

The Precarity of the Inarticulate: Two Kinds of Silence in Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*¹

Adam Hulbert
University of New South Wales

“Miranda... !” There was no answering voice. The awful silence closed in and Edith began, quite loudly now, to scream. If her terrified cries had been heard by anyone but a wallaby squatting in a clump of bracken a few feet away, the picnic at Hanging Rock might yet have been just another picnic on a summer's day. Nobody *did* hear them. The wallaby sprang up in alarm and bounded away, as Edith turned back, plunged blindly into the scrub and ran, stumbling and screaming, towards the plain.

This early moment of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1967)² is at the centre of a tragedy that ripples outward, spreading beyond the cloistered community of an all-girls boarding school and into the wider society of 1900s Victoria. The fate of a teacher, and of the three girls who wandered off during a school picnic, deep into the Australian bushland of Mount Macedon, remains unknown to the reader. The only clue is the parting scream of a fourth girl: she who is spared the silence inflicted on the others.³

This event is interwoven with two types of silence. Miranda's silence is that of the rock, which looms precariously over the commu-

nity until its moment of collapse. It is both an absolute silence and a productive force: it produces noise without making its own articulation; it inspires a scream and a landslide, but never projects its own voice. It is this occult silence that makes *Picnic at Hanging Rock* a preeminent antipodean weird tale, one that generates an inexplicable narrative force outside conventional genre categories.⁴ The inexplicable mystery was translated to film in 1975 under the direction of Peter Weir, and the tale seems to have lost little of its cultural relevance, having been slated for return as a television miniseries in the near future.⁵

There is a second kind of silence, which envelops the fleeing girl: if Miranda has become the silence of the rock, Edith has become the marginalised voice of the wild. A threat to the institution, Edith can no longer speak with the College's voice; instead, her scream is the articulation of an elsewhere that cannot be overheard. This second silence is desire; it is the silence that screams, the voice that exhausts itself into nothingness as it runs towards the words of the institution.

In many ways, the novel evokes a soundscape that is rich with silences that are both generative and destructive. Its literary soundscapes create and sustain various listening subjects in a field of plural relations. In this paper I examine these dual approaches to silence in *Picnic* and the precarious subjectivity that these quietudes both allow for and destroy. I also propose strategies for listening to these silences in new ways, reading them as phenomena defined by something other than the absence of sound.

Silence is Golden: Desire in the Soundscape

Readers first encounter silence in *Picnic* as biopolitical and European. Silence is a force that implies the domination of written literacy over the spoken word: "At Appleyard College SILENCE WAS GOLDEN, written up in the corridors and often imposed" (15). Silencing in Appleyard acts not only to subjugate the students, but also to control and police the soundscape. The disciplinary apparatus follows the same technics of suppression that allowed for the political silencing of the indigenous population with the doctrine of *terra nullius* ("no one's land"), which

had been applied by Europeans a little over a century prior—even if not in name⁶—to justify the British colonisation of Australia’s East coast and to silence the land rights and other claims of the country’s indigenous populations.⁷

Although Lindsay downplayed criticism of English colonisation in *Picnic*, she was able to beautifully articulate the seeming contradictions in the soundscapes of European education institutions within the context of the Australian bush in the twentieth century.⁸ In her autobiographical *Time Without Clocks* (1962),⁹ Lindsay opens the description of “Our School”¹⁰ with a redolent recollection of the schoolyard soundscape as transected by the acoustic traces of varied forces and incursions:

The busy hum of children’s voices from the little ginger school-house floating out over our paddocks had soon become as much a part of our life at Mulberry Hill as the clucking and cackling from the fowlyard and the continuous bellowing of Fulton’s Bull. Although the main ingredient in the school’s symphony was the basic hum—like the murmur of our own bees under the roof—there were the recurrent overtones, pauses, and changes of tempo with the jangle of the school bell that evoked the clatter of boots on the hard clay of the yard, the staccato shrilling of the teacher’s disciplinary whistle, the burst of throaty warbling of magpies in the school pines. The scholars recited *The Inchcape Rock*, shouted and sang, saluted the flag at the gate with suitable patriotic sentiments every morning at nine o’clock, droned out the multiplications table—even now the triumphant singsong ‘ten tens a *hundred*’ calls up a drowsy summer afternoon at Mulberry Hill and the shuffle of children’s feet on bare boards.¹¹

The technologies in this soundscape include those commonly used to structure the experience of time through sound. In particular, the school bell, an extension of the monastic regulation of time and space through bells, operates to produce a radiant territoriality that reconfigures time around institutional imperatives.¹² However, Lind-

say situates the institution in a wider ecology, problematising any straightforward opposition between nature and technology. The bell, for example, is described as part of a wider “symphony” and, in *Picnic*, the natural world and the innovations of human settlement follow a similar environmental logic. Mrs Appleyard’s College for Young Ladies is described as having “sprung up” alongside other houses “like exotic fungi following the finding of gold” (8), suggesting that the human desires of the gold rush share the same impulses as those that shape mycelial ecology.

At the close of the above passage in *Time Without Clocks*, when “the triumphant singsong ‘ten tens a *hundred*’ calls up a drowsy summer afternoon,” the collapsing of the repetitive multiplication tables into a rhythmic drone is hypnagogic rather than didactic, evoking a journey through differing modes of consciousness. In light of Lindsay’s attention to the relations of sound, repetition, and mental transition, it is unsurprising that the mathematics teacher in *Picnic*, Greta McGraw, disappears with the girls into atemporality. Through her discipline, McGraw becomes capable of identifying possibilities for new rhythms of relation. On the way to Mount Macedon, for instance, McGraw determines that there is time enough for the picnic by adjusting the timing of the return journey, using the Pythagorean theorem to do so (18). Of course, Pythagoras famously identified a rock as “frozen music,” and by attributing all movement in the universe to sounds that could be heard by the initiate, the Pythagoreans seemingly erased the possibility of objective silence altogether, localising it instead within the uninitiated as the deafening inability to listen to what is always already present.¹³

The opening passage of *Picnic* introduces another ever-present droning, this time from cicadas and bees:

Everyone agreed that the day was just right for the picnic to Hanging Rock—a shimmering summer morning warm and still, with cicadas shrilling all through breakfast from the loquat trees outside the dining-room windows and bees murmuring above the pansies bordering the drive. (7)

In this first sentence, the significant relation between sound, stillness, and movement is established. The day is “warm and still,” although haunted with the auguries of motion in its “shimmering” quality. The window, a technology often deployed to silence the soundscape and showcase the landscape, is left open, allowing sound to travel from inside to outside and vice versa.¹⁴ This augurs a kind of erasure of institutional silence as frozen into architecture: with the window closed, only functional sounds—those of the dining hall and the students having breakfast—govern the acoustic space; with the window open, however, this activity is exposed to the unpredictability of the soundscape outside.

The cicadas introduce into the sonic field a kind of droning quality that remains a ubiquitous and multidirectional constant, undergirding the other sounds of the novel, such as the activity surrounding Saint Valentine’s Day and the preparation for the picnic. The auditory expression of the emergence of the insects, which appear en masse after a period of years underground, suggests both the cyclicity of time and the transformative nature of the event. In tracing the role of insect sound in early musical practices, David Rothenburg notes the specific emphasis placed on the cicada in the anthropological research of Marina Roseman.¹⁵ For the Temiar people of the Malaysian Rainforest, the cicada’s sound is of far greater importance than the more tuneful birdsong, because the droning rhythms entrain the listener to enter a threshold consciousness leading to a trancelike loss of self. He draws attention to the song “The Way of Old Woman Cicada”:

Dancing in a slow step
 The green tinge of sunset and
 The late hour cicada sound
 Laaw Laaw marks the time
 Of dizziness, whirling and change.¹⁶

In *Picnic*, a similar dervish-like trance state is enacted in the final dance of Irma, who in the twilight “got up off the rock where she was lying and began to dance. Or rather to float away, over the warm

smooth stones” (33). During the course of her dance, Irma experiences what composer Marc Couroux has termed a “chronoportation”: a “time travel by amnesic recall, triggered by a given stimulus.”¹⁷ In fact, as the novel suggests, Irma is transported to “Covent Garden where she had been taken by her Grandmother at age six, blowing kisses to admirers in the wings, tossing flowers from her bouquet into the stalls” (34).

The narration of this transportive experience relates to Lindsay’s self-reported understanding of the relation between time and consciousness: “I’ve always felt that time is all around one, not just in a long line in a calendar,” she wrote. “I feel that one’s in the middle of time: the past, present and future is really all around and I’m in the middle of it.”¹⁸ The dance is the expression of this centre, this middle space, in which being a six-year-old is no less real than being one’s present age. The motif of flowers connects Irma’s experience to Lindsay’s own multimodal sensation of time in the region of Hanging Rock. In *Picnic*’s opening sentence, Lindsay is careful to note that pansies line the drive that leads out of the College and to Hanging Rock. In her own recollections, Lindsay recounts how at age three she uttered her first word while visiting Mount Macedon:

I was standing in the middle of a bed of pansies—really I’ve got an extraordinary memory for my youth, I really was only three—and I can remember standing up and I suddenly said “*beautiful*”; looking at the pansies, and they were smelling so wonderful, and I can still remember. And my mother said that was the first time Joan ever opened her mouth.¹⁹

There is a sense that, in her first contribution to the soundscape, Lindsay’s experience is wholly affective: the articulation of this word—“beautiful”—is as much a product of the landscape speaking through her as it is an effect of Lindsay’s own cognition.

The affective responses experienced both by Lindsay and other characters in *Picnic* is related to an involution of the ground and figure, the two categories of perceptual organisation proposed by the Gestalt

psychologists of the early twentieth century.²⁰ Lindsay studied as a painter prior to beginning a career in professional writing, and later married Daryl Lindsay, another painter, on Saint Valentine's Day in 1922. Throughout this period, Lindsay had spent time thinking about the landscape in terms of her characters' relation to the Australian bush. She stated that her impulse to write developed partly from her inability to paint people, and that she switched from painting to writing because she yearned to portray them: "I could draw trees, not badly I think, but that wasn't enough for me: I wanted to draw people. I was terribly interested in people."²¹ Despite switching mediums, Lindsay retained her keen artistic interest in the relation between character and environment. And it is likely that some of the inspiration for the title *Picnic At Hanging Rock* came from William Ford's 1875 painting *At the Hanging Rock* (1875), which is mentioned in the novel, and has hung at the National Gallery of Victoria, where Lindsay studied, since the Gallery purchased it in 1950.²²

In response to Stephen Downes's question in a 1975 interview, "What are the most important things people should get from *Picnic at Hanging Rock*? What is the novel saying?," Lindsay replied, "I think the main thing is the effect of the environment on character and vice versa. It's so tied up with, well, the background, presumably, although I would almost call it the foreground."²³ Lindsay's comments reflect her artistic, painterly vision. However, they also help to explain the unusual prominence of soundscape in the novel. Her refusal to fully separate the characters from their environment—to combine them with both the "foreground" and "background"—is part of the imagined horror of the text: namely, the recognised identity that has been transformed through an encounter into the unknown. Gilles Deleuze has described a similar process of human–environment synthesis: "When the ground rises to the surface, the human face decomposes in this mirror... It is a poor recipe for producing monsters to accumulate heteroclitic determinations or to over-determine the animal. It is better to raise up the ground and dissolve the form."²⁴ Lindsay explicitly evokes the figure/ground involution in the final chapter of *Picnic*, published separately and posthumously as *The Secret of Hanging Rock*,

when Miranda describes her relationship to the presence of a stone: “The monolith. Pulling, like a tide. It’s just about pulling me inside out.”²⁵

SILENCE IS GOLDEN, written in capitals, shouts of an institutionally-articulated subject as the foreground, and expects that this subject pre-exist as separate to a background of institutional time that structures a similarly silenced soundscape. However, silence as an imperative sublimates rather than erases desire, and *Picnic* shows the great strain of maintaining silence in the aftermath of the disappearance. Edith’s scream makes audible the horror that occurs when it is no longer possible for the institutional subject. By contrast, the silence of the rock is generative: those caught up in its tide are pulled inside out, until they listen to and articulate the dance of everything, to become a monstrous threat to institutional silence.

The Stillness inside the Whorling: Time in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*

If one silence in *Picnic* is an ordering of subjectivity into stillness, a second silence is produced through movement: the rock as a destination draws the party in increasing spirals as they weave higher and higher around the rock, until they are dancing and whirling silently on the plateau. This is the silence that Edith is unable to comprehend, and which leads her to run, screaming.

The transition between the two kinds of silence is not without violence, and perhaps for this reason the representatives of these two silences are both associated with evil at various points in the novel. Mrs Appleyard is recognised for her sadistic disciplining of Sarah, in particular; while the mysterious Hanging Rock maintains a dark presence on the visual horizon, jagged and foreboding. However, when Lindsay was questioned about the book as a “celebration of evil” in 1975, she responded definitively, dismissing the notion:

I’m afraid I don’t agree with that. I objected rather strongly—and it wasn’t until too late to say anything—when the film was widely

publicised as a “recollection of evil.” Well, I think that there is as much good as evil in that book... I think it’s a demonstration in many ways of love and humanity alongside its very sinister aspects. It’s so interwoven.”²⁶

Although it is tempting to view the novel’s encounter with the ineffable as a kind of Lovecraftian “weird realism,” the narrative’s characters are distinct from those of Lovecraft in that they are integrated within, rather than excluded by, larger cosmic interests (albeit unknowingly).²⁷ Much of what is terrifying or sinister in *Picnic* can be attributed to individual responses to the unknown, and this drives much of the characterisation in the novel, making the human reactions to the tragedy far more recognisably evil than the mystery of the disappearance.

One way to examine the operation of evil in *Picnic* is to return to the passage in *Time Without Clocks* in which Lindsay describes the soundscape of the school. Here, as she writes, “the scholars recited *The Inchcape Rock*.” As a reference to Robert Southey’s 1802 supernatural ballad, the allusion is a curious one; however, the poem foretells some of the novel’s themes.²⁸ In the original ballad, the Abbott of Aberbrothok places a bell on top of a dangerous sandstone reef near the coast of Scotland to serve as an acoustic warning to sailors during times of low visibility. When the waves hide the reef, the bell sounds in response as an alarm. At the opening of the ballad, the Scottish environment is still:

Without either sign or sound of their shock,
The waves flow’d over the Inchcape Rock;
So little they rose, so little they fell,
They did not move the Inchcape Bell.

To besmirch the reputation of the Abbott, Sir Ralph the Rover rows out into this stillness and, exploiting the cover of silence, removes the bell. Many years later, Ralph returns, laden with plundered wealth and, during a sudden storm, without the bell to guide him, crashes

into the reef. The sound of ringing accompanies his drowning. It is the peel of a bell rung by the devil to guide him into hell:

But even in his dying fear,
 One dreadful sound could the Rover hear;
 A sound as if with the Inchcape Bell,
 The Devil below was ringing his knell.

Although received as a cautionary tale, the ballad also recounts the impacts of two human actions in relation to the submerged sandstone. The presence of evil is not constituted by the reef itself but by the seafarer's response to it through both listening and silencing. In this context, the sound of the bell comes to symbolise the rippling of the sea's consequences.

Lindsay explicitly intended the narrative structure of *Picnic* to resemble a disturbance that has, like an object hitting the sea, radiating consequences:

I wrote that book as a sort of atmosphere of a place. And it was like dropping a stone into the water, I felt... that story, if you call it a story, that the thing that happened on St Valentines day kept on spreading, out and out and out in circles.²⁹

The emanative structure of the novel is evident as early as the first chapter, when Miranda proposes a toast:

Miranda had risen to her feet, a mug of lemonade raised high above her head. "To Saint Valentine!" "Saint Valentine!" Everyone including Mr Hussey raised their mugs and sent the lovely name ringing down the dusty road. (16)

The bell-like "ringing" of the toast radiates through the soundscape, as waves of sound transect the linear road. Indeed, the journey of the girls to Hanging Rock can be seen as a series of significant turns, each of which accompanies a correlative shift in visual and acoustic

perspective. The straight flat road to Mount Macedon, the crossing of the stream to the base of Hanging Rock, the series of aborted turns through the dense undergrowth, the circular ascension, and the whirling dance on the plateau: each of these movements have their corresponding soundscapes and specific modes of consciousness. At the same time, throughout this journey Saint Valentine, the subject of the toast, takes on a variety of characteristic forms.

Arguably the temporal setting of Saint Valentine's Day was a practical choice for Lindsay: it was one of the three dates that she cared to remember, as the anniversary of her first meeting with, and also of her marriage to, her husband, Daryl Lindsay.³⁰ However, in the narrative, Saint Valentine arguably serves several important functions beyond just sentimental or symbolic ones. Little is known about this Catholic Saint, aside from his martyrdom, and the historical record variously attributes his deeds to three different people with the same name.³¹ In fact, so little is known of him that, in 1969, only two years after the publication of *Picnic*, Valentine's name was removed from the general Roman calendar.³² Nevertheless, as the patron saint of (among other things) engaged couples, young people, bee keepers, travellers, epilepsy, and fainting, the invocation of his name, similar to the Abbott's bell in *The Inchcape Rock*, operates to signal the force of love as a guide through a turbulent dreamscape. It is the absence or silencing of love following the disappearances of the College students and teacher that tolls the funeral bell for, among others, the headmistress of the College, who suicides by throwing herself from Hanging Rock.

Lindsay's close friend, Philip Adams, wrote of Lindsay that "St Valentine's Day is her magic day, when the commonplace is overwhelmed by the extraordinary."³³ At the turn of the twentieth century Lindsay's family would all regularly receive anonymous Valentine's Day missives, which they kept and pored over. In a 1975 interview, Lindsay recalled their effects: "we never knew who sent them, [but] we thought they were from a mysterious man who appeared on Saint Valentine's Day and sent us these cards."³⁴ In *Picnic*, this mysterious man becomes the personification of a natural force: "Saint Valentine is impartial in his favours, and not only the young and beautiful were

kept busy opening their cards that morning” (9). In its impartiality and anonymity, love is, like the rock in *Picnic*, a silence that produces movement: partiality is not a quality of love but an effect of the relations and dreams it facilitates.

In the events prior to the eponymous picnic at Hanging Rock, the narrative moves between the principal characters, following their responses to their individual messages of love. It does so in a vicarious way, as though tracing the individual branches of a tree by the movement of wind passing through them. The picnic at Hanging Rock then moves away from these individual encounters and toward the silent forces that connect them. The flowing movement is stimulated by the excitement of the journey and the magnetic pull of the destination, which slows down the picnickers when they reach the site of their gathering. Here, even the surroundings seem symbolically attuned to this dissipation of movement. The flowing of the nearby creek, for instance, “ran sluggishly through the long, dry grass, now and then almost disappearing to re-appear as a shallow pool” (20). Slowness is evoked not only literally, but in the narrator’s long vowel sounds. This languid slowing down of time carries on to a deadening cessation: at one point, the group discover that, of the two watches possessed by members of the party, both had stopped working at twelve o’clock. The apparent freezing of time suggests that, somewhere along the journey to the grounds, the group had crossed a kind of threshold, after which linear time could no longer describe or record their experience. Acoustically, this shift finds its expression in the gradual cessation of speech and the emergence of silence: “the Frenchwoman, seldom at a loss for a word, even in English, found herself embarrassingly tongue tied” (23). This silence, which subordinates the noise of the College, allows the soundscape to foreground perception in the novel.

The Frenchwoman, a teacher named Mademoiselle de Poitiers, describes the impact of the pervasive languor of the scene on the existing regimes of activity and value:

Impossible to explain or even think clearly on a summer afternoon of things that mattered. Love for instance, when only a few

minutes ago the thought of Louis's hand expertly turning the key of the little Sèvres clock had made her feel almost ready to faint. It was unnecessary to consult a watch. The exquisite languor of the afternoon told her that this was the hour when people weary of humdrum activities tend to doze and dream as she was doing now. (24)

The experience of this new rhythm challenges de Poitiers's conception of love, inaugurating a narratological shift that reflects the beginning of a new movement. Whereas previously her thoughts had focused entirely on the object of her amorous feelings—her “beau” (he is incidentally a skilled watchmaker, and so a master craftsman of the technologies of institutional routine)—this stretching and slowing down of time into drowsiness makes her love seem distant, of diminished importance. This disorienting process foreshadows a transition from the proliferation of metonymic meaning in the novel, expressed as individual loves that are reflected in different lovers, to synecdochic meaning, signified by the universal, transpersonal love that Irma later expresses at Hanging Rock.³⁵

The metonymy of the leaving party is not lost on the observers, who take note of each girl individually. Michael and Albert notice the girls from a distance, and it is clear that Albert pays special attention to Irma, “that little beaut with the black curls” (28). Equally apparent later in the text is that Michael is fascinated by Miranda's grace; while Edith lags behind and crosses the stream clumsily. The moment in which the party crosses the creek exposes the individualities of the girls, each of whom crosses according to a particular mode of grace and balance. Albert's low whistle follows the party across the stream and, echoing the ringing of Miranda's toast in the previous section, foreshadows the shift from metonymy to synecdoche. Although it is intended for one girl in particular, the sound is indiscriminate, and it follows the whole party toward the base of Hanging Rock.

Crossing the creek brings the party directly into the presence of the proverbial Hanging Rock, a process of disorientation again marked by silence: “The immediate impact of its soaring peaks induced a silence

so impregnated with its powerful presence that even Edith was struck dumb” (29). Here again silence is encountered as a presence in its own right; and now it even has the power to “impregnate.” This moment of awe is the mute apprehension of the possibility of a whole, of something greater than what the contrasts and comparisons of metonymy can account for. It is a total image that collects together all the individual details of perception. The narrator herself seems to step back from the narrative to ask a riddling question: “Who can say how many or how few of its unfolding marvels are actually seen by the four pairs of eyes now fixed in staring wonder at the Hanging Rock?” (29)

The party’s apprehension of Hanging Rock inaugurates a revelation about their place within the dimension of time. The Hanging Rock exists in a different temporal order to that described by their biological clocks, or by the routine chronologies of their timepieces: the rock is at least a million years old. For Edith, this fact is an affront to her sense of orientation in the world: “at fourteen, millions of years can be almost indecent” (30). The very concept of “millions” threatens to subsume Edith’s individuality, the number insinuating that she herself is comprised of something beyond her comprehension, imagination, and control. This realisation makes her long for the previous silence of the novel—a soundscape in which the world was reduced to a solipsism consisting only of her individual phenomenological perceptions—and she puts her hands over her ears in a symbolic return to this space.

In the moving stillness there is the possibility of finding a rhythm that might connect the picnickers to the wider ecology. Any hope of this connection, however, is soon impeded by the party’s collective mode of habitual listening:

So they walk silently towards the lower slopes, in single file, each locked in the private world of her own perceptions, unconscious of the strains and tensions of the molten mass that hold it anchored to the groaning earth: of the creakings and shudderings, the wandering airs and currents known only to the wise little bats, hanging upside down in its clammy caves. None of

them see or hear the snake dragging its copper coils over the stones ahead. (30)

Silence carries the potential for hearing, if only one can pay attention to the wider ecology outside the “private world of [one’s] own perceptions.” That the girls carry around their own silence has been noted previously in the novel—at the picnic, where “the sunny slopes and shadowed forest, to Edith so still and silent, were actually teeming with unheard rustlings and twitterings, scufflings, scratchings, the light brush of unseen wings” (20–21). This occluded soundscape suggests the possibility for new and unnamed experiences as unarticulated relationships and the promise of knowledge outside of the language that composes the meaningful world.

The resonance of the figure of the snake with *gnosis* or knowledge in the Western mythic and mystic traditions suggests that what the girls miss here—what they *do not see*—is not simply the figure of the snake, but a spectre, one that will always remain beyond organised perception. In *The Secret of Hanging Rock*, a little brown snake leads the party to a crack through which the group eventually disappears. This crack is an empty space—it is literally a portal—through which the party vanishes. In her commentary on the final chapter, Yvonne Rousseau refers to Lindsay’s description of the “bruised, heart-shaped leaves” of Hanging Rock as an example of the author’s “Freudian symbolism, as if the birth canal was being entered to allow another birth to enter into the world.”³⁶ Rousseau ties the party’s disappearance to a transition narrative of the Dreamtime (Tjukurrpa), describing a story that transpires in atemporal rather than mundane time, and that derives from an occult tradition:

A human being’s body may lie tranced or dreaming while the consciousness moves about in astral form, invisible to others. In the same way, we may suppose that the Australian landscape has an astral body for use in its Dreaming, and that the people and the Ancestors who appear in Dreaming legends are mov-

ing about in the landscape's astral consciousness, having been removed from its physical awareness.³⁷

In this context, one aspect of the snake worth considering is its compulsion to shed the skin that it outgrows. An exemplar of this process is the Common Brown Snake. Living in a wide range of terrain throughout Victoria, it is likely to be the species of snake to which the text implicitly refers. Rousseau's explanation for the party's disappearance situates the girls' discarded bodies in a cave that was buried by the falling boulder described in the final chapter:

The boulder crashes down over the hole; that is, the landscape's consciousness has surfaced again in the waking physical world... True to the image produced later by hysterical girls at the College, the lost people now "lie rotting in a filthy cave"—a cave which they could never have entered except in the Dreaming state of the landscape.³⁸

The teacher and girls who do not return have crawled into this hole in mimicry of the snake.³⁹ As an initiation into silence, this disappearance into soundlessness recalls that, by shedding its skin, the Common Brown Snake reveals a soft underbelly, which allows it to move even more quietly across surfaces. The snake, as a symbol of gnosis, is revered in the hermetic tradition, while conversely reviled in Christian theology as the tempter of Eve. Similarly, the events that surround the party's disappearance may be seen either as involving a tragic death or a transformation; as with the the value of clocks, evil is a matter of perspective.

Silence and Time: Creating a Plothole to Swallow the Soundscape

If silence is at the heart of *Picnic*, Lindsay remains faithful to that silence throughout the novel, refusing to disclose the mystery of the girls' potentially horrifying disappearance. The text itself is ambigu-

ous as to whether it is based on true events. Famously, her dedication in the book reads as follows:

Whether *Picnic at Hanging Rock* is fact or fiction, my readers must decide for themselves. As the fateful picnic took place in the year nineteen hundred, and all the characters who appear in this book are long since dead, it hardly seems important. (6)

Lindsay's and the novel's abstruseness meant that, prior to the publication of the final chapter, a range of hypotheses presented themselves. Rousseau's *The Murders at Hanging Rock* (1980) presented some of the most extensive research in this area, and suggests a number of different hypotheses for the novel's events, including brutal murders, UFO abductions, and supernatural events.⁴⁰ All of these hypotheses find some purchase on the ambiguity of the text. In his preface to *The Secret of Hanging Rock*, John Taylor sees Lindsay's editorial decision to exclude the final chapter, and to thereby create ambiguity between fact and fiction, as crucial for drawing readers to the book and audiences to the film. He goes so far as to present the chapter as "the invisible foundation stone on whose absence the Australian film industry built itself."⁴¹

By her own admission, Lindsay imagined much of the story in a kind of hypnagogic state. She would watch it unfold throughout the course of the night, and then write it down in the light of the following day:

The characters just appeared before me... I didn't have to think about what they would say... they just said it. I didn't have to invent much consciously at all. I used to do much of my thinking at night, lying in bed, and I knew exactly what was going to happen next day and I would write it down.⁴²

In distancing herself from a method of consciously constructing the novel's characters (in her own account the characters came to her already fully formed and with names), Lindsay suggests how their

motives and most of the novel's symbolism had been inaccessible even to her.⁴³ She describes her experience of writing the story as unfolding “almost as if it was before me in a kind of... almost like a film, when I wrote it.”⁴⁴ In her account, Lindsay takes a pragmatic approach to writing the novel, responding to her creation as if it were a real experience, and implicitly denying any conscious process of symbolisation.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Lindsay's eschewal of method and her impatience for analysis do not devalue symbolic interpretations of the book. Rather, her method seems to compel any and all textual analysis to follow its own dreamlike logic—a logic in which fact and fiction become strangely fluid.

Rousseau's identification that the fourteenth of February, 1900, was a *Wednesday*, rather than a *Saturday* as in the novel, was one of the first cracks in the novel-as-truth edifice. Admittedly, this is the kind of historical detail that Lindsay cared least about. In *Time Without Clocks*, Lindsay opens with her father dressing down her mother: “Excuse me my dear but surely it was *Thursday* and not *Friday* you lunched with Aunt Lizzie.” In the following line she notes, “My mother was no more interested in dates than I am” (1). The dates themselves exist in terms of a relation to the world that is, for Lindsay, irrelevant, and has little to do with truth. When Lindsay was asked directly, “Is Picnic Fact or Fiction?,” she responded emphatically:

It's all so true to me. Fact and fiction in my mind are almost indistinguishable. The older I get things that some people call facts I don't...

I think you will find in 1000 years hence or in some other state of time that what we call fiction today may be fact. I'm being quite truthful about that. A great deal of the book is based on things that I've done and seen and know but they are fused into a thing, which I hope is a thing of beauty on the whole, and I suppose you would call that fiction. But it is an impossible thing to answer. Fact and fiction are so closely intertwined.⁴⁶

Here, Lindsay presents an immanent process wherein the seemingly solid edifices of fact and signification prove to be porous, flowing, and malleable. At any point in time, certain perspectives on fact and fiction will seem unassailable; but for each moment in time this is also liable to change. To experience “some other state of time” than the chronological, then, is to recognise the foundational contingency of measurable time or temporality.

This recourse to “some other state of time” was ever present throughout Lindsay’s life as a practical consideration. In several interviews, Lindsay notes her inability to wear watches or to be around people wearing them.⁴⁷ In one filmed interview she confessed a special talent:

I have an extraordinary gift—you might call it—or a very sinister one, of being able to stop people’s watches just by sitting beside them. I don’t know if I’ve stopped anybody who’s helped making this film. Quite often people say to me, “Oh my watch has never stopped before,” and I say, “I’m very sorry, but that’s probably my fault.” So I tell you that for what it’s worth. Perhaps there are other watch stoppers listening to me now, who will know what I’m talking about. I can’t tell you the reason, but it’s true.⁴⁸

Interestingly, although few studies had been conducted on time freezing at the time of this 1974 interview, the phenomenon of “watch stopping” is widely reported today. It has even recently been identified as particularly prominent among people who had approached the liminal threshold of a near death experience (NDE).⁴⁹ The recurrence of this anomaly for Lindsay meant that time was an ongoing preoccupation, a fact evidenced in the title of her autobiography, *Time Without Clocks*, in which she recalls the clocks in her house, *Mulberry Hill*: “The Sévres and ormolu clock... had ceased to function the moment it arrived and ever after, perched on the drawing room mantelpiece, looking as out of place as a person in fancy dress at a board meeting.”⁵⁰

Lindsay’s response to a question about time from Stephen Downes further clarifies her particular understanding of temporality, which

lies outside reason and disregards the importance of mechanistic measurement:

S. D. What is your preoccupation with clocks and time? Is there any reason for it?

J. L. Well, I don't know what you call a reason, it's just that I've always had strange views about time, possibly. Pre-occupation with clocks? I'm just not interested in them. I can't wear a watch.⁵¹

It is not surprising that Phillip Adams, who as a close friend of Lindsay's was familiar with her uniquely indifferent relationship to time, identified the suspension or manipulation of time as central to *Picnic's* mystery:

Re-reading the text I had in mind Joan Lindsay's obsession with time... Long before Einstein revealed his relativity theory, in which time ceases to be something solid and dependable and becomes elastic, Joan believed that it was somehow dreamlike, that yesterday is still with us while tomorrow is already here.⁵²

By his own admission, John Taylor, the Promotions Manager for Lindsay's publisher in Melbourne, Cheshire, was the first reader of *Picnic* to present a hypothesis about time to Lindsay herself. Lindsay rewarded Taylor for his insight by entrusting him with the manuscript of the missing chapter 18, which outlined the events of the last moments on the rock, although she ordered him to publish the chapter only after her death.⁵³

Both Taylor and Adams refer to a particular moment in chapter 3 of *Picnic* as pivotal since it confirms the importance of time in the novel. This was a moment in which a perceptual anomaly occurs after Irma's whirling dance and subsequent chronoportation on the plateau. Her dance finishes just at the limit of the rock face; but she seems to have remained in a kind of reverie, responding to Edith's insistent

complaints with a laugh. This is a threshold moment, one in which the cliff holds “the last light of the sun,” and when the transition into night seems imminent. Although night approaches, the rock shelf seems to exist in a kind of timeless twilight, without shadows or change, so that “clumps of rubbery ferns motionless in the pale light cast no shadows upon the carpet of dull, grey moss” (34). In a dreamlike consciousness, Irma notices the ant-like activity of a number of people below, seeing them as though through a mist. In her last connection with the events she sees below, she registers an acoustic event: “The ants and their business were dismissed without any further comment. Although Irma was aware, for a little while, of a rather curious sound coming up from the plain. Like the beating of far off drums” (34).

Irma’s perception is one of radical temporal disjuncture. Taylor and Adams both connect this event to one that occurs many hours later in the narrative, when the mass of searchers spread out and bang rhythmically on sheets of tin. This makeshift drumbeat not only offers a riddle but seems to reflect a rhythmic transition in the narrative sequence. The old order from the plains pulses through Irma like a heartbeat until it gradually slows, and then she and the other girls are entrained by a rhythm into unconscious rest:

Suddenly overcome by an overpowering lassitude, all four girls flung themselves down on the gently sloping rock in the shelter of the monolith, and there fell into a sleep so deep that a horned lizard emerged from a crack to lie without fear in the hollow of Marion’s arm. (35)

The trust of the lizard expresses a gentleness that comes from being in complete rhythmic synchronicity with the surroundings. This deep sleep marks a change from the motion of the plains to a stillness that reflects the silence of the monolith. They no longer simply journey towards the rock, but begin to take on some of its qualities, as if preparing for a new kind of tempo.

This temporal jump is, from the perspective of linear narration, a plot hole. Nevertheless, it is a plot hole that finds form as the organis-

ing fabric of the completed story. The initially-excluded final chapter is more explicit than the original publication, although still quite oblique, when it describes the missing girls' encounter with an enigmatic presence on the final plateau. Once again pulling the ground through the figure, Lindsay allows this plot hole to become a central presence in the story:

It wasn't a hole in the rocks, nor a hole in the ground. It was a hole in space. About the size of a fully rounded summer moon, coming and going. She saw it as painters and sculptors saw a hole, as a thing in itself, giving shape and significance to other shapes. As a presence, not an absence—a concrete affirmation of truth. She felt that she could go on looking at it forever in wonder and delight, from above, from below, from the other side.⁵⁴

The asignifying properties of this presence undermine any possibility for meaning, although its presence acts as a guarantor for meaningful relations, “giving shape and significance to other shapes.” When a plot hole or a silence organises a narrative around it, each moment will be an articulation that has its own weird, but complete, logic: this resonates with Miranda's adage in Peter Weir's filmic adaptation of the novel, that “everything begins and ends at exactly the right time and place.”⁵⁵ In one sense, this hole is to the narrative something akin to the “blind spot” that is always occluded by the perceptual apparatus of cybernetic systems. No organism is able to perceive the architecture of their own perceptual system, but each has a blind spot that is necessary for the perception of the world as a complete whole. In second-order cybernetics, the observing system is, through relation, able to articulate the limits of perception in other systems.⁵⁶

According to the final chapter, in the space surrounding the hole, time ceases to function entirely, and the girls' discarded corsets remain suspended in the air. By suspending time, the hole reveals that time itself is a creative, perceptual, and discursive solution to a problem rather than just an inevitability. For most of the girls, this exception acts as an attraction to a transpersonal subjectivity; for Edith, however,

it is pure negation, bringing about profound loss and “awful silence,” and the act of trying to hold on to a voice that cannot articulate the experience plunges her into temporary insanity (36). These different experiences identify the nature of this encounter as the recognition of asignification, which can be terrifying or liberating—not simply evil *per se*. Lindsay’s description of the time-frozen hole could equally be one of time itself: it is “not necessarily an evil force... it’s a primitive force.”⁵⁷

Encountering Silence: Asignifying Listening

Whereas the perspective from the rock shelf onto the plain had been “vague and distant” (34), the party had awoken into a new clarity, the confusion and fuzziness of sleep shaken off. This new understanding of reality is present even to the girls’ senses: it is a “colourless twilight” where “every detail stood out defined and separate” (35). Here all the parts of the girls’ movements express an order that was previously occluded, and the frozen music of Hanging Rock becomes defined as a pattern of awakening:

Everything if only you can see it clearly enough, is beautiful and complete—the ragged nest, Marion’s torn muslin skirts fluted like a nautilus shell, Irma’s ringlets framing her face in exquisite wiry spirals—even Edith, flushed and tirelessly vulnerable in sleep. (35)

This is the emergence of synecdoche: an order that is drawn from the movement and entrainment of the girls, rather than imposed on them through institutional learning. The narrative dwells on a nearby nest; it is untidy, “its every twig and feather intricately laced and woven by tireless beak and claw” (35). The turning and weaving movement that creates the nest echoes the previous movements of the party, including the “wiry spirals” of Irma’s ringlets and the fluted skirts like a “nautilus shell” (35), which reflect the journey’s “endless loops and turns of the wayward creek” (25). All these shapes are perfect because

they have emerged, even in their apparent incompleteness, as a result of the interaction between figure and ground. The spiral forms are the morphological traces of vortices—the balanced integration of experience and environment around a powerful but empty centre.

Hanging Rock achieves its fullest expression by drawing the party in to and above it, leading them to a place where a new foundation for signification awaits. Weathered and “pock marked” by experience, the monolithic rock is likened to “a monstrous egg perched above a precipitous drop to the plain” (35). It is shaped by the shearing of wind and time and ready to engender a new order. This is the stone that Lindsay throws into the world of her narrative. If it is to fall and crush the plain, and even the girls themselves in their existing forms, it is because the old description of reality can no longer be sustained by the founding metaphor. Through their journey, the girls weave a nest to create and nourish the conditions for emergence, but the nature of that emergence, when it occurs like a birth, is a mystery even to them.

At this point in the narrative, the turns of the other girls are lost on readers, and remain forever so. Even when Irma is discovered, alive and relatively unharmed, she has no memory of the events that have transpired on Hanging Rock.⁵⁸ Edith, into whose ontology we are now thrust, asks, “when are we going home?” (35) For her, home is not the new nest but the familiar locus of the plain, the zone into which she flees, running in a straight line, screaming. Within the narrative, Edith is treated with little compassion, which adds to her sense of aloneness. If she were able to recognise her place in weaving the nest for this new mode of signification, then our sense of distance and unfamiliarity would be less threatening; but as it is, we feel her abandonment deeply. Indeed, Edith’s disaffection is profound; not only does she lose sight of the girls, but contact with the sensory or perceptual world of sound, and consequently with her sense of embodiment, so much so that “the breathless silence her voice seemed to belong to somebody else, a long way off, a harsh little croak fading out amongst the rocky walls” (35). Unable to identify patterns of connectedness, or to discern aural relationships or agencies, she is prevented from locating her own sense of self.

Edith's "breathless silence" is not a lack of sound, but a lack of communication, as her loud screams fail to produce the connectedness for which she yearns. The wallaby stands in as an agent for, or as an inhabitant of, the primordial bed of complexity, and runs away in alarm from what is Edith's shocking articulation of her desire for order of the plains. The difference between the two orders engendered by the novel does not arise, however, because one is natural and the other unnatural. Rather, we find ourselves led beyond that distinction as the novel's cosmology introduces events that have a patterned significance, mandating that, like all perceptions, listening itself needs to be experienced in new ways. Unable to connect with this new sensory logic, Edith is flung between two silences: she moves from the silence of the plains back to the College, where, following the tragic disappearance of the party at Hanging Rock, institutional soundlessness is the political imperative—there must be "absolute silence until further notice" (70).

Lindsay's novel offers a way out of silence, but the escape method screams and is monstrous. Escaping silence involves journeying into the wilderness and listening to sounds without signification to connect with them in profoundly new and weird ways. Part of the terror of this form of listening is its virtuality, and the force with which it collapses what is known or knowable. For this reason, *Picnic* offers the possibility of love and connection as a guiding bell.

Naturally, asignifying listening forces us to turn fact into fiction when we seek to rearticulate this new soundscape; although, since all the sounds we have heard have long since fallen silent, it hardly seems important.

Notes

1. This paper uses and extends on material from an unpublished dissertation chapter titled "Implosive Listening in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*," in Adam Hulbert, *Turning and Returning: Composition in the Streaming Soundscape*, PhD diss. (University of Western Sydney, 2010).

2. Joan Lindsay, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1967; repr. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1986), 36. All subsequent page references are to this edition, and made in the body of this article in parentheses.

3. A fourth, Irma, is found later in the wilderness under a rock, although she is unable to recall any of the events. Clearly, some unspeakable trauma has occurred here; although, in a 1977 interview with *The Age*, Lindsay suggested that, in the film adaptation, “the horror was just slightly downplayed in parts,” especially when compared to the novel, which offered “a rather horrible description of the way the poor child looked.” See Stephen Downes, “Rock keeps its Secret,” *The Age* March 22, 1977, 16.

4. This is a weird tale insofar as it shares an enigmatic narrative, apparently outside any specific genre, with speculative “weird fiction,” a genre that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. Malcolm Crick, in his overview of the reception of *Picnic*, notes that its genre was contested at the time of its publication. One reviewer claimed it was “too sunlit to be gothic”; another likened it to a “faded watercolour”; a third suggested it would become a “classic of the macabre”; and a fourth identified it as “mythopoeic.” See Malcolm Crick, “Corsets, Culture and Contingency: Reflections on Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock*,” *Mankind* 15, no. 3 (December, 1985): 232.

5. See Cheryl Eddy, “Australian Cult Classic *Picnic at Hanging Rock* is getting a Miniseries Remake,” *io9*, 6 September 2016, <http://io9.gizmodo.com/australian-cult-classic-picnic-at-hanging-rock-is-getti-1786275668>.

6. The first legal usages of the terms *terra nullius* (and the related *territorium nullius*) took place in Berlin in around 1860, some 90 years after the European colonisation of Australia: see Andrew Fitzmaurice, “The Genealogy of Terra Nullius,” *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 6, and Chris Rudge, “Whence Terra Australis?” *Philament* 21: “Terror Australis” (2016): 3–5.

7. For further discussion of *terra nullius* in relation to *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, see Victoria Bladen, “The Rock and the Void: Pastoral and Loss in Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and Peter Weir’s Film Adaptation,” *Colloquy* 23 (2012): 159–184; and Kathleen Steele, “Fear and Loathing in the Australia Bush: Gothic Landscapes in *Bush Studies* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*,” *Colloquy* 20 (2010): 33–56.

8. In an interview, Lindsay was asked, “Is *Picnic* a story about the way in which English and all things English have trouble in settling into the Australian landscape?” In answer, Lindsay said, “No. I never thought of that at all... the book has no underlying digs at England at all.” See Downes, “Rock keeps its Secret,” 16.

9. Joan Lindsay *Time Without Clocks* (1962; repr. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976).

10. Lindsay attended Clyde Girls Grammar in nearby East St. Kilda.

11. Lindsay, *Time Without Clocks*, 94.

12. Interestingly, R. Murray Schafer has written of the importance of the bell’s audibility: “circling is quite literally true of the church bell, which defines the parish by its acoustic profile... those who could hear the bells were in the parish; those who could not were in the wilderness.” R. Murray Schafer, *Voices of Tryanny, Temples of Silence* (Ontario: Arcan Editions, 1993), 32.

13. Of course, Pythagoras’s authorship of this theorem is contested. See the discussion, for example, in Alexander Bogomolny, “Pythagorean Theorem” (1996), <http://www.cut-the-knot.org/pythagoras/>.

14. Schafer has suggested that the glass window often acts a tool of dislocation, “framing external events in an unnatural phantom-like ‘silence.’” See Schafer, *Voices of Tryanny*, 71.

15. David Rothenberg, *Bug Music: How Insects Gave Us Rhythm and Noise* (New

York: Picador, 2014), 162.

16. Rothenberg, *Bug Music*, 162–163.

17. Marc Couroux, “Preemptive Glossary for a Techno-Sonic Control Society (With Lines of Flight) Pt. 2,” in *the occulture* (March 9, 2013), <http://www.theoculture.net/preemptive2/>.

18. Joan Lindsay, interviewed in “The Writers: Archival Film Series II” (commissioned by The Arts Council of Australia, Mornington Peninsula, 1974), http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xf521f_joan-lindsay-interviewed_people. Produced at Lindsay’s home in Mulberry Hill, this recording also captures some of the surrounding soundscape. Further, Lindsay stated to Philip Adams that “To me time is all at once... the past, present and future.” See Philip Adams, “Philip Adams: About Time,” *The Australian*, April 5, 2008, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/life/weekend-australian-magazine/phillip-adams-about-time/story-e6frg8h6-111115975322>.

19. Lindsay, “The Writers” (emphasis in original).

20. Ibid. Also see, for instance, Johan Wagemans, et al., “A Century of Gestalt Psychology in Visual Perception: I. Perceptual Grouping and Figure–Ground Organization,” *Psychological Bulletin* 138, no. 6 (2012): 1172–1217.

21. Ibid.

22. Andrew Stephens, “Hanging out for a Mystery,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 21, 2007, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/victoria/hanging-out-for-a-mystery/2007/01/18/1169095907672.html?page=3/taglines,para.7>.

23. Ibid.

24. Downes, “Rock keeps its Secret,” 16.

25. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 28–29.

26. Joan Lindsay *The Secret of Hanging Rock* (North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1987), 24.

27. Downes, “Rock keeps its Secret,” 16.

28. See John Gray, “H. P. Lovecraft Invented a Horrific World to Escape a Nihilistic Universe,” *New Republic*, October 24, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119996/hp-lovecrafts-philosophy-horror>.

29. *The Inhcape Rock* is reproduced in full at http://www.bellrock.org.uk/misc/misc_poem.htm.

30. Lindsay, “The Writers.”

31. See Adams, “About Time”; Lindsay, *Time Without Clocks*, 1.

32. See William Saunders, “History of St. Valentine,” <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/history-of-st-valentine.html>.

33. See Catholic Online, “St. Valentine,” http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=159.

34. Philip Adams, “Into Another Dimension,” *The Age*, November 1, 1975, 12.

35. Joan Lindsay, interviewed by John Taylor, 1975, cited in Terrance O’Neil, “Joan Lindsay: A Time for Everything” *The LaTrobe Journal* 83 (May 2009), <http://www3.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-83/t1-g-t5.html>.

36. The movement of the party as a whole, from the College to their disappearance, could be mapped using Vico’s tetradic topology, as outlined in James M. Mellard, *Doing Topology: Analysis of Narrative Discourse* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press,

1987). The movement is also similar in tropic function to the fourfold movements in streaming fluids of dual speeds that allow for the formation of vortices, as proposed by Ernst-August Müller and Dietrich Rapp, "Streaming: A Picture of the Etheric," in *Towards a Phenomenology of the Etheric World*, ed. Jochen Bockemühl (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1985).

37. Yvonne Rousseau, "Commentary," in Joan Lindsay *The Secret of Hanging Rock* (North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1987), 52. Local historian Allan Maxwell's unpublished study of the region recounts the likely importance of Mount Macedon as a central place for various bordering tribes, and "the beginning of many Dreamings," such as "Fertility Dreaming, which includes the procreation and proliferation of all the native species of flora and fauna known to this area." Quoted in Stephens, "Hanging out for a Mystery," 11.

38. Rousseau, "Commentary," 48.

39. *Ibid.*, 52.

40. It is worth noting that Rousseau's provocative commentary suggests that each of the women who were able to enter the hole could be associated with totemic spirit animals, arguably as reincarnated spirits from the indigenous inhabitants: see "Commentary," 49. This is reflected, for example, in the description of Mrs McGraw's transformation, where her arms "became the pincers of a giant crab that inhabits mud-caked billabongs": Lindsay, *The Secret of Hanging Rock*, 32. Yvonne Rousseau, *The Murders at Hanging Rock* (Fitzroy: Scribe Publications, 1980).

41. John Taylor, "The Invisible Foundation Stone," in Joan Lindsay *The Secret of Hanging Rock* (North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1987), 18.

42. Downes, "Rock keeps its Secret," 16.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Lindsay, "The Writers."

45. Lindsay categorically denies the existence of any deliberate symbolism in the text, suggesting they "are unconscious symbols... I don't analyse it... I write just as it comes and then clean it up as well as I can as a professional writer." See Downes, "Rock keeps its Secret," 16.

46. *Ibid.*

47. See Lindsay, "The Writers," and O'Neill, "Joan Lindsay."

48. Lindsay, "The Writers."

49. See, for example, Cheryl Fracasso and Harris Friedman, "Electromagnetic Aftereffects of Near-Death Experiences: A Preliminary Report on a Series of Studies Currently Under Way," *Transpersonal Journal* 4, no. 2 (2012): 34–55. Lindsay's friend Phillip Adams provocatively outlined Lindsay's opinion of time in *The Australian*, explaining that "Joan rejected the belief in time, considering it a delusion."

50. Lindsay, *Time Without Clocks*, 59.

51. Downes, "Rock keeps its Secret," 16.

52. Phillip Adams, quoted at *Bookmice.net*, <http://www.bookmice.net/darkchilde/rock/picnictc.html>.

53. Taylor, "The Invisible Foundation Stone," 10–11. The chapter was initially excluded through consultation between Lindsay and the editors for literary reasons.

54. Lindsay, *The Secret of Hanging Rock*, 30.

55. Peter Weir (dir.), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Victoria and South Australia: Picnic

Productions, 1975).

56. On second-order cybernetics and ecology, see Søren Nors Nielson, “Second order Cybernetics and Semiotics in Ecological Systems—Where Complexity Really Begins,” *Ecological Modelling* 319 (2016): 119–129.

57. Downes, “Rock keeps its Secret,” 16.

58. In Lindsay’s *The Secret of Hanging Rock*, Irma is described as patiently waiting for an audible signal to come from the hole in order to go further: “How long had she been staring at the lip of the cave, staring and listening for Miranda to tap on the rock? Listening and staring, staring and listening” (33). Eventually, the rock’s fall excludes her entirely from the others.

