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Editor: Annette Burns

**Fancelines and Horizon Lines: Queensland in the
Imaginary Geographies of Cinema**

Dr Allison Craven

Dr Allison Craven is a senior lecturer in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, James Cook University, in Townsville, where she teaches English, Cinema and Communication. She has published on Disney film, gender and globalization, children's literature and education, and Australian film. Her lecture arises from her current research project, "Paradise Post-National", concerning film and cinema in Queensland.

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Framing Queensland and Early History

Film is a profoundly illusory medium. The sense of place in a film is often created with little more than a few images, dialogue and other narrative devices. The power of cinematography creates a sense of immensity of the place in the consciousness of the viewer, giving the impression of seeing or being somewhere, an experience that can be uncanny for viewers when the place concerned is a homeland (see Craven 2010). This article concerns a number of films in which Queensland has entered the cinematic imaginary. Fence lines and horizon lines suggest how our perceptions of Queensland in these films are subject to the illusory boundaries of cinematic settings. I ponder the regional, national and international resonances from times when Queensland was very marginal in the international film industry to the current era of Queensland's rising involvement in the industry.

Australian film histories are rarely focused on states or regions. An exception is in the work of Albert Moran, whose *Queensland Screen: An Introduction* (Moran 2001) contains a filmography of over 4000 film and television productions in Queensland throughout the twentieth century. While there has been an abundance of locally produced television, Moran points out that it is less straightforward to identify a coherent corpus of films that are written, made, financed, produced and post-produced entirely in Queensland by Queenslanders. Instead, he devises a set of criteria that includes films (and television) "that have in part or in whole been shot in Queensland and/or concern Queensland or Queenslanders" (3). I follow him in adopting these criteria as the basis for the films discussed in this article, in looking at fiction feature films since the World War II. Fiction features, however, did not form the beginnings of cinema, so I pause first to overview some milestones in the early history of cinema in Queensland, which largely comprised non-fiction films of industry and culture in the colonial state.

The early history is sketchy and we have much to thank the efforts of film historians, Pat Laughren and Chris Long, for compiling a documentary, *Queensland's First Films* (Laughren 1996), that gives some chronology to this history, and some background on the identities of the pioneer filmmakers. The information that follows in this section is largely drawn from their documentary. Motion pictures appeared in Queensland via several technologies from 1894. Brisbane seems to have been the site of first showings before the 'pictures' would tour around Queensland. In 1896, Lumiere's cinematographe, a hand-cranked machine for shooting, printing and projecting film, was introduced to Australia, enabling the first films to be made here. Queensland's first film is said to have been shot in 1897 but no print of it survives. Queensland's oldest surviving film, dating from 1898, was made on Murray Island and featured Islanders' ceremonies and dances (Laughren 1996). The film was shot by Professor Alfred Haddon, who led a Cambridge University expedition to the Torres Strait (Laughren 1996).

However, the earliest films to be made by Queenslanders were government productions, notably those of the Queensland Agriculture Department that were shot by Fred Wills, an official government artist and photographer (see also <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/blogs/AS10346b.htm>). Wills worked with a cinematographe and was sent to Sydney to train in the use of it. His first film of Queensland was of the opening of Parliament by the Governor, Lord Lamington, in 1899 (Laughren 1996). Among his other surviving films are scenes of Queen Street and the Roma Street Railway, in Brisbane; of wheat harvesting on the Darling Downs; the sugar industry around Eumundi and Nambour; and of a parade of Boer War troops, among other subjects (Laughren 1996). North Queensland regions appear in Wills's films of the Cairns and Mareeba Railway; of Torres Strait Islanders;

and of ships at sea off Townsville. In November 1899, a collection of Willis's films was screened privately to government officials before it was sent to London for use by Queensland's Immigration Lecturer, George Randall (Laughren 1996). Willis eventually gave up filmmaking as Moran records that Willis left his post in 1901 (Laughren gives 1904) and moved to Toowoomba where he operated a photographic studio (12).

Another major producer of films in Australia in this period was the Salvation Army Limelight Department based in Melbourne under Joseph Perry. The Salvation Army came to Queensland in June 1899 to film the Riverview Boys Home in Moggill, Brisbane, and these films were incorporated into the Salvation Army's touring lecture presentations (Laughren 1996). The Limelight Department became Australia's first registered film production business under Perry, who was assisted from 1901 by the English-born Queensland, Sidney Cook as second cameraman. While most of the films are lost, the Limelight Department filmed the first federal parliament and Federation events in Melbourne, in 1901. The Salvos also held the quirky distinction of shooting Australia's first bushranging film in Winton - which is said to have been made two and a half years before the *Story of the Kelly Gang* (Charles Tait 1906), which is thought to be the oldest extant *Ned Kelly* film - and, in Hughenden, the first film of shearing in Australia (Laughren 1996). Among some footage of the Brisbane ports that was shot by Cook were images of the *Yongala* three years before it disappeared off Townsville. Sidney Cook eventually left the employment of the Salvation Army in 1905 to become a commercial picture showman, screening first at His Majesty's Theatre in Brisbane, in 1906. Two years later, in 1908, he screened films in London on behalf of the Queensland Government at the Franco-British Exhibition. According to Laughren, Cook was among the most prolific filmmakers of his Edwardian era. He died in 1937. Among his rival filmmakers was another Queensland, Bert Ives, who was a Government cinematographer from 1913. In 1910, Ives covered the visit of Lord Kitchener to Brisbane, creating almost a feature-length record of this event. Government projects, civic works, indigenous culture, local histories, and colonial administration thus constitute the early screen consciousness of Queensland.

Queensland goes to Hollywood

The more compelling fact of our early cinema history is that by the 1920s, Hollywood was by far the main source of all fiction films screened in Australia. The occasions were extremely rare in which Australia or Queensland figured in Hollywood films. *Sister Kenny* (Dudley Nichols, 1946), a biopic about Sister Elizabeth Kenny (played by Rosalind Russell) made by RKO Studios is a rare exception. *Sister Kenny* was based on the book, *And They Shall Walk* written by Kenny and Martha Ostenson during the years that Kenny lived in the United States. In *Sister Kenny*, the narrative place is initially suggested by a map of Australia that appears after the opening titles, followed by a zoom-in on the big eastern state, with 'QUEENSLAND' appearing in block letters across the screen (in fact, Kenny was born in New South Wales but had a lifelong association with Queensland, through her family home in the Darling Downs district, and her clinic in Townsville; she died in Toowoomba in 1952). Queensland is referred to in dialogue in the early stages of *Sister Kenny*, which concern Kenny's ambitions to work 'in the bush' and as a 'bush nurse'. The 'bush' is visually suggested as a land seen from within the family homestead, beyond a verandah and a picket fence, the site of the heroine's dreams. Kenny's work takes her away from the bush as she develops her controversial treatment of children afflicted by polio. Queensland thus acquires meaning in this film through its indistinct setting as a rural place with heroic settlers, a pioneer myth. The name on the map stands for Kenny's obscure background and her rise to controversial prominence.

The visual trope of Queensland as a rural setting or landscape, its cinematic territories pegged out with fence lines that disappear in the sightlines of the *mise-en-scene*, recurs in other Australian films where the fence imposes a sense of a colonial space, a settled territory that is separated from the wider land. When location markers fail in evoking a sense of place, myths rush in to fill the void. Myths of Queensland have also evolved from literature and folklore that inscribe the relationship of Queensland to the nation, and mythologise the character of its inner regions and social microclimates.

Mythic Queensland: All Around the Tropic

In 1976, the late Thea Astley confessed to a Sydney audience that her love affair with Queensland became most intense when she moved to the southern states (Astley 1978). Musing on what marks Queensland as different from the South, and considering that Queensland was originally part of New South Wales, from which it separated in 1859, she noted that the convict history and the treatment of Aborigines were no different in the two states. Apart from "isolation" and "monstrous distances", and "suspicions of political neglect . . . by a federal government located two thousand miles [sic] away" (3), Astley found answers in the obvious: Queensland architecture (houses on stilts); Queensland dress ("more casual"); and Queensland manners ("indifferent, laconic"); and "tougher sunlight, slower-moving people and a delicious tendency to procrastinate" (4). Astley admits that her reminiscences of Queensland are more oriented to the north, where she was a teacher for some years (in Townsville). "These virtues", she says, "were raised to the nth power north of Rocky" (4), and she expresses amusement at the far-northern tendency to refer to even nearer Queenslanders as "southerners" (3). As one of her oddball characters, Leo, in *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, says, "when I say southerners I mean anyone below the tropic" (Astley 1979, 139), a reference to the Tropic of Capricorn. In spite of her expressed love, Astley nevertheless parodied Queensland in her fiction (see Astley 1979, 1997), and her imaginary Queensland bristles with grotesque characters. She also speaks of how Queensland has "always suffered from being a cultural joke to southerners" (Astley 1978, 12). She praises the novels of David Malouf, especially *Johnno*, as "a beautiful evocation of the Queensland wound" (9)¹.

Perhaps what Astley characterises as the wound is a quality that emanates as the otherness of Queensland in cultural discourses beyond literature, such as Bruce Molloy's (1990) observation of "depiction[s] of eccentricity or excess, emphasising bizarre behaviour" (69) in a number of feature films set in, shot in or referring to Queensland from the silent era to the late 1980s, including the first *On Our Selection*, made in 1919 (72). With a touch of Astley's Leo, Molloy attributes this pattern to "outsiders" defining how Queenslanders look at themselves (69). It is a view he adapts from James Michener's complaint that Texans are subject to myths imposed by non-Texan movie-makers, and Molloy is invoking the folklore that Queensland's distinction from southern Australian states, like Texas in the United States, is the result of its size (67). Apparently without irony, in 2008, the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd publicly recalled this folk narrative by complimenting the then American President George W. Bush as an honorary Queenslander, apparently owing to Bush's Texan background. Not only a reminder of the persistence of folklore, the

¹ The essay from which these quotations are taken (Astley 1976) was republished twice, in *Southerly*, Volume 36 No. 3, 1976, pp 252-64; and in *Eight Voices of the Eighties*, edited by Gillian Whitlock (University of Queensland Press, 1989, pp 169-79). In the latter version, Astley omitted the comments on David Malouf's novels and the 'Queensland wound'.

incident also goes to the role of Rudd, a Queenslander, in overcoming the wound in rising to national leadership.

The wound has also afflicted Queensland's relationship to the film industry at times as Queensland seems to have been regarded as a backwater for film production since the 1960s, even as its landscapes were incorporated into 'parts' in Australian films, and other places have 'played' Queensland at times. Various myths have emerged in these representations, in Molloy's view, such as Queensland as either "exotic background to conventional stories", or "a site of rich resources for the taking...through hard work" (68). This latter theme he says is often associated with "Queensland as a mythic destination, the object of a journey of epic proportions" (68). *The Overlanders*, made in 1946 by Ealing Studios, and *Sons of Matthew*, completed in 1949 by Charles Chauvel, are two such films that "celebrate the spirit of enterprise and the virtues of hard work" (Molloy 70). In both of these films, Molloy argues that the success of pioneering characters in Queensland settings contrasts with the "pessimistic thesis" of Australian literature and film, in which the protagonists experience disempowerment and impotence in encounters with the bush (71). *Sons of Matthew*—which was made with the support of the then Queensland Government, and in picturesque locations in the Numinbah Valley and around Beaudesert near Brisbane—captures this pioneering spirit in dual senses. It is a story of a family who migrate from New South Wales to Queensland to establish a pastoral dynasty; and the production itself was pioneering in that it took two years to produce in challenging conditions, including a flood, conditions that somewhat mirrored the drama of the elements in the film as Matthew's family contend with a cyclone and a bushfire.

In addition to eccentricity, epic journeys and Queensland as 'reward', another key myth identified by both Molloy and Moran is that of Queensland as 'paradise'. In a number of films, Moran suggests "Queensland is an Eden held out to the characters as they undergo a narrative of events that are situated elsewhere" (24). This mythic Queensland is "a goal, a heaven on earth that the characters hope to reach in the future" (24). Molloy also discerns myths of Eden in Queensland, in *Age of Consent* (Michael Powell 1969) and, more ironically, in *Walkabout* (Nicholas Roeg 1971) (Molloy 70). This mythology of paradise seems to have become more prominent and more contentious since the 1980s, in films based on screenplays written by prominent non-Queenslanders, notably *Buddies* (Arch Nicholson 1983), *Travelling North* (Carl Schultz 1986)—based on a David Williamson play of the same name—and *Radiance* (Rachel Perkins 1998; based on *Radiance*, the play by Louis Nowra). But whereas *Travelling North* adopts these patterns sentimentally, *Radiance* contests them through allusions to Native Title, *terra nullius* and the Stolen Generations (see Craven 2008: 2010). Views of horizons in these films contribute in diverging ways to senses of desire for and desire to contest the myth of paradise in Queensland. The vividly sunlit horizon of the water on which Frank fishes in retirement in *Travelling North* implies the nearness to heaven for Frank, who dies – contented – after a relatively brief retirement somewhere around Port Douglas (see Craven 2010). In *Radiance*, the horizon-trimmed views of Nora Island - offshore from the home of Nona, Cressy and Mae, that is implied as somewhere around Rockhampton - figures the ancestry that inspires the sisters' rebellion against the landlord who mistreated their mother and evicts them from her house. Comparison of these films shows that the mythos of 'paradise' is unstable; it is not only a means of idealising Queensland.

In contrast to these regional dramas of Queensland that uphold and contest the myth of paradise, Queensland territories have been adapted to stand for the nation of Australia as a whole in the films discussed hereafter. *The Irishman* (Donald Crombie 1978) was shot mainly in and around Charters Towers, but the film barely references

the place of its setting and is remembered as one of the nationalist period films of the New Wave of Australian cinema in the 1970s.

Nationalist Queensland: *The Irishman*

While it is credited as a production of the South Australian Film Commission (SAFC), *The Irishman* was generated under the overarching influence of the Australian Film Commission (AFC). The AFC was established under the Whitlam Government in 1975 (originally as the Australian Film Development Corporation or AFDC) in response to a prolonged lobby in support of the arts and film industries, in a period in which Australia was emerging from the grip of its colonial past. The 'New Wave' is the name now given to the crop of films that emerged in the late 1970s, which have come to be seen as national cultural landmarks, irrespective of the regions of production. *The Irishman*, however, was written, made, and partly financed and produced in Queensland, and largely by Queenslanders. Donald Crombie, the director, grew up in Central Queensland, and the film was based on Elizabeth O'Connor's Miles Franklin Award-winning novel, *The Irishman: A Novel of Northern Australia* (O'Connor 1960) (see Craven 2011). O'Connor was the pseudonymous Barbara McNamara, the wife of a station manager in the Gulf Country, and the novel is based on the relationship between her husband and his father, who ran a horse team between Georgetown and Croydon during the gold boom years. The novel tells of young Michael, son of Black Paddy the Irishman, during the decline of gold mining in the region, when horse teams were giving way to motorised vehicle transport.

While the Queensland settings of the novel are said to be Georgetown and the Atherton Tableland (Cheryl Taylor, Personal Communication, 2003) there are also brief references to Chillagoe, Georgetown and Normanton. Crombie's film, however, was shot in Charters Towers and near Cardwell and these locations were chosen partly because of the proximity to Townsville as a supply point for film stock and production resources (Audio Commentary 2002). Elsewhere (Craven 2011) I have discussed the ways in which regional signs in the film locations were adapted to the aura of national heritage as local properties in Charters Towers were used as sets, and Gill Street, Charters Towers, was made-over as the fictional township. The design of the interior scenes in *The Irishman* was inspired, according to Crombie, by the work of the North Queensland artist, Ray Croke, in particular, the manner in which the luminous exteriors are sometimes shot from within the gloomy indoors of the timber dwellings. Fences - which appear in the form of the stockyards and boundaries ridden by Michael and his boss, Dalgleish - figure the manly culture of station management in which Michael is apprenticed. But Michael's quest for manhood leads him to the bush camp of the itinerant Chad Logan, and in these and other passages of the film, the spacious landscape meets horizons. Thus *The Irishman* exhibits the landscape aesthetic that became a distinct element of the New-Wave cinema, and which has gained both praise and criticism (see Turner 1989).

Among its other distinctions, *The Irishman* is one of a number of films that have been wholly or partly made in or around regional towns in Queensland. Gayndah and Bundaberg featured in another New-Wave film, *The Mango Tree* (Kevin James Dobson 1977). *Radiance* was also largely shot around Bundaberg, Childers and Hervey Bay. The practice of adapting small towns to national visions has persisted in more recent films. *Australia* (Baz Luhrmann 2008) and *The Proposition* (John Hillcoat 2005) were made in and around Bowen and Winton, respectively, and the town of Emerald in central Queensland became the production site for scenes in *Charlie and Boots* (Dean Murphy 2009) - and this is not to mention the collaboration of Cardwell folk in the production of *Nim's Island* (Jennifer Flackett and Mark Levine 2008) on Hinchinbrook Island, well pre-Cyclone Yasi. Most of these films also feature livestock

spectacles of one kind or another: the crossing of the Burdekin river by Paddy's horse-team in *The Irishman*; the drive through the town in *Australia*; the Western-style drama of *The Proposition*; and the rodeo in *Charlie and Boots*, in which local riders, horses, bulls and announcers participated.

The Irishman is also a testament to the inhospitality of the state of Queensland to filmmakers in the era of its production. Crombie tells a story about the producer, Anthony Buckley, meeting with the then Premier, Joh Bjelke Petersen, to seek funding for *The Irishman*, only to be asked - it is alleged - "what's in it for me?" (Audio Commentary 2002). Perhaps apocryphal, this story nevertheless reminds that there was once a time in which it was nigh impossible for local filmmakers to make a movie in Queensland. The courageous filmmaker, Jackie McKimmie, for instance, owing to the difficulties of production in Queensland, made *Waiting* (1986), which is set in Crow's Nest near Toowoomba, in a location near Wollombi in the Hunter Valley. With funds gained from a combination of national and international interests², a property was purchased and adapted to resemble a Queenslander house, in a location that most resembled the Darling Downs setting of the story (Yeates and Fox 1993, 95). Thankfully, this situation is much changed today. The most recent era of cinema in Queensland is one in which the state government and various interests have actively sought to attract film production to Queensland, most notably with the establishment of the Pacific Film and Television Commission (PFTC) some years ago, now known as Screen Queensland. This body and the now well-established presence of the Village Roadshow studios on the Gold Coast has transformed the in-state capacity for film production. The current era is therefore emerging as one of transformation in the relationship between Queensland and the international film industry, and a prime example of this mature trend is *The Proposition*.

Transnational Queensland: *The Proposition* and the Australian western

The award-winning *The Proposition* was co-produced with international interests and written by Nick Cave and directed by (the Queensland-born and Canadian-raised) John Hillcoat, both Australian artists with international reputations. The lands and skies of Queensland appear as those surrounding the fictional town of "Banyon", in which is centred the chilling drama of Captain Stanley and the vicious bushrangers, the Burns Brothers. The film was shot in locations around Winton, including Bladensburg National Park, and some private station properties. It is a region known for grazing and agriculture that has more recently also become the destination for tourist pilgrimages to dinosaur tracks. The haunting adaptation of these regions to the plot of *The Proposition* therefore bespeaks both the transitional economies of regions as well as the profound illusion of place in cinema. Temporary sets were constructed and the shoot took place in broiling Queensland conditions in the summer of 2004. According to locals, the sets of Banyon were either dissolved by the heat or destroyed by termites soon after, so no trace of it remains.³

The proposition of the title is the bargain offered by Stanley (Ray Winstone), an English colonial police officer, to Charlie Burns (Guy Pearce) to spare his brother, Mikey (Richard Wilson) from a death sentence if Charlie will hunt down and kill his other brother, Arthur (Danny Huston), the leader of the Burns Brothers gang. Charlie grimly agrees, but his quest is fraught with his residual family loyalty tempered by

² Funding for *Waiting* was sourced jointly from Australian (Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Film Finance Corporation) and British (Film 4 and Channel 4) interests (Yeates and Fox 1993).

³ My thanks to Ms Linda Elliott and Ms Margaret Oxley for sharing their recollections of the production of, *The Proposition*.

conscience for Arthur's appalling violence, and Charlie's own mistrust of the police. As this plot suggests *The Proposition* has generally been received as a 'Western' (Schembri 2005; Urban 2008) or as a "fake" on the Western (Carruthers 2005). Vince Leo (2006) compares it to *High Plains Drifter* (1973) and *Unforgiven* (1992), and Jon Fortgang describes the "visceral" violence of *The Proposition* as the influence of Sam Peckinpah; the film critic, David Stratton, found some passages "unwatchable" (Pomeranz and Stratton 2005). While shoot-outs form the climax in most westerns, in *The Proposition*, gun-slinging is less featured than other forms of brutality: people are flogged, kicked, beaten and knifed to death as well as shot. But the American Western is not simply understood as a pageant of violence, but rather as a myth of origin of the American nation, and this is its relevance to *The Proposition*. Hillcoat himself has reflected that "nation building is founded on violence. . . we definitely wanted to look at. . . how it actually affects people" (qtd in Pomeranz 2005). *The Proposition* is therefore more appropriately described as a "pastiche" (Hart 2005) or post-colonial western as it blends Australian colonial settler history and bushranging folklore with the eschatological overtones of the classic Western; as Fortgang says, though "set against the birth of modern Australia" there is "a strong sense that these are the last days" (3).

Some hold that "although it has a bush tradition, Australian cinema has no genre to compare with the Hollywood Western" (Collins and Davis 2004: 96). Others, like Peter Limbrick (2007), argue that the Western has been appropriated in various national cinemas for decades (for example, in Sergio Leone's 'spaghetti westerns,' and German westerns of the 1960s), including in Australia, and because the Western represents "a settler colonial mode of cinema" that is part of a cultural project of "grounding white settler cultures within colonized landscapes" (69). Limbrick identifies a number of Western-style films in Australian cinema history. He refers to: *Greenhide* (Charles Chauvel 1926), a so-called 'kangaroo western'; the 'cattle duffer' and 'bushranger' films of the 1900s-1920s, including *Thunderbolt* (John Gavin 1910) and *Robbery Under Arms* (Kenneth Brampton 1920), that were patterned in ways familiar to cinema goers from the American silent Westerns of the same period; and a subsequent group of pre-World War II films, including *Girl of the Bush* (Franklin Barrett, 1921) and *The Squatter's Daughter* (Kon G. Hall 1933), which established, Limbrick argues, the "racialized nature of the outback, and set white settlers, Aboriginals, Chinese, and even Afghans in asymmetrical relations of gender... labor, and property" (71-72). Carol Hart nominates *40,000 Horsemen* (Charles Chauvel 1941), *The Man from Snowy River* (George Miller 1982), and "numerous versions of *Ned Kelly*" as Australian inheritors of the Western (Hart 2005); and the handful of films made by the British Ealing Studios in Australia in the mid-twentieth century, including *Bitter Springs* (1950) and *The Overlanders* (1946), also adapted the Western code, but "[fewrote] white conquest as peaceful coexistence" according to Limbrick (87). He argues that the adaptation of the Western is not simply evidence of mimicry or appropriation of "an exclusively American frontier mythology" but concerns the "negotiation of the tensions and contradictions of building 'home' in a disputed space, the demarcation of territory between European settlers and indigenous inhabitants" (70).

Limbrick's view suggests a way of seeing *The Proposition* as a work of negotiated and parodic adaptation of the Western. This occurs especially through the powerful use of landscape, which plays on both the conventions of the Western, and the landscape aesthetic of Australian cinema. Land occupies a central place in the mythic structure of the Western, even if there is some variation in its perceived meaning. Jane Tompkins (1992) argues that the main premise of the classic Western concerns death and transcendence; to "go west" is to die -- death, she says, "is everywhere" in the Western (24). In this fatal landscape, men may dominate women,

animals, and each other but “they never lord it over nature”; nature is the “one thing larger than man” and it is “constantly portrayed as immense” (72). In a divergent account, Virginia Wright Wexman (1993) argues the Western is structured through an agrarian “ideal of the family farm”, the “object of which is to make use of land to build a patrimony for future generations” (81), and which often becomes contaminated by the rivalries of brothers (82). In her view, the bucolic landscape with wagon trains suggests harmony between human and nature, and the landscape becomes the ‘metaphorical “face of the country’ that returns the Europeans’ gaze” (78-79). Arguably, both Tompkins’ and Wexman’s views, and their respective traditions of interpretation of the Western are referenced and parodied in *The Proposition*, and with a deeper additional reflection on the meanings of land and dispossession in Australian colonial history.

The Irish Burns brothers undoubtedly embody the fateful threat of fratricide, and, indeed, the dead are everywhere, in *The Proposition*. Human and animal corpses appear in many scenes, imposing a sense of moribund futility on Captain Stanley’s grim program of “civilis[ing] this place.” The more potent cinematic effect is to deconstruct the landscape myth by confronting the “splendour-image of the landscape” with the “action-image of [colonial] violence” (Collins 2008: 65-66). The squalid mining community of Banyon grotesquely parodies the bucolic agrarian myth as the placid wagon trains of Wexman’s description are transmuted to prison wagons, in which brutalised criminals and Aborigines are rolled into town. The economics of Banyon are thus subordinated to a struggle over civility and justice, which thinly conceals the deep divisions of two acute racial conflicts that permeate the imaginary community and hence the view of colonial Australia, in *The Proposition*: divisions between blacks and whites, and between English and Irish settlers. The combination of Stanley’s proposition to Charlie, his vague sympathy for the enslaved Aborigines, and his deep affection for his genteel wife, Martha (Emily Watson), marks him as a complex and somewhat doomed figure. In offering the proposition to Charlie, Stanley says: “I know where Arthur Burns is. It is a god-forsaken place. The Blacks won’t go there. Neither will the trackers. Not even my own men.” The Aborigines believe Arthur is a spirit or “dog man”, half-human, half-animal. As Charlie heads out in search of Arthur, he is depicted against the horizon, moving into the country. At first the landscape seems naturalistic but his greater distance from the town is suggested by more visible horizons that signify his crossing into a gothic, territory - a kind of *mundus subterraneus* - inhabited by Arthur.

Fence lines and horizon lines thus stake out the mythic terrain of the action and social divisions, and are hauntingly incorporated into the *mise-en-scene* (see Craven 2010). These boundaries mark mythic borders between the ‘civilized’ terrain of Stanley’s jurisprudence, and the “fresh hell” beyond, the vast territory inhabited by bushrangers and Aborigines. An ornate picket fence surrounds the Stanley’s house and rose garden, or what in colonial times was called a ‘homesick’ garden, reminiscent of England. At home in their bedchamber, or taking breakfast on the veranda, Captain and Mrs Stanley appear to live the agrarian myth, reminiscent of outback pioneers. But they are childless with no prospect of patrimony, and the ‘homesick’ garden is a travesty of Eden. Toby, their Aboriginal servant, in heading back to country while the Stanleys celebrate Christmas, removes his shoes before passing through the picket gate as if acknowledging his passage between the two worlds. More ominously, horizon lines rim the arid territory in which Charlie searches for Arthur, marking Charlie’s shift between the town of Banyon and the wild world, and invoking the haunting allusions of horizons, in classic Westerns, to quest and eschaton (Melinda Szaloky 2001). A gruesome showdown takes place at the Stanley residence on Christmas Day, with dying Arthur departing bloodily through the ‘homesick’ garden until, joined by Charlie, he sits to die, facing away from both fence

and horizon. The skill and sophistication with which the transnational conventions of the Western are disturbingly blended with colonial myths and histories in *The Proposition* marks a rite of passage in Australian filmmaking. It deeply challenges the landscape tradition in Australian cinema, and contrasts with the sentimental nationalism of New-Wave films like *The Fishman*, and both of these films are a long way from the playful regional politics of the tropic. Such are the expanding passages of Queensland in transnational cinema.

Conclusion: Queensland Unfenced

There is some irony in that while Moran's once unlikely definition of a Queensland film - one wholly made and produced in the state - is now a viable product, the film industry has transformed making transnational co-productions like *The Proposition* more the norm, and the spectacle of a genuinely regional feature film seemingly redundant. More positively, however, the capacity for Queensland people and places to participate in this transnational industry is now relatively established. The efforts of the PFTC and Screen Queensland, in the offering of Queensland locations for runaway production has resulted in a growing number of films made and produced throughout Queensland, including: *Nim's Island*, *Fool's Gold* (Andy Tennant 2008), *Triangle* (Christopher Smith 2009), *Sanctum* (Alistair Grierson 2011), and *The Tree* (Julie Bertuccelli, 2010) to mention a few titles of recent years. Among the more recent films, *Beneath Hill 60* (Jeremy Sims 2010) stands out as a local story. Based on the diaries of Oliver Woodward, a civilian engineer who participated in the campaign on the Western Front in 1916, *Beneath Hill 60* was made in Townsville, in locations in Kelso and Garbutt, out of a production office in Vincent. This film portrays the national aura of Australia's participation in World War without eclipsing regional perspectives on the story. Local extras participated and local investors supported it, and this input and the production locations were acknowledged in the gesture of a premiere screening in this city. *Beneath Hill 60* was subsequently screened at the Cannes Film Festival, and - again ironically - an Australian-French co-production, *The Tree*, which was shot in south-east Queensland gained a place in the final of the competition at Cannes, in a year in which several Australian films participated at Cannes. If *Sister Kenny* was a rare instance in the inter-war years, in which Queensland figured in a Hollywood film--and with connotations of obscurity--then that situation is now dramatically changed. Although still something of a fledgling player in the global Hollywood industry, collaborations between governments and independent interests continue to bring diverse visions of Queensland to the screen. Mythic Queensland, the paradise 'up north', the frontier land of reward for enterprise and hard work, the dystopian land of oppression and exile, continues to transform. Fence lines and horizon lines still mark the dimensions and the illusions of the place, and the limitlessness of Queensland in the imaginary geographies of cinema.

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Filmography

- 40,000 Horsemen (d. Charles Chauvel, 1941.)
Age of Consent (d. Michael Powell, Nautilus Productions, 1969.)
Australia. (d. Baz Luhrmann, Twentieth Century Fox, Bazmark Films, 2008.)
Beneath Hill 60 (d. Jeremy Sims, Warner Bros. 2010.)
Bitter Springs (d. Ralph Smart, Ealing Studios, 1950.)
Buddies. (d. Arch Nicholson, JD Productions, 1983.)
Charlie and Boots (d. Dean Murphy, Instinct Entertainment, 2009.)
Foot's Gold (d. Andy Tennant, Warner Bros and De Line Pictures, 2008.)
Girl of the Bush (d. Franklin Barrett, Barrett's Australian Productions, 1921.)
Greenhide (d. Charles Chauvel, Australian Film Productions, 1926.)
High Plains Drifter (d. Clint Eastwood, Universal, 1973.)
Nim's Island (d. Jennifer Flackett and Mark Levine, Waldon Media, 2008.)
On Our Selection. (d. Raymond Longford?? 1919/1920?)
Robbery Under Arms (d. Kenneth Brampton, Pacific Photo Plays, 1920)
Radiance. (d. Rachel Perkins, Eclipse Films, 1998.)
Sanctum (d. Alistair Grierson, Universal Pictures, 2011.)
Sister Kenny (d. Dudley Nichols, RKO Studios, 1946.)
Sons of Matthew. (d. Charles Chauvel, Greater Union, 1949.)
The Irishman (d. Donald Crombie, Forest Home Films, 1978.)
The Man from Snowy River (d. George Miller, Cambridge Productions, 1982.)
The Mango Tree. (d. Kevin James Dobson, Pisces Productions, 1977.)
The Overlanders. (d. Harry Watts, Ealing, 1946.)
The Proposition. (d. John Hillcoat, UK Film Council and Surefire Film, 2005.)
The Squatter's Daughter (Ken G. Hall, Cinesound Productions, 1933.)
The Story of the Kelly Gang (d. Charles Tait, J. & N. Tait, 1906.)
The Tree (d. Julie Bertuccelli, Les Films du Poissons. 2010.)
The Wild Bunch (d. Sam Peckinpah, Warner Bros/Seven Arts, 1969.)
Thunderbolt (d. John Gavin, Southern Cross Motion Pictures, 1910.)
Travelling North. (d. Carl Schultz, Australian Film Commission, 1986.)
Triangle (d. Christopher Smith, Icon Entertainment, 2009.)
Unforgiven (d. Clint Eastwood, Warner Bros Pictures, 1992.)
Waiting. (d. Jackie McKimmie, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1991.)
Walkabout (d. Nicholas Roeg, Si Litvinoff Film Production, 1971.)

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