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Lure and Does the coast have a place in the Australian gothic landscape

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LURE

AND

DOES THE COAST BELONG IN THE
AUSTRALIAN GOTHIC
LANDSCAPE?

A NOVEL EXTRACT AND EXEGESIS

SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF HUMANITIES AND MEDIA
IN THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES,
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CHRISTINE TONDORF, BA (MELB)

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I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Christine Tondorf,

30 July 2016.
ABSTRACT

Australian beaches are synonymous with white sand and bright sunshine, but in this Creative Research Thesis – consisting of a creative-writing project and an exegesis – I investigate whether the coast is a credible Gothic location. In my novel, *Lure*, the main character is Jason, a policeman who has transferred to the north coast of New South Wales from Sydney but regrets the move. His despair deepens after he is called to investigate the drowning of a man dressed in a glittering fish suit. Jason soon finds that he is being followed by a foul-smelling fish ghost. He is dogged by feelings of foreboding and the uncanny, common in Gothic texts. The coastal setting has a binary role, offering him restoration, but it is the home of this strange Fishman. In *Lure* there are also frequent outbreaks of the supernatural (ghosts, angels and magic), harkening back to the very first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole’s (1764) *Castle of Otranto*.

In the exegesis, I argue that there is a genre of literature and film that could be recognised as Australian Coastal Gothic. Acclaimed authors, including Tim Winton, Robert Drewe and Peter Temple, have penned dark, brooding novels about troubled men who retreat to the coast. The sea, where they surf, swim and fish, has a sublime beauty, arousing feelings of awe and wonder. These men harbour secrets; sometimes they’re menaced by grotesque characters. Often they’re mourning a woman’s death. Like Frankenstein’s monster (Shelley 1818), they long for a mate – the feminine is lost. In Australia the coast is not often the site of Gothic unravelling. Historically, it’s the continent’s interior that traps the Gothic hero. The land is imbued with evil. This tradition emerged in nineteenth-century colonial Gothic writing, and continues today in film and literature in works such as *The dressmaker* (Ham 2000), *Wolf creek* (2005) and *The dry* (2016). But the authors of Australian Coastal Gothic have returned to a practice established by the earliest English Gothic novelists and Romantic poets. They extoll the sublime, almost ethereal beauty of the coast, describing tumultuous seas, jagged rocky outcrops and flooded reefs. These images are powerful and beautiful, but tinged with danger. The beach and sea have a dual nature, so powerful they could destroy the protagonist, yet they’re just as likely to inspire and restore. The coast is the Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde of Gothic locations.
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Access to the creative component 'Lure' is restricted pending manuscript submission and publication.
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DOES THE COAST BELONG IN THE AUSTRALIAN GOTHIC LANDSCAPE?

An essay

SECTION ONE

Preface

In assessing whether the coast belongs in the Australian Gothic landscape, I examine how the natural environment (both the coast and interior) has been depicted in the Gothic since the colonisation of Australia. I cite scholars who argue that the Gothic has settled in the continent’s interior. The demonisation of the land over the past 200 years is a key marker of antipodean Gothic. I then look broadly at images of the coast in literature, art and film over the past two centuries and the emergence of a contemporary Australian Coastal Gothic about forty years ago. Finally, I position my creative project, Lure, in the Coastal Gothic genre.

Introduction

The coast was present in Australia’s earliest convict novels, including Marcus Clarke’s (1870) classic For the term of his natural life, which invokes the Gothic (Turcotte 1998, p. 14). It was the sea and land that trapped the prisoners. The coast was a gaol wall, but from the mid-nineteenth century, the colony’s best-known authors turned their back on the sea. Leading writers like Francis Adams, Price Warung and Hume Nisbet “went bush” in search of the essence of Australia. They followed the squatters, gold prospectors and shearsers inland, writing short stories that imbued the land with malevolence. It fitted the colonial narrative to cast the continent’s interior as wild, strange, even evil – in need of taming and subduing. In his poem, ‘Up the country’, the colonies’ most acclaimed writer Henry Lawson (1892, p.210) described ‘treacherous tracks that trap the stranger, endless roads that gleam and glare, dark and evil-looking gullies, hiding secrets here and there’.

During the nineteenth century a particularly Australian genre of Gothic writing developed where – instead of a castle or haunted house – it was nature that trapped and menaced the protagonist. Gerry Turcotte (1998, p.10) in his benchmark essay, ‘Australian Gothic’, wrote that as a migrant nation we suffer a dislocation from the land with Australia posing ‘particularly vexing questions for European immigrants. Nature, it seemed to many, was out of kilter’. Twentieth-century novels like Lasseter’s last ride
(Idriess 1931), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Lindsay 1967) and *Wake in fright* (Cook 1961) continued the custom of demonising the land, with characters lost in and ensnared by the bush, while twenty-first century texts reinvented the tradition. The family in *The white earth* (McGahan 2004) suffer because they can’t acknowledge the hurt caused to the land’s traditional owners. The salt-of-the-earth bushman in *Wolf Creek* (McLean 2005) is a psychopathic serial killer. Australian Gothic is well represented on the screen, and film can readily be taken into account in a discussion of Australian Gothic.


As the early colonial writers were searching for the spirit of the emerging nation inland, Anglo-Australians retreated from the coast – literally. Leone Huntsman (2001) has documented the factors that impeded Australians’ enjoyment of the beach in the years before and after Federation in *Sand in our souls*. Huntsman explains that in the 1830s, daylight swimming on the colonies’ beaches was banned. The sea was perceived as cruel, claiming the lives of countless sailors. The coast disappeared from the colonies’ literature. Then, towards the end of the century, new rail lines and shorter working hours led Anglo-Australians back to the sea. The beach became a place for picnics and games and more people took to the water. Following public protests, the ban on daylight bathing was repealed and the lifesaving movement began in the early 1900s. The coast increasingly became a place for leisure and pleasure, and culturally it began its ascendance, challenging the bush for the mantel of national icon. Writers and artists turned away from the bush to the beach, although the rise of the coast was interrupted by two world wars.

Fiske, Hodge and Turner (1987, p. 54) argue that by the 1960s ‘as the free, natural and tough bush existence became more obviously an anachronistic version of national identity, the figure of the bronzed lifesaver filled the gap’. The architect Drew (1994), demographer Salt (2001), historians Huntsman (2001) and Hoskins (2013) and sociologists Dutton (1985), Booth (2001), and Metusela and Waitt (2014) have all
charted the evolution of a beach culture or love of coast in Australia that came to the fore in the second half of the twentieth-century. This love of coast is today reflected in everything from the price of coastal real estate and branded beach-wear (Billabong, Hot Tuna) to TV shows – *Bondi rescue* (2006) and *Home and away* (1988).

In the post-war years, the cultural ascendancy of the beach intersected with the counterculture, the civil rights movement and feminism. In the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s a number of pre-eminent Australian authors wrote Gothic novels about dominating patriarchs/matriarchs ruling claustrophobic suburban homes. Literary scholar Joan Lidoff (1982) believes Australian writer Christina Stead pioneered this Domestic Gothic, with a focus on family dysfunction and oppressive relationships. Many of these early Domestic Gothic stories were set in harbour-side houses, for example: *The man who loved children* (Stead 1940/65), *For love alone* (Stead 1945/65) *The watchtower* (Harrower 1966), *Eye of the storm* (White 1973) and *Milk and honey* (Jolley 1985b). In these texts the reader glimpses a Gothic coast, but the function of the Australian seaside in these novels has not (to best of my knowledge) previously been analyzed. Harrower, White and Jolley described a gloomy foreshore, but Christina Stead described a sublime coastline.

In 1976, the film *Storm Boy* was released. The movie is darker than the original short story (Theile 1966). A father and his son retreat to the remote Coorong Peninsula to mourn the loss of a wife and mother. The landscape is sublime and the boy’s life is often bleak. Six years later Tim Winton (1982) then Robert Drewe (1983) published their first books, with undercurrents of foreboding, dread and the uncanny. Both Winton’s *The open swimmer* and Drewe’s *The bodysurfers* feature the death of a matriarch and focus on troubled men, who retreat to the coast. The stories unfold, not in a house, but on the beach. The coast is imbued with a mystical beauty. It’s a place of veneration and power, conjuring up the might of a divine creator. The surf could crush, destroy the hero, but it also inspires and invigorates.

David Punter (1996, p.4), in *The literature of terror*, argues that the Gothic is a ‘version of self-conscious unrealism; a mode of revealing the unconscious; connections with the primitive, the barbaric, the tabooed’. From the late 1970s, a number of Australian Coastal texts appeared in which a turbulent sea mirrored the inner turmoil of the protagonists. The sea in these stories reflects the subconscious and is also a wild force, hence these texts become a ‘version of self-conscious unrealism; a mode of revealing
the unconscious’. The sea is depicted as divine, but it also links the protagonists to the primitive, the barbaric – nature untamed and unfettered. And yet the coast restores and nurtures the broken hero. I believe *Storm Boy* and the texts of Winton and Drew are examples of contemporary Australian Coastal Gothic. Like the earliest English Gothic novelists and the Romantic writers, they focus on nature and human instinct but at the same time are preoccupied with dark themes and the sublime. A number of literary critics – Schine (2008), Ashcroft (2014) and Rolls & Alayrac (2002) – concur that the sea has ‘other worldly’ quality in the works of Winton and Drew. ‘One passes into a world of evasion, dreams and fantasy’ (Rolls & Alayrac, 2002). More texts have appeared that could be classified as Coastal Gothic including *The broken shore* (Temple 2005) and *Past the shallows* (Parrett 2011), and films like *Blackrock* (1997) and *Newcastle* (2008). Again a tempestuous ocean is imbued with mystical powers. The protagonists enter the sea to be spiritually and physically cleansed. This is a significant shift in how the environment is portrayed in Australian Gothic fiction. In Interior Gothic texts the land menaces and frightens. In Australian Coastal Gothic the sea is exalted and divine, a powerful agent of both renewal and destruction, hence the coast is the Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde of Gothic locations. (Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde were positive and negative facets of the same entity.) The creative project at the heart of my thesis, *Lure*, fits within this genre.
SECTION TWO

Defining the terms of the essay question

COAST
The defining feature, both geographically and culturally, of the coast is its proximity to the beach and sea. The coast encompasses the beach but is not limited to that terrain. I define coast as beginning at the sea’s high water mark and stretching 50km inland. This definition comes from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), which defines a coastal centre as ‘a significant urban area ... with its centre point (centroid) within 50 km from the coast’.


According to the Macquarie dictionary (Delbridge et al. 1995, p.345), the coast is the land next to the sea; the region adjoining it. The Columbian encyclopaedia (Lagassé 2012) defines coast as ‘the land bordering an ocean or other large body of water … coast indicates a strip of land of indefinite width landward of the shore’. Science clarified (City-Data 2014) states that the ‘coast extends landward from the coastline to the first major change in terrain features, which may be miles inland; this could be a highland or a forest or some other type of terrain’. The Macquarie dictionary (Delbridge et al, 1995, p.767) defines the Great Dividing Range as ‘the eastern highlands of Australia, watershed to rivers flowing east and west, extending from Cape York Peninsula down the eastern coast to western Victoria’. Kenneth Cook (1961, p.5) in the Australian Gothic classic, Wake in fright, describes the coast as ‘the strip of continent lying between the Pacific Ocean and the Great Dividing Range, where Nature deposited the graces she so firmly withheld from the west’.
Ian Hoskins in his book *Coast* (2013, p.13) points out that historically beaches and headlands were regarded as inhospitable, so east flowing rivers attracted settlements and were recognised as coastal towns, hence Grafton, which is 25km from the Pacific Ocean, was known as a sea port for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It is just as difficult to map the peripheries of the Australian interior; to identify where is back of the black stump or where does the bush end and the outback begin? This area also attracts scholarly debate. Don Watson in *The bush: travels in the heart of Australia* wrote:

> Much of the continent is red: red rocks, red soil, red dust, the Red Centre. But long before you reach the dry inland, or the Kimberley, there is red in the forest and woodlands. It is the inside colour of the bush (2014, p.67).

**LANDSCAPE**

Landscape, according to the *Oxford Dictionary* (Stevenson 2010, p.991), is ‘all the visible features of an area of land, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal’. By asking if the coast belongs in Australian Gothic landscape, I wanted to frame a question that allowed me to look at Australia’s relationship with the environment. I am specifically asking if the coast has a place in Australian Gothic fiction. The Australian Gothic is already a companion to characters imprisoned in weird suburban abodes – like Jay Cody in *Animal kingdom* (2010) – and is with lost souls at the mercy of the continent’s interior, for example Aaron Falks in the drought-stricken Kiewarra (Harper 2016).

**BELONG**

To belong, according to *The Macquarie dictionary* (Delbridge et al 1991, p.160), is to be usually or rightly placed. I ask if it is justifiable to position a Gothic story in a coastal environment. Is it possible for the Gothic to jump the Great Dividing Range and live amongst littoral forests, meander down beachside roads, even set a foot on wet sand? Or is Australian Gothic’s true home the wastelands of *Mad Max* (1979), the sunburnt escarpments of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Lindsay 1967) and the dusty wrought-iron shacks of *The dressmaker* (Hamm 2000)?
AUSTRALIAN GOTHIC

It is widely accepted that Gothic began as a literary genre in the late eighteenth century, emerging in England with the publication of Walpole’s (1764) Castle of Ortranto in 1764. Ann Radcliffe’s (1794) Mysteries of Udolpho was published thirty years later and Matthew Gregory Lewis’s (1796) The monk: a romance followed, establishing Gothic as a new literary genre. Gothic has since fanned out across the globe and adapted, evolving to its environment.

A number of markers can identify a text as Gothic, but it still remains a difficult genus to define. It is forever metamorphosing. Tessa Chudy (2014, p.74) in her thesis Sunburn and psychic shadows wrote that the ‘Gothic is slippery, but it is also pervasive. It changes, but remains the same, yet it is always different’.

No Gothic text includes every marker. Some characteristics of Australian Gothic are unique to Australia, while other traits belong to the broader, universal Gothic. Following are some of the characteristics frequently found in Gothic texts, but the list is by no means exhaustive.

Fear/foreboding and terror:
Gothic is the bad dream from which you can’t awake. A Gothic text can invoke feelings of despair and powerlessness in readers, as though they’re the cusp of losing everything. Alternatively the Gothic may produce a gnawing feeling that all is not well, as the subconscious needles the conscious and suppressed fears and anxieties rise to the surface. Terry Castle (1995, p.5) describes Gothic as ‘the hag-ridden realm of the unconscious’. Eric Denton (1998, p.71) talks of ‘the Gothic psyche of despair’. Turcotte (1998, p.11) believes the Gothic has both psychological and religious dimensions, seeing it as a ‘sense of spiritual malaise’ that reflects the ‘uncertainty and desperation of the human experience’.

A key characteristic of Gothic is a sense of foreboding, a dread or fear of the strange. Sigmund Freud (1919, p.1) in his essay on the uncanny wrote it ‘belongs to all that is terrible – to all that arouses dread and creeping horror’. This arousal of fear or teasing terror is a key trait of Gothic. Radcliffe (1826) in her essay ‘On the supernatural in poetry’ points out that the reader often embraces the terror. The heroine, Catherine, in Jane Austen’s (1818, p.60) Gothic parody Northanger Abbey, relishes in the terror of Mysteries of Udolpho: ‘Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life reading it.’
There is no scholarly consensus on the appeal of fear in Gothic texts. Perhaps the reader embraces fear, safe in the knowledge that the danger is confined to the pages of a book, or maybe the reader is genuinely frightened and lives vicariously through the novel. As Abigail Lee Six wrote:

Is it because like a ride on a roller-coaster, we know it is not really dangerous, so we can enjoy a thrill or mock fear or, conversely, because during the suspension of disbelief, we respond just as would to real-life horror (2010, p.102).

Either way fear is intrinsic to the appeal of the Gothic novel. Marie Mulvey-Roberts (1998, p.xvi) defines the Gothic as ‘the eerie dialect between anxiety and desire’.

**The Supernatural:** The first Gothic novels featured the paranormal. *The castle of Otranto* had ghosts. Mary Shelley’s (1818) Frankenstein created a monster by sewing together body parts of the dead. Robert Louis Stevenson’s (1886) Dr Jekyll uses a potion to transform himself into the evil Mr Hyde. Suanne Becker (1999, p.1) in *Gothic forms of feminine fiction* wrote that the Gothic had ‘from the first proudly celebrated its anti-realism’. In *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Lindsay 1975), a group of schoolgirls is magically swallowed up by the land. In Rosa Praed’s (1891) ‘The bunyip’, visitors to the bush hear the mythical creature’s cries. Anne Williams (1995, p.66) believes that Gothic is often used to ‘shows the cracks in the system that constitutes conscious “reality”’.

**Sublime:** Contemporaries of the first Gothic novelists, the Romantic poets, were preoccupied with the sublime beauty of nature. The sublime evokes a sense of power and wonder. Lord Byron gives the sea a magnificent and terrible force:

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean-roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin-his control
Stops with the shore;-upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed (Byron 1818).

But many Gothic scholars – Turcotte(1998), Steele (2010), Gelder & Weaver (2007), Chudy, Cook & Costello (2010) – argue that the Australian sublime is unique because the landscape is firstly foreign to Europeans and the continent is now scarred or damaged by white settlement, hence Chudy (2014, p.232) works with the concept of a ‘battered sublime’. Freud (1919, p.2) explained the uncanny as ‘where the home is
unhomely’. The landscapes, the protagonists’ home in *The white earth* (McGahan 2004) and *In the winter dark* (Winton 1998), have been beaten into submission, but are fighting back. Chudy (2014, p.238) states that in Australian Gothic the sublime and the uncanny exist side by side: ‘the wonders of a vast nature are as likely to drive those who experience it mad as to elevate their awareness’.

**Grotesque**: Gothic refers to mutations both frightening and comic. Australian Gothic has excelled at creating grotesque characters, including the towns folk of Yabba in *Wake in fright* (Cook 1961), the obese and intellectually disabled Waldemar from Elizabeth Jolley’s (1985) *Milk and honey*, and Frogman from Lois Nowra’s (1976) *The misery of beauty*, half man and half deviant. Cynthia Freeland (2000, p.229) believes Gothic embraces the grotesque because ‘what is evil is also interesting, what is ugly or distorted can be fascinating’. Turcotte (2009, p.168) argues that Frogman ‘functions analogically as a representative of all those in society who are marginalised’. The grotesque can generate fear or discomfort, but reactions to the grotesque also reveal the true character of the protagonist. Frankenstein felt no compassion for the monster he created – was he actually the monster?

**Sexual perversion**: Gothic stories often feature sexual acts that are either outside the law, or what is widely considered as moral misbehaviour. *Eye of the storm* (White 1973) and *Milk and honey* (Jolley 1985b) both suggest sibling incest. Homosexual sex, only legalised in most Australian states in the 1970s, is featured in *All about anthrax* (Fitzgerald 1987 ), *Wake in fright* (Cook 1961) and the *Misery of beauty* (1976). In *The castle of Ortranto* (Walpole 1764), Manfred tries to marry his deceased son’s fiancé, Isabella, against her will. In Barbara Baynton’s (1902) ‘The tramp’, a woman on an isolated property is raped and murdered by a passing swagman. Rosemary Jackson (1981, p.41) in *Fantasy: the literature of subversion* wrote that Gothic is often preoccupied with ‘incest, necrophilia, androgyne, cannibalism, recidivism, narcissism and “abnormal” psychological states’.

**Excess**: Gothic is renowned as the genre of excesses, with fantastical plots and rich, layered prose – exaggerated ‘beyond reality’ (Becker 1999, p.6), ‘Gothicism running riot in metaphor and mood’ (Lloyd-Smith 1998, p.8). Chudy, Cook and Costello (2010, p.4) found that the Gothic is perfectly suited to convey the excess of extreme Australian environments, such as the subtropics where ‘the climate is a combination of high rainfall, heat, humidity and strong sunlight. It is a strangely beautiful landscape’.
**Gender:** The Gothic often addresses themes of gender in relation to societal expectations about the roles of the sexes. Some Gothic scholars – Moers (1978), Van Leeuwen (1982), Fleenor (1983) and Becker (1991) – argue that early Gothic novels about women imprisoned in castles by evil villains were feminist texts. Becker (1991, p.21) in *Gothic forms of feminine fictions* believes that many feminist Gothicists are interested in the Gothic, because ‘they see it as the genre that best “expresses female experience”’. It has also been argued that *Frankenstein* (Shelley 1818), published fifty-four years after the first Gothic novel, ‘is a warning of the loss of men and women alike that ensues when the feminine other is denied symbolisation’ (Millbank 1998, p.57).

**Secrets/past transgressions:** Gothic houses often enclose secret corridors, and Gothic characters frequently harbour secrets that threaten the main protagonist. Jane Eyre (Brontë 1847) does not find out that Mr Rochester keeps his mad wife in the attic until her wedding day. In *Milk and honey* (Jolley 1985b), Jacob does not learn that Waldemar is still alive and living in top floor of the house until Waldemar murders Madge, Jacob’s lover. In the novel *Rebecca* (du Maurier 1938), it is not revealed that Maxim murdered his first wife until the second Mrs de Winter is almost pushed to suicide by Mrs Danvers. In *The cars that ate Paris* (1974), Arthur Waldo must uncover what is menacing the town before he too is murdered. Past transgressions and secrets can isolate, disempower and threaten the protagonist:

> These insular communities do not welcome strangers who could learn their secrets or interfere with their way of life and so typically these interlopers are made to disappear (Johinke 2010, p.112).

**Dopplegänger:** Frederick Frank (1987) in *The first Gothics: a critical guide to the English Gothic novel* defined *dopplegänger* (or double goer) as a second self or alternate identity, sometimes a physical twin:

> The Dopplegänger in demonic form can be a reciprocal or lower bestial self or a Mr Hyde. Gothic doppelgängers often haunt and threaten the rational psyche of the victim to whom they become attached (Frank 1987, p.435).

But in Australian Gothic, the land, to Europeans, is almost a *dopplegänger*. It is the home that is not home, the uncanny.
**Entrapment:** A sense of being captured or trapped is often central to the Gothic plot. Chris Baldick (1992, p.xix) defines Gothic as ‘a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space’. Victor Sage (1998, p.82) argues in his piece, ‘The Gothic novel’, that the use of confined spaces – castles, dungeons, monasteries and prisons – is ‘to symbolise extreme emotional states’. Australia’s earliest European settlers often felt imprisoned by a vast foreign landscape and as Susan Haynes (1998, p.77) points out the new arrivals frequently described their natural environment ‘in Gothic terms of enclosure and entrapment’.

**AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL GOTHIC**

Australia’s indigenous population had oral stories about ghosts, evil spirits and monsters before the First Fleet arrived in 1788. According to Australian Studies lecturer Christine Judith Nicholls, who spent ten years living in Australia’s Central Desert, many of these myths survive today:

There are roaming Ogres, Bogeymen and Bogey women, Cannibal Babies, Giant Baby-Guzzlers, Sorcerers, and spinifex and feather-slippered Spirit Beings able to dispatch victims with a single fatal garrote (2014).

Nicholls believes the main purpose of these stories is to inform people about the ‘hazards of specific places and environments’. For example Yawk Yawks, evil mermaids, are said to live in deep water holes and serve as a caution against drowning. But the Gothic is a distinct literary genre imbued with a sense of the menace and preoccupied with buried secrets. Malaysian academic Andrew Ng (2007, p.182) defines the key Gothic aesthetic as loss and transgression, hence it’s hard to make a case that traditional indigenous horror fables are Gothic. However contemporary Australian indigenous writers have combined the Gothic with traditional myths to create a new unique Aboriginal Gothic. For example author Mudrooroo has inverted the colonial notion that indigenous people are the ‘other’ and barbaric. As Alison Rudd points out (2010, p.11) Mudrooroo instead uses white ghosts (an indigenous myth) ‘as a metaphor for infection of cultural contact’ with Europeans. The Gothic plot often focuses on uncovering a buried secret, thus the genre is ideal for addressing un- or under acknowledged traumas suffered by indigenous Australians. Katrin Althans (2010, p.4) wrote in *Subverted Darkness: Aboriginal Gothic* that ‘some Aboriginal artists remembered its subversive origins and usurped its European tradition in order to transform it into a uniquely Aboriginal Gothic’.
SECTION THREE

The Gothic in convict novels

When the First Fleet arrived in 1788, the landscape trapped the new arrivals. In his epic account of Australia’s founding Robert Hughes (1988, p.1) wrote that an unexplored continent would become a jail, even its ‘very air and sea, the whole transparent labyrinth of the South Pacific, would become a wall 14,000 miles thick’.

Turcotte (1998, p.10) realised that the Gothic, defined by darkness and despair, was the ideal agent to convey the experience of exile of both convicts and free settlers transported to a strange new land – ‘a condition of deracination and uncertainty, of the familiar transposed into unfamiliar space’.

Australia’s earliest convict novel, *Quintus Servinton* (Savery 1830), is not a Gothic work. Its author, Henry Savery, a forger transported to Van Dieman’s land, does a credible job of gentrifying the convict experience. Ironically Savery’s own life could be said to be Gothic. He was sent to the colonies’ cruelest convict settlement, Port Arthur, and died probably by slitting his own throat in 1840 (Hadgraft 2003, p.xxii).

Savery’s novel includes perhaps the earliest description of the Australian coast in fiction:

> Regardless whether she was the occasion of happiness or misery, freedom or slavery, to her numerous inmates; and gliding under easy sail, close alongside the magnificent rocks that rise in massy columns from the water’s edge, flanking the entrance to the harbour, she dropped her anchor (Savery 1830, p.301).

*Ralph Rashleigh* (Tucker c1840) is a more realistic portrayal of convict life and includes beatings and a cruel work regime. It was written by the convict James Tucker, transported to New South Wales in 1827 for demanding money by menace. His coast imprisons:

> On their left lay the mainland, on their right was the open sea; but between them and the latter, at about the distance of a mile, the thundering noise of breakers indicated the existence of a reef, or barrier of rocks, which is frequently found to guard the approach to the iron-bound coast of eastern Australia (Tucker c1840).
In Caroline Leakey’s book, *The broad arrow* (1859), the coast has a sublime appeal. Leakey was the sister-in-law of an English minister and spent a year at the Port Arthur convict settlement. The convict girl in her novel has been wrongly convicted. Leakey imbues the Tasmanian coast with a powerful, awe-inspiring beauty:

Now in vain opened to new magnificent scenes from the coasts of Frederick Henry Bay; in vain upreared the Iron Pot its grotesque dimensions, it awoke in her no curiosity; nor did the surf which boiled around its base attract her attention. The grand tumult of Storm Bay, the quiet farm of Slopen Island, were nothing to her so long as chains dragged down the hands and oppressed the feet of those with whom she was forced into contact (Leakey 1859).

Marcus Clarke (1870) is credited with shaping ‘a specifically Australian form of Gothic mode’ (Turcotte 1998, p.14) in his masterpiece *For the term of his natural life*. He imbues the coast and sea with malaise. A Tasmanian river running into the sea is ‘gloomed by overhanging rocks, and shadowed by gigantic forests, the black sides of the basin narrow’ (Clarke 1870/1982, p.62).

Australian convict Gothic literature has a long history of painting coasts that are awe-inspiring and powerful but also a force of imprisonment. The convict Gothic tradition continues in texts such as *The secret river* (Grenville 2005) and Paul Collins’ (2002) film *Hell’s gate: the terrible journey of Alexander Pearce, Van Dieman’s Land cannibal*. 

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SECTION FOUR

Gothic escapes into the interior

In the early nineteenth century, Australian authors went bush. The early colonial writers – Barbara Baynton, Francis Adam, Price Warung, Rosa Praed, Edward Sorensen, Hume Nisbet and Henry Lawson – followed the squatters, prospectors, bullock drivers and shearers into the interior, in a quest to find the spirit of “Australia”. Matthew Flinders coined the name “Australia” and NSW Governor Lachlan Macquarie promoted it (Huntsman 2001, p.46).

It fitted the colonial narrative to portray the interior as wild, strange, even evil, in need of subduing and taming. Ross Gibson (2008, p.13) in Seven versions of an Australian badland refers to the interior as the “Badland”, a term created two centuries ago in North America to describe the ‘sense of insufficiency’ felt by Europeans entering ‘the more savage’ parts of the ‘new world’. The land was depicted as an enemy that must be conquered, a mutant demon, a Gothic fiend. Clarke (1909) in his preface to the book Poems by Adam Lindsay Gordon declared that ‘in Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribblings of Nature learning how to write’. Writer Don Watson (2014, p.93) believes that nineteenth-century Europeans arrived with ‘their fashionable Gothic taste which the bush with its various “contrarieties” did much to satisfy’.

At the same time authors from other genres (adventure, children’s literature and romance) wrote stories describing the beauty of the interior, “selling” the bush and the colonial need to conquer the land; examples include Ethel Turner’s Seven little Australians (1894), Banjo Paterson’s (1889) ‘Clancy of the overflow’ and Jeannie Gunn’s (1908) We of the never, never. Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver wrote in The anthology of colonial Australian Gothic fiction that the Gothic colonial stories were ‘counter narratives to the more familiar tales of colonial promise and optimism’ (2007, p.9).

Scholars also believe that the land was depicted as a haunted space because the colonisers failed to acknowledge the indigenous population: ‘It is not only the concrete images of human settlement that are haunted but the landscape itself projects this hauntedness’ (Chudy, Cook & Costello, 2010, p.1). It is not only the buildings, erected by Europeans, that speak of indigenous dispossession. The natural landscape, empty of
the original inhabitants, becomes a ghost-scape, reminding us that the land was stolen from the Aboriginal people. Steele (2010, p.48) believes that ‘the bush space [contains] all that is clandestine and unresolved in settler culture’. ‘The colonial Australian Gothic is intimately tied to the violence of settler life’ (Gelder & Weaver 2007, p.9).

The hot and dry climate of the inland, away from the populated coastal cities, was also a perfect agent of entrapment:

Isolation through distance is no less absolute or terrifying then imprisonment by walls, the unassailable natural powers of heat, thirst and desolation are no less despotic than those of the aristocratic villain (Haynes 1998, p.185).

This tradition of demonising the Australian interior is alive and well today, evident in texts such as The white earth (McGahan 2004), Bereft (Womersley 2011) and The spruiker’s tale (Rey 2003). Author Catherine Rey wrote that inland Western Australian ‘confuses even infiniteness’:

The endless plain seems always to be pushing the horizon further and further away … How many expeditions vanished! Gobbled up, devoured, sucked up! … Pffft! Space ! Too much space destroys space, don’t you see (Rey, 2003/05, p.29)?

More dark interior texts are being produced. In 2016 the film, Goldstone, a mystery set in a remote town, was released. It has been described as “outback noir” (Galvin 2016), while Chris Sun is directing Boar (2016), a horror movie about a wild pig that terrorises an outback Queensland town.

It is difficult to locate contemporary Australian texts that show the interior in a positive light. Red dog (2011) in many ways is a classic “interior” tale set against a hot, dry, sparsely populated landscape, but rather than being hostile the people living in this remote location are a friendly, tight-knit group. The film was a huge hit (Screen Australia, 2016), but in their paper, ‘Wolf Creek, rurality and the Australian Gothic’, Scott and Birron (2010) argue that the Outback has become the home of Gothic, evidenced in many films over the years including Walkabout (1971) and Mad Max (1979). Scott and Birron say Wolf Creek (2005) relies heavily upon landscape in order to tell its story:
The film continues a tradition in the New Australian Cinema of depicting the outback and its inhabitants as something the country’s mostly coastal population do not understand (Scott & Birron 2010, p.307).

Appraising the Gothic resurgence of the 1960s and ’70s, Turcotte (1998, p.16) noted that ‘the suburbs could be just as chilling as the outback’ but he never mentioned the coast.
SECTION FIVE

Retreat from the beach, return to the coast

RETREAT FROM THE BEACH

In the early years of Sydney town, few convicts, soldiers or settlers could swim, but they must have watched the Eora people in Sydney cove and followed them into the water because in 1810 Governor Macquarie outlawed swimming around the wharf and dockyard in a decree in the Government gazette: ‘A very indecent and improper custom having lately prevailed of Soldiers, Sailors and Inhabitants of the Town bathing themselves at all hours’ (Macquarie cited in Huntsman 2001, p.28). In 1833, all swimming in daylight hours in the harbour was banned and the ban was extended to the colony’s other beaches by 1838.

Caroline Ford (2014, p.25) in Sydney beaches argues that the prohibition did not stop everyone from swimming – ‘bathing in the surf was an important if discreet element of Sydney’s colonial beach culture’. Perhaps it was not an activity to be celebrated in poetry or fiction. Meanwhile the search for identity in the lead-up to Federation focussed attention inland. Hoskins found few beach references in nineteenth-century texts when researching his book, The coast:

A fundamental theme that emerged from my research was the ambivalent and marginal place occupied by the coast and sea in the cultural consciousness as that developed through the 1800s (Hoskins 2013, p.12).

Demographer Bernard Salt (2001, p.7) believes that the beach disappeared culturally because Australians were preoccupied ‘exploring, taming and settling the harsh interior of this continent’. Huntsman (2001, p.122) argues that because shipwrecks claimed so many lives, there was a colonial perception of the sea being cruel – ‘the old dread of the beach where wrecks and the victims of the sea’s destruction powers are cast up’. Hoskins (2013, p.282) echoes these sentiments, pointing out that if you showed a nineteenth-century Australian Max Dupain’s iconic image of the sunbather, she/he would think it was a shipwrecked sailor. Geoffrey Dutton (1985, p.20) in Sun, surf and sand – the myth of the beach complains the beach ‘until very recently had a bad literary image in Australia’.

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This attitude is reflected in the prose of Australia’s most famous nineteenth-century writers:

We cannot love the restless sea, that rolls and tosses to and fro, like some fierce creature in its glee; for human weal or human woe, it has no touch of sympathy (Banjo Patterson, 1864 cited in Huntsman 2001, p.46).

In 1901 Henry Lawson (cited in Hoskins 2013, p.12) wrote, ‘the spirits of our fathers rise not from every wave, They left the sea behind them long ago’.

Australia did have one prolific writer of beach fiction in the late nineteenth century. In her paper, ‘Ecologies of the beachcomber in colonial Australian literature’, Rachael Weaver (2015, p.152) explains that Sydney writer Louis Becke did not set his beach fiction on the shores of north Queensland or the West Australian Kimberley coast, but on the distant shores of South Pacific islands, and his stories created ‘a sensation that local critics united to proclaim him as the superior of Robert Louis Stevenson’.

Even Dorothea Mackellar’s iconic poem ‘My country’ (1904), with forty-eight lines, has only one reference to the coast – ‘I loved her jewelled sea’. The coast vanished from Australian nineteenth-century literature, including the Gothic.

But abroad, the Gothic went to the beach, even boarded ships. American Gothic poet Edgar Allan Poe drowns a city then a lover in his ballads ‘The city in the sea’ (1845) and ‘Annabel Lee’(1849). British author Joseph Conrad penned Gothic maritime novels including Almayer’s_folly (1895), Heart of darkness (1899) and The shadow_lines (1916). Yet in Australia, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the coast failed to resonate with writers. These sentiments are shared by architectural historian Philip Drew:

In the nineteenth century men had explored the inland regions, but this remained unfamiliar and little understood. There was a feeling that whatever was special about Australia was hidden away in some remote, inaccessible part of the country (Drew 1994, p.92).
Seaside resorts in England were popular with the British aristocracy by the late eighteenth century (Metusela 2104, p.4). A year before the first convicts arrived in Sydney, the Prince Regent of Britain began transforming a modest farmhouse in Brighthelmstone into England’s Taj Mahal (Brighton & Hove Tourism 2016). The Royal doctor told him the sea would be good for his goitre (Corbin 1994, p.272).

Botany Bay became Sydney’s first seaside resort, with two hotels opening in the 1840s, while in Melbourne, Brighton became popular after the whooping cough epidemic of 1845 (Huntsman 2001, p.37). Ellison (2013, p.31) writes that Australia’s connection to the coast partially stems from a perception that the beach is a place of healing.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, railways lines were built to the coast, making it easier for the population to visit the beach for picnics and games. Steam rail began operating between Melbourne and St Kilda in 1856 (Museum Victoria 2007). The first horse tram from Adelaide to the beachside suburb of Glenelg began in 1873 (South Australian Government 2001). The first tram to Bondi began running in 1884, branching from the Waverley line (Tram Scrolls Australia 2010). The working class also had more leisure time to go to the beach in the second half of the century thanks to the expanding union movement. In 1856, Melbourne’s stonemasons won the right to an eight-hour work-day and forty-eight-hour working week – this spread to other industries (Australian Council of Trade Unions, 2013).

In 1870, Adam Lindsay Gordon’s poem, ‘The swimmer’, was published – an ode to the beach and sea. In the 1880s Australia’s preeminent artists, the Heidelberg school, painted coastal landscapes of beaches around Melbourne and Sydney (Ford 2014, p.1). But these artists also journeyed inland to capture the spirit of the bush on canvas, examples including Tom Roberts’ *Shearing the rams* (1890), Walter Withers’ *Panning for gold* (1893) and Frederick McCubbin’s (1904) *The pioneer*.

Following protests, legislation outlawing swimming at the beach in daylight hour was repealed in the early 1900s (Hoskins 2013, p.305). Bronte claims to be the first lifesaving club in Australia and the world, forming in 1903 (Bronte Surf Club 2012). Eugenics – the science of improving the race – was a strong influence in Australia in the early twentieth century (Jones 2011). Eugenics meant physical exercise, such as swimming, was encouraged. In 1910 Charles Wade (cited in Ford 2013, p.55) described
swimming in the surf as ‘no better exercise to develop muscular, courageous and other qualities of young men’. Metusela and Waitt found (2014, p.111) ‘for those advocating scientific framings of the beach, swimming bodies became positioned as non-sexual and as “good” citizens’. But World War I interrupted the ascendancy of beach culture in Australia and depleted clubs of young male lifesavers (Huntsman 2001, p.94).

After the war, Australians returned to the beach in droves (Ford 2014, p.114). D H Lawrence published his novel, Kangaroo, in 1923, set on an Illawarra beach, after spending three months in Australia. The famous English author had an ambivalent attitude to Australians and the natural environment. Lawrence (1923, p.87) found the continent unheimlich, uncanny and described the landscape as ‘unimpressive, like a face with little or no features, a dark face. It is so aboriginal, out of our ken, and it hangs back so aloof’. But he also wrote testimonies about the regenerating effects of surf, which read like a precedent to the texts of Australia’s best known contemporary coastal author, Tim Winton:

She had felt herself free, free, free, for the first time in her life. In the silvery pure air of this undominated continent she could swim like a fish that is just born, alone in a crystal ocean (Lawrence 1923, p.385).

And yet the character, Harriet, feels a sinister vibration from the ‘glisten’ – ‘out of the silver paradisiacal freedom untamed, evil winds could come’ (Lawrence 1923, p.385). Lawrence was one of the first writers to recognise the sublimity of the Australian coast and also a sense of the uncanny in the beachscape.

With the outbreak of World War II, beach culture again hibernated. Barbed wire was rolled out at beaches and tank traps installed around Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong (Hoskins 2013, p.217). But Australians held tight to their love of coast. In 1940 Charles Meere’s painted the Australian beach pattern, the epitome of healthy Anglo-Australian beach goers. In the immediate post-war years, Ruth Park (1948, p.378) described an alluring ocean in The harp in the south, ‘there it was, cobalt, glittering richly, tossing itself in foam-laced breakers’.

After the war, surfing grew in popularity (Booth 2001, p.91). In 1956 visiting American lifesavers introduced the shorter, lighter Malibu boards to Sydney, transforming the Australian surf culture (Ford 2014, p. 197). Californian beach culture was also
imported. The Beach Boys released their first album in 1961; Sandra Dee was initiated into the Californian surf culture in the *Gidget* films (Huntsman 2001, p.97).

In the second half of the twentieth century, Australians began to identify more with the beach than the bush. Fiske, Hodge and Turner (1987, p.54) argue that ‘as the free, natural and tough bush existence became more obviously an anachronistic version of national identity, the figure of the bronzed lifesaver filled the gap’. Drew (1994, p.110) also insists this love of coast became central to the Australian identity, ‘the attractions of beach, surf and coastal lifestyle have proved irresistible. This is bound up with the Australian preference for life in the sun which only dates from this century’. Jon Stratton (2007, p.27) agrees that, in the twentieth century, the beach largely superseded the bush as a space of national dreaming. Douglas Booth (2001, p.xix) says that ‘discovering, claiming and inventing the beach is as much an individual journey as it is a collective social and cultural process’.

Dutton (1985, p89) identifies Roger Carr’s 1966 book *Surfie* as ‘one of the most vivid of Australian books about the beach’. The main character Chuck Carr contrasts the constraints of suburbia with the freedom of the surf:

> You look ahead to the coast and can’t believe it. All those miles of rolling dunes and ocean and open spaces after the funny little fenced squares (Carr cited in Dutton 1985, p89).

Australians might have been falling for the beach, but the custom of Gothicising the interior did not abate in the post-war years. Two classic interior Gothic texts were published: Cook’s *Wake in fright* was released in 1961, while Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock* came out in 1967.

Australia’s fear of the interior and love of the coast existed side-by-side and the dual philosophies were inevitably contrasted in literature and film. At the beginning of Patrick White’s (1958) novel *Voss*, the explorer is a happy man on the coast, but descends into madness as he journeys inland. The film *Wolf Creek* (2005) begins with three backpackers enjoying an idyllic holiday on the beach in Broome, which Scott and Birron (2010, p.310) describe as ‘an archetypal space of leisure’. This provides a stark contrast to Gothic depictions of the continent’s interior as strange and threatening. The backpackers go inland and fall into the hands of a madman. Ellison (2013, p.39) says by
establishing the coast as a haven in the first scenes of Wolf Creek, the outback horror is ‘even more jarring’.

WHERE THE SEA AND BUSH MEET

The idea of a Tasmanian Gothic genre is gaining traction in Australia. Although it appears to have received less scholarly attention than Gothic located in the interior, the concept of Tasmanian Gothic is widely accepted among literary reviewers. Jim Davidson (1989, p.308) in his paper ‘Tasmanian Gothic’ wrote that it grew from the island state’s history and ‘the crowded period of convicts, bushrangers and decimation of the Aborigines proved ineradicable’. Davidson (1989, p.308) also wrote that since colonisation Tasmania had always been viewed as ‘different’ from the mainland and, 200 years after the arrival of Europeans, Tasmania’s ‘outdated way of life’ coupled with its natural beauty contributed to its Gothic image:

An uncommonly picturesque one of crags and the Splits, of a myriad of sudden lakes, or the wonderfully overwrought coastlines of Tasman Peninsula with its clefs and pavements and blowholes located exactly where a Gothic author would want them (Davidson 1989, p.310).

Emily Bullock (2011, p.71) in ‘Rumbling from Australia’s deep south’ wrote that “‘Tasmanian Gothic’ has become a by-word for the unsettling combination of Tasmania’s colonial histories and its harsh landscapes in literature’. So accepted is Tasmanian Gothic in the Australian vernacular that it has a Wikipedia page. The webpage claims that ‘the dramatic landscape and impenetrable rainforests of Tasmania and the real and imagined brutality of the original penal colony provided a ready source of horror stories’ (Wikipedia 2012). Gregory Young (1994, p.32) claims in ‘The island of Gothic silence’ that Patrick White was the first writer to identify Tasmania as Gothic in 1976.
SECTION SIX

Trapped in watchtowers

The 1960s and ’70s were a time of change in Australia and around the world. Australia voted in its first Labor government in twenty-three years. Australians watched the struggle for civil rights in America on their new televisions. In 1965, Aboriginal Sydney University student Charles Perkins boarded the Freedom Ride bus, and by capturing the attention of the Australian media, highlighted the state of Aboriginal health, education and housing (Curthoys 2002). The feminist movement was building; in 1971 singer Helen Reddy released, ‘I am woman’ which became a feminist anthem (Spurling 2014, p.51). It was a time of excesses; the concept of ‘free love’ led some to sexually over-indulge (Smaal 2012, p.70) and the use of the psychedelic drug LSD was promoted (Robinson 2012, p.125). From this generative soil again sprouted the Gothic.

The Gothic is a genre of writing that surfaces in times of historic turbulence or change. It first appeared in Europe during the French and American revolutions. Clive Bloom (2010, p.169) wrote in Gothic histories that Gothic is ‘the rational testing its limits both as a carnival and revolution’. In the Australian colonies, short stories about ghosts and the supernatural were popular as the colonies sought identity then union in Federation.

In the 1960s and ’70s, the cultural ascendency of the beach collided with the social turmoil: the civil rights movement, feminism, the peace movement. During this Gothic renaissance, Domestic Gothic appeared, focusing on power struggles at a family level. A number of acclaimed Australian authors released stories about dysfunctional families and exploitative relationships in the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s, for example Christina Stead’s The man who loved children (1940/65) and For love alone (1945/66); Elizabeth Harrower’s (1966) The watchtower; Patrick White’s (1973) Eye of the storm; and Elizabeth Jolley’s (1985) Milk and honey. Christopher Koch also penned Gothic novels about destructive relationships during these years. Literary scholar Joan Lidoff credits Christina Stead with developing a Domestic Gothic centring on power struggles in suburban homes. Andrew Ng (2007, p.152) in ‘The wider shores of Gothic’ argues that The man who loved children is a classic example of a type of Australian Gothic story ‘revolving around women suffering from a sense of entrapment within a domestic space, and the dreadful realisation that their guardians (fathers, husbands) are ultimately their jailers’.
Since the eighteen century the Gothic has been used by female writers to express women’s fear of and frustrations with a patriarchal society and home. Ellen Moers (1978) recognised this when she coined the phrase ‘Female Gothic’. But, according to Lidoff (1982: p.23), what is most significant about Stead’s work is that the story is set ‘not a Gothic castle in an exotic land’ but in an ordinary house.

However the ordinary homes, in the novels cited above by Stead, Harrower, White and Jolley, were all next to a harbour. In these works, the coast reappeared in the Australian Gothic landscape, more than 100 years after the early convict novels used the shore as a means of entrapment. I believe these novels belong to a Domestic Coastal Gothic genre.

Historically the bulk of Australia’s population has always lived near the coast (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004) so in setting the narratives near the water, the authors base their characters in a geography shared by ordinary Australians. But I believe that Stead, Harrower, White and Jolley also realised that Australians increasingly identified with the coast – the beach had become a national icon – hence by setting Gothic tales beside the sea they could comment on Australia’s relationship with the coast.

Harrower, White and Jolley describe a bleak and ugly coastline. The tortured souls in Domestic Coastal Gothic rarely escape their ‘watchtowers’ and luxuriate in the ocean. They do not swim or surf or fish – are these pursuits reserved for the Australian alpha male? Only Christina Stead’s heroine in For love alone enjoys a Romantic connection to the water. She bathes in a halcyon sea.

In the remainder of this section I explore in detail depictions of the coast in Domestic Coastal Gothic.

CHRISTINA STEAD

The Australian beach novels, Jungfrau (Cusack 1936) and Intimate Strangers (Prichard 1937), questioned social expectations of women following World War I. During World War II, Stead’s wrote the Gothic masterpiece, The man who loved children, about an embittered housewife who hates her narcissistic husband. It came out in 1940 to mediocre reviews and weak sales, but when it was re-released in 1965, during the
counterculture years, it sold strongly and received positive reviews (Vanderbilt 1999, p.13). Stead’s novels were not published in Australia until the 1960s.

_The man who loved children_ was originally set around Sydney Harbour, but Stead changed the location while living on the east coast of the United States.

I simply transferred where I talk about the salinity of the Chesapeake (Bay), Sydney Harbor is a reach of sea, whereas Chesapeake is not (Stead cited in Lidoff 1982, p.184).

The coast does not feature prominently in the book. In the last chapter, the main character, the elder daughter Louie, escapes her grotesque family by crossing a bridge – was it the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the novel’s first draft? The people living around the harbour are impoverished. Stead describes (1940/65; p72) ‘poor people gasping just at the surface’ and looking at the world ‘through two fishy eyes’. But in her next novel, _For love alone_ (1945/66), the coast has a more prominent role.

_Fore love alone_ (1945) has a plethora of Gothic markers. One early reviewer described the book about a young woman who pursues a relationship with the cold, misshapen Jonathon Crow as ‘500 pages of lust and abnormality’ (unnamed reviewer cited in Modjeska 2011). Fiona Morrison (2013, p.10) in her piece ‘Modernist/provincial/Pacific’ attests that Stead was ‘aware of surrealism and attracted to it as a legitimate space in which to engage her more generally Gothic predilections’. Lidoff (1982, p.23) says Stead’s ‘Domestic Gothic’ had a ‘capacity to encompass fantasy in the quotidian world, balance profound access to the turmoils of the inner life’.

Stead’s descriptions of Sydney’s coast in _For love alone_ are defined by excessive passion, death, almost perversion.

From every moon-red shadow came the voices of men and women; and in every bush and in the clumps of pine upon unseen wooden seat and behind rocks, in the grass and even on open ledges, men and women groaned and gave shuddering cries as if they were being beaten. She passed slowly, timidly but fascinated by the strange battlefield, the bodies stretched out, contorted with sounds of dying under the fierce high moon. She did not know what the sounds were, but she knew children would be conceived this night, and sometime later women would marry hurriedly, if they could, like one of her cousins, who had slept with a man in one of these very grottoes;
and perhaps one or two would jump into the sea. There were often bodies fished up around here that had leapt when the heart still beat, from these high ledges into the waters washed round these rocks (Stead 1945, p.61).

This passage is characteristically Gothic, with references to desire and self-destruction, and while the scene is not one of a blatant perversion, it almost describes an orgy. Stead’s writing is rich with coastal metaphors. She (1945, p.500) describes Jonathan as ‘the bachelor sucked into himself like a sea-anemone’.

Yet the main character, Teresa, is never frightened by the coast or menaced by the sea. Sydney Harbour has a sublime beauty. Tessa’s harbour-side home is serene. On high tide, sea water washes down her streets and she swims in the harbour at night – ‘you just let yourself go – you can even sleep floating, but the ocean she dreamed about under her lids was a wide smooth expanse under the moon, a halcyon sea’ (Stead 1945, p.67). Stead clearly has a Romantic connection to the harbour.

**ELIZABETH HARROWER**

Harrower’s (1966) novel *The watchtower* is about two sisters who fall under the control of the evil Felix Shaw after the older sister marries him. The three live in his waterside Sydney home – the watchtower – but it becomes their prison as he subjects the women to increasingly cruel mind games. The reader only glimpses the coast, for example when the younger sister, Clare, walks past ‘Manly Pool, deserted, seaweedy and bleak’ (Harrower 1966, p. 34). Harrower rarely uses coastal metaphors. This is one of the few: ‘Clare turned about in a last effort to locate some more reliable and buoyant piece of driftwood than herself for the boy to cling to’ (1966, p.169).

At the end of the novel Clare leaves her coast home and travels inland. In contrast to the role of nature in interior Gothic texts, the bush energises her:

> Abruptly the road by the train lines changed colour and character: it was a bush track – bright clay. And there were trees suddenly, swift-moving past – blossoming eucalyptus, pines. Alone in the compartment, Clare jerked the window up and leaned out into the day. The light was wonderful. Waves of

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air beat against her face, and it smelled of grass, or clover or honey
(Harrower 1966, p.219).

**PATRICK WHITE**

White’s (1973) *Eye of the storm* is about two adult siblings who return to Australia to visit their dying mother in her harbour-side mansion. The grotesque matriarch crushes her children. Most of the novel unfolds in the mansion, with only small sections set near the harbour. *Eye of the storm* is archetypal Gothic, with the protagonists locked up with a villain in a castle-like home. Turcotte (2009, p.155) argued that ‘the house’s depths are the repositories of more than children’s dark imaginings. There is to be found here the dark secrets of history and colonialism’. The coast provides the brother and sister with no relief from the torture:

> The sun had gone in besides, behind a drift of dirty cloud. And once your vision is withdrawn from you, there remain the lapping shallows, the littered sand, one competing with the other for the sludge to which the human spirit can sense itself rendered: an aimless bobbing of corks which have served their purpose, and scum, and condoms, and rotting fruit, and rusted tins, and excrement (White 1973, p.352).

White uses a host of Gothic traits to create what Baldick (1992, p.xix) might describe as an ‘impression of a sickening descent into disintegration’. At the end of the novel a cyclone hits Elizabeth’s beach house, but she survives. Having lived through the ordeal, she feels strengthened. White aligns Elizabeth with a coastal storm, a malignant force. She wreaks havoc on her family:

> She waded out of the bunker through a debris of sticks, straw, scaly corpses, a celluloid doll. Round her a calm was glistening. She climbed farther into it by way of the ridge of sand and the heap of rubbish where the house had stood. At some distance a wrecked piano, all hammers and wires, was half buried in wet sand (White 1973, p.424).

White also uses sea metaphors to emphasise the horridness of the key characters. ‘She lay gasping, as though the tide had almost fully receded from this estuary of sheets, while they watched her, she could tell, with their unregenerate gulls’ eyes’ (White 1973,
p.414). ‘They might have united in a ‘good laugh’ at the expense of this turgid male – or human turbot’ (White 1973, p.403). Jennifer Straus (1982, p.81) in her paper, ‘An unsentimental romance’ claims that ‘it is in the work of novelists like White and Stead that we find Gothic extravagances of associative language and imagination’.

Again and again White links images of rubbish to the Australian coast. Basil (Elizabeth’s son) buys prawns on a walk to the ferry:

> He was illustrious and foreign enough to make a pig of himself in public. Even so, many of those he passed appeared to glare at him … but [he] went on climbing, shelling prawns, stuffing them into his mouth and spitting out fragments of shell (White 1972, p.272).

Basil is a grotesque character. White, who was born in England and spent much of his adult life in the UK, described an uncouth, uncivilised Australia. He is channelling D H Lawrence. Fifty-years earlier Lawrence described the south New South Wales coast thus:

> In the openness and the freedom this new chaos, this litter of bungalows and tin cans scattered for miles and miles, this Englishness all crumbled out into formlessness and chaos. Even the heart of Sydney itself – an imitation of London and New York, without any core or pith of meaning (Lawrence 1923, p.33).

Scholars have noted that European Gothic novels are often set among the ’crumbling ruins” of a castle or monastery. Martina Moeller (2013, p. 150) in Rubbles, ruins and romanticism writes that ruins ‘evoke feelings of existential alienation’. White and Lawrence both present a “ruined” coastal environment instead of a decaying castle.

At the end of Eye of the storm both Basil and Dorothy return to Europe. They need to escape their mother and the parochialism of Australia. White Gothicised Sydney Harbour in the early ’70s as his friend, the artist Brett Whitley, was painting tumultuous and revolutionary abstracts of Sydney Harbour.

CHRISTOPHER KOCH

Koch, a Tasmanian author, also wrote about forlorn characters desperate to escape either Tasmania or the mainland ‘island’ of Australia. The main character, Cullen, in
The boys in the island, dreams of leaving Tasmania and breaking ‘free from the hillbound circle of the island, now a mocking prison, its every corner and scene stabbing him with a joke’ (Koch 1958, p.122). The coast, as it did in convict Gothic novels, imprisons the protagonist. But on the mainland island Cullen endures a Gothic unravelling that forces him back to Tasmania. In Sydney, one of his friends dies after a stupid stunt. Another mate gets drunk and assaults a female friend and the protagonist is injured in a car accident.

The main character of Across the sea wall leaves Australia, but eventually returns home a failure, ‘like a dog to its vomit’ (Koch 1965, p.210). Chad Habel (2009, p.225) in ‘Christopher Koch: crossing sea walls’ argues that ‘the sea wall acts as a metaphor for isolation and enclosure, the novel suggests that Australians tend to be inward-looking’. White and Koch cast the whole Australian continent as a Gothic house that entraps desperate protagonists. In Stead’s (1945) For love alone, the heroine also leaves on a ship and the novel begins with a description of Australia’s geographical estrangement.

ELIZABETH JOLLEY

Jolley excelled at Domestic Gothic. Her characters are contained in suburban buildings, just like the heroines locked up in castles of in archetypal eighteenth-century Gothic. Jolley used a boarding house in Milk and honey (1985), a maternity home in Cabin fever (1991), an old people’s home in Mr Scobie’s riddle (1983), and schools in Miss Peabody’s inheritance (1983) and Foxybaby (1985).

But in Milk and honey, the reader catches a glimpse of a Gothic harbour:

From the narrow veranda in front of our house we could look across other similar houses, crazily packed one above the other, on the steep little roads which led down to a small shipyard and a harbour and on to the sea. It could have been a pretty place with charm but for us it became at once the embodiment of failure and suffering (Jolley, 1985b, p.5).

The true source of horror in the novel is the grotesque Heimach family, who fake Waldemar’s death to control Jacob. He is effectively captured in their home. Dorothy Jones writes in her paper, ‘Which hend you hev? – Elizabeth Jolley’s Milk and honey’ that to Jacob the house is a romantic if rather sinister place, reminding him of ‘a slightly
decayed Austrian schloss. The branches of the mulberry tree are gnarled and twisted “like branches in the pictures in fairy tales” (1986, p.38). The coast only appears in novel a couple of times, but it is a sad place:

I sat outside on the small, sandy cliffs looking down on to the sea as it came up in long slow waves to the rocks and sank sighing back down the beach and I felt the profound melancholy that all my life has come over me from time to time (Jolley 1985, p.7).

Fionnuala Neville (1997) suggests that Jolley in her next novel Foxybaby (1985) uses the sea to gauge a level of Alma’s self-awareness:

The sound of the sea, the steady all-embracing sustained roar of the sea, the sound behind the immediate splashing sound of the waves running up and falling and running back was like a returning to consciousness … The sustained roar suggested limitless depths, untouched and mysterious (Neville 1997, p.199).

Jolley wrote Foxybaby two years after her student, Tim Winton, published his first novel, An open swimmer (1982), which uses the coast as a place of retreat, meditation and restoration for the key protagonist. Winton’s representations of the coast will be examined in the next section.

SUMMARY

Numerous Australian scholars – Lidoff (1982), Ng (2007), Morrison (2013), Turcotte (1998), Davidson (1989), Strauss (1982) and Jones (1982) – have identified the novels of Stead, Harrower, Koch, White and Jolley as Gothic, yet scant attention has been given to the Australian coastline as a credible Gothic location in these texts. In the novels of Stead, Harrower, Koch, White and Jolley the reader catches a glimpse of a Gothic coast as besieged characters struggle to survive. I believe the stories of Stead, Harrower, Koch, White and Jolley form a significant body of work that could be classified as Domestic Australian Coastal Gothic.

Stead’s For love alone (1944/65) demonstrates a love and connectedness to a sublime sea, but Stead’s ocean (1944/65, p.1) also isolates Australia from the world – ‘that cold stormy sea full of earth-wide rollers, which stretches from there without land, south to the pole’. Koch in two novels (1958, 1965) used the coast to isolate, and sea travel as a
right-of-passage – a literal and metaphorical journey. Harrower’s (1966) captured sisters just glance at the coast in her classic, The watchtower. White (1973, p.346) demonises Sydney’s Harbour – ‘along the skirting of sand and detritus which passed for a beach, an earlier tide had hemmed scallops of oil scum’. Jolley (1985) also rendered the harbour bleak.

Australian Domestic Gothic set in seaside houses is a predominantly female Coastal Gothic. In The man who loved children (Stead 1940/65), The watchtower (Harrower 1966), The eye of the storm (White 1973) and Milk and honey (Jolley 1985), the characters are imprisoned in seaside ‘watchtowers’ and menaced by domestic tyrants – Sam Pollit, Felix Shaw, Mrs Hunter and the Heimachs. The gaoled protagonists can only peek at the ocean and freedom. But in the works of Tim Winton and Robert Drewe the beach bursts to the fore.

In the following section, Storm Boys, I argue that there is a male Australian Coastal Gothic genre. In this fiction the sea is imbued with a sublime Romantic beauty, and the broken heroes escape to the beach to be renewed.
SECTION SEVEN

The Storm Boys

The counterculture of the ’60s and ’70s trigged huge changes in Australian society that came to be reflected in law. In 1976, the Federal Government passed the Aboriginal Land Rights Act allowing Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to claim back land they had traditional ties to (Commonwealth of Australia 1976). In 1969 and 1972, federal pay cases ruled that women must be awarded the same pay as men (Australian Council of Trade Unions 2013). In 1975 the Family Law Act was introduced which allowed divorce on only one ground ‘irretrievable breakdown’ after twelve months of separation (Harrison 1994). Divorce rates in Australia soared fourfold to 4.6 divorces per 1,000 people. The national divorce rate prior to the World War II was 1.1 divorces per 1,000 people (Qu 2011).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a number of dark texts, both films and novels, appeared focussing on men in crisis, who had lost either a wife or mother. These men retreat to the coast to think and heal. Ellison (2013) asserts that the beach is a space people run to in times of crisis. The author Frank Moorhouse names Surfers Paradise as his favourite sanctuary when suffering a nervous collapse:

I would load a bag with books, videos and bourbon and fly to a highrise luxury apartment on the Gold Coast, draw the blinds, lie in bed, call room service, read, stare at the ceiling fan, watch movies and listen to the breakers in the dead of night (Moorhouse cited in Ellison 2013, p.43).

Ellison (2013, p.33) argues that the beach is embedded in the Australian psyche as a place of healing because ‘the beach has long been associated as a place of both physical relaxation and psychological rebirth’. Robert Drewe (cited in Huntsman 2001, p.135) also wrote that ‘when Australians run away, they always run to the coast’.

Troubled souls are drawn to a sublime ocean. The eighteenth-century philosopher, Edmund Burke (1759), believed that the ocean was the ultimate sublime force:

A level plain of a vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean; but can it ever fill the mind with anything so great as the ocean itself? This is owing to several causes; but it is owing to none more than this, that the ocean is an object of no small
terror. Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime (Burke 1759, p.40).

Ford (2009) in ‘What power, what grandeur, what sublimity’ argues that Aussie coast culture stems from a late nineteenth-century Romantic appreciation of the coast and sea:

The Romantic appeal of the beach lay in its capacity on a wild day to arouse sensations of the power and awe of God, a crucial marker of ideal scenery for European Romantics (Ford 2009, p.21).

The films and books I cite in this section could be classified as a male Australian Coastal Gothic. Like the female Coastal Gothic (described in the previous section), male Coastal Gothic grew out of the ascendency of beach culture intersecting with an aspect of the post-World-War-II counterculture, namely feminism.

**COLIN THIELE AND HENRI SAFRAN**

Colin Thiele’s (1966) short story ‘Storm Boy’ is about a father and son who retreat to South Australia’s remote Coorong coast after the death of the wife and mother. The young boy lives a happy, but isolated life and his only friend is an elderly Aboriginal man. After hunters kill a nesting pair of pelicans, Storm Boy raises their three chicks and keeps one as a pet, until it too is killed by hunters, then Storm Boy agrees to go to boarding school. Thiel was a teacher and ‘Storm Boy’ was written as a children’s tale, a coming-of-age story. Most of the narrative is set on the beach, which Thiel (1966, p.70) describes as ‘a wild strip, wind-swept and tussocky, with the flat shallow water of the Coorong on one side and the endless slam of the Southern Ocean on the other’.

The film *Storm Boy* (1976), directed by Henri Safran, was darker than the original short story. The boy’s life is bleak, lonely. His grieving father is uncommunicative. Fingerbone Bill is an ethereal, almost mystical character. The boy’s home is a broken-down humpy in the sand dunes. The child is terrorised by drunken hunters in sand-buggies when home alone, in a scene reminiscent of the films, *Wake in fright* (1971) and *The cars that ate Paris* (1974). The Coorong landscape is sublime. The boy is bereft after his pet, Mr Percival, is killed by a hunter. In 2013 the Sydney Theatre Company performed *Storm Boy*, the play. Director John Sheedy (cited in Boland 2013) described the narrative as being about men unable to deal with grief:
Hideaway Tom has lost his wife, Fingerbone Bill has lost his community, Storm Boy has lost his mother and the pelicans have lost their mother. It’s these men in this vast wild landscape who have retreated from civilization because they’re damaged (Sheedy cited in Boland 2013).

I believe the 1976 film, *Storm Boy*, is one of the earliest examples of a contemporary Australian Coastal Gothic. There is a preoccupation with loss, and a constant menace – the hunters might return. The drunken hunters are grotesque. The main characters are troubled by their past and trapped by remoteness. But the coast is again a source of beauty, power and transcendence. It is a haunted landscape, seized from the indigenous owners and disrespected by belligerent white men and yet, at the same time, the coast nourishes Storm Boy. His best friend is a seabird.

**TIM WINTON**

Six years after the release of the film *Storm Boy* (1976), Winton (1982) published his first novel, *An open swimmer*. The story focuses on two young men on a fishing trip at a remote beach, but there are tensions between Jerra (the main character) and Sean. Morose images of sea creatures are scattered throughout the text – ‘the burst carcass of the seal that frightened him so much’ (Winton 1982, p.40). The fish the men catch are bad and a grotesque old tramp, living in a humpy on the beach – ‘a crazily constructed dwelling’ (Winton 1982, p.41) – visits their camp. Jerra and Sean are isolated by the wilderness. There are hints of the supernatural. Jerra is looking for a mythical pearl in a fish. He is burdened by secrets, troubled by the memory of Jewel, a maternal figure who encouraged him to write. She committed suicide by cutting her throat in the surf after years of domestic abuse. It eventuates that the old man in the humpy has murdered his wife by burning her alive. Winton (1982, p.165) describes an ugly coast, ‘the sea was the colour of spit, bubbling and foaming’ and ‘gulls fought in the tree’ and yet the main character finds redemption on the beach in the end.

There are a plethora of Gothic markers in the novel: buried secrets, personal disintegration, grotesque characters and a constant sense of the uncanny. The beachscape is almost deformed – the rocks, close up had lost ‘their darkness and smoothness and were blotched with little varices and pock marks, dissected by veins of algae’ (Winton 1982, p.40).
The novel ends with a fire liberating Jerra from his past, a common Gothic device. The mad wife dies in a fire in *Jane Eyre* (Brontë 1847). A fire at Manderlay frees a second wife from the shadow of Rebecca, (du Maurier 1938), and fire destroys the ugly town of Dungatar in *The dressmaker* (Hamm 2000).

Winton is Australia’s best-known author of coastal fiction. Many of his novels have ominous undercurrents. Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman (2009) believe there are Gothic elements in his texts. Like ‘interior’ Australian Gothic novels, Winton’s stories unfold in remote locations and ‘his settings are generally coastal, rather than rural, but the settings can be just as remote’ (Gelder & Salzman 2009, p.29).

Gelder and Salzman also argue that Winton’s coastal characters are grotesque because they are so isolated, alone and neurotic ‘as to make social interaction with anyone else, no matter how closely related, an impossibility’ (2009, p.27). They point out that human relations in Winton’s novels are fraught; most marriages fail. Later novels by Winton feature the supernatural. There is a monster in *In the winter dark* (1988) and a ghost in *Cloudstreet* (1991) and *That eye, the sky* (1988). Gelder and Salzman (2009, p.28) assert that the haunted house in *Cloudstreet* is Gothic. Winton also used Gothic/magical realism ‘sentimentalised through the character Fish, who is metaphysically linked to water and the coast Winton so adores’ (Gelder & Salzman 2009, p.31).

Cathleen Schine (2008) wrote in *The New York review of books* that Winton is a practitioner of “Macho Romanticism”. The early Gothic novelists were practitioners of Romanticism, but perhaps Schine labels Winton’s writing “Macho Romanticism” because his characters pursue traditionally masculine water activities like fishing, surfing, diving:

His novels, often set on the sea in Western Australia, are grand, Gothically lyrical affairs beautifully written and spiritually overwrought. They can partake of giddy magical realism, like *Cloudstreet*, the immensely popular 1992 novel of two families haunted by ghosts, angels, and a talking pig; or like *Dirt Music* they can partake of the solemn wilderness epic (Schine 2008).

Bill Ashcroft (2014, p.21), in his essay ‘Water’, writes that Winton uses water to ‘detect the holiness of the world, best encountered in the weightless brilliance of the sea’.

Ashcroft (2014, p.16) writes that Winton casts the sea as the ‘passage to a different state of being, sometimes in dream’. The Gothic has been linked to dream-state ever since
Walpole and Shelley revealed that the inspiration for their novels arrived in dreams. Yvonne Miels (1993, p.35) in ‘Singing the Great Creator’, says Winton uses water to denote spirituality by offering ‘knowledge, completion and wholeness’.

In Winton’s (2009) novel Breath the coast is more restorative, and less bleak than the foreshore in The open swimmer. Breath is being made into a feature film (2017). Some media have labelled the movie “a thriller” (Frater 2015), but was the original novel Gothic? In the book, the main character, Bruce Pike, discovers surfing and develops an addiction to risk. He falls under the influence of an older surfer, eventually having a sexual relationship with the surfer’s girlfriend who teaches him about erotic asphyxiation (suffocation to induce sexual arousal). Like Frankenstein (Shelley 1818), Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (Stevenson 1886) and Wuthering Heights (Brontë 1846), the story is narrated retrospectively. Pike, now a middle-aged paramedic, is called to a house where a youth had died from auto-asphyxiation, Pike then recounts his introduction to surfing and how it led to his demise. The plot is dark and disturbing: Pike’s older lover eventually dies by auto asphyxiation, his childhood friend suffers a violent death in a drug deal and Pike’s father is killed in an accident at the sawmill. As an adult, Pike has a breakdown.

Many of the characters appear grotesque, including his friend, the reckless dare-devil, Loonie, and his older lover, Eva, who asphyxiates with ‘a slimy bag’ over her head (Winton 2009, p.234). Pike grows to hate erotic asphyxiation, describing it as poison. He is as contained as any one of Radcliffe’s heroines by his lover Eva, who likes to be either strangled or choked with the plastic bag during sex: ‘I wanted her, wanted to be free of her. Yet I was afraid of her. And afraid for her. I was trapped’ (2009, p.192). Gothic plots traditionally engender fear, but, according to Colleen McGloin (2012, p.110), Breath also explores the limits and potential of human fear which ‘exceed the constraints of ordinariness, for example, fear of massive waves, of deviant sexual practice, of drowning, and more generally of dying itself’. Pike becomes addicted to risk – he was intoxicated by his first wave. He embraces his own destruction, as do many Gothic protagonists. The school girls in Picnic at Hanging Rock (Lindsay 1967) wander ever deeper into the rock’s crevices. John Grant is entreated to drink more beer and play two-up in Yabba in Wake in fright (Cook 1961). Cathy is emotionally captured by Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights (Brontë 1846), returning to him again and again. The coast in Breath is as inspiring as Heathcliff’s moors:
All about was seething vapor. I hung right up in the boiling nest of foam at its very peak, suspended in noise and unbelief, before I began to fall out and down in a welter of blinding spray. I only got to my feet from instinct, but there I suddenly was, upright and alive, skittering in front of all that jawing mess (Winton 2009, p.48).

Winton (cited in Steger 2008, p.3) says one of the key themes in Breath is risk and man’s emotional and physical relationship with the environment and ‘a residual appetite for wildness …but I think there’s also a physical, psychological and erotic correlative to all that’. Mohr (1998, p.68) in a paper ‘German Gothic’ argues that the Gothic stems from ‘the high-romanticists thorough and in-depth probing of man’s psycho-physical relationship with what he considers the external world’. Matthew Brennan (1997, p.3) testifies in The Gothic psyche: disintegration and growth in nineteenth-century English literature that ‘the sublime underlies the Gothic quest’.

Brigid Rooney (2014), in ‘From the sublime to the uncanny in Tim Winton’s Breath’, also believes that the surfers’ connection to the sea is a sublime appreciation, and there is a pronounced uncanniness. Rooney (2014, p.258) argues that the town in Breath is uncanny because ‘the frontier past intrudes into the present’. Rooney (2014, p.246) also acknowledges that Australian beaches can be uncanny because of their history as ‘primal scenes of invasion and colonisation’. Winton blends the sublime and uncanny as the protagonist pushes himself to the limit in the surf. Rooney (2014, p. 42) says this challenge leads to a recognition of ‘self’’s inconsequentiality, its lack of authenticity and autonomy and the threat of extinction’ – again Gothic themes. Brennan (1997, p.8) argues that the Gothic principally represents ‘psychic disintegration, myths about breakdown of identity and the decentring of Self, but it also manifests the potential of positive integration and growth’.

In Winton’s (2013) most recent novel, Eyrie, there is a marked change in how Winton describes the coast. The beach is not restorative or sublime, but polluted, much like the dirty harbour in Eye of the storm (White 1973). The main character, Tom Keely, is a failed environmentalist addicted to prescription drugs and alcohol. He lives in a seedy high rise in Fremantle, a city peopled with grotesque drug pushers, criminals, greedy developers and corrupt politicians. In a review of the novel, Lyn McCredden (2013) wrote in The Sydney review of books that the world evoked in Eyrie ‘is far more pocked
and raddled, the tone mordant. It is as if Winton has nose-dived straight into the darkness of his earlier novels.

**ROBERT DREWE**

A few months after the appearance of Winton’s first novel, Drewe (1983) released *The bodysurfers*. Both books are set in Western Australian and both deal with the theme of a death of a matriarch and the ensuing grief, as did the film *Storm Boy* (1976). In these texts, grieving men go to the coast for healing – to swim. Their home is broken; there’s a preoccupation with death; they meet grotesque characters, and all the while the coast is sublime, fluctuating between a source of destruction and renewal.

*The bodysurfers* (Drewe 1983) is a series of interlinking short stories about David Lang and his siblings following the death of their mother. These are dark and perverse tales. In ‘View from the sand hills’, Paddy likes to spy on nudists from the sand hills, but it is revealed he is a vicious rapist (Drewe 1983, p.92). In ‘Silver medalist’, the former Olympic champion running the beach kiosk is having an incestuous relationship with his daughter (Drewe 1983, p.22). In ‘Looking for Malibu’, David Lang, his wife and children are invited to visit a celebrity in a Californian beach mansion but when they arrive the celebrity is gone and his dog has been shot (Drewe 1983, p.64). Gothic markers are everywhere – there is a constant sense of the uncanny, grotesque characters, secrets and sexual perversion.

Drewe’s coast can be sinister, but the beach is also a place for rejuvenating – again a sublime coast. His characters love swimming:

> The electric cleansing of the surf is astonishing, the cold effervescing over the head and trunk and limbs. And the internal results are a greater wonder. At once the spirits lift (Drewe 1983, p.158).

In a paper on Drewe’s 1996 novel, *The drowner*, Alistair Rolls and Vanessa Alayrac Southerly (2002) claim that Drewe uses the beach as an edge so by ‘jumping off it, one passes into a world of evasion, dreams and fantasy’ while drowning is an act of reflection. As scholars have written of Winton’s texts, water symbolises another reality. The Gothic often depicts alternate realities. Elizabeth Bronfed (1998, p.40) wrote that it ‘negotiates the slippery boundary between a verifiable reality and modes of perception gone awry’. Brennan (1997, p.13) argues that Gothic is Jungian ‘visionary art’
suggestive of ‘dreams, night-time fears and the dark recesses of the mind’ – the subconscious.

Drewe has continued to write dark novels in coastal locations, such as * Fortune* (1986), the story of a diver who finds a famous wreck. At first the discovery delivers fame and fortune, but ultimately it leads the diver to jail, where he commits suicide. The story is reminiscent of Idreiss Ion’s 1938 interior Gothic bestseller, *Lasseter’s last ride*, about the demise of the fossicker who found a lost reef of gold in the Central Dessert.

**FAVEL PARRETT**

Like Drewe and Winton’s first books, Parrett’s (2011) debut novel *Past the shallows* focusses on a family of men following the loss of the matriarch. The mother has died in a car crash and the three brothers are left at the mercy of a cruel, alcoholic father. The brothers work with their father on his abalone boat off the southern Tasmanian coast. The novel is populated by lonely men, including a hermit who lives in a rundown beach house. At the end of the novel, the father, a volatile character, murders his youngest son by throwing him from the boat into the sea during a storm.

Again the coast and sea are sublime – a source of dark and light. Parrett’s description of underwater caves is reminiscent of a labyrinthine English castle:

> Below in the murky darkness, in the swirling kelp all you had to guide you was one hand touching the rock wall while your legs kicked you down blind. And that’s where they were, the abalone. Down where the algae grew thick where the continental shelf dropped away. They could eat their way across kilometres of submerged rock, those creatures. And there were caves and crevices, places to get stuck. Places where the air hoses could get snagged (Parrett 2011 p.33).

Scholar and literary reviewer Lucy Sussex (2014) wrote in *The Sydney review of books* that *Past the shallows* (Parrett 2011) was clearly Gothic – ‘the Gothic was as integral to the novel’s setting as saltwater is to flotsam’.
COASTAL GOTHIC OR NOIR?

Peter Temple’s (2005) *The broken shore* is about a detective, Joe Cashin, who retreats to the Victorian coastal town where he grew up, following the murder of a colleague. After moving into a rundown beach house, he is called to investigate the murder of a prominent citizen. He faces racism and corruption, while battling the demons of his past, including his father’s suicide. The town harbors dark secrets and many of the residents are grotesque.

*The broken shore* (Temple 2005) could be classified as Noir. The Noir literary genre is an offshoot of Film Noir, and was first recognised by French critics Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton (1955), in their book *Panorama du Film Noir Américain 1941–1953*. In defining Noir, Borde and Chaumeton (p.5) explained that the genre focused on a crime and the following investigation. The locations were grim and realistic, and brutality was often depicted. The police were of dubious disposition, in fact most of the characters were morally ambiguous. Borde and Chaumeton (p.9) described the Noir hero as a ‘masochistic type, his own executioner, someone hoist by his own petard’.

Chudy (2014, p.288) believes that there is much overlap between Gothic and Noir, and that Male Gothic was ‘a prototype of Noir with its bleak endings and fatalistic horrors, however, the two strands, over time, have collapsed into one another’.

I agree with Chudy that *The broken shore* has both Gothic and Noir traits. And the detective, Cashin, is both a Gothic and Noir character. Like the Noir anti-hero, he is cynical and world weary, but true to a Gothic hero, he gravitates to a beachscape, which terrifies, inspires and testifies to the might of a divine creator:

> Even standing well back from the crumbling edge of the keyhole, the scene scared him, the huge sea, the grey-green water skeined from the foam, sliding, falling, surging, full of little peaks and breaks, hollows and rolls, the sense of unimaginable power beneath the surface, terrible forces that could lift you up and suck you down and would spin you and you would breathe in icy water, choke (Temple 2005, p.164).

The prose is reminiscent of the Romantic poets, such as Shelley, Byron and Coleridge:

> And when lightning is loosed, like a deluge from Heaven,  
> She sees the black trunks of the waterspouts spin  
> And bend, as if Heaven was ruining in (Shelly1820).
Fred Botting (2001, p.22) in *Gothic (the new critical idiom)* wrote that Gothic works ‘attempt to explain what the Enlightenment left unexplained, efforts to reconstruct the divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle’. I believe both the texts of Temple and Shelley imbue the sea with a deific might. Temple (2005, p.164) refers to ‘the sense of unimaginable power beneath the surface, terrible forces’, while Shelley (1820) writes that it’s as though ‘Heaven was ruining in’. Temple and Shelley are both reconstructing a divine mystery in their descriptions of the sea.

Temple perfectly encapsulates the binary nature of the coast for Cashin, his Gothic hero. The blowhole that claimed his father’s life, is the same spot where Cashin first kissed his childhood sweetheart.

Jock Serong’s (2014) debut novel, *Quota*, is also about a man who retreats to a remote coast to heal after a personal meltdown. He is ‘cut adrift from the routines of his life’ (Serong 2014, p.110). Charlie Jardim is a lawyer investigating a murder, who goes to stay in a windswept town in southern Victoria after his fiancé leaves and his career fails. The decaying town is populated by grotesque characters and harbours secrets – it ‘revealed itself to him by giving away absolutely nothing’ (2014, p.109). Jardim is called to investigate the murder of two men involved in abalone poaching. It could be argued the novel is both Gothic and Noir, with a protagonist emotionally and geographically ‘displaced’, but again the sea has an uplifting dynamism:

> Fixing his sight on a point on the surface, he tried to picture the colossal blue cathedral of depth beneath, the first and mightiest truth that the ocean hid (2014: p.94).

**Patriarchy’s Nightmère**

Williams (1995, p.107) argues in *The art of darkness* that male Gothic is ‘a dark mirror reflecting patriarchy’s nightmère, recalling a perilous, violent and early separation from the mother/mater denigrated as “female”’. In *The contested castle: Gothic novels and the subversion of domestic ideology*, Kate Ellis (1989) argues that Gothic focuses on crumbling castles as sites of terror and homeless protagonists who wander the face of the earth. Ellis (1989, p.ix) writes that ‘it is the failed home that appears on the pages, the place from which some (usually fallen men) are locked out and others (usually innocent women) are locked in’. And she goes on to say that the male exile is no more
empowered, ultimately, by the division than the female prisoner. In Fiona Capp’s (1996) haunting coming-of-age novel, Night surfing, the main character, Jake, has lost his mother to cancer. Like other Coastal Gothic protagonists, his home has crumbled and he’s left to wander the earth, but being an Australian surfer he looks to the ocean for solace. According to Ellison (2013, p.57), his demons ‘are stripped away once in the water’. Again a troubled man finds consolation in a sublime sea.

In 1979, just three years after the release of the Storm Boy (1976) film, the book Puberty blues (Carey and Lette) was published. Puberty blues is not a Gothic novel, but it looks at the Australian beach in a new light. It casts the beach as a male-dominated space in much the same way that Baynton (1902) depicts the bush as a male domain in Bush studies. Both Puberty blues and Baynton’s work tell stories about the rape and intimidation of women. The film, Blackrock (1997), also focusses on these themes. Blackrock, based on a real crime, is about the rape and murder of a school girl on a beach. The coast is the domain of volatile men. This theme is shared by the movie, Newcastle (2008), a story about the death of one of three surfing brothers. The horror beach film, Lost things (2003), centres on four teenagers who go away for a weekend, but are menaced by a strange male beachcomber called Zippo. In the box office hit, Two hands (1999), the main character Jimmy is asked to deliver money for a gangster, but it is stolen while Jimmy swims at the beach. The gangster, Pando, is a merciless psychopath. The coast, in these films, is dark and dangerous, home to grotesque, unstable men and yet still awe-inspiring and beautiful.

The feminine is usually lost to the protagonists in coastal Gothic male texts. Ben-Messahel (2012, p.14) argues that in Tim Winton’s Breath, Eva is the ‘female other’. Hannah Schurholz (2014) in her article ‘Over the cliff and into the water’ points out that the mother figure in Winton’s novels is often dead or missing:

> All the women in Breath, and in other Winton novels as well, become the signifier of lack for the male protagonist, who now tries to come to terms with his own tragedies by revisiting their traumatic origins (Schurholz 2014, p.112).

Schurholz (2014, p.102) believes that the death of the matriarch is often the catalyst for the protagonist’s redemption – ‘fractured maternity, becomes a decisive matrix of self-realisation’. Ellis (1989, p.ix) describes the exile of the male in Gothic texts as a grotesque re-enactment of God’s punishment of Satan, Adam and Eve. In the texts I cite in this section, the men have lost their home and are effectively exiled from Eden, sent
out into a coastal wilderness where they swim, surf, fish, dive and boat. They are akin to Frankenstein in the Artic wilderness and Heathcliff on the moors. These Australian stories tell of a crisis in masculinity.


Gelder and Weaver (2014, p.9) argued that colonial Gothic stories were ‘a counter narrative to the more familiar tales of colonial promise and optimism’. Perhaps Coastal Gothic serves as a counter narrative to contemporary Australian texts (commercials, films, newspaper and magazine articles) that show the beach as a place for fun, relaxation and regeneration. Many of the themes of Colonial Interior Gothic have been transposed to Coastal Gothic – bereft men, loneliness, isolation, death, an unbridgeable divide between the sexes. In Colonial Interior Gothic, grotesque bushies in run-down humpies menace the protagonists; in Coastal Gothic grotesque beachcombers emerge from dilapidated beach shacks.

To restate my argument, the male protagonists in Australian Coastal Gothic withdraw to the coast to think and heal, usually after the loss of a woman, but the coast is magnificent, sublime – reminiscent of the sea described by the early Gothicists and Romantic poets: Radcliffe (1794), Shelley (1818), Lord Byron (1818) and Percy Shelley (1820).

The restorative power of the beach may deter academics from recognising these brooding coastal stories as Gothic. In the book *Tim Winton: critical essays* (McCredden & O’Reily 2014), scholars Ashcroft, Rooney and Schurholz identify Gothic traits from the sublime, dream-states, colonial uncanny, fear, haunting, fractured identity and a male melancholy, yet they never use the word ‘Gothic’ when describing Winton’s writing. Coastal Gothic can often go unnoticed on the shores of the Australian mainland. Perhaps it has been exiled to continent’s interior and the southern island of Tasmania.
In Australia, there was no Coastal Gothic in the nineteenth century, no Joseph Conrads or Alan Edgar Poes – only Adam Lindsay Gordon’s ‘The swimmer’ (1870) conjured up a sublime sea. This dearth of Coastal Gothic in the nineteenth century appears to impact on perceptions of Australian Gothic today. I believe there is a perception of the beach as a place for leisure and pleasure that prevents wide recognition of Australian Coastal Gothic.

**SHARKS IN AUSTRALIAN COASTAL GOTHIC**

Between March 2014 to February 2015, five people were killed by sharks in twelve months in Australia (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2015), which prompted me to consider the role of sharks in Australian Coastal Gothic. It has been difficult to locate popular Australian books or films that use sharks or other sea creatures as a source of fear. In *Breath* (Winton 2009), the older surfer, Sando, tells Pike and Loonie about a shark in the water, but despite their fears they continue surfing. The shark almost serves to enhance the sublime appeal of the ocean because these surfers ‘get off’ on danger. The American horror film *Jaws* (1975) was a huge commercial success in Australia. In Eleanor Spence’s (1976) novel *The October child*, a boy who prefers surfing to homework is spooked by a shark. He vows to never go night swimming again. The novel is a coming-of-age story, and the shark scare teaches the boy that it is time to take on the responsibilities of an adult. I have located two other examples of menacing sea creatures in Australian texts. In the final short story in *The bodysurfers* (Drewe 1983), ‘Stingray’, David Lang is injured by a stingray while enjoying an ocean swim. In the Australian horror film *The lost weekend*, (Eggleston 1978) a couple disrespect nature and the film ends with the husband accidentally shooting his wife with his spear gun. She is then run over by truck because the driver is being attacked by a sea bird. Given the frequency of shark attacks in 2015 and 2016, more Gothic stories about dangerous marine life might appear in the coming months and years.
SECTION EIGHT

Positioning *Lure* in the Australian Coastal Gothic genre

Access to the creative component ‘Lure’ is restricted pending manuscript submission and publication.
SECTION Nine

Conclusion

Richard Flanagan’s 2013 Man Booker-prize-winning novel, *The narrow road to the deep north* begins:

Dorrigo Evans’ earliest memories were of sun flooding a church hall in which he sat with his mother and grandmother. A wooden church hall. Blinding light and him toddling back and forth, in and out of its transcendent welcome, into the arms of women. Women who loved him. Like entering the sea and returning to the beach (2013, p.1).

Flanagan compares the warmth of a woman’s embrace to bathing in the ocean, because contemporary Australians love the coast. This Aussie affinity with the sea has flourished over the past century, but 200 years ago the coast was not affectionately thought of, rather it was a force of containment or even a harbinger of death. Countless ships were wrecked on the Australian coast. When the first convicts arrived in New South Wales, the seashore was one wall of their gaol, ‘the iron-bound coast of eastern Australia’ (James c1840), ‘a wall 14,000 miles thick’ (Hughes 1988 , p.1).

The Gothic should have been at home in this natural antipodean prison, but in the early nineteenth century the Gothic bolted into the bush – ran away to the outback. Adam Lindsay Gordon (1870) is perhaps the only colonial writer to pen a Romantic sonnet, ‘The swimmer’, to a sublime coast in the century that followed the arrival of Europeans:

I would that with sleepy soft embraces
The sea would fold me – would find me rest
In luminous shades of her secret places,
In depths where her marvels are manifest (Gordon 1870).

Meanwhile Gordon’s contemporaries were drawn inland. The landscape described by Baynton, Adam, Warung, Praed and Lawson is a fearful place where isolation sends you mad, venomous creatures attack, men deprived of the female are depraved, the wrath of displaced spirits rains down, and starvation and dehydration follow. Their short stories and poems cast the interior as a wild, strange, evil place. Their works are influenced by the violence of colonisation and disempowerment of indigenous

In the early nineteenth century, Anglo-Australians abandoned the coast. In 1838 daylight beach swimming was banned. The ocean was perceived as a dangerous means of transporting goods between ports (Hoskins 2013, p.226). It failed to engage writers, and almost disappeared from the emerging nation’s literature.

In the early nineteenth century the ban on daylight swimming was repealed and the first lifesaving clubs were established. The beach began its cultural ascendancy, challenging the bush to become the national icon. However, the beach’s rise was interrupted by two world wars, yet by the 1960s Australians were identifying more with the beach than the bush. They extolled the virtues of the bronzed lifesaver over the stoic bushman.

The ascendancy of the ‘beach myth’ intersected with the counter culture, especially feminism. Domestic Gothic was born, focusing on power struggles in families. A number of classic Australian novels were set in harbour-side houses – *The watchtower* (Harrower, 1966), *For love alone* (Stead, 1945/1966), *Eye of the storm* (White, 1973) and *Milk and honey* (Jolley, 1985). Stead’s *The man who loved children* (1940) was originally set on Sydney Harbour.

Then in the early 1980s, Winton and Drewe began writing male coastal Gothic tales – stories about troubled men, often dealing with the loss of a woman. These male protagonists seek solace in nature and follow in the footsteps of Frankenstein and his monster (Shelley 1818), and Heathcliff (Brontë 1846).

Australian Coastal Gothic texts have a swell of Gothic markers: a preoccupation with death, personal turmoil, a sense of foreboding, the uncanny, perversity, grotesque characters, buried secrets. They are tales of degeneration, with a troubled protagonist withdrawing to the coast, but the restorative power of the sea could deter Australians from recognising these works as Gothic.

Yet the coast is not just a place of renewal. It is the site of sex crimes in *The Bodysurfers* (Drewe 1983) and *Black Rock* (1997). The coast in *Eye of the storm* (White, 1973) and *Eyrie* (Winton, 2013) is ugly and polluted. In *An open swimmer*
(Winton, 1982) and Past the shallows (Parrett, 2011), the beach is inhabited by grotesque men. The sea unfurls its fury against the cliffs and, menaces in The broken shore (Temple 2005) and Quota (2014).

Still, Australian Coastal Gothic today celebrates a sublime sea. Like the earliest Gothic novelists, contemporary Aussie authors have a Romantic admiration of the ocean and their male protagonists do not watch the sea from the land, instead they are in the water, swimming, surfing and skin-diving. The Romantic poet, Lord Byron (1812), who wrote ‘Roll on , thou deep and dark blue Ocean – roll’, was said to be an exceptional swimmer, swimming 7.5km to visit his friend, Percy Shelley, when they were staying on the Ligurian Coast (Humphreys 2008). A plaque at Grotta Apraia celebrating Byron’s prowess in the sea, reads: ‘the immortal poet who as a daring swimmer defied the waves of the sea from Portovenere to Lerici’. I wrote this thesis – linking Romantic poets like Lord Byron to contemporary Australian coastal authors (Winton, Drewe, Temple, Parrett and Serong), while living near the coastal, surfing town of Byron Bay – named after Lord Byron’s uncle.

In male Australian Coastal Gothic, a churning ocean mirrors the personal turmoil of the protagonist. The men in Australian Coastal Gothic are tossed around by rough seas, tossed around by life, while in female Australian Coastal Gothic, the key characters are imprisoned in seaside homes, ‘watchtowers’.

In male Coastal Gothic, the beach and sea have a sublime beauty that threatens to consume the hero. Gould’s book of fish (Flanagan, 2001) has a stronger beach and sea flavour than earlier convict novels. Gould is shackled to a cell built at the base of cliffs below the high water mark – a fish cell that is near submerged on high tide. The sea is not just a wall of the jail, it is his jail. Gould finally turns into a seahorse and disappears into the sea, much like the school girls who were devoured by Hanging Rock (Lindsay 1967):

I was floating, breathing water, falling, rising, my weight as nothing compared to what I had once known, I was flying though water, dropping & soaring through dancing forest of bull-kelp, touching sea lettuce, coral …and the sea was an infinite love that encompassed not only those I had loved but those I had not (Flanagan 2001, p.396).
Flanagan does not explicitly say whether the sea consumes Gould or send him mad. This prompts the reader to wonder whether Gould’s relationship with the ocean is a spiritual connection, reflecting a transcendent appreciation of nature. The sea offers Gould sanctuary – escape. Gould’s coast is depicted through the sensibilities of a contemporary Australian author, impregnated with the belief that the sea is as warm as a woman’s embrace.

My creative project, the novel *Lure*, is an example of male Australian Coastal Gothic. *Lure* is a fable of degeneration set on the New South Wales North Coast. It includes outbreaks of the supernatural, grotesque characters, *doppelgänger*, femme fatales, oppressive spaces and a sublime natural environment. There is danger, death, humour and passion. In the final chapter of *Lure*, Fishman and the Carnivorous Beauty Queen return to the sea:

> Alex swam out to the rock and perched on its central peak. A day later a shimmer of silver rose from the water. In her dark hair, the Carnivorous Beauty wore pearls and shells. Streams of water ran down her shoulders and breasts. She had a mermaid’s tale, so long that even when she was seated on the rock, the fin still dipped into the sea where a stable of golden seahorses chomped barnacles growing on her scales (Chapter Thirty-Six).

The Australian coast has a fulsome role in the Gothic and our understanding of place. Depictions of the coast in literature and film speak volumes about Australian attitudes to the environment. Australians cling to the coast. More than eighty percent of the nation’s population live within 50km of Australia’s coastline (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004) – the meeting point of the world’s great oceans: the Pacific, Indian and Southern Oceans. Australia’s connection to the coast has developed as a result of a myriad of historic, economic, cultural and social factors, as I have outlined in this exegesis, but the nation’s relationship with the environment is not static. Violent crimes have been committed on beaches. In early 2016 two female backpackers were viciously assaulted by an itinerant man on South Australia’s Coorong coast (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2016). Some beaches are polluted and over-developed (Booth 2001, p.162). In Gladstone, where the harbour has been dredged to accommodate the liquefied gas industry, there have been widespread reports of mutant cane toads (Calligeros 2013). The Australian Environment and Energy Department (2016) has found that sea levels are rising around the country. The current Federal Government has a policy of processing refugees, who reach Australian waters, offshore and moving them to
detention centres on remote tropical islands (British Broadcasting Corporation 2016). Sharks killed five swimmers in Australian waters in twelve months (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2015). Undoubtedly some of these variables will leach into the nation’s literature and resound in Australian Coastal Gothic in coming years.
SECTION TEN

Postface: an explanation of the choice of texts

In this thesis I sought to identify significant Gothic texts that depict the Australian environment. I wanted to look at books and films that resonate with Australians. I began with authors acknowledged by scholars as important to Australian Gothic literature. Gerry Turcotte’s (1998) ground-breaking paper, ‘Australian Gothic’ was a great starting point. He referenced numerous acclaimed and best-selling Australian Gothic authors, including: Joan Lindsay, Kenneth Cook, Robert Hughes, Christina Stead, Patrick White and Elizabeth Jolley. I read novels by the authors Turcotte cited, looking specifically at how they described the natural environment – the coast and the interior.

Turcotte looked at the Gothic traits of convict literature, including the novels of Henry Savery and Caroline Leakey. To this list of convict authors I added convict writer James Tucker, who described the Australian seashore as ‘the iron-bound coast of eastern Australia’ (c1840).

Turcotte’s essay also listed some of the early colonial Gothic writers: Marcus Clarke, Price Warung (William Astley), Barbara Baynton and Henry Lawson. For Section Four: Gothic escapes into the interior, I also found Gelder and Weaver’s The anthology of colonial Australian Gothic fiction (2007) particularly helpful. It identified (in addition to Marcus Clarke, Price Warung, Barbara Baynton and Henry Lawson cited by Turcotte) Francis Adam, Rosa Praed, Edward Sorensen and Hume Nisbet as Gothic writers widely read in the colonies.

I also endeavoured to find contemporary Gothic authors writing about the interior. New texts I cited include Andrew McGahan’s (2004) The white earth, Catherine Rey’s (2003) The spruikers tale and Chris Womersley’s (2010) Bereft. I was looking for culturally significant Gothic texts by authors either recognised by scholars, or authors who’d won major national or international literary awards for Gothic novels. McGahan has won Australia’s preeminent literary prize, the Miles Franklin Award, while Rey, who writes in French, won France’s Grand Prix de la Société des Gens De Lettres; and Womersley was short-listed for the Miles Franklin Award and won the Indie Award for Fiction. I also reference the film Wolf Creek. It has almost cult status in Australian and was nominated for seven Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Film Awards.
In Section Five: *Retreat from the beach return to the coast*, I look at coastal authors and artists identified as significant by historians and sociologists, who’ve studied Australia’s connectedness to the coast (Huntsman, Hoskins, Dutton, Drew). They name a number of authors including DH Lawrence, Ruth Park, Roger Carr and painters, namely from the Heidelberg school.

In Section Six: *Trapped in watchtowers* I began with three writers named by Turcotte as significant to Australian Gothic in the post war years: Stead, White and Jolley. Other scholars (Ng, Morrison, Turcotte, Davidson, Strauss and Jones) testify that Stead, White and Jolley are Gothic writers. I read some of their novels and noted that *The man who loved children* (1940/65), *The watchtower* (1966), *The eye of the storm* (1973) and *Milk and honey* (1985) took place beside a harbour. I was also aware that Elizabeth Harrower’s (1966) dark novel *The Watchtower* is set near the coast and that acclaimed writer Christopher Koch has written books that include sea travel. Harrower (the winner of the Patrick White Prize for Literature) and Koch (a Miles Franklin Award winner) are both arguably significant Gothic writers.

In Section Seven: *the Storm Boys*, sociologist Leone Huntsman and historian Ian Hoskins identify Tim Winton and Robert Drewe as pioneers of a new genre of coastal literature. I agree with their assertion. Drewe and Winton are among the nation’s best known authors. Drewe has won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best Book in Australia and South-East Asia, and the National Book Council Prize for Fiction. Winton has won the Miles Franklin Award four times and been shortlisted for the international Man Booker prize. My next task was to analyse their texts for Gothic markers.

In this section I also refer to the film, *Storm Boy* – again another culturally significant text in Australia. It won the 1977 Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Film of the Year Award and the Australian Film Institute Jury Prize. I include other coastal texts that have resonated in Australia. Favel Parrett’s novel *Past the shallows* won the Dobbie Literary Award, the Australian Book Industry’s Newcomer Award and was short-listed for the Miles Franklin Award. Peter Temple’s *The broken shore* was the first Australian novel to win the international Crime Writers’ Association’s Duncan Lawrie Dagger award (Gold Dagger) in 2007. Jock Serong’s *Quota* won the Australian Crime Writing Ned Kelly Award for Best First Fiction. The films *Blackrock, Newcastle, Lost things and Two hands* are all listed as important examples of coastal horror in Elizabeth Ellison’s PhD thesis, ‘Australian Beachscapes’. Richard Flanagan became the
fourth Australian to win the international literary Man Booker prize in 2014 with The long road to the deep north. I argue that his previous novel, Gould’s book of fish, is classic coastal convict Gothic.
I appreciate that there are possibly many more Australian books and films that depict a Gothic coast – but Australian Coastal Gothic is relatively unchartered territory. In this thesis I tried to include Australian ‘landmark’ Gothic texts that describe the natural environment.
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