



# White Vanishing: Rethinking Australia's Lost-In-The-Bush Myth (Cross/Cultures)

*Elsbeth Tilley*

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*Elspeth Tilley*

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The story of the vulnerable white person vanishing without trace into the harsh Australian landscape is a potent and compelling element in multiple genres of mainstream Australian culture. It has been sung in "Little Boy Lost," brought to life on the big screen in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, immortalized in Henry Lawson's poems of lost tramps, and preserved in the history books' tales of Leichhardt or Burke and Wills wandering in mad circles. A world-wide audience has also witnessed the many-layered and oddly strident nature of Australian disappearance symbolism in media coverage of contemporary disappearances, such as those of Azaria Chamberlain and Peter Falconio. *White Vanishing* offers a revealing and challenging re-examination of Australian disappearance mythology, exposing the political utility at its core. Drawing on wide-ranging examples of the white-vanishing myth, the book provides evidence that disappearance mythology encapsulates some of the most dominant and durable categories at the heart of white Australian culture, and that many of those ideas have their origin in colonial mechanisms of inequality and oppression. *White Vanishing* deliberately (and perhaps controversially) reminds readers that, while power is never absolute or irresistible, some narrative threads carry a particularly authoritative inheritance of ideas and power-relations through time.

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