

**EXQUISITE CORPSE**  
STORIES AND AN EXEGESIS

Sinead Roarty  
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degree of Master of Creative Arts (Research)  
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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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## Contents

Statement of Original Authorship	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
Abstract	v
Key Words	vi
Part One: The Exegesis—Death Wishing & Cultural Memory	
Prologue: Suicidal Thoughts 1–7	1
Introduction: The Accidental Thanatourist	5
Chapter One: A Walk Through Japan’s ‘Suicide Forest’	9
Chapter Two: The Gap in Between	18
Part Two: The Creative Work—Exquisite Corpse	
Introduction: Writing the Suicidal Self	32
Chapter One: Goosebumps	35
Chapter Two: 25 Words or Less	41
Chapter Three: Mortal Sins	51
Chapter Four: Dominoes	59
Chapter Five: Dishpan Hands	64
Chapter Six: The Charm	73
Chapter Seven: Backwash	79
Chapter Eight: Slipstream	87
Appendices	
Research Methodology & Ethical Considerations	a
References: Bibliography	b
Filmography	c
List of Publications	d

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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**

Voluntary death, suicide, cultural memory, Japanese cinema, Aokigahara Jukai, Golden Gate Bridge, The Gap, liminal landscapes, monstrous geography.