

**'No storied windows, richly dight': Locating the Gothic in Four Australian Novels**

An Exegesis Accompanying  
'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter:  
an Australian Gothic Novel'  
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## **Abstract**

After completing the first draft of 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', I discovered that my novel contained several elements that placed it within the Gothic genre. Wanting to account for how this happened, I decided to research the genre. In this exegesis I pose the following questions: what defines the Gothic genre and what are the Gothic elements in arguably the world's first example, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. I ask if these can be traced in early Australian literature through to Elizabeth Harrower's *The Watch Tower*, Elizabeth Jolley's *The Well* and Sonya Hartnett's *Surrender*. I examine how my novel is situated within the context of the genre in Australia and account for how my original draft came to display Gothic elements. I also note the adjustments I made to enhance some of these elements in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'.

The words that comprise the title of my novel were uttered in the Old Bailey in eighteenth-century London, when Jack Cooper was sentenced to transportation for life for stealing twigs from a hedge to keep warm in winter. The hedge was on the common land that Jack's family had owned before Judge Christian Wilson enclosed it, leaving the Coopers to fend for themselves.

My novel brings the descendants of the Wilsons and the Coopers together in present-day Australia. Camilla, mother of Lucas and Hugh, married Christian Wilson because she was pregnant as a result of her relationship with Jack Cooper. Camilla and Christian's marriage was destructive. It became worse when Christian discovered that Lucas was not his son and Camilla found out that Christian had wanted her for her

money and had tricked Jack into signing up for the military service that made him a casualty in World War Two.

Camilla and Christian deliberately involved their children in their hostilities. Lucas learned to protect himself by dissociating, but Hugh perpetuated the Wilson past by behaving like his parents. When Camilla, elderly and demented, fell and broke a hip, Lucas and Hugh came together again in the old family home and their dysfunctional behaviours resurfaced. In the process, Lucas discovered why his mother, Camilla, had married Christian Wilson and that his real father was a descendant of the convict, Jack Cooper.

## **Declaration**

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and the embargo on the creative work.

Henry Ashley-Brown

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Date:

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Many years later, once again encouraged, this time by Professor Tom Shapcott, I enrolled as a student in Creative Writing at the University of Adelaide. Then, chaperoned by my two wonderfully discerning and unrelentingly perspicacious supervisors, Dr Jan Harrow and Dr Philip Butterss, I became a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Professor Nicholas Jose then kindly introduced me to Roger McDonald, whose enthusiasm for the first draft of my novel, 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', informed and energised its polishing. I thank them both.

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## Introduction

After finishing the first draft of 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', I was surprised to find that my novel could be described as belonging to the Gothic genre. Never having experienced the Gothic, other than in film, I decided to research the genre with a view to deepening my understanding of it, enhancing its elements in my novel and situating my story within the context of the Gothic in Australia. I discovered firstly that my narrative aligned with the Gothic because it contained an old house, the paranormal and an accident that would lead to death. There were also issues of inheritance, males with psychological problems, a demented and isolated female victim, past injustices that impinged on the present and several scenes that took place in darkness. All fitted nicely with Gothic literature.

I found that definitions of the Gothic varied considerably and that descriptions of its various subcategories, such as Gothic Romance and Gothic Horror, added to the difficulty of sharpening my understanding. To make the task of definition more challenging, many of the attempts enumerated its traits in art, architecture and film. An example of the latter is *The Mysterious Geographical Explorations of Jasper Morello* (Lucas), a Gothic animation set in the steampunk world of Shadowland. Clarity eluded me.

It seemed, therefore, that before proceeding I should take into account experiments which examine the metaphors that people bring to their methods of conceptualising and I came to agree with Mark Johnson, who concludes that, 'What they show is that people draw definite inferences based on their underlying metaphorical conceptions of the domain



they are investigating' (112). Further, as David Gordon says, we all carry with us our own unique models of the world (9). These conclusions offer an explanation for the fecundity of definitions, why differences occur amongst the similarities and why certain aspects of the tradition receive preference when defining it.

A solution to defining the Gothic, as suggested by Thomas and Gillard (39), required admitting that its elements belong to a family. As in human families, there are family likenesses. Ludwig Wittgenstein's proposal of the use of a metaphor that characterises likenesses and properties as being akin to the spinning of a thread by the twisting of fibre about fibre, helped. He observed that, 'the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' (39). The analogy 'can acknowledge the existence of genre through a series of textual relationships while simultaneously allowing the genre to take different "shapes" at different times' (40).

With this in mind, I looked to the beginnings of the Gothic as a literary form in order to identify its 'fibres'. My research led me to the early eighteenth century where the Gothic and the Romantic were on the way to emerging as passionate and subversive successors to the Age of Reason. As the England of the eighteenth century was a time in which the contrast between behaviours that stemmed from logic and emotion, reason and instinct, was marked, these characteristics drew comments from contemporary observers such as Alexander Pope:

Go, wondrous creature! Mount where science guides,  
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;

Correct old Time, and regulate the sun ...

Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—

Then drop into thyself, and be a fool.

(in Dobrée, 'Essay on Man', Epistle Two, 1, 19-30, 190)

My novel appeared to touch on the same contradictions in human nature and speak through the voice of the Gothic. To discover why and to learn more about the genre, I decided to read what is arguably the world's first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764. Walpole's novel, I discovered, represents a synthesis of several of the philosophical ideas of the eighteenth century and also incorporates themes particular to the drama and the poetry of the age. As the origins and key ingredients of the early Gothic novel have been described in works such as Davendra Varma's, *The Gothic Flame*, I will not dwell on them here.

The question as to why the Gothic novel could successfully move house from its castle in Otranto, leave its various dark abbeys and ruins in the northern hemisphere and relocate to sunny Australia, was also intriguing. Frederick Sinnett, in his 1856 article, *The Fiction Fields of Australia*, had expressed grave doubts about the possibility: 'It must be admitted that Mrs Radcliffe's genius would be quite thrown away here; and we must reconcile ourselves to the conviction that the foundations of a second "Castle of Otranto" can hardly be laid in Australia during our time' (23). I determined, therefore, to identify Walpole's Gothic elements in three Australian novels and compare them with those in my novel, 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'. I chose Elizabeth Harrower's *The Watch Tower* (1966), Elizabeth Jolley's *The Well* (1986) and Sonya Hartnett's *Surrender* (2005). Each of

them, published approximately twenty years apart, offered the opportunity to study how the Gothic manifested in Australia. I wished to know how these authors challenged or added to the genre and I would look at the differences in their style, techniques, content and the Gothic emphases their authors chose to recognise or omit. Perhaps in so doing, I could establish how my novel fitted with theirs and in that process further enhance the Gothic elements in my own.

During my researches I became aware of the important contributions to the Gothic genre of many distinguished women writers. The three authors of the Australian novels which I discuss are also women. They are highly concerned, as were their predecessors, with issues such as sexuality, isolation, suppression, betrayal and collusion. The prescribed length and scope of this exegesis and the intent of my novel, however, did not permit the rewards of pursuing such a fascinating historical journey.

In Chapter One, I begin by teasing out the properties of *The Castle of Otranto* and, in passing, draw attention to the remarks of critics in relation to matters such as the significance of the castle, the situation of women, Burke's writings about the sublime, terror and obscurity, the Jungian interpretation of the subterranean and Freud's thoughts about the uncanny.

Chapter Two discusses the ideas that, according to Gerry Turcotte, gave Australia Gothic potential, well before its settlement. I then examine Frederick Sinnett's grave doubts about the possibility that the genre could be suitably accommodated here. I follow up with several examples of early Australian stories, set in the bush, which have Gothic

elements and some, much more recent, such as Tim Winton's *In the Winter Dark*, and Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala*, that bring the genre into suburban surrounds.

In Chapters Three to Six, I identify the Gothic elements in *The Watch Tower*, *The Well*, *Surrender* and 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', consider their import and describe how decisions about style and structure assist their authors' intentions.

With Wittgenstein in mind, I now turn to a consideration of the Gothic elements in *The Castle of Otranto*, prior to discussing them in the works of Elizabeth Harrower, Elizabeth Jolley, Sonya Hartnett and in my novel, 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'.

**Chapter One**  
***The Castle of Otranto***  
**Horace Walpole, 1764.**

Walpole establishes several of the important and continuing elements of the later Gothic novel within the first few pages of *The Castle of Otranto*. They are the mediaeval castle and its subterranean cloisters as the setting; death; innocent victims; an arranged marriage to secure property; and an injustice from the past with the usurpation of the rightful Duke of Otranto by poison. This deed brings a retributive curse, imposed with the help of the supernatural. In the preface to *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole stated that one of the main aims of his book was to demonstrate the biblical visitation of the sins of the fathers upon their sons (Grey Walls Press 7).

The story opens with the imminence of an arranged marriage between Duke Manfred's sickly fifteen-year old son, Conrad, to the beautiful Isabella. The marriage is necessary because Manfred wants to be assured of heirs in order to avoid the curse that could, otherwise, deprive him of the dukedom. Thus property and its inheritance through marriage are introduced as a theme of the genre.

A supernatural manifestation, in the form of a giant helmet, falls upon Conrad and crushes him to death just moments before the ceremony. Manfred, revealing himself as a villain, then quickly decides to divorce his barren wife, Hippolita, and marry Isabella himself in order to produce the required heirs. This brings villainy, misuse of power and the sexual,

into the Gothic. Walpole pushes Manfred's sexual intentions further into the questionable by having Isabella name them as incestuous.

The confines of the Gothic castle, another signature of Walpole's and the later Gothic, contributes to the plight of Manfred's daughter, Hippolita, as well as to that of his wife, Matilda and Isabella. David Punter and Glennis Byron say that: 'The castle represents desubjectification. Within its walls one may be "subjected" to a force that is utterly resistant to the individual's attempt to impose his or her order' (262). This remark supports Kate Ferguson Ellis's belief that:

The strand of popular culture we call the Gothic novel can be distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out. They are concerned with violence done to familial bonds that is frequently done to women. (3)

Thus, solitude keeps company with subjugation in the early Gothic. Ostensibly, being housed in a castle preserved the innocent from harm but it also served the interests of powerful males such as Manfred.

The women in *The Castle of Otranto*, however, mostly collude with Manfred because they see compliance as a virtue: 'It is not ours to make election for ourselves: heaven, our fathers, and our husbands must decide for us' (107). Hippolita not only allows herself to be locked in from both sides but her collusion is the equivalent to throwing away the keys. Collusion is also at home in the Australian Gothic, and will be discussed in relation to the novels I have listed.

The stranger who brings complications into the plot is a peasant called Theodore. He falls in love with Manfred's daughter, Matilda. But his is a love marred by unhappiness, because Manfred accidentally kills his own daughter in the dark of the castle chapel, believing that she is Isabella and is there to reconnoitre with Theodore.

Unfortunately, it was the well-intentioned priest, Father Jerome, who had put the idea of Theodore's interest in Isabella into Manfred's head. Thus the sacred in the Gothic links with eighteenth-century concerns about Popish plots and wily priests.

Theodore enrages Manfred by pointing out that the helmet that crushed Conrad is like the one on the memorial statue above the grave of the deposed Duke Alfonso. Manfred incarcerates Theodore in the helmet, leaving him to die. But the helmet, in falling, had broken a hole into Otranto's cellars, enabling Theodore to escape into the chambers beneath the castle where he met the fleeing Isabella. It is there that we also discover another trait of the Gothic: the obscurity of the subterranean.

Anne Williams discusses how dim light and shadow, mist and twilight have narrative value. They 'awaken the imagination by making visual images unclear and ambiguous' (46). Walpole made it clear in the preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* that one of his intentions was to create terror. His use of obscurity (darkness) heightens Isabella's fear when, pursued by Manfred, she encounters Theodore in Otranto's underground cloisters. In engaging with obscurity as a technique, Walpole had the support of Edmund Burke's writings.

In his work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757, several years before the publication of *The Castle of Otranto*, Burke makes a distinction

between the beautiful and the sublime and uses the word 'sublime' to describe an intense feeling that goes beyond admiration or awe and results in terror. He says:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (86)

In this context Burke described the use of darkness to accentuate fear:

To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary...Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds, which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings. (102)

Combining supernatural events with subterranean obscurity also suits the generation of what Freud was to describe later as the uncanny. By way of defining the uncanny, Freud says:

an uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolises. (398)



So, whereas for Burke, a sublime moment occurred when the senses were overwhelmed, for Freud, an uncanny moment arrived when the familiar became unfamiliar. For example, a shadow of a coat hanging on the back of the door might, in the imagination of the viewer, turn into an intruder and this perception lead to such uncertainty that dread and horror result.

Both devices benefit from an author's first establishing a grounded sense of normalcy. According to Sir Walter Scott, Walpole attempted to enhance a feeling of reality. He observed that, 'it seems to have been Walpole's object to attain, by the minute accuracy of a fable, sketched with singular attention to the costume of the period in which the scene was laid, that same association which might prepare his reader's mind for the reception of prodigies congenial to the creed and feelings of the actors' (quoted in Mehrotra 167). I look for the occurrence and effect of this aspect of Walpole's Gothic in the Australian novels I examine.

Walpole's castle, along with the subterranean, supernatural manifestations and uncanny effects, suit its contemporary adaptation into metaphors for the unconscious. Jung, for example, spoke of the significance of the house and its lower levels in this way:

The ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious. The deeper I went, the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave, I discovered remains of a primitive culture, that is, the world of the primitive man within myself—a world which can scarcely be reached or illuminated by consciousness. (Jung, *Memories*, 156)

This hidden world, un-illuminated by consciousness, he named the 'unconscious' and in it he included repressions such as painful thoughts and feelings as well as 'everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten' (357). He called this aspect of the unconscious the 'shadow' (355). Of it he said: 'The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting upon him directly or indirectly.' He said that it 'also displays a number of good qualities' (355).

Jung elaborates the idea in *Practice of Psychotherapy: Essays on the Psychology of Transference and Other Subjects*:

If, as many are fain to believe, the unconscious were only nefarious, only evil, then the situation would be simple and the path clear: to do good and eschew evil...but what is 'good' and what is 'evil'? The unconscious is not just evil by nature, it is also the source of the highest good: not only dark but also light, not only bestial, semi-human and demonic but superhuman, spiritual, and, in the classical sense of the word, 'divine'. (quoted in Smith, *Gothic Radical*, 81)

Considered within this Jungian context, the characters in *The Castle of Otranto* who display extreme behaviours, either of self-interest or self-sacrifice, invite contemporary psychological interpretations that suit the disturbed behaviours of the characters in the Australian novels I discuss later.

Walpole brings a theme of mistaken or falsified progeniture and issues of inheritance into his plot. Theodore discovers he is the son of the priest and a descendant of the

usurped Duke Alfonso and therefore the rightful heir to Otranto. The strange hermit in the woods turns out to be Isabella's father.

A series of supernatural appearances culminates in the fulfillment of the curse and the destruction of Otranto.

Melancholy marks the conclusion of *The Castle of Otranto*. Manfred and his wife retire to a nunnery to meditate. Theodore and Isabella marry, but instead of living happily ever after, they are united in melancholy. Melancholy is not only a feature of the early Gothic but was a preoccupying, if not fashionable, condition to have in eighteenth-century England. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1621 had reached eleven editions by 1806 (Skultans 19). Burton describes melancholy, as a simultaneous affliction of body and soul which can manifest 'either in disposition or habit' and he adds that, 'we call him melancholy, that is dull, sad, sour, lumpish, ill-disposed, solitary, any way moved or displeased (125). Its Gothic implication in Walpole's novel is that the weight of the past returns the novel to the mood that begins it.

There are, however, some humorous interludes. As Walpole explains in the preface of the second edition, he wished to emulate Shakespeare and set the 'sublime' characters against the 'naiveté' of the domestics in order to exalt the former. Jaquez and Diego, for example, whilst reporting an event, constantly digress and interrupt one another in the telling, much to Manfred's increasing annoyance (32-33).

Importantly, the resolution of *The Castle of Otranto*, as James Watt points out, means that property claims are settled and a stratified society restored to harmony (7). The re-establishment of this harmony in Walpole's Gothic arrives with supernatural approval in the

returning of hegemony to a patriarchal hierarchy. So, although Walpole raises questions about arranged marriages, abuse of power, individual rights, including the possibility of a right to happiness, all issues that were very much relevant in his day, he does not resolve them. The passions of true love or the right to have it remain denied and this leaves the potential for the past to repeat itself, inherent in the resolution of the novel.

To summarise, the Gothic elements in *The Castle of Otranto* include a mediaeval castle with subterranean passageways and cloisters, including religious sites, particularly those associated with death and burial; a meddling priest; a past injustice that invokes supernatural retribution; a marriage that is arranged by an evil male who abuses his authority in order to secure property. There is also the ingredient of mistaken or falsified progeniture and inheritance that manifests with the appearance of the stranger, Theodore. Finally, a marriage unites hero and heroine in melancholy. The conclusion sees the villain and his long-suffering spouse end their days in contemplation in a nunnery.

Irrespective of the literary merits of *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole's was certainly a creative act in gathering the literary trends and the philosophical interests of the age into this new genre. His use of the subterranean also anticipated the release of what Jungians call the 'unconscious' into literature. In the chapters that follow I will discuss the various ways in which Walpole's Gothic elements have been translated into the Australian context.

## Chapter Two

### Relocating the Gothic to Australia.

Frederick Sinnett, in his 1856 article, 'The Fiction Fields of Australia' thought the possibility that Australia might be suitable as a location for the Gothic tale was dubious. He noted that:

No storied windows, richly dight, cast a dim, religious light over any Australian premises. There are no ruins for that rare old plant, the ivy green, to creep over and make his dainty meal of. (23)

Collins Street, he then speculated (tongue-in-cheek) might be dark enough, thanks to lack of action by the corporation, but too dirty 'to ask the White Lady of Avenel, or a single one of her female connections, to pass that way'.

The potential for the Australian Gothic had, nevertheless, preceded settlement. Gerry Turcotte points out that, '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' ('Australian Gothic' 1). John Mandeville in the fifteenth century, for example, had argued that the Antipodes was a strange region of reversal, peopled by naked cannibals (Trigg xii).

Moore's *Utopia*, published in 1516, envisaged a land of 'waste deserts, scorched with continual heat. A gloomy and dismal region', he continued, 'looms in all directions ...' These forebodings were partly confirmed by the scathing comments of actual visitors such as Dampier (quoted in Trigg 131). Dampier had described the dry sandy soil, lack of water

strange animals and people who differed 'but little from brutes' (Bayliss 143). In 1676, Gabriel de Foigny wrote *A New Discovery of Terra Incognita Australis*, in which the setting makes Australia a bountiful Eden. The author used the device of having the story told to him by a James Sadeur, who had been conveyed to its hinterland by enormous birds called Urgs. There, in the company of naked hermaphrodites, he had lived for twenty-five years in godless, socially harmonious and sexless bliss. This perfect society had eventually caused such a degree of boredom that it became urgent for him to escape. He did so and managed to tell the tale of his adventures to Monsieur de Foigny, only a few hours before dying.

The human cargo of the First Fleet consisted mainly of convicts, sailors and soldiers. This meant, according to Gerry Turcotte, that Australia could be interpreted as the 'dark subconscious of Britain, for all intents and purposes Gothic and the dungeon of the world' ('Australian Gothic' 1). But the people who arrived brought not only their pots and pans and other belongings but also the metaphors that related to the Gothic, including literary links that arrived in a curious and personal way. There is a portrait of Elizabeth Solomon in the Art Gallery of South Australia, for example. It was painted by John Noble in 1862. Elizabeth's father-in-law was the infamous convict known as 'Ikey' Solomon who was the model for Charles Dickens' Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. Ikey's transportation to Tasmania in the 1830s is a reminder of the human cargoes that continued to arrive in Australia for many years.

The story of Ikey is also a reminder that the villain Fagin did not inhabit a castellated mediaeval castle but the less savoury parts of the London of *Oliver Twist* and had probably

seen the Thames as a place where bodies were found floating, as in *Our Mutual Friend*, settings that offered their own horrors. Nor were Dickens' choices of characters restricted, as were Walpole's, to the well-to-do, soldiers and priests. Therefore Frederick Sinnett's concerns about the absence of suitable Gothic structures to house the genre in Australia, as expressed in his article, *The Fiction Fields of Australia*, were unnecessary. An Australian author had no need to worry about how 'to extricate his hero or heroine, however pressing the emergency may be, by means of a spring panel and subterranean passage, or such like relics of feudal barons ...' (23). Sufficient precedent had been set by authors such as Dickens and his friend Wilkie Collins, to enable the adaptation of the new raw materials of Australia's strange settings and the insalubrious characters already here, to suit the purposes of the genre. The Australian novels I have chosen to discuss are liberated from dependence on ancient mediaeval architecture or its inhabitants.

Settlers and convicts not only brought their pasts but had to contend with the hardships of settlement and a new environment. They also administered, witnessed or received the punishments they imported, which included hanging, whipping, shackling, solitary confinement and enforced labour. Walpole's punitive villain, Manfred, would have felt comfortable with what the hierarchy sanctioned. But, as Dorothy Rowe explains, 'Families do not deal with a major trauma once and for all and leave it behind them. The effects rumble on, generation after generation' (302). The Gothic in Australia had a full pantry.

Moreover, the settlers, by attempting to duplicate in Australia what was a familiar genre in their homeland, made good use of the schism that lay between them and the

ever-present strangeness of their new land. The contrast, as Marc Delrez observes, presented a new Gothic potential (10). Rolf Boldrewood in *Robbery Under Arms* and Marcus Clarke, in *For the Term of his Natural Life*, adapted the new scenery and had convicts as villains and Marcus Clarke, in his preface to *The Poetical Works of Adam Lindsay Gordon*, demonstrates the early imposition of Gothic elements upon the Australian landscape:

What is the dominant note of Australian scenery? That which is the dominant note of Poe's poetry—Weird Melancholy...The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret, stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle in their black gorges a story of sullen despair ... It is fear-inspiring and gloomy ... Hopeless explorers have named the mountains out of their sufferings—Mount Misery, Mount Dreadful, Mount Despair ... In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribbling of nature learning how to write. (Barnes, viii , all excisions added)

The equivalent of Walpole's cellars emerges in Ernest Favenc's 1890 short story, 'A Haunt of the Jinkarras'. There, 'hideous beings' (in Gelder and Weaver 107) live in an underground cavern, 'savages or the most degraded type, far below the ordinary Australian blackfellow' (107-108). In 'The Evil of Yelcomorn Creek' (1899), by William Sylvester Walker, who wrote as 'Coo-ee', there is a tunnel through a wall of rock in the 'Never Never' mountains (Gelder and Weaver 210). It leads to an Aboriginal burial site and a death by ghosts (212).



Obscurity harbours the enemy in Henry Lawson's short story, 'The Bush Undertaker'. It ends with the words, 'And the sun sank again on the grand Australian bush—the nurse and tutor of eccentric minds, the home of the weird' (80). In 'The Drover's Wife', a vulnerable woman, whose husband is away, looks after four children alone at night, fearful of a large snake that has crept into her cabin (59). Isolation, loneliness and the serpent intimidate and the latter could be said to represent the equivalent of the evil villain Manfred.

In Barbara Baynton's short story, 'The Chosen Vessel', another defenceless mother is alone at night, fearful of an intruder. A passer-by facilitates her murder by fleeing from her calls for help. He thinks she is an apparition of the Virgin Mary, there to chastise him for his reluctance to vote for the priest in the local election. The story, in addition to this reminder about 'Popish' superstition, contains the added Gothic touches of the graveyard and the innocent female victim clad in white (in Krimmer 86).

But when the bulk of Australia's population came to inhabit the major cities and suburbs of the coastline, the Australian Gothic moved too. Patrick White adapted it for the suburbs. In a *Time Magazine* review of his novel, *The Solid Mandala*, (1966), entitled 'The Shaman of Sarsaparilla', the writer (unacknowledged) makes the point that White converts 'a scrubby Australian suburb into standard Old South Gothic.' White has 'Gothic' grass, 'wormy' quince trees and a weatherboard house in the style of a Greek Revival temple. He uses 'mutton fat, bad drains, and skeins from bowls of bread and milk to convey the squalor of life and the hatred of it that is proper to fiction of this genre' (*Time*).

As for the European vampire who entered the Gothic tradition, well after *The Castle of Otranto*, Fred Botting describes the evolved, contemporary and well-informed Gothic vampire as also lurking differently now:

The vampire becomes a metaphor of current associations between machines, bodies, and patterns of consumption. In itself it exists on the borders between life and death, between human, animal, and supernatural identities. (quoted in Hogle 288)

In the Gothic of *In the Winter Dark*, Tim Winton makes his 'monster' inner darkness. This allows for the possibility that the monster is the Jungian 'shadow' of the characters. It is Ronnie, who faces into 'the grey-blue evening light' and believes that there is no monster outside in the dark. 'No use looking out there,' she says to Murray Jaccob. 'It's us' (109). This could also be said about the Gothic in *The Castle of Otranto* and the Australian novels I have chosen to discuss. Exchanging the constellations of the northern hemisphere for those of Terra Australis offered other ways to present the Gothic story.

So, it remains true, as Gerry Turcotte has observed, that 'what is most exhilarating about the Gothic mode, and what has made it so enduring, is that unlike many other literary forms, it has been at its most exciting when least obeyed' (in Research Online, 11). The essential ingredients of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* recur, but with different emphases and substitutions made possible and necessary by translocation to a different environment.

## Chapter Three

### *The Watch Tower*

Elizabeth Harrower, 1966

In Elizabeth Harrower's novel, *The Watch Tower*, the title is all that remains of the mediaeval Gothic edifice. The place of residence for the protagonists in this Australian Gothic novel, is a well-kept piece of prime real estate overlooking Sydney Harbour.

Although the rattle of death is louder in the other Australian novels I discuss, a death does precede and precipitate the beginning of this story. When Mrs Vaizey's husband dies, she ignores the academic promise of her daughters, Laura and Clare, and removes them from their country boarding school to attend a cheaper day school in the city which will prepare them for early entry into the female workforce. She treats her daughters as if they are objects on a 'to-do' list. So, unlike *The Castle of Otranto*, this story unfolds from a loss that begins in childhood.

Subsequent to showing how Mrs Vaizey devalues her daughters' worth, Elizabeth Harrower begins work on depicting their isolation and their mother's exploitative control. She is a neurotic, demanding and bullying mother, who not only likes to keep her girls at home, but does her best to keep visitors out. When the girls are not at school, she has them look after her and do the housework, the cooking and shopping. She expects them to be quiet while she rests from her frequent headaches. By these means Mrs Vaizey

unintentionally trains her daughters into accepting a self-negating obedience that will ready them for their later domination by Laura's unpleasant employer, Felix.

This controlling aspect of Mrs Vaizey's behaviour mimics male domination and in this there lies an engine that will injure her daughters even more than she does. Mrs Vaizey is unaware that she does this because she is also a victim in that she shares some of the Gothic traits that make Walpole's female characters male-dependent. She implicitly positions herself as an object by attending to her appearance frequently and meticulously. By doing this she calculates her worth in terms of whether or not she is desirable as a recipient of the male gaze and conditions her daughters into a similar acceptance. It is a situation that flags one of the important traits of the Gothic, an ongoing past and the processes that feed it.

Symbolically, when Laura leaves school and gets a job, it is to another restricted setting – that of Felix's box factory. The work is repetitive and the view is of a brick wall. She has nothing to look forward to and nothing in common with the other girls, so she is as closely restricted at work as she is by her mother at home.

Laura marries Felix because it is the sensible thing to do. Elizabeth Harrower thus extends the demonstration of abuse of power beyond the workplace and into the domestic. The arrangement for Laura to marry Felix fits in conveniently with Mrs Vaizey's decision to return to England and leave her daughters behind. Elizabeth Harrower neatly weaves in the association between property and isolation as important Gothic elements in her novel. After marrying Laura, for example, Felix reduces his expenses by running his business

from home and keeps Laura on as an unpaid worker. Then he puts her in the position of having to ask him for everything she wants.

In these displays of objectification and domination there lurks in Harrower's novel the equivalent of the Gothic curse arising from the injustice of something wrongfully taken, albeit a curse unknowingly perpetuated by its victims. The threat that it is likely to do so appears when Laura pressures Clare to humour Felix. As in *The Castle of Otranto*, the expression of pity and virtue only empowers their oppressor. Harrower creates a world filled with constraints and tensions. Laura and Clare may as well be locked in Walpole's mediaeval castle.

Felix invests in other factories that, like the box factory, also have uncomfortable, ugly settings. In addition, their windows have restricted views. Like Laura and Clare, his female employees become the trapped recipients of his belittling attitude towards them. Significantly, his factories produce consumables, such as chocolates and artificial flowers, things that the market recognises as trifles that, as the expression goes, 'keep the little woman happy' and for which they must express gratitude.

Though Felix, like Walpole's villain, Manfred, concerns himself with wealth and property, he works for his and does not acquire it through subterfuge; nor does he seek heirs for it through marriage. On the contrary, he uses it perversely by selling it cheaply or destroying it as one of his ways of inflicting anxiety on Laura and Clare and ingratiating himself with handsome young men. Felix's behaviour ensures that Laura and Clare are soon tip-toeing around to avoid him. His outbursts leave 'devastated rooms' through which

Laura and Clare wander, shaken, 'as though through a city abandoned after days and nights of bombing' (142). These actions mirror what he does to their self-worth.

The settings in *The Watch Tower* are places of entrapment. Felix, Laura's unappealing, future employer and the man she agrees to marry, definitely fits the split-male of the Gothic. His house has spaces that are more or less pleasant depending on whether he is in them or not. The rooms with their objects become stages for the actors, as in *The Castle of Otranto*, and provide the setting for Laura and Clare to be treated like the furnishings Felix smashes.

Whether Felix is 'in' a room or 'out' of the house, determines the mood of its occupants. A typical example is when Clare protests to Laura:

'I'm reading. I can't concentrate in there.'

'He'll wonder what's wrong if you don't come in.'

'Can't I just want to be by myself? When I do sit in there you only talk to each other about business.' (75)

Elizabeth Harrower intensifies the situation with containments such as these. She logs, almost from room to room, Laura and Clare's physical movements and the emotional states they take with them. Their desperate, unhappy closeness, accentuates their separateness. Walls and windows isolate. The white path that leads into the house remains 'untrodden' and the gate, 'wilfully, so quietly, closed' (52).

Felix's car also becomes a place of confinement where he intimidates Laura and Clare. He parks it for hours, deliberately leaving them in it to wait for him. When he asks for advice about parking spaces, he makes any answers an opportunity to give his captive

audience more of his biting sarcasm, put-downs and accusations. Invariably, the final twist in all of this taunting is Felix's conclusion that Laura and Clare are incredibly stupid. The garden, like the house, also shifts from being a place of beauty to a location for endless punishing labour. Felix, introduced into this setting, seems almost to equate with being the resident serpent who helped bring about the end of Eden.

As in *The Castle of Otranto*, the enemy in *The Watch Tower* is not beyond the castle walls but within. Harrower, by way of a statuette of Bluebeard, confirms quite early that Felix is the villain and will treat Laura and Clare badly. After Clare moves in with Laura and Felix it is not long before, whenever she looks out of her window, it is in the hope of escape. Her gaze not only emphasises her severance from the world but also marks her as the lonely observer. To this extent she is, like many of the males in the Gothic, split:

This window was her look-out tower. All windows were part of the look-out tower. All of the girl looked out of the windows almost all of the time, wherever she happened to be, whatever she might be doing. (52)

The heroines of the early Gothic novels would have had no trouble understanding the plight of Laura and Clare or the feeling of being powerless in the face of Felix's domination. But they would have, no doubt, been appalled by Felix's imposition of the added burden of a domestic drudgery that would have, in their day, been performed by servants. The seemingly privileged status conferred upon Laura and Clare by wealth, possessions and the location of Felix's house, hides their subjugation. Felix is mean, belittling, vindictive and violent: he '...vomited words at them' (66) and he '...lifted and threw and crashed and overturned' (67).

In this novel, the oppression of the women by Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto* is related to Laura and Clare's drudgery in the kitchen and to housework. Their locked-in situation puts them into the equivalent of Otranto's dark underground. Alice Munro captures such a dark domestic reality in *Lives of Girls and Women*, when she describes life in the township of Jubilee in Canada: 'People's lives are dull, simple, amazing, and unfathomable – deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum' (253). Trying to escape from this kind of oppression, as well as from Felix's moods and demands, is not unlike Isabella's flight through the subterranean of *The Castle of Otranto* to escape Manfred..

Apart from the death that sets the story in motion, Harrower also links Felix with death and the grave. 'There's only death at the back of his mind,' says Clare. 'He's jealous of anything living. Death's all he wants to spread' (198).

Gothic darkness also lurks in Felix's gaze: 'His eyes were rather peep-holes through which a force could be glimpsed, primitive, chilling, subterranean beyond definition' (181). It appears too, in Laura's fear and depression when she 'lurched into a black pit and began to clamber slowly up its familiar sides' (182).

The overall darkness of the Gothic builds through the creation of this fearful domestic setting. Laura and Clare, tyrannised, receive respite by way of Felix's occasional good mood or a gift. Now and then, Felix offers an expensive gift, such as the ring he gives Laura, and then removes it so that he can taunt her and let her think she has lost it. In this there are similarities with Walpole's world in which women receive approval as the reward for the virtues whose observation keeps them obedient, suppressed and imprisoned. Far from mollifying Felix, continual compliance ensures that his behaviours will be repeated.



Laura, as a result of the 'living death' imposed on her by Felix and her own collusion, succumbs to blinding headaches. Clare resorts to such severe nail-biting that she gets blood poisoning.

The sexual element of the Gothic is present in this novel too. It seems that Felix has locked himself into a marriage that hurts everyone in order to lock out the significance of his liking for handsome boys. As Laura says, 'Sometimes I think he should have *married* one of his dear boys' (149). Interestingly, it is Felix who offers Bernard, the stranger, accommodation and takes it upon himself to nurse him back to health. The attention Felix lavishes on Bernard suggests that Felix is a homosexual who has denied himself the expression of his true nature and that he, like Laura and Clare, is a prisoner. When Felix sells his property and businesses, he enjoys distressing Laura and Clare, especially when he does so at bargain-basement prices. But the sales are to handsome young men who treat him with the same contempt that he visits upon Laura and Clare.

Felix's escalating bouts of drunkenness and violence might also be due to his suppressed sexuality. What he inflicts on Laura and Clare suggests the extent to which he dislikes himself. This leaves the reader with the sense that, behind the monster Felix, there is a society whose norms, inadvertently cruel and destructive, have created him.

Bernard, like Theodore in *The Castle of Otranto*, is the stranger in the Gothic novel who brings change. He releases Clare from her bondage by asking her a very simple question, 'Why have you stayed so long in the house with them?' Her reply is: 'I didn't know I could go' (196).

On the other hand, Laura's desire to escape appears to remain wishful. She endures her days by hoping for the happy ending that was in the books she had once read. In such stories, heroines, even if 'their plans were shattered and there was no hope at all, it always worked out that there had been a fantastic misunderstanding' (4). But no symbolic rainbow brings hope to Laura. Instead, Harrower uses irony to portray her standing at the sink, 'her eyes fixed on the rainbowed suds with their minute reflections of small squared window-panes, and her hands rushing about of their own initiative performing tasks...' (123).

It is Clare who breaks free at the end of the story. The time she spends with Felix and Laura brings her insight and *The Watch Tower* ends with her resuming a journey towards personal fulfilment, this time in a train that takes her away from, rather than into, the city. As she leaves, the view from the train represents almost a progressive summary of the bleak life from which she escapes:

The train worked its way through the geometry of moving tracks, poles, overhead wires, cubes and squares of corrugated iron, black rotting terraces, narrow walls and fences leaning askew. Dismal relics of clothing blew damply on clothes lines. The outer suburbs marched up, crowded, formal and hard as nineteenth-century cemeteries. (219)

Unlike her mother, who hated Australia so much that she returned to England, Clare continues the life journey that was interrupted when her mother took out of her school. She breathes in the aromas of the Australian bush and revels in the landscape and the light. In having Clare express delight in nature, Harrower frees the Australian landscape from the grotesque of the Gothic that earlier Australian writers applied to it and she imbues it

instead with a presence that might be called spiritual. She makes it a place for fresh beginnings, potent with beauty rather than with Burke's sublime of terror.

The ending to this story acknowledges the Gothic element of melancholy because Laura again hopes that Felix will keep his promises about mending his ways. But the reader suspects that Laura, who has just accepted another placatory gift from Felix, an expensive coat that symbolically covers the true state of their relationship, will remain a victim. She will hope for the happy endings that had always happened in the books she had read as a child. Just as Walpole sent Manfred and Hippolita away into sad retirement into a nunnery, the departure of Clare and Bernard leaves Laura and Felix keeping unhappy company with each other. *The Watch Tower* ends with a ray of hope only for Clare. She, unlike Laura, has broken free from the household, ostensibly because she did not have her mind conditioned as a young girl by reading books that promised happy endings and because Bernard, the stranger, had successfully challenged her with the question as to why she remained.

## Chapter Four – *The Well*

Elizabeth Jolley, 1986

In Elizabeth Jolley's novel, Walpole's subterranean cloisters become the well and she invests it with several layers of metaphorical significance. *The Well* tells the story of Hester, who is middle-aged and lame. One of her vivid childhood memories is of the time when her governess miscarried and she realised that the child was her father's. It was a moment that deprived her of both her governess and her childhood. Subsequently Hester brings home a young orphan, Kathy, to be her companion and replacement for what she had lost in her infancy. After Hester's father dies, Hester and Kathy retreat to a cottage on the outskirts of the farm where there is a well. They imagine it to be the home for an imaginary troll and a princess but it becomes the grave of a stranger, run over at night. The well also symbolises the sexual desires that Hester has committed to the dark of her unconscious. Together with Hester's night drives, edged with the black shadows of the salt bush and a storm at night, the darkness of the well contributes to the shadows that make up Gothic obscurity.

Obscurity, in turn, facilitates the uncanny of the Gothic. As Burke said of obscurity: 'Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread ...' (102) and, as Freud asserts, the uncanny occurs 'when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolises' (398). So, the opening scene of the novel, in which Kathy persuades Hester to let her practise driving, promotes the uncanny

by means of an accident in which the victim is never clearly seen or identified. At the same time, the event underlines Kathy's dependence on Hester. On other occasions, Hester and her car appear to be very small components in a vast setting that provides contrast between the infinite and finite, the mortal and the enduring. Jolley does not overlook such an opportunity for metaphysical awareness and creating a sense of what Burke described as the sublime. Quite early in the book, Jolley has Hester feeling dwarfed by immensity, and imagining herself as being unseen (2). She later has Hester pull off the road onto the gravel, 'alone on the edge of the great emptiness' (98), at a time when she is thinking she is about to lose Kathy to Joanna, the friend Kathy had whilst at the orphanage. Her circumstances are not unlike those of Isabella, also alone and vulnerable, in the darkness beneath Otranto. This fits with Burke's ideas about a sense of the sublime in relation to both vastness and infinity. Of vastness he says: 'Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime (114). He then suggests that:

Another source of the sublime, is *infinity*, if it does not rather belong to the last. Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect and truest test of the sublime. (115)

He differentiates vastness from infinity in that infinity cannot be comprehended and he gives several examples, such as when the mind continues to reverberate with the sound of a waterfall long after experiencing the event. Both these concepts fit with Jolley's use of location to ascribe psychological meaning and emotional states. In *The Well*, isolation and feelings of insignificance also fit sympathetically with Hester's knowledge that she lacked importance to her father. Kathy's awareness of being isolated is different; she depends

upon Hester, who wears the car keys about her neck. Jolley perceives and shows that although Hester and Kathy share the same environment, they invest it with different needs, moods and perceptions.

There is objectification, exploitation and control in *The Well*, as in *The Castle of Otranto*. Hester brought orphan Katherine home with the shopping. The juxtaposition signals ownership and Hester made it quite clear to her father that the girl was hers: 'I've brought Katherine, father ... But she's for me' (9). Jolley did not plant this remark idly. It becomes more significant later when the reader discovers that Hester's father was also the father of the governess, Hilde's, miscarried child. Hester's claim over Kathy then reads as double entendre. Her father's relationship with Hilde had usurped Hester's bond with her governess. Lame Hester knew then that she had not only lost a friend in Hilde but that her father had wanted a healthy male child as his heir instead of her. She had been doubly usurped.

Jolley's novel has no ancient castle or ruin for its setting. It is set in a run-down farm in Western Australia but Jolley does refer to some of the tales that might once have been told within the walls of a mediaeval castle. These stories she relocates to inhabit the well that is near Hester and Kathy's isolated cottage. They imagine that the stout metal rungs lead down to a world of caverns. For lame Hester this world is the habitation of trolls that make princesses their playthings but Kathy, an orphan, imagines it as the residence of a prince or an imprisoned princess:

A troll with horrible anti-social habits had his home down in the depths.  
They invented too an imprisoned princess, the possession and plaything  
of the troll. (32)

The reader realises that the stories Hester and Kathy tell are projections that show Hester's similarity to the villainous troll and Kathy's to the prisoner who desires rescuing by a prince.

But before the stranger in the well can rescue Kathy and carry her away to a new life, she must, unlike the rescued in fairy stories, first rescue him. Hester, however, fears the stranger as much as Kathy desires him and she denies that there is anyone down there, or at least anyone alive. For Hester, the stranger is the horrible troll who will do what she has already done, and take Kathy away to make her his plaything. The stranger, nevertheless, although unseen and perhaps nonexistent, brings conflict that has the sexual as its basis. Kathy's hopes end when the well floods and Hester lets Mr Borden seal it up.

The sexual elements in Jolley's novel are complex. Hester is the villain, in an apparently vicarious, same-sex relationship, who does not want to lose Kathy. By inserting a male into the dry well, Jolley, by implication, gives it vaginal significance. Hester had already buried the possibility of marriage by the time she took Kathy to live with her in the isolated cottage. But, by so doing, she was also burying the possibility of marriage for Kathy. The arrival of the stranger coincides with rain that floods the well. Then Hester, after denying Kathy's claims that a man is down there and alive, goes out into a storm at night, believing that she does hear him calling for rescue. Seeing what she believes to be a protruding head, she beats it back down under the waters. This is somewhat in keeping

with the potential sexual significance of the subterranean of Walpole's Gothic in which Conrad is killed by a helmet (foreskin) that falls so forcefully it penetrates the chamber (vagina/womb) beneath the castle, so that when Theodore is imprisoned inside it by Manfred, he falls into the presence of Isabella.

For Hester, the stranger represents the repressed sexual instincts that she associates with the beast from under the earth (10). Her memory of her friend and governess, Hilde, accounts for this association. As a child, Hester had come across Hilde miscarrying and realised that her father was responsible. Instinctively she knew that her father had wanted an able-bodied male child to inherit the farm.

Hester's repression, which sentences part of herself to a living-death, has additional connotations. Paul Salzman points out the name of the man in the well is Jacob,

who in the Bible was the person who rolled away the stone over the mouth of his uncle Laban's well, traditionally read as a foreshadowing of Christ's resurrection (Genesis 29) and therefore invokes another intertwining of fertility and death. (20-21)

Similarly, as Salzman also notes, the verses from *Ecclesiastes 13*, 'form the text for the Brahms' *Serious Songs*' (20) and link with Hester's identification of the sexual with the beast from under the earth. In this way, Jolley includes cultural landscape as part of her Gothic, rural Australian setting. This is an intertextuality that Chris Prentice describes as deriving from Europe and reaches back to mythic patterns and narratives (4). It is not at the cost of Jolley's contemporary, symbolic references. The cassettes Hester buys for Kathy declare Hester's obsession with Kathy. The titles — 'I Can't Let You Go', 'Never



Never Say Goodbye To Me' and 'Hold Me Just A Little Longer' (Jolley 105) — echo the thoughts that spin in Hester's head as well as sustain the locked-in and locked-out themes of the Gothic and the continuing agency of past events.

Supporting the theme of the locked-in and the locked-out of the Gothic, Hester's farm is distant from the nearest township. The isolation is confirmed by a further move to a cottage on the corner of the property. Jolley consistently reminds the reader of this isolation through Hester and Kathy's long trips to the local township or the city. She alludes to it in several other ways to make it a continual presence. Mr Bird, the accountant, for example, suggests that Hester get a dog. Kathy's wish to learn to drive is another reminder; not only of the distance to town and city, but that she is a prisoner.

Hester guards the keys of the four-wheel drive by wearing them around her neck. She ensures social isolation, too, because like Mrs Vaizey in *The Watch Tower*, she 'did not encourage visitors' (Jolley 21). Additionally, a neighbour, Mrs Borden, contributes to the idea that Hester is stopping Kathy from growing up by expressing concern about the way Kathy is shut away (72). Later, Mrs Borden gives further dimension to this remark when she comments that the dress Hester has made for Katherine has a Peter Pan collar (75).

The location of the cottage is in scenery that verges on the grotesque and is like that which Gerry Turcotte said the explorers and cartographers imagined might exist in the southern hemisphere ('Australian Gothic' 1). Jolley situates Hester's retreat in the middle of the Western Australian wheat belt. Her description of it mirrors Hester's physiological and psychological circumstances. The land is dry and has clusters of scraggy trees set amongst declining pastures. The arid landscape is more than a sign of drought or farming

neglect. When Mr Bird observes Hester's fields and says, 'your stubble is thin' (55), Jolley offers a metaphor that infers that Hester, like Hippolita in *The Castle of Otranto*, is barren. By contrast, Jolley has the Bordens, who buy Hester's farm, make it fruitful and produce numerous male children.

In alignment with the importance of property in the Gothic, Hester's farm is, until she neglects it, valuable and inheritable. Because Hester's father, however, must have wanted a male heir, of sounder body than hers, Hester addresses this injustice in what could be interpreted as an act of revenge, by selling the best part of the farm. But by keeping Kathy to herself, Hester also brings another injustice into being. In turn, the arrival of the stranger brings Hester a different kind of *bête noire* to deal with. These circumstances contrive to keep the past ongoing.

Jolley alludes to the animal element of the later eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Gothic, when Hester associates the sexual act with the 'beast' from under the earth (190). She also makes the animal sexually significant in the way Hester deals with poultry by knocking off roosters, mid-crow, for dinner from time to time.

Changes of tense differentiate past and present yet suggest both are simultaneously present. Jolley begins *The Well* in the present tense with the motor vehicle accident that introduces the stranger. The author then switches to the past tense to relate the events that led up to this happening and then concludes the novel with a return to the present tense. By doing this, she gathers up the past events that have shaped the predicaments of the present moment. Also, in keeping with the ongoing past of the Gothic, Jolley signals that the story will be repeated. This happens when Hester runs out of petrol whilst on the

way with Kathy to collect her friend Joanna. Mrs Borden gives Hester a lift and invites Hester to distract her children by telling them a story. She suggests the story should be about 'a Great – Big – Monster she caught on her roo bar' one dark night (174).

As Chris Prentice argues:

By making endings meet, Jolley reinforces the point that was made at the beginning: the supremacy of the text and the recurrence of its constituents.  
(23)

Another of Jolley's techniques that helps the past to exist simultaneously with the present is to allow the reader access to Hester's flashbacks and thereby provide an embedded story that accounts for Hester's motivations and her reasons for creating the kind of life she lives with Kathy. One of these key flashbacks is the miscarriage of her governess, Hilde: 'In the soft candlelight she saw Hilde crouched on the floor, her nightdress spread like a tent, red splashed, round about her' (121). This was the moment when Hester felt supplanted. For Hester, the embedded story in these flashbacks offers the possibility of 'Coming to terms with the shadow, the "negative" side of the self, [which] is, as Jung argues, essential to wholeness' (Brady 55). Jolley seems to suggest, however, that Hester will not choose to acknowledge the reason for her obsession with Kathy. Jolley prefaces the retelling of the story by Hester, as she travels with Mrs Borden, with her ironically ambiguous reply: 'I'll have to decide which monster I'll tell you about' (175). And when she begins with a 'Once upon a time', the beginning signals a shift of genre. This suggests that it is a tale that will become suspended in a make-believe time of folk or fairy

story, one that will make the past ever-present whenever the story is retold, and keep Hester and Kathy forever locked within it.

The lift by Mrs Borden also promises a reliving of the past in real terms. Hester's retelling during the trip happens because Hester, on the way to collect Kathy's visitor, Joanna, runs out of fuel, perhaps intentionally. For Hester, Joanna represents another intruder who could come between her and Kathy. Ironically, thanks to Mrs Borden's kindness, Hester can now meet Joanna at the train station, but her reluctance to do so hints that Joanna's arrival will create circumstances that will result in another version of the same story.

In keeping with the uncanny of the Gothic, Jolley delivers her story as the adroit, 'unreliable narrator', to use a term originally defined by Wayne Booth (158-159). As Brian Dibble affirms, 'The reader never exactly knows the truth of events' (213). For example, by withholding definite answers, the mystery about whether a man was in the well or not lingers, and, at the same time, gives Gothic obscurity an extra dimension.

Jolley's conclusion suggests past events will be altered by re-narration. This means that reader curiosity may become another way in which the past will keep her story alive, because curiosity invites a quest for certainty and this is what she refuses to give. The reader will continue to want to know, but never find out, if there was really a stranger in the well or whether it was the stranger or Kathy, who stole Hester's money. From the beginning, Jolley offers various possibilities and, as Sir Walter Scott said of Walpole's novel, she also pays attention to detail and invests her story with 'the minute accuracy of a

fable' in order to prepare the reader's mind for the 'reception of prodigies congenial to the creed and feelings of the actors' (quoted in Mehrotra 167).

So it is that Kathy and Hester construct a world of make-believe that includes trolls, princes and princesses, exotic meals, memories from photograph albums, sewing of special clothes and imitations of film stars. It amuses Hester 'to see Katherine adopting yet another way of speaking or of holding her head. She was influenced in some way by every film they went to' (12-13). By means of these fantasies the real world is denied, but sensuality is not and, although there does not seem to be a physical relationship between them, Hester enjoys Kathy's acting and dancing. After the party at the Borden's:

She remembered Katherine's animated movements and the ripple of the light-yellow dress. She groaned. The dance was for her the only physical manifestation of physical love. Hester did not feel guilty about the feeling. It was private. (98)

Theirs is a fantasy world into which Jolley also lures her readers so that they too, like Hester, will never be sure about the reality of what it was she pushed back under the waters of the well on a dark and stormy night. What is certain, though, is that Jolley achieved the 'uncanny' of the Gothic in the realisation of this moment.

Additionally, and of relevance to the achieving of uncanny effects, Hester is alone and fearing abandonment by Kathy when this occurs. To feel alone is often to feel diminished as Hester has on several previous occasions and this fits nicely with Brian Dibble's remarks about Jolley's interest in loneliness. He notes that:

Jolley was struck by Bertrand Russell's observation in his *Autobiography* that, 'The loneliness of the human soul is unendurable, nothing can penetrate it except the highest intensity of the sort of love that religious teachers have preached ... it follows that in human relations one should penetrate to the core of loneliness in each person and speak to that.' (214)

The turmoil of love, jealousy and loneliness are part of Jolley's use of the uncanny in *The Well* and do not compromise Freud's description of it as 'effacing the distinction between imagination and reality' (Freud 398). In the howling of the wind on a stormy night she thinks she hears the stranger calling out and that she glimpses him struggling in the water that swirls in the well. The familiar becomes strange and turns to uncertainty then terror.

Jolley's decision to have Hester retell her story with a 'Once upon a time ...' promises to shift the colours of her Gothic threads into a pattern that belongs to another genre, that of folk or fairy tale, yet remain in keeping with the ongoing past they animate and repeat. In this way Jolley's techniques bring notable enhancements to the expression of the Gothic elements that Walpole introduced in *The Castle of Otranto*, their restatement allowing them to reside comfortably in the Australian environment.

## Chapter Five – *Surrender*

Sonya Hartnett, 2005

Death appears at the beginning of Sonya Hartnett's *Surrender* with young Anwell's decision to surrender to death. The novel begins with the words: 'I am dying' (1). He makes this decision after his abusive father forces him to shoot his dog, also called Surrender. Loss in childhood, as in the preceding Australian novels, is the curse that retains its place in this novel. For Anwell, the dog represents the only freedom he could enjoy. Unlike Conrad's swift death at the beginning of *The Castle of Otranto*, Anwell's takes the full length of this novel. He is seven when the story begins, sixteen when he falls ill and twenty when he dies. We meet him lying in his own fluids, knowing that a grave has been found in the forest where animal 'becomes vegetable becomes mineral' and there are 'little phalanges gnawed on by a rat' (9-10). His alter-ego, Finnigan, presents this information on the way to investigate the discovery of the grave which presumably holds the bodies of the parents Anwell murdered.

The Gothic elements in this book are shadowed by death and the constant smell of earth and decay. As Finnigan says, 'the earth is mine, the dirt, the seeds, the grass, the worms, the cracks, the clods, all of it, all' (6). In order to achieve this effect, Hartnett chooses language that is poetic in effect. By poetic, as distinct from uncomplicated prose, I mean that:

straightforward prose has single, discursive meaning, while good poetry has several meanings—a discursive or referential meaning and a range of symbolic meanings—and its symbolic meanings are not experienced unless the reader's consciousness is changed. (Davy 36)

By these means the author takes her readers deeply into her characters' worlds of sensory perception: 'This is what dying is: a pull to the ground. I am as thin as a shadow, yet clotted as dough, my blood as thickset as mud' (234). The recurrence of metaphors like these, in poetically enriched language, accompanies the action like the chorus to a drama.

The Australian setting imagines the township of Mulyan within the equivalent of Walpole's Gothic castle walls: the jagged mountains that encircle the township and enhance the locked-in and the locked-out situation of Gothic isolation. The reader then discovers that Anwell is also locked in. He lies strapped to his bed in the lean white bedroom of his childhood home. This room is his 'morgue' (5). His view is of the dented mattress upon which he lies, the blood he haemorrhages, the 'panelled walls, his nurse, and a haze of curtain' (3). Occasional sounds and aromas outside reach his room only when the window is open. Hartnett enriches her narration by drawing on the wider literary landscape of the Gothic, for example, when Anwell says:

My illness comes from the time of chivalry and towers, of armour and sunken swords. It's a close relation to the fatally broken heart. Life is a skittish sprite – but it can be caught and tied down. It can be muzzled and deprived until its light begins to fade. (219)



The reader discovers that seven year old Anwell and his handicapped brother, Vernon, along with their unpopular parents, are socially isolated within Mulyan. Vernon, hidden away and confined to his cot, has a brain that is a 'small damp cake' (54). He dies in an even smaller space when Anwell, responsible under threat of punishment for keeping him quiet, gags and locks him in a disused refrigerator.

Anwell's subsequent punishment includes being allowed out only on Saturdays. Hartnett compresses his trapped situation into a symbolic scene in which he plays in the backyard with a toy car, using as his imaginary road the fence rail that keeps him from the world (13). The abuse by his parents precipitates a state of dissociation or depersonalization in which he, as Gabriel, will do the good things and Finnigan the bad. This reaction seems to correspond, perversely, with the way some children create imaginary friends but Hartnett adds the negotiating element that constitutes a reminder of other bargains in the Gothic genre, such as those made by Faust, Melmoth and Dorian Gray. Finnigan says, 'You will only be good things – you'll never get angry or fight. And I will only be bad things – I will always get angry and fight. We'll be like opposites – like pictures in the water' (37-38).

As in *The Castle of Otranto*, true love is denied. Anwell has none from his parents. His father is the aloof punisher; so too is his mother and when she speaks to him, she does so as an accuser or blamer and in the depersonalised, self-referent of the third person: 'You want to make a fool of your mother. You want to make your mother die of shame. You want to kill your mother' (21). She, like Laura in *The Watch Tower* and Hester in *The Well*, suffers severe headaches and is the neurotic woman of the Australian Gothic. She also,

like them, has difficulties with the sexual. In the year Anwell turns fifteen she starts 'muttering under her breath' (117) and he becomes aware that his mother wants to prevent him from relating to girls. It is a shock that leaves him feeling tormented. The resulting 'mush' in his brain, 'felt like a bruise and smelt of pond scum, an odour that oozed through my skin' (118). His desire for life, denied, reeks of death.

Hartnett maintains constant references to the tight spaces that squeeze Anwell:

I remember vividly the last hot afternoon, Surrender, Finnigan and I were wedged in the space between the chicken coop and the back fence. Sunshine never reached this place ... (157)

Property is an essential part of Hartnett's plot, but it is not usurped by a contemporary version of Manfred or restored to its rightful owner by a retributive supernatural, nor is it related to an arranged marriage that will produce heirs to ensure its legitimate inheritance. Instead, Hartnett presents it as linked with the consequences of Anwell's parents treating him as property. By doing this they demonstrate that other important element of the Gothic genre: misuse of power. As a result, Anwell joins the ranks of the split males whose literary ancestors, such as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, display the Gothic binaries of good and evil. As Gabriel, he presents an image of good behavior, but as Finnigan, he becomes his own agent of retribution and it is this alter ego who sets fire to the possessions of those who offend him. This disregard for property, in the full knowledge of its value, aligns Anwell with Felix in *The Watch Tower* and Hester in *The Well*. Anwell's bouts of destruction, the murder of his parents and the willing of himself to death in order to kill his alter ego, Finnigan, fulfill the Gothic tradition of retribution.

Hartnett's Gothic elements include the subterranean, night scenes and the animal, and she makes frequent allusions to them. Finnigan says, 'I need the world caught in the black pit of my eyes' (7). 'His eyes were jet and unnerving' (82) and it is at night that Anwell, as Finnigan, turns arsonist and his dog Surrender becomes 'the dark's dog' (138).

Previously discussed in relation to Jung, the subterranean also signifies the unconscious, the place for keeping behaviours that have to be put away. In *Surrender* they are not. In an interview Hartnett explains, 'I'm interested in the very essential animalness inside humans. It's never more obvious than when we're children. Children live by animal rules' (Interview 'Achuka'). Descriptions of earthiness, animal, death, the grave and decay are in keeping with Anwell's arrested development.

The animal element features in *Surrender* in several ways. Firstly there is Anwell's older brother Vernon, who is an unfinished human, 'wet-faced and snot-nosed, ribboned with saliva' (55) and kept in a cot where Anwell has to feed him mush and make sure he does not scream and wake his mother. He is a visible representation of the dysfunctional family that made him. Then there is Finnigan, the undisciplined beast, a 'hyena' (11). His clothes 'hung in rags, his hair was filthy ... he was brown and stained' (143). His 'hair is shabby as wolf's pelt, his stolen clothes don't fit. A smell rises from him – tree sap, algae' (219).

Finnigan's monstrosity is in keeping with those of the earlier Gothic. Frankenstein's creature in Mary Shelley's novel of 1818 is not a proper human. Oscar Wilde's 1891 story about Dorian Gray gives Dorian the face of youth but his portrait reveals his degeneration. Anwell's parents are abusive human monsters in *Surrender*. The dog that accompanies

Finnigan is a marauding monster that kills the local livestock. To paraphrase David Punter and Glennis Byron, monsters function in the Gothic through difference, whether in appearance or behaviour, to define and construct the politics of the 'normal' (263). The text, they suggest:

first invites or admits a monster then entertains and is entertained by monstrosity for some extended duration, until in its closing pages it expels or repudiates the monster and all the disruptions that he/she/it brings.

(264)

When Anwell, forced by his father, shoots his dog, he also kills something vital in himself and the dog's death also accounts for the uncanny of Anwell's extended living death. As his alter ego, Gabriel, says, when 'Surrender roamed at liberty, so did some shadow of myself. Free, he was enviably, brightly alive: through him, so was I' (168). 'A tethered thing', he adds, 'is a dead thing' (169). The dog gave Anwell not only freedom but the companionship and physical touch denied him by his parents. Untrained and unleashed, Surrender linked Anwell with the personas of Gabriel and Finnigan. For Anwell, Surrender and Finnigan were the necessary compensations for abuse, monsters that comforted.

Finnigan's ragged clothes are reminders, though unusual, of the part played by clothes in the Gothic. They are not as fine as Walpole's choice of habiliments that denote rank and role in the cavalcade of the Knight of the Gigantic Sabre who enters Otranto to challenge Manfred (72). Finnigan's coverings also differ from the reward of clothing that helps keep Laura the prisoner of Felix in *The Watch Tower* and his is not the kind of clothing that was

part of the fantasy of dressing-up in *The Well*, or the ominous symbol of the Peter Pan collar that Hester sews onto Kathy's dress. Finnigan's rags supplement the sense of the animal beneath as well as the smell of decay.

Regarding the uncanny of the Gothic, Hartnett builds it in several ways. Anwell's state of dissociation fits with Freud's definition of the uncanny in that it blurs the distinction between imagination and reality (Freud 398). Anwell represents the traditional binaries of good and evil of this genre. Some examples include Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, as well as the individual polarities of good and evil at work in Ralph and Jack in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Hartnett combines dissociation with the technique of the unreliable narrator who also prevents certainty. As Finnigan says of Gabriel, 'I don't trust him with the truth. This is what happened' (186). The author compounds uncertainty when Finnigan does not seem real, even to Gabriel, who says that, 'in the shifting shade of the trees he vanished and vanished again' (121). Gabriel, however, warns the reader quite early that he is unreliable: 'Now I am dying, my temperature soaring, my hands and memory trembling: perhaps I should not be held accountable for everything I say' (11).

The uncanny is complemented by Hartnett's careful choice of words. She invites the older Gothic elements to have literary presence in her text. In the following extract, describing one of the many fires Finnigan starts, she uses the words 'hooded' and 'cathedrals'. Both are reminders of Walpole's chapel and church in *The Castle of Otranto*, as well as Father Jerome and a hooded apparition: 'The sky above the valley was hooded with grease which blotted out sun and stars: the mountain peaks, miles apart, were linked

by cathedrals of flame' (48). Allusive vocabulary consistently references the Gothic, as in 'gargoyle' and 'towersome height' (7). Anwell's bed is his 'citadel' (11). His mother is known as a 'witch' (12) who later 'cast her curse' upon any young lady that Anwell might have found attractive (117). Gabriel is pleased to think of his alter ego, Finnigan, as a 'member of an undiscovered species, half-human, half-beast, half-storybook-goblin, which roamed the world wildly, wreaking chaos' (82). These earlier Gothic elements run parallel in Hartnett's novel and make its past ongoing.

Location, too, references the uncanny. The township of Mulyan has the mountains as its ramparts and so the valley within becomes the equivalent of castle interior. In keeping with Walpole's mediaeval castle, the enemy is within. Yet again, the unreliable narrator makes this both true and false. One part of Anwell, as Gabriel, complies with social expectation but Finnigan rules by imposing fire.

Forest is part of the setting in *Surrender* and Hartnett utilises it as an intersection for several metaphors. It is the place where the animal-like Finnigan dwells and it is the grave for Anwell's parents. But primarily the forest is Walpole's subterranean transfigured as the unconscious. Forests, as Gaston Bachelard observes, invite journeys of both real and imaginary exploration. Comparing the immensity of a forest with inner immensity, Bachelard considers the relationship to be one that is akin to daydreaming. He quotes Marcault and Thérèse Brosse's passage about the immediate immensity of forests:

Forests, especially, with the mystery of their space prolonged indefinitely beyond the veil of tree-trunks and leaves, space that is veiled from our

eyes, but transparent to action, are veritable psychological transcendentals.

(185)

In Jungian terms, the 'transcendent function manifests as a quality of conjoined opposites' (Jung, *The Collected Works*, 90). In Anwell's situation the meeting between the conscious and unconscious is fraught because the virtuous Gabriel of his unconscious must will himself to death in order to kill the evil Finnigan who is also there. 'I'm dying to kill you', Gabriel says (Hartnett 218). Jung warns that a person's failure to come to terms with their unconscious can prevent them from becoming themselves: 'to the degree that he does not admit the validity of the other person, he denies the "other" within himself the right to exist—and vice versa' (Jung, *The Collected Works*, 89). Death brings Anwell's release from his living death and contributes, at the same time, to the uncanny of the Gothic.

Hartnett extends her metaphors thematically, for example, by bestowing the encircling mountains with toothed, animal significance. As similes they are 'like shark teeth, ivory' (7). Their jagged edges contain the idea of hurt. The dog, Surrender, seems capable of biting his owner: 'Surrender returns, thinks, thinks about biting. His lip crooks like a wave' (7). He roams the district killing and returns with 'rooster feathers snagged in his canines' (18). Even the breeze bites 'like snake's fangs' (6), Finnigan's mind is as 'sharp as a trap' (10) and Anwell's mother grips his arm 'like a snare grabs a fox' (20). These extended metaphors culminate with the blows of the sharpened hatchet that Anwell uses when he kills his parents.

One of Hartnett's uniquely effective contributions to Australian Gothic literature, apart from her way with metaphors, lies in her lengthy expansions upon single aspects of the

sensory. These add to a sense of the real but at the same time also destabilise through the use of multiple referents that demand a particular state of awareness from the reader. There is a lengthy expansion of the kinaesthetic, for example, when Finnigan finds out that a grave has been found in the forest:

The fact that it's found is at my shoulders like a swarm, pushing me through the slop and fug, up and up the mountain. The earth I touch with my hand is cold (the earth is mine, the dirt, the seeds, the grass, the worms, the cracks the clods, all of it, all). The mud cakes on my knees. (6)

An accumulation of detail deepens the visual in another section when Hartnett, deftly alluding to Gothic architecture, has Finnigan describe the view from this 'towersome height' (7). On other occasions she expands the auditory, for example, when Gabriel's mother approaches to drag him from Evangeline's party:

The noise of the party abruptly changed. It had burbled and snuffled in a way that seemed friendly: suddenly it became angular and jarred. Two or three voices fluttered up, like sparrows fleeing a dogfight: the music skidded to a halt. (201)

Sensory detail, infused with metaphor, also slips into synaesthesia here, mixing the auditory with the kinaesthetic. Noise becomes liquid, then breathing turns to geometry before changing to the fluttering of birds, then it skids. Similarly, while Anwell talks to Evangeline, 'party sounds sniff the door like inquisitive pets' (200). In a synaesthesia that blends the olfactory with the visual, Anwell has said earlier, 'I must smell pink' (1).



The immediacy of sensory detail in *Surrender* is enhanced because Gabriel and Finnigan speak in the present tense and in the first person. In addition, frequent flashbacks and switches in points of view serve to conjoin past narrative time with real-time narrative. These also run partly as parallel accounts in which Gabriel and Finnigan comment on one another as well as upon those who live in the town, including Anwell's parents. The combined effect of metaphors, uncertainties, sensory switches, time shifts and changes in point of view creates a succession of events that seem to flutter as rapidly as Anwell's dying heartbeat. This is appropriate because, as Mark Johnson reminds us, 'Our world radiates out from *our bodies* as perceptual centers from which we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell our world' (124). Anwell's dying, his slow surrender from life, makes his a convincingly feverish, restless, ever-present body-based world from which many excursions take place and enable him, uncannily, to be where he is not.

The title of the book gives not only the name of Anwell's dog whose freedom is his vicarious freedom, but also refers to his decision to surrender to death after he is made to put it down. Hartnett foreshadows the inevitable fate of the dog when she warns, 'A dog that kills is also killed. It's a fact of life' (169). Anwell's father makes the deed cruel by ordering him to kill his own pet. In the harrowing scene that follows, Anwell then murders his parents. In this, Hartnett contributes to the Gothic grotesque of the Antipodes with a believably inevitable conclusion. The ray of light that brings to the Gothic some hope of escape, comes as the book closes, with the contrast of Anwell, at the moment of his death, leaping upwards, escaping from Vernon, from Finnigan and from the prison of his failed body.

## **Chapter Six**

### **'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter: an Australian Gothic Novel'**

**Henry Ashley-Brown, 2009**

In this chapter I will begin by outlining how my original intention in this novel, which was to depict the ways in which the past manifested in the present, accounted for its alignment with the Gothic genre. I will then discuss the Gothic elements in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' and lastly, elaborate my purposes in the creation of the settings.

One of several questions I posed, before beginning the first draft of 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', was how to depict the ways in which the past manifested in the present as behaviours that were based on the metaphors that the colonists brought to New South Wales. By metaphor I do not refer only to its use in literature as a means of comparison that includes simile, personification or referential metonymy, for example, but rather as terms of a tool that, as Lakoff and Johnson say:

is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.

Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. (3)

I also asked how I might make my story accessible to present-day Australians who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. I soon discovered that the Wilson family required the habitat of a suitable structure and style in order for me to fulfil these objectives and I

set about creating a series of journeys within two larger journeys: Camilla's dying and her son Lucas's coming to terms with the past.

In order to account for the Gothic elements in my novel, my research took me to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic human needs (17-26). These include physiological needs, safety, belongingness, love, esteem and self-actualisation. All apply to the organism as well as the personality. It seems to me that the explanation for the alliance of 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' with the Gothic genre comes from the threat or denial that the elements of the Gothic impose on these basic needs. Maslow states: 'There is now sufficient anthropological evidence to indicate that the fundamental or ultimate desires of all human beings do not differ nearly as much as do their conscious everyday desires' (6). He points out further that: 'We must remember always that only a whole human being is frustrated, never part of a human being' (75) and that deprivation and threat applies both to the organism as well as to the personality (75). My first draft of 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', engaged with universal human concerns about having such needs denied or threatened.

Another contributing factor that made the initial draft of 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' fit with the Gothic genre occurred because I had asked myself how I could present my story, in an inclusive way, for a contemporary Australian audience consisting of many ethnicities, cultures and values whose first language was not always English. In search of the answer to this question, I consulted the writings of Herman Hesse, who, in his introduction to *Stories of Five Decades*, wrote that, 'fragmentation produced by the proliferation of beliefs and ideologies in the twentieth century has destroyed the common

ground' (vii). Philip Fisher makes similar observations in relation to America. He says there is no common racial origin and no common history, no shared religion or common language or style of humour, no inherited maxims or spoken rules (*Still the New World* 33) and even the wisdom and technology familiar to one generation becomes superseded and unavailable to the next (5). Further, as he points out, even perception 'in the city, especially in the street has its basis in interruption ... reducing it, finally to a set of glances' (250).

I had asked myself, prior to the first draft of my novel, how best to communicate with this kind of audience, whilst at the same time giving recognition to the many whose world, because of travel, could be constructed from a 'set of glances'. Hesse said that he:

increasingly favoured literary forms that enabled him to examine his own past and present, singling out for particular scrutiny those moments at which individual experience achieves the level of universal validity. (viii)

It seemed to me that the experience of fragmentation in modern life itself had universal validity. However, as my wish was to find experiences, hopefully universal, that readers would be familiar with and be able to relate to their own moments of 'universal validity', I gave the matter further thought. I observed the way people responded to conversation topics and soon verified that most listeners not only recognised similarities but responded by sharing their own experiences, often over-generously and not exactly in concordance with the styles Hesse evolved with this intent.

I made a list that included friendship, humour, courtship, birth, illness, authority, conflict, struggle, defeat, death and funerals, all part of the human lot. I found that many of

these had their counterparts in Gothic literature and, in the context of a threat or denial, matched the basic needs described by Maslow. It seemed to me that such threats or denials, by generating fear, also had a universal validity.

Johnson says that, 'When we actually move from one place to another, we experience ourselves as traversing a path from one bounded area to another' (39). Such bounded areas, a specialty of the Gothic, connect in their turn with people being locked in or locked out, a Gothic predicament, especially for women (Ellis 3). Threat looms larger in bounded areas because there is little or no possibility of escape. There are several journeys in *The Castle of Otranto*. One occurs as the supernatural engages in a series of actions to rectify the injustice of a usurpation involving murder, and then Otranto's walls fall down. Journey is also there in the unfolding of Manfred's intentions and the reactions of the other characters to them. The female characters are conditioned to be virtuously compliant and are dependent on Manfred and therefore locked in, as are Laura and Clare in *The Watch Tower* and Kathy in *The Well*. In 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', Camilla confines herself.

Family dysfunction in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' damages Camilla's children, Lucas and Hugh. Camilla and Christian made them weapons in their power play. Christian thrashed the boys to get at Camilla, and Camilla either made them audience to her stratagems for annoying Christian or neglected them because she associated them with painful memories. Subverted childhood in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', as in all the Australian novels I have examined in the exegesis, is an injustice from the past that invites retribution. The damage that the Wilson parents meted out upon their children is an ever-present past that haunts Lucas and Hugh especially when Camilla becomes ill and the

brothers come together once more. Although Hugh remains a victim and his behaviour is a visible accusation against the parents who bore him, Lucas, like Clare in *The Watch Tower*, breaks free of the past, though not unscarred by his experiences. I discuss the devices by which I attempt to convey a sense of the ever-present past and the fractured relationships in the Wilson family when describing the settings in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' later in this chapter.

Death is an important element in the Gothic novel and Camilla's death in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', like that of Anwell's in *Surrender*, takes the full length of the book. It is an event in which the reader can share because it is one that awaits us all. Camilla, in her nineties, and suffering from dementia, lies in hospital awaiting an operation. Her memories bring to light a relationship with Lucas's father, Jack Cooper, for whom she still grieves. Lucas, who lives in Adelaide, also begins a journey that involves finding out who his father was and coming to terms with the past. This journey begins when he receives a phone call from his brother Hugh, who lives in Sydney, to say that their mother is in hospital after a fall in which she broke her hip.

There are the equivalents of Walpole's Gothic obscurity in my recurring references to the paranormal, night driving, wind, rain, storm, dim rooms and dark corridors. Several more extended scenes take place in darkness. In one of these, Lucas returns from the hospital after Camilla's operation and, startled by the yowling of the cat, drops his keys in the dark. Whilst searching for them he discovers Camilla's purse and some of her belongings amongst the crushed ferns in the garden nearby. It seems to him that Camilla had fallen out here and broken her hip and not, as Hugh had said, inside the house.

Another scene in darkness occurs when Lucas almost falls into the cellar. Unreliable narration hopefully sustains the puzzle as to what part Hugh plays in these events. His habit of avoiding issues with the words, 'Not talking; not listening!' (193) also contributes to the Gothic of obscurity.

Whereas the supernatural is an element of Walpole's Gothic genre, in my novel it had to give way to modern doubts about its existence or, if it exists, its interest in righting wrongs. In the first draft of my novel I describe Lucas as 'fey' and I leave his paranormal experiences in place as the psychological substitute for Walpole's supernatural apparitions. My novel begins with Lucas's witnessing of 'shadows out of the corner of his eye at the supermarket' and subsequently seeming to be surrounded by crows (1). They come from the shadowy place of lost memory and their presence leaves him with a feeling of foreboding. At Camilla's funeral, suggestion is the substitute for Walpole's supernatural when Lucas, in a distressed and exhausted state, sees his brother's face transformed into Camilla's likeness by the light from the stained glass in the chapel. Hugh seems to have become possessed by his mother. The cat, Basil, in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', is also 'fey'. When Lucas arrives at the family home, for example, the cat seems to expect him. Lucas says: ' "You've been waiting? You always seem to know, don't you?" ' (12). The cat also mirrors Camilla's distress after her operation.

Retribution, a further characteristic of the Gothic, also has rational explanation in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'. The flood that damages the Wilson house hints at the possibility that, like Walpole's supernatural retribution, it demonstrates the biblical warning that the sins of the fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation.

These sins, in my novel, can be interpreted as relating to the destruction of the environment as well as to family dysfunction. In regard to the destruction of the environment to make way for leisure housing, I later discovered that Fred Botting identifies the suburbs as a new kind of Gothic vampirism (quoted in Hogle 288). As such it is not quite supernatural or animal but it suckles from these inhabitants of the Gothic genre by representing a consumerism that ‘creatively’ destroys the environment in the interests of lifestyle. The idea seemed like an opportunity to extend the theme of threat to one of the basic human needs Maslow describes in his hierarchy — ironically, that of shelter, and then to have both old and new visited by a retributive flood. During the course of the novel I extend the metaphors of brooding weather, of wetness, rain and the slow build-up of water in preparation for this, so that the flooding of the estuary and its coincidence with a storm and king tide make an inundation seem inevitable.

The animal element of the Gothic genre, such as black cats, ravens and werewolves, arrived some years after Walpole’s novel and perhaps culminated in Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). In regard to the Australian novels I have discussed, one can perhaps think of Felix as the animal in *The Watch Tower*. But Elizabeth Jolley definitely aligns the beast from under the earth with the sexual and also has Hester display her dislike of males by wringing the neck of a rooster. Sonya Hartnett gives the dog, Surrender, a pivotal role, and Anwell’s alter ego, Finnigan, is very much the grubby child animal. My novel already had the presence of crows, but to fit it a little more closely with the animal in the literary Gothic I changed the name I had given my first-draft cat, to Basil, after the herb that supposedly deters Basilisks. I liked the idea that the word might be



suspected of having Gothic connotations, but my main intention in having a cat in the story was to add to Lucas's links with the past and to give him a companion in his hour of need. Basil is a cat who is particular to bestow his attention only upon those he likes, thus indicating that Lucas is more genial than his relatives might wish to believe. Basil retains his original function in the story as Lucas's companion and the occasional recipient of his conversation in order to bring variety to Lucas's self-talk. He also provides for Lucas, as does the dog named Surrender for Anwell, the comforting sense of touch that was denied to him as a child.

Death stalks the Gothic genre as I mentioned earlier in this chapter and fits with Camilla's demise. Jack, the man she loved and did not marry was drowned. His body lies entombed in the hold of a ship, the Montevideo Maru, which was torpedoed in World War Two. Camilla, pregnant, decided to marry Christian Wilson and both lived unhappily ever after. Although she had spoken about moving from her home for many years, she never did. Her unhappy married life became the living-death that eventually brought her, like Anwell, to the white room in hospital, where she lies dying, with only her disturbed mind roaming freely (33). Like most awful people she has also been treated badly herself and leaves a legacy of irreconcilable conflict between Lucas and Hugh.

Camilla's funeral takes place in my modern replacement for Walpole's chapel and church, a crematorium chapel surrounded by plaques and graves. I intend Lucas's witnessing of Hugh's possession by his mother during the funeral service, to represent the uncanny of the Gothic by blurring the distinction between imagination and reality. The poem Lucas reads fits with his moments of foresight:

*Death leaves a space where something lives –  
it's empty to the eye,  
but where you are not, your presence is –  
by some strange alchemy. (180)*

In the description of the funeral service, I suggest that Hugh becomes her living memorial and that she somehow lives inside him, both of them trapped, possessed by the past. Camilla's possession of Hugh, whether or not imagined by Lucas in a state of dissociation, promises that her unhappy past will in some way live on in Hugh. In choosing to commemorate them like this I found I had 'conversed' Burke's ideas about the sublime in that Lucas is so overwhelmed he almost faints. His terror though fits more with Freud's definition of the uncanny in which the familiar becomes so strange he becomes filled with terror (178).

As in *The Castle of Otranto*, there is a stranger in my novel. But whereas in *The Castle of Otranto* Theodore discovers that he is the rightful heir, I have Lucas find out that he is not Christian Wilson's son, but Jack Cooper's and that he won't inherit. So, Lucas fits into the tradition of the Gothic stranger in a different way. I also make him a family member who has been away for a long time and one who finds, when he returns, that his family's version of him makes him a stranger to himself, an unpleasant, disliked, unwelcome avatar or doppelganger. The true Wilson is Hugh, seemingly doomed to continue his dysfunctional family's villainy. Hopefully though, I have given enough reason for Hugh to be the way he is to earn him more sympathy than Walpole's Manfred, whose behaviour, without any mitigating circumstances, seems based solely on greed.

Misuse of power by villains is a strong component of the Gothic genre and threatens the basic needs described by Maslow. The collusion of its victims does likewise. Unlike the perpetrators of injustice in the first three novels I discuss, however, in mine both Camilla and her husband, Christian, have agency. But they misuse it to feed off one another through aggressive power struggles that involve abusive behaviours towards their children. These heightened sexual tensions that are resolved through reconciliations. Their relationship becomes worse when Christian finds out that Lucas is not his son and Camilla discovers that Christian had wanted her for her money. Worse, he had tricked her boyfriend, Jack, into signing up for the military service that led to his death. By continuing to abuse their power over one another they make victims of themselves and their own children.

Wealth, property and inheritance are Gothic elements that I link with the Wilson house and with Camilla's marriage. Her mother and father had pushed Camilla's relationship with Christian for mercenary reasons:

Camilla's mother had insisted on the trip to Singapore. Camilla knew why on the first night at sea when she went to dinner. There was Christian Wilson at the table, standing up to greet her, debonair in a stripy blazer, looking so pleased with himself. It was a plot. (54)

Inheritance, made attractive by increased local land and real estate values because of the new housing developments, offers a promising motive for the possibility that Hugh might have tried to kill Camilla. The unreliable narrator leaves it to the readers to reach their own conclusions as to whether Hugh pushed her or she fell over. But Lucas does

later discover that Hugh, with the knowledge of his wife Hedda, has been helping himself to money from her bank account (137). Hugh is a villain damaged by his upbringing, including the Wilson family's predatory greed, and his stroke. Lucas struggles with the way Hugh behaves:

Lucas makes himself think, as he has done in the past, that there's nothing wrong with him as a person. He's a gifted artist and scientist. Before his stroke he was so gregarious, so popular, he tells himself. (172)

Lucas's compassion however, like the virtues of others in the Gothic genre, disempowers him and it takes some time before he asserts himself with Hugh. When he does, Hugh's response is to run away (150) or state that he's not listening (98).

Villain and hero in Walpole's Gothic become, in my novel, consistently split characters. The causes in mine differ from those for the characters in the other Australian novels I selected for study. Camilla suffers from dementia and lives in the past. Hugh, who has had a stroke and is not the same person he used to be, literally runs from trouble and buys himself the ice cream that was his reward as a child for telling tales. Lucas, on the other hand, learned how to avoid pain by dissociating from his body and he does so again, after returning to the tensions of the family home and his visits the hospital:

He drifts higher above the room, the old terror of the shadow upon him but he feels safer – the further away he goes the less he feels but something could be his fault if he is not there and he knows he has to return. (42)

On several occasions he is 'outside' himself as an observer, as was Clare when she left the house and stood in the garden at night while Laura and Felix quarrelled. His

dissociations are akin to the transcendent function, described by Jung. I therefore chose forest location as described in Marcault and Thérèse Brosse's passage about the 'immediate immensity of forests' (quoted in Bachelard 185), for Lucas to revisit a place that brought a trauma. Its suppressed memory survives only as a glimpse of shadows and crows (127). But by returning to the place where it occurred, Lucas brings his suppressed memory to consciousness and experiences a moment of psychological transcendence. A storm, almost anthropomorphic, accompanies the moment.

The chase through the subterranean of *The Castle of Otranto* has its above-ground equivalent in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'. Hugh escapes questioning about Camilla's missing purse and the money he withdrew from her bank account, by running. My version of Manfred's hunt for Isabella, is through a hospital car park and I reverse the Gothic scenario in which villains pursue the virtuous. What is seen above ground in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', often signifies the presence of something dark in the cellar of the unconscious. Hugh, for example, comes and goes from the family home somewhat like a moth dancing about a flame. Lucas's dissociations also represent running away and returning. Lucas's moments of dissociation, however, eventually allow him to self-understand and escape the past. The wearing of a locket containing Camilla's hair shows, nevertheless, that he is not unscathed by it (199). Hugh does not escape.

The clothing and accoutrements of the Gothic genre originate in *The Castle of Otranto* when the Knight of the Gigantic Sabre enters the castle with his visor, 'surmounted by a large plume of scarlet and black feathers' (72). He is accompanied by footmen clothed in

scarlet and black, heralds with banners, squires with shields and devices and various accoutrements of male power.

While Walpole's cavalcade frames the male, the authors of the Australian novels I have discussed put clothing to wider use. They are the wearables that enhance and hide. In particular, clothes and adornments suggest 'cover' and cover relates to what is hidden and the hidden relates to Burke's advice about obscurity and its contribution to terror. In practical terms the tradition confers a semblance of a more familiar reality onto the unreal.

Interest in vestments occurs in *The Watch Tower*. Felix's gifts of clothing and jewellery to Laura not only announce moneyed status but also represent Laura's collusion, followed by the rewards he gives after he maltreats her. The making of clothes by Hester and Kathy in *The Well* represents imprisonment in a world of make-believe. And the Peter Pan collar that Hester creates for one of Kathy's dresses reveals the way she locks Kathy into childhood. In *Surrender*, the association of Anwell's mother with night dresses grows into a symbol that represents her headaches, illnesses and her hatred of noise.

In 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', I retain clothing as a significant element of the Gothic. Camilla has kept many of her clothes as a reminder of happier days. After she has died, Lucas throws them from a bridge at night, into the wild wind of a storm, symbolically setting her free from the bondage of the male gaze that they represent and her self-imposed living-death (168). Camilla's red hat is especially important in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter': she had, long ago, given her hatbox, together with photographs of Jack and the letters they exchanged, into the safekeeping of her friend Peggy. Peggy gives the

hatbox to Lucas to let him know who his father is (108). The red hat is the one Camilla wore when she met Jack and it is this same hat that she wears as she joins him in death.

In order for my main character, Lucas, to break free from an upbringing that, in the modern world, imposed dysfunctional responses, I sought to make him and the reader aware of the fractures and dissonances between past and present as well as the proximity of the past. These were to reveal some of the indicators of the irreconcilable conflict between Lucas and his brother, Hugh. To this end, although not writing intentionally in the Gothic genre, I underpin the story of Camilla's dying and Lucas's coming to terms with the past, by engaging with metaphors about separation, giving history to objects, and retrieving memories through stream of consciousness and flashbacks. I make changes of tense to lend structural support and so I begin and end the story in the present tense, and narrate past events in the past tense. After the intimation of a funeral via crows and Hugh's phone call, at the beginning of the novel, the conclusion makes it real. The locket Lucas wears is also there, like the design of a rondo in music, to suggest an ever-present past and the possibility of its recommencement with variations.

Although Lucas seems to escape the curse of the Wilson family, his fate is in keeping with the melancholy that ends *The Castle of Otranto*. The locket says he will always wear the scars of the injured male of the Gothic. Melancholy accompanies all the main, living participants, upon the conclusion of the Gothic stories I have examined in this exegesis, except in *Surrender*. Anwell's death closes the cycle of repetition. A melancholy residue seems appropriate. It fits with the fear that our basic needs will be denied or threatened (Maslow 75). After all, Coleridge, in the Gothic of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner',

replaces the albatross around the Ancient Mariner's neck with a life-long obligation to make his tale ongoing. Elizabeth Jolley also arranges for Hester to repeat her story and we are left wondering if Kathy will ever get her hands on the car keys. Clare catches her train, apparently happier and wiser, but like many of us, still unsure of her destination.

Another important element in the Gothic genre is the setting and it is a strong feature in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'. Taking heed of Frederick Sinnett's doubts about the existence of a suitable edifice in Australia for the location of a Gothic story (23), I requisition, instead of a castle, Horace Walpole's invention of the neo-Gothic house. Walpole had established the location for his novel well before writing it. According to Alain de Botton, he was the creator of the world's first Gothic house at Strawberry Hill, on the banks of the Thames (34). I use some of its ingredients to flavour my Australian version and situate it somewhere on the northern coast of New South Wales. In keeping with Walpole's neo-Gothic house I lend its architecture and décor, several Gothic touches, such as its tall chimneys and a cellar.

The cellar in Camilla's house references Horace Walpole's subterranean. I also use it to provide obscurity, to promote the uncanny and represent the unconscious, as described by Jung, in terms of architecture (156, 357). Having a flooding cellar brings my story closer to Walpole's original Gothic model in which Otranto is destroyed. The stuffed birds under glass domes, with feet glued to their perches, the ferret killing a cringing rat (167), give visual representation to the predatory metaphors at work in the history of the Wilson family. It is also a past that could have become either Lucas's real grave or his symbolic grave, after Hugh left its trapdoor open, perhaps on purpose. Unlike Walpole's subterranean



cloisters through which Manfred pursues Isabella, my cellar has no religious significance but it does include darkness and signifies the danger of Hugh's villainous presence. In this the emphasis of my story differs from the symbolism of Elizabeth Jolley's well and also from the darkness, intimidation and domestic drudgery that constitute the subterranean of *The Watch Tower* and the decay and dying in *Surrender*.

The furnishings and the line-up of portraits in the Wilson house demonstrate the ongoing traditions that derive from the male-dominated British Imperium. A grandfather clock chimes an imitation of Big Ben (14); I intend it as reminder of former colonial rule from Westminster. A carved chair is the seat reserved for the head-of-family (21). A statue of a naked shepherdess, whose body language is a metaphor for submission, hopefully reminds the reader about the Gothic positioning of women as objects (17).

These objects, as well as places further away, such as the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney and Sydney's Botanical Gardens, not only have their own physical history but also speak of the metaphors that brought them into being and how they came to be located where they are. Their presence also generates further stories through the personal associations allocated to them by the living and the symbolism they acquire through the accretion of successive events.

The Wilson house is a microcosm of a past age, replete with the regalia of class, authority and property, but now smells of urine because Camilla, dying in hospital, is incontinent. Her condition represents another way in which syntropy and entropy, interdependent, intertwine with past and present and make the past an ongoing process. 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' therefore differs from the other Australian Gothic novels I

have discussed in that its details about setting are there to keep the past contiguous with the present, to generate flux, fracture and create tensions that are environmental as well as familial.

Marc Delrez, in the Synopsis to his thesis, describes 'fragmentation' as the experience of isolation, alienation and spiritual inability of the early settlers to cope with their new environment (10). As previously stated, the settlers, by attempting to duplicate in Australia what was familiar in their homeland, accentuated the schism that lay between them and the ever-present strangeness of their new land. The contrast, as Marc Delrez observed, presented a new Gothic potential (10). I also add other tasks for the vegetal. The Wilsons operate from their imported, colonial metaphors so I make the Australian environment continue to confront. Therefore, in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', the vegetal is variously cut down, planted, beautiful, confronting, blocking the driveway of the Wilson house, bashing against Camilla's hospital window, then in her hands later as an offering of bush flowers from Lucas. In the Botanical Gardens in Sydney, it is foreign and separated from the sea by walls. The floral tributes on her coffin comprise species, colours and textures that reveal more about their givers than they do about Camilla.

In accordance with the early Gothic tradition in literature the Wilson house is an isolated place even though a new bridge crosses an estuary and connects with a highway. I establish that the area was once accessible only by bullock track and then, much later, by ferry across an estuary. Towards the end of the book I reinstate the original isolation of the Wilson house by means of a retributive flood that requires Lucas to use the old road in order to escape (167), thus also bringing past and present together at a critical moment,

shortly after Camilla's death. I endeavour to highlight the anomaly of the Wilson house by describing it as being encroached upon by new suburbs and shopping centres. It lies between the new and the original bush to highlight the undercurrent of the constant workings of the syntropy and entropy that affects all things. Such cycles of decay and regeneration also include cultural changes, such as those represented by 'progress'. But, just as the colonists did, the newcomers ignore natural forces, such as flooding, that have been at work in the area for centuries and will continue to assert themselves. So, by implication, the flood that damages the Wilson house will also damage them.

The element of isolation in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' occurs in another way: Camilla's self-imprisonment. Disappointed in love and marriage, she had always wanted to move from her husband's family home but never did so, even after his death. No stranger had ever challenged her with the question, as Bernard did Clare in *The Watch Tower*, as to why she stayed. Camilla was forever planning to move, but did not (9). She turned her life into a living death after she married Christian, whom she did not love. As she grew older she became housebound and friendless. This is in keeping with the plight of all the main characters in the Australian novels I studied.

In conformity with a contemporary trend in which family members become isolated from home by moving interstate or overseas for work, I situate Lucas in South Australia so that he has to undertake lengthy trips to visit his mother. The purpose in doing this is to create wearisome repetition. I wanted the physical challenge of Lucas's journeys to loom almost as his Kafkaesque punishers and accusers and contribute to the difficulties of his struggle to survive his latest visit and come to terms with the past.

Lucas's trips to the family home and the hospital would, I hope, represent a world like Kafka's 'world of the fathers' and, like it, also 'gnaw away at a son's right to exist' (quoted in Benjamin 114). It seemed opportune to resurrect some of my own Kafkaesque memories of the repetitious and use them to keep the past ever-present. Although I had worked in various unaesthetic government departments, the uncomfortable 'world of offices and registries, of musty and shabby, dark rooms' (quoted in Benjamin 112), none I experienced was as Kafkaesque as Kafka's. For the purposes of my novel I borrowed from the familiar generic settings of modern life, such as corridors, foyers, offices, air terminals, hospitals, car parks and highways. Such places seemed to have an almost vampiric presence and power that managed invisibly, anonymously, to demand compliance. I hoped that their repeated appearance would complement the theme of the past weighing upon the present.

Lucas's travelling also offered me the opportunity to create fractured views, in keeping with fractured relationships, and broken conversations such as Hugh's, marred by stuttering and his avoidance of issues and announcements that he is 'Not listening!' (87). To this end, I include frequent views through barriers such as windows, especially glimpses through car windows. Fisher notes how we can 'freight' such 'senseless detail' with meaning (*Still the New World* 196). It seemed to me that by bringing to my story a repetition of views and information 'locked in the surface' (199), I could also contribute to the disequilibrium created by the unreliable narrator, 'who never allows the reader to know the truth of events' (Dibble 213). Passing views offered a realism that I thought could, in Fisher's words be, 'Discovered and uncovered by the traveller ... just like a door suddenly

thrown open onto a room and then quickly shut' (205). Accordingly, the readers, in following my story, travel by car, as well as by train, taxi, ferry and sports car and their journeys bring a repetitive backdrop of highways and car parks, landscapes, cityscapes, seascapes and gardens.

Sometimes I convert scenery to other uses when I juxtapose past and present through Lucas's moments of dissociation. When he is distressed he sees himself from above, separated from feelings, as he did as a child when being punished. The mirror in which he sees himself, whilst inspecting the ancestral portraits (21,110), is also in keeping with his moments of dissociation. When he gazes into it he experiences subjectification, objectification and emplacement. Although I do not intend the mirror to suggest either the Utopia or heteropia Foucault attributes to it, it is nevertheless, as Foucault says, a place where, 'I see myself where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface: I am over there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself' (quoted in Soja, *Thirdspace*, 158). Importantly, as he goes on to say, 'I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am' (158). I intend the mirror effects to contribute not only to Lucas's feelings of separation but also to the uncanny:

In the morning, when he'd paused in front of the family portraits, he'd seen himself in the mirror interposed in the family line-up. He'd picked up Basil and stood closer to the mirror. 'Take a look,' he'd said to himself in the place where he wasn't. 'I don't fit in do I? It's Hugh's face that completes the Wilson array, not mine.' (110)

My metaphorical schemas of windows and surfaces are intended to show connection and division. By schema I mean, as Johnson defines it, 'a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in or of, these ongoing ordering activities', of metaphor (29). Barriers, such as windows, separate interior and exterior worlds or, as in a scene in hospital, they become a mirror for Lucas to see what is happening behind his back (149). They are there with the intention of making my story consistently relevant at an unconscious level. Similarly, I intend the reflections from the television that flicker on the surface of the family portraits to bring past and present together and suggest continuing frisson (141). Intimation of the power of the past occurs again when Lucas dreams he has altered the house to let in the light, but the house always reverts (163).

Beneath the surfaces in the wider world, I continue the themes of fracture and containment by hinting at freedom beyond. Under the wharf where Lucas and Hugh have lunch, there is another world, watery and forever transforming, glimpsed through cracks in the decking (85). Students, on excursion nearby, remove small creatures from their tiny habitats of rock pools, while far away, in a wider, expanded view, two fishermen, in the small world of their dinghy, drag a fish from beneath the surface (93). Later, I have skateboarders break the rules of the hospital car park (151). Similarly, I draw attention to the separation between the waters of Sydney Harbour that want to reclaim the grounds of the Botanical Gardens (191).

Such separations invite the illusion that, at times, they intrude or melt into both worlds, as when Hugh sits in the same carved chair that features in a nearby portrait:

Rhythms of stiff curves seem to grow into liana-like curlicues and vines, firming their grip on the carved arms of the chair in the exact place where Hugh's fingers now wander. The carvings incorporate creatures that look like those on ancient maps, strange animal-things that inhabit the dangerous edges at the end of the world. (139)

I also employ Ovidian transformations to keep my protagonist's world, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in a constant state of flux. I saw that such destabilising could also contribute to the uncanny. I had previously addressed the idea of how to encourage sufficient curiosity in the readers to make them want to interrupt in the way in which people often do in live conversation in order to gather more detail. In this regard I turned to Benjamin's observations about Leskov's stories, such as 'The Deception' and 'The White Eagle':

The most extraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks. (Benjamin 89)

To this end, I added the decision to be sparing in explanations. This method, as it turned out, suited the Gothic genre because it invited the creation of a destabilizing uncertainty which enhanced the mysterious or uncanny and also suited the methods of the unreliable narrator.

Keeping metamorphosis and amplitude in mind, I turned the beginning of a relaxed and friendly lunch between Lucas and his brother, Hugh, into an ugly occasion for accusations. Even the pleasant scenery, through the use of pathetic fallacy, became cruel and mocking (86). Similarly, the emotion of Camilla's death scene and its aftermath are overtaken by Hedda's rage and Hugh's transformation into the likeness of Camilla during the funeral service, keeps company with the uncanny element of the Gothic genre.

Manfred's passionate outbursts in *The Castle of Otranto*, however, display what Philip Fisher would describe as 'vehement passions' in which the 'calculating self' (Fisher, *The Vehement Passions*, 48), along with the 'remembered self' (49), vanish behind the force of the emotion. In 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', the method becomes another way in which I can combine destabilising fractures, metamorphoses and promote the uncanny.

As Lucas's dissociation involves self-gaze, I took note of Steven J. Gores's observations about the circle of expression in eighteenth-century literature. He says it was first popularised in England through the 1701 and 1734 translation of Le Brun's, *Traité sur les Passions* (Treatise on the Passions). It occurs, he states, in 'the way the various characters react to the spectacle of Joseph's naked body' in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (167). Gores considers that in art, Joseph Wright's 'Academy by Lamplight', in which light from the centre illuminates the onlookers' faces, is an excellent example (167). I revived this eighteenth-century tradition and took it into my novel so I could underline important moments with the presence of witnesses. To combine the circle of expression with moments of passion seemed to me to offer an opportunity to combine visual and emotional 'compression that forces us to take in the entire story almost instantaneously' (Fisher, *The*



*Vehement Passions*, 137). As he states, a painting 'confronts us with an all-at-once first glimpse of a situation, before we enter its details' (137). Accordingly, to make a witnessing eye to the quarrel between Lucas and Hugh in a restaurant, I describe the reflection of a bridge: 'the bridge reappears and its reflection makes the shape of an eye with an iris full of chaotic distortions.' (88). The symbolic image prepares the reader for a further metamorphosis when busload of students constitutes a circle of expression and imitates Lucas and Hugh. As the dramatic chorus, made up of children, they also mirror Hugh's childish behaviour and the hostility between the two brothers. (97). Such circles of expression, combined with the expression of high feelings, help support Ovidian metamorphoses. The combination of effects, hopefully, constitutes a continuing destabilisation for the reader that will fit with the uncanny.

There are moments of observation, rather than gaze, in the other Gothic novels I discuss in this exegesis. Walpole recruits low-level characters to elevate the high. Elizabeth Harrower has Clare watch the world from her window and stand outside in the garden at night, listening to Laura and Felix's quarrel. Elizabeth Jolley lends a similar import when Hester pulls over to the side of the road, feeling alone and insignificant under the night sky of the wheat belt. When a nurse waves happily to Lucas from his Volkswagen, I intend the encounter to offer a heightened contrast to mark the disparity between Lucas and Hugh's relationship with their mother. The nurse, Todd, has a kindly character and a good relationship with his considerate mother. Their relationship prioritises the human, in contrast with the material values of the Wilson family and its attitude toward property, its burdens and its obligations.

Another schema of metaphors that I run through the text relates to cutting, biting and chewing. For example, I have the chainsawing of a tree early in the novel to foreshadow Lucas's discovery that he is not a Wilson, that he will be disowned by Hugh and his family has been cut out of Camilla's will and that Hugh will inherit (2). The new estates bring cleared land for houses and shopping centres and destroy mangroves to make way for marinas (10). At Camilla's funeral Hugh sits under a tree with split trunks (169). The 'maw' of this tree foreshadows his being 'eaten' by Camilla's possession of him, while the double trunks (169) signify Hugh and Lucas's broken relationship and the discovery that they are half-brothers. It is Emily Cooper and her healthy, perfumed wisteria, whose roots go down into the sandstone and back in time to the foundations of the penal colony of Sydney, that show the possibility of reconciliation between past and present.

To summarise this chapter, the main elements of the Gothic genre established by Walpole have their family equivalents in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'. Like modern families they no longer need to be confined to a restricted setting. They hitch a ride with their hosts as they travel, still accoutred with the metaphors of the Imperium and they meet with those imported by subsequent settlers from all over the world. The contiguity of past and present accompanies them and can threaten its protagonists in daily life as well as memory, memories lost, and behaviours mostly unquestioned. The Gothic, in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', keeps its protagonists company along highways, into supermarkets and down corridors, yet offers the possibility of escape when it takes them into their own darkness.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this exegesis, I spoke about the lack of consensus in defining the Gothic and offered, as a solution, Wittgenstein's proposal about the use of a metaphor that characterised likenesses and properties as being akin to belonging to a family. The spinning of a thread by the twisting of fibre about fibre, certainly allows the genre to take different 'shapes' at different times (Thomas and Gillard 3). My study of the novels in this exegesis not only confirms the continuing existence of the Gothic fibres that make up the threads in the changed and changing shapes of this genre in Australia, but their interweaving displays their continuing healthy presence and dynamic variety. Therefore, I must conclude, as Gerry Turcotte observes, that 'what is most exhilarating about the Gothic mode, and what has made it so enduring, is that unlike many other literary forms, it has been at its most exciting when least obeyed' (*Australian Gothic* 11).

In Australia, the Gothic adapted to lonely huts, the scariness of the bush, vulnerable women whose husbands were absent, monsters that were lizards or snakes, cellars that were caves and villains who were convicts. The isolation that was within and without Walpole's mediaeval Gothic castle, found conducive but different habitats in all four Australian novels and eventually the Gothic made its home in the suburbs where domesticity hid the powerful and the powerless and their secrets.

In the novels I have discussed people still become property and other property, such as land and real estate, is coveted, as in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', or sold, as in *The*

*Watch Tower* and *The Well*, or destroyed, as in *The Watch Tower*, *Surrender* and 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter' or is linked with retribution for past misdeeds.

The cellar becomes the dark of domestic drudgery in *The Watch Tower*; the well, in Elizabeth Jolley's novel, signifies Hester and Kathy's unconscious projections. Darkness fills the entire valley of Mulyan in *Surrender*. The contents of the cellar of the Wilson home, in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', reveal the predatory nature of the Wilsons and when Hugh leaves the trapdoor open, Lucas almost meets his death.

The sexual in the Gothic novels I have discussed acknowledges the lesbian and the homosexual as well as heterosexual relationships. In these, as in Walpole's Gothic, there is abuse of power. Felix bullies Laura and Clare, Hester dominates Kathy, Anwell's parents turn him into a murderer and, in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', Camilla and Christian hurt each other as well as their children.

Passions flare in all four Australian novels. Felix rampages and destroys. Hester and Kathy's relationship turns into confrontation. Anwell's alter ego, Finnigan, burns property and Anwell, beaten and abused by his parents, eventually murders them. Emotions also explode in 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter'. In all novels, there are damaged people who collude with their abusers and all novels give death a significant role. And in all of them, though perhaps disguised, a stranger still appears. Felix's guest is the stranger in *The Watch Tower*. A stranger that the reader never meets, and who may not even exist, creates crisis in *The Well*. Anwell's alter ego, Finnigan, is the stranger in *Surrender*, and Lucas finds that he is the stranger when he returns to his family home. These strangers continue to create crisis as did Theodore's arrival in *The Castle of Otranto*.

As for the supernatural, it seems to have resigned itself to adapting to a different role, one made manifest through psychological problems, the technical prestidigitations of the unreliable narrator and the sense of the uncanny that comes from confusing imagination with reality.

David Punter says: 'When we think about the Gothic, one thing that certainly comes to mind is the specific and limited range of metaphors with which the early texts played' (*Metaphor* 29). This is not so of the Australian novels I chose to examine. They show many differences in their ways of representing the elements of the Gothic. Since the publication of *The Castle of Otranto*, the development of the novel has brought writers the opportunity to be aware of the complexity and variety of metaphors at their disposal, of styles, structures and of ways to select vocabulary. Form can support thought in complex and telling ways, and without necessarily distracting the reader by drawing attention to itself.

As a result, though far from its homeland, the Gothic remains a chronicle that, like the ouroboros, unendingly swallows its own 'tale', so to speak, and it is fitting that the structure of the genre should reflect this. Walpole's story, for example, has its protagonists retire in a melancholy that is haunted by the ghosts of what happened. So, too, in all the other novels I have discussed, form reflects the agency of a recurring past by undertaking a circular journey. Clare boards her train and continues her journey, leaving Laura with Felix to weather the same domestic storms. The conclusion of *The Well* has Hester about to tell Mrs Borden the story that began on the same road, thus ending by recommencing. The 'Once upon a time' with which she starts, promises to be the same story, but always one that will be told in a different way because it is to be a story about human nature. The

advent and departure of Anwell's alter ego, Gabriel, in *Surrender*, suggests that violent injustice risks a violent retribution. As regards the structure of 'Twigs from a Hedge in Winter', I began with the intimation of Camilla's death and conclude the book with its aftermath, a funeral. I leave both Hugh and Lucas damaged, because the Gothic genre gives continuing agency to the past.

In conclusion, I return to an observation of Wittgenstein's, about games, and apply his words to this exegesis and I hope that 'the result of this examination is [that] we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail' (32).

Human nature, of course, suits the predicaments of the Gothic and the healthy survival of the genre. As Alexander Pope pointed out in the eighteenth century, in words as relevant now as then, our lot has not changed. Humankind continues to display:

Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;  
Still by himself, abus'd or disabus'd;  
Created half to rise and half to fall;  
Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all,  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd;  
The glory, jest and riddle of the world.

(Dobrée, 'Essay on Man', Epistle Two, 1, 13-18, 190).

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