SCREENED AUSTRALIANNESS: Representations of Australian National Identity and National Character in Australian-made Cinema 1945 into the 21st Century

by

Martin G.K. Harbus

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I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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abstract

In the Australian nation's experiences of modernity and late modernity, Australian made films have become a popular conduit for the promulgation of national narratives. Employing a cultural studies paradigm, this study identifies, maps and describes some instances of the Australian national identity and nation building project's attempts at meaning-making, through an identification of various discourses associated with the national identity and the national character, as they have been represented in Australian made films, throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

This study argues that the Australian national identity and national character is often defined, in Australian cultural, social and political life, by association with a set of discourses I label the referential regime, a discursive regime that uses as reference points notions associated with: Australian values (mateship, a fair go, egalitarianism), gender (with masculinity occupying most of this space), ethnicity (including notions of race, whiteness or indigeniety), the landscape (including the anxieties of belonging to this place) and class (including notions of 'the battler' and 'the Ocker'). The representative regime, while discernible in fields and spheres as diverse as political rhetoric, advertising and business practices are best described by reference to cultural products and practices. The instances of meaning-making that employ the referential regime remained constant over the period studied; however, the ways in which the reference points are employed change with the times.

This study examines some examples of the films produced between 1945 and 2007 in the context of the times in which they were produced and viewed and from within social/cultural and political/economic/industry contexts. The discussion uses some film examples, chosen from various periods, to illuminate, illustrate and explain ideas around my contention that the main area of national identity meaning-making in Australian made film is to be found in the changing relationships between the mainstream of Australian society and some discourses (what I call the referential regime), associated with constructing, defining and bounding the national identity and national character. These are often deployed in an Australian made film, in an attempt to provide a shock of recognition. The result of these attempts at meaning-making, in the chosen film examples, is discussed.
CH. 1.   INTRODUCTION: ‘... THIS VIDEO MAY CONTAIN ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE WHICH PORTRAYS VIEWS NOW CONSIDERED UNACCEPTABLE’  

CH. 2.   ‘OUR KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD’: FINDING AUSTRALIANNESS IN SECOND GENERATION, AUSTRALIAN MADE FILMS: 1946 - 1965  


CH.8.   IN CONCLUSION  

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Ch. 1. INTRODUCTION: ‘... this video may contain archival footage which portrays views now considered unacceptable’

Between three oceans and miraculous New Guinea
This dry wedge is floating on a godless plate:
We thought in getting far enough away from Europe
We’d have cleaned the slate,

But rightangle corners and gates with Scottish names
Have played wire geometry across the soil
Which is treated as a counter under which
Are tucked away... what? Bauxite and oil.

We devour the sheep we used to be on the back of,
Are unblushingly kind to the plastic rich
And confuse all political fluctuations
With surf or a cricket pitch.

We believe in slightly more than sweet f. a.,
Do tolerant indifference passing well
And let our fanatics rave for a year or three,
Then fade like a bad smell.

(Chris Wallace-Crabbe)†

Something like this seems to me the real issue in the debate about
Australia’s "identity". It's less about the national character or self-image, more about how clear-eyed we are, and how game.‡

(Don Watson)§

To what extent can a film, or any cultural product for that matter, be
read as indicative of the ‘national culture’ in which it was produced? Can we, through an analysis of the kinds of national markers used in such cultural products, glean something of the self-imagining of that culture? This work seeks to articulate what might best be labelled the ‘imagined’ character, or cultural identity, of the nation. This is the goal of this study: to see if it is possible to read something of the imagined, Australian national identity and national character in its cultural output.

This study identifies the active part of the nation that is tasked with the

− Warning on video products sold by Screen Sound Australia.
† This Don Watson quote comes from an entirely different source to the Chris Wallace-Crabbe poem.
§ The juxtaposition is mine.
development, promulgation and definition of the 'cultural identity' of the nation, as the 'national identity' and 'nation-building' projects. The identity produced by these projects is described through an analysis of its discursive construction (repetition, replication and re-presentation) and through the identification of the results of these processes: a residual 'Australianness'. These discursive constructions are analysed as manifestations of social practices in Australian films over the last fifty years. Taken together, over the period 1945-2007, the discursive constructions around these national markers form a narrative around the consistencies and discontinuities of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, expressed as Australianness.

Raymond Williams describes culture as the expression of a society and at the same time the expressions of the individuals who make up that society. He sees every human society having:

...its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. The growing society is there, yet it is also made and remade in every individual mind ... A culture has two aspects, the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. These are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of a culture: that is both traditional and creative; that is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings.3

Following on from Williams, in this study I identify and analyse the territory of meaning-making for the Australian culture, that thing Williams labels as the '... known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to ... [and the] ... new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested,'4 to discern how meaning is made around its imagined character, and how this is represented in 'Australian made' cinema. For this study
cinema is an observable landscape that facilitates the analysis of the meeting of Williams’ conception of culture: that thing that is traditional and creative, ordinary and individual. The key aspect in the development and performance of culture, for this study, is the employment of common reference points with which any construction of the Australian national cultural identity must engage. The result (almost in the form of a residue or as a by-product) of (some of) the cultural output of the society, I label Australianness.

Perhaps most importantly, this research project seeks to answer Graeme Turner’s question: ‘... since the explicit years of the 1970s has Australian national cinema disengaged itself from the explicit project of nation-building’? and the development and promulgation of a ‘national identity’?⁶ This is answered by mapping ‘Australian made’ cinema’s relationships with notions of national identity and national character, before the explicit years of the 1970s and 1980s, through them and after, into the twenty-first century. In a related area, this study also seeks to answer Turner’s question: has the Australian national cinema reached a point which could be described as being the end of its major role in screening desirable representations of Australianness – or has ‘Australian made’ cinema sought to move the struggle into more contested territory? If this is so what is it seeking, and how has it been moved?⁸ Or to put it another way, in the wake of the 1996 federal election, the ‘September 11’ attacks on the US, the ‘Bali Bombings’, ‘children overboard’ and the sinking of the ‘Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel – Unknown’ (SIEV-X), and ‘Schapelle Corby’ – is Australian self-imagining as a nation able to resist a knee-jerk reactionary / racist backflip? Or does the charge – that at our heart lies a white, racist, xenophobic, backward looking, nostalgic national ethos – have any validity?
An emerging domestic film-making industry and culture is a perfect place in which to explore questions such as: ‘Who are we?’, ‘How did we get here?’ and ‘What should be important to us?’ And it is to the national narratives, national myths of becoming, or (as Graeme Turner more pointedly labels them) ‘national fictions’ – and to the national types, established in those myths, narratives and fictions – that filmmakers turn to explore some possible answers to these questions. Leslie Fiedler has argued that a body of mythology lies ‘behind every major literature and before it.’ This facilitates audience acceptance of plots, characters, situations and images without the need for ‘conscious effort at understanding them.’ The manifestation of this can be seen in the discursive landscape of Australian films – Dermody and Jacka’s AFC genre in the 70s and early 80s is a clear cinematic example of this phenomenon of knee-jerk reference to the established national narratives / fictions / myths, but not the only one.

In the 1970s, the ‘Australian nation’, which saw itself as culturally and racially homogeneous, came under attack by radical reformist pressures and a changing demographic. The emerging film culture, financed and administered by government bureaucracies at this time, was enlisted to pump out an articutable view of a black and white colonial past justifying contemporary power structures and what could be labelled the ‘traditional nationalistic values’ or the particularly Australian tradition of nationalism labelled as ‘the romantic nationalist school’. By articutable, I mean narratives of the national histories, stories and identities that were flexible and malleable enough to encompass emerging contradictions – particularly in terms of the changing face of Australians – but were able to remain firmly connected to the ‘natural’, core markers of the national character. In these
films particular types of men stood in as indices of the components of the desirable Australian identity. The 'traditional nationalist values' were present in characters who embodied ideals of stoic endurance, the capable man, and the laconic bushman / larrikin who endured within particular landscapes.

For a number of years, in the history of 'Australian made' films these enactments of the national narratives held the key to readings of the national identity. This propensity to fall back on the very core national markers for the purposes of meaning-making, commercial success and hegemonic reassurance can also be found in other cultural fields. Les Carlyon's book *Gallipoli*¹¹, an orthodox retelling of the landings on Gallipoli in 1915, was in the top ten-bestseller list for more than 15 weeks over the period 2001/2002 and is still (2008) regarded as a 'classic'.¹² And towards the end of 2001, ABC television repeated '1915': a C.E.W. Bean inspired Gallipoli era mini-series produced in the 1980s which, when finished, was replaced with a brand new (comedy / drama?) series dealing with Australian POWs in 'Changi'. This very successful series was created by an iconic radio comedian John Doyle, better known as half of the comedy duo of 'Roy & H.G.'.¹³ These are only a few examples of this phenomenon: of the propensity of cultural producers to present overt and narrow, national narrative references that present themselves as belonging 'naturally' to a grouping of characteristics that could collectively be called the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation.

Stuart Hall, in a discussion on the 'rediscovery of ideology', outlines the function of the media, in what he calls a three-dimensional model of power in society, to shape the whole ideological environment as a way of:

... representing the order of things which endowed its limiting perspectives with that natural or divine inevitability which makes
them appear universal, natural and coterminous with ‘reality’ itself. This movement – towards the winning of a universal validity and legitimacy for accounts of the world which are partial and particular, and towards the grounding of these particular constructions in the taken-for-grantedness of ‘the real’ – is indeed the characteristic and defining mechanism of ‘the ideological’.14

This study seeks to side-step notions of myth and ideology (where possible) to focus on that much more slippery notion of national narratives. It is no coincidence that these film, literary and television examples referred to above all have as a central theme ‘mateship’ as the ‘naturally’ defining characteristic of men’s (and all of the characters are men) national character. This study seeks to unpack notions around the naturalisation of characteristics associated with the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in Australian made films.

This study proposes that there is a propensity in Australian screen culture to prescribe various specific representations of the national identity, through an engagement with national characteristics associated with any discussion of the Australian character, in different periods with differing aims and with differing foci. This study also proposes that the use of references to these national characteristics – often in unquestioning ways – leads to representations of a narrow Australian national identity. In the most extreme reading of this propensity, the narrow cultural identity linked with the Australian national identity and nation-building projects can be seen as having – placed at its heart – insecurities, conflicts and flaws. These insecurities, conflicts and flaws tend to present as narrative mechanisms from which Graeme Turner, calling upon the work of Lévi-Strauss, Frederic Jameson and Stuart Hall, constructs an idea of narrative as serving a function that provides ‘... symbolic resolutions to a social contradiction, and is one of the major areas of the labour of representation within the culture,
performing the ideological work of "making things mean". For example, in the Barry McKenzie films (The Adventures of Barry McKenzie, Bruce Beresford, 1972, and its sequel Barry McKenzie Holds His Own, Bruce Beresford, 1974) the symbolic resolution is in the form of a reassurance that while there might be a number of 'Australian' types they are all easily distinguished by their difference from the British and the 'Other' (women, homosexuals, perverts, etc.). One can also imagine that it serves a similar function for British audiences, reassuring them that while they might be eccentric, perverted and flawed, at least they are distinguishable from the colonials! (See chapter three for a fuller analysis of The Adventures of Barry McKenzie.)

All cultures, in some way, seek to explore and articulate their identity through the promulgation of their 'national narratives' in cultural products: stories, poetry, visual arts, performance. The Australian national narrativising has favoured many forms of cultural product in its short history and has inspired a great number of works on the development of the national character.

Vance Palmer in The Legend of the Nineties (1954), A. A. Phillips in The Australian Tradition (1958) and Russel Ward in The Australian Legend (1958) all developed theories of a 'romantic-nationalist' interpretation of the Australian art and political scene in the late nineteenth century which strongly influenced, in their view, the unique Australian character. Their argument goes along the lines that the unprecedented economic depression of the 1890s caused the colonists to examine their past and their situation closely for the first time. They saw that they were dependent on Britain financially and this nurtured nationalist sentiment. Nevertheless, they saw the 1890s,
focused by the coming of Federation, as a time of great social and cultural optimism.

It was a time when poets and writers were held in high popular esteem; when *The Bulletin* was publishing the works of Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson; and when the populus was united in pride at the classless, egalitarian society it had supposedly created. These were ideas that had been resurrected in the 1890s from even earlier notions of the frontier, settler society of the squatters and currency lads and lasses. David Myers reminds us that most of ‘... these ideas were composed of large parts of wishful thinking and dreams of a utopian, Golden Age in the past.’ This did not prevent them from being repackaged in the 1950s and 1960s and remaining powerful into the 1970s. This re-engagement in the 1960s and 1970s was the stuff of Russel Ward’s *Australian Legend*: the convict-inspired bush ethos, and the re-re-engagement with the ANZAC myth in varied ways, Alan Seymour’s *One Day Of The Year* (1958), for example, and even Donald Horne’s counter-image of the Lucky Australian a man in ‘... an open-necked shirt solemnly enjoying an ice-cream. His kiddy is beside him.’

In the latter half of the twentieth century cinema came to be an important form of cultural expression for the nation. So much so that the films of the mid-1970s can still be considered the high point of ‘success’ for Australian cultural products, at home and in the world market place. Graeme Turner sees film as a unique cultural product having more cultural currency than other mass media in that, unlike television, for example, cinema can be seen as ‘art’. Cinema could, therefore, be used to project a worthy image of the nation. Those seeking to set up a national cinema recognised this potential cultural function of cinema and employed it as a conduit of what
Turner calls 'nationalist mythology'. This 'nationalist mythology' recognised the power of cinema to project 'an image of the new confidence and maturity seen to mark contemporary Australian culture and society.' This recognition embraced the processes of transition and moved forward with them. This action signals attempts by the Australian national projects to move into a postcolonial, postmodern position through the creation of a new nationalism, against associations of external imperialism. It does not, however, negate intra-national imperialism. In his later work Turner examines Australian cinema in light of this postcolonial nationalism:

Within Australia and other postcolonial societies the idea of the nation retains a progressive potential as a point of resistance to domination from outside, a point at which local interests may be expressed and defended against the logics of internationalisation. Furthermore, within such formations, Australian film retains the capacity to rewrite imperial histories, to appropriate American generic forms, and to operate as a critical, if marginalized, body of representations within mainstream Western cinema.

This assertion by Turner, that Australian film can function as a way of meaning-making resistance, is an important part of this study's analysis. Just how successful a role in cultural resistance Australian film has played is explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

This study is also inspired by one of the seminal works on the notion that a nation wears its collective heart up there on the screen, Siegfried Kracauer's 1947 work, From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film. In this work he reads films as a popular form of the expression of the culture, or as expressions that provide an insight into the unconscious drives and fantasies of a nation. Of particular interest for this study is Kracauer's argument that reflected in the output of a nation's cinema is its '... mentality in a more direct way than other artistic media for two reasons.'
He argues that these two reasons are, first, that film is a collaborative enterprise that '... tends to exclude arbitrary handling of screen material, suppressing individual peculiarities in favour of traits common to many people.' The final product, therefore, is the result of collaboration, compromise and consultation rather than a single vision of an individual. He is specifically addressing popular, commercial feature films, the cinema from which this study draws its examples. It should be remembered there are other cinemas outside this definition.

The second thread of Kracauer's argument is that popular cinema is at the mercy of popular public desires to see what it wants to see, so that '... films address themselves, and appeal, to the anonymous multitude. Popular films – or, to be more precise, popular screen motifs – can, therefore, be supposed to satisfy existing mass desires.' Popular cinema is at its heart a business and it therefore seeks to communicate with the desires of the audience. I label the entity that produces films in Australia as the Australian film-making industry/culture, to encompass the inexorably bound nature of the art and the business. In this study I unpack and examine the constituent elements of the national character, represented there up on the screen in the output of the Australian film-making industry/culture, as providing a view into the collective mind of the nation.

Tom O'Regan, in his substantial work on the Australian national cinema, sees cinema in a very similar way to Kracauer. For O'Regan a national cinema can be defined in terms of a relationship between cinema-texts, producers and the international cinema industry, in the context of the nation's contemporary influences. O'Regan goes on to say that the films of a national cinema are the output of a culture and as such reflect the psyche
of that culture directly in two ways. The first is through the process of making the film. Film-making is a collaborative process. A film text is not the work of any individual. It is a contract between many. Secondly, the film text is a commercial product created to serve the needs of the market and, therefore, since films are created with a view to satisfying those needs exclusively, these needs must be identifiable.32

As can be seen from these two engagements, a nation’s cinematic output is a viable place in which to gain some insight into its collective self-imaginings. However, just what films to include in the national film-making industry/culture can present a problem.33

As the mass of the Australian national film-making industry/culture grows, what makes a film Australian becomes a more and more difficult question to answer. Compounding the problem can be the phenomenon of marketers manipulating the perception of a film’s Australian origins in an attempt to increase rentals.34 To place themselves more favourably in the market, to take advantage of, or to avoid, positive or negative ‘brand identification’, some films have their Australiana played up (or even fabricated) to locate, what Tom O’Regan labels, a film’s ‘local’ advantage.35 Some films lean heavily on the slim fact that parts of the film were shot on location in Australia or that it has some local actors and locations which lend some de facto Australian identity to it: Is that Sydney in The Matrix?; does Superman really fly over rural New South Wales?;36 or has the Moulin Rouge come to Twentieth Century Fox Studios Australia? (Maybe, but sorry, no tax breaks, not ‘Australian’ enough!).37 Thus movie marques and video-shop shelves are overcrowded with images of Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett or even Nicole Kidman; Bushrangers, Sporting Heroes and ‘Top Blokes’ and
'Good Sorts'; and the other usual suspects of Australian national identity: gum trees, 'the wide brown land' and kangaroos.\textsuperscript{38}

It should be remembered that this is the world of classification, of the appeal of the 'package'; not all Australian national identification occurs through reference to simple, knee-jerk icons. Putting aside the machinations of the market, and even the desire to appropriate New Zealand film\textsuperscript{34} three broad areas of national cultural identification tend to be used to initially distinguish a film as 'Australian': (we) the people, (our) own stories and (this) unique place. More complex representations are often employed (inside the box), in the articulation of narratives of who we are, what our stories say and what this place represents, in the territory of the national imagining.\textsuperscript{35}

To a cultural alien, just how a film such as \textit{Mad Max} (Dr\textsuperscript{36} George Miller, 1982) fits into a collection of feature films which could not only be labelled as 'Australian made' but more importantly be said to belong to a grouping of films which vigorously engage in Australian national representation could be difficult to explain without going into an extensive discussion of genre, myth, Russian formalist approaches to folktales and the mid-pacific accent. However, that it is a film which contains a great deal of Australiana in forms other than the simple engendering of those superficial touchstones of national identification – the people, the stories and the place – points to the embedding of more complex and contestable notions of national representation being possible.

For Adrian Martin the \textit{Mad Max} movies specifically '... seemed at once militantly un-Australian – in their embrace of a foreign (even imperialist) cinematic mode – and profoundly, shockingly Australian, not least of all for their rough, larrikin cheekiness.'\textsuperscript{37} However, too often representations (in
Australian made cinema) of what this study labels the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation — that occurs as a part of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects — is reliant on unproblematic references to simple and easily recognisable notions drawn from those key areas of the people, the stories and the place in 'Australian made' films.

A film such as Mad Max is also a very good example of two of the major characteristics Tom O'Regan identifies with (in what he labels) the Australian national cinema, in that it hybridises and indigenises the modes and forms of foreign feature film-making styles and techniques to make them something new — Australian. Australian national cinema is, in O'Regan's estimation, a result of imported and domestic characteristics which have been synthesised into a 'hybrid assemblage of elements that are continually being improvised, combined and recombined.' For O'Regan, the diversity in the origins and available influences for the Australian domestic film-making industry/culture experience is what makes it characteristic and unique. To use another of O'Regan's concepts, films such as Mad Max help to 'problematisate' notions of a national cinematic identity and the representations of the national to be found within, by digging into less recognisably 'Australian' signifiers, by playing with the slippage between (in the case of Mad Max) genre and national cinema and national cultural tradition. In this study I use the label 'Australian made' rather than employ O'Regan's national cinema description.

'australian made' films

The qualifier employed in this study, 'Australian made', is an attempt
to encompass all feature films embraced as being Australian. It refers to any feature film made in Australia or with an Australian component, or which just claims to have some Australiana for marketing purposes (location, marsupials, actors). It also has some resonance – in later periods – with the official 'Australian made' campaign which sought to qualify notions of Made in Australia, 'Australian made' and Manufactured in Australia – notions which have a linkage with jingoistic campaigns such as Pauline Hanson's one 'white/economic' nation and Dick Smith's buy (MY) - Australian biscuits!

As a description, 'Australian made' is also similar to the definition used in the official tax/funding arrangement definitions of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and The Arts: guidelines on the 10BA film tax incentives for Australian production.

This Is An Excerpt From The 2005 Guidelines:

'How Does A Film Qualify [For Tax Breaks]? To Qualify, A Film Must Be Eligible, Which Means It Must Be A:

• Feature Film
• Documentary
• Film Of A Like Nature (To A Feature Film) Produced For Television, Or
• Mini-Series.

It Must Also Be An Australian Film (Made Wholly Or Substantially In Australia) Or Be An Official Co-Production, And Have 'Significant Australian Content'.

Several Elements Are Considered When Assessing A Film's Australian Content Including:

• Creative Control
• Subject Matter
• Where The Film Is Made
• Copyright Ownership
• Owners Of Companies Involved In The Production
• Source Of Funds
• Production Expenditure, And
Any Other Matters The Minister Considers Relevant."
A significant consequence of such coralling of film examples used in this study is that some films are excluded. For example, two of the most significant films to be excluded are *Moulin Rouge* (Baz Luhrmann, 2001), and *Happy Feet* (Dr George Miller, 2006). Both these films were domestic and international, critical and financial successes in a period of few large-scale successes for the domestic industry. However, in the terms of this study they, and other films like them, lack a significant attempt at any kind of cultural authenticity, and failed to gain an official tax reduction status, to warrant their inclusion. This study is focused on those films which fit into this world of the mainstream feature film aimed at satisfying the existing desires of the masses to see themselves up there on the screen. It is for these reasons that this study draws examples from commercial feature films of the ‘Australian made’ cinema in its discussion of Australian national identity.

The focus of this study is to go deeper than the simple commercial identifiers of Australiana. My aims are (paraphrasing Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha\(^4\)) to explore the territory of the ‘imagined [cultural] community’, to read the ‘narration of the nation’. In this study I identify, map and analyse the various building-blocks of Australian cultural identity. I identify the inescapable, representative referential regime which is employed to define, articulate and bound the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation. This identity, it is argued, developed as a part of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects. To lend a formal unity to this uniqueness, this study uses the generalising attribute national identity as label to signify slippery notions that have been used in the development of ideas around the representation of the national character.

The propensity to ‘naturalise’ notions of the Nation – and with it history...
— visibly intersects with narrow ideas of desirable national characteristics and is often expressed as 'the national identity' in an attempt to link all Australians by means of desirable national types, common 'values' and shared social history. Benedict Anderson proposes a definition of the nation as an 'imagined political community'. In Australia's case the 'imagined cultural community' is too often represented as an amnesic, culturally homogeneous one.

Given that the search for an all-encompassing national identity is, on the one hand, obviously futile and, on the other, so appealing to sections of the Australian community and just about every federal politician since Barton, we should not be surprised that it has ongoing appeal. Tom O'Regan contends that films (and perhaps films of a national cinema in particular)

'...are a means of interrogating the public and civic culture. They inspect, evaluate, describe and project society, its life ways and its psychic dispositions (neuroses, fears, etc.). Films investigate contemporary public issues, they render social divisions and incommensurate purposes of people. They register disturbing social and cultural truths, and foster alternative identities within the country.'

Yet he points out (at least in the case of Australian national cinema) that film is also capable of failing to be representative and tolerant, and in its worst excesses, Tom O'Regan sees cinema being capable of '...partly remedying, but all too often contribut[ing] to social deficits of, for example, racism, social class, gender inequality and disadvantage.'

Homi Bhabha's famous inside/outside process of hybridity seeks to acknowledge that the (post/neo/colonial) nation is a product of conflicting forces and desires. In other words, that the nation is, and is not, a completed entity. Bhabha reminds us that the:

...locality of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem
of inside/outside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation.}

A great deal of the debate around notions of the Australian nation has tackled the question of 'who we are' by highlighting the conflict between two opposing forces in much the same way that many of the discourses around the national and of the postcolonial do. In the case of Australia's national imagining, the dichotomy created (by these inside/outside foci) states that, on the one hand, there is a body of foundation cultural history (that is, national identity structure, which I label the representative referential regime), which informs almost all notions of an Australian national identity. These foundation stories were laid early in the Australian nation's journey. On the other hand, the dichotomy states that there is a dynamic aspect to Australia's national identity and nation-building projects that causes shifts and rifts within the culture. Powered by societal swings, incompatible challenges arise in Australia's cultural, political and social histories which redefine notions of an all-encompassing nation-state compatible with orthodox cultural histories.

The shift from fundamentally assimilationist immigration policies (The White Australia Policy and The Australian Way of Life) to one which accommodated diversity (Equal Opportunity and Multiculturalism) is one such obvious shift which challenged some of the traditional foundations of the Australian nation. This study suggests that this dichotomy is not the only force which informs notions of Australian cultural imagining. Rather, multiple sets of dichotomies and shifts between competing hegemonic cultural forces in these dichotomies offer useful ways of looking at the ongoing discourses of 'The Nation', and that the dynamic nature of the imagined nation can be
glimpsed in cultural expressions.

The way in which the characteristics, significant milestones and interpretations of the national cultural community and other influences upon the cultural identity of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects have been 'imagined', 'narrated', 'discoursed', 'fantasised', 're-imagined', 'configured', 'reconsidered' and 'constructed' all have some commonality. It is a commonality in the shape of a number of seemingly inescapable elements with which all discussions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation must contend: a (dead/ red/ sunburnt) centre against which all is measured, and a treacherous landscape across which all must trek.

Specifically, this study identifies and analyses the representative referential regime associated with the national identity through an analysis of discourses around the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects, as they are represented in 'Australian made' films throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

In all periods of Australian film-making, the representative referential regime has an inescapable role in supplying reference points for meaning-making around Australian national narratives, as they are played out in Australian films. This study identifies Australianness as being defined in Australian cultural and social life, as being a discernible residue left behind by an association with the representative referential regime, rather than the national identity itself. This referential [reverential?] representational regime, that uses as its reference points notions associated with Australian values (mateship, a fair go, egalitarianism), gender (with masculinity occupying most
of this space), ethnicity (including notions of race, whiteness or indigeneity),
the landscape (including the anxieties of belonging to this place) and class
(including notions of ‘the battler’ and ‘the Ocker’), remained constant over the
period studied. However; the ways in which the reference points have been
employed has changed with the times.

The representative referential regime is discussed in detail in chapter
two and a close analysis of the reference points drawn from it constitute the
methodical apparatus with which the film examples are analysed.

Membership of the Australian cultural community, at first dependent
on Britishness, then more broadly, Whiteness, has come to be measured in
terms of one’s understanding of the nuances around, and with an adherence
to, the representative referential regime, which is reduced in Australian public
and political discourse to the simple all encompassing notion: Australian
values.

Peter Costello, Treasurer in the Howard Government (1996-2007),
articulated this position very clearly in 2006. He said:

We need to be very clear on these issues. There are some beliefs,
some values, so core to the nature of our society that those who
refuse to accept them refuse to accept the nature of our society ... We are asking all our citizens to subscribe to a framework that can
protect the rights and liberties of all. These are Australian values,
we must be very clear on this point. They are not optional, we
expect all those who call themselves Australians to subscribe to
them, loyalty, democracy, tolerance, the rule of law, values worth
promoting, values worth defending, the values of Australia and its
citizens. 53

The values which have come to be associated with the uniquely
Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation are the clearest
signposts across the landscape of the development of the Australian national
identity and nation-building projects.

There are, unquestionably, events that mark turning points in a
Nation's journey (through time not towards some destiny, as some would characterise it), moments when it must be realised that nothing will be the same, and time comes to be divided into two parts – before this, and after this.

For a particular generation of Australians, the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972 (and perhaps even more significantly The Dismissal in 1975) were such moments. In the more recent journey of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects, the materialisation of Pauline Hanson at the 1996 federal election was also such a moment. For many writers on the Australian national identity and nation-building projects, the emergence of naked, right-wing political views on nationalism, race and the economy – in the form of ‘One Nation’ and the Howard Government’s acquiescence to Pauline Hanson – came as a surprise. Many were caught looking towards twenty-first century Australia as an emerging postcolonial society.51

There does seem to be a propensity in the Australian social and cultural landscape to abandon any critical and intelligent engagement with notions of who we are and what makes us ‘us’, and to re-embrace an unproblematic construction of the national identity. Donald Horne wrote in the 1971 edition of his seminal work *The Lucky Country*:

> Most Australian writers seem to find it impossible to come to grips with their own people. They caricature their fellow countrymen or idealize them for qualities most of them do not possess.52

Perhaps the most extreme example of this lack of perspective in recent years occurred early on the morning of Sunday 25 February 2001, in perhaps the last great expression of this national identification hyperbolic frenzy: ‘a simple carpenter’s son’ passed from this world into the next. A review of the
media outpourings of national grief at the death of Sir Donald Bradman shows that he, and his 1948 team, hailed as the 'invincibles', are placed among those who are considered 'real' Australians, our unequivocal heroes, the battlers who have risen to the challenges of history and 'had a go'. Moreover, most importantly they have become the perpetuating archetypes of desirable national types and therefore the very stuff of Australia's national narrative.

Like the youth of Australia who went off to war to foster the Empire in the first half of the twentieth century, 'The Don's' legend was irrevocably formed in the crucible of battle. The names Larwood and Jardine are as ingrained upon the national psyche as Lone Pine and The Burma Railway (mantra to some, meaningless to others). 'Men do not become gods by virtue of their achievements alone,' wrote one chronicler. From another: 'Perhaps only Shakespeare has stood so far ahead of his peers,' and from Paul Kelly: 'In a nation of mates, Bradman transcends mateship. He is the ultimate hero .... He ranks with The ANZACS, Ned Kelly, Nellie Melba, Henry Lawson, "Weary" Dunlop and Phar Lap as a representation of the nation.' And from the editorial of the Sydney Daily Telegraph: 'He will live on in our national legend, as much a fixture and an icon in the Australian story as the land itself.'

Journalistic hyperbole? Certainly, but why? What do these characters all have in common which makes them national heroes? What resonates so strongly with the culture across time? How did they become a part of the great Australian social myth-making? What, beyond his sporting achievements, transformed Bradman into a god? To challenge his memory is to challenge Australia's national narrativising. Nevertheless, those we hold
up as examples of who we are, what is important to us and who we should be elevating, must be questioned. And the questions the Don’s death raises are: ‘Has a type of Australia died with him?’ and ‘Did that Australia ever exist?’ A review of some of the ways in which other writers have sought to address the question ‘Who are we?’ can be helpful.

australianness (who are we !?)

The ongoing public ‘debate’ around notions of what many simply call the Australian ‘national identity’ periodically flairs up with renewed vigour. Although given that we probably do ‘... believe in slightly more than sweet f.a.’, the level of rancour these public engagements can raise is often surprising. Peter Pierce (author of The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety58) goes so far as to suggest that Australians actually believe in nothing; he asks us to consider, ‘... the chilling vacuousness of some of our favourite phrases – ‘fair go’, ‘good bloke’, ‘mateship’. This is a nation of nihilists.’59

Questions of ‘Who are we?’ or ‘How did we arrive at this point?’ and perhaps most contentiously, ‘What does our history tell us about who we are and how we arrived at this point?’ seem to permeate the post-Second World War Australian political/social/cultural landscape like few other issues. For example, a very few of the major works which have sought to explore some of the territory include: The Legend Of The Nineties (1954), The Australian Legend (1958), The Lucky Country (1964), A New Britannia (1970), The Tyranny of Distance (1983), The Fatal Shore (1987), Intruders in The Bush (1992), White Nation (1998), Imagining Australia: Ideas for Our Future (2005).60
This study traces these preoccupations with Australia's self-imagining, and the inescapabilities to be found in that territory. One of these inescapabilities is the position that this 'place' occupies in that imagining, the manifestations of issues around a desire for legitimate 'belonging' for the broader white community. This study's temporal scope commences in the immediate post-Second World War years, which saw a rise in what Ian Mclean characterises as '... anti-imperial nativism'. In his work *Aboriginalism: White Aborigines and Australian Nationalism*, Mclean labels this frontier characteristic as a process of 'indigenisation'. For Mclean, 'Aboriginalism', which he defines as '... an attempt to understand what it means to be a white Australian through metaphors of Aboriginality rather than ones of Empire,' was the key identity process/notion of the immediate post-war period. The development of this indigenous sensibility within the frontier settler society was driven by desires to reassess their place in the landscape. For the settler society it is only within the landscape that the power to make good, to become more than what came before, lay.

Not straying too far from McLean's notion of 'Aboriginalism', a very recent contributor to the public discourse on this aspect of the Australian national identity, and more importantly of White Australia's place in this 'place', was Germaine Greer in her 2003 essay *'Whitefella Jump Up'*. Greer's essay asks the question 'What kind of legend does Australia want to place at its heart?' Greer attempts to answer the question by turning it upside down. She suggests that the white Australian national identity malaise (in the time of encroaching globalisation) could be cured by going back to the point of departure (or rather arrival), that things could be turned around and moved forward by adopting a national (small 'a') aboriginality. Greer sees the
shortest way to true postcolonial nationhood lying in an embrace of an inner hunter-gatherer-ness. She has, with this outburst, now joined the others who have sought to comment on the sacred site that is the origins, development and future of the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity, of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects. Within ideas of ‘Who we are’, ‘Where we came from’ and ‘Where are we going’ is inextricably woven the notion of the ‘values’ of ‘us and them’. It is one of the inescapable reference points of the representative referential regime, which informs the national identity quest.

The notion of ‘values’ is a problematic one. Greer and her fellow national diviners often couch their contributions to the debate by highlighting conflict between opposing forces, by dichotomising the forces (they see) at work. Another tactic is to define what is not valuable or to discredit one point of view, so as to privilege what is left. Keith Windschuttle’s revisionist frontier history is a good example of this tactic. All seek in some way to acknowledge that the nation is a product of conflicting forces and desires, and some even stray into the postcolonial extreme, to question (like Greer) whether it is or is not a complete or completable, (and I would add) i[manage]able culturally homogeneous entity? This anxiety around the national imagining is not a new phenomenon, merely the most recent manifestation of what is sometimes seen as Australia’s dominant social anxiety.

This dominant social anxiety revolves around notions of identity and belonging and involves engagements with race – at first – then, ‘the Australian way of life’, new nationalism and, more recently, the ‘history wars’ and the ‘values’ debate. The anxiety around the national imagining was
compounded by the shift, in the 1970s, from a racially based national identity towards a culturally derived one. Jon Stratton sees this position as being '... characterised by the shift away from essentialist claims about race towards constructivist claims about culture.'\(^{67}\) Regardless of the shifting foci of the national identity quests and the anxieties around such imaginings, there are a number of inescapabilities with which any discussion of the Australian national identity must contend. I have labelled these the representative referential regime. Subsequent chapters engage closely with the representative referential regime and the reference points drawn from it. The reference points drawn from the representative referential regime help create, define and draw the boundaries of constructions of Australian national identity and the national character in the national identity and nation-building projects.

**national identity and nation-building projects**

Just what is meant by the term national identity and nation-building projects? This study identifies that much of the output of the Australian domestic film-making industry/culture, in the post-Second World War decades, was seeking to screen a familiar and saleable filmic identity, manifest as: national identity, or as creating a significant form of 'Australianness', for domestic and international film audiences. Moreover, this familiar and saleable screened national identity is inextricably connected with the national identity and nation-building projects. The exploration, development and promulgation of a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived national identity in cinema is part of a wider nationalist project of nation-building, building national self-esteem and drawing a border around
the national character and its attendant traits and values – a process that is inescapably bound up with the representative referential regime.

As a part of these early national identity and nation-building projects, a uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity was identified, developed and promulgated across the arts through ‘enlightened public patronage.’ Public institutions such as The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (founded in 1954 with the aim of establishing national drama, opera and ballet companies), The Australian Council for the Arts (established in 1968 to continue the work of establishing a national collection and to foster the arts in Australia), and the introduction and expansion of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (the introduction of a public television station in 1956) were some of the main civic mechanisms through which this was attempted. The growing level of interest and investment in the arts (arts defined in the broadest sense, as comprised of art practices such as writing, visual arts and crafts, performance based art, film and video and multimedia) by the federal government can be seen in the fact that the level of direct funding went from $1.7m in 1968/69 to $75.1m in 1988/89. This equates to a rise in government funding of the arts, in terms of ‘real funding per head,’ from $2.56 in 1968/69 to $10.90 in 1988/89.

Jon Stratton, in his discussion of popular music and culturally based nation-building in the 1970s and 1980s, defines nation-building as undertakings that signal ‘... a concern with the production of an understanding among a group of people that they are a nation ....’ He sees this happening in [Anglo-Celtic] Australia in ‘... terms of a claim to a shared, lived culture. At another, earlier, time under the White Australia Policy (WAP 1901 – 1972) nation-building in Australia took place by reference to a claim
to a shared [white] racial identity." One way to achieve this shift of identity marker from the racial to the cultural was to marginalise, codify and redefine 'others' rather than to completely dispense with the racial aspect of the desirable shared identity. Redefining 'whiteness' in the 1950s and 1960s, by pushing the definition of 'white peoples' further south in Europe is a good example of this attempt. (The problems of the persistence of racially and ethnically biased national identity signifiers is discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.)

The ongoing project of nation-building also includes '... grand projects that advance the national interest' such as the large infrastructure projects: the Ord River Scheme and the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in the 1950s and 1960s, expanding urban development (most memorably sewage) in the 1960s and 1970s, economic rationalisation and restructuring in the 1980s, and even Paul Keating's standardisation of rail track gauges in the 1990s.

Into the late 1960s, the cultural national identity and nation-building projects began to use film as a significant arena in which direct efforts were made to give body and shape to the imaginings of the shared national cultural character, and as a part of a wider, commercial and cultural project to develop a 'proper' film-making industry/culture. The two significant federally funded institutions which were created in this process were the Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC) (formed in 1970, becoming the Australian Film Commission (AFC) in 1975) and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS, established in 1970). For Susan Dermody and Liz Jacka, the effects of the national identity projects in film are expressed through a way of 'speaking Australianness' through the use of
iconic actors and through a repeating pattern of aesthetic choices. The relationship, which shaped what they label the 'force-field' of feature production through the 1970s and 1980s, was the film-making industry's accord or reaction to the project's aims. 

The film-making industry and culture's accord with the aims of the projects, in cinematic identity representation of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, reached its apotheosis in the second half of the 1970s with the emergence of the canon of the so-called 'AFC genre' films. Films from this era, such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975), *Sunday Too Far Away* (Ken Hannam, 1975) and *Breaker Morant* (Bruce Beresford, 1980) were perhaps the most direct attempts ever undertaken to screen a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived national identity, in a burgeoning national cinema industry/culture, to the nation and the world.

A national cinema is an exercise in drawing a border, in time and space, around a discrete entity defined against other national cinemas. Within this process of defining 'the national' is, inevitably, the desire to talk of a 'national identity'. This is one of the themes imbedded in this study: What is it about the output of the Australian domestic film-making industry/culture that makes it Australian; how is meaning made around notions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in 'Australian made' films? How is this desire to bound Australian films accomplished?

In his major work on the Australian national cinema, Tom O'Regan reminds us that Australia, like other 'new world' cultures, has a dominant ethnicity which is constructed from 'a cultural hybrid not a particular ancestral ethnic group.' He goes on to argue that mainstream Australian commercial
national cinema is '... dominated by Anglo-Celtic, English speaking
Australianness excluding whole kinds, classes, ethnicities and races of
people.' In the mainstream public sphere, notions of the 'nation', and the
propensity to 'naturalise' narrow ideas of desirable national characteristics,
visibly intersect with the search for a 'national identity' in an attempt to link all
Australians through mechanisms of common influences, common 'values'
and shared social history. With this in mind, Benedict Anderson's 'imagined
community' is interpreted, in this study, as the manifestation of the uniquely
Australian, culturally derived national identity of the Australian national
identity and nation-building projects.

It must be noted that in some ways this discussion is primarily
cconcerned with the dominance of certain commercial, popular and un-
confusing representations of the national character, and the playing out of
certain representations of the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national
identity of the nation. This is not to say that those were the only
representations of the cultural identity of the Australian national identity and
nation-building projects present. As we see later in this study, there were, in
each period discussed in this study, some conflicting and counter
representations which, while they still employ the representative referential
regime, make use of the reference points in ways that question and
problematise notions of 'the nation', rather than following the hegemonic
herd. Counter-representations are also present in every period of film-making
in the history of the Australian film-making industry/culture. However, this
'counter', in popular Australian cinema, has tended to take the form of social
realism, as in the case of a film such as 27A (Esben Storm, 1973) or Letters
From Teralba Road (Stephen Wallace, 1977) or as cheeky iconoclasm in
*The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (Bruce Beresford, 1972), for example, or in the form of personal/art films as in just about the entire oeuvre of the Dutch/Australian auteur Paul Cox. These are a few examples of attempts to promulgate real alternatives to the orthodox deployment of the representative referential regime. The influence of these types of 'alternative' representations was slow to gain a foothold in mainstream commercial cinema although they do have a place in representing the nation in ‘Australian made’ cinema.
the nation

Cultural studies is deeply ambivalent about the idea of nation ... Australian studies, of course, has few such reservations. While clearly unsympathetic to a crudely chauvinistic cultural nationalism, Australian studies continue to be explicitly concerned with the idea of nation and national identity. (Graeme Turner)

Graeme Turner directs a great deal of criticism towards the limitations of Australian studies' unitary view of national imagining. While Turner is explicit in what could be called his counter-nationalism view, political, social and cultural developments since 1996 have demonstrated that a form of virulent nostalgic nationalism persisted around the 'fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society' and the 'fantasies of a good nation.

As Jennifer Rutherford put it after the 1996 Federal election, ...few could now dispute the entrenched nature of an aggressive Australian nationalism. Of Australian racism and xenophobia, and continued power of the fantasies that have underpinned disparate notions of nation and identity during the two hundred years of colonisation.

Writing in 1996 (obviously just before the federal election which would see the election of the Howard Coalition Government and the startling and unforeseen emergence of Pauline Hanson and One Nation) Graeme Turner (and it must be noted, just about every other commentator on Australian social and political culture) did not seem to anticipate the approaching backlash in Australian social/cultural/political terms to Aboriginal reconciliation and land rights, multiculturalism and tolerance and so-called 'political correctness'. It should be noted that Turner does address these and other issues of the post-1996 election world in Making it National Reconsidered: The Uses of Nationalism in Contemporary Australia (1999), a work this study refers to in subsequent chapters. In that work Turner writes:
From where I stand there can be nothing disinteresting about Australian cultural studies’ view of the revival of a residual but still highly contagious strain of white, Anglo, isolationist, and nostalgic nationalism. We might have our contradictions to deal with as we try to produce a progressive politics for Australia through the discourses of cultural nationalism, but we can deal with what Pauline Hanson represents without a hint of ambiguity.83

Sites of cultural production have significance because they are the main portals through which the discourses of the national pass. In Australian national cultural production, the practice of promulgating the desirable discourse of ‘the nation’ in cultural products – particularly in times of political and social conservatism, and of cultural reaction – seems to be periodically reinforced by taking off what was famously labelled by Geoffrey Blainey the ‘black armband of history’, looking back to a time of imagined homogeneity, purity and consensus. Typically, this backward looking exercise seeks out stereotypes, archetypes, folk heroes, events and eras which can serve as role models and which can be identified as the crucibles in which the ‘core values’ of the ‘broader Australian community’ (or ‘Forgotten People’, or ‘Aspirational Voters’) were forged and tested. However, just which sites make it into the building blocks of the national identity and nation-building projects is not generally open to broad societal debate. Interestingly, Fiona Nicoll, in an essay on ‘Whiteness’ and the Anglo-Celtic core, reminds us that non-Anglo-Celtic Australians ‘… are only allowed to tell one kind of story in the mainstream media: that of the opportunities that they and their families have enjoyed since coming to this country. Political critique is reserved for the opinion columns presided over by those Anglo-Celtic warhorses such as Frank Devine and P.P. McGuiness.’84

The work of Stephen Alomes (A Nation at Last?) on the changing/unchanging character of Australian nationalism and in particular the
uses of nationalism, is addressed by asking the following questions: If the uses of nationalism are for national identity, national unity and shared national interests and are '... used in times of peace and war to distract attention from the realities of class and exploitation,'\textsuperscript{85} then who benefits, who does it serve, and are there those same inherent shortcomings in all types of nationalism: economic, cultural and political? This study sees the need to include Graeme Turner's '... residual but still highly contagious strain of white, Anglo, isolationist, and nostalgic nationalism'\textsuperscript{86} in association with the category of problematic national identification, which can be seen to sit within the established reference points for the production of the cultural identity of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects. These established reference points include indices that were present before the 1996 election, and traces of which can be detected throughout the time-frame of this study in more subtle and complex ways than can be reduced to the 'black arm-band'/balance sheet' dichotomy around which much of the subsequent discourse has revolved.

Using Alomes' work on the description of the nation through various types of nationalism, the commodification of Australian nationalism (Alomes identifies a number of 'nationalisms' such as: t-shirt nationalism, manufactured nationalism, jingleism [sic] etc.\textsuperscript{87}) and the various strategies of nationalism used by the national identity and nation-building projects since 1901, some social/political/historical context on the field of nationalism in the various periods and some insight into its relations with the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects can be achieved.

In the recent history of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects there have been two streams of nationalism which have
influenced the cultural landscape of the post-Second World War years: 'New Nationalism' and the 'Romantic or Radical Nationalist School' of Australian nationalism.

Further to this nationalist contextualising, James Curren's work (*Prime Ministers and the New Australia: Remaking the National Image*) on Prime Ministerial rhetoric and Australian nationalism informs the discussion on the changing nationalistic character[s] of the national identity and nation-building projects as expressed specifically in the rhetorical utterances of Prime Ministers from Whitlam to Howard. The sub-periods into which this study is broken coincide with the tenures of Prime Ministers since the Second World War. While it is not suggested that there is any direct link between the prevailing political leadership of the nation and the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects represented in film, there is a casual one. This connection lies in the arena of the nationalist rhetoric of the contemporaneous Prime Minister. I believe within that rhetoric some insight into the pulse of the electorate and therefore the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects is possible.

Curren's work also informs this study's positioning of the two dominant strains of nationalism with which the national identity and nation-building projects have engaged: romantic nationalism and new nationalism. Curren links particular strains of nationalism with the rhetoric of prime ministers. This study also extends that linkage into the pulse of the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects.

New nationalism stems from the late 1960s and is most strongly linked to the Whitlam Labor Government. In the 1970s, Gough Whitlam proposed a 'new nationalism' to deal with contemporary issues. His strategy...
set out to ‘... help develop a national identity through artistic expression and to project Australia’s image in other countries by means of the arts’ and by moving away from what Curran calls ‘British race patriotism.’

Curren gives as an example of the ‘new nationalism paradigm’ Whitlam’s shifting foreign policy, which sought to find a ‘distinctive and more self-assertive response’ for Australia in the changing circumstances of the late 1960s and 1970s. Some of the foreign policy dilemmas in which Australia found itself included, for example, opening up diplomatic relations with China, being embroiled in a long-term conflict within Vietnam, as well as changing relations with Britain and the US, among many other major shifts in Australian’s geopolitical circumstances. Australia’s foreign policy was for Whitlam to move away from militarism towards a more independent stance that would ‘... not be open to suggestions of racism.’ New nationalism resists a clear definition and in this study it is used to refer to attempts to move away from romantic nationalism in the period of the Whitlam Labor Government and embrace a type of internationalism from a contemporary Australian perspective. It was a short-lived experiment that can be glimpsed in films of the so-called ‘Ocker’ formation of film production in the early 1970s. This study further defines new nationalism as belonging to an expression of ‘impotent late-modernity’ in the Australian context in that it sought to redefine the characteristics of the nation by moving away from early-modernity and imperial notions of class, expressed, for example, through a breaking with the British honours system and the replacement of God Save the Queen with Advance Australia Fair; and by moving towards gender equality and away from an exclusively heterosexual, misogynist masculine national identity and to embracing a multicultural Australian
ethnicity. Overall, new nationalism is characterised by the embrace of a
public policy system based on merit rather than one based of privilege
through class, gender or ethnicity.

Romantic nationalism is more clearly defined and is best exemplified
by Russel Ward’s reading of the bush-derived national identity myth in his
work *The Australian Legend*. Ward sees the Australian national character
springing from the bush experiences of the early settlers, convicts and
itinerant rural workers. Ward’s work has helped to solidify the narrow,
desirable Australian national type in Australian cultural products from that
point on. Ward’s work will provide an ongoing source of discussion for the
remainder of this study.

**national narratives in cinema**

If this study were to single out one Australian film text as having within
its narrative[s] the most connections to (and what might be described as the
broadest articulation of) the various cultural journeys, identification
touchstones and social (narrative) byways of the Australian national identity
and nation-building projects, then that film text would be *The Adventures of
Barry McKenzie*. As a portrait of numerous ‘Australian Identities’, as an
articulation of – and perhaps even, as an inciter of – the inherent insecurities
in the cultural, social and political fabric of the nation, and in the
acknowledgement of the various political, social and cultural histories of the
national identity and nation-building projects, *McKenzie* stands out in the
post-Second World War Australian film landscape.

*McKenzie* broadly influenced the way Australians and others came to
see the Australian national identity on the big screen, at a time when this was
an articulated goal of the film-industry. Phillip Adams, the producer of *McKenzie* – and self-confessed father to the domestic industry – famously stated: ‘We got into this industry for one reason: to give ourselves a national voice, to give ourselves a sense of national purpose and a national identity, and to throw that away would be a disaster and a fiasco.’

As a satire on this Australian self-imagining and on other (mostly British) imaginings of the Australian character, development, pasts and even futures, *McKenzie* robustly problematises desirable, perceived and observed notions of ‘a’ national identity, while never settling on a simple character. Its narrative is tellingly dominated by the juxtaposition of Barry McKenzie (Bazza), a Homer-like hero. His odyssey through the permissive society of the ‘Home’ land consists of dodging the temptations and manifestations of his (and metaphorically the nation’s) fears of the ‘other’ – women, homosexuals, foreigners, the imperial apron strings, as well as a Freudian nightmare of psychosexual relationships (strict mothers, flagellated fathers and transvestite aunts). His mate in London, Curly, concurrently represents the ‘desirable’ image of post-Menzies, modern Australian sophistication and a satire on that identity.

*The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (and its sequel *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own*) stretch across the Australian political landscape from the ‘bucolic’ Menzies years to the jet-age of the Whitlam years. Throughout this journey the narratives embrace a sustained argument for the proposition that inherent in notions of the cultural identity of the nation is the proposition that it is in fact to be found in the contradictions of being Australian. For example, Graeme Turner suggests that what he calls ‘commonsense notions of Australian experience’ are at odds with much of the narrative performance
of the experience. In particular, he reminds us that in populist, Australian narratives:

Thematic representations of the self’s powerlessness and isolation are juxtaposed against the idea of one’s resourcefulness and commitment to community; and the resolution of this contradiction in favour of acceptance and accommodation is made possible by the effective denial of the contradiction’s importance.  

It is the position of this study that the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation is such a slippery notion that it is and is not a completed, or even a completable notion, that there is no static Australian identity, no ‘true’ Australian. In the Barry McKenzie films, as in a number of ‘Australian made’ films, the national identity and the national character is defined by a number of things: what it is not – not British; what it is associated with – heterosexual masculinity; or what produces a sense of anxiety – the other (however that is constructed in any given period). Rarely has Australianness been successfully defined in the ‘Australian made’ cinema by what it is. One reason for this, I would propose, is that Australianness is better understood as the residue, left by attempts to articulate the national identity, and not the national identity itself.

Perhaps most significantly, McKenzie was one of the so-called ‘Ocker’ cycle of films which helped rearticulate narratives of the ‘ordinary’ people, working class or most colourfully, the ‘Aussie Battler’. The Ocker – or Aussie Larrikin, as it has come to be called in the twenty-first century – is characterised by being ‘... unpretentious, anti-intellectual, anti-authoritarian, working-class, sport-loving, staunchly heterosexual, rural, rough, ready and [a] basically decent bloke with a grin as broad as his accent’ and, to add some of Russel Ward’s definition, he will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they might be wrong. McKenzie, and the films of the
'Ocker' cycle, have some resonance in a filmic tradition stretching through *Dad and Dave* (Ken G. Hall, 1932-1940) back to *The Sentimental Bloke* (Raymond Longford, 1919). The popularity of the 'Ocker' tradition of films helped to shape the representations of the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation that would be privileged and referenced – either in reaction to, or as a homage to, that 'Ocker' tradition – through the 'renaissance' of the Australian film-making industry in the 1970s, and into the twenty-first century. The 'Ocker' is further discussed in subsequent chapters.

This tradition of the 'Ocker' – of exploring working class characters and experiences, the world of the Aussie battler – can still be glimpsed in the twenty-first century, in the 2006 film text *Kenny* (Clayton Jacobson and Shane Jacobson). In keeping with the evolution of the tradition, *Kenny* is now a narrative of an 'un-sentimental bloke'. His simplicity is not the subject of syrupy romanticism in the way *The Bloke*'s is. Kenny's strength and dignity comes from his simple view of the world – his fair-go attitude, unquestioning mateship and unswerving egalitarianism in the face of life’s trials. He does work with human waste after all. The development of the 'Ocker' identity and its connections with the evolution of the national identity (in 'Australian made' films) is a major focus of this study.

By looking at a number of 'Australian made' films, the consistencies and inconsistencies around the representations of the character of the Australian national identity, and the discourses through which they are constructed, can be teased out and the inescapabilities connected to the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects – as they are represented in Australian films throughout the second half of the twentieth century – can be
identified, mapped and analysed.

**methodology**

This study seeks out culture in the Australian context as it is represented in the cinematic output over the period 1945-2007. To return to Raymond Williams, this study examines the ways in which a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation represents its 'known meanings and directions', the national narratives 'which its members are trained to ... [and the] ... new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested,'\(^{101}\) to discern how meaning is made around the nation's imagined character, and how that thing I label the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation, is represented in 'Australian made' cinema.

A number of works have engaged with representations of various configurations of Australian cultural identity in the cinema, although none has sought to map representations over such a time period. Much of the period 1945 to the present, with a heavy emphasis on the period 1970 to 1988 has been comprehensively covered by a number of studies employing various methodologies, points of view and conclusions. However, the early period 1945-1966 and the later period encompassing 1988 to the present, have been significantly under-researched.
a few words on cinema as a social system, methodologies and this study

To forestall criticisms of my argument serving a purely functionalist agenda, the focus, methodology and parameters of this study should be clearly stated, along with a justification for my approach.

The tools employed in this study to analyse various notions of the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation, lack a strong and distinct association with the field of theoretical film studies. Close textual analyses of the stylistic/aesthetic provinces of film texts are not a major focus of this study. Rather, the discursive practices in and around the thematic, character and narrative elements of the film texts are analysed in keeping with this study’s disciplinary associations which are more in the (undisciplined) field of cultural studies than in the field of film studies. This means that this study focuses on seeking to identify and analyse the discursive manifestations of the mores, beliefs and values of the ‘nation’ (and to some degree of the film-makers and of film funding structures/industry), and the social structures and public discourses of the contemporaneous society – which are deployed in and around the film texts, through their narratives – rather than providing an in-depth textual analysis of the formal/aesthetic qualities of film texts. That said, the ‘filmic style’ of a film text obviously does lend itself to the unfolding of the narrative, and so, insofar as the discussion of the film texts requires it, some references are made to the filmic ‘language’ (the ‘vocabulary’, ‘punctuation’ and ‘grammar’) of individual texts as it affects the discursive qualities of the narrative.

As a part of another way of explaining and justifying my approach, I would also like to refer to some other approaches to the study of cinema as a
way of demonstrating how my approach differs or has some similarities with other research approaches, depending on the relationships between the parameters and aims of other works and the parameters and aims of this study.

For example, John Tulloch, in the introduction to a chapter of his 1977 edited work *Conflict and Control in the Cinema*¹⁰³ presents an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of certain approaches to the study of cinema (and it should be noted of Hollywood, specifically) as a social system. His core argument is that if cinema is to be studied as a social system then the aim of that study should be to examine the structure of the inter-relationships between actors within that system in an effort to consider '... the way in which the social system of the cinema and other media operate to legitimise [italics in original] an existing order?'¹⁰⁴, that is, the relationships between several levels of mediation in the planning, production, distribution and reception of films. To illustrate his view, Tulloch invokes the earlier (1967) seminal work on *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger and Luckman who argue that four levels of legitimation can be identified.

The first of their four levels of legitimation is *language*, by which they mean the labelling and basic relationship joinings in a film, for example the naming and showing of 'a' father and son, and their connectedness through their role positions. Berger and Luckman's second level of legitimation is *rudimentary theoretical propositions*, and the examples they give are in the region of proverbs, folk tails and legends. The third level, and the one that Tulloch sees as being the '...most appropriate to our argument here'¹⁰⁵, is '...social legitimation via institutionalised 'pure theory'.¹⁰⁶ This level of legitimisation is characterised by the deployment of a 'differentiated body of
knowledge' in which legitimated institutions such as, in the case of my argument of the nation building and national identity projects, gain autonomy through what Tulloch calls 'specialised theories and full-time legitimators'.

The fourth level of legitimation Berger and Luckman identify is the construction and maintenance of 'symbolic universes', which refers to sets of 'values' and ideologies that '...encompass the whole of society and human interaction within it, so integrating all the sectors of the institutional order.'

I see Tulloch's approach invaluable as some points to keep in mind while examining some aspects of the Australian made cinema industry/culture. However, his approach alone is not wholly suitable for the aims of this study for two reasons. The first is that Tulloch, and those theorists and researchers that he presents and refers to, are heavily focused on Hollywood and its influences on other culture industries and ultimately upon audiences. They seem to be trying to develop a unified theory of the analysis of cinema cross-culturally, keeping the Hollywood industry/conventions/product in the privileged position of being the only 'real' cinema, to use Berger and Luckman's term to legitimise other cinemas through comparison with how like Hollywood they are. Fundamentally, Tulloch's approach is from the position of seeking the 'influence' of cinema upon the industry and audiences while my approach in this study is to map the reflection of society and the industry in the cinema.

I see Tulloch's approach sitting very firmly in the field of theoretical film studies, a field that this study does not engage with. While Tulloch's view is one of a film theorist, looking at the macro-system, the approach of this study sits within cultural studies and therefore is focused on performance in the micro-system (i.e. the film examples). That said, while I am not arguing
for the influence of film on society, but mapping the presence of the influence of society in film, as a part of this study there is some discussion of attempts at the legitimation of a hegemonic cultural identity, for example Howard's 'values of the mainstream' or the 'black armband of history' through the generation of what has been called 'the shock of recognition'. The so called 'AFC' genre of very successful films of the 1970's and early 1980's were perhaps the most explicit attempts to promulgate notions of the established hegemonic cultural identity of the nation to domestic and international audiences, films like *Sunday Too Far Away* (Ken Hannam, 1975) employed a shockingly familiar construction of Australian masculinity to great success.

The second point is that Tulloch's work and that of those he evokes, while thorough and well argued, is dated in its rigidity. This study places itself in the field of cultural studies, a field that seeks a boundlessness that finds itself in conflict with the kind of limited flexibility of 1970s screen studies. That said, my approach's lack of clear boundaries and multi-layered, clearly established theoretical methodologies does leave itself open to attack on this level.

The approach of this study sees the study of discourses of national identity in cinema as being limited to its ability to illuminate what might be called the *Zeitgeist* of the times in which the films were produced and viewed, outside of the film examples themselves.

There are other approaches to the discussion of Australian national identity and notions of the nation in cinema, contemporary with mine, that are worth touching on to further illuminate my approach to this issue. In one of the few works on Australian cinema in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Albert Moran and Errol Vieth present an introduction to Film in
Australia. In their introduction they declare that their book's genesis lies in a "...dissatisfaction with accounts of Australian cinema offered elsewhere, which seemed to postpone or retard an engagement with film in favour of other matters." Their work has a genre focus and specifically rejects attempts to 'read the nation in its films'; they are content to focus on a textual reading of the film texts as examples of genre engagements in the Australian context.

They see other works on Australian cinema springing out of three distinct traditions. The first of these encompasses a general history that tries to tell the 'story' of Australian cinema in terms of its hits and misses, ebbs and flows, highlights and heroes. The second type of work they characterise as one which is pitched at a general level and concerns the larger institutions and especially Hollywood. The third kind of inquiry they see as one that is too often indebted to Cultural Studies and Australian Studies. They go on to declare that this kind of study of the Australian cinema:

... seeks to interpret a supposed zeitgeist [their italics], the spirit of the times, adducing a conceptual grid, usually a couplet or triad, which becomes the grand framework for understanding the films. In other words, film seems only to be a point on a journey whose real goal is broadly sociological, historical or even philosophical.

It is reasonable to read Moran and Vieth's comments as being critical of this 'Cultural Studies and Australian Studies approach', an approach this study would situate itself within; in fact, this study would see itself as having a strong relationship with all three traditions, and little relationship with Moran and Vieth's approach, for the reason that this study is seeking to examine and discuss notions of Australian national identity rather than cinema in Australia, the film examples being used to illustrate notions of the discourses that are employed to invoke some Australianness.

Cinema, it should be remembered, is only a very small but popular
part of a society's expression and self-reflexivity. This study is interested in
the constant and changing representations of the unique cultural identity of
the nation in so much as it has been promulgated in cinema over the latter
half of the twentieth century. Very little of the broader culture's engagements
with identity meaning-making in other cultural, economic and social spheres
is discussed because the notion that what can be gleaned of a culture's self-
image in cinema is not necessarily going to be consistent across the whole
society. It would be a gross oversimplification and generalisation (such as the
types the news media are wont to undertake) to extrapolate the
representations of the national identity in film, as I discuss them, onto the
broader society. It is only with some examples drawn from Australian made
film that this study occupies itself, with some reflections drawn from other
cultural and political spheres, not with the national imagining in its many
spheres.

In keeping with this study's relationship with the field of cultural studies
– and more specifically Australian cultural studies – the work of Graeme
Turner provides a significant contribution to this study's engagement with
the existing field of knowledge, a field within which the conclusions of this
study positions itself. And the first positioning for this study is to align itself
with Turner's own positioning of the field of Australian cultural studies in
relationship to film studies; he proposes that:

The project of film studies in the academy is still primarily an
interpretive one – of textual analysis – while the history of cultural
studies has seen it move from a focus on the text to the analysis of
the audience, and from there to mapping the discursive, economic,
and regulatory contexts within which the two come together.

This study, in keeping with Turner's Australian cultural studies /
Australian studies positions, engages in mapping the national identity space
created by the discursive, economic and regulatory contexts in and around the nexus of audiences and film-texts. Specifically, in the terms of this study, the space occupied by representations of the cultural identity is read through the deployment of an Australian cultural studies paradigm, and the Australian national identity and nation-building projects are defined by the deployment of an Australian studies paradigm. This is undertaken by drawing examples from film narratives, while engaging and contextualising the discussion with the more explicit discourses of the nation around cultural narrativising, through the national identity and nation-building projects, expressed as the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation.
a few works on australian cinema

Australian cinema has been analysed and documented by a number of academics and writers, covering the periods up to, and including the 1990s, in diverse ways, with numerous foci. This study uses as its starting point a number of studies on Australian film culture that look at some important periods of film production; it also explores the ideas of those works which offer useful methodological tools.

As a part of the mapping of the discursive elements of cultural identity, nationalisms and identity narratives, present in and around film texts, this study seeks to extend a number of Graeme Turner's assertions and conclusions in his work *National Fictions*, i.e., that the overwhelming thematic natures of Australian narratives are as 'consoling inventions', and that these constructions 'are built to encourage assent to a system which constantly privileges the good of the community (however that is represented) over the individual'\(^{113}\) – in the terms of this study – as a function of the national identity and nation-building projects. And as part of this process, this study also re-poses Turner's question: '... since the explicit years of the 1970s has Australian national cinema disengaged itself from the explicit project of nation-building?'\(^{114}\)

This study also keeps in mind some points made by Meaghan Morris and John Frow in their introduction to their significant work *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader*, when they remind us that in order to get to the:

... disparate structures that meet in and flow through a complex site like a shopping mall [their example of a site of social relations activity Australian Cultural Studies might be interested in], the theorist (because this is never simply a descriptive [italics in original] activity) will have of necessity to draw upon, and to cross, the discourses of a number of different disciplines (and again, this cross-disciplinary perspective is characteristic of the working methods of cultural studies).\(^{115}\)
They go on to list the discourses this activity might call upon: an economic discourse, an aesthetic discourse, a discourse of politics, a discourse about gender, an ethnographic discourse, a discourse of history, a discourse '... perhaps more specific to cultural studies', by which they mean one that understands, to use their example again, '... the mall as an intricate textual construct, and understands shopping as a form of popular culture directly interrelated with other cultural forms ...', a policy discourse and '... some mix of sociology, semiotics and philosophy.'

Tom O'Regan's *Australian National Cinema* offers perhaps the most substantial analysis of the Australian film-making industry/culture as a case study in a wider international, economic and cultural context, and provides a major reference source for this study. O'Regan maps the characteristics of Australian national cinema through both its similarities with other national cinemas and also its uniqueness. It is with the unique aspects of Australian film-making industry/culture and of film as a medium itself, that this study is most concerned and, in particular, with the ability of film to be a mirror of the culture (seeing and reflecting) which created it, and at the same time a reinvigorator of forgotten narratives through re-presentation in another form. For example, the very successful film version of *The Man From Snowy River*, (George Miller, 1982) fed off the familiarity of the Lawson poem with domestic audiences without strictly adhering to the original narrative. Film can also function as an initiator of national narratives for the culture. For example, the film *Breaker Morant* (Bruce Beresford, 1980) could be read as the elevation [evolution] of a minor cultural hero, through the imbuing of that hero with one of the central national narrative identities, which links with notions of ANZAC in an emerging cultural conduit, namely cinema. This
process, in some way, acknowledges that the national narratives around ANZAC are so powerful that they can be press-ganged into service in other narratives. The cinema in particular is not separate from the culture which creates it. The domestic cinema industry/culture contributes to the narratives of a culture, creating as well as reflecting. Without the established narratives of ANZAC, a cultural product such as the film *Breaker Morant* would have had to establish, through a very different kind of narrativising, the relations between the men, and of the British to the Australians. It is a pertinent example of the ‘naturalising’ of narratives, and of the national characteristics that contribute to those national narratives, that an Australian audience (or even a non-Australian audience familiar with Australian filmic identity) could ‘pick up’ the narrative so easily. The delineation of the protagonists, us and them, the Australians and the British – in the very clearly dichotomised way that they are constructed in the film – are typical narrative mechanisms of the films of the period in which *Morant* was produced. A fuller discussion of this argument is found in chapter four.

In their examination of Australian film-making industry/culture, Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka literally dissect the body of Australian national cinema, gathering the pieces into useful groupings. Their aim is to ‘see its parts, tendencies, specialisations, limitation and desires.’ They examine the iconic use of particular actors to speak to ideas of a particular ‘national type’ and, more broadly, their work examines the way in which the films of the 1970s and 1980s articulate that national identity. They argue that in the 1970s and early 1980s the type of uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation represented in Australian cinema was one which was generated by ‘an iconic white masculinity.’ For them, the films of
this period in particular deal with an unproblematic national identity, which needed no interrogation because it was represented as being 'natural, historical, inevitable, true – and adequate.'\textsuperscript{121} It was a national identity closely linked with Australian national narrativising. The questions this study asks are answered by mapping Australian cinema's relationships with the discursive construction of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation as it is expressed as a part of the national identity and nation-building projects.

In addition to the analysis of the discursive ways in which notions of the national identity have been used to limit the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects, this study incorporates some mapping of the economic and regulatory elements of the space around the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects. Through an examination of the industry conditions which produced the films (the funding arrangements, 'runaway',\textsuperscript{122} 'offshore', 'foreign', 'co-production' and other production arrangements, production funding and distribution frameworks) the ways in which economic arrangements could impact on the types of films which were made, and that could privilege certain films over others, can be seen. Additionally, the regulatory frameworks developed by the various government bodies in the areas of education, professional development, direct and indirect funding and censorship are examined to give further context to the wider discussion.

In keeping with the fluid and undisciplined nature of cultural studies – which enables it to travel over the boundaries of other disciplines – this study picks and chooses from various theories to illuminate readings of the film texts and to lend some consistency to those readings. For example, in the
broader theoretical fields, there are references to Vladimir Propp’s work on folk narrative structures, particularly in reading the popular films of the so-called 'AFC genre' of the 1970s as narratives which can be read as being more closely linked to ‘folktales’ – through the deployment of archetypical characters/characteristics, identity narratives and aesthetics – rather than narratives in almost any other period of film-making in Australia.

**structure of this study**

This study is structured along a chronological, linear path divided into distinct periods which loosely sit concurrently within various periods of political leadership, within which only a casual link is suggested.

The first of these political periods is covered in chapter two, which analyses representations of the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation, in the immediate post-war period: 1946-1965. The period is sometimes referred to as ‘the long afternoon’ in Australian social history. Under the leadership of Robert Menzies, and along with the post-war reconstruction and economic boom, few resources or interest were reserved for representation of the national identity and nation-building projects on the screen. In this period a number of co-productions were made in Australia and much of the analysis of the national character in this period is through an engagement with these views through foreign lenses.

The most striking thematic stream to emerge in this period is in the direct post-war period. In this period, post-war reconstruction is supported by looking back to the recent past and referring to various virtuous national narratives. The period ends with the first hints of the approaching domestic film industry (*Clay* (Giorgio Mangiamele, 1965)) and the emergence of the
first successful 'Australian made' film of the post-war period, *They're A Weird Mob* (Michael Powell, 1966).

In chapter three, the film texts of the 'pre-high renaissance' period, 1967-1974, are analysed. In this period, the domestic film-making industry begins to emerge from the long afternoon and starts to explore and articulate a new Australian voice through an engagement with the vernacular 'Ocker' character. This is the period of the 'new nationalism' and the election of the Whitlam Labor government.

Chapter four covers the so-called 'renaissance' period 1975-1983, a period in which Australian film-making industry/culture gained enormous national and international critical success. This is the period in which some of the most easily recognisable groupings of 'Australian made' films, which established a strongly resonant type of cinematic, uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation, are to be found. Although this is also the period of Malcolm Fraser's Prime Minstership, little of his administration's character is reflected in the cinematic output of the period.

Chapter five, which covers the period 1984-1990, a period which was strongly influenced by changes to the tax system, i.e. with the '10BA tax concession', and which saw an explosion of film-making and the film-making industries in Australia. The new ethos of 'economic rationalism' which characterised the Hawke years had a strong influence on the types of product produced by the industry in this period.

In chapter six, which covers the period 1991-1996, filmic texts of the so-called 'glitter cycle' (which includes *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1993) *Muriel's Wedding* (Paul J. Hogan, 1994) and *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1992)) are analysed to expose some
interesting new ways of telling old stories with reference to the representative referential regime buried under some superficial fluff and feathers. This chapter identifies that in this period (1991-1996) much deeper engagements with parts of the representative referential regime were undertaken, resulting in great success for some films. The main focus of this chapter is to unpack these deep engagements, and to formulate some thoughts as to why some films were so successful with both national and international audiences, critics and the culture more broadly. This period is perhaps the most non-homogeneous period analysed in this study as far as the filmic output of the nation is concerned. In this period the film making industry/culture saw the end of the significant international and domestic, culturally, critically and financially successful films made in Australia. *The Adventures of Pricilla Queen of the Desert* is an example of one the last of these domestic and international success stories.

And finally in chapter seven, some 'Howard' period 1996-2007 films are analysed in light of the conclusions made following the analysis of previous chapters. The proximity of this period to the present is also a consideration and involves discussions of some very recent texts. This period would see the development of several strains of film-making: the further development of a mature art house practice and formation. This period also saw the revival of the Ocker comedy. In addition, towards the end of the period, the other formation to emerge was an exposition of genre pictures for sale to world markets. In this final period, some conclusions are drawn around notions of a maturing film-making industry/culture and a maturing national culture.

The question of just what constitutes the national identity is not
confined to film. In this study 'Australian made' film texts are analysed to map the changing landscape of Australian national narratives, identity histories and cultural identities. Together the playing out of these national stories helps to form and develop the directions of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects, to establish trends and to document a dominant national ethos across sub-periods. The manifestations of these national stories also help in modelling the development of ways in which contemporaneous notions of the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation are represented in narratives over the whole period.

This study examines filmic examples, from 1945 into the twenty-first century, to expose the propensity to prescribe a particular set of representations of the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity of the nation and its attendant value systems. Often, as a result of this propensity, much is said about the desires of the contemporary society and the limitations of its self-imagining, and of the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the times in which the films were made and viewed.

Employing a cultural studies paradigm (which by definition is a composite of the discursive methodologies of a number of other disciplines, see earlier in the introduction for a fuller explanation), this study identifies, maps and unpacks some instances of the Australian national identity and nation-building project's attempts at meaning-making through an identification of various critical discourses associated with the national identity and the national character, as they have been represented in Australian made films throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

This study is not an analysis of all of the films made in Australia in the
second half of the twentieth century, but rather a discussion of the discourses employed in meaning-making around notions of national identity in some critically, culturally and commercially popular (and not so popular) film examples. I see identity meaning-making in Australian made cinema as being able to be read as an example of a larger undertaking that I label the national identity and nation building projects. The film examples are employed to illustrate my reading of the deployment of certain discourses that I group under the rubric 'referential regime'. Obviously there are many other discourses and film examples that run counter to my analysis. The scope of this study does not permit the analysis of all of the discourses associated with meaning-making in this context, just the identification and mapping of those I see as being significant, consistent and, perhaps most controversially, inescapably linked with what I identify as the referential regime.
1. end notes


4. Ibid.


10. This is a term that is commonly applied to the characteristics of a medical or engineering positioning device that has movement through a number of plains retaining strength, rigidity and stability. See for example: http://www.epatents.org/Light-Fixtures/Find-patent-Articulatable-positioning-device-698329.htm


12. See for example Andrew Denton's remarks at: http://www.abc.net.au/changil/about/writing.htm

13. Doyle writes that he had an idea to create a situation comedy in the mould of 'Hogan's Heroes', that just naturally gravitated towards being set in Changi. See: http://www.abc.net.au/changil/about/writing.htm


15. Ibid. p. 142.


18. For a comprehensive discussion of the function of the arts as a conduit of the National Narratives see for example:
   Turner, Graeme. (1993) op. cit.;


23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid. p. 203.
28 Ibid. p. 5.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 A number of marketing strategies play down the foreign language content of some films by having promotional trailers contain no dialogue in an attempt to play down the subtitled reality of the film.
36 O'Regan, Tom. (1996) op. cit.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
47 Ibid. p. 22.
48 Bhabha, Homi. (1990) op. cit.
50 Bhabha, Homi. (1990) op. cit. p. 4.
53 I am particularly thinking here of Turner, Graeme. (1999) op. cit.
52 Horne, Donald. (1971) op. cit. p. 25.
53 See: http://www.acn.net.au/articles/donbradman/
55 Roebuck, Peter. (2001) 'Perhaps Only Shakespeare Has Stood So Far Ahead of His Fellow Players.' The Sydney Morning Herald, 27 Feb, p. 6
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Stratton, Jon. (2006) op. cit. p. 244.
71 Ibid.
72 MacGregor, Duncan, Andrew Leigh, David Madden, and Peter Tynan. (2004). op. cit.
75 O'Regan, Tom. (1996) op. cit. p. 305.
76 Ibid. p. 22.
81 Ibid. p. 13.
82 Turner, Graeme. (1996) op. cit.
83 Turner, Graeme. (1999) op. cit. p. 27.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
89 Ibid. p. 169.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid. p. 80.
93 Gough Whitlam in ibid.
96 Turner, Graeme. (1986) op. cit. p. 143.
97 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
104 Ibid. p. 154.
105 Ibid. p. 155.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
109 Ibid. p. xi.
110 Ibid.
111 The principle works of Graeme Turner which inform this discussion are:
Turner, Graeme. (1993b) *Film as Social Practice*. 2nd ed. New York:
Routledge.

112 Turner, Graeme. (2000) op. cit.
113 Turner, Graeme. (1986) op. cit. p. 143.
114 Turner, Graeme. (1994) op. cit.
116 Ibid. p. xvii
119 Ibid. p. 28.
120 Ibid. p. 199.
121 Ibid. p. 25.
Ch. 2. 'OUR KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD': FINDING AUSTRALIANNESS IN SECOND GENERATION, AUSTRALIAN MADE FILMS: 1946 - 1965

The daydreams we get from celluloid are not Australian daydreams. Our kingdom is not of this world. (Tom Wein)¹

Australia is one of the last frontiers; it offers the lure of faraway places with strange-sounding names to an industry which is increasingly compelled to send its cameras all over the world in search of something new. (E.S. Madden)²

It is this sense of identity which a community's own film making confers upon it as nothing else can. Now, when most of our diversions are processed and packaged elsewhere, we probably need it more than ever. But it is notably absent from our experience when Hollywood, having paid us a coach-party visit, presents us with a Summer of the Seventh Doll or a Sundowners. These, though quaintly counted by some as 'Australian films', are not Australian in any sense that matters; the background was exactly that – background. (Sylvia Lawson)³

While the 1950s signalled the end, in many senses, of the 'second generation' of Australian production, it can also be seen as marking out many of the paths of the 'third generation'. (Stuart Cunningham)⁴

introduction

In his 2004 Boyer Lecture series Tales Of Two Hemispheres, Peter Conrad discusses the transformation of notions of Australia from a place which was once conceived as 'God's fumbling rehearsal ... a trial run, and a botched job,'⁵ as the antithesis of the northern hemisphere,⁶ a useless counter weight – the negative, unequal half of an imbalanced whole. This notion seems to have shifted towards an idea of Australia that is so attractive that it risks being overrun by a northern hemisphere in search of a new idea of an attractive great southern land, still antithetical to the north and yet now somehow cleansed of its past.⁷ The reassessment of Australia from a place
of dread towards a place of traveller, tourist and nature lover pilgrimage, as a refuge from war and old world animosities, pollution and lifestyle atrophy, as a recycled and reclaimed place, started its journey (in earnest) after the Second World War. In this period, the war weary Australian population sought to re-examine who they were, where they had come from and where they were going, and to begin to define *who they were* through the emerging national identity and nation-building projects. In the post-war period there was little engagement with the national identity part of the project. However, with the massive waves of immigration that occurred in the later post-war period, questions of national identity would eventually emerge as a national fixation.

**this chapter**

This chapter examines the early stirrings of the national identity and nation-building projects, and the deployment of references drawn from the representative referential regime – expressed as a developing sense of a national identity – in 'Australian made' films of the post-war period. The modes of production, which characterised this period, and the distribution of the temporal and spatial narrative settings of the few films produced in Australia at this time, are mapped to provide context to the textual discussion of how the national identity is represented in the filmic texts of this period, if it is at all.

This study identifies the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation as being defined in Australian cultural and social life through association with the representative referential regime that uses as its reference points notions associated with: Australian values (mateship, a fair
go, egalitarianism), gender (with masculinity occupying most of this space),
etnicity (including notions of race, whiteness or indigeneity), the landscape
(including the anxieties of belonging to this place) and class (including
notions of ‘the battler’ and ‘the Ocker’). A close analysis of just what this
representative referential regime consists of is discussed in detail below. By
examining examples of ‘Australian made’ films from the period 1946-1965, in
their social, political and industry contexts, the early developments of a
screened, Australian national identity can be glimpsed.

The time period this chapter engages with is the post-Second World
War period in Australian film-making, a watershed period which serves as a
temporal starting point for a wider discussion of the changing – and un-
changing – developments in representations of the uniquely Australian,
shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in Australian made cinema
from 1945 to the present. This time period can be isolated as a discrete
period in Australian film-making. It represents the period between two events,
the end of the Second World War (1945) – an event that disrupted film-
making in Australia – and the release of They’re A Weird Mob (Michael
Powell, 1966) – an event, that, it is later argued, signalled the start of a new
period in Australian cinema.

Tom O'Regan points to the significance of the post-Second World War
period (the 1940s and 1950s) in the development of the Australian film-
making industry/culture as being not so much in the filmic output, but in the
period’s function as a signpost in the development of the Australian film-
making industries. He writes:

More than any other period, the 1950s is a sign of the
discontinuous tradition of Australian cinema. Its meaning is
generally given in relation to the period immediately before it or—
more often—immediately afterwards. You go through the 1950s to
arrive elsewhere—whether at the agitation for a film industry of the
1960s and the resulting film revival of the 1970s or backwards to
the frustrated aspirations of the 1940s or the Cinesound years of
the 1930s.⁸

O'Regan’s view of this period of film-making in Australia is as a sign of
discontinuity between the ‘successful’ pre-Second World War Cinesound
years and the later 1970s and the AFC genre successes. That the period is
of limited significance in itself is a common view, although it should be
acknowledged that the entire first edition of the influential journal Continuum
(1987) [edited by O'Regan] was devoted to Australian film in the 1950s. The
period is also the subject of two major studies, Bruce Molloy’s Before The
Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930-1960 and Stuart
Cunningham’s Featuring Australia: The Cinema of Charles Chauvel, as well
as numerous book chapters and journal articles.⁹ The present study sees the
immediate post-war period as being important in the ongoing development of
a continuous exploration and development of the national identity in
‘Australian made’ cinema, which started with the birth of film, continued with
the early Australian silent successes and the comedy successes of the
1930s, pushed on into the overt screening of Australian national identity in
the 1970s and 1980s, and developed into a reassessment in the 1990s
before becoming ‘lost’ and confused in the twenty-first century. That relatively
few film texts were produced which exhibit some identifiable Australianness,
as it is defined by this study, in the post-war period is no reason to ignore
these film texts or to limit the focus to the usual suspects of study for this
period – Charles Chauvel and the output of Ealing Studios in Australia.¹⁰

The post-Second World War period is sometimes referred to as ‘the
long afternoon’ in Australian social history. Under the leadership of Robert
Menzies (1949-1966), and along with the post-war reconstruction and the
primary products economic boom, few resources or interest were reserved for representing the nation on the screen. At this time (perhaps more so than in any other period) aspects of what this study labels the national identity and nation-building projects, were very much a clearly stated aim of post-war reconstruction through state control and personal restraint. The focus of the nation-building project, in the post-war reconstruction period, was confined to an economic public policy, dominated by the notion of 'full employment' through state control of investment. The Menzies Government's focus was on policies that were seen to promote the people in helping themselves. The Menzies government instituted policies '... to encourage thrift and self-reliance.' Some efforts were made in this period to project the nation on movie screens, primarily through locally made documentaries. These documentaries functioned as information films rather than as entertainment.

In 1945, the Federal Government established the Australian National Film Board (ANFB) to make informational documentaries for domestic consumption. Albert Moran, writing in the first issue of Continuum in 1987, sees the post-Second World War documentary being thematically unified around '... building the nation'. He sees the documentary as an:

...ideal vehicle for civic education. It was a means by which a set of social duties, and 'active citizenship' could be built up. The documentary could not only help overcome regionalism and parochialism by moulding a civic and national viewpoint but it could also promote international knowledge and understanding.

Because of the didactic nature of these films very few of the national narratives are present. Today they seem almost culturally 'foreign', in their lack of reference points drawn from the representational referential regime, and for their lack of the production of Australianness. The cultural identity of the nation in this period had more to do with Britain than with any 'native'
born notions of the Australian character. While the government information documentaries were promoting a particular set of civic duties, much of it was presented in a sort of 'BBC English'; the Australian vernacular was nowhere to be heard. Additionally, any commercial feature film production in Australia at this time was dominated by foreign money, aims and sensibilities. The commercial feature films of this period reflect a lack of Australianness through their poor engagement with the reference points drawn from the representative referential regime associated with the national identity. At this time Australia, if present, was generally only to be found in the background.

For example, in this period, a significant formation of commercial feature film output in Australia consisted of a number of co-productions that were made in and around Australia. Captured through foreign lenses, representations of Australia, Australianness and the Australian character, in these films, often had very narrow depths of focus, because the focus was on a strictly international audience.

The most striking filmic thematic engagement to emerge in this period was in the direct post-war years. In the years following the Second World War, post-war reconstruction was heavily supported by looking back to the recent war past. Some examples of this remembering include a focus on the triumphs: Smithy (Ken G. Hall, 1946), The Overlanders (Harry Watt, 1946); of the sacrifices: A Son is Born (Eric Porter, 1946); and the debt to the fallen: Always Another Dawn (T.O. McCreadie, 1947). As the period progresses a few voices sought to raise some questions around issues of class: Captain Thunderbolt (Cecile Holms, 1955), and Three In One (Cecile Holms, 1957). There are also frontier narratives, some with the background presence of the original inhabitants: Bitter Springs (Ralph Smart, 1950), The Back of Beyond
(John Heyer, 1954); and narratives set in the broader region: *King of the Coral Sea* (Lee Robinson, 1954), *Walk into Paradise* (Lee Robinson, 1956); and the new place the US has as a powerful friend: *Kangaroo Kid* (Lesley Selander, 1950). Towards the end of the period, children’s films became a staple with the exotic location and animals acting in place of a mature and unique society. The period ends with the first hints of the approaching domestic film industry, *Clay* (Giorgio Mangiamele, 1965), and the emergence of the first really successful ‘Australian made’ film of the post-war period, one that begins to experiment with an engagement with reference points drawn from the referential regime: *They’re A Weird Mob* (Michael Powell, 1966).

**recognisable australianness**

This chapter has so far touched on the shape, breadth and depth of film-making in Australia in the post-war period and on the social and political conditions. The most important results of the production modes in the post-war period were the films they produced. It is very difficult to find any filmic text from this period which exhibits any recognisable Australianness created through an association with the representative referential regime. The foreign funded films were all made with both eyes firmly on the international audience. This resulted in the construction of Australia and simple ideas of a filmic Australianness becoming a location for foreign and domestic film texts that Tom O’Regan calls ‘culturally inauthentic’ films.¹⁶

The co-productions often went even further in creating an Australian space as exotic in the locations and characters used, thus rendering out any Australianness that might have been present, for example, in ways of representing the place other than as a commodity. This having been said,
there are some films of this period (as there are in all periods of Australian film production) which display a belief that they were exhibiting a purposeful, direct attempt to be more ‘Australian’, and to stake a claim at speaking in a national cultural voice. These films include: *Strong is the Seed: The Farrer Story* (Arthur Greville Collins, 1949), *Night Club* (A.R. Harwood, 1952) and *Into the Straight* (T.O. McCreadie, 1949).

Most of the other films produced in this period rely on token gestures to create some sort of ‘Australiana’ through the employment of the usual suspects: the wide brown land, kangaroos and cries of ‘cooeeeee’ echoing across a gum-treed landscape. *The Sundowners* (Fred Zinneman, 1960) is probably the best example of this.

The overall starting point for the arguments this study is making is to question whether it is the case that some sort of ‘culturally authentic Australianness’ can only be created through an engagement with the representative referential regime? That the more it is engaged with the more cultural currency a film has, the more Australianness is created?

Just what are culturally authentic film texts? How should Australia be represented? This study identifies Australianness as being a result, a by-product or even the residue that remains after engagements with the representative referential regime of the national identity and nation-building projects. This is not to say that to achieve critical and commercial success, domestically and internationally, a film must create some culturally authentic Australianness. It is just to say that a film’s cultural authenticity can be measured in the residue of its interactions with the representative referential regime, in the resulting Australianness. The ways in which the reference points are deployed, problematised or celebrated all help to build cultural
authenticity and in doing so, to explore meaning-making in the landscape of the national imagining. The films of the post-Second World War period, often made by foreign film-makers or made by domestic film-makers with little or no experience, budget or support, demonstrated their lack of cultural authenticity through failing to employ the representative referential regime, through their lack of a residual Australianness.

In the post-war period, the closest that Australianness comes into being, in the filmic output, is in some associations, in the filmic narratives, with notions of place, class and egalitarianism, and with a very slight engagement with mateship. Mateship is one of the central values in the representative referential regime and an almost inescapable component of any discussion of uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, in the post-war period, through the 1960s and into the overt screening of Australianness in the 1970s and 1980s. As is discussed in later chapters, more problematised notions of mateship and the other aspects of the representative referential regime would not become common until the 1990s and even then, many unproblematised representations, references and deployments can be found.

In all periods discussed, the central position of the discussion of a national identity is one that provides privileged notions of an identity associated with the characteristics of the white, heterosexual male. Some of these characteristics include endurance, anti-authoritarianism, physical prowess and above all else mateship, i.e., mateship as a hierarchical social order whose purpose is to en-culture men into a structure of conformity. It is no coincidence that the environments of the army, outback workers and pioneers are primary sites for the development of mateship, and therefore
the development of national narratives. *Sons Of Matthew* (Charles Chauvel, 1949), for example, is the story of men clearing, taming and conquering the land while the women are at home, breeding and baking. The relationships the men have are ones of family bonds, loyalties and tensions; they are all brothers and are working with their uncle. They are held together by these family bonds, not mateship. A closer examination of the components of what I label the representative referential regime is warranted.

**representative referential regime**

In much of the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, the discourses (particularly in the time under the Howard Government 1996-2007, but not limited to it) regarding national identity in Australia have come to revolve around questions of a ‘core culture’ and ‘core values’. Much of this discourse argues that for the majority of its existence Australia more generally has been characterised as having a dominant socio-cultural caste group constructed from a central hybrid racial identity based on Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Celtic or Anglo-Celtic-European heritage. This discourse focuses on the notion that the dominant group’s ideological base reflects an essentialist view of race founded on ethnographic empiricism. And that by its very nature the dominant caste excludes full national membership to others, based on characteristics which were perceived to encourage deviation from what has come to be called by some revisionists – John Howard in particular but not exclusively – the ‘core values of the mainstream.’ These ‘core values’ are some of the desirable national traits of the dominant caste that came to be identified with itself and the nation as a whole. In some cases the imported, self-constructed and fluid cultural identities of those who might be
seen to be outside the 'mainstream' inhibit their ability to adopt these 'core values' and to become a part of the national cultural belonging. The unwanted result being their enduring position on the periphery. National identity in John Howard's terms is therefore thought of as an '... expression of the historical experience of the people' and he argued that, for example, 'multiculturalism threatens that national identity.'

To elaborate on this kind of construction of the origins of the Australian national identity or national character, some of the most pervasive situational elements within the Australian national identity and nation-building projects can be said to stem from the conditions of its conception, birth and development – colonisation, occupation, exploration, settlement and federation. The 'Australian situation' is one that is characterised by a unique frontier settler society positioned on a unique continent and the resulting development of a cultural identity formed out of its origins (Britishness) and the development of a limited multicultural society (Anglo-Celtic) – a relationship the Australian national identity and nation-building projects cannot escape. This study shifts this view away from the essentialist Australian situation towards a practical-pluralist one, and identifies the national identity as constructed, in Australian cultural and social life, by association with a representative referential regime that uses a consistent set of reference points to make meaning around notions of the national character, and therefore around belonging.

As stated above, the reference points within the representative referential regime are: Australian values (mateship, a fair go, egalitarianism); gender (with masculinity occupying most of this space); ethnicity (including notions of race, whiteness or indigeneity); the landscape (including the
anxieties of belonging to this place); and class (including notions of ‘the battler’ and ‘the Ocker’). I briefly touch on some definitions and explanations around these reference points. They are explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters where they are deployed and developed in the analysis of film examples.

The notion of Australian values can be seen to occupy a number of fields: political, social and cultural. Firstly, there is what I label the political field, exemplified by ‘egalitarianism’. This field is in large part defined by the laws enacted to eliminate discrimination, laws such as: *Age Discrimination Act 2004, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986, Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Sex Discrimination Act 1984, and Disability Discrimination Act 1992.* These laws seek to enshrine equal access to power in the political field.

For Donald Horne, egalitarianism is a fairly recent notion, having:

... moved into common speech only fairly recently (if it has moved into common speech) but the idea has been around for a long time. Meaning? In Australia it certainly does not mean that we have all been born equal or that no one should be better off materially than anyone else ... What it often (usually?) does mean is that we have at least an appearance of equality of manners in our relations with each other (even though we are not all the same) – although to some people it has meant that we should all be more or less the same (which is a different thing).²²

In the terms of this study, the actual social performance and manifestation of egalitarianism is as Donald Horne characterises it above, a battle between a demand for an equality of manners and the desire for uniformity. The argument I have with Horne is that he says of egalitarianism, it is ‘... not a matter on which you make laws or amend constitutions.’²³ I see it in the opposite terms. I see the olive branch of peace between the two warring positions: on the one hand the appearance of equality, and on the other the desire for uniformity, being ‘Law’. Law that enshrines a respect for
individual roles in society through legal mechanisms, and what might be
labelled 'Lore', a common sense rules, which are demonstrably 'right and fair'
in support of 'us' against 'them', implicit in the national imagining. And that
while obviously the law of the land can be altered to reflect this, the lore that
is enshrined in the law, in public policy discourse and in the constitution, in
the terminology, sensitivity and fairness of the way that the 'rules' are
articulated, can go a long way in providing a framework for all to benefit from
Australian egalitarianism.

Some political examples of this were the desire of the Howard
Government to change the preamble of the Australian constitution to reflect
notions that included: all Australians, men and women, having equality
before the law and that it should be acknowledged that there was Aboriginal
'prior ownership' of this place. And in the same vein, the subsequent Prime
Minister, Kevin Rudd (2007 - ), sought to make a decisive symbolic act in the
first months of his Prime Ministership by issuing a formal apology for prior
harm by the state towards Aboriginal people. Both of these gestures are the
kinds of things that can be read as being extensions of Australian
egalitarianism. The performance of Australian egalitarianism in filmic
narratives is generally manifest and expressed through particular linguistic
constructions of social actions. In the various time periods of film-making in
Australia – engaged with by this study – an analysis of Australian
egalitarianism in filmic narratives is undertaken. It should be noted at this
point that this study is interested in the cultural construction and performance
of egalitarianism. Economic egalitarianism, characterised as 'equality of job
opportunities, earnings, quality of working life, access to welfare system,
education, health and housing, the tax system, regional opportunities and the
distribution of industrial power' has a quite different focus, which falls outside the scope of this study.

The second field of values is the social, exemplified by the notion of 'a fair go', a uniquely Australian construction of fairness. It is a social practice enshrined in such institutions as education, the army, sporting and social organisations, and even to some degree volunteer organisations like the State Emergency Services (SES); all seek to make 'a fair go' a part of the social life of the nation. Importantly, in the development of these institutions a great amount of 'unfair go' has been the norm, bullying being a hallmark of schools, the army and many volunteer organisations. As the notion of 'a fair go' has developed and spread, with the shift away from essentialist notions of belonging to encompass those who were previously marginalised, women in particular, 'a fair go' is, in twenty-first century Australia, being used to stamp out non-inclusive practices and to en-culture all into the fold.

For example, recent (August 2008) criticisms of the Victorian Country Fire Service (VCFA), a mostly volunteer organisation, for its culture of bullying and harassment, especially of women, were received with a great deal more self-reflexive criticism by the organisation than was previously possible. While a degree of this is undoubtedly a result of professional public relations, a good deal of the VCFA's response can be read as a reaction to what has now become inappropriate in the social sphere – being seen to not afford 'a fair go' to all.

'A fair go' picks up where egalitarianism leaves off. It plays out in the social field (generally) without a formal legal framework as its primary means of authority. This is where Horne's view belongs: 'a fair go' is not something we should make laws about, it is a part of a socialising process. 'A fair go'
relies on socialisation through the institutions of the society, schooling being the predominant one.

For example, in the Values For Australian Schooling project\textsuperscript{26} the notion of ‘a fair go’ is clearly articulated for school students and interested parties.

Within the nine articulated values is number 3, ‘Fair Go’.

3. Fair Go

Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society

The National Framework consists of nine areas of values for school children, in ‘... alphabetical order and not in any rank order of importance.’ These ‘shared values’ are seen to be ‘... part of Australia’s common democratic way of life, which includes equality, freedom and the rule of law.'\textsuperscript{27}

For Fred Argy, a fair go, or fairness, is a good starting point for social cohesion and late modern nation-building. He writes:

Fairness? If you were trying to build up a new kind of speech-making for Australian politics you could do worse that build it around the idea of ‘a fair go’. However it would have to be given a meaning wider than just helping underdogs. ... Tolerance? ... How are all these different people supposed to get on with each other? Partly by minding their own business and not caring if everyone in a society is not ‘the same’ as everyone else – but also by remembering that, although they are in many ways different, as citizens all have equal status. They are all equally Australians.\textsuperscript{28}

The third field of Australian values is the cultural, exemplified by ‘mateship’. This field functions as a part of a system of foundation myths that embodies foundation narratives of the national identity, like, for example, Russel Ward’s ‘typical Australian’.\textsuperscript{29} For Brian McFarlane:

The sentimental ideal of mateship may well be Australia’s chief contribution to the history of human relationship[sic].\textsuperscript{30}

And for John Howard, a keen supporter and definer of a particularly narrow construction of mateship:
We pay proper regard to excellence as well as fairness to independence as well as mateship. And let me say, in relation to the word mateship, that it is one of those words hallowed by the Australian experience which has a particular resonance, I believe, with all Australians.  

The notion of 'mateship' is (perhaps most) strongly characterised by contradictions and ambivalences in political, public and cultural discourse, and yet is very familiar to most Australians. For the purposes of this study I define the actual social performance and manifestation of mateship as being a nexus of a number of elements:

1. A co-dependency, which develops through shared experiences;
2. building on identified common concerns;
3. the development of a particular kind of trust;
4. a trust which is characterised by critical humour and a self-conscious brevity of speech towards the mates (though the opposite is often to be found directed at 'outsiders'); and
5. developed and strengthened through the establishment of a common social language (including such things as 'nick-names' and the use of some kinds of slang).

The important thing to remember is that while it is popular to say that at the centre of the Australian national character are values which are best associated with white Anglo-Celtic men, as for example when Donald Horne reminds us that the values can be defined '... in terms of Anglo-Australian goals and aspirations, usually for the benefit of adult males', nevertheless, membership in the Australian cultural nation is open to all who can conform to the 'rules', who can perform 'what it means to be Australian'. Membership is no longer limited by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class or physical ability; all can join if they can navigate their way towards performances of belonging to the nation through association with the national cultural identity. This is where I align my definition of culture with that of Raymond Williams,
who writes that one aspect of culture is the manifestation of the '... known meanings and directions, which its [society's] members are trained to ...' \(^{33}\)

The other reference points employed by the representative referential regime are gender, ethnicity, the landscape and class.

It is a common position that in the production of Australian national identity and national character, masculinity is privileged over femininity. In much of the output of the Australian made cinema, the spaces that films create and occupy are too often men's spaces, devoid of 'woman'. Men populate these spaces, women are girlfriends back home, sideline supporters, barmaids or nymphomaniacs. It is worth noting that Dermody and Jacka point out the presence of assertive women who displace (very un-70s Australian) 'circumspect, vulnerable men' in middle class 'cultivated fiction' (the source of much of the popular and successful 'AFC' genre films of the 1970s and early 1980s). They go on to suggest that the presence of these men weakly belies the myth of the 'relentless masculinism of this [Australian] society.' \(^{34}\) And yet not one woman appears in their list of iconic Australian actors. \(^{35}\) This is clearly a result of the dominance of what they call 'the male ensemble film' \(^{36}\) and the further masculinisation of desirable Australian characteristics as seen in the popularity found in the unification of the 'male ensemble film' and the 'period drama' into 'the all-male diorama approach to the re-staging of great sporting or military defeats from history.' \(^{37}\) Only when the female character enacts, embodies or performs the male cultural traits does she come near iconic status – Dermody and Jacka's example is Judy Davis' character Sybylla in \textit{My Brilliant Career} (Gillian Armstrong, 1979). They see Sybylla borrowing from the male tradition of the larrikin '... to achieve "brilliant" non-conformity and hero qualities.' \(^{38}\) Heroes in Australian
films are therefore almost always men, or at least display qualities associated with men. As a number of other writers\(^3\) have suggested previously, much if not all myths and types of national narratives represented in Australian cultural products across the time period studied, 1945-2007, were men’s stories. They included stories of men and things associated with men, ‘rationality, activity, transcendence, taming and colonisation’, and their spaces, which include the bush, the battlefield and the pub.\(^4\)

Anne Summers sees the marginalisation of women’s activities, superseded by the activities of men, as being a part of the reason for the gendered differences of what she labels the ‘levels’ of culture:

> When the socially valued areas of our culture are either occupied by men or dependent for survival on values which are associated with the male sex role, what and where is the women’s place? What alternatives do most women have but to subsume themselves within that permitted territory and strive for self-realization at the lower levels, in the shadowy areas of allowed art forms or in the homes and gardens where they are psychically imprisoned?\(^4\)

In the filmic Australia of the 1970s, for example, ‘... manliness is seen, quite simply both as the pinnacle of the Australian experience and of Australian cultural identity, as well as universally representative of Australianness.’\(^4\) The men are sons of the land, fathers of the nation and torchbearers of tradition.

In terms of ethnicity, the constructions of Australian national identity have had a confused history. One of the most significant aspects of the situation the Australian national identity and nation-building projects finds itself in developed as the Australian national community grew through various waves of immigration. The relationships between the invading cultures, the indigenous cultures and immigration developed to further confuse the national identity situation.
From the earliest voyages of ‘discovery’, to the transportation of Britain’s ‘unwanted class’, to South Pacific slave trading, through to the development of a British émigré population with just the ‘crimson thread of kinship’ and some very long apron strings to link it tenuously to the mother country, and as a European diaspora huddled in South East Asia, and further still through massive immigration after the Second World War, the assimilation of ‘New Australians’, the influx of Asian ‘boat people’, the opening up of non-traditional migration sources and family reunion policies and the latest politicised ‘illegal arrivals’ have all – over time – helped to create the national community and to confuse the national imagining.

Australia was founded as a colony of Great Britain in 1788. From that day Australia developed as a nation obsessed with its racial make-up and the threat from outside its borders and, from within, to that racial purity. For example, the first legislative act of the first parliament in 1901 was to install the ‘White Australia Policy’ (WAP) as the key manifestation of the industrial relations, foreign and immigration policies of the new nation.

This study takes as its starting point (on the question of a working definition of the nation) Benedict Anderson’s concept of the ‘imagined community’, particularly the notion that groups of citizens can go about their lives in the firm knowledge that parallel to their lives are many more people just like them and, in the cases of colonial outposts, far across the sea at ‘home’ there existed fellow nationals (primarily defined by race in many cases) making up communities parallel and comparable to their own. For Australia this imagined sharing of identity and cultural homogeneity informed the creation of the colonies, the federation and to some degree, for the core Anglo-Saxon culture, contemporary life.
For Richard White, in his influential work *Inventing Australia*, the identity of the colony in New South Wales differed little, internally and externally, from comparable British colonies throughout the world.\(^{45}\) The United States, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada were all founded on Enlightenment principles, which were framed by an adherence to scientific principles. If the environment and the experiences of a species (read race) shaped that species then all British colonialists were reflecting their origins and supreme fitness to be the new masters in a new land. Australia could therefore be looked upon as a new branch of the Anglo-Saxon tree, as reflected in Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, especially as it was abstracted into 'social Darwinism'.\(^{46}\) In 1901 the population of The Commonwealth of Australia was measured in a census. The total population (i.e. British, white) consisted of 3,773,801 persons, of whom 77% were Australian born Anglo-Saxons.\(^{47}\)

For White, the Commonwealth of Australia was founded upon a desire to legislate a conception of nationhood which sought to defend itself through laws designed to 'protect' the nation. Some of the laws that were created in the first year of the Australian nation were the 'White Australia' policy, the establishment of military preparedness and economic protections in the form of the new arbitration system. The states were left to develop the nation\(^{48}\) and, therefore, the earliest notions of a national identity were informed by very explicit notions of the Other, those who should be kept out of the colonies and then the federation, so as to keep it racially homogeneous.

It should be noted that although Australia was comparable with the other British emigrant societies (defined by their own frontier experiences) of the time – Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and even the United States –
as the colonies developed into a federation of states, it developed a unique nature. Australia was, in its imagining and in practical application, a racially homogeneous nation in that the indigenous population was not considered to be either numerically or culturally significant enough to bring any consideration to bear on the formation, development or evolution of the colonies or the Commonwealth. Nor was there any significant non-white immigration in the first half of the twentieth century, in the Australian context. In 2002, 66% of Australians still identified themselves as being of British origins. The other British colonies each had both an indigenous and a poly-cultural diversity giving a significant complexity to their racial/cultural societies: Canada had the French; South Africa the 'native' population, the French and the Dutch; New Zealand, while 'British to the bootstraps' had a perennially (in the sense of its entire history) significant indigenous population. Threats to the racial make-up of the Australian federation of colonies did not predominantly come from within, but from without.

A more concrete factor that is inescapable in any discussion of the production of Australianness is the landscape or, more specifically, the landmass. As confused as the national imagining might be by its racial and ethnic makeup, the land – the physical size of the Australian continent and its topography – presents almost insurmountable problems. The most persistent way of imagining this place, through the eyes of the earliest European visitors, was as a wholly physical and most importantly for this study, conceptually inhospitable place (except for some bits of the coast), which Robert Hughes rightly describes as being imagined as a gaol with walls 14000 miles thick.
The vast dry land turns its population's attention from the sea. Often Australia is described as the largest island on the planet or, in perhaps the most famous description of the landmass, as a place 'girt by sea'. This is misleading, for Australia has no strong island culture, rather, the desert, and the ongoing drought and even bush fires and floods, seem to inform the national culture more than the sea. The culture looks from one oasis to the next, only venturing to the edge of the sea, preferring harbours, bridges and beaches. For example, the 'Bondi Lifesaver' stands as some reassurance that you will be pulled out of the treacherous waves if you get in over your head and as a symbol of the land and civic virtue. John Fiske sees the lifesaver as being '... responsible, law-abiding and community spirited, the surfer is irresponsible, feckless and “a bludger”; if the lifesaver is civilised, the surfer is primitive; the lifesaver is land, the surfer is the sea.'

Why is Australian society obsessed with the land rather than the sea? This study takes the position that 'The Fatal Shore' was the first and remains a dominant index of who we were, who we are and where we are going. The land consumes ideas the population has about it. This place denies the manageability necessary for it to become the pastoral perfection of romantic British culture, the land as an ‘English Gentleman’s Park’. However, the land was also so able to consume ideas about it that it never descended into the horrible reality of nineteenth century Britain, where village life was being destroyed by the rise of the ‘satanic mills’. The backs of the sheep and the ‘natural resources’, as a counter under which are ‘... tucked away... what? Bauxite and oil’, would give the nation almost limitless space to consider how to think about this place.

Nevertheless, the landscape is the place from which almost all of the
foundation myths of the cultural identity of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects flow. The landscape and its changing currencies, readings and development as an economic, cultural, spiritual and conceptual place of expansion, growth and belonging has exerted a powerful influence since the earliest human habitation on this continent. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has travelled even to a few parts of the island continent. That the Australian landscape engenders a desire to draw identity from it, engage with it and become a part of it on the one hand, and on the other invokes fear of its vast dryness and inhospitality is an index of the ongoing and inescapable power of the vast brown land.

These relationships above all others signify an inescapable influence upon the changing and unchanging cultural identity of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects. That, for writers such as Germane Greer, the way forward is unquestioningly towards a postcolonial Australia (presuming that the national identity and nation-building projects must therefore be mired in a neo-colonial or at best a late-colonial situation – marked by various forms of, on the one hand, systemic, ad hoc and casual racism, and on the other, official, ad hoc and pragmatic multiculturalism), points to this seminal, conditional element and to its unresolved status.

And finally class has a role as a reference point in the representative referential regime. Class is used here in a post-Marxist sense to encompasses power relations from a wide range of relationships including race, gender and post-colonialism as well as in the 'classical' Marxist sense of the socio/economic stratification of society with a focus on the working class as the privileged agent of social change, notions surrounding inherited privilege and of rigid gender roles, such as chivalry. Class is also used as an
overarching, umbrella term in a deliberate attempt to provide an anti-egalitarian tone to the position of this study. Much is made, in Australian social and cultural development, of the notions of egalitarianism and ‘classlessness’ in Australian national culture and the linking of these notions with the production of Australianness.

Class, for the purposes of this study, encompasses a complex, multidimensional model that refers to notions such as the Ocker, the aspirational and the battler, all of which possess some degree of fluidity.

The reference points of the representative referential regime remain constant over the whole period examined in this study, i.e., 1945-2007. It is how they are deployed, what meaning is made in their deployment, inclusion or exclusion that interests this study. The larger question engaged with in this study is how the deployment of the representative referential regime plays a role in the nation-building and national identity projects. Ultimately it is not ‘what is said’ that interests this study but what is chosen to ‘say it’. And one of the embryonic modes employed to explore the national identity and the national character were notions associated with ‘the bush’.

the bush

Richard White reminds us that the romantic notions of the ‘bulletin school’ literary views of a constructed Australian national identity strongly embraced notions of ‘the bush’ as giver of identity. This notion of the bush as clean and pure was produced by an urban bourgeoisie born out of an expanding manufacturing industry that idealised nature, rather than being the product of a pastoral community acknowledging and celebrating its roots. Thus the place of ‘the bush’ in the national imagining was always a construct
of the city dwellers. White goes so far as to say that the national type based
on a bush legend was the antithesis of urban pretensions and decadence – a
better, simpler self more in touch with nature and the land. With high
Enlightenment ideals of the power of purification by nature, the urban dweller
was seen as the unclean modern man, lost in filth of his own making and in
need of the cleansing power of the land. After the First World War, the urban
male became so suspect of radical politics, disease and drunkenness that
the ANZAC legend was reconfigured to be one exclusively telling of the boy
from the bush rather than the lad from Bankstown. The land was imbued with
the power of a ‘natural’ and mythic place by lingering Enlightenment thinking
and that place was eagerly re-embraced in the face of advancing
industrialisation and modernity in the cities. This did not, however, prevent
the romantic bush influences from being repackaged in the 1940s, 1950s and
1960s and notions of the outback spaces as the ‘true’ Australia remained
powerful into the 1970s (but not unchallenged; see chapter three for a
discussion of the attempts to shift the notion of the typical Australian into the
city).

In many of the filmic texts from the post-Second World War period,
this ‘romantic nationalist’ version of ‘Australia’ is present as a strong narrative
device functioning to establish the characters, the story and the progress of
the narrative. In films such as The Overlanders, Eureka Stockade, Smithy
and other early Australian made films (of the 1940s and early 1950s), the
filmic narratives seek to identify with an embryonic uniquely Australian,
shared, culturally derived identity of the nation through an association with
the established ideas of the bush and with bush-men, and with developing
ideas around post-war notions of egalitarianism and with mateship in harsh
conditions. These narrative conventions set up dramatic narrative situations of cause and effect that in the Australian made context result in narratives in which the protagonist (or more simply hero) is confronted with an obstacle and must find a culturally recognisable solution, in keeping with the contemporary state of the national identity and nation-building projects. For example, in *The Overlanders* the obstacle is the landscape, the solution is stoic endurance, the capable man, the laconic bushman/larrikin – Chips Rafferty, six foot six of iconic Australian bloke. In *Eureka Stockade* it is Chips once again but this time the obstacle is unfair treatment from the ruling classes and the solution is the establishment of egalitarian fairness and 'a fair go' through class solidarity and the ANZAC irreverent/fighting spirit. In *Smithy* the obstacle is the tyranny of distance, and the solution is mateship, stoic endurance and imperial pride (with a bit of British stiff upper lip, learned in the British Air Corps no doubt).

In one of the most extensive analyses of a film text from this period Deb Verhoeven reads the film *Bitter Springs* (Ralph Smart, 1950) as an assimilationist text. Yet it can be argued its narrative conforms to the cause and effect, obstacle and solution framework that enables the protagonists, which include Chips Rafferty (playing a more disagreeable character role than we are used to seeing him in), to overcome the land, the weather and the inconvenient truth of the original inhabitants, and in this case, the prior owners of the waterhole (resources!). In keeping with this reading of the narrative, Verhoeven sees the narrative as having two sections, both of which deal with the overcoming of a set of obstacles. She writes that each half of the narrative is:

... characterised by a crisis of fluidity (namely a desperate need for water), a thirst that is sated only by the appearance of the helpful government representative (Trooper Ransome). Each half is
distinguished by its approach to physical and cultural movement respectively. The first half is devoted to 'getting there' ... moving towards the destination in an orderly, continuous linear fashion .... The second half of the film is devoted to 'staying there', in which mobility is measured in terms of a cultural rather than a geographical distance traversed.98

In these and other narratives, a national type standing as an index of the nation, playing out the national narratives, which conformed to 'traditional nationalist values,' was employed to make them reflect the position and contemporary state of the national identity and nation-building projects. The position this national identity occupied was mostly a backward-looking one mired in a conservative, colonial relationship subordinate to the mother country, glued together with simplistic readings of nineteenth century nationalistic foundation myths which deal with, in Australia's case, the coming of nationhood and the foundational stirrings of a national identity in the shadow of the Empire. These established national types, which Lucas calls the 'cluster of dominant, recognizable images in our cinema – for example, the bushmen, the Ocker, the 'mate', the 'battler'59, are the easiest way of endowing a filmic narrative with some association with the Australian national identity and character. Even in their use, these recognisable images can be represented in differing ways. Some are ironic, such as the way that Smiley's father is drawn as a hard working drover, a hard drinking and gambling man, all the result of his development as an Australian rural worker in the mould of Ward's legend school of national identity. Some stereotypes are soberly presented as reality such as the folk-hero Captain Starlight, standing up to the British pastoralists and their lackey politicians and traps. Others are used as a focus of (gentle) derision, for example the three horse thieves in Bush Christmas (Ralph Smart, 1947). They are so inept that 'native born' children have a better bush-craft ability than these grown men.
As a widely held view of Australian national identity, the types in the romantic nationalist school were, therefore, ripe for inclusion in filmic narratives as attempts at instant indexes of Australianness. However, for some film-makers, romantic ideas of the Australian bush-derived, working class larrikin type were not enough. In some films the engagement with class took a different form, a political one which problematised the direction of post-Second World War Australia. The post-war years saw the embryonic development of a particular type of film made in Australia that would be present in almost all periods of film making: the social realist film. In this period the third 'story' in Cecil Holms' film *Three in One*, for example, tells the story of a newly married couple without a place to live. They spend the night walking around Sydney and arguing. This narrative is reminiscent of George Orwell's *Keep The Aspidistras Flying* in which the protagonist (Gordon Comstock) must consummate his relationship with a woman (Rosemary) in alleys or doorways as society (exemplified by boarding houses and landladies, and 'the Money God') withholds the means to live in dignity if one has no money. Holms stands out in this period as trying to engage with contemporary life and, in doing so, records some aspects of the contemporaneous, uniquely Australian, socio/cultural identity.

However, arguably the most significant factor in the social, political and cultural development in Australia in the post-war period was immigration.

**social, political and economic contexts of post-war australia**

Socially and culturally, the immediate post-war period saw the development of massive immigration programs which changed the make-up of the nation and necessitated a reassessment of the direction of the national
identity and nation-building projects. The flow-on result was the emergence of an articulation of 'the Australian way of life' in the 1960s. This development in the national imagining, in reaction to the needs to culturally accommodate, assimilate and eventually, pluralise immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and the flow-on effects for representations of uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation is one of the core arguments of this study.

These waves of immigration and other domestic, economic and political events began to shift the focus of the post-war films, from a 'building the nation' kind of project in government documentaries, in the immediate post-war period, towards narratives that engaged with an '... individualist, less group centred vision of the “lucky country”' as the period progressed. In this new Australian representational landscape, the Australian way of life would serve as the catalyst for the assimilation of the influx of 'new Australians'.

The reassertion of the desire to screen a recognisable Australia, in the developing commercial feature film industries (and in the emerging television industry) can be seen as a part of the desire to assimilate the new arrivals into the Australian way of life.

Geopolitically, the collapse of the British Empire in the wake of the Second World War and the realignment of the Australian national geographic imagining – away from the mother country towards the U.S. and the larger Pacific Rim region – saw a new national and international dimension introduced into the Australian national identity and nation-building projects.

The developments and growth spurts in notions of Australian national identity are associated with the developing cultural identity of the post-war
Australian national identity and nation-building projects. The development of a unique sense of national identity can be seen in the filmic output of film-making industries, both domestic and visiting, and with the changing notions of what the nation has in common with its British settler heritage. This study suggests that cinema is a viable site from which an idea of the culture’s self-image can be drawn, where its own daydreams and self-imaginings can be glimpsed.

A review of articles published on the Australian film industry in the period after the Second World War demonstrates a high degree of angry pessimism about the state of the domestic film-making industry and a pleading desperation for Federal Government aid to resuscitate Australian film-making, if the nation and its narratives were going to be screened.

Tom (Fitzgerald) Weir’s (1958) ‘No Daydreams Of Our Own’ and Silvia Lawson’s (1965) ‘Not For The Likes Of Us’ are perhaps the best known of these articles, along with Cecil Holms’ (1954) ‘The Film in Australia’; Newman Rosenthal’s (1949) ‘Has The Documentary Film a Future?’ and E.S. Madden’s (1959) ‘The Australian Film Industry’. They are entreatments to see Australia truly represented on the screen by Australians rather than by visiting productions only interested in backgrounds. During this period, several high profile Australian stories were made into films by imported production companies, actors, money and sensibilities. Summer of the Seventh Doll (Leslie Norman, 1959) is perhaps the strongest example of this, with American and British actors, Ernest Borgnine, Anne Baxter, John Mills and Angela Lansbury playing the central characters and with the setting of the play shifted from Melbourne to Sydney, without regard to the cultural significance of the change in location. Sylvia Lawson is particularly strong in
her criticism of the reception of the films made by visiting companies:

One had a horrifying impression that Australians were positively flattered, not to say grateful, for the sight of their own country on the screen, even in soap-opera caricature.64

The story of the changing representations of cultural identity in the Australian national identity and nation-building projects, in the fifty years following the end of the Second World War, is bound up with those visiting coach parties of film-makers, content to employ Australia as background, and the nation’s imaginings of its own place in this place and the region, and its own histories and stories in the wake of the Second World War and the changing demographic of the nation’s population.

The power and importance of cinema as a cultural formation and agency for cultural identity production and promulgation is also a strong theme in these articles. The argument is that cinema, in the post-war period, is an important art form in fostering cultural nationalism and social cohesion (as a part of what this study labels the national identity and nation-building projects), in much the same way that Benedict Anderson suggests that print-capitalism, for example novels and newspapers, acted as the original central conduit for the dissemination of civic nationalism.65 Cinema, being (one of) the modern equivalents of print-capitalism (the evolving roles of the broader media and even television cannot be ignored), should, therefore, be produced by the domestic culture to ensure the veracity of the cultural picture it presents. It should promote what Tom Weir calls genuine ‘national self-expression’, and seek to register with audiences ‘... the shock of self recognition’.66

At the end of the Second World War there were a number of economic/industry conditions which affected Australian domestic film-
making. The two most significant factors in this period of film-making are the roles foreign production companies played in film-making in Australia and the Australian Federal Government’s intervention (or lack of positive intervention) in the film-making industry in this period. Foreign production companies came to Australia primarily for economic reasons and for issues of loyalty to the empire, colonial usefulness and post-war reconstruction. For example, the film *Bush Christmas* (Ralph Smart, 1947) was produced in Australia in part because children under the age of fourteen were not allowed to appear in films in Britain. As an issue of empire loyalty, Ealing Studios established a working facility and began to produce films for the British and Australian domestic markets, following a request from the Australian Government to raise the propaganda profile of Australia’s war effort. Their presence in the Australian film-making landscape lasted from the war years into 1959, producing five films, *The Overlanders* (Harry Watt, 1946), *Eureka Stockade* (Harry Watt, 1949), *Bitter Springs* (Ralph Smart, 1950), *The Shiralee* (Leslie Norman, 1957) and *The Siege of Pinchgut* (Harry Watt, 1959). There were plans to set up a permanent studio and to produce ten more films but these plans were killed off by British and Australian government inaction and lack of support.67

Other British and American interests, which had a good deal of money (mostly receipts from exhibition and distribution, as the majority of distribution and exhibition was in foreign hands) when prevented from taking their money out of the country by the government of the day, came to export their frozen funds as films. This policy caused these foreign companies to fund film production in Australia almost against their will. If there had not been a government ban on currency exports at this time a good number of these
films would not have been made. The films that fall into this category include *Smithy* (1946 Columbia Pictures), *Smiley* (1956 Twentieth Century Fox) and *Kangaroo* (1952 Twentieth Century-Fox). *Smithy* and *Kangaroo* were minor films of little cultural importance or profitability. However, *Smiley* became a hugely popular and profitable film and a landmark text of the period. It proved that Australian stories, the Australian accent and Australian locations could be turned into profitable films.

The other significant factor which affected film-making in Australia at this time was the role of the Federal Government. Many Australian film-makers and industry members consistently lobbied, in vain, for support from the Federal Government. Charles Chauvel was a tireless campaigner for government support for a domestic film-making industry. He was often in the public eye, at every royal commission or government investigation into the film industry to lobby for Australian film-making, and himself. The role of governments has always been important in small film-making nations such as Australia. However, government intervention in the post-war period in Australia was perhaps more significant as a direct disincentive to produce films than at any other time in the nation’s film-making history. The lack of direct support, and the introduction of legislation which directly inhibited film production, was a significant element in the retardation of the Australian domestic film-making industry in the post-war period, and into the late 1960s.

The introduction of the Capital Issues Board Legalisation in 1951, limiting public companies to a capital outlay of less than ten thousand pounds (unless it was for a purpose of national importance, which film-making was not) restricted Australian film-makers to a maximum budget of ten thousand pounds. This financial limitation goes a long way to explaining the poor
quality of locally made independent films in this period. The government’s acquiescence towards the actions, strategies and monopolisation of sectors of the industry by foreign companies also contributed to the position in which Australian film-makers found themselves: a lack of modern studio space, a lack of investment and difficulty in getting their films distributed and exhibited. This period was a precursor to the later periods of ‘the renaissance’ of the 1970s, and the ‘10BA ’80s’, two periods that were shaped directly by government pro-active intervention (with hugely varying degrees of success). And, in that sense, the post-war period can be seen perhaps as a necessary or inevitable step in the development of the Australian domestic film-making industry, and in the ongoing development towards an Australian film-making industry/culture. A step which unequivocally signalled that government intervention and support is inescapably linked with the economic viability of a domestic film-making industry and that a degree of self-recognition in the texts is required to get the domestic audience’s bums on seats to watch Australian films. Hard lessons were learned in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, which helped shape the environment that would make possible the golden renaissance years of Australian film-making industry/culture, i.e., 1975-1983.70

post-war film-making modes

The post-war film production period is characterised by three film-making modes. First, in budgets and professional experience, and with the least ‘culturally authentic’ products, were the foreign location productions looking for cheap and exotic off-shore production locations with limited local financial, artistic or technical participation. Films that Bruce Molloy terms ‘...
“location” films in which the creative and financial control was held by non-Australians ...’. Their limited engagement with the local industry often extended to all non-location-work, for example, much of the interior work of these films was completed in their own national film-making studios back in London or Hollywood, as well as much of the post-production work. An outcome of this practice was to delay the introduction of technological innovations such as colour film into the local industry. The Australian film-making industry had to wait until Jedda (Charles Chauvel, 1955) for the first colour feature film to be made in Australia, by an Australian film-maker. And even then Chauvel had to send the film to Britain for processing, and in doing so lost some footage in a plane crash. Another technological influence on the domestic industry, which Albie Thoms sees as a clear break from the ‘Australian cinema heritage’, was the purchase of studio equipment for Cinesound by Ken Hall. Thoms goes on to suggest that had Hall gone to France, and seen first-hand the work of Jean Renoir, rather than going to Hollywood ‘...he might have become aware of the different options open to him and the Australian film industry’.

The second film-making mode is the struggling local independent productions. Short on government support, money and experience this mode still managed to produce a number of films. E.S. Madden, self-styled historian with Stanley Kramer’s On the Beach (1959) production,71 maps out the struggle that local film-industry workers had to deal with to make a living between big foreign film jobs and the slim pickings of the domestic industry. In this period there was not enough work to keep film-makers and technicians in full-time employment. The local industry was thus a part-time film-making industry. Local independent productions during this period
suffered from a variety of ills. Lack of funding and support was the primary problem. However, the lack of experienced film actors also created problems.

The pool of dedicated film actors in the country between 1945 and 1960 was very narrow and very shallow. The success of an actor such as Chips Rafferty points to the limitations with which the film-makers were faced. While he was lauded by many as '... the quintessential Australian bloke.... [who more] than any other Australian actor ... represented the almost mythical Australian male', Rafferty seldom extended the characters he played beyond a two-dimensional stereotype of that Australian bloke, relying on a sort of grizzly laconicness to engender the stereotype. In *Wake in Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, 1971), a film which seeks to question the darkest side of the Australian masculine culture, Rafferty (in his last film performance) plays the omnipresent police sergeant. His portrayal of the policeman does not require him to resort to enacting any kind of 'evil' manipulator characterisation in the 'southern sheriff' mould of Rod Steiger in the film *In The Heat of The Night* (Norman Jewison, 1967), for example. A more recent example of this can be seen in Bryan Brown's portrayal of an outback cop, Rosco, in the feature *Cactus* (Jasmine Yuen Carrucan, 2008) a role with an international focus and therefore an international representation of the malevolent cop.

In *Wake in Fright*, Rafferty can play it 'straight', that Australian bloke, the stereotypical Australian masculine cultural representation is intimidating enough. It is in the juxtapositions created by the director that meaning, far beyond the stereotype, is created. Rafferty's character in *Wake in Fright*, although highly significant to the narrative, is not required to develop the stereotype beyond the ones he had developed in many of his previous
performances, commencing with *The Overlanders* (Harry Watt, 1946) and including his 'biggest' roles in films like *Rats of Tobruk* (Charles Chauvel, 1944) and *Desert Rats* (Robert Wise, 1953). A close analysis of *Wake in Fright* is undertaken in chapter three.

Many of the popular Cinesound films of the 1930s utilised vaudevillian comedy and larger than life characters in their comedies, a mode of acting suited to the times, texts and audiences. However, after the Second World War, a more serious dramatic mode took control of the texts, with filmic narratives that required a different, more professional, dedicated style of film acting. Those best skilled at this mode, for example Cecil Kellaway, Peter Finch, Rod Taylor, Charles Tingwell and Errol Flynn, had all gone overseas to pursue their careers (though Finch and Tingwell did return to make films in the 1950s). Along with a lack of technological innovation, talented film actors and technical expertise, the lack of talented film directors retarded the development of the domestic industry.

Many of the directors had come from a background in documentary film-making, one of the few sources of employment in the film-making industries in the post-war period, and this shows in the over-use of stock footage and in their limited ability to tell a story visually. For example, there is an over-extensive use of voice-over as the primary mode of exposition in many of the filmic narratives. *Sons of Matthew* (Charles Chauvel, 1949) is a good example of 'the voice of God' exposition through the strategy of an unseen narrator reminiscent of the informational documentaries and newsreels of the time. These are the characteristics that, in part, define the local independent production, film-making mode in the post-war years.

The third mode of production in this period is Australian commercial
productions in league with foreign production companies (co-productions).

This mode was almost entirely made up of films produced by the co-
producing teams of Southern International (Australia, Chips Rafferty, Lee
Robinson) and Discifilm (France, Paul Decharme). These co-productions are
pertinent examples of Australian productions attempting to cash in on a
generic representation of Australasia as an exotic location, rather than as a
source of original filmic narratives, complex non-archetypical characters and
genre crossing films. That they were making films for the French speaking
world as well as for the domestic and wider English speaking world goes a
long way to explaining the lack of identifiable Australiana in these very
successful films. In a 1987 interview with Albert Moran, Lee Robinson lays
out very clearly Southern International’s marketing policy:

   We said “let’s forget what the Australian public thinks about, what
they might take to, because if you put an Australian tag on a film it
was the worst possible thing you could do”. 74

Firmly targeted at the world ‘B’ movie market and television, the
French-Australian co-productions offer some of the best technical,
professional, accomplished film-making to be found in this period. They were
generic and formulaic depictions of an unashamedly exotic Australasia.
Some of these films were runaway successes, with *Walk Into Paradise* (Lee
Robinson & Marcel Pagliero, 1956) making the most money of any Australian
made film until the success of *Mad Max 2* (Dr. George Miller, 1981). In a
1987 interview, Lee Robinson remembers:

   We did *Walk into Paradise* (1956), which until *Mad Max 2* was
probably the highest earning Australian picture ever. A lot of
people don’t realise that, at the time it was one of the 100 top
grossing films in America, it was the first Australian picture to go
into Cannes, one of the very first multiple releases in
Australia. 75[my italics]
The Southern International/Discifilm, Australian/French, co-production mode was short-lived, lasting from 1956 until 1959. It was killed by poor management\textsuperscript{76} and changes in the world-wide film-making scene. For example, the introduction of wide screen films, the loss of the ‘B’ feature and other developments rendered these types of films unprofitable.

In Australia, during the period 1946-1965 there were a surprisingly significant number of films produced by these three modes of production. This chapter examines film texts from this period, putting aside production shortcomings, to concentrate on the ways in which the nation and the national narratives are represented. A survey of the film texts demonstrates considerable diversity in their modes of production, their individual style and narrative foci.

production company nationality in australian cinema 1946 - 1965

Between 1946 and 1965 forty feature films\textsuperscript{77} were ‘Made in Australia’\textsuperscript{78} (strictly speaking two of them were made in Tahiti and one in New Guinea as Australian/French co-productions\textsuperscript{79}). Few had recognisable Australiana about them. The predominant reason for this was that the local, visiting and co-production film-makers only saw Australia and Australians as suitable for background. Rather, these films can be identified as being characterised, most significantly, by the fact that they were literally ‘Made in Australia’. In this period, seventeen films can be identified as being ‘foreign location productions’; eighteen as being ‘local independent productions’ and five as being ‘co-productions’ (see Table 2.1 Appendix A).
spatial and temporal narrative settings

The major superficial factor that identified many films as being 'Made in Australia' was their narrative setting. Many of the films used settings of exotic Australasian urban, bush or other spaces. Thus, in this period one finds a plethora of 'Kangaroo Westerns', exotic adventure tales, children's entertainment and over-cooked period melodramas – texts littered with pet kangaroos, Aborigines (often in the noble savage mould), swashbuckling bushrangers and bare-footed colonial urchins running around in the 'olden days' or in familiar settings of historical tradition.

A review of the synopses of the feature films made in Australia between 1949 and 1965 demonstrates the narrative foci of the films in terms of their spatial (mostly bush, with some urban settings) and their temporal (mostly contemporaneous and recent past temporal settings with a few historicised periods) narrative settings. The forty feature films produced in this period can, therefore, be broken down into categorisations based on their narrative foci, specifically by their temporal narrative focus. By this I mean the time in which the narrative is set, or they can be characterised by the space in which they are set.

Temporally, the filmic narratives can be placed into three periods, the first of which I label as those having a 'contemporaneous' temporal setting, of the times in which they were produced and set, the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. That is to say, films that are set in the period in which they are made. For example, Into the Straight (T.O. McCreadie, 1949) is set at the 1948 Melbourne Cup. These films can utilise actuality and location film in their narrative. Twenty-two texts (see Table 2.2, Appendix B) come under this temporal description.
The second temporal setting that characterises a grouping of films made in this period is one that could be said to be set in what I label an 'historicised' temporal setting. By this I mean they are set in a reconstructed historical period, often with reference to actual participants, and these films seek to, in some way, reconstruct the times in which they are set. Often these are narratives dealing with biographies and histories. For example, *Eureka Stockade* (Harry Watt, 1949) reconstructs the events on the Ballarat goldfields and the exploits of Peter Lalor and the Eureka Stockade in 1854, while *The Overlanders* (Harry Watt, 1946) reconstructs the cattle drive in the early part of the Second World War (in the period 1942/1943) without featuring any of the participants from the actual drive. Nine texts (see Table 2.2, Appendix B) from the post-war film-making period can be characterised as belonging to this grouping.

The third temporal setting I label, 'periodised', in that the narratives are set in a constructed time, populated with fictitious characters. For example *Long John Silver* (Byron Haskin, 1954), although set in the eighteenth century, is completely fictitious and makes no claim to historical accuracy or biographical veracity. Some other filmic narratives are more problematic – *A Son is Born* (Eric Porter, 1946) is set during the 30s and early years of the Second World War, although it is not an attempt to reconstruct events. The time period is merely a dramatic setting. Although it does use actual footage of New Guinea, the characters and their actions are fictitious. Eleven texts from the film-making period can be placed in this temporal category (see Table 2.2 Appendix B.).

A close examination of the narrative temporal settings of the film texts shows that they are roughly split equally between those narratives set in the
‘contemporaneous’ temporal period and those set in the ‘periodised’ and the
‘historicised’ temporal settings. The filmic narratives are also roughly set
equally between bush and urban/other spatial settings. And, in the films
within the group of ‘contemporaneous’ temporal narrative setting the spatial
settings are equally distributed between bush (eight), urban (seven) and
other (seven) (see Table 2.2, Appendix B).

The importance of this for this study is to point to the fact that there
were a significant number of local, independently produced films (eighteen)
in this period, with spatial and temporal narrative settings from across the
range. For example twenty-two filmic narratives were set in
‘contemporaneous’ temporal narrative settings. Of these, ten were local
independent productions. In this same period, twenty filmic narratives were
set in period/historicised temporal narrative settings. Of these ten were local
independent productions. And within the spatial settings of the filmic
narratives, out of a total of twenty-four filmic narratives set in bush spatial
settings, twelve were local independent productions; in filmic narratives set in
urban spatial settings, three out of a total of seven were local independent
productions; and out of eleven filmic narratives set in other spatial settings,
five were local independent productions. That is, diversity can be found
across funding regimes and across narrative settings in ‘Australian made’
films from this period (see Table 2.2, Appendix B).

This analysis of the funding regimes of the texts and of the temporal
and spatial settings of the filmic narratives establishes that the popular
perception of this period as overwhelmingly dominated by foreign
productions is not (at least numerically) accurate. That much more money
was spent by foreign film production companies in Australia in this period is
undeniable. However, the major criticism of this period and the major focus of this study is not the relative production values of the texts, but the representation of Australia and Australianness in these filmic narratives. To look at the period another way, it is undeniable that a result of the domination of the Australian film-making landscape by foreign companies was that their own economic imperatives were placed uppermost, rather than any notions of accuracy or any desire to represent Australia and Australians for culturally nationalistic reasons.

In this period, these larger, richer production companies, whose films were seen more widely than the small local product, coerced local independent production companies, by sheer weight, into (often) aping these screened representations of Australia and Australians and foreign (Hollywood) film-making modes and conventions. The establishment of benchmarks of a screened Australian national identity, in the context of the contemporaneous nation, in this time, helped to facilitate the emergence in later periods of a unique, more culturally authentic screened Australian identity of the nation that was shared and culturally derived. For example, Charles Chauvel’s production of *The Sons of Matthew* (1949) is particularly guilty of aping ‘Hollywood’ conventions and modes while trying to embody a form of the national voice in the narrative. Andrew Zielinski, in a discussion of Ken G. Hall’s Cinesound films of the 1930s and 1940s, employs what he calls an ‘oppositional analytical view’ in his discussion of Ken G. Hall’s films. Zielinski lists five alternative analytical strategies ... [that] ... offer points of complexity and ambiguity within what is the accepted strength of Hall’s cinema, and to offer a different methodology to Molloy’s valuable analytical success model of the cinema of Ken G. Hall.
His five points have a usefulness which stretch beyond the discussion of Hall's cinema, and can be utilised to interrogate the other successful film-makers of this period. Charles Chauvel's post-war films, in particular, can be usefully analysed with them.

The five alternative analytical strategies are:

1. Commercialism as culture
2. Stereotypes as identity
3. The lack of a creative cinematic art
4. The avoidance of historical significance
5. Sentimentality as hiding cultural anxiety

With Chauvel we get the appearance of the stirrings of a culturally authentic Australian film-making industry/culture practice in the post-war period through his engagements with filmic commercialism. Chauvel's success was at the cost of his reputation as an artist. As the head of Cinesound Studios in Australia, he encouraged filmmakers with the idea that Australian film needed '... not artists but showmen.' Chauvel's post-war films reflect this focus on entertainment over any type of engagement with film art. The physical and philosophical 'place' in which Chauvel's films are set are an idea of Australia populated by 'pioneers'. The Sons of Matthew is particularly significant in this respect. He over-employs gender, class and ethnic stereotypes as standing in for the components of the national identity. Chauvel's cinema is also dominated by this aping of the conventions and modes of Hollywood to tell stories about his Australia. The opening credits, and the introductory narration, in The Sons of Matthew, scream Hollywood in the grand symphonic musical score, huge ornate titles, and the 'voice of God'
style narration. The credits are in the form of 'the hand of God' turning the pages of the histories of the chosen people. These pioneers are seeking to populate a Protestant work ethic haven, rooted in the colonial promised land. His post-war films are also overburdened with sentimentality, hiding a cultural anxiety around legitimacy and belonging. Chauvel was trained by Hollywood and driven by his Australian roots to create these hybrid films with big ambitions and a clear eye for the 'Australiana' he wanted to produce. However, his films suffer from the fact that in filmic texts the medium is always the message and his medium was second-rate Hollywood, not first-rate Australian. This lack of creative cinematic art is a part of his style and in large part deliberate.

*Sons of Matthew* is almost overburdened with the epic narrative of domestic born Australian sons of Irish and English immigrants opening up the land. As Shaun O'Riordan tells us, 'It could be a great land Cathy, if only we can tame it.' The sons (of the title) frolic naked like so many Adams free of Eve’s influence (for the moment) in the pristine egalitarian Eden of the Australian bush. The major themes are of birth coupled with land taming. The generations of Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English settlers are gently pushed out into the frontier wilds of the Australian bush to carry on the taming tradition. It is a place in which women and boys must be turned into men (or at least adopt the characteristics of men) if they are to succeed. They face drought, bushfires and cyclones as well as the land, in the boy's terms: 'It’s the oldest jungle in the world.' Jack McAllister, Jane O'Riordan’s brother, must go further into the wilds where the boys will follow to a place which can be tamed if you have the right stuff. The narrative aesthetic is dominated by a frontier myth and by the conventions of the American western – music,
costume, the role of the land, the power of the elements and gender roles.

‘I’ve never known a place that wasn’t for a woman. They make the places,’

Matthew O’Riordan tells his sons. For if they are to keep their tamed land
(British – and not have to import immigrants) they should go forth and
reproduce, populate the land with their sons and build a nation upon the rock
of the Christian family. It is not too much of a stretch to read ‘house’ as

Nation in the opening of Chauvel’s film:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,
and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a
rock.

(Matthew VII 25)

The historical significance of Jedda, an Aboriginal child being taken in
by a white family, or the O’Riordan’s ‘opening up’ the Lamington Plateau, is
in some ways ignored by Chauvel. Although in the context of the times, his
was a contemporary and significant representation of prevailing views. In
addition, the problem with much of Chauvel’s work is its short-sightedness.
Where significant meaning is made in Chauvel’s post-war films, it is easy to
imagine that this was a mistake, without deep purpose or intent. Like the
documentaries in the Second World War period, the wartime feature films
(Forty-Thousand Horseman, 1940, and The Rats Of Tobruk, 1944),
stylistically, thematically and representationally are much better suited to
short-term goals and propaganda, and in those terms they are well-crafted
exercises.

the myth of australianness

The films of Cecil Holmes and some other individual examples, such as Smiley, Summer of the Seventh Doll (Leslie Norman, 1959), Eureka
Stockade (Harry Watt, 1949), and perhaps most universally the bushranger
movies *The Glenrowan Affair* (Rupert Kathner, 1951) and *Robbery Under Arms* (Jack Lee, 1957), all exhibit a desire to come to grips with one overriding theme – class in the context of Australia's colonial history.

I would argue that issues of class in Australia stem from the colonial condition of the nation at the time the films were produced. Australia was, in this period, still very much a part of the British Empire, and that relationship is evident in many of the filmic narratives. *Smithy* is flying for King and Empire, *Smiley* receives his bike under the watchful gaze of the Young Queen and the twin flags of the Southern Cross and the Union Jack, and the home valley of Deep Creek in *Sons of Matthew* is populated by representatives from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the McAllisters, O'Riordans, McNallys and Smiths. It is also evident in the choices for Governor General of Australia in the post-war period. The Head of State's representative in Australia at this time (1945-1947), the Governor General who attended the premier of *Smithy*, was the Duke of Gloucester, uncle to Queen Elizabeth II. He was followed in the role by an Australian, Sir William John McKell (1947-1953), who was in turn followed by a British general (who served at Gallipoli), Sir William Joseph Slim (1953-1960).

**conclusions**

Bruce Molloy, through the use of what he calls 'myth analysis' in his work *Before The Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930-1960*, looks at the period of feature film production in Australia from the introduction of sound in the 1930s to the decline of film production after 1960. He identifies that each of the three main groupings of films he examines (Cinesound, Chauvel and Ealing) contain ‘... discourses of national identity
based on representations of character, incident and setting. He, most importantly, sees the concept of national identity as being at the intersection of mythology and ideology. He is using ideology in the 'sense of a selective tradition.'

Molloy also proposes that:

By the 1960s, the consensual concept of national identity and its associated myths and ideology were beginning to seem increasingly irrelevant in a demographically reshaped Australia which was in the process of developing a new, cosmopolitan character.

From the point of view of national cultural identity (Australian nationalism, national identity, cultural narratives and nationalist/identity histories, and all aspects of 'imagined' or 'invented' notions of 'Australia') this modern post-war period saw enormous cultural shifts from Kokoda and the Young Queen to Vietnam and hippies. With Australia's reassessment of its place in the world, and its changing relations with other nations (Britain in particular) after the Second World War, the traditional foundation givers and affirmers of mainstream Australian nationalist identity were, on their own, beginning to look like they would soon be no longer sufficient (though they still remained popular). In this period the focus of Australian identity was shifting from the 'bush' to the 'city' (almost half of the spatial settings of filmic narratives in this period are situated in spaces other than the bush – eighteen in the bush and twenty-four in other spaces); from the past to the present (more than half of the temporal settings of filmic narratives in this period, twenty-two, are set in a contemporaneous temporal period and twenty in other times); and to a lesser extent the complexity of an identity which had to contend with an embryonic reassessment of Australia's coloniality in the context of a restructuring of much of the world into Cold War aligned blocs,
into ex-colonies and ex-colonisers and with the gradually changing
demographic face of Australians. Tom Weir laments the lack of domestic
voice in Australia at the time; he reminds us that:

Like pre-Chaucerian England, tugged between Italy and France,
we are also torn between two dominant cultures, those of America
and Britain. No wonder our voices are thin and so weakly
articulated as to be barely audible to visitors when they first step
ashore.91

This shift in identity focus would eventually foster a backlash to post-
colonial modernity, to pluralism and to the urban nature of emerging
Australian identities, resulting in, for example, the period drama boom of the
late 1970s (labelled the AFC genre by Dermody & Jacka), and the re-
establishment of traditional identity contexts (the landscape, positive and
negative British colonial links, mateship and egalitarianism (rather than class)
and the less threatening *male ensemble films*92). This backlash, alternate
views of Australian cultural identity and the subsequent battles for dominance
of the direction of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects
is the subject of later chapters. This chapter has dealt with the seeds of those
cultural conflicts sown in the shallow cultural ground of the post-war years.
APPENDIX A.

Table – 2.1 – Production Company Nationality Data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign Location Productions</th>
<th>Local Independent Productions</th>
<th>Co-Productions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smithy, d. Ken G. Hall: Columbia Pictures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong is the Seed (the Farrer Story), d. Arthur Grevelle Collins: Collins Productions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Shiralee, d. Leslie Norman: Ealing Studios.</td>
<td>The Back of Beyond, d. John Heyer: Shell Film Unit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Siege of Pinchutch, d. Harry Watt: Ealing Films.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Bungala Boys, d. Jim Jeffrey: Jimara Production for the Children’s Film Foundation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>They Found a Cave, d. Andrew Steane: Vistaone Island Pictures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Bungala Boys, d. Jim Jeffrey: Jimara Production for the Children’s Film Foundation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>They Found a Cave, d. Andrew Steane: Vistaone Island Pictures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>Foreign Location Productions - 17</td>
<td>Local Independent Productions - 18</td>
<td>Co-Productions - 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B.

Table – 2.2 – Temporal and Spatial Setting Data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bush Temporal Setting</th>
<th>Contemporaneous Temporal Setting</th>
<th>Periodised Temporal Setting</th>
<th>Historised Temporal Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer of the Seventeenth Doll</strong>, d. Leslie Norman: Hecht-Hill/Lancaster.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clay</strong>, d. Giorgio Mangiamele: Self Produced.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total – 11</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mike and Stefan</strong>, d. Maslyn R. Williams: Film Division, Dept. of Interior, for Dept. of Immigration.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bungala Boys</strong>, d. Jim Jeffrey: Jimar Production for the Children's Film Foundation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contemporaneous Total – 22</strong></td>
<td><strong>Periodised Total – 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Historised Total – 9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporal Setting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ch. 2. endnotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Madden, E. S. (1959) 'The Australian Film Industry.' <em>20th Century,</em> no. 13. p. 318.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>And perhaps most significantly, Australia was seen as the antithesis of the Aboriginal imaginings of dreamtime creation, myths of a holistic view of a balanced world. Conrad, Peter, <em>Tales of Two Hemispheres</em> (ABC Radio (Boyer Lectures), 2004 [November 2004]); available from <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/rn/boyers/stories/s1240089.htm">http://www.abc.net.au/rn/boyers/stories/s1240089.htm</a>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>O'Regan, Tom. (1987) 'Australian Film in the 1950s.' <em>Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media &amp; Culture.</em> 1, no. 1. p. 35.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In the first issue of <em>Continuum,</em> apart from two articles over viewing the period, the articles focused on Chauvel, Lee Robinson and the making of 'Back of Beyond' and then most of those articles were interviews rather than textual analysis.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ibid. p. 62.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Caste here is used in its primary (Macquarie) dictionary definition: an endogamous and hereditary social group limited to persons in a given occupation or trade, having mores distinguishing it from other such groups.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>A search of statements by John Howard as Prime Minister is resplendent in calls for 'Aborigines' Muslim immigrants, the notion of 'gay marriage' and even errant women, to name just a few groups, who need to come into line with 'the mainstream,' a grouping he sees himself representing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>See <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2339235.htm">http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2339235.htm</a> for a media story on this incident.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Nine Values for Australian Schooling are:
1. Care and Compassion, Care for self and others
2. Doing Your Best, Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard, pursue excellence
3. Fair Go, Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society [my emphasis]
4. Freedom, Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others
5. Honesty and Trustworthiness, Be honest, sincere and seek the truth
6. Integrity, Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds
7. Respect, Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person's point of view
8. Responsibility, Be accountable for one's own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment
9. Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion. Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others
Penguin. p. 128.

44 Ibid. p. 129.
46 Ibid. p. 69.
47 Ibid. p. 29.
48 Ibid. p. 169.
52 MacCallum, Mungo. (2002.) Girt by Sea: Australia, the Refugees and the Politics of Fear, Quarterly Essay (#5) Melbourne, Vic.: Black Inc.
64 Lawson, Sylvia, (1965) op. cit. p. 30.
67 Molly, Bruce, (1990) op. cit. p. 165.
68 Cunningham, Stuart, (1991) op. cit. p. 46.
69 The introduction and effects of this significant legislation is noted by a number of writers see, Tom O'Regan (1987) op. cit., Bruce Molloy (1990) op. cit., Stuart Cunningham (1991) op. cit. and Larkins, Bob, Chips: The Life and Films of Chips Rafferty (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1986).
70 It should be noted that the most 'successful' (a term which requires an enormous amount of qualifying) Australian films have not had any government assistance and there is some argument for independence from the degrees of control and orthodoxy, which comes with government control of production funds and industry assistance (see chapter four).
71 Madden, E.S., (1959) op. cit. p. 317.
72 See Larkins (1986) and Madden (1956) for two views of the quality and experience of film actors in Australia in this period.
73 Please see chapter four for an extensive discussion of Wake in Fright.
75 Ibid.
76 For an account of the rise and fall of Southern International see, Larkins, Bob, (1986) op. cit.
77 The list of feature films used in this study has been derived from the following sources: Pike, Andrew, and Ross Cooper. (1998) Australian Film, 1900-1977: A Guide to
The qualifier employed here 'Australian made' is explained in the introductory chapter.

Larkins, Bob, (1986) op. cit. p. 11.

It should be noted that for the purposes of examining the narrative settings for films in this period Cecil Holmes' film *Three in One* (1957) is counted as three separate filmic narratives as it is in three distinct episodic parts.


Bruce Molly’s work: *Before the Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930 - 1960.* Is one of the most comprehensive work on the cinema of the period.


Ibid.

The Duke, Henry William Frederick Albert, was the third son of George V and Queen Mary, and thus uncle to Elizabeth II. He was brother to George VI. He served as the eleventh Governor-General of Australia from 1945 to 1947. Please see: http://www.burkes-peerage.net/articles/peerage/page62-6a.aspx and http://www.bartleby.com/65/gl/GloucsH.html


Molly, Bruce, (1990) op. cit. p. 200.

Ibid. p. 9.

Ibid.


Weir, Tom, (1959) op. cit. p. 144.

For, insofar as a colony is a departure as well as a continuation, it may herald something new in the world. If the tie to the mothering culture can be cut, that newness will have the opportunity for expression.

(William D. Routt){1}

He understood now that the Romans had preferred death to exile. He could sympathize now with Ovid on the Danube, hungering for Rome and blind to the land around him, blind to the savages. So Somers felt blind to Australia, and blind to the uncouth Australians. To him they were barbarians. The most loutish Neapolitan loafer was nearer to him in pulse than these British Australians with their aggressive familiarity. He surveyed them from an immense distance, with a kind of horror.

(D.H. Lawrence){2}

Now we will see what terrible things are in store for the creatures when God seems to have forgotten. Now for a while the world here will belong again to the men of brawn, the men with the terrible delusion that they are the only ones who work.

(Manning Clark){3}

introduction

'Are we a nation of bastards?'

This is, of course, Manning Clark's infamous rhetorical response to the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1975. While Clark decides that the answer is NO, he – like D.H. Lawrence fifty years earlier – can not hide his belief that he was watching, with a kind of horror, the behaviour of barbarians. Clark seems to be asking: Is this the way it always has to be? Will we never grasp our destiny, our place in the world? Will we never rise above ourselves to greater things, or will we always have to cut down those with whom we differ? In his polemical answer, Clark weakly seeks to reassure his readers that the events of 1975 were merely an aberration, a '... temporary halt in the people's march to victory.'
Clark seems to be articulating the notion that the contemporaneous state of the national projects were, in part, the result of the way the culture sought to deal with some of the inescapable insecurities and perils woven into the social fabric of the nation by the forbears – Clark’s so-called ‘men of brawn’.\(^5\) He reminds us in his article ‘... that we always had been intruders here ...’ and warns that like other settler/invader colonies the Australian national projects run the risk of being reconciled to the colonial past if we do not fulfil our post-colonial destiny.\(^6\) Clark seems to conceive of a national destiny moving on, away from the past, while acknowledging past wrongs and the limiting nature of reactionary societal impulses. Clark is, above all, calling for political leadership.\(^7\) Much of Clark’s unashamedly socialist set of objectives was the source of many of the criticisms that were levelled at him throughout his career.\(^8\)

This chapter takes as its starting point the proposition that Clark is reacting against the desire to return to ‘the old order’\(^9\) that is characterised by the use of certain meta-narratives of the national, what he calls a return to ‘the years of unleavened bread.’ Like Jean-Francois Lyotard\(^10\) Clark’s incredulity is aimed at these attempts to revisit the recent past and in reducing ‘the national story’ to ones within these meta-narratives.\(^11\) He sees these meta-narratives of the nation as supporting the ‘glorious past’ and seeking to ‘turn the clock back.’\(^12\) The result of this process is the naturalisation of notions of a fixed national identity and national character based on kinship, shared social history, a common relationship with the land, and even – in the extreme – race.\(^13\) Clark obviously sees these limited notions of the national character as being inadequate, alienating
and counter productive.

Clark – like Pauline Hanson and her supporters (in the latter years of the twentieth century) – is reacting against a crisis of identity and direction, a lament for the 'ideal world' (order), which has been lost to the forces of 'change'. Hanson and her supporters (twenty years after Clark’s pleas, and after many shifts in the battles over ‘the past’) attempted to re-assert some sort of control using this very reading of the national narrative of ‘the past’, couched in terms of national identity, the national character and the prescribed values associated with such things. This neo-conservative, reactionary hegemonic project, typified by Hanson and her ‘One Nation’ party, and facilitated by the acquiescence of the Howard Government, expressed a desire to return to the old, ‘modern’, order of society. They saw this ‘order’ being lost to the forces of a national post-modernity, best exemplified by the previous Prime Minister’s (Paul Keating 1991-1996) moves to reconcile with Australia’s indigenous peoples and to move Australia towards becoming a republic. Graeme Davison, writing in 1995 on the question Australia: The First Postmodern Republic?, suggests that:

One of the striking features of the post modernist nationalism is its millennial character. Australia is supposed to have crossed, or to be rapidly approaching, a great divide denoted by the repeated use of the oppositions, colonial/post-colonial, nationalist/post-nationalist, modern / post-modern. It is millennial too, in the more literal sense that it looks towards a kind of national re-birth in the year 2001.

I would suggest that this process started in the late 1960s and to some degree the contests between various hegemonic projects have dominated the developments of the narratives of the nation since. The
dismissal of the Whitlam Government is one of the major skirmishes in this culture war.

Hanson infamously labelled the key forces of national post-modernity as 'political correctness' and identified the key targets for reactionary change being the '... various taxpayer funded "industries" that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups', resulting in some sort of loss of a 'true' national direction. In Clark's case it is a loss of 'progress', caused by the willingness of the nation to embrace a re-assertion of an all encompassing, grand, unproblematic national story of birth, struggle and triumph: to make this place ours. In Clark's words, these were actions by reactionary forces that threatened '... once again to pledge ourselves to the past and to defend the old order of society, when a Prime Minister should glory in an idea of resurrecting the past rather than leading us into the future...' It should be remembered that Clark is writing in 1975, at the end of the period under discussion in this chapter. What led to this clash is the focus of this chapter.

This chapter analyses examples of films, made in Australia, drawn from the period 1966-1974, to read something of the development of Australianness at this time. This time-frame covers the end of the Menzies premiership (1949-1966), the premierships of Holt (1966-1967), McEwen (1967-1968), Gorton (1968-1971), McMahon (1971-1972) and, perhaps most significantly, the election, re-election and dismissal of Gough Whitlam (1972-1975). It is for these reasons that this period is perhaps one of the most politically turbulent periods covered in this study, and can
be seen as a watershed in the developments of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects.

In the late 1960s, the Prime Ministership of Robert Gordon Menzies was coming to an end and 'a new era' was dawning in the economic, political and social landscapes of Australia. The Vietnam War was well under way. Holt, the successor to Menzies, had gone 'all the way with LBJ' and started sending conscripts to the war in 1966. The economic post-war reconstruction policies of the Menzies government had facilitated an explosion in the conditions of modernity in Australia. Capitalism, suburbanisation, industrialisation, specialisation in the workplace and consumerism, all hallmarks of modernity, had developed and boomed in the post-war years, making Australia a truly modern nation. The social policies of the post-war period had promoted secularisation (in the face of sectarianism) and nationalism (as Australia became more and more aware of Asia). Indirectly, the post-war policies had, most significantly, helped populate the nation with millions of 'white' European immigrants. Economically, the rise in the standard of living, for many Australians, meant a booming interest in popular culture and various forms of entertainment. Television, introduced in 1956, took off in the 1960s and the cinema, arguably, the art form of modernity, was hugely supported in Australia, although most of the products on the screens in the 1950s and 1960s were American (see chapter two for a detailed discussion of this environment). These social and economic shifts would help to change the national identity and nation-building projects profoundly.
This chapter deals with the early developments of more problematised and robust constructions of the national character in Australian made films, in a time of change and upheaval for the Australian national identity and nation-building projects. The uniqueness of this period derives from the effects of emerging battles between competing social and political hegemonic projects, after a period of stable hegemonic leadership.

On one side were forces that sought to associate themselves with what this study labels *Virulent Modernity*, exemplified by radical nationalism, unproblematic readings of the glorious past in which explorers and pioneers opened up the vast empty country conquering and settling it, and in the process developing the foundations of the Australian national character. This position's influence upon film-making in Australia at this time was to strongly engage with what I have described as the representative referential regime. Because this position engages so vigorously with reference points drawn from the representative referential regime it can in some ways be seen to be in the position of having an orthodox cultural authenticity. Moreover, that the later AFC genre can be seen to have grown out of the influences of this position, should, therefore, come as no surprise. On the other side of the hegemonic dichotomy were forces that sought to associate themselves with what this study labels *Impotent Late-Modernity*. This position is best exemplified by Whitlam's meritocratic society, and counter-racist foreign policy engagements with Asia, and the early attempts at reconciliation and the recognition of the rights of those who had been marginalised: women, Aboriginal
Australians, homosexuals and refugees and immigrants. This position also sought to engage with the problematic present/future direction of late-modernity, radicalism and 'new nationalism'. Manning Clark's polemic is an expression of this position. This study suggests that the tensions in this dichotomy can be seen as manifesting as Residual Coloniality (as pre-post-colonialism). This tripartite grouping is an inescapable characteristic of the national identity struggle from this point on.

**out damn spot! – australian coloniality**

In the 1960s, one of the strategies that developed, beyond the blind desire to assimilate, one that sought to accommodate the increasingly uncooperative immigrants ('new Australians'), was 'the Australian way of life'. This position, however, did not attempt to deal with the ongoing condition of Australia's coloniality. In the history of the Australian national projects, the condition of colonialism is so problematic that it is more rightly referred to as coloniality. The ongoing processes and conditions of Australian coloniality sit in this space of confused and mixed colonial status. In the Australian experience, the processes of colonising, of being colonised, of furthering and continuing colonisation, and of moving on towards a post-colonial space are (often) all at once present simultaneously. A time when this condition was perhaps at its most complex was 1970. For example, Australia's ongoing involvement in the war in Vietnam and Australia's United Nation's granted mandate over New Guinea and, domestically, the government and vested interests fighting embryonic land rights claims, with the recognition of Aboriginal peoples as
citizens only three years earlier in 1967, were just some of the factors contributing to the complex nature of Australian coloniality. Compounding this is the *bastard* nature of Australia’s ongoing coloniality.

I see the *original sin* – the ongoing complexity and uncertainty around the legitimacy of discovery, occupation, land ownership and displacement – as giving Australia’s colonial status its bastard characteristics. That it happened is un-deniable – even the Howard Government’s ten solid years of denial failed to dissipate the stain, and the apology in the early months of the Rudd government also did little to dissipate the stain of that past. I see notions of coloniality in Australia being characterised by the tensions between the colonising culture and the colonised national culture, and the post-colonised national culture trying to squeeze out of this synthesis, and the tensions around the move towards a post-colonial national culture while the national culture is itself a colonising force. In this confusion, legitimacy for any single view is impossible, thus the illegitimacy of the bastard coloniality remains a dominant position. In a similar reading of this condition, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra see these origins in terms of what they call Australia’s obsession with legitimacy. In their exploration of Australian literature and the post-colonial mind, they remind us that:

Legitimacy is a raw and buried issue in contemporary Australian consciousness for good reasons. The current system of government, law and property derives from a chain of juridical acts which leads inexorably back to the founding event itself: an act of invasion by which the Aboriginal owners of the land were dispossessed with some cruelty and without compensation. Many White Australians try to minimise the importance of this history, claiming that it is something that happened to other people a long time ago, only of interest to Aboriginal activists and a minority of neurotics indulging in ‘White Liberal Guilt’.15
Therefore, we can see, in these terms, that the desire to prescribe a narrow Australian national identity is, in part, the result of this fundamental influence on Australian national culture, the circumstance of its conception (the original sin), i.e. colonisation. Hodge and Mishra also make the point that due to the illegitimate nature of the British original claim to the land, the Australian identity can be seen in terms of being that of a bastard. They see the active affirmation of illegitimacy 'How are you, you old bastard?' enabling the Australian psyche to evade any anxiety regarding its origins. 16 Thus you have the dilemma of the consequences of a conception through sin and the hereditary stain remains not only as an influence on notions of national origin but on the broader Australian national culture looking for and finding a place in the fabric of the output of the Australian film-making industry/culture.

These colonial tensions and the flow-on tensions between the hegemonic agencies associated with radicalism and conformity, and the tensions between other conflicting forces (such as anti-intellectualism and reactionary-ism, cultural cringe and internationalism, city and bush, empire and nationalism, parochialism and federalism, class struggle and egalitarianism, multiculturalism and racism), have had a significant influence upon the making of the Australian nation. Perhaps most importantly has been their roles in the construction of national narratives and identity histories.

These tensions, between conflicting forces generated by competing hegemonic projects, those groupings I describe and dichotomise as being Virulent Modernity and Impotent Late-Modernity, are a major component in
the processes of Australian (cultural) nation-building.

This chapter suggests that a useful way to examine questions of the static, changing and conflicting representations of a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in the Australian made cinematic output of the pre-renaissance period (1966-1974) is in terms of the tensions present in the period. Tensions between the trichotomic (from dichotomy) expressions of *Virulent Modernity* and *Impotent Late-Modernity* compounded by a very problematic *Residual Coloniality*. As we shall see, the battles over which representations of the national character would become privileged in this period would be the ones to dominate the so-called renaissance of the Australian film-making industry/culture, 1975-1983 (see chapter four for a more detailed discussion of this period). The narrative roots of many of the very successful films, which would be made throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, can be found in one of two places. In Australia’s past, explicit in the AFC financed period dramas that told the ‘national story’ in the official cinema voice of the culture. Alternatively, ‘the story’ could be told from a very different position, one that took its references from Australia’s present, as parodied and satirised in the purely commercial Ocker farces catering to the lowest Australian common denominator, speaking in the voice of the herd.

An analysis of some examples drawn from the major filmic formations of the pre-renaissance period (1966-1974) further demonstrates how the consistencies and inconsistencies in the construction of Australianness can be read as expressions of a position
within this central nationalism/identity hegemonic tri-chotomy of *Virulent Modernity* and *Impotent Late-Modernity*, compounded by a very problematic *Residual Coloniality*.

In all periods of film-making in Australia, the conditions of the film-making industries affect the output. One of the arguments this chapter makes is that the predominant effect of the pre-renaissance period (1966-1974) upon the renaissance of Australian cinema (1975-1983) was to establish – through an economic (structural and commercial) process of elimination – the kind of industry environment in which particular types of texts would flourish. By examining the groupings of texts which were included and excluded from the emerging canon, a better understanding of the hegemonic aims and focus of (what in this period could be called the deliberate) national identity project/s – which developed as a part of the national identity and nation-building projects – can be discerned, and other views assessed in light of this knowledge. A brief overview of the conditions which helped contributed to the development of the industry/climate of the period under discussion is therefore a suitable starting point.

**pre-renaissance industry conditions**

The broad cultural challenge is to adopt and transform discourses of the national so that they deal better with our diverse social and historical circumstances. Australian films are leading the way in constructing a unifying discourse that transcends the regressive and exclusivist images of the past. This is one step towards developing a more radical kind of national discourse: one that accepts the multiplicities and contradictory natures of the various interests in whose name it speaks. (Graeme Turner 1997)\textsuperscript{17}

In the early 1960s, the agitation for more domestic screened content commenced with a 1962 government report into television entitled
the Vincent Report, and ended with the creation of the institutions of a national film-making bureaucracy and tools of control for the mainstream via the Federal Government: the Australian Film Development Board (AFDC, later the AFC), Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS), Experimental Film Fund (EFF); and some state film institutions, most notably the South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC) in the early 1970s. In the wake of the eventual failure of the recommendations of the Vincent Report, to increase 'local' content figures in 1964, the Actors and Announcers' Guild and the Writers' Guild, along with the Screen Editors' Guild of Australia, lobbied the government to increase the amount of Australian content on radio and television to one hour per week. After almost two years of work, they received a concession of thirty minutes per week.¹⁸ Other interested parties, professional groups, guilds and unions, along with academics, journalists and loose groupings of intellectuals and citizenry lobbied for government assistance, patronage and structural/legislative actions to reform and make viable a domestic film-making culture and industry which would give a more culturally 'genuine Australian' voice/picture/narrative to Australian cinema and create the conditions for an ongoing industry.

On other fronts, censorship became a public policy issue, with sections of the underground and the big film festivals (using conventional lobbying and unconventional, even illegal tactics) agitating for more relaxed access to world cinema. In 1970, with the introduction of the 'R' certification, the issue of censorship was (for a while) put to rest. In June 2003, however, the Sydney Film Festival (an organisation strongly linked
with issues of censorship in Australia) announced that it would not screen the film *Ken Park* (Larry Clark, 2002). The film had been refused classification by the Office of Film and Literature Classification and the Board of Review who ruled that the film offended against '... the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults.'

The early change to censorship — the introduction of an 'R' classification — paradoxically resulted in producers introducing the sex comedies of the Ocker period, rather than the (presumed) intended exhibition of European art-house films that had adult content.

Underground and non-mainstream film-making also had an impact in this period. In Sydney, Ubu Films (later to become the Sydney Filmmaker's Co-operative) and the Melbourne Carlton group along with 'Women's Film' groups at La Trobe University in Melbourne and the Sydney Women's Film Group, examined Australian society, the artistic possibilities of film and the underground uses for dissent through film. As film-making became available to more and more marginalised groups and as many came to rely on government money to finance their projects, the 'underground' (in the eyes of some) began to atrophy. Albie Thoms wrote in 1972 that '... underground film in Australia is dead.'

Early commercial success came through several independent film-making strands, which were able to eke out an existence in this period. The self-funded, self-promoted and self-exhibited surfing films of filmmakers such as Bob Evans, Paul Witzig and Albert Falzon and 'travellers tales' made by (now familiar) film-makers such as the Leyland Bros. and
Malcolm Douglas managed to find audiences and to even make a profit. Film-making modes such as these helped to dispel myths about exhibition and distribution. Film-makers could take their films out into church halls, disused cinemas and community halls and 'four wall' them, with the film-maker as projectionist, ticket seller and even a bit of Q & A. Phillip Adams successfully used this technique with his early sex-comedy *The Naked Bunyip* (John B. Murray, 1970).

Eventually, the reforms to the Federal Government's support of the domestic film industry resulted in a package of three inter-supporting institutions – in 1970 the Australian Film Development Corporation (later, in 1975, to become the Australian Film Commission) was established as an administrative body with funds for film-making and distribution, as the AFC it would go on to have a remarkable effect on the direction of film-making in Australia; it will be more comprehensively discussed in the next chapter.

In 1973, the establishment of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) ensured professional personnel for the future of the industry, a standardisation of skills and the internationalisation of potential Australian film-makers. The implementation of the Experimental Film and Television Fund promised the nurturing of projects that were either a) original in approach, technique or subject matter, b) technical research projects, or c) experiments by inexperienced but promising filmmakers. This institution helped to involve independent talents in the great leap forward. Together these and other official inducements to create a domestic film industry and culture succeeded, for a while. Writing
in 1970, John Baxter (*The Australian Cinema*) – without the benefit of hindsight and with a prescience seldom seen in overviews of the Australian film industry – wrote of the near future promise of a government funded industry:

A fund administrated by government officers or appointees would merely extend federal control into the independent film field, making it almost impossible for genuinely original and creative work to be done.\(^{24}\)

As film-making came more and more into the purview of government through its funding bodies (that which was not already under the steel grip of some sections of the established industry) – with disputes regarding taxation and duty on imported films, and with the fall of the Whitlam Labor Government – inevitable changes appeared in the landscape. At this time (the mid-1970s), Government funding bodies began to take a keen interest in the films they were funding, and in the types of representations of the nation that were being included in the films. Questions were asked in parliament regarding the trend towards what were at the time labelled 'Ocker' films, with the result that a new direction was deemed fit. As public monies were being used to fund and develop the film-making industry/culture in Australia at this time, a new policy direction for the funding of films was seen to be warranted. A new direction, away from the 'Ocker' towards:

... films of 'culture and quality', disavowing 'sure-fire' box office formula films. The industry 'dived into intelligent' movies – with *Picnic at Hanging Rock* [1975] definitively turning away from Ocker.\(^{25}\)
But why? What particular representation of 'Australia' and the resulting construction of 'Australianness' was unwelcome? What was an appropriate 'national story' to project to the domestic audience and the rest of the world? Was the domestic film audience getting what it deserved and wanted? Australia had finally discovered itself on the big screen only to find that there were desirable and undesirable types of 'Australianness'.

**filmic australianness 1966 – 1974**

A number of writers have analysed, outlined and mapped the industry climates during the period leading up to and including the renaissance period (1975-1983) of Australian film-making. Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka have, in their two volume work *The Screening of Australia: Vol 1. Anatomy of a Film Industry*, and Vol 2. *Anatomy of a National Cinema* arguably covered the ground most comprehensively. Other writers such as Tom O'Regan, in his many works on the characteristics and output of the Australian film-making industry/culture, Graeme Turner, in his many works on Australian screen and national culture, along with John Tulloch, Stephen Crofts, Stuart Cunningham, Brian McFarlane, John Baxter and Bruce Molloy, have all contributed to the work done on the industry, film culture and film-making in general in Australia.  

Graham Shirley and Brian Adams are responsible for probably the most comprehensive overview of film-making in Australia during the first eighty 80 years of its existence. Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper have, in their work *Australian Film, 1900-1977*, comprehensively listed all of the
features produced in a seventy-eight year period while giving a picture of the industry and its production conditions during this period. Using the work of these writers, the (pre-)industry context of this chapter can be placed in perspective.

This chapter engages with a period that can be seen to stretch from 1966 and the release of They’re a Weird Mob (Michael Powell, 1966), towards 1975 and the release of Sunday Too Far Away (Ken Hannam, 1975) and Picnic At Hanging Rock (Peter Weir, 1975). Nineteen seventy-five heralded the birth of the AFC genre and the death knell of the high point of the Ocker experiment. Due in part to its success the Ocker film has never quite disappeared and its influence can be seen to persist into the twenty-first century. Perhaps the most important distinction this period offers is that contemporary urban Australia (with very few exceptions) becomes the popular setting for the films made at this time.

According to Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, in this period (1966-1974) fifty-seven 'Made in Australia' feature films were released. The twenty-one films, which are referred to in this period (see Table 3.1, Appendix C), can be equally broken into three groupings or formations of film-making. They include: 'The Ocker', 'The Commercial' and 'New Australian'.

The 'Ocker' films, perhaps the most successful films of the period and some of the most controversial with films like Alvin Purple (Tim Burstall, 1973) and The Adventures of Barry McKenzie (Bruce Beresford, 1971). This film formation is most closely aligned with the forces of Impotent Late-Modernity and therefore, New-Nationalism, the problematic
present/future direction of *Late-Australian-Modernity*.

The second formation is the 'commercial' (including the 'foreign commercial') films that were in large part produced by non-Australians and in which meaning is made through the use of exoticised locations, flora and fauna, as in the 'foreign location' productions from the preceding period (1946-1965; see chapter two). However, these films also can also be seen as attempts to create a sophisticated and problematised representation of a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, through an engagement with modified readings of the representative referential regime that include Australian values (egalitarianism, a fair go and mateship), gender, class, ethnicity and the landscape. Sometimes, as in the case of *Wake In Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, 1971), the result is a startlingly perceptive representation of some elements of the national identity, in this case mateship, as a darker and more complex system than is commonly represented in seemingly more culturally authentic films (a closer discussion of *Wake in Fright* follows).

The 'commercial' formation continues a tradition of engaging with romantic nationalist constructions of the nation and for this reason this study describes this filmic formation as being aligned with a kind of *Virulent Modernity*.

The third formation is the 'new Australian'. This formation is read as an engagement with a wider world-cinema practice, following on the heels of movements such as the 'French new wave' and other national 'art' cinema movements, developing a proto-art-house cinema practice in Australia. Tom O'Regan sees films such as the four episode *Libido* (David
Baker, Tim Burstall, John B. Murray, Fred Schepisi, 1973) as being '… marked by "art cinema" protocols'. O'Regan goes on to say that some of the stories in Libido '… in their lyrical exploration of the state of mind of their respective protagonists look forward to the art films of Paul Cox in the 1980s.' The position of the Dutch/Australian auteur Paul Cox, and his oeuvre, as an index of the high water mark of 'Art House' cinema practice in Australia, is not a contentious one, although a number of writers site him in that vain. Because of the 'art-house' focus of these films they are the most stylistically avant-garde and deal thematically with the most contemporary issues (for example, gender, colonialism and emerging social movements). For these reasons this study labels these films as being the expression of 'Residual Coloniality', which was previously identified as the tension between the two other positions of Impotent Late-Modernity and Virulent Modernity. The characteristics that lead me to describe each film-making formation in these terms will constitute the focus of remainder of this chapter. Each of these three filmic formations will be the subject of a close study of filmic examples drawn from within that formation.

the ocker films

The Ocker films dealt with a type of Hyper-Australianness putting aside any discernible sophisticated filmic style for the sake of (rough) identification. The Ocker formation is one that is in large part defined by its thematic characterisation rather than its development of a type of film-making aesthetic. In the early 1970s, for the newly discovered domestic
film audience, producers such as Phillip Adams and his ilk produced these Ocker films, resplendent with the Australian vernacular and the shameless celebration of the sounds of the Australian voice. It is no coincidence that Barry Humphries’ lampooning creation – Edna Everage – appears screeching like a sulphur crested cockatoo throughout the films of this period.

This formation of films employed the Australian vernacular unselfconsciously, and up on the big screen the acknowledgement and even celebration of everyday language came across as new and exciting for local audiences starved of the sight and sound of the broader Australian community. These films also took advantage of relaxing censorship laws to employ sex and nudity. A strong disregard for social niceties and some enthusiastic ridiculing of perceived old fashioned social codes, hypocritical attitudes to sex or unrealistic expectations of the younger generations are the major narrative characteristics of this formation. Thematically they exclusively focused on particular arenas of contemporaneous urban Australian society – new nationalism, marriage in a second wave feminist world, immigration (before multiculturalism had come into play), education, ‘the permissive society’, and the changing stratification of Australian society. These films assiduously avoid an association with Australia’s colonial past (Eliza Fraser, Tim Burstall, 1976) is a rare exception), or the ‘natural’ landscape. The criticisms and firmest memories of these films tended to dwell on gratuitous nudity, vomiting and the celebration of the ordinary: the ‘ugly Australian’ or Ocker or Yobbo. The Ocker formation dealt with an unashamedly commercial/
anarchic contemporary view of the nation. Films such as *The Naked Bunyip* (John B. Murray, 1970), *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (Bruce Beresford, 1972) and *Stork* (Tim Burstall, 1971) were business ventures, which played on the public’s (rightly) perceived desire to see and hear themselves on the silver screen. The Ocker films also often held expressions of some of the prevalent lowest common denominator attitudes to sex and nudity to often great success (for example, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (Bruce Beresford, 1972) and *Alvin Purple* (Tim Burstall, 1973).


These Ocker films, which dealt with a sometimes gross type of hyper-Australian character (for example, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, *Stork* (Tim Burstall, 1974) and *Dimboola* (John Duigan, 1973)) were, despite their controversial nature, the original success story of the Australian pre-renaissance of the film-making industry/culture. These films dealt with the simplest, most fundamental and widely popular contemporary ‘Australianisation’ of cinema. The ability of these films to appeal to ‘the disruptive, anarchic entertainment values of the cinema going public’ is a possible explanation as to why they were widely popular (amongst some sections of society) and financially profitable and
yet were so heavily criticised (by some sections of the establishment). These films were seen to criticise Australia through parody and farce at a time when unity and sophistication were the only official bywords. Dermody and Jacka remind us that in the 1970s, as the popularity of the Ocker film came into the mainstream,

... the term [Ocker] was used to label, denigrate and to a lesser extent celebrate, particular films, ads, TV programs – and kinds of social behaviour. Tim Burstall’s film *Alvin Purple* (1973) was very popular with audiences and damned by critics. One writer described this film as being ‘... frozen in the proto-adolescent, male masturbative dream of an irresistible youth and a whole host of perpetually available and invariably “beautiful” women.’ David Stratton cites the fortunes of *Alvin Purple* with contemporary Australian critics: ‘... John Tittensor in Cinema Papers ... found the film to have no redeeming values at all ... and found that it is not funny at all ...’ Yet *Alvin Purple* went on to become the highest grossing Australian film made (up until that point).

*The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* was one of the first Ocker films, and is a good example of the generic conventions and modes that characterise these films. It is worth examining its narrative, characterisation and production history in detail as a case study of this landmark filmic formation.
**The Adventures of Barry McKenzie – 1972**

All pommies are bastards, bastards or worse.
And England is the arsehole of the universe.
(Drinking song from *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, 1972)

The character of Barry McKenzie (Bazza) was a creation of Nicholas Garland and Barry Humphries for the British magazine *Private Eye* in 1963. Bazza is awkwardly conservative, '... in a suit reminiscent of Sir Robert Menzies, and a broad-brimmed hat even then obsolescent in all but the most bucolic backwater of Australia.' The hero of the comic strip is 'an innocent abroad armed only with the baroque vernacular of his remote homeland, warily treading the moral quicksands of the permissive society.' The comic strip was intended to be a vehicle to explore and comment on the British and their habits, but very quickly the character of Bazza took over 'and the English found themselves always relegated to supporting roles.'

The film version of *Barry McKenzie* was written by Humphries and Bruce Beresford (the director of both *Barry McKenzie* films) for an Australian and British cinema audience. David Stratton adds some anecdotal material to the story of the making of the film, saying Philip 'Adams was convinced the time was right for [a film of] Barry McKenzie, provided the film was coarse, crude and vigorous enough.' And of course he was right, the time was right – the audience was there.

The film presents two versions of a possible Australian identity in the characters of Barry McKenzie (Bazza, played by Barry Crocker) and Curly (played by Dick Bentley). Curly is Jim Cairns (or is it Don Dunston?)
to Bazza's Gough. It is no coincidence that both of them are men, as many writers and commentators have linked ideas of 'Australianness' exclusively with men. The role of women in narratives such as *Barry McKenzie* is important because the heroes of the 'Ocker farce' film cycle were 'battlers', and in the great Australian misogynistic tradition, they primarily battled women and other threats to their domination of the culture. Edna is a post-menopausal drag-queen, the other women in the narrative are lesbians or hippy-freaks, of no threat to the boys. Richard White points out that in the early 1970s (the very time at which these films were being written, made and shown) the role of women in the Australian identity was being questioned. Books such as Anne Summers' *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975) 'were particularly influential in reassessing the place of women in cherished Australian myths'.

The roots of Humphries' experiences in theatre (Edna is a standout example here as a vaudevillian creation of gigantic proportions, deliberate Dada-ist irrationality and garish props) and his and Garland's experiences in the creation of the comic strip are ever-present in the film text. The film is structured in the form of an episodic stage review with set-piece skits. The film does not employ elaborate filmic techniques as a major way of making meaning. This was Bruce Beresford's first feature film; his filmic style would develop immensely over the next ten years resulting in arguably his finest film from the revival period in Australian film-making, *Breaker Morant* (1979), before heading off to Hollywood and an international film-making career (*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1989).

Much of the meaning making relies on the visual staging, costumes,
props, setting and action rather than cinematic devices such as editing, framing and camera movement. Much is made of costume, in particular — Edna’s glasses, Bazza’s hat, Clyde and Leslie’s male drag, and the drag queens in the pub. For example, at Sydney Airport, Bazza stands out as a freak in his ‘costume’ in stark contrast to the ‘real’ Australians in the background and the extras there to see him off. He is set up visually in this scene, juxtaposed with ‘normal’ Australians as a monster, a character and a parody, anything but normal. Barry McKenzie is a hyper-stereotypical cartoon archetype of a throw-back, colonial Ocker yob. The butt of the jokes in the film are the British who think that Bazza is a typical Australian.

As indices of myths, of national type, Bazza and Curly fit well into ideas of the polarised binary structure of myth, which Bruce Molly identifies in his exploration of Australian films in the 1950s and 1960s. Bazza is primarily identified with the ‘bush’, the ‘outback’ and all of its attendant character traits, the Virulent Modernity of the ‘traditional nationalist values’ of the ‘Australian legend’ school. Bazza is marked as an old type of Australian stereotype by his clothing, his behaviour and his attitudes.

Throughout The Adventures of Barry McKenzie, Bazza (as the archetypal proto-Australian male) is referred to variously as: a fabulous horseman, a convict, bluey, a sun-bronzed ANZAC, a rich pastoral shareholder and, ironically, as a distinguished ‘Australian’ intellectual. Groove Courtney, the advertising man who gives Bazza a job advertising High Camp Cigarillos, describes him as a ‘rugged, unconventional human, with a touch of the outback.’ And most pointedly in the introduction to
the television interview, the interviewer (Joan Bakewell – ‘The thinking man’s crumpet’) foregrounds a contemporaneous media view of Australians when she describes one dominant image of Australian men as ‘tough, insensitive, foul-mouthed, beer-swilling bores.’

Curly is recognisable as another ‘authentic’ stereotype of the contemporary urban Australian type in his role as an archetypical ex-pat Australian living in London in the early 1970s. He is a poet and writer. The presence of the permanently naked woman in his bed attests to his virility, suggesting that he is no impotent virgin, unlike Bazza who fails in each of his sexual encounters and remains a virgin. Curly wears a modern, very fashionable suit, shirt and tie to the concert at ‘The Factory’. On the wall in his flat is a travel poster showing sun, sand and sea, clichéd images of an idea about the Australian landscape. On the wall of Curly’s London flat there is also a print of one of Sydney Nolan’s Ned Kelly series. This very contemporary reference signifies his participation in a more sophisticated culture, back home, from the position I describe as Impotent Late-Modernity, one that can abstract an Australian hero and even the landscape in its meaning making. Perhaps this can be read as a hint for the audience that Bazza is also an abstraction, that Australianness is maybe even an abstraction?

Curly is writing the great Australian novel. ‘Old Morris West better watch out’, he says. Curly tells Bazza that ‘right now in Australia, a cultural renaissance is taking place’ and he wants to be a part of it – from London!? Curly is living in London for a better view of Australia, as many of his compatriots did. While he explains this to Bazza, Bazza is ogling a
Penthouse magazine.

Women, in films of the pre-revival period, such as Barry McKenzie, are for Meaghan Morris (who also includes homosexuals and foreigners) to serve in the role of alien difference that emphasises mateship and group cohesion among the men. Bazza is shown to be sexually repressed around women, and sexually boastful around his mates. He cowards in the presence of women and his homophobia is displayed in the defensiveness he displays in his encounters with a number of gay men, transsexuals and lesbians. He is most sexually ‘at home’ talking about sex with his mates or ogling pornography. For Bazza, access to pornography (something which was not freely available in Australia at the time given the absence of the ‘R’ rating, which was only just introduced as the film was being made) to feed his introverted, sexual fantasy-driven sexuality is all the cultural progress he requires. Curly’s recognisable ‘normality’, in the context of the permissive society, in his casual sexual relations with women, an example of the influence of the permissive British society on him in the years that he has lived in England, points to Bazza’s freakishness and vice versa. Curly stands as neatly postcolonial in his contemporary ‘nationalist mythology’ persona, fitting snugly into Turner’s definition of that late 1960s image of Australia – ‘an image of the new confidence and maturity seen to mark contemporary Australian culture and society.’

As a bearer of ‘traditional nationalistic values’, as a standard bearer of an (ironic) Virulent Modernity, Bazza struggles with a new world order he finds in Great Britain. Bazza uses every conceivable (and even some
inconceivable) terms of racial vilification available (e.g., 'gypos', 'iky mo', 'hungry Arabs', 'tinted bastards', 'slant eyed-ratbags'). He is the resurrection of the ugly White Australia Policy given life in his 1950s suit. But is Bazza questioning the hypocrisy of the society and its attempts to overturn decades of institutionalised racism? Bazza clearly identifies every other character outside of his group of mates by their sexuality or ethnicity, and in doing so helps some members of the audience to identify with him. Because, for some audiences, he is not a satirical character, he is one of them. The average Australian man's fear of the emerging women's movement, the passing of a type of conservative Australia and an emerging new order in sexual politics, fuelled interest in these reactionary sex comedies. Alvin Purple and Bazza McKenzie thereby became popular heroes. John Hinde tells of his own experiences of seeing the film at the time:

Sitting in with the mostly, but not overwhelmingly, male audiences that sent Barry McKenzie racing into domestic profit, I saw plainly that Barry was an up-market hero to them, rather than being in the delicately down-market position of the pathetically inept comic figure of other societies. Barry was doing what they did or their boyfriends did, or would like to do ... only doing more of it, and better.  

Morris sees the attraction of these films for audiences as a part of a 'bonding ritual' – the pleasure of identification. Identification with or against the 'Ocker' points to a widely held belief that 'Ockerism' did exist. The character Barry McKenzie is a satire of 'traditional nationalist values'. His existence and the reaction to him points to the existence of those values being perceived as part of an Australian national identity, at least for the audiences.
In some ways this film and its ilk are the more contemporary themed films of the pre-revival period. Rather than looking back to a romantic, mythologised past (as the later AFC ‘period films’ do), the ‘Ocker’ films look within contemporary Australian culture for their subject. In doing so they touch on issues of ‘nationalist mythology’. Bazza is placed at the centre of the narrative in The Adventures of Barry McKenzie as a hyper-Australian type and his actions clearly spell out a view of a mythical proto-national form. Although he is a monster, the fingerprints of his doctor Frankenstein are present. Humphries and Beresford attempt to debunk the traditional mythic Australian type – sun bronzed, surfing ANZAC – with an alternative and one just as mythic – the crude and ‘vulgar but lovable in our vulgarity.’\textsuperscript{53} Both are overly simplistic.

Tom O’Regan sees these films as setting about ‘self-consciously highlighting “the Australian”’, often through ‘sending up’ things Australian or parodying some Australian characteristics. In the context of The Adventures of Barry McKenzie this is most famously created through Bazza’s vomiting. The film loudly boasted on the posters of the time that the film was presented in ‘chunderama’. Bazza’s Australianness is also highlighted through his excessive drinking and most commonly through the use of exaggerated vernacular language.\textsuperscript{54} These early films of the Australian film industry revival did generally shy away from the simpler views of the traditional foundation national types in an attempt to say something about the contemporary urban experience. But it seems the audience wanted to identify with the simplest reading of an Australian type, which generally consisted of ‘radical nationalist values’.
While the ‘Ocker’ films struck a chord with many Australian audiences, they shamed the ‘cultural mandarins’ such as Max Harris. Harris wrote a book berating the culture of the ‘Ocker’, going so far as to accuse Gough Whitlam of being the ‘arch-Ocker’.\textsuperscript{55} In part, Clark’s article seeks to set the record straight. He says ‘... we are not all “bastards”, not all “Ockers” who were out for a “quick quid”, and not all driven by some mad hatred against intellectuals and dole-bludgers – all those people Whitlam tried to help.’\textsuperscript{56} The Ocker formation of film-making in Australia at this time was the most domestically successfully and undoubtedly helped to establish the film-making industry/culture in Australia. However, there were other formations that sought wider recognition and strove for a more ‘legitimate’ profile. The commercial was also a very successful formation in this period.

the commercial films

The commercial films were often funded by non-Australian monies and therefore had artistic control in foreign hands (a common practice throughout the fifty-year scope of this study). They often used the landscape, the people and animals as exotic backgrounds. \textit{Walkabout} (Nicolas Roeg, 1971) is a stand-out example of this tendency – its erratic shifts in landscapes and posed animal extras, the over-emphasises on the exoticism of the film’s setting, adding to the film’s excessive romanticisation of the landscape and Aboriginal spiritual connections to place. \textit{Ned Kelly} (Tony Richardson, 1970), another example of a foreign commercial film, seeks success through employing a ‘star’ in the person of
Mick Jagger – regardless of his suitability to play the character. This formation of films often exploited the audience’s desires to see and hear themselves, in an internationally sanctioned way, to see established television or, in a few cases, local film stars, or to see some ‘naughty bits’, all as a visceral and safe experience of the permissive times in which these films were made and viewed.

The commercial film formation produced a diverse group of films, with some of the stand-out films of this period, including *They’re a Weird Mob* (Michael Powell, 1966), helping to kick start some interest in a domestic industry and to put the ‘Australian’ back on the screen; *Wake In Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, 1971) showed that there was more than one way to imagine ourselves – here the dark sides of our national nature and our insecure relationships with this place are exposed – and from *Walkabout* (Nicolas Roeg, 1971) comes an extended romantic fairytale of the landscape as the spiritual heart of this place rather than as the dead heart of the continent.

These film examples lie at the centre of this period and together with the other films of the commercial tradition they deal with many themes from immigration to homosexuality and life on the land – in search of commercial success through the employment of the representative referential regime, or in the case of *Wake In Fright*, by straying far from the comfortable myths of the Australian character, they too often failed to create an Australianness which drew domestic audiences to them as did the Ocker formation. *Wake In Fright* is such an important film from this period that it warrants a close engagement.
bastard coloniality

There have been, throughout the histories of the Australian colonies/nation state, various notions pulling at the unified fabric of a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in the national identity and nation-building projects, with each pull creating a little tear which, as it heals, leaving a small area of scar tissue which in turn makes visible these conflicts within the national projects. A film text such as *Wake In Fright*, made by Canadian director Ted Kotcheff, in 1971, is such a scar. It is worth taking a detailed look at *Wake In Fright* to un-pick those scars of the original sin of colonialism. For Hodge and Mishra the colonial and post-colonial situations are ones in which '... the Other is constructed out of a double impulse: fear of revenge and desire of the security of legitimacy.'\(^{57}\) In some Australian made films of the pre-renaissance period, the place of character in the landscape, and the tensions between characters, is the playing out of these two anxieties, fear and revenge.

**wake in fright – 1971**

*what I can’t altogether see*
*is why I should be permitted to be alive,*
*and to know these things.*

*(Wake In Fright, 1961)^{56}\)

*Wake In Fright* tells the story of John Grant, a school teacher bound by a bond of $1000 to teach in the remote community of Tabooed (in the New South Wales/South Australia border region). He is half way through his commitment of two years and on his way back to Sydney, the beach
and the woman of his dreams. He must travel by train six hours east to the nearest town with an airport – Bundanyabba (The Yabba). Like Dante, Grant must pass through the circles of Hell and escape the influence of its inhabitants to reach his paradise and the object of his desires. He quickly discovers that the inhabitants of The Yabba revel in a lustful, gluttonous, violent, debauched and perverted existence, into which they seek, with mixed intentions, to drag him. Also like Dante, he has a guide – Jock Crawford, the local police sergeant. Jock appears throughout the narrative to lend a hand, to point Grant in the right direction, to warn of the dangers and, after Grant is finally driven to suicide by the fear he will never escape, to release him from The Yabba. Grant survives the trials of The Yabba and now stronger and wiser, returns to the limbo of his own personal ante-hell to serve out his sentence of another year of teaching. Grant’s journey is through the landscape of the territory of bastard coloniality.

In *Wake In Fright*, mateship becomes a claustrophobically inescapable presence. In film texts such as *Wake In Fright*, the explicit demonstration of mateship manifests as a harsh reading of it as a system of conformity. Mateship in *Wake In Fright* is defined as a brutality, inherent in an unsympathetic reading of the bush legend, and would have appeared to be a slap in the face to contemporary Australian audiences and their values. This manifestation of mateship was incompatible with the dominant ethos exemplified in romantic nationalism and, therefore, in *Virulent Modernity* and in the construction of mateship as an almost spiritual quality of the Australian character. It is worthwhile, at this point, to revisit my definition of mateship.
The first point to remember about mateship is that it is a site specific, a time specific union. I strongly agree with Donald Horne's assertion that mateship is for example, a system that is, at its worst, one of inclusion and exclusion; however, all can have a go at inclusion, birth right (race, gender, class, religion or ethnicity) is not mandatory, it just facilitates power/knowledge/membership more easily.

Another thing to remember about the playing out of mateship is its short-lived, pragmatic half-life. Mateship unions are joined under certain circumstances, which, when over, see the mateship union dissolve – that is to say, mate-ing unions are site specific. For Donald Horne mateship is shared between:

.... men who are thrown together by some emergency in an unfriendly environment and have become of one blood in facing it. In this sense its use is strongest in the unions and in the armed forces. Mates stick together in their adversity and their common interest. Mateship of this kind is not a theory of universal brotherhood but of the brotherhood of particular men.59

Specifically, within this site specific character I see the actual social performance and manifestation of mateship as a nexus of a number of elements:

1. A co-dependency, which develops through shared experiences;
2. building on identified common concerns;
3. the development of a particular kind of trust;
4. a trust, which is characterised by critical humour and a self-conscious brevity of speech towards the mates (though the opposite is often to be found directed at 'outsiders'); and
5. developed and strengthened through the establishment of a common social language (including such things as 'nick-names' and the use of some kinds of slang).
Much is made of this legendary characteristic in almost all aspects of Australian public, social and cultural life. It ties the traditional Australian national identity back to the bush experiences of the early settlers, the convicts and the itinerant rural workers. And yet mateship is almost never criticised, problematised or even questioned for its narrow focus. In more orthodox constructions of mateship, as in the romantic nationalist tradition, it becomes the great Australian mythic quality of identity best exemplified by Russel Ward and his reading of the bush-derived national identity myth that he explores in his work *The Australian Legend*.  

Ward’s work has helped to solidify the narrow, desirable Australian, national type in Australian cultural products that survives into the twenty-first century. It is perhaps the most established and all-encompassing, even self-perpetuating, definition of the Australian national identity. Ward’s Australian identity, derived from men’s experiences pioneering the land, was the dominant cultural signifier of Australian national identity throughout the latter half of the twentieth century in Australia. His definition is a narrow, misogynistic version of national identity, the cornerstone of Ward’s work and a blueprint for a fictional archetype from that point on. The influence of Ward’s view is so pervasive that it warrants closer examination.

The first important distinction Ward makes is that it is male specific:

> According to the myth the ‘typical Australian’ is a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affection in others.

Ward closely links maleness with the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation because this ‘legend’ view of the
myth has at its core the connection of the landscape to identity. The links of convict origins formed through the 'outback' experiences of taming the land into the definitive Australian identity are crucial. It is, therefore, an almost exclusively male identity, because the action of surviving in the landscape and the attendant male traits borne out of that experience—mateship, stoic endurance and the laconic larrikin—are often seen as exclusively male preserves, in a narrow self-perpetuating cycle of masculine identity and identification with the land. Ward goes on to describe this mythical Australian as being

... a great improviser, ever willing to 'have a go', at anything, but willing too to be content with a task done in a way that is 'near enough'. Though capable of great exertion in an emergency, he normal feels no impulse to work hard without good cause. He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion.63

Texts such as *Wake in Fright* question the viability of such a narrow identity and point to the end results of this type of incestuous inbreeding in the cultural/social gene pool.

One of the most conflicting aspects of Ward's articulation of the Australian national identity myth is this tendency to characterise the Australian type as being one to 'have a go' and yet the notion of 'she'll be right' or 'near enough is good enough' is also prevalent in representations of the identity. Many film characters of the Australian type deal with this by reinterpreting the 'she'll be right' casualness incorrectly as confidence and ability culminating in an easygoing likeability. It is a construction absent in *Wake In Fright*.

Ward also argues that:

Though he is 'the world's best confidence man', he is usually taciturn rather than talkative, one who endures stoically rather than one who acts busily. He is a 'hard case', sceptical about
the value of religion and of intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. He believes that Jack is not only as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and so he is a great ‘knocker’ of eminent people unless, as in the case of his sporting heroes, they are distinguished by physical prowess.  

In Australian cultural mythology, this description of the Australian ‘type’ is linked with scepticism and intellectual practicability to create an image of simple shrewdness. In *Wake In Fright*, Grant is the object of this type of anti-intellectualism.

Perhaps the most important point Ward makes is that in his description the Australian type is

... a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong.

This portion of the legend affects cultural narratives and the actions of characters in cultural products perhaps more than any other. ‘Heroes’ of Australian cultural narratives are often these independent, anti-authoritarian individuals who perform their roles as mates by sticking up for their weaker mates (Breaker Morant, Barry McKenzie, Mad Max, Mick Dundee), heroic mates who are willing to have a go, and stick up for their mates and in doing so are, in many of these film narratives, defending the nation. The use of a policeman as Grant’s guide is a deliberate sign of the danger the ‘good blokes’ pose.

The inhabitants of ‘The Yabba’, the setting for *Wake In Fright*, deliberately adhere, with a frightening rigidity, to the description of the Australian identity in Ward’s *Australian Legend*. Published in 1958, Ward’s work undoubtedly had a great influence on Cook who has challenged every word of it in *Wake In Fright* (published 1961). Although Cook does
seem to acknowledge that the landscape is the root of the ongoing national identity, it is a darker influence than Ward envisaged. In this period there emerged some films which on the surface sought to give a more sophisticated and complex reading of the national character in relation to the rest of the world. With the massive escalation of immigration in the period after the Second World War came new ways of thinking about the cultural identity and the social constructions of the citizens, within the direction of the national identity and nation-building projects.

*Wake In Fright*’s narrative is reminiscent of the two other features from this period, *They’re a Weird Mob* and *Walkabout*. In both of these films ‘others’, in the form of outsiders — the Italian immigrant (Nino) to Australia in *They’re A Weird Mob* and the two children in *Walkabout* — are given guides to the mysteries of Australian national culture and language (well, at least the mysteries of Sydney) and to the ‘outback’. These outsider characters succeed because they conform to what is required. They listen to their guides, and ‘survive’ the perils of belonging, while being required to give up something in the process, innocence in the case of the children and his ‘birth culture’ in the case of Nino. This can be seen as a reference to the notion of ‘The Australian Way of Life’ – the cultural journey that the ‘new Australian’ and the children (both of the children are British and speak with a strong non-Australian British accent) must take. *Wake In Fright*, by contrast, can be seen as a warning that the process of becoming one of us may well hold some painful lessons in conforming.

*Wake In Fright* was the second production of the NLT/Group W alliance. NLT was an Australian production company with the entertainer
Bobby Limb as its majority shareholder (his estate still owns the Australian rights to the film), and Group W a film investment subsidiary of the US Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. The film rights to Kenneth Cook's 1961 novel were first optioned by British director Joseph Losey and actor Dirk Bogarde in 1963. After they failed to produce a film they sold the rights to the Australian writer Morris West. West also failed to produce a film and so he sold the rights to NLT/Group W for a reported $49,000.\textsuperscript{66} NLT and Group W had signed an agreement in 1968 to produce ten films before 1974. The NLT/Group W alliance had produced one film prior to \textit{Wake In Fright}. In 1969 they produced \textit{Squeeze a Flower, Squeeze a Grape} (Marc Daniels), starring Walter Chiari, the actor who three years earlier had played the lead role in \textit{They're a Weird Mob}. David Stratton records that it was a dismal failure. 'The film was released by BEF at the State Theatre in February 1970, but any hopes of duplicating the success of \textit{They're a Weird Mob} were quickly, and properly, dashed.'\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{Wake In Fright} was produced in less than three months for a budget of $800,000. It was shot on location in Broken Hill (Kenneth Cook's original inspiration for The Yabba), at the Ajax Studios Bondi and at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The film was distributed world wide by United Artists. It participated in the 1971 Cannes Film Festival where is was in competition with Nicholas Roeg's \textit{Walkabout} (which was in competition as a British film).\textsuperscript{68}

The opening shot of \textit{Wake In Fright} locates its place with a 360 degree pan of a flat, desolate outback. The only features in the outpost of Tiboonda are a water pipe coming from the distance and disappearing into
another distance. Likewise, a train line passes through the outpost between two rude shacks, one the school house, the other the pub. It is an empty place, hot and forbidding. At the Tiboonda rail siding, the handless clock signals time matters little in this place. It could be any day of the week, within the last 150 years. It is an outpost of an outpost, although the train line does indicate that as bare as this place is it is not the end of the line – there is always worse waiting further out. In the one-room, two-dunny school house, the blond-haired students sit impatiently with their equally blond-haired teacher, all counting down to the school holidays and escape, so time does matter. The teacher wears a tie, his suit jacket neatly placed over the back of his chair. As the children leave they respectively address him as ‘sir’, all except the older one who leaves with ‘see you next year, mate’, much to the chagrin of the teacher. He is at the same time one of them and an outsider. All are trapped.

In the teacher’s room at the local pub a surrealist painting decorates his wall, a collection of geologically interesting rocks fills a sideboard. Graeme Turner reads the geological collection as an indication of Grant as a ‘... detached, superficial observer ...’69 but maybe they point to artefacts of the landscape with Grant as an archaeologist seeking the artefacts of a previous civilisation. But oops!, there was no civilisation before people like Grant came and found the outback was empty. This is not Troy or Rome; there are not the artefacts of an ancient civilisation to exhume; there is barely a contemporary civilisation to witness, only rocks and fossils to be found, the artefacts of an empty land, devoid of (human) history. His drawings of the local area share space with black and white
photos of his parents and of a young woman (her photo is of her university
graduation, a reminder of his connection to intellectualism), a photo of a
leafy suburban house and a bright colour photo of the Sydney opera
house and harbour bridge. He is educated, talented, from somewhere
else. There is also a BOAC (British Overseas Airline Corporation) calendar
with a photo of the Acropolis. He has indices of modernist European
culture and of the classics, of places he would obviously rather be, places
with culture and proper, human history.

Downstairs he has a last drink with the publican who chides him for
not paying for his drinks with "What's the matter. You got snakes in your
pockets?" After a year he is still an outsider, still failing to learn the local
customs, because his mind and soul are elsewhere. And he sees himself
above and separate from these people and their customs. He is blind to
the savages. He runs to catch the train out of town, still dressed in his
teacher's suit.

While on the train he dreams of the woman in the photo: Robyn.
She is emerging from the sea. She approaches him and he raises a cold
beer which he rubs gently on her chest. The beer keeps them apart, he
holds her off. In his own fantasy he fails to embrace her fully. Kym
McCauley suggests that Grant constructs the image of Robyn in the
perfect form of '... heterosexual normalcy ...' and that Cook's description
(in the novel) of Grant vomiting when he attempts to engage sexually with
Janette '... suggests that Grant is sickened by actual sex with a woman.'
The violent sexual assault Grant suffers at the hands of Doc Tydon is
therefore rendered somewhat ambiguous. Readings of its meaning in the
narrative rest on the interpretation of Grant's reaction to the attacks of Doc that night (as Grant points out in the novel, he was assaulted twice) and his reaction the next morning. Grant does return to Doc's shack with murderous intent, but is it for the sexual brutalisation or for waking in him those urges (twice!!).

McCauley sees the 'outback' — in the form of Doc Tydon — as representing a corrupting influence on Grant's sexuality. Rather than dwelling on Grant's latent homosexuality, he can be read more clearly as possessed of a repressive sexuality which casts him as an unwilling participant in a number of, what are to his mind, incestuous relationships. He is a child of the maternal culture not used to the corrupt influence of the remote paternal landscape. His half sisters and brothers are too familiar with him. He does not welcome their hospitality or their intimacy.

It should be remembered that the majority of the narrative takes place over one weekend just before Christmas. It is as if Grant has gone home for the holidays to a distant relative, only to find that he is expected to join in with their corrupt traditions and perverted practices. He tells Janette of his dream to be free of teaching and to go to England and become a journalist. He wants to go home to Mother but he is stuck in the outback hell of Father's world.

In *Wake in Fright* the 'outback' is a wholly corrupting influence on all aspects of the character's existence. The slag heaps point to the mines as conduits leading directly into the rotting influences of the foreign earth. The attitudes of the inhabitants to the landscape and their place in it is easy to discern. The total lack of respect for the land is evidenced by the slag
heaps, the obvious effects of mining, the a/spiritual land which is merely a resource to be used. The 'roo hunting' sequence demonstrates their absolute lack of consideration for the flora or fauna. The animals are seen as just a resource for entertainment, they don't even use those animals they kill. And their mateship is paper-thin – Dick and Jo descend into a brawl at the easiest provocation. And nobody tries to actually help Grant, they all just want to gloss over his problems and have another drink.

The title of the book and the film comes from a curse: 'May you dream of the Devil and wake in fright'. There are many references to Hell and the Devil throughout the film text and even more are to be found in the novel of the same name. In the novel, Bundanyabba is described as ‘... just a larger variation of Tiboonda, and Tiboonda was a variation of hell'. In the film, Doc Tydon tells Grant: 'All the little devils are proud of hell' and 'It's death to farm here and worse than death in the mines.' The pubs are hells of another type.

The pub, in which Grant and Jock meet, is an overcrowded, hot, sweaty pit of debauched humanity. Some of the men are naked to the waist, some wear slouch hats, others are in what could be football jerseys. All are loud, drunk and pressed up together. Grant has washed up in the anti-Elysium of the ideal, prescribed Australian masculine identity, a place he does not fit. The spaces in the film – the pubs, the two-up school and the bush (in the kangaroo hunting sequences) – are men's spaces, devoid of 'woman'. They are spaces which are at once battlefield, sporting field and prison yard, with Jock as army officer, referee or prison guard. Men populate these spaces, women are girlfriends back home, sideline
supporters, barmaids or nymphomaniacs.

It should be remembered that in the filmic Australia of the 1970s '... manliness is seen, quite simply both as the pinnacle of the Australian experience and of Australian cultural identity, as well as universally representative of Australianness. Narratives such as *Wake In Fright* are the playing out of representations of a narrow way of being, for some men, and an exploration of the limiting nature of these influences, all held up for inspection.

To stretch the parental metaphor – Australian national culture, as represented in *Wake In Fright*, is the result of the coupling of the British mother country and the paternal Australian landscape, resulting in a child which obsequiously craves the affections of its regal mother and fears the harsh punishment of its crude father. In the harshest reading of the most extreme propensities in the Australian social and national cultural character, the Australian identity, as represented in *Wake In Fright*, identifies itself as the bastard hybrid of two incompatible parents. The resulting film reflects the national culture's dawning acknowledgement that it runs the risk of permanently establishing an identity as the illegitimate rural idiot child of an embarrassed imperial parent. One (unwelcome) way of reading the notion of Australian bastard coloniality – in the film text of *Wake In Fright*, as it sat in 1971 – is as a representation and expression of the effects of unfinished colonial business on Australian national culture and of the narrow, limited desirable influences upon Australian national identity.
This dialectical process is only a part of the process of developing the national identity and nation-building projects. No national culture exists in a vacuum (no nation is an island when it comes to influences on the national culture). I hesitate at this point to talk of a national culture evolving or maturing (as Clark patently does), for this implies deterministic and evolutionary notions of a continuous teleologically inspired linear national progression of cause and effect towards a goal to which a national culture is, or should be, moving. The interest here is with conflicts between competing forces in a national culture, with the tensions created in the processes of hegemonic cultural shifts as ongoing reflections of the conditions of national origin. Bastard coloniality and the results of the ongoing tensions between competing forces are represented in the cultural output of the national culture. Tensions such as these are represented and expressed in many different ways in the cultural products and cultural practices of the Australian nation.

In film texts the most obvious channel through which these tensions are represented and expressed is the narrative. It is within the narratives of this limbo of confused coloniality that a view of the harsh side of Australian national culture can be observed. In that narrative space can be found an Australian bastard coloniality which is personified in the pressures of conformity, in anti-intellectualism and in the cultural cringe, a condition popularly described as the ‘tall poppy syndrome’, which Clark sees directly contributing to the downfall of Whitlam in 1975. It is a colonial syndrome which points to poor parenting and borderline abuse, resulting in the horror, nightmare outback world of a *Wake in Fright*, a world of
mateship with a vengeance, a beer-fuelled cultural cringe, raping and slashing its way through the outback flora, fauna and inhabitants. *Wake In Fright* subverts the familiar national narrative rhetoric of the bush myth, a fair go, egalitarianism and mateship and the setting of the familiar mythic landscape of 'the outback' by showing the limitations of such notions. Film texts such as *Wake In Fright* are representations of a hell in which 'the men of brawn' rule.

In 1966 explicit lessons in assimilation into the 'Australian way of life' had come from the 'new' cultural orthodoxy represented in *They're a Weird Mob*. This is the familiar mythic utopia of the 'Australian way of life', populated by white men crowding into a public bar, a meat pie in one hand and a beer in the other, mates who buy each other beers in a highly ritualised fashion. In the process of the narrative, the Italian immigrant is turned from a newspaper man – old world, intellectual, white collar – into a 'New Australian' – a builder, building in a new land, doing real work, physical work. The 'Australian way of life' converts and assimilates. Resistance is useless, and anxiety is unnecessary.

*They're A Weird Mob* dwells on reassuring lessons in assimilation for the entertainment of its audience. Jeanette Hoorn, in her 2003 article, suggests that the burden of *They're A Weird Mob* is in trying to answer these questions:

How do nations that have previously conceived of themselves as monocultural come to terms with the cultural diversity which accompanies the increasing mobility of populations around the globe? How do nations like multicultural Australia deal with populations that have been dispossessed?75

The answer seems to be that a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation is so powerful that it will – to use
Hoorn’s term – ‘digest the new foreign element.’ There is nothing to fear from them as they will become one of us soon enough.

Australian audiences ate this all up with a vengeance, and the film ‘... enjoyed the longest run any film has ever had at GU’s [Greater Union] giant State Theatre in Sydney.’ This early experience in a filmic representation of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, that could consume as well as define, demonstrated that there was a domestic audience for this type of domestic product. And for producers and exhibitors there was money to be made in domestic filmmaking. This financial impetus pushed the Australian film revival into being and influenced the type of films that would be made.

*Walkabout* and *Wake In Fright* are films which were made by non-Australians. Their views were framed from the outside looking in. In the early 1970s these views were less than welcome in Australia. From *Wake In Fright* came some of the frankest views of the Australian outback mateship mythology ever put on film. For Kim McCauley, *Wake In Fright* failed to be included in the canon, which was mostly comprised of ‘... AFC genre films like *Sunday Too Far Away, The Man From Snowy River* and *Gallipoli*’ because it failed to ‘... reinforce, promote and celebrate the outback as a site of narrowly prescribed, national (masculine) identity.’ Films like *Wake In Fright* were unwelcome in the ongoing development of a film-making industry/culture because they were seen to represent an undesirable view of Australian national culture. Around this time (the early 1970s) a very strict dichotomy began to develop between the critically unpopular/popularly critical films set in contemporary Australia and the
critically popular/uncritically proper films set in the past. The 'Ocker' films were critical of the contemporary nation while the AFC genre films would be uncritical of the nation's past.

the 'new australian' cinema films

The 'new Australian' formation is often characterised by a degree of foreign influence, mostly from what is now called 'independent' filmmaking traditions, the French 'New Wave' and European 'art house' cinema. The 'new Australian' tradition, while often self-conscious and experimental, did seek to articulate a contemporary reading of the political, social and cultural identities of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects. It is no irony that the genesis of the AFC genre can be found in part in this formation (for example, in The Cars That Ate Paris (Peter Weir, 1974) and Between Wars (Michael Thornhill, 1974)). The films of this formation are often the most non-commercially focused films of this period; they differ markedly from the formation labelled commercial.

The 'new Australian' cinema films were often experiments in style, aesthetics and form, putting aside any overt and perceived 'clichéd' elements of national character elements for an intellectual foray into filmmaking. Many of the films came out of university film clubs and film societies, and yet there were commercial and professional film-making avenues which also produced films in this vein. As a result of the variety of positions from which these films emerged, there was a wide spectrum of films that came under this heading. Nevertheless, the thematic focus of the 'new Australian' cinema films tended to be small stories of human
relations, with an element of the irreverence of the Ocker, but without the commercial focus and exoticism of the background of the commercial formation. These films also tended to shy away from overt representations of traits connected with 'classic' radical nationalism, such as the values of the referential regimen as broad national characteristics. Rather, they leant towards the broader world-view of 'new nationalism' and in some cases, a faux European sophistication in search of acting like grown-ups.

The 'new Australian' cinema films are all firmly set in contemporary, mostly middle-class, bourgeois, virile, heterosexual, male Australia. Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper mention that *Pudding Thieves* (Brian Davies, 1967), a relatively successful film, '... the first Australian film in more than a decade to stand on its own two feet .... [out of the Carlton group around Melbourne University was] .... fired by the spirit of the French 'new wave', and it revealed a variety of conscious styles and intellectual influences from Godard, Chabrol and Truffaut.'

The film has as a major theme one that could be more likened to the male friendship theme of *Jules et Jim* (François Truffaut, 1962) rather than a theme that could be likened to ones of 'mateship', such as those in a film like *Sunday Too Far Away*. From *2000 Weeks* also came a clear and very patronising comment on the contemporary cultural situation in Australia, from an unashamedly bourgeois ex-pat — now anglicised — documentary producer, to his fawning, trendy, safari-suited, wine drinking Australian bourgeois audience:

Broadly speaking, I see Australia as having unique advantages and unequal disadvantages. They both come from the fact you are so isolated from the rest of the world. Now, isolated means of course that every idea is five years out of date, but it also means that you're cut off from the tensions and horrors of
modern life which is a very enviable position to be in, from what I can gather Australia has made enormous strides in the last decade.

(character in 2000 Weeks Tim Burstall, 1969)

It is because of this thematic focus on the 'current situation' in the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects that films such as The Adventures of Barry McKenzie cross over from Ocker to also inhabiting some of the territory of 'new Australian' cinema. And films such as The Cars That Ate Paris and Between Wars moved away from these themes towards a focus on a more commercial, emerging aesthetic and an engagement with problematic narrative reactionary-ism, demonstrating the characteristics of a formation, which would come to be known as 'the AFC genre'.

between wars – 1974

"You make what you are afraid of into an obscenity."
(Edward Trenbow in Between Wars Michel Thornhill, 1974)

David Stratton, in his introduction to Between Wars (Michael Thornhill, 1974) on Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) television in 1999, said that it (Between Wars) was the '... first important, serious film of the renaissance' of film-making in Australia. He went on to say that Between Wars explores 'in a way that no other Australian film has since, the political and social changes that occurred between the two world wars and the clashes between progressive new ideas and innate conservatism.'

This 'clash' is also the subject of Manning Clark's article Are We A Nation Of Bastards? and this study suggests that throughout the histories of the cultural identity of the national projects, in the period 1945-2007, the
'clash' between competing hegemonies, *Virulent Modernity* and *Impotent Late-Modernity*, is a consistent site of cultural conflict in the Australian context.

*Between Wars* tells the story of Edward Trenbow, a young medical doctor and, with him, some of the journey of the nation between the First and the Second World War. Newly qualified, he finds himself on the Western Front in 1917/18, inadequately trained and too ethically sensitive for the horrific effects of the war on some of the men. He is thrown into conflict with his superiors (the establishment) from the outset. He is introduced to the work of Sigmund Freud, by a German POW, in a repatriation hospital in England. This conflict between the English medical establishment and the radical ideas of the German psychiatrist set the lines of conflict over which the narrative is played out. The narrative is episodic, set in four time periods (1918, the end of the First World War; 1920, the rise of right wing extremism in Australia; 1932, the Depression takes hold; and 1941, the beginnings of the War in the Pacific). The narrative places Trenbow in various conflicts, over which he has little power. He is variously labelled a Freudian, a Communist, a Leftist, a Rightist, a Traitor and a Pacifist, while in reality he is merely open to new ideas and shows some resistance to following the mob; in the terms of twenty-first century Australia, under the Howard Government, he would most likely be labelled 'Un-Australian'.

The narrative places him in the middle of conflicts between the forces of 'the establishment' and more radical 'new ideas' – most often the medical establishment, including psychiatry. The array of radical
tendencies with which Trenbow engages include: the younger generation, jazz music and jazz dancing, Freudianism and ping pong. In the end, Trenbow is human, all too human. He ignores his own son, a sub-plot in which he implants numerous childhood traumas into his personality, as he does with many others, complicating his own future.

It is not too extravagant a claim to make in the context of this study’s focus, that often, in Australian made films that have engaged with the referential regime and have developed a significant manifestation of Australianness, the metaphorical focus of the narrative revolves around a fear of the presence of the father rather than the fear of a mother’s abandonment. I make this argument in some detail in the discussion of *Wake In Fright*. Other film examples that I would put in this grouping include: *Smiley* (Anthony Kimmins, 1956), *Walkabout* (Nicolas Roeg, 1971), *The Last Days of Chez Nous* (Gillian Armstrong, 1991), *Muriel’s Wedding* (P.J. Hogan, 1994), *Shine* (Scott Hicks, 1995), *Head On* (Ana Kokkinos, 1998) and a film that will be discussed below, *Sweetie* (Jane Campion, 1989).

Trenbow is continuously shown to be a man of little conviction through his unwillingness to go beyond simple questioning of the prevailing orthodoxy, for no clearly explained purpose. His colleague, Peter Avante, while seeming less radical, achieves greater real change in the practice of psychiatry by just plugging away and keeping his head down. However, by 1941 Avante has been seduced by ‘the establishment’.

*Between Wars* is a good example from the formation I describe as the ‘new Australian’ cinema in its ambitious attempts to problematise some
Australian social and political history through the subjective exploration of the nation between two world wars. In the person of Edward Trenbow we have an explorer of the political and social landscape of sections of the Australian community between two of the most important events in the federation's history, the two world wars. Rather than focusing on the myth of ANZAC in the aftermath of the First World War, the film introduces images and notions around the Depression and the 'New Guard', not popular subjects of national myths of identity and national character. Without coming to any conclusions regarding the times in which he lives, Trenbow is shown to not be alone in his rejection of the establishment's view, and as the recipient of the consequences of this resistance he is the recipient of professional marginalisation, police harassment and the alienation of his son.

As a proto-AFC genre film (which many of the 'Ocker' and 'new Australian' films, it could be argued, were), *Between Wars* exhibits the early stirrings of the AFC genre's visual and thematic aesthetic – a metaphorical and actual filmic soft focus, within a context of nostalgic periodisation retelling familiar stories with appropriate British accents, neo-colonial rhetoric and Heidelberg School landscapes. However, unlike the 'purer', neo-post-colonial AFC genre films, which sought to push the stain of colonialism onto the heads of the British, films such as *Between Wars* generated more questions than they answered. Whereas the AFC genre films of the renaissance period sought to tell 'the story' of the nation in terms that would extend the national identity and nation-building projects into very successful cultural and commercial territory, the films of the 'new
Australian' cinema sought to explore more problematic notions of the nation in cinema with a good deal less success. For example, the harsh critical reception to *2000 Weeks* would deter all but the most strong-willed film-makers from experimenting with thematic, narrative and technical representation. Bishop and Mackie see the film courageously tackling themes '... of cultural nationalism and personal politics .... [finding] .... little sympathy from critics or the box-office.'\(^8^3\) However, other issues remained, such as those around the stain of colonisation and the ongoing treatment of the indigenous population, who had been incorporated fully into the nation in the (at this time recent) referendum of 1967; although largely side-stepped by the AFC genre, they would persist.

**the end of the beginning**

Australia, in the (just over) one hundred years of its existence as a nation state, has maintained a close cultural link with ideas which are predominantly informed by racial origins and ethnicity. For example, the White Australia Policy (WAP) as the dominant immigration policy for the majority of the twentieth century (1901-1972); the recognition of Aboriginals as full members of the Australian nation was only permitted as late as 1967; the atrophying of official policies of multiculturalism, EEO and Anti-Discrimination; the failure of the republic referendum; and the obvious race and neo-yellow peril border protection issues in the political platforms of both major political parties in the 2001 federal election, all point to an underlying neo-high-colonial core to Australian culture which is too often the major informer of Australian cultural nationalism, a propensity
which can be observed in the cultural output of the nation throughout the period covered by this study (1945-2007).

This relationship is Australia's unique contribution to ideas of post-coloniality. Australian notions of cultural and social hybridity and the exploration of what Stuart Murray refers to as the post-colonial nation's trouble in forming a 'new' nationalism is one in which the nation has to come to terms with 'the nature of the rupture with the colonizing power.' Australian nationalism, while that of a hybrid nation, has alleviated the need to rupture by remaining, for all intents and purposes, a colony. The referendum held on the question of an Australian republic demonstrated a resounding unwillingness to facilitate (at least symbolically) that rupture. Well might we say 'God save the Queen', for no one will do away with the Governor General and the place of the core-culture.

The (often foreign) commercial formation saw the extended use of commercial constructions, from earlier periods, of the national by both domestic and by foreign film-makers through the use of locations and the widely recognised indices of Aborigines, landscape and native animals to either locate narratives in this place as an exotic backdrop or to excite a local audience by attempting to bring a more polished and international professional image to a local production. This formation is also responsible for some films which touched on uncomfortable notions like the settler origins, darker sides of the national character and contemporary social problems (for example, *Ned Kelly* (Tony Richardson, 1970), *Walkabout* Nicolas Roeg, 1971) and *Wake in Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, 1971)).

The dominant ethos which influenced the 'proper' and 'acceptable'
films of the later 1970s, the subject of the next chapter, the so-called AFC genre films that provided national and international, commercial, cultural and critical success, was one which was coloured by an Australian national identity quest unconfused by its coloniality. It was unconfused and therefore successful, because the past was rewritten and reassessed. The types which were chosen to play out narratives of 'Who are we?' were often ones looking back to 'Who [we think] we were.' For much the same reason, the 'Ocker comedies' were excluded from the official patronage of the government's film financing and marketing apparatuses. Barry McKenzie and Alvin Purple did not fit into the mould of the rugged bushmen who reached their zenith in the myth of the Anzac. A review of the film texts of the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s shows evidence of these battles between the forces of radicalism (Impotent Late-Modernity as exemplified in the Ocker and Whitlam's 'new nationalism') and of conformity (a modernity as exemplified in the traditional 'radical nationalist' view of Australian identity and Virulent Modernity), and of the eventual dominance of various forms of conformity.

conclusions

Much of the work done on Australian cinema culture and the expression of dominant indices, narratives, themes and representations of a cultural identity strongly associated with the national identity and nation-building projects revolves around this canon of film texts, which mostly come from the so-called 'renaissance' period of film-making in Australia – the mid 1970s to the early 1980s. At this time, along with the demise of the
Whitlam Labor Government went many associations with the 'new nationalism'. In its place the newly re-emerged, re-energised 'radical nationalist' influence on notions of the national identity demanded that certain discourses of belonging, uniqueness and core values came to stand for an enduring and transcendent national identity. This helped to commodify a useful and saleable Australianness, which was one that contained indices of the favoured meta-narratives of 'the past', of our forefathers and the values they developed in their exploits to be privileged and placed at the centre of the national story. In doing so, a useful and saleable contemporary national identity was engineered into existence on the movie screens of the nation and into much of the world.

The creation of a cinema canon did not come about easily or spontaneously. The appropriate tone of cinematic national identity took some time to develop, almost always shaped by the changing configurations of the domestic film-making industry/culture. A number of films were produced in Australia prior to the relatively successful 'renaissance' years (1975-1983), which directly and indirectly influenced the ongoing development of the domestic Australian film-making industry/culture.

In this earlier period, other views of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation were offered to audiences. Some of these 'alternative' views were well received and some were not. This chapter has dealt with the 'pre-renaissance period' (1966-1974) through the identification of three different yet successful formations of films. The three formations of the pre-renaissance period are the 'Ocker', the
'commercial' (including the foreign commercial) and the 'new Australian'. The identification, analysis and discussion of the three major film-making formations to develop in this period demonstrate how each of these formations represents a stepping stone on the road to, arguably, the most commercially and critically successful constructions of 'Australianness' in the post-war period, the literary inspired AFC genre films of the mid-1970s and early 1980s.

As in all periods of film production in Australia, the pre-renaissance period was, in large part, characterised by the economic/industry environment in which the films were produced. I do not (at this point) wish to get into the vexed issues of what is 'Australian' or to dwell on which part of the industry this study is referring to. The previous chapters defined Australian made film sufficiently to provide the reader with an idea of that territory, and as for industry, the focus of this chapter and the larger study is firmly on the feature length, commercially released and exhibited films, and their relationships to notions of 'the mainstream'. Occasionally this study considers other modes, i.e., the non-feature documentary, experimental film projects, the short, educational films and even advertising; however, the commercial feature film dominates the discussion.

In *Wake In Fright* John Grant is shown to be both naive and arrogant and there is some case to be made for blaming him for all of his misfortunes. The colonies offer riches and redemption if you can play the game and win. For the losers there is poverty, humiliation and shame. During his time in *The Yabba* he faces the dilemmas of all who venture
into the depths of a colony – the dark propensities of the frontier mentality. Unlike colonies such as the US and South Africa, Australia had no sense of manifest destiny or the assurance of God’s blessing. Rather, Australia had a flimsy legal precedent to justify its existence. The tension of the stain of invasion and dispossession linger on the Australian frontier more powerfully than elsewhere in the nation, and yet this is seen as the site from which the desirable characteristics of national identity are drawn. The tensions present in *Wake In Fright* are those which surround notions of the place the inhabitants have in the landscape. The aggressive egalitarianism of the Australian legend is in many ways the overt acting out of this tension. Grant is a reminder of the stain. He stands as representative of the coloniser and of the colonised, congenitally doomed, like Australian mainstream culture, to insecurity.

In the end, for Clark, the ‘bastards’ had won and would write the history from then on. As film was, at this time, becoming one of the most important conduits for the promulgation of the national narratives the nation would most likely be represented as an expression of certain types of privileged notions.

This hegemonic victory of radical nationalism and *Virulent Modernity* over the forces of new nationalism and *Impotent Late-Modernity* resulted in a batch of film narratives which tended to use an idealised ‘past’ to ground their representations in a particular grouping of recognisable and distinct national characteristics – a firm relationship with the easily recognised, unproblematic grand narratives of settlement, occupation, exploration, ‘development’ and ‘civilising’ of this place by
Europeans. To make meaning in the pursuit of success, these narratives would softly focus on the colonial histories of the pre- and early, nation-building eras as a source of nationalist pride, and to commodify a type of uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation which would find favourable national and international consumption. Thus a canon of Australian films was brought into existence in the 1970s and 1980s. And with this canon Australia had a nationally and internationally recognised cinema within which to express a type of widely supported and successful, hegemonic national identity.

It has been argued that the Ocker film cycle was an effort to foster at least a temporary domestic audience for Australian films because the financing for filmmaking came from purely commercial sources with purely commercial interests. These films held some commercial dominance until 1975 when a new type of success story came into focus. When successive, conservative Australian governments started to directly fund the domestic film-making industry/culture, a more literate and conservative view of Australia, for international consumption, would emerge. John Hinde asks the question, 'What would the Australian national cinema look like if the Alvin Purples and Barry McKenzie had been allowed to become the official Australian revival cinema?' We will never know because a very different type of official cinema was engineered into existence.
Appendix C.

Table – 3.1 Thematic Formations 1966 - 1974
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FILM</th>
<th>OCKER</th>
<th>NEW AUST.</th>
<th>COMMERCIAL</th>
<th>MAJOR THEMATIC FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They're a Weird Commercial Mob (Michael Powell, 1966)</td>
<td>Ocker</td>
<td>New Aust.</td>
<td>Commercial (Foreign)</td>
<td>Immigration / assimilation and a celebration of the power of 'The Australian Way of Life'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Set (Frank Brittain, 1970)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Pure exploitation – nudity / homosexuality / cross dressing / drugs / violence – swinging Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Inn Fright (Ted Kotcheff, 1971)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial (Foreign)</td>
<td>Bastard coloniality and some uncomfortable home truths about mateship and our place in this place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkabout (Nicolas Roeg, 1971)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial (Foreign)</td>
<td>Romantic view of landscape and of the demise of Aboriginal culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stork (Tim Burstall, 1971)</td>
<td>Ocker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The new urban – language / sex / drugs / art / the new nationalism in full flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley Thompson VS The Aliens (Jim Sharman, 1972)</td>
<td>Ocker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychedelic rock and roll trip – Australian suburban family / urban youth – theatrical excesses and lack of filmic sensibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alvin Purple (Tim Burstall, 1973)</td>
<td>Ocker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Simple minded sex-comedy, huge commercial success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving On (Richard Mason, 1974)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Television aesthetic, archetypical family kicked off the land finding a new life (but the same values of community) in the multicultural inner city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone (Sandy Harbutt, 1974)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial (pre-Mad Max)</td>
<td>Action genre film with contemporary Australian realisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterson (Tim Burstall, 1974)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stab at Ocker drama – Jack Thomson vehicle, written by David Williamson – new nationalism, women's rights, sexual freedom, the myth of class mobility and freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Wars (Michael Thornhill, 1974)</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Aust.</td>
<td>(almost AFC)</td>
<td>Soft focus historical drama, more problematic than its successors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alvin Rides Again (David Bilcock, Robin Copping, 1974)</td>
<td>Ocker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A lot more of the same – sex and success, a cheap attempt to cash in on the success of the first film by doing less and showing more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry McKenzie Holds His Own (Bruce Beresford, 1974)</td>
<td>Ocker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More of the same – irreverence and schoolboy raspberries to the detractors, even more topical and harsh in its criticism of trendies, 'emperors new clothes' and the situation in OZ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ch. 3. endnotes

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. p. 216.
12. Ibid.
16. Ibid. p. 23.
19. The board's reasons for refusing classification say in part: 'It was the Review Board's determination that the scenes at 54 minutes, 69 minutes, 75 minutes and 83 minutes were of a cumulative impact such that they exceeded material that could be accommodated in the R classification. The Review Board noted that the film could not be accommodated in the "X" classification as the Code does not allow for "violence" "sexualized [sic] violence" "or fetishes". A number of the scenes detailed contained these elements including those at 1 minute, 54 minutes, and 75 minutes. Additionally, the Guidelines state "films and computer games will be refused classification if they include or contain any of the following" and a list is given which includes "depictions of child sexual abuse." It was the Review Board's determination that the scene at 69 minutes was such a scene. It was prolonged and contained gratuitous detail. In addition, that scene and the other depictions of sexual activity depicted non-adult persons (that is people under 18 years). The X guidelines exclude the depiction of sexual activity involving non-adult persons or adult persons who look like they are under 18 years. http://www.oflc.gov.au/content.html?n=173andp=66 (2003 decisions 'KEN PARK' p. 8. Accessed April 2005).
21. Ibid. p. 236.


O'Regan, Tom. (1989) op. cit. p. 81.

Ibid. p. 80.

Ibid. p. 77.

Clark, Manning. (1976) op. cit. p. 218.

Hodge, Bob, and Vijay Mishra, (eds.) (1990) op. cit. p. 25.


Ibid. p. 2.

Ibid.


Coincidently that year (1971) Joseph Losey's film The Go-Between won the Grand Prix International du Festival at the Festival. One can only speculate what sort of film would have resulted if Losey and Bogarde had produced their version of Wake in Fright.


Ibid. pp. 6-7.

Jeni Thornley sees many films of the 1970s and 80s as being devoid of anything positive associated with 'the woman'. The main device in this process being the setting of film narratives in exclusively men's spaces - prison, the sporting field, and the battlefield. Thornley, Jeni. (1981) 'Where the Boys Are'. Filmnews February. p. 10. The bar room used for the film is a bar at the Sydney Cricket Ground, thus making it a men's space within a men's space.


Ibid.


Pike, Andrew, and Ross Cooper. (1998) op. cit. p.239.


David Stratton, 1999. Television Broadcast, Special Broadcasting Service
(SBS) television.

82 Clark, Manning. (1976) op. cit.


86 One need look no farther than the trajectory of Bruce Beresford’s filmmaking career in the 1970s – His first films were ‘ocker’ comedies *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own* (1974), *Don’s Party* (1975). By the end of the 70s he was making an ‘AFC genre’ period drama, *The Getting of Wisdom* (1977) and *Breaker Morant* (1979), films which were government funded and brimming with the hallmarks of legitimate Australian national cinema texts. See also O’Regan, Tom. (1996) op. cit. for an account of film-maker Tim Burstall’s attacks on films he himself once made.


Ch. 4. ADVANCING AUSTRALIA TOWARDS A SINGULARLY AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY: THE EMERGENCE OF FOLKLORIC NATIONAL CHARACTER IN THE 'HIGH RENAISSANCE' PERIOD: 1975 - 1983

Folklore is the hidden culture that joins the past to the present by making sense, or at least tolerable nonsense, of both.

(Graham Seal)¹

Yeah, look at 'em, yesterday's men. Cranking out pictures that nobody wants anymore. Slow pans over the vast outback. Look! It's about time we woke up to the fact that what little history we've had is so bloody dull, that it's not worth mythologising about it.

(Mike McCord in Emerald City)²

introduction

This study argues that the most significant 'revival' of the domestic, Australian film-making industry/culture, in the post-war period, dates from the late 1960s. This is the subject of this chapter, the high point of that revival, the so-called 'renaissance' (1975-1983) of the Australian national film-making industry/culture. This 'high renaissance', as I label it, grew from the revival of the domestic film-making industry/culture that lasted from 1966 to 1974. This was the first time since the 1930s³ that Australia had an economically viable, domestic cinema industry that was capable of privileging the cultural identities, histories and values associated with 'The Story' (or more properly, the national narratives), associated with the Australian national identity and nation-building projects.

Phillip Adams, a prominent revival and high renaissance film-maker and agitator (self-serving in the mould of Charles Chauvel, see chapter two), besieged governments and prime ministers with demands to develop
a viable infrastructure for the domestic industry. His sentiments are a
germane example of the hopes and aspirations of the culture industries for
the development of a viable domestic industry. The desire to articulate
national narratives through the further development of a vibrant film-
making industry/culture, as part of the national identity and nation-building
projects, was a paramount objective for those ‘stakeholders’ in the
industry/culture.

The early revival films (1966-1974) were experiments in industry
and business as much as they were experiments in film art. Perhaps most
importantly for this study, they were developed as a viable conduit for the
promulgation and further development of the national narratives in the
context of the contemporary foci of the national identity and nation-building
projects.

The concurrent developments of an emerging domestic film
industry and significant changes in domestic social policy as well as in the
Australian political and cultural landscape meant that a clear picture of the
Australia to be represented in the national narratives became increasingly
difficult. It had not, of course, been particularly clear at any previous time.
Changes in the social, political, cultural and economic landscape at the
time included the abolishment of the final traces of the White Australia
Policy, the development of multiculturalism, the emergence of the
women’s movement and significant changes overseen by the Whitlam
government (1972-1975). It was a time of so-called ‘new nationalism’.

This ‘new nationalism’ constituted a paradigm shift in the nation’s
efforts towards self-expression, with the choice of a ‘new’ kind of
nationalism, in itself, saying something about the desires of the society. This ‘new’ direction would transform the filmic representations of the Australian self-image of the time.

Just how social, political, cultural and economic developments, and the anxieties around these changes, were expressed in the domestic film-making industry/culture, through particular constructions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, provides the general context of this study. The specific focus of this chapter is on the unique developments, in this process, during the period under discussion (1975-1983).

The various filmic formations of Australian made cinema, which developed in the revival period (1966-1974) such as ‘the Ocker’, ‘new Australian’ and the ‘commercial’, each suffered from an inability to comprehensively attract either domestic or international, commercial, critical or cultural approval, for their representations of a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, and the associated engagements with the national narratives. This was thought to be imperative if a domestic film-making industry/culture was to flourish.

Through the process of exploring various narratives associated with the Australian national identity and nation-building projects, a quasi-uniform picture began to emerge in the mid-1970s. These narratives and the unique Australian film-making industry/culture formations and modes that had developed in the revival period, were to become the foundations for the canon of texts which marked the first comprehensive – domestic and international, commercial, critical and cultural – high point in post-war
Australian film-making industry/culture (see chapter six for a discussion of the later successful period of the early 1990s that further developed and, more importantly, problematised concepts of mateship and the landscape, and in the process, achieved great domestic and international, critical, commercial and cultural success).

As the industry developed and as funding and government supported infrastructure became available to the now experienced film-makers to create the texts which were to become enshrined in the canon, the stories they chose to tell were ones which often looked back to non-contemporary, traditional indices of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, constructed through an engagement with un-confusing readings of the representative referential regime that include Australian values (egalitarianism, a fair go and mateship), gender, class, ethnicity and the landscape.

This identity was constructed through links to a golden, reassuring past, defined through the prevailing models to be found in the un-problematically re-presented national narratives. They were now reinterpreted through an emerging filmic narrative mode. This un-problematic re-presentation conflicted directly with the place the national story inhabited in the period. For example, there was a notable absence of the cultural other at a time of high immigration, refugee arrival and the playing out of new laws and policies around anti-discrimination and multiculturalism.

The filmic texts in the period of the high renaissance are strongly characterised by a wider search for a national identity, which sought to
reflect a contemporary image of the nation by referring to (in large part) the foundation myths, established national fictions and narratives of the nation.

This chapter focuses on the established notions of the national character – as it appears in film – as a socialising mechanism. I mean this in the sense that Raymond Williams does, when he defines it as a part of that thing he calls culture, in that it refers to the ‘known meanings and directions, which its members are trained too.’ One of the most important arguments of this study is that the national character is open to anyone who can adopt it, if they can grasp the meanings the rest of the nation are trained to do; if they can navigate the intricacies of established notions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation. These established notions were strongly marked, through various narrative mechanisms and with differing degrees of success, by a relationship to a particular tradition of reference points drawn from the representative referential regime. This tradition references a set of specific elements including Australian values of mateship, a fair go and egalitarianism as well as constructions of gender, class, ethnicity and the landscape.

To analyse how these constructions of the national identity and the resulting notions of the national identity and national character in this period (1975-1983) developed, three groups of factors that influenced these representations and the development of national narratives in the film texts of this period, are considered.

The first is the contemporary state (or state of (dis)repair) of
Australian national imagining in this period. It should be remembered that
the development of a sense of Australia as a nation was informed by a
national imagining which, in turn, was derived from a colonial status
dominated by the stratification of Australian society along ethnic/race and
class mobility/egalitarian lines. Richard White reminds us that this had
been the case from the earliest days of the national identity and nation-
building projects. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the ‘new nationalism’
– first articulated by Prime Minister John Gorton in 1967 and championed
by Gough Whitlam throughout his term as Prime Minister – defined the
national character by what it was not rather than what it was – and it was
mostly defined against notions of Britishness. Two major film texts of this
period – Breaker Morant (Bruce Beresford, 1980) and Gallipoli (Peter
Weir, 1981) – are driven by this overwhelming theme in which the cultural
identity of the national identity and nation-building projects is defined
against British institutions, traditions and cultural manifestations, with
English class rigidity as opposed to egalitarianism being perhaps the most
potent.

The second group of factors revolves around the failure of the
White Australia Policy to ‘keep Australia for the white man’ as some would
have it. The failure of the post-war European immigrants to
comprehensively culturally integrate into Australian society along with
other race factors forced a reassessment of migrants. This led to the
establishment of legislative and social mechanisms of drawing boundaries
and imposing control, to accommodate these inescapable developments.
The shift from notions of racial difference to those of cultural difference
helped to facilitate an acceptance of ethnic diversity and evolving notions of a cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects which in time came to be defined in terms other than those of ethnic/cultural origin.

How can a homogeneous national identity be ‘successfully’ engineered in the ‘foundry’ of a film-making industry/culture? How were (incompatible?) notions of ‘multiculturalism’ represented in this film-making industry/culture (if at all) and what does the continued presence and acceptance of such deeply resonant narrative tropes as a principal referential mode of transmission throughout this period have to say about the resulting ‘national identity’?

Although the public/political policies of official multiculturalism had been implemented a few years prior to the period under discussion, the filmic texts exhibit very little of this official policy. Instead, the emergence of a type of ad hoc cultural pragmatism can be glimpsed in the film texts of this period. Although the seeds of diversity were planted between 1975 and 1983, the culture had to wait until the later 1980s and 1990s to see extensive interrogations, celebrations and exultations of multiculturalism, cultural pluralism and tolerance come to fruition. Some critics, however, such as Ghassan Hage, suggest that regardless of any official policy, legislative framework or day-to-day pragmatism, multiculturalism is a product of the White majority seeking to invent a fantasy space in which ‘the’ national culture could construct a situation in which: ‘... Aboriginal people and non-White “ethnics” are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will.’
One of the more interesting aspects of this period is that it is perhaps here that the space to construct the ethnic (and to a lesser extent the indigenous) as the established 'other', in Australian social and cultural life, was first created. In the ensuing periods these ethnic 'others' would be deployed in narratives in very controlled and even 'bounded' ways so that their places in the national narratives would not be too disruptive to the 'mainstream'. The analysis below explores various constructions of Whiteness, the 'ethnic', the cultural other and the foreigner.

The third set of factors to influence representations of the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects in this period were the economic/political/geo-political circumstances of the times. As the reassessment of influences on Australia's identity moved away from its British roots towards a place in the Pacific Rim economies, an assessment of these 'new chums' – the US and the Asian neighbours – became extraordinarily important, and most importantly, extraordinarily problematic. For example, the end of Australia’s direct involvement in the Vietnam War and the arrival of the first ‘boat people’ from the area, at the beginning of this period, shifted Australia’s perception of its place in the region in profound ways. This formed part of the regional narrative that influenced the Australian story throughout the period. Closer examination of Australia’s relationships with the rest of the world provided a set of circumstances that were increasingly difficult to reconcile with the national story. Cultural diversity, economic internationalisation and the tyranny of closeness brought with it introspection and nervousness. Life – in this new
world order – was definitely not meant to be easy. To unpack the representations of the national character in this period, these three sets of factors are considered using examples drawn from ‘Australian made’ cinema during this period, which commences with the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government in November 1975.

This chapter argues that the so-called AFC genre of films (films like *Sunday Too Far Away* (Ken Hannam, 1975), *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, (Peter Weir, 1975), *Caddie* (Donald Crombie, 1976), *Careful He Might Hear You* (Carl Schultz, 1983) among many others11) brought together commercial, critical and cultural approval through their representations of appropriate and recognisable constructions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation and the resulting Australianness, produced and developed through an association with the representative referential regime, which further resulted in a contemporaneous ‘culturally authentic’ telling of the national narratives, with great domestic and international success. This formation, of strongly recognised ‘culturally authentic’ films, would not prove to be sustainable.

**the cultural other and us**

The Whitlam Labor Government introduced some sweeping changes to the social and political landscape of Australia in the 1970s. In terms of this study, key changes included: new nationalism, multiculturalism, the women’s movement and the meritocratic society. Screen representations (if there were any) of multiculturalism and the migrant experience were transformed from their earlier depictions in
"They're a Weird Mob" (Michael Powell, 1966). The immigrants in films such as "Golden Cage" (Philip Noyce, 1975), "Kostas" (Paul Cox, 1979) and "Promised Woman" (Tom Cowan, 1975) were problematised in a way that Nino Culotta (protagonist of "They're a Weird Mob") never was. These films often focus on the 'Anglo-Celtic Australian' woman in 'non-Anglo-Celtic', 'non-Australian' men's lives. These women are shown as capable of rejecting, or at least tolerating, the otherness and sexist traditional values of the immigrant men. In the tradition of the 'Australian Way of Life', the immigrant woman in "Promised Woman" is changed by her 'Australian' sisters into a 'new', contemporary Australian woman. "Journey Among Women" (Tom Cowan, 1977) is the apotheosis of this notion in which the collective of escaped convict women become lesbian and feral, and exist outside the world of men.

Films such as "Caddie" (Donald Crombie, 1976), "Puberty Blues" (Bruce Beresford, 1980), "Monkey Grip" (Ken Cameron, 1981) and "My Brilliant Career" (Gillian Armstrong, 1979) transfer traditional virtues associated with men onto women to imbue them with sufficient currency to justify their prominent roles in these narratives. Rarely can the same be seen in the imbuing of the ethnic 'other' with enough currency to warrant their development into a leading character, devoid of stereotypical limitations.

The absence of significant representations of the cultural other at this time is also included in the analysis of the construction of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in this study. It is helpful to identify the presence – in a very few filmic narratives from this
period – of a meagre engagement with the cultural other in some form, usually through mechanisms which can be most generously described as an emerging phenomenon I call *ad hoc* cultural pragmatism.

**the filmic texts of cultural otherness**

One of the most intriguing aspects of this period is the ways in which notions of the cultural other are actively ignored, measured against a culturally privileged centre or accommodated in an emerging, crude multicultural system. There is a certain type of passivity, often inactivity, around issues of race, cultural otherness, core/peripheral cultures, etc. that is strongly characteristic of this period in Australian cultural products. It is lack of representation or acknowledgement that is the governing force defining cultural borders, rather than a frontal attack. The phenomenon of the independent member for Oxley, Pauline Hanson, emerging at the 1996 federal election, is a notable divergence from the passive to the active.

Jon Stratton, in his work *Race Daze*, argues for the existence of a very conservative underlying character in the Australian national identity:

> The presence of Ocker characteristics in films such as 'Breaker Morant' (1980) and 'Gallipoli' (1981) dealing with events considered to be central to Australian history hints at the very conservative representation of Australian national identity being established at the same time at which Australia was putting in place a non-racially discriminatory migration policy and defining multiculturalism as official government policy.¹²

This chapter analyses representations of a culturally plural, culturally diverse, and culturally homogeneous Australia, in the film texts of the high renaissance period 1975-1983. At the very time that Australia was putting in place the mechanisms of a tolerant, culturally plural and diverse
society, the culture was revelling in a backward looking reactionary
nostalgia-fest on the screen. This period 1975-1983 is the height of the so-called AFC genre film production cycle. It was a cycle characterised by some of the most popular, widely successful and conservative representations of Australia’s contemporary views of itself. These were expressed through an engagement with historical narratives that allowed no space for any type of cultural otherness apart from the Anglo-Celtic axis of origin. What does this say about contemporary Australian cultural aspirations? Did the policies associated with 'official multiculturalism' necessitate (in the Australian experience) a bolstering of the core culture in some way by ignoring the cultural other and revisiting an (un)problematic deployment of the reference points drawn from the representative referential regime of Australian national identity and identification? And if so, why was the adoption of non-discriminatory policies of immigration and social control not reflected in the filmic output of the period?

In a very recent, twenty-first century example of the presence of the immigrant in the frame is in the film You and Your Stupid Mate (Marc Gracie, 2005). A friend, of the two main protagonists, is a recent Somali refugee, Alf (played by Samir Malik, himself a recent Somali refugee). Alf is a taxi driver who repeatedly shouts at the other traffic, 'road rage' outbursts of 'I have killed before and I will kill again.' This outburst is given further contextual power through a flash-back in which the audience sees Alf’s active military role in the civil war in Somalia. Rather than downplaying his past, it is employed as his history, as violent and foreign,
and his place in Australian society, as a marginalised yet a *functioning*
recent arrival, is therefore emphasised. It is effectively used as a self-
referential narrative device. This example shows just how far the
representation of the ethnic other has shifted, and been accommodated, in
the thirty-year gap between these periods.

These identity quest texts of the high renaissance period noticeably
lack an engagement with a group of themes which could be said to deal in
some way with experiences of migrant/immigrant/refugee/multicultural/
multi-racial/otherness in an Australian context and which reflect the
significant demographic and cultural impacts of the ethnicised other at this
time. In the Australian context, it could be argued that the presence of the
‘other’ appears so ‘big’, because the centre against which it is measured is
so narrow. For example, the construction of the male in Australian cultural
products is only possible through reference to a constricted set of
characteristics, narrative possibilities and an even narrower set of
physicalities.\(^\text{13}\)

In this period, very few texts seek to explore the themes of ‘other
cultures’ in any depth. Two of these texts, *The Brothers* (Terry Bourke,
1982) and *Run, Rebecca, Run!* (Peter Maxwell, 1982), engage with the
other simply as colourful window dressing rather than in any depth. In the
high renaissance period (1975-1983) only seven Australian made feature
film texts, out of a total of approximately 180\(^\text{14}\), dealt with these themes in
some way.

In previous periods (1945-1974) a number of films dealt explicitly
with notions of the cultural other. In those texts a clearer representation
was employed. *Mike and Stefani* (R. Maslyn Williams, 1952), for example, was an exercise in reassuring the Australian public that the post-war European refugees allowed to migrate to Australia had been thoroughly vetted and were deserving of a place in the sun. It was also aimed at urging the Australian (read Anglo-Saxon at that time) population to accept the need for these people to migrate from war-torn Europe.

Explicit in the immigration department’s interrogation of Mike and Stefani is their suitability to ‘fit in,’ to assimilate through a number of carefully explored and tested factors. The family is tested on their English language proficiency, a test that is still, in the twenty-first century, paramount in the minds of ‘true blue’ Australians. Mike and Stefani both speak several languages as well as quite good English, which suggests that they will be able to acquire full (Australian) English. They are shown to be potentially useful to Australian post-war re-building, through their working/employability potential. Mike is shown to be skilled (in practical ways – a builder, not an intellectual) and hard working, Stefani is a ‘good home keeper’, a demonstrably devoted mother and wife/homemaker, even under the harsh conditions of post-war Europe. Culturally, their (Eastern-Orthodox) Christian background makes them somewhat familiar, and politically, they espouse a desire to be ‘free’ in a ‘free nation’ and they reject their oppressive former homeland, which is essentially dead to them. And perhaps, most importantly, the children are young enough to forget their past and to become fully integrated through schooling. As I argued in an earlier chapter, schooling is a key mechanism for en-culturing potential citizens into the fold. Schools teach the values associated with
the national identity and nation-building projects, 'a fair go' in particular.

*They're a Weird Mob* (1966) is also a narrative of assimilation in which the 'active' processes of assimilation are 'played' out; the immigrant is retrained, paired with a 'local' breeding partner, and the offspring of the pairing of continental Europe with the young Australia promise to be good future Australians. These and the other few texts from the earlier period which represent the (openly) discriminatory immigration policy, discriminatory social policy and broader legal inequities present in the Australian model, actively engage with the cultural other as it passes through the processes of assimilation.

Ghassan Hage and Jon Stratton, in their significant works on Australian multiculturalism and national identity, offer some informative insights into the nature of race and (national) culture in Australia in the light of the emergence of Pauline Hanson and John Howard. However, it should be noted that their focus is a narrower one than that taken by this study. Hage, in particular, is concerned with the 'complicity' (italics in original) of the broader Australian society in the politics of white privileging and racist exclusion. Again, there is this passive element, in this case probably best exemplified by John Howard's inaction over Hanson's inflammatory speeches and his defence of her 'right' to express her views against the forces of 'political correctness'. Both seek in some way to contextualise the 'Hanson phenomenon' after the fact. Both review notions of multiculturalism, race and race/culture in and around 'the ethnic' periphery and 'the Anglo-Celtic' 'core culture' – important distinctions and ones with which this study concurs. Stratton warns that to '... think that
Australian social life is lived in the image of the official policy of multiculturalism is a crucial ideological misrecognition. However, to my mind, Hage makes this crucial ideological misrecognition. He seems to give too much power to the white core, in creating the others as objects to be moved around at the national will without considering the ad hoc, day-to-day interactions that happen in the life of the nation. While Hage's position may have been truer in the formative years of multiculturalism, in later developments things are not so clearly delineated. I engage with this and other issues further in later chapters.

While Jon Stratton does touch on representations of the cultural other/absence of the cultural other in this period, his main focus is the feature film texts of the 1990s which represent an engagement with through what he identifies as the narrativising of multiculturalism - '... discrete national cultures and spectacular representations' of those cultural others. This study engages with these and other works in the section devoted to the period covering the later 1990s. For now it is Stratton's distinction of 'official' and 'everyday' multiculturalism that interests this work. The 'official' refers to the public policy and legal framework (equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, etc.) government policies of 'social control'. The 'everyday' refers to the way in which the people interact through ad hoc mechanisms of everyday social contact, social pragmatism and situational tolerance/intolerance.

As a part of the reassessment of the directions of the national identity and nation-building projects (despite many exceptions), they can be seen to include rather than exclude others by sidestepping the classical
nineteenth century nationalist notions of common descent, kinship and common origins. We can say that, for the purposes and focus of this study, nationalism is an inadequate term for the Australian situation. Notions of Australian nationalism are, therefore, only lightly touched on in this study as a part of the political contextualisation of the various periods. By this I mean that as classical nationalism tends to be mired in the 'myth of national origin' and this study is more interested in the 'myth of what makes us us,' a close engagement with Australian nationalism is not a significant part of this study.

Hugh Mackay defines the distinction between the Australian values of the haves and the have-nots as the values gap. These values are apparently the values of mainstream Australia; values such as mateship, egalitarianism and a fair go – values I identify as being a significant part of the referential regime from which notions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation are constructed. I have, in other parts of the larger study, defined these values. Under the Howard Government, a distinction was made in the public discourse between who belongs to the nation and who does not. This distinction hinged on the ability, of those who wished to belong, to understand and conform to a set of vague rhetorical 'values'. A part of the expanding values gap is a rhetorical shift in the place values have from being seen as naturally enshrined and traditional in many Australian social institutions, towards an emerging deployment which is able to accommodate a more individual/independent focus. This 'shift in use' is one explanation for the lack of definition in the political and public spheres of these core values. If the
values are rigidly defined they exclude at a time when inclusion is the aim. The accommodation of more 'problematic' participants in the national identity and nation-building projects is also associated with shifting notions and ideas of 'trust' and an identification with others. This shift is also one that encompasses a move from totalising material values towards some which are more contextual, changeable and fluid, and which are, by their nature, difficult to quantify. However, it should be noted that in the final days of the Howard Government and into the Rudd Government's first term, a Citizenship Support Grants Program was introduced to fund help programs, so prospective citizens could develop an understanding of the values, rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens. Its aims, in part, were to make the Citizenship Test that all prospective citizens are required to undertake, have more relevance and impact. While this program of grants did not directly supply definitions and information for prospective citizens it did prescribe what organisations could deliver training in this area.²¹

In the period 1975-1983, the filmic constructions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation reflect these pressures and conflicts and the power of filmic narratives to reflect and reassure the cultural, social and political insecurities of the society in a time of change and of a reassessment of what is seen as 'natural' or a part of an enduring tradition. This was also a time of structural and economic change and adaptation for the film-making industry/culture.

In the period following the revival period (1966-1974), the high renaissance period (1975-1983) of Australian film production,
representations of the national characteristics strongly embodied manifestations of rigid relationships with the established notions of a particular, uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation. The playing out of the constructions of the national identity associated with the national identity and nation-building projects that were developed in the films of this period (1975-1983) endeavoured to shift the perception of this tradition of national identity from one which was marked by 'myth' towards one marked by the notion of 'folklore'.

from myth to folklore

In an attempt to create a more universally recognisable grouping of virtues and characteristics, the mythic qualities associated with traditional romantic notions of the national identity were grafted onto 'folk heroes/actions' (in filmic narratives). This placed them in a more concrete and widely recognisable form. This form could be more easily fitted into a contextualised space that was compatible with reference points drawn from the representative referential regime, and was more able to accommodate contemporary pressures and incongruities.

For the purposes of this study folklore is defined using the work of Graeme Seal. He describes it as a:

... continuing, informal process generating/perpetuating and communicating culturally significant information outside, but in connection with, the official institutions of a social society (government, mass media, education, corporation). It is a universal human phenomenon manifest in certain identifiable and interacting forms of group expression (song, joke, tale, etc.) and practice (custom, artefacts, dance, gesture, etc.) that typically have a multiple existence in time and space.22

Seal goes on to define the forms and functions of folklore. For the
purposes of this study, it is the functions of folklore, as Seal sees them,
that is of interest. Seal identifies the major social functions of folklore as
being educational and maintaining group identity:

Among the most important folklore functions is one that can be
broadly termed 'education'. This involves the transmission of
traditional informal knowledge, skills, techniques, beliefs and
codes of appropriate behaviour from person to person and from
generation to generation ... The second vital function of folklore
is its role in maintaining group identity. Folkloric expression and
practice simultaneously reflects and confirms self-perceptions
of a folk group and its understanding of itself in relation to other
groups ... Participation in informal communication processes,
such as telling insulting jokes about other ethnic groups, or
about women/men reinforces the sense of belonging to a
particular group – 'us' against 'them'. The extensive customs
and related folklore clustered around such important rites of
passage as christenings, marriages and deaths strengthen
group cohesion and identity.23

This chapter explores the proposition that in the period 1975-1983
constructions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity
of the nation, developed through the telling of national narratives, shifted in
the ways in which they were created from narrative associations with
mythic tales, the telling of the origins of the peoples and the nation,
towards ones that were developed in the folkloric nature as defined by
Seal.

In order to accommodate the changing conditions in which the
nation found itself, the way in which the nation was 'imagined', 'narrated',
'discoursed', 'fantasised', 're-imagined', 'configured', 'reconsidered' and
'constructed', the cinema of the high renaissance period shows this shift
from the 'mythic' – in the form of national narrative tropes – towards
representations of 'folkloric' narratives and characters.
a word regarding archetypes

Given the dominance of a few strong archetypes in Australian culture we should not be surprised that these were pressed into service – stock standard, without modification – by the high renaissance film makers. Conservative mythic Australian self-images during the revival period of the Australian film-making industry were confined to the dominant representations of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in the new government financed industry.

For example, Mark Haltof draws a straight line from Henry Lawson through Sydney Nolan to the archetypical elements of the characters in Peter Weir’s film Gallipoli (1981). For Haltof, ‘Weir does not want to deconstruct but rather to reinforce the mythic elements constituting the Australian national Identity.’ And to do this Weir uses off-the-rack archetypes, and archetypical behaviour – bushman, mates and larrikins. Peter Weir could have called his 1981 unreconstructed nostalgia flick ‘The ANZAC Legend: as told to me by C.E.W. Bean’. As Dermody and Jacka point out, the films of the ilk of Gallipoli (what they call the male ensemble film) made a ‘... populist [italics in original] appeal to an audience it projects as homogeneous, ... conservative, nationalist, optimistic, ordinary, simple, attractive and sentimental,’ comforting notions in times of confusion, complexity and (relative) economic hardship.

By embodying the abstract, traditional, romantic mythic qualities in characters and narratives as ‘folkloric’, concrete shape was given to these mythic qualities. For example, it is worth noting the narrative resonance of a film such as Mad Max (Dr George Miller, 1979) in cultures as disparate
as Japan, the US, Germany and Britain\textsuperscript{27}, and yet it remains a narrative of the experience in this place and a loud spruiker of parts of the Australian story through its employment/deployment of the folkloric. The small table below demonstrates these dichotomised, binary areas of cultural recognition (a detailed examination of \textit{Mad Max} follows below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURALLY SPECIFIC RECOGNITION</th>
<th>UNIVERSAL CULTURAL RECOGNITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mateship</td>
<td>class solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>larrikin</td>
<td>everyman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the battler</td>
<td>underdog</td>
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<tr>
<td>a fair go</td>
<td>justice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By contextualising the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in filmic examples through application of these folkloric qualities, culturally specific recognition was achieved by the domestic audiences and a more generalised, even universal cultural recognition might be achieved internationally. If this was achieved with the wider international audiences it would ensure a greater chance of financial and critical success. The formation of films that best embodied this dual cultural recognition was the so-called AFC genre.

\textbf{modernity and the afc genre}

The films the Australian Film Commission (AFC) chose to privilege with funding and support in the 1970s and early 1980s were almost universally period pieces of reassurance and distant beauty, often
embellished with the power of national myths and located within a space of relatively unproblematic and contemporary, national identity. Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, perhaps the most significant writers on the Australian film-making industry/culture in the 1970s and 1980s, point to the AFC genre as dominating the period ‘...1975 to 1980/1, when the Australian Film Commission [AFC] and its preferences dominated local production and strongly influenced the way Australian film came to be officially thought and talked of.’

This official cinema consisted of the quality period films which made domestic audiences so proud and which fared well at international festivals, on the art house circuit and on cultural television stations all over the world. The AFC was interested in developing a national film industry that its members felt reflected ‘high’ cultural values and sufficiently represented an appropriate Australian identity to justify the direct injection of public funds. Films of this type were the internationally known ‘proper’ cinema films, period dramatisations of tasteful literary adaptations that retold familiar stories with appropriate British accents, neo-colonial rhetoric and Heidelberg School landscapes, films such as Sunday too Far Away (Ken Hannam, 1975), Picnic at Hanging Rock (Peter Weir, 1975), Caddie (Donald Crombie, 1976), Careful He Might Hear You (Carl Schultz, 1983) among many others. However, not all commentators on the efforts to establish a viable film-making industry at this time were so enthusiastic regarding the development of an industry at any cost, producing any product. Sylvia Lawson was one of the most critical commentators on the developments and direction of the ‘proper cinema’ that was coming into
being. She took issue with what she labelled the ‘films of good taste’ that the governmental institutions and infrastructure seemed to be privileging. Sylvia Lawson specifically targets:

The AFC, along with the interested film trade men, the South Australian Film Corporation, Film Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Commission – the whole establishment, in fact – is presently in hot pursuit of Good Taste.32

Dermody and Jacka go so far as to say that in what they call the ‘middle period’ (1975-1980/1), the ‘... AFC and its preferences dominated local production and strongly influenced the way Australian film came to be officially thought and talked of.’33

This AFC genre of literary inspired, period adaptations were films ‘... positioned between art-cinema protocols and classic Hollywood.’34 Hanging Rock comes in for special criticism from Lawson; she is overwhelmed by the uncritical outpourings over this film by contemporary audiences, critics and the industry in general. She laments:

... it has been to Picnic at Hanging Rock that industry, audience and critics have turned in seemingly breathless gratitude – for an Australian movie you really could call a Beautiful Film; for the answers to Bazza and all that beer-swilling vulgarity; for proof that Australian film-makers are not just ‘technically’ adequate, like the Americans – they are also artistic, like the French and the Swedes.35

Lawson criticises the ‘over-praise’ and indulgent promotion of the ‘high’ high renaissance films and their inability to take a hard look at Australian colonial experiences, and marginalised ‘other’ histories that can be seen to be a part of the national identity and nation-building projects. These ‘other histories’ include migrant experiences, the social, political, legal and health conditions of Aborigines, and even the place of women and the marginalised in the cherished national narratives. She sees the
domination of these choices as watering down the power of any critiques of distinctive Australian notions like mateship and societal and personal conflict that might be present in any of these films. She seems to be reacting against a feeling among the participants and supporters of the culture industry that after such a long drought the film industry cannot be allowed to gamble away its existence, at any cost.

**discourses of national identity**

The constant need to be aggressive about one’s national identity, to vociferously reaffirm it usually indicates a sense of inferiority towards other nations. Being able to regard oneself as an Australian, being able to contribute to Australia does not depend on outward symbols. (Malcolm Fraser)³⁶

A starting point for the discussion of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation – to be promulgated in the emerging film-making industry/culture of this period – is an acknowledgement that identity is a relational notion; it defines the relationship between one group and another. Just as a national film-making industry/culture is an exercise in drawing a border around one cinema to differentiate it from another, the articulation of a culturally defined national identity requires that a precise sense of that identity needs to be articulated through some mechanism. Another point of departure for this study is the notion that the proposition of an identity of a 'real' person or a nation or thing remaining static is impossible. Therefore, the central thesis of this study is that the Australian film-making industry/culture, since the end of the Second World War, has witnessed and/or contributed to the generation of a shifting, fluid representation of the Australian national identity and national character. While this 'identity'
is defined, in Australian cultural and social life, by association with the representative referential regime, which remains constant throughout the period, the uses to which it is put and the resulting production of 'Australianness' vary.

Representations of the national identity touch on some very familiar territory. From very early on in the post-war period it was realised that the relational aspect of the Australian national identity was going to be unworkable. The reassessment of the relationships with Britain and with it a shift in the central source of immigration into Australia necessitated a shift in the central defining characteristic of any type of 'official' Australian national identity – one which was dominated by a central criterion involving a British diaspora on the edge of Asia. With the changing demographic of the Australian population and a reassessment of the emerging place of Asia, a more self-sufficient identity was required. This was not achieved overnight, as the society and the culture persisted with the idea of assimilation and the power of 'The Australian Way of Life' in the face of massive, non-British immigration. The workable solution was to adopt a fluid notion of national identity with which pluralism – at its highest point in the form of multiculturalism – could be accommodated while keeping a strong central core identity. A recent example of this strategy is John Howard's appeals to the core values of the mainstream. Just what these core values are is never defined. One can only imagine that notions such as abiding by the law, paying one's taxes, and of course the particularly Australian policy of mandatory voting, are the core values to which all must adhere. The question this raised in my mind is: just how could
something like rubbery notions such as 'mateship' be made mandatory?!

Norman Fairclough\textsuperscript{38}, in his significant work \textit{Language and Power}, analyses and identifies how social practices, or the values associated with the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects in the terms of this study, are discursively shaped. He also examines the subsequent discursive effects of social practices, in this case, representations in Australian made films. To put this notion in simpler terms: the filmic representations and discursive constructions of the values associated with the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects are, as Raymond Williams reminds us, at once familiar reproductions of identity and modes of socialisation.

Wodak et al., in their work \textit{The Discursive Construction of National Identity}, seek to '... conceptualise and identify various macrostrategies employed in the construction of national identities and to describe them using a hermeneutic-abductive approach.'\textsuperscript{39} This study also rests on the concept that national identity should be seen as context-dependent and dynamic. In the same way, in terms of the representation of the values of national identification in film, Wodak et al. go on to say:

\ldots we \ldots assume further that the various discursive constructs of national identity are given different shapes according to the context and to the public which they emerge, all of which can be identified with reference to content, strategies and argumentation patterns, as well as according to how they are expressed in language (linguistic realisation).\textsuperscript{40}

This notion, that the discourses of the national identity are given shape by the contexts in which they emerge, is a fundamental point made by this study. In the late 1970s and 1980s concurrent developments of the emerging domestic film industry and significant changes in domestic social
policy and in the Australian political and cultural landscape meant that the kinds of discourses of national identity had to be carefully shaped. A clearer reading of these discourses can be gained by an analysis of some examples of films made in Australia at this time.

In films such as Gallipoli (Peter Weir, 1981) and Breaker Morant (Bruce Beresford, 1979) Australian identity rests on a historical view of the past as being different from the present, and with an attendant identity which requires that Australians are differentiated from their colonial parent, Britain, in an attempt to develop a separate identity. Some writers see this type of oppositional polemic – an identity based on 'Pommy-Bashing' as patriotism⁴¹ – resulting in a narrowing of the discourse to a one-way dialogue of identity through criticism of the mother country. This discourse was, in some ways, the dominant tactic of the film narratives of this period. For example, in Breaker Morant the British are identified by their pith helmets, manners, spit and polish soldiering, their hypocritical, snobbish, deceitful nature, and their fundamental inability to wage this new type of war. This is contrasted with the Australians who are oppositionally identified as heroic, democratic, skilled commando fighters. The slouch hats set them apart visually from the British. They are plain speaking scapegoats held together by their informal mateship and loyalty, further defined in part by their superior ability to wage this particular type of frontier war.

The primary contemporary pressures on desirable representations of a view of the emerging Australian neo-colonial self seem to be directed at distancing the Australian projects from the colonial master, Britain.
There was also at this time something of a backlash against that position, accusations of throwing the baby out with the bath water. Confused relationships with Britain have continued to confound the national imaging into the twenty-first century. A number of films from this period deal with an Australian reaction to Britain as an imperialist power, in some cases satirically and in others equivocally. Many films of this period dealt with this relationship and imperialism in a larger context. However, few of these films explore in any depth the issues they raise: *Gallipoli* (Peter Weir, 1981), *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (Fred Schepisi, 1978), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975), *The Mango Tree* (Kevin Dobson, 1977) and even films set more contemporarily, such as *The Year of Living Dangerously* (Peter Weir, 1982), are clear examples. These films tend to display a comfortable reading of the reference points drawn from the representative referential regime with little reference to the complexities and pragmatic ambivalences of the contemporary situation.

As the period progresses, there seems to be a thematic return to more traditional male characters associated with particular events such as war and exploration, with the period ending with *Mad Max, Gallipoli* and *Far East*, three very different narratives but all of which deal in some way with traditional, gendered notions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation and its attendant values.
breaker morant

Lord Kitchener – “The Kaiser is just looking for an excuse to come to the aid of the Boers. Of course it’s the gold and diamond mines that they’re after.”

Maj. Bolton – “Quite right sir, they lack our altruism.”

*Breaker Morant* (Bruce Beresford, 1980), it has been said, differs from other Australian war narratives such as *Gallipoli* in that it attempts some degree of tone, which is ‘... less apologetic, ambivalent and satirical in its invocation of its audience and Australia.’* Breaker Morant* retells the story of an established Australian folk hero (albeit a very minor one). The film of *Breaker Morant* is derived from a play (Kenneth Ross, 1978), and from the book *Scapegoats of the Empire* by the surviving member of the three accused (George Witton, 1913) and from the book *The Brave One* (Kit Denton, 1973). The film takes as its structure a standard courtroom drama, with flashbacks to subjective recollections of the events.

Australia’s experiences in the Boer War (1898-1902) predate the more mythically famous and narratively familiar Gallipoli landings and occupation (April – September 1915) and the events of the first World War (1914-1918). Manning Clark writes of the first World War experience: ‘... the soldiers, if not the people to whom they belonged, were in part apotheosised by the ashes of defeat. For some it [the ANZAC landings] symbolized the noblest aspirations of the people.’* However, in the 1890s Australia was still grappling with its impending federation. So when called upon (in 1898) to aid the Empire against the Dutch in South Africa, the antipodean colonies sent their youth to fight with the Irish, the Scots and the rest of the Empire.
*Breaker Morant* deals with events in the second phase of the Boer War. After their initial success in a conventional war, the British were forced to fight a new type of action against Boer guerrilla forces. In December 1899, 3000 British soldiers were killed or captured.45 These dramatic events hardened Australian pro-war feelings. As a part of Australia’s imperial commitment a ‘... second colonial contingent was raised with the almost unanimous support of the various parliaments.46

*Breaker Morant* reflects some very contemporary themes regarding the nature of war and atrocity, questions thrown up by the Vietnam War which had ended only four years before the film’s production. Yet the mode chosen to explore the theme was one peopled by recognisable Australian types and not incompatible with Australian war myths, war myths which would be more explicitly presented in Peter Weir’s *Gallipoli*, filmed two years after the release of *Breaker Morant*.

Leigh Dale warns that Australia often goes back looking nostalgically for ‘... a simple national story that sets a clear agenda for the future based on a mythically stable past.’47 *Breaker Morant* clearly demonstrates the propensity of Australian film culture in this regard. Dale’s quest for a simple national story found root in the fertile ground of the Australian mythic landscape with its population as personified by the ANZACS, the *Man from Snowy River* and *Breaker Morant*.

Again, it is no coincidence that these examples are all men, for in the Australia of the 1970s and 1980s ‘... manliness is seen, quite simply both as the pinnacle of the Australian experience and of Australian cultural identity, as well as universally representative of “Australianness”.’48
Breaker Morant deals exclusively with men and men's stories. Jeni Thornley groups Breaker Morant with The Club (Bruce Beresford, 1980) and Stir (Stephen Wallace, 1979) as films in which few if any women have a direct physical representation, even as 'the other'. These films make women absent so as not to deal with them. One of the few places in which women appear in Breaker Morant is in the form of two married Boer women with whom Lt. Peter Hancock (played by the archetypical Australian actor Bryan Brown) has sexual relations. His throwaway comment that he was visiting 'no one' belittles the place of women as being unimportant. He also degrades them by saying, 'A slice off a cut loaf is never missed.' Dermody and Jacka identify this line and its required laugh as being further indication for the audience of another great Australian tradition, that of belonging at the cost of your own integrity or standing up only to be pushed out. As Thornley points out, he would undoubtedly miss any 'slice' off his own wife upon his return to Australia. This line and its reaction of laughter (at least with documented contemporary audiences) consolidates '... the film's 'Australian' values of mateship and manliness.'

It is, at this point, worth re-revisiting parts of Russel Ward's reading of the bush-derived national identity myth in his work The Australian Legend. This description of mateship has helped to solidify the narrow, desirable, Australian national type in Australian cultural products from that point on. It is perhaps the most orthodox and all-encompassing, even self-perpetuating, definition of the Australian national identity. Ward says of the typical Australian: 'He is a fiercely independent person who hates
officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong.\textsuperscript{155}

This portion of the legend affects cultural narratives and the actions of characters in cultural products perhaps more than any other. ‘Heroes’ of Australian cultural narratives are often these independent, anti-authoritarian men who are sticking up for their mates (Breaker Morant, Barry McKenzie, Mad Max, Mick Dundee), willing to have a go.

This reaction against individualism is commonly labelled mateship. A number of narratives from this period adhere to this reading of the social convention of mateship, which Graeme Turner sees as being the fundamental mode of characterisation in Australian fiction. For Turner, the representation of character in Australian fiction is informed by an ideology opposed to the individual.\textsuperscript{56} Thus, for Turner mateship can be seen as characterised by:

\ldots its insistence that individual characteristics do not cancel out the loyalties contracted through work and association in the bush. In short, what makes mateship possible is not the authenticity of the particular relationship; its primary conventional attribute is its dependence on the negation of individuality or even specificity of character in order for the particular relationship to be subsumed by the convention. The naturalness of the convention is never questioned, but is continually reinforced and applauded.\textsuperscript{57}

\textit{Stir’s} prison setting, \textit{The Club’s} sporting field and \textit{Breaker Morant}’s battlefield are men’s spaces for the development and performance of mateship – perfect spaces if you want to exclude women and naturalise the conventions of mateship. Thornley sees these films as being devoid of
anything positive associated with ‘the woman’. In this sense, *Breaker Morant* is not exemplary of all AFC period films: *The Getting of Wisdom* (Bruce Beresford, 1977), *Caddie* (David Crombie, 1976), *My Brilliant Career* (Gillian Armstrong, 1979) and others are films of the period that are not male dominated. *Breaker Morant* does, however, stand as an example of the excesses of this cycle to mythologise and masculinise a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in its treatment of history.

Stephen Crofts, in a contemporary review of the film’s stance, identifies it as a morality play highlighting the ‘Australian’ character through the three main protagonists in their negatively defined identity, which is in opposition to British characteristics. For Crofts, it is a film that purports to explore national and historical issues while settling for dramatised moralities in the form of a guaranteed, precise narrative resolution, i.e., the court case.

The courtroom location/setting is a simple, large, open room with stone walls, a wooden floor and a slightly raised stage at one end. Natural light (a strong aesthetic characteristic of the AFC genre) fills the room from the large windows set high in the high walls. The room echoes slightly with the dialogue and the footfalls of the characters as they move about the room. This is all an effort at reducing the mediation between the men’s story and the audience. We are seeing the truth, not a fiction – it is ‘History’. The setting is austere and clean, nothing decorates the room, and the light is harsh but pure like our gaze. The audience is invited to be the jury.
When the camera moves outside this setting things change. The Veldt is blue with cold, dark with uncertainty and dirty with sin. The land is shown in wide shot to be vast and mostly empty, like Australia (perhaps reminding Australian audiences that if they look too closely at their recent past some expedient if less than defensible practices may have been employed in taming their terra nullius. After all, where did the Australians learn to be such outstanding guerrilla fighters if not in their own backyard veldt!?).

A strict linear time frame is established through the editing, in that all events in the past are presented from one point of view in strict chronological order. These subjective flashbacks (among the defendants) are presented as a unanimous memory of the events. The narrative is presented as a first person subjective view, the three defendants sharing the view. A popular strategy in constructing an Australian identity while attempting to deal with colonialism and past crimes of the nation is to push the leadership, actions and moral ambiguity onto the heads of the British. The Australians are, therefore, constructed as innocent victims of imperial, political machinations, once again getting stuck between the immoral aims of empires.

Crofts points out the absence of women, the Boers and any real moral complexity in the film's treatment of the war. For Crofts, the film glosses over the fact that the Australians are fighting (and dying) for British political-cultural values. And it glosses over the similarities between the Boers and the Australians. The Boers used the skills learned on the land, skills which the Australians also possessed. It has been proposed that in
Breaker Morant the Australians are pitted against a people in a very similar situation to themselves – colonial, racist, rural/bushmen, inhabitants of the southern hemisphere, independent and to some extent pawns – in a larger geo-political drama. If the Boers are not present then little comparison can be made between them and the Australians.

Crofts is quite right in his criticism. Breaker Morant does offer an unproblematic, polarised view of right and wrong, guilt and innocence, us and them. It ignores historical realities while presenting itself as historical fact. Crofts’ article was prompted in some ways as a response to a review by Bob Ellis in the Nation Review (October 1980) in which Ellis celebrates the view of the Australian self-image presented (as being one of manliness, comradeship and sardonic dignity). Crofts’ article prompted a further ideological and very personal exchange with Bob Ellis, in the pages of Cinema Papers in 1980/81.

For Ellis, the marginalisation of women and the Boers is a natural consequence of the war. Ellis’ often bizarre and personal attack on Crofts fundamentally asserts that the film is historically accurate and that Crofts’ criticism of it fails to acknowledge this historical dimension. Ellis declares that the point of the film, Breaker Morant, is:

... how certain human beings from two related cultures reacted in a certain trying situation: how the English, to prevent war with Germany, decided to kill a few Australians to palliate the Kaiser, and how the Australian soldiers and their Australian lawyer behaved in that situation – with panic, despair, aggression, cunning and finally grace.

Crofts in reply lists his arguments in opposition to Ellis’ – that the film uses the elements of a realist film to tell a seemingly authentic story about real people with whom the audience can identify, while concealing
the process to reduce the audience’s desire to seek alternative readings. It only offers the elements it needs to elicit the desired response. The film fails to address imperialism, the point of the war. Crofts goes on to argue that by marginalising the Boers, rendering them absent in the ‘picture’, the narrative removes alternative moral dimensions of a colonised group, helping the coloniser to overpower another colonising group.65

Set in South Africa and shot in South Australia, the space, the distinctive Australian landscape and light used in this film could be seen to draw a physical, social, historical parallel between South Australia and South Africa (both of which sit on the 30th parallel, south). These fatal foreign shores should be a strong allegory for the Australian experience and landscape. Yet it is not a parallel strongly signalled in films of the high renaissance.

a little david williamson biography

During the period of the high renaissance (1975-1983) David Williamson stands out as a major influence, credited with writing eight films (The Removalists 1975, Don’s Party 1976, The Club 1980, Eliza Frazer 1976, Duet For Four 1981, Gallipoli 1981, The Year of Living Dangerously (with Peter Weir and C.J. Koch) 1982, Phar Lap 1983). A number of these films made a significant contribution to the development of contemporary and subsequent notions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, in particular middle-class, Australian male characteristics. For example, a character in Don’s Party (Bruce Beresford, 1976) exclaims: “I must say, I didn’t know university
educated people could be so uncouth!66 They can if they are Australian! This development of identities beyond the working-class would prove to be an important point in the development of a filmic national identity, and to the re-interpretation of significant historical events. This grouping could also be extended to include the character of those who came to be called the 'aspirational class' in the early part of the twenty-first century.67 It is worth looking at Williamson and his work as a case study of the period.

Dennis Carroll's assertion that David Williamson owes a lot of his success to the fact that he is able to '... provide a certifiably accurate representation of contemporary manifestations of Australian society'68 is a provocative notion. Putting aside the notion of 'certifiably', Williamson's screenplays do offer the shock of recognition that was one of the characteristics of the revival of Australian film-making. David Williamson's scripts played an undeniably significant part in the revival of the Australian film-making industry and in shaping a particular type of mainstream representation of the national cultural identity in the film texts of the period and beyond.

His play The Coming of Stork first staged in Melbourne at La Mamma in 1970 was also the source of his first feature film script.69 Produced in 1971 and directed by Tim Burstall, the film Stork was a huge critical and financial success. David Stratton writes: 'But generally speaking, Stork deserves its honourable place in the history of the new Australian cinema – the first box office success.'70 At the Australian Film Awards in 1973, Stork won Best Film, Director, Actor and Actress.71 It was the first of the 'Ocker' films and its independent release paved the way for
other films to get around the trials of finding distribution and exhibition with the major players. Williamson was prolific and successful throughout the whole revival period (1975-1983), through the late 1980s and into the new millennium. In the 1970s and 80s he adapted six of his own plays for feature films.

Carroll sees Williamson's work as being that of Australia's most prolific and significant contemporary playwright – rejecting the charge made by a number of reviewers and commentators that Williamson's work is '... facile middle-class realism.' For Carroll, Williamson's work highlighted a number of ways in which the Australian social character was being transformed (into perhaps most significantly the 'Ocker'). Williamson's primary narrative devices were through the use of language, most memorably in his part in the development of the 'Ocker'. Yet he went further than most at this time in demonstrating how the use of the 'aggressive vernacular' was not restricted to the 'working-classes' – and through various narrative/character devices that he used to demonstrate the power of social conformity in the Australian context – but extended across classes. The important thing that was explored in much of Williamson's work was the notion that a significant aspect in the national identity and nation-building projects was the position of conformity in the social and cultural fields. For Carroll, echoing Graeme Turner to some degree, many of the so-called 'new wave' plays and Williamson's work in particular:

... social interactions between men are usually social rituals of accommodation, 'trade-offs' in which a basic, reassuring mateship syndrome is reaffirmed. A number of Williamson's scripts also highlight the other side of
mateship – anti-individualism. There are a series of checks and balances against unbridled individualism – the urge to master and dominate other competition leads to the kind of isolation and loneliness that has little place in the 'Australianist'[sic] legend and for which the equivocal 'success' of being 'king' provides small consolation.  

Along with mateship and the other values associated with the national identity and nation-building projects, in the films of the high renaissance period landscape is one of the most significant characteristics, so significant in fact, that it is worth looking at another filmic example to explore the emerging relationships with the landscape in Australian made films of this period.

**mad max and the road warrior and landscape**

It is simultaneously, and shamelessly, a visionary kinetic experience, a tacky music video, a classically moral action epic, a gleefully amoral exploitation movie, and a stirring mythic tract. (Adrian Martin 1994)

Ross Gibson sees the Mad Max trilogy (*Mad Max* 1979; *Mad Max 2, The Road Warrior* 1981; *Mad Max 3, Beyond Thunderdome* 1984, all directed by Dr George Miller) as stories about a new relationship with the Australian landscape. The battle between what has been called neo-colonial ‘traditional nationalistic values’ on the one hand and contemporary, postcolonial ‘nationalist mythologies’ on the other is, in *Mad Max 2*, a battle over and with the landscape. Like the landscapes in the AFC period films (which present the landscape as a beautiful, yet mysterious space of divine power and identity), the mythic landscape space in *Mad Max 2* is the source of identity, the great ‘other’ with which all Australian culture and society must reconcile to achieve a comfortable
identity and a sense of belonging to this place.

Australian national narratives see the landscape as a place of becoming, unlike other, imperial nations; frontier nations such as Australia had to go out into the wilderness and make themselves – to become Australia. There was no manifest destiny in Australian colonisation of the land; it was more a case of kill or be killed. Burke and Wills were our Louis and Clark, without the happy conclusion. What land could not be tamed was ignored as 'useless'.

However, this process was not a simple matter of wandering out into the wilderness and 'becoming'; there were obstacles to overcome, influences to take into consideration and dangers of unexpected results. One of the seminal theorists of the effects of the frontier on the settler population is Frederick Jackson Turner. He describes the effects of the wilderness upon the settler thus:

The wilderness masters the colonialist.... In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe, not simply the development of Germanic germs, any more than the first phenomenon was a case of reversion to the Germanic mark. The fact is, that here is a new product that is American....As successive terminal moraines result from successive glaciations, so each frontier leaves its traces behind it, and when it becomes a settled area the region still partakes of frontier characteristics. Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines.78

It is interesting to consider Frederick Jackson Turner's 'Frontier Thesis' in relation to Australia's experiences. In Jackson's terms the journey from the 'old' world into a new 'product' – through the experiences
of the fledgling colonies and its inhabitants pushing ever forward – affects all ‘new’ nations as they march further away from the influences of their origins towards their independence. The foundation principles, for the US as a vigorous product of the Enlightenment and for Australia as a dumping ground for much of the unwanted riff-raff of late Georgian Britain, a ‘scentless cesspool for a vast quantity of nameless rubbish’ set the stage for their frontier experiences. The table below points to some of the variations in the Frontier experiences between Australia and the US, and suggests some possible outcomes:
US

Founding principles:

'We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their right powers from the consent of the governed.'

(U.S. Declaration of Independence 1776)

Journey of exploitation as national metaphor:

Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-06

(Group of 33, Long list of achievements, all returned well and safely.)

Big, well funded, well organised and successful domination of land, flora & fauna, natives and potential national rivals.

Romantic Nationalism as Manifest Destiny

National Ethos = Rugged Individualism

AUSTRALIA

Founding principles:

'He believes that Jack is not only as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and so he is a great 'knOcker' of eminent people unless, as in the case of his sporting heroes, they are distinguished by their physical prowess.'

(Ward 1956)

Journey of exploitation as national metaphor:

Bourke and Wills Expedition 1860-61

(Group of 8, only 1 survived. Short list of achievements, rescue parties contributed more info than main party.)

Personal egos, colonial rivalries and poor outcomes, raising fear of land and original inhabitants.

Romantic Nationalism as Anxiety

National Ethos = Egalitarianism
The two ‘journey of exploitation as national metaphor’ narratives point to the playing out of those frontier experiences, triumph of their ‘Manifest Destiny’ in the case of the US and triumph of place over man in the case of Australia. The conclusions this matrix of principals and experiences and ultimately meaning making leads to is the ‘National Ethos’ outcomes, rugged Individualism in the case of the US and egalitarianism (within a web of national anxiety) in the case of Australia.

In *Mad Max 2*, the landscape has been accelerated into a post-industrial state; all the land is untamed and this time around it is going to take a special kind of hero to tame it. It is also notably devoid of the original inhabitants. In *Mad Max 2* it is a scarred landscape, littered with the corpses of previous inhabitants and the trappings of their culture, a past (our future) which has failed.

*Mad Max 2* has been described as a western, a road movie, a post-apocalyptic science fiction film and a 1980s high concept film.\(^80\) Tom O'Regan sees this indigenisation of genres as characteristic of the hybrid nature of Australian national cinema. *Mad Max 2* typifies his views of the Australian national cinema as a fusion of domestic and international cinema brought about, in large part, by importing and indigenising genres and film-making norms.\(^81\) He seems to agree with Miller's assertions that Australian cinematic identity is shaped by its relationships with both the ‘domestic’ and the ‘international’ – markets, national industries, cultures and histories.\(^82\) Films such as *Mad Max 2* place themselves in the middle of this relationship, taking advantage of international generic codes and domestic national narratives, in this case the role of the landscape in the
national psyche. Thomas Schatz identifies the generic hero as helping to define the community and its cultural conflicts within its generic setting. He describes the plot structure of genre film as having four stages. Stage one is the establishment of the 'generic community' (Max observing the two tribes). Stage two sees the conflict animated through the characters’ actions (Max becomes involved, seeking petrol). In stage three the conflict is intensified until it reaches crisis point (Max is forced to drive the tanker). And in the final stage, the crisis is resolved in the community’s favour (Max decoys the Humongous tribe, while the community finds its way to the ‘Gold Coast’).

One of Mad Max 2’s primary narrative foci is the proximity of narrative elements in the shape of the landscape to neo-colonial ideas characterised as traditional, romantic nationalist notions created through engagements with reference points drawn from the representative referential regime. In this sense, Mad Max 2 can be seen as adhering to the traditional mythic use of the land as the supreme motif of the national narrative. Like Crocodile Dundee, this film is less focused on representing a strictly time-honoured view of the national identity and national character in pursuit of a world-wide audience. Nevertheless, it cannot escape a relationship with a romantic nationalism in its portrayal of the frontier hero as outsider, comfortable in the mythical outback space, which in this case has been styled into a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Its relationships with traditional readings of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation is, in Gibson terms, as a 'laconic minimalist' hero. Like Mick Dundee, Max comes to help the battlers against the baddies, the
settlers against the 'Indians', using his heroic qualities learned in harsh bush lessons. Like Mick Dundee, Max wears the scars of his trials as a uniform. His black leather suit, the scars and the metal leg brace are significant visual reminders of his past.

Seeking recognition through adherence to pan-national genre filmic modes, Miller describes his Mad Max films as montage films. He sees this type of film as one in which meaning is made in the editing, in the juxtaposition of visual elements. The style of Mad Max 2 conforms to its generic origins in its constant use of cross-cutting techniques to show parallel action. It also uses standard filmic forms of exposition. For example, when Max first comes across the White Tribe's camp and oil refinery, he sits on a hill, watching the Humungus troops attacking it – his view through the binoculars serves to define the space and the players. The community is locked away in their 'fort' while the hostile 'natives' surround them. The narrative therefore places Max above the two groups of protagonists, although he has a strong relationship with both groups. In the past, i.e. in Mad Max, he was a member of the White Tribe, but his experiences have turned him into a nomad in the style of the Humungus tribe (his clothing and modified vehicle are similar to theirs). Mad Max 2 uses generic conventions of the hero primarily from the western genre.

Max, the enigma, is the central character. In countless 'westerns' the hero was once a farmer or homesteader, turned into a gunslinger through the murder of his family and is now an outsider. Like the nameless, unknown gun-slingers of many westerns, his past (at least between the end of Mad Max and the present film) is lost behind him, with only nightmares and old
injuries remaining. He is, for his own selfish reasons, thrust into someone else's battle. As generic heroes Max and Mick Dundee are defined by the landscapes they inhabit. They draw an identity from the landscape. Max's identity is damaged, minimalist and generic.

conclusions

While Australian mainstream culture was struggling with an ever more complex contemporary self-image and given the pressures of change which were present in Australian society in the 1970s – multiculturalism, the dismissal of the Whitlam Government, the emergence of the ‘New-Right’, pre-post-Cold War geopolitical realignments, the ‘oil crisis’, economic re-alliances and the inescapable emergence of powerful political ‘pressure groups’ (women's issues, the environment, land rights to name just a few) – it is no surprise that the culture went looking for comfort in a traditional, romantic, even neo-colonial view of themselves, their past, their national identity and their (folklorically constructed) national character.

In the period of the high renaissance of Australian film-making (1975-1983) there were a number of successful efforts to promulgate a recognisable, consistent and broadly saleable 'national identity' stamp in the Australian made cinema. These successes were, in part, created through reflecting deeply resonant, national narrative tropes and nation-building aspirations (highlighting narratives of perceived national 'successes' and trials). Along with this successful national narrativising in cinema came the desire to create viable notions of the homogeneous
social/cultural origins of the society, and to highlight the ongoing development of the national identity and nation-building projects – under the rubric of a filmic national identity. These desires culminated in wide national and international recognition and financial success for the newly re-invigorated domestic Australia film-making industry/culture and the national culture more broadly.

Films of this period looked back to ‘our’ shared history and the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, all developed and created, in this period, through an engagement with readings of the representative referential regime that include Australian values (egalitarianism, a fair go and mateship), gender, class, ethnicity and the landscape, reassuringly deferring any criticism from the present into the past and, in doing so, engendered a particular type of cultural identity. The films of this period set the image of Australia and constructed national identity and character in the minds of the rest of the world. When filmmaking moved from being an exercise in self-exploration to one of national and international marketability, the clichéd notions of an Australian identity established in these earlier films reappeared as a national stereotype g’day-ing its way across the world to, in the case of films like Crocodile Dundee (Peter Faiman, 1983), enormous national and international success. The next chapter explores the construction of the cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects in the post-high renaissance period (1984-1990), a period that would see great changes in the film-making industry/culture’s output.

As in all periods of film-making in Australia, the condition of the
industry, usually in regard to government support, or lack of support, has a significant impact on the output of the industry. In the next period, changes to indirect government financial support would prove to undermine the ongoing development of the national narratives in a viable and coherent domestic film-making industry/culture, through overheating the industry and confusing the national imagining in search of greater economic success.
Ch. 4. endnotes


2 Character of Mike McCord in *Emerald City* (Michael Jenkins 1988).


5 Previous chapters have dealt with the development of alternative representations of the Australian Story.


9 ‘Australia for the White Man’ was the Bulletin’s masthead slogan from 1908, with the departure of J.K Archibald, until the editorship of Donald Horne, under the ownership of Sir Frank Packer. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bulletin for an overview of the publication and its history.


14 See: Ibid.


17 See endnote #9.


19 Ibid. p. 128.


26 Ibid. p. 62.

27 For a colourful engagement with the world wide popularity of the Mad Max franchise see: Martin, Adrian. (2003) *The Mad Max Movies (Mad Max, Mad Max 2/the Road Warrior, Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome)*. Sydney: Currency Press/ScreenSound Australia.


29 Ibid. p. 29.

30 Ibid. p. 12.
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<td>31</td>
<td>See Ibid. p. 28-29.</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Lawson, Sylvia. (1977) op. cit. p. 211.</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Breaker Morant (Bruce Beresford 1980).</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>Ibid. p. 2.</td>
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<td>Ibid. p. 454.</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
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<td>62</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>Ibid. p. 13.</td>
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<td>Ibid. p. 12.</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>Simon in Don's Party (Bruce Beresford 1976)</td>
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69 Ibid. p. 223.
71 Ibid.
73 Ibid. p. 228.
76 See chapter two for a discussion of the ‘Romantic Nationalist School’ of Australian Nationalism
79 Henry Kingsley quoted in Ibid.
81 O'Regan, Tom. (1996) op. cit. p. 5.
82 Ibid. p. 102.
84 Ibid.
Ch. 5. BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND CULTURE: SCREENED AUSTRALIANNESS IN THE POST-REVIVAL PERIOD: 1984 - 1990

A 'dying' industry, when Crocodile Dundee (and, to a lesser extent, Crocodile Dundee II) has rewritten all commonsense notions about the scale of possible Australian film success? It seems to us that Paul Hogan's success is a quarantined one that carries with it virtually no tidings for the industry as a whole, but that provides extremely interesting insights into the nature of current readings of how to pose 'Australianness', locally and overseas. (Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, 1988)

Most of the films these [Australian] directors make are pitched uneasily in the no-man's-land between art-house cinema and the commercial mainstream. They live up to the potential of neither and satisfy few. Yes, these films have their incidental pleasures (pretty images, calm narratives, sensitive moments), and they did help initiate critical interest at the start of the revival. But in the past decade [1980s] that spotlight has increasingly narrowed into the work of the genuine auteurs, such as Miller and Campion. (Scott Murray, 1994)

We tend to look back on the 70s as the glorious era of Australian cinema .... probably as many good films was [sic] made in the 80s as were made in the 70s; it is just that a very great many bad films were made as well. (David Stratton, 1990)

introduction

In 1980, the Australian Government's new indirect film funding/tax scheme, 10BA, came into existence, and with it began a new era in film production in Australia. In the 1970s, governments – through the mechanisms of state sponsored infrastructure, in particular the Australian Film Commission (AFC) and individual states' film funding bodies – directly funded film production. Chapter three of this study discussed the creation of the public film infrastructure apparatus, and the resulting effects on the film-making industry and culture in Australia. There were critics of this state-run system, of the perceived 'closed shop' nature of the arrangements, in that either you were 'in' with the funding bodies or you
were not.\textsuperscript{4} If you were not 'in', there was no real funding alternative. Eventually, the AFC itself would come to feel that in the long-term \textit{indirect} government funding and the fuller participation of the private sector would ensure a stronger industry.\textsuperscript{5} The result of this shift in policy was a national film industry, previously funded directly by government bodies, being privatised overnight.\textsuperscript{6}

The introduction of bigger, private and commercial sector, money, seeking bigger gains saw innovations such as the importation of American and British stars and the proliferation of formulaic genre films. Driven by the reduction of tax deductibility (down to 120\% in 1986), as the real investment required rose and the tax write-off shrunk, pre-sales and safer generic forms were favoured. The representations and enactments of the national identity and national character, in Australian films of the 1980s, reflect these changes.

As in other periods of film production in Australia, the connections between the film-making industry and the film-making culture, in the late 1980s, were inextricably interrelated. This is why the Australian domestic film-making entity is described throughout this study as a binary entity: industry/culture. The Australianness that had been produced as part of a unique cinema aesthetic – in the AFC genre films of the 1970s and early 1980s most notably – was largely lost in the later 1980s through concessions to world markets. Chapter four in this study addresses the development of the co-called AFC genre of films that signalled the renaissance (1975-1983) of the Australian film industry/culture. As Australian films sought to compete in international marketplaces in the
post-renaissance period (1984-1990) they lost some of the culturally authentic and culturally successful representations of the national identity and character that had been developed to great domestic and international, critical, commercial and cultural success in the high renaissance period. The performance of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in the successful AFC genre of films, from the high renaissance period (1975-1983), were strongly marked by a relationship to the regime of representational references. This regime references a set of particular notions: Australian values (mateship, a fair go and egalitarianism), constructions of gender, class, ethnicity, and the landscape. The films of the post-renaissance period (1984-1990), the subject of this chapter, generally abandon a close adherence to this regime, though it must be stressed it is not a total abandonment. In all periods of Australian film-making, the representational regime has an inescapable role in supplying reference points for meaning-making, around Australian national narratives, as they are played out in Australian made films. For example, in the film examples drawn from this period (1984-1990), notions of ‘the landscape’ come in for special attention.

This chapter examines and charts the Australian film-making industry/culture’s journey from being a domestic and international success story at the start of the 1980s, to having to fight for a place in the international market place by the end of the decade. To do this a number of factors are addressed. What was the contemporary state of the industry/culture, and how did this accord with the national identity and nation building projects? Why, when the established forms and industry
structures were so successful, was a new direction deemed necessary? And what were the new modes and styles that were developed and employed in search of domestic and international success in the post-renaissance period (1984-1990)?

This chapter will address each of these questions before going on to analyse film examples from each of the emerging film formations in this period. The two main film formations identified in this period are the 'proper' and the 'personal'. From the proper formation of films, the phenomenally successful and fascinating film *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) is analysed, and from the 'personal' formation, an analysis of *Sweetie* (Jane Campion, 1989) is undertaken.

In the context of this study, *Crocodile Dundee* can be seen as taking the screened cultural identity of the national identity and nation-building projects into an unproblematic direction for domestic audiences through references to familiar constructions of masculinity and the landscape, and internationally through an association with 'Hollywood' generic conventions. It found financial success on an unimagined scale, by performing a widely recognisable (and therefore it is argued) saleable, un-confusing, concrete national identity, constructed through an engagement with some clear national narrative tropes, and performed in the 'familiar' context of Hollywood 'filmic-ness'.

This analysis looks beyond *Crocodile Dundee's* oft-mentioned phenomenal financial success to focus on the way in which the film engages with, and expresses its approach to, the markers of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation.
To further illustrate the discussion of the changes to the Australian film-making industry/culture in the post-renaissance period, an analysis of another example drawn from this period will be undertaken. *Sweetie*, in contrast to *Crocodile Dundee*, was a low budget, personal film, which was part of a larger international cycle of personal art-house films by a director with a formal education in film-making. *Sweetie* engages with, and deploys markers of, the national identity in a much more problematised way than many other films of the period, with vastly differing results. It questions the referential (reverential?) regime, rather than deploying it for familiarity and simple national identity marking (marketing?).

An analysis of these examples will give a better understanding of the aims, foci and location of the national identity and nation-building projects and the contemporary state of the Australian film-making industry/culture.

‘that slippery fish’

In 1988 Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka attempted to grab hold of some sort of current, clear and comprehensive snapshot of the Australian film-making industry/culture. They colourfully labelled the industry/culture ‘that slippery fish’. In the period under discussion (1984-1990), the ‘slipperiness’ can be seen to be compounded by a number of factors. These include: the dramatic escalation in the volume of film-making, the sheer diversity of film texts produced, and the contemporary changes in the world film market (the introduction of the domestic video player, for example). Almost all of the significant changes to the domestic
film-making landscape can be said to have been made possible (and to some degree *super-charged*) by the introduction of indirect, tax-break funded film finance – 10BA, and the resulting restructuring of the film-making industry/culture in Australia.

In the evolving story of the Australian film-making industry/culture, positioned between the high water-mark of the 'revival' (with the 'Ocker' films) and the 'renaissance' of the domestic film-industry/culture (with the 'AFC genre' period films) and the emergence of some new imaginings in the early 1990s (with the 'glitter cycle') is this post-renaissance period (1984-1990). This period is characterised by significant industry developments and some experimentation in the thematic and stylistic performance of the national identity and character associated with the national identity and nation building projects. The cultural enactments of the national identity in this period continue an ongoing engagement with the nation building and national identity projects of imagining and screening the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, to the nation and, now, to the world, in a national cinema.

Graeme Turner, one of the most respected, engaged and perceptive writers on the Australian national identity and nation building projects, and Australian cultural enactments, wrote in 1991 that if '... most now agree that the [film] revival of the seventies self-consciously (even self-importantly) busied itself with representing the 'nation's history', many would also argue that the eighties attempted to move away from this 'national' project towards a wider range of more idiosyncratic, contemporary and (paradoxically, perhaps) more generic films.' This is
the starting point of this chapter. Is there, in this period, a move away from
the national project's aims, towards the results Turner describes?

In an attempt to extend the analysis and conclusions of Dermody
and Jacka, and Graeme Turner, the present study identifies that much of
the output of the Australian made cinema, in the post-war decades, sought
to screen a familiar and saleable national identity and recognisable
representations of the national character, for domestic and international
film audiences. In addition, it argues that the production of this familiar and
saleable screened 'Australia' is inextricably connected with the national
identity and nation building projects.

As a part of this national identity project, a uniquely Australian,
culturally-derived national identity was sought, developed and
promulgated, beginning in earnest in the 1960s and 1970s, across the
culture industries, through 'enlightened public patronage.' The growing
level of interest and investment in the self-expression of the nation can be
seen in the context of internationally recognised, valid artistic expressions:
film festivals, biennales, travelling exhibitions and visits by internationally
recognised cultural organisations to local arts festivals, for example. The
exploration, development and promulgation of a cinema that could be
seen to be uniquely Australian is, for this study, an important part of this
wider, nationalistic/artistic project of nation building and building national
identity.

Into the late 1960s the cultural nation building and national identity
projects began to use film as a significant arena in which direct efforts
were made to give body and shape to the imaginings of the shared
national cultural character, and as a part of a wider, commercial and cultural project to develop a 'proper' film-making industry. For Dermody and Jacka, the shape of feature production through the 1970s and 1980s was determined by the film-making industry’s accord with, or reaction to, the identity project's aims. The film-making industry/culture’s accord with the aims of the project in cinematic identity representations – a nationally unified sense of what it means to be Australian through a particular engagement with the regime of representational references – reached its apotheosis in the second half of the 1970s with the emergence of the canon of the so called ‘AFC genre’ films.

Films from this era, such as Picnic at Hanging Rock (Peter Weir, 1975), Sunday Too Far Away (Ken Hannam, 1975) and Breaker Morant (Bruce Beresford, 1980), were perhaps the most direct and successful attempts ever undertaken to screen a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived national identity to the nation and the world. Ironically, the changes to the structure of the film-making industry in the 1980s would wreak havoc on the domestic film-making culture and, therefore, on some parts of the nation building and national identity project’s aims and methods.

10ba tax scheme

In the 1960s and 1970s the federal and state governments were directly involved with providing finance to the film-making industries through the AFC and state film funding bodies. The two significant federally funded institutions which were created in the process of these
changes were the Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC) in 1970 (becoming the Australian Film Commission (AFC) in 1975) and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) in 1970.

The significant industry development in the 1980s was the implementation of the new indirect film funding/tax scheme known as 10BA, which allowed for a 150% tax write-off. It came into existence on October 11th 1980. Specifically, the original ‘...10BA concessions were clearly more attractive than those that exist today [2005]. The first concession allowed a tax deduction of 150% of eligible expenditure and taxation of only 50% of the revenue derived by a qualifying film. This was subsequently wound back to 133/33% in 1983, 120/20% in 1985 and ultimately 100% in 1988.'

The 10BA system was supported and initiated by the industry and the government bodies that were directly involved in funding the industry. While it was received by the industry and these government bodies with 'general agreement,' it was not without its critics. For example, the Treasury was unhappy with the lack of a 'ceiling' on the amounts that could be written-off. At the height of the tax write-off years, some film projects were 'packages' (too often cynical tax write-off schemes) put together to take advantage of the large amounts of money available. David Stratton cites the films made by 'Filmco' (one of only two specialist, financially-focused film management companies in Australia at that time) as being 'some of the most dismal films ever produced in Australia.' Early Frost (Brian McDuffie, 1981), The Dark Room (Paul Harmon, 1982) and Double Deal (Brian Kavanagh, 1981) were three Filmco-produced films
never shown in cinemas."\textsuperscript{15} Meaghan Morris calls 10BA a 'government-run tax avoidance scheme ... [and] ... an alarming success.'\textsuperscript{16}

However, the AFC was a strong supporter of the introduction of the indirect funding scheme, believing that the incumbent (Fraser) Coalition government (1975-1983) might tire of funding the industry and therefore there was a need for a more sustainable, indirect government funding system, with the desired result being an escalation of commercial funding, which would, in the long term, ensure a stronger industry.\textsuperscript{17} The result was a national film industry, previously funded directly by public monies and government administered, being cast adrift into the free market.\textsuperscript{18}

In part, because of this shift, and over the span of the decade, Australia lost the enviable position it enjoyed in the international cinema world, at the beginning of the 1980s, as 'flavour of the month.'\textsuperscript{19} Stephen Crofts cites the influential film critic Pauline Kael's assessment of that enviable position, when the Australian period films of the AFC genre, the key films of the Australian success story in the U.S., could be described as having almost 'a seal of Good Housekeeping'. This position translated into the reality that the AFC period-films, produced in the 1970s and early 1980s with the 'made in Australia' stamp, were almost guaranteed an audience. This 'guarantee' did not extend to many films produced in the later 1980s.

One cause of this loss was the new commercial reality and business landscape of the 10BA period, another was the shift in theme and cultural authenticity of the films produced by this new industry/culture. Few films were produced that were demonstrably 'Australian' or with a
defined national identity speaking the recognisable, shared, culturally
defined identity through an engagement with the regime of
representational references, producing Australianness.

By 1984 Dermody and Jacka’s ‘slippery fish’ had become as
engorged (and in some ways as unwelcome) as a Murray River Carp –
good perhaps only for fertilizer. They significantly point out that in 1984/5 –
the high point of investment in the Australian film-industry (in the 10BA
years) – $AUS185.7m was raised. In 1988, a high point for box-office
returns, the entire Australian box-office return was $AUS188m. Thus it is
reasonable to assume that the domestic audience was not the major focus
of the marketing of the majority of films made in that era. Towards the
1990s, in search of economic viability in this difficult climate, the way in
which the national identity and the national character was represented, the
types of filmic narratives made and the shape of the domestic
industry/culture were all transformed in search of profit through access to
emerging international and domestic markets.

The Australian film ‘business’, in the later 1980s, under the 10BA
tax scheme, was largely focused on making films for specific markets.
These commercially-focused films were often seeking an international
audience, competing with smaller commercial film industries in direct-to-
video and smaller genre films. The international marketability of a film had
to be considered if Australian films were to make a profit under the
changing conditions of the funding landscape. Distribution changes and
new opportunities for revenue generation, such the introduction of the
domestic video player and the appearance of ‘video libraries’, and the
resulting opportunity to expand the life of a film, had to be considered from inception, which is one reason for the popularity of easily recognisable genre film subjects in this period.22

the films of the 1980s

As Australian made films sought to compete in international marketplaces, they lost some of their uniquely Australian identity through concessions to the market. This is not to say that they were necessarily less commercially successful than other films that produced a culturally authentic Australianness. As film-makers moved away from the ‘AFC genre’, with its ‘hard’ representations of a particular construction of the explicit, shared, Australian, culturally derived national identity – sourced from a literal relationship with the representative referential regime, and literary sources that had a familiar and unproblematic relationship with the same ideas – the film-making industries made some films that would have been more comfortable coming out of a cultural system akin to that of Hollywood. For example, the use of higher production budgets, seeking access to the profits to be made in the new landscape, saw innovations like the importation of American and British stars and the proliferation of formulaic genre films. The importation and sometimes awkward placement of clearly non-Australian actors/characters often resulted in shaping narratives to validate their role. For example, Frog Dreaming (Brian Trenchard-Smith, 1986) featured Henry Thomas, the little boy who stared in ET (Steven Spielberg, 1982), whose character’s Americanness is not fully explained or justified. Mad Max 2 (Dr George Miller, 1981) is a good
example of success through universal generic familiarity; it was a huge
success, almost before its time it set the tone of the new successful 'made
in Australia' generic genealogy of the films of the period. It was marketed
as The Road Warrior outside of Australia where the first Mad Max (1979)
film was virtually unknown.

Liz Jacka points to the field of films made in this period being
dominated by three categories: Australiana, Family Fare and Genre
Pictures. Her first category is constructed around a 'recognisable and
internationally consumable 'Australiana'.' Films in this category include:
The Lighthorsemen (Simon Wincer, 1987) and The Man From Snowy
River 2 (aka Return to Snowy River, Geoff Burrowes, 1988). Her second
category, 'Family Fare', consists of films such as Always Afternoon (David
Stevens, 1988) and Bushfire Moon (George Miller, 1987). And her third
category, 'Genre Pictures', include Time Guardian (Brian Hannant, 1987)
and Initiation (Larry Stewart, 1984).

However, I read the period as being dominated by a larger
formation I label the 'Proper' or 'Proper wannabe/Genre', films like
Razorback (Russel Mulcahy, 1984), Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (Dr.
George Miller, 1985), Dead Calm (Phillip Noyce, 1988), along with, of
course, Crocodile Dundee and Crocodile Dundee II. You will notice that
the directors and stars (Mel Gibson, Nicole Kidman, Sam Neill, Paul
Hogan) of these films are the ones who go on to Hollywood and have
extensive careers. A film like Dead Calm worked as an audition piece for
Kidman (who then goes on to appear in Days of Thunder (Tony Scott,
1989), with Tom Cruise), Noyce (who then goes on to direct Clear and
Present Danger in 1992) and even to some extent Neill (who had been to Hollywood before and goes on to appear in a major role in The Hunt for Red October (John McTiernan, 1990). This phenomenon of film-makers and actors making a name in Australian made films and then moving on to Hollywood is a characteristic of many periods in the history of the Australian film-making industry/culture; Errol Flynn, Peter Finch and Dr George Miller are but a few.

The result of the films produced by the domestic film-making formations of the period seems to be that the financial organisation of the industry gradually shifted the force of ‘credibility’ away from what Meaghan Morris calls the rhetoric of ‘national authenticity.’25 As David Stratton puts it: ‘We tend to look back on the 70s as the glorious era of Australian cinema .... probably as many good films was [sic] made in the 80s as were made in the 70s; it is just that a very great many bad films were made as well.’26

While this period was marked by few films that were demonstrably ‘Australian’, that is, ‘culturally authentic’, or that produced much of what might be called ‘descendible Australianness’, defined in the way the successful AFC films were, there were many financial and critically successful films made in this period through an engagement with safer generic forms. Table 5.1 (Appendix E) presents a brief listing of many of the safer thematic, familiar generic classification or generalised films ‘made in Australia’ in this period27, and Table 5.2. (Appendix F) presents a brief listing of many of the more recognisable texts of (to use Dermody & Jacka’s term) ‘Australiana’ in films ‘made in Australia’ in this period. This is
not to say that in this period there were not Australian made films containing more culturally authentic, recognisable representations in keeping with the shared national identity and which were successful both with domestic audiences and in the international market.

**Examples drawn from film modes of the 1980s**

Some of the more financially and critically successful filmic examples drawn from this period are, from the 'Proper' formation of films, *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) and, from the 'Personal' formation, *Sweetie* (Jane Campion, 1989).

The 'big news' of this period and of much of the post-revival periods was the phenomenal success of one film: *Crocodile Dundee*.

*Crocodile Dundee* was an early blockbuster, looking for (and finding) the largest audience possible (over $AUS20m, in Australian cinemas alone\(^{28}\)). It is an example of what Paul Hogan called a 'proper movie'\(^{29}\) – that is, a big budget, high production value, escapist, pure entertainment film for an international commercial market.

*Crocodile Dundee* benefited from funding through the 10BA system. It was floated on the stock market and was 20% over-subscribed.\(^{30}\) By 1988 it had returned more than 730% to its investors.\(^{31}\) There was, in its reception, a great deal of critical embarrassment and jubilation, and analytical variety, over the cultural enactments connected to the national identity it employed in its search for world-wide success.

In contrast to *Dundee*, in the film text of *Sweetie* a particular emphasis is placed on some contested and problematised representations
of some of the other (less than popular) cultural enactments connected to the national narratives. While the analysis of Sweetie demonstrates that it is not strongly marked by a simple relationship to the regime of representational references, it contains, in varied and mixed ways, interesting constructions of gender, class, ethnicity and the landscape. Both film examples, in their own differing ways, construct recognisable representations of the national identity and the national character.

The diversity (of quality, purpose and theme/genre) and proliferation of film-making in the 1980s was made possible by the introduction of the 10BA indirect, tax-break funded film scheme, and the resulting restructuring of the film-making industry/culture landscape. The sheer volume of film texts produced in this period, the dramatic shifts in the cultural identities represented in the filmic output and the contemporary changes in the world film market make the analysis of films from this period an important and fascinating project.

Rewriting the possibilities in the commercial mainstream of the proper film: Crocodile Dundee (Peter Faiman 1986)

Crocodile Dundee (Peter Faiman, 1986) is, in fact, the ‘proper movie’ Paul Hogan wanted to make. He said, in an interview just before the film was released:

I expect it to gross millions of dollars around the world, and I'm planning for it to be Australia's first proper movie. I don't think we've had one yet — not a real, general-public, successful, entertaining movie. You name me one.32

Dundee was also the phenomenal success that Tom O'Regan has identified, he reminds us that it is,
...a measure of both the singularity of Crocodile Dundee and Crocodile Dundee II and the downturn of Australian feature production that this volume should carry an article concerned solely with the Crocodile Dundee phenomenon.33

Crocodile Dundee tells the ‘fish out of water’ tail of a bushman and crocodile poacher, Mick ‘Crocodile’ Dundee. Discovered by a New York journalist, Sue, Mick is transported out of the Northern Territory to the Big Apple. Mick is a novelty at first, then he and Sue become romantically involved, with Mick saving her from ‘the evil protagonist’ and her fiancée, in the dénouement. A part of the familiar filmic construction is reinforced by this most typical of Hollywood narratives, boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back, and they live happily ever after.

The film makes much of its high production values, a stated aim of Dundee/Hogan’s,34 to create the experience of a ‘real’ film, as opposed to television, Dundee/Hogan’s previous domain. It was a domestic and worldwide commercial success, almost beyond the imagined possibilities of the Australian film-making industries of the post-revival period (1986-1990). The ‘properness’ and more importantly the ‘success’ of Crocodile Dundee is often measured in terms of its international profile and profitability. This fact tends to dominate much of the subsequent discussion of the filmic text, and what I characterise as the inescapably linked, binary entity, Dundee/Hogan. Mick Dundee is Hogan, Hogan is Dundee. Tom O'Regan points to the inescapable fact that this film and other films like it rely on the audience having a social and filmic/media, intertextual knowledge.35

Many of the contemporary and subsequent reviews and articles regarding the film focus on the ‘phenomenon’, on the $AUS420m the film grossed. Why, they ask in various ways, was this simple little film so very
popular? The film and its status as an Australian cultural product of immense profile, its cross-cultural significance and reception is the subject of much serious critical work.\textsuperscript{36}

_{Crocodile Dundee} (and to some extent its sequel {Crocodile Dundee II} (John Cornell, 1988) is the performance of a masculine type of egalitarianism moulded in a remarkably orthodox adherence to stereotypical notions of the capable bushman, and is therefore linked with the established enactment of the national narratives. In many ways _Dundee _universalised the notion of a commercially recognisable Australiana. This is achieved through reducing Hogan/Dundee's actions to those associated with a classical, traditional, universally naturalised set of notions about the Australian character, all of which revolve around gendered (read masculine) social roles, the landscape as giver of a (gendered) national identity and of traditional (gendered) values associated with the bush.

For some critics 'Dundee films came to be seen as straightforwardly confirming impoverishing cultural and social stereotypes about Australian masculinity.\textsuperscript{37} I would go so far as to include much of Western culture's construction of masculinity. Dundee/Hogan's domination of nature, other men, competing mates of potential mates and the father of the potential mate are all seemingly conventional stereotypes of a broad Western masculinity. This is exactly one of the functions of the unquestioning, archetypical construction of the hero in this film and its Hollywood pedigree, to make Dundee/Hogan 'easily' recognisable to a wide variety of audiences. This notion is reminiscent of John Hinde's experiences of
seeing the 'Barry McKenzie film' in the early 1970s:

Sitting in with the mostly, but not overwhelmingly, male audiences that sent Barry McKenzie racing into domestic profit, I saw plainly that Barry was an up-market hero to them .... Barry was doing what they did or their boyfriends did, or would like to do ... only doing more of it, and better. 38

Internationally, just how its construction and presentation of masculinity is read, in relation to some sort of 'local reality', is up to various audiences. Personally, I can remember travelling to Britain during the height of Crocodile Dundee's popularity and being confronted with the disappointment, of some who had seen the film, at my lack of 'Dundeeness'. As time passes, the reception of the film, at least for Australian audiences slips further and further into perceptions of uncomfortable cliché and stereotype.

Australian made film and the output of the 1980s were a continuation of the national identity and nation-building projects which involved the development of, and screening of, representations of a shared, culturally derived national identity. Crocodile Dundee, however, fails to satisfy notions of this shared identity by its internationalisation of the hero identity. While Crocodile Dundee touches on indexes of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, specifically the bush legend of the capable man, enacting a nation narrative, wrapped in a saleable shroud of international filmic conventions, production values and customary narrative devices (the romantic comedy), it is in essence a facsimile of the 'hero as nation', hero and place constructed for broad consumption.

For Ross Gibson, Crocodile Dundee offers a space which looks and sounds like an 'idea' of the land. He sees the landscape in Crocodile
Dundee as being respectful of the 'nostalgia of American frontier myths' by commodifying the space, thus entering into, as Gibson calls it, a 'transnational economy.' For Dundee/Hogan the 'sounds like the place / looks like the place' nature of the spaces of the Australian bush and New York City are constructs for consumption. A panoramic 'outback' and a bustling New York 'metropolis' are the mythic landscapes of ideas of these spaces, inhabited by this hero, identifiable by the audience, at home and over there.

Mick takes Sue out into the 'real' bush, which just happens to look like a tourism commercial for Australia. There is lots of water – lakes, creeks and billabongs in the 'real' 'outback'. The film also contrasts Walkabout Creek, Mick's hometown (an index of Australia – backward, empty, dusty, slow), with New York, Sue's hometown (an index of America – progressive, bustling, shiny, dynamic). In Australia, all of the interiors seem very small and all of the exteriors are large, sometimes even vast (e.g. the view from the cliff-top), still primitive and undeveloped. By contrast, in New York, many of the interiors (particularly Mick's hotel room and the house of Sue's father) are very large and roomy, while the exteriors seem to be teeming with people and congested with buildings, modern, developed.

All of the film elements during the outback sequences endeavour to invoke an idealised Australian outback scene of travelogues and advertising (floating camera, wide vistas, animal action, sunrise and sunset). For example, at the billabong two people (we cannot see if they are Sue and Mick) are seen swimming, shot from above; they could be
anyone – even you, if you are a heterosexual, white, economically able, physically able, consumer, that is.

The camera pulls back, revealing an Eden-like, natural paradise. The two people are far from the cares of the world. In the Kakadu portion of the film there is minimal camera movement. The few camera movements are very slow pans, giving a sense of space, openness, calmness and tranquillity to the sequences. High-resolution film, wide lenses and filters are used for deep colour and a large depth of field. Advertising codes, in particular ones of framing, are employed throughout the ‘bush’ sequences to provide a linkage with notions of unity and to ‘naturalise’ Mick’s place in the bush. By placing the elements of Mick and Sue within the frame of the bush, a bush that extends far beyond the frame, we come to see them as a part of something larger. This unifying framing reminds the audience of Dundee/Hogan in the predominant intertextual position of the international construction of him as spokesman for the Australian tourist board in his many television advertisements, as an index of the Australian nation even. It seems to be the case that Hogan’s television commercials catapulted the line ‘put another shrimp on the barbie’ into becoming one of the strongest cultural and commercial indexes of a particular idea of Australia. It is comfortably deployed in popular culture into the twenty-first century as an ironic index of a cliché of the place and, more importantly, the people.

The New York sections, in contrast, endeavour to add energy and a sense of hustle and bustle through a lot of camera movement, faster editing, higher angled shots and very dense frames filled with people and
movement. At first Mick stands apart from the teeming masses, he climbs a street sign to see over their heads. However, as he conquers the city, he is shown to 'belong' through being framed within familiar city elements, the bar (a reminder of the bar he meets Sue in), the alley (a reminder of the cliffs of Kakadu), etc. In some ways the New York portion of the film is the most filmically 'proper' part as well. The Kakadu section is, in contrast, reminiscent of the familiar television part of Hogan/Dundee’s identity. Crocodile Dundee's form, as a proper film, belies its relationship with orthodox, concrete constructions of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally-derived identity of the nation, through its deployment of a gendered national type.

Rose Lucas reads Crocodile Dundee in terms of its adherence to Australian conventions of masculinity, as they are presented in a number of Australian filmic texts. Lucas links this representation of masculinity – which she identifies as both 'the pinnacle of the Australian experience and of Australian cultural identity, as well as universally representative of Australianness' – with other film texts of the 1980s: The Man from Snowy River (George Miller, 1982 and The Man from Snowy River 2 Geoff Burrowes, 1988), The Lighthorsemen (Simon Wincer, 1987), Coolangatta Gold (Igor Auzins, 1984), Gallipoli (Peter Weir, 1981), and others. The resulting uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation is on the level of an uncritical [re]presentation of a national narrative, in which 'the capable and unique man' (standing in as an index of the unique nation) is defined by his (its) ability to control his (its) physical environment. His successful domination of this landscape is
rewarded in gaining the ‘prize of the object of his desires’, ‘the woman’ (national destiny and legitimacy). Dundee wins Sue from her father and from Richard (her fiancée) through dominating both of the landscapes and its inhabitants presented in the film: ‘the bush’ (nature) and ‘the city’ (society). For Lucas this is the key enactment of the ‘conventional, phallocentric perspectives of masculinity,’42 and therefore of a particular type of orthodox, widely recognisable national type that is linked with a construction of the Australian national identity and national character.

Stephen Crofts takes a different, more empirical approach with two pieces of work that comprise a cross-cultural analysis of the critical reception of the film in the US and in the UK, and a comparison of the differences between two versions of the film text, the ‘Australian’ and the ‘world’ versions.

In the cross-cultural work, Crofts investigates some ‘culturally divergent readings of the same text.’ Crofts uses this analysis to examine ‘respective constructions of Australia, and of gender, class and ethnic politics.’43 The fundamental reception difference he found was between the UK’s cultural familiarity (through years of period drama relating to a shared history) and the US’s ethnocentrism (a factor catered for in the film through the downplaying of Dundee’s self-deprecation and Sue’s constant explanations of Dundee’s foreign colloquialisms and bad manners).44

Through his other analysis, Crofts examines the dissimilarity in a modified US version of the film, listing in detail the scene and shot variations.45 He identifies the key narrative changes the ‘world’ version makes through re-editing and re-sound mixing to achieve ‘narrative
streamlining', and to reconcile Australian outback slowness, tourist images, mateship and Ocker vulgarity. The changes also help to heighten the 'heroic' features, promoting American heroic narratives against the Australian anti-heroic, self-deprecation and language (to facilitate understanding for audiences dealing with the culturally and linguistically unfamiliar).46

Tom O'Regan and Meaghan Morris can probably be credited with producing the two most significant works on the Crocodile Dundee film text. Tom O'Regan examines the phenomenon through a study of the marketing strategy47, and Meagan Morris produces a post-modern reading in search of a story of 'appropriation', which she points out, with reference to the work of Geeta Kapur, 'resounds with the history of Western imperialism.'48 In Crocodile Dundee she sees this being expressed through an enactment of 'a post-colonial comedy of survival, with remnants of the British, land-taking, appropriative regime (bushmen, Aborigines, Darwinian 'natural' perils) emerging into the 'multinational' cultural space of American-media modernity.'49

Morris sees Dundee/Hogan as a ready-made cultural iconic figure created through his sustained earlier exposure in the 'shrimp on the barbie' tourism commercials and beer and cigarette advertisements. Like those advertisements, he is constructed to embody ideas of 'an Australia', ideas which the film expands to encompass a codified and filmic representation of a mythic landscape existing only in the intertextual / advertising space, and yet it is of course (to some degree) a space which is also a 'real' simulation.
For Morris, *Crocodile Dundee* is 'a revision of frontier mythology, not a random 'mix' of elements from it (still less an attempt to escape it).'

*Crocodile Dundee* appropriates elements from a number of frontier mythologies, popular culture references, Australian bush mythology, in fact, whatever it needs to position itself through 'the critical modification of cultural, and cinematic codes' for a very large audience identification and appeal. Therefore we find direct verbal references from the characters to Tarzan, Jungle Jim, Davy Crockett (men of the wild frontier), Fred Astaire, Cowboys, *I Love Lucy* (popular American export culture), and references to contemporary domestic and international media events such as Aboriginal land rights, uranium mining and the tourist industry. And of course we find self-referential in-jokes about the character of Mick Dundee/Hogan himself 'throw another goanna on the barbie.' His profuse smoking is also pointing to Dundee/Hogan’s ‘Anyhow have a Winfield’ persona for the (older, cigarette commercials ceased on Australian television in 1976) domestic audiences.

With the exception of Morris’s engagement with the film, O'Regan declares that too many other works of analysis and criticism of the film inadequately transcend the complex filmic and social intertextually which characterise the film and its reception and subsequent 'success'. And, of course, he is correct about the film’s success. The film’s international success, and national pleasure giving, is totally reliant on these intertextual nodes of meaning making. These types of film are very much constructed outside of the filmic experience. The audience brings into the cinema knowledge of, in this case, Dundee/Hogan’s television shows, and
his beer ads, tourist ads and cigarette ads. Additionally, the connections between Dundee and real-life Hogan were widely publicised in popular tabloid mass media. Dundee/Hogan does leave Australia (and his wife and family) to move to America to live with Sue (Linda Kozlowski) where we find them in the sequel and the sequel's sequel, all reinforcing the blend of image, life, film and reality. The most telling point is that Dundee/Hogan was widely identified as the ‘author’ of the film.\textsuperscript{53} It is ‘his’ film, he lends his identity to it as a celebrity, its star and its creator. Most audiences would be hard pushed to name the correct director, or the other writers (Hogan, John Cornell, Ken Shadie).

Tom O’Regan comprehensively charts the \textit{Crocodile Dundee} phenomenon in terms of the ‘films themselves, their production strategies, their reception, their spin-offs.\textsuperscript{54} He proposes that although \textit{Crocodile Dundee} highlighted Paul Hogan as ‘the most recognisable and popular of Australian figures both in Australia and overseas … [it was significantly] … not the preferred Australiana of Bob Ellis’s \textit{Breaker Morant}, or for that matter Barry Humphries.\textsuperscript{55} What O’Regan means by this is that the preferred Australiana has moved on from Ward’s ‘legend’ articulation of the ‘typical Australian’ – it is a move that Hogan/Dundee does not make.

In the majority of the pre-post-colonial Australian fiction narratives (many of the films of the 1970s and 1980s) the international Australian identity is often projected through an opposition with the motherland. This Australian national identity dichotomy is primarily constructed through contrasting how unlike the British we are. For a detailed discussion of how characters, such as Bazza McKenzie and the Australians in \textit{Breaker
Morant, are defined explicitly by their comparison with the British, see chapter three. By not engaging in that identity dichotomy, Crocodile Dundee bypasses a popular stratagem in the filmic representations of the preferred, shared, unique, culturally derived national identity for an obtuse, lighter and ultimately more internationally saleable Australiana that defines itself by comparison with an existing view of Australia held in America, and an unashamedly enthusiastic appropriation of 'Hollywood' filmic forms, production-values and meta narratives. Meaghan Morris calls this succeeding through 'getting Americans to like us.'

While Crocodile Dundee is, on the face of it, a filmic narrative whose hero is defined by his 'avowed' Australianness, the 'Australianess' Dundee/Hogan projects is devoid of contemporaneous indexes of a shared, unique, culturally derived national identity, constructed through an engagement with the representative referential regime. Contemporaneous national activities, such as multiculturalism, reconciliation and the impending bicentenary, are replaced by easily digestible aphorisms and obtuse references. The stand-out example of this is Dundee/Hogan's dismissal of land rights by likening it to fleas on the back of a dog arguing about who owns the dog! The film also rests on references to widely understood American (Hollywood) generic formulations and their easily recognisable filmic and narrative modes, the 'western' hero, the fortunes of a classical heterosexual couple and rugged individualism.

Dundee embraces a stylised, backward-looking, intertextual persona, through a reinterpretation of Barry McKenzie's 'hyper-Australianness' reconstructed in Dundee/Hogan's television and filmic persona – a sort of
'hyper-Hoganness'. O'Regan labels this 'fair dinkumness', which he sees as being carefully delineated from 'Ockerism' so as to make the film 'nicer,' more family friendly. Dundee/Hogan is not the Ocker of Bazza McKenzie or possessing the manly, dignified stoic mateship of Breaker Morant. Dundee/Hogan has revised, or rather edited, the regime of representational references. The set of particular elements include Australian values (mateship, a fair go and egalitarianism) and constructions of gender, class, ethnicity and the landscape. Dundee/Hogan picks and chooses some simple points of reference from within the representational reference system. For example, Dundee/Hogan universalises notions such as egalitarianism into characteristics of fairness and class mobility, thus creating a type of Australianness able to be recognised and consumed by a wider international audience, while maintaining a close association with a modified yet still 'traditional' Australian notion of egalitarianism, one which he can perform solo. Dundee/Hogan embodies references to elements of Australianness on such a fundamental level that he spans cultures, relying on simple readings of the outback bushman, and internationally recognisable clichés of Australiana, such as the 'outback', Aborigines and kangaroos. The primary Australian identity signifier at work in Crocodile Dundee is the bush as the crucible of the Australian hero's power, and the seminal site of the formation of the Australian identity. It is the birthplace of stoic endurance, the laconic larrikin and the capable man. By imbuing the land with a mythical power, a power society or culture cannot tame, the few men who are capable of surviving the land gain mythical power, too. 'In
mythic terms, therefore, the nation is feasible, but only as a collection of extraordinary individuals. These characteristics, personified in the actor and the character Hogan/Dundee in *Crocodile Dundee*, are clearly pointed out to Sue and therefore to the audience: Mick the bushman (in the more universal mode, the frontiersman), Mick the 'white Aborigine' (in the more universal mode, better than the native), Mick the buffalo hypnotiser (in the more universal mode, dominator of nature).

In the bush Mick is shown to be master of the space; he is shown to be superior to Aboriginal people. He sneaks up on Nevill (played by Aboriginal David Gulpilil, another semiotic surface inscribed with an enormous amount of filmic intertextuality; for example, in his roles in *Walkabout* he showed the lost children how to survive – now Mick shows him how to do it):

Neville: [Mick has just snuck up on Nev and is holding his knife to Nev's throat]
    Ah, Mick! You frightened shit out of me!
Mick: So I oughta, mate. Sneaking up on a man when he's rendering first aid to a lady.
Neville: Ah, is that what you were doing.

Neville walks off into the night. We hear him fall over and swear. He hates the 'bloody' bush. Mick follows him, quietly, safely and competently.

In New York City Mick quickly establishes strong and familiar relations with an assortment of characters who all respond positively to his openness – a mounted traffic cop, the Italian cab driver, street walkers Mick meets outside the neighbourhood bar (who offer him a 'freebee'! – the height of male/hero narrative acceptance). In the neighbourhood bar he befriends Gwendolyn the transvestite, in all innocence accepting her for
a 'real' woman but his subsequent ridiculing of her for fooling him is laughed off – once again reinforcing that he has developed so much social capital with these New Yorkers that he is allowed some social freedom. The black 'dude' in the New York bar which Mick's new egalitarian cab driver mate takes him to declares Mick to be 'cool'!

At a party, Mick re-meets the street walkers, and also Fran, the older woman of dubious gender, who he physically interrogates much to her excitement:

Sue: Sorry, he's from Australia.
Fran: I must go there some time!

Primarily, Mick Dundee/Hogan's brand of Australiana is a performance of one of the key Australian social values associated with the shared, national cultural identity, i.e. egalitarianism.

This 'brand' of 'Australianness', and therefore Dundee/Hogan himself, can be defined through his conscientious fairness, his competence and good humour, all aspects of the egalitarian discourse. This social value, along with mateship and 'a fair go', are the main values associated with the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation and the national identity and nation building projects. In Imagining Australia: Ideas for our future, its authors give what has become a consistent view of these values:

Australians are rightly proud of our national identity. We have our own set of values, hewn from our collective national experience, which place a premium on egalitarianism, mateship and 'a fair go'.

In the classic Russel Ward reading of the Australian Legend, these values, of the 'typical Australian,' were fired in the crucible of the
tough outback experience of men. Dundee/Hogan’s identity is linked with this regime, his ‘outback’ upbringing, his bushman’s pedigree and his ‘legendary’ character. However, he distances himself from other ways of performing ‘Australianness’, such as the ‘new nationalist’ identity with its links to the British-Australian national identity and character of the Breaker Morant/Barry McKenzie practice. Dundee/Hogan also seeks to avoid any links to the vulgarity of the ‘Ocker’. Tom O’Regan sites Hogan’s own ideas about the basis of the film’s success: Hogan maintains that the great success of the film is the distancing of his film from both ‘Ocker’ and ‘splatter’. Hogan says: ‘People like the fact it’s a nice movie. There is no spurting blood, not much violence at all, and no explicit sex.’ And of course no Ocker crudeness, no chundering.

In the film text of Crocodile Dundee, Dundee/Hogan employs implicit notions of the national identity that are defined by a relationship with a key social value of egalitarianism, resulting in a ready-made, marketable ‘Australiana’. In particular Dundee/Hogan is the embodiment of Australian egalitarianism as it has been characterised by a number of writers.

For Elaine Thompson, the focus of her work Egalitarianism in Australia is:

... largely limited to the study of egalitarianism as ‘sameness’ in the areas of social manners, or the lack of a classed society, or at least a fluid mobility between the few (economic) class levels that exist, and as racial and cultural sameness resulting in the formation of the notion of the Anglo-Celtic Australian as members of a single British species.

It is on the realm of the ‘larrikin’, of the school of ‘jack is as good as his master’ egalitarianism, that her work is focused. Interestingly,
Thompson quotes Francis Adams from 1886 and his assessment of the Australian character as a product of a unique type of egalitarianism practised in Australia. Written in 1886, Adams describes Australia thus:

This is a true republic – the truest, as I take it, in the world. In England the average man feels that he is inferior, in America that he is a superior; in Australia he feels that he is an equal .... Here the people is neither servile nor insolent, but only shows its respect of itself by its respect for others[sic].

This is the mould of egalitarianism from which Mick Dundee is cast.

Donald Horne characterises egalitarianism as a social practice that means ‘... that we have at least an appearance of equality of manners in our relations with each other (even though we are not all the same) – but that’s not a matter on which you make laws or amend constitutions.’

I see it in the opposite terms. I see the olive branch of peace between the two warring positions of equity and desire, being ‘Law’, which enshrines a respect for individual roles in society through legal mechanisms, and what might be labelled ‘Lore’ as common sense rules, which are demonstrably ‘right and fair’ in support of ‘us’ against ‘them’, implicit in the narratives of the national imagining.

In the context of the national identity performed in Crocodile Dundee egalitarianism means the right (cultural currency) and ability (the man made in the bush) to ‘stick it up them’ if they do not recognise and obey the rules. In Mick’s case he spends the entire film plot righting wrongs and standing up for his rights, and the rights of weaker characters, against, primarily, other men. In Crocodile Dundee, Mick is defined by a position as arbiter of the rules of egalitarianism, constantly sticking it up those who transgress the rules. He does this by exercising various types
of power: over nature (the water buffalo, the crocodile that attacks Sue, her father’s guard dogs), men (the city cowboys, the pimp, the muggers), women (Sue, the streetwalkers, Fran [older woman at party]), and most importantly over Richard, Sue’s lover. In *Crocodile Dundee II* (John Cornell, 1988) the stakes are upped through the introduction of a greater adversary: the macho, ruthless Latino drug lord whose actions include trying to kill Dundee and kidnapping Sue. In both films Dundee/Hogan is defined through his direct actions against ‘them’ for ‘us’, the deployment of his bush skills.

Mick Dundee’s encounters with other characters are all characterised by this starting point of respect for oneself through respect for others – and if they are unwilling to treat him as an equal, Dundee / Hogan becomes proactively egalitarian in his interpersonal interactions. These encounters range from physical violence to comically embarrassing moments. His position is always at the centre of any situation and his power as a ‘true’ Australian of the bush enables him to protect the weak and vanquish the oppressive.

He starts with the ‘city cowboys’ in the Walkabout Creek pub: In the first part of the plot, set in the Australian ‘outback,’ he is shown to be master of each part of the environment and its inhabitants: locals, visitors and nature. In the Walkabout Creek pub he disarms Sue by dancing with her and manages to ‘punch the lights out’ of a city cowboy who interferes.
Sue: [Sue and Mick are dancing] Legend has it a crocodile bit half your leg off.
Mick: [Mick rolls up his trousers] More of a love bite actually. Still, enough about me leg. Let me tell you about the rest of me. [he sings] 'Up North in the Never Never, where the land is harsh and bare. Lives a mighty hunter named Mick Dundee [points to himself] who can dance like Fred Astaire'.

Mick dips Sue, twirls her and punches the city cowboy unconscious, all in one fluid movement. The city cowboy called Mick a 'poacher'.
Mick: I don't like that kind of talk in front of a lady.

Mick goes on to defeat the giant Donk, not by brute force but through brains, kissing rather than punching.

In the denouement, Mick defeats 'the pimp', sans knife – the chauffeur (of the Harlem Warlords tribe) helping Mick dish out some rough justice with the newly acquired skill of boomerang throwing. In the most cynical reading of this occurrence, in a racially determinist way, one could see that the skill of the native is 'naturally' there, in the black driver's genes, just as Mick's bush skills are his naturally.

_Crocodile Dundee_'s 'originality' is constructed through the strong association it makes between placing Mick in situations which require him to use his learned bushman's skills and a particular Australian social skill – the social performance of egalitarianism – to win the day, to defeat the 'baddies' and to win the girl. The interesting thing about these manifestations of the national narratives is in the ways that the filmic narrative uses a unique Australian egalitarian perspective to give some 'freshness' to what otherwise is a very ordinary and orthodox fish-out-of-water and romantic comedy filmic narrative.
In each situation in the film, Dundee/Hogan is placed into a situation of conflict. He inevitably resolves the conflict through some sort of action. Dundee/Hogan's character is defined through his capability in any situation or landscape. Table 5.3, below, gives a brief representation of the episodic structure of the narrative and an outline of the elements of each oppositional struggle, action, justification and the employment of particular egalitarian characteristics to achieve a resolution.

Table 5.3. Episodic Narrative Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPOSITION</th>
<th>JUSTIFICATION</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, FAIRNESS AND COMPETENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/ City cowboys in the pub – accuses Dundee of being a poacher</td>
<td>Don’t use that language in front of a lady</td>
<td>Physical violence, downplayed with humour</td>
<td>Patience and then the use of minimal force, physical power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/ City cowboys in ‘the revenge of Skippy’ – misbehaving in the bush</td>
<td>For Sue he takes a stand</td>
<td>Shooting at the cowboys, deferring the impact with humour and kangaroo play</td>
<td>Skippy as underdog, Skill with arms and bush craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ Buffalo and crocodile (which tries to eat Sue) – nature</td>
<td>Dundee has power over nature because he is more a part of the landscape than mere animals</td>
<td>Force of will over the buffalo and the power of his big (phallic) knife directly into the brain</td>
<td>He does not ‘hurt’ the buffalo, but he kills the croc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/ Richard in the restaurant – belittling Dundee with bad manners</td>
<td>No way to treat a guest – vanquishing the other male</td>
<td>Physical violence, very little justification</td>
<td>Being treated unfairly. Not bound by social convention in his actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/ Pimp – directly challenges Dundee’s masculinity</td>
<td>No way to treat a lady, no way to treat a man like Dundee</td>
<td>Physical violence – chivalry</td>
<td>Treating the ‘street walkers’ as ‘ladies’ – Physical power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/ Bag snatcher – everyone else is inactive</td>
<td>No way to treat a victim of robbery</td>
<td>Artful physical violence</td>
<td>Protecting the ‘weak’ Physical skill with weapons – metaphorical boomerang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/ Party guests</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>Naive direct action/ intervention/ interaction with others</td>
<td>Treating all equally, without fear or favour, always a solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(old woman, street walkers, coke man, smoking woman) treat him as friend</td>
<td>equality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8/ Muggers brandish flick knife</th>
<th>No way to treat a courting couple with a knife</th>
<th>Humour and a big knife – a metaphorical ‘clip around the ears’</th>
<th>‘they’re only kids’, grown-up skill with a ‘real knife’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/ People at Sue’s father’s party and his dogs</td>
<td>Only animals, only people</td>
<td>Magical powers over nature, social skill of the egalitarian</td>
<td>All are equal, socially genuine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/ Climatic fight with pimp and henchmen</td>
<td>Direct attack</td>
<td>Physical violence, without knife – new mate coming to aid</td>
<td>Mateship, passing on skills (boomerang)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paul Hogan rode these identifiers straight to the bank. However, there were other engagements with indexes of the shared national identity, which enact and create a very different type of ‘Australianness’ with quite different results and degree/type of success. Above all, the question for the Australian film-making industry/culture in times of upheaval is this: Given the real potentials of rewriting the possibilities of success, how far to carry the project at the cost of critical or popular cultural success?

Scott Murray points out that many of the films made in the 1980s in Australia were often ‘... pitched uneasily in the no-man’s-land between art-house cinema and the commercial mainstream. They live up to the potential of neither and satisfy few.’ I would tend to agree. As the film-making industries developed through the post-war years, the revival, the renaissance and into the post-renaissance periods, the struggle between a desire to produce ‘culturally authentic’ films and financially successful films seldom coalesced.

Films like *Crocodile Dundee* confuse this spectrum even more.
When a film becomes so terrifically successful, as *Dundee* did, the critical reception exposes just how unsatisfying its type of success is to the culture. This is not to say that critically successful films are by definition more satisfying for the culture. It is a characteristic of the Australian domestic film-making industries that few films fulfil the culture’s desires to see themselves represented on the screen, in a culturally authentic way, while also being financially successful. The culture would have to wait until the 1990s to finally see some films that come close to that fully satisfying experience. In chapter six of this study, the phenomenally cultural, financial and critical success of the so-called ‘glitter’ cycle of films – films such as *The Adventures of Pricilla Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1993), *Muriel’s Wedding* (Paul J. Hogan, 1994) and *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1992) – are analysed in detail.

If *Crocodile Dundee* is placed towards the commercial mainstream end of Murray’s spectrum, then Jane Campion’s 1989 film *Sweetie* would be placed towards the art-house cinema end.

**the personal art-house film: *sweetie* (jane campion 1989)**

Kay – “I’m destined to be with you”.
Louis – “That’s a bit theatrical, isn’t it?”

(*Sweetie*)

“I want to do something modern, something about the eighties” said Jane Campion in a *Cinema Papers* interview in Cannes (May 1989). And she did – she made her personal (what could be called ‘auteur’) art-house film defined by ‘anti-Hollywood stylistic conventions’. For example, an art-house film will be episodic, tend to deal with the inner journeys of the protagonist, a journey that won’t be clearly directed at a goal. Campion’s
work *Sweetie* (1989) is such a film.

*Sweetie* tells the story of Kay and Louis. Newly engaged, they are beset by a series of ‘family’ troubles. Predominant among their troubles is the arrival of ‘Sweetie’ (Dawn, played by Genevieve Lemon), Kay’s ‘mental’ sister, with her ‘producer’ boyfriend. Additionally, Kay’s mother has left the family to go bush and find herself, and so Kay and Dawn’s father have come to live with them.

In keeping with her contemporaries (Pedro Almodóvar, Wong Kar Wai, David Lynch, Jim Jarmusch, Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman to name just a few), Campion was seeking to evoke a feeling and tone that reflected contemporary modes of ‘modern life’ and how it affects people. Feeling and style are elevated in films of this ilk onto the same plane as narrative. These films are explicitly contemporary in theme, view, style and characterisation. In this way *Sweetie* is conforming to a particular set of international filmic conventions, referencing an international filmic intertextuality in much the same way as *Crocodile Dundee* conforms to a familiar set of conventions associated with ‘Hollywood’, and refers to a different field of filmic intertextuality. The difference of the forms chosen, to express the aims of the two films, naturally led to the final product. *Dundee* sought financial success through its employment of Hollywood conventions, while *Sweetie* sought an expression of the film-maker’s artistic vision at the cost of wide popularity.

For Sue Gillett, in the films of Jane Campion there is ‘...an aesthetic at work which aims at re-visioning and refashioning images of the feminine, refusing to censure the actions of her women in the interests of
upholding the ideal of the classical body with its limited repertoire of gestures, poses and expressions.\textsuperscript{70} Gillett points to the images of women 'pissing' in \textit{The Piano} (1993), \textit{Holy Smoke} (1999) and \textit{Sweetie}, and specifically Sweetie's naked 'bum' farting from the tree-house, as examples of this type of refusal to self-censure the actions of these women.\textsuperscript{71} In much the same vein, Felicity Collins links \textit{Sweetie} with Bakhtin's description of the grotesque 'eating, drinking, defecating, copulating, birthing, ageing, decaying ... [the body] ... as a comic figure of profound ambivalence: its positive meaning is linked to birth and renewal while its negative meaning lies in decay and death.\textsuperscript{72} In direct opposition to the aesthetic of films like \textit{Crocodile Dundee}, ' ... Campion's aesthetic of the female body is one which opposes the repetitive, standardized and homogenous images of decorous female beauty manufactured by Hollywood in the person of Sue, and circulated routinely throughout other visual media such as television and magazines.\textsuperscript{73}

\textit{Sweetie} can be said to use the internationally developed conventions of these types of films, which started with the post-war French 'New Wave' and can be still found in 'art-house' cinemas in the inner suburbs of any capital city, brimming with universal themes and national idiosyncrasies and bare bums. As O'Regan argues, the Australian national cinema is a hybrid of elements – international, national and contemporary of culture and industry.\textsuperscript{74}

In keeping with art-house cinema conventions, the narrative of \textit{Sweetie} is broken down and fragmented as much as possible. For example, the framing, of which much is made in contemporary interviews
with the director and director of photography, is in the style of its international contemporaries. We see parts of the story, some is out of sight, inside. A way of achieving this is to focus the framing on a part of the narrative action, to keep some out of the frame or to focus on only the important part in that moment – to isolate a moment, to break the smooth, linear cause and effect progression of the narrative. To stop and smell the flowers, if you will. Many of the shots are framed with the main character in a lower corner and the rest of the frame composed in such a way as to give the necessary clues to the inferred reading of the scene. Kay walks into extreme close up until only her lips are visible; she says 'a question mark'.

Framing is everything in this film. The world the characters inhabit is in some ways more important than the characters themselves. For example, the film commences with Kay reclining as if on a psychiatrist’s couch, introducing us to her fear of trees (the tree is the family, the roots are the lasting damage they have done). The main recurring symbolic image in Sweetie is trees as index of the place, the physical landscape and the historical notion of a space of grief. When Kay talks of the roots, we see her feet; when she talks of her feelings, we see her face covered, all in a dappled light as if under the tree. The tree overshadows everything she does. The leafy wallpaper and shadows, and the parts of Kay that we are shown, indicate the focus. This is all very conventionally unconventional for a film of the independent art-house ilk. The framing and lighting, and the visual approach in general, give this film its style and offer the main visual channel of communicating the narrative through recurring
symbolic images.

As Kay walks to her meeting with her tea-lady, she tries to avoid the cracks in the footpath. The camera tracks along with her, the trees come between the viewer and Kay. The cracks in the footpath serve to show Kay’s superstition and fear – they are the evidence of the roots following, pushing to the surface. ‘Maybe that’s why trees scare me, its like they have hidden powers’, she tells us early in the film. The floral carpet, the prints and paintings of flowers that clutter the walls of the tea lady’s house, hint of autumn sepia and earthy tones. They all point to a theme that has something to do with inescapable roots. Trees are a constant motif, standing in for the family and the deep rooted-ness of the things that affect her. The symbolism of the narrative is to be interpreted as literalism. It is interesting at this point to briefly consider trees in Crocodile Dundee. The trees, or more specifically the bush, or in the terms of this study this place, in Crocodile Dundee, stand as an index of the nation. In Crocodile Dundee it is the place of becoming for Mick, the place in which he became the capable man who is endowed with the ability to achieve resolution. In both films, as in the wider Australian culture, various constructions of nature/landscape are inescapable references in constructing Australianness.

Sweetie’s meaning-making does not rely on the kind of social aesthetic intertextually or stereotypical narrative familiarity of the preferred Hollywood convention; rather it relies on representation that triggers a knowing gaze from the female audience. Gillett recalls the experience she had on first viewing the film; she remembers ‘the unique experience of being known [italics in original].’ It should be remembered that this
'knowing gaze' is a reminder that women cannot stand in for the nation. Women, like the land, are bearers of meaning, not makers of meaning. This masculinist reading of national identity is a position this study identifies as being a part of the representational regime identified previously. And in this lies the reason for the distance between the representations of Australianness in *Sweetie* and more traditional notions of a unique, Australian, shared national identity constructed through relationships with the traditional referential system.

In *Sweetie*, Dawn (Sweetie) falls and lays dying in the dappled light under the tree that held her palace. The tree stands silently over her and the rest of the family. 'This is family business. It will be handled by the family,' says her father. But her father's memory is of his little princess – in flashbacks Kay and Dawn are remembered as children. In the post-colonial reading of *Sweetie* the Empire (the family) denies its role in genocide (Dawn is dead by the end of the story).

Campion's *Sweetie* offers a narrative of 'lived cultural experience' of contemporary women's lives. It achieves this by contrasting the universally naturalised set of notions about the Australian character, all of which revolve around gendered social roles, the landscape as giver of gendered identity and of traditional masculine values associated with the bush, and representations of a problematic alternative. This overall shape is achieved through the narrative linking of two domestic structures presented in the film: Kay's (played by Karen Colston) family of origin, mum, dad and Sweetie; and Kay's family of choice, the family she is trying to establish with Louis (played by Tom Lycos). It is interesting to think that
these readings of the gendered nature of the characters roles in film narratives like *Sweetie* have been developed by theorists like Laura Mulvey out of an engagement with psychoanalysis.\(^7\)\(^6\) For this analysis I would evoke a theoretical position informed by a reaction to psychoanalysis (or more particularly by psychiatry), one of anti-psychoanalysis, anti-psychiatry.

**a bit of anti-psychiatry**

The existential psychiatrist David Cooper, a colleague and collaborator of R.D. Lang, and an exponent of ‘anti-psychology’ (a radical British-based approach to mental health in the 1960s and 1970s),\(^7\)\(^7\) has placed the damaging influence of the family structure and its function as the primary social mediating force as lying at the centre of a range of humanity’s mental health issues. In his critique of the family, Cooper is primarily concerned with ‘the nuclear family unit in capitalist society in this part of this century [1970s].’ His work covers ‘... the social functioning of the family as an ideological conditioning device .... in any exploitative society.’ Cooper sees family structures replicated throughout society as reinforcing:

... the effective power of the ruling class in any exploitative society by providing a highly controllable paradigmatic form for every social institution. So we find the family form replicated through the social structures of the factory, the union branch, the school (primary and secondary), the university, the business corporation, the church, political parties and governmental apparatus, the armed forces, general and mental hospitals, and so on. There are always good or bad, loved or hated 'mothers' and 'fathers', older and younger 'brothers' and 'sisters', defunct or secretly controlling 'grandparents'. Each of us, in terms of Freud’s discovery, transfers bits of our original family experience in the ‘family of origin’ on to each other in our ‘family of procreation’ (our ‘own’ wife and children) and on to each other in whatever situation we work.\(^7\)\(^8\)
In the case of Kay’s family, good mental health is thin on the ground. *Sweetie*, while a parody, is also a warning. Cooper’s work is useful in the context of this present study as a metaphorical starting point for an analysis of *Sweetie* as an allegory of the [personal] colonising force of modernity. Kay’s story can therefore be seen in terms of her being oppressed by a kind of commodified, industrialised, urbanised, capitalist family structure in the Australian context. Philosopher Iris Marion Young notes that ‘oppression’ is composed of five main factors: ‘exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence … delimitations which marginalised social groups experience in distinctive ways.’ Kay is suffering from oppression in each of these five ways, as Sweetie does too – their shared oppressor is the family. It is no coincidence that Kay and Sweetie’s mother, Flo, has gone bush to find herself, and that the family is healed and re-united in the bush, at a bush dance, with ‘real’ bush-men, in Ward’s legend mould.

Kay’s family of origin is the embodiment of a neo-colonial traditional social system. Kay and Dawn’s (Sweetie’s) mother Flo (played by Dorothy Barry) leaves the family to travel to the outback, once again the place of becoming, where she becomes a camp cook on a cattle station. By escaping to the outback she is attempting to return to those purer traditional values associated with that space, because she feels more comfortable identifying with these traditional roles/characters/space than with her own life/identity.

Kay’s chosen family has a colonised structure. Dawn (Sweetie) acts as a colonising force on Kay’s chosen family, attempting to conquer and
destroy it the way the family of origin ultimately destroys her. Thirteen months after the start of their relationship, something comes between Louis and Kay – a tree. Louis wants to plant a tree as a sort of symbol of their living together. This is the event that begins to push Kay and Louis apart. She is terrified of trees, of their roots. Louis compounds this by saying that in their new relationship Kay is like a sister to him. The last thing Kay wants is to be reminded that she is a sister.

Dawn (Sweetie) attempts to come between Kay and Louis by seducing Louis, thus emphasising the corrupting nature of sex and sexuality in the traditional family. Dawn’s incestuous, or at the very least sexually inappropriate, relationship with her father is constantly foregrounded. One of the clearest examples of this is the sexualised bathing of their father in Kay’s house in full view. Dawn does not close the door – she is showing off her status rather than being engaged in something shameful. Dawn’s flagrant sexual dis-inhibition, touching, talking and nudity emphasise the problem in Kay and Louis’ relationship. Unlike Dawn, Kay appears sexually frigid in her relations with Louis. Sue Gillette reads Dawn’s behaviour in terms of her place in her father’s eyes: ‘Dawn, her father’s Sweetie, is the favoured daughter: the paralysis of Kay’s sexuality, her loss of sexual desire is linked to her relative neglect.’ Thus the situation is set up in which for Kay to ‘succeed’ in the favoured terms of the family it needs to be through the favoured form of sexuality, sexual performance and sexualisation.

As an index of larger things, Kay’s social and sexual discomfort is rooted in her discomfort and inability to deal with her family of origin’s
problems. When they are around, this general social and sexual inhibition is emphasised and heightened. Early in the film Kay speaks of her fear of the tree roots growing under the house and coming into her bedroom – fear of receiving the same treatment as Dawn (Sweetie), yet being jealous of the attention Dawn (Sweetie), and not she, receives. Dawn (Sweetie) seems to flaunt her sexuality via her loud sex with Bob. After witnessing the bathing, Kay lies on her bed ambiguously digesting the scene. She withdraws from participating in the family structure, if it means that she, too, will have to participate, in the family, in this way. Whenever family issues are forced into her view, she is less capable of social (and sexual) interaction and tends to withdraw. Dawn (Sweetie) tends to do the opposite. Dawn’s exhibitionist reaction to her family tends to overshadow the extreme nature of Kay’s reaction to the family.

Confused relationships crowd the narrative; characters are variously described and labelled as friend, producer, girlfriend, sister, neighbour, fiancé, work colleagues, mother-daughter, father-daughter, father-mother. Within this interpersonal complexity, fundamentally this is Kay’s story. It is one based on intra-personal and inter-personal conflicts. She is battling with her loneliness, her relationship with Louis, the people at work, her sister, her family, herself. However, she sees Dawn (Sweetie) as the cause of all her problems. But what did the family do to Dawn (Sweetie)? When we first encounter Dawn (Sweetie) she is seen fleetingly running like a naughty child into a bedroom; she says ‘uh-oh’, knowing she is in trouble again. Kay describes her to Louis as a friend of hers who is ‘a bit mental’.
In reviews of the film, writers commonly use words like 'uncommonly haunting', 'brave' and 'dark humour', in an attempt to emphasise the extreme nature of the message. They obviously feel that challenging the traditional family structure and pointing out its potential destructiveness and limitations is a brave thing to do. It is true that Campion's film is very strong in its almost anti-family construction. The narrative requires Dawn's death before Kay is free to construct a unit identity with Louis without the shadow of her family being ever-present. There is no reference to it as a 'feminist' film, though surely the plight of Kay, Flo and Dawn is attributable to a patriarchal value system upheld by society in structures such as the family, which replicates conservative gendered power structures.

While this film constantly attacks traditional values in the manifestation of the family, it offers only brief glimpses of an alternative possibility. When we first meet Louis he seems very much in the mould of a traditional male role, particularly in his workplace (and in his relationship with the women surrounding him). After he goes to live with Kay we see him develop into a different sort of person. For example, he is shown to regularly attend meditation classes, he quits his job at the bank and becomes a writer working from home. While he may have had these things in him or had done these things before, we could not see this about him. These changes are linked with his relationship to Kay – they were repressed while he was adhering to the traditional social roles expected of him, but are allowed to blossom once he breaks free of these values. The sock-clad feet, warm, comfortable and insulated, in the final scenes, give
some hope that happiness is possible if your past is killed off.

_Sweetie_ stands on the edge of the '90s, by assigning traditional values and social roles as a negative but inevitable part of Kay's family of origin. Campion seems to be saying that in structures such as the traditional family, indexes such as modernity, suburbanisation, the dog, the backyard, gendered roles, and of course mum, dad, two-point-four kids and the traditional value systems tend to be present. _Sweetie_ is the playing out of the notion that if a younger generation is attempting to break away from replicating them, at least initially, and lean towards a more contemporary problematised self-identity in their reaction to the family, then the road will be long and hard but the reward might just be worth it. In the context of the focus of this study, I read Campion as also showing that the continuing generations reinforce and relive and carry on the tradition of the values associated with the cultural (and in this case social) identity of the Australian nation building and national identity project in much the same way that the family reinforces and relives and carries on its own project.

**conclusions**

The films of the 1980s to a large extent reinterpreted the myths and legends of Australian identity in the classic intractable mould to create a hybrid cinema composed of international and national elements. The examples explored above demonstrate how varied this process can be. _Crocodile Dundee_ reinvigorates and updates the bushman through Dundee/Hogan's celebrity to create a widely held view of Australian identity that relates back to the legend school. This film is not as much a
parody as *Barry McKenzie* – it took the business and the Dundee/Hogan intertextual ties too seriously – yet it was just as powerful in shaping views of the Australian identity in the minds of cinema audiences worldwide. Jane Campion’s *Sweetie* deals with an Australianness highlighted by political references to the ‘traditional nationalist value’ system in order to criticise its extreme possibilities.

The 1980s tax concession law changed things, at least for a while, and many voices and visions joined in a national frenzy of filmmaking. Most ‘investors’ and ‘executive producers’ went back to their dental practices, their merchant banks or retired to their avocado plantations, but some went on to emerge in the 1990s with a slowly burgeoning, re-imagining of the cultural identity of the Australian national project in Australian made cinema. It would be recognised and celebrated worldwide for its quirkiness, freshness and, paradoxically, for its representations of seemingly very un-Australian counter-archetypes.
APPENDIX E

TABLE 5.1. Generic Film Texts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FILM (director, year)</th>
<th>GENRE/ GENEALOGY</th>
<th>DOMINANT THEMES/ AUSTRALIANNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Coolangatta Gold. (Igor Auzins, 1984)</td>
<td>Male ensemble films (AFC genre): Gallipoli</td>
<td>Battlers, mates – male competitive/ physical effort on a mythic level: sport as war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razorback. (Russell Mulcahy, 1984)</td>
<td>International generic: Mad Max</td>
<td>'video-clip horror' for the international market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome. (Dr George Miller, 1985)</td>
<td>Hollywood genre sequel: Crocodile Dundee II</td>
<td>Mish-mash of myth – the hero in his final state as Jesus; tossing the money lenders from the temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangaroo. (Tim Burstall, 1986)</td>
<td>Old school AFC literary adaptation: The Devil's Playground</td>
<td>British turned Australian – men and men, men and women/radicalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crocodile Dundee. (Peter Faiman, 1986)</td>
<td>High production values Hollywood: Walkabout</td>
<td>Icon, myth, the bush in its rightful place as giver of power – more culture war, more Australianness than you can point a stick at!, 'Success through getting the Americans to like us'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Game (Mario Andreacchio, 1986)</td>
<td>Violent, exploitation: Wake In Fright</td>
<td>Kangaroo hunting turns into human hunting!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les Patterson Saves the World. (George Miller, 1987)</td>
<td>Neo-Ocker farce: The Adventures of Barry McKenzie</td>
<td>Nihilistic Australian/Ocker comedy showing the very darkest of the negative side of Ocker Australianness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lighthorsemen. (Simon Wincer, 1987)</td>
<td>Old school AFC: The Man From Snowy River</td>
<td>Romantic nationalism applied with a trowel – mates, diggers, the bushman, the battler.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulevard of Broken Dreams. (Pino Amenta, 1988)</td>
<td>Australian 80s generic: Far East</td>
<td>Contemporary 'Carlton' kitchen sink drama – John Waters doing a good Peter Finch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead Calm. (Phillip Noyce, 1988)</td>
<td>High production values Hollywood: Crocodile Dundee</td>
<td>The sea as a desert – fear of the other, violent male culture over the female nurture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Table 5.2 Familiar Australiana
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FILM (Director, year)</th>
<th>GENRE/ GENEALOGY</th>
<th>DOMINANT THEMES/ AUSTRALIANNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annie's Coming Out. (Gil Brealey, 1984)</td>
<td>Social realist: 27A</td>
<td>Heroic struggle over almost insurmountable odds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver City. (Sopha Turkiewicz, 1984)</td>
<td>AFC / social realist: Mike &amp; Stefani</td>
<td>'cultural integration' as melodramatic love story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke &amp; Wills. (Graeme Clifford, 1985)</td>
<td>AFC historical reproduction: Eureka Stockade</td>
<td>Mythic men as human beings – folk heroes given life (coming of age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Beatie Bow. (Donald Crombie, 1985)</td>
<td>AFC historical reconstruction: Picnic at Hanging Rock</td>
<td>Teenage bodice ripper – strong links to notions of personal/community history in a fantastic narrative setting (coming of age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bliss. (Ray Lawrence, 1985)</td>
<td>Quirky/Art-house/almost Ocker: Don's Party</td>
<td>The 'cancer ridden hell of city life' in contemporary Australia – '80s writing on the wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emoh Ruo. (Denny Lawrence, 1985)</td>
<td>Late Ocker: Puberty Blues (grown up)</td>
<td>Australia dream / nightmare – battlers – devoid of social comment or satire (coming of age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around The World in 80 Ways. (Stephen Maclean, 1986)</td>
<td>Australian suburban gothic kitsch: The Night The Prowler</td>
<td>Post-Ocker surreal family comedy pushing the Ocker farce towards the daggy end of the spectrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling North. (Carl Schultz, 1986)</td>
<td>David Williamson (a genre in himself): The Club</td>
<td>The changing face of bourgeois values in Sea-Change Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm. (Nadia Tass, 1986)</td>
<td>Quirky Australian: The Odd Angry Shot</td>
<td>Mateship over adversity – disability / marginalisation of men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dot and the Koala (and Keeto, and the Whale)</td>
<td>Pure Smiley</td>
<td>Cutie Australian kids and cuddly Australian animals in cartoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fringe Dwellers (Bruce Beresford, 1986)</td>
<td>Stab at revisiting Jedda</td>
<td>Ineffective, backward looking, sentimental and complacent – strictly for domestic consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Love Alone (Stephen Wallace, 1986)</td>
<td>AFC genre My Brilliant Career</td>
<td>Attempts to catch hold of a bit of 'The Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval' through periodisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm (Nadia Tass 1986)</td>
<td>Almost 'Ocker' Stork</td>
<td>Uniquely Australian humour of the 'quirky and ordinary' kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool Change (George Miller, 1986)</td>
<td>High Country Australiana Man From Snowy River</td>
<td>Unofficial sequel to Man From Snowy River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Beatie Bow (Donald Crombie, 1986)</td>
<td>Smiley meets Back to The Future</td>
<td>'Young peoples' fantasy with wide appeal through solid film-story telling of Ye-Olden-Days in Old-Sydney-Town</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ch. 5. endnotes


5. Ibid. p. 3.


8. Dermody, Susan and Elizabeth Jacka. (1988a) op. cit. p. 3.


17. Stratton, David. (1990) op. cit. p. 3.


22. For an extensive analysis, detailed description and thorough overview of the Australian film-making cinema/industry in the 10BA period see Dermody & Jacka 1988a.

23. Please note this is not Dr George Miller, director of the Mad Max films etc.


31. Ibid.

O'Regan, Tom. (1988) op. cit. p. 156.

See Baxter, John. (1986) op. cit.


O'Regan seems to be pointing to Ruth Abbey & Jo Crawford (1987) 'Crocodile Dundee or Davy Crockett?' *Meanjin* 2. Sited in O'Regan, Tom. (1988) op. cit. p. 158.


Gibson, Ross. 'Formative Landscapes.' Paper presented at the *Back of Beyond: Discovering Australian film and television* / presented by the Australian Film Commission and the UCLA Film and Television Archive in association with the Australian Bicentennial Authority, Los Angeles 1988. p. 29.

Again, this is not Dr George Miller, director of the Mad Max films etc.


Ibid. pp. 16-19.

Ibid.

O'Regan, Tom. (1988) op. cit.

Morris, Meaghan. (1998) op. cit. p. 244.

Ibid. p. 244.


Ibid. p. 243.


Ibid.


Paul Hogan quoted in O'Regan, Tom. (1996) op. cit. p. 162.


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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>For a seminal article on the notion of Art-House cinema characteristics see: Bordwell, David. (1979). 'Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice.' <em>Film Criticism</em> 4, no. 1 (Fall).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Ibid. p. 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>It is interesting to note that Brian Trenchard – Smith was one of the most prolific directors of this period, one of the greatest exponents (at least in terms of volume) of genre films, starting in 1975 he went to Hollywood in the later 1980s, to a solid career in telly-movies, direct-to-video, schlock horror and violent fight movies (the titles of his films leave little to the imagination). Some of Trenchard-Smith's output includes: The Love Epidemic (1975); The Man from Hong Kong (1975); Stuntmen (1976); Deathcheaters (1976); Stunt Rock (1978); Hospitals Don’t Burn Down (1978); Turkey Shoot (1982); Day of the Assassin (1979); BMX Bandits (1983); Jenny Kissed Me (1986); Frog Dreaming (1986); Dead-End Drive In (1986); Strike of the Panther (1988); Day of the Panther (1988); Out of the Body (1989); Dangerfreaks (1989); The Siege of Firebase Gloria (1989); Night of the Demons 2 (1994); (straight to video) Leprechaun 3 (1995); (straight to video) Leprechaun 4: In Space (1997); (straight to video) Atomic Dog (1998); (television) Megiddo: The Omega Code 2 (2001); In Her Line of Fire (2006).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If most now agree that the revival of the seventies self-consciously (even self-importantly) busied itself with representing the nation’s history, many would also argue, that the eighties attempted to move away from this ‘national’ project towards a wider range of more idiosyncratic, contemporary and (paradoxically, perhaps) more generic films. The relation between film and the national identity in the nineties is difficult to predict but it seems likely to develop the directions of the eighties rather than the concerns of the seventies.

(Graeme Turner)↑

While there have been a number of shifts in the generic frames and thematics of film texts from this period [1980s & 1990s], it is possible to locate within each of them a common element: a rejection of the explicit rhetorics of nation and nationality that so dominated the first decade of the revival. Indeed, within our most recent films, the foregrounding of a representative “Australian-ness” so clear in the films of the seventies gives way to a more precise interest in the local or the regional.

(Graeme Turner)↓

introduction

On 10 December 1992, Prime Minister Paul Keating made his landmark speech at Redfern Park, at the Australian launch of the International Year for the World’s Indigenous People. Reconciliation, land rights and the Mabo native title decision were just one part of his so-called ‘big picture’ approach to the Prime Ministership, which also included making Australia a republic, and furthering economic and cultural ties with Asia. In his Redfern speech he said (as sitting Prime Minister it should be remembered) that reconciliation begins with acknowledging past wrongs and crimes:

It begins, I think, with the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion.↓
Less than four years later, John Howard become Prime Minister (2 March 1996) and with him came a very different approach to reconciliation, the republic and the engagement with Asia. The Howard Government oversaw the weakening of native title with the Wik ten-point plan, the defeat of the republic referendum (6 November 1999) and a shift away from a political and cultural to a more purely economic engagement with Asia. Perhaps the most memorable occurrence in the 1996 election of the Howard Government, and with it the defeat of the Keating government, was the election of the independent from Oxley, Pauline Hanson.

On 10 September 1996, Pauline Hanson made her maiden speech in the Senate chamber of the Federal Parliament. Her position was one of railing against the inequities she saw in contemporary Australian society, promoted by those ‘... who control the various taxpayer funded industries that flourish in our society, servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalisms, and a host of other minority groups.’ She went on to declare:

... I am fed up to the back teeth with the inequities that are being promoted by the government [the recently defeated Keating government] and paid for by the taxpayer under the assumption that Aboriginals are the most disadvantaged people in Australia. 

No discussion of the Australian social and cultural landscape in the 1990s can escape the Pauline Hanson phenomenon. The election of the popular, xenophobic (please explain!?) right wing candidate at the 1996 federal election caused a dramatic reassessment of the trajectory of the post-colonial possibilities of the Australian national imagining. The 'race issue' became a prominent discourse in the wider public arena with Hanson's emergence. That the official policies of multiculturalism, Aboriginal reconciliation and (non-white) immigration should come under such a fundamental attack, with the support of (possibly large?) sections
of the Australian community, and with the tacit acquiescence of the federal government, overnight threw into high relief the underlining tensions in notions of the Australian national identity and nation building projects. Questions of who could take part in the national identity and nation building projects, and whether race was a hindrance to that participation, were asked. The enduring effects of the Hanson phenomenon on Australian made films will be more the focus of the next chapter. The focus of this chapter is the embryonic development of this type of return to narrow notions of who could belong.

The Australian made cinema of the early 1990s holds little acknowledgement of these extreme forces at play in the broader society. In the 1990s, Australian made cinema, if anything, exhibited an optimism for the future of the projects and was seemingly blind to the excesses of the more extreme side of politics, content to refer to the established markers of Australianness and the nation for domestic and international consumption.

What happened to the Australian national identity and nation building projects? Was Keating's mea culpa too much for the culture to live with? What happened to Australianness in the 1990s or should we not be so shocked? Was this a part of the culture that had been there all of the time? The area of analysis for this chapter is to examine whether the representations of the national story as a part of the national identity and nation building projects, in the films of the period (1991-1996), reflect this reactionary shift.

Graeme Turner categorises the Australian film industry/culture in the late 1980s as being marked by a shift away from the overt practice of
the national identity-driven 'national' project model – with its explicit themes and particular set of representations of an 'Australianness' that informed many of the film texts of the 1970s and early 1980s – towards a different future, which involved more generic forms.\(^7\) He foresaw the films of the 1990s moving more in the direction of the 1980s than in the overt national identity direction of the 1970s. I argue in this chapter that a new engagement with the traditional referential regime was forged in the 1990s concurrently with attempts to incorporate new, more problematic alternative reference points, reconciliation being the predominant, 'alternative' theme to emerge in this period (1991-1996).

**the 1980s**

David Myers asks 'are contemporary Australian films hopelessly nostalgic and ideologically biased?'\(^8\) He was talking about the late 1980s but that question should be asked of each era of Australian made films. In the 1990s, it seemed that the Australian film industry/culture had returned to a model little removed from a combination of the overt 'national project' days of the 1970s and the generic structures of the 1980s. This temptation to seek the path of least resistance in stamping some easily recognisable 'Australianness' on a film text – by referring unproblematically to established traditional markers of the nation, and its attendant national identity – seems too great for some filmmakers. Graeme Turner sees the development of this unproblematic product being tied up with notions of an authentic Australia being one that produces, '... a particular, privileged, set of definitions: one preferred version of Australia. The effect is exclusive, elitist, hegemonic.'\(^9\) A narrow definition of notions of 'The Nation' seems, nevertheless, to be an inescapable focus for many cultural practitioners. A
further result of this practice is the development of particular film-making modes, genres or formations which suit, privilege and promote certain constructions of Australianness.

Further to this study's discussion of Australianness in Australian made films, this chapter identifies the emergence of new types of filmic formations that, due to their limited natures, uniqueness and unity, are labelled film cycles. How they differ from other formations, genres and groupings of Australian made films identified by this study, and the justification for labelling them cycles, will be an embedded theme throughout this chapter.

The film examples drawn from these cycles are analysed for their engagements with the representative regimes of meaning making in the Australian national identity and nation building projects, and are examined to explore the contemporaneous state, aims and condition of the projects. This period (1991-1996) is, in retrospect, a watershed in Australian political, social and cultural life. It comes between the recognition of the legitimacy of 'native title' (June 1992) and Prime Minister Paul Keating's 'Redfern' Speech (December 1992), and the election of the Howard Government (March 1996) and with it the election of One Nation's Pauline Hanson.

One of the key characteristics of this period is the optimism expressed in much of the public discourse: optimism around issues of reconciliation between indigenous peoples and the broader Australian society; the consolidation of a pluralist society with multiculturalism becoming a greater part of the national landscape; with Australia taking an active role in Asia; and the realisation of making Australia a republic. Many
writers, commentators and academics seem to have been taken by surprise by the shift away from this agenda towards a backlash in the 1996 election. Prior to the 1996 election, many foresaw the projects moving further into a mature post-colonial phase. The conditions under which they thought this is another embedded theme of this chapter.

As in other periods discussed in this study, the main focus of this chapter is in the area of meaning making and the culture’s engagement with exploring the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation through the use of reference points drawn from the referential regime.

In this period the reference points used tended to focus on mateship and what this study identifies as un-mateship. Through an analysis of the films *The Adventures of Pricilla – Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994) and *Death In Brunswick* (John Ruane, 1990) these notions will be explored in further depth. An engagement with themes of ethnicity and reconciliation, in particular struggling with an emerging post-colonialality, will be explored through an analysis of the film *Vacant Possession* (Margot Nash, 1994). To a lesser degree this chapter also analyses some references to class through the representations of characters and their relationships being defined through reference to the ‘workplace’ and workplace relations. For the discussion of the uses of the ‘workplace’ and workplace relations as an expression of class positions and relationships, an analysis of the film *Proof* (Jocelyn Moorhouse, 1991) will be also undertaken.

This chapter identifies that in this period (1991-1996) much deeper engagements with parts of the representative regime were undertaken,
resulting in great cultural, critical and economic success for some films. The main focus of this chapter is to unpack these deep engagements, and to formulate some thoughts as to why some films were so successful with both national and international audiences, critics and the culture more broadly.

To facilitate an analysis of the changing (and in some cases static or even reactionary) representations of Australianness in Australian made cinema in the 1990s, an acknowledgement of a structural pattern of cycles (some unique to the period, and some not) in the filmic output of the period needs to be undertaken. In the Australian film-making landscape, in the 1990s, a number of these cycles can be identified.

**the state of the industry/culture: film industry context: film cycles**

Into the 1990s, 'Australianness' in Australian made cinema developed out of a range of representations that, while beginning the processes of re-imagining the representations of the Australian identity and national building projects, could not escape unproblematic references to the representative regime in order to produce that Australianness.

The absence of tasteful period literary adaptations does not necessarily signal the absence of a kind of national identity quest. This seems to be mostly in reaction to the rapidly globalising cultural world. It seems true in part to say that the identity focus in the early 1990s did shift with these globalising trends, away from the national towards the local or the regional. Graeme Turner suggested this would happen (with 'work' and 'the city' becoming increasingly important anchors, for example – I am thinking here of *Muriel's Wedding* (Paul J. Hogan, 1994), in particular)."
Muriel's home town, Porpoise Spit, a thinly disguised Gold Coast (or is it Port Macquarie?), stands as an index of the traditional, corrupt old Australia, while Sydney holds new possibilities, opportunities and relationships for Muriel. The representations of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation in the period did move some distance away from the traditional indexes used to stamp types of Australianness in Australian made film texts that had their height in the 1970s with the AFC genre films. The filmic representations of the national identity and national character in the 1990s, try as they might, could not escape too far from the core identity markers of traditional Australian national culture: the representative regime.

Any discussion of the films of the 1990s is dominated by the domestically and internationally successful popularist films that were a part of a very distinct stylistic cycle of the 'quirky' or 'glitter' films, the triptych of usual suspects – *The Adventures of Priscilla – Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1993), *Muriel's Wedding* (Paul J. Hogan, 1994) and *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1992), and some 'wannabe's' like *Cosi* (Mark Joffe, 1995), *All Men Are Liars* (Gerard Lee, 1995) and *Billy's Holiday* (Richard Wherrett, 1995).

Tom O'Regan identifies an important characteristic of Australian cinema being what he called the 'ordinariness and otherness' of it. The success of the 'glitter cycle' of films is in part due to its uses of ordinariness and otherness as concurrent juxtaposed narrative devices deployed in the construction of a recognisable and yet complex Australianness. One of the larger questions this study would like to consider is whether the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived
identity of the nation is to be found in the space created by the contradictions, whether it be in O'Regan's construction of the ordinariness and otherness, or in the inescapabilities I suggest in the need to draw references from the regime of representational references that can be discerned in certain film examples?

Much of the 'comedy' and 'identity in transition' in the filmic narratives of the glitter cycle revolves around the physical juxtaposition of the seemingly normal with the glitteringly fabulous – perhaps best exemplified by the use of the Bonds singlet and the frocks in *Strictly Ballroom*. Scott Hastings (Paul Mercurio), the central male character, practises in his plain white singlet until he is transformed into his 'suit of lights' alter-ego on the dance floor – so popular was this identity/product placement that images of him were used in Bonds advertising.

A film-formation that is of interest to this chapter is a cycle of generic films defined with much of the aspirations of the 1980s but with better production values than what had come before, and a closer aping of the conventions of international cinema codes. This is not to say that this cycle lacks representations of 'Australianness'; on the contrary, much of the 'local' and international identification relies on a strong identification with certain notions of 'Australianness'. Films like *Flirting* (John Duigan, 1990), *The Big Steal* (Nadia Tass, 1990), *Frauds* (Stephan Elliott, 1992), *Metal Skin* (Geoffrey Wright, 1994), *Doing Time For Patsy Cline* (Chris Kennedy, 1996) and *Heaven's Burning* (Craig Lahiff, 1997) are very good examples of a hybridisation and domestication of other cinematic sets of codes employed by a more professional domestic Australian film-making culture seeking national cultural and international financial success.
There was also in the 1990s a re-emergence of a high quality serious cinema practice cycle (a sort of post-AFC genre?), a cycle with a film-school pedigree, often films made by women or immigrants aimed at the emerging Dendy/Palace middle brow, inner-city cinema scene and international film festival circuit – films like *Head On* (Ana Kokkinos, 1998), *Floating Life* (Fu Sheng) (Clara Law, 1996), *Vacant Possession* (Margot Nash, 1994), *Traps* (Pauline Chan, 1993) and *The Last Days Of Chez Nous* (Gillian Armstrong, 1991). This cycle also has a 'wannabe' association in films such as *The Nostradamus Kid* (Bob Ellis, 1992) and *Dust of The Wings* (Lee Rogers, 1996).

A sub-grouping of films from this cycle explored, from previously unseen vantages, issues of colonialism and imperialism. Films like *Vacant Possession* (Margot Nash, 1995) and *Radiance* (Rachel Perkins, 1998) place questions of reconciliation, both personal and cultural, in the centre of their narratives. These themes were beginning to be explored in film discourses that offered few easy answers and pointed to just how little had changed in a hundred years of federation, all without resorting to colonial periodisation. Films like *Floating Life* and *Traps* posed questions of imperialism, identity and place in new ways, with new voices. However, it should be remembered that all new voices, if their aim is to create some Australianess, must employ, at least in the initial stages of development, the traditional regime of representational references, and in particular some engagement with the values associated with the regime.
values, mateship and un-mateship

‘The Values for Australian Schooling’ which was released in 2005 as a part of the incumbent conservative government’s ‘Values Education Program’ was an attempt to reinvigorate and promulgate a traditional reading of ‘Australian values’. It employs directly visual references of one of the clearer signposts of a ‘classic’ institutional Australian core value: mateship. The representation of mateship in the ‘Values Education Program’ is strongly referenced in the person of Simpson Kirkpatrick – ‘The man with the donkey’. It is no coincidence that the watermark image in ‘The Framework’ is a photo representation of the war memorial’s official 1988 statue of Simpson and the Donkey by Peter Corlett.

Why was this image chosen to underpin the listing of a collection of vague rhetorical attempts at articulating the social values secondary school children ‘should be aspiring too’, in some contrast to the economic aspirations of their parents? What are the values which can be said to lie at the heart of the Australian national identity and nation building projects?

These values are difficult to comprehensively articulate because they change with context and contemporaneous hegemonic focus. And yet, as a vivid index of the national social/cultural identity, they are often recklessly deployed by politicians, pundits and cultural producers, without exactness, uniformity or definition. These political, public and cultural discursive deployments – while being fluid, contextual, contestable, esoteric, obscure and mysterious – are too often seen as being ‘unchanging’, ‘natural’ or ‘relevant’.

Graeme Turner suggests that what he calls the Australian
stereotype emerges as a character based on a number of characteristics. Turner's reading of the national character is not incompatible with my reading of the referential regime and the resulting reading of Australianness in my analysis of the film examples. Turner lists his characteristics of the national stereotype as being:

1. Communal rather than individualist values, heavily over determined by work
2. egalitarian in sentiment if often intolerant in practice
3. dependent upon a defining opposition between the Australian and the British, the national and the colonial
4. figured forth at its most elemental in the Australian's battle with the landscape
5. rather than with a particular kind of social engagement or philosophy.  

Is it impossible to talk of the collective identity of a nation without talking about individual identity? Perhaps at this point it is useful to consider the individual identity along with the collective identity, in this case the identity of the national projects.

The journeys of individual and collective identity are, for Leszek Kolakowski, impossible to talk about without reference to each other. He sees the personal and the collective identity being, in part, the expression of memory, and states

... there can be no personal identity without the memory which makes it conscious – in other words, without the consciousness of one's history.  

Kolakowski sees collective and personal identity being characterised by five very similar aspects.

For the 'cultural and existential phenomenon' that is personal identity, Kolakowski identifies the following as the five component elements:

1. Substance, the soul-body connection, the 'I' in identity
2. memory, the consciousness of one's own history
3. anticipation, hope, fear, uncertainty, joy
4. body, my body is my own, but the memory of its history is incomplete
5. beginnings, I know where I came from.
Kolakowski goes on to describe the elements of the collective identity, using ethnic communities and nations as examples of collective entities. Interestingly, Kolakowski points out in his discussion of national consciousness his belief that when

\[ ... \text{we speak of nations, we usually have in mind historically well-established ethnic communities, most often European ones, and we are reluctant to use the term more widely – to apply it, for example, to African or Asian tribes or even to remote outposts of European civilization in North or South America or in Australia.} \]

While it may be true that generally when we think of nations we think of the ethnic/political nation states of Europe, the events of the end of the twentieth century have demonstrated that those ‘old world’ nations are no more ethnically, culturally or socially stable, or homogeneous, than ‘African tribes’ or the new world states of Asia and the Americas. In the early twenty-first century it is becoming apparent that the notion of the successful nation being one composed of ‘well-established ethnic communities’ is an unstainable myth. A national identity based on ‘the common aspirations of their people, if these prove stronger than ethnic divisions’ is no longer just the fate of those nations whose status is in doubt. Hence this study’s faith in its hypothesis that Australianness is created through relationships with reference points drawn from the regime of representational references.

What specifically interests this study is Kolakowski’s five aspects of the collective identity:
1. National spirit, cultural life and collective behaviour
   In the Australian context, this study identifies the core values associated with Australianness (mateship, a fair go and egalitarianism) as being the articulation of this 'national spirit' part of the collective identity.

2. Historical memory, the present existence is a continuation of a past one
   The recent 'history wars' demonstrate just how powerful writing this 'memory' is to the Australian national identity and nation building projects. Ownership and therefore interpenetration of the past has become a constant part of public discourses in post-war Australia.

3. Anticipation, future interests, survival, protection against adversity
   In the twentieth century the place of Australia in the British imperial family and in the twenty-first century the ongoing protection of Australian regional interests have become very important.

4. Body, national territory, landscape
   Perhaps the most powerful index of Australian collective identity, from terra nullius through squatting, and the mythologising of the space, and place, is imagining the landscape as a significant place. This aspect has, as its mirror, anxieties around the 'bastard coloniality' and the displacement of indigenous peoples.

5. Identifiable beginning, myths of origin (truth is not a necessity)
   The 26th of January 1901, the 25th of April 1915, clear beginnings, still commemorated, getting more popular the more things change.

These five characteristics of national identity, in the Australian context, are developed, expressed and bound using reference points drawn from the representational regime. One of the key reference points is the unique Australian construction of the value of mateship. To better develop and understand this study's reading of mateship, it is helpful to discuss and define it, in the specific terms used in this study. Additionally, this study would like to identify and define another notion, that of un-mateship, the argument being that with the creation and performance of
mateship its other, un-mateship, is often to be found, functioning to
highlight mateship and its characteristics. This is important because, at its
core, mateship is a system of inclusion and subjugation, a relationship with
very clear responsibilities.

mateship as a key value in the referential regime

Mateship is the great Australian mythic identity quality and is a
claustrophobically inescapable presence in many Australian films. Much is
made of this legendary characteristic in almost all aspects of Australian
public, social and cultural life. It ties the traditional Australian national
identity back to the bush experiences of the early settlers, the convicts and
the itinerant rural workers. Russel Ward’s reading of the bush-derived
national identity myth in his work The Australian Legend\(^2\) has helped to
solidify the narrow, desirable, Australian national type in Australian cultural
products. It is perhaps the most orthodox and all encompassing, even self-
perpetuating, definition of the Australian national identity.\(^2\)

Ward’s Australian identity, derived from men’s experiences
pioneering the land, was the dominant cultural signifier of Australian
national identity throughout the latter half of the twentieth century in
Australia. The important aspects of Ward’s view for this study are his
comments on mateship. He characterises the ‘typical’ Australian as being:

\[\ldots\text{a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and}
\text{authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in}
\text{military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and,}
\text{above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin,}
\text{even if he thinks they may be in the wrong}^{22}\text{[my emphasis]}\]

Another thing to remember about the playing out of mateship is its
short-lived, pragmatic half-life. Mateship unions are joined under certain
circumstances, which, when over, see the mateship union dissolve – that
is to say, mate-ing unions are site specific, and the sites are almost always workplaces.

Workplaces, which in many ways can be read as code for class in the Australian context, are significant in the development of mateship. The military, unions and outback workers, being the most commonly referenced and celebrated sites in the historical development of mateship, are therefore significant in the development of Australian values and the Australian character. This point is so important that it worth looking at another view of mateship. Donald Horne’s description of mateship is as a brotherhood of particular men in particular situations. This is an important view that is often overlooked. Horne characterises mates as being:

...men who are thrown together by some emergency in an unfriendly environment and have become of one blood in facing it. In this sense its use is strongest in the unions and in the armed forces. Mates stick together in their adversity and their common interest. Mateship of this kind is not a theory of universal brotherhood but of the brotherhood of particular men.  

I read Horne literally, and see that mate-ings are not enduring; it is the institution of mateship that endures.

The notion of ‘mateship’ is (perhaps most) strongly characterised by contradictions and ambivalences in political, public and cultural discourse, and yet is very familiar to most Australians. For the purposes of this study I have defined the actual social performance and manifestation of mateship as being a nexus of a number of elements: A co-dependency building on identified common concerns and the development of a particular kind of trust, which is characterised by critical humour, developed and strengthened through the establishment of a common social language.

It is important to remember that while it is popular to say that at the centre of the Australian national character are values which are best
associated with white Anglo-Celtic men, for example, Donald Horne sees the values being defined '... in terms of Anglo-Australian goals and aspirations, usually for the benefit of adult males.' I strongly agree there is a solid argument to be made along these lines, that this type of social power does operate in the Australian social field. This study would like to suggest that full cultural membership is nevertheless open to all (on a sliding scale of difficulty) if they can learn and take on that 'knowledge', and the power of belonging that comes with it.

So, in the realm of cultural knowledge, systems like mateship can be seen at worst as being ones of inclusion and exclusion. The important view is that it is a system that all can have a go at being included in: birthright (race, gender, class, religion or ethnicity) is not mandatory, it just facilitates knowledge membership more easily.

An example of the explicit social performance of mateship, as a knowledge system, can be seen in an analysis of the film text of *Proof*.

**mateship in proof**

*Proof* tells the story of the friendship (in the terms of this study, of the mate-ing) of Andy (Russell Crowe), a young kitchen hand, and Martin (Hugo Weaving), an older, blind photographer. The coded class aspect of this relationship lies in Andy's social/class position as a kitchen hand, and therefore working class, and as being more naturally close to the core values of Australianness, in this case mateship. Martin, though blind, does not work because of his class position as an independently wealthy middle class man, looked after by a housekeeper. Martin's class position requires that he be en-cultured into the values of Australianness through his
relationship with Andy. The plot revolves around their burgeoning relationship, the development of trust between them and the malevolent intrusion of Martin’s housekeeper, Cecilia (Genevieve Picot). Table 6.1 demonstrates how their relationship is developed along the lines of mateship that I have outlined:

**Table 6.1 mateship in *Proof***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Discourses</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-dependency which develops through shared experiences</td>
<td>Proof/Trust</td>
<td>Martin thinks he has killed an alley cat, befriended by Andy. This situation brings them into contact for the first time. At the Drive-In, on a mate-date the two men get into a fight with some other men and are forced to have Martin drive off. The resulting situations of a blind man driving the car and being caught by the police further bond the two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding/Unquestioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusive male friendship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds and identifies common concerns</td>
<td>Support of sameness</td>
<td>Waitress in the restaurant where Andy works ignores Martin as ‘too difficult’. Cecilia, Martin’s housekeeper, moves objects around in Martin’s house to trip and confuse him. Martin’s mother is the source of all of his untrustworthiness and his need to have PROOF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women as untrustworthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops a particular kind of trust</td>
<td>Male trustworthiness</td>
<td>The key bonding situation and building of trust in the reading of the photos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female untrustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterised by critical humour</td>
<td>Inside – outside Authority as object of ridicule</td>
<td>Andy &amp; Martin’s car accident, the situation in the hospital and with the police provide a great deal of humour that is only shared between Andy and Martin (and the audience; we’re mates too).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of a common language</td>
<td>Speaking the same language, seeing things the same way</td>
<td>The development of a common language — literally Martin coaches Andy on what type of language to use in narrating the photos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Martin and Andy’s relationship revolves around Andy’s ‘reading’ of the photos that the blind Martin takes. These photos are ‘proof’ that these things happened, and that Martin was there. The development of the plot relies on the two men becoming mates, and the dependence and trust that is developed for that, and which is strengthened by the untrustworthiness of Cecilia as un-mate and the ultimate question as to whether Martin’s mother lied to him about the subject of the ‘first’ photograph.

un-mateship

To better understand the discursive construction and bounding of mateship in Australian made cinema, this study will employ its ‘other’ – ‘un-mateship’ – in analysing some workplace relationships.

In the development of mateship, workplaces are significant. The most commonly sited conditions for the development of mateship and its other, un-mateship, are the military, the unions and through the activities of outback workers.

The discursive regimes which bound and define ‘mateship’ are analysed in a number of film examples, where representations of ‘mateship’ – as indices of socialisation and cultural recognition – are present, to test the hypothesis that for every representation of ‘mate’ there is an ‘un-mate’. That is to say, that while some characters perform in the characteristic role of ‘mate’ their suitability for ‘mateship’ is heightened by the companion representation of a character (or range of characters) who perform an identity which renders them ‘un-mates’.

The identification of un-mates – as narrative conveniences and as the by-product of the discursive bounding of mateship – can also be
characterised as a form of resistance to the orthodox gendered construction, at the core, of the values of Australian identification.

The approach taken here is a discursive one, which views indices of ‘mateship’ and ‘un-mateship’ as social constructions. This analysis touches on notions of power where power is conceptualised as working through the production of subjects – that is, rather than being natural or descriptive labels like ‘mate’, they are part of a power/knowledge nexus in which certain identities, practices, ideas and ways of living are normalised – he’s a good bloke, and others are rendered outside ‘un-mates’.26

Notions of the values/knowledge nexus help to explain the way in which the label ‘mate’ is a part of identities which are normalised while others, the ‘un-mates’, are rendered to the outside. This dichotomy is very strongly represented in filmic narratives of the workplace where the representations of ‘un-mates’ are too often identified through discourses that construct a non Anglo-Celtic ‘other’ ethnic group, or discourses around particular stereotypical representations of women.

It should be noted that this notion of ‘un-mateship’ is best viewed as a spectrum which stretches from a position in which ignorance of ‘knowledge’ (of mateship and of the ways to fit in) are represented (generally in the person of an ethnicised ‘other’) towards the other end of the spectrum, a position represented by a knowing anti-mateship resistance (in the character of a feminine gendered ‘other’, including gay men). To better explore this spectrum of un-mateship some examples drawn from the film Death In Brunswick are employed.
death in brunswick – 1991

Carl Fitzgerald (Sam Neil) is a down-on-his-luck slacker, until he gets a job as a cook in a dingy night club. In a number of reviews and articles on this film he is misrepresented as a loser. Mustafa (Nick Lathouris), the kitchen hand (like Andy in Proof it is a class identity), rejects Carl’s overtones of mateship, refusing to join with Carl against their common enemy: the bouncers of the night club. Carl accidentally kills Mustafa. He turns to his unscrupulous (the best kind!) loyal mate Dave (John Clark) for help, and together they attempt to dispose of the body. Mustafa performs un-mateship in the form of ignorance of ‘knowledge’ (of mateship and of the ways to fit in) to heighten Dave’s performance of mateship.

The other un-mate in the film is Carl’s mate, Dave’s wife June (Deborah Kennedy), who is a constant source of criticism towards Carl and Dave. She constantly questions the actions of both of them. Her performance as a knowing anti-mateship character also tends to strengthen Dave and Carl’s performance of mateship. June performs un-mateship in the gendered knowing anti-mateship resistance mode (in the character of a feminine gendered ‘other’) and thereby heightens Dave and Carl’s performance of mateship. As stated above, this study identifies the notion of mateship as a nexus of elements.

In the same way, un-mateship can be see as the mirror of these five elements, shifting the focus from assent to the system towards individuality:
1. A failure to develop a co-dependency through the acknowledgement of common shared experiences;
2. not identifying common concerns;
3. mistrust – no development of any kind of trust;
4. a relationship that is characterised by a lack of commonality, most importantly no sense of ‘us against them’; and
5. a relationship that is hampered by a lack of distinctive, special and common language.

The explicit performance of un-mateship can be seen in Table 6.2.

It demonstrates how un-mateship is developed and played out in Death In Brunswick along the lines that I have outlined:

Table 6.2 un-mateship in Death In Brunswick

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Un-Characteristics</th>
<th>Discourses</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A lack of a co-dependency which does not develop through shared experiences</td>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>June, Dave’s wife, is critical of any contact between Carl and Dave. Mustafa, the kitchen hand at Carl’s work, does not cooperate in developing any kind of relationship with Carl, even though the bouncers of the night club are a common enemy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of understanding / active questioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criticism of the exclusive male friendship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fails to build and identify common concerns</td>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td>Mustafa refuses to cooperate with Carl in any of the kitchen duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women as questioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not develop a particular kind of trust</td>
<td>Female and male untrustworthiness</td>
<td>Mustafa accuses Karl of dobbing on him to the bouncers. June’s treatment of her husband, Dave, changes dramatically when Carl is around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is not characterised by a critical humour</td>
<td>Them as object of ridicule</td>
<td>Mother, June, Mustafa and staff at nightclub all ridicule Carl in every interaction.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fails to establish a common language</td>
<td>Not speaking the same language, seeing things the same way</td>
<td>The kitchen hand spells out his name to Carl, correcting a slight inaccuracy: M.O.U.S.T.A.F.A. He calls him ‘Cookie’ not Carl. The management of the club are Greek while Mustafa is Turkish, a point of a great deal of tension.</td>
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To better explore the way this study sees the performance of mateship and un-mateship as being the performance of Australian values, an analysis of *The Adventures of Priscilla – Queen of the Desert* is undertaken. Looking below the surface of the film I will argue that it is simply, at its heart, a narrative of mateship. I am arguing throughout this chapter that the glitter cycle of films and a number of others sought to make meaning through overlaying a quirky veneer over a fairly orthodox engagement with the referential regime.

**identity and the adventures of priscilla – queen of the desert**

"Funny, we all sit around mindlessly slagging off that vile stink-hole of a city, but in its own strange way it takes care of us. I don’t know if that ugly wall of suburbia has been put there to stop them getting in or us getting out?"


*The Adventures of Priscilla – Queen of the Desert* (*Priscilla*) is a narrative of personal identity journeys amongst a group of mates, played out through the familiar discursive regimes of the collective, national identity. At its centre is the journey of Anthony ‘Tick’ Belrose (Mitzi Del Bra) – played by Hugo Weaving – who, perhaps unsurprisingly with so many identities in one character (or is that so many characters in one identity?) is confused about who he is supposed to be – man/woo-man, father/drag queen, husband/gay man. The only thing he seems sure of are his mates who accompany him on his road trip from Sydney to Alice Springs: the transsexual Bernadette (Ralph) Basserger – played by Terence Stamp – and super camp *enfant terrible* Adam (Felicia Jollygoodfellow) Whitely – played by Guy Pearce. To focus more fully on
the ways in which traditional indices of the national identity and the national character are played out, played with and questioned in the ‘new quality cycle’, a close examination of one of the texts is useful.

*Priscilla* is the story of Tick’s journey to his wife and child and to his ‘me’. Tick’s journey of self [identity]-discovery is one which takes in the question *Who am I*, and *Am I doing what I should be doing, given who I am?*

Tick sets off into the Australian outback on his very own husband / father / drag queen daydream / nightmare, pilgrimage / road trip of self-discovery / bonding, from drag performer to father, from incompatible to compatible, from unsure to sure. A phone call sends him off into memory; he has his two ‘mates’ with him to laugh and cry with while exploring the vast outback on the other side of the suburban sprawl that separates ‘them’ from ‘us’.

Opening scene: the hard grind of the drag-show business (and of course – there really is no business like it!). The narrative commences with Tick and Adam cynically plugging away at another night of their own drag version of the perennial sentimental song, ‘I’ve never been to me’:

Hey, you know what paradise is?
It’s a lie, a fantasy we create about people
and places as we’d like them to be
But you know what truth is?
It’s that little baby you’re holding,
it’s that man you fought with this morning
The same one you’re going to make love with tonight
That’s truth, that’s love...

So there is ‘truth’ out there, that little baby waiting for him in Alice Springs, and the wife there too. Is that the ‘me’ Tick should embrace? Like other road-trip narratives, Tick and his mates set out on a journey of discovery – it’s a bit like life, really. From a tough beer can throwing inner-city Sydney drag bar crowd, through an R.M. Williams make-over, and the
transformative power of the 'landscape', back to a new 'belonging', expressed in a fabulously successful ABBA drag-show, with son proudly watching on.

This scene is strongly reminiscent of a key *Muriel's Wedding* bonding scene in which the two central women, Muriel and Rhonda, perform a hugely successful rendition of an ABBA song. This bonding gives them the strength to repel the insults of the 'popular' girls. So what has changed? What is the journey that Tick has undertaken? And, in the 1990s, where had the journey of the Australian national project's national identity in the Australian made cinema ended up?

*Priscilla* is also a narrative of the beginnings of the re-imagining of identities connected with the discourses of the collective identity of the national project in Australian made cinema. The discourses of Australianness in film narratives are traditionally to be found under the rubric of the core values of Australianness, identifiable as 'mateship', 'egalitarianism' and 'a fair go'. In the rationale for the 'Values for Australian Schooling' we are reminded that 'values':

... as 'principles and fundamental convictions' are abstractions until they are applied in the contexts of daily life. Values are made real or 'realised' when their meaning is expressed through choices made and behaviours acted out. 28

Each of these core values associated with the Australian collective identity are, through discursive re-presentation, 'applied in the contexts of daily life' in *Priscilla.*

One of the key discursive narrative tactics employed in the representations of personal and collective identity is the employment of clear and simple dichotomised positions. For example, suburbia (in this case rather than 'city') as opposed to the bush is the age-old Australian
identity dichotomy. In *Priscilla*, this dichotomy is fleshed out with further binary polarisations: gay in opposition to straight, youth in opposition to ageing, transvestite in opposition to transsexual, and perhaps most importantly of all, man in opposition to woman.

Towards the end of the film Tick asks his son "... you know what I am, don't you?" And of course, his son does – his father. It is this acceptance that propels Tick's own acceptance of the ‘rightness' of his husband, father, man, drag queen identity. Throughout the story, Tick's active homosexuality is downplayed. There is no uncomfortable man-on-man action, though his son does ask if he has a boyfriend! Early in the journey, Adam teases Tick about the apparent ambivalence around his sexuality, given the fact that he has been married, though the fact of the child is not known to Adam and Bernadette at this point.

Adam  "We've only recently discovered that young Anthony here bats for both teams."
Tick  "I do not."
Adam  "Oh so we're straight?"
Tick  "No!"
Adam  "Oh ... we're not? So, we're a donut puncher after all?"
Tick  "No."
Adam  "What the hell are we then?"
Tick  "I don't fuckin know."

Tick will know by the final credits, but remember it's the journey that's the thing, just getting there is not enough, lessons must be learned, relationships made and broken and repaired.

Once again, landscape plays an important role in mythologising Australian identity in Australian national cinema. Taking "cocks in frocks" onto "a rock" may seem, at first glance, to be a radical departure from traditional ideas of Australian identity, but *Priscilla* does not really depart all that much. Like a number of other films made in Australia during this period, *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1992), *The Sum of Us* (Geoff
Burton and Kevin Dowling, 1994), *Muriel's Wedding* (P.J. Hogan, 1994) – being very popular examples – superficial originality was confused with a radical reassessment of Australian cultural identity. Additionally, these films were not celebrations of diversity, as some would have them be. Rather, they were a slightly camouflaged retelling of traditional identity values associated with Australianness because, of course, at the heart of *Priscilla*’s road movie narrative is the suggested goal of reunification of a traditionally structured heterosexual family, in the context of the familiar generic lessons learned on the road: mateship formed through shared experiences, survival against ‘outsiders’ and the inevitable triumph over adversity through loyalty to each other, and their ‘becoming’ in the landscape. In Broken Hill the three go to the local pub where they encounter the locals. While they are out ‘on the town’, their bus is defaced with the graffiti: ‘AIDS fuckers go home’. In the local pub Bernadette defeats Shirl the town dragon, much to the delight of the other locals. Tick and Bernadette fight over Tick, calling her by her ‘male’ name ‘Ralph’. They continue fighting until they see the defaced bus. Back on the road, the three are shaken by the graffiti.

Tick “It’s funny, you know. No matter how tough I think I’m getting, it still hurts.”

But they have each other, and almost anything can therefore be laughed off. The triumph of mateship in the face of adversity goes so far as to encompass another man the three meet on the road.

The other mate they make is Bob (Bill Hunter), an iconic character who personifies a variety of Australian stereotypes characterised by the way in which they are imbued with types of symbolic power: father, politician, (potential) husband, all imbued with the symbolic power of male,
heterosexual, legitimation. He appears in all three 'quirky' films of this period – in *Strictly Ballroom* he plays Barry Fife the villainous Australian Ballroom Dancing Federation President, a character whose symbolic power is of 'good gone wrong', and in *Muriel's Wedding* he plays Muriel's father, Councillor Bill Heslop, another man who is corrupted by power, greed and lust. However, in *Priscilla*, Bob is characterised as a 'gentleman' within the framework of his re-presentation of the mythic, stoic, self-sufficient bushman stereotype. In *Priscilla*, he knows how to treat a 'Les Girl' when he meets one as well as fix their bus, and protect a 'lady' in distress. In Coober Pedy, Bob at first shuns Adam while on his ecstasy-powered incursion into Bob's booze-up with his (traditional heterosexual) mates. When Adam is threatened with violence Bob steps in to stop Frank, at some risk to himself. Finally, Bernadette steps in and puts paid to Frank's homophobic aggression with a swift knee to the balls. Bob has picked sides. He accepts the three and joins with them, becoming a mate to Tick and Adam and a potential partner to Bernadette. Thus, the city and the bush reconcile. It is worth taking a closer look at the dominant value re-presented in *Priscilla*: mateship. In *Priscilla* the three principal characters and Bob conform to this definition of mateship.

They develop their co-dependency (mateship) through a number of shared experiences. The trip, hours in the bus talking, singing, drinking, telling jokes, sewing and just generally spending time together. When they stop for the night, they often go their separate ways, emphasising that the time they spend together is in some way forced. Bob's rescue of Adam in Coober Pedy is one of the defining experiences of his time with the girls. Their experiences, in particular Adam's with his uncle in the bathtub, as
gay men is the clearest articulation of their identified common concerns, and of course the ‘AIDS fuckers go home’ graffiti on the bus in Broken Hill emphasises their differences/similarities. This establishment of their co-dependency and common concerns further assists in the development of a particular kind of trust, a trust that is characterised by an almost relentless critical humour. This critical humour is performed through the establishment of a common social language – the bitchy ‘drag queen’ discourse and ‘hand-bag’ music are immediately familiar to the broader community.  

Tony, Adam and Ralph are fundamentally a group of mates who have to battle each other, the land and their pasts to get where they are going, but of course when they get there they have to turn around and come back because it’s the journey that’s the thing.

*Priscilla* takes this group of mates on a road trip of self-discovery, personal growth and bonding, relying on the frocks and musical numbers to create a type of originality in the rapidly becoming clichéd Australian outback space. It is interesting to think that some parts of *Priscilla* were filmed in the same general location as *Mad Max 2* and *Wake in Fright* – Broken Hill – the quintessential untameable outback space of lost children, the original inhabitants and the Australian place of becoming – the same landscape with the same mythic qualities of trial, redemption and rebirth. Max is a product and a part of the landscape in much the same way that Mick Dundee is. They are the traditional heroes of Australian culture, fired in the crucible of the outback. The three drag queens refuse, at first, to acknowledge this process; rather they try to exert their identities on the landscape and the communities they come across. Bernadette walks off
into the desert without any supplies, in high heels, and almost perishes in an act of sheer arrogance and ignorance. She is saved by an Australian gothic couple who bolt at first sign of the pink bus and the other two 'girls'.

As a further shift into more contested re-imaginings of the values associated with the collective identity of the Australian national identity and nation building projects, filmic narratives in the later 1990s and into the twenty-first century place the action in urban settings. In *Priscilla*, the outback landscape is used to heighten the fabulousness and the exoticism of the adventure the mates are undertaking and of course the exoticism of the adventurers themselves. Perhaps the most memorable example of this juxtaposition is in a wide-angle helicopter shot, from high above, of the bus, and Adam/Felicia enthroned on a giant stiletto with a huge piece of silver fabric flying behind her. Music is also used to make the scene grander – opera streams from the bus throughout the scene. Numerous helicopter shots place the three figures in the vast landscape. They stand out as alien in what is usually portrayed as an alien landscape, in defiance. The characters are contrasted with the landscape and the people who inhabit the isolated communities they visit, in their clothing, make-up, language, sexualities and musical tastes. This contrast emphasises the stereotypical masculine roles associated with traditional Australian values, self-consciously asking for a re-definition of these values.

The men they meet on their journey are generally homophobic and hostile toward them. Notable exceptions are the Aboriginal people they meet who accept them by allowing them to participate in their non-ceremonial music making. The three reciprocate by inviting one Aboriginal
man (played by Alan Dargan) to join them in a rendition of the song “I will survive” in a naive and simply ironic statement. The Aboriginal characters, as custodians of the land, are given a perfunctory nod while not being re-imagined outside of stereotypically traditional paternalistic ideas of singing and dancing natives in the mould of the ‘noble savage’. The three ‘heroes’ might be drag queens but they are white drag queens.

They also meet women in the ‘outback’ who have a different role to play in their identity. Women exist in this landscape to be humiliated. Shirl, the woman in the pub in Broken Hill, is not woman enough to out bitch them, nor masculine enough to out-drink Bernadette. Cynthia, Bob’s horrifically represented mail-order-bride, loses her man to Bernadette while out-performing them with her ‘real’ woman-ness (her ‘trick’ vagina, an identity they cannot compete with).

The foregrounding of misogynistic views like the horror of the ‘Philippino mail-order bride’, the vanquishing – through physical, symbolic and gendered acts – of ‘Shirl the dragon’, in Broken Hill, the joining of Bob and Bernadette and the revelation that Tick is a father, all help to under-emphasise the ‘gayness’ of the characters, to remind us that they are strongly associated with ‘maleness’ and to sanitise ideas of difference. Under those frocks, they’re still men, or at least used to be. Once again the landscape has wielded its mythic power to transform, culminating in Tick’s appropriation of a beer-drinking, butch bushman-dressed father in Alice Springs, an identity he does move away from, but one which is nevertheless within him.

As Jonathon Rayner points out, Felicia’s dream to engage with the landscape by climbing King’s Canyon in full drag (“a cock in a frock on a
rock") represents a qualification of 'Australian masculinity and national identity.' This gesture demonstrates that even drag queens have a place in the landscape (read 'real' Australian identity). This gesture is also indicative of the shallow level of engagement these films have with issues of diversity and individuality. The early 1990s were a time when the collective Australian identity was still defined by going back to reference clichés of the outback for legitimation. As we have seen, filmic representations of the collective identities of the Australian national identity and nation-building projects cannot escape reference to the referential regime, associated with Australianness.

In the 1990s, issues of reconciliation began to become more a part of mainstream public discourse. As mentioned in the introduction, a stated aim of Prime Minister Paul Keating (1991-1996) was to develop a path towards reconciliation, including land rights, justice and equity between Aboriginal peoples and the broader Australian society. The subject of reconciliation had been the theme of a number of films in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. In the period under discussion in this chapter, themes of personal reconciliation were played out in some films.
vacant possession

Tessa – "What is his [a cat] name?"
Millie – "Captain Cook, but we call him Cookie."
Tessa – "Because he's white?"
Millie – "No ... because we didn’t invite him and he won’t go away."
(Vacant Possession, 1995)

_Vacant Possession_ (Margot Nash, 1995) has been said to belong to a thematic grouping of ‘eccentric works of mourning in the prevailing face of comedy.’ These films engage with a set of very contemporary identity issues, very strongly drawing out the problematic nature of contemporary Australian society, using a reading of 'romantic nationalist values' for counterpoint and criticism. These films, through their use of the dynamic characteristics of 'Australianness', utilise a postcolonial discourse to engage in an ongoing de-simplified examination of 'who we are' which looks in a very different way at 'who we were'.

_Vacant Possession_ has at its centre themes of reconciliation: reconciliations between Tessa (Pamela Rabe) and her past, Tessa's father and his past, Aboriginal Australia and white Australia, colonialisation and post-colonialisation. These themes are highlighted in the film's narrative; however, in keeping with the radical approach of the film-maker, there is no attempt to completely resolve these issues. Rather, the identification of the complex landscape of memory, pain, displacement and loss is begun.

This whole film is, in a way, a representation of Tessa's dreaming (an assertion that could only be made in the (post-)post-Mabo, twenty-first century) – the distant past, the recent past, now and the future. The film opens with a representation of the land as a mythical dream-like space, of real and imagined secrets buried in the mangroves on the edge of Botany
Bay, a very traditional view of the land in the 'romantic nationalist value' system. However, in this case the landscape is the coast rather than the 'outback' and the main protagonist is a woman not a man. The film ends with Tessa, the ghost of her mother, and the two bag ladies around a fire on the edge of Botany Bay, occupying the place and telling stories. As Felicity Collins points out, this is a recognisable image 'for certain audiences' in that it is an 'indigenous way of life organised around ceremony, story-telling and kinship' and, I would add, matriarchy. She sees it as an image of reconciliation. This film is set in an urban 'bush' landscape populated by women. The place is viewed through Tessa's eyes, so in some ways it is her Aboriginal experience – her 'White Fella Jump Up'. She does not become a 'white aborigine' like Crocodile Dundee; rather, she is shown to begin a process of reconciliation with the other inhabitants of the space. For example, Tessa looks into the sky and sees a plane. Aunty Beryl (an Aboriginal matriarch in the local community) looks into the sky and sees a bird. Qantas jumbo jets constantly fly over the house, reminding us that Botany Bay, Captain Cook's original landing place, now is an airport – the site of contemporary arrivals to 'The Fatal Shore'.

In some of the same ways as Mad Max 2, Priscilla and Crocodile Dundee, Vacant Possession is concerned with identity derived from the landscape. Vacant Possession deals with landscape as a place of identity by invoking the past and present, in reality, memory and myth. Filmically it does not rely on filmic norms (dissolves, effects) to do this. The past mixes with the present spontaneously, visually and mentally. For her stylistic sins – the multi-layered narrative mixing of history with his-story; the past and
other pasts; dark muttering just under the surface of Botany Bay, ghosts of aunties; and Second World War battles – Felicity Collins and Therese Davis label Margot Nash an '... experimental, anarcho-surrealist-insurrectionary-feminist filmmaker.' They also declare Vacant Possession to be the '...first explicitly post-Mabo feature film.' These labels can be tied to the film's lack of resolution. It is a narrative of beginnings, not of solutions.

Tessa's father is an ironic embodiment of traditional Australian 'legend' values. He is deeply scarred by his wartime experiences (Second World War), in stark contrast to any ideas of a golden heroic ANZAC. In the cellar during a storm, the culminating sequence of the film, he cries and whimpers with a terror remembered from that period. He is seen re-enacting events from Tessa's childhood memories and he is seen writhing on the floor – now a victim of his own memory. Many of the characters in Vacant Possession are scarred by memory, the (in)visible damage of the past. Felicity Collins places Vacant Possession with films such as Floating Life (Clara Law, 1996) and Radiance (Rachel Perkins, 1998) in a grouping she identifies as 'obscure, low-budget and eccentric films on the basis that they share a dislocated relation to Australia as a 'homeland'.' She sees something un-(traditionally) Australian about bringing the critical past into the present. The evidence to be found in much of the filmic output of the Australian film-making industry/culture does tend to support this notion. Too often meaning is made by bringing the un-critical past into the present.

Tessa returns home to the shores of Botany Bay on the death of her mother, thereby reinvigorating her mid-life crisis. She dreams of her
mother's death from far away. She dreams of the dark mangroves, a secret place that is dark and still. She knows it is home because of the water – she is in a boat. She says that this is her birthplace, the birthplace of the nation, her home. She thinks about her mother and her mother's mother, and what she calls the links to the past 'back to the ancestors. Prisoners sweating and hungry in the dark holds.' She brings the baggage of the past with her. The bag ladies she meets physically carry the past around with them. They are shown to be in possession of Tessa's grandmother's ring and a photograph of her mother.

The Aboriginal people Tessa meets function as a stable family in marked contrast to Tessa's own unstable family. While Tessa squabbles with her sister over the house, and fears the meeting with her father, the Aboriginal family embody traditional white notions of a 'normal' family with the exception that in their family structure there is a matriarch, Aunty Beryl. The families are linked through history, by past violence. Tessa's father shoots her Aboriginal lover. She learns that her lover died after being released from prison. She, through the process of visiting the past, begins to reconcile these events, though when she attempts to give the house to the Aboriginal family her gesture is rejected. It is about 'homes not houses', they tell her. Reconciliation between black and white Australia is not as simple as the reconciliation with family history and self. White Australians thinking they know what Aboriginal Australians want, in this case the house, becomes a barrier to reconciliation.

In *Vacant Possession* the values of neo-colonial Australia are rendered in the very real past. They are given solid dimensions by Tessa's dreaming. The overtly contemporary themes of reconciliation, of mid-life
crises, family and indigenous Australia are in the here and now, still haunted and fundamentally shaped by the earlier value system and its actions. *Vacant Possession* points to the ability of Australian national cinema to hybridise domestic, contemporary elements as diverse as the whole range of social myth, contemporary social and political issues and cultural concerns to create a cinema that is evolving in a world context.

**conclusions**

From where I stand there can be nothing disinteresting about Australian cultural studies' view of the revival of a residual but still highly contagious strain of white, Anglo, isolationist, and nostalgic nationalism. We might have our contradictions to deal with as we try to produce a progressive politics for Australia through the discourses of cultural nationalism, but we can deal with what Pauline Hanson represents without a hint of ambiguity.

(Graeme Turner 1999)

**to return to the beginning...**

In the 1990s the national projects did not retreat into the dark, their influence and desires unabated – they hovered in the sub-text. These traditional national identity indexes were often buried beneath a thick surface layer of international generic conventions or stylistic film-school veneers, conventions learned on big budget international productions made locally or other such contemporary fashions which served, by delivering a more polished film-making product, to present (seemingly) more complex narrative representations of 'Australianness'. Upon closer inspection (and with the benefit of hindsight) the national identity signifiers employed in the explicit identity project of the 1970s – the landscape, vernacular Australian English and the abstract notions of the Australian Legend school of national traits – loom large as narrative devices in seemingly unlikely film texts.
The simple backward-looking nationalism of the 1970s resurfaced with the reintroduction of direct funding through the Film Finance Corporation and the Australian Film Commission. At this time some popular films failed to deal with contemporary issues in any depth, seemingly focusing more on production design, such as retro '70s music and fancy frocks (Priscilla's drag, Muriel's wedding gown and Ballroom's feathery frocks) rather than challenging content. The dilemmas forced upon the protagonists were easily resolved with little real exploration of contemporary issues and with the use of comic relief and fun music soundtracks to defuse any tension.

As a clear demonstration of this, one need look no further than the three most exemplary and popular texts of the 1990s – *Priscilla, Strictly Ballroom* and *Muriel's Wedding*. Each employs a strong narrative and visual style to engage an audience (it should be said, very successfully domestically and internationally) while effectively masking, through satire, caricature, hyperbole and the smoke and mirrors of 'colour and movement', the use of orthodox indices of 'Australianness'. In particular 'Ballroom' employs vernacular Australian English and the exoticising of the ethnic 'other' in an egalitarian rebellion; *Priscilla* engages with the landscape as the place of becoming in a way little different from *Crocodile Dundee* or *Mad Max* and 'Muriel' reinforces the patriarchal power structures of the man's country through her necessary rejection in the climax of father/family/friends and husband, in much the same way that Kay in *Sweetie* does.
meanwhile, back outback...

The films of the early 1990s very successfully used the nature of the Australian national cinematic tradition to assimilate diverse elements for a synergetic outcome. Though still relying on obtuse enactments of AFC genre values to identify them as Australian in the world market, films of the 1990s look to contemporary Australia for thematic verity. Films of the later 1990s reworked themes of Australian identity in the face of participation by, increasingly, Australians from a non-English speaking background, indigenous Australians and other previously unrecognised groups within the community (such as people with disabilities). It was no longer necessary to characterise the Australiaanness of a film by resorting to clichés established in the late 1970s. Films such as The Adventures of Priscilla – Queen of the Desert and its ilk still obviously feel it necessary to refer to these ideas if they are to attract a worldwide audience. Very slowly ideas of the Australian identity seem to be escaping the landscape of the Australian legend/romantic nationalist school for a more diverse range of identity-related myths and influences.
Ch. 6. endnotes


5 Pauline Hanson's maiden speech is available from many sources, however it is not available without comment. It is available from her official site at:http://www.paulinehanson.com.au/index.php?nav=profile

6 For a fascinating analysis of the exchange between Hanson and the reporter Tracy Curro, on channel nine's 'Sixty Minuets', in which Hanson uttered her famous 'please explain' line and with it cemented her position as leader of 'ordinary Australians' against the inner-city chattering elites, see: Morris, Meaghan. (2000) 'Please Explain?: Ignorance, Poverty and the Past.' Inter-Asia Cultural Studies. Vol. 1 (#2).


11 Turner, Graeme. (1994) op. cit.


17 Ibid. pp. 7-8.

18 Ibid. p. 9.

19 Ibid.


22 Ibid. p. 2.


24 Ibid.


26 Ibid.

32 Ibid. p. 114
37 Ibid.
39 Turner, Graeme. (1999) op. cit. p. 27

Aspirational Australia loves a whinge. It's the glue of aspirational solidarity.  
(David Williamson 2005)\(^1\)

But this is not why I love Australia. I love it because of all the nations on earth, it's mine. I feel about it exactly as I feel about my family — of all the families in the world, God chose this one for me to be part of and look after. So, too, he chose this nation for me and I accept his choice. Just as we love Australia, the evil men who murdered our people and others in Bali, they surely hate Australia. And why do they hate us? They hate us not for our wickedness which is occasional and undeniable. They hate us for our oddly persistent goodness. Because we like to go to the pub and enjoy each other's company. Because we go to the beach in a swimming costume. Because we no longer hate homosexuals. Because we believe that people of all religions and none, and all races can live in peace and freedom in one society.  
(Greg Sheridan 2002)\(^2\)

introduction

The Australian film-making industry/culture, in the last years of the twentieth century and the first years of the twenty-first (a period in which 359 feature films were released, according to FFC figures\(^3\)), was not to see the broad, domestic and international cultural, commercial and critical success that had been achieved in other periods. On the superficial level of national and international financial 'success' in the Australian made cinema, it can be argued that 'super success' ended with the glitter cycle of films in the early 1990s. Why were no more 'super successful' films made after the early 1990s? The most 'successful' film made in Australia in this period (1996-2007) was *Happy Feet* (Dr George Miller, 2006), an internationally-focused film with little Australian cultural content and which therefore does not interest this study.
Mark Freeman asks: should the ‘Australian national cinema industry’ manufacture an easily recognisable ‘Australianness’ for international saleability? Is it okay for films like *The Dish* (Rob Stitch, 2000), for example, in the twenty-first century, to still seek success through getting the Americans to like us? It is a debate that sounds very familiar. *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) was re-edited for the American market, *Mad Max* (Dr George Miller, 1979) was re-voiced, expunging the Australian accent, and *The Castle* (Rob Stich, 1997) had its Australian slang and automobile names revised and re-dubbed, all in search of a larger audience. Isn’t *The Dish* just cutting out the middleman and making the adaptive changes in the production process, before exporting the film to the US? Films like *The Dish* still grate on some with its small town, backward yokel, coming of age view of an Australia, which the rest of the world is happy to embrace. Is this the type of film a mature domestic film-making industry/culture should be making? It is interesting to note that the Prime Minister featured in *The Dish* was John Grey Gorton (1968-1971), the man who kick-started the Australian film revival with the introduction of the *Australian Film Development Corporation Act 1970*, ‘...which provided the first Commonwealth government assistance to the emerging Australian film industry.’ He is represented as a small town drunken politician, kow-towing to the Americans just like everybody else. Australians are generally presented in the film as bumbling idiots who get it together just in time to do their job. Do films like *The Dish*, through their success, encourage filmmakers to revisit the past and the familiar, established representations of the national identity and national character in seeking wider audiences for their work, and is this incompatible with
notions of a developing 'mature' film-making industry/culture into the twenty-first century?

21C

The early years of the twenty-first century saw a number of events that tested the limits, maturity and stability of the Australian national imagining. No discussion of this period can proceed without reference to these events. Fear of the violent other was thrust into the national vision through the events of 11 September 2001 and the 'Bali bombings' of 12 October 2002 and remained so through Australia's involvement in the subsequent invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2004. The sentiments of Greg Sheridan, Foreign Editor of the Australian newspaper (a man who has been called 'Australia's most prominent journalist of good and evil, [because his] columns are peppered with the language of moral absolutism and dichotomy - 'good vs. evil', 'right vs. wrong' and 'us vs. them''), quoted above, are an indication of the depth of feeling that these events facilitated in the public discourse.

The significance of Sheridan's comments and the circumstances that enabled him to invoke God's will in Australian public discourse is for this study the realisation that as momentous as these events and the environment that they facilitated were, they had little if any effect on the cinematic output of the Australian film-making industry/culture. Unlike the film-making industries of many other Western, developed nations, in the Australian experience there were no explicit 'post-9/11' films made. In Hollywood's output, for example, the spectrum of evocations, documentaries, re-enactments and popular-cultural references includes
such films as: *Shortbus* (John Cameron Mitchell, 2006), *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006), *I Heart Huckabees* (David O. Russell, 2004), *11’9”01 September 11* (11 various directors, 2002), *25th Hour* (Spike Lee, 2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Michael Moore, 2004) and *War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg, 2005). The many and varied ways in which these events and their aftermath have been included in the filmic narratives of other film-making industries/cultures are so diverse and prevalent that their analysis would, and undoubtedly will, constitute a number of studies, from various disciplines, suggesting a range of conclusions.

As in the discussions of the other periods in this study, the tenure of the Prime Minister lends some structure and character to the period under discussion. John Howard was Prime Minister from 1996 to 2007. His Prime Ministership was characterised by the emergence of a reactionary construction of Australian national identity and national character which he tended to characterise as ‘the core values of the mainstream.’ George Brandis, minister in the Howard Government, clearly states Howard’s position on the mainstream: ‘Howard’s attitude reflected not indifference but a conscious preference for social order above personal freedom, for the attitudes of the “mainstream” above the concerns of the marginalised.’

Howard’s leadership did lend some stability in turbulent times. The film-making industry/culture should, in this period, have benefited from this stability. It should have aspired to further explore the landscapes of meaning to be found around the playing out of ideas around the national identity and national character, and it did, to a point. For this study, the most significant result of the events, in the Australian context, was the ammunition it gave to ‘the right’ in Australian political, social and cultural
life to further solidify its power. This process began with a backlash against the Keating Labor Government, the emergence of the independent member for Oxley (Pauline Hanson), and the election of the Howard Government in 1996. This solidification of power was further 'supercharged' by the attacks on the U.S. and in Bali. During the 'Howard years' the right wing 'culture warriors' that emerged as 'loyal friends' after the 1996 election included: Janet Albrechtsen, Dennis Shanahan, Andrew Bolt, Piers Akerman, Gerard Henderson, Kevin Donnelly and, of course, Greg Sheridan. 8

Matthew Clayfield, writing in 2004, in the on-line journal *Senses of Cinema*, suggests that it is perhaps not the filmmakers themselves who should be blamed for the contemporaneous misdirection of the film-making industry/culture’s raison d’être. 9 He lays the blame on the funding bodies: '... whose concept of Australian cinema and its role has remained stagnant, lifeless and restrictive.' 8 He goes on to declare that in '... a country of increasing conservative and borderline fanatical politically correct repression, this is most certainly not a good thing.' 11

As I write this (November 2008), Baz Luhrmann’s ‘epic’ *Australia* (2008) is about to be released. From a superficial examination of the publicity material available, the film seems to be a remake of *The Overlanders* (Harry Watt, 1946) with a touch of the grandiose aspirations of Charles Chauvel about it. What the effect on the film-making industry/culture, this film’s international focus, and syrupy romantic notions of ‘taming, and opening up this wide brown land!’ will have, is unknowable. How it uses reference points drawn from the representative referential regime, and what degree of Australianness it produces, will probably be of
lesser concern than Oprah Winfrey's opinion of the film. However, I feel that it is possible to predict that its reception and level of critical, commercial and cultural success will undoubtedly have a significant effect on the (near) future of the Australian film-making industry/culture. Michael Bodey, in an editorial in *The Australian*, highlights a widely held view that the success of *Australia* will mean success for the whole film-making industry/culture. 'The one film in everyone’s sights – Australia – gained generous support from the screen producers’ association. Its executive director, Geoff Brown, said: “Baz’s success will be the industry’s success largely.”

This is the starting point for this chapter and a reminder of the larger question for this entire study: has Australian made cinema, and its role in the national identity and nation-building projects remained stagnant, lifeless and restrictive over the period discussed, and into the twenty-first century? In order to explore this question, and produce some conclusions for this study, this chapter will discuss some of the social, cultural and political environments to be found in this period (1996-2007). This chapter also examines the contemporary state of the film-making industry/culture through a brief discussion of some film examples drawn from the period. The goal of this whole study has been to read something of the Australian, imagined national character in its cultural output. In doing this I have attempted to map, define and analyse the discursive construction of these national markers and expose how they form a narrative around the consistencies and discontinuities of the uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation, expressed as Australianness. The key aspect for this study is the common reference points that any
construction of the Australian national cultural identity must engage with.

After examining the film-making periods from 1945 into the twenty-first century, this chapter must acknowledge that no clear conclusions – as to the future of the national identity and nation building project's engagements with the national identity and the national character, or the uniquely Australian, culturally derived national identity development in the film-making output of the nation – emerge. This chapter can therefore be seen to be characterised by the fact that it tends to ask more questions than it answers.

who are we, and how's my driving?

The Sydney Morning Herald conducted a poll of some well known and 'scarcey known' Australians for Australia Day (26 January 2002). It asked two questions: "What is the best quality about Australia and Australians?" and "What disturbs you most about Australia?" It is interesting to note that the second question does not ask "What disturbs you most about Australia and Australians?" Perhaps we are ready to ask some difficult questions about the state but not the nation. The answer to the first question elicited the kind of responses one might expect from the list of people the newspaper interviewed (politicians, sporting stars, actors, popular writers and 'celebrities'): a litany of rhetorical clichés such as 'our easygoingness', 'respect for democracy', and the deployment of the usual suspects of 'a fair go', 'mateship' and 'egalitarianism'. Unsurprisingly for this study, the responses were in keeping with what this study identifies as the inescapable reference points drawn from the referential regime. The second question, however, elicited some slightly more interesting
responses.

Almost unanimously the responses to the second question touched on some universally recognisable negatives that would not be out of place in any humanitarian’s list of contemporary misgivings about Western society: ‘inequity of wealth and opportunity’, ‘intolerance towards others’, ‘cutting down those we see as different’, ‘defensive, selfish, aggressive timidity’ and even the tax system. The response of Prof. Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, is a good example of the kind of response given to the question: “What disturbs you most about Australia?” She replied:

Because of our advantages we may risk becoming apathetic, indifferent, self-absorbed and intolerant, forgetting obligations to our land, our forebears, the region, and the world. We may disregard our obligation to one another, for example the widening socio-economic inequality affecting people whose voices need to be heard thus diminishing our sense of community. These factors may ultimately contribute to a gradual erosion of the Australian quality of life. Further, opportunities may be lost to play a crucial role for far-reaching positive development in peace and prosperity in the region and beyond, which may ultimately impact adversely on Australia.14

There are a number of interesting points raised by this response. One of the important things about the general response to these questions is, seemingly, the emergence of a willingness to be self-reflexive about the negative results of some parts of the national identity and nation building projects. Specifically, I see Bashir’s response as being accessible to a number of layers of Australian society. Superficially she is addressing the concerns of all of the Sydney Morning Herald’s readership, that on this Australia Day they (or we) should be a little generous in taking a bit of a hard look at themselves and pondering the plight of those less well off. On another level she is addressing possible concerns about what was called at this time the aspirational part of Australian society. For Haydon
Manning, this class has been defined through a number of factors:

A host of demographic, social and economic factors are banded around to define the ‘aspirational voter’. Objectively, they are middle income earners, upwardly mobile, and may be employed in either blue or white collar occupations. More speculative is the view that they are vulnerable to interest rate rises due to high levels of personal debt (Hewitt 2004). Pundits describe the aspirational outlook as entrepreneurial and individualistic. Aspirationals have been variously described as the new ‘conservative right’, anti-egalitarian and anti-union, favouring tax cuts, driving new cars, and sending their kids to private schools.15

The comments of many of the respondents would have appealed to the burgeoning, petty bourgeois values of these aspirational Australians, in that they touched on how an economically developing, class-mobile section of the Australian society should be marrying that emerging economic power with a developing social responsibility. On a political / economic level she is reminding us that our economic future is tied up with the region. I am taking these together as being the signs of attempts to develop an emerging maturity in the aims and attitudes of the projects, and a developing mature approach to questions around Australia’s contemporary social/cultural situations and the unforeseeable futures in light of the aforementioned ‘events’ of the early years of the twenty-first century.

The state of Australian film-making

In 2000, right in the middle of the period covered by this chapter (1996-2007), Sandra Hall, a well respected Australian film journalist, wrote of the Australian film-making industry/culture of the period: ‘It’s time to call off the search for a national identity and move on to something more mature.’16 Her article, entitled ‘Peter Pan Country’17, criticises the film-
making industry/culture on the grounds that it seems to be happy to relive
the familiar triumphs of its youth, to focus on 'coming of age' stories, rather
than to move on into some sort of respectable middle age and the pursuit
of things a bit more mature. Just what those things would be is difficult to
say but, overall, Hall is not wrong in her assessment. The output of the
Australian film-making industry/culture does, in all periods this study deals
with, tend to fall back onto the recognisable, in search of familiarity,
comfort and success.

Hall identifies some of the mature/sophisticated films against which
she is measuring the Australian industry/culture's output. She cites films
like Curtis Hanson's Wonder Boys (2000), Ang Lee's The Ice Storm
(1997), Sam Mendes' American Beauty (1999), and Michael Mann's The
Insider (1999) along with what she labels '... the best French films of the
past decade, along with the work of Ingmar Bergman, Woody Allen,
Yasujiro Ozu and Robert Altman.' Hall sees the films of a 'middle-aged
film-making' culture being defined in terms of their willingness to move
away from the 'safe' towards a film-making culture that is willing to engage
and explore some difficult territory.

One of the most obvious things about Hall's list of the films of
'mature' film-making cultures is that it is a list of a 'bunch of blokes' making
films predominantly about 'baby boomer' men's mid-life crises. The plots
of Wonder Boys, The Ice Storm and American Beauty are some of the
most explicit attempts to seriously explore this territory. The resolutions for
many of the men at the centre of these narratives is the emotional re-
connection with the women/family in their life, recognising what is
'important' and getting over the confusion of the changing world they find
themselves in. Generally these are narratives of self-discovery that revolve around plots in which the predominant question is: How do I make meaning in a world without meaning, without the traditional grounded points that used to be there? Primarily among these 'grounded points' are gender roles. It is interesting that The Ice Storm is the only period film (it is set in the 1970s) mentioned in this list. It is set in a time when second-wave feminism was making the world just a little bit more confusing for many suburban, middle-class men.

It is interesting to note that one of the criticisms that has been levelled at the Australian film-making industry is that it has, in the twenty-first century, been engaging in too much exploration of difficult territory. This criticism was most strongly articulated by the president of the Screen Producers Association, Antony Ginnane, who said, in his maiden speech at the screen producers' conference in 2008, that contemporary Australian films were:

... in the main, dark depressing bleak pieces that are the cultural equivalent of ethnic cleansing .... We have to recognise that the feature film side of our industry has for some years now almost completely failed to connect with and find an audience .... Right now, the mainstream multiplex audiences have had too many bad experiences with Australian films -- Happy Feet, Moulin Rouge, The Dish and Wog Boy notwithstanding. .... Among the few successes was Kenny, while on the other side of the ledger were films such as Candy and Dying Breed.19

This chapter, by way of concluding the examination of the continuities and discontinuities in the development of meaning-making around notions of the national identity and national character in Australian made cinema over the last sixty years, will discuss some emerging issues around a mature film-making industry/culture in some film examples drawn from this period (1996-2007).
the state of the industry/culture

In this last period for analysis, the national identity and nation-building projects are inextricably tied up with developing a national identity and national character that is linked with notions of maturity, youth and individuation. I am using the term individuation here in the Jungian sense: the process whereby individuals become aware of themselves, of their make-up, as a way to discover their true, inner self. In this same way, the Australian nation building and national identity projects were and are efforts, in some way, to become self-aware and to develop a view of the nature of the culture. I would like at this point to make the suggestion that the projects have over the fifty-year scope of this study been inextricably linked with the notion of maturity: maturing beyond the mother country's apron strings, maturing through self-doubt, maturing through periods of tension and confusion, maturing beyond 'bastard coloniality'.


As has been the case, over much of the period covered by this study, the changing cultural identities of the Australian nation building and national identity projects were developed, in part, by resorting to simplistic notions of a backward looking national identity quest uninformed by contemporary Australian society, and its place in the global environment. The question of the continuity and interpretation of the national identity and nation-building projects is, in this period, perhaps more important than in others. So critical did control of the story become that it broke-out into open *history wars*.

**history wars**

Twenty years after Manning Clark’s protestations that we were not a nation of bastards, and after many shifts in the battles over the past, came further attempts to re-assert some sort of control over the story. Pauline Hanson and her supporters (among a number of others, John Howard included) expressed a desire to return to the old order of society, which they saw as being lost to the forces of late-modernity. Hanson infamously labelled the adverse forces thrown up in the period of late-modernity as ‘political correctness’, and identified the ‘various taxpayer funded “industries” that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups.’²⁰, using a particular reading of the national narratives of the past, couched in terms of a narrow national identity and a slender national character, and the prescribed values associated with such things. Like many of the other combatants in the history wars, Hanson’s ‘One Nation’ movement appointed their
unproblematic reading of *the story* as the only, correct, reading of *the story*.

Hanson, the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the other revisionists of the time were seeking a return to traditional national narratives (even, in some cases, naked jingoism, racism and xenophobia). Ruth Barcan sees this as a reaction along the lines of the Marxist notion of alienation, i.e. that Hanson and the other revisionists were articulating dissatisfaction with:

... the rise of consumerist ideologies, the decline in other models of community, productivist relations to time, people's sense of abandonment and of not belonging, and the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, the overworked and the underworked.²¹

A part of the backlash against this 'decline' is the battle over a fundamental difference between the belief in 'values' and 'lessons of history' being fixed, deterministic and transcendent or, on the other hand, evolving, ephemeral and changeable.²²

Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, in their book *The History Wars*, argue that the history wars are not really about history at all, but about control of interpretation. The control of narratives that 'tell history' therefore reflects powerful political and cultural possibilities for all camps. Macintyre and Clark characterise the *history wars* as:

... an argument for control of the past as a political resource. They are conducted as a polemical argument and rest on a misunderstanding of the nature of history and historical understanding.²³

The *history wars* have also been characterised by John Howard through references to the 'black-arm band' view and 'balance-sheet' view dichotomy. John Howard has articulated the dichotomy thus:
This 'black arm band' view of our past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.

I take a very different view. I believe that the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed. ²⁴

Felicity Collins and Therese Davis point out in their work Australian Cinema After Mabo (2004) that 'histories' of black and white Australians have been politicised to the point where, for Prime Minister Paul Keating, history was an inescapable part of the 'Australian experience.' In his terms, it is imperative that it be acknowledged that in the British colonial period 'we took the traditional lands', 'we brought the diseases', 'we committed the murders'²⁵ and that the terms of the national self-imagining should be drastically transformed for the current Australians, who should take some responsibility for what 'we' did in the nation's name.

It is for this reason that Prime Minister John Howard saw 'our' role in a very different way so as to preserve the links to the British colonial past as one built by, he argued: 'well intentioned, hard working British settlers.'²⁶ And therefore, it is argued that the 'black armband' principle of history should be replaced by the 'balance sheet' position. Howard's view is one that sees that on the whole the early settlers (and therefore the present occupants) do not deserve such 'jaundiced and gloomy'²⁷ treatment, and therefore 'we' have nothing to say sorry for.

Little of the complexity of the political landscape is represented in the films of this period. However, it should be noted that Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, in their significant work on Australian cinema's reactions to the Mabo native-title decision, do explore the after-effects on some subsequent films and the manifestation of the sense of place. They
also extensively deploy a metaphor of 'backtracking', to read some filmic engagements with notions of land rights. Theirs is a work that can be seen to be acknowledging a complexity in the filmic representations and references to the post-Mabo political, cultural and social world. This study argues that the conditions that facilitated the emergence, and the manifestation of what has come to be called the 'aspirational class' in Australia in the early years of the twenty-first century had perhaps the strongest influence on the (whole) filmic output of the Australian film-making industry/culture in this period.

**maturity in australian made cinema?**

In the Australian domestic film-making industry/culture, for most of the period covered by this study, there were haphazard attempts to develop a 'mature' or maturing filmic formation. For example, in the early 1970s, *Wake in Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, 1971) attempted to explore harsh and dark notions of mateship and the outback. In *Between Wars* (Michael Thornhill, 1974) unwelcome attempts were made to look at Australian history. And, perhaps most spectacularly, the harsh critical reception to *2000 Weeks* (Tim Burstall, 1969) would deter all but the most strong-willed film-makers from experimenting with thematic, narrative and technical representation.

There is also an argument to be made that attempts to make mature film narratives in the early 1980s (and there were a number of attempts, for example: *Annie's Coming Out* (Gil Brealey, 1984), *Shame* (Steve Jodrell, 1987) and *The Fringe Dwellers* (Bruce Beresford, 1986)) failed to gain wide critical, cultural and commercial 'success' because the
society/culture was still, just not ready to deal with mature issues that directly addressed the likes of societal discrimination, gender inequity and the continuing marginalisation and genocide of Indigenous Australians.

However, there is some argument to be made that in the Australian context the films made around the publication of Sandra Hall's article can be read as the output of an emerging, mature/sophisticated film-making industry/culture. Films like *Lantana* can be seen to cover this territory in a culturally authentic, Australian way, to a moderate degree of cultural, critical and commercial success.

*Lantana* is a significant mature art-house film of the period. It explores some manifestations of contemporaneous men's experiences and by association some women's experiences as well. A focus of much of the popular critical work on the films of this period dwell on just how much like other cinemas these mature Australian made films are. For example, a major focus in critical reviews of *Lantana* rests on comparisons with the work of Robert Altman - on the multi-strand narrative structure of the film: "... that delicate interweaving of plotlines and characters to form a larger scale mosaic rather than the classical form which pins its hopes on two or three main characters and relegates all else to support"28.

The multi-strand narrative structure of the film notwithstanding, the plot is fairly straightforward. A woman, Valerie (Barbara Hershey, imported accent), a psychiatrist, goes missing on her way home. Her husband John (Geoffrey Rush, internationally known Australian actor) is suspected of causing her disappearance, until Nik (Vince Colosimo, the Bryan Brown of this period) falls under suspicion by the investigating cop Leon (Anthony LaPaglia, international Australian star) who is having an affair with Jane,
Nik's neighbour. Jane's husband, Leon's wife and police partner, and some of Valerie's patients are minor yet significant characters in the plot.

A significant inclusion in the cast is Leon's police partner, Claudia (played by Leah Purcell). Like a number of other inclusions in this and other 'mature' films of the period, her Aboriginality is not a part of her character's 'back-story' or personality. It gives no emphasis or justification to her actions. Her significant defining characteristics are in her personal situation as a single thirty-something woman and in her complex attraction to Leon.

One of the most telling scenes in the film occurs between two characters who are connected though they don't know it. This is one of the themes of the film — the interconnectedness of contemporary life. In this scene, in a pub (men's space, it could have been a battle field or a sporting field, devoid of women) Leon meets Pete (the husband of his mistress) by coincidence. Neither knows who the other is, nor does the audience know who Pete is. The two men strike up a conversation, and get into a drinks 'shout', buying each other drinks in the ritualised fashion of the (Australian male) culture. What would women do in the same situation? Could they be in the same situation? In the twenty-first century mature Australian made cinema they could, though they seldom are. This is predominantly (as most are) a men's story. The lives of the women in the narrative are affected by the actions of the men rather than being self-determining. Leon's wife is the major example of this — she must wait for Leon to 'work it out' before they can resume their 'love' relationship. The resolution of the film is the re-coming together of the 'couples' and the permanent and clean break-up of the broken couples.
In the pub, the two men, Leon and Pete, start talking about an incident Pete suffered in an altercation on the street, with Valerie (a psychiatrist, who does not know who he is either). This discussion is the catalyst for the developing 'mateship' relationship of the two men. They come together through a mutual confusion about women and their roles in 'relationships'. A further development of this relationship occurs in the pub toilet.

A little later (presumably after a few drinks), Pete and Leon are in the toilet of the pub talking. Through the process of sharing common concerns and the ritualised drinking tradition, the two men are emerging into the 'mateship' relationship through the development of the characteristics of mateship – trust, common concerns, common language etc. Leon is telling Pete about the incident that happened to him a few days earlier (the audience saw the incident earlier in the film narrative). Leon was out for a jog, running around a corner, when he literally ran into another man – both came off with bloody noses. Straight away Leon started to yell and swear at the other man who cowered on the ground. As the other man walks away he starts to cry:

Leon: ... and that's when it happens
Pete: What?
Leon: He starts to cry.
Pete: What for?
Leon: I don't know. I don't know what makes a man cry like that?
Pete: Yeah...a lot of things – So what did you do?
Leon: I just...I held him. I just stood there and I held him, but you know the whole time I was thinking – you fuckin’ weak prick, pull yourself together, you know the rest of us have to.
Pete: ...yeah – but don't you want to cry sometimes?
Leon: ...yeah but...you don't do ya'?
Pete: um...yeh...mmmmmm!?
In the DVD commentary,\textsuperscript{29} the director (Ray Lawrence) says, of what he calls the 'male nuance' in this scene: 'it works everywhere in the world, it's not just an Australian thing. Everywhere I've seen this, no matter where, the guys get it.' Is this maturity? Is this some sort of adult universality? Is the recognition of these common concerns a significant defining characteristic of these films? Or is the maturing, domestic Australian film-making industry/culture's universalising of the values associated with the production of Australianness – in this case mateship into simple, recognisable male friendship – diluting the uniqueness of the culturally derived cultural identity of the nation?

In a further example, a construction of mateship in the film \textit{Walking on Water}, in the twenty-first century, HIV/AIDS world, has Charlie (Vince Colosimo), a gay man, wrapping a plastic shopping bag around his dying friend Gavin's (David Bonney) head, to finish off an attempt at assisted suicide (when the morphine overdose does not work). In this narrative, a gay man dying of HIV/AIDS does have mates, developed just like all other mates, through shared experiences, the development of trust and a common language. In Australia, in this period, this kind of mature filmmaking further opened up the possibilities of whose stories would be placed at the centre of the national narratives and who had a place in the national identity and nation building projects, at the expense of some of the uniqueness associated with the cultural identity of the nation.

Importantly, I would point to films like \textit{The Boys}, \textit{Head On}, \textit{Walking On Water}, \textit{Alexandra's Project} (Rolf De Heer, 2003), \textit{Japanese Story} (Sue Brooks, 2003), among a number of others, that took those concerns of maturity and of self-reflexivity and adapted them further, into other
situations and contexts. These types of narratives opened up issues of meaning-making in a time of change, for new groups, women most importantly, as well as gay people, the children of immigrants, and poorer, marginalised fringe dwellers.

In an article for the *Australian Screen Education Journal*, Gary Simmons argues that in Australian film the 'bush myth' – which he defines as creating meaning through privileging rural contexts and the Australian landscape, 'with its vast hallucinatory power' and the representation of country communities as 'models of social organization' – plays a central role within Australian narrative traditions. I have no problem with this notion, but where Simmons and I diverge is in his over-extension of the assertion that in the 1990s there was a 'paradigm shift in concerns and preoccupations' around identity meaning-making in Australian national narratives.

For Simmons, in the 1990s the traditional and well established bush myths and legends 'were either subverted or ignored, as cultural diversity generated 'national fictions' that privileged women, migrants, Indigenous culture and diverse sexualities which had previously been marginalized.' He singles out three films as being illustrative of this paradigmatic shift: *No Worries* (David Elfick, 1993), *Looking for Alibrandi* (Kate Woods, 1999) and *Mall Boy* (Vince Giarrusso, 1999). I would argue that these examples are consistent with films from other periods that I have discussed (the glitter cycle in the early 1990s in particular), in that they superficially seem to be making a break from the traditional narrative forms to be found in familiar Australian made cinema, but that in their meaning-making they can not escape the dominant paradigm, and the
discourses through which films are imbued with some sort of national identity and national character recognition by references to the referential regime.

This is the point of my whole argument: Significant and easily recognised, orthodox meaning-making around the national narratives is accomplished through imbuing central characters with an identity and character; developed through the representation of a uniquely Australian, shared, culturally derived identity of the nation; and produced through an engagement with some sort of reading of the representative referential regime that includes Australian values (egalitarianism, a fair go and mateship), gender, class, ethnicity and the landscape.

As was the case in the renaissance of the Australian film-making industry/culture (1975-1983) and subsequent periods, for the main character of a film narrative to have enough cultural currency to carry the narrative, they have to be imbued with a recognisable amount of the qualities associated with the national narratives.34

In Walking on Water, a palliative care nurse named Robin comes to pick up the medical equipment loaned to the household in which housemate Gavin died. She tells the two remaining housemates, Charlie (Colosimo) and Anna (Maria Theodorakis), that the nurses at the 'treatment room' had been talking about them, about what 'good mates' the two had been over the eighteen months of care they had given Gavin in the final stages of his illness. Throughout the narrative they are also shown to be family, friends and co-conspirators. This is a common engagement to be found in the serious-art house films of the period: though they often deal with the stories of previously marginalised women,
people from non-English speaking backgrounds, etc., they tend to specifically label and link their identity/character enactments with the referential regime. What remains unchanged are the playing out of the values of the characters, the role that the place has in meaning-making, the gendering of the characters and the demographic naturalising, stereotyping and limiting of them and their stories.

Yes, stories by and about women, migrants, indigenous culture and diverse sexualities were produced in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, but they were narratives producing a familiar Australianness. The shift is that these previously marginalised characters can now be imbued with enough cultural currency, a familiarity built out of references to the referential regime, to a sufficient degree such that they can be placed at the centre of the narrative.

An early exercise in the narrative elevation of previously marginalised characters can be seen in the 1970s and early 1980s 'AFC genre' filmic narratives. This period saw the early stirrings of a more inclusive identity/character begin to emerge with the pushing of traditional, gendered values such as mateship, egalitarianism and a fair go, normally in the production of Australianness, only associated with men, onto women, imbuing them with enough currency to justify their prominent places in a few narratives. In these early inclusive narratives a few dominant women were imbued with sufficient characteristics associated with the national identity and national character such as capability, larrikin cheekiness and non-conformity, thus making them worthy of a central role in the narratives of national identity and therefore in the national narratives.
In the twenty-first century period, you find Vince Colosimo and Alex Dimitriades no longer being just 'wog boys', but now imbued with enough cultural currency to also be men, mates, protagonists. Two of the major characters they play in this period, Colosimo in *Walking on Water* and Dimitriades in *Head On*, are 'openly' gay. Their positions as gay are significant in the make-up of their character, and therefore in the plot; however, they are in no way stereotypical or (specifically) clichéd, but complex characters inhabiting a number of identities.

In this period, given the right story, these previously marginalised characters can move into the centre of the narrative, out of the previous limited stereotypes and limited functioning as marginal or just down-right 'colourful' characters, with their ethnic/sexuality baggage intact. It is interesting that Colosimo (and Anna, Maria Theodorakis) are not identified, in *Walking on Water*, as having a non Anglo-Celtic ethnicity. Their problems are the problems of inner-city thirty-somethings. In *Head On*, Dimitriades' problems are a bit more complex and made more complex by his Greek/Australian background, his sexuality and his drug use; however, they are not so foreign that they could not be the problems of an Anglo 'Skippy'.

In all periods of film-making in Australia that this study engages with (1945-2007), there are seeming departures from the narrow, white, male heterosexual central character, and the privileging of new groups, identities and narratives; however, notions around national identity and national character meaning-making are always facilitated by the deployment of reference points drawn from the referential regime.
conclusion

This chapter brings to an end the review, mapping and analysis of the national identity, nation-building projects in Australian made cinema. By reviewing this process over more than fifty years of film-making, a picture of some of the aims, foci and results of the projects can be glimpsed.

The analysis undertaken in this study has sought to establish that the role of the Australian film-making industry/culture is demonstrably one that has been, and continues to be, inextricably linked with the national identity and nation building projects, and therefore, with the Zeitgeist of the film-making industries and watching cultures at various times. As long as there is a definable Australian domestic film-making industry/culture that seeks to promote what Tom Weir called in 1958 genuine 'national self-expression', and attempts to register with audiences '... the shock of self recognition,' the analysis, description and discussion of the results of these engagements will remain a viable and necessary research undertaking.
Ch. 7. endnotes

2. Sheridan, Greg. (2002). 'This Nation We Love Must Face the Threat, And Fight.' The Australian. Thursday October, 17, p. 13.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
23. Ibid. p. 89.
26. Ibid. p. 6.
27. Geoffrey Blainey in Ibid.


31 Ibid.


33 Ibid.


Ch. 8. IN CONCLUSION

This study is structured along a chronological, linear path, from 1945 into the twenty-first century, divided into distinct periods that loosely sit concurrently within various periods of political leadership. Its aims were to read something of the national imagining in the cinematic output of the Australian film-making industry/culture.

This study commenced with the post-war period, a period that was strongly characterised by the leadership of Robert Menzies (1949-1966) and the post-war reconstruction and economic boom in which few economic resources, or manifestations of official or public interest were reserved for representations of the national identity and nation-building projects on the screen. In this period a number of co-productions were made in Australia, and much of the analysis of representations of the national identity and national character in this period is through an engagement with these developing views. Captured through foreign lenses, representations of Australia, Australianness and the Australian character in these films often had very narrow depths of focus, because the focus was on the place as background. The period ends with the first hints of the approaching domestic film industry and the emergence of the first really 'successful' Australian made film of the post-war period: They're a Weird Mob (Michael Powell, 1966).

In the next period, from 1966 and the release of They're a Weird Mob contemporary urban Australia becomes the setting for almost all of the films made in this next period. In the pre-renaissance period (1967-
1974), the domestic film-making industry begins to emerge from the long afternoon and starts to explore and articulate a new Australian voice through an engagement with the vernacular Ocker character in a popular cinema form. This is the period of 'new nationalism' and the election of the Whitlam Labor Government. Some of the other film examples drawn from this period were focused more on aping a European art house style, putting aside any Australianness in pursuit of (rough) style, while the Ocker films dealt with a type of hyper-Australianness putting aside style in pursuit of (rough) identification.

The so-called renaissance period (1975-1983) was a period in which Australian made cinema gained enormous national and international critical success through the so-called 'AFC genre' of films. This is the period in which some of the most easily recognisable groupings of Australian made films, which established a strongly resonant type of cinematic Australianness, are to be found. During a portion of the renaissance of Australian made cinema in the 1970s that position was a backward-looking one mired in a conservative, neo-colonial subordinate relationship to the mother country, for good and for bad, glued together with simplistic readings of nineteenth century nationalistic foundation myths that deal with, in Australia's case, the coming of nationhood and the foundational stirrings of a national identity. Though this is also the period of Malcolm Fraser's Prime Ministership, little of his administration's character is reflected in the cinematic output of the period.

In the 1980s a strict adherence to the kinds of constructions of the national identity and national character that were prominent in the 'AFC
genre’ films were put aside for economic rationalisation and the search for larger audiences through joining with more broadly established market expectations of an Australian identity and through appropriating generic forms and incorporating them into the Australian national cinema.

The period 1984-1990, a period that was strongly influenced by the changes to the tax system, 10BA, as the tax concession was called, saw an explosion of film-making and the film-making industries in Australia. The new ethos of ‘economic rationalism’ that characterised the Hawke years (1983-1991) had a strong influence on the types of product produced by the industry in this period.

In the 1990s the Australian made cinema re-emerged, invigorated and challenged by original and individual views of what it meant to be an Australian. The filmic texts of the early 1990s, in particular examples drawn from the so-called ‘Glitter Cycle’, employ some interesting new ways of telling old stories with reference to the representational regime buried under some superficial fluff and feathers.

Through the analysis of how notions of the Australian national identity and national character is defined, constructed and fitted within discursive boundaries in Australian made cinema, this study has identified that it is reliant on reference points drawn from the representative regime. These discursive mechanisms helped to form and develop the directions of the Australian national identity and nation building projects. This phenomenon has been mapped across sub-periods, and examples of the development of ways in which contemporaneous notions of Australianness are represented in narratives over the whole period have been modelled.
Various representations of what I have labelled the national identity
\textit{}/ type, and the accompanying playing out of this national identity/type in
the narratives of the nation have held dominant places in the themes
present in Australian made cinema across the 62-year period (1945-2007)
covered by this study.

Tom O'Regan characterises Australian national cinema as being a
result of imported and domestic characteristics that have been
synthesised into a hybrid assemblage of elements that are continually
being improvised, combined and recombined. O'Regan identifies the
Australian national cinema as remaining unrepresentative of the nation as
a whole by remaining an English-language cinema which generally
confines itself to discourses within that cultural area, failing to 'privilege
biculturalism and hybridity.'\textsuperscript{1} I would, in part, disagree. What the
examination of the ways in which Australianness was produced,
represented and defined in Australian made cinema in the 60 years after
the Second World War shows is that membership of the Australian
imagined cultural community is open to all if they can adopt the values,
mores and ethos of the cultural nation.

Over the period studied, 1945-2007, the notions of who can join in
the Australian national narrative reading, writing and representation have
shifted from those defined by race to those defined by something much
more fluid – adherence to and an understanding of the national identity
and national character. In much of the period covered by this study, it was
not the definition of what made a typical Australian that was important
(which is realistically impossible anyway), but rather, what was important
was the way in which the term was, and is still, used. This study has identified that the Australian national identity and national character is defined, in Australian cultural and social life, by association with a representative regime that uses as reference points notions associated with: Australian values (mateship, a fair go, egalitarianism); gender (with masculinity occupying most of this space); ethnicity (including notions of race, whiteness or indigeniety); the landscape (including the anxieties of belonging to this place); and class (including notions of 'the battler' and 'the Ocker'). This referential ('reverential?') regime remains constant over the period studied; however, the ways in which the reference points are employed changed with the times.

Finally, it should be recognised that the more something such as Australianness is defined, the less distinctive it becomes. That notions such as 'mateship' can be redeveloped into friendship, 'a fair go' into fairness and 'egalitarianism' into tolerance make the understanding and therefore the adoption of the national identity and the recognition of the national character easier for new members of the imagined cultural community.
Ch. 8. endnote

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