EXQUISITE CORPSE
STORIES AND AN EXEGESIS

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

Date
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Abstract

Does landscape have a memory? Can past events—historical facts and cultural fictions, personal stories and public hype—impregnate a site, marking it so deeply that those who pass through it feel its pull, creating attraction and desire, so the landscape itself becomes a magnet—a lure into the abyss? Put another way: can landscape have a soul?

My research looks at the interplay between history and cultural memory at two of the world’s most popular suicide sites: Aokigahara Jukai, the sacred ‘suicide forest’ lying at the base of Mount Fuji; and The Gap, a notorious headland at Watsons Bay, Sydney.

By looking at the unique circumstances that have marked these two very different, yet similarly popular suicide destinations, I question whether the very aura of a site can influence the creation of a suicidal self. Whether a history of voluntary death narratives creates loci memoriae—memory places that mark a landscape or a landmark as a suicide destination, codifying and transforming a very public place into possibly the most private space of all—the environment in which someone chooses to end their life.

Exploring the factual and the fictional, the literal and the literary, this project excavates beneath the surface of these liminal landscapes to reveal their roots through storytelling and unearth whether these landscapes are, as Pierre Nora says, ‘inscribed in the flesh of memory’(Nora 1989).

The exegesis also explores the process and underpinnings of my creative work and demonstrates how my fiction has been informed by my scholarship. Extensive research in the field of suicide studies has given me an historical, cultural and philosophical framework from which to write deeply on a topic that is still taboo to many.

The creative project was developed in parallel to the exegesis. *Exquisite Corpse*, a collection of interlinked stories, tackles the notion of the suicidal self
and the suicide bereaved, and looks at the dynamic relationship between place and identity.

**Key Words**