

SEAGULLS GATHER AROUND YOU ON ST KILDA BEACH.

THE DEVONSHIRE STREET TUNNEL STRETCHES FURTHER
AND FURTHER INTO THE PAST.

THE OWNER OF THE LITTLE SECOND HAND PLACE ON
IPSWICH ROAD SMILES TOO MUCH.

DAVID WALSH IS BEHIND YOU IN THE MIRROR.

IN THE NEW BAR ON SYDNEY ROAD, SMILING WHITE
PEOPLE BRING YOU A DRINK NAMED AFTER A MASSACRE.

This is Australian Gothic.



An anthology of locative horrors

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Introduction

lowercasename

To start writing the introduction to this anthology, I browsed Google Scholar for articles on the Australian Gothic tradition. The paywall behind which the first article lurked made me laugh out loud. There, neatly summarised, was the reason you are holding this book in your hands:

Subject: <u>Aboriginal Tasmanians</u> ; <u>Literary prizes</u> ; <u>Australian literature--</u> <u>Appreciation</u> ; <u>Sheep ranches</u> ;
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Sheep ranches. Constantly, endlessly, sheep ranches. Something has to be done.

The confluence of landscape and horror is by no means new in Australian literature. Lisa Hannett's summary of this tradition is comprehensive, evincing the longevity of its existence in Australian literary culture:

These stories are riddled with manifestations of 'Australian Gothic'. Many of them depict rural isolation: people alone in the desert, in the bush, by the sea. Underlining human and supernatural threats is nature itself, harsh and unforgiving; over it all hangs an endless, suffocating sky. The settings in these narratives are more than just unsettling or uncanny; there's an *unheimlich* quality to this country's wilderness, which makes it clear that most characters – human or otherwise – are unwelcome. *Leave, they seem to say. You don't belong here.*

When we think of Gothic literature – Australian or otherwise – several themes or features immediately come to mind: ghosts from the past (literal and metaphorical) rising up to oppress the stories' protagonists; a sense of discomfort, of being unwholesome, resulting from breaking social taboos; overwhelming darkness, hopelessness, claustrophobia, and disintegration.¹

And indeed, when clive-gershwin-palmer wrote the first post in the

'#regional gothic' tag on Tumblr, many of these elements were, in one way or another, present:

imagine suburban east coast Australia gothic. Australia needs regional gothic.

creepy train stations at night, jagged cliffs, footpaths covered in layers of rotten berries and wilted jacaranda flowers, disused chip shops with peeling signs and broken ice cream freezers, pelicans and seagulls staring at you like they know something, windy roads with no street lights, dead echidnas and possums on the side of the road, rusted fire danger signs, eerie unidentifiable animal noises coming out of the bush, abandoned terrace houses, ominous dark shapes in the water, rotten piers, birds screeching in the distance.²

While this piece portrayed a strange world beyond the normality of suburban Australian life, it was the wave of pieces following in its wake - beginning with 'South-East Queensland Gothic' by korvidian - which created the specific, unique tone of Australian Gothic. Sheep ranches were, thankfully, few and far between. Also mostly missing were old white men confronting their past, incestuous relationships in the bush, and a landscape which makes its inhabitants unwelcome. Unlike classic Australian gothic, this new Australian Gothic usually describes a landscape which has been truly suburbanised or at least extensively lived in, and therefore, leaving it, and its inherent creepiness, is no longer an option. The locations of Australian Gothic are visited every day by tourists, schoolchildren and mothers. These places want you to stay. It is when you do that the horrors start.

Like any literary form, Australian Gothic borrows liberally, as much from the classic language of gothic literature as from modern gothics such as the radio show *Welcome to Nightvale*. In both cases, the regionality of the narratives and settings subverts the adopted tone. Moreover, rather than dealing directly with classically gothic grand concepts such as death,

lust and power, Australian Gothic is inspired by the seeming banality of Australian culture, weaving horror from politics, public transport, tourism and drug deals. The final effect is both mocking and serious. The spaces in which the authors play are far too familiar, and horribly alien.

Like any literary form with lasting merit, Australian Gothic also does not shy away from real, human darkness. Some of the pieces in this collection deal with things which rarely leave - and, I hope, will never leave - the Australian consciousness, especially the memory of historical genocide, the utter distance and loneliness of our landscape, where things can be forgotten *almost* for ever, and a pervasive anxiety about national and cultural relevance, most prominent in the pieces set in smaller cities and towns. The first two themes are well-represented in the tradition of Australian gothic writing, though the meme gives them an intimate edge, almost uncomfortable in its reality. The third is surely a symptom of the size of the Australian community on Tumblr. Occasionally, browsing my dash, I feel like there might only be five of us, and our cultural cringe, which continues unchecked a century after Gallipoli was meant to define our national identity, is still with us today. This is why seeing this recent surge of utterly Australian writing, and being able to collect and edit it, has been such a creepy delight.

Despite its short lifespan, Australian Gothic has not been without controversy. Once the 'locative gothic' meme took off on Tumblr, the appearance of numerous other regional gothic pieces, mostly from the USA, prompted clive-gershwin-palmer to write: "the reason I made my original Sydney Gothic inspo post was because I was sick of every good piece of gothic fiction being set in Europe or America when we Australians are sitting on a goldmine of low key offbeat creepiness. ... But now that

the meme is popular, do I see other Australians contributing to a growing pool of Scary Weird Australian Shit? No. I don't. I see every other post on my dash being like 'California Gothic' 'Florida Gothic' 'Las Vegas Gothic'. God damn it America. You've had your go".³ Nevertheless, there was clearly enough attention paid to Australian Gothic online to stir the annoyance of American writers on Tumblr: around the same time, kalimayablack (whose piece also features in this zine) responded to critiques of Australian Gothic as a copy of [USA] Southern Gothic: "Look. I love Southern Gothic a whole lot, and I respect the urge to protect it, but nobody seems to be acknowledging the contribution of Australian Gothic to the Locative Gothic meme. Which is kind of ironic, because being overlooked and sidelined is a common theme of Australian Gothic".⁴ In effect, Australian Gothic, in highlighting the pervasiveness of our cultural cringe, is extremely well placed to challenge it, both online and in the larger literary scene.

With all of this in mind, the book you hold now has been created in the spirit of acknowledging, celebrating, and being very, very frightened by a uniquely and specifically Australian - and uniquely *placed* - form of literature. Carving out a niche at a very crowded table, thereby ending up covered in viscera and clutching a bowie knife, Australian Gothic is built on a subversion of everything from classic gothic tropes to contemporary urban culture, and in publishing this anthology, I hope that interest in this movement will continue to spread. ☒

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1. Lisa L Hannett, "Wide Open Fear: Australian Horror and Gothic Fiction", *This Is Horror* (Online), <http://www.thisishorror.co.uk/columns/southern-dark/wide-open-fear-australian-horror-and-gothic-fiction/>.
 2. clive-gershwin-palmer, Untitled post, *Tumblr* (Online), <http://clive-gershwin-palmer.tumblr.com/post/107960237979/imagine-suburban-east-coast-australia-gothic>.
 3. clive-gershwin-palmer, Untitled post, *Tumblr* (Online), <http://clive-gershwin-palmer.tumblr.com/post/115995693124/but-real-talk-the-awkward-thing-about-the>.
 4. kalimayablack, Untitled post, *Tumblr* (Online), <http://kalimayablack.tumblr.com/post/116129117083/look-i-love-southern-gothic-a-whole-lot-and-i>



Sydney Gothic

clive-gershwin-palmer

- ✧ There are some teenage girls on your train wearing uniforms with school colours you don't recognise. It's 6 pm on a Saturday. One goes to take a selfie but her face doesn't show up on the camera.
- ✧ The furniture displays at the Harvey Norman keep moving when nobody's looking. You can't find the electronics department. Nobody knows where it is. There's a wall of armchairs blocking the exit.
- ✧ The 4WD in front of you at the stoplight has a faded my family stickers- they only have the kids and the pets, no parents. The light turns and you overtake. There is nobody driving the car but there are 3 dead-eyed children in the back holding a sick looking dog and a goldfish bowl.
- ✧ Cockatoos fighting over a dumpster. There's blood on their beaks. You just saw one fly off holding a finger.
- ✧ The dog fountain at the QVB knows your name. It knows where you're going.
- ✧ It's 10 degrees outside but Town Hall station is still unreasonably hot. The old man standing next to you bursts into flames.
- ✧ There are weird lights in the sky, reflecting on buildings in all

directions. You ignore it until you remember that Vivid ended last month.

- ✧ They're building a block of apartments on your street. They just keep on building them. You wish they would stop.
- ✧ They've got a guy in a mascot costume standing outside your local Eagle Boy's. Someone knocks his head off. There's nobody in the suit. The suit just keeps handing out vouchers for half off on pizza.





South-East Queensland Gothic

korvidian

- ✧ the humming of cicadas in the neighbourhood in summer gets louder and louder. windows start to break in their panes.
- ✧ after complaining to translink, your bus arrives on time. exactly on time. you happen to look out your window while making breakfast. the bus is there, in your driveway. waiting.
- ✧ kookaburras laugh outside your window. you go to the doctor to get your cough checked out. the doctor jerks away swiftly when she places the stethoscope against your chest. muffled, you hear them laughing.
- ✧ you find an old 4 minute shower timer from the water restrictions during the drought. you turn it over and watch the blue sand fall. when the last grain lands, the rain outside stops.
- ✧ buskers in the queen street mall start singing in time. from one end of the mall to the other, they sing. the same thing, in the same voice, at the same moment. you make eye contact with one and feel your lips start to move. 'help' is not the word that comes out of your mouth.
- ✧ it is summer. the dinosaurs outside the museum begin to rot. you can see bone.
- ✧ small children with white hair emerge from the beach at south bank.

‘marco’, one says. ‘polo’, says another. a third points at a passing child.
‘fish out of water’. salt water starts cascading from the child’s eyes.

✧ Slip. Slop. Slap. Slip Slop Slap. S l i p S l o p S l a p. SLIPSLOPSLAP.
It gets closer.

✧ you go on a Macca’s run at 3am. A Ronald McDonald statue stands
opposite the order box in the drive thru. You look down and see soft
serves sitting beside you. You hear the sound of large shoes slapping
the ground, running.

✧ thousands of kookaburras sit on telephone wires. their tails are on
fire. the continue laughing. smoke fills the air. car alarms start going
off.

✧ after a night out drinking, you and your mates lay in the botanical
gardens using goon sacks as pillows. you ask Tommo how he’s going
and he says he feels pretty seedy. his fingers sink into the earth. then
his elbows.

✧ it’s finally winter. you curl up under your doona. a hand touches
yours. you break out in a cold sweat. a strange voice whispers ‘no
homo’ into your ear.





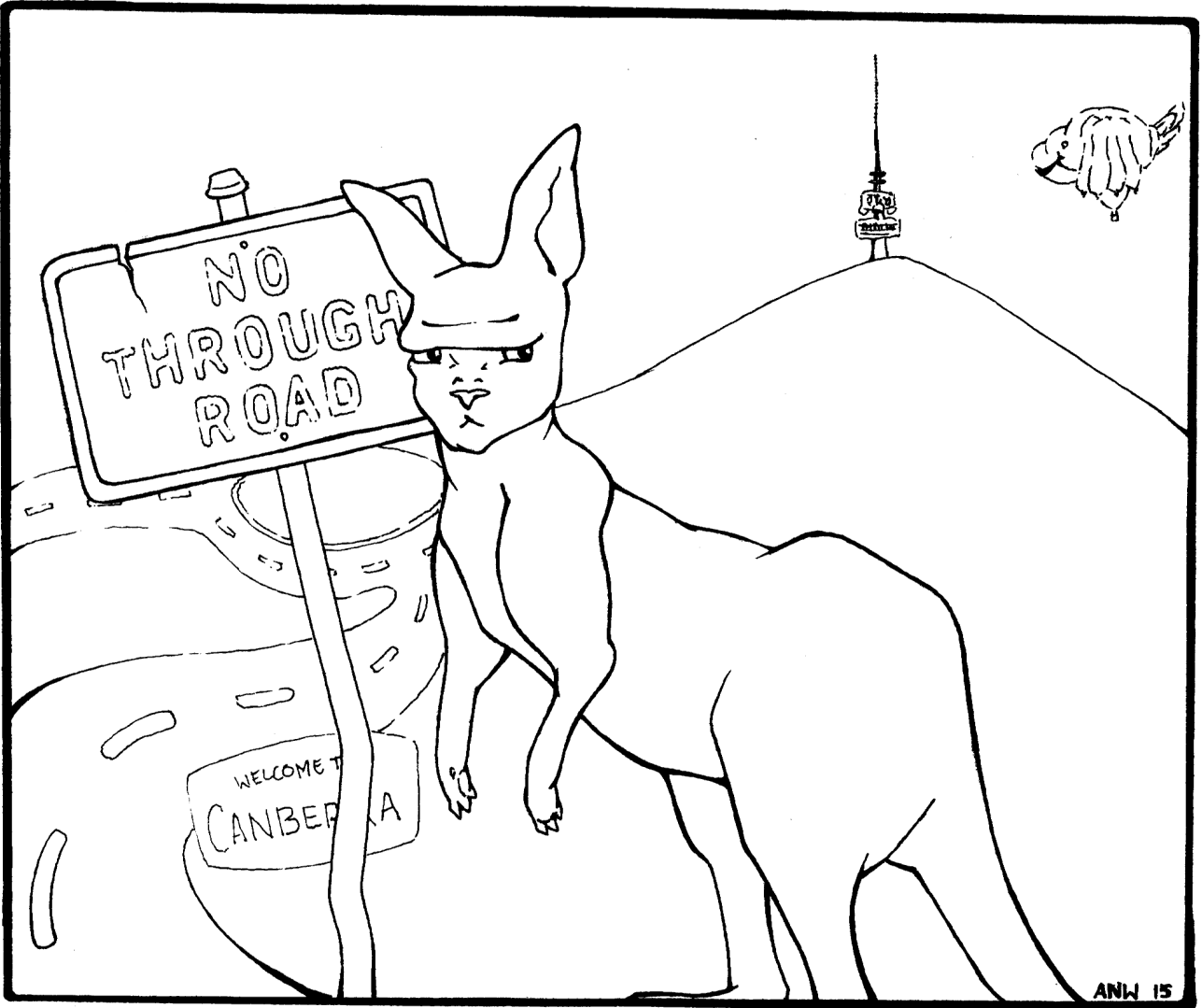
Sydney CBD Gothic

wehaveallgotknives

- ✧ you climb the fig tree shadowed stone steps from the harbour to the botanical gardens. you slip on an underripe fig. you fall. you fall forever.
- ✧ there is a crane on the horizon. there are two cranes on the horizon. there are four cranes on the horizon. there are eight cranes on the horizon. there are sixteen cranes on the horizon. there are thirty two cranes on the horizon.
- ✧ at the powerhouse museum, you follow the prompts of the poorly animated cacao bean and hold your hand out under the chute. what lands in your palm is brown and soft and smells delicious. you eat it and lick your fingers. you keep licking. it is red and soft and smells delicious.
- ✧ there is a seal on the opera house steps. there is an opera on the seal house steps. there is a house on the opera seal steps. there is a step on the opera house seal. it barks indignantly.
- ✧ goths congregate in front of the qvb. they each resemble the statue of queen victoria. the same scowl, the same jowls, the same wrought iron eyes.
- ✧ a dead bat slung over some power lines offers you pingas. it is wearing a tiny pair of beat up sneakers.

- ✧ muscled lads under the coke sign in the cross howl at passing cars. they each howl at different pitches, each a half pitch apart. they howl continuously.
- ✧ on the train to redfern a drunk cunt is muttering about curry eaters. the seat folds back, suddenly, with a clunk. he is no longer there.
- ✧ the baby magpies cry outside your window, so you close it. the crying gets louder. the mother swoops from behind a light fitting.
- ✧ an ibis dips into a bin in belmore park, bringing out a string of viscera encrusted in glitter.
- ✧ you go to dixon house food court for dinner and look up in the mirror above you. your reflection is eating a different meal. a meal that's moving.
- ✧ walking down the devonshire street tunnel, the first busker is playing 80s synth pop. the mural is an 80s industrial situation. the second busker has long hair and is playing a jimi hendrix jam. the mural seems more psychedelic. you start running, passing a monkees tribute band, some WWII bond buying propaganda, a jazz trio, an ad for cocaine in bottles, some men in loin cloths hitting things with sticks, cave paintings. the tunnel stretches away into silence.
- ✧ you let your dog off the lead in camperdown memorial park. the dog does not run, but stares. all the dogs are staring at the sky. how did we convince ourselves it wasn't red all along?





Antony Nate Westlin



Canberra Gothic

icanmakeapictureoutofthat & aufdenglischbitte

- ✧ Everyone you know is a public servant. You are a public servant. You have always been a public servant. You don't know what it is you do, but you are certain you will die if you take off your lanyard.
- ✧ It is against the law to visit Braddon without a beard. Your grandmother refines her goatee daily. Surely soon she may enter the Lonsdale St Traders hallowed doors.
- ✧ You drive to Civic. On your way, you turn left at a roundabout. You come to another roundabout. You turn left again, but are once again confronted by another roundabout. You do not think this will ever end. When did you last see your parents?
- ✧ It is the Canberra centenary. It has been the Canberra centenary for every year that you can remember. Every year there is a new skywhale. You can no longer see blue sky.
- ✧ You attend your second tutorial in Coombs. The room is not where it was yesterday. You climb the stairs, but it is not there either. Six hours later, you stumble upon the correct door, and open it. Your class turn their heads in unison. Their eyes are empty.
- ✧ You set your alarm early so you can make it to your local Coles before closing. You arrive at 8am. It is already closed. You have missed the

opening hours again. You have never managed to get here in time. You are so hungry.

- ✦ You have been waiting for the bus for half of the year. The bus never comes. Somehow you are on the bus, but you never arrive at a destination. You cannot get off the bus. The bus driver cackles manically.
- ✦ You know there is a military base in Canberra, but you have never seen it. You have never met anybody there. Suddenly, you do not know anyone who is not affiliated with ADFA. You look down, and you are holding a rifle. You are at war.





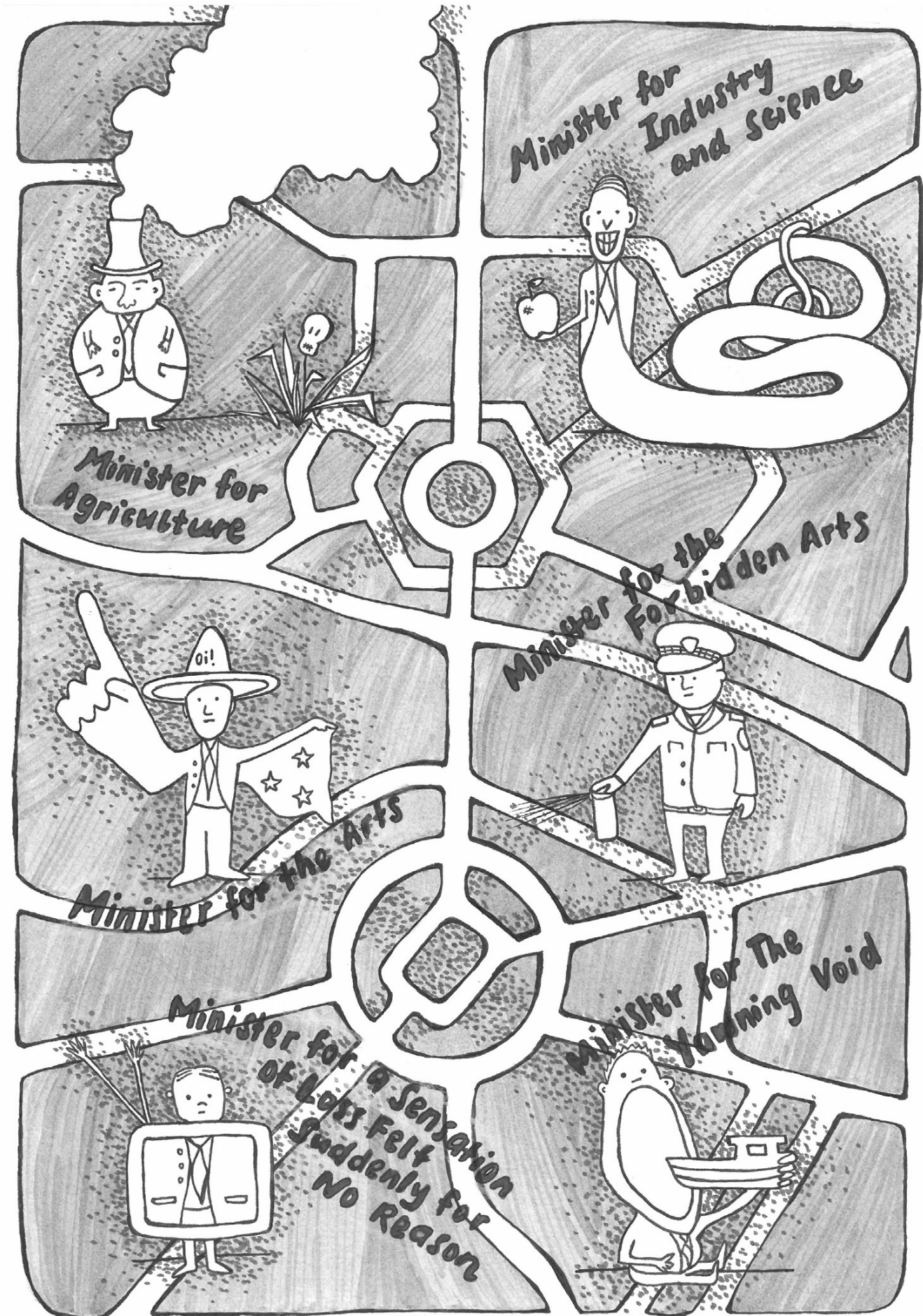
Federal Politics Gothic

fragilesoftmachines

- ✧ a member of parliament stands at each corner of London Circuit. they speak the appointed words at the appointed time. the Elder Party stirs, and then is quiet again. for now.
- ✧ julie bishop's eyes roll back in her head. her head falls back against her chair. her body begins to shake. she screams that heaven is empty and we will all be punished. she falls unconscious.
- ✧ the speaker calls for order. the speaker cannot be heard over the noise. the speaker calls for order. the noise increases. the speaker calls for order. the members of parliament are silent and terrified. the noise increases. the speaker screams for order.
- ✧ all senators take their seats. there are many unclaimed seats. everyone stands and checks they are in the right place. there are even more unclaimed seats when they sit again.
- ✧ you are inside the governor-general's office. you are told to go through a door. through it you find the same office again. you are told to go through another door. and another. you realise that the sky has gone dark outside. there are no stars. you go through one more door. everything is so bright.

- ✧ Minister for Agriculture. Minister for Industry and Science. Minister for the Arts. Minister for the Forbidden Arts. Minister for a Sensation of Loss Felt Suddenly for No Reason. Minister for The Yawning Void.
- ✧ you are in the carpark beneath parliament house. you see a door left open. you look inside. you are welcomed. you are part of the Lowest House, now. you cannot leave.
- ✧ a change.org petition that you signed sends an update. when you click to open the email, a staticky voice hisses from the speakers. 'budget cuts, budgets cuts, budgets cuts', it whispers.
- ✧ a flock of budgerigars bursts from parliament house. a week passes with no event. then they descend on every beach at once, attacking anyone in a speedo. the death toll is in the hundreds.
- ✧ at last, the sea returns him. he is gaunt and hollow-eyed. he is wearing only seaweed. he is implacable. he will reclaim his place.





Hannah Ky McCann



Tasmanian Gothic

fandom-feminist

- ✧ They dig up the Myers pit again. The walkway disappears. They get a bigger crane. It's gone the next day. They keep digging. The pit still hungers.
- ✧ The Sleeping Beauty rolls over in her sleep, tearing apart the land. We pray she will not wake.
- ✧ They say there are massive ships sunk in the Derwent river, never recovered. It is far, far deeper than a river should be. At night, phantom lights like sirens travel the old shipping lanes, deep below the surface.
- ✧ The water is freezing, but the children go in anyway. They look back at you and their eyes are huge, dark. They do not look back again; you should have kept their skins better hidden.
- ✧ They say the monkeys in City Park cannot get out, but there is something watching you from the trees as you walk home at night. You hope it is only the monkeys.
- ✧ You see David Walsh in the supermarket. In your coffee shop. Across the street. Behind you in the mirror. Don't look-

✧ You walk out into the bush, birds singing, knowing there are no thylacines left. They were more like cats than dogs, the tour guide tells you. Big as a panther, and as agile. There is a rustling in the bushes, but you are sure there are no thylacines left. They could open their jaws to 120 degrees. The rustling stops, but the birds have stopped singing. *Tiger*, they called it. You run, praying there are no thylacines left.





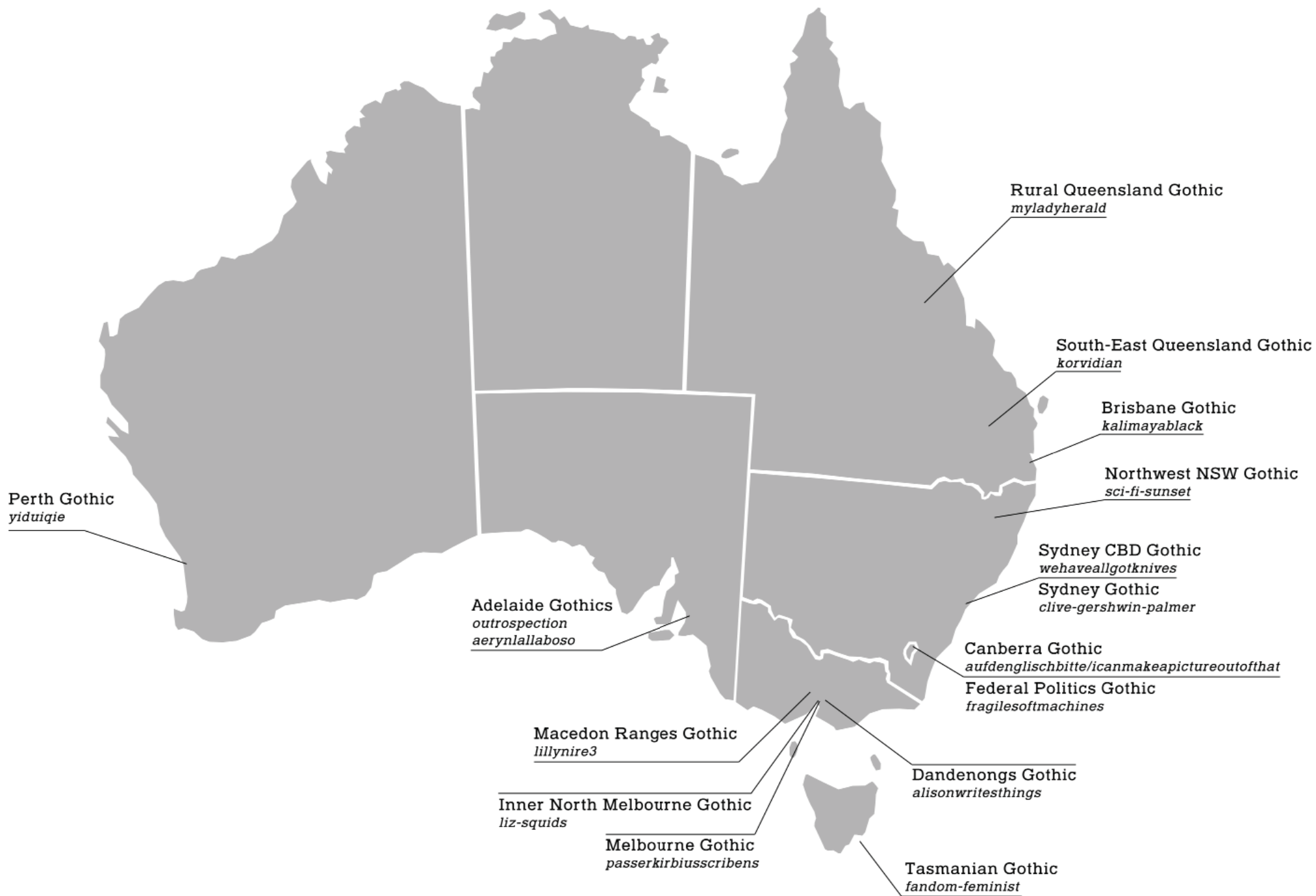
Dandenongs Gothic

alisonwritesthings

- ✧ you are on a belgrave train. the next station is ringwood, change here for services to lilydale. the lights outside rush past so you know the train is moving, but it has been three hours since you left flinders st. the sun starts to rise. the next station is ringwood. change here for services to lilydale. the sun sets. the man sitting across from you was just a boy when you first sat down.
- ✧ you are driving home and you slow down for the car in front. they are going thirty kilometres under the speed limit. they are going forty kilometres under the speed limit. they are going fifty kilometres below the speed limit. they stop. they get out of the car and approach you. they open their mouth to ask a question but there are so many teeth, so sharp, you can't make sense of the words.
- ✧ the woman beside you comments on the wasp problem this year. you nod and swat away the wasp circling your head. another wasp appears, and another. soon, there are too many to count. you turn to the woman but there is a cloud of wasps where she was. the dress she was wearing has crumpled to the ground.
- ✧ puffing billy crosses the bridge as you stand and watch. the steam spells out the letters *there isn't much time left*. you blink, and the steam is just steam again.

- ✧ there are roadworks on monbulk road. we just need to clear some trees, the man holding the stop sign says to you. he says something into his handheld radio. the cars pile up behind you. you comment that this is the reason for the roadworks last week. and the week before. the man only smiles. when he eventually lets you pass, you hear his pockets are buzzing.
- ✧ the farmers market is a hive of activity. everyone buzzes as they move about. organic berries? a woman says, offering you a punnet of small stones. they're half price, she says. you shake your head no and continue on your way. the buzzing gets louder with each step.
- ✧ you are trying to sleep. there is a possum somewhere outside. the screaming gets closer, the possum's breathing is louder. soon the possum is right outside your window. it whispers to you secrets you have told no one.
- ✧ there is a bus. it is not the right one. you wait an hour and there is another bus. it is not the right one. five days pass and as many buses. eventually, you get on the bus, although it is still not the right one. they have been waiting for you.







Melbourne Gothic

passerkirbiusscribens

- ✧ “Now approaching Flagstaff station”. You thought the last station was Flagstaff, wasn’t it? Flagstaff station passes. “Now approaching Flagstaff station.”
- ✧ You entered the laneways hours ago. You turn the corner, but there is only another laneway. In desperation you run into one of the restaurants, but there’s nothing in there. Only another laneway.
- ✧ As you cross the West Gate, there’s a Pink Lake, but no one dares look at it. The lake doesn’t like that. Not one bit.
- ✧ The Nylex clock flashes 99:99. Then it shows 99°. Then your car explodes, in slow motion. The trees, the buildings, the people, they burn slowly, agonizingly, horrendously, trapped in this moment.
- ✧ Hidden somewhere deep in the Melbourne Laneways, is a café. The coffee here is beyond comparison. In this café, everyone is drinking the coffee, their lives are complete here, and no one ever notices that there is no exit in this café, because no one will ever want to leave, not when the vanilla slice is so divine.
- ✧ At St Kilda Beach, you sit with your lover, enjoying your fish and chips. The seagulls hover on the wind nearby, begging for chips, and you laugh at their acrobatics and turn to your lover. But it’s not your

lover. It's a flock of seagulls, dressed in your lover's clothes. And they are ravenous now.

- ✧ There is a story, often repeated, of your friend who moved to the West of Melbourne. It's often repeated, because while everyone tells the story, no one can ever remember the friend. It's always told drunk, because no one ever remembers the story sober.
- ✧ When travelling with Myki, remember to touch on, and touch off. Because no one likes a freeloader. Certainly not the trams. Certainly not the trains.
- ✧ No one knows the secret of Crown Casino's success. But I do. It will take your money, but that's never enough. It'll take your happiness, but that's never enough. Gamble with your life, though? Crown always needs more life.





Inner North Melbourne Gothic

liz-squids

- ✧ You take a shortcut through the bicycle parking on Lygon Street. The bikes are too close together. They seem to be moving. All you can see are bicycles. Forever.
- ✧ You go to the pub for a meal. You order the vegan parma. “100 percent cruelty free,” the menu says. The eggplant makes no sound as you bite into it.
- ✧ The next station is North Melbourne. Change here for Craigieburn, Werribee, Williamstown, Sunbury, and a growing sense of unease.
- ✧ Your flatmate sells terrariums at the Fitzroy Markets. Using tweezers, she inserts tiny plastic people into mossy landscapes. You look closely. The people have your face.
- ✧ Lost cat signs are going up in your neighbourhood. New ones appear every day. Where are the cats going? Are they running away from something? What do they know that we don’t?
- ✧ You buy the ornate baroque bed that has been sitting in Franco Cozzo’s window for as long as you can remember. You sleep well. When you wake up, you’re back in the shop. You sit up slowly, becoming aware of the people peering at you through the glass. But it’s not you they’re looking at. It’s the bed. They can’t see you at all.

- ✧ A new bar opens on Sydney Road. It has a pan-Asian theme. Smiling white people bring you a cocktail named after a massacre. You sip it and think, *This is reality now.*
- ✧ *This is reality now.*
- ✧ What evil lurks in the empty shell that was once a Spotlight? No one dares even to ask.
- ✧ Gourmet pizza. 24-hour-fermented crust. Brunch pizza. Dessert pizza. Breakfast pizza. Apocalypse pizza.
- ✧ Someone has yarn bombed the poles outside Brunswick Town Hall. The pattern grows more elaborate every day. The yarn spreads to engulf the building, the road, the tram tracks and the kebab van opposite. Fire cannot kill it. Leave while you still can.





Macedon Ranges Gothic

lillynre3

- ✧ You do not go to Sunbury. Your friends joke, “Haha Scumbury!” But you see the fear in their eyes. You do not go to Sunbury. You end up in Sunbury.
- ✧ You walk up Hanging Rock on a sunny day. Children laugh but you do not see them. It has been years since you’ve seen anyone. How long have you been here?
- ✧ It snows on the top of Mount Macedon. You know this. You have never seen it. No one has ever seen it. It snows on the top of Mount Macedon.
- ✧ It’s Live 4 Life season in the schools. You think you remember your own time with it. Do you really?
- ✧ You go to the library. There are many books. There are so many books. The librarian gives you a vacant smile, teeth gleaming. So many books.
- ✧ Myths and Legends has a new display. Blood and bones make sacrifice in the windows. The fairy has teeth too sharp. Children scream.

- ❖ The Winter Festival looms. The Log Cabin devours the children.
They reappear, vacant eyed, to serve you coffee and pumpkin soup.
Support your local scouts.

- ❖ “Shut the windows!” The bus captains call. You scramble for the glass.
It is not the dust you fear.

- ❖ Prepare. Act. Survive. Leave your belongings in the classroom.
Prepare. Act. Survive. You take your bag. Prepare. Act. Survive. You’ve
doomed us all.



Elly Freer



Elly Freer
Hanging Rock #2, #3





Adelaide Gothic I

aerynlallaboso

- ✧ adelaide is known as the city of churches, but few ever stop to consider that the city itself could be a church. local citizens shake their heads at you kindly when you broach the theory, asking, ‘but to whom?’ that, you answer, is the question. the cathedral’s bells chime in the distance.
- ✧ there’s a peculiar scent in the air as you get closer to glenelg. it’s the smell of the sea, people say, breathing it in and smiling at you reassuringly. it smells like salt, sure, but it’s not sea salt - it’s the salt you taste when you bite your lip and lick up the blood. rust and decay.
- ✧ perhaps it’s the same thing you detect hidden in the bouquet of those famous barossa valley wines. something bloody, something vile, as if the grapes of the vineyard were fed on corpses buried in the rich soil. you purse your lips and pretend the wine is too sour for your tastes.
- ✧ sometimes there are two balls in rundle mall. sometimes there are three or four. sometimes they don’t quite touch; one hovering slightly above each other. occasionally an animal or a passing tourist ends up on top of them - nobody knows how.
- ✧ you walk to the bus-stop and take a seat, peering into the distance for the golden frame of the next bus. you spot it after five minutes and

pull out your wallet, leaning against the stop to wait, and wait, and wait. the bus never gets any closer.

- ✧ on the days when the buses do arrive, your routes change regularly, detouring around an accident or a burst water main. there seem to be so many burst water mains in this city; like something underneath is pushing and gurgling its way up to the air. they smooth over the pavement and stop the water flow, but it will reach us eventually.





Adelaide Gothic II

outrospection

- ✧ “The next train on platform 1 will arrive in 2 minutes,” says the announcement. But the station is closed. It’s always been closed.
- ✧ Midnight strikes at the Post Office clock. The city immediately shuts down. Lights go out. Cars stop. People slump, frozen in the street.
- ✧ “It’s just up the street,” they say. There’s only one street. It stretches as far as the eye can see in either direction. It never ends.
- ✧ Public holidays are the worst. You can see people aimlessly wandering the streets, confused. There used to be shops here. Now there’s a hole.
- ✧ Everything happens in March. There’s nothing for the rest of the year. The city is silent. Dormant. Waiting. Soon...
- ✧ It’s whale watching season! Everyone stand on the proper lookouts so the whales can see you clearly.
- ✧ This is the City of Churches. Just churches. Everywhere.
- ✧ You get a Balfours frogcake. You used to eat these all the time when you were a kid. The vibrant green icing makes you smile. So does the way the cake squirms in your hand.

- ❖ The Christmas Pageant winds its way through the streets to the delight of young and old, lining the pathways to cheer and wave as the floats move past. “Help us!” one of the clowns hisses through a rictus smile.

- ❖ The statue of Colonel Light stands on Montefiore Hill pointing to the city of Adelaide. The statue of Colonel Light stands on your front lawn pointing at your window.





Perth Gothic

yiduiqie

- ✧ You loop onto the Narrows. You loop off. You loop onto the Narrows. You loop off. You loop onto the Narrows.
- ✧ The walls of the convention centre crack. The plaster crumbles to reveal a giant, gleaming Richard Court. He has been sleeping. Colin Barnett climbs inside. Richard's eyes open.
- ✧ You walk along the pipeline to Kalgoorlie, up along the Mundaring Weir. You hear an echo coming towards you. You put your ear against the pipe. "Yes," you hear. You wrap your arms around the pipeline, and let the water run. CY has missed you. You will not let him be alone.
- ✧ "Our beaches are the best!" you argue. You go to Cottesloe, and your feet sink into the sand. You can only go forward; you can only go west into the sea. Cottesloe has heard you. Cottesloe will not let you go.
- ✧ Students from UWA have pranked the diving lady yet again. You swim out and unclothe her. She wraps her arms around you. You reach for the water, and still. There are two diving ladies.
- ✧ The Polly Pipe opens. You drive into its entrance. You drive and you drive, and you never reach Loftus Street. Its lights close around you.

- ✧ The Swan Bells chime. You climb the stairs to see them up close. You climb the stairs. You climb the stairs.
- ✧ There's a quokka in your tent. You reach for your camera. The flash goes off. The quokka is there, beside you. At home, the quokka is there, beside you. Right now, the quokka is there, beside you.





Brisbane Gothic

kalimayablack

- ✧ Your friends are leaving Brisbane. Your workmates are leaving Brisbane. Your cousins and siblings are leaving Brisbane. Everyone is leaving Brisbane. You are leaving Brisbane. It's the only way to escape the ones who come back to Brisbane.
- ✧ You and your friend get drunk and climb into the Morning Star. You laugh at your own reflections in the mirror-polished surfaces. A peacock screams. Your friend is gone. You can't reach them. You can't remember how to climb out. The mirrors reflect infinity. Your reflection is gone.
- ✧ Arriving at the Pancake Manor, you knock three times and listen at the belltower door by the entrance. You hear nothing. You turn to your friends. They are ashen. They heard it.
- ✧ The clouds break. A wall of rain rushes towards you with a hissing sound. The sound builds and builds. The rain never reaches you. It never will. The sound continues to build.
- ✧ Crossing King George Square in the summer, the glare disorients you. There was grass here once, and shade. You've been walking across the square for hours. The lions look hungry. When they step down from their plinths, you are already too exhausted to run.

- ✧ Those are not bones in the mud under the mangrove trees. Keep telling yourself that.
- ✧ The bats are screeching in the mango tree in the backyard. There are so many bats. The mangos are screaming in the bat tree in the backyard. Every morning, the tree wails and keens for hours.
- ✧ Your landlord puts the rent up. You do what you have to. Your landlord puts the rent up. It's getting harder to find enough blood. Your landlord puts the rent up.
- ✧ GOMA is Lord. Tremble before GOMA. Hail GOMA. GOMA demands sacrifice. GOMA is Lord.
- ✧ It's kerbside collection week again. You put out the crumbling old chipboard dresser you picked up last kerbside collection week. When you get home, the dresser is back in your room.
- ✧ The nameless little second hand place next to the Costume Company on Ipswich road is open. It has exactly the thing you need, for exactly the price you can afford. The man who serves you smiles too much.
- ✧ You're crossing the bridge at that certain time of day when the river turns blue. The day is so hot and the water looks so cool and clear. It's so blue. It's so inviting. The hands in the water beckon to you. They reach out to you. A cloud crosses the sun and the river is dull brown again. You hear sirens. People are screaming. How did you get past the guard rail?
- ✧ The Guardian nods to you as you pass. You don't know what he's

guarding you from, only that you can walk down Wharf Street now.

- * You walk up the stairs in Roma St Parklands. You walk up the stairs in Roma St Parklands. They unfold infinitely around you like Jacob's Ladder. You walk up the stairs in Roma St Parklands.





Rural Queensland Gothic

myladyherald

- ✧ the rains come later every year.
- ✧ don't look at the church. don't look at the abandoned house with barred windows. don't look at the old tin shed.
- ✧ sometimes you will meet people with missing parts, taken away by missions or academics or museums.
- ✧ a lesson learned young and then over and over again; when there is no food, chroming will at least stop the pain in your belly.
- ✧ you learned to sleep through the trucks on the highway. you learned to sleep through the trains going past. you can learn to sleep through the crying from next door.
- ✧ once in a while, someone - a father, a sister, a whole family - disappears. sometimes you find out why. the truth is usually worse.
- ✧ count yourself lucky on the days when the only bodies in the reservoir are livestock.
- ✧ each generation remembers less. can you give life to a story when the language is dead?



Northwest NSW Gothic

sci-fi-sunset

- ✧ Round here there's places with names like: Gravesend. Gin's Leap. Dead Man's Creek. Those places earned those names, and now they hide in plain sight.
- ✧ Then there are the other place names, in that other language that bubbles under everything: Barraba. Bingara. Boggabri. Warialda. Gunnedah. Boggabilla. Quirindi. Kootingal. These names also hide a kind of violence.
- ✧ Every town's swimming pool is a war memorial swimming pool. Every town clock is a war memorial. Every town is a war memorial.
- ✧ By the side of the Manilla road sits huge white anchor. The coast is at least 300 km away. Nobody can satisfactorily explain why it's there.
- ✧ The beautiful creek next to the abandoned asbestos mine is a popular picnic spot. The pile of asbestos tailings is 75 metres high. It looks more like a mountain. The void lake at the bottom of the mine is much, much too blue. The asbestos mill building that stands alongside it has stood silent and collapsing for thirty years. We can't knock it down. The bats won't let us.
- ✧ When the mine opened, all the schoolchildren were taken out to Woodsreef in buses to witness the opening ceremony. They were each

given a sample bag of asbestos to take home with them. Don't worry though, it's the nice asbestos.

- ✧ There's a critically endangered, bright pink slug that lives only on the summit of Mount Kaputar. You can walk up the mountain on a fire trail if you wanna look for the pink slug, but y'won't find it. There *are* a lot of pink gum leaves on the ground up there though, waiting for you to go away. You won't go away. Why won't you go away?
- ✧ An enormous, pure white albino kangaroo leaps easily over the fences of the properties out along the Banoon road and into the headlights of your ute, and then instantly away in massive bounds that shouldn't be possible. Everyone round here thinks the albino roo's a myth. But everyone's seen him with their own two eyes. He's lived for decades. He's never been hit by a car or shot in culls. And thank fuck for that, because there'd be consequences. We dunno what kind of consequences.
- ✧ Patterson's Curse covers the paddocks in noxious purple, a weed that chokes everything. Salvation Jane is a very beautiful flower. Patterson's Curse is Salvation Jane. Salvation Jane is Patterson's Curse.
- ✧ You can drown in a silo, if you fall in. There's plenty of things that you can drown in that aren't water.
- ✧ At the edge of town, the Grain Corp silos loom over the Fossickers' Way. The silos've been empty for years. It doesn't mean you couldn't still drown in 'em.





Fiona McLeod

At Last, The Sea Returns Him

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