

'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

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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