

FACT AND FICTION IN JOAN LINDSAY'S PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK

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## ABSTRACT

Joan Lindsay's novel Picnic at Hanging Rock, has been examined on a variety of levels. Scholars have viewed the novel as a study of the conflict of humanity versus nature, in symbolic terms as the embodiment of an archetypal religious myth, as a philosophical treatise on the passing of time and merely as an ambiguous and sinister disappearance. The purpose of this thesis has been to discriminate between fact and fiction in Picnic at Hanging Rock, with particular reference to the education of women. The novel has been explored in historical terms in an attempt to ascertain how much it is a reflection of Joan Lindsay's educational experiences at the Clyde Girls' Grammar School and her social experiences as a daughter of a prominent Melbourne family. Lindsay's experiences as a student at Clyde Girls' Grammar from 1911-1914 and the lifestyle of her family provide a historical picture of an upper middle-class family and their pattern of behavior at the turn of the century.

This thesis examines Joan Lindsay's family, married life and literary works, paying particular attention to her childhood. The upper middle-class lifestyle, social mores and customs of the Weigall family provide much of the raw material for Lindsay the novelist's portrayal of turn-of-the century life at Appleyard College and the village of Macedon. This thesis also studies the staff, educational objectives and teaching methods employed at the fictional Appleyard College and compares these with a historical study of the staff and teaching practices of the Clyde Girls' Grammar of Joan Lindsay's experience. It concludes that although Lindsay has portrayed Appleyard College as institution with a shallow, haphazard approach to education, embodying all of

the negative facets associated with education of females in the Victorian period, the education offered at Clyde appeared to be of sound intellectual standard and of the best quality available to the females of her generation.

Through the characters in her novel Lindsay highlights different approaches towards education in the late Victorian era. Through Appleyard's imposing headmistress, Mrs Appleyard, Lindsay satirizes the attitude that social status is the most important value no matter what the cost. Mrs Appleyard is obsessed with her students' social background and displays little concern for their intellectual development. The character of Dianne de Poitiers plays out the role of the accomplished woman, a teacher who is hired for her ladylike appearance and demeanor and fluent French rather than any outstanding intellectual qualities. And in contrast to de Poitiers, Lindsay casts Greta McCraw as a mathematic mistress whose little appreciated mathematical brilliance and outlandish physical appearance designate her as a bluestocking. The different approaches of these two teachers personify the acceptable and unacceptable gender characteristics for women in the late Victorian era.

Lindsay would have been well aware that the superficial education offered at Appleyard College defended class boundaries and the lifestyle of the upper middle classes which she so humorously describes later in the novel. Her examination of the manners, prejudices and social practices of this privileged sector of society is humorous in its intention and often scathing in its perceptions. And although her depiction of Appleyard College is not a reflection of her years at Clyde, Lindsay's position as a daughter of a privileged Melbourne family has provided her with an intuitive understanding of the upper-middle-class lifestyle of the late Victorian era.

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## INTRODUCTION

Joan Lindsay's novel, Picnic at Hanging Rock, has been examined on a number of different levels. Joan Kirby in her article, 'Old Orders, New Lands: The Earth Spirit in Picnic at Hanging Rock', has compared the novel to E.M. Forster's A Passage to India and Nathaniel Hawthorne's A Scarlet Letter. In these novels the British have intruded on unfamiliar lands and in each case there is a resulting outbreak of inexplicable phenomena - as if the earth refuses to be confined by an unnatural sense, order or culture.<sup>1</sup> Anne Crittendon in her article, '"Picnic at Hanging Rock": A Myth and its Symbols', perceives the novel as a depiction of Australians' 'ambivalent attitude'<sup>2</sup> to the bush and in a broader context, humanity's uneasy relationship with nature. She compares the girls' ascent of the mount 'to divine glory'<sup>3</sup>, to a similar vision evident in Dante's Divine Comedy. In her article she views the novel as the embodiment of several age-old themes, those of 'civilisation versus nature, contentment versus aspiration and the material versus the ideal'.<sup>4</sup>

Yvonne Rousseau's 1980 publication, Murders at Hanging Rock takes a different approach. She offers a number of sophisticated and entertaining solutions to the Hanging Rock mystery. Her explanations for the girls' disappearance touch on elements of theology, alchemy, the occult and worlds of the supernatural. Rousseau even suggests that the two young men present at the scene, Michael Fitzhubert and Albert Crundall, might have been responsible for the death of the girls and their ill-fated governess. Rousseau writes from the viewpoint that the author's

intentions are not the most interesting aspect of the novel but rather the reactions and satisfaction of the reader are what count.

I disagree with Rousseau. Although speculating on probable solutions to the mystery may provide the reader with some satisfaction, the author's intentions remain of paramount importance. And it is my contention that Joan Lindsay set out not only to entertain with a spellbinding mystery, but also to capture the essence of the behavior and lifestyle of the upper classes in a precise period of Australian history, the twilight of the Victorian era.

The purpose of this thesis is to discriminate between fact and fiction in the novel Picnic at Hanging Rock and to ascertain how much of the novel, in terms of the society of Appleyard College and the village of Macedon, reflects Joan Lindsay's personal experiences at the Clyde Girls' Grammar School and also of her experiences growing up as an upper middle-class daughter during this 'still point' in Australian history.

Since the publication of Joan Lindsay's Picnic at Hanging Rock in 1967, the Australian public has been obsessed by the tragedy. Although legend has it that three Appleyard College school girls and a governess disappeared at the rock on Valentine's Day in 1900, there is no historical evidence that such a disappearance ever occurred. A comprehensive search of the February 1900 editions of the Age, Argus and Woodend Star made by the staff of the State Library found no references to such an event. Yet even though the disappearance of the girls and governess is fictional, the event still holds a significant place in Victoria's folklore.

The general public's perception of the tragedy at Hanging Rock is based on another false assumption, possibly perpetuated by Phillip Adams'

Age article of 1 November 1975 (later reprinted in the HSC English Resource Book 1977). In this article he stated that Joan Lindsay's novel sprang 'from her experiences around the turn of the century at her girls' school at Mount Macedon'<sup>5</sup>. Few people are aware of the fact that the Clyde of Joan Lindsay's experience was located in Alma Road in East St Kilda and did not move to its Woodend site until 1919, some nineteen years after the supposed tragedy and five years after Joan's last year of attendance at the school.

Although discrepancies in time and location are obvious, I wondered if each institution, the fictitious Appleyard College and the Clyde Girls' Grammar of Joan Lindsay's experience, offered a similar standard and style of education. Appleyard College stood out in my mind as a school which offered a poor quality education exemplary of all of the negative traits associated with the stereotype of education for females in the Victorian era. The education offered at Appleyard College emphasized feminine propriety rather than a commitment to the intellectual development of its students. Thus, I set out to discover if a similar kind of education was offered at Clyde. I also wondered if Joan Lindsay had based some of her fictitious characters on particular staff members and whether the style or quality of the teaching available at Appleyard College was indicative of her experiences at Clyde.

The Victorian Public Record Office introduced me to the forgotten world of Victoria's private headmistresses, teachers and schools. Here I began my investigation by researching into the background of Clyde's staff. These public archives, a series of interviews with Clyde old girls and the school's history, The Chronicles of Clyde, provided me with a



picture of Clyde Girls' Grammar. At this point I decided to broaden my perspective in an attempt to determine if other themes or motifs from Joan Lindsay's life were employed in the novel.

In a generous commitment to the arts, Joan Lindsay left her literary papers to the National Trust of Australia. An assortment of literary notes, letters, magazine articles, unfinished manuscripts, short stories, novels and critical commentary, as well as copies of most of her published works, are contained in thirty-two boxes stored at the National Trust's Tasma Terrace. The Museum Service of the Victorian Ministry of the Arts has catalogued the bulk of this material; however, many of Lady Lindsay's random thoughts and literary notes require further collation. It has been my great privilege to be only the second person to read these memoirs which are referred to by the Trust as the Mulberry Hill papers. From them I have been able to piece together a more accurate picture of her life, to ascertain some of the themes and motifs from her childhood which enter the novel, and to comment on what motivated her to write such a novel.

Chapter one of this thesis briefly examines Joan Lindsay's family history, her married life and literary achievements. Chapter two sketches Lindsay's childhood and provides a historical picture of an upper middle-class family and their patterns of behavior at the turn of the century. The social mores and customs of the Weigall family provide much of the raw material for Joan Lindsay's portrayal of turn of the century life at Appleyard College and the village of Macedon. Chapter three is a study of Appleyard College, its staff, educational objectives and teaching methods, and a comparison of these with a historical study of the staff and teaching practices of the Clyde Girls' Grammar of Joan Lindsay's experience.

Chapter four deals with her personal reflections on the nature of her education and her response to her years at Clyde. A dominant theme of this chapter is Joan's disdain of formal education which provides a vital clue in understanding her negative portrayal of education at Appleyard College.

The last chapter, entitled 'The metamorphosis of fact and fiction', explores several themes: it treats life at Appleyard College and the idle upper class lifestyle of the Fitzhuberts at Lake View as satire; it briefly touches on Joan Lindsay's philosophy of time; it examines her comments on the nature of Victorian education; and on a broader level it examines the social forces at work in the late Victorian period. Although the novel is written from the omniscient viewpoint, Joan Lindsay's views on a number of subjects are vividly portrayed through the thoughts and actions of her characters.

Although Joan Lindsay's Mulberry Hill papers provide the historian with a detailed picture of her childhood, family and literary accomplishments, the papers appear to have been deliberately selected and left in a systematic fashion in an attempt to leave a particular impression and to maintain her sense of privacy. In other words, anything of an extremely personal nature, for example, details of her courtship and long marriage to Daryl Lindsay or reference to her inability to have children, was not divulged. These omissions may very well have been a normal response from a woman of her historical era. In the absence of such personal details I decided to interview those who knew her well. Interviews with Rae Clements, her housekeeper of fifteen years, and Rick Amor, an

artist who resided for many years on the Mulberry Hill property, helped to shed further light on Joan Lindsay's character.

From these sources I have attempted to examine Joan Lindsay's Picnic at Hanging Rock in a new way. The novel is not examined as a study of the conflict between humanity and nature, nor in relation to its mythical or religious archetypes, nor as an ambiguous and sinister disappearance. Rather it has been analyzed in terms of fact and fiction in an attempt to ascertain how much of the novel, in terms of the society of Appleyard College, is based on Joan Lindsay's educational experiences at the Clyde Girls' Grammar School and her social experiences at the turn of the century as a daughter of a privileged Melbourne family.

## CHAPTER ONE

## ST MARGARETS TO MULBERRY HILL

In 1896, at the twilight of the Victorian era, Joan a Beckett Weigall was born in East St Kilda. Her mother, Anne Sophie Hamilton, had grown up in Dublin Castle where the Hamiltons resided when her father and Joan's maternal grandfather, Sir Robert Hamilton, was appointed Under Secretary to the Admiralty. Sir Robert was sent to Australia in 1887 and remained until 1892 in his capacity as Governor of Tasmania. He was accompanied to the Antipodes by his wife, Lady Hamilton, and his daughter, Anne Sophie, who was then in her early twenties.<sup>1</sup>

Joan's paternal grandparents, They're and Marion Weigall, resided in Walmer Cottage, Martin Street, Elsternwick. They're senior held the position of Curator of Estates of Deceased Persons. Joan's father, They're, the oldest of the five Weigall sons, was born in Elsternwick in 1860.<sup>2</sup>

Joan's mother Ann Sophie met They're a Beckett Weigall while he was an ambitious young barrister on a legal holiday in Tasmania. They're, finding it difficult to get Anne Sophie alone, proposed to her on the banks of the Derwent River. The couple formally announced their engagement in the grounds of Melbourne's Como House. Correspondence in the form of a letter written to Anne Sophie from They're in 1890 indicates that They're remained in Melbourne to continue his work and to organize the couple's domestic arrangements while Anne Sophie and her family returned to Tasmania. Lady Hamilton arranged the Hobart wedding reception 'down to

the last slice of wedding cake and champagne'<sup>3</sup> and the couple was married in 1890.

Arriving in Melbourne soon after their marriage, Anne Sophie and They're set up residence in St Margarets, a rambling twenty-four room villa, which was secluded behind a twenty foot cypress hedge, thus ensuring Anne Sophie's English desire for privacy. They're was said to have purchased the Alma Road, East St Kilda residence complete with all of its household contents, without a moment's consultation with his bride.<sup>4</sup> Anne Sophie accepted this 'fait accompli'<sup>5</sup> without a murmur as she had little disposition for housekeeping and in Joan's words was 'more or less unaware of anything but the delicious tides of her own music.'<sup>6</sup>

They're's legal career and family blossomed. He became an eminent King's Council and later a judge of the Supreme Court as well as the father of four children. Mim, Nancy, Joan and baby They're were soon residing at St Margarets and their upbringing was supervised by Anne Sophie as well as a string of nannies and governesses. The children were instilled with manners reminiscent of the finest English tradition and deemed well bred 'colonial charges'<sup>7</sup> of whom Anne Sophie could be proud.

Although the acquisition of a private governess signalled a family's prestige in the class conscious society of turn of the century Melbourne, governesses employed by the Weigall household varied in quality. Some succeeded in imparting academic and cultural knowledge while one was fondly remembered for having taught almost nothing<sup>8</sup> and leaving Joan and her younger brother They're high up in the Norfolk pine sucking on halfpenny sticks while she relaxed and savored the delicacies of morning tea. In 1909, at the age of thirteen, Joan was sent a few doors down in Alma

Road to Carhue to commence her formal education. Carhue was subsequently purchased by Isabel Henderson who amalgamated the school with her own Clyde. Thus Joan attended town Clyde in its East St Kilda location from 1911 to 1914.

Joan left Clyde in 1914. She briefly flirted with the idea of becoming Melbourne's first woman architect but acknowledged that she had 'omitted to find out that a stiff dose of mathematics - algebra, euclid, geometry and trigonometry was essential for a brilliant architectural career.'<sup>9</sup> Her aversion to clocks was also difficult to reconcile with such an occupation. Just before her 'indulgent father was about to put down a thumping sum'<sup>10</sup> in payment for the completion of her architectural articles, she decided that she was more suited to the study of art and directed her energies into becoming a professional artist. Accompanied by her cultured mother, Joan was interviewed by Frederick McCubbin, teacher at the National Gallery School of Art. She was accepted for entrance and attended the Gallery School of Art school during the First World War years, one of a number of female students taught by McCubbin and Bernard Hall. She experienced some success with her painting and staged an exhibition in July 1920 at Decoration Gallery in Collins Street where twenty-two of her forty paintings were sold.<sup>11</sup> It was at the National Gallery School of Art that she first laid eyes on her future husband, Daryl Lindsay. As stated in her unpublished autobiographical essay 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof', 'I liked the look of Daryl Lindsay and made up my mind that some day I would meet him'.<sup>12</sup> Joan was formally introduced to Daryl, the ninth of the ten Lindsay children of the renowned Creswick family, at a Melbourne dinner party. In Europe she renewed her acquaintance with Daryl and in London they

visited galleries, museums and mutual friends. Daryl commented on their developing relationship in his autobiography, The Leafy Tree, 'We soon discovered that we shared the same attitude to life and the things that mattered'.<sup>13</sup> After a short engagement the couple was married on Valentines Day, 14 February 1922. Unlike her parents' large formal wedding, Joan and Daryl were married at the Registry Office at Marylebone. Robert Lindsay, Daryl's older brother who resided in London, was the best man and upon the completion of the registry proceedings accompanied the couple to a party given in their honor at the Hotel Cecil. Prominent novelist Martin Boyd, Joan's cousin on the a Beckett side, attended the reception. The marriage linked two of Australia's leading artistic families, the Boyds and the Lindsays.

The couple returned to Australia later in 1922, first living in an apartment in St Kilda and then renting a house in Bruce Street, Toorak, where both concentrated on their painting. In 1926 the couple staged a husband-wife exhibition, said to be the first of its kind in Australia.

Daryl's country origins, the couple's love of privacy and the problem of agisting Daryl's horses in the grounds of Como House influenced the couple's subsequent move to the country. In 1926 Joan and Daryl purchased a four room weatherboard cottage on a seventeen acre block at Baxter. Architect Desbrowe Annears was employed and the original cottage was expanded into a spacious Georgian country home where the couple was to reside (apart from a brief spell at Bacchus Marsh during the Depression and their European and American tours) for the remainder of their married life. It was during this early period of residence at Mulberry Hill that Joan began to direct her creative energies

away from painting and towards writing. Although she still painted on rare occasions, and some of her water colors remain on display today, she considered her 'first love'<sup>14</sup>, painting, as passe and succumbed to her love of writing and fascination with the written word.

Her successful literary career spanned five decades and included several genres of writing. During the 1920s she worked as a journalist and published numerous feature articles for various magazines such as Talk, Home and Triad. These early articles, reviews of various exhibitions or interviews with well known artistic personalities, reflected her interest in the artistic world.

By the next decade the focus of her writing expanded. In 1936 under the pseudonym of Serena Livingstone Stanley she published Through Darkest Pondelayo, an account of two English ladies on a cannibal island, a satire on travel books written by pedantic travellers of her day. Early Melbourne Architecture: 1840-1888, was compiled by Joan, close friend Mae Casey, and three others in 1953. It was a photographic record of many of Melbourne's early buildings and still stands as an architectural reference text. In 1962 she published Time without Clocks, an autobiographical account of her life with husband Daryl, their early European travels and life at Mulberry Hill.

In 1962 the Carnegie Corporation of New York invited Daryl and Joan Lindsay on a study tour of the great American artistic collections. Facts Soft and Hard is Joan's entertaining and often humorous account of this journey. Undoubtedly Lady Lindsay is best remembered for her novel Picnic at Hanging Rock, published in 1967 and made into a feature film in 1975. After the completion of this novel she turned to a different age



group and wrote Syd Sixpence, a whimsical children's story illustrated by Rick Amor, an artist friend who lived on the Mulberry Hill property.

Joan Lindsay's literary career was not limited to these major works. When Daryl Lindsay took over as Director of the National Gallery in 1941, Joan became the first editor of the National Gallery Bulletin. She acted as a constant inspiration and behind the scenes assistant to her husband, serving as indispensable volunteer at the gallery where she worked three days a week, answering requests for information on paintings and porcelains. She was also active in community affairs and co-authored with her husband the Story of the Red Cross, a fundraising activity for the Red Cross Society undertaken during the Second World War. Joan was responsible for the research and writing of this historical sketch while Daryl arranged its illustrations and layout. Joan also acted for many years as president of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria and was a member of the Lyceum Club.

Although Joan and Daryl Lindsay never had children, they lived enormously full and varied lives. Joan spent many hours sitting on the floor of her upstairs 'sanctum' completing novels and short stories while Daryl, warmed by the fire of his studio, immersed himself in his painting. The couple respected each other's literary and artistic careers, leaving each other space to complete whatever had to be done. During the later years of their marriage, with the successful publication of Picnic at Hanging Rock occurring some ten years after Daryl's retirement from the National Gallery, Joan's career tended to overshadow that of her husband. Joan spent an enormous amount of time replying to mail about her novel and took an avid interest in its subsequent production as a film.

Joan survived Daryl by eight years and continued to write in her upstairs study at Mulberry Hill. At the time of her death she was working on a third autobiography entitled 'Alma Road' which focused on her childhood years preceding those portrayed in Time without Clocks and Facts Soft and Hard. She died in a Frankston Hospital in 1984 leaving the bulk of her estate as well as numerous unpublished novels and short stories to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

CHAPTER TWO  
 REMNANTS OF A MIDDLE-CLASS CHILDHOOD

In an unpublished memoir entitled 'St. Margarets', Joan Lindsay has described her childhood as an 'outwardly happy, uneventful, button booted pinafores childhood, under the straggly plum coloured roof of St. Margarets.'<sup>1</sup> Sheltered by its imposing cypress hedge, St Margarets was a paradise for active young children. The children used the spacious garden and bordering croquet lawns as a setting for countless games of hide and seek. Joan, her sisters and younger brother, with their knowledge of the villa's physical outlay, intricate mazes and spacious gardens, were at a distinct advantage, and visiting children invariably became lost.

Within the confines of this idyllic setting the children were supervised by Bertha, 'an elderly English nannie with pale yellow teeth and thin taut grey hair.'<sup>2</sup> Joan Lindsay felt that Bertha 'might well have been lifted bodily'<sup>3</sup> from a respectable Kensington premise and Joan compared herself, Mim, Nancy and young They're to typical London children. It was Bertha's duty to teach Joan and her siblings proper manners and speech, eradicating any hint of the insidious Australian twang. Bertha appeared to be selfless and single minded about her task; in Joan's words her ultimate goal was to achieve 'that mysterious product - a lady and a gentleman.'<sup>4</sup> The humorous tone of Joan's recollections implies that this undertaking was a painless if relentless process. Lindsay offers us an amusing and precise picture of an earnest nanny at work.

While the children were continually supervised and molded by the suitably attired Bertha, Joan's mother Anne Sophie continued to keep up the appearance of running a house, garden and family. Joan writes fondly of her mother's lack of interest in household detail. According to Joan, Anne Sophie wisely gave up attempting to organize the family meals. Each morning she participated in 'an after breakfast chat with the residing cook, a face saving gesture'<sup>5</sup> that allowed the cook 'a free hand'<sup>6</sup> and then adjourned to her Steinway grand piano.

Anne Sophie 's preoccupation with her music left her little time to become homesick for her English homeland. She also continued the facade of supervising a large home, extensive gardens and servants and participated in the common social rituals of the day. She took part in various social calls and left her visiting card if no one were at home. The hospitality enjoyed during these visits was returned at afternoon teas staged at St Margarets, its hostess serving 'thin bread and butter and afternoon tea from the best china.'<sup>7</sup> Anne Sophie also managed to appear at bazaars and tea parties 'immaculate in tight kid gloves and an immense wide hat laden with artificial flowers.'<sup>8</sup>

Although Anne Sophie participated with obvious flair in any required social occasion, be it the annual Cumloden garden party ('For the Sons of Gentlemen'<sup>9</sup>) or the Faireleight (predecessor to Clyde) annual break up, her true love and overriding obsession was her music. Joan described her mother as 'genuinely and passionately musical and almost entirely undomesticated.'<sup>10</sup> Joan was in awe of her mother's passion for music and her 'incomprehensible quality of being more or less unaware of

anything but the delicious tides of her own music flowing out into the old green garden.'<sup>11</sup>

The comforts and services involved in the Weigall's comparatively wealthy lifestyle were paid for by They're's successful legal practice. Joan writes of her father:

I knew that my father worked in a building called 'Selborne Chambers' which I envisaged as a two-storeyed house like Ravenswood with a lot of lawns dotted all over with big white chamber pots, like the one Nursie kept under her bed.<sup>12</sup>

Although They're was away at work much of the time and did not figure as prominently in Joan's memoirs, she gives the impression that he was a caring if sometimes eccentric, father. They're and his young son Boysie (young They're) participated in an unusual ritual. Each year They're, with Boysie positioned high upon his shoulders, would wander around the garden of St Margarets playing his flute in earnest.<sup>13</sup> A photograph at Joan's Mulberry Hill home attests to the fact that this routine continued for many years, as in it young Boysie perched upon his father's shoulders is no longer a baby but a strapping lad. In 'Scattered memories of a non-education' Joan wrote of a more conventional morning ritual with each day beginning 'as usual with a boiled egg, and a farewell kiss for Father at the front gate.'<sup>14</sup>

They're and Anne Sophie enjoyed a varied social life, often participating in formal balls and receptions. As a little girl Joan was fascinated by the various preparations undertaken by her parents when

dressing for a ball. Her vivid recollections bring to mind the repressed sexuality of the Victorian era.

But I can still see her beautiful round breasts as I stood on tiptoe beside her dressing table watching her reluctant bosom being coaxed into its whale bone prison of the stiff stained bodice . . . as my father could be heard struggling less expertly with a starched bow tie.<sup>15</sup>

Her parents would then depart for their destination in a handsome cab with a cabby dressed in a black bowler hat.

They're was also an avid tennis player who saved Saturdays and Sundays for tennis with Joan's Uncle Tom a Beckett. Sir Thomas a Beckett, for many years a controversial judge of the High Court, lived at Karbarool, a large Victorian house on the corner of Williams and Orrong Roads.

Joan's unpublished autobiographical essay, 'Alma Road', provides a vivid collage of her childhood memories.

Looking back on the first half of my childhood, and right up to the 1914-1918 war, life at 151 (Alma Road) builds up into a fantastic surrealist picture, Grandpianos in overcrowded drawing rooms, little slim parasols raised aloft by the ladies of St.Kilda against blistering summer sun (often 100 degrees in the shade,) handsome cabs, cable trams, parlour maids, tramps and sea bathing at Brighton Beach, billy tea with chops grilling over wood smoke only five miles from our front door.<sup>16</sup>

Joan describes her growing up years at the turn of the century as a lingering twilight of the Victorian Age.

Although Queen Victoria died in 1901, for Australians, thousands of miles distant, the so called 'Victorian Age' of rigid taboos and social prejudices, its manners and morals and heavy mahogany furniture, for those who could afford them, lingered on long after it had faded out in England.<sup>17</sup>

And it is precisely this era which Joan Lindsay so vividly recreates in her novel Picnic at Hanging Rock. Before engaging in a study of the manners, morals and customs of the upper classes of this lingering Victorian era it is necessary to look at Lindsay's depiction of the education offered at Appleyard College. The following chapter is a study of Appleyard College, its staff, educational objectives and teaching methods, and a comparison of these with a historical study of the Clyde Girls' Grammar School of Joan Lindsay's experience.

## CHAPTER THREE

## APPLEYARD COLLEGE 1900 - CLYDE GIRLS' GRAMMAR 1911-1914

One of the purposes of this thesis is to test the popular conception that Appleyard College of Picnic at Hanging Rock fame is in reality Clyde Girls' Grammar School, the place of Joan Lindsay's formal education. To what extent is Appleyard College, in terms of its historical setting, staff members, set curriculum and educational objectives, a true reflection of Joan Lindsay's educational experiences at Clyde?

Discrepancies of time and place are fundamental clues in the testing of this thesis. Appleyard College was located off the Bendigo Road near Woodend, some fifty miles north of Melbourne. The fictional establishment was founded by Mrs Appleyard who was 'newly arrived from England with a considerable nest egg and letters of introduction into some of the leading Australian families.'<sup>1</sup> The fateful picnic at Hanging Rock occurred on Valentines Day 1900, some six years after the school's inception. Clyde Girls' Grammar of Joan Lindsay's experience was located in Alma Road, East St Kilda. Its doors had been opened in 1910 by Miss Isabel Henderson and Joan Weigall attended Clyde in its East St Kilda location from 1911-1914. In 1919, five years after Joan Weigall's final year at Clyde, and nineteen years after the supposed tragedy at Hanging Rock, Isabel Henderson moved her school to its rural setting in Woodend.

Although Joan Lindsay never attended country Clyde, she would have been familiar with its building and grounds. Braemar, the school's new premises, was located on the wooded slopes of Mount Macedon. Built



in 1896 by the syndicate of William McGregor, C. W. Chapman, William Knox, J. C. Syme, William Jameson and Colin Templeton, it was designed by a Swiss architect as a convalescence home. When this venture was not profitable, Braemar was converted into a popular holiday resort which it remained until the beginning of the First World War.<sup>1</sup> Although its Swiss chalet lines and weatherboard construction do not replicate Appleyard College's mock Italianate design nor solid Castlemaine stone exterior, its setting and spacious grounds are similar.

An examination of the size of the schools further illustrates the differences between them. The fictional Appleyard College was an intimate institution. At the peak of its popularity, before the college crisis, only twenty students lived within the mock Italianate mansion. The Clyde of Joan Lindsay's experience was a far more populous and ambitious institution. On Clyde's original registration papers, dated 16 April 1910, Isabel Henderson listed her enrolment as one hundred pupils, seventy-six day pupils and 25 boarders.<sup>3</sup>

With such discrepancies in the numbers of students attending each institution, there are also differences in the number of staff members employed at each school. The Appleyard College teaching staff under the supervision of its headmistress, Mrs Appleyard, who taught the humanities and the occasional scripture lesson, consisted of Miss Greta McCraw, an elderly mathematics mistress, Mademoiselle Dianne de Poitiers, a vibrant young French teacher and dancing instructor and Miss Dora Lumley, a bumbling junior mistress who was later replaced by an equally unpopular Miss Buck. There was also a kind hearted visiting art mistress called Mrs Valange.

The staff employed at Clyde Girls' Grammar was on a much larger scale. On the school's original registration papers Miss Henderson listed ten registered teachers in the subprimary, primary and secondary categories, who were responsible for the academic subjects.<sup>4</sup> As well as these teachers Miss Henderson employed on a sessional or visiting basis twenty teachers of dancing, dressmaking, domestic science and carpentry.<sup>5</sup>

The qualifications of the staff members varied between institutions. It is never revealed whether Mrs Appleyard, Appleyard's imposing headmistress, possessed any academic training or experience in the field of education. Joan Lindsay implies that the fact that she looked precisely what the parents expected of an English headmistress was sufficient qualification. On the other hand, Isabel Henderson held official teaching qualifications. Born in 1862, she was one of seven children of the Rev. William Henderson, a Free Church of Scotland minister and the founder of Ballarat College. Educated herself at Ballarat College, she was one of six girls taught in a mixed matriculation class. Not a lack of academic success but rather financial considerations destroyed Miss Henderson's dream of becoming a surgeon. At the time of her matriculation in the late 1870s, the University of Melbourne Faculty of Medicine was not open to women. When it later accepted female applicants Miss Henderson's father had died and she did not have sufficient resources to support herself during the required period of medical training.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, in 1879 she became a student teacher under the guidance of Andrew Harper at the Presbyterian Ladies' College. Her original teacher registration papers, dated 17 May 1906, state that she acted as an assistant teacher at Clarendon College, Ballarat, from 1882-

1886. Shifting with her widowed mother to Melbourne in 1886, she spent the next five years at Tintern, then a private school located in Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn. During 1891-1906 she worked in partnership with Miss A. Garton and opened Kalymna School in Burnett St, St Kilda. The building at Kalymna became overcrowded, necessitating a change in the school's location to Oberwyl, also in Burnett St, St Kilda. The partnership with Miss Garton was dissolved in 1910<sup>7</sup> and Miss Henderson purchased Faireleight, located in Alma Road, East St Kilda, from the Misses Alice and Florence Chambers and Carhue from Miss Annie Stanley Henderson. The latter was no relation to herself but a member of the Anketel Henderson family, then leading Melbourne architects.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, when Clyde Girls' Grammar was opened in 1910 just before Joan Lindsay's attendance in 1911, Isabel Henderson possessed over thirty years of teaching experience.

Miss Henderson's 1906 registration papers also attested to her classification under the subprimary, primary and secondary classification and to the fact that she had been employed teaching pupils up to the matriculation standard in French, German, English, arithmetic, algebra, Euclid and physiology.<sup>9</sup> Her literary or academic qualifications were listed as having passed the matriculation examination of the University of Melbourne.

Unlike Mrs Appleyard at her fictional establishment, Miss Henderson did not act as sole administrator of her school. Mabel A. Daniell and Catherine Jane Remington, who had both accompanied Miss Henderson from Oberwyl, served as qualified and competent assistants to the headmistress. Miss Daniell began her teaching career in 1891 and had surmounted an early lack of confidence with a bright yet sarcastic wit.<sup>10</sup> Her strong

organizational abilities freed Miss Henderson from many of the details of the day-to-day operation of the school. Along with her normal teaching duties Miss Daniell acted as school bursar and organized extracurricular activities, such as the school magazine, and musical and dramatic productions.

Miss Remington was referred to as 'one of those happy persons' who had 'surmounted the first agonies of teaching and arrived in the peaceful waters of experience.'<sup>11</sup> Miss Remington's lucid expression and concern for the underdog were her outstanding features, while her zest for geography earned her the continued affection and respect of her students. At the time of their registration in 1906, both Mabel Daniell and Catherine Remington were registered on the primary roll and had completed their second year of an Arts course at the University of Melbourne. Miss Daniell's application for registration attested to her seven years' teaching experience to matriculation level in French, German and Latin,<sup>12</sup> while Miss Remington stated that she had been teaching geography and geometry from the primary grades to the matriculation level since 1892 with the exception of eighteen months study leave.<sup>13</sup> Both teachers continued their studies and gained Master's degrees from the University of Melbourne.

Evidence such as this suggests that Miss Daniell and Miss Remington were the backbone of Miss Henderson's academic staff. Miss Henderson and her two assistants would have formed a most experienced and organized body of teachers, and a very firm foundation for Clyde Girls' Grammar, a school in its fledgling years.

The most senior staff member apart from the headmistress at Appleyard College was Miss Greta McCraw. Although there is no way of

actually assessing her teaching qualifications, the fictional McCraw was academically talented. The narrator described Greta McCraw as a 'masculine intellect on whom she'(Mrs Appleyard) 'had come to rely on in the last years.'<sup>14</sup> Her mathematical brilliance, however, did not endear her to the other staff members or students. Miss McCraw, who listened 'exclusively to the music of the Spheres in her own head'<sup>15</sup>, was portrayed in a singularly unattractive and comical manner. The students laughed at her outlandish appearance and, apart from Marion Quade, the class genius, did not perceive her mathematical talents as important or meaningful. The implications of Lindsay's treatment of a mathematically gifted woman will be discussed later.

To ascertain whether a prototype for Greta McCraw could be found at the Clyde of Joan Lindsay's era, it was necessary to examine the Clyde staff lists for the years 1910 to 1915. A teacher called Helen E. McCraw did join the staff of town Clyde in 1913, the third year of Joan Lindsay's attendance there. According to her registration papers Miss McCraw was classified as a secondary teacher, having matriculated in English, French, Latin, algebra, history and botany in the year 1900.<sup>16</sup> After teaching at several schools around the Mair Street, Ballarat area, she acted as a governess at the Kurne-a-rue Station, Rokewood during 1902 and thereafter moved to Melbourne. When she joined the staff at town Clyde as resident mistress to the juniors in 1913 she would still have been a relatively young woman, unlike the elderly Greta McCraw at Appleyard College.

A former pupil of Miss Helen McCraw in the years 1916-1921, Mollie Turner Shaw described her as 'a nice cheerful woman';<sup>17</sup> hardly a detailed

description but quite unlike the Greta McCraw of the novel. Although Helen McCraw was capable of teaching mathematics as did the fictional Greta McCraw, there the similarities end. The Greta McCraw of Picnic at Hanging Rock was portrayed as an older, more isolated and unorthodox figure who, despite the fact that she had lived in Australia for some thirty years, 'remained oblivious to the vagaries of the Australian scene'.<sup>18</sup> Helen McCraw was a native of Ballarat who enjoyed a long and varied teaching career. After her fourteen years as junior mistress at Clyde, she moved to St Catherine's, Toorak, acting as chief-of-staff until she retired to her home in Kallista.

Mademoiselle Dianne de Poitiers, Appleyard's French and dancing mistress, was much admired and well respected by staff and students alike. Once again, the author has not divulged her academic qualifications. However, it appears that she has been hired for her ladylike demeanor and her fluent French rather than for any outstanding academic talents. In the narrator's words, 'The Headmistress knew a lady when she saw one and Mademoiselle de Poitiers was definitely a social asset on the staff, not to be easily replaced.'<sup>19</sup> Mademoiselle De Poitiers acted as the college's 'admired arbiter of fashion'<sup>20</sup> while her romantic nature, startling physical beauty and sense of feminine decorum are repeatedly emphasized.

Clyde's French teacher during Joan Lindsay's years was Madame Augustine Liet, a well qualified and experienced teacher. At the time of her registration, dated 26 May 1906, she had worked as a teacher of French in Melbourne for some twenty-three years.<sup>21</sup> In her registration papers she listed her academic or literary qualifications as Diploma of the University de France from the Academie de Poitiers,<sup>22</sup> the surname of the

much-loved French governess in Joan Lindsay's novel. De Poitiers, also the name of a famous Royal mistress of Henri II of France, is an interesting link between Clyde's French mistress and Appleyard's Mademoiselle de Poitiers, but here all similarities cease. In contrast to the quiet beauty and dignity of Mademoiselle de Poitiers, Madame Liet was said to be 'short, plump and bad tempered.'<sup>23</sup> Madame Liet took little interest in those who struggled with the complexities of the language and adored those who were gifted, whereas Mademoiselle de Poitiers appeared to have cared for all of her young ladies, displaying special concern for the orphaned, yet decidedly unacademic, Sara Waybourne. Madame Liet's sharp tongue and her ability to cause sheer terror motivated some of her students to further academic heights. The Liet Prize for French at the matriculation standard of the University of Melbourne was endowed in her honor by former students after her death.

Lindsay's choice of the contrasting personalities and behavior of McCraw and de Poitiers illustrates two different responses to the normal gender expectations of the Victorian period. McCraw, in her masculine pursuit of knowledge, has transgressed the boundaries of feminine learning and is portrayed as bumbling and unattractive. De Poitier's physical beauty, knowledge of European culture and fluent French, epitomize the attributes of the 'accomplished woman' who is confined to the feminine sphere. Her impending marriage to Louis Montpelier, a Bendigo watchmaker, signifies her success in attracting a husband who can afford to provide her with a leisured life, thus allowing her to resign from Appleyard College.

Now that a comparison of staff members of both schools has been made it is important to examine the nature of the curriculum, methods of teaching and educational objectives employed at each institution. The subjects of English literature, history, mathematics, French conversation, art and dancing were offered at Appleyard College. Although the college was only six years old it was already 'quite famed for its discipline, deportment and mastery of English literature.'<sup>24</sup>

Clyde Girls' Grammar offered a mixed curriculum appealing to academically inclined students as well as those in pursuit of a traditional girls' school education. Miss Henderson stated in the school's 1910 registration papers that all English subjects, modern languages, science, mathematics, Latin and Greek would be offered from the kindergarten level to senior public honors.<sup>25</sup> The diversity of subjects listed on the registration form suggests that Miss Henderson was attempting to emulate the hybrid curriculum of a middle-class boy's school, combining a sprinkling of the classics with modern subjects. Along with an intellectual type of curriculum, Miss Henderson provided the extra subjects common to the traditional girls' school curriculum. The cultural subjects of music and art as well as dancing, dressmaking, domestic science, and carpentry were all available at Clyde.

The differing curriculums of Appleyard College and Clyde Girls' Grammar are interesting when viewed in light of nineteenth century reform of the female curriculum. With its origins in the humanist principles of the ancient liberal arts tradition,<sup>26</sup> the traditional curriculum of the girl's school consisted of the accomplishments. Fueled by the British notion<sup>27</sup> that the accomplishments were the proper focus for the education of young



women, the homes of aunts or family acquaintances became the site of small gatherings of young girls who eagerly accepted lessons from the visiting masters of music, modern languages and painting. The accomplishment curriculum with its emphasis on music, French and cultural studies reached the Australian colonies by 1820 and was flourishing in Melbourne's ladies' academies in the 1860s.<sup>28</sup> In 1871, the University Council decided to admit women to the matriculation examination of the University of Melbourne. According to revisionist historian Marjorie Theobald, this decision was not motivated by Whiggish notions of progress towards educational equality with men but, was an attempt to gain control over the traditional 'form of middle-class female education.'<sup>29</sup> A pass at the matriculation level served as a de facto teaching qualification and in 1881 the University of Melbourne opened its examination in Arts to women and its Medical Faculty to women in 1886. As a response to these developments, many of the traditional ladies' colleges offered their students a choice of a more academic curriculum (Latin, Greek and mathematics) and enthusiastically took up 'the challenge of external accreditation'.<sup>30</sup> Despite many schools' efforts at preparing their students for success in the male academic domain, many continued their older tradition of female education along side, and sometimes at variance with, the male intellectual rituals.<sup>31</sup>

Historians of women's education have engaged in much debate over the merits of the female accomplishment curriculum, with some historians endorsing the thesis that such an education was superficial and lacking in sound intellectual quality.<sup>32</sup> Revisionist historians such as Marjorie Theobald argue that such an interpretation is too prescriptive and Victoria's earliest women's academies offered an enormous range and depth

of education, good, bad or indifferent in quality depending on the merits of a particular institution.<sup>33</sup>

Joan Lindsay's fictional portrayal of Appleyard College endorses the view of traditional historians, presenting a school as 'meretricious and misguided'<sup>34</sup> and lacking in sound intellectual character. Although by 1900, the sixth year of Appleyard College's existence, many battles had been fought over the reform of female education, the patrons of Appleyard College in its isolated, rural setting, remained oblivious. Appleyard College with its polite teaching of the accomplishments and grooming of students for the marriage market was a school sadly lacking in intellectual character.

Appleyard College's short lived fame was achieved by methods that were dubious and often bordering on cruel. A student's failure to achieve a set standard in a particular subject was often punished with disciplinary measures. The orphaned Sara Waybourne seemed to suffer the brunt of the college's discipline policy while other students were awarded order points for minor transgressions. Sara's inability to recite the 'Wreck of the Hesperus' caused her to be excluded from the fateful picnic at Hanging Rock and earned her solitary confinement. Although Sarah's gentleman guardian could afford the College's high fees, her inferior breeding and orphan status were scorned by Mrs Appleyard and Miss Lumley. The latter punished her for her poor posture and lapses of attention by attaching her 'to a padded horizontal board fitted with leather straps'<sup>35</sup> where she was shamefully forgotten.

Educational methods employed at Clyde served to prepare students for intellectual competition, and possible university entrance and were a

response to the more meritocratic ideal in female education<sup>36</sup> which evolved from the reforms of the 1870s and 1880s. The methods employed at Clyde did not appear to be as physically or psychologically cruel as those employed by Mrs Appleyard and her staff. Miss Henderson motivated her students by personal competition. Marks were awarded for every subject on a weekly basis and at the end of the week marks were totalled by the form mistress. Then at every Monday assembly the girls sat within their particular form in the place of their academic ranking.

At Appleyard College there did not appear to be any such overt recognition of students' intellectual achievements. In fact, the educational objectives of Appleyard College lacked any firm intellectual basis. The hidden curriculum, which emphasized appearances, proper manners and the right connections, superseded any intellectual aims. Mrs Appleyard's obsession with minor poets and rote memorization are symbolic of the college's superficial approach to education. Mrs Appleyard did not seat her students in terms of their academic standing as did Isabel Henderson but instead ranked her students in terms of their pedigree, paying homage to her students' ascriptive social characteristics rather than academic achievements.<sup>37</sup> Irma Leopold was a favorite because she possessed 'the most impressive parents on the college register: fabulously rich and moving in the best international society'.<sup>38</sup> Miranda, another favorite pupil, did not enjoy quite the lofty status as that of the Leopolds, as her family was 'not quite in the millionaire class';<sup>39</sup> but she nonetheless deserved respect as her family was 'entrenched in a setting of solid wealth and well being as one of Australia's best known pioneer families.'<sup>40</sup> Mrs Appleyard's main concern was to mold the behavior of her students to that

desirable for an upper middle-class lady and to reproduce the culture of the British ruling class. At the same time she enjoyed 'the respectable luxuries of life at Appleyard College'<sup>41</sup> while she lined her own pockets with the proceeds.

At Clyde Girls' Grammar the educational objectives were twofold. A competitive spirit was fostered in the academic area similar to that apparent in a middle-class boy's school. The merits of 'politeness, punctuality, neatness and quietness'<sup>42</sup> were also encouraged. If a particular student was not up to standard in these ladylike qualities she was said to be 'off honours'.<sup>43</sup> After prayers during the weekly Monday assemblies, Miss Henderson announced the names of the girls who were said to be 'on honours', attempting to emphasize success rather than failure. Thus, at Clyde, intellectual achievements and the attributes of ladylike behavior and decorum were being fostered. This brings to mind Sara Delamont's notion of double conformity,<sup>44</sup> an insistence on competitive spirit as well as a preoccupation with the virtues of feminine propriety. Although Clyde was espousing intellectual equality with male academic institutions, its emphasis of feminine propriety served to reproduce traditional gender characteristics within its students. Clyde not only defended traditional gender boundaries, but preserved class boundaries. Its exclusive fees, the highest of all of Melbourne's ladies colleges during this period,<sup>45</sup> served to deny equal educational opportunities and access. As at Appleyard College, only daughters of the privileged upper middle-class could afford to attend.

It is ironic that Appleyard College's fine reputation for the teaching of English literature rested on the laurels of Mrs Appleyard. The

headmistress's lack of knowledge in this field required her to be cautious in her treatment of literature '(one couldn't in her position be too careful; so many quotations turned out to be Tennyson or Shakespeare.)'<sup>46</sup> Mrs Appleyard's weakness as a literature teacher was not shared by Isabel Henderson. Joan Lindsay herself, in a personal tribute to Miss Henderson written sometime before the 1966 publication of the Chronicles of Clyde, paid the highest of compliments to Miss Henderson's abilities as an English teacher.

The thing that really mattered to me, and any girl who had the good fortune to attend Miss Henderson's English lessons, was her uncanny ability to get under our skins and communicate her own enthusiasms for life and literature. It was Miss Henderson who first made poetry come alive for me as a source of endless pleasure. She had the rare gift of lighting up whole territories of the mind by a seemingly casual observation in class, and was one of the few people I have ever known to whom I really enjoyed listening when she read aloud.<sup>47</sup>

Joan Lindsay continued by noting Miss Henderson's judicious approach to discipline. 'Our Head could turn on the thunder, when necessary, ... but never in my memory was her wrath directed at an individual wrongdoer. Isabel Henderson's rule was above all a rule of tolerance. And of love.'<sup>48</sup>

The Miss Henderson of Joan Lindsay's tribute has little in common with the fictional persona of Mrs Appleyard. Miss Henderson, who was known for her dedication, tolerance and willingness to hear every girl out, contrasts sharply with Mrs Appleyard, who shows little mercy for individual wrong doers, judges girls solely on their social status and indeed is only in the business for her own profits.

Mrs Appleyard's academic ineptitude and her mistreatment of individual students are in sharp contrast to the orderly and pristine appearance of her suitably select college for young ladies. Appleyard College at the height of its 'material prosperity', with its 'choicest hydrangeas' and afternoon teas served 'by maids in long tailed caps and frilled aprons'<sup>33</sup>, has an aura of wealth and power. Notions of academic integrity or compassion for individuals who were less fortunate did not enter the picture. Indeed the college was a sham, presenting a view of female education as costly, pretentious and solely geared towards grooming the daughters of the upwardly mobile for the marriage market.

Clyde Girl s' Grammar, in comparison, appeared to be an institution of serious academic intentions seeking to establish its credibility in a changing education arena. Young women were given the opportunity to achieve in the male academic domain and many responded eagerly to this challenge. Marion Wanliss in the class of 1914 (the same year as Joan Lindsay) entered the ranks of medicine. Leslie Henderson, a student who passed matriculation in the same year, went on to study law at the University of Melbourne. The academic achievements of these and other Clyde women helped to enhance Clyde's status as an academic institution.

According to Mollie Turner Shaw, prominent Melbourne architect and Clyde old girl, her western district parents sent her to town Clyde in 1916, as in its short six years of existence it had established itself in the forefront of women's education. Her older sister had been educated at the Hermitage in Geelong. Shaw suggests that in the six years before she commenced her own formal education, Clyde had established itself as the best of Victoria's private girls' schools and was viewed as on an intellectual par with Melbourne Grammar, Scotch College and Wesley College.

As well as establishing an academic institution that rivalled the existing middle-class boys' Public schools, Miss Henderson could be viewed as an educationalist in the broadest sense of the word. She played a prominent part in Victoria's educational history as the only female member of Victoria's Teachers and Schools Registration Board, which implemented the Registration of Teachers and Schools Act in 1906. She was also one of the original members of its successor, the Council of Public Education, an active participant in the Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria and its first female president. She worked tirelessly to promote domestic science to public examination status and was the only woman teacher elected by secondary teachers to represent them on the University's Schools Board. As a founding member of the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria, she acted for many years as its secretary. Unlike the fictional Mrs Appleyard, whose interest in education was solely a means to satisfy her own greed and ambition to enter the ruling class, Miss Henderson accepted great responsibilities and was a leader in the broader educational arena. She set an example as a new breed of

headmistress, a professional woman committed to public service rather than to private gain.

Now that a comparison of each school's headmistresses, staff members, educational objectives and practices has been made, it is apparent that Appleyard College and its staff members are creations of Joan Lindsay's artistic imagination and not an authentic historical account of her school years at Clyde. Appleyard College in its hey day, in its secluded Woodend setting, is exemplary of all the negative stereotypes associated with the education of females in the Victorian era. The qualifications of its headmistress are flimsy and its intellectual objectives shallow, while a preoccupation with class, social position and reinforcement of the status quo are its supreme objectives.

The Clyde Girls' Grammar of Joan Lindsay's experience opened its doors in its Alma Road, East St Kilda location in 1910, ten years after the demise of Appleyard College. Its highly qualified staff with Miss Henderson as its head offered educational opportunities for women in the previously male academic domain while also catering for the more traditional female accomplishments. Its success in both of these areas is a reflection of the ambivalent social forces of the day. Its curriculum catered for the different needs of a changing society where some women entered into and succeeded in the male education arena, while others remained satisfied with the status quo, enjoying a traditional girls' school education, either training for a life of leisure, marriage or philanthropy, or a combination of these.



CHAPTER FOUR  
REFLECTIONS ON A FORMAL EDUCATION

As Appleyard College and Clyde Girls' Grammar School were clearly two different institutions, one might question why Joan Lindsay the novelist chose to depict the education offered at Appleyard College in such a negative manner. A closer look at Lindsay's response to her own education will help to answer this question.

Joan Weigall appeared to be an outstanding student during her years at Clyde. Evidence such as old school reports, university examination results and the Clyde school history, The Chronicles of Clyde, confirm that Joan was a talented student. School reports describe her as a gifted young woman who showed a particular flair for the humanities and foreign languages including French, German and Latin.<sup>1</sup> Her only weakness appeared to be in the area of arithmetic where she did not always achieve a pass standard. In spite of this weakness she was ranked among the top five students of her class throughout her four years at Clyde, and ranked first in a class of eighteen in 1913 with the following marks: English literature 80, German 86, geometry 94, French 88, geography 69 and history 55.<sup>2</sup>

Her junior public and senior public examination results also attest to her ability as a student. In 1913, Joan a Beckett Weigall gained distinctions in English, geometry, geography and French, while achieving passes in history and German.<sup>3</sup> In 1914 at the senior public examination she gained honours in English language and literature and a pass in

British history.<sup>4</sup> According to The Chronicles of Clyde, Joan Weigall was a model student, not only in her academic achievements but also in her citizenship at the school. Joan designed the school emblem in 1911 (with the assistance of Miss Daniell), was dux of the school in 1913, a prefect in 1914 and treasurer of the Clyde Old Girls' Association in the years 1916-1917.

In spite of her outstanding academic results and contribution to school citizenship, Joan Lindsay appeared dismissive of her school days. A comment made by Lindsay published in a 1982 autobiographical essay, significantly titled 'Scattered memories of a non-education', supports this view:

I was sent to school at the ridiculous age of thirteen, ostensibly to top off a too obviously home-brewed education with a stronger draught at Clyde, then a few doors away in Alma Road. Yes, I must surely have 'learned and digested' something during my four or five years at Clyde. But I was too young (or too old?) to start learning again, at the bottom of a class of twenty-six girls in blue serge tunics, seated for six hours a day, two and two, at our cramped wooden desks.<sup>5</sup>

A further clue which highlights Joan Lindsay's dissatisfaction with her schooling is found in 'Scattered memories of a non education.' Lindsay lamented:

Unanswerable or otherwise embarrassing questions were not encouraged, and I never had the gumption - or the courage to ask - so that I fidgeted my way through at least twenty wasted hours from Monday to Friday, week after week, year after year.<sup>6</sup>

A comment made in 'Catalysts' further highlights her dissatisfaction with school routine.

Nevertheless it was rumoured by aunts and others on the family grapevine that little Joan was 'artistic' so that when I presently attended Clyde School (then in Alma Road., St. Kilda) I was allowed to take art as an 'extra' a glorious excuse for getting out of routine school work every Friday afternoon.<sup>7</sup>

Another comment made in 'Alma Road' gives an indication of her frustration with the study of literature within the confines of a classroom. (One would assume that Isabel Henderson was not, in this case, Joan's literature teacher.)

As a school girl at Clyde, studying Macbeth from a nasty little text book, heavily annotated, 'even the Witches Cauldron' I had never seen it on the stage until Mother took me to a matinee at Her Majesties Theatre where the figures of the text book came to life. I read the whole play again at home. It was an adventure into the timeless Past

- Macbeth and his beautiful wife had become real people as much alive as Cousin Edie or Archibald Strong.<sup>8</sup>

A final isolated comment made in 'Alma Road' further indicates the author's disdain for her formal schooling.

However I learned to play hockey and basketball and made some lasting friendships. Notably Miss Remington inspired me with a real love of geometry as an almost purely visual study whereas arithmetic as taught at Clyde (sic) panic.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of this passage lies in the missing phrase.

Joan also objected to the insistence on rote memorization, a type of learning requiring little comprehensive or reflective skill which was common practice at the time. In 'Memories of a scattered non-education' she characterizes rote learning, 'to learn anything by heart', as 'peculiarly mental torture'.<sup>10</sup> In Facts Soft and Hard she lamented that history taught to Australian students was often a 'hideous boring recapitulation of Hard Facts to be committed to memory for examination and quickly forgotten.'<sup>11</sup> Perhaps this is why she did poorly in history in her public examinations. On the other hand, there is a strong probability that her outstanding results of 94 per cent in the year 1913 and a distinction for the junior public exam in geometry (a subject requiring much memorization) were a reflection of her teacher's visual approach. Catherine Remington's teaching method lifted young Joan out of her habit of passive acceptance, inspiring

her with a true appreciation as well as a spatial comprehension of the subject.

Nevertheless it was only the very gifted teachers who could satisfy Joan's intellectual yearnings. The balance of evidence suggests that Joan was a student who reluctantly endured her time in the classroom. Although historical sources have shown her to be confident and successful in her academic endeavors, she preferred her literary, artistic and sporting activities outside the constraints of the schoolroom. Even though she paid the highest of compliments to two members of Clyde's faculty (she was inspired by Miss Remington's teaching of geometry and extraordinarily moved by Miss Henderson's teaching of literature) on the whole she remembered her education in a negative way.

Lindsay's contempt for formal Public school education also appears in Picnic at Hanging Rock. Her initial description of Michael Fitzhubert, the dashing young English man who rescued Irma Leopold from the rock, depicts him as 'barely articulate, at the age of twenty'<sup>12</sup> and offers the explanation, 'a Public School education being by no means a guarantee of adult expression.'<sup>13</sup> In view of Joan Lindsay's comments in 'Memories of a scattered non-education' and those offered in her Mulberry Hill papers, one can take this statement at face value. Although Joan herself participated in the best that Melbourne had to offer in a private school education, a female variant of the British Public School model, she is indeed dismissive of such an education.

Joan Lindsay's lack of regard for her formal schooling also lies in her family upbringing. For many years Joan received her education at home under the varying tuition of Miss Tripp, 'Miss X' and Miss McDonald.

In 'Scattered memories of a non-education' she made specific references to the uneven qualities of these governesses' teaching; she has nothing but praise for the 'unfailing patience'<sup>14</sup> of Miss Tripp, while Miss X 'taught almost nothing'.<sup>15</sup> Yet in the background Joan's academic progress was continually supported by the attention of her refined and cultured mother. Joan wrote appreciatively of her mother as a 'conscientious parent who believed her children should be given doses of culture at an early age, in much the same spirit as we were given doses of cod liver oil.'<sup>16</sup> Her mother read to the children from her favorite books: The Old Curiosity Shop, Jane Eyre, Treasure Island and 'The Ancient Mariner.' The family frequented the theatre and the National Gallery and enjoyed musical soirees at home. Her older sisters participated in European tours and visited their mother's homeland, something Joan would do as well after she left Clyde.

It is possible that the many years of private tuition, as well as the experience of growing up in a highly cultured home, made the normal regimentation of school extremely stifling for Joan's independent and inquisitive spirit. The prospect of being dressed in a blue serge tunic and 'seated for six hours a day, two and two, at overcramped wooden desks'<sup>16</sup> did not gratify a student whose previous educational experiences had had such a personal and cultural emphasis.

A final comment from Lindsay's unpublished memoirs indicates that she learned more from those around her than from her experiences at school.

I shall end these random memoirs with some of  
the wonderful men and women from whom I  
learned so much - not in their professional

teaching capacity - as teachers and scholars, surely by being friends who never talked down to me as a...schoolgirl. Professor Thomas Tucker after my Father's death became my beloved and loving stepfather.<sup>17</sup>

In 'Memories of a scattered non-education' she echoed these sentiments, referring to Sir Archibald Strong, 'Cousin Edie' (Lady Harrison Moore), Grandfather Weigall and Professor T.G.Tucker as people of 'wit and wisdom' who 'gave a non-educated child with an enquiring mind glimpses of truth and beauty that came as a flash of light in the darkness.'<sup>18</sup> She concluded her essay with the statement, 'If I am ever again asked- which is unlikely at eighty-four years of age-'where were you educated?', the answer will be 'Everywhere.'<sup>19</sup>

Rae Clements, Joan Lindsay's former housekeeper of fifteen years, also spoke of Joan's disdain for her formal schooling. She noted Joan's dislike of regimentation, describing her as a 'forceful woman who enjoyed things her way.'<sup>20</sup> Joan Lindsay was very people oriented and preferred the company of others in contrast to the stark discipline of the classroom. Yet Joan was not merely a social being, she needed people for the knowledge they could offer her. The incisive knowledge and sharp wit that figures in much of her writing was fuelled by constant interaction with those around her.

Thus Joan Lindsay learned more out of the classroom than in it. She had acquired knowledge from her parents, some of her governesses, her friends and her personal experiences in the world at large. Although her formal education at Clyde was of a high quality and perhaps the best

money could buy for a daughter in her historical era, she dismissed it as unimportant in her scheme of things. From this perspective it becomes evident that Joan Lindsay did not possess or feel constrained to owe loyalty to a tradition of schooling or the formal institution of education. Although Picnic at Hanging Rock has often been misunderstood as an attack on her school days, it is not a personal vendetta or specific reference to her time at Clyde. She has employed Appleyard College as a fictional device rather than a historical device in order to enhance her novel's plot, humor and intrigue, while at the same time voicing her negative perception of formal education in general.



CHAPTER FIVE  
METAMORPHOSIS OF FACT AND FICTION

The final chapter firstly explores the motivation behind Joan Lindsay's creation of the novel and secondly examines the social forces operating in the confines of Appleyard College and the village of Macedon. The cast of characters assembled at the college and in the village of Macedon can be viewed as a microcosm of late Victorian society and while not representative of Joan Lindsay's educational experiences at Clyde, they are nonetheless a reflection of her social world and her experiences growing up in the twilight of the Victorian era.

In Joan Lindsay's 1953 publication, Facts Soft and Hard, she described soft facts as 'the private and personal sort which most of us collect for ourselves: the odds and ends of personal experiences that have a way of sticking like burrs to the mind, long after the names and dates are forgotten.'<sup>1</sup> Although Lindsay always stated that her novel Picnic at Hanging Rock just came to her, a number of 'soft facts', motifs from her childhood and later private life, influenced the novel's direction and shape.

In the introduction to The Secret of Hanging Rock, John Taylor, Joan's long-time friend and literary agent, provided a vivid example of her creative powers at work. Lindsay told him of an incident which occurred in 1929 which she later employed figuratively to help her cousin, novelist Martin Boyd. Joan and Daryl Lindsay were driving on the Western Highway en route to Creswick where they were to dine with Daryl's mother.

Glancing out of her side window Joan observed a strange sight; next to the highway a half a dozen nuns were running frantically across a field and climbing a fence. Intrigued Joan asked Daryl's mother if there was a convent in the area. Her mother-in-law responded that there had been one but it had burned down several years earlier. In London many years later Martin Boyd was suffering from writer's block. Although he had been contracted to write a novel, he could not even think of a title. He asked Joan to suggest a title and she replied, 'Nuns in Jeopardy' which became another of Boyd's successful novels.

In Picnic at Hanging Rock she has used the same selective processes, employing themes and motifs from her own childhood and altering and or embellishing them for the desired effect. In her childhood visits to the National Gallery it would have been surprising if young Joan had not noticed a painting entitled 'Picnic Day at Hanging Rock', painted by William Ford in 1875. Hanging amongst a group of pre-Heidelberg paintings it pictures 'elegant crinolined figures' set against an 'ominous and alien background.'<sup>2</sup> If Joan had not observed this painting during her childhood visits to the gallery she would have had the opportunity to become acquainted with it while she assisted her husband Daryl in his position as director of the gallery.

Mount Macedon served as a holiday venue for Joan during various stages of her life. She spoke her first syllables as a toddler knee high amongst a bed of pansies at the mount. In one of her personal photo albums is pasted an amusing photograph labeled 'Teddy Bear's Picnic, Mount Macedon, 1909', attesting to her participation in an early teen picnic on the mount. Daisy Chains, War, then Jazz, the autobiography of

Kathleen Mangan (née McCubbin), contains a photograph dated 1926 of a recently married Joan Lindsay at Mount Macedon accompanied by several friends. And in her memoirs left to the National Trust there is a geographical relief map of Mount Macedon and its surrounds. This local knowledge, much of it acquired in the early stages of her life, would provide inspiration and lend an air of authenticity to her novel.

Joan had always attached great importance to Valentine's Day, the day of the fateful picnic. Amongst her memoirs at Mulberry Hill is a leather album compiled during her childhood. Kept as one of her most precious possessions, the album contains a collection of exquisite antique lace valentines. She was to meet and later marry husband Daryl on 14 February.

And one cannot ignore the fact that Joan Lindsay's personal philosophy of time plays a prominent part in her life and personal philosophies and indeed enters the novel. In 'Scattered memories of a non-education' Joan stated that, 'I wrote Picnic at Hanging Rock for my own joys and sorrows in attempting to translate a long-seen vision into words that would make the fateful picnic into a living reality.'<sup>3</sup> Joan's vision of past, present and future time coexisting offers an alternative to the conventional view of the passing of time as viewed in a linear fashion. The fusion of past, present and future provides clues to the solution of the college mystery. The last chapter of the novel published after Joan's death offers a view of the missing girls and the ill-fated governess not in a state of terror and decay but rather as suspended in time in a state of transcendence from earthly concerns.

It has been argued that the novel Picnic at Hanging Rock is not an accurate historical account of Lindsay's school years at Clyde. Appleyard

College has been employed as a fictional device rather than a historical device in an attempt to enhance her novel's plot, humor and intrigue. Nevertheless 'soft facts' from Joan's school career have entered the novel in the same way that her early experiences of Macedon, her fascination with Valentine's Day, and her personal philosophy of time are used. Appleyard College's and Clyde's mathematic mistresses were both called McCraw. Clyde's French mistress Madame Augustine Liet was educated at the Academie de Poitiers, the surname of Appleyard's beloved French teacher. Mrs Appleyard and Isabel Henderson were both larger than life figures gifted with natural authority and a strong sense of physical presence. Mrs Appleyard relied heavily on the 'masculine intellect'<sup>4</sup> of Miss McCraw, while over many years Isabel Henderson shared a very close relationship and relied on the support of Miss Daniell with whom she retired to London after she left Clyde. Although these similarities are not mentioned in any systematic way in the novel and do not accurately reflect her years at Clyde, they are nevertheless brief snippets which may have been derived from the author's schooling.

Beyond the presentation of these motifs from her own life, the novel is a powerful period piece and a vehicle for Joan Lindsay's examination of the taboos, prejudices, manners and morals of the late Victorian society. Lindsay writes incisively of the social forces at work at the turn of the century. Her position as a daughter in an upper-middle-class family that was very much a part of the Melbourne Establishment gave her a wealth of raw material from which to develop her novel's characters. Although Joan herself never attended boarding school thanks to the fortuitous opening of Clyde a few doors down in Alma Road, her mother and an older sister had

done so. Joan's mother Anne Sophie acquired a firm dislike of draughts at Miss Banks Ladies Establishment in Sydney. Older sister Mim was a boarder at Ruyton Girls' School, Kew. Joan's father's occupation as an eminent King's Council is echoed at Appleyard College where Marion Quade's father was an eminent Queen's Council. Like the Quade family, the Weigall family were not the most affluent members of this upper middle-class society. Yet Joan can be viewed as decisively molded by her historical time and social class, and familiar and comfortable with its values and lifestyle. Yet Joan Lindsay the novelist has the ability to step back and satirize the residents of Appleyard College and the village of Macedon.

Joan Lindsay's satire of Appleyard College is enhanced by her method of narration. She writes from the third person point of view, adopting an omniscient viewpoint. Assuming a god-like knowledge of what her characters are thinking and doing, the narrator fluidly crosses back and forth revealing the inner thoughts and actions of her characters. This approach is most effective, as besides presenting the reader with an overall picture of the developing drama, it highlights the changing perceptions and sentiments of the various characters with an ironic wit.

Mrs Appleyard, the dominant force behind Appleyard College, is vividly described through the eyes of the narrator as well as those with whom she interacts. In the beginning of the novel she is portrayed as 'an immense purposeful figure'<sup>5</sup>, 'swimming and billowing in grey silk taffeta, ... like a galleon in full sail.'<sup>6</sup> The reader can hear her 'gracious, plummy voice, specially imported from Kensington'<sup>7</sup> and appreciate her masterful control of her school's administration and students.

Yet Mrs Appleyard's semblance of control, reinforced by her 'carefully moderated College voice'<sup>8</sup> and impeccable sense of decorum, is slowly undone by the college tragedy. Joan Lindsay skillfully depicts the transition of an iron-willed autocrat to a loose fleshed, tired old lady, a character who is not a shadow of her former invincible self. Remarks made by various characters highlight the transition in Mrs Appleyard's physical appearance and mental state.

When Irma Leopold, the only girl found at the rock, returned to the college for a hasty farewell, she noticed that Mrs Appleyard's study was a lot smaller than she remembered and that 'She was no longer afraid of the woman behind the closed door whose hand, seized with an uncontrollable tremor, reached for the bottle of cognac under the desk'.<sup>9</sup> Reg Lumley, coming to collect his weak and foolish sister who had resigned from the Appleyard staff (another victim of the college tragedy) 'noticed a strange mottled colour creeping up Mrs Appleyard's neck under the net collar'.<sup>10</sup> Mrs Appleyard, trying to cover up Sara Waybourne's mysterious disappearance, is described by Minnie the maid as looking 'something awful - white as chalk and breathing like a steam train'.<sup>11</sup> Dianne de Poitiers, in her last conversation with Mrs Appleyard, realized that 'she was no longer afraid of the woman whose crackling Sunday taffeta disguised an ageing body in aching need of rest, hot water bottles and small feminine humanities'.<sup>12</sup>

The narrator reinforces this impression of demise, exposing Mrs Appleyard as 'an old woman with head bowed under a forest of curling pins, with pendulous breasts and sagging stomach beneath a dressing gown'.<sup>13</sup> The fact that 'no human being - not even Arthur - had seen her

thus, without the battle dress of steel and whalebone'<sup>14</sup> suggests an ultimate sense of vulnerability. Such a description foreshadows the novel's tragic ending where Mrs Appleyard's skull became impaled upon Hanging Rock.

Through the character of Mrs Appleyard, Joan Lindsay satirizes the attitude that social status is the most important value regardless of the cost. Mrs Appleyard has no appreciation of beauty or aesthetic values. The college's immaculate appearance and luxurious gardens held little appeal for her; she perceived them solely as physical prerequisites required to maintain the image of an elite school. To Mrs Appleyard, 'well kept beds and lawns were no more than a symbol of prestige. Neatness was all'.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the novel Mrs Appleyard judges people according to their social background and relative wealth, and treats them accordingly. She describes her favorite student Irma Leopold as a 'charming girl - worth half a million when she turns twenty-one.'<sup>16</sup> On the other end of Mrs Appleyard's social scale is the orphaned Sara Waybourne whom she pronounced as a 'trouble maker. From the very first.'<sup>17</sup> Upon the disappearance of the three senior girls at the rock Mrs Appleyard lamented: 'why had it happened to three senior girls so valuable to the prestige and social standing of Appleyard College? ... Why couldn't it have been Edith who had disappeared, or that little nobody Blanche, or Sara Waybourne?'<sup>18</sup> When Irma Leopold was later found at the site of the rock Mrs Appleyard was dismayed. With Irma's parents abruptly withdrawing her from the college the school's reputation was sliding. Rather than rejoicing at the resurrection of a lost child, Appleyard's headmistress felt

positively ill, 'To lose in such a manner her richest and most admired pupil made her feel physically faint, almost sick.'<sup>19</sup>

Mrs Appleyard kept up appearances to the very end. Her well-known iron will and excessive pride kept her at the college's helm when a lesser individual would have sold the school while it was still a viable enterprise. Yet upon the death of Sara Waybourne, Mrs Appleyard lost all sense of decorum and semblance of control, becoming another victim of the college tragedy .

Through the comical character of Greta McCraw, Joan Lindsay is satirizing the academic woman, inferring that a life guided by learning alone is far from complete. In her description of McCraw she employs the same narrative method, the reader gaining clues about Greta's unorthodox nature from the reactions she prompts from people around her. The coachman Mr Hussey thought 'Miss McCraw was a queer fish all right'<sup>20</sup> and later noticed that 'the very peculiar governess was smiling up at him.'<sup>21</sup> Dianne de Poitiers noted that 'poor Greta was getting more eccentric every day.'<sup>22</sup> The students observed her at the picnic grounds attempting to eat a banana with her gloves on and later 'sitting upright on a fallen log with her knife of a nose in a book.'<sup>23</sup> The narrator's comment that 'she was almost too easy to caricature'<sup>24</sup> hints at the novelist's purpose. Lindsay is divulging her intention of sending up a woman who is so lost in her world of mathematics that she is oblivious to the small joys of Valentine's Day. When Irish Tom, the college's handyman, sent her a card with mathematical figures on it she found them 'a good deal more acceptable than roses and forget-me-nots.'<sup>25</sup>



Miss McCraw with her 'secret crooked smile'<sup>26</sup> and passion for calculus was oblivious to those around her. Yet when Mrs Appleyard called on her in times of crisis, she found that Greta 'could be unexpectedly shrewd, even practical.'<sup>27</sup> While Joan Lindsay has chosen to emphasize Greta McCraw's shrewd intellectual nature and academic ability, she has also depicted her as a particularly unattractive, 'unfeminine' character. On the day of the fateful picnic, Greta was dressed in steel rimmed spectacles, a drab colored coat, puce gloves and black lace boots. In appearance she epitomized the blue stocking, a woman whose penetration into bastions of male knowledge has violated accepted gender patterns. In retribution for her transgression Greta McCraw has been characterized in a particularly unsympathetic manner with 'greying hair perched like an untidy bird's nest on top of her head'<sup>28</sup> her bony frame taking on the 'proportions of one of her own Euclidian triangles.'<sup>29</sup>

At the Hanging Rock picnic ground Greta told Mr Hussey:

This morning we have driven along two sides of a triangle. . . you have only to change your route this afternoon and return by the third side. In this case, since we entered this road at Woodend at right angles the return journey will be along the hypotenuse.<sup>30</sup>

Marion Quade, the only student with any comprehension of the theorem of Pythagoras, was described as 'a favorite pupil, in the sense that a savage who understands a few words of the language of a shipwrecked sailor is a favourite savage.'<sup>31</sup> Greta McCraw operated on a higher intellectual plane than those around her, participating little in

communication with the other students and taking no interest in the college's social frivolities. Yet Miss McCraw's intelligence was not viewed as a positive attribute. When she became lost with the three senior girls in the bush Mr. Hussey remarked, 'A knowledge of arithmetic don't help much in the Bush.'<sup>32</sup> Later in the police investigations Mrs Appleyard and the investigating officer agreed that 'no matter how "smart at figures"...could be fool enough to lose her way like anyone else'.<sup>33</sup> And Bumpher remarked: 'Even Archimedes... might have taken a wrong turn with his thoughts on higher things'.<sup>34</sup> This older woman, lacking friends and relatives on the Australian continent, is a symbol of emotional sterility,<sup>35</sup> an isolated woman lost in a mathematical stupor living a life of limited proportions.

In her depiction of McCraw, Joan Lindsay has endorsed the myths about mathematics being an unsuitable area of study for women. Portraying McCraw as awkward and ungainly, she serves as the antithesis of feminine beauty. Lindsay's description of McCraw as mathematically gifted yet physically unattractive, reinforces the myth of the possible 'unsexing' of woman who intruded into the masculine domain. Yet Joan Lindsay has infused her own understanding of spatial dimensions and love for geometry into the character of Miss McCraw.

Joan Lindsay does not view all of her characters as pretentious like Mrs Appleyard or as one dimensional like Miss McCraw. She greatly admired one member of staff, the college's much loved teacher of French conversation and dancing. The Macedon grapevine described Mademoiselle Dianne de Poitiers as 'pretty as a picture'.<sup>36</sup> Her students wondered how 'such a sweet pretty creature' could be a 'school teacher - of all dreary

things in the world'<sup>37</sup>. Mrs Appleyard admired Mademoiselle's impeccable presence and sense of refinement which compensated for her penniless position. Mademoiselle also possessed an inner strength that helped her endure her long weeks of employment after the college tragedy. When Irma Leopold, the survivor from the fateful picnic, returned to the college for a brief farewell, Mademoiselle was in charge of the girls who broke out in a hysterical frenzy. Even in this situation she remained in control as 'something warned her to walk sedately with head held high.'<sup>38</sup> Upon her resignation from the college due to her impending marriage, Dianne could have washed her hands of the continuing implications of the college drama. Yet she still felt obliged to write Constable Bumpher a letter informing him of Sara Waybourne's mysterious disappearance and of her fears for her student's safety. Mademoiselle de Poitiers was not a character who could shrug off her responsibilities, thus earning the admiration of staff, students and the reader.

Dianne de Poitiers can be viewed as a symbol of kindness, beauty and aesthetic values and their necessity in our lives. Brought up amongst the galleries of Europe, Mademoiselle represents a merging of the European and Australian traditions. Lost in contemplation on the day of the picnic, Mademoiselle watches her students. Irma dances 'barefoot, the little pink toes barely skimming the surface like a ballerina with curls and ribbons flying and bright unseeing eyes. She was at Covent Garden.'<sup>39</sup> Yet the vision of Miranda, ' a little ahead gliding through tall grasses that blushed her pale skirt . . . a Botticelli angel from the Uffizzi'<sup>40</sup> stands supreme.

Mademoiselle's romantic perspective is in sharp contrast with other staff members at the college. Her philosophy, 'At their age young girls should be strolling under the trees in light summer dresses with a young man's arm around their waist'<sup>41</sup> is a quiet relief from Mrs Appleyard's social pretensions and Miss McCraw's aloof character. Her first encounter with her beloved Louis, '"When I first see the back of my Louis's head I say to myself: Dianne that man he is yours"<sup>42</sup>, is reminiscent of Joan Lindsay's first reaction upon seeing her future husband Daryl.

Although Joan Lindsay wrote Picnic at Hanging Rock in 1967, close to a century after many battles had been fought and won for the reform of women's education, in her romantic depiction of Dianne de Poitiers and her parody of Greta McCraw, she has nonetheless endorsed the philosophical tradition of the accomplishments and the 'enduring notion that there is a natural affinity between the female mind and the humanities'.<sup>43</sup> Did Lindsay create the archetypes of de Poitiers and McCraw in order to highlight their different approaches to life or were they included in the novel for other purposes? The answer is both.

Lindsay the novelist has privileged de Poitiers as a beautiful, caring individual whose intuitive approach to life is rewarded by ultimate fulfillment through love. Lindsay may have felt comfortable with this character type as she too had experienced a feminine, intuitive approach to life which placed much emphasis on the female accomplishments. Growing up at the turn of the century, she was decisively molded by her family background and time in history. In a home resounding with the sounds of her mother's music, Joan was constantly reminded that she was 'artistic', and she later balked at an architectural career due to the stiff

mathematical prerequisites. Over fifty years of marriage to Daryl Lindsay, who in The Leafy Tree testified to her 'intuitive and mature judgement'<sup>44</sup>, perhaps helped to reinforce such an 'intuitive' way of relating to the world.

Yet even though Lindsay has championed de Poitiers' feminine and intuitive character, paradoxically she has lampooned Appleyard College and its accomplishments curriculum. She lambastes Appleyard College not because she is against the teaching of the accomplishments but rather because it does not teach them well. Its headmistresses's knowledge of literature is sketchy, her appreciation of aesthetics nonexistent. Apart from Mademoiselle de Poitiers and Mrs Valange (who was dismissed for defending the tiresome Sara Waybourne), none of the teachers have either the refinement or rapport needed to implement such a curriculum.

And Lindsay's comical treatment of Greta McCraw provides much of the novel's humor and serves as initial entertainment while the college drama unfolds. In her portrayal of McCraw, Lindsay is not so much scorning Greta's academic bent, but the exclusive hold it has on her life. Greta, who on the fateful picnic day, 'would have given a five pound note to have spent this precious holiday, no matter how fine, shut up in her room with that fascinating new treatise on the Calculus',<sup>45</sup> is depicted as an remote and distant individual. Through Greta, Joan Lindsay is suggesting that it is not a person's academic achievements that count but rather what an individual does with her life. Shutting oneself away from the rest of humanity as does McCraw, no matter how brilliant a mathematician, does not appeal to Joan's people oriented nature or style of learning.

Although through her description of Appleyard College and the characters of de Poitiers and McCraw, Lindsay has endorsed the conventional stereotype of women's education in the Victorian period, this particular stereotype suited her literary purposes. As a novelist she firstly set out to capture the reader with a spellbinding mystery and secondly to write a subtle commentary on the manners and morals of such a society. Lindsay would have been well aware that the superficial education dished out at Appleyard College defended class boundaries and the lifestyle of the upper middle classes which she so humorously describes later in the novel. And although through the character of de Poitiers she has endorsed the merits of the feminine intuitive woman, it is neither a prescriptive judgment nor an overall assessment of her attitude towards the education of women. It is apparent from 'Scattered memories of a non-education' that she had the utmost respect for her geometry teacher, 'wonderful Miss Remington from Clyde',<sup>46</sup> and subsequently instilled her love of the subject into the character of McCraw. In Joan's case the choice between the humanities and the sciences is not as clear cut as the characters of McCraw and de Poitiers suggest. Joan Lindsay would not have overly concerned herself with such a debate, dismissing the merits of formal education as unimportant in terms of one's overall achievements.

Many of the students of Appleyard College share Lindsay's lack of concern for formal education. It is through the observations of some of the College students that Lindsay conveys the smug, self satisfied lifestyle of the upper middle classes. The careless remarks of Irma Leopold reveal an arrogance combined with naivete. Although early in the novel Irma states,

'My Papa made a million out of a mine once'<sup>47</sup>, and later, 'Mama always says you can judge a man's taste pretty well by his choice of jewellery',<sup>48</sup> the narrator's powers of omniscience are capable of looking much later into Irma's life. Many years after the college mystery Irma's gentle yet undiscerning heart 'would find expression in fantastic payouts . . . to a thousand lost causes - lepers, sinking theatrical companies, missionaries, priests, tubercular prostitutes, saints, lame dogs and dead beats all over the world.'<sup>49</sup>

Edith Horton, the class dummy, also conveys a sense of complacency as she wonders, 'How anyone can prefer to live in the country I can't imagine. Unless of course they are dreadfully poor.'<sup>50</sup> It is through the character of Edith that Joan Lindsay satirizes the limitation of a women's role in late Victorian society. Edith, who interrupts police investigations with the comment 'My mamma, didn't want me to do senior mathematics. She says a girl's place is in the home'<sup>51</sup>, is reiterating a viewpoint representative of the upper classes of the late Victorian period. The fact that the novelist has chosen Edith Horton, the college dunce, to utter these words of wisdom accentuates her humorous yet ironic intentions.

Joan Lindsay's study of late Victorian behavior is not confined to the residents of Appleyard College. She also makes a study of the lifestyle of the residents of Macedon, paying particular attention to the Fitzhubert family whose summer residence was Lake View. Lake View was the holiday destination of Michael Fitzhubert, the young Englishman who found Irma Leopold at the rock. The narrator described the Fitzhuberts and their friends as:

a smug little community, well served. A sprinkling of Collins Street doctors, two Supreme Court judges, an Anglican bishop, several lawyers with tennis-playing sons and daughters, enjoying good food, good horses and good wine. Pleasant comfortable people for whom the current Boer war was the most catastrophic event since the Flood.<sup>52</sup>

The everyday rituals of this quiet comfortable community are presented as farce. The novelist's description of the Fitzhubert family serves as a humorous guide to the manners, mating habits and entertainment practices of the upper to upper middle classes in the late Victorian period.

The days of the Fitzhubert family took no definite shape and were given form by 'the punctual appearance of the delicious meals borne on enormous trays.'<sup>53</sup> Mealtime was announced by the penetrating drone of a large Indian bong. Tardiness for such gastronomic delights was considered a 'cardinal sin.'<sup>54</sup> The rest of the family's time was spent in the quiet pursuit of pleasure. Colonel Fitzhubert occupied much of his time either in his rose garden, on horse rides or enjoying the occasional match of tennis, while his wife was preoccupied with garden parties and the delicate art of entertaining. Both took a great interest in the matching of family members with a suitable partner, as did other members of the smug little community.

When the dashing young Englishman, Michael Fitzhubert, showed little interest in Angela Spracks, her father, Major Spracks, was dismayed



and pleaded with his daughter: 'Don't you realize that young man is one of the best matches in the whole of England. Fine old family. Title any day . . . plenty of cash.'<sup>55</sup> Mrs Fitzhubert had her eyes on the heiress Irma Leopold as a future wife for her nephew Michael and invited Irma to lunch at Lake View. Lindsay's treatment of this scene borders on farce. When Michael Fitzhubert in an alarming breach of etiquette neglected to attend the luncheon the colonel apologized to Irma saying, 'You'll just have to put up with us two old fogies. No other guests I'm sorry to say. At the Calcutta Club eight was always considered the perfect number for a small luncheon party.'<sup>56</sup> His wife joined the conversation by remarking, 'fortunately we are not lunching off those detestable Indian chickens.'<sup>57</sup>

With the absence of Michael Fitzhubert the luncheon party turned out to be a tedious affair with several awkward gaps in the conversation. After the first course of trout, Colonel Fitzhubert indulged himself in a predictable monologue on roses, and the ingratitude of the Boers towards the Queen. After the mousse of tongue and before the arrival of coffee both ladies made desperate efforts to keep the social ball rolling with animated discussion on the Royal Family, music and the mysteries of bottling fruit.

When the clock on the mantelpiece signalled an acceptable hour for departure, Irma rose to leave. Although there had been an absence of spontaneity and a forced attempt of communication on both ends, Mrs Fitzhubert offered her unreserved approval of young Irma as a match for her nephew Michael. The narrator reveals Mrs Fitzhubert's inner thoughts.

The girl had pretty manners and quite an air for seventeen. Michael was twenty-exactly right. She accompanied the visitor to the hall door - unfailing sign of social approval - and hoped, for reasons too complicated to be entered upon here, that Irma would visit them in Toorak.<sup>58</sup>

Joan Lindsay's humorous treatment of the lifestyle of Colonel and Mrs Fitzhubert illuminates the shallow, idle life of the upper classes, bringing to mind a description of her own parents and friends written late in her life and found in her unpublished memoirs. Joan Lindsay described her parents and immediate circle as:

individually charming, eccentric, loveable or the reverse, collectively they were an unspectacular lot remarkable only in that they represented a typical slice of middle class 'colonial society'. Already the age into which they fitted as snugly as oysters in their shells, has passed into Australian history.<sup>59</sup>

Although Joan's parents' days could not be defined as formless or lacking in a sense of direction as were those of the Fitzhuberts - Anne Sophie was committed to her music and They're to his practice of law - this attractive couple participated in many of the same social pleasantries enjoyed by the Fitzhuberts. Anne Sophie's ritual afternoon teas, the couple's appreciation of formal entertaining and They're's enjoyment of tennis all fit into the pattern of middle-class colonial society.

Anne Sophie's preoccupation with manners and her great fear of the pervading Australian twang contaminating her children's speech places her on par with Mrs Fitzhubert who voiced her wariness of Albert Crundall, the coachman at Lake View, in the following words, 'I can't imagine that Crundall's conversation would be exactly edifying.'<sup>60</sup> They're's pursuit of sport and his presidency of the Victorian Lawn Tennis Association can be likened to Colonel Fitzhubert's similar sporting interests and involvement in his rose committee. They're and Anne Sophie's commitment to schooling their children in the English way of life, their opportunities for lengthy trips back to the motherland and their life of relative comfort presents a remarkably comfortable middle class picture. Lindsay's description of her parents as 'wrapped in a protective mantle of unconscious snobbery and middle-class arrogance' seems to be equally true of the Fitzhuberts' lifestyle.

Although Joan Lindsay satirized the values and lifestyle of several of the residents of Appleyard College and the village of Macedon, she eulogized Miranda, one of the school girls who disappeared at Hanging Rock. Miranda's loving nature and shining presence captured all near to her be they strangers or friends. Mr Hussey admired Miranda while she was 'expertly manipulating the warped wooden latch'<sup>61</sup> of the gate at the picnic ground. Irma, whose patience was being tested by the tiresome Edith, wondered 'why was it...that God made some people so plain and disagreeable and others beautiful and kind like Miranda.'<sup>62</sup> Mrs Appleyard paid homage to Miranda's 'admirable self control'.<sup>63</sup> Dianne de Poitiers reflected upon meeting with Irma at Cutlers after the tragedy, 'Ah Miranda ... only eighteen and such wisdom.'<sup>64</sup> While resting at Lake View, Irma

explained Miranda's philosophy of life to Michael Fitzhubert. 'Miranda used to say that everything begins and ends at exactly the right time and place.'<sup>65</sup> And Rosamund summed up Miranda's attitude towards life and influence on others in the statement, 'Miranda believed in the power of love over everything.'<sup>66</sup>

In his article on the novel published in the 1977 HSC English Resource Book, journalist Phillip Adams suggests that Miranda's philosophy may be Lindsay's philosophy of life. I would contend that Adams is on the right track, that Lindsay, who had no sophisticated understanding of political theory<sup>67</sup>, lived on an intuitive level hoping that individual's small gestures of kindness would improve the quality of life of society in general.

Yet this conception of Lindsay's philosophy of life is inadequate. Her vision of life did not merely rest upon a philosophy about time and love; a very important aesthetic element also influenced her perceptions. De Poitier's physical beauty and European sense of culture are qualities idealized by Joan Lindsay. It hardly seems a coincidence that Lindsay chose the name Dianne de Poitiers for her much loved French governess in the novel. According to the Dictionnaire de Biographie Francaise, Diane de Poitiers was a well known, romantic historical figure. Born in 1499, she was brought up in the court of Anne de Bretagne and well accustomed to the dangers and intrigue of court life. Twenty years older than Henri II, she was his mistress and motherly advisor. Her great beauty, sound judgement and caring nature were rewarded by Henri who in 1548 gave her le Chateau de Chenonceaux and the title of the Duchesse de Valentinois. A feature of this most beautiful chateau is the Chambre de Diane de Poitiers,

a bedroom of supreme beauty and grandeur. Whether Joan Lindsay and husband Daryl visited this landmark on one of their European tours is unknown, yet there is a strong probability that Joan was aware of the existence of this majestic chateau on the banks of Cher River.

The Lindsays' home Mulberry Hill, with its walls lined with paintings and book cases full of the great classics, gives us a good indication of Joan's taste. Her bookcase in Daryl's studio held several volumes by French writers whom Joan was said to read frequently. Joan's love and appreciation of the French language was to stay with her throughout her life and she was thrilled when the film version of Picnic at Hanging Rock was translated into French. There is some logic in her sympathetic depiction of the French governess, Mademoiselle Dianne de Poitiers.

Joan Lindsay's metamorphosis of fact and fiction in Picnic at Hanging Rock has provided interesting social commentary on the turn of the century period in Australian history. Although through the depiction of her characters she has endorsed the philosophical tradition of the accomplishments and an aesthetic approach to life, she nevertheless deplores the unconscious snobbery and complacency of the upper middle-classes.

## CONCLUSION

Picnic at Hanging Rock has been examined on a number of different levels. Viewed as a study of the conflict of humanity versus nature, in symbolic terms as the embodiment of an archetypal religious myth, as a philosophical treatise on the passing of time or merely as a straight out murder mystery, each approach is legitimate.

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore the novel in more precise historical terms and to ascertain just how much it is a reflection of Joan Lindsay's educational and social experiences. Although the briefest of snippets from her years at Clyde have entered the novel, it is not an accurate historical account of her years at the school. Appleyard College, with its shallow, haphazard approach to education, embodies all of the negative facets associated with the Victorian education of females. Although Joan Lindsay did not enjoy and was dismissive of her years at Clyde, they nonetheless appeared to be of sound intellectual value and of the best quality available to the females of her era.

In her novel Lindsay has included several themes and motifs from her childhood and altered or embellished them for her literary purposes. Her position as a daughter of a privileged Melbourne family has provided her with an intuitive understanding of the upper middle-class lifestyle of the late Victorian period. Her examination of the manners, prejudices and social practices of this privileged sector of society is humorous in its intention and often scathing in its perceptions. One is able to sense Joan's ambivalence about such a society. A variety of life experiences, her

exposure to artistic circles that transcended the boundaries of class and the benefit of fifty years hindsight have provided her with a more balanced viewpoint. She deplores the pretentious, hypocritical elements of this society, yet is still seduced by its dedication to beauty and culture.

Joan Lindsay would like to have been remembered first and foremost as a writer. She worked hard at her craft (in advance of today's ubiquitous word processor, many of her memoirs consist of pages that have been meticulously cut and pasted with the aid of sewing pins.) And indeed the public has gained from her efforts. Picnic at Hanging Rock, with its disarming honesty and ironic wit, has captured the essence of the of the behavior and lifestyle of the upper classes at a precise period of Australian history, the twilight of the Victorian era.

## FOOTNOTES

Introduction

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2. Anne Crittendon, '"Picnic at Hanging Rock": A myth and its symbols', Meanjin Quarterly, Feb. 1976, p. 167.
3. Crittendon, p. 170.
4. Crittendon, p. 174.
5. Phillip Adams, 'Picnic at Hanging Rock', HSC English Resource Book 1977, Dove Communications, Melbourne, 1976, p.91.

Chapter One - St Margarets to Mulberry Hill

1. Joan Lindsay, 'Catalysts', p. 6, Manuscript 943.3, Mulberry Hill Papers, National Trust Archives (NTA).
2. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 826.2, Mulberry Hill Papers, NTA.
3. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.6.
4. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.6.
5. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.6.
6. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.6.
7. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.6.
8. Joan Lindsay, 'Scattered memories of a non-education', S. Murray-Smith (ed.), Melbourne Studies in Education 1982, Melbourne 1982, p. 54.
9. Joan Lindsay, 'Catalysts', p. 3.
10. Joan Lindsay, 'Catalysts', p. 3.
11. This information was found on a Decoration Gallery program, contained in



a red and gold photo album stored in the dining room of the Mulberry Hill property. Archive 533, NTA.

12. Joan Lindsay, 'Cat Under a Hot Tin Roof', p. 13A, Manuscript 787.18, Mulberry Hill Papers, NTA.

13. Daryl Lindsay, The Leafy Tree, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, p. 128.

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### Chapter Two - Remnants of a Middle-Class Childhood

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2. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.10.

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5. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.6.

6. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.6.

7. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 826.2.

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9. Joan Lindsay, 'Scattered memories of a non-education', p. 51.

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13. This information was obtained from an interview with Rick Amor.

14. Joan Lindsay, 'Scattered memories of a non-education', p. 56.

15. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', uncatalogued manuscript consisting of literary notes written before 1984.

16. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.10.

17. Joan Lindsay, 'Alma Road', Manuscript 883.2.

Chapter Three - Appleyard College 1900 - Clyde Girls' Grammar 1911-1914

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2. Hay, p. 38.
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9. VPRS 10061, unit 9, PROV IH no. 3118.
10. This information was obtained from a personal interview with Betty Clarke.
11. Hay, p. 75.
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14. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 12.
15. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 18.
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27. See M. Bryant, The Unexpected Revolution: A Study in the History of Women and Girls in the Nineteenth Century, University of London Institute of Education, London, 1978, for British background to reform of women's education.
28. Marjorie R. Theobald, 'The PLC mystique: reflections on the reform of female education in nineteenth-century Australia', Australian Historical Studies, vol. 23., no. 92, April 1989, p.11.
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30. Theobald, 'The PLC mystique', p. 14.
31. Theobald, 'The PLC mystique', p. 20.
32. Theobald, 'The PLC mystique', p. 2.
33. See Theobald, 'Women and schools'.
34. Theobald. 'The PLC mystique', p. 2.
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36. See J.S. Pederson, 'Schoolmistresses and headmistresses: elites and education in nineteenth-century England', Journal of British Studies, vol. 15, Nov. 1975, pp. 136-162, for discussion of this trend in Britain.
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41. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 41.
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43. Hay, p. 36.
44. Theobald, 'The PLC mystique', p. 4.

45. This information was obtained from a personal interview with Mollie Turner Shaw.
46. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 42.
47. Hay, pp. 1-2.
48. Hay, p. 3.
49. Joan Lindsay. Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 114.

#### Chapter Four - Reflections on a Formal Education

1. Archive 533, school reports are contained in a red and gold photo album stored in the dining room of the Mulberry Hill property.
2. Archive 533.
3. Melbourne University examination result book, 1913, Melbourne University Archives.
4. Melbourne University examination result book, 1914, Melbourne University Archives.
5. Joan Lindsay, 'Scattered memories of a non-education', p. 49.
6. Joan Lindsay, 'Scattered memories of a non-education', p. 56.
7. Joan Lindsay, 'Catalysts', p. 2.
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### Chapter Five - Metamorphosis of Fact and Fiction

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6. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 15.
7. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 15.
8. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 46.
9. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 150.
10. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 165.
11. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 186.
12. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 188.
13. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 196.
14. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 14.
15. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 115.
16. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 117.
17. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 187.
18. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 67.

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20. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 19.
21. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 20.
22. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 20.
23. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 24.
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29. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 12.
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32. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 51.
33. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 55.
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35. See Crittendon, "'Picnic at Hanging Rock': A myth and its symbols", for further discussion on this theme.
36. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 126.
37. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 24.
38. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 155.
39. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 37.
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41. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 48.
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44. Daryl Lindsay, The Leafy Tree, p. 128.
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46. Joan Lindsay, 'Scattered memories of a non-education', p. 55.
47. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 33.
48. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 140.
49. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 34.
50. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 22.
51. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock, p. 65.
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