

**The Rock and the Void: Pastoral and Loss in
Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and
Peter Weir's Film Adaptation**

Victoria Bladen

An eclogue is a sort of picnic in words.
– Frederick Turner¹



*Fig. 1. Picnic at Hanging Rock, directed by Peter Weir.*²

The genre of pastoral has a long literary history and continues to be a relevant mode, highly adaptable to different cultural contexts and various art forms. The flexibility of pastoral arguably arises from a lack of rigidity in its terminology: the “happy confusion of definitions,” as Paul Alpers observes in his landmark study *What is Pastoral?*, creates difficulties in articulating precisely what pastoral means (reflected in the title of Alpers’ work), yet also presents opportunities for a wide variety of texts to be viewed through the lens of pastoral.³ Charles Martindale argues persuasively that “genres are best thought of as processes; not as essences or ontological entities, things, but as discursive formations, contested, fluid, resisting even while inviting definition.”⁴ Approaching the genre of pastoral as a process accounts for its flexibility and supports the argument that pastoral is a genre of continuing relevance that can be applied to texts without shepherds. This article assumes pastoral to be constituted by a group of interrelated ideas that together express a liminal space of mystery, one situated on the porous boundaries between civilisation and nature, society and solitude, within which figures articulate the human condition as subject to natural processes of beauty and loss, and creatively respond to these forces. The contemplative pastoral figure (who may or may not be a “shepherd”) can thus be understood in one way as the projection of an author, artist or filmmaker, rendering pastoral as inherently metafictional and metafilmic.

Picnic at Hanging Rock is a significant phenomenon of the Australian cultural landscape, comprising Joan Lindsay’s 1967 novel, Peter Weir’s 1975 film adaptation⁵ and the paratexts that surround text and film, such as urban mythology, interviews with participants (which accompany the director’s cut edition) and the 1987 publication of Lindsay’s *The Secret of Hanging Rock*, the final chapter edited out from the original book. *Picnic* explores the idea of an intense human encounter in natural space, and the sense of mystery and experience of loss surrounding this. Given these elements, the pastoral mode is a valuable lens through which to approach Lindsay’s and Weir’s works.

The novel, set in Victoria in 1900, relates the story of a group of schoolgirls from Appleyard College being taken on a picnic to Hanging Rock, a natural feature of the Victorian landscape near Mount Macedon. Three girls and one of the teaching staff disappear at the Rock, and only one of the girls is found in the subsequent search; suffering from amnesia, she is unable to shed any light on what happened at the Rock. The novel relates the picnic, the subsequent search and response to the tragedy, and the further and consequential tragic deaths of Sara Waybourne, a young orphan who doesn’t attend the picnic, and Mrs. Appleyard, the headmistress of the college who suicides at the Rock (and is implicated in Sara’s

death). Dora Lumley, an employee of the college, and her brother, subsequently die in a fire after leaving Appleyard, deaths which the author suggests are linked, in a fatalistic way, to the tragedy at the Rock.⁶

Some critics of *Picnic* have intimated recognition of the relevance of pastoral to both novel and film, such as Karelisa V. Hartigan, who aptly observes that the film is “filled with scenes of pastoral peace which belie the disturbing mystery of its subject” and that the action of the film “is placed within the pastoral milieu.”⁷ Others limit the traces of pastoral to the space and surrounds of the anachronistic English boarding school (“a European pastoral idyll”⁸). Yet, overall, there has been scant attention paid to the relevance of pastoral in the critical dialogues on *Picnic*, a lacuna which this article seeks to address. My approach assumes that the group of inter-linked ideas that are characteristic of an engagement with the process of pastoral may look something like this:

1. Human immersion in natural space of some form;
2. A contemplative state; the natural space gives rise to a state of reverie and physical passivity, rather than active labour within that natural space;
3. Mythic elements; nature is an artificial, idealised state recalling the classical Golden Age or the Christian Eden; perpetual spring is captured in and becomes a form of artwork. The mythic dimension is emphasised by the presence of or reference to mythic figures or gods. This might also extend to a sense of the sacred, a transcendental or spiritual experience of some kind for the human figure;
4. A celebration of beauty – visual, sensual, musical, physical;
5. A sense of loss, pain and mourning that accompanies the celebration of what is beautiful;
6. Suspension of time; the pastoral is a temporary escape from flux in order to contemplate and reflect;
7. A self-reflexive, metafictional element in which the creator of pastoral, the writer, artist or filmmaker, sees themselves reflected in the pastoral protagonist; creating in response to life and loss.

These elements provide a valuable prism through which to refract the potential meanings of *Picnic*.

Immersion in nature

The pastoral mode originated in classical antiquity with the writings of Theocritus and Virgil, particularly the latter's *Eclogues*, where, in a series of vignettes, shepherds express the beauty of nature and experiences of loss and desire, while also competing with each other in poetic singing competitions.⁹ Figures are situated in a green space which is stylised, idealised and replete with mythical figures. Nature is contemplated for its beauty, and various characters compete to demonstrate their poetic prowess in celebrating nature and to affirm the social, occupational and emotional bonds between them. Pastoral poetry based on the Virgilian model peaked in the Renaissance.¹⁰ Some poets reimagined Virgilian pastoralism with shepherd voices expressing love and the idealised rural life, such as Christopher Marlowe in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" (1599); others drew from but modified and questioned pastoral modes.¹¹ This is apparent in the work of Shakespeare.¹² Other writers, such as Andrew Marvell and Henry Vaughan, had more complex responses, and pastoral moved beyond shepherds to themes of spiritual transcendence through nature. In traditional pastoral, the shepherd's occupation gives a reason for being in nature for a prolonged period. The shepherd must sit and watch, while the sheep graze, in a state of active passivity; he has a stance from which to view, admire and celebrate the green world that nourishes him and his flock. Virgilian pastoral is inherently artificial; it does not purport to depict an actual shepherd's life and naturalism is not a priority, although descriptions may incorporate elements of naturalism. While pastoral imagines a life in nature, it is an idealised form,¹³ the latter characteristic distancing traditional pastoral from most of its postmodern versions.

The central events of *Picnic* take place in the Victorian bush and in both book and film there are many references to the landscape. Lindsay gives intricate details of the rock formation and the natural life that surrounds it: insects, animals that live on and around the Rock, trees and shrubs, grasses and details of the terrain that the girls pass through. Various fauna interact with the girls during the climb. In the film adaptation, in the scenes at the Rock, Russell Boyd's cinematography lingers on the natural features, finding analogues for Lindsay's observations; the camera is also constantly composing the figure in the landscape. Both Lindsay, in her novel, and the eye of the camera in Weir's adaptation, contemplate the Australian landscape, its age, mystery, hostility, unaccommodating quality and alien strangeness. As Glenn Novak and Myles P. Breen observe: "Weir interjects into his microcosm of the Australian bush a plethora of detail, much of which has very little to do with the dramatic structure of his film."¹⁴

Yet this detail is typical of pastoral and invites us, as viewers and readers, to contemplate nature, giving us the gaze of the protagonist shepherd-figure. It creates an empathetic celebration of nature, including the beauty and mystery of the ancient rock, which accompanies the tragedy of human affairs.

Pastoral has been aptly labelled “a form of escape literature.”¹⁵ Hanging Rock is located at some distance, physically and metaphorically, from the college, reached by carriage ride. The first view of the Rock is framed by trees and there is discussion, expanded in the film script, of the ancient age and dimensions of the Rock. The characters’ responses to nature are a curious mix of rationalism and myth. The scientific empiricism in the geological description of the Rock is juxtaposed with a mythic aura given to it. The Rock is personified in the film; Irma says the Rock has been “waiting millions of years, just for us.” The descriptions of the Rock establish its immensity, magnitude and gravity in size and age, which correspondingly reduce the weight and significance of the human figures about to encounter it.



Fig. 2. Miranda, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

The scenes at the Rock depict various individuals engaging with, and immersed to different extents in, the natural world. This is particularly emphasised in Weir’s film version; shots are framed with fringes of trees, long grasses and sections of rock. During the tableau shots at the base of the Rock, Miranda studies a flower with a magnifying glass (see fig. 2). At the Rock there is a confrontation of culture with nature, order with wildness. The increasing immersion in nature at the picnic site corresponds to a decreasing adherence to decorum and order. Control of behaviour and dress,

magnified at the boarding college under the strict rules of Mrs. Appleyard, appears to dissipate with the shift in location. The signs of European civilisation and gentility become unravelled: ants take over the cake, layers of clothing are removed – gloves on the way to the picnic, stockings and shoes by the girls on the ascent of the Rock (other than Edith, also the only girl who keeps her hat on); later Edith reports that, as she came screaming down from the Rock, Miss McCraw was seen in her underwear. There is the suggestion of a peeling away of layers of clothing that signify female containment, control and cultural order. As Thomas Sheckles observes, clothing, particularly corsets, emphasise the “opposition between strictures and the threatening loosening of them.”¹⁶ In the subsequently published chapter eighteen, the corsets come to signify the human form; they are discarded as “confining husks” as the girls transform to animal form in order to transfuse into the mystic space of the Rock.¹⁷

Beyond the picnic area, the Rock is a space of uncharted territory; it is not mapped or controlled, anathema to the rigours of the boarding school and the petty tyrannies of Mrs. Appleyard: “There are no tracks on this part of the Rock. Or if there ever *have* been tracks, they are long since obliterated” (P 33). The juxtaposition of rational empiricism and emotive response, evident during the carriage ride, is continued with the girls’ proposed ascent of the Rock. For Miranda and Irma it is curiosity; they “wanted a closer view of the Rock” (P 33). By comparison, Marion Quade’s reason for wanting to go for a walk is to “make a few measurements at the base of the Rock”; she produces “some squared paper and a ruler” (P 25) yet it is not clear how such measuring would be done. In any event, no measurements are taken and the girls’ walk quickly takes on the quality of a mystic pilgrimage. Marion discards her pencil and notebook, “toss[ing] them into the ferns” (P 38), before they fall asleep at the Rock.

While the natural space is a source of admiration and wonder, it is only superficially and temporarily idyllic, not the nurturing landscape of Virgilian pastoral. The girls become immersed in the landscape to a point where they are no longer in control but become subject to its magnetic, subsuming and devouring forces. The tragedy of *Picnic* is that the pastoral immersion in nature is taken to its extremity; the landscape takes and swallows up the heart of the human group. The film constructs the Rock as a type of labyrinth in which the girls become enmeshed and ultimately lost; there are numerous shots of the girls encircled and encased with rock. The girls’ extreme immersion in the natural world has latent parallels with other cultural representations of young girls in landscapes, such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), where a young girl is immersed in a strange and often hostile landscape featuring size distortions and irra-

tional logic. Alice chases an unattainable object of desire while exploring a labyrinthine and hostile green world under an irrational and tyrannical government. Miranda, like Alice, desires to explore a labyrinthine and hostile space, searching for something unattainable while also, paradoxically, becoming herself an unattainable object of desire, like the white rabbit, for both Sara, and Michael.¹⁸ Also relevant to the aspect of tragic immersion in nature that *Picnic* explores is the lost child theme of late-nineteenth century Australian art. Aptly, the cover of the publication of Lindsay's final chapter eighteen features Frederick McCubbin's *Lost* (1886).¹⁹

Contemplation

Pastoral modes commonly encompass practices of reflection and contemplation, originating in the stylised Virgilian depiction of the life of the shepherd.²⁰ In the early modern period, a spiritual dimension was added to the classical figure of the shepherd,²¹ his reflective function a parallel to motifs of the ascetic saint in the wilderness.²² Solitude was often praised as facilitating communion with God, while nature—God's Second Book—was to be read for its signs and revelations of divine meaning.²³ The pastoral mode of contemplation in a natural setting is thus commonly intensified in the early modern period with suggestions of divine communion and protagonists experiencing intense psychological and bodily interaction with a natural space imbued with a metaphysical dimension.²⁴ This further dimension of intense experience in nature that accrued to pastoral in early modern culture (and which has links to ideas of the sublime in Romanticism)²⁵ provides a significant antecedent to some of the ideas in *Picnic*.

Although the lost girls and woman in *Picnic* are not shepherds, in contemplating and physically ascending the Rock they function in ways similar to the pastoral shepherd, the Virgilian figure overlaid with an early modern metaphysicality, albeit taken to tragic excess. The *topos* of mystical pilgrimage in *Picnic*, the physical ascension (reiterated in the film with its haunting soundtrack) suggests a mission, only partially understood by the young women. The girls that climb the Rock are seekers of a more intense, direct experience of nature, seeking to go as far as they can in interacting with the natural world. In this particular landscape, that intense experience has tragic consequences. This is not the soft, accommodating landscape of Virgil but a weird and harsh one, hostile to soft European feet and an anathema to a long, white, Victorian dress. As Mark Haltof observes, these formal dresses signify the "old order, which is incompatible with the order of the new land."²⁶ The girls contrast starkly with their surroundings; their apparel is unsuited for the terrain: Irma observes that "[w]hoever invented

female fashions for nineteen hundred should be made to walk through bracken fern in three layers of petticoats” (*P* 35). At the same time, however, the unsuitable dresses code the missing girls as angelic, ethereal and spirit-like; the dresses restrict yet visually enable them to float, as more practical clothes would not.

In the pastoral genre, the shepherd was never a mere herder of animals. The figure was a poet and philosopher, immersed in nature at a reflective distance from society, a lover, one particularly susceptible to the senses, and one with a melancholy appreciation of life, love and loss. With the Christian gloss of early modernity, the figure immersed in nature was commonly depicted as encountering the divine. In *Picnic*, despite its 1900 setting, a Christian spiritual outlook is absent, replaced by an attempt to create a sense of the metaphysical and its unfathomability using elements of pagan myth and Aboriginal dreamtime mythology. This is particularly evident in the subsequently published final chapter.

As Hartigan observes, “There is a stillness at the film’s center, as if a divine epiphany is to occur.”²⁷ The girls, while climbing the Rock, make philosophical statements, reflecting on the figures below, likening them to ants and pondering the purpose of humans. As the girls climb, they find themselves “on an almost circular platform enclosed by rocks and boulders” (*P* 35) from which the girls observe those remaining below at the picnic grounds. Their vantage point enables not only an observation of how the others appear physically but also initiates metaphysical reflection of the position of humanity within nature:

Irma at once discovered a sort of porthole in one of the rocks and was gazing down fascinated at the Picnic Grounds below. As if magnified by a powerful telescope, the little bustling scene stood out with stereoscopic clarity between the groups of trees. (*P* 35-36)

The girls continue up and when they reach a similar semi-circular shelf, they again look down for the final gaze on those below. Irma says:

“Whatever can those people be doing down there like a lot of ants?” Marion looked out over her shoulder. “A surprising number of human beings are without purpose. Although it’s probable, of course, that they are performing some necessary function unknown to themselves.” (*P* 38)

The encounter with the Rock enables them to comprehend how humanity is situated in the greater scheme of nature; through this altered physical and intellectual viewpoint, humanity’s centrality is displaced and its purpose subordinated to this greater scheme.

Myth

Picnic is a strange blend of naturalism and mythic sensibility. The novel is narrated through various framing devices designed to give the impression of authenticity: the last chapter is comprised of an “extract from a Melbourne newspaper,” and given a precise date of thirteen years after “the fatal Saturday” (P 212), while chapter sixteen includes a letter from Dianne De Poitiers and two police statements, one by the gardener and the other from the driver Ben Hussey given to Constable Bumpher. In the sections related by a third-person narrator, a journalistic effect is also created by the combination of clinical, ostensibly objective narrative with dramatic, tragic and sometimes grotesque content.

Countering these material details and naturalistic effects is a strong vein of the supernatural and uncanny throughout the novel, which is more subtle and diluted in the film. Lindsay’s interest in the paranormal is most evident in the final chapter, which was removed from the original publication as her editor astutely recognised that the power of the work was enhanced by a sense of mystery, rather than a specified supernatural conclusion. John Taylor observes, in his introduction to the delayed publication of the final chapter, that the appeal of *Picnic* lies in its combination of “mysterious and sinister events with a picture of a period drawn with loving nostalgia, and the fact that the mystery was left unsolved.”²⁸

Lindsay’s and Weir’s works include various intertextual references to Renaissance culture with references to Shakespeare and Botticelli, aspects of the European culture that is ostensibly set in opposition to the otherness of the Australian landscape. Consistent with the common pastoral engagement with myth, Venus, the goddess of love, is evoked, firstly through Valentine’s Day, the day celebrating love when the picnic takes place, and also, in Weir’s film, with a shot of Sandro Botticelli’s late-fifteenth century *Birth of Venus*. At the picnic grounds, as Miranda and the other girls leave to climb the Rock, Mademoiselle makes a startling observation: “It simply wasn’t possible to explain to Miss McCraw of all people her exciting discovery that Miranda was a Botticelli angel from the Uffizzi” (P 26). While in the book the observation is a silent thought, in the film the mistress exclaims aloud, emphasised with a shot of the book from which she is reading; there is a cut to an image which is a cropped detail of a work by Botticelli, not of an angel but from *The Birth of Venus*. The idea of Miranda as the goddess of love was also originally intended to be emphasised with a shot of Miranda naked in the pose of Botticelli’s Venus, complete with scallop shell, a dream sequence where Michael imagines he sees Miranda looking at him from a shady alcove. This shot was edited out from the origi-

nally released version; however, it is included as part of the additional material accompanying the director's cut.

The film also evokes classical myth in its choice of soundtrack, comprised partly of orchestral pieces (Beethoven's "Emperor" Piano Concerto) but dominated by the music of pan pipes, played by Gheorghe Zamfir. In Greek myth, related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (c. 8 CE), Pan chases the nymph Syrinx, who is then changed into a reed. Pan fashions a pipe from the reed and plays music to mourn his lost love object. In *Picnic* the music is a significant dimension of the film. Both ethereal and haunting, the breathy sounds of air through the pipes and the high pitch evoke ideas of transcendence, corresponding with the process of ascension as the girls climb the Rock. The music of panpipes is quintessentially pastoral, its Ovidian origins linking it with loss and mourning. The music simultaneously uplifts and threatens because the viewer/listener knows that for some of the girls the ascent will be perpetual; there will be no descent.

A further inference of myth in *Picnic* lies in the echoes of the loves of Zeus.²⁹ In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* there are recurring narratives of young desirable women being pursued by gods in natural settings and abducted and raped, or escaping assault through metamorphosis into natural elements. In *Picnic* the echo of Ovid is suggested by the disappearance of the girls into the landscape, vague hints of possible sexual assault and elements of the supernatural, such as the red cloud seen above the Rock³⁰ and an uncanny noise: "Irma was aware, for a little while, of a rather curious sound coming up from the plain. Like the beating of far-off drums" (*P* 38), which potentially evokes the idea of the predatory Zeus as the god of thunder. Weir echoes this idea with the use in the soundtrack of the sound of a "slowed down earthquake."³¹ Miranda then sees the Rock: "[A] single outcrop of pock-marked stone, something like a monstrous egg perched above a precipitous drop to the plain" (*P* 38) upon which the girls lie down and fall into a deep sleep. Metamorphosis also features in the subsequently published last chapter, where the girls transform into reptilian creatures, evoking parallels both to the European Ovidian tradition, and to indigenous Dreamtime mythology.

Beauty

A significant aspect of pastoral is the prominence given to beauty – of natural surroundings, lyric poetry and human objects of desire. With *Picnic*, in both book and film, there is a sustained celebration of female human beauty, principally of Miranda, alongside that of nature. Miranda is constructed as otherworldly for her appearance, grace, elegance, ethereal movement

and seeming preoccupation with things above the mundane and ordinary. In climbing the Rock it is Miranda who, in tune with the beauty of the Rock, looks towards the sky, while Edith is stolidly associated with the earth: "Miranda had been the first to see it: 'No, no, Edith! Not down at your boots! Away up there – in the sky'" (P 32) Edith is the only one of the girls that recoils from the Rock, sensing its danger: "Why can't we all sit down on that log and look at the ugly old Rock from here?... 'It's nasty here.... I never thought it would be so nasty or I wouldn't have come....'" (P 34)

After falling asleep on the Rock, Miranda is the first to wake, and the observation "[e]verything if only you could see it clearly enough, is beautiful and complete" (P 39) seems to belong to her. Edith (played by Christine Schuler in Weir's film) is the only one to speak at this point, signifying the clear gap between her and the others; she articulates the voice of the ordinary earth-bound non-indigenous human, ill at ease in her surroundings: "I feel perfectly awful! When are we going home?" (P 39) She is answered only with an uncanny response:

Miranda was looking at her so strangely, almost as if she wasn't seeing her. When Edith repeated the question more loudly, she simply turned her back and began walking away up the rise, the other two following a little way behind. Well, hardly walking – sliding over the stones on their bare feet as if they were on a drawing-room carpet, Edith thought, instead of those nasty old stones. (P 39)

Edith's horrified cries to the others are not responded to and "all three girls were fast moving out of sight behind the monolith" (P 39). The film emphasises this moment of horror with a shot of the girls disappearing behind a rock as Edith "saw the last of a white sleeve parting the bushes ahead" (P 39). The terrified Edith begins to scream and runs back down; in the film this is shot from above from a bird's eye view looking down on the running Edith. Edith is too attached to the earthly world, with its comforts of cake, to be an appropriate muse for the Rock. She is not sufficiently *light*, like the ethereal Miranda, or of intellectual weight, as are Marion and Miss McCraw. While Irma has beauty and empathy, ultimately she is defined by her wealth, and thus seems to be rejected by the Rock. In taking Miranda, the epitome of beauty and grace, and Marion and Miss McCraw, the characters attributed with knowledge and intelligence, the Rock appears to take the best elements that humanity has to offer.³² Those chosen to disappear by the author seem to be in the nature of the choicest sacrifice left for the unknowable Minotaur at the heart of the labyrinthine Rock.

Anne Lambert, who plays Miranda in Weir's film (see fig. 3), was cast for her quality of detachment from the other actresses; she floats in every

scene and subsequently became a key visual focus of marketing the film. Particular shots create and emphasise Miranda's ethereality: slow motion shots and particularly a double exposure of Miranda's transparent face and a flock of birds in the sky. This suggests her empathy and connection with the natural world and her absorption in it, a connection tragically culminating in her dissolution with the Rock. At the end of the film, a freeze frame invites the viewer to contemplate the figure as an object and icon of beauty while cognisant of the accompanying sense of loss. If, as the film suggests, she embodies, or is somehow the personification of, Love, like the goddess Venus, such a love is achingly beautiful, unattainable in the mortal realm and accompanied with unbearable pain.

Loss

A central element of pastoral, relevant to *Picnic*, is its elegiac mood of loss which is inextricably tied to the celebration of natural beauty. As Martindale observes, there is "an undertow of (often pleasing) melancholy about much pastoral writing," inherited from Virgil.³³ The sense of loss in Virgilian pastoral is multi-faceted. Firstly, the acute sense of beauty is suffused with cognisance of its temporal nature and its inherent ephemerality, which leads to a sense of human mortality. There is recognition, whether expressed or implicit, that the natural elements enjoyed and the observer herself are transitory, even though the pastoral mode generally doesn't specifically trace that process of decline and decay but presents the beautiful natural space as if suspended in a state of fruitfulness. The second dimension of loss is created by the emphatic theme of desire in pastoral, often accompanied with the pain of unrequited love. This is related to the first category of loss since lost or unrequited love in the pastoral mode seems a synecdoche of the larger loss of life itself.

Thirdly, there is an overarching political and material sense of loss. The *Eclogues* are set in the context of the extensive dispossession and redistribution of land (Augustus rewarding his returning soldiers with land confiscated from others), so the celebration of natural landscape by some occurs in a context of awareness of their fragile hold over it and the loss suffered by others (*Eclogues* one and nine). Possession of land is subject to the overwhelming political forces of empire.³⁴ Thus loss and pain, on multiple levels, are intimately bound up with pastoral.

Erwin Panofsky has usefully theorised how the sense of loss in Virgilian pastoral is constituted. He outlines how the pastoral genre emerged through a process of projecting an imaginary, idealised natural space onto a distant elsewhere. While the Greek writer Theocritus located his ideal

landscape in Sicily, Virgil transformed Arcadia, a “bleak and chilly” region of Greece, into an idealised Utopia.³⁵ However, in idealising nature and projecting a “soft primitivism” and Golden Age, Panofsky observes, Virgil conveyed a natural dissonance between idealised surroundings and the experience of human suffering arising from “two fundamental tragedies of human existence, frustrated love and death.”³⁶ This dissonance is resolved in “that vespertinal mixture of sadness and tranquility.”³⁷ As Panofsky observes, Virgil did not “exclude frustrated love and death” but rather deprived them “of their factuality,” projecting “tragedy either into the future or, preferably, into the past,” thus transforming “mythical truth into elegiac sentiment.”³⁸ As Panofsky contends, tragedy in Virgil is not presented as a “stark reality but is seen through the soft coloured haze of sentiment either anticipatory or retrospective.”³⁹ It is this elegiac mood of pastoral which is recurrently drawn upon and reinterpreted in subsequent versions of pastoral.

A deep sense of loss, of absence, lies at the core of *Picnic*, which can be seen as typically pastoral. The melancholy of *Picnic* is a “mixture of sadness and tranquility,” the resolution, as Panofsky theorises, of the dissonance between human suffering and natural beauty. *Picnic* articulates an inability to possess and hold, and recognises that human beauty and wisdom are no protection against the overwhelming forces of nature which encompass decay, loss and destruction in equal measure to life and renewal. The film adaptation, particularly, conveys an affecting melancholy and the profound sense of loss that the novel’s narrative traces. This sense of loss is concurrent with the celebration of the majesty and awe-inspiring sublimity of the Rock, its raw, rugged beauty (see fig. 3) closer to the harsh primitivism of the original Arcadian landscape than its Virgilian gloss.



Fig. 3. Hanging Rock.

Elegy has commonly intersected with pastoral,⁴⁰ and Panofsky emphasises the importance of the elegiac mood as a central component of the latter.⁴¹ He traces early modern iconography of shepherds encountering death—in the form of a skull or tomb—in idealised pastoral surroundings where the phrase “*Et in Arcadia ego*” appears; death is still present in the most beautiful of natural spaces. In Nicolas Poussin’s *Et in Arcadia Ego* (c. 1630) a proto-Miranda, a beautiful girl with long flowing hair and a white dress, contemplates, alongside the shepherds, the presence of death.⁴² The occupant of the tomb in this iconography was often presumed to be a young woman;⁴³ thus the living young woman mirrors her dead counterpart.

Inextricably tied to the exploration of beauty in both novel and film adaptation is their deep engagement with loss, and particularly lost love. Various failed relationships, actual or potential, of love, friendship or protection, are threaded through the work: between Miranda and Michael Fitzhubert, Miranda and Sara Waybourne, Sara and her brother Albert, Sara and her guardian Jasper Cosgrove, and Mrs. Appleyard and her students. These various losses combine with the tragic loss of the five dead, and ultimately the loss of the school. The book’s prologue, mirrored in the film with a simple statement, serves a choric function, foreshadowing the tragic outcome. Thus reader and audience expect and anticipate the deep horror of the loss of something precious and beautiful in a landscape that is equally compelling and terrifying, a silent, non-communicating landscape that will consume with no explanation.

Picnic’s engagement with the idea of a void, an unfathomable gap and absence which includes but goes beyond the loss of the girls, is a product of the historical context of the novel’s setting and production. Kathleen Steele, in her perceptive analysis, observes that “Australian authors floundered in de-historicised space”; the “alien environment” and perceptions of Australia based on an uncanny absence of Aboriginal history created “a space that appeared to reside outside both God and man.”⁴⁴ This void, the problematic construction of Australia as empty and blank, haunts *Picnic*, as many critics recognise. *Terra nullius*, the construction of blankness, as Elspeth Tilley notes, legitimised occupation, while the notion of fear of a hostile wilderness was a discursive tool of empire and conquest.⁴⁵ Douglas Keesey observes of *Picnic* and *The Last Wave* (1977) that Weir’s early Australian films are “haunted by the uncanny in the homeland they are in the process of defining,” and are “demystifications of the very myths that give white Australia its identity.”⁴⁶ Of course the concept of “homeland” is problematic; what or where is “home” for Europeans in an alien country and where is home for the invisible, absent Aboriginal communities whose land is now inhabited by people ill-equipped physically, mentally and spiritually

to inhabit the ancient landscapes? As Mark Haltof observes, *Picnic* is “replete with dream images.”⁴⁷ The emphasis on dream states in both novel and film seem to articulate the liminal location of the protagonists between “homes” and an unconscious European response to the missing indigenous Dreaming.

Time

A sense of suspended time often accompanies the state of the pastoral shepherd. The green space is depicted in a state of fecundity and abundance, and nature thus becomes art, not subject to decay while in the suspended mode of pastoral, even though it is imbued with a sense of loss (past or future). It is this characteristic of a suspended and idealised state that often gives pastoral its artificiality. In *Picnic*, the tragedy of the loss of the girls occurs fairly early in the novel, in chapter four, and thus the majority of the work deals with its aftermath. Yet the scenes at the Rock, the pastoral tableaux, have a visual and thematic prominence; the vignettes of the girls in the landscape and ascending the Rock are conveyed with a sense of suspended time, particularly emphasised in the film. Thus they dominate over the other scenes, lingering in the memory.

There are clear references to pastoral in the depiction of the state of *otium* at the base of the Rock, featuring midday drowsiness, inactivity, passive contemplation of and saturation in natural surroundings. Conversation diminishes yet what is said becomes more introspective, poetic and philosophical. In the film adaptation, as John Tibberts observes, the picnic is “the set piece of the film,” a “sustained marvel of soft-focus, narrow depth-of-field imagery.”⁴⁸ The effect of the slow panning shot across the tableau of the picnic party is a powerful one. The combined effect of the visuals and the music is to slow time: “The dozing figures, the drooping parasols, the slanting shafts of sunlight – even the buzzing of insects in the air – all drift suspended in an indeterminate continuum of time and space.”⁴⁹ Due to lighting requirements, the shot could only be filmed for short periods at a time before the sun shifted; thus it was a shot that all the participants kept returning to over many days.⁵⁰ This moment constitutes a suspended state of beauty and balance just prior to the tragedy unfolding. In this after-lunch state the orchestral humming of insects becomes the dominant noise and ants trail over the remains of the sticky cake.

Contemplating nature in the Australian landscape inevitably involves contemplating the vastness of time, and in *Picnic* there is a strong sense that nature and natural terrain constitute a window onto time. Lindsay was deeply interested in aspects of time and timelessness. She never wore a

watch and claimed that her physical body caused watches to stop (whether worn by her or people close to her). Whether true or not, she imagined and constructed herself as having a physical force that stopped time. The suspension of time is an uncanny element that features strongly in *Picnic*; at the base of the Rock all ability to measure time is lost when various watches stop. Mr. Hussey, the cab driver observes: "My old ticker seems to have stopped dead at twelve o'clock. Today of all days in the whole bloom-in' year" (P 24). Likewise Miss McCraw's watch: "Stopped at twelve. Never stopped before" (P 25). There is an uncanny effect created by the correlation of both watches stopping at the same time and the precise nature of the time at which they stop. The suggestion is that a supernatural force is at work which overwhelms human contraptions of measurement. Just as no measurements are (or can be) taken of the Rock, what happens occurs in a space beyond the ordinary forces of time or at least cannot be measured. This element corresponds to other uncanny phenomena such as the red cloud and the sound of drums. These suggestions hint at something which is unknowable, a void and a resonant absence, upon which the power of novel and film rely.

Lindsay explores aspects of time in the novel through a variety of literary techniques, including experiments with shifts in the tense of sentences. Chapter three describes the girls climbing the Rock with a mixture of past tenses ("Miranda had been..."; "Mike remembered..."); evocative descriptions of the Rock invoke notions of its deep history and yet juxtapose the sense of the past with a present tense which disorients the reader: "Huge boulders, originally spewed red hot from the boiling bowels of the earth, now come to rest, cooled and rounded in forest shade" (P 32). A shift to the present tense also gives a strong sense of the narrator present alongside the girls contemplating the landscape:

Who can say how many or how few of its unfolding marvels are actually seen, selected and recorded by the four pairs of eyes now fixed in staring wonder at the Hanging Rock? Does Marion Quade note the horizontal ledges crisscrossing the verticals of the main pattern whose geological formation must be memorized for next Monday's essay? Is Edith aware of the hundreds of frail star-like flowers crushed under her tramping boots, while Irma catches the scarlet flash of a parrot's wing and thinks it a flame amongst the leaves? And Miranda, whose feet appear to be choosing their own way through the ferns as she tilts her head towards the glittering peaks, does she already feel herself more than a spectator agape at a holiday pantomime? (P 33)

The sense of immediacy created by the present tense draws the reader closer to the moment and the girls' experience, creating the illusion of a timeless present, outside of the ordinary flux of history. Weir finds a filmic analogue in the slow motion shots at key points.

Moreover, in the final chapter Lindsay emphasises the idea of a suspended and endless moment:

It is happening now. As it has been happening ever since Edith Horton ran stumbling and screaming towards the plain. As it will go on happening until the end of time. The scene is never varied by so much as the falling of a leaf or the flight of a bird. To the four people on the Rock it is always acted out in the tepid twilight of a present without a past. Their joys and agonies are forever new. ... So on a million summer evenings the pattern forms and re-forms upon the crags and pinnacles of the Hanging Rock.⁵¹

Central to the author's conception is the idea of a "pattern" which repeats itself infinitely. Thus Lindsay seeks to reframe ideas of time in articulating the sublime, something beyond comprehension and not necessarily understood within a discourse of deity but which can possibly be approached through the idea of time generally and the immense age of the Australian landscape. The Rock embodies the horror of this immensity of time, which Edith articulates.

The void of *Picnic*, the gap in time and suspended state of timelessness within which the women disappear, is one of several elements of ambiguity through which Lindsay constructs a space of mystery. There is firstly the equivocal apparent status of the novel between fiction and fact, a suggestion followed by the film; both intimate that the events are inspired by factual events (although there is no evidence for this). There was also urban folklore circulating generally at the time of the film's release on theories of what happened to the girls at the Rock and tourists interviewed often expressed beliefs that the story was true. Mystery is also created through hints and suggestions of explanation that range from the material (either accidental or criminal—Irma is checked for evidence of sexual assault; the men are seen as potential suspects) to the supernatural (the red cloud, stopped watches, the description of the girls gliding over the Rock, "the absence of any kind of tracks" (P 55) and the fact there are no scratches on Irma's feet). A sense of mystery is also created with the strong emphasis on liminal states in the text (the girls falling spontaneously asleep at the Rock, Michael Fitzhubert doing likewise, Michael's various visions of Miranda and Albert's dream of his sister Sara). In Weir's film there is also the subtle suggestion of Miranda's premonition before the picnic, telling Sara

she must learn to love others. The idea of a random accident is undermined by Lindsay's references in the novel to a "pattern," which suggests a preordained event. In the novel Lindsay's matter of fact tone juxtaposes with the fantastical elements of the narrative, giving a faux naturalism to the uncanniness.

Metafictionality

In pastoral, the figure of the shepherd is a pretext for reflection, a stance, space and role from which to consider humanity's relationship with nature and experiences of love and loss, central aspects of the human condition. This role of the pastoral shepherd is inherently metafictional. The fact that pastoral works, literary or visual, include a philosophical, contemplative dimension results in the pastoral protagonist reflecting the creative persona behind the work. As the girls look down from the Rock at the human society they have left behind, pondering human existence and purpose, they reflect on the questions and ideas that the novelist and Weir are conveying through the process of publication. The girls, philosophising and later dancing on the Rock, creatively respond to the beauty around them, just as Weir's camera compositions and Lindsay's words articulate what it is to be immersed in the Australian landscape with its beauty and terror. What does the loss of beauty and life mean in the greater patterns of existence and what is the role of cultural creation in that process? Thus pastoral reflects back on its makers.

At the picnic grounds, in Weir's film adaptation (although not in the novel), one of the schoolgirls reads number 18 of Shakespeare's sonnets, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day." The sonnet, expressing the speaker's love for the young man, is self-reflective; it asks whether, in the process of writing poetry, the speaker should compare the beloved to a summer's day or whether the analogy, however beautiful, is in fact inadequate because of the natural flaws of reality (rough winds and the temporary nature of summer). Ultimately it is poetry that will preserve and grant immortality to the beauty of the beloved. In *Picnic*, one of Miranda's roles is that of the beloved, although the ideal she represents is also reflected generally in the schoolgirls as a group in the landscape. The theme of love in the sonnet is appropriate for a St. Valentine's Day picnic and the girls are absorbed by the abstract idea of love. The reciting of poetry in the natural landscape is a pastoral act, recalling the classical origins of the genre; Theocritus and Virgil's poems foreground acts of singing, reciting poetry and playing music in natural settings. The filmic episode of reading the sonnet also draws attention to the meta-poetic and meta-filmic aspect of

pastoral references; reading a poem about the immortality of poetry reflects back on the process of creating art itself and the potential immortality of the art object.

Metafictional elements are also interwoven into the novel. When climbing the Rock Miranda recalls a late nineteenth-century painting of it: "I remember my father showing me a picture of people in old-fashioned dresses having a picnic at the Rock. I wish I knew where it was painted" (P 35). Lindsay's footnote states "The picture Miranda remembered was 'Picnic at Hanging Rock, 1875' by William Ford, now hanging in the National Gallery of Victoria." Given that the novel takes the same name, the moment seems a metafictional one that takes the reader out of the present of the narrative, of the girls climbing the Rock, to reflect on Lindsay the author having knowledge of the painting and most likely being inspired in part by it. This is a moment where self-reflexivity mirrors the process of novel and film which are likewise "a picture of people in old-fashioned dresses having a picnic at the Rock." Miranda, like us, frames the Rock through a fictional cultural artefact of the past.

Conclusion

Picnic, in both novel and film, draws in various and innovative ways from the pastoral tradition. Pastoral embodies an encounter with the mystery of life because it situates the human at the liminal periphery of urban space and culture and at the frontier of that which humanity has emerged *from* and to which it remains tied, albeit estranged in many ways: nature. The pastoral genre is thus uniquely placed to philosophise on what the state of being human encompasses. It embodies recognition of loss and mutability while being concerned, through the process of art in song and myth, with articulating and transmuting the experience of loss. Pastoral deals with some of the most significant aspects of the human condition: its relationship to nature, its experience of beauty, desire and love, and the profound sense of loss at the core of life. Pastoral is a lament, a type of pining for the absent, past or future, for the loss of beauty and recognition of the ephemeral, transient quality of life. Of course *Picnic* is not entirely pastoral and it also draws on various other literary and filmic codes including tragedy, the Gothic, horror, the detective novel and the period costume drama. Nevertheless, it clearly enters into a dialogue with the pastoral genre; it has episodes and elements that are clearly drawn from pastoral including scenes of figures immersed in a picturesque landscape, the celebration of physical beauty, and the haunting soundtrack that invokes Pan, the god of universal nature. Most significantly the essence of the mood of *Picnic* is pastoral; this

melancholic atmosphere is a core vein of *Picnic* and reflects the inheritance of pastoral.

Ultimately in *Picnic*, immersion in nature leads to absence and loss. Mother Nature becomes a devouring mother, analogous to the disturbing headmistress of the college. As J.A. Wainwright observes, "Miranda and the others are swallowed whole (just as Irma is regurgitated "quite intact" a week later."⁵² Tableaux of beauty, of the natural Australian landscape and of female figures within it, are imbued with a deep sense of the tragic, foreshadowed from the beginning. *Picnic* ultimately does not attempt to console, rectify or repair. In its crafting of mystery, it recognises the power of the void—the lack of explanation. In this regard the published final chapter seems remote and removed from both novel and film.

In its depiction of a beautiful but dangerously consuming nature, the work plays on the deep anxieties embedded in the responses to the Australian landscape by non-indigenous Australians both in 1900, when the narrative is set, and in the late 1960s when the novel was originally published. It is of significance that *Picnic* was published in 1967, the year that indigenous Australians were granted the vote for the first time; legally and politically they shifted from an ambiguous status as natural features of the Australian landscape, problematic objects from the perspective of colonising Europeans, to legally recognised subjects and individuals. *Picnic* at some level registers this momentous shift with its resonant absence of Aboriginal characters (other than a brief mention of a tracker⁵³) and lack of indigenous presence in this landscape which is clearly sacred and missing its traditional custodians and guardians. European responses to the Australian landscape necessarily entail the violent juxtapositions of ideas of "time" and the clash between supposedly "old" Europe embodied in the relatively "young" Australian national entity, and its continuing encounter, reiterated with the 1967 referendum, with a timeless Australian landscape, ancient indigenous culture and newly recognised political voice. *Picnic* seems to reverberate with a sense of European alienation from the beautiful and terrifying landscape with which it is confronted.

The loss which *Picnic* articulates is bound up with empire. European culture, specifically English culture, has travelled, through the colonising impulse, beyond its comfort zone and *Picnic* articulates the point at which that culture fails to possess. Instead it unravels; civilised gentility of tea cups and long white dresses is no match for the Australian bush. White Europeans have annihilated the black human presence from the landscape of Hanging Rock, but the humans that now occupy it are inherently fragile and ill-equipped for the landscape they purport to possess; thus some will not survive their encounter with the Rock.

In the novel, fittingly, the last people to see the headmistress Mrs. Appleyard alive are a “shepherd and his wife,” pastoral witnesses who testify in court that they had seen a “a woman in a long coat getting out of a one-horse buggy at their gate” and “stood watching her walking off along the road in the direction of the Picnic Ground” (P 209). The shepherd’s location is at the edge of civilisation: “Very few strangers passed that way on foot” (P 209). The headmistress is described as a person who has remained cooed from and inoculated against the natural landscape: “Born fifty-seven years ago in a suburban wilderness of smoke-grimed bricks, she knew no more of Nature than a scarecrow rigid on a broomstick above a field of waving corn” (P 210). She embodies the authority of empire, tradition and European civilisation to which the Australian bush is an alien world; the close proximity of Appleyard College to the natural landscape has not resulted in any degree of integration or understanding of it. Mrs Appleyard has “[n]ever walked between the straight shaggy stems of the stringy-bark trees. Never paused to savour the jubilant gusts of Spring that carried the scent of wattle and eucalypt right into the front hall of the College” (P 210). Now, in her heightened state of livid fury at a landscape that has undermined her control, she confronts the unknown: “after a lifetime of lineoleum and asphalt and Axminster carpets, the heavy flat-footed woman trod the springing earth” (P 210).⁵⁴

Picnic engages with the pastoral tradition in multiple ways. In its portrayal of an intense, metaphysical and ultimately tragic encounter with nature, it is indebted to aspects of pastoral in the European literary tradition. The opposition between urban and natural space becomes magnified into an encounter and collision between a European culture, old in tradition but newly arrived, and an ancient and alien landscape and absent indigenous culture;⁵⁵ between supposed cultural order and wilderness/natural order; and between knowledge/certainty and the void/mystery. The lost women embody something of the height of humanity (abstract ideas of beauty and intelligence) as they become human sacrifices on a day devoted to love. Weir emphasises this idea of sacrifice with a low-angle shot of the circle of girls and Miranda raising the knife menacingly, as if to kill the cake.⁵⁶

For the early modern pastoral genre, deity in the landscape was assumed, whether Christian or displaced onto classical deities. In the twentieth-century secular landscape there is a void, an absence of deity which the Rock embodies and reflects. The Rock is a tangible absence, a space both solid and empty, a present material trace and embodiment of an unfathomable future absence. This idea is articulated in Lindsay’s final chapter where the “hole in space” that the girls disappear into is “a presence, not an absence – a concrete affirmation of truth.”⁵⁷ The Rock from a human

perspective embodies death, a tangible, material translation of what is ultimately impossible to articulate. Its age and immensity is terrifying from a human perspective because it is a reminder of humanity's short and fragile existence between the mountains of time during which they did not exist in the past and will not exist in the future. As Panofsky observes, the figure of the tomb (first appearing in Virgil's fifth *Eclogue* as a memorial to Daphnis) subsequently becomes "that almost indispensable feature of Arcady in later poetry and art."⁵⁸ In *Picnic* it is the Rock that constitutes the tomb of Arcady; it is the site of the missing corpses and a memorial of multiple layers of loss: the women, the school, the failure of Empire and European colonisers to truly possess and dominate the Australian landscape, the loss of the indigenous presence on the land, and ultimately a reminder of the impermanence and futility of humanity in the face of the Rock that is embedded in the millennia of the past and future.

Picnic celebrates the beauty of nature and young womanhood, and it mourns its loss. Written and filmed in an elegiac mode, it begins with love and ends with loss. It compounds and builds on loss, ultimately depicting an excess of death indebted to the tragic genre. In its crafting of mystery, it recognises the power of the void – the terror of emptiness and a lack of explanation. It thus touches the raw nerve of the human condition with its mystery and lack of consolation. If there is any consolation to be found it lies in Lindsay's emphasis on nature as an organic whole and the relatively minor role of humanity within it. Although the loss of pinnacles of beauty and wisdom are, from a human perspective, tragic, in the macrocosmic context of natural patterns, which the book particularly emphasises, there is perhaps no qualitative difference between the loss of Miranda and the withering of a perfect flower, both products of nature's patterns which encompass growth and destruction. *Picnic* is a powerful pastoral tragedy that warrants continuing investigation as a significant feature of the Australian cultural landscape.

University of Queensland
victoria.bladen@uqconnect.edu.au

NOTES

¹ Quoted in Paul Alpers, "Modern Eclogues," *Triquarterly* 116 (2003): 20-47.

² This image is a digital capture, along with those that follow. The copyright owner is

welcome to contact the editors at *Colloquy* if any copyright has been infringed.

- ³ Paul Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- ⁴ Charles Martindale, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 108.
- ⁵ The film adaptation was produced by McElroy & McElroy, in association with Patricia Lovell, with a screenplay by Cliff Green.
- ⁶ "[A] segment of the pattern begun at Hanging Rock literally burning itself out, five weeks later, in a city hotel." Joan Lindsay, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 171. Furthermore, Edith Horton dies relatively young, thirteen years after the tragedy; the cause of death is not cited (Lindsay, *Picnic*, 213). All subsequent references to *Picnic* will follow parenthetically in text, with the abbreviation *P*.
- ⁷ Karelisa V. Hartigan, "Artemis in South Australia: Classical Allusions in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*," *Classical and Modern Literature* 11, no. 1 (1990): 93-99; 93, 97.
- ⁸ Kathleen Steele, "Fear and Loathing in the Australian Bush: Gothic Landscapes in Bush Studies and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*," *Colloquy: text, theory, critique* 20 (2010): 33-56; 35.
- ⁹ Pastoral or "bucolic" poetry, is derived from the Greek word for herdsmen, *boukoloi*, and was first used to describe the poems of the Greek poet Theocritus (3rd century BCE) (known as idylls, from the Greek *eidyllion* "little form") which presented episodes of idyllic rural life and conveyed states of joy, tranquillity and celebration. These were imitated by the Greek poets Bion (2 BCE) and Moschus (c. 150 BCE), and then by the Roman poet Virgil (70-19 BCE) in the Eclogues (c. 42 BCE), who gave the genre an ostensible location (Arcadia in Greece) and many of the motifs used by later poets. M.C. Howatson, *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 89, 102-03; 294, 371, 594.
- ¹⁰ Martindale, *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, 115.
- ¹¹ See David Ormerod and Christopher Wortham's useful account of traditional and early modern pastoral in their edition of Andrew Marvell's pastoral and lyric poems. Traditionally, pastoral implies a comparison between different modes of life—the urban and the rural—asserting the superiority of the latter. Pastoral is an idealised vision of the rural life constructed from an urban perspective, an idea emphasised in Horace's (65-8 BCE) poem "*Beatus ille*" (c. 23 BCE) where the speaker, who celebrates the simple rural life, is revealed to be a moneylender who returns to live in the town. Early modern writers such as Marvell and Shakespeare complicated the traditional opposition of urban and rural life inherent in the pastoral genre, seeing a necessary interrelation between the two spaces and modes of life. The editors caution that contemporary considerations of pastoral have often "simplified and secularized a rich and complex tradition," and write that "for us pastoral is a place to be; for the Renaissance, pastoral is an ethical ideal to be striven for." David Ormerod and Christopher Wortham, eds., *Andrew Marvell: Pastoral and Lyric Poems 1681* (Perth, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2000), xxiv, xxviii.

- ¹² In Shakespeare, aspects of naturalism, the less idealised aspects of reality, intrude upon the potential romanticism of the shepherd's life. In *As You Like It* Corin, the shepherd, reports that he is unable to offer hospitality to Rosalind and Celia because he does not own the sheep and the property is to be sold, so his employment seems precarious. Touchstone is able to present both sides of the rural life—its attractions and drawbacks. In *The Winter's Tale*, the celebratory rural festival is an antidote to the tyrannical chill of Leontes' Sicilia, however it cannot completely repair the loss that has occurred.
- ¹³ Thus the myth of the Golden Age, the classical analogue to Eden, was central to pastoral. See Ormerod and Wortham, *Andrew Marvell*, xxxiii.
- ¹⁴ Glenn D. Novak and Myles P. Breen, "Anti-Melodramatic Realism and Narrative Ambiguity in Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*," *Review (West Georgia College)* 20 (1990): 1-14; 7.
- ¹⁵ Margaret Drabble, ed., *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 743.
- ¹⁶ Theodore F. Sheckels, "Fear in Peter Weir's Australian Films: A Matter of Control," *Antipodes* 23 (2009): 75-80; 76.
- ¹⁷ Joan Lindsay, *The Secret of Hanging Rock* (North Ryde; London: Angus and Robertson, 1987), 26.
- ¹⁸ *Alice in Wonderland* is referred to explicitly in Lindsay's novel (142) when Mrs. Fitzhubert is compared to the Cheshire cat. The appeal of the figure of Alice in Australian modern culture is also evidenced in the series of paintings by Charles Blackman entitled??.
- ¹⁹ Hanging Rock itself was also a popular subject in visual art, particularly in the work of McCubbin and Ford.
- ²⁰ The concept of *otium* entails a conception of leisure as a dignified state, separated from the practical materiality of ordinary life. See Ormerod and Wortham, *Andrew Marvell*, xxiv.
- ²¹ Maren Sophie Rostvig, in a landmark mid-twentieth-century study *The Happy Man*, traces the classical *beatus ille* tradition as it was interpreted in seventeenth-century poetry, using a series of labels to describe the various shifts that occurred in constructing the idea of a retreat to nature and the different manifestations of the figure in the natural landscape. See Maren-Sofie Rostvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Idea*, 2nd ed., 2 volumes. (Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press, 1962).
- ²² The contemplative life of the shepherd was often seen as closer to the prelapsarian role of Adam and Eve, whereas the husbandman was seen to lead the life of post-lapsarian labour. Abel, the first shepherd, was God's favourite, while Cain was the first murderer, farmer and builder of cities. See Ormerod and Wortham, *Andrew Marvell*, xxiv.
- ²³ Ormerod and Wortham, *Andrew Marvell*, xxxii.
- ²⁴ This is particularly evident in the work of Andrew Marvell; see my earlier articles: Victoria Bladen, "Arboreal Language and Otherness in Andrew Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House' (1651)," in *Langue Et Altérité Dans La Culture De La Renaissance*

- sance, ed. Ann Lecercle and Yan Brailowsky (Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2008), 101-29; and Victoria Bladen, "Andrew Marvell and the Tree of Life," in *Renaissance Poetry and Drama in Context: Essays for Christopher Wortham*, ed. Andrew Lynch and Anne M. Scott (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 269-84.
- ²⁵ Pastoral in its traditional form is often seen as having ended with the rise of romanticism: see Drabble, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 743.
- ²⁶ Marek Haltof, "The Spirit of Australia in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*: A Case Study in Film Adaptation," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 23, no. 3 (1996): 809-22; 810.
- ²⁷ Hartigan, "Artemis in South Australia," 97.
- ²⁸ John Taylor, "Introduction," in Lindsay, *Secret*, 2.
- ²⁹ Also see the arguments of Hartigan that the mythic figures of Artemis, Orpheus and Dionysus are potentially invoked (Hartigan, "Artemis in South Australia," 95); she argues persuasively that the power of the Rock suggests that of Dionysus (Hartigan, 96) and that the ascending girls evoke the three Graces (Hartigan, 97).
- ³⁰ Edith reports seeing "a funny sort of cloud[;]... this one was a nasty red colour" (*P* 64). In the myth of Io in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Zeus disguises himself as a cloud in order to rape the nymph Io.
- ³¹ James Doig, Patrick Lee and Brett McKenzie, "Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*: A Fortieth Anniversary Retrospect," *Studies in Australian Weird Fiction* 1 (2008): 171-183, 173.
- ³² Marion is attributed with mathematical and scientific knowledge: "Marion reflected out loud. Precisely as she would have stated a proven truth about an isosceles triangle. There was no real rancour in Marion—only a burning desire for truth in all departments" (*P* 34).
- ³³ Martindale, *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, 114-15.
- ³⁴ Augustus, the nephew of Julius Caesar, came to power in the aftermath of both the failed attempt to preserve the Roman Republic and a civil war; his reign saw the emergence of the Roman Empire, the subjection and domination of vast continental territories, not just local landscapes. The dispossession of some, in favour of Augustus' soldiers, thus reflects the larger process of dispossession inevitably involved in the process of forming an empire.
- ³⁵ Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 300.
- ³⁶ Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 300.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 300. See Panofsky's discussion of the iconography of the tomb in Arcadia in the art of Poussin and others.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 301.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 301.
- ⁴⁰ Elegy as a term may have been first connected with the Greek word for "flute" which accompanied the recitation of Greek elegies. Elegiac metre (alternative lines of hexameter and pentameter) was considered primarily as the metre of la-

ment (Howatson, *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, 208). The origins of pastoral elegy are generally located in Theocritus' first Idyll, although not technically written in elegiac metre (Howatson, 208) or Virgil's fifth *Eclogue* (Alpers, "Modern Eclogues"). A prominent early modern example of pastoral elegy is John Milton's *Lycidas*.

⁴¹ The centrality of elegiac mood to pastoral develops in the early modern period, according to Panofsky; while it is present yet "peripheral" in Virgil, it becomes, with Jacopo Sannazaro's poem *Arcadia* (Venice 1502) "the central quality of the Arcadian sphere." Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 304.

⁴² Reproduced in Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, fig. 91.

⁴³ Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 319, footnote 49.

⁴⁴ Steele, "Fear and Loathing in the Australian Bush," 38.

⁴⁵ Elspeth Tilley, "The Uses of Fear: Spatial Politics in the Australian White-Vanishing Trope," *Antipodes* 23 (2009): 33-41; 33.

⁴⁶ Douglas Keeseey, "Weir(d) Australia: *Picnic at Hanging Rock and the Last Wave*," *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 8, no. 3-4 (1998): 331-46; 331.

⁴⁷ Marek Haltof, "A Dream within a Dream," *European Journal for Semiotic Studies* 2, no. 1 (1990): 79-92; 80.

⁴⁸ John C. Tibbetts, "Adaptation *Redux*: *Hanging Rock* on Video," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (1999): 155-56; 156.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵⁰ Director's cut. Interview with Peter Weir.

⁵¹ Lindsay, *Secret*, 22.

⁵² J.A. Wainwright, "Desolation Angels—World and Earth in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*," *Antipodes* 10, no. 2 (1996): 121-23; 122.

⁵³ "[A] black tracker was being brought from Gippsland" (P 55).

⁵⁴ The woman begins to climb the rock, encountering a "large black spider" that heralds her end; as she looks around for something to kill it with she sees the apparition of "Sara Weybourne, in a nightdress, with one eye fixed and staring from a mask of rotting flesh" (P 211). The final description of Mrs. Appleyard's end is blunt and graphic: "[T]he clumsy body went bouncing and rolling from rock to rock towards the valley below. Until at last the head in the brown hat was impaled upon a jutting crag" (P 211).

⁵⁵ Hanging Rock is located within the Wurundjeri territory. After colonial settlement the Wurundjeri were dispossessed of the area by 1844.

⁵⁶ As Hartigan observes, "a sacrifice of sorts" is made to St. Valentine "when Miranda plunges the knife into a festive cake" (Hartigan, "Artemis in South Australia," 94).

⁵⁷ Lindsay, *Secret*, 30.

⁵⁸ Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 302.