

A thesis submitted for the degree of
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The Folklore of Awe: Elements and Influences involved in the construction
of tales concerning strange creatures and phenomena arising in the
Australian environment and culture

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Preface

This thesis, one in the academic subject area of Folklore, is for the M.A. Honours degree programme, and it consists of around 50,000 words in the main text.

This thesis is an exploration of the Folklore of Awe, and the way in which human cultures, - particularly in recent centuries, - have created representations of strange creatures and phenomena as the Other or as 'monsters' in their stories, and still continue to do so. The first part of this study looks at the idea of the 'monster' or the 'Other' in human culture, and at ways that ideas of separation have contributed to the creation of such 'monsters', examining briefly some well known examples. The second part of the study turns explicitly to Australian lore, examining the cases of: the Bunyip with its possible connection to the ancient Megafauna; the ways in which the Tasmanian Tiger has been constructed by various interested parties; the Alien Big Cats and their appreciable effect in our modern society; and the matter of Yowies, and some ideas of their possible origin. In Chapters 4 - 7, charts of sightings are included, in order to clarify the elements of the various 'creature' stories.

The study then proceeds to phenomena considerably less physical in nature: Indigenous nature spirits and ghosts, Min Min Lights and Crop Circles, and the Environment itself and certain phenomena which include an immanent sense of almost magic realism in their occurrences. The human ability to have a sense of the numinous combined with the tendency to project some contents of the unconscious onto the surrounding people and environmental elements seems to have contributed greatly to the essence of tales of myth and folklore, and to be still as capable as ever of creating new and fascinating stories.

In order to keep the main text more succinct, I have included much of the somewhat fiddley but pertinent and connected information and evidence in the footnotes, while the Appendix contains some reference materials in greater detail than was possible in the main body. Although this subject area could provide more than enough scope for several more theses, I have tried to accumulate and distinguish the various strands in this field of Awe,

especially as it relates to Australia.

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