactions' (Russell, 2020, p. 154, citing Shino Konishi), and suggested that 'for many Indigenous scholars, there is an urgency and activism in their writing that may not necessarily extend to commenting on the state of the field of settler colonial studies' (Russell, 2020, p. 157). This and Lou Cornum's statement above capture the divergence of trajectories that Ahlqvist et al. (2015) describe, as it applies to Indigenous and non-Indigenous futures. Indigenous futurisms, briefly overviewed in this section, are distinct not only from settler projections onto the future, but also from the very conception of a future that can only 'move on' from the past. We shall see that Indigenous futures imaginaries might also, through their reminders of the continued presence and futurity of Indigenous peoples in the face of colonialism, serve to unsettle settler futures.

Indigenous futures activism can be seen in the use of current injustice as a tool for critiquing Western futures thinking, through an Indigenous discourse of 'dystopia now.' Dystopia is generally defined as 'an imagined world or society in which people lead wretched, dehumanized, fearful lives' or 'a vision of a future that is a corrupted (usually beyond recognition)'.[2] However, Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte points out that Indigenous peoples 'already inhabit what our ancestors would have understood as a dystopian future' (Whyte, 2018, p. 227, citing Lee Sprague) where climate injustice 'is less about the spectre of a new future and more like déjà vu' (Whyte, 2017, p. 88). As Australian Aboriginal writer and academic Tony Birch (2017, p. 202) notes:

> Climate change is not only a future, or even contemporary event. In the past, as a result of both natural disaster and human intervention, often in the name of empire, Indigenous communities specifically, and the poor more generally, have experienced both environmental displacement and localised climate change events that have devastated communities.

The catastrophic consequences of climate change for Indigenous peoples in places such Greenland and the Marshall Islands are seen by the West simply as 'bellwether' phenomena, as Indigenous Hawai'ian (Kanaka Maoli) scholar Hi'ilei Hobart (2021, p. 4) observes:

> Casting climate change relative to domestic American impact reveals the ways in which whiteness remains the unmarked center of apocalyptic anxiety by setting up false distinctions between drastic climate change 'over there' to its pending encroachment 'over here'.

Hobart discusses an art video that, in its poetic evocation of loss, refuses the West's minimisation of specific Indigenous experiences of dispossession and harm arising in Greenland and the Marshall Islands, not only from climate change but as a result of U.S. Cold War occupation and activities, including the nuclear bombs detonated on Pikinni (Bikini) Island (Hobart, 2021. See also Koch, 2021). Hobart (p. 11) describes the dystopia left behind after Cold War defence outposts in Greenland were abandoned:

[2] www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dystopia; www.yourdictionary.com/dystopia

> Investigations into the hazardous future of Cold War defense outposts embedded within Greenland's landscape lack clarity regarding the treaty terms under which they were established. Not only do they offer unclear directives about which nation is responsible for contaminants leeching from the now-abandoned structures, but they also fail to address the structural conditions by which Inuktun territory has been exploited in the service of colonial powers that understand its space to be empty, static, and available for use as a waste repository.

In response to such dystopias, 'Indigenous Futurisms' emerge as 'a form of storytelling whereby Indigenous authors use the speculative fiction genre to challenge colonialism and imagine Indigenous futures' (Kwaymullina, 2018, p. 149, citing Anishinaabe academic Grace Dillon (Dillon, 2012)). As Dillon (2016, p. 2) notes, the 'contemplation of futurisms is another step in an inevitable direction, especially for peoples whose experience of an Apocalypse Now frustrates their chances of finding "a way out of no way to the future"':

> Indigenous Futurisms are not the product of a victimized people's wishful amelioration of their past, but instead a continuation of a spiritual and cultural path that remains unbroken by genocide and war.

Indigenous Futurisms are a statement that Indigenous peoples remain undefeated; they offer 'an aesthetic spring from the trap' of the present, as 'artists who are haunted by a disappeared past while facing survival in a devastated present can reclaim possible futures through aesthetic creation' (Dillon, 2016, pp. 2, 3). Indigenous Futurisms in literature and film 'illustrate the value of Indigenous scientific literacies in connecting the land with the people and in connecting people as communities' and establish a 'vibrant Indigenous presence as a condition of the (post)colonial' (Dillon, 2016, p. 4). Diné (Navajo) author Lou Cornum (2015) writes of Indigenous Futurisms:

> Our collective refusal of colonial progress (namely, our destruction) means we must chart other ways to the future that lead us and other oppressed peoples to the worlds we deserve.

In the United Kingdom, Geoff Bright (2016, pp. 150–151) has noted that marginalised and economically precarious groups turn their energies to 'a sociality of relationality' rather than the capitalist pursuits of acquisition and extraction, thus raising 'the possibility of *another way of living*' (emphasis in original). Relationality is a profoundly important quality of Indigenous peoples' worlds in the past, the present and the future, extending to all living things (Martin (Booran Mirraboopa), 2003). Kwaymullina (2018, p. 151) describes this relationality:

> In Indigenous worldviews, the pattern of creation is comprised of living wholes. Because everything lives, everything moves, and in a constantly shifting reality, position is always relative—which is to say, determined by relationships. Indigenous kinship systems map connections (relationships), and the concept of 'family' is not confined to human beings but extends to animals and plants and every other shape of life in the world.

One of the many griefs for Indigenous peoples which has been brought about by dispossession, is the severing of their local connections with animals, plants and ecosystems (Whyte, 2018, p. 226), and with their languages, histories and cultures (L. Smith, 1999, p. 28). Futures in which these relationships are fundamental are, as Ahlqvist et al. would suggest, in an irreconcilable parallel with 'settler futurity' which is 'blind [to] the inextricable connections between human and planetary health (Hernández, 2020, p. 1006, quoting Indigenous Hawai'ian academic Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua). Cornum (2015) also observes:

> It is the settler who wishes to flatten the relation between place and people by claiming land through ownership. Projecting themselves forward into faraway lands and times, the space NDN [Native American] reveals the myriad ways of relating to land beyond property.

For Cornum (2015), Indigenous Futurisms redefine 'advanced technology' and 'advanced civilization' so that dynamic traditions – 'themselves a type of advanced technology' – are brought into the future rather than being abandoned, in order 'to foster the kind of relationships that make futures possible'. For Aunty Shaa Smith and her daughter Neeyan (2020, p. 957), the way forward is about 'finding ways to live protocols as un-stolen, trying to get back to a place of oneness with Country, getting back to her and allowing her to speak, to hear those songs and to sing them, finding that place of oneness within, that remains uncolonized despite everything'.

While settler Australia's present and its futures remain haunted by avoidance of the past and a fear of ceding dominion, it also largely ignores the movement of Indigenous people world-wide towards much more radical visions of the future. Described by Indigenous scholars and artists as a *resurgence*, it encompasses relation-based futures in which the human and the nonhuman are integrally connected, a continuation of a sovereignty that is also generous and inclusive. That sovereignty can be seen in the (western New South Wales) Barkindji people's stance towards the world: the knowledge that the land is there to nurture all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous:

> This … invitation offered to all … assumes and enacts a sovereignty grounded in a special relationship with and understanding of bush that transcends limited Western conceptions of property (Forsyth & Gavranovic, 2018, p. 479).

Indigenous futurisms bring traditional knowledge and embodied practices to meet the changes and challenges to come. American Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017, p. 17) explains the connection between Indigenous resurgence and tradition in her use of the term 'biiskabiyang', which is 'the process of returning to ourselves, a reengagement with the things we have left behind, a reemergence, an unfolding from the inside out…. an individual and collective process of decolonization and resurgence'. For Simpson, resurgence through biiskabiyang 'is a flight out of the structure of settler colonialism and into the processes

and relationships of freedom and self-determination.'

Simpson's 'Radical Resurgence Project' is a *refusal* of the dispossession of Indigenous bodies and land, but, she notes, a generative refusal, in that it also embodies an Indigenous alternative: 'it is a process from which grounded, real world, Indigenous alternatives are manifest and realized' (2017, pp. 35, 34). As Simpson calls for collective Indigenous action to 'build and rebuild Indigenous worlds', she focuses on what must be done *now* in order to generate a better future: 'I don't want to imagine or dream futures. I want a better present' (2017, p. 246). For Indigenous researchers, refusal and resurgence entails a shift from pain-centred narrative to desire-based frameworks that look to the past and to the future with hope:

> Desire invites the ghosts that history wants exorcised, and compels us to imagine the possible in what was written as impossible (Tuck & Yang, 2014, pp. 231, 235).

In Indigenous resurgence, relationality and connectivity are ways of 'making anew' or 'remaking' the world in kinship with all living things (Chazan & Cole, 2020, p. 13; Drabinski, 2013, p. 128; Hogan, 2017, p. 22). This necessary remaking of the world as one of relations between all things, through traditional knowledge and performance, has been described elsewhere: Di Chiro (2017, p. 72) presages futures of 'the multiple, interconnected worlds comprised of different human lifeways and other species who will co-create stories of resurgence that may help us to live convivially together and to forestall … what some are predicting to be the Sixth Great Extinction'; Theriault, Leduc, Mitchell, Rubis, & Gaehowako, (2020, p. 901) propose that stories and ceremonies 'are not symbols but embody living protocols through which worlds come into being in acts of resistance, refusal and resurgence.' (See also Joseph (styawat), 2021, p. 173); Audra Mitchell (2020, pp. 920, 921) describes resurgence as 'the political, social, spiritual and physical acts through which Indigenous peoples struggle to regenerate their unique place-based modes of life and fight for decolonisation', so that, in 'actively re-building the relations that ensure co-flourishing, they are opening paths towards futures full of life'; Chickasaw poet and academic Linda Hogan (2017, p. 24) explains that:

> With ideas of connective creation, we have been putting this world back together, not only in creative form, but also in some of the [place-based] restorations that are taking place.

Knowledge embodied and performed goes beyond Western conservation of artefacts and oral histories, 'to make possible entirely different worlding narratives, different futurities, about remembering and making anew (Chazan & Cole, 2020, p. 13):

> Sovereign memory, as seen here, does not focus on colonial trauma, nor does it seek to insert Indigenous people and stories into state archives. Sovereign memory, we learn, is much more than this – it is memory that exists beyond confrontations with colonization; memory about and from Land, spirit, knowledge, gender, power, creativity and relationships. This is a powerful, future-oriented circulation of Indigenous memory (Chazan & Cole, 2020, p. 13).

The sovereignty that was never ceded, that settler society is still compelled to deny (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 179), is the founding principle of Forsyth and Gavranovic's (2018) 'logic of survival', within which Aboriginal people have co-opted the impositions made by the settler on Indigenous bodies and land, to continue building connection with Country and kin. In such stories of more-than-survival, of custodianship, sovereignty, and Indigenous resurgence, and in the slow realization within settler society of the need for other ways of relating to the nonhuman world in order for there to be a (any) future, we might begin to see the emergence of at least a sightline from non-Indigenous imaginaries to Indigenous alternatives. This sightline does not yet honestly encompass the temporal arc that extends back to the very foundation for economic growth, resource exploitation and consumption: genocide, dispossession, destruction of Country and a continued deeply entrenched racism reflected at every level of government and across settler society. However, Indigenous truth-telling and other acts of resurgence will continue to ensure that this longer trajectory back to the 'point of conjunction' continues to haunt settler imaginaries and re-imaginaries as a trace or absent-presence (Ahlqvist & Rhisiart, 2015, pp. 99, 100), until the accepted past and projected futures are unlearnt: 'Haunting is the cost of subjugation. It is the price paid for violence, for genocide' (Tuck & Ree, 2016, p. 643).

For Indigenous peoples, exercising sovereignty in a remaking of the world and the future, in acts of generative refusal, is a deep responsibility, an example of which we explore below. As Linda Hogan (2017, p. 26) says: 'We are holding the future. Its rocky spine rests across our lands'.

5. The South West Queensland Indigenous Cultural Trail: Localised resurgence and truth-telling

We have discussed elsewhere the way in which a non-Indigenous 'taking hold' of the uncomfortable colonial past might support a process of Makarrata or peace-making (Palmer & Pocock, 2020). Here our focus is the force of Indigenous work on futures/futurisms/futurity, always already underway, in order to place the truth-telling work of a particular Indigenous-led project in South-West Queensland within the wider context of this radical futures work and its implications for unsettling settler Australia.

The South West Queensland Indigenous Cultural Trail project was led by the Surat Aboriginal Corporation, which worked with Aboriginal communities in seven South-West Queensland towns to develop a drive trail of around 1200 kilometres through Surat, Roma, Mitchell, Cunnamulla, Charleville, St George and Dirranbandi. The project leader, Walsh, developed the project in a number of stages over several years. In 2016 she commissioned a research team at the University of Southern Queensland to conduct interviews with Aboriginal people in each town, research the Aboriginal history of the towns, and use this material to develop a website and other information material for tourists and the tourism industry (www.swqict.com.au). The research team, which included anthropologists, archaeologists and community development researchers as well as a doctoral student, worked under the close guidance of Walsh, who had already established a network of participating organisations and community members across the region.

The Trail project conjures, for non-Indigenous people, a spectral past limned by the true stories of Aboriginal people's experiences. Indigenous ownership of such stories and control over decisions about sharing have been ongoing issues for Indigenous peoples working with non-Indigenous researchers, as Canadian Squamish artist Michelle Nahanee (in conversation with Chazan & Cole, 2020, p. 8) and Australian Wiradjuri writer Jeanine Leane (2016, p. 43) have pointed out. Research contracts and University ethics approvals are not yet sufficient to meet the need for deep engagement with Indigenous peoples that ensures research supports Indigenous sovereignty. Palmer, as a member of the research team commissioned by Walsh, presents the material below however in the belief that doing so lies within Walsh's intention, through the Trail project, to reinstate in perpetuity the Indigenous history of towns and the land, and with the approval of the Surat Aboriginal Corporation.

The research team (see 'Acknowledgements' at the end of this paper) was taken by a Traditional Owner and an Aboriginal ranger on a bumpy ride through remote Country to a wide pan of rock and hardened red dirt. They showed us a set of three hollows dug into rock and, after they had brushed the sand out of each depression, we could see that each hollow was about a metre in diameter, each lying slightly lower than the next. We were told that it was a rock-well built by the land's custodians long ago, located where the water runs just under the surface of the earth. The water would emerge into the first pool then cascade into the next and the next, removing impurities at each change in level. We also noticed the timber remains of a small building about twenty meters away, and were shown a large square excavation into solid rock, extending downwards into darkness. This was the well built by Aboriginal labourers at the order of the white station[3] owner. Our guides explained that the water runs a long way beneath the surface here, but this is where the station owner wanted it.

We continued our ride over red earth pans towards a long row of silver-weathered spliced posts. Each piece of timber stood upright, forming a low but solid wall topped with a couple of runs of barbed wire, and stretching as far as the eye could see in both directions. Our guides told us that this phalanx of posts, buried up to a metre underground, was built by Aboriginal labour for the white station owner in order to keep out rabbits, an environmental pest introduced with colonization. One guide pointed out the huge amount of work involved and that in that time food rations were issued to the labourers instead of wages.

The research team visited a town a few hundred kilometres down the road where the air temperature was 45° Celsius (113° Fahrenheit). Older Aboriginal people, who had been forced to live in camps at the edge of town until the late 1960s, spoke of walking bare-foot from the camp into school in summer, hopping from one clump of grass to the next and carrying the smaller kids on their backs. When the kids came home to their humpies (shacks) constructed of tin and other materials gathered from the town rubbish dump, the river was the only place to go to cool down.

A senior Aboriginal man in the town remembered working as a younger man in a construction team, digging a deep trench that ran across the main street. The labourers worked through summer when crow-bars could not be laid down for even brief periods because they would become too hot to touch. The hessian water bags used for drinking water could not be re-filled during the day because the water came from a deep underground bore and was so hot that it dissolved the thin coating that lined the bags. The bags were instead filled first thing in the morning, and lowered into the trench, so the workers would not climb out of the trench to get water.

This last interviewee did not say whether his co-workers were Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, but his story, and the story of walking to school, throws back to us a different image from that of the bold, successful European settler who worked hard to build the towns and farms of the west. The acknowledgement of Aboriginal labour in the construction of modern Australia, and the differentially applied benefits of this development, is work that still needs to be done by settler Australia. The stories we were told were often not explicit criticisms of white privilege or of white foolishness or oppression, but simply of another past that is the same but different, that is, in Gelder and Jacobs' sense, uncanny: 'when one's home is rendered, somehow and in some sense, unfamiliar; one has the experience, in other words, of being in place and 'out of place' simultaneously (Gelder & Jacobs, 1998, p. 23).[4] Even in this telling – to a small group of non-Indigenous researchers – it was uncomfortable listening, reminding us that the apparently rational and desirable ordering of progress is not always what it seems.

The stories bring to life a history that Walsh knew was slowly beginning to surface in settler consciousness, through public art, museum exhibitions and school language programs. The Surat Aboriginal Corporation had already collected a vast amount of material on Surat Aboriginal family histories from Queensland State Archives and the State Library. Walsh points out that no-one can deny what happened – 'it's all documented and date stamped'.[5] The Surat Aboriginal Corporation began recording and filming local oral histories of the old people and Elders, to preserve knowledge which was then put on the organisation's website. For Walsh, this work not only told a 'proper' history of Aboriginal people in Surat, for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but was something she says she needed her children and grandchildren to know. Walsh instigated and managed the construction of an interpretive shelter and storyboards on the site of her family's former riverside camp, and the construction of a replica humpy nearby; on the opposite riverbank the original humpy of the Combarngo family was restored. She began to talk with other communities about their history, and realized that in another hundred years, those sites, like the camps at Surat, might also disappear. Finding that each community had its own very different story to tell, she worked with others to develop a driving loop through all of the towns. The vision was for Aboriginal people to share their true histories, so that knowledge could be passed not only between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, but

[3] A station is a large landholding in Australia, generally running sheep or cattle.

[4] It should be noted that Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015, p. 10) has challenged Gelder and Jacobs' claim that Native Title in Australia has rendered the land uncanny in the sense that it is both 'theirs' (and sacred) and 'ours'; she points out that most Indigenous Australians still have neither land rights nor ownership of sacred sites. The recent detonation of a 46,000 year old Aboriginal site in Juukan Gorge, Western Australia by mining company Rio Tinto is another example of Western capital's 'victory' over the sacred.

[5] From Walsh conversation with Palmer, 22 January 2017

across generations (Palmer, Burton, & Walsh, 2020). This vision – an act of reimagining that refuses and transcends the settlers' obliteration of the inconvenient past – grew out of Walsh's family's own dystopian past, of stolen children, fear and dispossession. She has always said that her work was done to honour her grandfather who, although repeatedly asked 'why' questions by his granddaughter, had been unable to speak of the past:

> [Angelia] remembers that every time a policeman came to the camp, her grandfather would shout at the kids to run and hide. She thought that was a game (Palmer, Burton, & Walsh, 2020) p. 759).

For Walsh and for other families, their work was about resisting erasure in the past, present and future. As Walsh has said, 'They might bulldoze this place, but they can never deny we were here' (Palmer, Burton, & Walsh, 2020)p759. In constructing the humpy and the interpretive shelter, she wanted her children and grandchildren to know the true history, 'backed up by something you can see.'[6] This history includes both happy and traumatic stories; the aim of the Trail itself is both to refuse the white-washed histories of communities, and to unsettle 'selective memory, … denial, unconscious habit, the destruction of physical evidence …' (T. Griffiths, 1996, p. 106). With the guiding hand of Walsh's daughter, an Aboriginal cultural festival (Bamba Gii, meaning 'strong heart') took place in 2021, drawing attention to the unstoppable continuity of Aboriginal cultures and languages, to 'memory that exists beyond confrontations with colonization; … a powerful, future-oriented circulation of Indigenous memory (Chazan & Cole, 2020, p. 13).

The Trail and other projects that insist upon the Aboriginal past and continued presence are, in Bright's (2016, p. 148) words, haunting reminders to the settler of 'people who are meant to be invisible'. In the small histories we have related from the Trail project, we see a distorting of non-Indigenous Australians' picture of life on the 'frontier,' the spectre's distortion that might result in 'a temporary weakness in our grip on things' (Jameson, 1999, p. 38). Such stories are not a re-telling of the 'national narrative'; rather they gesture at the possibility of a much bigger, more disturbing, reimagining. Such re-imaginings are necessary, as Edmonds points out, in settler society; national apologies for stolen children, 'Sorry Days' and reconciliation marches have, she suggests, 'elided the past and failed to address, in any coherent fashion, ongoing structures of violence' (2016, p. 93). Meanwhile, however, Indigenous peoples continue to perform their own truth telling in projects, ceremonies and events that recall the actual violence of the colonial past and celebrate a continuing Indigenous presence and futurity. These may sometimes include white settlers; the Myall Creek Massacre Memorial is a consecrated space where descendants of white perpetrators and of Aboriginal victims have worked together to acknowledge, reflect upon and grieve for the past (Batten, 2009, p. 95). Edmonds (2016, p. 94) notes:

> At Myall Creek, shared, local, traumatic histories and personal relationships continue to be reworked and reimagined, though not without risk and challenge, and can offer new ways of being together in the name of reconciliation.

The Trail's localized re-instatement of Aboriginal people in the post-contact past and present is both an insistence on the absent-presence of the Indigenous past, and an act of resistance that refuses invisibility now or in the future. In its insistent reminders of the local experiences and continued presence of Aboriginal people, the Trail acts as the spectre that nudges the edges of consciousness and conscience; it tells us that the present 'might under exceptional circumstances betray us' (1999, p. 39). The Trail is a reminder to non-Indigenous Australians who engage with it – perhaps even those who merely hear of it – that the past is not over and done with (Gordon & Radway, 2008, p. 196) and remains inextricably – hauntingly – connected to their future.

6. Conclusion

The profoundly different futures that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples imagine and act upon in the shadow of colonialism, are connected by 'traces' from one that haunt the other. Haunting, as we define it here, arises from something denied or not faced, an active spectral presence that disturbs consciousness and conscience; it is white settler futures that are haunted by reminders of the founding wound and legacy of colonization. Attempts to 'envelop' (Silverstein, 2020, p. 53) Indigenous futures in an all-encompassing future of economic growth, acquisition and consumption have been met with resistance by Indigenous peoples; this resistance takes many forms, including radically alternative imaginaries for futures that draw upon profound cultural traditions of relationality, and projects of truth-telling and reclamation of sovereignty that emerge in literature and art, in Indigenous histories, in protests and activism (Edmonds, 2016). It emerges also in projects such as the South West Indigenous Cultural Trail, where resistance conjures the colonial spectre: a presence that makes itself known through stories that are neither pedagogical nor polemical. In these often gentle stories we see the trajectory of Indigenous resurgence connecting, in a series of haunting reminders, with the trajectory of the white settler's imagined future. In such localized acts of resurgence that touch non-Indigenous worlds, the settler's past might begin to 'shimmer like a mirage' (Jameson, 1999, p. 38), and the very foundations of apparently inevitable futures might be shaken. It might become possible to see that radically re-imagining what is now a haunted and unsustainable settler future – to re-imagine sufficiently – will involve more than the tentative co-option of selected Indigenous practices (such as land management); the settler's 'growth' trajectory must first be seen in the light of its true history, back to the founding wound upon which those ambitions for growth were so brutally leveraged. This is the arc of Angelia Walsh's vision for the Trail: a vision that refuses the coloniser's past and a colonised future, in a generative – and haunting – act of Indigenous resurgence.

[6] From Walsh conversation with Palmer, 22 January 2017

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