



WHAT IF? WHAT NEXT?

SPECULATIONS ON HISTORY'S FUTURES

SESSION 4B

THE COUNTERFACTUAL

Feedback Loops: Architectural History's Impact on Architecture

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WHAT IF ... HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND ITS ASSOCIATED NARRATIVES OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CULTIVATING A 'SENSE OF AUSTRALIANNESSE' IN THE 1960s-2000s? A CASE STUDY OF HANGING ROCK, VICTORIA

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What might be the intersections between historical knowledge (in the form of legislative acts and practice) and cultural landscape narratives? Using Hanging Rock, Victoria, Australia, as a case study, this paper examines cultural landscape historiographies and legislative acts, and recognised creative landscape narratives in the period 1960s- 2000s. It begins with Joan Lindsay's novel, Picnic at Hanging Rock (1967). This evocative story offers an insightful reading of the physical form of the wider landscape intertwined with the identity of the Rock. In the narrative the landscape is presented as both foreboding and welcoming, accessible and inaccessible, creating a heightened sense of mystery. By considering the activities and impacts of European settlers on the landscape, Lindsay reflects on the relationship(s) between people and place, highlighting evolving understandings through time. A historical review of legislative Acts associated with identifying and conserving cultural landscapes follows this exploration. As an example, the National Parks Act 1974 (Vic) outlined four conditions to protect a nature reserve: conservation of biodiversity, protection of natural phenomena, preservation of cultural values and promotion of these values through public enjoyment and research. The former Australian Heritage Commission, under the Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 (Cth), provided guidelines for the identification of cultural landscapes, categorising them as Evolving, Associative, and Designed Landscapes. These historical Acts focus a lens on national cultural values by seeing place as an integral component in creating communal identity. Additionally, they also set up guidelines for protecting and conserving natural and constructed landscapes. Arguably, the intersections between historical legislation and practice and landscape narratives have the potential to play an important role 'in cultivating narratives of identity'¹ or in Taylor's words, provoking a "sense of Australianness".²

Introduction

This paper asks what might be the intersections between a creative narrative in the form of a novel that uses landscape as a primary subject, and the legislated aims of ‘protecting’ landscapes. It posits that such an exploration may provide a deeper understanding of how landscape narratives and associated legislative acts play a role “in cultivating narratives of identity”.³ Scholars Bonyhady and Griffiths claim that “Landscape does not just shape language; the landscape itself is transformed by words, phrases and ways of telling”.⁴ They argue that this transformation is particular to the Australian landscape, that its landscapes lend themselves to the curation and collection of adjectives and experiences, and that this is presented through a strong culture of storytelling.⁵ Cultural landscapes in Australia also exhibit this connection. In his exploration of cultural landscapes in painting and writing, Taylor states that “written and artistic interpretations of landscape inform the concept that landscapes themselves are historical documents”.⁶ This notion reveals how the Australian psyche has become intertwined with its landscape through the prolific presence that it occupies in our cultural catalogue. Hanging Rock in Victoria, Australia (Fig. 1) is one example of such a cultural landscape with a strong presence in the Australian psyche. This site provides an opportunity for the examination of how a landscape can become embedded in identity through references in culturally important documents.

The paper begins by examining the narrative of Joan Lindsay’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and explores how Lindsay uses layers of time and a sense of mystery to reveal notions about colonial settlement in Australia, and how they have contributed to the identity of Australians.⁷ In the narrative, these themes become intertwined with the communities surrounding the Rock. They also inform the way in which the characters perceive themselves, the land around them, and relationships between people and place. This creative narrative has contributed to the cultural value of the landscape at Hanging Rock⁸ and influenced the content of Victorian heritage citations.⁹

Following this, the paper examines the legislation and guidelines that inform the basis for cultural landscape protection in Australia. The term “cultural landscapes” has emerged through the maturation of Australian heritage conservation policy.¹⁰ The paper explores four of these documents, tracking how they influence one another and how landscape is linked to Australian identity through policy. The descriptive transformation of cultural landscapes in these frameworks reveals how Australian cultural identities are shaped by landscape narratives and community perceptions. Intersections between creative narratives and policies reveal key ideas about how cultural landscapes have contributed to Australian identity.

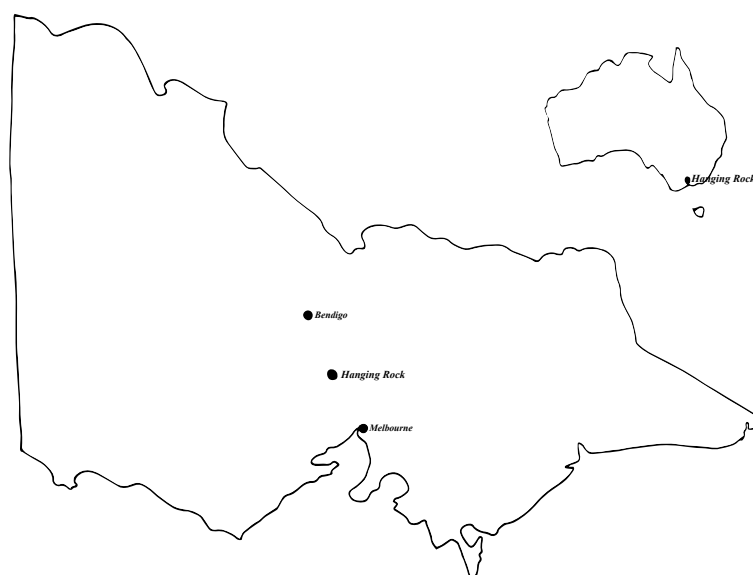


Figure 1. Location of Hanging Rock in Victoria (map drawn by author).

Picnic at Hanging Rock

Joan Lindsay wrote *Picnic at Hanging Rock* in 1967 and narrates the story of a school excursion that goes awry. On the 14th of February, 1900, Valentine's Day, a group of school girls go on an excursion to Hanging Rock. Whilst there, three of the girls, Miranda, Marion and Irma, and their maths teacher, Miss McCraw (Table 1) all mysteriously disappear. The story follows in the aftermath of the disappearances and captures the disrupted lives of the communities around Hanging Rock.

Character Name	Description
Miranda	Senior Boarder. One of the schoolgirls who goes missing.
Irma Leopold	Senior Boarder. One of the schoolgirls who goes missing, she is later found at the Rock by Michael Fitzhubert.
Marion Quade	Senior Boarder. One of the schoolgirls who goes missing.
Miss Greta McCraw	Mathematics Mistress. She accompanies the girls on the Picnic and disappears. She is Scottish.
Edith Horton	"The College Dunce". A younger boarder who accompanies the senior girls on their exploration of the Rock, but returns unharmed, albeit scared, after they vanish.
Mlle Dianne de Poitiers	The French and Dancing Mistress, she accompanies the girls on the Picnic to the Rock.
Mrs Appleyard	The Headmistress of Appleyard College, an English immigrant. The disappearance of the girls unravels the sense of order that she maintains in the college.
Michael Fitzhubert	An English youth who is visiting relatives and becomes obsessed with the mystery of the missing girls. He finds Irma stranded on the Rock a week after they disappeared.

Table 1. Key characters in J Lindsay's novel, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

Through distortions of time and a sense of mysteriousness Lindsay captures the essence of foreboding in the ancient Rock and explores the rippling impact of the Australian landscape on the characters' lives.¹¹ Importantly, Lindsay captures colonial Australia's struggles with identity in an unfamiliar environment and presents these struggles as intrinsically linked to the landscape.¹² The narrative explores these links through the various characters' perceptions and interactions with the landscape.

Time

Lindsay presents time throughout the narrative as a layered deep-time. She does this through juxtaposing the ancient and new, Hanging Rock versus manicured gardens, and warping the timelines of characters to present possibilities of future, present and past actions happening concurrently. Lindsay links the landscape to time by framing the Rock through distorted temporalities:

On the steep southern façade the play of golden light and deep violet shade revealed the intricate construction of long vertical slabs; some smooth as giant tombstones, others grooved and fluted by prehistoric architecture of wind and water, ice and fire. Huge boulders, originally spewed red hot from the boiling bowels of the earth, now come to rest, cooled and rounded in forest shade.¹³

The age of the Rock is said to be “a million years old”¹⁴ which both intrigues and terrifies the characters in the novel. The language used to describe the Rock is evocative of geological timespans. Rawness is juxtaposed with weathered finishes. Lindsay uses multiple contradicting interpretations and reactions to the landscape to reveal layers of time. Sculptural descriptions provide an artistic understanding, exposing high art elements in the perceived “architecture” of the Rock – the grooved and fluted tombstones are reminiscent of the large stone work in Greek temples. This Classical reading alludes to civilisation as understood by Europeans; further, the French teacher is reminded of a “Botticelli Angel”¹⁵ when looking at Irma, a reference to the Renaissance, the rebirth of Classicism. Language here draws upon references across time. The contrast is between civilised Classicism and the spewing of boulders from the earth evoking an uncontrolled and volatile reaction. Edith typifies this reaction: she is terrified by the age of the Rock. Fearing something that she cannot understand, Edith exclaims that the age of the rock is “horrible”. Indeed, Lindsay comments in the novel that “At fourteen, millions of years can be almost indecent”.¹⁶ This suggests that the naïve are unable to comprehend geological or classical beauty in the Rock. Instead, this beauty can only be appreciated by those characters in the novel who are educated and receptive to the Australian landscape.

The older girls, Miranda, Marion and Irma, destined to mysteriously disappear, characterise those who are open and receptive to the Australian landscape. They are intrigued by the age of the Rock, wanting to document and understand the way that it was formed. Lindsay describes each of them in turn, reflecting on the different ways in which people can find beauty around them:

Does Marion Quade note the horizontal ledges crisscrossing the verticals of the main pattern whose geological formation must be memorised for next Monday’s essay? Is Edith aware of the hundreds of frail starlike 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 toward the glittering peaks, does she already feel herself more than a spectator agape at a holiday pantomime?¹⁷

The language used by Lindsay casts doubt over a traditional understanding of time, as it explores landscape that provides an opportunity for the characters to be led by their surroundings. Lindsay presents different timelines for each of the characters, warping how they are situated in relation to one another, and creating multiple understandings of time. We can see that Marion is focused on the future, the use of “next Monday” suggests she is embedded in the structured time that is run by the school’s framework of due dates. By juxtaposing the ancient landscape with layers of the immediate concerns of linear time defined by school hand-in dates, the age and timeline of elements is brought into question. It suggests that the understanding of ancientness could be warped and manipulated depending on the circumstances of the characters: they are linked both forwards and backwards in time. This is reinforced by each of the girls in turn. Irma’s glimpses of flashes of birds, reminiscent of flames, evokes a volatile geological history and foresees the future of the Rock. The analogy alludes to past bushfires and foresees the future fire that will burn the school to the ground.¹⁸ In this moment the characters are fluid, their reflections on the landscape and the influence that it has over them removes them from the structured timeline of the narrative. The concurrence between notions of time and identity are reflective of “Australianness”. Rather than making an explicit comment, Lindsay provides the opportunity for the reader to question their own understanding of the age of the land – through experiencing and reflecting on the landscape can a settler come to reach a synthesised understanding of the age of the landscape and how they then fit into it?

Sense of Mystery

Throughout the narrative, Lindsay shrouds Hanging Rock with a sense of unfamiliar mysteriousness that engulfs the landscape and the characters in the novel. This connects different characters with different presentations and expressions foreboding mysteriousness, revealing how the Australian landscape might be perceived by people of different backgrounds.

Lindsay describes the Rock as “nightmarish”¹⁹ when conveying the struggles and fears that the European characters have of the Australian bush. This foreboding is conveyed (prior to their own direct interactions with the landscape) through the thoughts and actions of the two key English characters. Mrs. Appleyard, the headmistress, describes the Rock to the girls as “extremely dangerous”.²⁰ Michael sees the Rock as a “tough proposition”.²¹ Lindsay uses the characters’ understandings of the landscape to make it seem an incomprehensible mystery of nature. This sense of mystery then takes on dangerous overtones because it is so unfamiliar. The English presumptions about the landscape are contrasted with the way in which the disappearing girls move through the landscape. Described by Steele as being the more Australian of the characters in the narrative,²² they “slid(e) over stones on their bare feet”.²³ The surfaces of Rock barely touch the girls’ feet, and they themselves leave “absolutely no signs of disturbance more recent than the ravages of Nature over some hundreds of thousands of years”.²⁴ This harmonious relationship between the girls who are willing to explore the landscape and the Australian bush suggests that the younger generation, who are less confined by the rigour of the colonial past, can transcend past perceptions of the landscape as “monstrous”²⁵ and instead begin to see glimpses of the “splendid”.²⁶ Indeed, those who are more Australian are able to “dissolve barriers between culture and nature”.²⁷

Lindsay’s novel, through distortion of time and creation of mysteriousness through the unknown grapples with particular aspects of the Australian landscape and reflects on the curation of identity in communities. These themes are not unique to the narrative of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, they also appear in the heritage citations for Hanging Rock. The intersection between these reveal how creative narratives through story-telling, are influential in establishing values in cultural landscapes and how historiographies, legislative Acts and policies capture more nuanced aspects of interpretation and community perspectives.

Cultural Landscape Legislation

The definition of cultural landscapes in Australia has been developed over time through heritage guidelines. The development of “place” within heritage guidelines offered the opportunity for a “new nationalism”²⁸ that would be formalised through the protection of specific landscapes and buildings that told the narrative of “Australianness” that communities sought to recognise.²⁹

Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Register of the National Estate

In 1973, the Committee of Inquiry into the Register of the National Estate (Hope Inquiry) was constituted to determine the “things that you keep”.³⁰ Their report outlined growing community concern for the natural environment, and acknowledged the unique flora and fauna in the Australian landscape.³¹ The report defined eight categories for heritage conservation and protection; six of these comprised natural areas: National Parks; Caves and Geological Formations; the Coastline; Inland Waterways and Expanses; the Scenic Areas Otherwise Not Covered and Areas of Aboriginal Significance.³² The report also reflected the breadth of values that can be seen in the landscape, and highlighted the importance of community input. It embraced cultural landscapes, which officially refer to areas altered by humans, but also encompasses areas that have key historical events, narratives or images linked to them.³³

This growing sense of national values will certainly be confirmed and increase as the concept of the National Estate takes shape in the acquisition, protection and enjoyment of the national estate itself. Properly chosen, managed and presented, we suggest that these will become a focus not just for the pride of material possession, but something less tangible but far more valuable, the sense of pride in being Australian.³⁴

The reference to the pride of being Australian conveys the importance of the landscape in anchoring this “new nationalism”.³⁵ It shifts thinking into how places of national significance help people to form notions about who they are and how they belong to something bigger.

In 1991, Hanging Rock was formally listed on the Register for the National Estate (Table 2). The citation for Hanging Rock states that the landscape is important for its aesthetic values, scenery, viewing areas and “association with bushranger Dan Morgan [and] the Joan Lindsay novel”.³⁶ Thus the narrative of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* influenced the way in which the landscape came to be perceived and appreciated, and formally listed as part of Australia’s National Estate.

Register	Year Listed	Description (Key Portions)	Statement of Significance (Key Portions)
Victorian Heritage Register	2015	<p>Hanging Rock Reserve is a 67.6 hectare public recreation reserve, 7 kilometres north-east of Woodend, and 77 km north-west of Melbourne. Located in the north-west of the reserve is Hanging Rock itself, an unusual body of volcanic rock known as a mamelon, characterised by a complex of vertical and inclined pinnacles with large detached blocks and slabs. Geologically, it is noted as the best example of its type in Victoria. Access to the rock formation is through woodland of the lower slopes, via an asphalted pathway or alternative stairway. The summit, individual viewpoints and rock formations can be accessed from minor paths between rocks..</p> <p>This place is part of the traditional land of the Kulin Nation and it is recognised that there are Aboriginal values associated with Hanging Rock.</p>	<p>Hanging Rock Reserve is of aesthetic significance as an outstanding, distinctive and unusual place of natural beauty. The Hanging Rock formation has been recognised and enjoyed since the 1860s for its natural beauty, for its provision of spectacular views of the surrounding countryside, and as a backdrop to the variety of recreational activities conducted at its base. Visitors have climbed the formation since the 1860s, enjoying its unique spatial and aesthetic qualities and the experience of being within it, and exploring the formation and the surrounding woodland. The importance of its aesthetic qualities is demonstrated in the popularity of the reserve as a Victorian tourist destination over a long period. The picturesque qualities of the place, which unfold from a number of viewpoints, impart a sense of mystery and evoke a strong emotional response from the viewer. From the 1850s the unusual and distinctive physical features of the Hanging Rock formation have stimulated innumerable written and artistic responses, including sketches, paintings, photographs, writing, film and music. [Criterion E]</p> <p>Hanging Rock Reserve is socially significant for its continuous use and appreciation by the wider Victorian community as a popular gathering place for recreational purposes since the mid-1860s. This enduring association with tourists was reinforced by the production of the book (1967) and the film (1975) of <i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i>, which resulted in an increase in the popularity of the Hanging Rock Reserve as a destination for</p>

			local, Australian and overseas visitors. [Criterion G]
Register of the National Estate	1991	<p>Hanging Rock is a local landscape feature. It rises out of the a forest base in a cluster of vertical rock pinnacles to a height of 100m, contrasting dramatically with surrounding flat grasslands. At the base of the rock the vegetation provides enclosed forest scenery with additional interest from the resident wildlife which includes koala, wallabies and birds. Within the rock formation area there are a number of internal rock enclosed passages.</p> <p>From the summit lookout panoramas are experienced. An addition to the aesthetic quality is an aura of mystery surrounding the rock which is now entrenched in public perceptions. This is probably due to the rock being used as a hideout/lookout by the bush ranger Dan Morgan, being used in the Joan Lindsay novel Picnic at Hanging Rock as a place where mysterious and unexplained events occurred and the rock formations which create a formidable and imposing presence when experienced from the narrow internal passageways.</p> <p>Significant Indigenous values are known to exist in this area. The Commission is currently consulting with relevant Indigenous communities about the amount of information to be placed on public record.</p>	<p>Hanging Rock is important for its aesthetic quality for the following reasons: it is a landmark feature in the surrounding countryside due to its height and rock formations; it provides a variety of scenery of intimate forest areas with added interest from wildlife, enclosed narrow rock passages, and viewing platforms from which panoramas can be experienced; and it is perceived by the public as having an aura of mystery due it its association with the bushranger Dan Morgan, the Joan Lindsay novel and the uncommon rock formation with narrow but tall internal spaces. (Criterion e 1)</p> <p>The Commission has determined that this place has Indigenous values of national estate significance. The Commission is currently consulting with relevant Indigenous communities about the amount of information to be placed on public record.</p>

Table 2. Hanging Rock Citations³⁷

Burra Charter

Formulated in 1979 the *Burra Charter*³⁸ developed an Australian specific set of standards based on the international ICOMOS *Venice Charter*³⁹. It also built on the landscape conservation work initiated in the Register of the National Estate. The Charter emphasised “the conservation – not preservation – of places of cultural significance”.⁴⁰ It is within the definition of “place” that the continuation of the significance of landscape can be mapped. The dynamic nature of the definitions in the *Burra Charter* are recorded in Table 3. This details the progressive nature of heritage conservation and reflects the morphology of the Australian identity as it changes over time. However, it is not until 1988 that landscape appears as a specific component within the *Burra Charter* definition for “place”. The AICOMOS conference in that year, focused not just on landscape, but on cultural landscape, landscapes that provide a “broader notion of places, linking disaggregated aspects of the environment”.⁴¹ This definition removed the need for quantitative

analysis of the landscape and instead focused on community involvement, history and connection to the land.⁴² This development provided a distinctively Australian interpretation of heritage conservation and allowed for a national history to be told through the cultural landscapes that were conserved.

The *Burra Charter* is a key reference document for the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR),⁴³ which formally protects the landscape at Hanging Rock. Recognised in 2015, the VHR listing for Hanging Rock elaborates on the citation on the Register for the National Estate (Table 2). It states that the Rock is of social significance not only for those directly around it, but also for its “continuous use and appreciation by the wider Victorian community as a popular gathering place for recreational purposes since the mid-1860s”.⁴⁴ This wider appreciation reflects a broader definition and understanding of the importance of key landscapes in forming notions around “Australianness” particularly within city groups. The citation also looks at the impact that the novel and subsequent movies⁴⁵ have had on bringing the Australian landscape into people’s homes, and in this manner, shaping their perceptions on what constitutes an Australian landscape.

Year	Definition of Place in the Burra Charter
1979	Place means site, area, building or other work, groups of buildings or other works of cultural significance together with pertinent contents and surroundings. This includes structures, ruins and archaeological sites and areas.
1981	Place means site, area building or other work, group of buildings or other works together with pertinent contents and surroundings. Place includes structures, ruins, archaeological sites and areas.
1988	Place means site area, land, landscape , building or other work, group of building or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views. <i>Note: the concept of place should be broadly interpreted. The elements described in article 1.1 may include memorials, trees, gardens, parks, places of historical events, urban areas, towns, industrial places, archaeological sites and spiritual and religious places.</i>
2013	Place means a geographically defined area. It may include elements, objects, spaces and views. Place may have tangible and intangible dimensions . <i>Note: Place has a broad scope and includes natural and cultural features. Place can be large or small: for example, a memorial, a tree, an individual building or group of buildings, the location of an historical events, an urban area or town, a cultural landscape, a shipwreck, a site with in situ remains, a stone arrangement, a road or travel route, a community meeting place, a site with spiritual or religious connections.</i>

Table 3. The Definition of Place according to the Burra Charter as it developed.⁴⁶

Australian Heritage Council and Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
In 2004, the national government repealed the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* (Cth) and archived the Register for the National Estate. This was replaced by the Australian Heritage Council and *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).⁴⁷ The legislation that was developed under the Department for Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) aimed at protecting key landmarks and landscapes:

Heritage is all the things that make up Australia’s identity – our spirit and ingenuity, our historic buildings, and our unique, living landscapes. Our heritage is a legacy from our past, a living, integral part of life today, and the stories and places we pass on to future generations.⁴⁸

This statement emphasises the way in which landscapes are recognised for their significance to the development of Australian identity through storytelling. Most appropriately, it recognises how stories have the ability to pass on landscape archetypes as part of national values. When this is viewed in conjunction with the *Burra Charter* and the Register of the National Estate we can see how the progression of national values has widened to a more holistic understanding of landscape, which is now integral to the way in which our heritage defines the concept of “Australian identity”.⁴⁹

Intersections

The analysis of the landscape in the narrative of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and the associated heritage citations reveal certain intersections and juxtapositions that reflect the collective significance of landscape in arriving at a distinctive “sense of Australianness”.⁵⁰

Intersection 1: Language

The language used in both *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and the heritage citations for Hanging Rock, brings forth evocative atmospheres and a sense of mysteriousness which relate the landscape to notions of belonging and identity. This is particularly notable in the heritage listings of the Rock, where the narrative of the book has had a direct impact on the way the landscape significance is described. In the listing for Hanging Rock on the Register of the National Estate “The Rock” is:

Perceived by the public as having an aura of mystery due to its association with the bushranger Dan Morgan, the Joan Lindsay novel and the uncommon rock formation with narrow but tall internal spaces.⁵¹

Readers are led to see the landscape as directly contributing to the sense of mystery which provides for an appealing aspect to retelling the narrative. The heritage citations for Hanging Rock formally note the “uncommon rock formation with narrow but tall internal spaces” that create an “aura of mystery”.⁵² In *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Lindsay uses descriptors such as “hideous caves”⁵³ and “bottomless cleft”⁵⁴, referring to the geology, to create a curiosity and anxiety about the depths of the rock formations, which provide a myriad of places for the girls to have disappeared into. Rather than using language that captures an outward facing view or prospect, the novel looks inwards, to the endless depths of the Rock, both unknown and unknowable. It is possible that this sentiment reflects emerging understandings of the ancient land and its indigenous people, that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁵

In both the Register for the National Estate and the 2015 Victorian Heritage Register listing, the sense of mystery is maintained:

Picturesque qualities of the place, which unfold from several viewpoints, impart a sense of mystery and evoke a strong emotional response from the viewer.⁵⁶

When reflecting on the EPBC Act, which states that heritage protection is part of the stories that we tell future generations, we can see how imbuing the landscape with an element of mystery provides Lindsay with the basis for a story that people will connect with. This helps communities to relate more strongly to the landscape.

The desire for a notable landscape that contributes to peoples’ identity can be seen in the dramatic language used in the narrative of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and in the heritage citations for the Rock. In *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, personification of the Rock, presented through the repeated use of shadows that creep, forms the basis for a distinctive landscape. In the heritage citations on both the Victorian Heritage Register and the Register of the National Estate the landscape is listed as “dramatic”⁵⁷ - the Rock is described as “ris[ing] out of a forest base in a cluster of vertical rock pinnacles to a height of 100m, contrasting dramatically with the surrounding flat grassland”.⁵⁸ This provides a clear understanding that the Rock is a landmark. The notable landscape of the geology of Hanging Rock contrasts with and dominates the surrounding land, its “shadows spread”⁵⁹ literally and figuratively across the people and

landscape. This imagery is further pushed through the sense of a spreading “pattern”⁶⁰ that comes from the Rock “weaving and interweaving the individual threads of their private lives into the complex tapestry of the whole”.⁶¹ The landscape in Lindsay’s words, not only dominates the lives of the communities around the Rock in a visual way, but also influences their actions. The “drama” in the heritage citations can then be read with an additional understanding of how narratives of the Rock add aesthetic and emotional meaning to the landscape and create a deeper response in people and communities.

Intersection 2: Communal Experiential Qualities of the Bush

Communal experiences of the landscape shape the way in which the various people in the novel identify with place through shared values. Stories of community experience of place capture how the landscape can transcend the simple “yarn” and become embedded in how people reflect on their collective identity.

The narrative of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* captures themes of fear and admiration of the landscape through individual and communal experiences. This is highlighted in the way communities around Hanging Rock respond to the disappearance of the girls. The Rock’s influence over the people of Woodend (Fig. 2) is shown through scenes of people simply waiting for news or assisting with the search around the Rock, willingly travelling within the “Shadow of the Rock”.⁶² Lindsay reflects on the enveloping nature of the landscape at the coming of day’s end:

Across the golden plain long shadows were crawling out of the forest, over the thin lines of post and rail fences, a few scattered sheep, a windmill with motionless silver sails catching the last of the sun. On the Rock, darkness stored all day in its fetid holes and caves seeped out into the twilight and it was night.⁶³

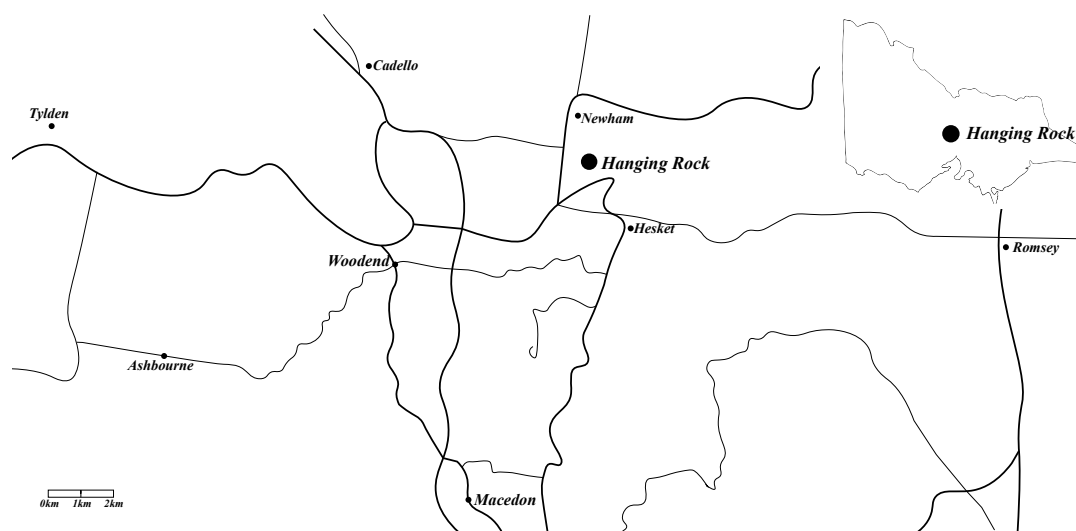


Figure 2. Location Plan around Hanging Rock (drawn by Author)

Lindsay palpably conveys the way the landscape of Hanging Rock influences the surrounding areas, shaping the way in which human elements such as the windmill and the fences are seen. Nature overwhelms humans in the Australian landscape, no matter what people bring to it; collectively their works will be altered and shaped by the landscapes around them.

The citation on the Register for the National Estate recognises this, emphasising that the Rock is noted for its “strong association with the social and cultural life of large numbers of Victorians”.⁶⁴ The Rock transcends being just a singular landscape or aesthetic, and instead takes on other values, as shown in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. As a place that is “highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational or social associations,”⁶⁵ Hanging Rock shows how the particular in the landscape can be overlooked for a wider more iconic understanding of the landscape experience.

When contrasted with the myriad of experiences that the landscape offers communities in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* we come to understand the cumulative influence that the Rock has over the surrounding community: as the narrative unfolds more people are affected by the Rock. This is most notably felt in the gymnasium scene of the novel, where the “communal vision”⁶⁶ of the school girls results in the physical harming of Irma (one of the originally missing girls), who directly experienced the power of the Rock:

The shadow of the rock has grown darker and longer. They sit rooted to the ground and cannot move. The dreaded shape is a living monster lumbering towards them across the plain, scattering rocks and boulders.⁶⁷

Place and imagination are inexplicably entwined. An oppressive presence triggers this vision, as Irma becomes part of the landscape after being lost at the Rock. In this passage, Lindsay removes elements of Irma’s persona. She is viewed by her old classmates through the lens of the shadows of the Rock and is thus rendered powerless. This communal vision of Irma suggests that Lindsay is observing the difference between an individual’s experience of the Australian landscape and the collective interpretation of the landmark. It also reflects an understanding of the power of the communal perception and vision of the landscape, and how this can shape the identity of communities. For example, traveling to The Rock to see the same view that someone else once did, forms notions of pilgrimage and rites of passage, which become foundational experiences on which a wider community can build identity.

Conclusion

The paper evidences a key intersection between Australian identity and landscape, through the examination of historical cultural landscape narratives in both literature and legislated heritage citations. In the example of Hanging Rock, the legislation and collective memory of landscape has driven the listing of heritage landscapes in order to protect these valued places that are integral to the shaping of societal and cultural identity. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* captures elements of how early Europeans in Australia struggled to settle in an unfamiliar landscape. By layering themes of time - juxtaposing ancientness and new, and warped timelines - and sense of mysteriousness represented in the hidden and unknown, Lindsay is able to interrogate elements we now associate with “Australianness”. Time distortion and the mystery of the unknown help the reader to reflect on how the communities and stakeholders around Hanging Rock curate key elements of identity. The presence of these themes, outside of the narrative and in the heritage citations for Hanging Rock, suggests that the novel has created a wider appreciation of the importance of this cultural landscape and directly influences the community’s own narratives of identity. Importantly, this paper provides insight into how belonging and identity in Australia have strong connections to distinct Australian landscapes. It further demonstrates how perceived identity values can be traced through landscape narratives such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, into heritage legislation to protect significant Australian landscapes such as Hanging Rock.

Endnotes

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² K. Taylor, ‘A Symbolic Australian Landscape: Images in Writing and Painting’. *Landscape Journal* 11, no. 2. (1992), pg.127-43.

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