

The Genesis of Indigenous Australian Characterisations in Feature Films

Bruce Lawrence Dennett B.A, M.Ed., Dip. Ed., MACE

Macquarie University

Faculty of Arts

Department of Modern History, Politics & International Relations

May 2012

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	i
Statement of Candidate	iii
Acknowledgements	v
List of Illustrations	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Tracker	77
Chapter 2: The Comic Black	129
Chapter 3: The Wild Black	181
Chapter 4: The Absences and the Mystic Black	225
Chapter 5: Multiple Heists – Robbery Under Arms & Warrigal’s Long Shadow	271
Conclusion	299
Bibliography	317
Appendices	347

Abstract

The Genesis of Indigenous Australian Characterisations in Feature Films

The media, particularly film, plays a powerful role in the making and unmaking of national identity and identities. In the so-called British settler societies it has often been the first and most significant source of exposure to Indigenous peoples for non-Indigenous audiences. This is particularly so in Australia where the Indigenous population, if not 'out of sight, out of mind', has always been on the peripheries except, notably, in film and literature, where Indigenous representations have helped forge particular versions of Australianess. From the first such filmic depiction in 1907 to the most recent in 2009 there has been a continuous re/working of Indigenous character types. Focusing primarily on the silent era of Australian filmmaking (c.1906-1928) this thesis analyses the ways in which Indigenous Australian cinematic characters have been invented and re-invented. But, instead of using Charles Chauvel's iconic film *Jedda* (1955) as a starting point for discussion of Indigenous Australian characterisations, as so many film histories in Australia do, I use it as a reference point. Rather than moving forward from *Jedda*, I go back, exploring the significant history that culminated in Chauvel's Indigenous characterisations. In doing so I contribute to the scholarship in three ways. The first is by addressing a gap that exists in the literature regarding Indigenous characterisations in the silent era. The second contribution stems from my challenge to the accepted wisdom that typically links Indigenous Australian characterisations with Hollywood's depiction of Native Americans. I argue that although some of these comparisons are appropriate, blanket comparisons of this kind over-simplify the reality and neglect the

important contrasts and comparisons to be made between Indigenous Australian and African American characterisations in silent films. Thirdly, I use *Jedda* as the basis of my typology of Indigenous Australian characters that allows me to investigate the preferred Indigenous Australian cast of characters. That preferred cast includes the Indigenous Australian 'tracker' character, the 'wild' or 'tribal black' and the 'comic black'. I also add to the scholarship by interrogating why, despite the acknowledged influence of Hollywood, three popular Native American and African American characters – the individualised warrior chieftain, the sexually predatory 'black buck' and the romantic heroine – were omitted from the silent Indigenous Australian cast.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work of this thesis entitled **“The Genesis of Characterisations of Indigenous Australians in Feature Films”** has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

.....

Bruce Lawrence Dennett

May 2012

Acknowledgements

I have many people to thank and acknowledge. I am indebted to my supervisors Alison Holland and Michelle Arrow for their patience, encouragement, expertise and guidance. I also want to thank Henry Reynolds for his initial suggestion that such an undertaking might be possible and Marnie Hughes-Warrington for getting me started and sharing her passion for film and history.

I am also grateful for the help provided by the staff at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and in particular Simon Drake for his help during the early stages. My thanks are also due to the librarians at the United States Library of Congress who were especially helpful as I ploughed my way through the archives and the footage of the Paper Print Collection of silent films. The staff at the New South Wales State Library could not have been more accommodating and I thank them.

This thesis owes much to the Modern History Department at Macquarie University where I have been made welcome and encouraged in an atmosphere that offers a unique blend of outstanding scholarship and collegiality.

A journey that began in 2006, and was temporarily interrupted due to a stroke that partially impaired my vision, could not have been completed without the love and support – both emotional and practical – of my wife Jane. I thank her for her patience and expertise as she read and re-read my drafts and never seemed to despair over my inability to find the right place for the comma. The final product also owes much to the insight, diligence and the relentless pursuit of precise language my brother-in-law Robert Nichols provided.

List of Illustrations

	Page
1 Publicity still for the film <i>Across Australia</i> (1912)	6
2 A still from <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> (1907) featuring the first Indigenous Australian film character	11
3 Images of the original Indigenous Australian character types	14
4 A still from the film, <i>The Phantom Stockman</i> (1953).	14
5 A still from the <i>The Enemy Within</i> (1918) featuring the tracker	87
6 A scene from the film, <i>The Enemy Within</i> (1918) featuring Sandy McVea and Snowy Baker	88
7 Sandy McVea as a Tracker leads Snowy Baker in a scene from the film, <i>The Enemy Within</i> (1918)	89
8 Sandy McVea as Jimmy tracks a spy in <i>The Enemy Within</i> (1918)	89
9 A scene from the film, <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> (1920) featuring Kenneth Brampton as Captain Starlight	92
10 Jackie Anderson as a lookout for the gang in a scene from the film, <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> (1920)	93
11 The death of Starlight from the film <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> (1920)	94
12 A still taken from the 1903 Edison film production of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	95
13 Advertisement for the film, <i>The Tenth Straw</i> (1926)	98
14 A scene from the film, <i>The Romance of Runnibede</i> (1928) featuring the Queensland Native Police	99
15 Two scenes from the film, <i>Trooper O'Brien</i> (1928) featuring a non-Indigenous actor as the Indigenous Tracker Moori as a boy	103
16 A scene from the film, <i>Trooper O'Brien</i> (1928) featuring the adult Moori in the city. The Tracker has become the Comic Black	105
17 Four stills from the film, <i>The Indian</i> (1914)	122

18	A scene from the film <i>His Trust</i> (1911). The loyal slave sees his master off to war	125
19	The final scene from the film, <i>His Trust Fulfilled</i> (1911)	126
20	King Billy from the film, <i>The Birth of White Australia</i> (1928)	142
21	Scenes from the Australian film, <i>The Birth of White Australia</i> (1928) alongside a similar scene from the American film <i>His Trust</i> (1911)	143
22	An advertisement for Pelaco shirts	144
23	Scenes from the film, <i>The Birth of White Australia</i> (1928) where the heroine is menaced by a group of Chinese men and rescued by the hero	149
24	Scenes from the film, <i>The Enemy Within</i> (1918) where the Tracker character is depicted as comic	151
25	A comic female character from the film, <i>The Moth of Moonbi</i> (1926)	153
26	The Indigenous Australian ‘Mammy’ and ‘Coon’ from the film, <i>Trooper O’Brien</i> (1928)	155
27	A scene from the film, <i>The Massacre</i> (1912)	161
28	The non-Indigenous settler surrounded by Indigenous helpers in a scene from the film, <i>The Birth of White Australia</i> (1928)	164
29	“Going Home” by Ernest Grisels	168
30	A cartoon that appeared in <i>The Photoplayer</i> in October 1923 of an Indigenous Australian couple rendered as comic characters	169
31	A cartoon of an Indigenous Australian character King Billy as he appeared in <i>The Bulletin</i> in 1900	171
32	The Indigenous Australian character King Billy as he appeared in the film, <i>The Birth of White Australia</i> (1928) alongside the cartoon character of King Billy from the film journal <i>The Photoplayer</i> in November 1923	171
33	The Indigenous Australian cartoon character Jacky as he appeared in <i>Smith’s Weekly</i> in August 1922	172
34	The cartoon character of Jacky alongside the film character Moori from <i>Trooper O’Brien</i> (1928)	173

35	Mick Paul's cartoon that appeared in <i>Aussie</i> in 1926	174
36	A cartoon by Benjamin Minns that appeared in <i>The Bulletin</i> in 1899	175
37	A cartoon that appeared in <i>The Photoplayer</i> in October 1923	175
38	A cartoon by Livingston Hopkins that appeared in <i>The Bulletin</i> in 1887 next to a cartoon by Stan Cross that appeared in <i>Smith's Weekly</i> in 1924	176
39	A cartoon by Tom Glover, "Getting Near", that appeared in <i>The Bulletin</i> in 1927	177
40	Intertitles from the film <i>Astronomers and Aborigines</i> (1922)	178
41	Part of the cast from the films, <i>A Blue Gum Romance</i> and <i>The Life of a Jackeroo</i> (1913)	187
42	A scene from the film, <i>Moondyne</i> (1913)	188
43	A still from the film <i>A Girl of the Bush</i> (1921) featuring a group of 'Wild Blacks'	194
44	A corroboree scene from the film of the MacRobertson Expedition (1928)	201
45	Indigenous Australian children from the film of the MacRobertson Expedition (1928)	203
46	Cannibal pot to porridge pot	203
47	A still of a scene featuring Indigenous Australians. The same scene appeared in an actuality film and a feature film	204
48	Part of the wall below the Cloisters in the Commemorative Courtyard at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra	210
49	A photo of the World Heavyweight Title fight between Jack Johnson and Tommy Burns in Sydney in 1908	230
50	An advertisement for the Western serial <i>Winners of the West</i> that appeared in Sydney in 1922	234
51	"The Yellow Peril", a close up from a scene from the film, <i>The Birth of White Australia</i> (1928) where Chinese men pose a menace to a white women	240
52	The chivalrous Captain Starlight from the film, <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> (1920)	244

53	A close up of Snowy Baker exercising in a scene from the film, <i>The Enemy Within</i> (1918)	244
54	Two publicity photos for the film, <i>A Girl from the Bush</i> (1921) that appeared in the film journal <i>The Picture Show</i> in March 1921	251
55	A lobby card promoting the film <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> (1957)	283
56	A production assistant applying blackface to a non-Indigenous cast member of the film <i>We of the Never Never</i> (1982)	285
57	A poster advertising Charles Chauvel's film, <i>Heritage</i> (1936)	288
58	A scene from the film, <i>Journey Out of Darkness</i> (1967)	291
59	Scenes from two films <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> (1920) and <i>Mad Dog Morgan</i> (1976)	292
60	Charles Chauvel and Snowy Baker in Hollywood	294

Introduction

Like many other non-Indigenous ‘baby boomer’ Australians, my first encounter with Indigenous Australia was through the media.¹ My early years were spent in Speers Point, a small community on the shores of Lake Macquarie, south of Newcastle. Despite studying Australian History at school and university, it was not until decades after I left the area that I learned that I had grown up on Awabakal land.² My four earliest clear memories of exposure to Indigenous Australia were Eric Jolliffe’s series of cartoons *Witchetty’s Tribe* that appeared in *Pix* magazine and three feature films: Ralph Smart’s *Bitter Springs* (1950), Charles Chauvel’s *Jedda* (1955) and Jack Lee’s *Robbery Under Arms* (1957).³ I encountered Jolliffe’s cartoons depicting voluptuous Indigenous maidens and childlike foolish Indigenous Australian males while waiting for my short back and sides in the local barber shop. Each of the films came to the local theatre, the *Astor*. Like me, many at the time saw Ralph Smart’s film as just another version of ‘cowboys and Indians’ down under, despite its attempt to deal with the issue of dispossession. *Jedda* told the story of the adoption of an orphaned Indigenous Australian baby girl by the McManns, a non-Indigenous couple living on a remote homestead in the Northern Territory. The film addressed Jedda’s confusion as

¹ Marcia Langton, ‘Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television ...’: *An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by about Aboriginal People and Things* (Woolloomooloo: Australian Film Commission, 1993), p. 7

² The Awabakal lived around Lake Macquarie and left behind a number of local place names – Awaba, Boolaroo, Teralba and Booragul.

³ Eric Jolliffe, “Witchetty’s Tribe”, *Pix* (State Library of New South Wales); Eric Jolliffe, *The Best of Witchetty’s Tribe* (Rosebery: Sungravure, 1980)

she grew and was increasingly torn between two cultures. The film featured, in my father's words, 'real blackfellas'.⁴ *Robbery Under Arms*, the story of the chivalrous bushranger Captain Starlight, was to that time the third film version of Rolf Boldrewood's novel and featured an Indigenous Australian character, Warrigal, as a 'Tracker', a helper and loyal aide to the non-Indigenous hero.⁵ Despite my father's observation none of these examples were about 'real blackfellas'. They were all non-Indigenous inventions.

In this thesis I seek to identify, in the films of the Australian silent era (c. 1906–1930), the genesis of one component of that non-Indigenous invention of Indigenous Australia. I chose film as the object of study, in part, because of my early exposure and because of its potential to be a powerful and pervasive influence in society.⁶ I have focused specifically on silent films because of their social impact in the first decades of the twentieth century and because of the gap that exists in the existing scholarship about Indigenous characterisation in the silent era.⁷

⁴ *Jedda* was the first Australian-made colour feature film, and the first to star Indigenous performers (Rosalie Kunothe and Bob Tudawali) in leading roles.

⁵ Two silent film versions of the story were made in 1907 and 1920. Rolf Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms: A Story of Life and Adventure in the Bush and in the Goldfields of Australia* (London: Cassell, 1947). In each chapter, I use quotation marks for the first instance in which I refer to the various cinematic character types, such as the 'Tracker', that I will discuss; thereafter, these are omitted.

⁶ Diane Collins, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies: 1896 to the Present* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1987), p. 2; Paula Hamilton and Paul Ashton, "At Home with the Past: Initial Findings from the Survey", *Australian Cultural History*, 2003, no. 23, p. 11. For more on the Hamilton and Ashton survey and its findings, see Appendix 1.

⁷ Andrew Zielinski, "Silent Cinema: Archetypes and Cliches", *Screen Education*, 1 January 2007, no. 45, pp. 130–34

Films set in the past which depict historical personalities and events have been a staple of the Australian film industry since its earliest days. Some sense of the potential influence of silent films on the cultural life of the new nation is evident as early as 1912 in an article in the film periodical *The Photo-Play*. The journal declared that “the taste of the Australian public in the matter of plays, amusements and literature is today much influenced by the moving picture”.⁸ *The Photo-Play* predicted that “such persistent and powerful appeals to the perceptive and receptive faculties are bound eventually to strike the deeper chords of sentiment and will”.⁹ The article claimed that “the moving picture bids fair within a year or two to surpass in influence the combined forces of theatre, school, church and library.”¹⁰ Although the exact nature of the impact of any film from any time, on an audience, is problematic *The Photo-Play*’s claims about the popularity of films are sustained by Australian ticket sales during the silent era.¹¹

Australia had one of the world’s earliest and most dynamic film industries. Between 1906 and 1912 Australian filmmakers routinely made feature-length films of between 3000 and 4000 feet. Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper in their survey of Australian film from 1900 point out that in 1911, as an example, the longest feature film made in Britain was 2500 feet while in Australia in the same year over twenty feature films of more than 3000 feet were made.¹² Extending the comparison, the United States did not make its first two films of feature length

⁸ “The Physic Force and Value of the Moving Picture”, *The Photo-Play*, vol. 1, no. 15, 13 April 1912, p. 11

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 3

¹² Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 2

until 1911.¹³ In the period between 1906 and 1913, 103 feature films were made in Australia. This was a time when Australia led the world in feature film production. In the period before the First World War, and the growth of Hollywood's dominance, Australian-made films with local historical themes dominated.¹⁴ Of Australia's first 100 films, only 35 had urban settings and themes. The remainder were dominated by stories set in the bush about pioneers, bushrangers and the gold fields.¹⁵ Film production, during these early years, was dominated by theatrical companies. These companies often used scripts adapted from their theatrical repertoire and exploited the new film medium to reach a wider audience outside the big cities.

In 1910 the British-born film producer Charles Cozens Spencer announced the establishment in Sydney of a purpose-built film studio. In the following year, a Melbourne-based company, Amalgamated Pictures, opened its new purpose-built film studio in the suburb of St Kilda.¹⁶ Aside from the popularity of film as entertainment, the potential of the new medium to serve education and science was readily acknowledged. The pioneer Australian filmmaker Francis Birtles made a number of actuality films that recorded aspects of actual or everyday life. Birtles and his camera travelled from city to country. Cozens Spencer vigorously prompted these films. One of the earliest of these films, *Across Australia* (1912), was filmed by Birtles as he rode a push bike from

¹³ Zielinski, "Silent Cinema", p. 130

¹⁴ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 2

¹⁵ Zielinski, "Silent Cinema", p. 130

¹⁶ Ina Bertrand (ed.), *Cinema in Australia: A Documentary History* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 1989), p. 32

Sydney to Darwin.¹⁷ The image below was part of the publicity prompting the film. The motifs evident in the publicity still, and in the film itself, were also apparent, as I will show, in the Australian feature films of the day. The figure meant to be an Indigenous Australian (seated at the centre) is surrounded by the other icons of the Australian bush, the stuffed kangaroo, the buffalo horns and the turtle in the foreground. The non-Indigenous Australian presence is represented by the technology of the bicycle and the implied spirit of the intrepid lone white explorer. The film was in fact a docudrama. Much of the footage focused on the wild scenery, but Birtles also included historical re-enactments of first contact between Indigenous Australians and settlers. The links between actuality filmmaking and feature films endured as an aspect of film production throughout the silent era. In 1925 Frank Hurley, who had worked with Birtles, produced two feature films, *Jungle Woman* and *Hounds of the Deep*, where the settings were inspired by his earlier travels and his documentary films, *Pearls and Savages* (1920) and *With the Headhunters in Papua* (1923).¹⁸ Although Hurley's films focused, as Jane Landman has pointed out, on the natives of Papua and New Guinea, they were imbued with the same values that distinguished between white Australians as 'modern man' and the imagined 'Other' as 'primitive man' that featured in the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australians.¹⁹ I argue that there are parallels between what Landman described as the interrelationships between the production of Australian films set in the Pacific and Australia's emergent colonial

¹⁷ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 502991; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 3

¹⁸ *The Photoplayer* November 29, 1923 p. 15; Jane Landman, *The Tread of the White Man's Foot: Australian Pacific Colonialism and the Cinema, 1925–62* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2006), p. 95; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 132

¹⁹ Landman, *The Tread of the White Man's Foot*, p. 6

nationhood and the ways in which Indigenous Australians were characterised during the same period.



Figure 1: Publicity still for *Across Australia* (1912). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

There were other actuality films featuring Indigenous Australians. Between 1900 and 1912, the noted anthropologist Baldwin Spencer used film to record his journeys through central Australia, and to disseminate his ideas. The films made by Birtles and Baldwin Spencer reached wide audiences and influenced perceptions about Indigenous Australia. Spencer delivered lectures accompanied by his films. He was explicit, observing that, Indigenous Australians were a

primitive, pre-modern people.²⁰ The assumptions about Indigenous Australia evident in these early films were also apparent in feature or narrative films.

Up to 1912 there was a precocious Australian film industry with an impressive schedule of locally made films. For a number of reasons, this changed after 1912. One of the reasons was the merger, in 1912 and 1913, of T.J. West's (Cozens Spencer's company), Amalgamated Pictures, and the company of theatrical entrepreneur J.D. Williams to form Australasian Pictures. The merged company, known as 'the combine', was more interested in exhibition and distribution than production. The combine also found it more profitable to import films than to support local production.

There continued to be Australian-made feature films but from the First World War, Hollywood began its domination of the global market. Australian filmmakers, therefore, operated in competition with the Hollywood style. The volume of American film production made the Hollywood style and the look of its films familiar with audiences. Australian filmmakers therefore attempted to both mimic the Hollywood style and distinguish the locally made product. In this respect, Australian filmmakers followed a similar path to the one that had been followed by their American counterparts when filmmakers in the United States attempted to distinguish the American product from that of their European rivals.²¹ American producers used the American landscape and Native Americans to create a distinctive product. Australian producers used bush scenes and Indigenous Australians to the same ends.

²⁰ Bertrand, *Cinema in Australia*, p. 48

²¹ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 9

Diane Collins pointed to legislation passed during the First World War in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania that required hotels to close at 6 pm, arguing that this contributed to the popularity of film. Her conclusion was that “in many areas the picture show then became the only out-of-home entertainment that was regularly open in the evenings when most people had their leisure”.²² The appeal of film and its place in Australian cultural life in the 1920s is reflected in the fact that while there were 800 picture theatres in Australia in 1921, by 1928 that number had grown to 1200.²³ The popularity of film is also evident in the growing number of Australian film journals or fan magazines, such as *The Photoplayer*, which published its first issue in June 1923 and boasted a readership of 100,000. By July 1923 that readership had increased to 140,000.²⁴

Australia’s film industry grew when the combined population of Sydney and Melbourne was just over one million, enough to sustain a market for motion pictures.²⁵ In a sense, the film industry arose out of the nineteenth-century theatre tradition, and many of the producers, directors, actors and distributors came from theatrical ranks.²⁶ For example, the first film featuring an Indigenous Australian character was *Robbery Under Arms* (1907) a film that, like the highly successful film versions of *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1908 and 1927), had

²² Bertrand, *Cinema in Australia*, p. 69

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *The Photoplayer* June 9, 1923, no. 1; *The Photoplayer* July 7, 1923, no. 5. These figures are all the more significant considering that in 1923 the entire population of Australia was just over 5.6 million.

²⁵ Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Fifty Years* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1989), p. 15

²⁶ For more on the background to the stage tradition, see Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage, 1829–1929* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1983).

been a novel before being translated to the stage and then made into a film.²⁷

The emergence of the film industry in Australia coincided with a time when, as Richard Waterhouse has argued, popular culture with a discernible American influence became more commercialised and widely disseminated.²⁸ American influence was evident not only in Australia's appetite for American films, but also in the trans-Pacific flow of performers and directors.²⁹

Consideration of the film industry, the films themselves and the attitudes of the filmmakers towards the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australians is one thing. The matter of audience reception, however, is far more problematic.

Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby have been at the forefront of analysis of the influence of Hollywood and changing audience perceptions. They acknowledge the distinction between text-based constructions of spectatorship and "evidence taken from historical sources on how film texts were actually received by audiences and critics".³⁰ They also acknowledge a lack of direct documentary evidence about audience reception and response.³¹ In the Australian context Ann Bittner, Nancy Huggett and Kate Bowles have looked at the particular nature of the local audience experience during the silent era.³² Looking specifically at

²⁷ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343344; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 11

²⁸ Richard Waterhouse, "Cultural Transmissions", in Teo and White (eds.), *Cultural History in Australia*, p. 120

²⁹ *The Photoplayer*, 6 October 1923; *Everyones*, 14 April 1920; *The Film Weekly*, 4 November 1926, 9 September 1926; *The Picture Show*, 24 May 1919, 7 June 1919

³⁰ Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds.), *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), p. 1

³¹ Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds.), *Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange* (London: British Film Institute, 2004)

³² Ann Bittner, "A Balanced Show: The Australian Picture Theatre Manager at Work 1922"; Nancy Huggett and Kate Bowles, "Cowboys, Jaffas, Pies: Researching Cinemagoing in the Illawarra in

theatre experiences, Bittner concluded that, despite the strong American influence, the fact that the theatre program was made up of both feature films and local vaudeville acts resulted in a balance between American and Australian cultural input.³³ Although I acknowledge that discussion of audience responses is problematic, the fact remains that films were made to be seen. Australian filmmakers were therefore in the business of meeting the tastes and interests of their audiences. Audiences would not pay money to see films that lacked appeal.

Inventing Indigenous Australian film characters

The process of non-Indigenous cinematic invention of Indigenous Australian characters began in silent films with Jim Gerald, a non-Indigenous Australian in theatrical blackface makeup, in *Robbery Under Arms* (1907).³⁴ Gerald's Warrigal was the very first Indigenous Australian film character, based on the original character created in 1883 by novelist Rolf Boldrewood. Australia's first Indigenous feature film character was a cosmetic creation. Gerald's character, like all the silent Indigenous characters to follow, was white underneath.³⁵ His appearance in blackface was indicative of other aspects of the

the 1920s", in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds.), *Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange* (London, 2004), pp. 51–77

³³ Bittner, "A Balanced Show", p. 61

³⁴ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343344 (production details) and Title No. 780821 (publicity material)

³⁵ As was the case with many others well into the sound era, whether actually in blackface, such as the popular non-Indigenous Australian actor Ed Devereaux in *Journey Out of Darkness* (1967), or metaphorically.

cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia, which will be explored subsequently:
the legacy of the theatre and the minstrel show.



Figure 2: The first Indigenous Australian film character Warrigal (centre) played by non-Indigenous actor Jim Gerald in blackface (1907). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

My consideration of Indigenous Australian characterisation in film differs from all previous discussions of this topic in two important ways: first, I adopt a wider chronological frame of reference, going back to the beginning and paying due attention to the silent era; second, my conceptual methodology offers a typology of Indigenous Australian characters rather than the survey approach typical of the literature's current treatment of Indigenous characterisation in the silent era.

But this thesis also differs from all that has gone before in its treatment of Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* (1955), which is typically the chronological starting point for discussion of Indigenous Australians in film. It looks at *Jedda* for what it was, a mid-point and a reference point rather than just a starting point. As I will show, there is an important history of Indigenous characterisation that precedes, and leads directly to, *Jedda*. Consideration of *Jedda* has the potential to offer far more

than just a preamble to the discussion of what came after – those Australian feature films with Indigenous characters made, most notably, from the 1980s on.

Jedda is important to this thesis, therefore, but not because its characterisations of Indigenous Australia are, as will be shown in my literature review, the starting point or even the ones most often cited and controversial. *Jedda* is important because Chauvel's chosen Indigenous Australian cast of characters provides a template for my typology of Indigenous Australian characters. I will use this typology based on *Jedda* to analyse the invention, timing, appearance and evolution of a number of Indigenous character types, including the familiar Tracker, the Indigenous Australian 'Comic Black' and the 'Wild or Tribal Black', all of whom were members of Chauvel's Indigenous Australian cast, both in *Jedda* and before.³⁶ By using *Jedda* as a reference point, rather than as a starting point, it is also possible to look back at the silent era and frame important questions, not as yet considered, about the absences from the Indigenous Australian silent film cast and to question the reasons for the belated appearance of Indigenous characters such as the 'Mystic Black' and the individualised Indigenous Australian warrior.³⁷

Another legacy of my time in the back row of the Speers Point *Astor* was the 1957 version of *Robbery Under Arms* starring Peter Finch as Captain Starlight. This was one of four film versions made of Boldrewood's iconic novel,

³⁶ Chauvel's silent films with Indigenous Australian characters included *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926). Chauvel's frequently neglected early sound films with Indigenous Australian characters included *Heritage* (1935) and *Uncivilised* (1936).

³⁷ The cinematic attribution of mystical qualities to Indigenous Australian characters, which became such a feature of filmic discourse in the second half of the twentieth century with films such as *Jedda* (1955) and Peter Weir's *The Last Wave* (1977), were absent during the silent era.

two of which appeared in the silent era (1907 and 1920) and two in the sound era (1957 and 1985). As noted earlier, the film featured Warrigal, an Indigenous Australian Tracker character. All four versions told the same story, using the same characters, for different film audiences across eight decades. It will, therefore, be the focus of a chapter; the specific analysis of this film will reveal much about both the continuity and the change that is a feature of Indigenous Australian cinematic characterisation. To date, the literature on Indigenous Australian cinematic characterisation has emphasised the changes that have taken place. I will use my analysis of the Indigenous Australian character types that emerged in the silent era and, more specifically, three of the four Warrigal characters in *Robbery Under Arms* to suggest, as do Bain Attwood and Jim Davidson, that there is more continuity in non-Indigenous Australia's preferred characterisations of Indigenous Australians than has been acknowledged in the film literature produced to date.³⁸

A typology of Indigenous Australian film characters

The typology of Indigenous Australian film characters that will form the methodological spine of this thesis is based on an analysis of the cast of Indigenous Australian characters since 1907. Although the typology uses Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* (1955) as a template, it draws primarily on the characters that emerged in the silent era. As noted previously, the purpose of the typology is to take consideration of Indigenous Australian characterisation beyond the level of a

³⁸ Bain Attwood, "Unsettling Pasts: Reconciliation and History in Settler Australia", *Postcolonial Studies*, August 2005, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 242–59; Jim Davidson, "De-dominionisation Revisited" *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2005, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 108–13

survey. I will examine the qualities of each of character type, and reflect on the continuity and change evident in the invention of them, and on the cast as a whole. As will clearly emerge as we proceed, each of these types was an amalgam of local and American influences.

There are three permanent members of the Indigenous Australian film cast: the Tracker, the Comic Black and the Wild Black. These are the first three types in my typology. Then there are the belated inclusions: the Mystic Black, who did not appear until the 1950s, and the individualised Indigenous warrior, who did not join that cast until well into the second half of the twentieth century. Finally, I will reflect on the omissions, the most notable of which is the Indigenous Australian romantic heroine.



Figure 3: All of the original Indigneous Australian character types: (left to right) the Tracker from *Trooper O'Brien* (1928) and *The Enemy Within* (1918); the Comic Blacks – male and female – from *Trooper O'Brien* and *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926); a group of anonymous Wild Blacks from *A Girl of the Bush* (1921).



Figure 4: A belated inclusion in the cast, the Mystic Black first appeared in *The Phantom Stockman* (1953). The Indigenous Australian actor George Murdoch played Dancer (right). A friend and helper to the non-Indigenous hero played by Chips Rafferty (centre), Dancer could also communicate telepathically.

‘The Cast’: Indigenous Australian character types

The first member of ‘The Cast’ is the ‘Tracker’. The Tracker was invariably male and he was a guide and a helper. There were at least 13 feature films made in Australia during the silent era with Tracker characters, starting with *Robbery Under Arms*, produced in 1907. The Trackers are depicted as subordinate and subservient to the white characters. With the exception of Sandy McVea in *The Enemy Within* (1918), and characters in *The Tenth Straw* (1926) and *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928), all of the tracker/guides were played by non-indigenous actors in the traditional minstrel show blackface. In *Jedda* (1955) the trackers come to the fore during the dramatic chase sequence following Jedda’s abduction by the Wild Black, Marbuk. The Tracker is part of Australian folklore and part of the fabric of our frontier myth. In the twenty-first century audiences have recently been reminded of the power and durability of the type through films such as *One Night the Moon* (2001), *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002) and *Tracker* (2002). This type was just as familiar to silent era audiences. Significant surviving footage of the Tracker is to be seen in *The Enemy Within* (1918) *Robbery Under Arms* (1920) and *Trooper O’Brien* (1926), to name just three of the films with surviving footage.

The second type is the ‘Comic Black’. Unlike the Tracker, the Comic Black can be male or female. The three essential qualities of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black are the anachronistic, the childlike and the foolish. Individually, but

more often in combination, these three elements are fundamental to the comedic qualities of the type. The Comic Black is rarely, however, purely comic. In other words, the Australian version of the Comic Black is often temporarily submerged in other characters, like the more familiar Tracker. Evidence of the invention of this type can be found in a number of silent films including *Australia Calls* (1913), *The Enemy Within* (1918), *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926), *The Birth of White Australia* (1928) and *Trooper O'Brien* (1928). In Chauvel's *Jedda*, the qualities of the Comic Black appear in two Indigenous Australian female characters who live near the white homestead.

The third enduring type is the 'Wild Black'. The Wild Black stands beside the Tracker as the earliest and most popular character types evident in Australian feature films. The Wild Black is both shadowy and deceptively familiar. The Wild Black can be identified in 16 silent feature films made between 1910 and 1929. This Wild Black was invariably male but unlike the Tracker character or the Comic Black, the Wild Black rarely appears as an individualised character. In *Jedda* the Wild Black is represented by Marbuk. Marbuk's characterisation clearly distinguishes the Wild Black from the 'Tame Blacks' who work for the McManns, the non-Indigenous newcomers. Marbuk also marked a change in the characterisation of the Wild Black because, unlike his predecessors in the silent era, he was an individualised character.

This leads, finally, to the 'Mystic Black'. There was no Mystic Black in the characterisations of the silent era. The type is a late inclusion in the cast of Indigenous Australian film characters. This characterisation is a way of thinking about Indigenous Australians and Indigenous characters as somehow

unknowable and beyond the scope of rationale understanding. This particular portrayal is evident in facets of the characterisation of both Jedda and Marbuk. One part of the opening titles of the film reads: "To cast this picture the producer went to the primitive Aborigine race of Australia." The voiceover at the start of the film, which is accompanied by an aerial shot of Uluru, says: "Mountains of mystery, red tombs in Australia's dead heart which hold the secrets of the Aborigine dream time, the burial place of the old totem men, a native race so old that their laws and religion stretch back to a past beyond our thinking." The image of the Mystic Black is reinforced by critical scenes in the film where Jedda is 'sung', apparently against her will, to Marbuk's fire, and when Marbuk loses his mind as he is 'sung' to death by tribal elders. To compound the mystical image, Joe's voice is heard at the end of the film in a kind of summation, as he describes Jedda as being "one of a race so mystic and so removed."

The Mystic Black has been a popular new addition to the cast of Indigenous character types. Few films featuring Indigenous Australians since the 1950s have been able to resist the attraction of this type, and it has been evident in films such as *The Last Wave* (1977), *Frog Dreaming* (1985), *Kadaicha* (1988) and *Dead Heart* (1996). I will analyse the nature of the characterisation and the reasons for its initial absence and late inclusion in the cast.

Rationale for the typology

In what follows, I will move from this typology to an examination of the genesis of each of these characters in the context of a wider consideration of the history of Indigenous characterisation in Australian feature films. But first I should

say something about the various influences that motivated my construction of this typology. For, while the typology is based primarily on Indigenous Australian characterisations in silent films, it is also grounded in a significant body of multi-disciplinary discourse about Indigenous Australians, and in the work of various American scholars.

The specifics of my rationale for this character typology are drawn from both Australian and American sources. The first two Australian sources are the works of Lynette Russell and Jane Lydon, both of whom present strong arguments asserting the power of the visual.³⁹ Russell, for example, maintains that “[m]any educators would now agree that the visual image has become central to contemporary society and that photography and filmmaking have surpassed the written text as the primary mechanisms for education”.⁴⁰ Her acknowledgement of the power of the image is not limited to the twenty-first century. In 1923, when representatives of the New South Wales Department of Education were passing favourable comments about the educational value of some silent feature films, teachers in that state were being instructed to expand their use of images of all kinds.⁴¹ An article on the subject in the Sydney Teachers’ College journal *Schooling* declared: “Pictures provide, fill out, correct and confirm mental images ... we all recognise that the impression made by the picture on the juvenile mind is powerful and lasting”.⁴²

³⁹ Russell, *Savage Imaginings*; Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (Durham, 2005)

⁴⁰ Russell, *Savage Imaginings*, p. 23

⁴¹ *The Exhibitor*, 28 November 1923, vol. 1, no. 6

⁴² D. Sinclair, “History Pictures”, *Schooling*, 1923, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 57

Russell made a study of how Indigenous Australia was represented in a variety of visual modes, including the Australian magazine *Walkabout* and a range of museum displays. She pointed out that the visual rendering of Indigenous Australians saw them mainly portrayed as either silent, anonymous figures or as “the last of the noble savages”.⁴³ She also considered the ways in which Indigenous Australians were represented in museum displays. She pointed out that Indigenous Australians were most commonly visually classified as the primitive, the noble savage, the ‘Other’, or hostile barbarians.⁴⁴ Although Russell did not actually use the term ‘typology’, she did begin to distinguish and classify particular components of Indigenous representation.

In 2004 Jane Lydon presented similar views about the power images, focusing specifically on film; she asserted that cinematic images construct a past linked to the present and capable of transporting us to that other world that is the past.⁴⁵ In addition to her work on film, Lydon traced the photographic history of the representation of Indigenous Australians and considered “the ways that a powerful visual language was shaped”.⁴⁶ In *Eye Contact* she traced aspects of the representation of Indigenous Australians in early photography. Lydon identified what she called “broad thematic patterns” in the photographs, pointing to the presentation of Indigenous Australians as specimens or the objects of science, and asserting that it was common to regard “photographs of indigenous

⁴³ Russell, *Savage Imaginings*, pp. 26, 25

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 40

⁴⁵ Jane Lydon, “A Strange Time Machine: *The Tracker*, *Black and White* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*”, *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2004, vol. 35, no. 123, p. 137–48

⁴⁶ Lydon, *Eye Contact*, p. xiii

people as trophies”.⁴⁷ Hence there is a link between Lydon’s idea of the specimen and Russell’s anonymous figures. Lydon also pointed to other patterns evident in the collections, such as the contrasts between wild and civilised “full blood and half-caste”, and the repeated photographic studies of “people living in harmony with nature”.⁴⁸ Lydon’s “thematic patterns” provide the foundations and inspiration for a cinematic Indigenous typology based on silent films because the patterns she identified were drawn directly from black-and-white images, combined with the occasional written label.⁴⁹ As such, they invite comparisons with black-and-white silent films that also feature the occasional written label in the form of intertitles.

A third Australian stimulus for a cinematic typology of Indigenous Australian characters stems from a specific and explicit typology developed by Chilla Bulbeck, based on a study of Australian statues and memorials.⁵⁰ Bulbeck identified common features in memorials featuring Indigenous Australians constructed in the period between 1850 and 1961. There is a chronological overlap between the timeframe of Bulbeck’s study and the genesis of the silent cinematic images of Indigenous Australia. Bulbeck observed that when the earliest of these memorials recognised Indigenous Australians as anything other than “unnamed killers” they depicted them as the “‘helpers’ of explorers”.⁵¹ She also identified other types, most notably in the period from the 1870s, when some memorials were dedicated to a local figure designated as the regional “Aboriginal

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 2, 52

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 50, 54, 122

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 52

⁵⁰ Chilla Bulbeck, *The Stone Laurel: Of Race, Gender and Class in Australian Memorials* (Griffith: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1988)

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 3

King”.⁵² On occasion, memorials were also erected to an individual designated as “the last full-blood”.⁵³ In such cases, acknowledgement was often linked to the fact that the man or women in question had become “at least partially integrated into the local white community”.⁵⁴ The types identified by Bulbeck also share a number of characteristics with popular Indigenous Australian cinematic character types. An additional point of comparison arises from the fact that, as with the feature films, these memorials reflect not only the values and ideas of the creator or director, but also those of the society and audience that sponsored, supported and funded them.

Writing about Australia’s quest for a national identity, Richard White pointed out that during the 1800s Australians saw America and American ideas as models.⁵⁵ Both Australia and America were seen as “new societies”, and as such many in Australia saw the United States as a model worthy of imitation.⁵⁶ White noted that throughout “the nineteenth century, Australia was being depicted as ‘another America’, a ‘new America’, the ‘America of the South’” and that almost every aspect of Australian life was at some stage being positively or negatively “compared to its American equivalent”.⁵⁷ America also became a model for Australian ideas of our place in the landscape and the type of civilisation “to be imposed upon it”.⁵⁸ American ideas about the frontier, the

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1981)

⁵⁶ *ibid.* pp. 48–49

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 50–51

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

wilderness and Native Americans therefore had a particular resonance for Australians.⁵⁹ This leads directly to consideration of the American precedents for my typology.

The appeal of American films for Australian audiences is widely acknowledged. Taking just two examples, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), a film set in the American South with African American characters and *The Covered Wagon* (1923), a Western featuring Native Americans, were both enormously popular with Australian audiences.⁶⁰ This popularity and the shared heritage of Australia and the United States as settler or 'supplanting societies' are reflected in the similarities between the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australians and both African and Native Americans.

The primary American influences on my typology were the studies of African American images in film by Donald Bogle, Ed Guerrero, and Larry Langman and David Ebner.⁶¹ Each of these three works offers its own African American character typologies. The American influence does not, however, end

⁵⁹ Ronald Lawson, "Towards Demythologizing the 'Australian Legend': Turner's Frontier Thesis and the Australian Experience", *Journal of Social History*, Summer, 1980, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 577–87; Marilyn Lake and Vanessa Pratt, "'Blood Brothers': Racial Identification and the Right to Rule: The Australian Response to the Spanish-American War", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2008, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 16–27

⁶⁰ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 51; Glen Lewis, *Australian Movies and the American Dream* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 8; John Tulloch, *Legends on the Screen: The Narrative Film in Australia 1919–1929* (Carlton South: Currency Press, 1981), p. 18; Joan Long and Martin Long, *The Pictures That Moved: A Picture History of the Australian Cinema 1896–1929* (Melbourne: Hutchinson of Australia, 1982), p. 118

⁶¹ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2003); Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Larry Langman and David Ebner (eds.), *Hollywood's Image of the South: A Century of Southern Films* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001)

with African Americans. A number of studies of the cinematic representation of Native Americans have also been used, notably ideas contained in the works of Peter Rollins and John O'Connor, Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, Scott Simmon, Andrew Smith, Angela Aleiss and M. Elise Marubbio.⁶² Finally, the typology was also framed with insights gleaned from the cinematic and literary analysis of African Americans and Native Americans offered by Leslie A. Fiedler.⁶³

The primary model for my typology was, however, Donald Bogle's *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*. Bogle forged new ground with his history of African American actors and images in film.

Bogle's research led him to "see blacks in films differently, with new awareness and an altered sensitivity".⁶⁴ He began his first chapter, 'Black Beginnings: from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *The Birth of a Nation*', with the words "In the beginning, there was an Uncle Tom." That Uncle Tom was the first African American character in films but, according to Bogle, it was a paradoxical image because "Tom was not black at all", rather he was "portrayed by a nameless ...

⁶² Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (eds.), *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998); Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Andrew Brodie Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians: Silent Western Films, American Culture, and the Birth of Hollywood* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003); Angela Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies* (Westport: Praeger, 2005); M. Elise Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009)

⁶³ Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Inadvertent Epic: From Uncle Tom's Cabin to Roots* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979);

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. xxv

white actor made up in blackface". The practice of using "whites in black roles" was a tradition inherited by filmmakers from the stage.⁶⁵

As noted earlier, the first Indigenous Australian film character was also, "not black at all" and was played by a white actor wearing blackface.⁶⁶ This practice followed the minstrel tradition that influenced both American and Australia filmmakers.

Bogle started ordering his ideas by examining the power of character, characterisation and imagery. He noted that following "the tom's debut, there appeared a variety of black presences bearing the fanciful names of the coon, the tragic mulatto, the mammy, and the brutal black buck".⁶⁷ All five of these character types were intended to entertain, but at the same time they were designed to stress "Negro inferiority".⁶⁸ According to Bogle, his five key character types were like boxes defining the nature of a performance. Later, however, when actors attempted to go beyond the limitations of the typology they were often still "wedged into these categories".⁶⁹

Bogle began at the beginning, with the silent era, in order to trace the evolution of African American representation. He also offered a specific study of the character types found in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). This film "told the story of the Old South, the Civil War, the Reconstruction period, and the

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 3

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 4

⁶⁹ *ibid.* It can be argued that in much the same way later characterisations of Indigenous Australians – even the gifted and nuanced performances of David Gulpilil either as a Tracker or a Wild Black – remained to a degree wedged or defined by the type.

emergence of the Ku Klux Klan”.⁷⁰ The story centres on the Cameron family of Piedmont, South Carolina. Before the war Piedmont and the Cameron family were the epitome of the ‘Old South’. The *mise en scène* is dominated by a sense of peace, civilisation and order. Everything changes with the war and the Reconstruction that follows it. After the defeat of the South, the old way of life is challenged by Northern trouble-makers, the ‘Carpetbaggers’, who set about “corrupting the former slaves, unleashing the sadism and bestiality innate in the negro, turning the once congenial darkies into renegades” bent on black supremacy and determined to crush the old Southern way of life. The climax of the film is marked by a dramatic and heroic ride that presents the Ku Klux Klan as the saviours of civilisation, knights charging to the rescue of “white womanhood, white honor, and white glory”.⁷¹

The Birth of a Nation is important because, according to Bogle, in a single film “all the major black screen types had been introduced”. The “toms, the coons, the mulattoes, the mammies and the bucks” evident in Griffith’s screenplay came to profoundly influence the way audiences perceived the African American experience.⁷²

Bogle traced some of his character types highlighted in *The Birth of a Nation* back to 1903. The first, the ‘tom’, was a socially acceptable “Good Negro”, and even though these characters often became the victims of injustice, they remain loyal, generous and selfless and as such “endear themselves to white

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 10

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 12

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 17

audiences and emerge as heroes of sorts”.⁷³ Stage versions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* were popular in both the United States and Australia during the nineteenth century, and during the silent era, the story was filmed three times (1903, 1914 and 1927) by various American production companies.⁷⁴

The character of Uncle Tom was also familiar to Australian audiences from 1853, when the first performance of an adaptation of the play was staged in Sydney.⁷⁵ For Australian audiences, the appeal of the play and its tale of plantation life lasted for decades.⁷⁶

The second African American character in Bogle’s typology, one capable of rivalling the ‘tom’ for its durability, was the ‘coon’. Bogle first identified the ‘pure coon’ in *The Wooing and Wedding of a Coon* (1905); here the character was little more than a stumbling fool. However, these character types, according to Bogle, “developed into the most blatantly degrading of all black stereotypes” and he went on to list their characteristics – unreliable, lazy, “subhuman creatures”.⁷⁷

Bogle traced his third type, the ‘tragic mulatto’, back to 1912. The female version of this character of mixed heritage is generally presented in a more sympathetic way than her male counterpart. A popular scenario for this character type was to have the pale mulatto “attempting to pass for white”.⁷⁸

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 4

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 6

⁷⁵ Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1990), p. 71

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 93

⁸² Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, pp. 7–8

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 9

The fourth type is the ‘mammy’, who is “closely related to the comic coons”. Bogle suggests that she appeared around 1914. She is generally independent, “big, fat, and cantankerous”. A subset of this type was the ‘aunt jemima’; both were female versions of either the tom “blessed with religion” or mammies who wedged “themselves into the dominant white culture”.⁷⁹

The last character type was ‘the brutal black buck’, a physically powerful, violent and menacing figure. Bogle traces the type, primarily to *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and divides it into two subsets: the ‘black brute’ and the ‘black buck’.⁸⁰ Bogle suggests that the differences between the two types are subtle: the ‘black brute’ is often nameless, like the African American mob characters in *The Birth of a Nation*, out to create havoc during Reconstruction. They are apparently mindless, simply bent on rampage and destruction; Bogle described them as “subhuman and feral”.⁸¹ The second subset, the ‘black buck’, was, according to Bogle, one of D.W. Griffith’s “really great archetypal figures”.⁸² They are always “savage, violent and frenzied”, consumed by a “lust for white flesh”. Bogle asserted that “Griffith played on the myth of the Negro’s high-powered sexuality, then articulated the great white fear that every black man longs for a white woman”.⁸³ The ‘black buck’ is the final component of the typology, the last member of the pantheon of mythic African American characters. Once he had identified “the basic mythic types”, Bogle used his typology to follow the “black themes” that emerged throughout the twentieth century in the cinematic

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 13

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 14

representation of African Americans.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, within those themes, Bogle asserted that the types endured. They might alter in guise, he argued; they might even be camouflaged, perhaps in the role of a servant, but the types survived.⁸⁵

Bogle then set about a review of the history of African American representation in film, following the rise and fall of his types. Bogle continued in this vein and traced his enduring types, regardless of guise and appeal, through each of the remaining decades of the twentieth century. In the fourth edition he had come to the late 1990s, where he argued that the “old retro images ... continue to pop up”.⁸⁶

Bogle’s work in the US provides a methodology and rationale for my typology of Indigenous Australian cinematic characters because of the parallels between Bogle’s ideas and my argument. Both works address the cinematic depiction of a racial minority by the social and ethnic majority. Both minority groups were perceived to be racially inferior throughout the formative years of the process of characterisation. Both minority groups were the victims of powerful images that became, through film, the prevailing view of that minority group in the public imagination.

Finally, Bogle’s approach is relevant because his methodology of identifying and tracing ‘mythic types’ can be adapted to the Australian context. I focus on the Indigenous Australian cast of ‘mythic types’ and consider why and how they emerged, faded and endured in popularity.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 18

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 432

Bogle's conceptual framework provides a valuable theoretical precedent, but the relevance of his work goes beyond that, owing to the powerful influence exerted on Australia by the American film industry. This influence was evident throughout the silent era of Australian filmmaking and is reflected in the ways in which many of Bogle's mythic African American types were adapted by Australian filmmakers. It is reasonable to expect similarities between the characterisation of Native Americans and African Americans and Indigenous Australians because of their shared status as 'the other' and because Australia and the United States are both "supplanting societies".⁸⁷ Some of the connections between Australia and America were also more direct, for example, where American filmmakers worked in Australia or Australians returned home to make films after a time in Hollywood.⁸⁸ Many Australian filmmakers were also conscious of tailoring their films for a potential American export market.⁸⁹ My Indigenous Australian character typology will help establish the ways in which some American cinematic characterisations were borrowed and adapted by Australian filmmakers as part of their invention of Indigenous Australia.

⁸⁷ David Day, *Conquest: A New History of the Modern World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 9. Day's concept and the parallels that exist between the Australia and the United States are important to this thesis because, as Day points out, in order to establish their legitimacy the newcomers must establish both a quasi-legal claim to the land and a cultural legitimacy. In Australia that was achieved by *terra nullius* and by depicting Indigenous Australians as primitive and in need of protection. Silent film and Indigenous characterisation was made to serve these ends. The issue at the heart of this thesis is this history of non-Indigenous representation of Indigenous Australians, not Indigenous Australia or the actual history.

⁸⁸ The Carroll-Baker Production Company employed several American writers, directors and cinematographers including Bess Meredyth, Wilfred Lucas and Robert Doerr. Meanwhile Australian filmmakers John Gavin and Charles Chauvel both spent time in Hollywood before returning to Australia to make films.

⁸⁹ *The Picture Show*, 24 May 1919, p. 13; Greg Growden, *The Snowy Baker Story* (Milsons Point: Random House Australia, 2003), p. 259; Tulloch, *Legends on the Screen*, p. 81

The status of Bogle's work and the validity of his approach have been reinforced by subsequent scholarship. In 1993 Ed Guerrero published *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*. Guerrero identified the "slavery motif" as a feature of African American characterisation evident for over 70 years.⁹⁰ Guerrero's reference to the colonising role played by the US "in shaping all other narrative cinema languages and formal conventions" also supports my claim about the potency of the American influence.⁹¹ Like Bogle, Guerrero focused on *The Birth of a Nation*, arguing that the film "projected itself into the continuum of cinema history" and that it conceptualised all the "southern romances" that followed.⁹² Guerrero wrote in terms of the southern romance because so many of the films made in the wake of *The Birth of a Nation* followed the "cinematic paradigm of the plantation myth and its fallacies regarding the depiction of African Americans" originally framed by Griffith in 1915. Within this paradigm Guerrero identified "the loyal slave, the mammy" and the "brute negroes".⁹³ Aside from validating the use of a typology, Guerrero offers some observations about African American characterisation relevant to the Australian situation.

Guerrero developed the discussion of his typology in association with the slavery motif and "the plantation genre".⁹⁴ In the process he made a series of points that have particular resonance for the Australian situation. He pointed out that in the early plantation films that celebrated the old South "the black parts ...

⁹⁰ Guerrero, *Framing Blackness*, p. 3

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 4

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 15

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 16

are time-honoured stereotypes that legitimise the slave system” and serve as devalued or comic counterpoints to white roles.⁹⁵ Australia’s early silent films presented Indigenous Australians in a similar way, as counterpoints to non-Indigenous characters and as stereotypes that legitimised, not slavery, but colonisation. Guerrero also made a general claim that race was one of the more emotionally and politically charged subjects “in the American social psyche and media imagination”.⁹⁶ Race and the idea of ‘whiteness’ were also significant factors, as noted previously, in the Australian context.⁹⁷

Guerrero used the study of African American characterisations in films to examine the shifting and contested social and political meanings of race. In much the same way, I will consider the shifting meanings of race in the Australian context. Interrogation of this issue was possible for Guerrero and is made possible here because of the ways in which “the turbulent power of race” is developed by the characterisations of African Americans and Indigenous Australians in commercial cinema.⁹⁸ Guerrero noted that the process of rendering slavery in cinematic terms was, for the most part, affected from an “evasive, sentimentalized, or nostalgic perspective” that ran counter to the African American version.⁹⁹ In Australia, the silent cinematic versions of British

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 24

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 41

⁹⁷ Marilyn Lake, “On Being a White Man in Australia c. 1900”, in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds.) *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 99; Alanna Kamp, “Formative Geographies of Belonging in White Australia: Constructing the National Self and Other in Parliamentary Debate, 1901”, *Geographical Research*, November 2010, vol. 48, no. 4, pp. 411–26; Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narrative of National Identity* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2007), p. 10

⁹⁸ Guerrero, *Framing Blackness*, p. 2

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 42

‘settlement’ and the struggles of the pioneers, as they appear in local films *The Pioneers* (1926) and *The Birth of White Australia* (1928) reflect a similarly evasive and sentimental perspective that runs counter to the Indigenous Australian version. Guerrero insisted that the American cinematic version of the plantation myth and slavery had an “ideological utility”: it was, in his view, “the act of denying or repressing the full horror of such far-reaching, powerful history”.¹⁰⁰ Film, according to Guerrero, was a part of America’s process of denial and kept Americans from “accurately or completely understanding” their national character.¹⁰¹

In the Australian context, the events that followed the establishment of permanent British settlement in 1788 can be viewed in much the same way. The very fact that words like ‘settlement’, ‘invasion’ and ‘genocide’ are used and contested in Australian history indicates the relevance of this line of argument.¹⁰² From the beginning, Australian filmmakers contributed to Australia’s “foundation myth”.¹⁰³ Hence Australia’s silent films, like the American films of the Southern plantation genre, served an ideological purpose. This is not, however, a matter of accepting all of Guerrero’s assertions and simply assuming their validity in the Australian context. Rather they should be seen as ideas to be tested. The fact that two related but distinct American cinematic genres – the Southern, depicting African Americans, and the Western, depicting Native Americans – had discernible influences on, and points of comparison with, the Australian silent

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 43

¹⁰² Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 87–100

¹⁰³ Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p.

cinematic invention of Indigenous Australians means that simple generalisations about borrowing are inappropriate

In 2001 Larry Langman and David Ebner, in the introduction to their survey, *Hollywood's Image of the South: A Century of Southern Films*, identified a series of African American character types within what they defined as “the southern” film genre.¹⁰⁴ They argued that it was as legitimate and distinct a form as “the western”. According to Langman and Ebner, the Southern film was discernable by two characteristics that they summed up as “the Confederate test”.¹⁰⁵ Such films are set either in one of the states that formed the Confederacy or in another location but with the involvement of Southern troops. Langman and Ebner also traced the development and the allure of the plantation for silent directors such as D.W. Griffith, E. Mason Hopper and Paul Sloane. According to Langman and Ebner, these directors depicted the plantation as “the embodiment of all things pure and good”.¹⁰⁶ This had an obvious impact on the way that slavery and African Americans were portrayed. In such a setting the “slaves were benevolently treated” and happy.¹⁰⁷

Langman and Ebner point out that the “Civil War presented both an opportunity and a challenge for the movie industry”.¹⁰⁸ The opportunity arose from the appeal of the Civil War for America’s public imagination; the challenge arose from “sectional animosities” that posed problems relating to how the North

¹⁰⁴ Langman and Ebner, *Hollywood's Image of the South*, p. ix

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. xi

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. xii

and South could be portrayed.¹⁰⁹ Favourable treatment of the Southern Confederacy could “alienate movie audiences in the rest of the country, while unfavourable treatment would alienate Southern audiences”.¹¹⁰ A review of the films facing this challenge, and specifically consideration of some of D.W. Griffith’s responses to criticisms of *The Birth of a Nation*, supports the claim that the African American minority did not benefit from this balancing act.¹¹¹ The African American types identified by Bogle appeared, grew, diversified and survived.

In the Australian context, historical and social patterns not unlike those identified by Guerrero, and by Langman and Ebner, have also been at work. What have variously been called the Australian outback, settler, pioneer or foundation myths and the changing ideas of race have interacted with the filmmaker’s art. A consideration of the patterns evident in Australian filmmaking will be explored later, in chapter four on *The Absences* and the *Mystic Black*. It is useful, for example, to consider just why a characterisation of Indigenous Australia that proved to be as popular as the ‘*Mystic Black*’, where Indigenous Australian characters were portrayed with special supernatural or other worldly qualities, did not emerge, unlike so many others, until the middle of the twentieth century and the era of sound. In much the same way, it is valuable to consider why, although there was an equivalent to Bogle’s African American anonymous “black brute” in the guise of the *Wild Black*, there was no Indigenous Australian

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Anthony Slide, *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (Lexington, 2004), pp. 77–80; Josh Glick, “Mixed Messages: D.W. Griffith and the Black Press, 1916–1931”, *Film History*, June 2011, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 174–95

characterisation to match the sexual menace posed to white womanhood by the “black buck”.¹¹²

Many of the Indigenous Australian character types identified here, have grown, diversified and survived. As such, they offer an identifiable thread that can be traced through all of the changes that impose themselves on filmmaking. I have focused primarily on the first strands of our Indigenous Australian cinematic threads, the threads from the silent era that have been largely neglected.

The lack of attention to silent cinematic Indigenous characterisation is hardly surprising when we consider that as recently as 1998 Peter Rollins and John O'Connor, in the introduction of their pioneering book on the representation of Native Americans in film, *Hollywood's Indian*, maintained that their collection represented “new horizons of scholarship”.¹¹³ Hence, even though Bogle's work remains my primary template, there are other influences and precedents that need to be acknowledged and explored. Elements of my typological approach are also, therefore, related to the depiction of Native Americans in film.

Historian Russel Ward made comparisons between the Australian outback and the American frontier and drew analogies between his own work and Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis. In the concluding chapter of the *Australian Legend*, published in 1958, Ward maintained “that frontier conditions exerted a unifying, nationalist influence in Australia and America”.¹¹⁴ He went on to argue that “the frontier tradition” had been as important in Australia as the United States. Ward traced the origins of both of these national frontier

¹¹² Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 13

¹¹³ Rollins and O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian*, p. 11

¹¹⁴ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 223

mythologies through literary sources and the visual arts.¹¹⁵ He observes how, “The earliest Australian landscape drawings are embellished with groups of Aborigines, becoming more ignoble with the years.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, Ward uses the idea of character and type, namely “noble frontiersman” to comment on aspects of nationalism.¹¹⁷ Finally, he acknowledges that within both the Australian and the American versions of the “cult of the noble frontiersman” there existed “the myth of the innate superiority of European and especially Northern European peoples”.¹¹⁸ This assumption clearly had consequences for depictions of Native Americans, African Americans and Indigenous Australians.

Australians saw the United States, an older settler society, as a model for Australia as a newer settler society.¹¹⁹ The allure, therefore, for Australian audiences, of the Western and its almost obligatory story lines featuring Native Americans went beyond the appeal of an outdoor action adventure. These films represented nation-building. They also represented, through cinematic imagery, the shared values, historical and cultural links that, as noted above, academic historians would acknowledge decades later.

The potency of the Western theme and its resonance in Australia during the silent era can best be illustrated by examining the enormous popular appeal of the epic Western *The Covered Wagon* (1923). The film, set in 1848, told the story of pioneers facing hardships and attacks by hostile Native Americans as they journeyed in wagon trains along the legendary Oregon Trail. The film did

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 228, 230–32

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 232

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 235

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 237

¹¹⁹ White, *Inventing Australia*, pp. 49–50

exceptional business in Australia and set new attendance records right across the country. *The Covered Wagon* ran for six consecutive weeks in Melbourne before opening to similar popular and critical acclaim in Sydney.¹²⁰ During the fifth week of the film's record-breaking Sydney run, representatives of the New South Wales Department of Education, as members of a committee to select films suitable for children, praised the educational qualities of the film because it taught about the hardships and trials of the early pioneers. One school inspector declared that the film "should be seen by every school child in Australia".¹²¹ The hardships of the American frontier depicted in the film and the travails imposed by nature and the lurking threat of the "Red Men" struck a particular chord with Australian audiences.¹²² *The Exhibitor* reprinted an article from the *Geelong Advertiser* from 26 October 1923 that called on Australian filmmakers to follow the example set by the American producers of *The Covered Wagon* and to make films that taught of how "early settlers set forth to possess the land".¹²³

In 1999 Jacquelyn Kilpatrick published *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film*. Kilpatrick also began her analysis by identifying the elements of a typology. In her opening chapter, she explored what she called "the genesis of Native American stereotypes".¹²⁴ Kilpatrick observed that "[f]ilms have been around for only a century, but the stereotypes within them have their origins in over five centuries of perceptions – and misperceptions".¹²⁵ Kilpatrick maintained that film was a vital element in the refinement of national symbols and that the

¹²⁰ *The Exhibitor*, vol. 1, no. 1, 24 October 1923, p. 7

¹²¹ *The Exhibitor*, vol. 1, no. 6, 28 November 1923, p. 6

¹²² *The Exhibitor* vol. 1, no. 1, 24 October 1923, p. 7

¹²³ *The Exhibitor* vol. 1, no. 6, 28 November 1923, p. 6

¹²⁴ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, p. 1

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

West, in particular, “made a perfect crucible for the development of a mythology intrinsically American”.¹²⁶ Kilpatrick also recognises the importance of Turner’s

Frontier Thesis: “The most common motifs in the western genre owe their genesis to the ideas articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893.”¹²⁷

Kilpatrick suggested that Native American stereotypes emerged from the need of the young American nation to define itself in terms of its relationship to others. In

other words, America’s heroes were defined in juxtaposition with Native Americans. This process, according to Kilpatrick, saw Native Americans

stereotypically “divided into three categories: mental, sexual and spiritual”.¹²⁸

According to Kilpatrick, when “[n]ative intelligence took visible form in film –

mental acuity has not generally been the celluloid Indians’ strong suit”.¹²⁹ The

assumed lack of intelligence, Kilpatrick suggested, “may have something to do

with the image of the Native American as intensely sexual”.¹³⁰ She points to

images of the “lustful savage attacking white women” or the beautiful “Indian

princess”.¹³¹ Kilpatrick’s final category was the spiritual. This was most commonly

represented by an assumption of “an inherent closeness to the earth”.¹³² This

notion saw a conflict within the cinematic imagery between the “Noble Savage”

and its “alter ego the Bloodthirsty Savage”.¹³³ The links between Kilpatrick’s

categories, like Bogle’s typology for African Americans, and the Australian

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 39

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p. xvii

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ *ibid.*

situation are all too clear. Kilpatrick acknowledged the power of Turner's thesis to create motifs.

I have looked at the way Russel Ward appropriated aspects of Turner's thesis and used it to address Australian issues. Two of Kilpatrick's three categories, the mental and the spiritual, offer useful points of comparison when considering how Australia and the United States set about cinematically defining themselves. The sexual category, however, as it relates to both the Native American and Bogle's black buck, offers a clear point of contrast with Indigenous Australian characterisations. During the silent era of Australian film Indigenous Australian men were not depicted as representing a sexual menace to white womanhood. This contrast, which amounted to a cinematic emasculation of Indigenous Australian men, will be explored in detail in chapter four, *The Absences*.

Three other American books, *The Invention of the Western Film* by Scott Simmon, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians* by Andrew Smith, and *Making the White Man's Indian* by Angela Aleiss, have proved valuable because of their specific focus on the era of American silent film. Scott Simmon used a form of typology as part of his analysis of the emergence of the Western genre. In the process, he claimed to have uncovered "a new history of the rise and fall of the Indian in silent films".¹³⁴ The first part of this new history, based on an examination of films made between 1908 and 1910 saw Native Americans depicted "as guide or saviour to the white hero".¹³⁵ In developing his analysis, Simmon, like Bogle and others, was compelled to look at the work of D.W. Griffith. Films such as *The Red Man*

¹³⁴ Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film*, p. xiv

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 4

and the Child (1908) *The Call of the Wild* (1908) and *The Red Girl* (1908) were key films in Griffith's early body of work. All of them gave rise to a particular mode of filmic characterisation. According to Simmon, even though the "actor playing an Indian on the early silent screen might run through a wide range of presentation gestures", that image, whether it was self-sacrificing or heroic, was always developed within the "inevitable story about the progress of civilisation and native decline".¹³⁶ Maintaining his focus on the films of Griffith, Simmon noted that when Griffith began to make films in California, the Westerns made in the West reflected a change in the characterisation of Native Americans. The stereotype of the savage replaces the need for character motivation. It was reduced to just "Injuns attack whites".¹³⁷ In these films the tribes remained, "but as individual characters Indians were vanishing".¹³⁸ The type had come to replace the character.

There are discernible parallels between the ways Native Americans were portrayed, first as friends and guides and then later as generic, violent, marauding savages, and the evolution of the representation of Indigenous Australians. In many of Australia's earliest bushranger films, an Indigenous Australian character was often cast as the devoted friend to the white hero.¹³⁹ By the time *The Birth of White Australia* appeared in 1928, the Indigenous Australians had been reduced – as Griffith's Native American had been reduced

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 11

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 37

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 44

¹³⁹ Andrew Pike, "Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films", *Meanjin*, December 1977, vol. 36, no. 4, p. 592

– to the status of a collective menace. In the case of the Indigenous Australian Wild Black, the type always trumped character.

Andrew Smith reinforced Simmon's analysis, notably his ideas about character typologies for Native Americans in the early years of silent film in the United States. Smith pointed to the fact that by 1909 the Western had become the "nation's leading film type".¹⁴⁰ He went on to observe that the genre was also "capturing the imagination of audiences ... all over the world".¹⁴¹ At this point it is worth noting the enormous success of the genre in Australia, a reality reflected in the prominence of two of the leading producers of westerns, the Selig and Essanay companies.¹⁴² Both companies ranked high in Australian lists of imported films.¹⁴³ Smith points to the fact that in the early years Native Americans are often friends and allies to the newcomers, willing to "sacrifice themselves (in photoplays) to save the lives or promote the happiness of white benefactors".¹⁴⁴ The early years, according to Smith, were marked by filmmakers creating "heroic Indian characters. Yet they typically did so by resorting to the noble savage stereotype".¹⁴⁵ Racism was ingrained in the creation of all of these types, as was the related "notion of the vanishing American", which became "the predominant Indian stereotype used by the film industry in the period 1913–1919".¹⁴⁶

In 2005 Angela Aleiss began her history *Making the White Man's Indian* by acknowledged the range of Native American characters, thereby establishing a

¹⁴⁰ Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians*, p. 37

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 52

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 53

¹⁴³ *The Photo-play*, April 1912

¹⁴⁴ Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians*, p. 91

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 93

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 100

rudimentary typological foundation.¹⁴⁷ Her types included the “Indian as a noble hero,” as a member of a vanishing culture, and as the problematic half-breed that was an obstacle to progress.¹⁴⁸ Along the way, she devoted time to the films produced by the Kalem, Bison and Lubin companies. Once again, scrutiny of the lists of influential American film companies and their products screened in Australia reveals that each of these filmmakers was prominently placed in the Australian market before the First World War.¹⁴⁹

Finally, a review of surviving American silent films held by the Library of Congress reveals a range of character types that I have designated the friend, the enemy, the comic Indian, the Indian maiden and the victim. These types span the period of silent filmmaking in the United States from 1903 to 1930. By far the most common type was the Native American as the enemy.¹⁵⁰ In some of these films, notably in the early years, Native American violence was given a motive, but for the most part attacks were presented as mindless and instinctive. The most striking contrast, evident between the characterisation of Native Americans and Indigenous Australians, were the stories of inter-racial romance featuring Native Americans and settlers and the existence of a romantic Native American female character. Neither of these were elements of the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia. Although other Native American character types and story lines found their way into Australian films, these did not.

¹⁴⁷ Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian*, p. xv

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 2, 6, 8, 31

¹⁴⁹ *The Photo-play*, April–August 1912

¹⁵⁰ For more on these Native American character types, see Appendix 3.

The American cinematic typologies of African Americans and Native Americans can be supplemented by a consideration of Leslie A. Fiedler's work. In 1968 Fiedler published *The Return of the Vanishing American*, in which he argued that in literary and cinematic terms the Southern and Western were both genres defined by the racial 'other' of the African American and Native American. In the case of the Southern, Fiedler argued that "without the Negro ... there is no true Southern".¹⁵¹ In relation to the Western, the argument continued thus: "The heart of the Western is not the confrontation with the alien landscape ... but the encounter with the Indian".¹⁵² Hence Fiedler adds another dimension to the typologies presented above by focusing on characters, as the key to understanding the genre as a whole. In 1979 Fiedler published *The Inadvertent Epic: From Uncle Tom's Cabin to Roots*; in this work, he traces a series of African American character types through film and literature. The key, according to Fiedler, to the characterisation of African Americans was the "demonic dreams of race, sex and violence which have haunted us as Americans".¹⁵³ Fiedler's approach acknowledges the power of characterisation.

Overview of the thesis

Having introduced my typology and indicated what lies behind it, it is appropriate to sketch out the plan for the thesis as a whole. The remainder of this chapter will do two things: first, place the issue of Indigenous Australian representation in context by examining the relevant literature; second, examine

¹⁵¹ Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), p. 19

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p. 21

¹⁵³ Fiedler, *The Inadvertent Epic*, p. 16

more specifically the role Australian silent film has played in the invention of national identity and Aboriginality in particular.

The body of the thesis is organised into five chapters: Chapter One: The Tracker focuses on the genesis of the most iconic and enduring of all the Indigenous character types. Chapter Two: The Comic Black examines the genesis of a character epitomising the legacy of minstrelsy and cinematic African Americans. Chapter Three: The Wild Black looks at the deceptively simple, yet diverse characterisation of the most popular Indigenous film character type. Chapter Four: The Absences considers the conspicuous absentees from the Indigenous Australian silent film cast. Among the characters spurned are the individualised Indigenous male hero, the Indigenous romantic heroine and the mystic figure. I will argue that their omission reveals as much about the era as the cast list does. Chapter Five: Multiple Heists uses the four film versions of *Robbery Under Arms*, two each from the silent and sound eras, to examine the origin and evolution of Indigenous characterisation.

Eight main issues will be explored as I examine the genesis in the silent era of Australian film's Indigenous Australian cast. In the process, I will revisit some Australian ideas of the past, national identity and national cinema.¹⁵⁴ First, it is important to recognise that although there was an acknowledged silence with regard to Indigenous Australia in academic discourse in the early twentieth century that silence was not as evident in cinematic discourse in the same

¹⁵⁴ Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, *Australian Cinema After Mabo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 3

period.¹⁵⁵ In fact, during the silent era some 250 silent feature films were made, and even though just over 50 of these features survive either whole or as fragments 30 of the 250 films had identifiable Indigenous characters, stories or themes.¹⁵⁶ Second, it is no less important to recognise that there has been a silence of another kind, a silence or lack of acknowledgement of the nature and importance of Indigenous representation in the feature films of the silent era and the sound era before 1950. Third, we need to consider the fact that cinematic discourse and its Indigenous images are an integral part of the ever-changing construction of Aboriginality. Fourth, it should be acknowledged that Aboriginality is, in turn, a key component of Australian national identity and a component of what has been called Australia's national cinema.¹⁵⁷ Fifth, I will examine three of

¹⁵⁵ W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Company, 1968); W.E.H. Stanner, *The Dreaming and Other Essays* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009); Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000), p. 92; Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), p. 13; Tony Birch, "History Is Never Bloodless: Getting It Wrong after 100 Years of Federation", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 42–54; Gillian Cowlshaw, "On Getting It Wrong: Collateral Damage in the History Wars", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2006, vol. 37, no. 127, pp. 181–202; Ann Curthoys, "Mythologies", in Richard Nile (ed.), *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St Lucia, 2000); Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines Under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995); Robert Foster, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettelbeck, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian Frontier and the Violence of Memory* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2001), p. 2

¹⁵⁶ Ray Edmondson and Andrew Pike, *Australia's Lost Films* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1982), p. 9; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 2

¹⁵⁷ Attwood, "Unsettling Pasts" p. 245; Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, "(The) 1967 (Referendum) and All That: Narrative, Myth, Aborigines and Australia", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 1998, vol. 29, no. 111, pp. 267–90; Bruce Clunies Ross, "Scrutinising Australian Nationalism and Myths", *Australian Literary Studies* October 1990, vol. 14, no. 4, 499–506; Jane Freebury, "National identity in Australian cinema: a symposium", *Screen Education*, Autumn 2001, no. 25, pp. 54–56; Greg McCarthy, "Caught between Empires: Ambivalence in Australian Films", *Critical Arts: A South North Journal of Culture and Media*, 2001, vol. 15, no. 1/2, pp. 154–74; Neville Meaney, "Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian

the enduring elements of Aboriginality in film. The characterisation of the Black Tracker is often linked to an acknowledged Indigenous affinity with the land, an image that, paradoxically, has the potential to challenge the idea of *terra nullius* and some of the traditional ideas of settler nationalism. Another enduring element has been a characterisation of the dichotomy between two cinematic types, Wild Blacks and Tame Blacks. The former were the remote, potentially menacing, full-blood, tribal Indigenous Australians and the latter were the more or less integrated helper figures. Yet another feature of the cinematic iconography of Indigenous Australia has been the recent association of Indigenous Australians with the spiritual and mystic. The mystical association, which significantly emerges in the middle of the twentieth century is, I will argue, a settler way of accommodating the recognition that the Indigenous Australians were not going to simply die out. Sixth, it will become clear that a close examination of the construction of Indigenous images can enrich, and be enriched by, our understanding of the concepts of Aboriginalism, Orientalism and Ornamentalism.

¹⁵⁸ Seventh, the feature films we will deal with need to be seen in terms of history

History and Historiography", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2001, vol. 32, no. 116, pp. 76–91; Ian Duncanson, "Identities in the Colony and the Family: Tragedies of Ascription and Transgression in Two Australian Films", *Social Identities*, November 2007, vol. 13, no. 6, pp. 697–713; Bart Ziino, "Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity/Australian Pastoral: The Making of a White Landscape/the Australians: Insiders and Outsiders on the National Character since 1770", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2008, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 373–80

¹⁵⁸ Bain Attwood and John Arnold (eds.), "Power, Knowledge and Aborigines", Special Edition of the *Journal of Australian Studies* (Bundoora: La Trobe University Press, 1992), p. ii; Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990); Terry Moore, "Misadventures with Aboriginalism" *Social Identities*, 2011, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 423–42. For Orientalism, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); For Ornamentalism see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2002); David Cannadine, "Ornamentalism", *History Today*, May 2001,

and memory. The films in question can enlighten reflection on the Australian version of the 'history wars'.¹⁵⁹ Finally, all of this needs to be addressed, acknowledging the racism that was a feature of filmmaking and non-Indigenous discourse about Indigenous Australia. Racist assumptions were part of the fabric of the new Australian nation. Diane Collins has suggested that racist sentiments and the depiction of white racial conquest were reasons for the popularity of Hollywood westerns in Australia.¹⁶⁰ Similar ideas about race and conquest were also evident in Australian films.

As a caveat, a further point needs to be stressed: this thesis is about representations of Indigenous people. Although I acknowledge that the films I deal with are open to multiple interpretations, including the question of Indigenous agency, the issue of Indigenous agency is, however, outside the scope of my examination.

vol. 51, no. 5, pp. 12–20; Edward H. Teague, "Ornamentalism (Book)" *Library Journal*, 1983, vol. 108, no. 2, p. 24; Peter H. Hoffenberg, "*Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Book)" *Journal of World History*, June 2003, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 264–69; Ian Christopher Fletcher, "*Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Book)" *Victorian Studies*, Spring 2003, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 532–34; Antoinette Burton, "*Ornamentalism* (Book)" *American Historical Review*, April 2002, vol. 107, no. 2, pp. 497–98.

¹⁵⁹ Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark (eds.), *The History Wars* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003); Lorenzo Veracini, "A Prehistory of Australia's History Wars: The Evolution of Aboriginal History during the 1970s and 1980s", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, September 2006, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 439–54; Andrew G. Bonnell and Martin Crotty, "An Australian 'Historikerstreit'? Review Article", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, September 2004, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 425–33; Robert Manne (ed.), *Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2003); Patricia Grimshaw, "The Fabrication of a Benign Colonisation?", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2004, vol. 35, no. 123, pp. 122–29; Keith Windschuttle, "Historical Error versus Historical Invention", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 2004, vol. 36, no. 124, pp. 375–82; Patrick Brantlinger, "'Black Armband' versus 'White Blindfold' History in Australia", *Victorian Studies*, Summer 2004, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 675–74

¹⁶⁰ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 47

Placing the issue of Indigenous Australian representation in context

In essence, this thesis will address how non-Indigenous Australia invented and reinvented cinematic images of Indigenous Australia. To date, discussion of the characterisation of Indigenous Australians in film has focused almost exclusively on the period since the 1950s. To adapt a phrase of W.E.H. Stanner, there has been a “great silence” about Indigenous characterisation in films of the silent era.¹⁶¹ This silence can be accounted for in two ways. First, many of the 30 films made in Australia during the silent era featuring Indigenous Australian characters have been lost.¹⁶² Second, from the 1980s filmmakers told powerful stories that included characterisations of Indigenous Australia. These films were so technically and creatively impressive that they became the focus of study, to the exclusion of what went before. As a result, little has been written about films with Indigenous characters before *Jedda* (1955).

Feature films have been chosen because, as *The Photo-Play* predicted, they contained images and ideas “experienced by the great mass of people”.¹⁶³ For more than 50 years after the First World War, feature films were, according to Diane Collins, “the most talked-about and the most influential amusement in the country”.¹⁶⁴ Film is a unique form of discourse capable of insights “as important

¹⁶¹ W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney, 1968), p. 25

¹⁶² Ray Edmondson and Andrew Pike, *Australia's Lost Films* (Canberra, 1982), p. 9

¹⁶³ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 2

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 3; *Photoplayer*, No. 1, 9, June 1923

as those found in books".¹⁶⁵ Film is also "a cultural artefact ... amenable to study and re-study" over time.¹⁶⁶ Neil Rattigan, writing about Australian-made films, claimed they often posed the question "Who are we?"¹⁶⁷ The silent films made between 1906 and 1912 were very much Australian.¹⁶⁸ According to Pike and Cooper, in their survey of Australian film from 1900: "It was perhaps the most acutely 'national' period in Australian cinema and many of the recurring themes and motifs of the local cinema were first explored and defined at this time".¹⁶⁹

The first cinematic images of Indigenous Australia were recorded in 1898.¹⁷⁰ Hence they are almost as old as film.¹⁷¹ Since then, ethnographers, anthropologists and filmmakers have collaborated to record aspects of Indigenous Australian life with varying degrees of sophistication and sensitivity. The ethnographic films were "observational".¹⁷² In other words, although there was an editorial agenda, ethnographic films tended, according to Ian Dunlop, to play the role of observer and recorder of aspects of "traditional Aboriginal life".¹⁷³ But there was a link, as I will show, between some of the ethnographic images and the characterisations invented by feature filmmakers. It is in the imagination

¹⁶⁵ Robert Brent Toplin, *In Defense of Hollywood: Reel History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), p. 174

¹⁶⁶ Kevin M. Brown, "'Racial' Referents: Images of European/Aboriginal Relations in Australian Feature Films 1955–1984", *The Sociological Review*, August 1988, vol. 6, no. 3, p. 475

¹⁶⁷ Neil Rattigan, *Images of Australia: 100 Films of the New Australian Cinema* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1991), p. 15

¹⁶⁸ Zielinski, "Silent Cinema", p. 130

¹⁶⁹ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 2

¹⁷⁰ Ian Bryson, *Bringing to Light: A History of Ethnographic Filmmaking at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2002), p. x

¹⁷¹ Ian Dunlop, "Ethnographic Film-making in Australia: The First Seventy Years (1898–1968)", *Aboriginal History*, 1979, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 113

¹⁷² *ibid.*, p. 113

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 118

and creativity of feature films that the subjective values of the dominant non-Indigenous culture are more clearly on show.¹⁷⁴

My focus will therefore be on feature films of the silent era (c. 1906–1930) because many of the Indigenous Australian character types familiar to audiences today were born in the silent era. However, consideration of Australian silent film remains problematic. Even though films were produced at the rate of one every two weeks in the three years before First World War, some were never shown, others shown without record and many were lost or destroyed.¹⁷⁵ Some of the relevant surviving silent films and fragments, such as *Robbery Under Arms* (1920), *A Girl of the Bush* (1921), *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926), *Trooper O'Brien* (1928), *The Tenth Straw* (1926) *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) and *The Birth of White Australia* (1928), will be examined. Where the films have not survived, I have had recourse to surviving scripts, production notes, stills, reviews and advertising.

No text can portray events impartially, and no neutral point exists from which to read or view texts that portray events.¹⁷⁶ Hence I acknowledge the limitations of my context and background. This work comes from the perspective of an Australian born Anglo-Celt. I claim no expertise about Indigenous Australia. However, this is a history of cinematic constructions of Aboriginality and as such offers insight into non-Indigenous discourse. This thesis is not about Indigenous

¹⁷⁴ Andrew Pike, "Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films", *Meanjin*, December 1977, vol. 36, no. 4, p. 592; Williams, *Film and Nationalism*, p. 9

¹⁷⁵ Eric Reade, *Australian Silent Films: A Pictorial History of Silent Films from 1896 to 1929* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1970), p. 7

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

Australia. Rather, it is about non-Indigenous Australia's invention of Indigenous Australia. In the process, the focus becomes, in Bain Attwood's words, "Ourselves, European Australian, rather than Them, the Aborigines."¹⁷⁷

The aim is to remedy neglect of the silent era and challenge aspects of the accepted wisdom. My argument is twofold: first, that assertions of cinematic absence are misleading and reflect a neglect of the silent era; second, that in some instances it is better to compare Indigenous Australian characterisations with the cinematic characterisations of African Americans. Instead of looking almost exclusively at the influence of the American western, it is fruitful to consider the impact of what Langman and Ebner labelled "the southern".¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, as I argue here, the particular nature of Indigenous characterisation in Australian films of the silent era was the result of an amalgam of local factors and international influences.

¹⁷⁷ Attwood and Arnold, "Power, Knowledge and Aborigines", p. xv

¹⁷⁸ Larry Langman and David Ebner, *Hollywood's Image of the South* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001) p. xi. For more on films about the South, see Pat Watters, *The South and the Nation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); Andrew Bergman, *We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Jack Temple Kirby, *Media Made-Dixie: The South in the American Imagination* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Robert Lang (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation: D.W. Griffith, Director* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema. Volume 2 1907–1915* (Berkeley, 1994); Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, Volume 3 1915–1928* (Berkeley, 1994); Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Gerald R. Butters Jr, *Black Manhood on the Silent Screen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theatre and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

This work is an aspect of film and history and cultural history.¹⁷⁹ Both of these areas of enquiry address questions of identity and representation and are marked by diverse approaches and perspectives.¹⁸⁰

There is a nexus between the depiction of Indigenous Australians in feature films and the academic and social debates of the day. Sometimes the

¹⁷⁹ For more on film and history, see Paul Smith (ed.), *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Ledger Grindon, *Shadows of the Past: Studies of the Historical Fiction Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Robert A. Rosenstone (ed.), *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Robert Brent Toplin, *History By Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Toplin, *In Defense of Hollywood: Reel History*; Marcia Landy (ed.), *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000); Alan Williams (ed.), *Film and Nationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film* (London: Routledge, 2007); Robert Burgoyne, "The Balcony of History", *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 547–55; Guy Westwell, "Critical Approaches to the History Film: A Field in Search of a Methodology", *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 577–88; Leen Engelen, "Back to the Future, Ahead to the Past. Film and History: A Status Quaestionis" *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 555–63; Alun Munslow, "Film and History: Robert A. Rosenstone and History on Film/Film on History", *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 565–75; Jeremy D. Stoddard and Alan S. Marcus, "More than "Showing What Happened": Exploring the Potential of Teaching History with Film", *The High School Journal*, January/ February 2010, pp. 83–90; Jane Landman and Chris Ballard, "An Ocean of Images: Film and History in the Pacific", *The Journal of Pacific History*, June 2010, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 1–20; Valentina Vitali, "Film Historiography as Theory of the Film Subject: A Case Study", *Cinema Journal*, Fall 2010, vol. 50, no. 1., pp. 141–46; Jeffrey Richards "Sign Posts: History Film", *History Today*, October 2011, vol. 61, no. 10, pp. 52–53. For more on cultural history, see Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds.), *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003); Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*; Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (North Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005); Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2007); Penny Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010); John Hirst, *Looking for Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2010).

¹⁸⁰ Teo and White, *Cultural History in Australia*, p. 2

connection is deliberate, while at other times they emerge by a kind of osmosis, reminding us how film reflects the society that produced it.¹⁸¹

The birth of film in Australia coincided with the infancy of the nation. As Marilyn Lake has argued, Australia's political leaders in the first decades of the twentieth century were intent on establishing a "new civilisation for the white man".¹⁸² This mindset was racist and preoccupied with the subjugation of the continent and its "dark people".¹⁸³ This thesis will indicate how that mindset emerged in silent films.

The silent films considered reflect the conflicts linked to emerging Australian nationalism.¹⁸⁴ On one level, Australians were still colonials, subject to "imperial dictation and British condescension".¹⁸⁵ Lake asserts that this situation posed a challenge to white Australian masculinity. This, in turn, provides part of my explanation for what will be shown to be the emasculation of Indigenous Australian male characters in the films of the silent era and the absence of an individualised warrior character until the sound era.

On the whole, discussion of the depiction of Indigenous Australians in the literature is both limited and marked by an assertion of irrelevance. Where it touches on the silent era, commentators focus more on what is absent rather

¹⁸¹ Alan Williams (ed.), *Film and Nationalism* (New Brunswick, 2002), p. 8; Williams Hughes, "The Evaluation of Film as Evidence", in Paul Smith (ed.), *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 69

¹⁸² Marilyn Lake, *On Being a White Man in Australia c. 1900*, in Teo and White (eds.) *Cultural History in Australia*, p. 99

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 104

¹⁸⁴ Zielinski, "Silent Cinema", p. 130

¹⁸⁵ Lake, *On Being a White Man in Australia*, p. 111

than what is actually present on the record. There is no Australian equivalent to publications that address the depiction of Native Americans or African Americans in the United States.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, a comprehensive examination of Indigenous Australian representation in feature films from the beginning is warranted.

There have been scholarly articles of late from a range of disciplines dealing with aspects of Indigenous Australian representation in feature films. In 2001 and 2002 alone there were six important films with Indigenous characters and stories: *Yolngu Boy* (2001), *One Night the Moon* (2001), *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), *Australian Rules* (2002), *Black and White* (2002) and *The Tracker* (2002). It appeared that producers were prepared to ignore veteran Australian director Ken Hall's axiom that Indigenous stories were "death at the box office".¹⁸⁷

These films, and consideration of them, have enlivened discussions about Aboriginality, Australian history and "the relatively new discipline of Aboriginal history", but at a cost.¹⁸⁸ The perceived need to address the more recent films has contributed to the neglect of Indigenous cinematic representation over a longer time scale.

¹⁸⁶ Rollins and O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian*; Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*; Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian*; Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*; Nicholas G. Rosenthal, "Representing Indians: Native American Actors on Hollywood's Frontier", *Western Historical Quarterly*, Autumn 2005, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 228–52; Peter Noble, *The Negro in Films* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1948); Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*; Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*

¹⁸⁷ Bruce Molloy, *Before the Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930–1960* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990), p. 124

¹⁸⁸ Lynette Russell, *Savage Imaginings: Historical and Contemporary Constructions of Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2001), p. 3

Earlier characterisations of Indigenous Australia are worthy of treatment in their own right and because they can better inform analysis of more recent depictions. This claim can be supported by using the example of Marcia Langton's perceptive 2006 analysis of the "figure of the Aboriginal tracker".¹⁸⁹ Although Langton acknowledged the colonial history of the tracker, her film analysis began with 1940s films and did not mention the silent era. The tracker is one of the most influential and enduring Indigenous Australian character types and warrants comprehensive examination. However, no examination is complete when half the history of the type is ignored.

Many publications addressing cinematic representations of Indigenous Australia have been limited by a form of conceptual myopia. The literature dealing with Indigenous representation in feature films is typically dominated by the here and now. Although this kind of theoretical analysis is valuable, it is incomplete in that it fails to begin at the beginning.¹⁹⁰

Scholarly consideration of Indigenous characterisation in Australian feature films is largely restricted to the period from 1950.¹⁹¹ Charles Chauvel's

¹⁸⁹ Marcia Langton, "Out of the Shadows: Marcia Langton Considers the Significance and Traces the Development of the Aboriginal Trackers Figure in Australian film", *Meanjin*, March 2006, vol. 65, no. 1, p. 55

¹⁹⁰ Edmondson and Pike, *Australia's Lost Films*, p. 9; Pike, "Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films", p. 592

¹⁹¹ Peter Malone, *In Black and White and Colour: A Survey of Aborigines in Australian Feature Films* (Jabiru: Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, 1987); Shane Maynard, "Black (and White) Images: Aborigines in Film", in A. Moran and T. O' Reagan (eds.), *The Australian Screen* (Ringwood, 1989), pp. 216–35; Molloy, *Before the Interval*, p. 124; Karen Jennings, "Aboriginality in Film", in Bruce McFarlane, Geoff Mayer and Ina Bertrand (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Film* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999); Shane Crilly, "Reading Aboriginalities in Australian Cinema: From *Jedda* to *Dead Heart*", *Screen Education*, Winter 2001, no. 26/27, pp.

Jedda (1955) is a typical starting point. This is ironic because of the influences of the silent era on both the film and Chauvel's career. Writing in 2010, Suneeti Rekhari commented that "the visual codes and connotations in *Jedda*" have to be seen in terms of "historical contexts".¹⁹² Rekhari addressed the immediate historical context of the film, but the article contained an implicit justification for broader historical contextualisation by adding that these contexts "were in the end shaped by Chauvel's ideologies and established socio-historical patterns".¹⁹³

Charles Chauvel began his career in the silent era. His first feature film was *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926). This is important because of the similarities between *The Moth of Moonbi* and *Jedda*. Despite the fact that Chauvel drew on "tales of the outback" for *Jedda*, the key is the climax.¹⁹⁴ Both films feature the kidnapping of a displaced heroine, a rescue bid by the hero and a dramatic cliff-top struggle.¹⁹⁵ The parallels are difficult to ignore. One possible conclusion is that Chauvel, consciously or unconsciously, recycled an earlier plot scenario.

When publications venture further back than the 1950s, they lack analysis; they are surveys in which the silent era becomes a mere preface to recent films. These works are adequate as surveys but the issue is focus. Atypically, in 1977 Andrew Pike began a piece about Indigenous representation in feature films for a special issue of *Meanjin* with specific references to the silent era, to which he

36–45; Peter Krausz, "Screening Indigenous Australia: An Overview of Aboriginal Representation on Film", *Australian Screen Education*, Spring 2003, pp. 90–95

¹⁹² Suneeti Rekhari, "Assimilation, Othering and Control: Looking Back at *Jedda*", *Screen Education*, Autumn 2010, no. 57, p. 123

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Susanne Chauvel Carlsson, *Charles and Elsa Chauvel: Movie Pioneers* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989), p. 151

¹⁹⁵ Molloy, *Before the Interval*, p. 103

devoted almost half the article. He argued that Indigenous Australians were “absent from the majority of Australian feature films – even those set in the bush” and concluded that absence reflected lack of awareness of Indigenous Australia common to most urban non-Indigenous Australians.¹⁹⁶ However, Pike did examine the characterisations of Indigenous Australians evident in the early bushranging genre. He noted that Indigenous Australians were portrayed as the loyal “side-kick to the bushranging hero” and that although the role was invariably played by a non-Indigenous actor in blackface, the character “was always a worthy ally, displaying strong virtues of loyalty and reliability”.¹⁹⁷ Pike argued that the relative absence of Indigenous characters was a reflection of a lack “of comprehension of Aboriginal existence”, but the popularity of characterisations of Indigenous trackers as loyal aides in the bushranging genre were, however, so popular that they require closer attention.¹⁹⁸

A review of the material held by the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia reveals that this characterisation was evident in 11 of the 30 silent films with Indigenous characters made between 1906 and 1930. It was therefore the first cinematic portrayal of the important academic and political concept of Aboriginality. The characterisation of the Indigenous Australian in bushranging films, as friend to the hero, standing by him in crisis, endured into the second half of the twentieth century with the second, sound remake of *Robbery Under Arms* in 1985.¹⁹⁹ Pike also observed that Indigenous Australians were rarely subject to the racial vilification reserved for other minority groups, notably the Chinese. In

¹⁹⁶ Pike, “Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films”, p. 592

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 593

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 592

¹⁹⁹ Pike, “Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films”, p. 593

other words, Indigenous Australians were treated in a benign way, as loyal aides, or exotic figures equated with the landscape, providing “local colour to outback dramas”.²⁰⁰

The range of themes addressed in Pike’s article and his endeavour to historicise Indigenous characterisation make it a useful departure point for this thesis. Unfortunately, the complexity of Pike’s approach was ignored by later scholarship. Instead, the emphasis has been on only one of Pike’s observations, the issue of relative absence. Pike made the point that feature films reflect and cater for what David Day called the dominant supplanting culture and, in Pike’s words, “the domain of the white urban middle class”.²⁰¹ It is to be regretted that this generalisation came to dominate later discussions at the expense of Pike’s other points about the silent era.

Pike’s qualified comment about Indigenous absence in the majority of films became a blanket assertion of neglect. The reality, however, is subtler and more complex. It is true that in terms of all Australian feature films Indigenous Australians are relatively absent, but a close consideration of the silent era indicates that during the period between 1900 and 1911 Indigenous Australians appeared in five of the 20 known feature films. Extending the survey, of the first 100 known feature films made between 1900 and 1913, 16 included Indigenous characters. In percentage terms, therefore, between 1900 and 1911, Indigenous Australians appeared in 25 per cent of feature films, and between 1900 and 1913 they appeared in 16 per cent. These figures contradict the assertions about an absence of Indigenous Australian characterisations in the silent era. The

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ Day, *Conquest*, p. 9; Pike, “Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films”, p. 598

challenge is to go beyond the assertion that Indigenous Australians were absent and consider the nature of the cinematic characterisation that did exist. Typical of what followed was the “survey of the presentation of Aborigines in Australian films” Peter Malone published in 1987.²⁰² He devoted only 13 of the book’s 139 pages to the silent era.

Shane Maynard, writing in 1989, began his review with *Jedda* (1955), commenting that up until this film Indigenous Australians did not find their way into the centre of film drama. He argued that, before 1955, Indigenous Australians “were side figures, marginal, treated much in the same way that Americans treated Indians in their films in the same decades”.²⁰³ With this phrase Maynard summarily dismissed the silent era. He also neglected the complexity of depictions of Native Americans in the silent era in the United States.²⁰⁴ Maynard’s generalisations are not without merit, but they are limited because the formative years of both Australian and American filmmaking are neglected.²⁰⁵

Film historian Bruce Molloy, in his 1990 assessment of Australian mythology and feature films between 1930 and 1960, echoed the accepted wisdom about infrequent representation. When he did deal with Indigenous characters, Molloy argued that non-Indigenous Australia and Indigenous Australia were represented in oppositional terms: “civilised and uncivilised”.²⁰⁶ Molloy asserted that Indigenous characters were represented as “simple minded and easily deluded, as many American films depicted Negroes, or as treacherous and

²⁰² Malone, *In Black and White and Colour*, p. xi

²⁰³ Maynard, *Black (and White) Images*, p. 219

²⁰⁴ Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film*, p. 9

²⁰⁵ Day, *Conquest*, p. 9

²⁰⁶ Molloy, *Before the Interval*, p. 130

sadistic savages opposing the ameliorating influence of white civilisation, as American films often depicted American Indians”.²⁰⁷ Neither of these generalisations was developed beyond the level of an assertion.

Karen Jennings, in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Film* published in 1999, offered a “historical overview of Australian narrative cinema” and commented on the absence of major Indigenous Australian characters. Her view echoed Andrew Pike’s when she identified a number of enduring “recurring patterns and myths”.²⁰⁸ In doing so Jennings dealt almost exclusively with films from the 1970s on. As a result, while her insights are valuable, Jennings has effectively dismissed the silent era, devoting no more than 96 words to the first 70 years of Australian film and referring to only two silent films.

In 2001 Shane Crilly began – as had Shane Maynard – with *Jedda* (1955) and asserted that between the 1950s and 1990s representations of Indigenous Australians had been “insubstantial”.²⁰⁹ He added, echoing one of Pike’s comments from 1977, that when Indigenous Australians were present in film, they were “an inevitable feature of the landscape where they have functioned mostly as part of an ‘exotic’ backdrop for white characters struggling with their own concerns”.²¹⁰ Crilly based this claim on the infrequency and the nature of that representation. There are, however, limits to this argument. The question needs to be asked: “insubstantial”, compared to what? To the Indigenous percentage of the total population, or to the frequency of representations of other minority or

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 124

²⁰⁸ Jennings, “Aboriginality in Film”, p. 1

²⁰⁹ Crilly, *Reading Aboriginalities in Australian Cinema*, p. 37

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

ethnic groups? By these standards, representations of Aboriginality and Indigenous Australia are substantial. Indigenous Australians may not have been granted the same prominence in Australian productions as Native Americans have in Hollywood films, but the fact remains that Indigenous Australians or at least the cinematic constructions of Aboriginality have had a significant place.

Writing in 2003, Peter Krausz offered a survey of Indigenous representation in Australian feature films over the past 100 years.²¹¹ His close study began with the 1950s, having dismissed the silent era with the assertion that “until the 1930s Australia’s silent cinema tended towards representing Aborigines, when they were represented at all, as the evil hordes stalling white Australia’s attempts to colonise the country”.²¹² Krausz also contended that there was “a general avoidance of Aboriginal issues and a lack of any balanced representation of Australia’s significant Indigenous population”.²¹³ This generalisation cannot go unchallenged. Krausz does not make clear precisely what he means by ‘Aboriginal issues’, and although I acknowledge that the films in question do address non-Indigenous issues, those with Indigenous characters also deal with a clash of cultures and conflict in a racist context. Considering Indigenous history since 1788 it is hard to see how these are not ‘Aboriginal issues’. How the non-Indigenous culture perceived itself and the ways in which the Indigenous population influenced the attitudes of the former towards the latter therefore became ‘Aboriginal issues’.

²¹¹ Krausz, *Screening Indigenous Australia*, p. 90

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ *ibid.*

At the heart of 'Aboriginal issues' since 1788 has been the response of Indigenous Australians to the arrival of the newcomers. This is the point that Krausz fails to acknowledge. Furthermore, as Bain Attwood points out, there was no collective concept of Aboriginality until after 1788, and therefore "Aboriginal issues" historically stem directly from the relationship between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous communities.²¹⁴ As a result, Krausz's point is only valid in a limited anthropological sense, and only if the consequences of 1788 are ignored.

The point, however, is that there have always been characterisations of Indigenous Australians in Australian feature films worthy of study. It is just that those representations have become more sophisticated, reflecting the fact that film captures for us the time, the "outlook, intentions and capacities of those who made it".²¹⁵ Krausz dealt with the era of silent film in less than 100 words and failed to make specific reference to a single film. A false impression was therefore created that Indigenous characterisations were more limited than was the case. Krausz was presenting the accepted wisdom that until recently representations of Indigenous Australia have been insubstantial. This view was reasserted by Brian McFarlane in 2003, when he described Indigenous representation in Australian films before the 1970s as limited and summed up their image as exotics and nature-oriented counterpoints to "civilised" society.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p. 149

²¹⁵ Smith, *The Historian and Film*, p. 7

²¹⁶ Brian McFarlane, "Back Tracking: Brian McFarlane Considers Racial Matters and Their Historical Representation in Recent Australian Cinema", *Meanjin*, March 2003, vol. 62, p. 59

Like Maynard, Molloy and Pike before him, Krausz likened the characterisation of Indigenous Australians to Native Americans in American silent films without analysis. The only exception in terms of African Americans is found in a brief aside from Bruce Molloy.²¹⁷ None of the scholarship outlined above really addressed important comparisons between depictions of Indigenous Australians and African Americans. I argue that for Australian silent filmmakers Hollywood's African American characterisations were as influential as its Native American ones.

Three points emerge from this literature review. First, Indigenous characterisation in the period 1906 to 1950 has been neglected. Second, general comparisons have been repeatedly made between Indigenous Australians and Native Americans – comparisons asserted but not analysed. Third, valuable comparisons that could be made between characterisations of Indigenous Australians and African Americans have been ignored.

The invention of Aboriginality

Silent films have played a significant and as yet unacknowledged role in the construction of Australian history in general, and in the invention of national identity and Aboriginality in particular. The scholarship addressing the invention and representation of Aboriginality is significant and growing.²¹⁸ Over the last two

²¹⁷ Molloy, *Before the Interval*, p. 124

²¹⁸ Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008); Langton, "Well, I Heard It on the Radio and Saw It on the Television ..."; Mudrooroo, *Us Mob: History, Culture, Struggle: An Introduction to Indigenous Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1995); Bain Attwood (ed.), *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996); Bain

decades there has been increased interest in how non-indigenous Australia, in Catriona Elder's words, has formed ideas of Australia and Aboriginality "through decades of storytelling, myth-making, news reporting, academic pontificating, cinema production and watching".²¹⁹ This remainder of this chapter will locate the invention of silent cinematic characterisations of Indigenous Australians within that discourse.

It is important at this stage to re-affirm that this study is about cinematic representations of Indigenous Australia, not about the Indigenous community itself. Unlike the United States, however, where African Americans and Native Americans played a part in film production, our cinematic constructions of Aboriginality have been overwhelmingly dominated by the non-Indigenous community.²²⁰ The result is that Australia's cinematic representation of

Attwood and Andrew Markus, "(The) 1967 (Referendum) and All That: Narrative and Myth, Aborigines and Australia", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 1998, vol. 29, no. 111, pp. 267–90; Kosmas Tsokhas, "Romanticism, Aboriginality and National Identity: The Poetry and Prose of Mary Gilmore", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 1998, vol. 29, no. 111, pp. 230–48; Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002); Ann Curthoys, "Mythologies", in Richard Nile (ed.), *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St. Lucia, 2000); Russell, *Savage Imaginings*; Adam Jamrozik, *The Chains of Colonial Inheritance: Searching for Identity in a Subservient Nation* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004); Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines Under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995); Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History*; Bart Ziino, "Review Essay: Insiders, Outsiders, and Shared Stories", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2008, vol. 39, no. 3, pp.373–380 ; Catherine De Lorenzo, "Confronting amnesia: Aboriginality and public space", *Visual Studies*, October 2005, vol. 20, no. 2, pp.62–71 ; Robert Clarke, "Star traveller: celebrity. Aboriginality and Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* (1987)" *Postcolonial Studies*, June 2009, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 229–246; Catriona Elder, "Colonialism and Indigenous dispossession in *Against the Wind*", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, June 2010, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 409 – 420

²¹⁹ Elder, *Being Australian*, p. 3

²²⁰ Patrick McGilligan, *The Great and Only Oscar Micheaux: The Life of America's First Black Filmmaker* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Bell Hooks, "Micheaux: Creating Blackness", *Black*

Indigenous Australia needs, as noted above, to be considered as a manifestation of Aboriginalism.²²¹ Australian films are historical texts, but they are above all, non-Indigenous texts. Stephen Muecke highlighted the limitations of written historical texts, arguing that they failed to provide an Indigenous sense of the historical experience and as a result lost much of the truth of that experience.²²²

The study of the invention of Aboriginality is a multi-disciplinary one that embraces Australian history, Aboriginal studies, cultural studies, anthropology, colonial and post-colonial studies, literature and art, not to mention the study of race and the creation of whiteness. The perspectives offered by this scholarship will be linked to the silent cinematic characterisations of Indigenous Australians. Although, as I will show, Indigenous Australian representation has been explored in each of these fields with increasing insight, film generally, and silent film specifically, has not featured prominently in any of these discussions. A good example of this omission can be seen in Catriona Elder's limited treatment of film in her otherwise thought-provoking analysis of the narratives of Australian identity. Elder does refer to film, but her earliest example is the 1971 film *Walkabout*. Her brief discussion of Indigenous representation in feature films

American Literature Forum, Summer 91, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 351–61; Gerald R. Butters Jr, "Portrayals of Black Masculinity in Oscar Micheaux's *The Homesteader*", *Literature Film Quarterly*, 2000, vol. 28, no. 1; pp. 54–60; Laura Quinn, "Writing Himself Into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Films and His Audiences", *Film Criticism*, Spring 2003, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 53–59; Richard Grupenhoff, "Oscar Micheaux: The Great and Only: The Life of America's First Black Filmmaker", *Film Quarterly*, Fall 2010, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 77–78; Dan Flory, "Race, Rationality, and Melodrama: Aesthetic Response and the Case of Oscar Micheaux", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Fall 2005, vol. 63, no. 4, pp. 327–38

²²¹ Bain Attwood and John Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines* (Bundoora: La Trobe University Press, 1992), p. ii

²²² Stephen Muecke, *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1992), p. 17

reinforces the validity of my argument that our understanding of these narratives can be enriched by a consideration of the silent era. Elder argued that, “increasingly in more recent Australian films Indigenous men have been represented in a new way – the tracker”.²²³ The tracker character is not new; as I indicated, it dates from 1907. Elder is correct, in as much as, the cinematic tracker has changed, but the character’s purpose is not new. The trackers in the films Elder discusses, such as *One Night the Moon* (2001) and *The Tracker* (2002), can be seen, according to Elder, as “the cinematic audience’s guide in moving towards reconciliation”, but, as I will show through the use of my typology, the twenty-first century trackers shared with their silent-era predecessors a common purpose.²²⁴ The trackers that Elder cites, as with those in silent films, were invented to serve the fashion of the preferred non-Indigenous versions of Aboriginality and the national story. Rather than simply labelling these characters as new, this thesis will undertake a close study of the silent era to bring out how these characterisations originally came about and how they have developed over time.

Since the rise of Aboriginal history and post-colonialism in the 1980s, there has been considerable scholarly discussion of the links between nationalism, Australian identity, and Aboriginality or the Indigenous Australian ‘Other’. As noted earlier, in his 2005 book *Conquest* David Day argued that a new concept was needed to assess the process described as colonisation. He suggested that

²²³ Muecke, *Textual Spaces*, p. 156 (my emphasis)

²²⁴ *ibid.*

we adopt “the concept of supplanting societies”.²²⁵ The supplanting society needs to develop a cultural affinity with the new land. In Day’s words, “[n]ew stories must be told and songs sung to invest the invaders with a deep sense of belonging to the land.”²²⁶ Australian feature films from the silent era to the twenty-first century are a key element in this process, and Indigenous Australian characterisation has been influenced by a non-Indigenous need for legitimacy.

This desire for legitimacy was sustained, according to Hodge and Mishra, by a “foundation myth” that featured stories of the suffering and achievements of non-Indigenous pioneers.²²⁷ Bain Attwood asserted that Australia used the invention of Aboriginality “to realise a distinctive sense of nationality” by articulating “Aboriginality in terms of apparent antiquity, primordality and primitivism”.²²⁸ Indigenous characterisation was designed, therefore, as a way of protecting both non-Indigenous foundation and pioneer myths and the preferred versions of Australian history and identity. As I will show in this thesis, the Indigenous Australian silent cinematic cast of character types was invented as part of this process.

In the 1980s anthropologist Jeremy R. Beckett applied the thinking of Benedict Anderson to the Australian situation and pointed out that conceptions of

²²⁵ David Day, *Conquest: A New History of the Modern World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 9; Richard J. Smith, “Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others – By David Day”, *Historian*, Fall 2011, vol. 73, no. 3

²²⁶ Day, *Conquest*, p. 11

²²⁷ Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p. 26

²²⁸ Bain Attwood, “Unsettling Pasts: Reconciliation and History in Settler Australia”, *Postcolonial Studies*, August 2005, vol. 8, no. 3, p. 245

Australian nationalism and Aboriginality were cultural constructions.²²⁹ While authentic, they remained “the products of human imagination”.²³⁰ Bain Attwood extended this argument when he suggested that a sense of national identity is “both imagined and constructed” and that it is created “by human imagination and actions”.²³¹ Elsewhere Attwood argued that national and racial identities are “the result of images which circulate in print and other media and come to be collectively held”.²³² Following this line of argument it is important to remember that film is one of the most pervasive and influential forces operating in the realm of public imagination and iconography.²³³

In terms of the silent era in Australia, the film historian John Tulloch, writing about Australian narrative filmmaking between 1919 and 1929, identified the processes addressed by Beckett and Attwood and noted that they reflected the sentiments of emerging Australian nationalism and populism. As I argue in this thesis, silent Indigenous Australian characters were invented as primitive and childlike binaries to contrast with the concepts of civilisation and progress that were imagined to be synonymous with the newly made Australian nation.²³⁴

²²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006)

²³⁰ Jeremy R. Beckett (ed.), *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies, 1994), p. 2

²³¹ Attwood and Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*; Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*; Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History*; Bain Attwood, *Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History* (Carlton, Vic.: The Mieyungah Press, 2009)

²³² Attwood (ed.), *In the Age of Mabo*, p. xxiii

²³³ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 2

²³⁴ Tulloch, *Legends on the Screen*, p. 18; Eric Reade *A Pictorial History of Silent Films 1896–1929* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1970); Eric Reade, *History and Heartburn: The Saga of Australian Film 1896–1978* (Sydney: Harper and Row, 1979); Josephine May, “A Field of Desire: Versions of Education in Selected Australian Silent Films”, *Paedagogica Historica* October, 2010,

Although the invention of Aboriginality was part of the Australian silent cinematic narrative of national identity, according to Henry Reynolds, consideration of Aboriginality was not a feature of academic discourse. Reynolds cites the example of Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958), where the outback was described as providing the crucible of a distinctive Australian national character.²³⁵ Reynolds notes, however, that for Ward "it was an outback almost, but not completely, devoid of Aborigines".²³⁶ By contrast, and contrary to the accepted wisdom, the Australian silent cinematic landscape was not devoid of Indigenous Australians.²³⁷ During the 24 years of the silent era, between 1906 and 1930, 30 Australian feature films were made with Indigenous characters, stories or themes.²³⁸ However, these films did select their cast of Indigenous characters to match the sentiments of the time. Such sentiments are evident in a reading of Ernest Scott's *A Short History of Australia*, first published in 1916.²³⁹ According to Scott, the story began with "a blank space on the map", and the processes of settlement and civilisation were facilitated by the fact that

vol. 46, no. 5, pp. 623–37; Ina Bertrand and William D. Routt, "The First Long Picture in the World: The Story of the Kelly Gang in Australian Film History", *Moving Image*, 2007, no. 8, pp. 3–19; David Headon, "Significant Silents: Sporting Australia on Film, 1896–1930", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Summer 99, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 115–27

²³⁵ Ward, *The Australian Legend*

²³⁶ Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?*, p. 129; Ronald Lawson, "Towards Demythologizing the 'Australian Legend': Turner's Frontier Thesis and the Australian Experience", *Journal of Social History*, Summer 80, vol. 13, no. 4

²³⁷ Karen Jennings, "Aboriginality in Film", in Bruce McFarlane, Geoff Mayer, Ina Bertrand (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Film* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999); Shane Crilly, "Reading Aboriginalities in Australian Cinema: from *Jedda* to *Dead Heart*", *Screen Education*, Winter 2001, no. 26/27; Peter Krausz, "Screening Indigenous Australia: An Overview of Aboriginal Representation on Film", *Australian Screen Education*, Spring 2003

²³⁸ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 2

²³⁹ Scott's book went into six editions and was still in use in the 1940s.

Indigenous Australians “were not an organized warlike people”.²⁴⁰ This thinking was mirrored in the cinematic characterisation that depicted Indigenous Australians as helpers and excluded an individualised warrior from the cast of Indigenous characters.

In 1994 Kevin Keefe in 1988 and Gillian Cowlshaw offered valuable insights into some of the ways in which versions of Aboriginality have been invented.²⁴¹ Keefe and Cowlshaw provided social, political and anthropological perspectives and reinforced the point that Aboriginality was inseparable from relationships that evolved, individually and collectively, between Australia’s Indigenous cultures and the dominant supplanting/settler culture. Keefe claimed that Aboriginality was best understood by applying the concepts of persistence and resistance. He defined “Aboriginality – as – persistence” as the bid by the Indigenous community to preserve and maintain the unique aspects of Indigenous identity.²⁴² This meant endeavouring to continue the practices that originated in traditional culture. Keefe argued that “Aboriginality – as – resistance” was a more dynamic concept and that it included a set of practices that arose from interaction with the supplanting/settler culture.²⁴³ He asserted that persistence and resistance were both parts of what could at times be the same

²⁴⁰ Ernest Scott, *A Short History of Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. v, 185

²⁴¹ Kevin Keefe, “Aboriginality: Resistance and Persistence”, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1988, no. 1, p. 68; David Hollinsworth, “‘My Island Home’: Riot and Resistance in Media Representations of Aboriginality”, *Social Alternatives*, 2005, First Quarter, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 116–20; Gillian Cowlshaw, “The Materials of Identity Construction”, in J.R. Beckett (ed.) *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality* (Canberra, 1994), p. 87

²⁴² Keefe, “Aboriginality: Resistance and Persistence”, p. 68

²⁴³ *ibid.*

'contradictory unity', with either one dominating depending upon the social and political situation.²⁴⁴

Keefe used the famous Indigenous historical figures Pemulwuy and Bennelong "as markers of identity", or as examples of persistence and resistance respectively.²⁴⁵ In 1790 Pemulwuy was famously held responsible for spearing to death John McEntire, Governor Arthur Phillip's gamekeeper, and then between 1792 and 1802 he led raids against outlying settlements across what is now western Sydney from the Georges River in the south to the Hawkesbury River in the north.²⁴⁶ Bennelong was approximately the same age as Pemulwuy. In 1789 he was one of three Indigenous Australian men kidnapped on Governor Phillip's orders.²⁴⁷ Until recently the general portrait of Bennelong was as a helper, an Indigenous Australian willing to assimilate and embrace the values of the supplanting society.²⁴⁸

More recent historical scholarship, however, offers a different portrait of Bennelong, suggesting that he in fact conspired to have Governor Phillip speared as a form of payback for his original abduction.²⁴⁹ On this view, Bennelong is presented as a consummate political operator. This portrait emphasises the complexity of the concept of Aboriginality.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 72

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 70

²⁴⁶ J.L. Kohen, *The Darug and Their Neighbours* (Sydney: Blacktown and District Historical Society, 1993); Inga Clendinnen *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003); Brendan Manley, "Where is Pemulwuy?", *Military History*, May 2010, vol. 27, no. 1, p. 11

²⁴⁷ The other two were Colbee and Arabanoo.

²⁴⁸ Kate Fullagar, "'Savages that are among Us': Mai, Bennelong, and British Imperial Culture, 1774–1795", *The Eighteenth Century*, Fall 2008, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 211–37

²⁴⁹ Keith Vincent Smith, *Bennelong* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 2001); Inga Clendinnen, "Spearing the Governor", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 157–75

The changing cinematic depictions of Indigenous Australian characters can be explored in terms of Keefe's persistence and resistance markers. As I will show, the preferred silent cinematic marker of Indigenous identity was conciliatory, reflected in the popularity of the Tracker character and in the omission of an individualised Indigenous warrior character.

When the anthropological perspective offered by Gillian Cowlshaw is added to Keefe's ideas about Aboriginality, the foundation emerges for an analytical model able to address the changing characterisations of Indigenous Australians in film. Cowlshaw wrote about Aboriginality as the manifestation of an "oppositional culture".²⁵⁰ She argued that this was a strategy adopted by powerless groups "to create their own arena of dignity".²⁵¹ As was the case with some of Keefe's concepts, Cowlshaw's idea of an oppositional culture, like the character of the individualised Indigenous warrior did not appear in film until the sound era. This belated appearance will be addressed more closely in chapter four. Nevertheless, both the absence of this cinematic characterisation in the silent era and the timing of its eventual appearance in the sound era are telling.

In 1993 Marcia Langton produced what she described as an "essay about the politics of representation".²⁵² Langton addressed cinematic texts and argued that Australian films were marked by a history of racist, distorted and often offensive representations of Indigenous Australians.²⁵³ She addressed the subjective, volatile and contentious nature of Aboriginality and argued that it is the product of

²⁵⁰ Cowlshaw, "The Materials of Identity Construction", p. 97

²⁵¹ *ibid.*

²⁵² Langton, *"Well, I Heard It on the Radio and Saw It on the Television..."*, p. 7

²⁵³ *ibid.*, pp. 7, 24

“intercultural dialogue” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.²⁵⁴

Significantly for a history of Indigenous representation in films, Langton asserted that it was through films, video and television “that most Australians ‘know’ about Aboriginal people”.²⁵⁵ Each of the issues raised by Langton is important in its own right and will be used to better understand and interpret Indigenous characterisations in silent films.²⁵⁶

The terms post-colonial or anti-colonial are often favoured in the literature addressing representations of Indigenous Australia, but according to Jim Davidson these terms are inappropriate. Davidson argued, first in 1979 and then more recently in 2005, that “for Aborigines, there cannot be much that is ‘post’ about colonialism as they have experienced it in Australia”.²⁵⁷

For Indigenous Australians the end of British rule did not amount to decolonisation, and so Davidson offers the alternative concept of “de-dominionisation”.²⁵⁸ The concept is useful on two levels: first, it distinguishes between the post-colonial experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians; second, it sharpens and refines one of the conceptual tools that can be employed to specifically consider the Australian situation. Finally, consideration of feature films in the light of Davidson’s idea of de-dominionisation acknowledges that, even though there has been significant progress and change, there is still a degree of continuity between the so-called colonial and post-colonial forms of cinematic discourse. The existing literature has focused almost

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 31

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 33

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 31

²⁵⁷ Davidson, “De-Dominionisation Revisited”, p. 109

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*

exclusively on aspects of change, and although this is, in many ways, a valid conclusion, a complete history exposes aspects of continuity in addition to the contrasts that dominate the existing literature.

The relationships between non-Indigenous Australians and Britain had an influence on the characterisation of Indigenous Australians, most notably in terms of masculinity.²⁵⁹ Davidson's refinement offers a valuable mechanism with which to compare and contrast the invention of Indigenous Australians and other first peoples, generally and in terms of masculinity. It is especially useful when employed in conjunction with David Cannadine's idea of ornamentalism. According to Cannadine, the British Empire was a "vehicle for the extension of British social perceptions, to ends of the world – and back again".²⁶⁰ In other words, the British applied ideas about social ranking and hierarchy that were part of the way they understood their own society to the Indigenous people of the Empire.²⁶¹ The history of Indigenous characterisation in Australian silent feature films offers repeated examples of ornamentalism. It is particularly apparent in the invention of the Tracker who is a helper, akin to a servant, and the 'Wild Blacks', who often have characters identified in the intertitles as "Kings and Queens". The servant/helper characterisation and the ornamentalist association with Britain

²⁵⁹ Marilyn Lake, "On Being a White Man in Australia c. 1900", in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds.), *Cultural History in Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 111; Shino Konishi, "'Wanton With Plenty': Questioning Ethno-historical Constructions of Sexual Savagery in Aboriginal Societies, 1788–1803", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2008, vol. 39, no. 3, p. 356–73; Shino Konishi, "The four fathers of *Australia*: Baz Luhrmann's depiction of Aboriginal history and paternity in the Northern Territory", *History Australia*, April 2011, vol. 8, no 1, pp. 23–41

²⁶⁰ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2002) p. xix

²⁶¹ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. xix

were evident in John Gavin's convict melodrama *Assigned to His Wife* (1911).²⁶² Although the film has not survived, we know the story line involved an Indigenous Australia Tracker character who befriends the non-Indigenous hero, to all intents and purposes becoming his unpaid servant. When the non-Indigenous hero returns to Britain, the Indigenous character goes with him. The master-servant relationship is therefore clearly evident. As I will show in detail in the chapters on the Tracker, the Comic Black and the Wild Black, there are also clear examples of British notions of hierarchy evident in films that have survived, such as *Robbery Under Arms* (1920), *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928), *Trooper O'Brien* (1928) and *The Birth of White Australia* (1928). Both ornamentalism and de-dominionisation can therefore be usefully considered in conjunction with the concept of Aboriginalism.

According to Bain Attwood, Aboriginalism sees Indigenous Australians "made into an object of knowledge over which European Australians, as the dispensers of truth about their needs and requirements, gain control".²⁶³ As such, Aboriginalism extends beyond academic discourse to include "other sources of intellectual discourse".²⁶⁴ Attwood specifically mentions museums but I will add a consideration of silent film, clearly a realm where Indigenous Australians became not just the object but the product of non-Indigenous imagination.

My argument about the neglected continuities between the silent era and more contemporary characterisations of Indigenous Australia and Australian national identity becomes clearer when silent film is included in the argument.

²⁶² Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film*, p. 37

²⁶³ Attwood and Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, p. ii

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*

This approach can serve to remedy, to a degree, Attwood's complaint that "too few settler histories show satisfactorily how the colonial past is still present".²⁶⁵ When Attwood made this observation, he also acknowledged the notion of "subaltern pasts", where minority pasts such as those of Australia's Indigenous population were treated as instances of human immaturity.²⁶⁶ These ideas can and will be used here to analyse the silent cinematic Indigenous characterisations evident in the invention of the child-like, dependent Comic Blacks. The emasculation of colonised Indigenous males was another consequence of their status as a subject minority with a subaltern past.²⁶⁷ This emasculation will be specifically addressed in detail in chapter four, The Absences. Despite significant borrowing from Hollywood, the absence, noted earlier, of an individualised Indigenous Australian male warrior character in the silent era, a character type popular in depictions of Native Americans in American silent cinema, highlights one of the distinctive features of Australia silent film. When this absence is combined with the omission of any Indigenous Australian characters posing a sexual menace to white womanhood, the emasculation of Indigenous Australian males becomes even more obvious. In Australian silent cinema, even though

²⁶⁵ Bain Attwood, "Unsettling Pasts", p. 248

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 243, 248; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts", *Postcolonial Studies*, April 98, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 15–29 ; Gunja Sengupta, "Elites, Subalterns and American Identities: A Case Study of African-American Benevolence", *American Historical Review*, October 2004, vol. 109, no. 4, pp. 104–39; Joanne Meyerowitz, "Subaltern History Makers and Alternative Constructions of the Past: An Introduction", *Journal of American History*, March 2003, vol. 89, no. 4, pp. 1366–67; A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahan Books, 2008)

²⁶⁷ Mrinalini Sinha, "Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of Colonial India", *Gender & History*, November 1999, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 445–61

Chinese males were characterised as posing such a sexual menace, Indigenous Australian males were not.²⁶⁸

It is difficult to consider cinematic characterisation of Indigenous Australians without addressing the issue in the wider context of the construction of whiteness.²⁶⁹ The construction of whiteness is linked directly to how non-whites, and hence Indigenous Australians, were characterised. Implicit in the idea of whiteness is the assumed superiority of whites.²⁷⁰ That superiority is manifest in the films of Australia's silent era through the 'pioneer myth', whereby non-Indigenous Australians are characterised as courageous, as leaders and as people with initiative. Typical of the construction of whiteness, non-Indigenous Australians are individualised and not all of them are depicted as good or courageous. This is where the implications of whiteness become clear in the contrasting silent cinematic characterisations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Tame Blacks, the Trackers and helpers, discussed in detail in

²⁶⁸ The most graphic example of this characterisation is evident in surviving footage from *The Birth of White Australia* (1928).

²⁶⁹ Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1999); Daniel Bernardi (ed.), *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Anne Brewster, "Indigenous Sovereignty and the Crisis of Whiteness in Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*", *Australian Literary Studies*, November 2010, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 85–100; Adriana Valdez Young, "Honorary Whiteness", *Asian Ethnicity*, June 2009, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 177–85; Sanjay Sharma, "Crash – Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Whiteness?", *Critical Studies*, July 2010, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 533–553; Jay Watson, "Introduction: Situating Whiteness in Faulkner Studies, Situating Faulkner in Whiteness Studies", *The Faulkner Journal*, Fall 2006/Spring 2007 vol. 22, no. 1/2, pp. 3–23; Kamp, "Formative Geographies of Belonging in White Australia: Constructing the National Self and Other in Parliamentary Debate, 1901, pp. 411–26

²⁷⁰ Dyer, *White*, p. 70; Bernardi (ed.), *The Birth of Whiteness*, p. 4

chapter one, are collectively characterised positively.²⁷¹ This lack of individualisation becomes even more obvious when the Tame Blacks, including the child-like Comic Blacks, who are the focus of chapter two, are contrasted with the Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks (considered in detail in chapter three). The silent cinematic Wild Blacks are almost always nameless and completely without individuality.

Cinematic notions of whiteness unique to Australia are also evident in the thinking behind the overall characterisation of Indigenous Australians that led to the exclusion from the silent cast of either the individualised Indigenous warrior or the Indigenous Australian romantic heroine. Although Daniel Bernardi argued that the birth of cinema coincided with the emergence of ideas that we now designate as whiteness, the ways this whiteness manifested itself in early American and Australian cinema differed greatly. Although Bernardi discussed whiteness in terms of American silent films, to date the concept has not been integrated into the discussion of Australia's silent films.

²⁷¹ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film*, p. 593

Chapter One

The Tracker

The Indigenous Australian trackers and guides, the famed black trackers of Australian folklore, were among the earliest, most popular and enduring of all the Indigenous Australian film characters. This chapter will trace the origins of the character I will call 'the Tracker' and reflect on the links between the Tracker the silent era (1906–30) and more recent versions of the type. I will begin with a close examination of the surviving Australian silent films that feature this character, then analyse the combination of elements that contributed to the process of its invention. Those elements are, first, the sentiments expressed about the Indigenous Australian Tracker in historical accounts and, second, the cinematic influences from the United States.

In Australian silent films, the Tracker was always a male devoted to non-Indigenous authority figures. He displayed an innate affinity with the bush in his role as a tracker, guide and ally. As a helper, he was admired for his loyalty to members of the settler society. The benign characterisation of the Tracker and his willing subordination belied the realities of the European invasion. Hence the characterisation of the Tracker in silent films reflected Australia's frontier myth.¹

Analysis of the Tracker in cinema supports the key arguments of this thesis: the neglect of the silent era, the nature and extent of American influences,

¹ Marcia Langton, "Out from the Shadows", *Meanjin*, 2006, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 55–64

and the impact of the construction of whiteness on Indigenous cinematic characterisation.

This history is not one of real-life trackers, but rather it is about cinematic masks and the creation of a distinctive, stylised type.² In the case of the Tracker, it was the product, according to Marcia Langton, of fact and myth linked to the invention of Aboriginality. Langton also claimed that the Tracker “has become a familiar figure in the tableaux of nation-building”.³ In other words, the invention of the Tracker character and all of the other Indigenous Australian silent film character types that I identified are in reality ‘mirrors’. According to Inga Clendinnen, in theory, these mirrors offer members of the non-Indigenous community the opportunity “to know ourselves more exactly, and more critically”.⁴ Langton’s assertion about the status of the Tracker in the national story and the remarkable durability of the character type in films reinforces the importance of examining the original invention of the type in the silent era.

Although they were rarely individually acknowledged, historically, Indigenous Australian guides and trackers supported many of the great inland expeditions between 1830 and 1900.⁵ In Australian iconography, they are

² Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1999), p. 17

³ Langton, “Out from the Shadows”, pp. 55, 58

⁴ Inga Clendinnen, *True Stories: Boyer Lectures 1999* (Sydney: Text Publishing, 1999), p. 5

⁵ Henry Reynolds, *Black Pioneers: How Aboriginal and Islander People Helped Build Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000), p. 38

celebrated for finding non-Indigenous Australians lost in the bush.⁶ They also acted on behalf of colonial authorities in pursuit of escaped convicts and other criminals. In the historical sense, the term 'black tracker' is imprecise and could refer to anyone who applied their tracking or bush skills to assist the newcomers.⁷

The role of Indigenous trackers as members of colonial police forces on the frontier is more contentious. Langton has argued that "modern usage of the term 'black tracker' by Aboriginal people as a term of derision derives from the oral history transmitted to them by their elders, and the obvious conflation of the tracker and the Native Mounted Police in the minds of people who lived on the frontier".⁸

The most striking factor to emerge from a close study of the surviving footage of Australian silent films featuring the Tracker is the primacy of the influence of Hollywood's depiction of African American rather than Native American characters. Although not all of the films survive, and we are left with only fragments and reviews, there were at least 13 feature films made in Australia between 1906 and 1928 that featured the Tracker character. Starting with *Robbery Under Arms*, produced in 1907 by Charles MacMahon's company Exquisite Pictures, all of the Tracker characters are depicted as both subordinate

⁶ Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

⁷ Pat Lowe, *Hunters and Trackers of the Australian Desert* (Dural: Rosenberg Publishing, 2002), p. 83

⁸ Langton, "Out of the Shadows", p. 56

and subservient.⁹ In appearance, the Tracker lacked sophistication in manner and dress, and this distinguished him from the non-Indigenous characters. Reflecting also both the minstrel tradition and the silent cinematic characterisations of African Americans, the Tracker was commonly played by non-Indigenous actors in 'blackface'.¹⁰

Many of the films featuring the Tracker were part of the bushranging genre. Starting in 1907 with the original film version of *Robbery Under Arms* up to Beaumont Smith's *The Gentleman Bushranger*, produced in 1921, all the Trackers were loyal friends to the white hero. The language of many of the intertitles used to describe these characters was typical of the demeaning lexicon of the American South that featured in popular minstrel shows and American silent films of the period. Mimicking the American practice, the term 'boy' was repeatedly used to describe an Indigenous Australian male of any age.

The inspiration for the 1907 film *Robbery Under Arms* came from Rolf Boldrewood's novel of the same name, published in 1888. The novel proved popular and was published during a period when, according to Philip Jones, Australians learnt to accept many national symbols and historical myths fundamental to an emerging national identity.¹¹ Both the novel and the

⁹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343344

¹⁰ The exceptions were Sandy McVea in *The Enemy Within* (1918), the Police Tracker Tommie in *the Tenth Straw* (1926) and the two Indigenous Police Troopers in the *Romance of Runnibede* (1928).

¹¹ Philip Jones, "Their Boomerang Won't Come Back: Aborigines, Artefacts and Advertising Australia", *Adelaide Review*, February 1992, pp. 16–18

subsequent film versions presented the story of the Marston brothers, adventurous young men drawn into bushranging. The hero was Captain Starlight, a gentleman bushranger. An Indigenous character, Warrigal, had a minor part as Starlight's devoted companion. Charles MacMahon's 1907 version ran for a month after its premiere in Melbourne and Sydney and was so popular that it was often revived.¹²

Another version of the Tracker appeared in *The Assigned Servant* (1911). The film was produced by Crick and Cooper, a company that would later become Australian Photo-Play, and starred John Gavin. Gavin played Ralph Frawley, a bushranger who, during a dramatic fight with the police, "is saved by an Aboriginal friend".¹³ In the same year, Gavin formed his own production company to make *Assigned to His Wife*, the story of a wrongly accused convict, Jack Throsby (John Gavin), and his lover, Bess Wilmot (Agnes Gavin). When Jack is transported to Van Diemen's Land, Bess follows.

The film featured an Indigenous character Yacka (A. Delaware), who befriends Jack. At the film's climax, Yacka rescues Jack. When evidence comes to light proving Jack's innocence, Jack, Bess and Yacka all return to Britain. The return – part of the supposed happy ending – is significant because it assumes the primacy of the non-Indigenous view of 'home'. Yacka, the Tracker, is

¹² Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 8; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343344

¹³ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 17; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343337

therefore characterised as belonging more properly to the film's non-Indigenous characters than to his Australian home. This characterisation also assumes a 'master/servant', or even 'master/slave', relationship, typical of the British social hierarchies identified by David Cannadine in his discussions of Ornamentalism.¹⁴

Also in 1911, Pathé Frères produced *The Squatter's Son*. The film premiered at Melbourne's Bijou Theatre in April 1911. Although surviving information about the film is sparse, Pike and Cooper point out that the plot focused on pioneers and bushrangers and that in one scene the hero is aided by an obedient "Black boy".¹⁵ The following year the Australian Photo-Play company offered audiences *Cooee and the Echo*. The film premiered with a three-day season at Waddington's Grand Theatre in Sydney in March 1912. Based on a play by E.W. O'Sullivan, the film's plot dwells the efforts of a young miner to avenge the death of his brother. The film has an Indigenous character, played by Charles Woods in blackface, who at the climax of the film rescues the hero. A reading of the play offers a contrast with the film. The silent film was limited by the need for short intertitles and visual action, by contrast the play provided more scope to develop ideas and in one speech even acknowledges that the

¹⁴ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism; How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2002) pp. 27–28; David Cannadine, "Ornamentalism", *History Today*, May 2001, vol. 51, no. 5, pp. 40–41

¹⁵ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 17

newcomers have taken Indigenous land. This contrast reinforces the reliance of silent filmmakers on character types and less nuanced themes.¹⁶

Woods was an actor/producer who in 1913 again appeared in blackface as an Indigenous character Gee-bung in his Australian Films production of *The Bondage of the Bush*, which first screened in Sydney at the Victoria Theatre in August 1913. We know little of the plot, but according to Pike and Cooper a review in the *Sydney Sun* on 12 November 1912 listed all elements typical of the bush melodrama, including “the faithful black boy”.¹⁷

The durability of the characterisation of the Tracker as a friend was reflected in the use of the type by Beaumont Smith in *The Gentleman Bushranger* (1921).¹⁸ The bushranger hero is a settler falsely accused of murdering a ship’s captain en route to Australia. He escapes to the bush with the aid of a ‘black boy’.¹⁹ The film premiered in Sydney at the Crystal Palace in March 1921 and proved to be very profitable.²⁰ Smith had only just returned from Hollywood. On his return, he gave an interview to a staff reporter for *The Picture Show* in which he said that while he was in the United States, he had visited “all the big American studios” and “studied the latest methods in picture making”.²¹ Smith’s

¹⁶ Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829–1929*, (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 199–201

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 39

¹⁸ *The Picture Show*, 1 March 1922 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 40; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 556048

¹⁹ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 111

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *The Picture Show*, 1 May 1920 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 47

comments reinforce the direct influence of American filmmaking on Australian cinema. Aside from his references to the American studios, Smith emphasised the fact that he held the film rights to the iconic Australian literary works of both Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson. His views therefore reflected the nature of the trans-Pacific amalgam that was Australian silent film production.

Each of the key aspects of the characterisation of the Tracker are reinforced by a close study of the silent films featuring this type that survive more or less intact in the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra. They include *The Enemy Within* (1918), *Robbery Under Arms* (1920), *The Tenth Straw* (1926), *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) and *Trooper O'Brien* (1928). I will look at each in turn.

***The Enemy Within* (1918)**

Sixty minutes of *The Enemy Within* survives. The film, produced by Franklin Barrett, premiered at The Strand theatre in Sydney in March 1918; it was the story of German spies in Australia, told within the context of the Great War.²² Snowy Baker, a famous athlete who would go on to live and work in Hollywood, used all his robust physicality in his role as Jack Airlee, a special agent for the Secret Service. The plot was thin, and largely designed to allow Snowy to give an exhibition of what Richard Dyer called “white muscle” as he dives, swims and

²² Greg Growden, *The Snowy Baker Story* (Milsons Point: Random House Australia, 2003), p. 249; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 761411

leaps from moving cars.²³ The film did feature an Indigenous actor playing an Indigenous character. Sandy McVea, a local middleweight boxer, played the part of Jimmy Cook. The character was introduced by an intertitle which read: “Jimmy Cook, Aboriginal, a black tracker by instinct, and a detective by training, is a valuable assistant in the Special Service”. In an early establishing scene, Jimmy is seen in an outer office; the intertitle that follows reads: “Jimmy, always an ardent admirer of ‘the Boss’, attaches himself to him, much to the disgust of Glassop”.

Glassop (Gerald Harcourt) was Jack Airlee’s manservant. A scene follows with Jimmy asleep, in his work suit, on Airlee’s sofa. There is a comic moment when Glassop, dressed in the formal attire of a butler, enters the room, picks up Jimmy’s boots with disdain and throws them outside into the corridor. The butler then tips Jimmy off the sofa and orders him outside as he straightens the sofa’s cushions. The fact that Jimmy Cook is a detective and a member of the “Special Service” is of less consequence than his racial status as an Indigenous Australian. The racial hierarchies are obvious. Jack Airlee then emerges from his bedroom, and Jimmy explains where he has been sleeping. Jack gives Jimmy a patronising pat on the head, and Jimmy goes out into the corridor to retrieve his boots. He then sits on the floor to put his boots on as Jack begins his morning exercises. The degree of attachment and admiration referred to in the intertitle is reflected in the fact that it is a Sunday morning: Jimmy’s life and world appear to be his job and the Boss.

²³ Richard Dyer, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 146



Figure 1: Jimmy asleep on the Boss's sofa from *The Enemy Within* (1918). The Indigenous character, like the stuffed kangaroo in the background, was intended to give the film a distinctively Australian quality, which it was hoped would set it apart and appeal to an international audience. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

In the next scene, Jimmy re-enters the room and stands by, watching Jack begin his morning exercises, first on the rowing machine and then using a small punching bag. As Jack, clad all in white, punches the bag in the foreground, Jimmy can be seen in the background, in his crumpled suit, mimicking the Boss by pretending to punch an imaginary bag. This is an early version of Richard Dyer's idea of masculine whiteness.²⁴ Sandy McVea had the physique of an athlete – he was in fact a professional boxer – but it is not obvious, his physique hidden by an ill-fitting suit. In this scene, Jimmy's Aboriginality is characterised in comic terms, while throughout the rest of the film the stereotype of the Tracker as loyal friend and helper dominates. The scene, with Snowy's obvious flexing of his famous white muscles, indicates just how the invention of Aboriginality and whiteness are linked. Here Jack Airlee's physique is contrasted with Jimmy's body in his baggy suit. The point, underscored by another intertitle, is that Jack epitomises the Greek ideal of mind and body. The scene uses Jimmy as a point

²⁴ Dyer, *White* p. 145

of contrast to provide an “affirmation of the white male body”, while the rest of the film emphasises Jack Airlee’s superiority in terms of “spirit and enterprise”.²⁵



Figure 2: Jimmy mimics the Boss and provides a point of contrast for white muscle. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

During the remaining scenes from the film, some of which are damaged, Jimmy is primarily portrayed in the role of an urban Tracker. He notices Warne (Billy Ryan), an enemy agent, in the street, and follows him. Throughout the film Jimmy either acts under the direct supervision and orders of ‘The Boss’ or, when he is alone, as a scout who investigates, shadows and reports back. Following the kidnapping, by the enemy agents, of Jack’s girlfriend, Jimmy is seen in a bush setting using his tracking skills and bushcraft to lead Jack to the enemy agents. During this sequence Jack carries a revolver, but Jimmy is not seen carrying a gun – he is a guide and a helper.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 147



Figure 3: Jimmy as Tracker and instrument of the white man. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

One intertitle reads: “Jimmy picks up Warne’s track”. Jimmy is shown tracking Warne across rocks at the water’s edge. He is able to recognise signs on the rocky foreshore invisible to the film audience. There is a shot of Jimmy clambering over the rocks, looking intently for Warne’s trail; he finds it, then points it out to Jack, who follows.



Figure 4: Jimmy tracking the spy over rocks. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

On a range of levels, the film captures key aspects of the Tracker type: tracking skills, loyalty and subordination. The components of Jimmy Cook’s Tracker character would be replayed over and over again in later Australian films. Jimmy follows orders, his initiative limited to fulfilling his role as helper. He is not a catalyst; rather, he responds to events. Beyond that, he is used to help define whiteness as much as Aboriginality. This characterisation also denies Jimmy

Cook the status of a warrior even though he is special agent. Jimmy's character is depicted as being less masculine than Snowy Baker's 'Boss' – a reflection of the silent cinema's emasculation of Indigenous males (this will be explored in more detail in chapter four).

The cinematic invention of the Tracker, as typified by Jimmy Cook and others, established the foundation for the success of the powerful twenty-first century films featuring Trackers: *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002) and *The Tracker* (2002). The success of David Gulpilil's Tracker characterisations in both these films is based on the fact that they were nuanced performances that ran counter to a long and well-established type, as reflected in Sandy McVea's Jimmy Cook and the other examples from the silent era. As I noted in the Introduction Catriona Elder's description of a new kind of characterisation of Indigenous men as Trackers in more recent films becomes more meaningful if all of the Tracker characterisations are assessed, not just these recent ones.²⁶ In other words, without the long-established audience familiarity of the Tracker, first created in nineteenth-century literature and reinforced by the films of the silent era, Gulpilil's challenges to these stereotypes would not have the same impact. Simply put, awareness of the earliest cinematic versions of the Tracker has the potential to enlighten discourse about twenty-first century re-inventions of the character.

²⁶ Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narrative of National Identity* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2007), p. 156

Robbery Under Arms (1920)

Although around five minutes' footage from this Pacific Photo Plays production are missing, enough remains to enable a clear assessment of the filmic devices employed to depict Warrigal, the Tracker character and friend to Starlight, the film's bushranger hero. Like the earlier 1907 and 1911 films, this version of *Robbery Under Arms* was based on the Rolf Boldrewood novel, but Kenneth Brampton, the film's writer, director and leading man, interpreted it through a screenplay.²⁷ I want to narrow the focus and concentrate on how Warrigal, played by a young Indigenous actor, Jackie Anderson, is depicted.

In an early scene designed to introduce the Tracker character, Warrigal is seen emerging from the water. His head appears slowly. He is bare-chested and his dark skin glistens as he breaks into a broad grin. The scene immediately contextualises the character as being at one with nature. The intertitle that follows reads: "Warrigal – a half caste boy devoted to Starlight". This intertitle, like the one that introduced the character of Jimmy Cook in *The Enemy Within*, helps to establish the character as a type. He is defined by his devotion, a devotion displayed through his skills as a tracker and guide. The initial absence of clothing, and then the simple clothes that Warrigal wears throughout the film, also says something about his status. Warrigal's initial bare-chested appearance identifies him as black and reinforces his status as close to nature. Although the intertitle makes it clear he is a half-caste, his complexion is very dark. In a white Australia,

²⁷ The 1911 version was called *Captain Starlight, or Gentleman of the Road*, National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 6750, Title No. 340374, Title No. 352103.

this carried all the necessary inferences of inferiority. Warrigal's simplicity of clothing and manner stands in sharp contrast to the courtly Captain Starlight. As was the case with the contrasting characterisations offered in *The Enemy Within* (1918), the construction of Aboriginality here is inseparable from the depiction of whiteness.

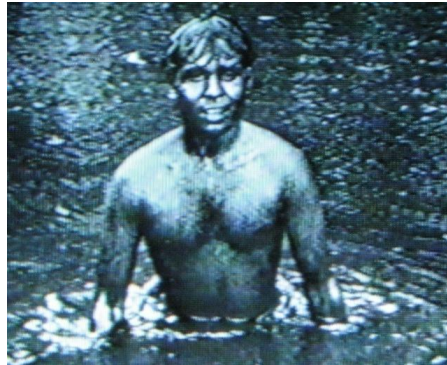


Figure 5: The devoted tracker at one with nature – Warrigal in *Robbery Under Arms* (1920). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Starlight is referred to as “Captain Starlight”, the ‘rank’ giving his character an aura of dignity. And Ben Marsden is described as “Cattle Duffer”, but Warrigal is classified by his race.



Figure 6: Warrigal's appearance and costume provide a contrast with Starlight and the image of the courtly “gentleman” – on show here as, during a coach hold-up, Starlight returns the money of one of the women passengers, and then bows. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

After Starlight is wounded, the loyal Warrigal brings the stricken hero to the Marsden's home. Warrigal is seen leading Starlight's horse, as the wounded hero slumps in the saddle. At this stage Warrigal is on foot and bare-foot, as he is for much of the film. Even though, Warrigal is an accomplice in the gang's cattle duffing, he never carries a gun. In the remaining scenes, he is only rarely seen on horseback and continually fills the role of servant, lookout and tracker. In a sequence where the gang bails up a stage coach Warrigal, on lookout, climbs a tree. The camera dwells on him as he displays agility and physical grace, moving quickly and easily into the top most branches. This scene, like the earlier one that introduced the character as he emerged from the water, reinforces how much Warrigal is at home in a natural setting. While the gang is engaged in holding up the coach, Warrigal, from the tree top, sights three mounted police troopers approaching and, with typical ease, quickly descends. He warns the gang and they flee, the police in hot pursuit.



Figure 7: Warrigal, the gang's lookout and guide, but not a full member of it. National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Later, in the climactic last stand, Warrigal leads away the horses and is not seen again until the gun battle ends. In this last stand, 38 shots are fired, the action continuing for over a minute and a half from first shot to the last. Clearly there was time for Warrigal to have joined the fight, but he does not. The point is

clear: Warrigal's function within the gang was limited. It is only after Starlight falls, and the shooting ends, that Warrigal reappears. He goes immediately to Starlight, who is lying on the ground surrounded by the police. Warrigal kneels and buries his head in Starlight's chest, and the bushranger reaches out a hand to pat the Tracker's head. The gesture is symbolic of a parent giving comfort to a child; it is also akin to a blessing. The scene is a cameo that contains echoes of so many similar scenes, where loyal African American slaves grieve for their fallen white masters. This particular tableau would have been familiar to many in Australia in light of the film and stage versions of the popular novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.²⁸



Figure 8: In a tableau that suggests the devotion of the good slave depicted in American films, Warrigal grieves for his master. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

²⁸ Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (North Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005), pp. 150, 152, 249; Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1990), pp. 70–74, 104–05; Brian McFarlane and Geoff Mayer (ed.), *New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in American and British Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 53



Figure 9: Loyal slaves mourn the death of Eva in this 1903 publicity still from the Edison Production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Courtesy of George Eastman House Rochester

The Indigenous actor Jackie Anderson was used more than once by Kenneth Brampton. He appeared in Brampton's 1923 film *The Dingo*. Brampton, another of the early Australian filmmakers from a theatrical background, cast many so-called 'legitimate' actors in the film.²⁹ Anderson's inclusion was, according to one reviewer in the journal *The Photoplayer*, the result of Brampton's desire to secure real 'types'.³⁰ The use of an Indigenous actor in this way was like using Australia's bushland settings and scenery; in both cases, these were devices that had the potential to set Australian films apart from their international competition. Scott Simmon observed that American filmmakers did much the same thing in relation to scenery and Native American characters as they struggled to create a distinctive identity for their films.³¹ Again, two points can be made: the genesis of Australia's Indigenous cinematic images are a blend of local and American influences, and they are the product of particular factors, but not necessarily uniquely Australian ones.

²⁹ *The Photoplayer*, 16 June 1923 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 21

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 9

Robbery Under Arms was remade twice during the sound era, in 1957 and again in 1985. In the 1985 version, directed by Donald Crombie and Ken Hannam and starring Sam Neill as Starlight, Warrigal is played by Tommy Lewis, an Indigenous actor. As with Gulpilil's Tracker performances, Tommy Lewis's Warrigal reflects elements of both continuity and change. The continuities are on show in Warrigal's loyalty and his affinity with the bush, and also in the fact that the Tracker continues to be employed as a filmic device invented by non-Indigenous filmmakers to match the fashion of the preferred historical discourse of the day. Some things have changed, however: Tommy Lewis is now armed and as well-clothed as any of the gang members, save for the elegant Starlight. Unlike the silent film character, Lewis's Warrigal is more than just a helper – he is a full partner in crime. Another change lies in the shift in focus that equated the Tracker's affinity with the land with original ownership of the land. Late in the film, when Starlight wants Warrigal to join him in leaving Australia for the United States, Warrigal declares: "Whitefellas – you got no place of your own – you come here, you go there ... I belong here." This declaration establishes a clear contrast with the plot of *Assigned to His Wife* from 1911, where, as noted earlier, the Tracker character Yacka leaves his country and travels to England with the white hero and heroine. There is, however, another important contrast. The 1985 Warrigal is a warrior; he is a manly figure who carries a gun. This mode of characterisation reflected the end of an absence, evident in the silent era, whereby Indigenous Australians were rarely characterised as individualised warriors. As I noted in my discussion of Jimmy Cook in *The Enemy Within*, this absence is linked to the emasculation of Indigenous Australian male characters.

The absence of the individualised Indigenous warrior in Australian film had finally ended in 1978 with the release of *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978), with Tommy Lewis in the starring role. The individualised masculine warrior appeared again in 1985, when Lewis appeared as Mundaru in *The Naked Country*. This absence – and others – will be explored in chapter four.

***The Tenth Straw* (1926)**

A convict melodrama produced by Pacific Films, *The Tenth Straw* survives largely intact. It screened for a week after its premiere at the Empress Theatre in Sydney in March 1926.³² An Indigenous actor played a minor, albeit significant, part as Tommie, a uniformed police Tracker. In a chase sequence Tommie unerringly guides the police. He is seen on foot leading a non-Indigenous party on horseback. The image would be immediately recognisable to modern viewers because of Rolf De Heer's *The Tracker* (2002). As the plot of *The Tenth Straw* unfolds, the Tracker overhears two of the individuals involved in the murder mystery, and in doing so helps to solve the crime. Tommie is valued in this film for his utility: he is a loyal servant working in the interests of the dominant white culture. The Tracker character in *The Tenth Straw* was, like the others discussed earlier, fundamental to the cinematic success of *The Tracker* (2002). Gulpilil's Tracker characterisation in the later film is made more powerful and challenging when it is set against earlier incarnations of the type. The characterisation of

³² National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 340385; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 130

Indigenous Australia in *The Tenth Straw* (1926), evident in one of the surviving advertisements for the film (shown in figure 11), conformed to what had become an enduring pattern of Australian film production. Indigenous Australia, according to the text of the advertisement, was equated with nature, the archaic and the anthropological:

“THE TANG OF THE SEA – THE SIGH OF THE GUMS, THE BLACK AND THE BOOMERANG”.³³



Figure 10: Advertisement for *The Tenth Straw* (1926). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

³³ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 360611

The Romance of Runnibede (1928)

This film by Phillips Film Productions starred the American actress Eva Novak as Dorothy Winchester and was set on the remote frontier of northern Queensland.

The Trackers in the film are members of the Queensland Native Police and appear after Runnibede station begins to lose cattle because of raids by local Indigenous Australians. The film's principal villain is Goondai, an evil witch-doctor described in an intertitle as a "murderer and fugitive". Goondai is played by Dunstan Webb, a non-Indigenous actor in blackface. When the troopers arrive, a montage is created by shots carefully framed to establish the superiority of the white man. Sub-Inspector Dale (Claude Saunders) is seen riding in the centre, slightly in front of his two Indigenous Native Police. His horse is larger, which makes him appear taller in the saddle.



Figure 11: Trackers in a scene representing Aboriginality and whiteness from the *Romance of Runnibede* (1928).
Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

The Trackers support the dispossession of the local Indigenous community. During the second half of the nineteenth century, there had been an expansion of non-Indigenous settlement as pastoralists occupied vast tracts of Indigenous land. The history of the Queensland frontier featured massacres of Indigenous

Australians and a level of violent Indigenous resistance that can be described as a war.³⁴

In the film the Trackers work to uphold the newcomers' claim to the land. Runnibede's owner Arthur Winchester (Roland Conway) declares in an intertitle: "I have cleared every foot of this land and I am not letting a few blacks drive me away." Like other silent cinematic Trackers, the Native Police in *The Romance of Runnibede* are portrayed as helpers in the white cause, a characterisation that reflected the preferred settler history of the frontier. The film presents them as guardians of law and order. Violence on the cinematic Queensland frontier is depicted as being the result of criminal action on the part of a single individual, the evil Goondai.

The whites of Runnibede are in danger because the local Indigenous Australians are gullible and savage. For personal gain, Goondai promotes the fantastic legend of a "White Queen", who, he explains through intertitles, "will bring us food and cattle" and "will guide our spears into the white men's hearts". This prompts the tribe to kidnap Dorothy Winchester. "The 'captive' white

³⁴ Jonathan Richards, *The Secret War* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2008); Murray Johnson, "The Secret War: A True History of Queensland's Native Police", *Journal of British Studies*, January 2010, vol. 49, no. 10, pp. 203–05; Greg L. Blake, "The Kalkadoon War", *Military History*, March–April 2005, vol. 21, no.7, pp. 44–76; Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines Under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), pp. 170–77; Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Reports From the Edge of White Settlement* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 177; Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), pp. 91, 104–05; Alison Palmer, *Colonial Genocide* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000), pp. 40–62; Rosalind Kidd, *The Way We Civilise* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1997) pp. 7–11

women's ordeal was a staple melodrama of frontier expansion", and it is not unusual, therefore, to see it adopted by silent filmmakers.³⁵ The implications of this plot device will be explored more closely in chapter four.

In much the same way that scenes from *The Tenth Straw* resemble scenes invented later by de Heer in *The Tracker* (2002), the plot of *The Romance of Runnibede* resembles *Jedda* (1955). In both films, the police Trackers go in search of an Indigenous criminal. In *The Romance of Runnibede* it is Goondai; in *Jedda* they are looking for Marbuk. And the plots of both films revolve around the abduction of the heroine.

***Trooper O'Brien* (1928)**

The film was produced by the Australian Artists Company and premiered in Sydney in May 1928 at the Australian Picture Palace.³⁶ It did well with the general public despite receiving ordinary press reviews.³⁷ *Trooper O'Brien* is important to an analysis of the Tracker for two reasons. First, here the Tracker is characterised as a friend to the film's hero; second, the film reveals the extent to

³⁵ Victoria Haskins and John Maynard, "Sex, Race and Power: Aboriginal Men and White Women in Australian History", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 36, no. 126, 2005, p. 198; Ian J. McNiven, Lynette Russell and Kay Schaffer, *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck* (London: Cassell, 1998); Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories* (Oxford, 1998); Julie Carr, *The Captive White Woman of Gippsland: In Pursuit of the Legend* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001)

³⁶ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 340396

³⁷ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 143

which Indigenous characters had become burlesque caricatures of some of Hollywood's African Americans types.

Having just returned from eight years in Hollywood, John and Agnes Gavin were the driving forces behind the film. They initially went back to what they knew best: a bushranger film.³⁸ They attempted to disarm potential objections on the part of the authorities to bushranger films by dedicating it to "that noble, yet silent body of men – the Police". Nevertheless, the film did include two lengthy action sequences appropriated from older bushranger films: *The Kelly Gang* (1920) and *Robbery Under Arms* (1920).³⁹ The film is a vivid example of the fact that the invention of Indigenous characters in silent films was a blend of Australian and American influences. *Trooper O'Brien* also bolsters the argument for the primacy of African American influence on the depiction of many of the Australian Indigenous types.

In the film's opening scenes, the young Glenn O'Brien (Jimmy Mahon) and his boyhood Indigenous friend Moori (Reg Quartley) live a 'Huck Finn'-style rural life. O'Brien is taller than his 'pal'; his clothes are simple, but they fit. By contrast, Moori's clothes are over-sized and ill-fitting. The boys come across a horse broken free from its harness: it turns out there has been a carriage accident. After quick cut the next scene shows Moori leading young Glen and his father, a police sergeant (John Gavin), as he follows the tracks. Both of the non-Indigenous

³⁸ John Tulloch, *Legends on the Screen: The Narrative Film in Australia 1919–1929* (Carlton South: Currency Press, 1981), pp. 258–67; Eric Reade, *History and Heartburn: The Saga of Australian Film 1896–1978* (Sydney: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 60, 67

³⁹ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 143

characters, even the adult police authority figure, automatically defer to the boy Tracker. In a lengthy sequence, the two whites simply follow Moori, with neither of them taking the initiative. A little later, Glenn and Moori appear at the bottom of a creek bed. Unusually, Glenn is in front, but he immediately stops, as if at a loss. This is followed by a three-quarter shot of Moori and Glenn. Glenn looks at Moori, who pauses, appearing either to hear something or simply because he senses a human presence. Moori turns and points to an infant alone and sobbing on the ground. It is only then that Glenn assumes the dominate role. He is first to the infant, and picks it up while Moori stands back, resuming his subservient role. The infant is a young girl, Winnie Brown (played by Betty Taylor), the sole survivor of the carriage accident.



Figure 12: Glenn and Moori as boys in *Trooper O'Brien* (1928). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia



Figure 13: Moori, a tracker by virtue of his Aboriginality. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

They take the little girl back to the O'Briens' home; throughout the journey, Moori stays in the background, a step or two behind. Once inside the house, Moori immediately sits on the floor.

As a Tracker, the young Moori in 1928 conforms to the character type evident throughout the bushranger genre over the previous two decades.⁴⁰ The character had become so familiar that no intertitle was needed to explain why a boy would lead an adult policeman in a search. The circumstances that gave rise to this character were particularly, but not uniquely, Australian.

As the plot unfolds, the young Moori as a Tracker will be contrasted with the adult Moori (Will Harris). Glenn becomes a policeman (now played by Gordon Collingridge) and leaves for the city; Moori follows and in the urban setting becomes the Comic Black, reminiscent of the African American 'coon'. The Indigenous character, at home in the bush, is out of his element in the city; comfortable and in charge in the natural pre-modern world, he is an alien in the modern world. This interpretation reflects generations of non-Indigenous thinking, based on Australian settler myths and the concept of *terra nullius*. The move from country to city is reduced to the simple notion of an Indigenous Australian now in need of protection. This approach mirrored the philosophy enshrined in New South Wales in the *Aborigines Protection Act* 1909, which specified "general supervision and care over all aborigines and over all matters affecting the interests and welfare of aborigines, and to protect them against injustice,

⁴⁰ Both Moori's character in *Trooper O'Brien* and Warrigal's character in *Robbery Under Arms* in 1907 were played by non-Indigenous actors in blackface.

imposition, and fraud”.⁴¹ The Protection policy varied between states, but in New South Wales where the film was made, the actions of the Aborigines Protection Board, as it was then called, epitomised the ideas of paternalism.⁴² In the city, Moori is a comic figure, who has to be protected by his boyhood friend from two con-men immediately after his arrival. The film therefore reflected the expressed rationale behind government policies towards Indigenous Australians.



Figure 14: Glenn and Moori as adults in the city. The tracker becomes the ‘Comic Black’ in need of protection.
Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

I now want to identify how the invention of the historical Tracker contributed to the invention of the silent cinematic Tracker. From the earliest phase of non-Indigenous occupation, Indigenous Australians acted as trackers

⁴¹ The 1909 New South Wales Aboriginal Protection Act in *Public Acts of New South Wales 1824–1957*, Volume 1 (Sydney, 1958); Anna Haebich, “Imagining Assimilation”, *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 61–71; James Heartfield, *The Aborigines Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa and the Congo, 1836–1909* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)

⁴² Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 76

and guides: in 1791 Watkin Tench led a party inland from the fledgling colony, accompanied by two Indigenous locals, Bolanderee and Colbee.⁴³

Historians Geoffrey Blainey and Henry Reynolds, two figures prominent in the Australian 'history wars' who hold often opposing points of view, both acknowledge the importance of trackers in frontier history. Blainey has pointed to their skill as "trackers, linguists, explorers, finders of scarce water and lost horses" and written of their fleeting fame.⁴⁴ Henry Reynolds has gone further, reflecting on the status accorded these trackers: the "Aboriginal guide – the ubiquitous, albeit often anonymous 'black boy' – played a vital role in the European exploration of the continent".⁴⁵ Although these Indigenous guides were, for the most part, nameless functionaries, mere facilitators of the non-Indigenous explorers' courage and spirit of adventure, one or two achieved "passing fame".⁴⁶ The two best-known nineteenth-century tracker/guides, familiar to generations of Australian schoolchildren, were Jackey-Jackey, who travelled with Edmund Kennedy and Wylie who accompanied Edward Eyre⁴⁷. Both were lauded in the colonial press as examples of "the ideal type of humble and loyal servant".⁴⁸

⁴³ Henry Reynolds, *Black Pioneers*, p. 35; Tim Flannery (ed.), *Watkin Tench: 1788* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1996), p. 188; Tim Flannery (ed.), *The Explorers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1999), p. 59

⁴⁴ Geoffrey Blainey, *A Land Half Won* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1982), p. 94

⁴⁵ Reynolds, *Black Pioneers*, p. 33

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 38

⁴⁷ Edgar Beale, *Kennedy of Cape York* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1977); Geoffrey Dutton, *Edward John Eyre* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977); Julie Evans, "Re-reading Edward Eyre", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 175–99

⁴⁸ Reynolds, *Black Pioneers*, p. 38

According to Clare Bradford, in children's literature and school texts, characters like Jackey-Jackey were reduced to the limited dimensions of a "stock figure", the "childish native retainer".⁴⁹ In these texts, the Tracker was always subservient. This characterisation is typical of the process Richard Dyer described as one of the means by which subordinated social groups "are categorised and kept in their place".⁵⁰ This process was evident in the invention of the Tracker both in literary texts and on the silent screen.

Characterisation of the Tracker can be linked to race, the construction of whiteness and Australia's foundation myths, but there are other elements to consider. Part of the iconic non-Indigenous affection for the Tracker is the result of the conflicting emotions of gratitude and fear. Gratitude resulted from an individual or group's emotional reaction to receiving help, especially when in dire need. The sense of gratitude was strengthened because it came from an unexpected source. The settler community was not inclined to expect help from the original owners because the latter were commonly viewed as simple-minded inferiors or as treacherous enemies. Henry Reynolds canvassed much of the nineteenth-century opinion in *This Whispering in Our Hearts*. He emphasised the persistence of the idea, well into the twentieth century, of Indigenous Australians as "a primitive and inferior survival from an earlier era".⁵¹ Indigenous Australians were, according to Reynolds, regarded as being "entirely destitute of human

⁴⁹ Clare Bradford, *Reading Race Aboriginality in Australian Children's Literature* (South Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2001), p. 15

⁵⁰ Dyer, *White*, p. 12

⁵¹ Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, p. 233

soul”.⁵² When they were not viewed as racial inferiors, Indigenous Australians were seen as “treacherous” and a menace that had to be controlled “by brute force”.⁵³ And so when an Indigenous Australian appeared to be the equal of a European – as was the case with Jackey-Jackey – he was acknowledged with special gratitude.⁵⁴ It is not difficult to imagine the gratitude that would be shown by settlers to any Indigenous Australian who helped to find a loved one lost in the bush. Beyond the gratitude born of relief, there was the gratitude arising from the surprise many Europeans would have felt at receiving aid from an Indigenous Australian, given that they had been taught that some people could not be trusted because of their innate treachery.

The Trackers in silent films lacked complexity in their relationships with the newcomers; they were caricatures, simply conforming to a type. Nevertheless an understanding of the type is a step in a more complete process of backtracking, or revisiting, past ideas.⁵⁵

A few historical accounts do focus on actual trackers. The most recent is Pat Lowe’s *Hunters and Trackers of the Australian Desert*. She observes that the “tracking ability of black trackers were by no means extraordinary – they were the usual, everyday proficiencies acquired by all native people”.⁵⁶ The mundane

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 140

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 123

⁵⁴ Beale, *Kennedy of Cape York*, p. 235

⁵⁵ Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, *Australian Cinema After Mabo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 3

⁵⁶ Lowe, *Hunters and Trackers of the Australian Desert*, p. 12

nature of the real tracker's skill simply exposes the distortions contained in the non-Indigenous myths. Indigenous Australians were better in the bush not because they possessed rare mystical powers or a romantic affinity with nature; they were better at tracking because the Australian bush was their home. Had the members of the supplanting society acknowledged this fact, they would have been forced to confront the contradictions inherent in *terra nullius*.⁵⁷

The role of Indigenous trackers as members of the Native Police, as portrayed in silent films such as *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928), is historically contentious. We know that Native Police forces were established in Victoria as early as 1837. A force of Aboriginal police operated in the Port Phillip District from 1837 until 1853.⁵⁸ It was, however, on the frontier and the fringes of European settlement that the Native Police had a long-term impact, both in terms of iconography and the history of Indigenous/settler relations. The Native Police that operated in Queensland and Western Australia played a controversial part in the processes of dispossession and settlement. In 1848 Governor Fitzroy established the Northern New South Wales Native Police, initially under the command of Frederick Walker, which operated in northern New South Wales and then in the Macintyre River District, in what was to become Queensland. Walker's force of 14 Indigenous troopers was recruited in the Riverina and drawn from various clans made up of four different language groups.⁵⁹ It was inherited by the

⁵⁷ David Day, *Conquest: A New History of the Modern World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 9

⁵⁸ Lowe, *Hunters and Trackers of the Australian Desert*, p. 83

⁵⁹ L.E. Skinner, *Police of the Pastoral Frontier: Native Police 1849–59* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1975), p. 28

new colony of Queensland in 1859.⁶⁰ The Queensland force comprised small detachments of 6 to 12, under non-Indigenous officers.⁶¹ It operated on the frontier and, according to Alison Palmer, officially its “main purpose was to protect settlers in areas where they were insufficiently concentrated to protect themselves”.⁶²

In reality, the force quickly became an instrument of settler aggression – “a coercive body”.⁶³ It was ordered to “disperse” large assemblies of Indigenous Australians – to use the term that was an acknowledged frontier euphemism for “firing upon”.⁶⁴ This aspect of the story of the Indigenous tracker was deleted from the sanitised history of the colonial frontier. Although it is clear that dispossession would have taken place without the Native Police, the special attributes of the Indigenous troopers – the combination of “the skills of both white and black – the ability to ride and shoot and the capacity to live off the land, find water and track their opponents” – meant that the Native Police did speed the process of dispossession.⁶⁵ The Indigenous members of these forces have been

⁶⁰ Richards, *The Secret War*; Johnson, “The Secret War”, pp. 203–05; Blake, “The Kalkadoon War”, pp. 44–76; Palmer, *Colonial Genocide*, p. 49

⁶¹ Palmer, *Colonial Genocide*, p. 49

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Jo Kimira, “Indigenous Participation in Policing – From Native Police to Now – Has Anything Changed?”, *Paper presented at the History of Crime, Policing and Punishment Conference*, Canberra, December 1999

⁶⁴ Palmer, *Colonial Genocide*, p. 51

⁶⁵ Henry Reynolds and Dawn May, “Queensland”, in Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground*, p. 171

depicted variously as “collaborators, traitors or ‘noble savages’”.⁶⁶ The complexity of the actual story derives from the perspectives and agendas of the story-tellers and their individual circumstances. This merely serves to reinforce the points made earlier in this thesis about the nature of Aboriginality in relation to film and the characterisation of Indigenous characters. In terms of the silent era, the extent of Indigenous representation was significant because Aboriginality was, and is, inseparable from both settler history and the construction of whiteness. The Indigenous troopers who served in the Native Police were drawn from distant regions. The groups from southern New South Wales that operated in Queensland felt no kinship with, or loyalty to, the local Indigenous communities. The characterisation of Trackers and Native Police in the silent era could therefore be seen to be historically valid. Their loyalty was to their non-Indigenous officers, not to their fellow Indigenous Australians. The troopers depicted in *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928), for example, served, in the context of Queensland, a filmic function very close to their historical one.

Reflecting on the links between the silent cinematic invention of the Tracker and more recent versions of the character, Marcia Langton traced the development of the Indigenous tracker in Australian film.⁶⁷ She observed that the character was “derived from the mythology of racial types and characteristics perpetuated in late-colonial and post-federation Australia by Social Darwinism”.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Kimira, “Indigenous Participation in Policing – From Native Police to Now – Has Anything Changed?”, p. 2

⁶⁷ Langton, “Out from the Shadows”, pp. 55–64

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 57

This was a period when the amalgam of Australian and American ideas of whiteness was evident in both silent film and minstrelsy.⁶⁹ Langton noted that the Tracker had “uncanny powers of observation, and perhaps even psychic powers”.⁷⁰

Langton’s reference to psychic powers raises the issue of the regular association of Indigenous Australians, especially full-blood or tribal Indigenous Australians, with psychic or mystical powers. From the 1950s this became a leitmotif of Indigenous Australia, but it was a characteristic absent during the silent era. The reasons for the absence of what became, in the second half of the twentieth century, a signature quality ascribed to many Indigenous Australian film characters will be explored in chapter four. Langton traces how cinematic depictions of the Tracker have mirrored our changing social and historical understanding. She points to recent feature films, such as *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), *The Tracker* (2002) and *One Night the Moon* (2001), works in which the Indigenous character’s knowledge is derived from “traditional ownership”, the “stuff of native title” and challenges the settler’s “arrogant claims to superior rights”.⁷¹

According to Langton, in these “new cinematic interpretations of the Aboriginal police tracker”, audiences are offered the opportunity to reconsider aspects of Aboriginality and “Aboriginal-white relations” from “a fresh

⁶⁹ Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*, pp. 6–7, 66–68, 102–03; Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, pp. 148–49, 173

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ Langton, “Out from the Shadows”, p. 63

perspective”.⁷² In these versions, the Tracker is neither a naturalistic figure nor a pre-determined racial being. These films free the Tracker from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideas that imposed limitations on his “humanity or agency”.⁷³ As insightful and valuable as this commentary may be, Langton begins her assessment of the development of the Tracker with *Jedda* (1955), while the earliest film she mentions is *The Overlanders* (1946). I argue that a more complete test – the results of which support Langton’s conclusions – emerges by including the analysis of the Tracker in silent films that I began earlier in this chapter.

Felicity Collins and Therese Davis have also written about the power of the idea of the Tracker. They maintain that the “lost child and the black tracker have long been entwined in Australian popular culture” and Anglo-Celtic imagery linked to the “white settler experience of the bush and the outback”.⁷⁴ In this article, Collins and Davis return to the concept of backtracking first developed in their 2004 collaboration, *Australian Cinema After Mabo*.⁷⁵ They re-affirm that it is the process of “going over old ground in ways that may lead one to retract or reverse one’s opinion”.⁷⁶ Like Langton, they use *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002) and *The*

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 64

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, “Disputing History, Remembering Country in *The Tracker* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*”, *Australian Journal of Historical Studies*, October 2006, vol. 37, no. 128, p. 35

⁷⁵ Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, *Australian Cinema After Mabo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

⁷⁶ Collins and Davis, “Disputing History, Remembering Country in *The Tracker* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*”, October 2006, vol. 37, no. 128, p. 35

Tracker (2002) as the basis for their examination of backtracking, but they also refer to *Black Tracker* (1997) *The Missing* (1999) and *One Night the Moon* (2000). This is a valuable analysis; however, as with Langton, their work is limited to reviewing the contemporary past.

The recent success of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and *The Tracker* has also prompted Brian McFarlane to consider the Tracker in terms of race and film.⁷⁷ McFarlane argued that Indigenous Australians were represented in racist terms to provide a contrast with the “civilised? white man”, a point that supports my use of the concept of whiteness developed by Richard Dyer.⁷⁸ Although McFarlane addressed the echoes of the western in *The Tracker*, he asserted that that film is not really a western. For him, these films characterised the Tracker as part of a “passionate dramatisation”.⁷⁹ Part of the dramatic power of the Tracker emerges because the character is immediately recognisable to Australian audiences. Both Phillip Noyce in *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and Rolf de Heer in *The Tracker* use the old and the apparently familiar to say something new. Although McFarlane acknowledges the influence of “prior texts in other media”, this assertion can only be properly tested through an analysis of silent film.⁸⁰

In terms of the history of the cinematic Tracker, none of these commentators gives adequate weight to the influence of African American characterisations. During the silent era, characterisations derived from African

⁷⁷ Brian McFarlane, “Back tracking”, *Meanjin*, March 2003, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 59–70

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 59

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 68

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

American plantation slaves and nineteenth century minstrel shows were more significant than Native American images for the invention of the Tracker type.⁸¹ Writing about Indigenous characters in the prolific “bushranging genre” of the silent era, film historian Andrew Pike maintained that they were frequently depicted as “faithful” allies to the film’s hero.⁸² The circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Tracker character were not unique, because they were constructed within a framework defining “whiteness”.⁸³ The Tracker specifically, and the cinematic depiction of Indigenous Australians more generally, was and is part of what Richard Dyer described as the cultural construction of white people by white people. According to Dyer, one way of doing this is to allow whites individuality while reducing other races to the level of the stereotype.⁸⁴

The invention of the Tracker reflects some of the approaches to whiteness employed by American filmmakers, especially in films about the South and the slave plantation. Just like the loyal plantation slave, loyal Tracker figures, such like Jimmy Cook in *The Enemy Within* and Warrigal in *Robbery Under Arms*, are

⁸¹ Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, p. 172

⁸² Andrew Pike, “Aboriginals in Australian feature Films”, *Meanjin*, December 1977, vol. 36, no. 4, p. 592

⁸³ Dyer, *White*, p. xiii; Sanjay Sharma, “Crash – Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Whiteness”, *Cultural Studies*, July 2010, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 533–52; Jay Watson, “Introduction: Situating Whiteness in Faulkner Studies, Situating Faulkner in Whiteness Studies”, *The Faulkner Journal*, Fall 2006, vol. 22, no 1/2, pp. 3–23; Mike Hill (ed.), *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Valerie Babb, *Whiteness Visible: The Meanings of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Hale, *Making Whiteness*; Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990)

⁸⁴ Dyer, *White*, p. 12

constructs that preserve mythic versions of Australian and US history. David Blight in his book about the American Civil War and public memory, *Race and Reunion*, made the point that around the 50th anniversary of the Civil War, “American theatres were saturated with Civil War films” and that there were “98 produced in 1913 alone”.⁸⁵ According to Blight, these films were “full of nostalgia” and plantation slaves were portrayed as happy and contented, often fighting to save the plantation and preserve the old Southern way of life.⁸⁶ Few of these films, as noted in the Introduction, had a more powerful impact on Australian audiences – and, by implication, filmmakers – than D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). As Blight has shown, “Griffith and others established a stereotype for blacks that would stand for decades as essentially the only image allowed in the movies”.⁸⁷ Australian filmmakers responsible for the silent versions of the Tracker character analysed in detail earlier, men such as Franklyn Barrett, John Gavin, Kenneth Brampton and Beaumont Smith, all grew to creative maturity during this period. Gavin and Smith both spent time in Hollywood, where they refined their craft.

In 1948 Peter Noble, in one of the first studies of the depiction of African Americans in films, *The Negro in Films*, made the point that in the silent era there were two categories of characterisation: films either “poked fun at the black man”

⁸⁵ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 394

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 395

or “portrayed him as the devoted slave who knows his place”.⁸⁸ This description could just as easily have been based on Kenneth Brampton’s Warrigal in *Robbery Under Arms* or John Gavin’s Moori in *Trooper O’Brien*. Both of these Indigenous Trackers knew their place. Not only that, the adult Moori also becomes a figure of fun. My argument for the influence of films about the American South featuring African Americans on the genesis of the Tracker is also supported by Ed Guerrero. Guerrero addressed what he called “the slavery motif”; that part of a plantation myth designed to legitimise the slave system.⁸⁹ The Tracker is likewise part of a similar Australian paradigm intended to legitimise the supplanting society.⁹⁰ This is reflected in the apparently contented subservience of all of the silent Indigenous Australian film Trackers.

None of this is intended to suggest that Native American characterisations and the western had no influence on the invention of the Tracker. Native American images from the early years of American silent films, especially in the period 1908–10 when Native Americans were often presented as “as guide or saviour to the white hero”, are relevant to a consideration of the emergence of the Tracker.⁹¹ It should be noted, however, that after 1910 the Native American as friend to the whites began to be replaced by the savage, the ‘Red Man’ who was a formidable enemy and menace. The real peak in the popularity of the western

⁸⁸ Peter Noble, *The Negro in Films* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1948), pp. 28, 29

⁸⁹ Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia, 1993), p. 3

⁹⁰ Day, *Conquest*, p. 9

⁹¹ Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film*, p. 4

in Australia came after this change.⁹² Unlike the characterisation of the Tracker in *The Enemy Within* (1918), *Robbery Under Arms* (1920), *The Tenth Straw* (1926), *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) and *Trooper O'Brien* (1928), the most popular American westerns after 1910 featured Native Americans as savage rivals more often than as subordinates. By contrast, in Australia between 1910 and 1914, films, especially those of the Bushranger genre, repeatedly featured Indigenous Australian characters as friends.⁹³

The change in Hollywood's view of the Native American became clear with films like *The Massacre*, written and directed by D.W. Griffith for Biograph in September 1912.⁹⁴ In *The Massacre* Griffith presents an attack by whites on a Native American village. An intertitle makes clear what the result is: "At the Indians stronghold, the Chief plans vengeance". The initial white attack is therefore used as motivation for the film's climactic revenge attack on a settler wagon train.⁹⁵ In the case of the collective characterisation that I call the Indigenous Australian 'Wild Black' (to be explored in chapter three), when Indigenous Australians attacked settlers in Australian films, such as in the opening sequences of *The Birth of White Australia* (1928), the attacks came without apparent motivation and were not acts of reprisal or made in defence of land and home.

⁹² Diane Collins, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies 1896 to the Present Day* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1987), p. 46

⁹³ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 592

⁹⁴ D.W. Griffith, *The Massacre* (Biograph, 1912), Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

The following year Griffith wrote and directed *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch*, again for Biograph.⁹⁶ The Native Americans are characterised as cruel and savage. As the film reaches its climax, the Native Americans are shown as being devoid of individual personality – they are animalistic and brutish. Although aspects of this characterisation do offer points of comparison for the genesis of other Indigenous Australian types such as the Wild Black, they offer nothing for the Tracker.

This argument is made stronger through a careful examination of the obvious contrast between the Native American and African American characterisations offered in the 1914 Klaw and Erlanger three-reel feature *The Indian*.⁹⁷ Unlike the *Battle at Elderbush Gulch*, this film presents the Native Americans with dignity. Their animosity towards the newcomers is documented in an intertitle: “The Red Man aroused by the invasion of the Whites”.⁹⁸ This is in stark contrast to the myths of peaceful settlement at the heart of the Indigenous Australian Tracker image and in the Australian aversion to the term invasion.⁹⁹ In a bid to resolve the frontier conflict, the Native American chief War Eagle travels to Washington; he is depicted as the noble savage, clothed in robes and headdress that convey his status as a leader. As part of the negotiations, War Eagle goes to the home of General Stirling. Stirling lives comfortably and has an African American butler. When War Eagle and his delegation appear at the

⁹⁶ D.W. Griffith, *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch* (Biograph, 1913), Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress

⁹⁷ *The Indian* (Klaw and Erlanger, 1914), Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000), p. 135–51, 153–66

Stirlings' door, the butler (played by a white actor in blackface) displays all the characteristics of both the compliant 'Tom' and the 'comic coon'. War Eagle's knock on the door rouses the butler from his daytime slumbers in a comfortable living room chair, and he goes to answer the door. As soon as African American butler sees the Native American delegation, the 'Tom'/'coon' figure throws up his hands and runs away in comic panic, the dignity and manliness of the Native Americans providing a vivid contrast to the behaviour of the African American.

The particular manliness of War Eagle and a number of other Native American silent film characters who are individualised warrior heroes offers another point of contrast with the silent cinematic invention of Indigenous Australians. The absence, as I noted earlier, of a similar character in the silent era is an important absence from the cast of Indigenous Australian characters to be examined in chapter four.

The subservient 'Tom'/'coon' figure, therefore, has more in common with characterisations of the Tracker than with the images of Native Americans. A review of the Australian film trade papers from the period provides clear evidence of the nature of Hollywood's influence on Australian film. One of the main Australian trade papers from the early 1920s was *The Picture Show*. Its pages support my contention that African American images are more appropriate than Native American images to a consideration of the genesis of the Australian tracker trope. For example, an advertisement for an imported American serial, *Winners of the West*, released by Universal in 1921 claims that the series is based on "Captain Fremont's famous trail breaking expedition" and is "suitable for

the school-room". In the film Native Americans are the stereotypical predatory menace: the advertising copy describes them as "red devils".¹⁰⁰

These images have nothing in common with the Indigenous Australian Tracker. The extraordinary success in Australia of Paramount Pictures' *The Covered Wagon* (1923) further supports this view. The trade journal *The Exhibitor* reprinted a review of the film, originally published in *The Geelong Advertiser*, which applauds the film for teaching Americans about their history and "how her early settlers went forth to possess the land".¹⁰¹ The reviewer goes on to lament how, unlike the United States or the British in South Africa, Australia has no equivalent to the "armies of Red Indians or Zulus in her history".¹⁰² The article claims that a similar Australian epic would need to focus on the pioneer's battle with "nature's forces gripped and conquered" and "the days of the gold-fields".¹⁰³

During the silent era, and for years afterwards, Native Americans were not viewed as models for cinematic images of Indigenous Australians because – unlike the situation with *The Covered Wagon*'s "Red Indians" – in the years after Federation, non-Indigenous Australians preferred not to see Indigenous Australians as an obstacle to the creation in Australia of "a home for a white people".¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ *The Picture Show*, 1 February 1922 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 68

¹⁰¹ *The Exhibitor*, 28 November 1923, vol. 1, no. 6 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 6

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*



Figure 15: A dignified War Eagle leads his delegation from *The Indian* (1914). From Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress



Figure 16: General Stirling's 'comic coon' butler. From Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress



Figure 17: The 'coon' in comic fright. From Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress



Figure 18: A contrast in images (with Figures 16 and 17) between the Native American and the African American. War Eagle and General Stirling stand as manly equals. From Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress

The Tracker's status as a subordinate should encourage us to look at the cinematic depictions of the African American slaves more closely. American westerns were extremely popular in Australia.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, films about the South and the Civil War were also very popular, even before the celebrity of *A Birth of a Nation* (1915). For example, in 1912, four years before the Australian premiere of *The Birth of a Nation*, the Edison Company released *For the Cause of the South*. The film was described in the trade journal *The Photo-Play* as "Edison's great masterpiece".¹⁰⁶ During the following months of 1912, other American films featuring African American characters appeared in Australian theatres. In July 1912 Kalem released *War's Havoc*.¹⁰⁷ The film was set during the Civil War and involved a loyal African American slave carrying a vital message to help his female Southern owner. A similar theme was evident the following month in another Kalem production, *Under a Flag of Truce*, in which loyal slaves rallied to aid their owners when the plantation was threatened by a renegade party of Northern sympathisers.¹⁰⁸ Two other feature films with southern themes were screened in Australia in 1912: *Burnt Cork*, produced by Vitagraph, appeared in July and *The Drummer Girl of Vicksburg* in August.¹⁰⁹ In

¹⁰⁵ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 51; Glen Lewis, *Australian Movies and the American Dream* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 8; John Tulloch, *Legends on the Screen*, p. 18; Joan Long and Martin Long, *The Pictures That Moved: A Picture History of the Australian Cinema 1896–1929* (Melbourne: Hutchinson of Australia, 1982), p. 118

¹⁰⁶ *The Photo-Play*, 25 May 1912 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 84

¹⁰⁷ *The Photo-Play*, 13 July 1912 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 191

¹⁰⁸ *The Photo-Play*, 10 August 1912 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 254

¹⁰⁹ *The Photo-Play*, 27 July 1912 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 224; *The Photo-Play*, 31 August 1912 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 302

January of 1913 the Rex Production group released *The Debt*, the story of a tragic mixed race love affair involving a mixed-race woman.¹¹⁰ A pattern of American films with southern themes continued, and it could be argued that the release of Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* in Australia in 1916 was the culmination of a trend, rather than its beginning.

Before *The Birth of a Nation* Griffith directed two films in 1911 for Biograph based on scripts by Emmett Campbell Hall: *His Trust* and *His Trust Fulfilled*. The plot is summed up by the first film's opening title: "His Trust: The Faithful Devotion and Self Sacrifice of An Old Negro Servant".¹¹¹ In the first film, when the white master rides off to war, the faithful servant George is seen cheering. The master is killed. When Union troops arrive, George attempts to defend the house as the invaders loot and set it on fire. George realises that the white family's young daughter has been trapped inside; he rescues the girl. As the intertitle says, "George risks his life to be faithful to his trust".¹¹² The film ends with the plantation house burnt to the ground and the widowed mistress and her daughter homeless. George cares for them, by taking them to his humble one-room slave cabin (he sleeps on a blanket outside). Such deference to whites is also evident in surviving scenes from the Australian films analysed earlier: *The Enemy Within* (1918), *Robbery Under Arms* (1921) and *Trooper O'Brien* (1928).

¹¹⁰ *The Photo-Play*, 13 January 1913 (State Library of New South Wales), p. 29

¹¹¹ D.W. Griffith, *His Trust* (Biograph 1911), Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress

¹¹² *ibid.*



Figure 19: The loyal slave George cheers his master off to war in *His Trust* (1911). From Paper Print Collection, US Library of Congress

The sequel, *His Trust Fulfilled*, released only five days later, continues the story of George's devotion. Following the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves, the other slaves walk away from the plantation, but George stays on. As the intertitle puts it: "After the War: The Emancipation, but George remains true to his trust".¹¹³ The mother dies and George cares for the daughter, using his own savings, pretending that it is her inheritance. The young girl grows to womanhood and marries. George has exhausted all of his savings to educate her, and as the film progresses his clothes become more and more threadbare. However, as the title of the film proclaims, his trust has been fulfilled.

The same sense of selfless loyalty is evident in depictions of the silent Indigenous Australian Tracker. There are parallels between Hollywood's use of the image of the Tom as a faithful servant and the Tracker in the construction of their particular national historical myths and whiteness.

¹¹³ D.W. Griffith, *His Trust Fulfilled* (Biograph, 1911), Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress



Figure 20: By the final scene George has earned respect as a loyal servant – just like Jackey-Jackey and the cinematic trackers of the Australian silent era. From Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress

Contrary, therefore, to the accepted wisdom, to understand the Tracker character, it is more useful to look at the ways in which African Americans have been depicted rather than Native Americans. The Tracker is a legacy of Australia's particular settler myths and an amalgam of American cinematic influences, including the stereotyping of subordinated races as part of the construction of whiteness. The good, uncorrupted plantation slaves were faithful retainers, like the loyal trackers and guides; both were subordinate, child-like helpers who admired their white betters and, in return, were celebrated for their loyalty.

To sum up the Tracker: he is the most enduring and celebrated of the Indigenous character types. He is primarily characterised not just by possessing a paradoxical affinity with the bush but, above all, by his sense of loyalty to non-Indigenous characters. I use the term 'paradoxical' because the filmmakers' invention of the Tracker's affinity with the bush left the obvious explanation for that affinity, namely ownership or belonging, on the cutting room floor, as it

were.¹¹⁴ Both qualities, affinity with the bush and loyalty to whites, reinforce parallels between Indigenous Australians and African American images. Such images had become familiar to audiences and Australian directors like Franklyn Barrett, Kenneth Hampton, John Gavin and Beaumont Smith through minstrelsy and film. The Tracker was therefore a blend of Australian and American elements that were part of the creation of whiteness and the fashioning of a preferred history. Tracker characters in the surviving Australian films confirm this conclusion. Their purpose is to serve white masters. And like the loyal slave George, loyalty makes them admirable.

Only through an analysis of the Tracker in silent films can we hope to explain the popularity and the durability of the type. The type has been popular because it promoted particular but not uniquely Australian ideas of nation-building. Although the type owes something to the cinematic representation of Native Americans, it clearly owes much more to African American characters, a fact that, until now, has been largely ignored.

Native Americans in silent films, unlike Indigenous Australians, were acknowledged as original owners and often as individualised warrior heroes. I look, therefore, at the more appropriate comparison offered by African American characterisations. The Australian silent film *Tracker* shared qualities of devotion, typical of the African American slave favoured by Hollywood. Australian frontier and settler myths were reinforced by the image of the Tracker, in much the same

¹¹⁴ Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 38

way that Southern plantation myths promoted the creation of images of the loyal and devoted slave.

Marcia Langton has successfully contextualised the Tracker, but there are limits to this discussion because it is exclusively Australian. I have expanded the contextualisation process by acknowledging both the Australian and the trans-Pacific elements in the invention of the Tracker.

One of the most valuable approaches to Indigenous Australians in film has been the notion of backtracking.¹¹⁵ However, its application by Collins and Davis has been limited to recent films. An examination of the Tracker, starting with the silent era, will contribute more to our understanding of Aboriginality. An examination of the genesis of the cinematic Tracker offers a mirror with which to reflect on, and help us better understand, who we are. Or at the very least, it will allow us to better reflect on the constructions of who we think we are.

¹¹⁵ Collins and Davis, *Australian Cinema After Mabo*, p. 3

Chapter Two

The Comic Black

An analysis of the invention of the Indigenous Australian character I call the 'Comic Black' is really, as was the case with the Tracker, an investigation of non-Indigenous Australia. The primary focus will be on surviving feature films from the silent era, and the following will be considered in detail: *Australia Calls* (1913), *The Enemy Within* (1918), *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926), *The Birth of White Australia* (1928) and *Trooper O'Brien* (1928).

The Indigenous Australian Comic Black, like the other enduring character types analysed in this thesis – the Tracker and the Wild Black, is a blend of international and local influences. Unlike the comic American 'coon' identified by Donald Bogle, or Jan Nederveen Pieterse's comic 'Sambo', the Comic Black character is rarely purely comic.¹ In other words, the Indigenous Australian cinematic Comic Black is often temporarily submerged in other characters, such as the more familiar Tracker. The comic quality of the characterisation generally surfaces when the Indigenous Australian is, for whatever filmic reason, removed from the tribal or traditional bush setting. The comedy is an aspect of Richard Dyer's concept of whiteness, where non-whites are presented as childlike and foolish to help define by contrast whiteness.² The Comic Black characters could

¹ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 7; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 152

² Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 12

be either male or female, but they variously display three qualities: they were either anachronistic, childlike or foolish. These were the ways in which, in terms of whiteness, Indigenous Australians are depicted as inferior. These three qualities were the cinematic “masks” invented by non-Indigenous Australian filmmakers in the first decades of the twentieth century.³

These inventions are a reflection of the fact that, according to Daniel Bernardi, the birth of cinema coincided with a view of race dominated by “social Darwinism and eugenics paradigms”.⁴ The racism inherent in the creation of the Comic Black was a fiction invented by the dominant society. It was, however, a powerful fiction because it became a potent kind of reality, especially in Australia, where nationalism in the silent era was inseparable from ideas about white racial superiority, and where most people only encountered Indigenous Australians and other non-whites through the media.⁵

The invention of the Comic Black clearly owed something to the broader Western tradition of demeaning people of colour typified by the popularity of the

³ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1999), p. 17. According to Hale, the ‘masks’ were the white-crafted representations of African Americans.

⁴ Daniel Bernardi (ed.), *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), pp. 2, 4. For the importance of race in Australia in the first decades of the twentieth century, see Marilyn Lake, “On Being a White Man in Australia c. 1900”, in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds.), *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 99; Alanna Kamp, “Formative Geographies of Belonging in White Australia: Constructing the National Self and Other in Parliamentary Debate, 1901”, *Geographical Research*, November 2010, vol. 48, no. 4, pp. 411–26; Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narrative of National Identity* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2007), p. 10; Marilyn Lake and Vanessa Pratt, “‘Blood Brothers’: Racial Identification and the Right to Rule: The Australian Response to the Spanish-American War”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2008, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 16–27

⁵ Marcia Langton. “Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I saw It on the Television ...”: *An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and about Aboriginal People and Things* (Woolloomooloo: Australian Film Commission, 1993), p. 33

minstrel show.⁶ In the case of Australian silent films, it is also the product of identifiable borrowings from images of African American cinematic characters. The Comic Black is, like the Tracker, a loyal servant to more important non-Indigenous characters. The comic elements in the character's behaviour and appearance are used to reinforce and justify this subservience. This is where the characterisations of the Indigenous Australian as the child and the fool come to the fore. Both the child and the simpleton need to be protected both from themselves and from others. In the genesis of the cinematic Comic Black, therefore, it is possible to see the mindset of the dominant supplanting society.⁷ This is a mindset politically and socially expressed in the philosophies of paternalism and protectionism towards Indigenous Australians that held sway throughout the first six decades of the twentieth century.⁸

As noted above depictions of the character as anachronistic, childlike or foolish are the three qualities that identify the Comic Black. Individually, but more

⁶ Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1990), pp. 6–7, 36–37, 66–68, 89–90; Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (North Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005), p. 173

⁷ David Day, *Conquest: A New History of the Modern World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 9

⁸ *The New South Wales Aboriginal Protection Act 1909 in Public Acts of New South Wales 1824–1957 Volume 1* (Sydney, 1958). For the influence of the Aboriginal Protection Society and Protection policies, see James Heartfield, *The Aborigines Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa, and the Congo, 1936–1909* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 122–23; Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp. 118–23; Ann McGrath (ed.) *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines Under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 27, 33; Tony Birch, "History is Never Bloodless: Getting it Wrong after One Hundred Years of Federation", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 42–54; Patricia Grimshaw, "The Constitution Federation and Political Rights: Aborigines and White Women in the New Commonwealth", *Ethos Annual*, 2000, vol. 8, no. 2000, pp. 4–13

often in some combination, they are fundamental to the comedic qualities of the character. The anachronistic qualities of the trope are expressed in terms of both time and location. In the decades before Federation Indigenous Australians were often stereotyped in this way.⁹ The Comic Black characters are amusing because they are out of place. Even though I have identified and individualised the elements of the anachronism in terms of time and place, the relationship is symbiotic. Some of the Comic Black characters are comic because they are characterised as being of another time, from a pre-modern age, whether implicitly through the use of images or explicitly through the intertitles. They are seen as being out of place in the modern non-Indigenous world.

In terms of images, one of the most common and potent devices is costume. The Comic Black character, found outside the traditional tribal setting, invariably appears in ill-fitting European clothes, with the result that he becomes an inferior and visually comic imitation of the European. Although the clothing might also be said to reflect the reality of the Indigenous Australian's economic circumstance, the primary visual impact is comic. Each of these explicit and implicit aspects of the anachronistic mask are evident in films such as *The Enemy Within* (1918), *The Birth of White Australia* (1928) and *Trooper O'Brien* (1928) that will be reviewed in detail. The implication of this kind of imagery is that neither the clothes nor modern, western culture fits the Indigenous Australian.

The clothes become an issue on two levels. First, as Richard Dyer points out, they "are bearers of prestige" and "power"; conversely, old and ill-fitting

⁹ Jessie Mitchell, "'Are We in Danger of a Hostile Visit from the Aborigines?' Dispossession and the Rise of Self Government in New South Wales", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2009, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 294–307

clothes, especially the clothes that have been discarded by whites, are markers of social inferiority.¹⁰ Second, these poorly fitted clothes hide and, therefore, erase any remnants of Rousseau's idealised 'Noble Savage'. An Indigenous Australian 'Noble Savage', with classical and sculptured physique, appeared briefly in European artwork in the first part of the nineteenth century, only to be replaced by the Comic Black clad in rags.¹¹ This facet of the construction of Aboriginality will be explored in more detail later in the chapter, but for the moment it is important to understand the visual power of this mode of representation. Another function of costume in the invention of the Comic Black that will also be considered in more detail later is the habit of disguising or demeaning the Indigenous Australian physique. This avoids physical comparisons that might challenge assumed white superiority and what Dyer described as "the legitimacy of white male power".¹² The physical appearance of the Indigenous character, therefore, came to characterise, for the non-Indigenous audience, the Indigenous way of life as both out of place and inferior.

By demeaning Indigenous Australians in this way, filmmakers paved the way for a symbolic emasculation of Indigenous Australian males. This emasculation was in part responsible for the absence, in the silent era, of an individualised Indigenous Australian warrior hero. Aspects of this emasculation and the absence in the silent era of either an individualised Indigenous Australian villain who posed a sexual threat to non-Indigenous women akin to Bogle's African American 'black buck' or the noble Native American warrior chieftains

¹⁰ Dyer, *White*, p. 146

¹¹ Keith Willey, *When The Sky Fell Down: The Destruction of the Tribes of the Sydney Region 1788–1850s* (Sydney: Collins, 1985), p. 199

¹² Dyer, *White*, p. 146

such as War Eagle will be addressed in detail in chapter four, which will deal with the characters absent from the Indigenous Australian silent film cast.¹³

The Indigenous Australian Comic Black was also often portrayed as childlike. The humour in this characterisation derives from the idea of an adult displaying the demeanour of a child. These Indigenous characters invariably take pleasure in simple things and display – in comic mode – a lack of awareness or a naive view of the real world. In the surviving fragments of film from the silent era, the Indigenous Australian Comic Black is easily amused and is viewed fondly, much in the same way that an adult would view an unworldly and playful child. Vignettes of this characterisation survive in scenes from *The Enemy Within* (1918), *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926) and *Trooper O'Brien* (1928), all of which will be analysed in detail later in this chapter.

We can see aspects of both the anachronistic and the childlike masks through contrasts with non-Indigenous characters. In terms of Richard Dyer's exploration of whiteness, "white spirit organises" and displays an "exhilaratingly expansive relationship to the environment".¹⁴ In other words, whites are filled with the spirit of enterprise; they build and transform their world. By contrast, the Comic Black is denied the qualities of foresight and enterprise. This quality, along with the anachronistic mask, was a reflection of the anthropological views prevailing in Australia during the silent era.¹⁵ For example, Baldwin Spencer, a noted anthropologist and ethnographer and the author of a number of influential

¹³ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*, (New York, 2003), p. 3

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 15

¹⁵ The nexus between Australian anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking and the invention of the Indigenous Australian character type identified as the Wild Black will be considered more closely in chapter three.

studies of Indigenous Australians, based his views of them on ideas of evolution and biology.¹⁶ Hence, in Spencer's view Indigenous Australians were of inferior intellect, childlike and incapable of grasping western ideas.¹⁷ It was a view that Spencer popularised in lectures and one that Australian filmmakers exploited. The childlike and the anachronistic, therefore, worked together to reinforce the perception of Indigenous Australians.

The third mask designed for the Comic Black was that of the fool. This quality was expressed explicitly through intertitles that labelled the Indigenous character as a fool or dupe and implicitly through images and actions. The exaggerated physical comedy of the slapstick fall was often a component of this visual imagery. As will be shown later, this particular device is evident in both *The Enemy Within* and *Trooper O'Brien* where the Indigenous characters become figures of fun through being subjected to demeaning falls. While this kind of obvious visual comedy was already popular in films of the silent era, and often depicted non-Indigenous performers in similar comic situations, none of the films that featured non-Indigenous comic characters had the same potential to stereotype a particular group in quite the same way as did the use of comic images of Indigenous Australians. There were sufficient positive characterisations of brave noble Englishmen, for example, to counter the images of Englishmen as

¹⁶ Geoffrey Grey, *A Cautious Silence: The Politics of Australian Anthropology* (Canberra, 2007), p. 33

¹⁷ D.J. Mulvaney and J.H. Calaby, "So Much that is New": *Baldwin Spencer 1860–1929: A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985), p. 126; Henrika Kuklick, "Humanities in the Chrysalis Stage: Ingenious Australians in the Anthropological Imagination, 1899–1926", *British Journal of the History of Science*, December 2006, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 535–68; Angus Nicholls, "Anglo-German Mythologies: The Australian Aborigines and Modern Theories of Myth in the Work of Baldwin Spencer and Carl Strehlow", *History of the Human Sciences*, February 2007, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 83–114. Spencer was the Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne from 1897 and Honorary Director of the National Museum from 1899.

figures of fun in films like *Pommy Arrives in Australia* (1913) or Beaumont Smith's *Hello Marmaduke* (1924) and *The Adventures of Algy* (1925).

While foolish, anachronistic and out-of-place non-Indigenous home grown Australian comic characters, such as those featured in Beaumont Smith's series of Hayseed films, were blatantly comic, they were more than balanced by noble enterprising depictions of non-Indigenous characters featured in pioneering stories of rural Australia.¹⁸ By contrast, there was no similar balance in the characterisations of Indigenous characters. This was further reflection of the construction of whiteness, whereby non-Indigenous characters are individualised but Indigenous Australians are made to conform to type.

As I noted at the outset, although the Indigenous Australian Comic Black is similar to the types identified by Bogle and Pieterse (the 'coon' and the 'Sambo'), unlike these the Comic Black is not always immediately or obviously comic. One or more of the Comic Black masks can be put on during the depiction of another character like the Tracker. When these characters slip into comic behaviour, the result is that unlike the 'coon' or 'Sambo' or the blatantly comic non-Indigenous characters in Beaumont Smith's Hayseed films, the donning of a comic mask might be seen as a latent manifestation of the Indigenous Australian's actual character.

Following identification of the components of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black, I want to return to my original argument, developed in the previous chapter on the Tracker. Blanket comparisons of Indigenous Australians and Native Americans run the risk of neglecting potentially more fruitful comparisons

¹⁸ The Hayseed Series included *Our Friends, the Hayseeds* (1917), *The Hayseeds come to Sydney* (1917), *The Hayseeds' Back-blocks Show* (1917), *The Hayseeds Melbourne Cup* (1918), *Townies and Hayseeds* (1923) and *Prehistoric Hayseeds* (1923).

between Indigenous Australian and African American cinematic characterisations. A close study of the genesis of the Comic Black calls into question the generally accepted wisdom that typically compares Indigenous Australian silent film characters with Native Americans.¹⁹ An analysis of the Comic Black provides a clear example of the merit of looking more closely at the links between the invention of Indigenous Australian characters in the silent era and Hollywood's characterisation of African Americans.

These claims will be supported by consideration of fragments from both the 30 Australian feature films with Indigenous characters that survive (out of the 50 that were made between 1906 and 1930) and the material on American silent films held in the Paper Print Collection of the US Library of Congress. The process of looking for the Comic Black in early Australian films is complicated by the fact that so much of the film stock has been lost: we only have 50, in part or whole, of the total of 250 films made in Australia during the silent era. Film reviews and textual material held in the Australian National Film and Sound Archive have been used, but this can only take us so far. The genesis of the Comic Black, as will be shown in detail later, was a continuation of a pattern evident on the stage, primarily in the form of the minstrel show, and in the art and literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹⁹ Peter Malone, *In Black and White and Colour: A Survey of Aborigines in Australian Feature Films* (Jabiru: Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, 1987); Shane Maynard, "Black (and White) Images: Aborigines in Film" in A. Moran and T. O'Regan (eds.), *The Australian Screen* (Ringwood 1989), pp. 216–35; Peter Krausz, "Screening Indigenous Australia: An Overview of Aboriginal Representation on Film", *Australian Screen Education*, Spring 2003, pp. 90–95; Shane Crilly, "Reading Aboriginalities in Australian Cinema: From *Jedda* to *Dead Heart*", *Screen Education*, Winter 2001, no. 26/27, pp. 36–45

The reduction of Indigenous Australians to figures of fun was a reflection of their marginalisation and denigration. This adds to the complication posed by the loss of vital film stock. Unlike the more obvious Indigenous Australian character types, the Tracker and the Wild Black, the Comic Black was often a peripheral character and one whose comic qualities were highlighted by imagery and the director's shot selection rather than through having a central role in the screenplay. Nevertheless, I have been able to find enough evidence to sustain my claims about the genesis of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black.

Despite the work of Richard Waterhouse in *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville* (1990) and *The Vision Splendid* (2005), where he clearly established the strong presence in Australia of African American idiom and characterisations, cinematic comparisons between Indigenous Australians and African Americans have been largely ignored.²⁰ This is surprising given the close links between the early Australian filmmakers and the stage. As Pike and Cooper point out, early silent films were often employed "as moving backgrounds to stage plays" and many were "produced by theatrical companies"; when specialised Australian film companies, such as "The Australian Photo-play Company" and "The Australian Life Biograph Company", did emerge, their products were "closely allied to theatrical experiences".²¹ There were extensive links between the stage and silent film in Australia. To cite just a few examples: the very first Australian-made feature film *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906) was produced by the Tait

²⁰ Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Fremantle, 2005); Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington, 1990)

²¹ Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 2

brothers, who came from a theatrical family.²² The *Squatter's Daughter* or *Land of the Wattle* (1910) was based on a stage play and had been performed by William Anderson's dramatic company before Anderson produced the film version.²³ An advertisement in *The Theatre Magazine* for the screening of *Struck Oil* (1919) declared that the film was based on "the most popular play produced in Australia".²⁴ Roland Stavelly, the director of *The Enemy Within* (1918), had been a stage producer for J.C. Williamsons.²⁵ Franklyn Barrett's *The Breaking of the Drought* (1920) was based on, and advertised with reference to, Bland Holt's stage play of the same name.²⁶ As did so many others in the industry, John Gavin, the pioneer Australian filmmaker responsible for *Trooper O'Brien* (1928), began his career on the stage. All of this becomes significant when we recognise the popularity of the minstrel show as a form of popular theatrical entertainment in Australia during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and how readily its imagery inspired Indigenous Australian imagery.²⁷

Aside from Bruce Molloy's brief but valid assertion that Australia's Indigenous characters were characterised as "simple minded and easily deluded, as many American films depicted Negroes, or as treacherous and sadistic savages opposing the ameliorating influence of white civilisation, as American films often depicted American Indians", few real comparisons between Indigenous Australians and African Americans have been drawn in the

²² *ibid.*, p. 5

²³ *ibid.*, pp. 13–14

²⁴ *The Theatre Magazine*, November 1919, National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 761656

²⁵ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 77

²⁶ Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829–1929* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 205–206; *The Sydney Sun*, 27 June 1920, p. 17

²⁷ Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, p. 172

literature.²⁸ A few critical points need to be brought out about Molloy's observations: first, his claim is unusual because it is one of the few times that such comparisons were made; second, he does compare African Americans with Indigenous Australians in terms of the Comic Black character; third, he alludes to the fact that Native Americans are more typically depicted as figures of menace. Molloy's observation is supported by an examination of American silent films, where comic imagery was rarely applied to Native Americans.²⁹

The genesis of the Comic Black character that later appeared in many of our best known films featuring Indigenous Australians can be traced directly back to the films of the silent era. The Comic Black, although clearly identifiable in the films of the silent era can, as noted in the chapter on the Tracker, intermingles with other character types, waxing and waning in significance to meet the demands of the plot. In other words, the Comic Black can either be a single characterisation or can appear as a trope or quality within other characters.

Clear examples of this pattern are evident in the character of Moori from *Trooper O'Brien* (1928). Moori is initially presented as a Tracker and helper in the rural environment, but becomes the Comic Black once he moves to the city. He is depicted as being out of his natural place and therefore becomes an anachronism in terms of his location. He is then characterised as a childlike fool in need of non-Indigenous protection. Moori, perhaps more than any other identifiable Australian cinematic character, resembles the African American 'coon'

²⁸ Bruce Molloy, *Before the Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930–1960* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990), p. 124

²⁹ Kemp R. Niver, *Early Motion Pictures: The Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985)

or 'Sambo' in both manner and appearance.³⁰ The same pattern of depiction, showing the Comic Black as appearing and receding, is also evident in the character of Jimmy Cook, the Tracker, in *The Enemy Within*. There are moments in the film when Cook, the detective and the Tracker, becomes the childlike Comic Black, which serves to reinforce his social inferiority.

The Comic Black that emerges as a component of another trope provides a more powerful way of conveying the sense of denigration than does the simpler, one-dimensional version. This multi-dimensional aspect of the Comic Black is more insidious because it implies that the naivety of the Comic Black is a quality of Indigenous Australians that, while it may temporarily be submerged, nevertheless always exists beneath the trappings of white imposed civilisation. It marks Indigenous Australians as being both inferior and out of place in the civilised world.

The anachronistic mask of the Comic Black in *The Birth of White Australia* (1928)

A vivid example of the Comic Black as an anachronism is evident in *The Birth of White Australia*, directed by Phil K. Walsh and produced by Dominion Films (1928). In its opening credits, the film declares itself to be "An historic and romantic record of our country". In the brief frontier settings, early in the film, Indigenous Australians are depicted as superficially akin to Native Americans: they are the enemy, a lurking menace to the first non-Indigenous white settlers. The comparison, however, is not really a good fit. Unlike the Native Americans of Hollywood's frontier, the Indigenous Australians are equated, explicitly through

³⁰ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 7; Pieterse, *White on Black* p. 152

intertitles and implicitly through imagery, with the natural hardships of the bush, rather than portrayed as human agents. This is evident from the intertitle that introduces the brief sequence (1 min, 34 sec) depicting frontier violence. It refers, in part, to “grim tales of massacre, flood and fire”. The scene that follows the intertitle has the Indigenous Australians attacking lone whites from ambush, only to be driven off with displays of white courage. The attack sequence is random and without apparent motivation, like those other capricious dangers of nature in the bush: flood and fire.

In the much longer sequences of the film that depicted, in documentary form, the opening of the national capital in Canberra in 1927, the anachronistic Indigenous Australian Comic Black emerged.³¹ The character was personified by King Billy, an Indigenous Australian who caught the director’s eye. King Billy was not with the official party. He has long unkempt hair and a greying beard, wears baggy, ill-fitting European clothes and is first seen in a three-quarter shot waving a small Australian flag. The clothes might reflect reality of the character’s socio-economic circumstance, but the primary visual impact, reinforced by the intertitles is of a quaint, iconic anachronism. There is a cut away to a group of Indigenous Australians, who are framed against a natural landscape that is empty save for a single gum tree in the background. They are therefore visually contextualised as being at home with nature but set apart, spectators in the new white nation. This image also reinforced the non-violent frontier sequences that showed the whites as industrious: they chop down trees and building, while the Indigenous

³¹ For an Indigenous Australian reflection on these events, see Ann Jackson-Nakano, *The Kamberri: A History from the Records of the Aboriginal Families in the Canberra–Queanbeyan District and Surrounds 1820–1927 and Historical Overview 1928–2001* (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 2001).

Australians live easily off the land. King Billy is featured in three shots, and in each instance he provides contrast and anachronistic light relief from the serious non-Indigenous business of opening the new Federal Parliament building. He appears cheerful, his three dogs at his feet. Looking closely, it is possible to see what appears to be a swag slung over his shoulder, which visually reinforces his transient status. King Billy is not viewed as a permanent feature in this tableau of Australian nationhood. Standing rumpled and ragged on the manicured lawns, he is framed as being in contrast to the gleaming white backdrop of the new building.

These scenes reflect the circumstances of Indigenous Australia in the first half of the twentieth century. King Billy and the other Indigenous Australians depicted were marginalised. But further, there is clear evidence of a visual segregation that reflected the actual segregation that had become a feature of government policy under the various Protection Acts.³² Indigenous Australians are never shown with the non-Indigenous Australians attending the ceremony. As the intertitle makes clear, the film's director Phil K. Walsh used the Indigenous character of King Billy to symbolise a passing race and a passing phase of Australian history.³³ As the first two lines of the related intertitle make clear: "The ethnic age has passed away. The Primal race is with the dead." This Indigenous Australian Comic Black characterisation was used to perpetuate the Australian settler and foundation myths in the same way that the African American 'coons'

³² The *Queensland Protection Act 1904*, the *Western Australian Protection Act 1905*, the *New South Wales Protection Act 1909*, the *Victorian Aborigines Act 1910*, the *South Australian Aborigines Protection Act 1911*, the *Northern Territory Aborigines Ordinance 1911*

³³ Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880–1939* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1997) McGregor, Russell, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011)

McGregor explains how Indigenous images were appropriated at a time when exclusion was still a social reality.

and buffoons were used as components of Guerrero's plantation myth.³⁴ King Billy has been reduced to an anachronistic, comic figure. He has become an Australian 'cultural talisman', used to help define an Australian culture distinct from Britain. He is also part of a carefully choreographed historical pageant.³⁵ As the Duke of York opens the doors to what is now the Old Parliament House, Canberra, an intertitle appears: "King Billy calls for cheers for the son of the great white King across the seas". The tableau is reminiscent of scenes of African American slaves gathered around on the old plantation. These images from *The Birth of White Australia* reinforced the Australian myth of peaceful settlement, a view that, according to Henry Reynolds, was long cherished by many non-Indigenous Australians, for whom it held great appeal.



Figure 1: King Billy from *The Birth of White Australia* (1928). The Comic Black was important as a justification of non-Indigenous occupation. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

³⁴ Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Images in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 31

³⁵ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 153



Figure 2: On the left, Indigenous Australians in a scene from *The Birth of White Australia* (1928) cheer in support of the 1927 opening of Canberra. On the right, in a similar scene from *His Trust* (1911) African American slaves are shown cheering for the soldiers of the Confederacy. From the US Library of Congress Paper Print Collection. Each of these tableaux represents historical myths: the Australian settler myth and the Southern plantation myth.

Another intertitle quickly follows and it is designed to reflect what the non-Indigenous audience would expect of a character like King Billy. The intertitle is in broken English and contains elements that reinforce the comic images of King Billy: “Mine tinkit that pfellers father budgereee King likit me”. Just like the images of their comic African American counterparts, the comic language and the imagery associated with King Billy and other Comic Blacks entered the mainstream.

Cedric Robinson has pointed out how a stock of African American characters were exploited in American advertsising. Characters such as the African American Mammy, the jolly overweight female trope familiar to generations as Aunt Jemima, the ‘coon’ Uncle Rastus and the pickanninies were repeatedly used in advertising for Quaker Oats, the National Biscuit Company, Cream of Wheat, maple syrup and Gold Dust washing powder.³⁶ In much the same way,

³⁶ Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theatre and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 61

the term 'nigger' had made its way to Australia and was used commercially to promote Nigger Brown boot polish, Nigger Boy soap pads, and licorice.³⁷ The best known example of Indigenous Australian Comic Black imagery in marketing was in the advertisements for Pelaco shirts. The image reproduced below are familiar to many Australians. As with the Gold Dust Washing Powder Pickanninies in the United States, the idea was to contrast the whiteness of the product against the dark skin of the comic trope. The images are indicative of the construction of whiteness and representative of the similarities in the exploitation of African Americans and Indigenous Australians in the racial regimes of both countries in the early twentieth century.



Figure 3: The language and appearance of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black became a feature of the mainstream up to the 1950s and 1960s, as evident in Pelaco advertisements such as this one. Although the language is Australian, and can be traced to the nineteenth century and linked to the intertitle from the *Birth of White Australia* (1928), the physical appearance of the character is not unlike the African American 'coon'.

The childlike mask of the Comic Black in *Australia Calls* (1913)

Australia Calls has not survived, but it was directed by one of Australia's most important pioneer filmmakers, Raymond Langford, and produced by Spencer's

³⁷ Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*, p. 104

Pictures.³⁸ The film, which opened to mixed reviews at Spencer's *Lyceum* Theatre in Sydney on 19 July 1913, played on Australia's profound sense of xenophobia, with a plot based on a fictional Asian invasion.³⁹ Although this scenario might seem to be an unlikely source for a discussion of a comic characterisation, there was a comic element to it, involving what Pike and Cooper described as "a comic scene showing one of the Aborigines 'hammering' a Chinese cook".⁴⁰ The construction of the contrasting racial regimes evident in the characterisations of Indigenous Australians and the Asian menace is important on a number of levels. The theme of the Asian menace was revisited in 1928 in *The Birth of White Australia* and provides one of the clear points of contrast between the cinematic invention of Aboriginality and Hollywood's depictions of African Americans or Native Americans.

In the American context, both the African American (in the form of Bogle's 'brutal black buck') and the Native American at times posed a sexual threat to white womanhood.⁴¹ Jan Nederveen Pieterse has argued that sexualisation was a key part of the western process of 'othering' blacks and that one facet of this was the image of the black male as a sexual predator.⁴² This mask, the 'brutal black buck', is clearly identified by Bogle and regularly features in the studies of African Americans in feature films.⁴³ In terms of Indigenous Australians, the same

³⁸ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343326. For more about Raymond Longford, see Lee Burden, "Getting Sentimental about the Bloke: An Australian Classic Restored", *Screen Education*, December 2009, no. 56, pp. 74–82

³⁹ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 38

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 10

⁴² Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 174

⁴³ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 10; Gerald R. Butters Jr, *Black Manhood on the Silent Screen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002)

kind of characterisation is not present and this is one of the absences that will be explored in chapter four.

However, when this filmic device was evident in Australian silent films, it was used to 'other' Asians. The distinction between the Wild Indigenous Australian and the potential menace of the Black Buck or wild Native American warrior is subtle but important. For the most part, Indigenous Australians in the wild posed a general and almost de-personalised (and hence de-sexualised) threat, akin to the forces of nature. With the exception of *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928), a production designed for American consumption with a marketable Hollywood star in Eva Novak, Indigenous Australian threats to settler society are rarely, if ever, given motivation or portrayed in a personal way.

This distinction, I argue, is the result of two particular Australian factors. First, the myth of peaceful settlement meant that, for the most part, Indigenous Australians were depicted as simple, comic, helpful and obliging. Simply put, they were characterised as supporters of the settler hegemony. It is in this role that we see them most clearly as the Tracker. They are also consequently depicted as the Comic Black in the guise of a character like King Billy in *The Birth of White Australia*, or in the case of *Australia Calls*, as part of a minor, comic vignette. The vignette, nevertheless, asserts the loyalty of the Indigenous Australian characters to their white betters.

The second particular factor was Australia's attitude to Asia and fear of the 'yellow peril'. This fear was an integral part of an emergent nineteenth century Australian nationalism and a preoccupation of numerous contributors to *The*

Bulletin.⁴⁴ It is no coincidence that the authors of *Australia Calls*, C.A. Jeffries and John Barr, were long familiar to *Bulletin* readers.⁴⁵ As a consequence of the Australian preoccupation with the Asian menace, Asians rather than Indigenous Australians were vilified as sexual predators.

The thinking behind this cinematic construction of race was based on the view that Indigenous Australians were few in number and a dying race. By contrast, the Asians to our north were feared both because of their numbers and because they seemed to constitute an emerging menace. For example, in *Australia Calls*, the white heroine Beatrice, played by Lottie Lyell, is captured by the Asian invaders and has to be rescued. These attitudes were reinforced and replayed in *The Birth of White Australia* in 1928. As noted above, depictions of the Indigenous Australian characters in *The Birth of White Australia* conformed to the settler myth paradigm. By contrast, the Chinese were again the predatory menace not only to Australia's white nationalism but also to white womanhood. This is graphically captured in the sequence from *The Birth of White Australia* (depicted below) where Mary Davis, played by Dot McConville, is chased by several Chinese. She had challenged them for washing their clothes in the creek and suggested that it was unsanitary because the white miners used it for their drinking water. Once aroused, the Chinese chase her. She collapses from fatigue and is at their mercy until Tom Kendrick, played by Frank Hardingham, comes to her rescue and gives the Chinese predators a good thrashing. In America, the existence of the image of the black male as a sexual threat to white womanhood

⁴⁴ Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds.), *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation* (Crawley, 2003)

⁴⁵ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343326; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 38

justified repressive laws, lynching and slavery.⁴⁶ In Australia, the image of the Asian male as a sexual predator was part of the rationale for the White Australia Policy implemented in 1901 as part of the new Federal Government's *Immigration Restriction Act* and celebrated in the film *The Birth of White Australia*.⁴⁷

Although the images of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black do share some of the cinematic features of their African American counterparts, clearly there are differences. The de-sexualisation of Indigenous Australians in film gave a particular primacy to simple and comic imagery. Andrew Pike highlighted this contrast between the Indigenous Australian and both African American and Native American characters in 1977, when he wrote, "Aboriginals did not figure in any local variant of the old Hollywood genre of the inter-racial romance, the genre, which flourished during and after World War One".⁴⁸ Despite the fact that this was a time when American films dominated Australian screens and other African American and some Native American tropes were reflected, adapted and even copied in the invention of Indigenous Australian characters, the sexualisation of Indigenous Australian characters was not a feature of home-grown silent films. The particular and distinctive Australian mode of racial 'othering' was also evident in the Australian form of minstrelsy. In his study of minstrelsy, Waterhouse pointed to its popularity and its significant influence on

⁴⁶ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 174

⁴⁷ The view offered in the film about Chinese men as a menace to the white womanhood can be linked to the sentiments expressed by the nineteenth century trade union leader William Lane, who accused the Chinese of being debauchers of white women. The sentiment is also evident in the gold field ballads of C.R. Thatcher, mentioned in Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend*.

⁴⁸ Andrew Pike, "Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films", *Meanjin*, vol. 36, no. 4, December 1977, p. 595

Australian culture.⁴⁹ He also pointed out that in the Australian version of the minstrel show Indigenous Australians were often substituted for the American Comic Black characters, but it was the Asians, not the Indigenous Australians, who in Australian minstrelsy were viewed as an emerging menace.⁵⁰

The Indigenous Australian characters in *Australia Calls* are comic and childlike because they are playing at the defence of Australia. They are not depicted as engaging in the real, serious business of defending the nation. They are not warriors. Rather their role, like that of the anachronistic comic image of King Billy is to provide light relief. The Indigenous Australians are loyal to their white 'betters' and, as children do, they play out the roles and lives of their parents – in this case, the Indigenous Australians in a comic scene attack a Chinese cook, a figure that is less a major threat than a stereotype of subservience. The real Asia menace was to be found elsewhere.



Figure 4: In a scene from *The Birth of White Australia* (1928), Mary Davis (Dot McConville), at the mercy of the Asian menace, is rescued at the last minute by Tom Kendrick (Frank Hardingham). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

⁴⁹ Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*, p. 112

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 107

The Tracker dons a Comic Black mask in *The Enemy Within* (1918)

As noted in the chapter on the Indigenous Australian Tracker character, *The Enemy Within* was unusual because it had an Indigenous Australian, Sandy McVea, playing an Indigenous character. As noted in the chapter on the Tracker, Sandy McVea's character became a kind of urban tracker. In a few scenes of light relief, however, the childlike and anachronistic Comic Black emerged from the more familiar Tracker trope.

In the 60 minutes of the film that survive, Jimmy Cook, when seen as a detective, is the loyal Tracker and in this role he is a gifted professional. When, however, he is not on duty the Comic Black emerges and he becomes the vehicle for light relief as the childlike figure of fun. The comic scene, already discussed in the chapter on the Tracker, takes place on a Sunday morning in Jack's flat.

Jimmy is seen sleeping in his clothes on the sofa. His childlike devotion to Airlee – or as an intertitle explains, “the Boss” – is evident from the fact that it is Sunday morning and Jimmy appears to have no other life. Despite Jimmy's devotion and his official status as a member of the elite Secret Service, he is still presented as socially inferior to a non-Indigenous butler Glassop (Gerald Harcourt). Glassop enters the room to find Jimmy on the sofa and proceeds, in comic fashion, to tip him on to the floor. The scene reinforces the status of the Indigenous Australian as an inferior. Jimmy displays no resentment at his treatment at the hands of the white butler. In the following scenes, Jack emerges and begins his morning exercises. When Jack begins to use the punching bag, Jimmy is seen in the background mimicking the Boss, throwing punches at an imaginary bag. Jimmy's status in this setting is akin to that of a playful child. He mimics Jack at the punching bag in the same way that a child imitates an adult and he is treated like

a child by the butler. The comic elements of this depiction are obvious. There is the physical comedy of the fall when Jimmy is tipped off the sofa and then there is the anachronistic element where a grown man is depicted with childlike qualities. When Jimmy is distanced from his traditional role as the Tracker, the Comic Black appeared.



Figure 5: A scene from *The Enemy Within* (1918). The Comic Black emerges during a depiction of the Tracker. Although he is working to protect Australia from German spies, the Indigenous Australian is still depicted as both comic and a social inferior. He has been sleeping on the hero's sofa and is tipped off in comic fashion by the white butler. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

These sequences from *The Enemy Within* are significant in that they use comedy to reinforce Indigenous Australian social inferiority. There was a clear hierarchy in place: the white non-Indigenous 'Boss', then the white servant Glassop, and at the bottom, both symbolically and literally (at the feet of the butler), the Indigenous Australian.

The female Comic Black version of Topsy in *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926)

A female version of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black appeared briefly in Charles Chauvel's first feature film, *The Moth of Moonbi*. The film opened at the Wintergarden Theatre in Brisbane in January 1926.⁵¹ The plot revolves around a

⁵¹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title Nos. 282 and 348394

young country girl, Dell Ferris (Doris Ashwin), who is initially drawn to the excitement of city life, only to return to the country, in the words of Pike and Cooper, “poorer but wiser”.⁵² As an intertitle makes clear, Dell experiences a deeply felt emotional conflict: “back on the lonely selection there slowly dawned in the wistful heart of Dell – that the circumstances of her father’s death would ever stand between her and the man she loved”. In the scene that follows, Dell is framed leaning back against a tree deep in thought. This is followed by another intertitle that announces to the audience: “And Josephine also had her knotty problems”. There is then a close-up of a Comic Black character, Josephine, played by non-Indigenous actress Billie Stokes in blackface. Josephine’s manner is light-hearted and her hairstyle is similar to that of Topsy, a character from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. This American comic character would have been familiar to Australian theatre and film audiences from the numerous stage and screen versions of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous novel. Josephine plucks a chicken, and her comic persona provides a contrast with the more serious and contemplative Dell. The comic element suggests that the Indigenous Australian character is childlike, happy and less likely to be troubled by deeper reflective thought.

⁵² Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 129



Figure 6: Josephine (Billie Stokes) from *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926). In manner and appearance she recalls the African American juvenile comic character of Topsy from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Although Mabel Forrest based the plot for Chauvel's film on an Australian novel, the character of Josephine as an Australian Topsy offers evidence of an American influence.⁵³ Despite the fact that Chauvel always felt a keen desire to tell Australian stories, borrowings from across the Pacific are evident in *The Moth of Moonbi*. When Chauvel gave an interview to the local film journal *The Picture Show* in 1922, at the beginning of his quest for experience in Hollywood, the article noted that Chauvel had already learned most about filmmaking in Australia from "the Americans, Wilfred Lucas and Bess Meredyth".⁵⁴ After his return from California, he set to work on *The Moth of Moonbi*. Even though Josephine is meant to be an Indigenous Australian, in appearance she is more like an African American character type. When we see Dell confronted by two villains in one of the surviving fragments from the film, Josephine plays the loyal servant standing by her mistress, in the convention of the loyal house slave in films from the plantation genre. When she is not the loyal retainer, Josephine is a comic character, still loyal and happy to serve. Although her role is limited, it is yet

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ "Another Australian Seeks American Studios", *The Picture Show*, 1 April 1922, p. 37

another example of the influence of African American characterisations on the invention of silent Indigenous Australian film characters.

The Comic Black masks of Fool and the Anachronism in *Trooper O'Brien* (1928)

There are few clearer examples of the Comic Black character than Moori from John Gavin's 1928 production *Trooper O'Brien*.⁵⁵ John Gavin and his wife, Agnes, had only returned from working in Hollywood two years before they started work on the film. Pike and Cooper acknowledge the extent of the Indigenous Australian comic parodies evident in the film when they note "the Aborigines are grotesquely broad comic caricatures".⁵⁶ The nature of Pike and Cooper's survey, however, meant that they did not have the opportunity to explore these comic characterisations more closely. Moori is a minor but important comic character. Like the other Comic Blacks, as an adult, Moori provides light relief from the more weighty matters that concern the non-Indigenous characters. He is also a clear example of the Comic Black emerging from another trope and donning the masks of the anachronism and fool. Gavin's 1928 film in many ways, therefore, synthesises the characteristics of the silent Comic Black and reinforces the extent of Hollywood's influences and its African American characterisations.

As noted in the earlier chapter on the Tracker, Moori as a boy, played by Reg Quartley in blackface, is a skilled tracker at home and even in command in the bush. However, when we see him as an adult in an urban setting Moori has become the fool, the Australian equivalent of the African American 'coon'. Three

⁵⁵ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 340396

⁵⁶ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 143

scenes clearly capture the essence of the fool. The adult Moori, played by Will Harris, yet another non-Indigenous actor in blackface, is depicted as comic from the moment we see his shambling pursuit of the train that carries his friend off to the city. Glen O'Brien (Gordon Collingridge) and Moori are boyhood friends. When Glen goes to the city to become a policeman Moori wants to join him. The second scene which depicts Moori in comic terms takes place once they are in the city. Moori is quickly identified as a fool by an intertitle that captures the conversation of two conmen: "That Abo's a mug." Moori is about to be swindled when Glen intervenes and declares that he will have to be looked after. This scene, as noted previously, reflects the protectionist views and policies in place at the time. In the third scene, the Indigenous Australian versions of both the African American 'coon' and the African American 'Mammy', the jolly overweight female comic character, appear. Violet Elliot plays the Indigenous Australian version of the 'Mammy' in blackface. An intertitle introduces her as "the budgereee flapper". The instant mutual attraction of Moori and the flapper is superficial and comic. Moori sits on a fence rail eyeing the woman as she prepares to hang out the washing. He then falls in a typical moment of slapstick comedy. Each of these surviving comic moments was designed to balance the serious aspects of the plot that centred on the non-Indigenous characters.



Figure 7: Moments from three of the comic scenes from *Trooper O'Brien* (1928): Moori in comic pursuit of the train taking his boyhood friend to the city; a close-up of an Indigenous Australian version of the 'Mammy'; and Moori just before his slapstick fall. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

African American comparisons in the invention of the Comic Black

As noted in the introduction, in the American context Donald Bogle identified a cinematic Comic Black, who he dubbed the 'coon', a trope that, according to Bogle, presented "the Negro as amusement object and black buffoon".⁵⁷ Bogle noted that for Hollywood the decade immediately after the First World War was the period when the "black jester ... the comic Negro was ushered in".⁵⁸ This is significant because the 1920s was both a high point of domestic Australian film production and a period of rapid and sustained growth in the importation of American films.⁵⁹ According to Pike and Cooper, the 1920s "saw the first flourishing of the Hollywood publicity and distribution machines and the virtually complete take-over of Australian screens".⁶⁰ May 1921, for example, marked the first publication of the *Paramount Punch*, a magazine for Australian employees of the film distribution and marketing agency of the American film company.⁶¹ The magazine reported a rapidly growing American share of the Australian market.

The Australian equivalent of the 'coon', the Comic Black (most commonly played by a non-Indigenous actor in blackface), was, therefore, another facet of the amalgam of Australian and international influences on the invention of silent Indigenous Australian film characters.

The cinematic Comic Black developed as a character at a time when the influence of American cinematic iconography was growing.⁶² The parallels that

⁵⁷ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 7

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 19

⁵⁹ Diane Collins, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies 1896 to the Present Day* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1987), p. 51

⁶⁰ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 86

⁶¹ *Paramount Punch*, May 1921, vol. 1, no. 1 (State Library of New South Wales)

⁶² Glen Lewis, *Australian Movies and the American Dream* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 8

have been drawn in this chapter between the African American 'coon' and the Indigenous Australian Comic Black reinforces one of the central premises of this thesis, namely that comparisons with the cinematic images of African Americans are often more fruitful than the comparisons between Indigenous Australian and Native American tropes typically asserted in the literature. The misconception inherent in this accepted wisdom, as noted earlier, arises because most of the books and journals that deal with Indigenous Australian cinematic characters begin with *Jedda* (1955) and therefore either do not go back to the genesis of the characterisations they discuss or simply offer surveys based on films from the sound era without looking more closely at the variety of Indigenous character types evident in Australian films from the earliest days. This is not to say that comparisons between Indigenous Australian and Native American characters are completely without merit; they do have a place, especially when we consider other Indigenous Australian characters, notably the Wild Black.

I do acknowledge that there were American silent films in which the Native American was a figure of fun.⁶³ These films were, however, neither numerous nor significant enough to have had the same impact on the popular imagination as the 30 films made during the same period where the Native American was depicted as a violent enemy. Furthermore, a close examination of the six films that might be classified as depicting the comic Native American reveals at least

⁶³ The Paper Print Collection of the US Library of Congress records a number of short films in which Native Americans were portrayed as comic figures. It is, however, important to note that between 1903 and 1924 there were only six such films and all were short one-reel films: *A Midnight Phantasy* (1903), produced by American Mutoscope and Biograph; *An Up-To-Date Squaw* (1911) from Pathé Frères; *The Tourists* (1912) by Biograph; *The Paleface* (1921) from Comique Film Company; *Big Chief Koko* (1925) from Inkwell Films; and *Felix Goes West* (1924), an animated cartoon produced by M.J. Winkler.

two instances – *A Midnight Phantasy* (1903) and *An Up-To-Date Squaw* (1911) – where a potential menace is linked to the apparently comic Native American character. This potential menace takes the form of the threat of scalping, a practice made cinematically synonymous with the Native American.⁶⁴ This quality of menace or potential danger was not associated with either Bogle's benign 'coon' or the Indigenous Australian Comic Black.

Not only is the characterisation of the Native American as a formidable foe more common, the Westerns that characterised Native Americans in this way were more popular and noteworthy. None of the six films with comic Native American characters is more than one reel. By contrast, of the 30 films that depicted Native Americans as enemies, eight of them were longer than one reel. My figure of 30 is based on films featuring significant or repeated clashes between Native Americans and white settlers.⁶⁵ This list does not include the five silent films made between 1903 and 1914 that have plots that focus on the abduction of whites by Native Americans. These films – *Rescue of Child from Indians* (1903), *Indians and Cow-boys* (1904), *The End of the Rope* (1914), *The Gambler of the West* (1914) and *In the Days of the Thundering Herd* (1914) – create a sense of menace reflected in the threat of Native American attacks and the prospect of abduction. Taken together, this means that 35 silent films were made between 1903 and 1930 in which the Native American was depicted as a

⁶⁴ In *A Midnight Phantasy* a wooden cigar-store Indian statue comes to life when a passer-by steals a cigar that he is holding. The statue chases and scalps the thief. In *An Up-To-Date Squaw* an Englishman flirts with the wife of a Native American. The Englishman is hunted down and scalped. The comic element emerged when it became clear that the scalping was harmless because the Englishman was wearing a wig.

⁶⁵ Kemp R. Niver, *Early Motion Pictures: The Paper Print Collection of the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1985)

major threat to members of the settler society, as opposed to only six one-reel films where the Native American was depicted in comic fashion. This invalidates any meaningful comparison of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black with Native Americans.

However, this argument does not rely on the number of films alone, but on their significance. In contrast to the six short one-reel films depicting the comic Native American, *The Virginian* (1914), for example, produced by Lasky and directed by DeMille, was a five-reel film that featured numerous attacks by Native Americans. Similarly *Blade of Grass* (1915) by Edison lasts three reels; *Daniel Boone* (1923) by Chronicles of American Picture Corporation, three reels; *America* (1924) from United Artists, two reels; *Custer's Last Stand* (1925) and *With Buffalo Bill on the U.P. Trail* (1925), both produced by Sunset, were two-reel films, and in the same year Sunset produced *General Custer at the Little Big Horn*, a five-reel feature.

It is contentious to speculate, at such a distance in time, exactly what images engaged the popular imaginations of any community. However, the empirical evidence indicates that although the Native American was a potential archetype for the Indigenous Australian Wild Black, Native Americans were unlikely models for the Indigenous Australian Comic Black. An examination of the most influential directors and stars involved in early American films reinforces this argument. Aside from Cecil B. DeMille, who directed *The Virginian* (1914), few directors had more impact than D.W. Griffith.⁶⁶ Griffith devoted a significant part

⁶⁶ Robert S. Birchard, *Cecil B. DeMille's Hollywood* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), p. xi; Scott Simmon, "Cecil B. DeMille's Hollywood", *Film Quarterly*, Summer 2006, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 51–52; Anton Karl Kozlovic, "Hollywood, DeMille and Homage: Five Heuristic Categories", *Trames: A Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 2009, vol, 13, no. 1, p. 64–82;

of his early career as a director for Biograph between 1910 and 1913 making films that established the convention that, according to Scott Simmon, “Indians enter without hint of motivation to attack”.⁶⁷ Simmon went on to describe the formulae for many of these films: “most of the major film companies drew on the Plains Wars model – wagon train pioneers, savage Indian attacks, cavalries to the rescue”.⁶⁸

It wasn't only great directors who contributed to the image of the savage Native American. Some of Hollywood's most famous stars appeared in films which reinforced the potency of the characterisation of the Native American menace. Bronco Bill Anderson and the legendary Tom Mix and William S. Hart all featured in films that equated the Native American with danger.

James V. D'Arc, “‘So Let it be Written ...’: The Creation of Cecil B. DeMille's Autobiography”, *Literature Film Quarterly* 1986, vol. 24, no.1, pp. 1–10. For D.W. Griffith, see Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and The Origins of American Narrative Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), Josh Glick, “Mixed Messages: D.W. Griffith and the Black Press 1916–1931” *Film History*, June 2011, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 175–95; Arthur Lenning, “‘There is a Tragedy Going on Here Which I Will Tell You Later’: D.W. Griffith and Abraham Lincoln”, *Film History*, 2010, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 41–72; Jeffrey B. Martin, “Film out of Theatre: D. W. Griffith, Birth of a Nation and the Melodrama *The Clansman*”, *Literature Film Quarterly*, 1990, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 87–96; Cedric J. Robinson, “In the Year 1915: D.W. Griffith and the Whitening of America”, *Social Identities*, July 1997, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 161–93

⁶⁷ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 36

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 45



Figure 8: A scene from the 1912 Biograph film *The Massacre*, directed by D.W. Griffith. The pioneer wagon train in the valley is stalked and in danger from the Native American menace. The Paper Print Collection US Library of Congress

American films characterising Native Americans as figures of menace associated with the Plains Wars model were evident in Australia as early as 1912. In that year the 23 November edition of the Australian film journal *Photoplay* featured an article entitled “The Massacre: A Real Life Story of the Indian War” by Henry Norman. The story mirrors the plot of Griffith’s 1912 film for Biograph of the same name. The evidence is clear: Native American characterisations were not cinematic models for the Indigenous Australian Comic Black.

In his 2007 study *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II*, Cedric Robinson offered an explanation for this contrast between the depictions of Native Americans and African Americans. Robinson asserted that Native Americans could fit easily into the “conquest motifs of the Western as a genre” but that for the African American the legacy of the minstrel show “was its own imperium”.⁶⁹ In other words, the African American characters, including the comic, who had become staples of minstrelsy, had acquired hegemony over

⁶⁹ Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, p. 129

white perceptions of African Americans. As I have indicated, this was not just the case in the United States. Minstrelsy was also an influential element in the genesis of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black and the broader Australian construction of racial regimes.⁷⁰

These African American tropes and an examination of some of the films in which they featured will serve to reinforce the validity of my comparison with the Indigenous Australian Comic Black. Guerrero asserted that the subordinate silent film buffoons were all the more demeaned by the absence of sound. He argued that this encouraged “exaggerated slapstick gestures enhancing the pantomime narrative of silent film”, qualities clearly evident in the exaggerated “mugging” by Moori and “the flapper” in *Trooper O’Brien*.⁷¹ The key to a valid comparison, however, between the African American ‘coon’ and the Indigenous Australian Comic Black lies in Guerrero’s analysis of the films he described as being part of “the cinematic paradigm of the plantation myth”.⁷² According to Guerrero, to sustain this myth some of the African American slaves needed to be childlike, simple-minded and comic figures to justify slavery on the grounds that they were happy and that kindly masters and the institution of slavery were needed to protect them from the harsh realities of competing in the free labour market. As noted previously, a similar rationale is evident in both Australian history and Australian film. The cinematic Comic Black served to justify the protectionism and paternalism that was a feature of Australian government policy throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The character was, in Bain Attwood’s words, a

⁷⁰ Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*, pp. 103–04

⁷¹ Guerrero, *Framing Blackness*, p.19

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 15

reflection of “the telling of stories” that served to sustain Australia’s settler myths.⁷³

The Paper Print Collection held in the US Library of Congress indicates that Bogle’s ‘coon’ has a long cinematic history. One of the earliest films containing the trope dates from 1900; in *Watermelon Contest*, made by Edison, four African American men appear to be in a race to finish eating a large slice of watermelon.⁷⁴ There is a close-up as one man eats and spits seeds. He repeatedly checks on the progress of his companions. The event degenerates as each of the men childishly begin to grab for one another’s watermelon to get more.

In 1903 cameraman Edwin S. Porter filmed *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* for Edison. This short film is very simple, with a single camera in fixed position and stage sets. A feature of the film is the impression that most of the slave extras are ‘coons’, simple-minded and happy. The African Americans appear happy to dance at the drop of a hat. The establishing shots at the start of three different scenes depict the slaves dancing. They appear generally happy with their lot. These scenes immediately remind the observer of a similar sequence from the Australian film *The Birth of White Australia* (1928) in which the Indigenous Australians happily sit at the feet of the white man and sing, content with their lot. The scene also reinforces a key aspect of the construction of whiteness. The non-Indigenous Australian is, again, the epitome of enterprise; he has apparently built something out of virgin bush. Richard Dyer linked white enterprise to

⁷³ Bain Attwood, *Possession: Batman’s Treaty and the Matter of History* (Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), p. 105; Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *The Dark Side of the Dream* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p. 26

⁷⁴ Paper Print Collection, US Library of Congress, Washington DC

colonialism.⁷⁵ A notable point of contrast, however, between the depiction of the 'coons' in silent film versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Tame Blacks, those Indigenous Australians who, like the Tracker character, tamely accepted the authority of the whites, was that the latter were not mistreated or brutalised. In other words, there is no obvious Australian equivalent to Simon Legree from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.



Figure 9: A scene from the Australian film *The Birth of White Australia* (1928). The segment contains the Australian equivalent to Guerrero's 'plantation myth'. Like the plantation slaves, these Indigenous Australians are content with their lot. They sit at the feet of the white man and happily sing – even though their actions appear to be disconcertingly like the 'hokey pokey'. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

In 1904 American Mutoscope & Biograph produced *A Nigger in the Woodpile*. This film, shot with a single fixed camera aimed at a stage set, celebrated white superiority, enterprise and energy by contrasting it in comic terms with the lazy and foolish African American. The film opens with a white man sawing wood. Shortly after this, another white man arrives and indicates by gestures that he thinks that some of their wood has been stolen. He puts a stick of dynamite in one of the logs and indicates, by gesture, that he anticipates an explosion when the thieves put the stolen log on their fire. The white men exit and two African American characters, played by white actors in blackface, enter. They

⁷⁵ Dyer, *White*, p. 31

steal some of the logs and take them home. The log with the dynamite goes into their wood-burner stove and explodes. The African Americans are humiliated and knocked off their feet by the force of the explosion but are apparently unhurt. The whites arrive and help the African Americans.

This film is only 102 feet long, but it summarises a number of attitudes shared by many in the United States and Australia in the first part of the twentieth century and tightens the conceptual links between the plantation myth and the Australian settler myth – the attitudes shared by Dixie and Matilda. The whites are industrious; they work hard. The white men saw the wood and the lazy African Americans steal it. The white men, however, are not fooled. They engineer a solution and the African Americans are taught a lesson by the enterprising whites. The film was shot in New York, but regardless of location it reflects a certain historical and social blindness, much like W.E.H. Stanner's "great Australian silence".⁷⁶ It is representative of the historical myths perpetuated by the Southern plantation films and Australian films with Indigenous characters. *A Nigger in the Woodpile* is blind to the fact that one of the features of slavery in the South was that the African Americans did much of the physical labour. So the film begins with a false premise, in much the same way as Australian silent films perpetuated myths about *terra nullius* and peaceful settlement.

In 1905 Edison produced *The Wooing and Wedding of a Coon* featuring a foolish bumbling African American couple. Between 1910 and 1911 a series of films featuring a comic African American 'coon' character known as Rastus appeared: *How Rastus Got His Turkey*, *Rastus in Zululand*, *Rastus and Chicken*,

⁷⁶ W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Company, 1968), p. 25

Pickaninnies and Watermelon and *Chicken Thief*. Each of these films served to consolidate the image of the foolish, 'comic coon'.

Bogle's 'coons' were the African American Jesters, "the comic Negro"⁷⁷ of the 1920s. The cinematic 'coon' had a long heritage and one of its earliest manifestations was "the piccaninny ... a harmless, little screwball creation ... whose antics were pleasant and diverting."⁷⁸ The popular and frequently remade silent film version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* included the slave child character of Topsy, a young version of the 'coon'; she is readily distinguished by her signature shock of unruly hair and her use "solely for comic relief."⁷⁹ Bogle noted that Topsy became a "film favourite".⁸⁰ As noted previously, the Topsy character can be clearly identified in one of the surviving fragments from Charles Chauvel's Australian film *The Moth of Moonbi* (1926).

In 1922 D.W. Griffith directed *One Exciting Night*, a film that, in Bogle's description, "featured a ludicrous Negro character named Romeo Washington".⁸¹ The character played by a white actor in blackface is trapped in a haunted house and the comic elements of the plot are generated by the panic exhibited by the 'coon'. Bogle made the observation that the use of white actors in blackface "degraded the black comic figures of the day even further" because they were made to "appear more grotesque and less individualized".⁸² In a review of the white actors' performances in these parts, Bogle went on to say that their "acting

⁷⁷ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 19

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 7

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 8

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 24

⁸² *ibid.*

was always grossly overdone”.⁸³ As is evident in the detailed examination of the surviving fragments of Australian silent films, white actors in blackface who gave similarly exaggerated performances also often played Indigenous Australian Comic Blacks. Peter Noble in his pioneering work *The Negro in Films*, published in 1948, described *One Exciting Night* as “the most striking example of the use of the Negro as the contemptible comic relief”.⁸⁴ Noble claimed that this Griffith film “commenced the long line of those well-known screen puppets”.⁸⁵ None of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black inventions – the anachronism, the child or the fool – has real, individualised personality: they are puppets.

The Australian historical context of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black

Given the influence of minstrelsy and the acknowledged impact of American cinematic iconography on Australia’s construction of whiteness and race, it is hardly surprising that they were present in the genesis of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black. Although I do accept the validity of Glen Lewis’s assertion that film was an international language but one that “speaks with an American accent”, Australia was not a passive recipient of racist imagery.⁸⁶ There were clearly identifiable home-grown elements to Australia’s cinematic racial regime. According to Keith Willey, the Australian tradition of the Comic Black in art dates back to the early nineteenth century, when Indigenous Australians were “no longer seen as individuals but as grotesque caricatures”.⁸⁷ Willey argued that the form reached a “culmination” with the image entitled *Going Home* by Ernest

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Peter Noble, *The Negro in Films* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1969), p. 43

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Glen Lewis, *Australian Movies and the American Dream* (New York, 1987), p. 8

⁸⁷ Willey, *When the Sky Fell Down*, p. 131

Grisels (see below).⁸⁸ The image is comic, but it also clearly suggests that Indigenous Australians represented a less evolved life form.⁸⁹



Figure 10: Clear evidence of the development, in art, of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black – reality distorted by racism. From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia

This pattern of caricature is also evident in a series of post-Federation cartoons featuring Indigenous Australians that appeared as a regular feature in *The Photoplayer*, a 1920s Australian film journal. All of the cartoons in the series, like the example in Figure 19, depicted Indigenous Australians in crude, racist and comic terms.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 160

⁸⁹ For a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Indigenous representation in Australian art, see Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960); Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788*, (Sydney, Ure Smith, 1945); Bernard Smith, “The Preference for the Primitive and on Writing Art History in Australia”, *Third Text*, September 2004, vol. 18, no. 5, pp. 513–16; Bernard Smith, “Captain Cook’s Artists and the Portrayal of Pacific Peoples”, *Art History*, September 1984, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 295–312.

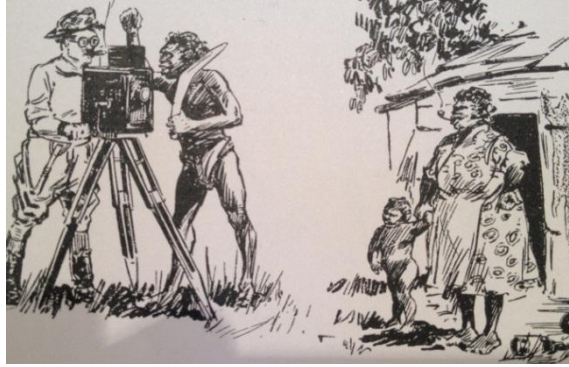


Figure 11: The caption reads: "Here Boss, no good you takem pitcher of Katie. No wantem white pheller write'em her plurry love letters." From *The Photoplayer*, 13 October 1923

Even though Bernard Smith provided an extensive analysis of Australian art that can be used to inform this discussion, I have focused more on the popular cartoons of the Federation era.⁹⁰ I regard these as more relevant to this study because first, the cartoonists were contemporaries of the silent filmmakers. Second the cartoons and the films depicted Indigenous Australians in the context of the early twentieth century and third both the cartoons and the films were part of what might be called 'popular culture'.

The cartoons that appeared in magazines such as *The Bulletin* and *Smith's Weekly*, among others, in the decades after Federation offer both an insight into the prevailing non-Indigenous racial imaginings of the time. Between 1900 and the 1920s many non-Indigenous Australians were exposed to Indigenous Australia through cartoons and silent films. I argue that there was a nexus between the invention of Indigenous Australians in popular cartoons and in silent films. The Indigenous Australian characterisations favoured by cartoonists included clearly identifiable types. A number of these character types, especially

⁹⁰ Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition*; Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850*; Bernard Smith, and A. Wheeler (eds.) *The Art of the First Fleet and Other Early Australian Drawings* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988)

the Comic Black, are similar to those invented by silent filmmakers. David Swain, in his survey of 130 years of cartoons featuring Indigenous Australians maintained that the three principal cartoonists who specialised in characterising Indigenous Australians – Benjamin Edwin Minns, Stan Cross and Eric Jolliffe – all shared the prejudices of their day and transmuted them through their art. The same thing can be said for Australia's silent filmmakers. The links between cartoons and film are evident in the way Swain described the communication of the cartoonist's imagined renderings. Swain said of the cartoonists that they performed "their comedy routines in the daily theatre of the newspapers". Swain uses words, such as 'comedy routines', 'perform' and 'theatre', that mirror the processes associated with the invention of film characters. Both the cartoons and silent films produced in the decades after Federation are non-Indigenous imaginings and inventions. When the links between the two are identified, the mindset of the age becomes even clearer.

Minns was a freelance artist whose work often appeared in *The Bulletin* between 1900 and the 1930s. Swain identified the key quality of Minns's characterisations of Indigenous Australians as their tendency to be patronising. An example of Minns's work can be seen in Figure 11. The character of King Billy is comic because he appears to be an inferior imitation of a non-Indigenous Australian gentleman. The King Billy character appeared in the 1928 film *The Birth of White Australia* (see Figure 13). It is readily identifiable in the film not only by his appearance but also by its name.



Figure 12: This Minns cartoon appeared in *The Bulletin* on 22 December 1900. The Indigenous character King Billy (right) raises his hat and says to the passing women, “You musn’t look at me like that – I’m a married man”.



Figure 13: At left, the King Billy character in the film *The Birth of White Australia* (1928). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia. At right, King Billy in a cartoon published in the film journal *The Photoplayer* on 17 November 1923.

Between 1919 and 1939, Stan Cross’s cartoons were frequently published in *Smith’s Weekly*. Cross typically, according to Swain, characterised Indigenous Australians as “stupid”. The Indigenous Australian character Jacky depicted in

the cartoon drawn by Cross that appeared in *Smith's Weekly* in August 1922 (shown in Figure 13) reflects many of the qualities of the typical Comic Black. Jacky is simpleminded and fixated on alcohol; he is barefoot and raggedly clothed. Like the Comic Black character of Moori, who featured in the silent film *Trooper O'Brien* (1928), Jacky is characterised as unready for the responsibilities of an adult. Both are depicted as childlike and in need of protection (see Figure 14).



Figure 14: This Stan Cross cartoon appeared in *Smith's Weekly* in August 1922. The non-Indigenous canvasser (at left) asks the Indigenous Australian character Jacky if he will support Prohibition. Jacky replies by stating that if he is given a bottle of rum he will vote for anything.



Figure 15: Stan Cross's cartoon character Jacky (at left) and the Indigenous Australian Comic Black character of Moori (at right) from the silent film *Trooper O'Brien* made in 1928.

I want to address two important links that I have identified between the characterisation of Indigenous Australians in cartoons and silent films, both of which have a bearing on my film typology. In my typology, there are two conspicuous absences: there is no romantic Indigenous Australian heroine who is the focus of an inter-racial sexual liaison, and there is no individualised Indigenous Australian warrior hero. These absences will be explored in more detail in chapter four. Both characters are absent from my typology, and part of the explanation for their absence can be found in the early twentieth-century invention of Indigenous Australians evident in cartoons.

Mick Paul's cartoon that appeared in 1926 (shown in Figure 15) contrasts the fine feminine features of the non-Indigenous woman with the coarse, simian features of the Indigenous Australian maid. Paul's grotesque caricature is all the more potent because it is composed as part of a cartoon where the non-Indigenous character is drawn in a realistic style. The implication is that both characters are rendered as they are in real life. Mick Paul was not the only cartoonist to render Indigenous women in this fashion. Tom Glover, a staff cartoonist for *The Bulletin* between 1920 and 1928, also depicted Indigenous women in a similarly unattractive fashion, as also did Benjamin Minns.



Figure 16: A cartoon by Mick Paul that appeared in *Aussie* in 1926. Source: David Swain, *200 in the Shade*. The maid, Mary, is asked about a missing bottle of cooking wine. Mary replies that her husband, Jackie, must have taken it because she saw him double last night.

The implication in all such works was that Indigenous Australians were on the lowest rung of the ladder of human existence. The cartoonists appeared determined to make Indigenous Australian women appear as unattractive as possible. It was as though these depictions were intended to prevent any sexual relationship developing between non-Indigenous men and Indigenous women, even though such relationships were a feature of life on the frontier. In 1899 Benjamin Minns drew the cartoon shown in Figure 17: it reflected both these points. The Indigenous Australian woman is more ape-like than the Maori she is looking at in the photograph. The label for the cartoon distinguishes between the colours of black and brown, and the Indigenous female dubbed the 'Eternal Female' is characterised by Minns as an 'Ugly brute'. These kinds of characterisations are linked to the absence of an Indigenous Australian romantic heroine in any of the silent films that were made in Australia as part of the inter-racial romance genre. Neither cartoonists nor filmmakers wanted to depict, or be seen to sanction, a betrayal by men of the ideals of a white Australia. Indigenous

women in cartoons were unattractive brutes or hags and they did not qualify, even as illicit sexual partners, for non-Indigenous males in silent films.



Figure 17: A Minns cartoon published in *The Bulletin* in 1899. The label reads, "Australian Black woman (looking at the photo of a Maori brown woman): Ugly brute!"

Aside from the place of this kind of characterisation in the general social consciousness, there is clear evidence that the character type of the unattractive Indigenous hag had embedded itself in the world of Australian film. The cartoon in Figure 18 appeared in the film journal *The Photoplayer* in October 1923.



Figure 18: This cartoon appeared in *The Photoplayer* on 13 October 1923. Note the bottles at the woman's feet and the reminder of the consequences of a sexual relationship in the form of the small child at left.

The other feature of the cartoons of the early 1900s and the 1920s that is relevant for my film typology is the absence of an individualised Indigenous Australian warrior character. I maintain that this absence is indicative of the cinematic emasculation of Indigenous Australian men. One of the factors at work in this process of emasculation was the depiction of Indigenous men as uncaring and lacking chivalry towards their women. In the first decades of the twentieth century, manliness was regularly associated with martial prowess and chivalry. When Indigenous men were characterised as falling short of these standards, as they are in the two cartoons shown in Figure 19, their manhood was brought into question.



Figure 19: At left *Moving Camp* by Livingston Hopkins (Hop) that appeared in *The Bulletin* in 1887. At right the same characterisation in the Stan Cross cartoon from 1924 that appeared in *Smith's Weekly*. Source: David Swain, *200 in the Shade*

The other element that coincided in the invention of Indigenous Australian characters in cartoons and silent film was the preoccupation with 'whiteness', the White Australia policy and the superiority of the white race. This was a constant element of Australia's national identity in the decades after Federation. They were recurring themes in both Australian silent films and the cartoons of the period. The other underlying assumption, set out explicitly in Tom Glover's

cartoon *Getting Near* that appeared in *The Bulletin* in 1927 (see Figure 20) was the idea that Indigenous Australians were doomed to die out.



Figure 20: The cartoon by Tom Glover appeared in *The Bulletin* in 1927. It explicitly reflects the myth of the doomed race. Note the distorted features of both of the Indigenous Australian characters. Source: David Swain, *200 in the Shade*

The non-Indigenous attitudes reflected in the cartoon character types invented in the 20 years after Federation were also apparent in the attitudes of silent filmmakers and so influenced invention of the ‘Comic Black’.

The mindset that gave rise to the invention of Indigenous Australian Comic Black was also evident in academic discourse. Few scholars had more influence on the popular perception of Indigenous Australians in the first decades of the twentieth century than the anthropologist Baldwin Spencer. Spencer attempted to observe and factually record Indigenous Australian communities, but according to his biographers D.J. Mulvaney and J.H. Calaby, he could not separate his view of Indigenous Australians from a belief in evolutionary biology.⁹¹ The result was that, according to Spencer, Indigenous Australians were examples of an anachronism. They were worth observing because they were an example of a simpler form of

⁹¹ Mulvaney and Calaby, “*So Much that is New*”: *Baldwin Spencer 1860–1929*, p. 17

prehistoric society.⁹² Spencer's ideas contributed to the kinds of thinking reflected in two Indigenous Australian character types evident in the films of the silent era: the Comic Black and the related Wild Black, a character type that will be considered in chapter three.

The transition from primitive anachronism to the comic characterisation proved to be easy. Indigenous Australia was an evolutionary error, an aberration and as an oddity, and hence, something potentially comic. This kind of comic imagery found its way into the 1922 silent film *Astronomers and Aborigines*, which followed the Croker Solar Eclipse Expedition to Walla in Western Australia (see Figure 20). The film was meant to be a documentary, but the images in the two intertitles below, which draw on the cannibal analogy and the notion of the ignorant and fearful black, reflect how readily Indigenous Australians could be typed as comic.

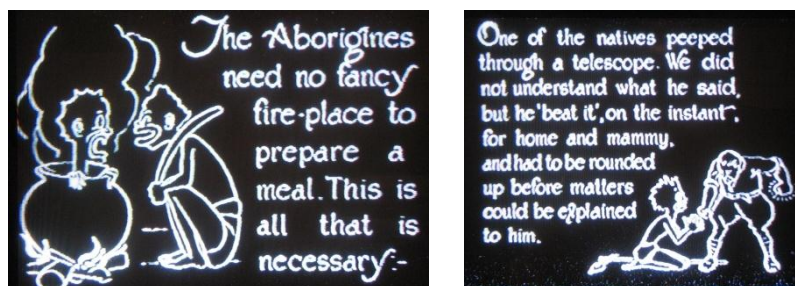


Figure 21: Intertitles from *Astronomers and Aborigines* (1922). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

In simple terms, then, the non-Indigenous Australian invention of Indigenous Australian comic imagery had a long history and proved to be all the more potent when conveyed in silent film through the masks of the Comic Black.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 61

Chapter Three

The Wild Black

The cinematic Indigenous Australian 'Wild Black' is both shadowy and deceptively familiar. The Wild Black stands with the Tracker as one of the two earliest and most popular inventions of Indigenous Australia evident in Australian feature films. The Wild Black can be identified in 16 silent feature films made between 1910 and 1929.¹ The Wild Black was invariably male and, unlike the Tracker or the Comic Black, was rarely an individualised character. However, like all of the character types identified here, the Wild Black is a non-Indigenous invention. Part of that invention was to characterise the Wild Blacks as 'primitive', pre-modern artefacts. This was achieved by presenting them as a contrast with those who, for the want of a better term, might be called 'Tame Blacks': the trackers, the stockmen and helpers who served members of the non-Indigenous newcomers.²

A review of Australian silent films reveals that from 1910, and the appearance of the first Wild Black, there has always been a clear demarcation between two distinct groups of cinematic Indigenous Australians: the tribal or Wild Blacks and the Tame Blacks. I contend that the ongoing distinction between the Wild Black and the Tame Blacks – evident in both plot and dialogue in Australian films familiar to many from the early sound era such as *Heritage*

¹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia; Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998)

² Quote marks are again used in the first instance to refer to a specific cinematic character type

(1935), *Uncivilised* (1936), *The Overlanders* (1946), *Bitter Springs* (1950) and *Jedda* (1955) and in many more recent films, up to and including Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008) – had its genesis in the silent era, and therefore can only be properly understood by exploring the provenance of those characterisations. This is an aspect of film history that has been ignored.

The cinematic Wild Black is a reflection of non-Indigenous thinking and of the concepts of Aboriginalism outlined earlier.³ Aboriginalism is the imposition of a non-Indigenous perspective on narratives involving Indigenous Australians. Aboriginalism is evident in the cinematic characterisation of the Wild Black, a process in which non-Indigenous filmmakers invented their own version of a “primitive Aboriginal mentality”.⁴

Two other concepts are useful in an analysis of the invention of the Wild Black. These are “smudging”, an idea proposed by Julie Marcus, and David Cannadine's Ornamentalism.⁵ The concept of smudging was initially proposed by Marcus in a consideration of artworks, but it is nevertheless useful in an analysis of silent cinematic images. Smudging is an appropriate concept to apply to the depiction of the cinematic Wild Black because the type was regularly equated, as were Indigenous Australians in artworks, with the land and with exotic, archaic

³ Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p. 27

Bain Attwood and John Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines* (Bundoora: La Trobe University Press, 1992)

⁴ Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, p. 28

⁵ Julie Marcus, *A Dark Smudge Upon the Sand: Essays on Race Guilt and National Consciousness* (Canada Bay: LHR Press, 1999), p. 10; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2002)

ceremonial practices. In the smudging process, according to Marcus, Indigenous Australians “lose their existence as living people with rights” and are therefore denied the status of “rational actors”.⁶ This lack of individuality or rationality is an identifiable characteristic of the silent cinematic Wild Black.

The other concept of value in this analysis is David Cannadine’s Ornamentalism. Cannadine used the concept to frame what he understood was the hierarchical way in which the British “understood, visualized and imagined their empire”.⁷ Ornamentalism is useful because it assumes a “racial hierarchy”, exemplified by stereotyping racial others. The empire was divided between the British and “subject races”.⁸ The Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks were assumed to be inferior. In this process, even though Indigenous Australians were thought to benefit from dispossession they were still banished “to the margins of the new imperial society”.⁹ The other useful element of Ornamentalism is the insight it offers into the British ways of thinking about the Indigenous populations of their empire. British thinking reproduced aspects of the social hierarchies most familiar to them. The British viewed their own society in hierarchical terms; hence it was “scarcely surprising that they conceived and understood their (colonial) periphery in the same way”.¹⁰ The silent cinematic Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks were regularly characterised in hierarchical terms through depictions of them being ruled by kings. As Henry Reynolds pointed out, the idea that Indigenous Australians were directed by powerful chiefs, especially in their

⁶ Marcus, *A Dark Smudge Upon the Sand*, p. 10

⁷ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. 5

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 5

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 5

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 122

attacks on the settlers, was a colonial fiction.¹¹ But it was a fiction that was adopted, reflected and refracted by silent filmmakers.

In terms of method, this chapter, as did the previous chapters on the Tracker and the Comic Black, will examine the nature of the characterisation of the Wild Black by tracing the provenance of the character type. This will be done by a survey of the silent films in which the type appears and through a close analysis of the character as it manifests itself in the surviving footage. The survey will include surviving footage from ethnographic films because I argue that there were clear links between the characterisation of Indigenous Australians in the ethnographic films and feature films. These links were at times direct. As I will show later, scenes from ethnographic films were added to feature films with the Wild Black character.¹² Furthermore, images from ethnographic films were used in advertising to promote feature films that characterised the Wild Black. Australian silent feature film and Australian anthropology came of age at much the same time, and there is ample evidence in the surviving silent ethnographic and feature films to establish a nexus between the two.¹³ Having said that, the principal focus of this chapter remains the genesis of the character type in feature film. Hence, the chapter will culminate with a close critical analysis of the

¹¹ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1982), p. 136

¹² One of the most obvious examples of this practice was the use of actuality scenes filmed by Francis Birtles in the six-reel drama *A Romance of the Burke and Wills Expedition* (1918).

¹³ Geoffrey Gray, *A Cautious Silence: The Politics of Australian Anthropology* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), p. 29

extensive depiction of the Wild Black in two surviving feature films: *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) and *The Birth of White Australia* (1928).¹⁴

A study of the Wild Black, like any of the other Indigenous character types from the silent era, is complicated by the loss of many of Australia's silent films.¹⁵ Even though the characterisation of the Wild Black can be identified in 16 silent features, footage from only four of these films survives.¹⁶ The genesis of the Indigenous Australian Wild Black in feature films of both the silent and sound eras can also be traced to some of the surviving early ethnographic films.¹⁷

In the chapters on the Tracker and the Comic Black, I challenged the accepted wisdom, which offered blanket comparisons between Indigenous Australians and Native Americans. I argue, instead, for a more nuanced approach that acknowledges the links between the cinematic invention of African Americans and Indigenous Australians. In the case of the Wild Black, however, it is valid to accept the significant influence of characterisations of Native Americans in the Western genre. Once the importance of Native American imagery is acknowledged, a point still needs to be made for a nuanced rather than a blanket comparison. There are significant points of contrast between the

¹⁴ For historical context and a background to the Chinese on the Australian Goldfields see Mae M. Ngai, "Chinese Miners, Headmen and Protectors on the Victorian Goldfields, 1853–1883", *Australian Historical Studies*, March 2011, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 10–24

¹⁵ Ray Edmondson and Andrew Pike, *Australia's Lost Films* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1982), p. 21

¹⁶ *A Girl of the Bush* (1921); *The Tenth Straw* (1926); *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928); *The Birth of White Australia* (1928)

¹⁷ *Haddon Expedition to the Torres Strait* (1898); *The Last Indigenous Australians* (1912); *Natives of Princess Charlotte Bay Queensland* (filmed in 1926 and 1927); *Coorab in the Island of Ghosts* (1929)

Indigenous Australian Wild Black and the wild Native Americans characterised in the silent Western. The cinematic invention of the Wild Black, and of Indigenous Australia in general, from the silent era on is, as I noted before, an amalgam. The amalgam is more complex and multifaceted than the existing literature suggests. The Wild Black character itself is also complex and worthy of closer individual study.

The Wild Black first appeared in a feature film in 1910 as a brief cameo in *The Squatter's Daughter* or *Land of the Wattle* with the depiction of what Pike and Cooper described as “an Aboriginal Wedding” incidental to the non-Indigenous story of the rivalry between neighbouring sheep stations.¹⁸ The film was yet another example of Australian silent film’s theatrical foundation. *The Squatter's Daughter* had been a staple of the Australian stage repertoire.¹⁹ A more substantial depiction of the character type came in the following year with *Moora Neya* or *The Message of the Spear* (1911), a melodrama about bush life produced by the Australian Photo-Play Company and directed by Alfred Rolf.²⁰ The film established some of the standards for the characterisation of the Wild Black. The Wild Blacks in the film were not individualised. Rather, they were part of a group manipulated by the villain in a bid to kill the film’s hero. It is this collective, rather than individualised, characterisation that makes the Wild Black a shadowy figure. Under Alfred Rolf’s direction, the Wild Black was again used to add colour. Advertisements for the film claimed that this was the first film to depict

¹⁸ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 10

¹⁹ Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829–1929* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 220–25

²⁰ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, , p. 21

Indigenous Australians in their native haunts. Pike and Cooper note that the film featured “a weird and fantastic corroboree”.²¹ The corroboree became a signature motif for the Wild Black. In fact, out of the 16 feature films identified between 1910 and 1929 with the Wild Black character type, nine featured a corroboree.²²

The Wild Black was again collectively in evidence later in 1911 in the Australian Photo-Play Company production *Caloola, or The Adventures of a Jackeroo*, in which a group of nameless Wild Blacks kidnap the daughter of a non-Indigenous settler.²³ The white captive motif, although more common in relation to Native Americans and the Hollywood Western, did, as will be seen later, re-emerge in the context of the Indigenous Australian Wild Black in 1928 in *The Romance of Runnibede*.²⁴ It should be noted, however, that the 1928 production was under the creative control of visiting American filmmakers and specifically designed for the American market.

In 1912 the Gaumont Agency produced *Call of the Bush*. The film opened at the Enmore Theatre in Sydney in December, but, as is the case with so many of Australia’s silent films, the film itself has not survived and we are left with only fragmentary documentary evidence in the form of advertisements. The

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 28

²⁴ For the white captive motif in American films, see Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 7. For the tradition of the white captive in Australia, see Julie Carr, *The Captive White Woman of Gippsland: In Pursuit of the Legend* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Ian J. McNiven, Lynette Russell and Kay Schaffer, *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser’s Shipwreck* (London: Cassells, 1998); Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

advertising referred to a story of bush life and an attack by nameless Wild Blacks.²⁵ The storyline of the film reinforced the characterisations of the Wild Black as a collective, non-rational, almost elemental threat to the non-Indigenous Australian pioneers – a characterisation that was compatible with the preferred historical narratives of the time.²⁶

The ubiquitous corroboree emerged again in 1913 in two films *A Blue Gum Romance* and *The Life of a Jackeroo*. Both films were directed by Franklyn Barrett and produced by the Fraser Film Release and the Photographic Company.²⁷ Whenever the Wild Black character type appeared in Australian silent films, the corroboree was second only to the random attack as the most favoured plot scenario. Unlike the random attack, however, the corroboree proved to have a much longer history as a filmic device, enduring well into the era of sound and the twenty-first century.

²⁵ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 37

²⁶ Bain Attwood, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History* (Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), p. 105; Bain Attwood and John Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines* (Bundoora, 1992); Bain Attwood "Unsettling Pasts: Reconciliation and History in Settler Australia", *Postcolonial Studies*, August 2005, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 242–58; Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, p. 27; Marcus, *A Dark Smudge Upon the Sand*, p. 10

²⁷ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 764637 (*A Blue Gum Romance*); Title No. 343322 (*The Life of a Jackeroo*); Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 39



Figure 1: The Wild Blacks from the casts of *A Blue Gum Romance* and *The Life of a Jackeroo*. They were played by non-Indigenous Australian youths from the Gosford area, where the films were shot. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Later in 1913 came *Moondyne*, a film directed by W.J. Lincoln and produced by Lincoln-Case Films. The film's non-Indigenous hero, Joe Moondyne (George Bryant), is a wrongly accused escaped convict who takes refuge with group of Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks.²⁸ The characterisation of the Wild Blacks in *Moondyne* is clearly a non-Indigenous invention and includes notions of hierarchy associated with Cannadine's Oramentalism.²⁹ In the film the Wild Blacks have a King with the name of Te Mana Roa, played by the non-Indigenous Australian actor Godfrey Cass.³⁰ Somewhat curiously, the King has been given a Maori-sounding name.

²⁸ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343315; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 41

²⁹ Cannadine, *Ornamentation*, p. 5

³⁰ Cass was a well-known silent actor who had a long career on the stage before being cast in silent films; he played Ned Kelly on four occasions. Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 42



Figure 2: Joe Moondyne (George Bryant, left and Te Mana Roa (Godfrey Cass, right), the King of the Wild Blacks.
Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

After the release of *Moondyne* in 1913, the Wild Black did not feature in Australian film again until 1920 with the Carroll-Baker production of *The Jackeroo from Coolabong* directed by Wilfred Lucas and starring Snowy Baker. The most obvious explanation for this hiatus was the combination of the emerging creative and marketing influence of Hollywood in the period between 1914 and 1918 and the influence of the Great War. An examination of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia's collection, and a review of Pike and Cooper's survey, indicates that during this period "Hollywood gained an ascendancy in world production" and a related creative influence.³¹ Both creatively and commercially, the Great War had a major influence on Australian film production. During the war years film stock became scarce because its primary ingredients, the nitrates, were used in munitions and because the European sources of film stock were cut off.³² The Great War also became a favoured subject for Australian filmmakers. The 'bush' melodramas that had always provided a place for Indigenous

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 49

³² Edmondson and Pike, *Australia's Lost Films*, p. 17

Australian characters such as the Wild Black were replaced by films about the Great War.³³ Of the 53 Australian feature films made between 1914 and 1918, 17, or almost 33 per cent, of them dealt in some way with the war or the German threat.

When the Wild Black did return in 1920, it was in *The Jackeroo of Coolabong*, part of whose plot was adapted from an earlier film, *The Lure of the Bush* (1918).³⁴ In *The Jackeroo of Coolabong* Snowy Baker played the hero, an English “new chum” intent on proving himself to the “old hands”.³⁵ In the process, he escapes from a party of Wild Blacks by displaying his trademark skills as an all-round athlete and swimmer. An advertisement for the film that appeared in the film journal *The Picture Show* on 1 November 1920 referred to a “whirlwind kangaroo drive” and an encounter with “wild aboriginals and their amazing Devil Dance”.³⁶ That advertising copy synthesised many of the key themes associated with the invention of the Wild Black. The anonymous Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks were directly associated with the landscape and fauna by linking them with the kangaroo drive, and the corroboree motif was again a signature of the Wild Black.

³³ Starting with *A Long Way to Tipperary* (1914) and continuing through to *What Happened to Jean* (1918), the Great War genre dominated. During this period even filmmakers like John Gavin and Beaumont Smith, who had made their careers making Australian films with Bush themes, joined the trend. In 1916 Gavin directed *The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell*; he followed it up in 1917 with *The Murder of Captain Fryatt*. Meanwhile, in 1918, Beaumont Smith also altered his normal creative course and made *Satan in Sydney*, a film featuring an evil German bent on corrupting Australian youth.

³⁴ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343404

³⁵ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 101

³⁶ *The Picture Show*, 1 November 1929, p. 44 (State Library of New South Wales)

When the film premiered in Sydney at the Crystal Palace and the Lyric Theatre in October 1920, banners proclaimed “Kangaroo hunts! High dives! Wild Blacks!”.³⁷ The key point is that the scenes featuring the nameless Wild Blacks could just as easily have been replaced, as filmic devices, with some other generic natural peril, such as a bush fire or flood. Snowy Baker would still have been able to dive and swim to escape death or injury. The film is another of the stories that emphasised the dangers that confronted the “pioneers and early settlers”.³⁸ It is also another example of ‘smudging’, because the Wild Blacks in this film are equated with the natural perils of bush life, and in the process are denied the status of rational actors.³⁹

Typically, in all of these early Australian films, the violent acts of the Wild Blacks just erupt, and no motivation is ascribed to them. This is in marked contrast to the characterisation of the Native Americans in the American frontier Westerns from the same period. For example, in D.W. Griffith’s *The Massacre* (1910), the motivation for the violent actions of the Native Americans is made clear. The film, which survives in the Paper Print Collection in the US Library of Congress, features a surprise attack on a peaceful Native American village by the US cavalry, led by a figure with long hair and beard resembling the legendary George Armstrong Custer.⁴⁰ No reason is offered for the attack. Just before it

³⁷ John Tulloch *Legends on the Screen: The Narrative Film in Australia 1919–1929* (South Carlton: Currency Press, 1981) p. 105. The film was later renamed *This Fighting Breed* for an American release in 1921.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 105

³⁹ Marcus, *A Dark Smudge Upon the Sand*, p. 10

⁴⁰ The assault on the village seemed to be loosely based on Custer’s attack at the Washita River where Black Kettle, one of the Cheyenne chiefs willing to live at peace, and his wife were killed.

occurs, there is a shot of a Native American mother and infant inside one of the tepees. After the cavalry rides through, there is a medium shot of the scattered bodies of the dead villagers, with the same mother and infant lying dead in the foreground. This film offered clear evidence of the differences between the silent cinematic representation of frontier conflict and the 'first peoples' of the US and Australia. Unlike any of the cinematic versions of the Indigenous Australian Wild Black, here the initial attack by the US cavalry provided a motivation for a retaliatory response by the Native Americans on a settler wagon train later in the film. By contrast, though, Australian silent films typically featured Wild Blacks as the aggressors. There is no Australian silent film scenario that is comparable to Griffith's *The Massacre* (1910), in which any form of frontier violence is initiated by members of the supplanting society.⁴¹ Hence there was an evident Australian cinematic silence about the realities of non-Indigenous aggression.⁴² There is nothing in Australian silent films to suggest the reality of frontier violence noted by historians.⁴³ This absence can be explained in three ways. First, there was the physical and conceptual distance between the worlds of the rural nineteenth-century frontier and the urban filmmakers of the post Federation decades. Second, in a desire to appeal to their audience, filmmakers followed the narrative fashion of the day. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the fashionable

⁴¹ David Day, *Conquest: A New History of the Modern World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 9

⁴² As noted in the chapter on the Tracker, the role of the Queensland Native Police on that frontier was sanitised in the surviving footage from *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928).

⁴³ Jonathan Richards, *The Secret War* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2008); Rosalind Kidd, *The Way We Civilise* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), p. xv; A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahan Books, 2008); Mark Finnane and Jonathan Richards, "Aboriginal Violence and State Response: Histories, Policies and Legacies in Queensland 1860–1940", *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* August 2010, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 238–62

historical narrative celebrating the new nation was being institutionalised.⁴⁴ Third, it was a period when the myth of the doomed race meant that non-Indigenous narratives were less inclined to engage with Indigenous Australians.⁴⁵ The Wild Blacks had become, in the words of W.E.H. Stanner in his 1968 Boyer Lecture, a “mere codicil” or “melancholy footnote” to the Australian story.⁴⁶

The contrast between the silent cinematic depictions of Native Americans and of the Indigenous Australian Wild Black was also evident in another Griffith film, *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* (1913), in which the Native Americans, although depicted as base and savage, were still given some motivation for their attack. In this film, the Chief’s son is shot by settlers and, as an intertitle from the film declares, “The death of the Chieftain’s son fans the ever ready spark of hatred to revenge”.⁴⁷ The contrast was even more obvious in the Klaw and Erlanger production *The Indian* (1914). Here the plot involved an attack by Native Americans on the pioneer/settlers, but unlike the typical practice in similar Australian films, there is explicit acknowledgement of a motive for the attack. An intertitle explains: “The Red Man aroused by the invasion of the Whites”.⁴⁸ This is not to suggest that American filmmakers in the silent era always offered motivation for attacks by their ‘first peoples’ on the newcomers. One of the

⁴⁴ Attwood, *Possession*, p. 165

⁴⁵ Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880–1939* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1997)

⁴⁶ W.E.H. Stanner, *The Dreaming and Other Essays* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009), p. 176

⁴⁷ *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch*, Biograph, 15 July 1913 (Paper Print Collection, US Library of Congress)

⁴⁸ *The Indian*, Klaw & Erlanger, 24 September 1914 (Paper Print Collection, US Library of Congress)

earliest surviving American narrative films, *Firing the Cabin (The Pioneers)* (1903), featured an attack by Native Americans on a settler cabin. The attackers break down the door, kill the adults and abduct a young girl. No motive is offered; it is simply a depiction of frontier violence. It should be noted, however, that this film was one of the earliest and most elementary of American feature films. It was filmed with a single camera and from a fixed position. As American films became more sophisticated in both technique and screenplay, motives came to be attributed to Native American characters. Even though there were still occasionally Westerns that featured nameless Native Americans in random attacks on settler homesteads and wagon trains, the point is that, by comparison, what was merely occasional in American Westerns became almost without exception the norm in Australian silent films.

The modes of characterisation of the Wild Black that had begun in 1910 were continued in 1921 with *A Girl of the Bush* (where fragments survive) and then *Mated in the Wilds* (1921). *A Girl of the Bush* was directed by Franklyn Barrett and produced by his Australian Productions company. The film told the story of Lorna Denver, the manager of a prosperous sheep station, played by Vera James.⁴⁹ As Pike and Cooper note, one aspect of the plot is the heroine's actions in giving "shelter to a baby that has survived an attack by Aborigines on white settlers".⁵⁰

⁴⁹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 761630

⁵⁰ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 104



Figure 3: A party of typically nameless Wild Blacks in a scene from *A Girl of the Bush* (1921). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Mated in the Wilds was directed by P.J. Ramster for P.J. Ramster Photoplays. Both Wild Blacks and Tame Blacks were incidentally featured as part of the outback phase of the story. In their summary of the plot, Pike and Cooper point to a 'love triangle'. The heroine, Elsa Hope (Elsa Granger), has two suitors, Justin and Monty, who venture into the outback on a motorcycle road trip. Monty abandons Justin and returns with the story that Justin has been killed "at the hand of wild Aborigines".⁵¹ As the plot unfolds, the audience learns that Justin has in fact survived being stranded in outback because he was cared for by "friendly Aborigines".⁵² Two things emerge from a consideration of each of these films. The first is that the Indigenous Australian Wild Black is again not individualised and is presented as just another of the generic natural dangers of life in the outback, and as such the image is smudged.⁵³ The second point worth noting is that *Mated in the Wilds* made clear the distinction between the Wild Black and the Tame Black (the friendly, helpful Indigenous Australian). Hence

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 107

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ Marcus, *A Dark Smudge Upon the Sand*, p. 10

even though the film is one of “Australia’s lost feature films”, we have enough to comment on the genesis of what was to become a well-worn non-Indigenous distinction between, on the one hand, the idea of the wild, tribal, potentially hostile Indigenous Australian and, on the other hand, the friendly helper.⁵⁴

The distinction between the Tame and Wild Blacks was part of what Henry Reynolds described in *The Other Side of the Frontier* as the politics of contact.⁵⁵ The basis for each of these character types emerged on the real frontier as part of the Indigenous Australian patterns of attraction and resistance to the newcomers. Reynolds explored these patterns further in *Black Pioneers*, in which he suggested that two of the great ongoing themes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations were confrontation and collaboration.⁵⁶ Reynolds also suggested that the distinction between the notions of the Wild Black and the Tame Black was linked to the tension that existed within non-Indigenous policies towards Indigenous Australians over whether it was best to assimilate or segregate the Indigenous population.⁵⁷ Reynolds suggested that, for the settlers, what assimilation of the Tame Blacks meant was that they would imitate the whites.⁵⁸ This quality was certainly incorporated into the cinematic characterisation of the Tame Blacks, and in the process the Wild Blacks were set clearly apart.

⁵⁴ Edmondson and Pike, *Australia’s Lost Films*, p. 9

⁵⁵ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1982), p. 128

⁵⁶ Henry Reynolds, *Black Pioneers: How Aboriginal and Islander People Helped Build Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000), p. 292

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 233

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 234

This sense of the Wild Black as apart – as the ‘other’ – was reflected in what we know about *The Tenth Straw* (1926) from surviving fragments of the film and the documentary evidence.⁵⁹ This convict melodrama was directed by Robert McAnderson for Pacific Films, and opened at the Empress Theatre in Sydney in March 1926. The story followed the familiar pattern established by Marcus Clarke’s novel *For the Term of His Natural Life* and by the short silent film based on it that was made in 1908.⁶⁰ The film plot, however, did involve a twist that introduced the collective Wild Black. According to Pike and Cooper, a goldfield was “discovered by Aborigines” and “real Aborigines were employed in the cast”.⁶¹ The comment by Pike and Cooper about casting of real Aborigines was in response to the fact that, following the minstrel tradition, it was common practice to use non-Indigenous actors in blackface to play Indigenous Australian parts.⁶² Aboriginalism is evident because the Wild Blacks in the film are appropriated simply to serve the non-Indigenous story-line and to cater to the non-Indigenous Australian fixation on gold.⁶³

The Indigenous Australian Wild Black and the corroboree appeared again in a film directed by and starring Harry Southwell for Anglo-Australian films, *Down*

⁵⁹ Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, p. 27; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 6907

⁶⁰ For a history of the theatrical adaptations of Clark’s novel, see Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829–1929*, pp. 144–49.

⁶¹ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 130. For more on the actual historical context of Indigenous Australians and the goldfields, see Howard Sercombe, “Living in Two Camps: The Strategies Goldfields Aboriginal People Use to Manage Customary Economy and the Mainstream Economy at the Same Time”, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, November 2008, vol. 2008, no. 2, pp. 16–21.

⁶² Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, p. 27

⁶³ *ibid.*

Under (1927).⁶⁴ Made for both British and Australian markets, it premiered in Perth. The outback scenes included a cattle muster “and an Aboriginal corroboree”.⁶⁵ The inclusion of a corroboree had, by 1927, become a typical, almost obligatory, signature motif linked to the characterisation of the Wild Black. It is easy to understand the appeal of a corroboree scene for any director with an eye to a British market or a largely ‘city-bound’ non-Indigenous Australian audience. The corroboree was an exotic, self-contained piece of theatre that worked well in silent films, a genre for which the visual impact was all-important. What is striking, however, is how the motif has persisted. It endured well into the sound era and the twenty-first century. The corroboree motif will be explored further in the chapter featuring the Mystic Black.

In the context of the invention of the Wild Black, I want to take a moment to look at some of the neglected films from the early sound era that preceded *Jedda* (1955) and which included the Wild Black and the Tame Black. In 1935, after learning his craft in silent film, Charles Chauvel made one of his earliest forays into

sound film production.⁶⁶ His film *Heritage* won first prize in a Commonwealth Government film competition. The film was a sweeping portrait of Australian history from Governor Phillip and the First Fleet down to the twentieth century. Both the film and Chauvel’s historical novel linked to it made explicit the

⁶⁴ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343579

⁶⁵ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 137

⁶⁶ Chauvel’s first sound film was *In the Wake of Bounty* (1933); it marked the film debut of the young Errol Flynn.

distinction between the Wild Black and the Tame Black.⁶⁷ Similarly, this distinction and the influence of the silent era were also evident in Chauvel's 1936 production *Uncivilised*. The film included the corroboree motif that had been a feature of the silent era and intertitles that referred to the Wild Blacks as "the remnants of the oldest race in the World", who "chant beside their fires, desiring to be left alone with their superstitions and their Gods". The Tame Black was present in the familiar guise of the Tracker, the loyal member of the Native Police.

The distinction between the Wild Black and the Tame Black was also drawn in two films starring Chips Rafferty: *The Overlanders* (1946) and *Bitter Springs* (1950). In *The Overlanders* the Tame Blacks are indispensable as helpers but are nonetheless characterised as inferior and subservient.⁶⁸ In *Bitter Springs* the Wild Blacks initially defend their traditional land but in the end are amalgamated into the non-Indigenous world, imitating the whites. By the film's last scene, the Wild Blacks have become Tame Blacks: they are shown shearing the newcomer's sheep, using his tools and wearing European clothes.⁶⁹

The characterisation of the contrasting Wild Blacks and Tame Blacks in all of these films came with little or no explanation. Such a characterisation was only

⁶⁷ Charles Chauvel, *Heritage* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), pp. 3, 204

⁶⁸ For an Indigenous Australian perspective, see Noah Riseman, "Contesting White Knowledge: Yolngu Stories from World War II", *Oral History Review*, June 2010, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 170–90.

⁶⁹ *Bitter Springs*, set in 1900, tells the story of Wally King (Chips Rafferty), who sets off with his family to take up new grazing land in the interior. One of the changes in this film is that the threat of an attack by Wild Blacks comes with a clear motivation: defence of their land. Nevertheless, the continuities dominate. Even though Ralph Smart raised issues about dispossession, the provenance of his characterisation of the Wild Black can be traced to the silent era. The concluding scenes of reconciliation assume the innate superiority of the non-Indigenous culture and way of life.

possible because of decades of both silent cinematic and anthropological discourse. The history of Australia's anthropological discourse and practice has recently been explored by Geoffrey Gray in *A Cautious Silence: The Politics of Australian Anthropology*. Gray points out that Australian anthropology "expressed an interest in Indigenous peoples as 'primitive'" and highlighted the fact that social anthropology "consolidated its position" both internationally and in Australia in the years after 1900.⁷⁰ The anthropological study of Indigenous Australians as a colonised people highlighted the distinction between their pre-colonial forms of society and the ways in which those societies might be, in Gray's words, "improved and made more compatible with modernity".⁷¹ This trend coincided with the growing popularity of film in the first years of the silent era. It should also be noted that, as Ian Dunlop has pointed out, the first films depicting Indigenous Australians dated from 1898 and that ethnographic films made between 1901 and 1922 regularly featured scenes of corroborees, Indigenous Australians at work and play, and aspects of their technology, implements, weapons, arts and crafts.⁷² Dunlop makes the point that during this period "the subject matter of ethnographic film was predominantly that of traditional Aboriginal life".⁷³ Hence, the earliest cinematic invention of the Wild Black, and one that was to be exploited throughout the history of Australian feature film, can be traced directly to the silent era.

⁷⁰ Gray, *A Cautious Silence*, pp. 3,

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 29

⁷² Ian Dunlop, "Ethnographic Film-Making in Australia: The First Seventy Years (1898–1968)", *Aboriginal History*, 1979, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 118

⁷³ *ibid.*

Australian filmmakers during the silent era and after can be said to have “reflected and refracted” (to use Marubbio’s phrase), the anthropological distinction between the full-blood, tribal, traditional or Wild Blacks and those who were increasingly drawn into the orbit of the non-Indigenous culture as a source of labour.⁷⁴ The point is that while the early history of this anthropological distinction has been explored by Gray and others, the early cinematic manifestation of the distinction, until now, has not.⁷⁵

A consideration of the silent cinematic ethnographic Wild Black

The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia preserved a number of silent ethnographic and actuality films featuring Indigenous Australians.⁷⁶ The idea and invention of the Wild Black is evident in a number of these films. At first glance, use of the term ‘invention’ may appear to be inappropriate in a consideration of the silent ethnographic/actuality films dating from 1898 that survive in the

⁷⁴ M. Elise Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), p. 25

⁷⁵ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: the politics and poetics of an ethnological event* (London: Cassell, 1999); Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and the Racial Destiny of Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005); Margaret Jolly, “Unsettling Affinities?”, *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, August 2004, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 173–84; Melinda Hinkson, “The Intercultural Challenge of Stanner’s First Fieldwork”, *Oceania*, March–June 2005, vol. 75, no. 3, pp. 195–208

⁷⁶ For the purpose of this analysis, I have distinguished between ethnographic films and actuality films, even though all of those considered here focus on Indigenous Australians. Ethnographic films such as *Haddon Expedition to the Torres Strait* (1898), *The Last Indigenous Australians* (1912), *Natives of Princess Charlotte Bay Queensland* (1926 and 1927) and *Coorab in the Island of Ghosts* (1929) were made by anthropologists. By contrast, actuality films were often travelogues featuring outback adventures.

archives. However, the reality is that these films, like any historical account, are influenced by the people who created them. As Geoffrey Gray pointed out, Australian anthropologists in the first decades of the twentieth century were interested in Indigenous Australians as a primitive people.⁷⁷ Hence, it is hardly surprising that their observations focused on this aspect of Indigenous Australian life and therefore were often preoccupied with Indigenous Australian weapons, technology, arts and crafts. The ethnographic films then, like the feature films, focused on what the person directing the camera wanted the audience to see.

A close examination of the surviving footage reveals that aside from weapons, arts and crafts, the most common aspect of Indigenous Australian life depicted was some simple form of dance or a corroboree. The preference of both ethnographic and the silent feature filmmakers for such scenes leads me to suggest the notion of the corroboree motif as a signature in the invention of the Wild Black. Corroboree scenes appear on seven separate occasions in the surviving footage from nine of the surviving ethnographic/actuality films.



Figure 4: Evidence of the corroboree motif: a scene from *MacRobertson Expedition* (1928). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

⁷⁷ Gray, *A Cautious Silence*, p. 3

Among the other recurring themes is an implicit contrast between the worlds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians evident in scenes of supposed daily life. Indigenous Australians were filmed making weapons, or at work on crafts. Other scenes also depict the traditional method of making fire, and a mock fight with shield and club.

These ethnographic films contributed to the invention of the Wild Black. The process of invention assumed that the Wild Black and the traditional Indigenous Australian way of life represented the way of the past. By contrast, non-Indigenous values and lifestyles were the way of progress and the future. This view, again acknowledged by both Gray and Reynolds, is represented by the juxtaposition of images of older Indigenous Australians performing traditional tasks while the young are framed in modernist settings.⁷⁸ These scenes include young Indigenous Australians receiving non-Indigenous schooling and even cooking porridge. Both scenes are meant to suggest the benefits of Western civilisation and hearty British nutrition. The intertitle that immediately preceded the shot of the Indigenous Australian youth stirring the pot of porridge read “According to tradition the natives formerly used the pot to cook missionaries”. This may have been an attempt at humour, but the implications were still nonetheless clear.

⁷⁸ Gray, *A Cautious Silence*, p. 3; Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, p. 128



Figure 5: Schooling of Indigenous Australian children, reflecting the contrast with more traditional practices associated with adults; an image from *MacRobertson Expedition* (1928). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

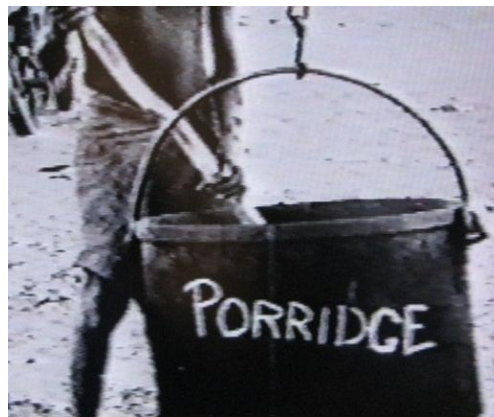


Figure 6: Cannibal pot to porridge pot; an image from *MacRobertson Expedition* (1928). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Aside from the visual evidence of the invention of the Wild Black evident in the images of the silent actuality films, the intertitles are explicit. Phrases like “Nomads of the North”, from the film made of the 1928 MacRobertson Expedition, and “Australia’s Primitive Inhabitants”, from the 1929 Kinegram travelogue *Real Australia* (1929), deliver their own clear message. Meanwhile the savage/civilised, or Tame Black/ Wild Black, dichotomy was also explicit in the

intertitles. Another intertitle from *MacRobertson Expedition* (1928) read “The ‘Civilized’ aboriginal is not half so ‘picturesque as those in the wild state”.

I have taken time to consider these ethnographic and actuality films because of their influence on narrative feature filmmakers. The influence of the actuality films and the nexus between them and feature films in terms of the cinematic invention of the Wild Black is clearly reflected in the image below.



Figure 7: A scene from the feature film *A Romance of the Burke and Wills Expedition of 1860* featuring Wild Blacks and the corroboree motif. The scene was taken from an actuality film by Francis Birtles and reflects the influence of the actuality films on the narrative film genre.

The image appeared in the film journal *The Picture Show* in May and July of 1919. The two Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks are pictured in corroboree poses, which clearly characterises them as the exotic “other”. In the process, they were transformed into specimens of humanity, shown at a primitive stage of development, rather than individual, rational agents.⁷⁹ The text of the advertisement for Birtles’s film describes him as “a pioneer overlander”. The

⁷⁹ Roslyn Poignant, “The Photographic Witness?”, *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 1991, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 6

Indigenous Australians are described variously as “Man-eating” and “Wild men of the bush”.⁸⁰ The same advertisement promotes some of Birtles’s other films, including *On the Track of Burke and Wills* (1915). Footage from *Thro’ Australian Wilds* (1919), including the scene in the image above, was used in a feature film about Burke and Wills. It was not unusual during the silent era for filmmakers to re-use footage from earlier films.⁸¹

The cinematic Wild Black in focus

Careful consideration of the various forms the Wild Black character has taken is warranted because of the way in which this character has been over-generalised. In the literature, for the most part, the idea of the Wild Black has simply replaced or become synonymous with Indigenous Australians. Such an approach reflects the false view – indicative of much non-Indigenous thinking – that ‘real’ Indigenous Australians are somehow part of an unchanging past. A careful review of the literature outlined in the introduction revealed a set of typical phrases commonly used to describe the characterisation of Indigenous Australians in feature films: for example, “treacherous and sadistic, savages”, “evil hordes stalling white Australia’s attempts to colonize the country”, “an inevitable feature of the landscape”, and “an ‘exotic’ backdrop”.⁸² This kind of

⁸⁰ *The Picture Show*, 19 July 1919 (State Library of New South Wales)

⁸¹ The practice was evident in *Trooper O’Brien* (1928); National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 7003. Edmondson and Pike, *Australia’s Lost Films*, p. 28

⁸² For “treacherous”, see Bruce Molloy, *Before the Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930–1960* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990), p. 124; for “evil hordes”, see Peter Krausz, “Screening Indigenous Australia: An Overview of Aboriginal Representation on

generalisation amounts to a distortion and neglect that is hardly useful. It ignores the fact that the Wild Black was just one of a number of the Indigenous Australian character types favoured by filmmakers. It also neglects the nuances evident in the silent characterisation of the Wild Black.

There is some basis for the generalisations evident in the literature because, as noted, the Wild Black is rarely individualised and in general, is depicted as part of a group. Furthermore, the Wild Black features regularly in non-Indigenous stories of struggle and adventure set in the outback. Although the character type is not absent in films dating from the period between the silent era to the twenty-first century, it does appear to be absent from academic discourse. In other words, the particular characterisation of the Wild Black is at once there, but not there, because the non-Indigenous invention of the idea of Indigenous Australians was, from the very beginning, preoccupied with the idea of the latter as primitives and savages.⁸³ Starting with the silent era, therefore, the history of the Wild Black reinforces the key points made in the opening chapters about the amalgam of Western, colonialist perceptions of Indigenous peoples that held sway both locally and internationally. An analysis of the provenance of the Wild Black reinforces the general neglect of the silent era and the importance of understanding the genesis of a character type that became a staple of Australian films.

Film", *Australian Screen Education* Spring 2003, p. 90; for "feature of the landscape" and "'exotic' backdrop", see Shane Crilly, "Reading Aboriginalities in Australian Cinema: from *Jedda* to *Dead Heart*", *Screen Education*, Winter 2001, no. 26/27, p. 37.

⁸³ Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Reports from the Edge of White Settlement* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 117

As with the more general cinematic construction of Indigenous Australia, the Wild Black is particularly, but not uniquely, Australian. As noted above, the Australian cinematic version of the Wild Black owes something to the cinematic Native American and also to the historical legacy of the accounts of the early European explorers, particularly the views expressed by William Dampier, familiar, in one form or another, to generations of Australians.⁸⁴ According to Pauline Turner Strong, Dampier's *New Voyage Around the World* proved to be "the most popular and influential of all travel accounts for three-quarters of a century".⁸⁵ Strong points out that Dampier's account and, hence, his view of Indigenous Australians, was widely read; it went through four editions by early 1699, "reviving the vogue for travel literature".⁸⁶ Dampier's generally negative judgement, which depicted "native Australians as among the lowest, the most bestial, of human beings" (Strong's paraphrase) was only partially ameliorated by the publication in 1773 of an account of James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific.⁸⁷ Both Dampier and Cook, however, established a pattern of thinking and a mode of characterisation that was to endure. According to Strong, each of their accounts "measured the natives of New Holland against Europeans primarily by what they lacked".⁸⁸ This view was based on an assessment of material culture.

⁸⁴ William Hasty, "Piracy and the Production of Knowledge in the Travels of William Dampier, c. 1679–1688", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2011, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 40–54; Anna Neill, "Buccaneer Ethnographer: Nature, Culture, and Nation in the Journals of William Dampier", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 2000, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 165–81

⁸⁵ Pauline Turner Strong, "Fathoming the Primitive: Australian Aborigines in Four Explorers' Journals. 1697–1845", *Ethnohistory*, Spring 1986. vol. 3, no. 2, p. 181

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 177

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 175

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 180

The application of this criterion and this mind set were still evident in the ethnographic/actuality films examined earlier.

A related legacy of Cook's voyage was the testimony given in 1779 by Joseph Banks, who characterised the New Hollanders as treacherous though cowardly.⁸⁹ As Henry Reynolds has noted, the views of people such as Dampier, Cook and Banks were often challenged in the 1830s and 1840s in the light of closer contact, and a case was made for "the intellectual equality of the Aborigines".⁹⁰ However, this contrarian view was lost in what Pauline Strong described as "a sea of general disdain".⁹¹ In other words, the idea that Indigenous Australians were primitive and savage, and generally constituted an inferior form of humanity endured and permeated through society. As we have seen, the idea of the Wild Black can be found in no fewer than sixteen feature films made between 1910 and 1929.

The Indigenous Australian Wild Black is historically Australian but it is, at the same time, a familiar figure in the literature, history and iconography of many white settler societies in Africa and the Americas. In 1992 Jan Nederveen Pieterse explored the idea of the African savage.⁹² Parallels can be identified between Pieterse's Western images of "Africans as savages" and the Indigenous Australian Wild Black.⁹³ These parallels include: judging them by what they lack in comparison to Western society; associating them with nature, fauna and the

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 181

⁹⁰ Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), pp. 27, 28

⁹¹ Strong, "Fathoming the Primitive", p. 181

⁹² Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 34

landscape; seeing each initially as enemy figures and then viewing each, as the supplanting society came to dominate, as comic or childlike. The parallels become even more apparent when we consider the image of the “evil witch doctor” and then “the fantasy of power: the European as king over the savages”.⁹⁴ Finally, both groups were also featured as decorations in the exhibitions in Europe and America that were popular at the end of the nineteenth century, and into the early twentieth.

The Indigenous Australian Wild Black was, like Pieterse’s nineteenth-century savage, judged by what he lacked.⁹⁵ Pieterse referred to the “absence or scarcity of clothing, possessions, attributes of civilization”.⁹⁶ Again the Indigenous Australian Wild Black and Pieterse’s African savage converge in terms of their attributed relationship with nature.

A particular Australian manifestation of the thinking that gave rise to this invention of the Wild Black can be found in the statuary of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. A design competition for the War Memorial was finalised in 1927, and so its design coincided with the silent film era. As can be seen below, a series of profiles adorn the walls of the Commemorative Courtyard. In ascending order from the entrance, Australian fauna – and Indigenous Australians – are featured.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 70, 108

⁹⁵ Strong, “Fathoming the Primitive”, p. 181

⁹⁶ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 35

⁹⁷ The gargoyles date from 1939 but reflect long-standing attitudes towards Indigenous Australians.



Figure 8: Part of the wall below the Cloisters in the Commemorative Courtyard at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. A female Indigenous Australian is featured at the right of the picture. Note the association of Indigenous Australians and fauna.

Like the African savage, the Indigenous Australian Wild Black has been cast as an extra in the screenplay of stories of their own homelands. The other links evident between what Pieterse identified as European ideas about Africans and the Wild Black are the notion of the native as “an enemy”. This in turn gave way as a “new methodology of Africa took shape” in which the “Africans were characterised as impulsive and childlike”.⁹⁸

Each of these characterisations is evident, with adaptations, for the Indigenous Australian Wild Black. The adaptations are primarily associated with the transition in European thinking about the Africans and Indigenous Australians. Both Africans and Indigenous Australians are, in the first instance, menacing figures; then, with assimilation, they become comic and childlike. In Australia, the Wild Black and the Tame Blacks, represented cinematically by the Tracker and the Comic Black, appeared almost simultaneously. This process mirrored the shift in thinking evident in early colonial sources.⁹⁹ Pieterse also pointed to the

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 78, 88

⁹⁹ Keith Willey, *When the Sky Fell Down: The Destruction of the Tribes of the Sydney Region 1788–1850s* (Sydney: Collins, 1985)

image of the “evil witch doctor” that was formed as part of the missionary iconography and became a feature of colonial accounts of Africa.¹⁰⁰ The figure of the evil witch doctor also became part of the invention of the Indigenous Australian Wild Black and the witch doctor character, although minor, appeared in a number of films in the silent era, most notably in *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928).

Pieterse also noted that by the late nineteenth century, and into the first decades of the twentieth century, as the colonisation process was completed, “the image of the native warrior ... became decorative” and was included in a “web of world exhibitions”.¹⁰¹ This form of exhibition emphasised what became the signature motifs of the primitive warrior. Pieterse pointed out that these exhibitions were entertainment and as such needed action and drama in the form of “war dances, cannibal dances, battle scenes and so on”.¹⁰² These theatrical devices offer further clues to the provenance of the corroboree as the signature motif of the silent cinematic Indigenous Australian Wild Black.

The links between the broader Western notion of the wild, exotic native, as discussed by Pieterse, and Indigenous Australians were evident in the experiences of two groups of Indigenous Australians from North Queensland who featured in the legendary American, P.T. Barnum’s *Ethnological Congress of Strange, Savage Tribes*.¹⁰³ According to Roslyn Poignant, “Aboriginal troops,

¹⁰⁰ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 70

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 95

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 91

¹⁰³ Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004)

together with other Indigenous performers ... became enmeshed in Western systems of mass entertainment and education, involving display and performance.”¹⁰⁴ It was in this way that the Indigenous Australian cinematic Wild Black emerged, cast, as Poignant suggests, as the “anonymous savage other to Western civilised self”.¹⁰⁵ When the Indigenous Australian troop appeared in the United States, Baltimore in 1883, Poignant pointed to the advertising copy in *The Baltimore Morning Herald* that read: “The Australian cannibals: Today their first appearance in Public in a Civilised Country”.¹⁰⁶

The idea of cannibalism provides a direct link between the wider Western idea of the savage and the Indigenous Australian Wild Black. References to cannibalism featured in the intertitles of a number of Australian actuality films. Even though the Wild Black as a cannibal does not appear in the ethnographic films or any of the Australian silent feature films, the association of cannibalism with the Wild Black was present in the intertitles of some of the actuality films made in Australia during the silent era. The blanket characterisation of the Wild Black as cannibal is a reflection of the non-Indigenous process of invention. The reason that cannibalism did not appear as part of the characterisation of the Wild Black in feature films can, in part, be explained in the same way that the other absences from the Indigenous Australian silent film cast will be explained in chapter four on The Absences. Here it is sufficient to point out that characterising the Wild Blacks in feature films as cannibals would have meant ascribing to them more personality than was compatible with the preferred view of them as a

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 7

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 8

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 89

doomed race. To characterise Indigenous Australians as cannibals would have elevated them to the status of warriors who were a menace. In Australian silent films, the Wild Black is one of the dangers associated with the outback like fire, flood and drought – a mindless elemental force, akin to one of the natural obstacles to settlement and civilisation.

The influence of “the existing clichés” evident in the nineteenth-century exhibitions on the modes of construction the Wild Black were readily translated into film.¹⁰⁷ The large-scale spectacles organised between 1895 and the First World War were, according to Pieterse, “outflanked” by the emergence of film that proved to be “more effective in reproducing stereotypes and transforming them into spectacle”.¹⁰⁸

In 2008 Chris Healy began his consideration of the ways in which ideas about Indigenous Australians were constructed by commenting on a 1940s board game called *Corroboree*. “The game consists of a journey around a board and finishes at a watercolour image of Indigenous men dancing by firelight for audience of women, children and of course, the players of *Corroboree*.”¹⁰⁹ According to Healy, the board game, like the silent films considered here, takes us to a time when “non-Indigenous people confidently represented Indigenous people as an archaic race who did not belong to the world of modern Australia”.¹¹⁰ The other key for consideration of the Wild Black lies in Healy’s use of the *Corroboree* board game to begin his discussion. The corroboree motif was

¹⁰⁷ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 97

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), p. 1

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

clearly a cinematic signature of the Wild Black. Healy's use of the corroboree, and its enduring place in Australian feature films and in academic discourse about Indigenous imagery, reinforces the value of looking more closely at evidence of its genesis in silent films.¹¹¹

The Wild Black in surviving feature films: *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) and *The Birth of White Australia* (1928)

Each of the key themes associated with the Wild Black are in evidence in the surviving footage from *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928), produced by Phillips Film Productions and directed by Scott Dunlap.¹¹² The film is set on Runnibede station in far north Queensland. The script by Gayne Dexter was adapted from a story by Steele Rudd and involved the abduction by Wild Blacks of the non-Indigenous heroine, Dorothy Winchester, played by American actress Eva Novak. The gullible, nameless Wild Blacks who abduct her have been convinced by an evil witch doctor that she is their recently deceased Queen, returned to them as a White Goddess.

The action takes place on the property of Runnibede. The station is introduced in an intertitle that reads: "Back of the cities in the far North of Queensland was Runnibede station – where civilisation stopped". The images and intertitles clearly establish the savage/civilised dichotomy. The Wild Blacks,

¹¹¹ William O. Beeman, "The Anthropology of Theater and Spectacle", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1993, vol. 22, no. 1, p. 380

¹¹² National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 7004; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 114

in the film, are cinematically defined as primitive and superstitious. In the process, they are contrasted with civilised non-Indigenous society and with the Tame Blacks represented by the Police Trackers. The film also features the corroboree motif as part of the scene where the Wild Blacks mourn the death of their Queen. The scene introduces the evil witch doctor, Goondai, played by the non-Indigenous actor Dunstan Webb in blackface. In an intertitle Goondai is described as a “murderer and fugitive” who found safety “as prophet of the tribe”. It is Goondai who manipulates the Wild Blacks to kidnap Dorothy. Early in the film, an intertitle indicates that the Wild Blacks have been spearing cattle. However, no motivation is offered for their actions until the introduction of the White captive scenario.

It is worth noting that the character of Goondai and certain aspects of the plot foreshadow the depiction of the Wild Black, Marbuk (Bob Tudawali), in *Jedda* (1955), which reinforces the central argument of this thesis that the character types familiar to audiences in *Jedda* had their genesis in the silent era. Both Goondai and Marbuk are murderers and fugitives who are pursued by the non-Indigenous police. Both are pursued with the aid of Tame Black trackers and both have an uneasy relationship with the other Wild Blacks. The action of both *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) and *Jedda* (1955) is driven by the abduction of the heroines. In both films, the heroine’s lover attempts a rescue. None of this is intended to suggest that Charles Chauvel based any part of his screenplay for *Jedda* on *The Romance of Runnibede*, but the parallels are indicative of the modes of thinking about the Wild Black that can best be understood with a more complete history that traces the provenance of the Indigenous Australian

cinematic character types rather than accepting, as the literature seems to do, that they simply appeared, more or less out of nowhere.

In *The Romance of Runnibede*, the clear contrast between civilisation and the primitive, savage world of the Wild Blacks is implicit in the imagery and explicit in the intertitles. The opening intertitles of the film declare: “Australia – land of new romance – where the pavements of jostling cities end in the bewitched wilderness of the Never-Never”. Scenes follow of a vast, empty landscape, reflecting the kind of imagery that Pieterse alluded to in his consideration of the Western iconography of Africans as savages, in which they were linked to a “wild and overwhelming landscape”.¹¹³ The next intertitle introduces the Wild Blacks, who are immediately identified with the corroboree motif. The intertitle reads: “Far northward Queensland’s jungles still guard their mysteries, the brooding silence split by chants of aboriginal corroborees”. The film moves from the landscape to a group of Indigenous Australians adorned with white body paint and head feathers. The scene ends with the intertitle: “While a thousand miles south lies Sydney, where the ships of the world come and go”. This is linked to a scene of the modern city and then a medium shot of Dorothy with a group of society friends.

The Romance of Runnibede coming, as it did, towards the end of the silent era reflected a culmination and synthesis of many non-Indigenous ideas about the Wild Black. The film clearly frames the distinction between the Tame and Wild Blacks and characterises the Wild Blacks as the superstitious, primitive ‘other’.

¹¹³ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 35

The Birth of White Australia (1928)

The Birth of White Australia (1928) was produced by Dominion Films and directed by Phil K. Walsh; it failed as a commercial venture and its investors lost heavily.¹¹⁴ The film was a celebration of white Australian nationalism and the key ethnic 'other' were the Chinese. However, the Indigenous Australian Wild Black can be clearly identified in the surviving footage.

The key themes and devices including the savage/civilised dichotomy and the corroboree motif that have been developed throughout the chapter are evident in *The Birth of White Australia* (1928). The Wild Black is used to enhance the pioneer myth. In the film the Wild Blacks are part of the dangers of life in the outback. As such, the Wild Blacks in *The Birth of White Australia* correspond to the traditional colonial image of the native in Africa that Pieterse identified as "an enemy".¹¹⁵ The attacks by the Wild Blacks in *The Birth of White Australia* are, as was typical of the character type, without motivation and indicative of the contrast noted earlier between the Wild Black and Native Americans.

The Wild Blacks in the film are framed clearly as savage and primitive, in contrast to the industrious, civilised non-Indigenous Australians. This is achieved, as was the case in the silent ethnographic and actuality films of the era and in footage from *The Romance of Runnibede*, both explicitly through intertitles and implicitly through the power of images. An intertitle early in the film declared: "The ethnic age has passed away – the primal race is with the dead". After a series of

¹¹⁴ Nation Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 6977; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 146

¹¹⁵ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 78

scenes that range freely back and forth in time from the opening of the Federal Parliament in Canberra in 1927 to Cook's landing in 1770, the next major scene opens with a bush setting.

The sequence that follows includes two of the modes of characterisation that defined the Wild Black. The first is the unmotivated, random attack and the second clearly characterises the Wild Black as a primitive beneficiary of Western civilisation. A lone non-Indigenous Australian settler tends a camp fire. He is being stalked by a group of Wild Blacks. After he is clubbed from behind, there is a quick cut to another non-Indigenous settler chopping down a nearby tree. He picks up a musket and shoots one of the Wild Blacks and the others run off. This is followed by a cut to a third settler engaged in hand-to-hand fighting against yet another of the Wild Blacks. The Wild Black is forced to the ground, where upon the triumphant settler is struck by another Wild Black, once again from behind. The action continues to move quickly: a non-Indigenous Australian is speared by a Wild Black lurking in a tree. This Wild Black is shot, and the sequence ends with a medium shot of one of the surviving settlers driving off the remaining Wild Blacks then angrily shaking his fist at them. It is worth noting that in each of the three clashes in this sequence the Wild Blacks attack from behind. The implication is clear: the Wild Blacks are returning to "treacherous though cowardly" behaviour Joseph Banks described.¹¹⁶ The sequence also serves to reinforce the natural superiority of the white race.

The next sequence amounts to a cinematic diptych that offers a direct contrast between the world of the non-Indigenous Australian settlers and that of

¹¹⁶ Strong, "Fathoming the Primitive", p. 181

the Wild Blacks. In a series of brief intercut scenes, the camera focuses first on a bark slab hut housing a non-Indigenous settler family (husband, wife and small child), then on a group of Wild Blacks sitting around a camp fire outside a cave. As the sequence unfolds, the non-Indigenous husband and wife are depicted working hard side by side, chopping trees and generally transforming the landscape. By contrast, the Wild Blacks simply live off the land. An individual Wild Black hunts a possum, while another kills a goanna with a boomerang. The intercut scenes contrast non-Indigenous industry with the relative indolence of the Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks. That the non-Indigenous settlers are the way of the future is reinforced by the presence of their young child.

The provenance of the images of the Wild Blacks can be traced to similar depictions evident in the silent ethnographic/actuality films of the period considered earlier and in art work and cartoons.¹¹⁷

The next sequence employs both the corroboree motif and anthropological style footage to introduce a group of Wild Blacks. The Indigenous Australians are depicted in their camp site making fire and wearing white body paint. One of the things that Pieterse identified in Western iconography of Africans was the transition from an enemy figure to a childlike image.¹¹⁸ That transition is condensed in the early scenes of *The Birth of White Australia*: the Wild Blacks move quickly from enemy figures to benign, almost comic, beneficiaries of

¹¹⁷ For a history of Australian art, see Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788*, (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1945); Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

¹¹⁸ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 88

colonisation. This is developed through the sequence, examined in the chapter on the Comic Black, where the Wild Blacks embrace the values of the supplanting society and become helpers.¹¹⁹ In many ways, the scenes in *The Birth of White Australia* where the Wild Blacks adapt to the ways of the newcomer were replayed in Ralph Smart's 1950 film *Bitter Springs*, once again indicating just how it is possible to trace the provenance of many of the images and character types that became staples of Australian cinematic iconography.

Conclusion

The Indigenous Australian cinematic Wild Black, like all of the Indigenous Australian character types identified, owes something to the legacy of Western colonialism and something to cinematic depictions of Africans and Native Americans. The Wild Black is also particularly Australian in that its provenance can be traced to the views expressed by Europeans from the earliest stages of contact down to the perspectives offered in the name of anthropology.

The invention of the Wild Black amounted to a rationale for dispossession on the grounds that Indigenous Australia was a transitional form of society which would inevitably be superseded or that Indigenous Australians would, in the long run, benefit from their dispossession. Each of these rationales can be identified in the characterisation of the Wild Black from the earliest days of film.

¹¹⁹ Day, *Conquest*, p. 9

What stands out in a full exploration of the history of the cinematic Indigenous Australian Wild Black is the durability of the trope. The character type that emerged in the silent era can still be clearly identified in the sound era, in *Jedda* (1955) and more recently. Analysis of the genesis and evolution of the Wild Black also exposes the, often subtle, shifts that have taken place in the character type. One shift that will be explored in the next chapter was the tendency, evident from the middle of the twentieth century, to imbue the Wild Black with mystical qualities: an unknowable, other-worldliness associated with mental telepathy and mystic awareness.

Aspects of these mystical qualities are evident in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008), but perhaps the best known single example was in Peter Weir's *The Last Wave* (1977). In all of these films, the qualities of the Mystic Black are sole preserve of the Wild Black. However, as will be explored more closely in the next chapter, the Indigenous Australian Mystic Black is, a relatively recent development, linked to the changing non-Indigenous perceptions of Indigenous Australia.

Chapter Four

Absences and the Mystic Black

This chapter will address the absences. The expression ‘the absences’ refers to the Indigenous Australian film characters who were omitted from the silent film cast or characters but who made a late entrance. Despite the influence of American film and racial iconography on Australia, there were a number of character types that depicted the non-white racial ‘other’; popular during the silent era in America, these were absent from the Indigenous Australian film cast. The most obvious absence is the Indigenous Australian leading man. Such a character either posed a sexual threat to white womanhood as a villain or, as a hero, offered himself as a would-be lover. Similarly, also absent during the silent era were any individualised Indigenous Australian warrior characters. Yet another significant absence was an Indigenous Australian female romantic lead. This chapter, however, will also explore the belated appearance of another significant character type: the Mystic Black. As noted in the previous chapter, although the Mystic Black became a leitmotif in the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia, the character was absent during the silent era and did not appear until the 1950s.¹

These Indigenous Australian absences might, in part, be explained by the silence about Indigenous Australians in the historical narrative in the decades

¹ The ‘mystic’ motif was a prominent element of the plot of *The Phantom Stockman* (1953) and a secondary aspect of the story of *Kangaroo* (1952).

after Federation.² In terms of silent film, however, such a generalisation would be an over-simplification. The silence or absence in film was character-specific. The silence did not apply to all Indigenous Australian characters, but rather to a select few. The decision to address these absences has been taken because there are times when what is omitted, what is not shown or privileged in any discourse, can be as telling as that which is included – especially when we try to understand why something has been omitted. This is particularly true with regard to the absence during the silent era of these three types: the individualised Indigenous Australian leading man, the female romantic heroine, and the Mystic Black. When discussing, in the introduction, the invention of Indigenous Australia, I noted that Roslynn Haynes had used the idea of the Australian desert as a constant to help trace the ever-changing construction of Australian identity.³ I argued that the changes in the motifs associated with the invention of cinematic Indigenous Australian character types could be used in much the same way. Part of tracing that evolution is looking not just at what character types were privileged, but also at those that were omitted, and particularly at the timing of their appearance and disappearance. In other words, which landmarks of Indigenous Australian characterisation were prominent and which were neglected? A consideration of what I call the absences can be as valuable as an examination of the more prominent Indigenous Australian character types.

² W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Company, 1968)

³ Roslynn D. Haynes, *Seeking the Centre: The Australian Desert in Literature, Art and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

The Australian modelling of its films on the Hollywood paradigm is widely acknowledged.⁴ This chapter will therefore explore why the silent film character types associated with the racial 'other' popular in the United States did not emerge in Australia. The exploration of the provenance of characterisations of the Indigenous Australian Tracker, Comic Black and the Wild Black in previous chapters revealed the parallels that existed between these particularly, but not uniquely, Australian character types and similar types found in American cinema. In those chapters, similarities were established between each of the Australian tropes and some of the characterisations of African Americans and Native Americans in the films of Hollywood's silent era. This nexus is not surprising given the fact that, as noted in chapter two, the birth of cinema coincided with a time when "social Darwinian and eugenics paradigms dominated the meaning of race".⁵ The fact is that silent film in both Australia and the United States reflected assumptions about white racial superiority. The pervasive cultural conviction of the time was that non-whites were "divinely, biologically or culturally inferior".⁶ These myths were reinforced by the shared status of Australia and the United States as settler or supplanting societies. The parallels between Australian and American characterisations of Indigenous Australians and Native and African Americans are therefore to be expected. Hence, when so much of the Hollywood

⁴ Brian McFarlane and Geoff Mayer, *New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in American and British Films* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 17; Diane Collins, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies 1896 to the Present Day* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1987)

⁵ Daniel Bernardi (ed.), *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p. 4

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 105

style was imitated, why then were some of the most popular and enduring of Hollywood's tropes rejected by Australian silent filmmakers?

In introducing the basis of my typology in the introduction, I pointed specifically to the use of cinematic typologies of African Americans. In particular, I referred to Donald Bogle's typology. Bogle identified character types such as the 'tom', a loyal helper, and the 'comic coon', both of whom shared some of the characteristics of identifiable Indigenous Australian character types.⁷ There are also some similarities between the particular silent era characterisations of Native Americans and Indigenous Australians. The links between Native American and Indigenous Australian character types are most obvious in the invention of the character I identified as the Wild Black. In many films, both in Australia and the United States, some Indigenous Australian and some Native American characters become a collective, and at times anonymous, menace to non-Indigenous settlers, whether in the outback or on the prairies. By contrast, there are no Indigenous Australian silent cinematic characters comparable to the noble Native American warrior chiefs.

I wish to return to the point made consistently throughout this thesis: the characterisations of Indigenous Australians have been particular but not unique to Australia.⁸ The similarities between the characterisations that made up the

⁷ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2003), pp. 4, 8

⁸ This point is exemplified by the popularity of an African American minstrel character known as the 'Zip Coon'. The character appeared on the stage in Australia from the 1850s. The character was aggressive and potentially dangerous but did not fit the preferred version of Aboriginality in the Federation era and was not therefore appropriated as the basis for an Indigenous Australian silent film character.

depictions of the racial “other” in Australian and American silent films are important in identifying the provenance of many of the most popular and enduring Indigenous Australian cinematic character types. Hence Australian characterisations were not unique. They were, however, particular to Australia. In other words, there were aspects of how Australian filmmakers portrayed the Indigenous Australian ‘other’ that were distinctive and local. Although some of these distinctions are subtle, they remain important. A less nuanced example of the particular nature of Australia’s cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia can be found in the characters that were excluded. Although Australia borrowed aspects of the African American ‘tom’ and the ‘coon’, as identified by Bogle, there is, for example, no equivalent in Australian silent film iconography to Bogle’s “the brutal black buck”.⁹ The ‘black buck’ was characterised as a sexual menace to white womanhood.¹⁰ There are examples in Australian silent film, most notably in one of the surviving scenes from *The Birth of White Australia* (1928), where the Chinese were depicted as a sexual threat. During the silent era, however, Indigenous Australian males were not featured in this way.

But there was also no Australian silent cinematic Indigenous Australian female character to match either the African American or Native American female characters depicted in films about inter-racial romance. Not until *Jedda* (1955) is there an Indigenous Australian equivalent of Bogle’s “tragic mulatto”, a leading character trapped between two cultures.¹¹ Nor is there a character in the

⁹ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 13

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 14

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 9

Indigenous Australian silent film cast to compare to the figure of the Native American maiden. Unlike Hollywood, where stories about inter-racial romance or miscegenation featured in depictions of both African Americans and Native Americans, the sexual dimension was absent from characterisations of Indigenous Australians.¹² In terms of Native Americans, evidence drawn from the US Library of Congress and a review of the holdings in the Paper Print Collection of American silent films reveals that between *The Kentuckian* (1908) and *Jamestown* (1923), there were 16 American silent feature films made that featured inter-racial romance. In six of these, the Native American female had a child with a non-Indigenous male. Sexual union between Native American males and non-Indigenous females was less common, although it did appear in three films of this period.¹³

The process of contrasting early cinematic representations of Native Americans and Indigenous Australians reveals yet another specific Indigenous Australian absence. The genre of inter-racial romance gave rise in Hollywood to a leading female Native American character which M. Elise Marubbio has labelled “the Celluloid Maiden”.¹⁴ According to Marubbio, the character appeared in a number of silent era romantic tragedies as a figure caught between two

¹² It is not as though the genre was unknown in Australia. In fact, there was an Australian-made production of *The Octoroon* filmed in Sydney. Dating from 1912, it told the story of an inter-racial romance set in the American South. Between then and 1928, it was followed by five other Australian made films in the genre, including *A Maori Maid's Love* (1916), *The Betrayer* (1921), *The Jungle Woman* (1926), *The Devil's Playground* (1928) and *The Adorable Outcast* (1928).

¹³ Paper Print Collection, US Library of Congress

¹⁴ M. Elise Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), p. 5

cultures.¹⁵ Despite the release in Australia of American films in this genre, such as *The Debt* (1913), a film that, according to the journal *The Photo-Play*, dealt with a “racial and moral situation” and the existence of Australian-made films in the genre, there were never any leading Indigenous Australian female characters in such films. When Australia made films in the genre, the female characters were invariably African American or Polynesian. Hence there was an absence of an equivalent to the Native American maiden or the African American “the tragic mulatto”.¹⁶

The absence of depictions of any form of inter-racial romance featuring non-Indigenous Australians and either Indigenous Australian men or women reinforces yet again the extent to which feature film reflected the values of the society in which, and for which, it was made. In 2005 Victoria Haskins and John Maynard examined the general absence of narratives featuring sexual relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. They noted that while some narratives dealt with the subject of “white men who married Aboriginal women”, in general “studies of interrelationships between Aboriginal men and white women were obscure, neglected and missing.”¹⁷ There is evidence to support the contention that while Australian silent film generally mirrored these attitudes in society, it may even have exacerbated them.

Haskins and Maynard endeavoured to explain the silence that shrouded accounts of relations between Indigenous Australian men and non-Indigenous

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5; Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 9

¹⁷ Victoria Haskins and John Maynard, “Sex Race and Power: Aboriginal Men and White Women in Australian History”, *Australian Historical Studies*, 2005, vol. 37, no. 126, p. 193

women in terms of “patriarchal power within colonial society by demonstrating power over white women”.¹⁸ They focused on male domination in family and social life: that is to say, the leadership and authority of the father within the family, and that of men in society. Following on from this assumption, and from notions of the vulnerability of women, Haskins and Maynard pointed to “the ‘captive’ white woman’s ordeal” as “a staple melodrama of frontier expansion”.¹⁹ This ‘white captive’ motif is the only aspect of inter-racial gender relations raised by Haskins and Maynard that found its way into any Australian silent film. It formed a central aspect of the plot evident from the surviving footage from *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928), and it re-emerged in the sound era with *Eliza Fraser* (1976). Haskins and Maynard asserted that the popularity of this particular motif could be explained by the notion of male power and the supposed weakness and vulnerability of females.²⁰ Although Haskins and Maynard offer a useful starting point for an explanation of the absence of films featuring stories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous inter-racial romance and, more specifically, for the limited use in film of the ‘white captive motif’, we need to go further.²¹ The real issue is race and the idea that if filmmakers depicted their heroes engaging in

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 197

¹⁹ Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power”, p. 198. For more on the white female captive, see Ian J. McNiven, Lynette Russell and Kay Schaffer, *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser’s Shipwreck* (London: Cassell, 1998); Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact: the Eliza Fraser stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Julie Carr, *The Captive White Woman of Gippsland: In Pursuit of the Legend* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

²⁰ Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power”, p. 198; Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 149

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 191

sexual liaisons with non-Indigenous Australians, a race then seen as being on perhaps the lowest order of human existence, those heroes would be betraying the very idea of Australia's white nationalism. This aspect of race thinking, I argue, was therefore a key to the absence of films in the inter-racial romance genre featuring Indigenous Australians.

The absence, until the 1950s, of the now familiar cinematic invention of the Indigenous Australian Mystic Black also needs explanation. From the 1950s on, mystic qualities became a leitmotif of Indigenous Australia. Henceforward, Indigenous Australians were often associated with mystical, supernatural and other worldly qualities, whereas before the 1950s this association of Indigenous Australians and the mystic had been absent. The absence of this facet of the Indigenous Australian landscape in the silent era can be used to consider both how the views held by non-Indigenous Australia about Indigenous Australia changed, and how non-Indigenous Australian views of themselves changed. Before films such as *Kangaroo* (1952) and *The Phantom Stockman* (1953), the character of the Mystic Black was absent. After 1953, however, the character appeared frequently, either as the primary focus of the plot, in films such as *Jedda* (1955), *The Last Wave* (1977) and *Kadaicha* (1988), or as a supplementary plot component used to identify Aboriginality, as in *Walkabout* (1971), *The Right Stuff* (1983), *Frog Dreaming* (1985), *Fringe Dwellers* (1986), *Until the End of the World* (1992), *Dead Heart* (1996), *Missing* (1999), *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2001) and *Australia* (2008). Out of 26 feature films made in Australia between 1952 and 2010 that depicted tribal or "full blood" Indigenous Australian characters – or Wild Blacks – on no fewer than 14 occasions were

these characters characterised, in some way, as mystical.²² After 1953, the mystic motif was employed in more than half of the films featuring traditional or tribal Indigenous Australians, and yet before the 1950s the Mystic Black was absent. The change is striking.

The silent cinematic absence of stories featuring inter-racial romance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and the consequent absence of Indigenous Australian characters akin to the African American 'black buck' or either the African American female 'tragic mulatto' or the Native American 'celluloid maiden', will also be explored in detail below.²³

In order to help clarify some of the elements responsible for these absences, it is useful to revisit some of our ideas about the past.²⁴ In this way, an understanding of why certain characters were absent during the silent era can be enhanced through a consideration of why and when they did appear later in the sound era. In the process, some of these absences, such as a leading, individualised Indigenous Australian male character, whether villain, romantic hero or noble warrior, will be linked to the absence of a leading individualised Indigenous Australian female character.

²² Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998)

²³ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 9; Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, p.5

²⁴ Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, *Australian Cinema After Mabo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 3

The absence of the Indigenous Australian ‘black buck’, the individualised ‘noble warrior chieftain’ and the ‘romantic hero’

There is no Indigenous Australian silent cinematic character to compare with either the African American ‘black buck’ identified by Bogle, the ‘noble warrior chieftain’, or the Native American ‘romantic hero’ in silent films such as *Call of the Wild* (1908), *Strongheart* (1914) or *The Scarlet West* (1925). In each of these films, Native American men became involved with white women. The African American ‘black buck’ was a powerful presence in D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), a film, which as noted in previous chapters, screened to large audiences in Australia.

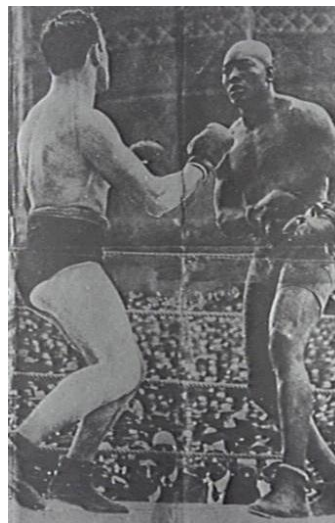


Figure 1: In 1908 Sydney witnessed a real life ‘black buck’ when the African American Jack Johnson (right) became the World Heavyweight Boxing Champion. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Eight years before exposure to the image of the ‘black buck’ in *The Birth of a Nation*, Sydney, and white Australia, was confronted in 1908 by a real-life example. At Rushcutters Bay, in front of a crowd of over 20,000, the legendary

African American boxer Jack Johnson caused a sensation when he defeated the white champion, Canadian Tommy Burns, to claim the world heavyweight title. Johnson's victory was widely reported in the press, both in Australia and overseas.²⁵ And in the local press, Johnson was characterised as a "bad nigger".²⁶ Two films were made of the fight, one of them by the pioneer Australian filmmaker Raymond Longford.²⁷ The event was even captured in a watercolour painting by Norman Lindsay. The souvenir program printed for the event declared that the contest was the first in which the champions of the "White and Black Races have met for Racial and individual Supremacy".²⁸ In the United States, Johnson's open relationships with white women aroused marked hostility and contributed to the emergence of Bogle's 'black buck'.²⁹ However, the racial implications of the Sydney title fight had little effect on Australia's perception of its own black population. But why was this trope ignored when, in the past, according to Waterhouse, so much of the racial imagery associated with African Americans had been appropriated by Australia as part of its invention of Indigenous Australia?³⁰

²⁵ Ian Warden, "Behold the Pilgrims to the Shrine of Stoush", *National Library of Australia News*, July 2008; Dan Streible, "Race and Reception of Jack Johnson Fight Films", in Bernardi (ed.) *The Birth of Whiteness*, pp. 170–99

²⁶ David Headon, "Significant Silents: Sporting Australia on Film, 1896–1930", *Journal of Popular Culture*, June 1999, vol. 33, no. 1, p. 120

²⁷ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 16603

²⁸ Warden, "Behold the Pilgrims to the Shrine of Stoush", p. 4; Souvenir Program, Burns–Johnson Boxing Contest (Sydney, 1908)

²⁹ Johnson married the first of his three white wives in 1911.

³⁰ Richard Waterhouse, "Australian Legends: Representations of the Bush, 1813–1913", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 2000, vol. 31, no. 115, p. 211

At a time when a growing body of scholarship has begun to address the question of gender and inter-racial sexual relations, it is useful to apply a similar focus to the cinematic construction of Indigenous Australian males and females.³¹ Returning to the theme of the neglect of the silent era and the generally sporadic treatment of Indigenous Australian representation, there is nothing, for example, to compare with the specific studies of Hollywood's cinematic construction of the African American male.³² This is due primarily to the absence of a powerful, individualised Indigenous Australian male silent film character.³³ There is nothing like the character until the sound era in the second half of the twentieth century with Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978), based on Thomas Keneally's 1972 novel of that name.³⁴ The reason for the absence of this particular character warrants consideration.

The basis for Keneally's novel (and hence Schepisi's film) was the story of Jimmy Governor, a part-Indigenous Australian hanged in Sydney as an outlaw and murderer on 18 January 1901. Governor had conducted a violent rampage that began with an attack on a group of non-Indigenous women and children in

³¹ Mrinalini Sinha, "Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of Colonial India", *Gender & History*, November 1999, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 445–61; Larissa Behrendt, "Consent in a (Neo) Colonial Society: Aboriginal Women as Sexual and Legal 'Other'", *Australian Feminist Studies*, November 2000, vol. 15, no. 33, pp. 353–67; Fiona Paisley, "Race Hysteria in Darwin, 1938", *Australian Feminist Studies*, March 2001, vol. 16, no. 34, pp. 43–59

³² Gerald R. Butters, *Black Manhood on the Silent Screen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002)

³³ The closest surviving characterisation to the 'black buck' is the character of Goondai, the evil witch doctor from *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928).

³⁴ The character of Marbuk in *Jedda* (1955) had some of the characteristics of the Black Buck and the Warrior Chieftain, but his sexual focus was not on a non-Indigenous female and he did not challenge non-Indigenous occupation. In the film, Marbuk became a criminal to both the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous community.

their homestead on the night of 20 July 1900.³⁵ Governor's execution followed a high-profile trial. The story of the rampage was widely publicised, and although the sensational events took place less than a decade before the birth of the Australian film industry, the story was ignored. All of this occurred at a time when the silent film industry was, more than ever, truly national and willing to tell local stories.³⁶ Despite the notoriety of the Jimmy Governor story, and the reality that Governor epitomised – namely, all of the qualities associated with the 'black buck' – neither his story nor his character found its way into film in the silent era.

Two related issues arise here. First, why was the specific story of Jimmy Governor was ignored by filmmakers for so long? And second, why was the more general trope of a leading Indigenous Australian 'black buck' character likewise ignored? The answers to both questions hold out the promise of insights into how the new Australian nation perceived itself and how it wanted to be perceived. Was the Governor story too violent to be the basis for a silent film? Or was it the specific idea of violence against women that was too unsettling for it to be acceptable to silent filmmakers? One explanation might be that the idea of Indigenous resistance was incompatible with the preferred vision of the inevitable demise of Indigenous culture or with the history of the new nation. An alternative explanation was that the Governor story exposed some shortcomings in policing, and early filmmakers were already under pressure from government authorities over the entire bushranging genre. Both of these questions are linked to the premise that filmmakers were eager to attract the widest possible audience and to avoid arousing the ire of government authorities. The idea that the Governor

³⁵ Governor was aided in the attack by a full-blood Indigenous Australian, Jacky Underwood.

³⁶ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 2

story was too violent can be rejected, based on both the level of violence – including a depiction of cannibalism – evident in the highly successful *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1927). Violence per se was not therefore the reason for the absence. However, the violence on display in *For the Term of His Natural Life* was directed at male convicts, so it might be asserted that the neglect of the Governor story until 1978 can be explained by the fact that the violence in it was directed against European women. But this argument is not convincing. To take just one example, publicity in Sydney for Universal's popular western serial *Winners of the West* (1921) included the prospect of a non-Indigenous heroine being molested by “the circle of red devils”, side by side with a claim that “here is a serial suitable for the school room”.³⁷

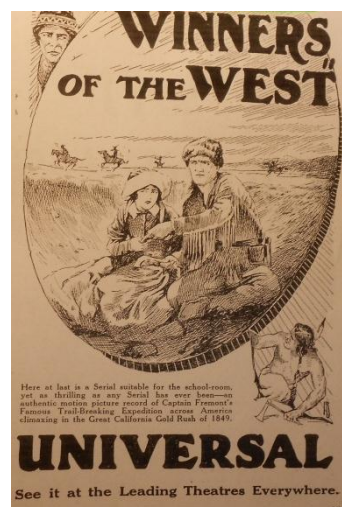


Figure 2: A poster for *Winners of the West*, published in *The Picture Show* in February 1922. The non-Indigenous female heroine is told to save the last bullet for herself rather than risk falling prey to the ‘red devils’.

The absence of the Governor story therefore needs to be examined in the light of different criteria. When the Governor story did eventually appear in film, it

³⁷ *The Picture Show*, 1 February 1922, p. 68

has to be acknowledged that the film was as much a product of its own time as the past it purported to depict.³⁸ Both Keneally's novel, published in 1972, and the film, released in 1978, coincided with a number of critical events in the history of Indigenous Australian and non-Indigenous relations.³⁹ During the same period academic discourse was influenced by the landmark works of W.E.H. Stanner's 1968 Boyer Lectures, *After the Dreaming*, and by the publication, in 1970, of Charles Rowley's *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*.⁴⁰ It was a period when Indigenous Australia had forced its way to the forefront of non-Indigenous national consciousness. It was also a time when the Indigenous cause was being publicly championed by a number of assertive and vocal Indigenous Australian leaders.⁴¹ The time was finally right for the Governor story to be told. An Indigenous Australian 'black buck' – a challenging, individualised figure of menace – had finally emerged, 63 years after the celebrated African American 'black buck' Bogle later identified in *The Birth of a Nation*.

I argue that the appearance of the Indigenous Australian 'black buck' was predicated in part on the changed social and historical circumstances of the day.

³⁸ Henry Reynolds, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (Canberra: Australian Film Commission, 2008), p. 68

³⁹ Among the key events were the first appearance in 1971 of the Aboriginal flag and the controversy surrounding the Gove Land Rights Case, followed in 1972 by the erection of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of the Old Parliament House in Canberra and the passage in 1976 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* for the Northern Territory.

⁴⁰ W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney, 1968); C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1972)

⁴¹ Russell McGregor, "Another Nation: Aboriginal Activism in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2007, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 343–60. The prominent Indigenous Australian activists at the time included Denis Walker, who organised an Australian Black Panther Party in 1972. Other high-profile activists included Gary Foley, who with Billy Craigie organised an Indigenous Australian Black Power Movement.

Hence, if the appearance of the Indigenous Australian black buck can be accounted for by these changes, it should be possible to go back and consider the cultural climate that prevailed earlier, and by doing so gain an insight into the reasons for the character's earlier absence.

The story of Jimmy Governor proved to be controversial when it did appear in the 1970s, and both Schepisi's film and, to a lesser extent, Keneally's novel remain contentious in the twenty-first century.⁴² Henry Reynolds saw the Governor brothers as representative figures whose early lives reflected the non-Indigenous desire to take advantage of cheap Indigenous labour while, at the same time, keeping "the blacks in their place".⁴³ By contrast, Darrel Killen, writing in the journal *Quadrant*, asserted that the film displayed an "unrelieved lack of balance" and expressed concern about how the film presented Australia to the rest of the world.⁴⁴

The earlier absence of the Governor story is all the more intriguing when we note that after the murders Jimmy and his brother Joe styled themselves as bushrangers and remained at large for more than three months. The bushranger genre had dominated early silent film production from *The Story of the Kelly Gang* in 1906, and the film that marked the appearance of the very first Indigenous Australian feature film character in 1907 – *Robbery Under Arms*. Nevertheless, the Governor story of real life Indigenous Australian bushrangers

⁴² Reynolds, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, p. 68; Darrell Killen "Fictionalising History on Film: The Case of *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*", *Quadrant*, November 2010, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 113–15

⁴³ Reynolds, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, p. 10

⁴⁴ Killen, "Fictionalising History on Film", pp. 114, 115

was ignored, despite having been widely publicised.⁴⁵ A correspondent for *The Sydney Morning Herald* conducted an extensive and widely circulated interview with Governor after his capture. Jimmy, his brother and Jacky Underwood were collectively referred to as the 'Breelong Blacks' and their actions were said to have "sent a thrill of horror through the people of the colony".⁴⁶ There was also a press report claiming that a young woman had been criminally outraged.⁴⁷ Even though all of the characteristics necessary for the invention of an Indigenous Australian equivalent to Bogle's black buck were present in the Governor case – plus the elements of a bushranger adventure – the film industry still looked elsewhere for its stories. Governor's marriage to a non-Indigenous woman, Ethel Page, meant that his story could have provided the basis for a film with a tragic Indigenous character in love with a non-Indigenous female, akin to Hollywood's own Indigenous Native American characters who courted non-Indigenous women. But again this narrative potential was ignored.

There were sufficient pre-conditions present in the first decade of the twentieth century to facilitate the invention of an Indigenous Australian 'black buck'. When the sum of those pre-conditions is considered, the Governor story on its own, with its outrages against white women, was powerful enough. It was then compounded by the victory of the 'bad nigger' Jack Johnson over Tommy Burns to take the world heavyweight title in front of a live audience of over 20,000 and then a vastly larger Australian film audience. Although dismayed by what

⁴⁵ For more on Bushrangers and Australian identity, see Bruce Tranter and Jed Donoghue, "Bushrangers: Ned Kelly and Australian identity", *Journal of Sociology*, December, 2008, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 373–90.

⁴⁶ *Maitland Daily*, 29 October 1900

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

they had heard of Johnson's victory, Australians across the country still wanted to see the fight on film.⁴⁸ These events were reinforced in 1916 by the release in Australia of the enormously popular *The Birth of a Nation*, a film that employed this trope.⁴⁹ Given this combination of factors, the question must again be asked, why the absence? Such an investigation can best be approached by contrasting the character types that were imitated and those that were rejected.

The most obvious starting point is the particular social and political context of Australia in the first two decades of the twentieth century and the status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. The silent film era coincided with a time when in the years after Federation the young Australian nation had begun to clarify and refocus its image of itself. The key component of thoughts about national identity, at this time, was that Australia was British and white – but above all, white. Images of the bush and the outback were added to the mix as a motif to distinguish Australia from Britain. This posed the problem of how Indigenous Australians were to be characterised in film. The conflict inherent in using the bush as a distinguishing feature of Australian national identity arose from the presence of the non-white Indigenous population.⁵⁰ The challenge was to use the bush as a distinguishing mark of Australianness and ignore the fact that it was the original home of Aboriginal people. Australian nationalist sentiments were explicitly depicted in the silent era in *The Birth of White Australia* (1928). The film was a commercial failure, perhaps because of its aggressive racial polemic.

⁴⁸ Headon, *Significant Silents*, p. 120

⁴⁹ Reynolds, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, p. 12; Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 65

⁵⁰ For the non-Indigenous appropriation of Aboriginality, see Bain Attwood, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History* (Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), pp. 140, 219, 222, 252.

Nevertheless, surviving footage from the film synthesised many of the key early twentieth-century themes of Australian nationalism, namely the courageous struggle of the pioneers, the importance of race and Australia's British heritage.

The film is chronologically disjointed but unified by the central theme of white nationalism and the menace posed by the Chinese.⁵¹ It opens with a map of Australia in black, surrounded by caricatures of Asians with grasping outreached hands. The map then changes to white against a black background. The intertitle that follows reads: "The founders of Australian Nationhood defined its boundaries within the Empire, and framed its constitution in white nationality". The film's themes were endorsed by the appearance of former Prime Minister Billy Hughes, who was introduced by an intertitle that described him as a "staunch advocate of – BRITISH WHITE AUSTRALIA". Facing the camera, Hughes then begins to deliver a speech to the unseen audience. An intertitle intended to sum up the speech indicates that Hughes has nothing against the rest of the world but asserts that white Australians have a right to ownership of Australia through colonisation. "This bit of the world belongs to us", it declares.

The argument was summed up in that intertitle linking colonisation with the right of white, settler proprietorship of Australia. This offers a clue to one of the reasons for the absence of a strong Indigenous Australian male character. Australia wanted to be a white Australia, and yet it had a black Indigenous population. There were two solutions. The first was the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, which excluded non-whites, and the second, directed at Indigenous

⁵¹ The action skips back and forth in time: from the New South Wales goldfields in 1854 to the opening of the Federal Parliament in Canberra in 1927, then back to Cook's landing at Botany Bay in 1780, and finally forward again to the 1850s.

Australians, was segregation and cultural erasure. For a time, the declining numbers of Indigenous Australians meant that they could be forgotten. In the process, the non-whites of Asia became and, for decades, remained the menace. They were a masculine threat, as evidenced in the scene below from *The Birth of White Australia* (1928) in which two Chinese men crouch over the white heroine they had been pursuing.



Figure 3: “The Yellow Peril”: in this scene from *The Birth of White Australia* (1928), Chinese men are depicted as posing a threat to white womanhood. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

By contrast, Indigenous Australia was emasculated, cinematically speaking. The strong individualised male character was absent. Indigenous Australians became either the collective, anthropological pre-modern Wild Blacks, or the helpers, the Tame Blacks, characterised as the Tracker or the Comic Black. Indigenous Australians were a subject, conquered people. Hence, in terms of the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia, they can usefully be viewed through the lens of imperialist perspectives such as Edward Said’s

pioneering work on the constructions of imperial power and David Cannadine's more recent consideration of Ornamentalism.⁵²

Although he did not state it explicitly, Said alluded to the idea that, in the minds of the colonisers, the colonised were associated with less powerful elements of Western society, and this could include women.⁵³ When this notion is interwoven with two other threads – first, the power of the cult of manliness in Edwardian Britain and its association with athleticism and militarism, and second, the narratives of dispossession in the decades after Federation – it contributed to a symbolic cinematic emasculation of Indigenous Australian males.⁵⁴ Indigenous Australian men were generally denied the status of warrior. As a result, they were not characterised, in the British sense, as true men. Little wonder, then, that they were not portrayed in film as leading or romantic heroes.

One specific example is the treatment of Bennelong. For most of the first half of the twentieth century, non-Indigenous accounts of Bennelong were a feature of historical discourse about Indigenous Australia in preference to the absent, legendary Darug warrior, Pemulwuy. Bennelong, who was described in one 1938 history as “Phillip’s native”, became the familiar Tame Black.⁵⁵ In other

⁵² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995); David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism; How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2002)

⁵³ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 207, 222

⁵⁴ Sinha, “Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of Colonial India”, p. 446

⁵⁵ M. Barnard Eldershaw, *Phillip of Australia: An Account of the Settlement of Sydney Cove 1788–92* (Sydney, 1972), p. 168. For more on Bennelong and the historiographical context see Marcia Langton, “Rum, Seduction and Death: ‘Aboriginality’ and Alcohol”, in G. Cowlishaw and B. Morris

words, he was yet another of the helpers. The omission of the warrior, and the preference for narratives about the helpers, was a distinctive characteristic of non-Indigenous discourse in the early twentieth century. As Henry Reynolds points out, earlier in colonial times “settlers’ accounts abound in references to powerful Aboriginal chiefs”.⁵⁶ These chiefs were often fictitious figures, just another non-Indigenous invention, but they were an invention to suit the times. These were times when limited contact between Indigenous Australians and settlers encouraged fear and imagination to converge in the minds of the newcomers to invent a powerful, hidden menace lurking in the bush. By the early twentieth century, the receding frontier meant that the Indigenous warrior did not suit the times or the preferred narratives of Australian identity.

While we can acknowledge the existence of something of “a disjuncture between the analyses of masculinities in Britain and in its colonies”, there is enough evidence to suggest that in the early twentieth century British and Australians did share similar ideas of colonial and post-colonial masculinity.⁵⁷ There are two parts to this argument: first, a consideration of the links between traditional British, notions of masculinity and the ways in which they were represented in Australian silent films, and, second, an understanding of how Indigenous Australians were depicted in terms of those ideas of masculinity. In Australian silent films, masculinity was characterised by non-Indigenous heroes

(eds.), *Race Matters* (Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press), pp. 77–94, and John Kenny, *Bennelong: First Notable Aboriginal* (Sydney: Australian Historical Society, 1973).

⁵⁶ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1982), p. 136

⁵⁷ Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, “Masculinity, ‘Race’, and Family in the Colonies: Protecting Aborigines in the Early Nineteenth Century”, *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol. 16, no. 1, February 2009, p. 63

exhibiting the qualities of the chivalrous knight or the courageous warrior. A number of silent film heroes exhibit displays of courtly chivalry. Two examples are John Gavin's 1910 portrayal of the gentlemanly bushranger Captain Moonlite and Kenneth Brampton's bushranger hero Captain Starlight in *Robbery Under Arms* (1920).

The link between the ideas of chivalry and masculinity has a long history in discourse about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. In the earliest colonial accounts, Indigenous Australian males were characterised as savage on account of to their alleged violence, abduction and rape of Indigenous women. Shino Konishi has argued that historical discourse about this aspect of Indigenous Australian life cannot simply be read as "ethnographic truth".⁵⁸ Konishi suggested that when these accounts are more closely interrogated they reveal the nature of the imperial gaze and an "ethnocentric self-regard".⁵⁹ In terms of chivalrous masculinity, they offer a contrast between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous males. This self-regard saw colonial accounts designed, as were the later silent cinematic characterisations, to cast the non-Indigenous newcomers as chivalrous.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Shino Konishi, "Wanton With Plenty': Questioning Ethno-historical Constructions of Sexual Savagery in Aboriginal Societies, 1788–1803", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2008, vol. 39, no. 3, p. 357

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 372

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 358

The courageous warrior was on display in the athleticism and boxing prowess of Snowy Baker's many characters.⁶¹ These qualities of the knight and the warrior were associated with white manliness.



Figure 4: Kenneth Brampton as the bushranger Captain Starlight in *Robbery Under Arms* (1920). The chivalrous knight is returning money to a poor damsel in distress. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia



⁶¹ Before his film career Snowy Baker was a well-known champion athlete. Baker played Rugby Union for Australia, represented Australia at the 1908 London Olympic Games in swimming, diving and boxing, and was the Australian Middle Weight and Heavy Weight Boxing Champion. His Australian film credits included *The Enemy Within* (1918), *The Lure of the Bush* (1918), *The Man from Kangaroo* (1919), *The Shadow of Lightning Ridge* (1919) and *The Jackeroo of Coolabong* (1920).

Figure 5: Snowy Baker once again flexes his famous muscles in *The Enemy Within* (1918). Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Snowy Baker, in particular, was hailed by the trade journals such as *The Picture Show* as the kind of man, both as an actor and a producer, that filmmaking in Australia needed.⁶² The publicity material for his films – the poster for *The Man from Kangaroo* (1920), for example – typically referred to him as an “actor-athlete”.⁶³ On another occasion, an advertisement for “The Baker Institute of Physical Culture” ran next to a review of his film *The Jackeroo of Coolabong* (1920). Baker’s physicality largely defined a particular, popular version of manhood.⁶⁴ One aspect of the physical contrast between Baker, the manly non-Indigenous hero, and an Indigenous Australian male character was addressed in an earlier chapter on the Tracker, which analysed a scene from his 1918 film *The Enemy Within*. In that film, Baker shares the scene with Sandy McVea, an Indigenous Australian actor who played his loyal assistant, Jimmy Cook. During the film Baker shows off his muscles in a series of dramatic stunts and during his morning exercises (as seen above in Figure 5; by contrast McVea, despite also being a professional boxer in real life, was not depicted as especially athletic. And even though McVea played a police special agent in the film, unlike his fellow non-Indigenous agents, he is not seen carrying a gun – he is denied the status of a contemporary urban warrior. Instead, Jimmy Cook is a comic figure, depicted as a subordinate and a helper.

⁶² *The Picture Show*, 24 May 1919, p. 12 (State Library of New South Wales)

⁶³ *The Picture Show*, 1 February 1920, p. 50 (State Library of New South Wales)

⁶⁴ *The Picture Show*, 1 November 1920, p. 29 (State Library of New South Wales)

None of the qualities of courtly good manners towards women, the chivalry of Kenneth Brampton as Starlight in *Robbery Under Arms* (1920) or those displayed by the hero in Beaumont Smith's film *The Gentleman Bushranger* (1921), were attributed to Indigenous characters.⁶⁵ None of Baker's extrovert muscularity, considered as a quality of manliness, fitted any of the depictions of Indigenous Australian men. Such qualities were without exception absent in the depiction of Indigenous Australian characters.

Let us return briefly to a point made in an earlier chapter about the Indigenous Australian Tracker character. The American Western *The Covered Wagon* (1923) proved to be an enormous hit with Australian audiences. It told the story of the American pioneers "who went forth to possess the land".⁶⁶ In acknowledging the success of the film, the Australian film trade journal *The Exhibitor* quoted the sentiments of a newspaper review that had lauded the film for its ability to teach Americans about their history. The review, however, contrasted the history presented in the film with what it saw as the Australian experience, declaring that unlike either the United States or South Africa with their Native Americans or Zulu impis, there were no such warlike warriors in Australia.

Consideration of *The Covered Wagon* (1923) and other Westerns reinforces the significance of the absence of anything like the Native American Noble Warrior Chieftain. These characters were individualised. They were worthy adversaries: brave and manly characters. Such characterisations had been a

⁶⁵ *The Picture Show*, 1 March 1922, p. 40 (State Library of New South Wales)

⁶⁶ *The Exhibitor*, 28 November 1923, vol. 1, no. 6 (State Library of New South Wales)

feature of American silent films from as early as 1912.⁶⁷ The trope was absent, however, as an Indigenous Australian character in the silent era of Australian film, an absence all the more striking when we consider the fact the Australian filmmakers made films featuring this individualised Native American warrior character. In 1911 the character appeared as Chief Wild Friday in *The Five of Hearts, or Buffalo Bill's Love Story*. The film was produced by Pathé Frères and the all-Australian cast was drawn from Edwin Cole's Bohemian Theatre Company. Cole's players were well known for their dramatic stage productions featuring stories of the American West.⁶⁸

The emasculation of Indigenous Australian males was clearly reflected in the cinematic absence of a warrior character. This absence was in no small part due to the non-Indigenous mindset of the time, evident in a variety of historical narratives, both scholarly works and school textbooks. Ernest Favenc, who wrote extensively about non-Indigenous exploration of the continent between 1880 and 1908, summed up the manly qualities of his explorer heroes. Favenc described Federation as "a grand result of the indomitable courage, heroic self-sacrifice, and dogged perseverance" of those who had earned what he called the proud title of Australian explorer.⁶⁹

An examination of some of the school texts from the period will be useful because of the degree of exposure they offered for sentiments about Indigenous Australian manhood. A good example of the characterisation of Indigenous

⁶⁷ The manly warrior character was evident in *The Fall of Black Hawk* (1912), *The Invaders* (1912) and *Sitting Bull and the Spirit Lake Massacre* (1927).

⁶⁸ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 6452

⁶⁹ Ernest Favenc, *The History of Australian Exploration* (Oxford: Logo Star Press, 2011), p. 376

Australian men offered to the young is to be found in G.V. Portus's *Australia since 1606: A History for Young Australians*.⁷⁰ The book, which was first published in 1932 and went through eight editions, is indicative of the thinking which pervaded the generations that came after Federation. There is a general neglect of Indigenous Australia is clearly evident: out of 219 pages, only ten contain any kind of reference to Indigenous Australians. When Portus does mention the "Blacks" or "natives", he categorises them as timid, peaceful and simple beings.⁷¹ By contrast, when he mentions the New Zealand Maori, they are accorded the manly status of warrior and described variously as warlike and "at war with the British".⁷²

The links between ideas of martial prowess and manliness are of significance for a consideration of the portraits of Indigenous Australia. Evidence in Australia of the pervasiveness of the British notion of masculinity contributed to the emasculation of Indigenous Australian males. The preferred non-Indigenous notion of masculinity was evident in the ways in which non-Indigenous heroes were represented in Australian history books published in the first decades of the twentieth century. In direct contrast to the image of the Indigenous Australians in Portus's textbook stands the one to be found in some of the other books used in schools during the same period. In the first two decades of the twentieth century,

⁷⁰ G.V. Portus, *Australia since 1606: A History for Young Australians* (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1938)

⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. 24, 86, 87

⁷² *ibid.*, pp. 14, 114

books used in schools frequently emphasised martial and manly qualities.⁷³ For example, in 1904 one of these books, *Simple Stories in English History for Young Australians* by W. Gillies, described the ill-fated Edward, the thirteenth-century son of Edward III (but popularly known as “The Black Prince”), in the following terms: “He was a handsome lad, strong of body and graceful in manner, and with a good heart. His chief wish was to be as fine a Knight as his father; and he could not get enough of fighting, jousting and hunting.”⁷⁴ In 1927 K.R. Cramp included a chapter on notable Australians in his *A Story of the Australian People* in which he boldly declared that “the history of a nation is the history of its heroes”.⁷⁵ These heroes were all men, and their characters were summed up with appropriately heroic phrases: Cramp wrote of the Reverend Samuel Marsden, for example, that he “was of a fearless disposition”.⁷⁶ The pen portrait of Sir George Grey (the soldier and explorer) is doubly useful because it acknowledged the status of the Maori as warriors while celebrating Grey’s “great personal bravery” in battle.⁷⁷

The contrast evident in Cramp’s treatment of Indigenous Australians is striking and also helps account for the absence of individualised Indigenous Australian cinematic characters. The “Australian Aborigines” are given their own separate chapter, in which they are treated as a generalised group of

⁷³ S.H. Smith, *English History Stories for Young Australians* (Sydney: Williams Books, 1913); P.R. Cole, *First Stories in English History* (Sydney: George B. Phillip and Son, 1920); K.R. Cramp, *A Story of the Australian People* (Sydney: George B. Phillip and Son, 1927)

⁷⁴ W. Gillies, *Simple Stories in English History for Young Australians* (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1904), p. 134

⁷⁵ Cramp, *A Story of the Australian People*, p. 221

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 223

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 233

anthropological interest segregated from the story of the nation.⁷⁸ Indigenous Australians were not individualised, nor did they have a place in any of these widely read history books as active historical agents. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they were denied a prominent place in the silent films fashioned at the time.

In her treatment of Australian national identity, Kay Schaffer pointed out that the qualities traditionally assumed to define Australian manhood were physical prowess and bravado.⁷⁹ Schaffer argued that these imagined qualities of manhood could be traced to pioneering days and constitute the nationalist assumptions of the Federation period. Schaffer was considering these masculine qualities to help account for the treatment of women in Australian national iconography. I use ideas of non-Indigenous Australian manhood in a similar fashion, to help account for the treatment of Indigenous Australian men in film.

This brings me back to the point made by Haskins and Maynard about the popularity of the female 'white captive' motif.⁸⁰ As part of their argument asserting the role of male power and the mythologies surrounding non-Indigenous women, they claimed that this particular motif arose out of the "imagined innate delicacy of white women".⁸¹ Although aspects of Haskins and Maynard's analysis are useful, especially in terms of colonial narratives which may be applied to feature films, this analysis remains merely a starting point. This is because although the 'white captive' did, as I noted earlier, feature in films made in both the silent and

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 150

⁷⁹ Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush*, p. 29

⁸⁰ Haskins and Maynard, "Sex, Race and Power", p. 198

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 199

sound eras, the silent films are unlikely to have been founded on assumptions about the supposed delicacy of non-Indigenous women. In the silent era, women were often the focus of films set in the outback and were frequently depicted as strong, independent, resilient and resourceful characters. Even a cursory review of the film magazines from the silent era yields ample evidence to sustain this claim. Films such as *The Squatter's Daughter* or *Land of the Wattle* (1910) and *A Girl of the Bush* (1921) contained strong non-Indigenous heroines. Some of the publicity, for example, for *A Girl of the Bush* (see figure 6) emphasised the independence of both the film's character and the actress who portrayed her, Vera James. James was described as "Fairbanksian in her athletic skill".⁸²



Figure 6: Two of the publicity stills for *A Girl of the Bush* (1921) from *The Picture Show*, 1 March 1921. On the left, the female lead Vera James is shown standing side by side with the men in a shearing shed at Kangaroo Flat, and on the right is the supporting actress Stella Southern; the caption for this second image read "A seat with the driver and his abo passenger for Stella".

⁸² *The Picture Show*, 1 March 1921, pp. 33–34 (State Library of New South Wales); the term "Fairbanksian" alludes to the robust physicality of, and film stunts performed by, the swashbuckling Hollywood hero Douglas Fairbanks.

Therefore, the 'white captive' motif in *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) is not about male power. Rather, it is about non-Indigenous racial superiority and power. The issue at the heart of the film was race rather than gender. The film ultimately reflects the impotence of the Indigenous Australian male Wild Blacks and the absence of a warrior culture because they kidnap a lone female who is in the end rescued by non-Indigenous heroes who are truly manly and by a few loyal Tame Black Indigenous Australian Trackers.

As noted in the chapter on the Tracker, when Indigenous Australians did find a place in the iconography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was as the Tracker and the helper. The Indigenous Australian Trackers were viewed fondly by non-Indigenous Australians when they took part in searches for people, especially children, lost in the bush.⁸³ Characterisations of the subjugated helper fitted into a mindset that emasculated the apparently powerless Indigenous Australian male. This accords with David Cannadine's claim that in order to understand Britain's idea of empire it is important to go beyond the ideas of race and think as well in terms of hierarchy.⁸⁴ The relegation in status of Indigenous Australians in the Australian national historical and cultural hierarchy produced a symbolic emasculation.

To sum up, I contend that the primary reasons for the absence of the individualised Indigenous Australian 'black buck', 'noble warrior chieftain' or

⁸³ Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

⁸⁴ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. 125, 128

'romantic hero' were racial, historical and cultural. Racially, Indigenous Australians were seen as a lesser order of humanity. In terms of Social Darwinism (which was an adaption – in fact, a misappropriation – of Charles Darwin's ideas that applied them to human societies), Indigenous Australians were seen as destined to fade away in the face of encounters with higher races.⁸⁵ As such, they were not associated with the likes of Jack Johnson. Even though Johnson's victory in Sydney over the white champion Tommy Burns was disturbing, Johnson was seen as another kind of black man entirely. And the New Zealand Maoris, even though they too were a colonised people, were also seen as different.

Historically, the absence of these individualised Indigenous Australian character types can be accounted for in terms of the times. The era of silent films, the first decades of the twentieth century, marked in Goodall's view, the foundation of Stanner's cult of forgetfulness.⁸⁶ These were years when, in terms of history, literature, art and law, Indigenous Australians were erased.⁸⁷ I contend that the absence of a leading, individualised Indigenous Australian 'black buck', 'noble warrior chieftain' or 'romantic hero or heroine' was, in part, a manifestation of this same process.

As noted in the previous chapter, when the nameless Wild Blacks appeared in films, they were only there to test the mettle of the settlers.

⁸⁵ Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880-1939* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1997); Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 104

⁸⁶ W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming: The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney, 1968), p. 25

⁸⁷ Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 104

Ultimately, they either faded from the story – as they do in *the Birth of White Australia* (1928) – or they became the Tame Blacks, the helpers such as the Tracker or the Comic Black.

Similarly, the neglect in silent films of the Jimmy Governor story can be explained both in racial and historical terms. The sudden violent outbreak by the ‘Breelong Blacks’ was reported in the press as an example of the innate savagery in Governor’s nature triumphing over civilisation.⁸⁸ Historically and culturally, Jimmy Governor was seen as an aberration, a momentary pause in the inexorable processes of progress, civilisation and colonisation. This idea of the paternalistic, civilising role of the colonisers permits consideration of an alternative notion of masculinity that co-existed with the more militaristic version. According to Lester and Dussart, to be a man an individual had to “secure the protection and salvation of his dependants”.⁸⁹ Using these criteria, two factors worked against the characterisation of Indigenous Australian men as truly manly. The first was the tradition discussed earlier, and addressed by Konishi, which saw non-Indigenous commentators identify rape and abduction as emblematic of Indigenous male behaviour towards Indigenous women.⁹⁰ A combination of this behaviour by Indigenous men towards women and an inability, or unwillingness, to protect women contributed to, in the non-Indigenous mind, a denunciation of Indigenous Australian manhood. The second factor at work was that Indigenous Australians were increasingly seen as dependants and therefore the subjects of the “paternalistic, philanthropic and pedagogic masculinity” that was a feature of

⁸⁸ *Maitland Daily*, 29 October 1900

⁸⁹ Lester and Dussart, “Masculinity, ‘Race’, and Family in the Colonies”, p. 64

⁹⁰ Konishi, “‘Wanton With Plenty’”, p. 356

nineteenth-century British society.⁹¹ Since Indigenous Australians were the focus of non-Indigenous paternalistic, masculine behaviour, and Indigenous males were seen as unable to protect their own land or women, they were again emasculated.

All of this provides instances of the process of reflection and refraction that typified the invention of Indigenous Australia. There were gaps in parts of the reflection and refraction in others. The popularity of the image of the empty landscape, favoured by artists, novelists, poets and filmmakers alike, is indicative of the wider absence of Indigenous Australians in the discourse of the early twentieth century. The landscape is a favoured motif, but the landscape is normally depicted as empty. The original Indigenous Australian owners are absent.⁹²

The Absence of Indigenous Australian romantic heroine

The absence of an Indigenous Australian romantic heroine in the mould of the African American 'tragic mulatto', or the Native American 'celluloid maiden', is another aspect of the silence about Indigenous Australia that characterised the first decades of the twentieth century.⁹³ It is also, as noted at the very beginning of this chapter, another dimension of the emasculation of Indigenous Australian

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² Dorothea Mackellar's *My Country*, perhaps the most iconic of all Australian poems, was written in 1904; it deals, in the absence of the Indigenous original owners, with the love of, and struggle with the land by the non-Indigenous newcomers.

⁹³ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, p. 9; Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden*, p. 5

males. Larissa Behrendt pointed out that the colonists viewed both the land and “Aboriginal women” as theirs for the taking.⁹⁴ The result was that sexual relationships between non-Indigenous men and Indigenous women were a feature of life on the frontier. One of the consequences of this, according to Behrendt, was “the emasculation of Aboriginal men by the colonising process”.⁹⁵

The historical facts of sexual liaisons between non-Indigenous men and Indigenous Australian women over decades, right across the frontier, are widely acknowledged.⁹⁶ Despite the historical reality of these liaisons and the popularity of the inter-racial romance genre, both in the United States and Australia, there was an absence in silent films of stories about such inter-racial sexual relationships. There was also a complete absence of a romantic Indigenous Australian female character. This absence is related to the absence of a leading, individualised Indigenous Australian male character. It is reasonable to argue that stories about inter-racial sexual relations only became a feature of cinematic discourse late in the twentieth century.

Recently, inter-racial liaisons were a feature of Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia* (2008). Shino Konishi interrogated these relationships in terms of their “broader historical contexts”.⁹⁷ Konishi distinguished between the four father figures in the

⁹⁴ Behrendt, “Consent in a (Neo) Colonial Society: Aboriginal Women as Sexual and Legal ‘Other’”, p. 353

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 356

⁹⁶ Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, p. 206; Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), p. 251; Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, p. 70; Ann McGrath, *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines Under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 3

⁹⁷ Shino Konishi, “The Four Fathers of *Australia*: Baz Luhrmann’s Depiction of Aboriginal History and Paternity in the Northern Territory”, *History Australia*, April 2011, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 25

film: the 'good white father', the 'bad white father', the 'surrogate', and the 'patriarch'. The 'bad father', Neil Fletcher (David Wenham), conforms to the image of the callous white men of the frontier who were widely condemned for their liaisons with Indigenous women.⁹⁸ By contrast, the 'surrogate father', the Drover (Hugh Jackman), is described as "a heroic good guy".⁹⁹ The Drover had also been sexually involved with an Indigenous woman. The Drover's characterisation might, at first glance, reflect a change in attitudes towards inter-racial liaisons, but the film quarantines and softens the Drover's prior relationship. The Drover's relationship with an Indigenous woman is quarantined because it took place before the action depicted in the film. The audience hears about it but doesn't see it. The relationship is then softened by his romantic entanglement with the leading non-Indigenous female character, Lady Sarah Ashley (Nicole Kidman). Hence there is still a marked degree of continuity evident in the sensitivity shown in the film towards inter-racial sexual relationships.¹⁰⁰ The point here is that, even in the twenty-first century, the issues of race and inter-racial relationships, particularly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, are still very sensitive ones. This reflects the continuity that has been a feature of cinematic discourse about Indigenous Australia.

This reality leads directly on to two of the points made by Haskins and Maynard. I accept the points made by Haskins and Maynard to the effect that, in general, narratives about sexual relationships between Indigenous and non-

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 28

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 37

¹⁰⁰ The film is also notable for another of the characterisations considered later in this chapter. David Gulpilil as King George is a Mystic Black. He is described in the film as a *gulapa* or magic man.

Indigenous Australians were taboo.¹⁰¹ The relationships between Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women were less common than narratives about non-Indigenous Australian men and Indigenous women.¹⁰² In terms of film, however, the fact is that when these kinds of stories did begin to appear, both in film and on television in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it was the stories about Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women that came to the fore.¹⁰³ I mention this to reinforce my central argument that the belated appearance of individualised leading Indigenous Australian male or female characters as sexual partners for non-Indigenous Australians in films was a matter of race rather than of gender. Haskins and Maynard acknowledged the significance of race, but spent much of their time considering the matter of Indigenous and non-Indigenous sexual relations, primarily through the prism of paternalism and gender.¹⁰⁴

It is my contention that it was the racial conceptions of Indigenous Australia that best explains the absence of an Indigenous Australian romance heroine. Even though film producers in the 1920s, such as Franklyn Barrett and the Baker–Carroll Production team, emphasised “wholesome”, “nice” family-oriented stories of “Australian life”, there were still love stories and tales of inter-racial romance.¹⁰⁵ There had even been films made during the Great War that

¹⁰¹ Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power”, p. 191

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978), *Dead Heart* (1996) and the ABC TV Series *Heartland* (1994)

¹⁰⁴ Haskins and Maynard, “Sex, Race and Power”, p. 197

¹⁰⁵ *The Picture Show*, 24 May 1919, p. 12 (State Library of New South Wales); *The Picture Show*, 1 March 1921, p. 33 (State Library of New South Wales)

dealt, by implication, with prostitution – *Satan in Sydney* (1918), to take one example – and seduction and sex outside marriage – *The Woman Suffers* (1918). There was even a film about the then-controversial matter of mixed marriage between Protestant and Catholic: *The Church and the Woman* (1917). Despite the general preference expressed by the likes of Barrett and Snowy Baker for avoiding “questionable subjects”, sex did feature in many silent films.¹⁰⁶ In 1923 the implications of venereal disease were broached in *Should a Doctor Tell?* The conclusion must therefore be that, given the popularity of outback settings for so many silent films, combined with the realities of Indigenous and non-Indigenous sexual relations, the absence of an Indigenous Australian romantic heroine was due to race and not to fears among members of the filmmaking industry about audience sensibilities about sex. The absence of an Indigenous Australian female romance figure was due to the fact that Indigenous women were simply not viewed in the same way as other non-white females who were seen as ranking higher on the ladder of racial hierarchies. The cinematic absence also had a great deal to do with the fact that films were made by urban filmmakers, that is to say, filmmakers who lived far away from the brutal sexual realities of the frontier.

Like the absence of the leading individualised Indigenous Australian male, the absence of an Indigenous Australian romantic heroine until *Jedda* (1955) can best be explained by the notion held in the decades after Federation that Indigenous Australians would simply fade away and were, therefore, not relevant to the cinematic version of the national story because they were, in effect, an anachronism.

¹⁰⁶ *The Picture Show*, 24 May 1919, p. 12 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Mystic Black

Mystical and supernatural qualities became the leitmotif of the Indigenous Australian cinematic Wild Black from 1952.¹⁰⁷ The Mystic Black first appeared in the American production of *Kangaroo* (also known in United States as *The Australian Story*). In that film, a group of Indigenous Australian Wild Blacks staged a corroboree to bring rain for a drought-stricken grazier, Michael McGuire (Finlay Curry). This was meant as thanks for the grazier's earlier action in allowing the Indigenous Australians to drink water from his artesian bore. The following year, in an Australian production *The Phantom Stockman* (1953), mystical qualities were again associated with Indigenous Australians, this time in the form of telepathy. In both films, the corroboree motif, identified in the previous chapter, was prominent in the imagery linked to the Wild Blacks. The difference between the corroboree motif evident in the two films from the 1950s and others up to the present day and that in the films of the silent era was that filmmakers from the 1950s acknowledged that the corroboree had a purpose beyond merely childish dress-up, superstition or the hocus-pocus on the part of the primitive Indigenous Australian 'other'.

An aspect of the construction of the corroboree motif common to both silent era and more recent films has been the filmic association of the corroboree with "full-blood" or tribal Indigenous Australian status. In both the silent era and the period since the 1950s, the Tame Blacks, the assimilated Indigenous

¹⁰⁷ David J. Tacey, *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia* (North Blackburn: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 8

Australians like the Trackers and other helper characters, have not, as a general rule, been associated with the corroboree motif. However, the difference, which reflects the silent era absence of the Mystic Black, was that in the films of the silent era tame, assimilated or civilised Indigenous Australians were depicted as having been lifted out of the primitive world (as symbolised by the corroboree). In the silent era, the Tame Blacks became the beneficiaries of non-Indigenous civilisation and hence became members of a modern rather than a tribal, pre-modern society.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, a close look at the absence of the Indigenous Australian Mystic Black in the silent era, and the trope's ultimate appearance in the 1950s, can provide insights into how non-Indigenous Australians have come to perceive both Indigenous Australia and themselves. The evident shift in non-Indigenous thinking represented by the appearance of the Mystic Black can be explained in part by adopting some of the ideas offered by Marianna Torgovnick, in her general analysis of Western thought, imagination and the construction of the "primitive life".¹⁰⁸ It is also useful to consider the works of David Tacey, Tony Swain and Peter Read in their more specific examinations of ideas of Indigenous Australian spirituality.¹⁰⁹ The very presence of these reflective studies can be seen, in and of themselves, as an explanation for the eventual appearance of the cinematic Indigenous Australian

¹⁰⁸ Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 9

¹⁰⁹ Tacey, *Edge of the Sacred*; Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Mystic Black. During much of the silent era, the issue of race and the related assumption that Indigenous Australians, their culture and way of life would simply fade away meant that non-Indigenous Australian engagement with the corroboree and aspects of Indigenous Australian spirituality only became an issue when it began to become clear that neither the Indigenous Australian people or culture were, in fact, going to fade away. David Tacey described this shift as being from “shadow to shaman”.¹¹⁰ In the case of film, this process was represented by the belated inclusion of the Mystic Black in the cast of Indigenous Australian characters. This shift has, according to Tacey, been due in part to changes in non-Indigenous society’s idea of itself. The non-Indigenous Australian world of material surplus has led some of its members to view aspects of Indigenous Australian culture with “envy and spiritual longing”.¹¹¹

The re-invention of Indigenous Australians as mystical and unknowable, sentiments expressed repeatedly in the dialogue of films for half a century from *Kangaroo* (1952) to *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), gives non-Indigenous Australia an excuse for failing to address the challenges, in terms of health and education, which have plagued Indigenous Australians in the years since dispossession. As I noted earlier, the absence – and then the belated appearance – of the Indigenous Australian Mystic Black is part of a process, or transformation that, according to Tacey, is really about non-Indigenous Australia and what amounts to the substitution of one “archetypal projection for another” to accommodate non-Indigenous Australia’s preferred construction of its history and identity.¹¹² This

¹¹⁰ Tacey, *Edge of the Sacred*, p. 129

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*, p.130

process of invention has been neither consistent nor tidy. The tentative cinematic shift reflected the broader patterns of non-Indigenous folklore about Indigenous Australia. W.E.H. Stanner addressed aspects of non-Indigenous folklore and noted the “self-contradictory mixtures” that existed side by side.¹¹³ Stanner made specific reference to the mystical Indigenous Australian qualities of mental telepathy to highlight the contradictions. He observed that, according to settler folklore, “Aborigines were masters of mental telepathy or alternatively, had no minds at all”.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

The absence of any individualised Indigenous Australian characters, other than the Tame Blacks, the helpers, in silent films can be explained in no small part by the wider culture of the time. This was a time, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, when, for example, artists such as Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and the other members of the Heidelberg School were painting the Australian bush and excluding “an Aboriginal presence in their self-consciously heroic depictions of Australian life and land”.¹¹⁵

One of the illuminating aspects of a consideration of the absences of this particular set of characters is the overall lack, in the silent era, of a depiction of Indigenous Australians as people. Again applying a comparative approach, with

¹¹³ Stanner, *After the Dreaming, The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney, 1968), p. 193

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ See McCubbin’s “The Pioneer” (1904) and “On the Wallaby Track” (1896); Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 108.

limited exceptions during the silent era, films about the lives and loves of Indigenous Australians were absent.¹¹⁶ By contrast, in the United States between 1909 and 1930, 12 feature films were produced that dealt exclusively with the lives of Native American characters. Of these, five were made by prominent silent filmmakers, such as Thomas Ince and D.W. Griffith. In a three-year period between 1909 and 1912, Griffith made three films for Biograph – *The Mended Flute* (1909), *The Song of the Wildwood Flute* (1910) and *A Pueblo Legend* (1912) – all of which told stories set exclusively within Native American communities.

During the same period the famous African American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux was making films about and for the African American community.¹¹⁷ The relative size and economic resources of the African American population in the United States, compared with the Indigenous Australian population, means that this comparison is less apt than that with Native Americans. Yet it remains a valid reflection of the overall silence that was a feature of the characterisation of Indigenous Australians during the silent era and that pervaded the broader cultural landscape of the period.

Although he was principally writing in terms of literature rather than film, Peter Pierce offered a valuable frame of reference with which to conclude this consideration of the absences. In his review of the potency and durability of the idea of the lost child motif in Australian colonial society, Pierce was tempted to compare the Australian situation with that in United States. He concluded, as I

¹¹⁶ An exception was the dramatised documentary *Coorab in the Isle of Ghosts* (1929).

¹¹⁷ Patrick McGilligan, *Oscar Micheaux: The Life of America's First Black Filmmaker* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007)

have done in relation to silent film, that Indigenous Australians, unlike Native Americans were rarely accorded individual status in either Australian racial contact history, in literature, or in the silent films that reimagined that history. Individualisation would have required “notions of Aborigines as more palpably and threateningly human than were often conceded”.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children*, p. xvii

Chapter Five

Multiple Heists: *Robbery Under Arms* and Warrigal's Long Shadow

This chapter will use one film, *Robbery Under Arms*, and one character, Warrigal, to draw together key aspects of the invention of Indigenous Australian characters in Australian feature films. Analysis of the different versions of *Robbery Under Arms* made between 1907 and 1985, and of the character of Warrigal, the loyal Indigenous Australian aide to the non-Indigenous hero, confirms the key patterns in the genesis of Indigenous Australian film characters identified in the preceding chapters. The most striking feature, in the various incarnations of both the film and the character, is the degree of continuity evident in the underlying assumptions about Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. This is not to suggest that there have not been some changes; it is just that since 1907 continuity has been more conspicuous than change.

I will closely examine each of the film versions of Rolf Boldrewood's original story and consider the legacy of the Warrigal character.¹

In what follows, I use the phrase 'Warrigal's shadow' to refer to the persistent motifs and assumptions associated with the character. Some of these have been touched on previously, especially when discussing the Tracker and the Tame Black. However, looking at different versions of the same character in

¹ Rolf Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms: A Story of Life and Adventure in the Bush and in the Goldfields of Australia* (London, 1947). "Rolf Boldrewood" was the pen name of Thomas Alexander Browne (1826–1915), pastoralist, magistrate and gold commissioner.

the same story across the decades is especially illuminating. The 1907 Warrigal cast a long shadow across the entire silent era and deep into the sound era. Sometimes the shadow is faint or shadowy, but it is, as I will show, nonetheless real. Warrigal's shadow and the first three film versions of the bushranger film, *Robbery Under Arms* all reflect a consistency in the preferred modes of characterising Indigenous Australians. This consistency or continuity has often gone unacknowledged because of the neglect of the silent era. Warrigal's shadow is evident in the characterisation of Indigenous Australians as being at one with nature. It is also evident in the central conceit that is a feature of the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australians. When the Warrigal characters were depicted as embracing the non-Indigenous way of life, they were typically characterised as the willing, contented and loyal servants of settler interests. All of these characters, however, regardless of their different names or the different films in which they appeared, still always remained outside the non-Indigenous world. Bushrangers in Australian films were outside the mainstream. They were enemies of the establishment. Many of the Warrigal characters and Warrigal shadows were therefore also characterised as outside the mainstream of non-Indigenous society. Even when Warrigal's shadow can be identified in the characterisation of an Indigenous Australian police tracker, acting as a servant of the establishment, he is still outside the mainstream. The key to Warrigal's shadow is that no matter who he loyally serves – whether it is a bushranger, the police or a settler – he remains subservient and an outsider.

Repetition of the characterisation the Warrigal characters as subordinates and loyal aids throughout the history of Australian silent film was a means of affirming non-Indigenous superiority, authority and power. Warrigal's shadow was

also an affirmation of what Russell McGregor referred to as the universal assumption that as a superior race, “whites were the vanguard of progress”.² The Warrigal characters survived, unlike the other members of the doomed race, because they had non-Indigenous benefactors. The absence of a paternal non-Indigenous protector was directly associated with the demise of the Indigenous Australian character.

In all, there have been four film versions of Rolf Boldrewood’s novel *Robbery Under Arms*: 1907, 1920, 1957 and 1985. All four versions offer valuable reference points which will allow us to sum up the genesis of a number of Indigenous Australian cinematic character types. A close consideration of these films will inform an analysis of the links between the silent and sound eras. *Robbery Under Arms* has been chosen because of the enduring appeal of the story for filmmakers and audiences.³ Boldrewood’s story of bushranging and the gold fields, featuring Captain Starlight, Warrigal and the Marston family, is an Australian literary classic. The 1907 silent film version, as noted earlier, marked the appearance of the very first Indigenous Australian character, Warrigal, played by a non-Indigenous actor Jim Gerald in blackface. The contrast between the first Warrigal and the most recent characterisation from 1985 is notable. This contrast, however, is not simply due to the advent of sound, which allowed more opportunity for expression of the character’s views. The nature of the contrast is rather, as I will show, a reflection of the times. This change is all the more striking

² Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1997), p. 48

³ The intervention of the New South Wales censorship regulations in 1912 about bushranger films prevented even more silent film versions of the story being produced.

because it emerges from the continuities evident in Warrigal's shadow. The first three Warrigal film characters – two from the silent era in 1907 and 1920, and the third from 1957 – have so much in common that they are all clearly the same character in more than just name. This is true despite the fact that the first and third were separated by half a century. Each of these characters is, however, only superficially an Indigenous Australian. The only difference between the characterisations of the actual Indigenous Australians cast in the role – Jackie Anderson in 1920 and John Cadell in 1957, and Jim Gerald's 1907 performance – was that Anderson and Cadell did not need to be made up in blackface. Their characterisations were, however, like Gerald's, white underneath.

The first sound-era version of the film was in 1957. In the entire film, John Cadell's Warrigal has only 34 words of dialogue, in four brief exchanges. By contrast, the second Warrigal of the sound era (Tommy Lewis, in 1985) is so different from the first three that he became an entirely different character. It is important to note that the 1985 Warrigal came after Fred Schepisi's 1978 film *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, the film version of the Jimmy Governor story discussed in a previous chapter. Lewis, the Indigenous Australian actor cast to play Jimmy Blacksmith, also appeared as Warrigal in *Robbery Under Arms* (1985), and then as Mundaru, the Indigenous warrior leader, in *The Naked Country* (1985). All of Lewis's characterisations were the product of their times. The individualised Indigenous Australian male characterised as a warrior or a figure of menace was absent throughout the silent era. The character was a belated addition to the cast of Indigenous Australian film characters. The appearance of the character coincided with growing public exposure to assertive Indigenous Australian activists. The fourth version of *Robbery Under Arms* and

the characterisation of Warrigal as an assertive, masculine warrior was the legacy of the 1970s activism noted in the previous chapter.⁴ Footage of confrontations between the police and protesters at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in front of Parliament House were part of the evening TV news. The period following the election of the Hawke Government in 1983 was a time when the land rights movement gained a new impetus. And in 1984 an outspoken Indigenous Australian, Charles Perkins, was appointed Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In other words, the cinematic characterisations of Indigenous Australians mirrored the social and political developments of the day.

Reflecting on the invention and reinvention of the same Indigenous Australian character in the same story across 78 years provides a rare opportunity to assess just how the dominant ‘supplanting society’ chose to mould and tell its story through film.⁵ An examination of Warrigal’s character in *Robbery Under Arms* also serves to reinforce two points made throughout this thesis. The first relates to the importance of a study of the silent era for a more complete

⁴ In 1972 militant activist Denis Walker organised an Australian Black Panther Party. In the same year Gary Foley and Billy Craigie organised an Indigenous Australian Black Power Movement. For more on the 1970s militants, see Kevin J. Gilbert, *Because a White Man’ll Never Do it* (Sydney, 1971); Kevin Gilbert, *Aboriginal Sovereignty: Justice, the Law and Land (Includes Draft Treaty)* (Canberra, 1988); Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The 1967 Referendum: Race, Power and the Australian Constitution* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1967). For Black Power, see Kathy Lothian, “Seizing the Time: Australian Aborigines and the Influences of the Black Panther Party, 1969–1972”, *Journal of Black Studies* March 2005, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 179–200; Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2003) pp. 321–25, pp. 340–43.

⁵ David Day, *Conquest: A New History of the Modern World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005), pp. 9,

historical analysis of Indigenous Australian characterisation in film. After all, two of the four film versions of Rolf Boldrewood's novel were made in the silent era, and yet there is a general neglect in the literature of the silent versions of the story. This can, in part, be explained by the loss of the 1907 version of *Robbery Under Arms* and the fact that the 1920 version is incomplete.⁶ This explanation does not outweigh the fact that, when it comes to discussing the changes in Indigenous characterisation, there is a clear preference in the literature for focusing on films made since *Jedda* (1955). The second point is that while there is an acceptance of the value of tracing the genesis of film characters derived from novels such as *Robbery Under Arms*, there has been a neglect of the genesis of film characters derived from the silent era.⁷ Indigenous Australian characters such as Warrigal have been considered in film literature almost entirely in terms of the period since the 1950s. But these characters did not just appear out of nowhere. Film scholars readily address contemporary influences on films with Indigenous Australian characters.⁸ However, a consideration of the

⁶ Despite the loss of the 1907 version, the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia holds useful documentation on the film, including a booklet of publicity material, with photographs and a story outline Title No. 780821. In the case of the 1920 version (Title No. 340374), significant sections of the film survive along with Kenneth Brampton's script and a synopsis that includes a cast and location lists.

⁷ George Bluestone, *Novels into Films* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003)

⁸ Suneeti Rekhari, "Assimilation, Othering and Control: Looking Back and Jedda", *Screen Education*, Autumn 2010, no. 57, pp. 123–28; Suneeti Rekhari, "The 'Other' in Film: Exclusions of Aboriginal Identity from Australian Film", *Visual Anthropology*, March–April 2008, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 125–35. Film scholars commonly contextualise the films they consider. In terms of methodology, it is possible for a historian to apply the same approach to a consideration of the invention of Indigenous Australian characters in the silent era. Peter Krausz, "Screening Indigenous Australia: An Overview of Aboriginal Representation on Film", *Screen Education*, Spring 2003, no. 33, pp. 90–95; Shino Konishi, "The Four Fathers of Australia: Baz Luhrmann's Depiction of Aboriginal History and Paternity in the Northern Territory", *History Australia*, April

predominant longer-term continuities evident in the first three versions of *Robbery Under Arms* reinforces the value of a consideration of the genesis of Indigenous Australian character types in the period before 1950. A longer-term approach also has the potential to offer insights into more than a single film. Examination of Warrigal's shadow furthers the analysis of both the evolution of Australia's idea of itself and the stories it tells.

***Robbery Under Arms* 1907, 1920, 1957 and 1985**

The first film version of *Robbery Under Arms* (1907) was among the very first Australian feature films. It is also significant because it marked the appearance of the very first Indigenous Australian film character. Warrigal was created by Rolf Boldrewood in his famous novel, published in 1882. In the novel, Warrigal was introduced to readers as a gifted tracker, slavishly loyal to the leading bushranging character, Captain Starlight. Boldrewood's pen portrait of Warrigal noted that the "only living things he cared about were Starlight" and his horse.⁹ Yet he was also characterised as devious and unmanly when compared to two other members of the gang, Jim Marston and his brother, Dick, who was the narrator of the novel.

2011, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 23–41; Shane Cribb, "Reading Aboriginalities in Australian Cinema: from *Jedda* to *Dead Heart*", *Screen Education*, Winter 2001, nos. 26/27, pp. 36–45

⁹ Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms: A Story of Life and Adventure in the Bush and in the Goldfields of Australia* (London: Cassell, 1947) p. 94

Rolf Boldrewood has been described as a widely-read advocate of Australian cultural nationalism.¹⁰ The character of Warrigal is an ideal reference point. In January 1904, just three years before the first silent film version of *Robbery Under Arms* was made, Boldrewood wrote an article about his novel as part of a series published by *Life Digest*.¹¹ The author's reflections on his novel and its characters two decades after original publication offer insights into the mind of the storyteller. It also provides an insight into the social context of the early twentieth century and the beginning of the silent era of Australian filmmaking. Boldrewood insisted that his key characters, the Marstons and to a lesser extent, Starlight, were "portraits drawn from a living model".¹² He also emphasised Dick and Jim Marston's manly qualities. Boldrewood described them as strong, active, enduring and intelligent young men. These qualities, he wrote, reflected their status as members of the Anglo-Saxon race as "bred and reared" in Australia.¹³ The author's ideas reinforce the point made in the previous chapter about the association, in the early twentieth century, of manliness and military prowess. Boldrewood wrote in hindsight of his fictional characters that had "the South African War broken out before they were fatally compromised, none who knew them doubted that they would have distinguished themselves at the front, as did so many of their compatriots".¹⁴ It was this association of masculinity and martial qualities that contributed to the emasculation of Indigenous Australian male characters in the films of the silent era. This form of emasculation was

¹⁰ Luke Trainor, "Australian Writers, British Publishers, 1870–1902: Talking to the Nation?", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2006, vol. 37, no. 127, pp. 140–55

¹¹ Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms*, p. 21

¹² *ibid.*, p. 24

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

evident in the characterisation of Warrigal in Boldrewood's novel and in the first three film versions of it.

When writing about his story in 1904, Boldrewood did not once mention Warrigal, even though the Indigenous Australian character had been pivotal to the plot. Warrigal was a key agent in the death of Starlight and in the gang's being brought to justice. Instead, Boldrewood focused on "old-time bushranging": the Marstons, father and sons; Starlight, described as "the chivalrous outlaw"; and even the bushranger's horse, Rainbow.¹⁵ Boldrewood wrote that Rainbow was a prominent character in the novel and devoted more than 340 words to the horse – but not one word to the Indigenous Australian character. In 1882 Warrigal was a key part of the story, but when novelist revisited his work in 1904 Warrigal was missing. It is worth considering what might have led to this change between 1882 and 1904.

A great deal had changed in the circumstances of Indigenous Australians and their place in the national story between the first appearance of Warrigal in the serialised version of the novel published in the 1880s and the post-Federation period of the article. The receding outback frontier meant that Indigenous Australians had also receded in non-Indigenous consciousness. In the article, Boldrewood devoted a specific section to "How the tale caught on".¹⁶ He was aware of the interests of his readership and the particular appeal of his work. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that in the 1904 article Boldrewood deliberately addressed the issues that were of interest to his most recent readers. The

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 25, 22

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 24

Marstons, Starlight, the location of Starlight's hide-out Terrible Hollow, Rainbow, the Boldrewood pen name, bushranging and the ethics of the story – all of these were all featured.¹⁷ In the process, Warrigal was omitted, despite his significance to the plot of the original story. The likely explanation is a lack of interest in Indigenous Australia, combined with a desire to remake the nation's idea of itself in the wake of Federation. By looking at the novel published in the 1880s, the 1904 article, and each of the four later film versions of the story, it is possible to trace the invention and evolution of an Indigenous Australian character type.

The portrait of Warrigal the filmmakers inherited from the novel was one of an Indigenous Australian devoted to Starlight and skilled as a tracker capable of reading "all the signs of the bush like a painted book".¹⁸ Warrigal was a superb horseman who could "find his way day or night to any place he'd ever once been to in his life"; he was said to have "had pluck enough" and could "catch fish and game in all sorts of ways".¹⁹ Despite these positive qualities, Warrigal was still, however, depicted as being less of a man than either Starlight or the Marstons. Dick Marston never really trusted Warrigal: "I was always expecting him to play us a dog's trick yet."²⁰ Warrigal conforms to Marston's expectation and does, in the end, inform on the gang to settle a grudge against Jim Marston.

In one key respect, both the novel and the first three film versions of *Robbery Under Arms* share an unwillingness to acknowledge original Indigenous ownership of the land. The novel's description of the gang's hide-out, Terrible

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 27

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 94

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 95

Hollow, refers to escaped convicts or “runaway Government men” being shown the way to the Hollow by an Indigenous Australian woman, thought to be either Warrigal’s mother, aunt or some other female relative.²¹ The Hollow was therefore part of Warrigal’s country. When this fact is linked to Warrigal’s gifts as a Tracker, the novel can be interpreted differently. Warrigal was the first Indigenous Australian film character and the first in a long line of Tracker characters and, as such, casts a long shadow. Like all of the other film characters discussed in the chapter devoted to the Tracker, Warrigal’s affinity with the bush arose from the fact that it was his home. The continuity of Indigenous cinematic characterisation was evident in the fact that the reality of Indigenous ownership was not something that either Boldrewood or any filmmaker who reinvented Warrigal before 1985 was willing to acknowledge. This reality was not addressed until the 1985 film version of the story.²²

In the novel, there was something weak, obsequious and unmanly in Warrigal’s relationship with Starlight. Boldrewood described how Starlight “would knock Warrigal down like a log if he didn’t please him, but he never offered to turn upon him. He seemed to like it, and looked regular put out once when Starlight hurt his knuckles against his hard skull.”²³ An alternative reading suggests that Warrigal may have been more loyal to place than person. In other words, Warrigal may have been loyal to Starlight as a way of staying in and around the Hollow and his country. Henry Reynolds explored this idea extensively in *Black Pioneers*, pointing out that Indigenous Australians were often willing to work

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 71

²² It is notable that the Mabo Case opened in front of the High Court of Australia in 1982.

²³ Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms*, p. 94

cheaply for non-Indigenous settlers because of a “determination to live on one’s own land.”²⁴ This was not weakness. Rather, it was an example of the power of the Indigenous Australian affinity with country. This reading of the text also offers a far more credible explanation for Warrigal’s return to the Hollow following the deaths of Starlight and Jim, Dick’s arrest and the break-up of the gang. In the novel, Warrigal was said to have come back to the Hollow “like a fool” or “because he had nowhere else to go”.²⁵ An alternative explanation for Warrigal’s behaviour, not canvassed until the 1985 version of *Robbery Under Arms*, was that Warrigal was, as always, primarily motivated by his links to country. For the non-Indigenous newcomers, the Hollow had a utilitarian value; it was a hide-out from the law. For Warrigal, it was home.

Charles MacMahon produced the first film version of *Robbery Under Arms* (1907). The film has not survived, and we are left only with a handful of reviews and some publicity material.²⁶ The film was part of the popular early bushranging genre and came a year after Charles Tait’s *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906).²⁷ As with the novel, the focus of MacMahon’s 1907 version, according to the few extant reviews, was on the Marstons and Starlight.²⁸ The dashing character of Starlight inspired a number of other bushranger characters in the genre. A similar character appeared in John Gavin’s *Moonlite* (1910). The story of Captain Moonlite is that of yet another gentleman bushranger, who never wronged a

²⁴ Henry Reynolds, *Black Pioneers: How Aboriginal and Islander people helped build Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000), p. 67

²⁵ Boldrewood, *Robbery Under Arms*, p. 424

²⁶ Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 11

²⁷ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 50618

²⁸ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 780821

woman and only robbed the rich to help the poor.²⁹ This film was followed in 1911 by *Captain Midnight, the Bush King*, directed by Alfred Rolf for Spencer's Pictures.³⁰ In the same year, Rolf also directed *Captain Starlight, or Gentleman of the Road* (1911) also for Spencer's Pictures.³¹ As the use of the name Starlight suggests, this film was loosely based on Boldrewood's novel. By contrast with Starlight, Warrigal was a peripheral character but, as I will show, one who cast a very long shadow. In 1907 the most significant aspect of Warrigal's characterisation was the use of a non-Indigenous actor, Jim Gerald, made up in blackface to play the part. The use of blackface was part of Australia's long theatrical and vaudeville tradition.³² Prior to this film, Boldrewood's novel had been performed as a stage play by a number of different theatrical companies. Like so many of the other early filmmakers, producer Charles MacMahon had a background in theatre production.³³

When, in 1920, Kenneth Brampton directed the first remake of *Robbery Under Arms* for Pacific Photo Plays, the most obvious cosmetic change in the depiction of Warrigal was the use of an Indigenous Australian, Jackie Anderson, to play the part.³⁴ Brampton's decision to cast Anderson arose from a desire for the right type. Brampton favoured the approach of casting characters based on

²⁹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No 343335; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 11

³⁰ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 343335

³¹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Script for *Captain Midnight, the Bush King*, Title No. 726844; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p.11

³² Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1990)

³³ Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, p. 11

³⁴ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 722501

their look or type, an approach that was in vogue during the early years of silent filmmaking.³⁵ In an interview for the film journal *The Photoplayer* in 1923, Brampton set out his views on this approach to casting and spoke of his desire to secure “real types”.³⁶ This typing was nonetheless superficial. In other words, Jackie Anderson was cast as Warrigal to look like an Indigenous Australian, not to be an Indigenous Australian. In a later issue of *The Photoplayer*, the paternalistic and patronising tone of the article mirrored the way in which Anderson’s performance as Warrigal had been framed. Anderson was referred to as “the aboriginal boy” finally procured by Brampton after several visits to La Perouse, a well-known Indigenous Australian community then on the coastal fringes of Sydney. Anderson’s family, described as “his dusky relatives” were said to be thrilled over the prospect of Anderson getting film parts.³⁷ It was this kind of paternalistic thinking that contributed to the emasculation of so many Indigenous Australian male characters during the silent era. Unlike real men they were not seen as masters of their own fate.

The Warrigal in the 1920 version of *Robbery Under Arms*, unlike the Warrigal in Boldrewood’s novel, did not carry a gun. As noted in chapter three on the Tracker character, Jackie Anderson’s Warrigal character owes as much to Hollywood’s depiction of loyal African American slaves as it does to Boldrewood. When Starlight is killed, Warrigal is shown kneeling in grief at the bushranger’s side. Warrigal’s shadow, however, stretched deep into the sound era of film. The

³⁵ John Tulloch, *Legends on the Screen: The Narrative film in Australia 1919–1929* (South Carlton, Currency Press, 1981), p. 85

³⁶ *The Photoplayer*, 6 June 1923, p. 21 (State Library of New South Wales)

³⁷ *The Photoplayer*, 23 June 1923, p. 23 (State Library of New South Wales)

same character appeared again in 1957, in the second remake of *Robbery Under Arms*. However, Warrigal's shadow can be seen in a number of other Indigenous Australian film characters. Although the names of the films, the names of the characters and the plot scenarios differed, Warrigal's shadow was still evident. As late as 1967, in *Journey Out of Darkness*, an Indigenous Australian Tracker acting as a loyal subordinate to the non-Indigenous hero was still being played by a non-Indigenous Australian actor in blackface.³⁸ Warrigal's shadow can also even be seen in 1976, in the performance of Australian film's most famous Indigenous Australian actor, David Gulpilil, as Billy. In accordance with the long-established silent tradition, Billy is characterised as the loyal friend and ally to the bushranger in *Mad Dog Morgan* (1976).³⁹ Before looking at Warrigal's more distant shadow, I want to examine some of the other versions of the character in the 1950s, including the 1957 incarnation of Warrigal in the third film version of *Robbery Under Arms*.⁴⁰

Aside from the Indigenous characters that owed something to the thinking that gave rise to the invention of Warrigal, Warrigal's long shadow was also evident in a more direct way. The cast of *Robbery Under Arms* in 1920 included a young Charles Chauvel as an extra. Chauvel's story is synonymous with the growth of Australian film. In a career as a filmmaker that began in the silent era,

³⁸ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 7654; Script for the film, Title No. 722076

³⁹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 4505; Script for the film, Title No. 722524; An interview with David Gulpilil about his part in the film, Title No. 541501, recorded and broadcast in May 2002; Letter from the director Philippe Mora to the American star Dennis Hopper about the character of Daniel Morgan, Title No. 794275

⁴⁰ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 8893; Publicity material for the film, Title No. 780828

Chauvel spent time in Hollywood before returning to Australia to make films, including the iconic *Jedda* (1955). One of Chauvel's films with Indigenous characters from the sound era was *Uncivilised* (1936). The film not only included evidence of the ubiquitous loyal Trackers, it also focused typically on the Wild Black–Tame Black dichotomy. In the cast was Kenneth Brampton, the director who had given Chauvel his start in the silent era in *Robbery Under Arms* in 1920.⁴¹ Warrigal's shadow and the influence of the silent era were manifest therefore in the sound era in a variety of ways.

In 1957 John Cadell's Warrigal owes perhaps more to the cinematic traditions of the silent era than he does to Rolf Boldrewood. The only things that had changed were the use of colour film and the advent of sound. Unlike Anderson in 1920, Cadell as Warrigal carries a gun, but he is always remote from the action. This continues until the near the end of the film when Warrigal gives his life to save Starlight (Peter Finch). In the extended sequence depicting the gang's last stand, Warrigal deliberately exposes himself to the troopers' fire to throw a rifle to Starlight. Rather than use the weapon, Warrigal is an Indigenous Australian gun-bearer. A related message is that Warrigal cannot survive without Starlight. The 1957 film also used Warrigal to continue the long tradition, discussed at length in the chapter on the Tracker, of characterising the Indigenous Australians in bushranger films as loyal allies to the non-Indigenous hero.

⁴¹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 769; Press clippings about *Uncivilised*, Title No. 350614; Screen tests, Title No. 66211



Figure 1: A scene from *Robbery Under Arms* (1957) and used in a theatre lobby card to promote the film: Captain Starlight (Peter Finch) at left and Warrigal (John Cadell) at right. The scene and the voice over introduced Starlight and mentioned the vast open spaces of Australia but neglected to mention the other person in the shot. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

The 1957 Warrigal was also characterised in such a way that it continued the long tradition of differentiating between the Wild and Tame Blacks. Warrigal and the trackers employed by the police are Tame Blacks. Their function is to serve. They are contrasted in the film, as they had been since the earliest characterisations in the silent era, with the tribal or Wild Blacks. When a group of Wild Blacks is encountered in the film, they are framed in iconic fashion in open country wearing white face paint. John Cadell as Warrigal, by contrast, is loyal and tame in every sense of the word. He lives and dies for Starlight.

By 1985, with Tommy Lewis as Warrigal, striking changes were evident.⁴² As outlined earlier in chapter three, which looked at the genesis of the Tracker type, the 1985 Warrigal is a masculine figure, both a warrior and an equal. In addition, by 1985 Warrigal's affinity with the bush is directly associated with original ownership of the land. This affinity is addressed explicitly when Starlight (Sam Neill) talks about leaving Australia for the United States. Warrigal's loyalty to Starlight does not supersede his commitment to country, and he refuses to go. Warrigal challenges Starlight and declares that the non-Indigenous members of the gang have no real place of their own and that by contrast he does, declaring, "I belong here".

Despite the undeniable change evident in the 1985 Warrigal, the idea that I advanced about Warrigal's shadow and the influence of the early silent characterisations can still be traced through the career of the Indigenous Australian actor Tommy Lewis, who played Warrigal in 1985. Lewis also appeared as manly warrior characters and figures of menace: in 1978 as Jimmie Blacksmith in *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, and in 1985 as Mundaru, an Indigenous Australian tribal leader who contests the right to the land of the non-Indigenous grazier, in *The Naked Country*.⁴³ But he also appeared as a Tame Black and helper, simply known as the Jackeroo, in *We of the Never Never*

⁴² National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 9407; Script Part 1 with amendments and notes, Title No. 727535; Script Part 2 with amendments and notes, Title No. 732523; Script Part 3 with amendments and notes, Title No. 727539; Publicity material, Title No. 780793

⁴³ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 766387; Anthony Buckley Production Papers for *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, Title No. 610678; *The Naked Country* (1985), Title No. 310923

(1982).⁴⁴ Warrigal's shadow was evident in this 1982 production, in Lewis's characterisation of a loyal helper. Lewis's character, the Jackeroo, served the non-Indigenous settlers Jeannie Gunn (Angela Punch-McGregor) and Aeneas Gunn (Arthur Dignam), who lived in the big house. The Jackeroo, however, never entered the big house. Warrigal's shadow and the legacy of the traditions of the silent era were also evident here in the use of non-Indigenous Australian actors wearing blackface to play the parts of Indigenous stockmen.

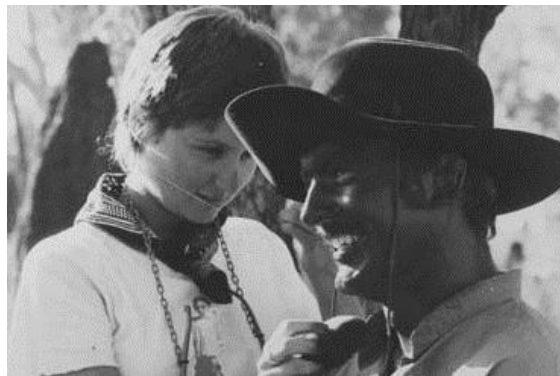


Figure 2: Evidence of Warrigal's long shadow. The first Indigenous Australian film character was Warrigal played by a non-Indigenous actor in blackface. In the 1982 version, 75 years later, blackface is still part of the invention of Indigenous Australia: here a production assistant on *We of the Never Never* applies blackface to one of the non-Indigenous actors appearing as an Indigenous Australian stockman. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Each of the Warrigal characters under discussion, starting with Rolf Boldrewood's novel from the 1880s, and the four film versions are all non-Indigenous inventions. Analysis of the evolution of the Warrigal character therefore provides an excellent mirror in which non-Indigenous Australia can see a reflection of itself over time. Beyond that, the Warrigal of the sound era can be

⁴⁴ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 6987; Script, Title No. 725874; Publicity material, Title No. 778751

better appreciated through an awareness of the provenance of the character type.

Both of the sound versions of *Robbery Under Arms* (1957 and 1985) have Indigenous Australian character types that had their genesis in the silent era. The distinction between the tribal Wild Blacks and the Tame Blacks, evident in both of these sound films, was a feature of the non-Indigenous invention of Indigenous Australia from the earliest days of film. Even though the Indigenous Australian character types in *Robbery Under Arms* clearly owe so much to the silent era, a close examination of the most recent version of *Robbery Under Arms* (1985) reveals a strong Indigenous Australian male character. This change refocuses our attention on the emasculation of Indigenous Australian males during the silent era and the absence of a strong individual Indigenous Australian warrior character.

Warrigal's shadow in other films

The sound-era films considered here can be better understood when viewed through a wider chronological lens that acknowledges the legacy of the silent era. Warrigal's shadow is evident in all of Charles Chauvel's films with Indigenous Australian characters from the sound era: *Heritage* (1935), *Uncivilised* (1936) and *Jedda* (1955).⁴⁵ The shadow was also cast over other films from other studios

⁴⁵ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Production details, Title No. 642; Press clippings for *Heritage*, Title No. 348234. For *Uncivilised* (1937), see National Film and Sound Archive of Australia Production details, Title No. 769; Press clippings, Title No. 350614; Correspondence and a report about *Uncivilised* by Charles Chauvel, Title No. 357039; Pike and Cooper, *Australian*

and other directors from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The films that will be assessed in terms of Warrigal's shadow are *The Overlanders* (1946), *Bitter Springs* (1950), *Journey Out of Darkness* (1967) and *Mad Dog Morgan* (1976).

In *Heritage* (1935) Warrigal's shadow was subtle but unmistakably present in the Tame Blacks who came to accept and serve the non-Indigenous way of life. Charles Chauvel won a Commonwealth Government prize for the film, for which he had spent some time crafting the story. The screenplay was linked directly to a novel of the same name, also written by Chauvel. In the film, Warrigal's shadow was evident in the contrast between the Tame Blacks and the passing resistance of the Wild Blacks. As the poster below indicates, the iconic Indigenous Australian Wild Black stands, boomerang in hand, in the bush. However, he is dwarfed by the settler characters at the top of the poster and the scenes representing the inevitable tide of progress linked to the First Fleet. The Wild Blacks initially challenge the settlers, but by the end of the film they have come to serve the newcomers; in this, they stand firmly in the line begun by Warrigal.⁴⁶

Film 1900–1977 pp. 173–74. For *Jedda* (1955), see National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 1270, Script with director's notes, Title No. 351699 and Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, pp. 219–21.

⁴⁶ Charles Chauvel, *Heritage* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), p. 204



Figure 3: A poster advertising *Heritage* (1935). The poster displays the key theme of the film: the idea of progress and the Australian ‘settler myth’. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

The following year Chauvel released *Uncivilised* (1936) and again Warrigal’s shadow was in evidence. In *Uncivilised* the police were served by a number of loyal Indigenous Australian Trackers, but the real evidence of the willing Warrigal-like subservience of Indigenous Australians to their non-Indigenous betters came with the central story line. The fanciful plot revolved around a group of Indigenous Australians ruled over by a white king, Mara (Denis Hoey).

As noted previously, Charles Chauvel’s *Jedda* (1955) is the typical starting point for consideration of Indigenous Australians in the film literature. It is, however, hard to separate the silent era and Warrigal’s shadow from an analysis of *Jedda*. Warrigal’s shadow is evident in the contentment of those Indigenous Australians who learn to embrace settler ways. The tensions in the film emerge in

the characterisations of Jedda (Rosalie Kunothe) and Marbuk (Robert Tudawali).⁴⁷ Both of these characters die in the end, and, as Suneeti Rekhari has pointed out, this was symbolic of their inability to survive in the modern world.⁴⁸ Rekhari goes on to argue that traditional Indigenous Australian “cultural beliefs and loyalties did not matter” and that they needed to accept “the prevailing Eurocentric views without question”.⁴⁹ It is my contention that this was an indication of Warrigal’s shadow. In 1920 Jackie Anderson kneels beside Starlight like a lost, grieving child; in 1957 John Cadell gives his life and dies with Starlight. The Warrigal characters need non-Indigenous authority and care in order to survive in the modern world.

Just after the Second World War, Ealing Studios made two films in Australia: *The Overlanders* (1946), directed by Harry Watt, and *Bitter Springs* (1950), directed by Ralph Smart.⁵⁰ Both films had Indigenous Australian characters set clearly in Warrigal’s shadow. In the case of *The Overlanders*, Warrigal’s shadow was most obvious in the characterisation of the Indigenous Australian stockmen, Jacky and Nipper (Clyde Combo and Henry Murdoch), who

⁴⁷ Note that I have used the name Rosalie Kunothe, not Ngarla Kunothe. Ngarla was a name that Elsa Chauvel chose for the young Indigenous Australian actress because it sounded more exotic. There are also striking parallels between the story of Kenneth Brampton’s search for Jackie Anderson in 1920, and Charles and Elsa Chauvel’s search for their Indigenous Australian actors for *Jedda*.

⁴⁸ Rekhari, “The ‘Other’ in Film”, p. 132

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 127

⁵⁰ For *The Overlanders* (1946), see National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Production details, Title No. 7597; Production booklet by the director Harry Watt, Title No. 360663; Shooting script, Title No. 715059; Press clippings, Title No. 352119. For *Bitter Springs* (1950), see National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Production details, Title No. 7609; Theatre promotion material, Title No. 770644.

join Dan McAlpine (Chips Rafferty) as he drives a huge heard of cattle across northern Australia. The plot addressed the wartime fear of a Japanese invasion and the aim of the drive was to prevent the cattle falling into Japanese hands. The exchange between McAlpine, who has been unable to convince a group of non-indigenous stockmen to join his cattle drive, and Jacky, who just happens to be passing is telling. McAlpine says, “You will go with me won’t you, Jacky?”, clearly assuming he will get a positive answer. Jacky then asks about the drive. He is told that McAlpine intends to drive his cattle across three states and that that they will be away “about a year”. Without hesitation, Jacky says that he will go along – “I’ll tell the Missus and be back in five minutes.” Both Jacky and Nipper are deferential and compliant, ready, almost in an instant, to leave their families and join the drive. The loyalty and devotion of the stockmen in *The Overlanders* to their non-Indigenous patrons has all the hallmarks of Warrigal’s shadow.

Warrigal’s shadow is not as immediately obvious in *Bitter Springs* (1950), a film in which the director, Ralph Smart, attempted to address the issue of Indigenous land ownership and the implications of dispossession. The plot, set in 1900, revolves around the pioneering experience of a settler Wally King (yet again, Chips Rafferty) and his family as they take up new land. After an initial clash, the film ends with the Indigenous Australians embracing the non-Indigenous way of life. Warrigal’s shadow is evident in two ways. First, the local Indigenous Australian band, the Karagani, work for the settlers, and second, cultural absorption means that, unlike Jedda and Marbuk, they do not perish.⁵¹

⁵¹ See Appendix 5 for a poster advertising the film.

In 1967 Warrigal's shadow was clearly manifest the performance of the non-Indigenous actor Ed Devereaux in blackface (see Figure 4) as the loyal assimilated Police Tracker Jubbal in *Journey Out of Darkness*.⁵² The film was set in central Australia in 1901 and dealt with the pursuit of an Indigenous Australian played by Kamahl.⁵³ Jubbal is situated in Warrigal's shadow because of he is made up in blackface and because, like all the other Warrigals, he is loyally devoted to the non-Indigenous cause and is used to create a stark contrast between the idea of the Wild and the Tame Blacks.



Figure 4: Non-Indigenous actor Ed Devereaux in blackface as an iconic Tracker tending the white man's fire in front of the equally iconic Uluru. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

⁵² National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Production details Title No. 7654; Script, Title No. 722076; Publicity material, Title No. 780670; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film 1900–1977*, pp. 239–40; also see Appendix 6 for an advertising poster for the film.

⁵³ Kamahl is the stage name of Kandiah Kamalesvaran, a well-known Malaysian-born singer of Tamil heritage.

The clearest outline of Warrigal's long shadow is in the 1976 bushranger film *Mad Dog Morgan*. David Gulpilil appears as Billy, the loyal Indigenous Australian friend and ally of the bushranger leading man. Both the 1920 Warrigal and his 1976 shadow are characterised as 'half castes'; both have an affinity with nature and are characterised as completely at home in the bush. Their characters are filmically defined as they emerge from the water in almost identical scenes, as shown in the images below. Both the 1920 Warrigal and his shadow lovingly tend the wounded bushranger when he is wounded. All of these shared characteristics mean that, despite differences in the film, the characters' names, the style of filmmaking and the generations, the continuity evident in the characterisation of Indigenous Australians remains.



Figure 5: At left: Jackie Anderson as Warrigal in 1920 emerging from the water and depicted as being at one with nature. At right: David Gulpilil as Billy, the loyal aide to the non-Indigenous bushranger who is also characterised as being at one with nature. Courtesy of the National film and Sound Archive of Australia

The four film versions of *Robbery Under Arms* and Warrigal's shadow indicate the legacy of the silent era. They also show the durability of certain Indigenous Australian character types and the entrenched nature non-Indigenous storytelling. The popularity of the Tracker character and the almost ubiquitous

presence of Warrigal's shadow throughout the history of the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia can be explained by non-Indigenous Australia's need to create a story that justified invasion and dispossession. This assertion is not new: it has been a feature of the commentary about Indigenous representation for many years across a range of disciplines. What I have done that is new is to trace in detail the cinematic process of invention from 1907 by looking at the four film versions of *Robbery Under Arms* and by identifying and tracing the outline of Warrigal's shadow.

Conclusion

This analysis of the genesis of Indigenous Australian film characters has challenged the accepted wisdom about the representation of Indigenous Australians in film in a number of ways. I maintain that, by going back to 1907 and the beginning of Indigenous Australian cinematic characterisation rather than by relying on a survey of films made since the 1950s, it is possible to see the important continuities that are a feature of non-Indigenous characterisation of Indigenous Australia from 1907 to the present day. My approach differs from previous contributions to the field of Indigenous representation in silent film in two ways. First, in terms of Indigenous characterisation, I have devoted more attention to the silent era than has previously been the case. Second, by developing and applying a character typology, I have been able to analyse, rather than merely describe or survey, the films with Indigenous Australian characters. As part of this approach, I have used the concept I refer to as 'Warrigal's shadow' to demonstrate the primacy of continuity over change in the characterisation of Indigenous Australians. Another consequence of this approach has been to challenge the assumptions, common in the existing literature, about comparisons made between Indigenous Australian and Native American characters. These assumptions – I call them assumptions because they have often been asserted but never interrogated – have neglected the equally valuable but hitherto largely ignored comparisons between Indigenous Australian and African American film characters.

The clearest example of the difference between my approach and all the others that have gone before has been my consideration of Charles Chauvel's

famous 1955 film *Jedda*. Rather than using *Jedda* as a starting point for a consideration of Indigenous Australians in film, I have used it as reference point, or, even as a mid-point. I believe this to be a far more useful approach. *Jedda* is indicative of many of the themes developed in my analysis. The film's creator, Charles Chauvel, personified the legacy of the silent era. Chauvel's career also reflected the importance of Hollywood's influence on Australian filmmakers. Like a number of his contemporaries during the silent era, Chauvel made the obligatory trip to Hollywood. He is pictured below with Snowy Baker during one of Chauvel's early visits to Hollywood. Both Chauvel and before him, Baker, had tailored Australian films in Australian settings in ways that they hoped would appeal to the American market. This commercial reality contributed to the continuities in the modes of cinematic characterisation of Indigenous Australians that have endured to the present day. Baker, Chauvel and, in 2008, Baz Luhrmann all expressed almost identical views about how to make films in Australia that would appeal to an international market.¹ The representation of Indigenous Australians was an aspect of the work of all three filmmakers.

¹ Karen McGhee, "The Reel Australia", *Australian Geographic*, October–December 2008, no. 92, pp. 34–36



Figure 1: A young Charles Chauvel (left) alongside Snowy Baker during one of Chauvel's early visits to Hollywood. Before becoming a film director, Chauvel had worked as an actor in two of Baker's films and had played a minor Indigenous Australian character in blackface. Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Chauvel's career was its longevity. He began making films with Indigenous characters in 1926 and continued to do so for 59 years until *Jedda* in 1955. As noted throughout this thesis, *Jedda* included all of the members of the Indigenous Australian cast: the Tracker, the Comic Black, the Wild Black and the Mystic Black are all clearly defined in this film. I argue, therefore, that, despite a growing body of scholarly work reflecting on *Jedda*, consideration of the film as part of a wider chronological focus can say still more about the processes involved in the invention of Indigenous Australia and Australia's racial imaginings.²

The decades immediately after Federation in 1901 marked the genesis of Australia's cinematic characterisations of Indigenous Australia. The first stages of this cinematic invention were influenced by three factors that formed a synergy.

² Suneeti Rekhari, "Assimilation, Othering and Control: Looking Back and *Jedda*", *Screen Education*, Autumn 2010, no. 57, pp.123–28; Suneeti Rekhari, "The 'Other' in Film: Exclusions of Aboriginal Identity from Australian Film", *Visual Anthropology*, March–April 2008, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 125–35

The first component of the synergy was the new white nation's desire to define itself. The second component was the birth of the film industry. The third component was the popularity of silent films, both locally made and imported, with the Australian public. This synergy provided the historical context for, and influenced the make-up of, Australia's preferred cast of Indigenous Australian film characters. The invention of Indigenous Australia in silent films is an important part of Australia's cultural history. To date, analysis of the processes of invention has neglected silent film. By considering the provenance of, and the shifts in, the preferred Indigenous Australian cast, it is possible to re-examine who 'we', as Australians, were, who we thought we were, and who we wanted to be. This analysis has always been, as noted in the introduction, more about non-Indigenous Australia than about Indigenous Australia.

The invention of Indigenous Australia can be best understood as one side of a binary. In the case of this binary, however, there is one side that is privileged or affirmed and another that is used as a contrast. Throughout the entire history of Indigenous Australian characterisation in film, this binary relationship has been remarkably consistent. Indigenous Australians have been equated with the natural environment. They have been the talismans of a pre-modern world, framed in terms of their relationship to and affinity with nature. Indigenous Australian characters were repeatedly framed in silent films by the Australian landscape and against backgrounds where the trappings of civilisation were absent. When these characters were depicted in scenes with the trappings of civilisation, they were framed to reinforce their 'primitive' status and to type them as a legacy of a pre-modern way of life. The contrasts that depicted Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as representatives of the past and the future,

pre-modern and modern, primitive and civilised, are inherent in the contrasts that co-exist within Indigenous Australian characterisations of the Wild and Tame Blacks. Both the overall binary construction that distinguished the Indigenous Australian past from the preferred or privileged, civilised, modern, non-Indigenous future and the internal binary opposition apparent in the invention of the Wild and Tame Blacks began in 1907 and has endured to the present day. These are the continuities which I refer to as Warrigal's shadow, and they are evident throughout the process of invention of Indigenous Australians in film. These continuities were fundamental to the genesis of all the Indigenous Australian film characters.

My approach has been to go back to the silent era, and the result is a significant change in perspective. Adopting a broader chronological perspective is somewhat akin to a director choosing a different lens or a different camera angle. The wider chronological perspective, much like the cinemascope lens and the wide-angle shot, alters what the audience sees and the way it comprehends what is depicted on screen. As I noted in the introduction, when it comes to Indigenous Australian characterisation, film scholarship has been obsessed with the 'close-up' or the 'medium shot'. The focus has been on the period since the 1950s. From this angle, the scene of Indigenous Australian characterisation appears to be dominated by change. Many of these changes are real, but when the camera pulls back and the entire panorama from 1907 to the twenty-first century is revealed, continuity rather than change becomes the most conspicuous feature of the imagined landscape of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cinematic iconography. As I noted above, aside from evidence of continuity, an analysis of Warrigal's shadow also reveals that, contrary to the views typically expressed in

the literature about American cinematic influence, it is more appropriate to reflect on the links between Indigenous Australian characterisations and the manner in which African Americans rather than Native Americans were depicted in films. When the Hollywood narrative paradigm did begin to dominate the Australian market from the First World War onwards, Westerns were popular but Australia's preferred versions of its history were, at that time, ones of peaceful settlement. Therefore, the compliant African American slaves depicted in films about plantation life in the old South were a more comfortable model for characterisations of Indigenous Australians than the Native American warriors of the plains. The influence on Australian filmmakers of the African American filmic model was reflected in the overwhelming preference for characterisations of the Tame Black during the silent era. Both Hollywood's invention of loyal African American slaves and Australia's invention of the Tame Blacks corresponded to the prevailing historical fashions of the day in each country. In the United States the loyal slaves were part of the revisionist history of the Civil War referred to as the 'Lost Cause', where life in the Old South was presented in positive terms and where the slaves were content and where nostalgia surrounded images of the Old South. These sentiments featured prominently in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).³ In Australia's case, the Tame Black reflected Australia's desire to reframe its history as one of peaceful settlement in the wake of Federation and after a century of frontier violence.⁴ Silent films lauded the pioneer spirit and

³ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 395–97

⁴ According to the records of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, the character of the Tame Black can be identified in 16 of the 30 films with Indigenous characters made between 1907 and 1928.

reinforced the virtues of the white race.⁵ As a consequence, certain Indigenous Australian character types were excluded from the silent film cast. The individualised warrior and the Indigenous Australian female romantic heroine were the most conspicuous absentees. Both of these character types appeared in Hollywood's characterisations of Native and African Americans but were absent from the Indigenous Australian silent film cast.

By identifying each of the members of the Indigenous Australian cast and considering why and when they appeared, it has been possible to go beyond the typical surveys that are a feature of the literature and analyse changes in the mood and tempers of the times. Since the appearance of the first Indigenous Australian film character in 1907, there has been a remarkable degree of continuity evident in the preferred characterisations of Indigenous Australia. The Tracker character that debuted in 1907 has endured. Along with the Wild Black, the Tracker has been a permanent member of the Indigenous Australian cast and each of these characterisations have been unbroken threads running through the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia. The characterisation of these two permanent members of the Indigenous Australian cast, the Tracker and the Wild Black, embody the complementary and contradictory relationships, noted above, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia and within the characterisation of Indigenous Australia.

The continuity evident in these characterisations is not coincidental. The Tracker and the Wild Black duo have never left the Indigenous Australian cast because they represent, perhaps, the most deep-seated dual tenets of Australian

⁵ Of the 103 silent films made between 1906 and 1913, 35 had bush settings and 25 had historical links.

settler nationalism. Until the most recent characterisations, the Tracker represented the first tenet needed to ease the non-Indigenous national conscience. The Tracker symbolised Indigenous Australian acceptance of the rights of the supplanting society. The Wild Black represented the other tenet that sanctioned non-Indigenous territorial acquisition of Australia. The Wild Black was emblematic of the past and non-Indigenous Australia was the future.

Even though the Tracker in twenty-first-century films is, in many ways, a different and more complex character, the most recent inventions of the character type still conform to the preferred non-Indigenous historical fashions of the day.⁶ In fact, each of these characterisations succeeds filmically because each works against the familiar stereotype. In other words, the cinematic impact of each of the recent versions of the Tracker depends, in no small part, on the audience's familiarity with a type originally invented in the silent era. Beyond that, despite the flashes of independence and even the mini-rebellions each of the twenty-first century Trackers display, these characters ultimately remain subservient and outside the main stream.

A good example is provided by *One Night the Moon* (2001), a musical drama written and directed by the Indigenous Australian Rachel Perkins, featuring a local Tracker, Albert (Kelton Pell), who is initially called in by the local

⁶ See, for example, the following three Tracker characters: Albert (Kelton Pell) in *One Night the Moon* (2001); Moodoo (David Gulpilil) in *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002); and "The Tracker" (David Gulpilil) in *The Tracker* (2002). For more on *One Night the Moon*, see the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 741343 (production details) and Title No. 755043 (the final draft of the script); for more on *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, see the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 507777 (production details); and for more on *The Tracker*, see the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 518340 (production details).

police to help search for a lost non-Indigenous girl.⁷ The young girl's father (Paul Kelly), sensitive about land ownership, refuses to let the Tracker stay on the property to help with the search. The Indigenous and non-Indigenous oppositional views about the land are then explicitly rendered in the song lyrics that feature after Albert is sent away. The father sings:

This land is mine, all the way to the old fence line,

Every break of day, I'm workin' hard just to make it pay.

The land is seen as a commodity with utilitarian value and a fence built by the settler defines its boundary. By contrast, Albert sings as he walks away:

This land is me, rock, water, animal, tree,

They are my song, my being's here, where I belong.

The Tracker character's long-established affinity with the land is restated. What is interesting is that this affinity is not translated into a land rights claim. The connection with the land is symbolic and spiritual. The lyrics of Albert's song continues:

This land owns me, from generations past to infinity,

We're all but one man; you only fear what you don't understand.

The father and Albert then sing:

They won't take it away; they won't take it away,

They won't take it away from me.

⁷ Rachel Perkins is the daughter of Charles Perkins, the well-known activist and former head of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Stewardship of the land is defined in different terms as the song ends with the father singing, “This land is mine”, and Albert responding, “This land is me”.⁸

Even though a change is evident because the audience is exposed to Albert’s view and his dissent from the claims of the non-Indigenous land-holder, the continuity, via Warrigal’s shadow, is also evident. Albert, like all the Indigenous Australian Trackers since 1907, is still an outsider. The power of the Tracker characterisation in *One Night the Moon* is enhanced by the fact that the non-Indigenous audience recognises almost immediately the non-Indigenous father’s error is turning the Tracker away. Little time has to be spent by the filmmaker in establishing Albert’s expertise. Acceptance of the Tracker’s expertise had already been part of non-Indigenous storytelling for over 200 years, and of films since 1907.

The durability of the Tracker was also evident in both *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2001) and *The Tracker* (2001). Both films featured David Gulpilil. In both cases, the power of the characterisation owed much to the legacy of the silent era and all the Tracker characters that had gone before. In the case of both Moodoo (the Tracker in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*) and the nameless Police Tracker in *The Tracker*, they are outsiders, despite being cast as Tame Blacks and working for the authorities. There are clearly changes evident in each of these characterisations. Each of these twenty-first century Trackers adapts, and thereby retains, a degree of autonomy. They are still, however, immediately familiar characters because of the genesis of the character type in the silent era.

⁸ For the complete lyrics to the song from *One Night the Moon*, see Appendix 7.

The continuities, only rarely acknowledged in film literature, go beyond individual characters. Almost all of the Indigenous Australian film characters, from the silent era to the present day, can be classified in the first instance in terms of the Tame Black versus Wild Black dichotomy. In the silent era and since, Indigenous Australian characters, especially the Wild Blacks, have been continuously defined in film as the pre-modern 'other' at one with nature. One of the most recent characterisations of the Wild Black was King George (David Gulpilil) in *Australia* (2008).⁹ This tribal full-blood Wild Black father figure is always remote and iconic. The character is imbued with mystic qualities and is almost always set against remote and empty landscapes. As noted in the earlier chapters on the Wild Black and in the chapter six on the Absences, there were changes clearly evident in King George's characterisation of the Wild Black, but the visual and filmic continuities are also undeniable. King George, like all the Wild Blacks before him, represents a pre-modern past. His young 'half-caste' Grandson Nullah (Brandon Walters) and the leading non-Indigenous characters represent the future. As a Wild Black, King George, unlike the characterisations evident in the silent era, is an individualised character. Nonetheless, he is still clearly the same cinematic Wild Black character that had its genesis in the silent era.

The continuity in the characterisation of the Wild Black could not be clearer than in the short film *The Confessions of a Headhunter* (2000), made by Indigenous Australian filmmaker Sally Riley. The film uses the long established stereotype of the Indigenous Australian Wild Black as the key plot device to drive the film. The film opens with an intertitle and a passage from the *Shorter Oxford*

⁹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 777885

Dictionary offering a definition of the term head-hunter. It reads: "Head-hunting, the practice, among some savages, of procuring human heads as trophies, etc." This is followed by a close-up of an axe being sharpened and then a medium shot of two men as they appear to load a body or bodies into the boot of a car. As one of the men is about to drive away, his partner says, "Don't waste time, just get them in the ground." The audience is given hints that the two men might be serial killers, as one of the men is arrested. The film is, in fact, all about the history of non-Indigenous Australian acquisition of Indigenous Australian heads. The two main Indigenous Australian characters in the film, Frank (Bruce Hutchinson) and Vinnie (Kelton Pell), have been taking revenge for the damage done to the statue of Yagan, an Indigenous Australian warrior who led the resistance of the Nyungar people of Western Australia in much the same way that Pemulwuy had done in and around Sydney. The historical Yagan had been killed and his head removed and sent to Britain. Later a statue of Yagan in Perth was also decapitated by vandals. In retribution, Frank and Vinnie set about decapitating the statues of famous non-Indigenous Australians. They melt down the metal from the collected heads and produce a statue of their own as a tribute to the stolen generations. The film works because the audience is, in the first instance, engaged by the notion of real head-hunters. The stereotype is then used and contested. The ease with which such a characterisation is possible reflects pervasive continuity of the silent cinematic invention of the savage Wild Black.

Aside from the *Tracker* and the *Wild Black*, there have been changes in the make-up and popularity of the Indigenous Australian cast. The best examples of this are the belated appearance of the *Mystic Black* and the individualised

Indigenous Australian warrior. Another important change has been the decline in the popularity of the Comic Black. When these changes were noted in the preceding chapters, an analysis of the reasons for the changes was developed through comparisons with the silent era. A review, for example, of the careers of the characters of the Mystic Black and the Comic Black serves to reinforce my contention that Indigenous Australian cinematic characterisations were an amalgam of Australian and international cultural and historical influences. Analysis of each of these character types also serves to confirm my assertion that many Indigenous Australian film characters were particularly, but not always, uniquely Australian.

Since the belated debut of the Mystic Black in the 1950s, the character has become a ubiquitous feature of Indigenous Australian characterisation. The Mystic Black has come to rival the Tracker as the star of the Indigenous Australian cast. The arrival of the Mystic Black is one of the most obvious changes to have taken place in the history of the cinematic invention of Indigenous Australia. Even though I refer to the appearance of the Mystic Black as a change, the reasons for the inclusion of the character are, once again, indicative of the degree of continuity in the process of invention. The continuity is linked to the fact that, as noted above in the case of Gulpilil's King George in *Australia* (2008), the Mystic Black can be seen as a facet of the personality or the characterisation of the Wild Black. Assimilated or Tame Blacks are rarely, if ever, associated with mystic qualities. The timing of the Mystic Black's debut is significant. During the period when it was assumed that Indigenous Australians were a doomed race and would quietly fade away, there was no need for non-

Indigenous Australia to accommodate or engage with them.¹⁰ They could be characterised and dismissed as either the Wild Blacks or the childlike Comic Blacks. However, when it became clear that Indigenous Australians were not going to fade away, a new means of characterising, categorising and ultimately dismissing Indigenous Australia was needed. That new category, that new character, was the Mystic Black. The continuities within the processes of invention were again on show.

Another belated addition to the cast of Indigenous Australian characters was the individualised warrior. During the silent era there were Wild Blacks who posed a threat to non-Indigenous settlers. These Wild Blacks were, however, always a collective and anonymous threat. They were never individualised in the same way that Native American or African American characters were individualised. The first individualised Indigenous Australian figure of menace, or warrior, did not appear until 1975 with *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*.¹¹ I argue that the belated appearance of this character, and the ongoing absence of an Indigenous Australian character posing a sexual threat to white womanhood, was an example of the cinematic emasculation of Indigenous Australian males. This emasculation was the consequence of three factors. The first was the British cultural notion of masculinity, where manliness was characterised by chivalry and martial prowess. The second, factor was the attitude that saw Indigenous Australians as a primitive and doomed race. Their inability to survive was seen as a consequence of their inability to meet the challenges of the modern world and

¹⁰ Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1997)

¹¹ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Title No. 766387 (production details)

compete with the assertive new arrivals.¹² The third factor was the non-Indigenous perception that Indigenous Australian men were unable to fulfil their roles as protectors of their own families. Each of these factors, in varying combinations at various times, contributed to the emasculation. Historically, and in film during the silent era, Indigenous Australians were never seen as being the equals of Native Americans or the Maori, who were frequently depicted as warrior-like. This tendency was reflected in the historical preference for stories about the Tame Black – Bennelong, for example, rather than his contemporary, the warrior Pemulwuy.

A related absence during the silent era was the Indigenous Australian romantic heroine. This absence was a particular feature of Australian filmmaking. The inter-racial romance genre was a popular feature of American silent films depicting both Native Americans and African Americans. Australian filmmakers also produced films in the genre, but they always used female romance characters who were not Indigenous Australians. This can be accounted for, in part, by the traditional taboo that existed in Australia around sexual relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.¹³ Even though sexual liaisons between non-Indigenous men and Indigenous women were a feature of the real frontier, this theme was absent from cinematic discourse. The subject would have been inappropriate for family viewing and would have challenged the preferred ideas of the pioneer myth, in which the non-Indigenous settlers were

¹² McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, p. 48; Anna Haebich, "Imagining Assimilation", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, p. 63

¹³ Victoria Haskins and John Maynard, "Sex Race and Power: Aboriginal Men and White Women in Australian History", *Australian Historical Studies*, 2005, vol. 36 no. 126, p.193; Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887–1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006)

depicted as paragons of character and courage. If the pioneers were to be characterised as the fathers of the nation, they could not be depicted as contributing to any lessening of white racial integrity. Such behaviour would have been at odds with the race-based thinking that defined the Australian nation as white and Anglo-Celtic.¹⁴ The absence, therefore, can be explained by a matrix of factors related to gender, power and race. I maintain, however, that in terms of silent film, attitudes to race and traditional taboos about sex were the primary influences. As Katherine Ellinghaus has pointed out, Indigenous females, in particular, were associated in the settler mind with the survival of the Indigenous race. In Australia's case the widespread acceptance of the doomed race theory contributed to the exclusion of an Indigenous Australian female romance figure because she was an irrelevance during the silent era. I say "during the silent era" because it was not until the 1930s that the removal of mixed descent children was formalised in specific policy and legislation. This was part of the policy of (biological) absorption.¹⁵ This policy also sanctioned inter-racial sexual relationships between non-Indigenous Australian men and mixed descent Indigenous women as a means of racial assimilation.¹⁶ Even this scenario, however, did not manage to pierce the racially motivated taboo about inter-racial sexual relations until the twenty-first century.

The character of the Comic Black was once a prominent member – namely, during the silent era – of the Indigenous Australian cast. Although other

¹⁴ Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (North Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2008), p. 24

¹⁵ McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, pp. 178–79

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 169; Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 281

characters survived into the sound era and well into the twentieth century, the Comic Black slowly faded. The decline of the Comic Black in Australian films can be linked to general changes in western cultural sensitivity. With a heightened consciousness about the implications of racist thinking, the Indigenous Australian Comic Black went the way of the Golliwog doll, Nulla-Nulla soap and Nigger Boy soap pads. The decline of the Indigenous Australian Comic Black was therefore a particularly, but not uniquely, Australian phenomenon.

Recent scholarship addressing audience reception of any of these characterisations acknowledges the limitations imposed by a lack of direct documentary evidence about audience reception and response.¹⁷ The fact is, however, that filmmakers were in the business of identifying and meeting the tastes of their audiences. Failure to do so would mean commercial failure. Filmmakers, therefore, simultaneously juggled a process of moulding and reflecting and refracting the tastes of their audiences. This is, in my view, a commonsense scenario based on the power of the dollar (or the pound) and the desire of filmmakers to attract an audience. Films were made to be seen. The survival of the filmmakers depended on their ability to attract and hold an audience. Audiences would not continue to part with cash to watch films that lacked appeal. The popularity of silent film as entertainment with the Australian public is evidenced by the fact that there were 800 picture theatres in Australia in 1921 and that by 1928 that number had grown to 1200.¹⁸

¹⁷ Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds.) *Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), p. 1

¹⁸ Ian Bertrand (ed.), *Cinema in Australia: A Documentary History* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 1989), p. 69

The continuities that I maintain become obvious when the entire history of Indigenous Australian characterisation is considered are evident in what I called Warrigal's shadow. Warrigal was the first Indigenous Australian film character and was repeatedly portrayed during both the silent and sound eras in four film versions of *Robbery Under Arms*. Warrigal's shadow also exists in the repeated use of aspects of the original characterisation in other Indigenous characters deep into the sound era. Warrigal can help us understand the genesis and durability of the silent era's preferred ideas about Indigenous Australians. These cinematic inventions mirrored more widely held views about Indigenous Australia and white Australian nationhood. The characters, most clearly, in Warrigal's shadow are the loyal, naive, subservient, partly assimilated helpers. These characterisations were, and remain, the ones most compatible with Australia's settler myths. Australia's invention of Indigenous Australia has therefore been part of, and taken place alongside, the invention of a distinctive Australian national identity.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Films

In the case of the Australian silent feature films (those made before 1928) cited in this bibliography, I have used the system of asterisks employed by Pike and Cooper in *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production* to indicate how much of the film has survived. This is because so many of the early Australian films, in particular, have been lost:

* Substantially complete

** Incomplete: has major gaps, several reels missing or exists only in fragments

Across Australia (1912) Spencer's Pictures

The Adorable Outcast (1928) Australasian Films *

The Adventures of Algy (1925) Beaumont Smith Productions *

America (1924) United Artists

Assigned to His Wife (1911) John F. Gavin Productions

Astronomers and Aborigines (1922) Croker Solar Eclipse Expedition

Australia (2008) Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

Australia Calls (1913) Spencer's Pictures

Australian Rules (2002) Adelaide Festival of Arts

The Battle at Elderbush Gulch (1913) Biograph

The Betrayer (1921) Beaumont Smith Productions

Big Chief Koko (1925) Inkwell Films

Boxing 1908: Johnson VS Burns (1908) Spencer's Pictures

The Birth of a Nation (1915) D.W. Griffith Corporation

The Birth of White Australia (1928) Dominion Films **

Bitter Springs (1950) Ealing Studios

Black and White (2002) Duo Art Productions

Blade of Grass (1915) Edison

Burnt Cork (1912) Vitagraph

The Call of the Wild (1908) American Mutoscope & Biograph

Caloola, or The Adventures of a Jackeroo (1911) Australian Photo-Play Company

Captain Midnight, the Bush King (1911) Spencer's Pictures
Captain Starlight or Gentleman of the Road (1911) Spencer's Pictures
The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith (1978) the Film House
The Church and the Woman (1917) Humbert Pugliese
Coorab in the Island of Ghosts (1929) Francis Birtles
The Covered Wagon (1923) Paramount Pictures
Custer's Last Stand (1925) Sunset
Daniel Boone (1923) Chronicles of America Picture Corporation
In the Days of the Thundering Herd (1914) Selig Polyscope Company
Dead Heart (1996) Dead Heart Productions
The Debt (1913) Rex Production Group
The Devil's Playground (1928) Fineart Film Productions *
The Drummer Girl of Vicksburg (1912) Vitagraph
Eliza Fraser (1976) Hexagon Productions
The End of the Rope (1914) Kalem
The Enemy Within (1918) Franklyn Barrett, Roland Stavelly *
The Fall of Black Hawk (1912) American Film Manufacturing Company
Felix Goes West (1924) M.J. Winkler
For the Cause of the South (1912) Edison
Fringe Dwellers (1986) Fringe Dwellers Productions
Frog Dreaming (1985) Western Film Production
The Gambler of the West (1914) Essanay Film Manufacturing Company
General Custer at the Little Big Horn (1925) Sunset
The Gentleman Bushranger (1921) Beaumont Smith Productions
A Girl of the Bush (1921) Franklyn Barrett *
Greenhide (1926) Australian Film Productions **
Haddon Expedition to the Torres Strait (1898)
The Hayseeds' Back-blocks Show (1917) Beaumont Smith Productions
The Hayseeds Come to Sydney (1917) Beaumont Smith Productions
The Hayseeds Melbourne Cup (1918) Beaumont Smith Productions
The Hound of the Deep (1926) Stoll Picture Productions *
Hello Marmaduke (1924) Beaumont Smith Productions
Heritage (1935) Expeditionary Films
His Trust (1911) Biograph

His Trust Fulfilled (1911) Biograph
The Indian (1914) Klaw & Erlanger
Indians and Cowboys (1904) Pathe Freres
The Invaders (1912) Kay Bee Pictures
The Jackeroo of Coolabong (1920) Carroll-Baker Australian Productions
Jamestown (1923) Chronicles of America Picture Corporation
Jedda (1955) Charles Chauvel Productions
The Jungle Woman (1926) Stoll Picture Productions *
Kadaicha (1988) David Hannay Productions
Kangaroo (1952) Twentieth Century Fox
The Kentuckian (1908) American Mutoscope and Biograph
The Last Indigenous Australians in the State of Victoria (1912)
The Last Wave (1977) Australian Film Commission
Mad Dog Morgan (1976) Mad Dog, Motion Picture Productions
The Man from Kangaroo (1920) Carroll-Baker Australian Productions *
A Maori Maid's Love (1916) Vita Film Corporation
The Massacre (1912) Biograph
The Mended Flute (1909) Biograph
A Midnight Phantasy (1903) American Mutoscope and Biograph
Missing (1999) Panorama Films
Moonlite (1910) Southern Cross Motion Pictures
The Moth of Moonbi (1926) Australian Film Productions **
The Naked Country (1985) Western Pacific Films
Natives of Princess Charlotte Bay Queensland (1926 and 1927)
A Nigger in the Woodpile (1904) American Mutoscope & Biograph
The Octoroon (1912) Australian Film Syndicate
One Night the Moon (2001) Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Our Friends, the Hayseeds (1917) Beaumont Smith Productions
The Overlanders (1946) Ealing Studios
The Paleface (1921) Comique Film Company
The Phantom Stockman (1953) Platypus Productions
The Pioneers (1926) Australasian Films **
Pommy Arrives in Australia (1913) Fraser Film Release and Photographic Company

Prehistoric Hayseeds (1923) Beaumont Smith Productions
A Pueblo Legend (1912) Biograph Company
Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002) Rumbalara Films
Real Australia (1929) Kinegram
The Red Girl (1908) American Mutoscope & Biograph
The Redman and the Child (1908) American Mutoscope & Biograph
The Red Raiders (1927) First National
Rescue of Child from Indians (1903) American Mutoscope & Biograph
The Right Stuff (1983) Ladd Company
Robbery Under Arms (1907) MacMahon's Exquisite Pictures
Robbery Under Arms (1920) Pacific Photo Plays *
Robbery Under Arms (1957) Rank Film Organisation
Robbery Under Arms (1985) South Australian Film Corporation
A Romance of the Burke and Wills Expedition (1918) Antipodes Films **
The Romance of Runnibede (1928) Phillips Film Production *
Round Australia with the MacRobertson Expedition (1928) Round Australia with
the MacRobertson Expedition
Satan in Sydney (1918) Beaumont Smith Productions
The Scarlet West (1925) Frank J. Carroll Productions
Should a Doctor Tell? (1923) P.J. Ramster Photoplays
Sitting Bull and the Spirit Lake Massacre (1927) Sunset Productions
The Song of the Wildwood Flute (1910) Biograph
The Squatter's Daughter or Land of the Wattle (1910) William Anderson
The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906) J and N Tait / Johnson and Gibson **
Strongheart (1914) Biograph
The Tenth Straw (1926) Pacific Films *
The Tourists (1912) Biograph
Townies and Hayseeds (1923) Beaumont Smith Productions
The Tracker (2002) Vertigo Productions
Trooper O'Brien (1928) Australian Artists Company *
Uncivilised (1937) Expeditionary Films
Under a Flag of Truce (1912) Kalem
Until the End of the World (1992) End of the World Productions
An Up-To-Date Squaw (1911) Pathe Freres

The Virginian (1914) Lasky
Walkabout (1971) Si Litvinoff Film Production
War's Havoc (1912) Kalem
Watermelon Contest (1900) Edison
We of the Never, Never (1982) Adam Packer Film Productions
With Buffalo Bill on the U.P. Trail (1925) Sunset
The Woman Suffers (1918) Southern Cross Feature Film Company **
Yolngu Boy (2001) Australian Children's Television Foundation

Contemporary Publications – Books and Articles

Chauvel, Charles, *Heritage* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935)

Cole, P.R., *First Stories in English History* (Sydney: George B. Phillip and Son, 1920)

Cramp, K.R., *A Story of the Australian People* (Sydney: George B. Phillip and Son, 1927)

Everyones, 14 April 1920 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Exhibitor, 24 October 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Exhibitor, 28 November 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

Favenc, Ernest, *The Explorers of Australia and Their Work* (London: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1908)

Film Weekly, 4 November 1926 (State Library of New South Wales)

Gillies, W., *Simple Stories in English History for Young Australians* (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1904)

Maitland Daily, 29 October 1900 (State Library of New South Wales)

Paramount Punch, May 1921, vol. 1, no. 1 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photo-play, April 1912 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photo-play, May–August 1912 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photo-Play, April 1913 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 6 June 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 9 June 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 16 June 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 23 June 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 7 July 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 6 October 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 13 October 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 17 November 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Photoplayer, 29 November 1923 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 24 May 1919 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 19 July 1919 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 1 February 1920 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 1 November 1920 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 1 March 1921 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 1 March 1922 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 1 April 1922 (State Library of New South Wales)

The Picture Show, 1 November 1929 (State Library of New South Wales)

Sinclair, D., "History Pictures", *Schooling*, 1923, vol. 3, no. 2

Souvenir Program, Burns – Johnson Boxing Contest (Sydney, 1908)

The Sydney Sun, 27 June 1920 (National Library of Australia)

Smith, S.H., *English History Stories for Young Australians* (Sydney: Williams Books, 1913)

The Theatre Magazine, November 1919

Cartoons, Paintings and Photographs

Photograph of the Burns versus Johnson World Heavyweight Title Fight in Sydney in 1908 (National Film and Sound Archive of Australia)

Photograph of part of the wall below the Cloisters in the Commemorative Courtyard at the *Australian War Memorial* in Canberra

Cross, Stan, "Prohibition", *Smith's Weekly*, August 1922

Glover, Tom, "Getting Near", *The Bulletin*, 1927

Grisels, Ernest, "Going Home" (Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia)

Hopkins, Livingston, "Moving Camp", *The Bulletin*, 1887

McCubbin, Frederick, "On the Wallaby Track", 1896, (Art Gallery of NSW)

McCubbin, Frederick, "The pioneer", 1904, (National Gallery of Victoria)

Minns, Edwin, "*The Eternal Female*", *The Bulletin*, 1899

Minns, Edwin, "King Billy", *The Bulletin*, 22 December 1900

Paul, Mick, "The Maid", *Aussie*, 1926

Roberts, Tom, "Bailed up", 1927, (Art Gallery of NSW)

Secondary Sources

Books

Aleiss, Angela, *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies* (Westport: Praeger, 2005)

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006)

Anderson, Warwick, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and the Racial Destiny of Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005)

Arrow, Michelle, *Friday on Our Minds* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009)

Attwood, Bain and Arnold, John (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines* (Bundoora: La Trobe University Press, 1992)

Attwood, Bain, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989)

Attwood, Bain (ed.), *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996)

Attwood, Bain, *Rights for Aborigines* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003)

Attwood, Bain, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005)

Attwood, Bain, *Possession: Batman's Treaty and the Matter of History* (Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2009)

Attwood, Bain and Markus, Andrew (eds.), *The 1967 Referendum: Race, Power and the Australian Constitution* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1967)

Babb, Valerie, *Whiteness Visible: The Meanings of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1998)

Beale, Edgar, *Kennedy of Cape York* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1977)

Beckett, Jeremy R. (ed.), *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies, 1994)

Bergman, Andrew, *We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972)

Bernardi, Daniel, (ed.), *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996)

Bertrand, Ina (ed.), *Cinema in Australia: A Documentary History* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 1989)

Birchard, Robert S., *Cecil B. DeMille's Hollywood* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004)

Blainey, Geoffrey, *A Land Half Won* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1982)

Blight, David W., *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001)

Bluestone, George, *Novels into Films* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003)

Bogle, Donald, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2003)

Boldrewood, Rolf, *Robbery Under Arms: A Story of Life and Adventure in the Bush and in the Goldfields of Australia* (London: Cassell, 1947)

Bradford, Clare, *Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children's Literature* (South Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2001)

Bryson, Ian, *Bringing to Light: A History of Ethnographic Filmmaking at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2002)

Bulbeck, Chilla, *The Stone Laurel: Of Race, Gender and Class in Australian Memorials* (Griffith: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1988)

Butlin, N.G., *Our Original Aggression: Aboriginal Populations of Southeastern Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982)

Butters Jr., Gerald R., *Black Manhood on the Silent Screen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002)

Campbell, Jan, *Film and Cinema Spectatorship* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005)

Cannadine, David, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2002)

Carr, Julie, *The Captive White Woman of Gippsland: In Pursuit of the Legend* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001)

Chauvel, Elsa, *My Life with Charles Chauvel* (Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1973)

Chauvel Carlsson, Susanne, *Charles and Elsa Chauvel: Movie Pioneers* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989)

Clendinnen, Inga, *True Stories: Boyer Lectures 1999* (Sydney: Text Publishing, 1999)

Clendinnen, Inga, *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003)

Collins, Diane, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies 1896 to the Present Day* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1987)

Collins, Felicity and Davis, Therese, *Australian Cinema after Mabo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Cullen, Jim, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995)

Davison, Graeme, et al. (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Day, David, *Conquest: A New History of the Modern World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005)

Dutton, Geoffrey, *Edward John Eyre* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977)

Dyer, Richard, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997)

Edmondson, Ray, and Pike, Andrew, *Australia's Lost Films* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1982)

Eisler, William and Smith, Bernard, *Terra Australis: The Furthest Shore* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1988)

Elder, Catriona, *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2007)

Ellinghaus, Katherine, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887–1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006)

Favenc, Ernest, *The History of Australian Exploration* (Oxford: Logo Star Press, 2011)

Fiedler, Leslie A., *The Return of the Vanishing American* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968)

Fiedler, Leslie A., *The Inadvertent Epic: From Uncle Tom's Cabin to Roots* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979)

Flannery, Tim, (ed.), *The Explorers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1999)

Flannery, Tim, (ed.), *Watkin Tench: 1788* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1996)

Flood, Josephine, *The Original Australians: Story of the Aboriginal People* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006)

Foster, Robert, Hosking, Rick and Nettelbeck, Amanda, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian Frontier and the Violence of Memory* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2001)

Gaynor, Andrea, Trinca, Matthew and Harbich, Anna (eds.), *Country: Visions of Land and People in Western Australia* (Perth: Western Australian Museum, 2002)

Goodall, Heather, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996)

Gray, Geoffrey, *A Cautious Silence: The Politics of Australian Anthropology* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007)

Grindon, Ledger, *Shadows of the Past: Studies in the Historical Fiction Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994)

Growden, Greg, *The Snowy Baker Story* (Milsons Point: Random House Australia, 2003)

Guerrero, Ed, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993)

Gunning, Tom, *D.W. Griffith and The Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Tears at Biograph* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994)

Haebich, Anna, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (North Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2008)

Hale, Grace Elizabeth, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1999)

Haynes, Roslynn D., *Seeking the Centre: The Australian Desert in Literature, Art and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Healy, Chris, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008)

Healy, J.J., *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989)

Heartfield, James, *The Aborigines Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa and the Congo, 1836–1909* (New York; Columbia University Press, 2011)

Hill, Mike (ed.), *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1997)

Hirst, John, *Looking for Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2010)

Hjort, Mette and Mackenzie, Scott (eds.), *Cinema and Nation* (London: Routledge, 2000)

Hodge, Bob and Mishra, Vijay, *Dark Side of the Dream* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990)

Hughes-Warrington, Marnie, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film* (London: Routledge, 2007)

Huhndorf, Shari M., *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001)

Jackson-Nakano, Ann, *The Kamberri: A History from the Records of the Aboriginal Families in the Canberra–Queanbeyan District and Surrounds 1820–1927 and Historical Overview 1928–2001* (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 2001)

Jamrozik, Adam, *The Chains of Colonial Inheritance: Searching for Identity in a Subservient Nation* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004)

Jolliffe, Eric, *The Best of Witchetty's Tribe* (Rosebery: Sungrature, 1980)

Kenny, John, *Bennelong: First Notable Aboriginal* (Sydney: Australian Historical Society, 1973)

Kidd, Rosalind, *The Way We Civilise* (St Lucia; University of Queensland Press, 1997)

Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999)

Kirby, Jack Temple, *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986)

Kohen, J.L, *The Darug and Their Neighbours* (Sydney: Blacktown and District Historical Society, 1993)

Landman, Jane, *The Tread of the White Man's Foot: Australian Pacific Colonialism and the Cinema, 1925–62* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2006)

Landy, Marcia, (ed.), *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000)

Lang, Robert (ed.), *The Birth of a Nation: D.W. Griffith, Director* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994)

Langman, Larry and Ebner, David, *Hollywood's Image of the South* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001)

Langton, Marcia, “*Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television ...*”: *An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and about Aboriginal People and Things* (Woolloomooloo: Australian Film Commission, 1993)

Langton, Marcia, “Rum, Seduction and Death: ‘Aboriginality’ and Alcohol”. In G. Cowlshaw and B. Morris (eds.) *Race Matters* (Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press) pp. 77–94

- Lewis, Glen, *Australian Movies and the American Dream* (New York: Praeger, 1987)
- Long, Joan and Long, Martin, *The Pictures That Moved: A Picture History of the Australian Cinema 1896–1929* (Melbourne: Hutchinson of Australia, 1982)
- McFarlane, Brian and Mayer, Geoff, *New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in American and British Films* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- McGilligan, Patrick, *The Great and Only Oscar Micheaux: The Life of America's First Black Filmmaker* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007)
- McGrath, Ann (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995)
- McGregor, Russell, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880–1939* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1997)
- McGregor, Russell, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011)
- Macintyre, Stuart and Clark, Anna (eds.), *The History Wars* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003)
- McKay, R.J. (ed.), *Public Acts of New South Wales 1824–1957, Volume 1* (Sydney: Law Book Co., 1958)
- McKenna, Mark, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002)
- McNiven, Ian J., Russell, Lynette and Schaffer, Kay, (eds.), *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck* (London: Cassell, 1998)

- Malone, Peter, *In Black and White and Colour: A Survey of Aborigines in Australian Feature Films* (Jabiru: Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, 1987)
- Manne, Robert (ed.), *Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2003)
- Marcus, Julie, *A Dark Smudge Upon the Sand: Essays on Race Guilt and the National Consciousness* (Canada Bay: LHR Press, 1999)
- Marubbio, M.Elise, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009)
- Molloy, Bruce, *Before the Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930–1960* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990)
- Moses, A. Dirk (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahan Books, 2008)
- Mudrooroo, *Us Mob: History, Culture, Struggle: An Introduction to Indigenous Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1995)
- Muecke, Stephen, *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1992)
- Mulvaney, D.J. and Calaby, J.H., *"So Much that is New": Baldwin Spencer, 1860–1929: A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985)
- Nederveen Pieterse, Jan, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)
- Niver, Kemp R., *Early Motion Pictures: The Paper Print Collection of the Library of Congress* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985)
- Noble, Peter, *The Negro in Films* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1948)

Palmer, Alison, *Colonial Genocide* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000)

Pascoe, Rob, *The Manufacture of Australian History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

Pierce, Peter, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Pike, Andrew and Cooper, Ross, *Australian Film 1900–1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Poignant, Roslyn, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004)

Portus, G.V., *Australia since 1606: A History for Young Australians* (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1938)

Rattigan, Neil, *Images of Australia: 100 Films of the New Australian Cinema* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1991)

Read, Peter, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Reade, Eric, *A Pictorial History of Silent Films 1896–1929* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1970)

Reade, Eric, *History and Heartburn: The Saga of Australian Film 1896–1978* (Sydney: Harper and Row, 1979)

Reynolds, Henry, *Aborigines and Settlers* (North Melbourne: Cassell, 1972)

Reynolds, Henry, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1982)

Reynolds, Henry, *Frontier: Reports From the Edge of White Settlement* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995)

Reynolds, Henry, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998)

Reynolds, Henry, *Why Weren't We Told?* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000)

Reynolds, Henry, *Black Pioneers: How Aboriginal and Islander People Helped Build Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000)

Reynolds, Henry, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (Canberra: Australian Film Commission, 2008)

Richards, Jonathan, *The Secret War* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2008)

Robinson, Cedric J., *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theatre and Film before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007)

Rollins, Peter C., and O'Connor, John E. (eds.), *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998)

Rosenstone, Robert A., *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

Rowley, C.D., *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1972)

Russell, Lynette, *Savage Imaginings: Historical and Contemporary Constructions of Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2001)

Russell, Penny, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010)

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995)

Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994)

Saxton, Alexander, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990)

Schaffer, Kay, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Schaffer, Kay, *In the Wake of First Contact: the Eliza Fraser Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Scott, Ernest, *A Short History of Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1943)

Shirley, Graham and Adams, Brian, *Australian Cinema: The First Fifty Years* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1989)

Simmon, Scott, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Smith, Andrew Brodie, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians: Silent Western Films, American Culture, and the Birth of Hollywood* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003)

Smith, Bernard, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788*, (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1945)

Smith, Bernard, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960)

Smith, Bernard, and Wheeler, A (eds.) *The Art of the First Fleet and Other Early Australian Drawings* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Smith, Keith Vincent, *Bennelong* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 2001)

Smith, Paul, (ed.) *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976)

Stanner, W.E.H., *After the Dreaming: The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Company, 1968)

Stanner, W.E.H., *The Dreaming and Other Essays* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009)

Stokes, Melvyn and Maltby, Richard (eds.), *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences* (London: British Film Institute, 2001)

Stokes, Melvyn and Maltby, Richard (eds.), *Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange* (London: British Film Institute, 2004)

Sturma, Michael, *Western Fantasy and Sexual Politics in the South Pacific* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002)

Swain, David, *200 in the Shade: An Historical Selection of Cartoons about Aborigines* (Sydney: Collins, 2000)

Swain, Tony, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Tacey, David J., *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia* (North Blackburn: Harper Collins, 1995)

Teo, Hsu-Ming and White, Richard (eds.), *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003)

Toplin, Robert Brent, *History By Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past* (Urbana, University of Illinois, 1996)

Toplin, Robert Brent, *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002)

Torgovnick, Marianna, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)

Tulloch, John, *Legends of the Screen: The Narrative Film in Australia 1919–1929* (Carlton South: Currency Press, 1981)

Twain, Mark, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (New York: American Publishing Company, 1897)

Upfield, Arthur, *Boney Buys a Woman* (London: Pan, 1975)

Ward, Russel, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1965)

Waterhouse, Richard, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1990)

Waterhouse, Richard, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (North Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005)

Watters, Pat, *The South and the Nation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969)

White, Richard, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1981)

Willey, Keith, *When the Sky Fell Down: The Destruction of the Tribes of the Sydney Region 1788–1850* (Sydney: Collins, 1985)

Williams, Alan, (ed.), *Film and Nationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002)

Williams, Margaret, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829–1929* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983)

Wolfe, Patrick, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999)

Woollacott, Angela, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

Articles

Attwood, Bain, “Unsettling Pasts: Reconciliation and History in Settler Australia” *Postcolonial Studies*, August 2005, vol. 8 no. 3, pp. 242–59

Attwood, Bain and Markus, Andrew, “(The) 1967 (Referendum) and all that: Narrative, Myth, Aborigines and Australia”, *Australian Historical Studies*, October 1998, vol. 29, no. 111, pp. 267–90

Baker, Felicity, “Rousseau and the Colonies”, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, February 1998, vol. 22, no.1, pp.172–90

Barta, Tony, ““They Appear Actually to Vanish from the Face of the Earth”. Aborigines in the European project in Australia Felix”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, December 2008, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 519–39

Beeman, William O., “The Anthropology of Theater and Spectacle”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1993, vol. 22, no.1, p. 380

Behrendt, Larissa, “Consent in a (Neo) Colonial Society: Aboriginal Women as Sexual and Legal ‘Other’”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, November 2000, vol. 15, no. 33, pp. 353–67

Bellanta, Melissa, "Leary Kin: Australian Larrikins and the Blackface Minstrel Dandy", *Journal of Social History*, Spring 2009, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 677–95

Bertrand, Ina and Routt, William D., "The First Long Picture in the World: *The Story of the Kelly Gang* in Australian Film History", *Moving Image*, 2007, no. 8, pp. 3–19

Birch, Tony, "History is Never Bloodless: Getting it Wrong after One Hundred Years of Federation", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 42–54

Blake, Greg L., "The Kalkadoon War", *Military History*, March/April 2005, vol. 21, no. 7, pp. 44–76

Bonnell, Andrew G., and Crotty, Martin, "An Australian 'Historikerstreit'? Review Article", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2004, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 425–33

Brantlinger, Patrick, "'Black Armband' versus 'White Blindfold' History in Australia", *Victorian Studies*, Summer 2004, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 655–74

Brewster, Anne, "Indigenous Sovereignty and the Crisis of Whiteness in Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*", *Australian Literary Studies*, November 2010, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 85–100

Brown, Kevin M., "'Racial' Referents: Images of European/Aboriginal Relations in Australian Feature Films 1955–1984", *The Sociological Review*, August 1988, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 475–502

Burden, Lee, "Getting Sentimental about the Bloke: An Australian Classic Restored", *Screen Education*, December 2009, no. 56, pp. 74–82

Burgoyne, Robert, "The Balcony of History", *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 547–54

Burton, Antoinette, "Ornamentalism (Book)", *American Historical Review*, April 2002, vol. 107, no. 2, pp. 497–98

Butters Jr., Gerald R., "Portrayals of Black Masculinity in Oscar Micheaux's *The Homesteader*", *Literature Film Quarterly*, 2000, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 54–60

Cannadine, David, "Ornamentalism", *History Today*, May 2001, vol. 51, no. 5, pp. 12–20

Chakrabarty, Dipesh, "Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts", *Postcolonial Studies*, April 1998, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 15–29

Clarke, Robert, "Star Traveller: Celebrity, Aboriginality and Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* (1987)", *Postcolonial Studies*, June 2009, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 229–46

Clendinnen, Inga, "Spearing the Governor", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 157–75

Clunies Ross, Bruce, "Scrutinising Australian Nationalism and Myths", *Australian Literary Studies*, October 1990, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 499–506

Coates, Isabel, "Ornamentalism (Book Review)", *Library Journal*, 8 January 2001, vol. 126, no. 13, pp. 130–31

Collins, Felicity and Davis, Therese, "Disputing History, Remembering Country in *The Tracker* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 2006, vol. 37, no. 128, pp. 35–54

Cowlshaw, Gillian, "The Materials of Identity Construction", in J.R. Beckett (ed.) *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality* (Canberra, 1994)

Cowlshaw, Gillian, "On Getting It Wrong: Collateral Damage in the History Wars", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2006, vol. 37, no. 127, pp. 181–202

Crilly, Shane, "Reading Aboriginalities in Australian Cinema: from *Jedda* to *Dead Heart*", *Screen Education*, Winter 2001, 26/27, pp. 36–45

Curthoys, Ann, "Mythologies", in Nile, Richard (ed.), *The Australian Legend and Its Discontents* (St. Lucia, 2000)

Damousi, Joy, "'The Filthy American Twang': Elocution, the Advent of American 'Talkies' and Australian Culture and Identity", *American Historical Review*, April 2007, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 394–416

D'Arc, James V., "'So Let It Be Written ...': The Creation of Cecil B. DeMille's Autobiography", *Literature Film Quarterly*, 1986, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1–10

Davidson, Jim, "De-Dominionisation Revisited", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2005, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 108–13

Delamoir, Jeannette, "Louise Lovely: Porno Stars and the AFI Awards", *Australian Screen Education*, Autumn 2001, no. 15, pp. 50–53

De Lorenzo, Catherine, "Confronting Amnesia: Aboriginality and Public Space", *Visual Studies*, October 2005, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 62–71

Duncanson, Ian, "Identities in the Colony and the Family: Tragedies of Ascription and Transgression in two Australian Films", *Social Identities*, November 2007, vol. 13, no. 6, pp. 697–713

Dunlop, Ian, "Ethnographic Film-making in Australia: The First Seventy Years (1898–1968)", *Aboriginal History*, 1979, vol. 3 no. 2, pp. 111–19

Egan, Maura, "Ornamentalism", *New York Times Magazine*, 27 September 2009

Elder, Catriona, "Colonialism and Indigenous Dispossession in *Against the Wind*", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, June 2010, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 409–20

Engelen, Leen, "Back to the Future, Ahead to the Past: Film and History: A Status Quaestionis", *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 555–63

Finnane, Mark and Richards, Jonathan, "Aboriginal Violence and State Response: Histories, Policies and Legacies in Queensland 1860–1940", *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, August 2010, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 238–62

Fletcher, Ian Christopher, "Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire (Book)", *Victorian Studies*, Spring 2003, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 532–34

Flory, Dan, "Race, Rationality, and Melodrama: Aesthetic Response and the Case of Oscar Micheaux", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Fall 2005, vol. 63, no. 4, pp. 327–38

Freebury, Jane, "National Identity in Australian Cinema: A Symposium", *Screen Education*, Autumn 2001, no. 25, pp. 54–56

Fullagar, Kate, "Savages that Are among Us": Mai, Bennelong, and the British Imperial Culture 1774–1795", *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, Fall 2008, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 211–37

Gaupier, Stephanie, "Aborigine Spirituality as the Grounding Theme in the Films of Peter Weir", *Midwest Quarterly*, Winter 2001, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 212–28

Grimshaw, Patricia, "The Constitution Federation and Political Rights: Aborigines and White Women in the New Commonwealth", *Ethos Annual*, 2000, vol. 8, no. 2000, pp. 4–13

Grimshaw, Patricia, "The Fabrication of a Benign Colonisation?", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2004, vol. 35, no. 123, pp. 122–29

Gruppenhoff, Richard, "Oscar Micheaux: The Great and Only: The Life of America's First Black Filmmaker", *Film Quarterly*, Fall 2010, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 77–78

Haebich, Anna, "Imagining Assimilation", *Australian Historical Studies*, January 2002, vol. 33, no. 118, pp. 61–71

Hamilton, Paula and Ashton, Paul, "At Home with the Past: Initial Findings from the Survey", *Australian Cultural History*, 2003, no. 23, pp. 1–226

Haskins, Victoria and Maynard, John, "Sex, Race and Power: Aboriginal Men and White Women in Australian History", *Australian Historical Studies*, 2005, vol. 37, no. 126, pp. 191–216

Hasty, William, "Piracy and the Production of Knowledge in the Travels of William Dampier, c. 1679–1688", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2011, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 40–54

Headon, David, "Significant Silents: Sporting Australia on Film, 1896–1930", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Summer 99, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 115–27

Healy, Sianan, "'Years Ago Some Lived Here': Aboriginal Australians and the Production of Popular Culture, History and Identity in 1930s Victoria", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 2006, vol. 37, no. 128, pp. 18–34

Hinkson, Melinda, "The Intercultural Challenge of Stanner's First Fieldwork", *Oceania*, March–June 2005, vol. 75, no. 3, pp. 195–208

Hoffenberg, Peter, "How the British Saw Their Empire (Book)" *Journal of World History*, June 2003, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 264–69

Holland, Alison, "Wives and Mothers Like Ourselves", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 2001, vol. 32, no. 117, pp. 292–311

Hollinsworth, David, "'My Island Home': Riot and Resistance in Media Representations of Aboriginality", *Social Alternatives*, 2005 First Quarter, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 116–20

Hooks, Bell, "Micheaux: Creating Blackness", *Black American Literature Forum*, Summer 1991, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 351–61

Jennings, Karen, "Aboriginality and Film", in Brian McFarlane, Geoff Mayer, Ina Bertrand (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Film* (South Melbourne, 1999)

Johnson, Murray, "The Secret War: A True History of Queensland's Native Police", *Journal of British Studies*, January 2010, vol. 49, no. 10, pp. 203–05

Jolly, Margaret, "Unsettling Affinities?", *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, August 2004, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 173–84

Jolliffe, Eric, "Witchetty's Tribe", *Associated Newspapers Limited, Australia*, 1952

Jones, Philip, "Their Boomerang Won't Come Back: Aborigines, Artefacts and Advertising Australia", *Adelaide Review*, February 1992

Kamp, Alanna, "Formative Geographies of Belonging in White Australia: Constructing the National Self and Other in Parliamentary Debate, 1901", *Geographical Research*, November 2010, vol. 48, no. 4, pp. 411–26

Keefe, Kevin, "Aboriginality: Resistance and Persistence", *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1988, vol. 1, p. 68

Keyes, Donald D., "Ornamentalism (Book)", *Art Journal*, June 1984, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 193–95

Killen, Darrell, "Fictionalising History on Film: The Case of *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*", *Quadrant*, November 2010, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 113–15

Kimira, Jo, "Indigenous Participation in Policing – From Native Police to Now – Has Anything Changed?", *Paper presented at the History of Crime, Policing and Punishment Conference*, Canberra, December 1999

Konishi, Shino, "'Wanton With Plenty': Questioning Ethno-historical Constructions of Sexual Savagery in Aboriginal Societies, 1788–1803", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2008, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 356–73

Konishi, Shino, "The Four Fathers of *Australia*: Baz Luhrmann's Depiction of Aboriginal History and Paternity in the Northern Territory", *History Australia*, April 2011, vol. 8 no. 1, pp. 23–41

Kozlovic, Anton Karl, "Hollywood, DeMille and Homage: Five Heuristic Categories", *Trames: A Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2009, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 64–82

Krausz, Peter, "Screening Indigenous Australia: An Overview of Aboriginal Representation on Film", *Australian Screen Education*, Spring 2003, pp. 90–95

Kuklick, Henrika, "Humanities in the Chrysalis Stage: Indigenous Australians in the anthropological imagination, 1899–1926", *British Journal of the History of Science*, December 2006, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 535–68

Lake, Marilyn and Pratt, Vanessa, "'Blood Brothers': Racial Identification and the Right to Rule: The Australian Response to the Spanish-American War", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2008, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 16–27

Landman, Jane and Ballard, Chris, "An Ocean of Images: Film and History in the Pacific", *The Journal of Pacific History*, June 2010, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 1–20

Langton, Marcia, "Out from the Shadows", *Meanjin*, 2006, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 55–64

Lawson, Ronald, "Towards Demythologizing the 'Australian Legend': Turner's Frontier Thesis and the Australian Experience", *Journal of Social History*, Summer 1980, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 577–87

Lothian, Kathy, "Seizing the Time: Australian Aborigines and the Influences of the Black Panther Party, 1969–1972", *Journal of Black Studies*, March 2005, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 179–200

Lydon, Jane, "A Strange Time Machine: *The Tracker*, *Black and White*, and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2004, vol. 35, no. 123, pp. 137–48

Lydon, Jane, "Our Sense of Beauty: Visuality, Space and Gender on Victoria's Aboriginal Reserves, South-Eastern Australia", *History and Anthropology*, June 2005, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 211–33

McCarthy, Greg, "Caught between Empires: ambivalence in Australian films", *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Culture and Media Studies*, 2001, vol. 15, no. 1/2, pp. 154–74

McFarlane, Brian, "Back Tracking: Brian McFarlane Considers Racial Matters and Their Historical Representation in Recent Australian Cinema", *Meanjin*, March 2003, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 59–59

McGhee, Karen, "The Reel Australia", *Australian Geographic*, October–December 2008, no. 92, pp. 34–36

McGregor, Russell, "The Necessity of Britishness: Ethno-cultural Roots of Australian Nationalism", *Nations & Nationalism*, July 2006, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 493–511

McGregor, Russell, "Another Nation: Aboriginal Activism in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2007, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 343–360

Magowan, Fiona, "Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle", *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 2000, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 308–22

Manley, Brendan, "Where is Pemulwuy?", *Military History*, May 2010, vol. 27, no. 1, p. 11

May, Josephine, "A Field of Desire: Visions of Education in Selected Australian Silent Films", *Paedagogica Historica*, October 2010, vol. 46, no. 5, pp. 623–37

Maynard, Shane, "Black (and White) Images: Aborigines in Film", in Moran, Albert and O'Regan, Tom (eds.), *The Australian Screen* (Ringwood, 1989)

Meaney, Neville, "Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography", *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2001, vol. 32, no. 116, pp. 76–91

Meyerowitz, Joanne, "Subaltern History Makers and Alternative Constructions of the Past: An Introduction", *Journal of American History*, March 2003, vol. 89, no. 4, pp. 1366–67

Mitchell, Jessie, "'Are We in Danger of a Hostile Visit from the Aborigines?' Dispossession and the Rise of Self Government in New South Wales", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2009, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 294–307

Moore, Terry, "Misadventures with Aboriginalism", *Social Identities*, 2011, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 423–41

Munslow, Alun, "Film and History: Robert A. Rosenstone and History on Film/Film on History", *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 565–75

Neill, Anna, "Buccaneer Ethnographer: Nature, Culture, and Nation in the Journals of William Dampier", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 2000, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 165–81

Ng, Marie Noelle, "Ornamentalism", *Canadian Literature*, Autumn 2003, Issue 138, pp. 108–09

Ngai, Mae M., "Chinese Miners, Headmen and Protectors on the Victorian Goldfields, 1853–1883", *Australian Historical Studies*, March 2011, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 10–24

Nicholls, Angus, "Anglo-German Mythologies: The Australian Aborigines and Modern Theories of Myth in the Work of Baldwin Spencer and Carl Strehlow", *History of the Human Sciences*, February 2007, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 83–114

Osborne, Richard, "Blackface Minstrelsy from Melville to Moby", *Critical Quarterly*, April 2006, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 114–25

Paisley, Fiona, "Race Hysteria, Darwin 1938", *Australian Feminist Studies*, March 2001, vol. 16, no. 34, pp. 43–59

Pike, Andrew, "Aboriginals in Australian Feature Films", *Meanjin*, December 1977, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 592–99

Poignant, Roslyn, "The Photographic Witness?", *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture*, 1991, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 6

Potter, Simon J., "Invasion of the Monster", *Media and History*, August 2011, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 253–71

Quinn, Laura, "Writing Himself Into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Films and His Audiences", *Film Criticism*, Spring 2003, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 53–59

Rekhari, Suneeti, "The 'Other' in Film: Exclusions of Aboriginal Identity from Australian Film", *Visual Anthropology*, March/April 2008, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 125–35

Rekhari, Suneeti, "Assimilation, Othering and Control: Looking Back at *Jedda*", *Screen Education*, Autumn 2010, Issue 57, pp. 123–28

Richards, Jason, "Imitation Nation: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Making of African American Selfhood in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*", *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Spring 2006, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 204–20

Richards, Jeffrey, "Signposts: History Films", *History Today*, October 2011, vol. 61, no. 10, pp. 52–53

Riseman, Noah, "Contesting White Knowledge: Yolngu Stories from World War II", *Oral History Review*, June 2010, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 170–90

Robert, Hannah, "Disciplining the Female Aboriginal Body: Inter-racial Sex and the Pretence of Separation", *Australian Feminist Studies*, 2001, vol. 16, no. 34, pp. 69–81

Rosenthal, Nicholas G., "Representing Indians: Native American Actors on Hollywood's Frontier", *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Autumn 2005, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 228–52

Rosset, Nathalie, "The Birth of the 'African Glen': Blackface Minstrelsy Between Presentation and Representation", *Rethinking History*, December 2005, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 415–28

Scott, James, "The Right Stuff at the Wrong Time: The Space of Nostalgia in the Conservative Ascendancy", *Film & History*, Spring 2010, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 45–57

Sengupta, Gunja, "Elites, Subalterns and American Identities: A Case Study of African-American Benevolence", *American Historical Review*, October 2004, vol. 109, no. 4, pp. 104–39

Sercombe, Howard, "Living in Two Camps: The Strategies Goldfields Aboriginal People Use to Manage Customary Economy and the Mainstream Economy at the Same Time", *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, November 2008, vol. 2008, no. 2, pp. 16–21

Sharma, Sanjay, "Crash – Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Whiteness?", *Critical Studies*, July 2010, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 533–52

Simmon, Scott, "Cecil B. DeMille's Hollywood", *Film Quarterly*, Summer 2006, vol. 59, pp. 51–52

Sinha, Mrinalini, "Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of Colonial India", *Gender and History*, November 1999, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 445–61

Smith, Bernard, "Captain Cook's Artists and the Portrayal of Pacific Peoples", *Art History*, September 1984, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 295–312

Smith, Bernard, "The Preference for the Primitive and on Writing Art History in Australia", *Third Text*, September 2004, vol. 18, no. 5, pp. 513–16

Smith, Richard J., "Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others – By David Day", *Historian*, Fall 2011, vol. 73, no. 3, pp. 647–49

Stoddard, Jeremy D and Marcus, Alan S., "More Than 'Showing What Happened': Exploring the Potential of Teaching History with Film", *The High School Journal*, January/February 2010, pp. 83–90

Stringer, John, "Australian Painters of the Heidelberg School/Australian Art", *Art Journal*, March 1982, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 79–83

Strong, Pauline Turner, "Fathoming the Primitive: Australian Aborigines in Four Explorers' Journals 1697–1845", *Ethnohistory*, Spring 1986, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 175–95

Teague, Edward H., "Ornamentalism (Book)", *Library Journal*, 15 January 1983, vol. 108, no. 2, p. 124

Trainor, Luke, "Australian Writers, British Publishers 1870–1902: Talking to the Nation?" *Australian Historical Studies*, April 2006, vol. 37, no. 127, pp. 140–55

Tranter, Bruce and Donoghue, Jed, "Bushrangers: Ned Kelly and Australian identity" *Journal of Sociology*, December, 2008, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 373–90

Tsokhas, Kosmas, "Romanticism, Aboriginality and National Identity: The Poetry and Prose of Mary Gilmore", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 1998, vol. 29, no. 111, pp. 230–48

Turner, Graeme, "The End of the Great Australian Film", *Social Alternatives*, July 1991, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 25–26

Valdez Young, Adriana, "Honorary Whiteness", *Asian Ethnicity*, June 2009, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 177–85

Veracini, Lorenzo, "A Prehistory of Australia's History Wars: The Evolution of Aboriginal History During the 1970s and 1980s", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, September 2006, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 439–54

Vitali, Valentina, "Film Historiography as Theory of the Film Subject: A Case Study", *Cinema Journal*, Fall 2010, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 141–46

Warden, Ian, "Behold the Pilgrims to the Shrine of Stoush", *National Library of Australia News*, July 2008

Warren, Kate, "Repositioning 'The Tracker'", *Screen Education*, Spring 2011, Issue 63, pp. 111–16

Waterhouse, Richard, "Australian Legends: Representations of the Bush, 1813–1913", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 2000, vol. 31, no. 115, pp. 201–21

Watson, Jay, "Introduction: Situating Whiteness in Faulkner Studies, Situating Faulkner in Whiteness Studies", *The Faulkner Journal*, Fall 2006/Spring 2007, vol. 22, no. 1/2, pp. 3–23

Westwell, Guy, "Critical Approaches to the History Film – A Field in Search of a Methodology", *Rethinking History*, December 2007, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 577–88

Windschuttle, Keith, "Historical Error versus Historical Invention", *Australian Historical Studies*, October 2004, vol. 36, no. 124, pp. 375–82

Zielinski, Andrew, "An Overview of Contrasting Spaces in Australian Feature Films", *Screen Education*, 2006, no. 43, pp. 92–96

Zielinski, Andrew, "Landscape Spaces in the Outback", *Screen Education*, 2006, Issue 43, pp. 97–101

Zielinski, Andrew, "Silent Cinema: Archetypes and Clichés", *Screen Education*, January 2007, no. 45, pp. 130–34

Zielinski, Andrew, "Alternative Spaces: Indigenous Films", *Screen Education*, Spring 2008, no. 51, pp. 113–17

Ziino, Bart, "Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity/Australian Pastoral: The Making of a White Landscape/the Australians: Insiders and Outsiders on the National Character since 1770", *Australian Historical Studies*, September 2008, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 373–80

Appendices

Appendix 1

(a) The questionnaire from the Australians and the Past survey conducted by the University of Technology, Sydney in association with ABC Radio National, the History Teachers Association (NSW), Tranby Aboriginal College, the Powerhouse Museum, and Museums Australia (NSW).

(b) A table from *At Home with the Past: Background and Initial Findings from the National Survey* by Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, published in 2003

Australians & the Past

The Australians and the Past survey is a national project being conducted by the University of Technology, Sydney in association with ABC Radio National, the History Teachers Association (NSW), Tranby Aboriginal College, the Powerhouse Museum, and Museums Australia (NSW).

The survey seeks to find out how Australians think about the past. By the past we mean everything from the very recent past to the very distant past, from your personal and family past to the past of Australia and other nations. The survey is anonymous.

This is not a 'test' to see how much history you know. Instead, we would like you to tell us how and when you learn about the past — in a broad sense. This can range from formal learning, such as in school, through to hobbies, conversations or watching TV.

The survey is divided into five sections, which altogether should take you about half an hour to complete — although if you want to tell us more on some questions it may take a little longer. Sections 2 and 3 ask you to 'rate' your experiences of certain kinds and sources of information about the past. After these rating however, we would like you to choose one of the answers for which you gave a 'high rating' (between 7-10) or a 'low rating' (1-3), and tell us in a little more detail why you thought these were very important, or not important at all. A line has been left following each question for you to fill in your answer.

1. Activities related to the Past.

This section seeks some information about some activities that you may have taken part in during the past 12 months. Please feel free to provide as detailed an answer as you would like. After some questions, there are some examples of specific kinds of information you may like to tell us about. But tell us whatever you think is important.

There may be some questions which are not relevant to you. If so, just ignore those and move onto the next question.

*1.1.1 During the past 12 months, have you watched any movies or television programs about the past?

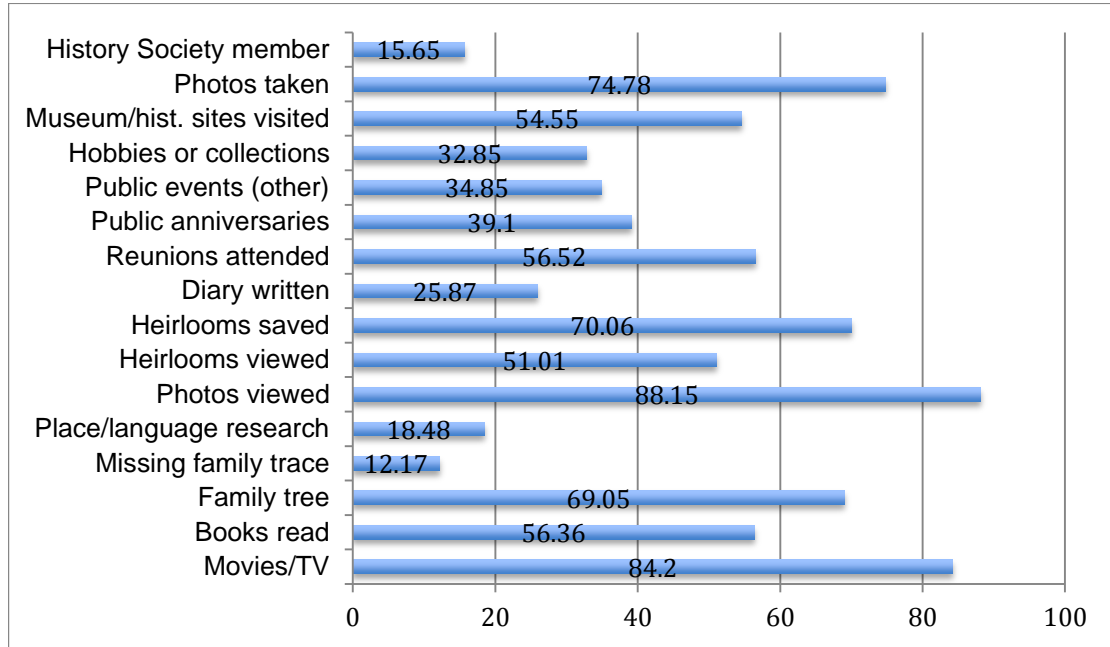
*1.1.2 What kinds of movies or television programs about the past do you like?

For example: what did you like about it? Why did you think it was interesting?

1.2.1 During the last 12 months have you read any books about the past?

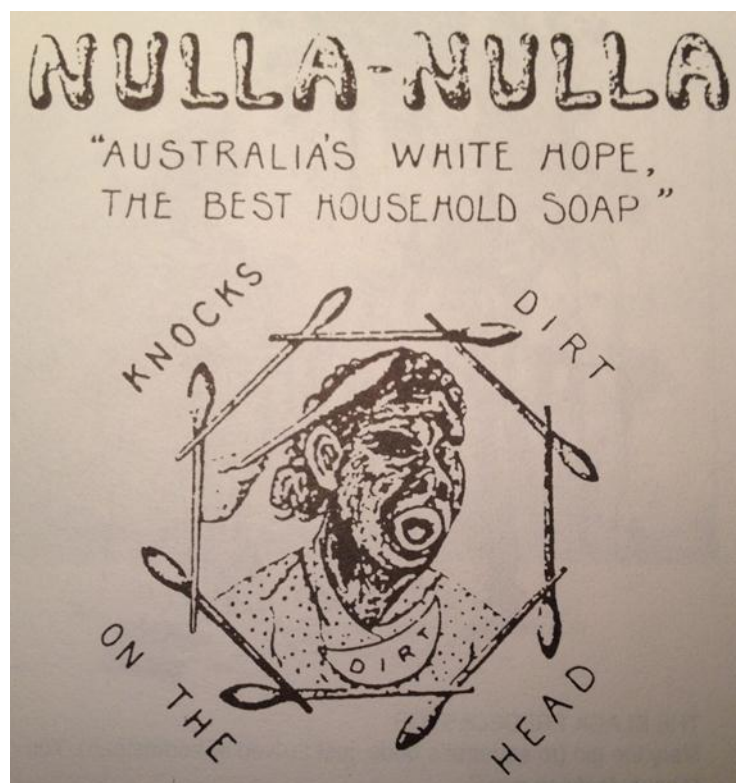
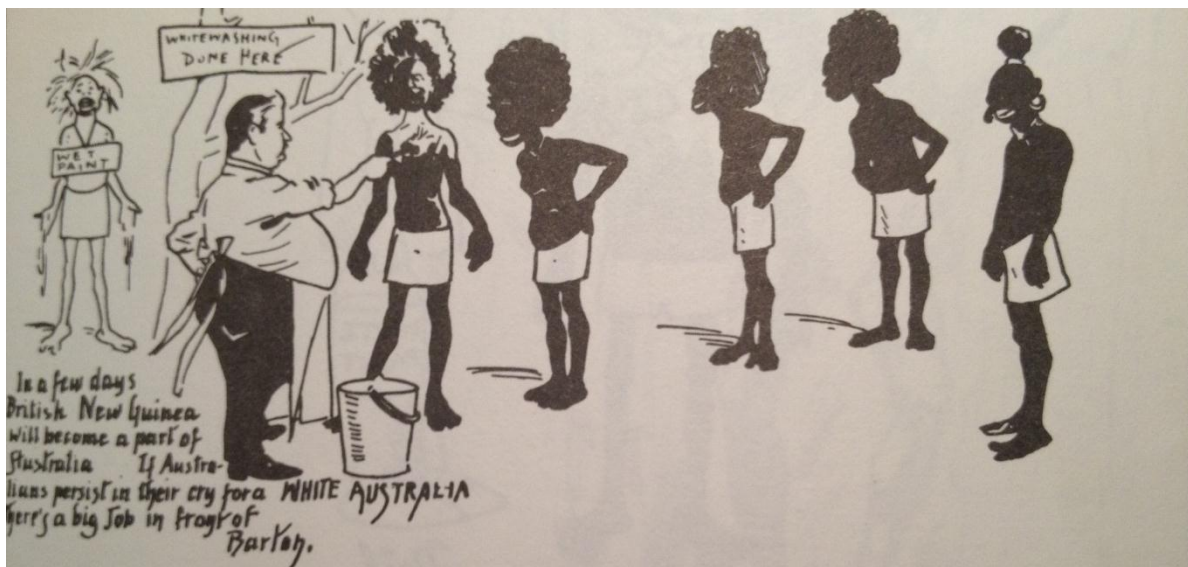
GRAPH 1: HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES

YES %



Appendix 2 – Two cartoons preoccupied with race and notions of whiteness

Taken from David Swain, *200 in the shade: An historical collection of cartoons about Aborigines* (Sydney, 2000)



Appendix 3 – Identifiable Native American character types

(Source – The Catalogue of the United States Library of Congress and the Paper Print Collection edited by Kemp R. Niver. The plot summaries are taken directly from those collections.)

Many of these American films were preserved as part of the Paper Print Collection. Unlike so many of Australia's early silent films, the Paper Print Collection preserved many of America's early silent films that would have otherwise have been lost. In 1894 there was no way to copyright a motion picture. Legislation allowing for film copyright was not passed in the US until 1912. Therefore the Edison Company began submitting photographs of each frame of their films on paper rolls and protecting them under the copyright laws that related to photographs. When copyright legislation was passed protecting motion pictures the process stopped but the Library of Congress still held 3,000 paper rolls. The films thus preserved were by the 1960s laboriously transferred to film stock and became part of the collection.

This list of character types was identified in the films held by the United States Library of Congress. The popularity of the Western with Australian audiences meant that an awareness of these identifiable Native American character types has a direct bearing on the invention of Indigenous Australian character types. This list offers clear points of comparison and contrast between the cinematic invention of Native Americans and Indigenous Australians.

The character types that I have identified are:

1. The Native American as a friend and ally to the newcomers
2. The Native American as an enemy

3. Individualised Native American characters – stories about Native American life or the sympathetic characterisation of Native Americans as victims
4. Native Americans characterised as lovers in stories of inter-racial romance
5. Native Americans as comic characters
6. Films featuring Native Americans and the white captive motif
7. Natives Americans as dupes, manipulated by evil white men

Although it has been a common practice among Australian film scholars to make blanket comparisons between the cinematic characterisation of Indigenous Australians and Native Americans a closer consideration of the Native American character types that I have identified here and my typology of Indigenous Australian characters provides for a more refined and nuanced analysis. A closer consideration of the early American and Australian silent films reveals that while both countries invented silent film characterisations of their first peoples as either variously, friends or enemies, as comic characters and as occasional dupes manipulated by evil white men, there are still significant points of contrast. Despite the global influence of the Hollywood model, there were no Australian films that individualised Indigenous Australians in the way that Native Americans were individualised. There were no Australian characterisations to compare with either the stories of Native American life or the sympathetic portrayal of Native Americans as victims or as the focus of inter-racial romance. Another striking point of contrast is the number of times Native Americans actors featured as principal characters in silent films. It was not until the 1950s that Indigenous Australian actors appeared in leading roles.

Films where Native Americans were characterised as friends and allies

KIT CARSON

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1903

Camera: Wallace McCutcheon

10 reels, 527 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5077-86

Kit Carson is captured by Indians and manages to escape only to be ambushed by them again. In the Indian village, Kit is tied to a tree and is harassed by the Indians, but is set free by an Indian maiden. (KN)

THE CALL OF THE WILD

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1908

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: Arthur Marvin, G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Florence Lawrence, Charles Inslee, Mack Sennett

1 reel, 376 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5273

An Indian proposes to a white woman. She declines, and the Indian angrily returns to his tribe. Later, the heroine is captured by Indians while in the woods, but is saved by the intervention of her rejected suitor. She returns home, while the Indian rides off sadly. (MH & KN)

THE REDMAN AND THE CHILD

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1908

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: Arthur Marvin

Cast: Charles Inslee, John Tansy, Harry Salter, Linda Arvidson

1 reel, 328 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5657

Outlaws kill an old miner and kidnap his grandchild while their Indian friend is away. Upon his return, the Indian rescues the child and avenges the death of his old friend by killing the outlaws. (MH)

THE GIRL AND THE OUTLAW

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1908

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: Arthur Marvin

Cast: Florence Lawrence, Charles Inslee

1 reel, 316 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5407

The chief of a band of renegade Indians leaves his girlfriend beside the road after severely beating her. She is found and revived by the daughter of a local settler. The two start out for the settlement, but they are captured by the outlaw band. The Indian girl dies after helping her rescuer to escape. (KN)

THE RED GIRL

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1908

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: Arthur Marvin

Cast: Charles Inslee, Harry Salter, Marion Sunshine, Tony O'Sullivan,
Florence Lawrence

1 reel, 392 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5656

A Mexican woman steals gold nuggets from a female miner, and is aided in her escape by an Indian woman, but the Mexican woman then seduces the Indian's half-breed husband

into going with her. They try to kill the Indian by tying her up and suspending her over a river, but she manages to free herself and helps the miner track down the Mexican woman and her unfaithful husband whom she refuses to take back. (MPW3:221)

THE ABORIGINE'S DEVOTION

AFI/Post Collection

World Film Mfg. Co., 1909

1 reel, 429 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 9790

A trapper is shown with a small child and his friend, an Indian man. When the trapper dies in a fall, he leaves his child in the Indian's care. When the Indian goes to fetch water, a trader comes and assaults the child and steals from their belongings. The Indian tracks down the trader and kills him, carrying the body back to the trapper's grave where, in a vision, he appears to bless the Indian and child.

LEATHER STOCKING

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1909

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer, Arthur Marvin

Cast: James Kirkwood, Linda Arvidson, Mack Sennett, Billy Quirk,

George Nicholls, Owen Moore, Henry B. Walthall

1 reel, 372 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5524

Based on James Fenimore Cooper's story, a party of settlers led by a friendly Indian and escorted by a British soldier set out on a journey. En route they are stalked and attacked by Indians. At the crucial moment, soldiers from the fort arrive and beat off the unfriendly Indian tribe. (KN)

THE BROKEN DOLL

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1910

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Gladys Egan, Kate Bruce, Alfred Paget, Linda Arvidson, Owen

Moore, Mack Sennett, Dell Henderson, W. Chrystie Miller.

1 reel, 406 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5265

After an Indian is cruelly killed, the Indians plan revenge by attacking the white settlement.

A little Indian girl, who had been given a doll by a white girl, warns her friend of the uprising. Able to prepare themselves, the settlers beat off the Indians, but the Indian girl is killed during the attack. (KN)

INDIAN WESTERN

AFI/Lake County Museum Collection

Selig, 1910

1 reel (inc.), 795 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 5853

At a US Army post, a colonel's daughter aids a young Indian woman and is rewarded by the woman's devotion. Trapper Joe attempts to take the colonel's daughter to Fremont, but they are attacked by Indians, led by Black Bear who seeks revenge. The Indian woman helps Joe and the white woman to escape. They travel across the desert where the Indian woman apparently dies of thirst before Joe and the colonel's daughter arrive at Fremont. Film appears to be incomplete.

A REDSKIN'S BRAVERY

AFI/Miller Collection

Bison, 1911

1 reel, 645 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 5399

A woman gives food to an Indian man. She then spurns the advances of a cowboy and rides off with her sweetheart. The rejected suitor plots revenge with a friend, and the two attack the lovers. The girl escapes to the river, but is apprehended by them in a canoe. The Indian comes to her rescue and delivers her to her sweetheart.

IOLA'S PROMISE

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1912

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Mary Pickford, Alfred Paget, Joe Swickard, George Nicholls,
William J. Butler, Dorothy Bernard

1 reel, 400 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5870

An Indian maiden is rescued from cruel captors by a kind prospector. Her tribe attacks a covered wagon and captures the prospector's fiancée whom they intend to burn at the stake. In the rescue, Iola is fired on by her own people and dies in the arms of the prospector, but not before she shows him where she has found some gold-bearing rock.
(KN)

THE SPIRIT OF CABIN MINE

AFI/S. E. Peters Collection

Frohman Amusement Corp., 1920

Cast: Texas Guinan

1 reel (inc.; reel 2 of 2 only), 850 ft., 35mm, ref. print FEB 5469

Reel begins with part two of the story. Donovan tells Red Bird, an Indian woman, that he loves her and wants to marry her, but she refuses him since she does not want him to become a "squaw man." She later realises that her father, Nashoba, killed the family of the miner, Briggs, at Spirit Cabin long ago. The villainous Ridgon wants Briggs' gold, so he convinces Nashoba to go and kill Briggs. Nashoba shoots Briggs, and Ridgon shoots Nashoba and steals the gold. Red Bird, who had been tied up by Ridgon, frees herself, borrows Donovan's horse and gun, and goes after Ridgon. She shoots him and returns the gold to the cabin. Nashoba admits that Briggs is Red Bird's true father. Listed in Library records as [Spirit Cabin Mine].

THE BROKEN LAW

AFI/Bernard Uhl Collection

Ermine Productions, Inc., 1926

Director: Paul Hurst; Writer: Dan F. Whitcomb; Photographer: Frank

Cotner; Editor: Fred Burnworth

Cast: Jack Meehan, Alma Rayford, Frank Abbott, Vester Pegg, Karl

Silvera, Robert Burns

1 reel (inc.), 830 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 8592

A cowboy falls off his horse when it bolts, and his dog barks to call for help. Cheeko, an old Indian who lives alone, shoots the dog in the leg thinking that it belongs to evil men who want to wrest from him the secret source of hidden gold, an inheritance from his forefathers. When he sees the cowboy, he realises his mistake and offers to care for the dog, giving the cowboy gold nuggets in exchange. Meanwhile, the Bar B foreman and his hireling plot to learn Cheeko's secret.

Films where Native Americans are featured as enemies

DISCOVERY OF BODIES

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1903

Camera: Wallace McCutcheon

1 reel, 64 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 4580

Frontiersmen find a burning cabin and bodies. No Indians appear, but this may be part of a series released by AM&B under the title *The Pioneers* which does feature Indians. [See also: *Firing the Cabin*, *Rescue of Child from Indians*, and *Settler's Home Life*.] (KN)

FIRING THE CABIN (THE PIONEERS)

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1903

Camera: Wallace McCutcheon

1 reel, 76 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 4624

A pair of Indians attack a cabin, killing the adults and setting the cabin on fire. The Indians lead away the young girl. May be part of a series released by AM&B in 1904 under the title *The Pioneers*. [See also: *Discovery of Bodies*, *Rescue of Child from Indians*, and *Settler's Home Life*.] (KN)

BRUSH BETWEEN COWBOYS AND INDIANS

Paper Print Collection

Edison, 1904

Camera: A. C. Abadie

1 reel, 39 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 4517

Near a river, mounted men shoot rifles at some other men, supposed to be Indians, who are also on horseback at a distance. The location is Bliss, Oklahoma Territory. (KN)

ATTACK ON FORT BOONESBORO

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1906

Camera: G. W. Bitzer

1 reel, 152 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 4964

In a reconstruction of an historic event in Kentucky, approximately one hundred people dressed as American frontiersmen and Indians participate in a sham battle between those inside the fort and the Indians outside. Filmed in Louisville, Kentucky. (KN)

A ROUND-UP IN OKLAHOMA

Paper Print Collection

Oklahoma Natural Mutoscene Co., 1908

Camera: J. B. Kent

1 reel, 321 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5676

During the course of a cattle drive, a group of Indians sneak up on a chuck wagon and kill the cook before they are driven away by cowboys. Filmed in Oklahoma. (KN)

STOLEN BY INDIANS

AFI/Raes Collection

Champion, 1910

1 reel (inc.), 185 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 7707

Indians attack a settler family, but cowboys go after them.

CAPTAIN BRAND'S WIFE

AFI/New Zealand Film Archive Collection

Selig Polyscope, 1911

Cast: Sidney Ayres

1 reel, 1,010 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 8619

Captain Brand is stationed in Arizona just one week after his marriage to Ada. Lieutenant Moore, a former suitor of Ada's, is also stationed there. A year later, Ada and her baby travel to Arizona by stagecoach and are met by Brand. Indians overtake the coach, kill Brand, and attempt to throw the baby over the cliff. Moore, who is on scouting duty, hears shots and comes to the rescue, saving the baby. Four years later, he wins Ada's love.

(MPW15:916)

ON THE WAR PATH

AFI/Rippen Collection

Kalem, 1911

Cast: William West, Jane Wolfe, Judson Melford, Alice Joyce, Carlyle

Blackwell, Robert Chandos, Frank Lanning, George Melford

1 reel, 909 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 5832

Two old settlers discussing their past battles with Indians inspire a little boy to defend the cabin himself when Indians come to attack again. The other settlers have gone to a military outpost for safety, but the little boy stays behind to fight until he is rescued by a half-breed trapper. (MPW9:575)

THE LAST DROP OF WATER

AFI/Tayler Collection

Biograph, 1911

Director: D. W. Griffith

Cast: Blanche Sweet, Joseph Graybill, Charles West

1 reel, 922 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 8202

A group of pioneers head west across the desert, including Mary; her alcoholic husband, John; and Jim, the suitor she rejected in favour of John. They are attacked by Indians, but ward them off. Jim and John go in search of water, and John gives his last water to Jim, since he considers Jim to be a better man. Jim returns to camp after he discovers a pool of water. Soldiers arrive and drive away the Indians. (MPW9:193)

THE MASSACRE

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1912

Director/Author: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Wilfred Lucas, Charles West, Blanche Sweet, Eddie Paget, Dell

Henderson, W. Chrystie Miller, Charles Craig, Robert Harron

1 reel, 834 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5883

A wagon train is attacked by Indians who are later run off by the cavalry. The hero searches the battlefield for his wife and baby and finds them alive under a pile of bodies of plainsmen who had stood back to protect the woman and her child. (KN)

A TEMPORARY TRUCE

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1912

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Blanche Sweet, Claire McDowell, Charles West, W. Chrystie

Miller, Alfred Paget, Walter Chrystie Cabanne, Robert Harron, Charles

Gorman, Charles Hill Mailes

1 reel, 570 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5903

A prospector's wife is kidnapped by a Mexican villain, but her husband declares a temporary truce with him so they can fight their common enemy, the Indians. (KN)

THE DEAD MAN'S CLAIM

Public Archives of Canada/Dawson City Collection

Essanay Film Mfg. Co., 1912

Cast: Broncho Billy Anderson, Arthur Mackley

1 reel (inc.), 925 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 7960

Before he dies, an old prospector tells Durkin and Black about a gold mine he has found. Durkin and Black go off across the desert in search of the mine, but Black deserts Durkin, taking the water and the pack train with him. An Indian steals Black's water, and Durkin later steals the water from the Indian. The Indian follows him to extract revenge, but dies from thirst. Black also dies from thirst. When Durkin runs out of water, he shoots himself with his revolver. Film has significant deterioration throughout. (MPW12:446)

THE LIFE OF BUFFALO BILL

Ernst Collection

Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill Film Co., 1912

1 reel, 940 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 1982

Three experiences from Buffalo Bill's past are re-enacted. In the first, he foils an attack by Cheyenne Indian scouts on a group of settlers. This is followed by an Indian attack, which the settlers win. In the next story, Buffalo Bill foils a stagecoach robbery. The last story shows the Cheyennes leaving to join the Sioux. Buffalo Bill alerts the cavalry to this, and a battle follows during which the "famous duel between Chief Yellow Hand and Buffalo Bill" takes place. Buffalo Bill scalps an Indian as revenge for Custer's death. Film features appearances by the real Buffalo Bill at the beginning and the end.

THE FALL OF BLACK HAWK

Paper Print Collection

American Film Manufacturing Co., 1912

Director: William Lee

Cast: Harry Launsdale

1 reel, 23 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5370

A depiction of the conflict between the whites and the Sauk and Fox tribes led by Black Hawk.

A FRONTIER SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

AFI/Merrill Collection

Comet, 1912

1 reel (inc.), 763 ft., 35mm ref. print

FEA 7018

A young man goes West after his sweetheart's uncle sends her away. In his travels, the young man meets a widow and saves her farm by paying off her mortgage. He also saves a covered wagon from an Indian attack and then finds that his sweetheart is travelling in the wagon. After being reunited, the young couple marries.

THE BATTLE AT ELDERBUSH GULCH

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1913

Director/Author: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Mae Marsh, Lillian Gish, Robert Harron, Charles Hill Mailes,
Kate Bruce, W. Chrystie Miller, Alfred Paget, Vergie Clarke, Henry B.

Walthall

1 reel, 874 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FBB 2271

When a white man kills the son of a chief, a terrifying battle between settlers and Indians ensues. (MH & KN)

THE VIRGINIAN

AFI/Paramount Collection

Lasky, 1914

Director: Cecil B. DeMille; from the novel The Virginian by Owen
Wister

Cast: Dustin Farnum, J. W. Johnston, Sidney Deane

5 reels, 3,719 ft., 35mm, ref. print FEA 4622 (r1), FEA 6440-43 (r2-5)

The Virginian plays many practical jokes with his friend Steve, one of which angers Trampas. Steve later decides to join Trampas and his gang of cattle thieves, and the Virginian is sent to hang them. The Virginian is wounded, but nursed back to health by the

schoolteacher he loves, Molly, and he later kills Trampas. There are several Indian attacks in the film. (AFI)

SAVED BY HER HORSE

AFI/Bosso Collection

Selig Polyscope Co., 1915

Producer/Director: Tom Mix

Cast: Tom Mix, Louella Maxam, Sid Jordan, Pat Chrisman

1 reel, 161 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 9884

Tom Golden leaves a party of settlers to look for hostile Indians. He discovers some, and his girlfriend, Nell, offers to go for help. She is captured by Indians, but her horse escapes and carries her hat back to the settlers' camp. With her horse leading the way, Tom finds Nell at the Indian camp. Nell hears her horse neigh, so she whistles and mounts him when he answers her call, and she leaves to get help. Parts of the picture are missing. (MPW24:1866)

BLADE O' GRASS

The George Kleine Collection

Edison, 1915

3 reels, 1,202 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 1389-91

A man is deserted by his wife and takes refuge from civilization by going with his daughter to the Maine woods. The girl grows up and falls in love with a hunter; the father drives off the hunter and sends the girl to live with his wealthy sister. The girl soon tires of high society and returns to the woods, where she is abducted by an Indian. The hunter rescues the girl and wins her father's consent to marry her. (GK)

THE CORPORAL'S DAUGHTER

The George Kleine Collection

Edison, 1915

Director: Langdon West; Author: Jack Crawford

Cast: Gladys Hulette, Arthur Housman, Yale Benner, Ben Turbett; George Melville, William West, William Burgess

1 reel, 361 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 1444

Snubbed by her lieutenant fiancé, a corporal's daughter travels with her father to the frontier where she marries a government scout after he rescues her from Indians. When the troops and her husband are trapped next to a mountain during a fight with Indians, she disguises herself as an Indian in order to show them a tunnel through which they may escape. Support troops arrive along with the news that the lieutenant is dead.

(MPW24:1834)

THE FUGITIVE

Copyright Collection

New York Motion Picture Co., Kay-Bee, 1915

(c) Video Yesteryear, 1984

Director: William S. Hart; Story/Screenplay: Richard V. Spencer and Thomas H. Ince

Cast: William S. Hart, Enid Markey, Clifford S. Smith, S. C. Smith, Ernest Swallow

29 min., sd., 1/2" videocassette, ref. copy

VAA 6624

Luke McVane escapes to the desert after killing a man. The deputy pursues him with a posse, but Luke lures the deputy away and shoots him. Not wanting to let the deputy die, Luke takes the wounded man with him, nurses him back to health, and later explains to

him that he killed in self-defence. The deputy promises to try to dismiss the charges against Luke. The two start back to town so that Luke may surrender, but they are attacked by Apaches who kill both. Original title of film is The Taking of Luke McVane.

THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP

The George Kleine Collection

Edison, 1917

Director: Floyd France; Author: Bret Harte; Adapter: Edward H.

Griffith

Cast: Ivan Christie, Robert Chandler, William Wadsworth, J. C.

O'Loughlin, Betty Young, Eugene Field, Thomas Trenor, A. Newson, Al

Stewart, Florence Adams

1 reel, 566 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 1985

The men of a rough western mining camp adopt a baby whose mother, a half-breed Indian, dies. Three years later the luck of the camp runs out. A half-breed Indian seeking revenge for having been chased away, tries to kidnap the child, but is stopped by the camp gambler. In the ensuing fight, the half-breed is killed, and the child finds a gold nugget, thus discovering a new vein of gold ore. (GK)

THREE WORD BRAND

Copyright Collection

William S. Hart Co., Paramount, 1921

(c) Video Yesteryear

Director/Adaptor: Lambert Hillyer; Story: Will Reynolds;

Photographer: Joe August

Cast: William S. Hart, Jane Novak, S. J. Bingham, Gordon Russell,

George Pierce, Colette Forbes

75 min., 1/2" videocassette, ref. print

VAA 6521

Hart plays the dual role of motherless twin brothers who are separated when their father is killed by Indians--one becoming the governor of Utah, the other a cattle rancher who poses as his brother in order to veto a water rights bill and pardon his partner falsely accused of a crime.

DANIEL BOONE

AFI/Alderman Collection

Chronicles of America Picture Corp., 1923

Director: Claude H. Mitchell; Adapted from "Pioneers of the Old Southwest" by Constance Lindsay Skinner

Cast: Elmer Grandin, Virginia Powell

3 reels, 2,694 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 6712-14

In 1776, Boone is sent by Kentucky land owners as the forerunner of a new settlement. He establishes Boonesboro, but the colony faces extinction through sickness and Indian depredations. Boone is captured by the Shawnees. In 1778 a French officer in the British service directs an Indian offensive against Boonesboro. Boone escapes, races back to his settlement and successfully defends it against a bitter nine day attack. Part of The Chronicles of America series released by Yale University. (Yale U. Press Film Service)

VINCENNES

AFI/Bradley Collection

Pathe, 1923

Adapted from "The Old Northwest" by Frederic Austin Ogg; Author:
William Basil Courtney

1 reel, 1,032 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FBA 6732

Story of the struggle for supremacy along the frontier when the American Colonies were fighting for independence in the East. Hamilton, British Governor General of the Northwest, occupies Vincennes. To rid the country of Hamilton and his Indian allies, George Rogers Clark captures Vincennes, breaking the influence of the British over the Indians and winning for the Republic the vast territory from which later were formed the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Part of The Chronicles of America series released by Yale University. (Yale U. Press Film Service)

AMERICA

Copyright Collection

United Artists, 1924

Producer/Director: D. W. Griffith; Scenery: John L. E. Pell; Story:

Robert W. Chambers; Photography: G. W. Bitzer, Marcel Le Picard,

Hendrik Sartov, Hal Sintzenich; Art Director: Charles M. Kirk; Film

Editor: Rose Smith, James Smith

Cast: Neil Hamilton, Erville Alderson, Carol Dempster, Charles Emmett

Mack, Lee Beggs, John Dunton, Arthur Donaldson, Charles Bennett, Frank

McGlynn, Jr., Frank Walsh, Lionel Barrymore

2 reels, 3,420 ft., sd., 16mm, ref. print

FDA 8406-07

The romance of a Boston patriot and the daughter of a Virginia Tory is set against the background of the Revolutionary War, showing many of the events and battles from Virginia to New England and also the Mohawk Valley campaign. Mohawk and Seneca Indians attack colonists in the film. Restored version with soundtrack music arranged and played by Charles Hofmann. (MOMA)

CUSTER'S LAST FIGHT

AFI/South Dakota Historical Society

Quality Amusement Corp., 1925

Producer: Thomas H. Ince; Story: Richard V. Spencer;

Editor/Titles: Inez A. Ridgway

Cast: Francis Ford, Anna Little, Grace Cunard, Wm. Eagleshirt, J.

Barney Sherry, Charles K. French, Lillian Christie, "Snowball," Art

Acord

2 reels, 1,562 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FBA 9117-18

Reissued version of the 1912 film Custer's Last Fight which depicts Custer's battle with the Sioux at Little Big Horn. The killing of two white naturalists is shown, followed by the arrest of Rain-in-the-Face for their murders. Rain-in-the-Face escapes, and Custer is given orders to drive Sitting Bull and his "hostiles" back to the reservation. In that effort, Custer and every one of his men are killed. The film ends showing the Custer monument on the battlefield. (MPW12:1116-1118 & Lauritzen)

WITH BUFFALO BILL ON THE U.P. TRAIL

AFI/Movieland Films

Sunset, 1925

Director: Frank S. Mattison; Photography: Bert Longnecker

Cast: Roy Stewart, Cullen Landis, Sheldon Lewis, Kathryn McGuire, Earl

Metcalf, Milburn Moranti, Fred De Silva

2 reels, 1,958 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FBB 2459-60

Buffalo Bill seeks to build a town on the railroad line, but is thwarted by a dishonest train town locator. A fight breaks out between Buffalo Bill and the surveyors, and the chief's

son, White Spear, starts a buffalo stampede to cover his attack on the whites. Buffalo Bill diverts the stampede, and the locator agrees to purchase the property rights. (AFI)

GEN. CUSTER AT LITTLE BIG HORN

The Douglas Fleming-Lynn Moore Collection

Sunset, 1926

Director: Harry L. Fraser; Producer: Anthony J. Xydias

Cast: Roy Stewart, John Beck, Helen Lynch, Edmund Cobb

5 reels, 76 min., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 459-463

A civilian scout attached to General Custer's command manages to escape the massacre at the Little Big Horn and returns to his girlfriend.

THE RED RAIDERS

United Artists Collection

First National, 1927

Director: Albert Rogell; Producer: Charles R. Rogers; Photography:

Ross Fisher; Titles: Don Ryan; Editor: Fred Allen; Akeley camera:

William Sickner; Business Manager: Sidney Rogell; Supervised by

Harry J. Brown; Based on a story by Marion Jackson

Cast: Ken Maynard, Ann Drew, Paul Hurst, J. P. McGowan, Chief

Yowlache, Harry Shutan, Tom Day, Hal Salter

7 reels, 2175 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAB 4812-18

A young Army officer is assigned to a frontier military post in Sioux territory. After an Indian spy at the post named Scar Face Charlie incites the Sioux to war and induces the troops to leave the fort, the officer brings the men back to the fort and the Sioux attack is crushed. (AFI)

THE LITTLE INDIAN WEAVER

AFI/Casselton-Larson Collection

Madeline Brandeis Productions, Pathe, 1929

1 reel, 1,015 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 8579

Based on the book of the same title by Madeline Brandeis, a Navajo Indian girl wants the doll of a white child, so she weaves a blanket to exchange for one at the trading post. The trader refuses to take the blanket, but the trader's son buys the girl a doll with his savings. Because of this act of kindness, the Navajos accept the white boy as their friend.

(Educational Film Catalog)

Individualised Native American characters – stories about Native American life or the sympathetic characterisation of Native Americans as victims

THE MENDED LUTE

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1909

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: James Kirkwood, Florence Lawrence, Owen Moore, Mack Sennett, Arthur Johnson, James Young Deer, Princess Red Wing

1 reel, 375 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5568

Little Bear and Standing Rock are vying for the Sioux chief's daughter, and the chief gives her to the highest bidder, Standing Rock, the man she doesn't love. After she leaves her new husband for Little Bear whom she loves, the two are captured by Standing Rock and his tribe and are about to be burned at the stake when, impressed by his rival's bravery, he sets them both free. (MH)

HIS LAST GAME

AFI/Miller Collection

Imp, 1909

1 reel (incomplete?), 354 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAB 0434

Two teams are matched for the big game of the series in Arizona. Two gamblers decide to bribe the Indian pitcher, so that they can fix the game in their favour. He turns them down, and they try to poison him. He kills one of the gamblers. The Indian is about to be shot for the crime, when the sheriff grants him a respite to pitch in the game, which he wins. The Indian is shot a moment before a reprieve for him reaches the sheriff.

THE INDIAN RUNNER'S ROMANCE

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1909

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: James Kirkwood, Owen Moore, Marion Leonard, Arthur Johnson, Mary Pickford

1 reel, 379 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5557

An Indian brave and the daughter of a chief are married, but the bride is abducted by white men shortly thereafter. The Indian brave searches for her, eventually locating her. He kills the white man and brings his wife home. (KN)

THE REDMAN'S VIEW

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1909

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: James Kirkwood, Arthur Johnson, Owen Moore, Lottie Pickford,

Alfred Paget, W. Chrystie Miller

1 reel, 389 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5658

Armed and unfeeling whites force reluctant Kiowas to move from their land. The Chief's daughter is left behind as part of a trade with the white men to prevent a massacre, but in the end she is allowed to go with the young Indian she loves to visit the burial site of her father. (MH & KN)

THE BROKEN DOLL

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1910

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Gladys Egan, Kate Bruce, Alfred Paget, Linda Arvidson, Owen

Moore, Mack Sennett, Dell Henderson, W. Chrystie Miller.

1 reel, 406 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5265

After an Indian is cruelly killed, the Indians plan revenge by attacking the white settlement. A little Indian girl, who had been given a doll by a white girl, warns her friend of the uprising. Able to prepare themselves, the settlers beat off the Indians, but the Indian girl is killed during the attack. (KN)

A MOHAWK'S WAY

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1910

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Dorothy Davenport, George Nicholls, Alfred Paget, Mack Sennett,

Claire McDowell, W. J. Butler

1 reel, 398 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5584

A white doctor refuses to treat a sick Indian child, so his wife ministers in his stead. Later, the Indians take to the warpath and kill the settlers except for the wife who is spared because of her earlier kindness to the ailing Indian child. (KN)

THE CURSE OF THE RED MAN

The British Film Institute Collection

Selig, 1911

1 reel, 836 ft., 35mm, ref. print in progress

An educated Indian struggles with alcoholism after he returns from college to live with his tribe. (MH)

THE BATTLE OF THE RED MEN

AFI/Chesko Collection

Bison, 1912

Director: Thomas H. Ince

1 reel (inc.), 886 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 0836

In a battle between the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians, Silver Moon's husband is killed. While looking for his body, she is captured by the Cheyennes and made a slave to the chief who is fascinated by her beauty. She lures the chief away from the camp so that her Sioux tribe can attack the leaderless village, and she pushes the Cheyenne chief over a cliff. Approximately half the picture is missing. (MPW11:902)

THE INDIAN MASSACRE

AFI/Killiam Collection

Bison, 1912

Director: Thomas H. Ince

Cast: J. Barney Sherry, Francis Ford, Arthur Acord

2 reels, 1,716 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 6371-72

When Indians attack a white settlement, a brave kidnaps a white baby to give to his wife as a replacement for their dead baby. The white mother goes to the Indian camp to look for her child and is captured by the Indians who plan to torture her. The settlers attack the Indian camp, destroying it completely and killing the braves, while the Indian wife returns the baby to the white woman and allows her to escape. The Indian wife mourns her baby at its grave, unaware of the destruction of the Indian camp. (MPW11:854)

A PUEBLO LEGEND

The Mary Pickford Collection

Biograph, 1912

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Mary Pickford, Robert Harron, Wilfred Lucas

1 reel, 33 min., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 92

A young Indian maiden assists the hero of the tribe in finding a sacred turquoise stone, the recovery of which would mean happiness and prosperity to the tribe. Filmed on location in the old Pueblo of Isleta, New Mexico.

THE SONG OF THE WILDWOOD FLUTE

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1910

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Mary Pickford, Dark Cloud, Dell Henderson

1 reel, 346 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5709

After hearing him play the flute, Dove Eyes chooses to marry Gray Cloud rather than another Indian suitor. When Gray Cloud falls into a bear pit, his rival leaves him there until he sees the maiden's suffering and rescues him. (MH)

A ROMANCE OF THE CLIFF DWELLERS

AFI/Nederlands Filmmuseum Collection

Edison, 1911

Director: Edwin S. Porter

Cast: Laura Sawyer, James Gordon, Herbert Prior

1 reel (inc.), 372 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAB 2492

A chief and a brave fight over an Indian girl. The girl kills the chief with an arrow so she can be with the brave, whom she loves. The brave is tried by the tribal council for murder and is tortured. The girl confesses when she hears his cries, and she is sent to her death after the lovers are permitted to watch the sunrise together. Titles are in Dutch.

(MPW10:1006)

HIAWATHA

AFI/Ohio Historical Society Collection

Fort Defiance Film Co., Gaumont, 1913

Producer: Frank E. Moore; Camera: Victor Milner; Based on the poem

"The Song of Hiawatha" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Cast: Soon-goot

1 reel, 16mm, ref. print in progress

Years after Gitche Manito proclaims that a prophet will come to unite the Indian warriors, Hiawatha is born to Wenonah and Mudjekeewis. After Wenonah's death, her mother

Nakomis adopts the child, announcing that he is the long-awaited prophet. Iagoo teaches Hiawatha to master the bow and arrow, and after he has slain his first deer, Hiawatha visits the arrow-maker across the lake. Smitten by the old man's daughter Minnehaha, Hiawatha soon marries her, and they live together happily until famine strikes the village. Following Minnehaha's death, Iagoo announces the arrival of white men and tall ships. Hiawatha then greets the pale-faced Black Robe and proclaims that the real prophet has finally arrived. As the priest begins to preach, Hiawatha disappears into the sunset. The film features a cast of 150 Indians from New York, Canada and the Dakotas, and it was filmed in New York State and near Lake Superior. (AFI)

THE DEATH MASK

AFI/Wheeler Collection

Kay Bee Columbia Films, 1914

Producer: Thomas H. Ince

2 reels, inc., 1,433 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 8701-02

Running Wolf, the son of the High Chief of a Southland tribe, is fascinated by the vision of an Indian maiden which appears to him at intervals. He resists gently the advances of Nona, a maiden of his own tribe, to the sorrow of his father. One Bear staggers into the camp and tells them of a tribe of fierce Indians to the north called the Tribe of Three Brothers and also describes a beautiful Indian girl whom Running Wolf takes to be the girl of his dreams. He journeys north to win the maiden and battles two of the brothers. The third brother, who always wears a grotesque mask, appears, and Running Wolf chases him into the forest. Running Wolf unmask the mysterious person, revealing Nona. They make their escape back to their own village.

This is the reissue version, also known as The Redskin Duel. (MPW21:1824)

THE INDIAN

Paper Print Collection

Klaw & Erlanger, 1914

Cast: Linda Arvidson, Charles Perley, Alfred Paget, Bert Williams,
Lewis Wells, Violet Reid

3 reels, 1,200 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5482-84

The twin sons of an Indian chief become separated after a battle between the Indians and the cavalry. One of the sons is raised as a white man, while the other grows up with his father. The daughter of the American general who raised one of the twins is kidnapped by a dishonest Indian agent. She is rescued by troops and by Indian supporters led by the Americanised twin, while the other twin is killed during the skirmish. (KN)

THE LEGEND OF THE CORN

Chazy School Collection

Rothacker, 1920

1 reel, 403 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAB 6098

Dramatises Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's version of the origin of maize ("Indian corn") as told in his poem "Song of Hiawatha" and shows the processing of corn into Post Toasties by the Postum Cereal Co.

SITTING BULL AT THE SPIRIT LAKE MASSACRE

AFI/Atkinson Collection

Sunset, 1927

Director: Robert North Bradbury; Adapted for the screen by Ben Allah;

Photographer: James F. Brown, Jr.; Editor: Della M. King

Cast: Bryant Washburn, Chief Yowlache, Anne Schaefer, Jay Morely,
Shirley Palmer, Thomas Lingham, Lucille Ballart, James O'Neil, Bob
Bradbury, Jr., Leon Kent

5 reels (inc.; 5 reels of 6 only), 3,919 ft., 35mm, ref. print FEA 8658-62

Shows the story of the famous Sioux leader and medicine man, Sitting Bull, including his dream of power. There is also a romance between a scout and a minister's daughter.

(AFI)

REDSKIN

AFI/Paramount Collection

Paramount, 1929

Director: Victor Schertzinger; Story & Screenplay: Elizabeth Pickett;

Photography: Edward Cronjager; Color Photography: Ray Rennahan and
Edward Estabrook; Musical Score: J. S. Zamecnik

Cast: Richard Dix, Gladys Belmont, Tully Marshall, George Rigas, Noble
Johnson, Jane Novak, Larry Steers, Augustina Lopez

2 reels, 2,927 ft., 16mm, color, ref. print

FCA 6983-84

The son of a Navajo chief returns from college and finds it difficult to assimilate into his tribe. When his father dies, he refuses to take his place and is exiled. He goes to a fellow student he loves, Corn Blossom, a member of an enemy tribe, the Pueblos, but is discovered in her camp and escapes into the desert where he discovers oil. He returns to his people, informing them they are rich now and marries Corn Blossom, who had been hiding from her people in his village. (EHW94:no.7,p.64)

THE SILENT ENEMY

AFI/Paramount Collection

Paramount, 1930

Director: H. P. Carver

Cast: Chief Yellow Robe, Chief Long Lance, Chief Akawanush, Spotted

Elk, Cheeka

8 reels, 7,548 ft., 35mm ref. print

FEA 8085-92

With winter approaching and food scarce for the Ojibwa tribe, Baluk takes the hunters south, but they return empty-handed. Baluk decides to move the tribe northward into the path of the migrating caribou, though Dagwan, who is a rival for the chief's daughter, taunts him with cowardice. The chief dies, leaving Baluk chief of the tribe. After weeks of fruitless travel, Dagwan calls a meeting where he announces that the Great Spirit requires the sacrifice of Baluk. As Baluk is about to be killed, word reaches the camp of a caribou stampede. Baluk is reinstated as chief and, as a result of his treachery, Dagwan is condemned to fare forth without food, water, or weapons.

Film originally contained a talking sequence in the prologue, but the Library version is silent. (AFI)

Films featuring Native Americans in stories of Inter-racial romance

RAMONA

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1910

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Mary Pickford, Henry B. Walthall, Frank Grandon, Kate Bruce

1 reel, 432 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5651

Based on the novel by Helen Hunt Jackson, an orphan from a great Spanish household falls in love with an Indian, Alessandro, but her foster mother tries to thwart the romance. Upon hearing that she has Indian blood, Ramona renounces the white world to be with Alessandro, but they are driven away from Alessandro's home by white men until he finally dies. (MPW6:897)

TANGLED LIVES

AFI/Marshall Collection

Kalem, 1911

1 reel, 947 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 7903

Seminole Indians kill a pioneer family and kidnap their son. The grandmother and baby Liza escape by hiding in the well, and are later rescued by James Ward. Twenty-three years later, Liza is married to James Ward, but becomes attracted to a wounded Indian trader who has found shelter in her house. When James returns from a trip he finds Liza and the stranger in the woods and decides to go and live in the swamps so his wife can be with the one she loves. When the stranger pulls out a bead necklace he has had since childhood, Liza realizes that he is actually her brother. The stranger leaves so he can sort out his feelings, and Liza finds James in the swamp and declares her love for him.

STRONGHEART

Paper Print Collection

Klaw & Erlanger, 1914

Supervisor: D. W. Griffith; Director: James Kirkwood

Cast: Henry B. Walthall, Lionel Barrymore, Alan Hale, Antonio Moreno,

Blanche Sweet, Gertrude Robinson

1 reel, 1,144 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5902

Based on the play by William C. DeMille, Strongheart leaves his tribe, goes to college in the East, becomes a football star, gets in trouble for lying to help a white friend who has cheated, and falls in love with a white woman. When he finds out that his tribe needs him because of the death of his father, he respects his duty and, leaving his sweetheart behind, sadly returns to his people. (MH)

RAMONA

AFI/Nichol Collection

Clune, 1916

Director: Donald Crisp

Cast: Adda Gleason, Monroe Salisbury, Mabel Van Buren, Richard Sterling

1 reel (inc.; reel 5 of 12 only), 992 ft., 35mm, ref. print FEA 9679

The second film version of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel about the tragic love between the orphan Ramona and the Indian Alessandro.

THE HALF-BREED

Copyright Collection

Triangle, 1916

Director: Allan Dwan; Producer: D. W. Griffith;

Adaptation: Anita Loos; From Bret Harte's "In the Carquinez Woods"

Cast: Douglas Fairbanks, Alma Reuben, Jewel Carmen, Sam DeGrasse, Frank Brownlee, Tom Wilkinson, George Beranger

1 reel, 1,728 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FDA 2939

Leaping Brook, a half-breed, lives as an outcast in the forest where he meets Teresa who is running away from authorities after stabbing her unfaithful lover. Mistakenly believing that the half-breed is involved with his sweetheart, Nellie, the sheriff decides to kill Leaping Brook, but Teresa discovers that Leaping Brook is really the sheriff's son and tries to tell the sheriff this. When a forest fire breaks out, Leaping Brook cannot save both Teresa and the sheriff, so he chooses Teresa. (AFI)

RED LOVE

AFI/Harry Mamas Collection

Lowell Film Productions, 1925

Director: Edgar Lewis; Story: L. Case Russell

Cast: John Lowell, Evangeline Russell, F. Serrano Keating, William Calhoun, Ann Brody, William Cavanaugh, Wallace Jones, Charles W. Kinney, Frank Montgomery, Dexter McReynolds, "Chick" Chandler

4 reels (inc.; reels 1,3,4 & 5 of 5 only; ref. print for reel 2 in progress), 4,250 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 5173-75, FEB 6505

Thunder Cloud, a Sioux and a graduate of Carlisle, becomes an outlaw when he believes he has slain the villainous Bill Mosher, a white man. He falls in love with Starlight, the halfbreed daughter of Sheriff La Verne, and eventually abducts her during the Indian Fair and takes her to his hideout. They are followed by Little Antelope, a member of the Indian police, who is also in love with Starlight. Thunder Cloud recognizes Little Antelope as his younger brother and turns himself in. At the trial, it is revealed that Mosher was not slain and that the allegation was only a plot against Thunder Cloud. Starlight agrees to marry Thunder Cloud. (AFI)

KENTUCKIAN

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1908

Director: Wallace McCutcheon; Scenario: Stanner E. V. Taylor from the play by Augustus Thomas; Camera: G. W. Bitzer, Arthur Marvin

Cast: Eddie Dillon, Robert Vignola, John Adolphi, Florence Auer, Wallace McCutcheon, Jr., D. W. Griffith

1 reel, 311 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5513

An Indian woman saves the life of a card player robbed by Indians and left for dead. They marry and have a child. As he is struggling whether to return East for his inheritance, his Indian wife commits suicide. (KN & MH)

COMATA, THE SIOUX

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1909

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: James Kirkwood, Marion Leonard, Arthur Johnson, Florence Lawrence, Linda Arvidson, Verner Clarges

1 reel, 360 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5228

An Indian maiden leaves her village to live with a white man, and they have a child. After the man abandons her for a white woman, she goes off toward the Black Hills with an Indian man who has loved and guarded her from the beginning. (MH)

WHITE FAWN'S DEVOTION

AFI/New Zealand Film Archive Collection

Pathe Freres, 1910

1 reel, 800 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 8529

Combs is married to an Indian woman in Dakota, and they have a daughter. He receives a letter telling him that he has an inheritance back east, and he proceeds to pack.

Thinking that he will never return to her, his wife stabs herself. Combs picks up the knife, and when their daughter sees him with the knife, she assumes he has murdered her mother. She runs to tell the tribe who capture him and plan to kill him until his wife rushes up explaining that she is not dead--the knife did not penetrate deeply. Combs decides to stay with his Indian wife and daughter. (MPW6:1061)

HER INDIAN MOTHER

AFI/New Zealand Film Archive Collection

Kalem, 1910

Cast: Alice Joyce, Jane Wolfe

1 reel, 995 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 8630

A man in the Hudson Bay country takes an Indian wife, and they have a daughter. He is unexpectedly called back to Montreal, and he soon forgets his wilderness home. An inspection trip brings him back sixteen years later, and by chance he sees his daughter whose mother has died. Impressed with her, he takes her back to Montreal and educates her as a white girl. After a while she misses her tribe, so she puts on her buckskin dress and returns to them. Her heartbroken father finds her in the tepee of a young brave whose wife she has become, and the white man then realises his loss. Listed under the title The White Man Takes a Red Wife in some Library of Congress records. (MPW7:1427)

A ROMANCE OF THE WESTERN HILLS

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1910

Director: D. W. Griffith; Camera: G. W. Bitzer

Cast: Mary Pickford, Charles West, Arthur Johnson, Alfred Paget, Kate
Bruce, Blanche Sweet

1 reel, 387 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5672

A young Indian woman, adopted by a white family, falls in love with a white man who cruelly rejects her after leading her to believe that he loves her. Her Indian lover seeks to avenge her treatment by attacking the white man, but the Indian woman stops him from killing the white man. When the white man's fiancée learns what he has done to the Indian woman, she breaks up with him. (MH & MPW6:611)

THE CHIEF'S DAUGHTER

MOMA Collection

Biograph, 1911

Director: D. W. Griffith Camera: Billy Bitzer

Cast: Frank Grandon, Stephanie Longfellow, Jack Dillon

1 reel, 408 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAB 2670

A prospector wins the love of the Indian chief's daughter and cruelly casts her aside when his Eastern fiancée arrives unexpectedly. The Indian girl has the opportunity to show his unfaithfulness, and he loses both his fiancée and the Indian girl. (MPW8:846)

LITTLE DOVE'S ROMANCE

AFI/Maskell Collection

Bison, 1911

Director: Thomas H. Ince

Cast: Red Wing, Charles Inslee, J. Barney Sherry, Young Deer

1 reel, 388 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAB 3957

When a hunter fires a gun, Little Dove's horse throws her to the ground, spraining her ankle. The hunter takes her to his camp where he mends her ankle. Noting her absence, her tribe trails her to the camp, but Little Dove prevents them from attacking the camp. She falls in love with the hunter, but when he does not reciprocate, she goes off sadly with a brave. (MPW9:730)

BUCK'S ROMANCE

AFI/Marshall Collection

Selig Polyscope Co., 1912

Director: William Duncan

Cast: Myrtle Stedman, Lester Cuneo, Rex De Rosselli, William Duncan,
Florence Dye

1 reel, 961 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 4146

Cowboy Buck Madden wins White Fawn from Chief Swiftwind in a horse race, but he will not accept her because his wife is arriving that day. Much to his embarrassment, White Fawn follows Buck everywhere until his wife explains to her that she is released from the bargain. (MPW14:1110)

THE INVADERS

The Blackhawk Collection

Kay-Bee, 1912

Director: Thomas H. Ince and Francis Ford; Script: C. Gardner

Sullivan

Cast: Francis Ford, Ethel Grandin, Ray Myers, Anna Little

3 reels, 2,741 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 897-99

Chief Eagleshirt and his Sioux attack and kill some surveyors who have entered their land. Sky Star, who loved one of the surveyors, dies, and reinforcements arrive to drive off the Indians who are attacking the fort. (MH)

MAYA, JUST AN INDIAN

AFI/Post Collection

Frontier, 1913

1 reel, 963 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 8308

Educated at the Carlisle School, Maya returns to her tribe, and falls in love with a white prospector whom she marries and reveals the secret hiding place of gold. He leaves her, but returns 2 years later with a white wife. Maya plans to kill his wife and win him back by bringing him gold, but reconsiders when she sees his child and ill wife, and leaves the gold and a knife on the table. When he returns, he realises Maya has been there and what she has done for him. (MPW17:878)

THE SQUAW MAN

AFI/Paramount Collection

Paramount, 1914

Director: Oscar C. Apfel and Cecil B. DeMille

Cast: Dustin Farnum, Monroe Salisbury, Winifred Kingston, Princess Red Wing

6 reels, 2,147 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAA 7783-88

James Wynnagate takes the blame for his cousin embezzling funds, since he is in love with his cousin's wife, Diana. He goes to Wyoming where he is rescued by an Indian maiden, Nat-U-Ritch, from an attack by Cash Hawkins. He marries her when he learns that she is pregnant. Sometime later, Diana comes with news that her husband has died, admitting his guilt. Knowing that her husband will send their son away, and hearing that she will be arrested for killing Hawkins, Nat-U-Ritch commits suicide. Diana embraces Wynnagate's son. (AFI)

WHITE DOVE'S SACRIFICE

Public Archives of Canada/Dawson City Collection

Sawyer, 1914

2 reels (inc.; reels 2-3 of 3? only), 1,599 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 9125-26

Indians attack a group of whites killing all but a cowboy and two children, Emma and Billy, the latter of whom is kidnapped by the tribe and raised as their own. Ten years later in a chance encounter, Billy, dressed as an Indian, saves Emma from a bear. When informed by the tribe that he must marry the chief's daughter, White Dove, he refuses because he is in love with Emma. He is imprisoned and sentenced to die at dawn if he does not marry White Dove, but because of her love for him, White Dove helps him to escape so that he can join Emma. Parts of the picture are missing, and there is nitrate deterioration.

(MPW21:754)

HOGAN OUT WEST

Paper Print Collection

Keystone, 1915

Producer/Author: Mack Sennett

Cast: Charles Murray, Billie Brockwell, Bobby Dunn, Frank Hayes

1 reel, 400 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5450

Hogan ventures to the Wild West where he is attacked by Indians and meets the Cactus Queen who becomes enamoured of him. He is mistaken for a bandit, but escapes with the help of the Cactus Queen. (KN)

THE HEART OF WETONA

Raymond Rohauer Collection

Norma Talmadge Film Corp., Select Pictures Corp., 1919

Producer: Joseph M. Schenck; Director: Sidney A. Franklin;

Scenario: Mary Murillo; Story: George Scarborough; Camera: David

Abel

Cast: Norma Talmadge, Fred Huntley, Thomas Meighan, Gladden James,

Fred Turner, Princess Uwane Yea, Charles Edler, White Eagle, Black

Wolf, Black Lizard

6 reels, 5,900 ft., 35mm, ref. print in progress

When Wetona, the half white, half Indian daughter of Chief Quannah of the Blackfeet tribe, tells her father that she would be an inappropriate choice to be the tribe's Vestal Virgin at the Corn Dance, the furious chief vows to kill her white lover. She goes to Government agent John Hardin for help, but her father sees them together and, speculating that Hardin has wronged her, demands that he marry her. Hardin agrees to the marriage to save her lover, whom he does not know is his friend and assistant Tony Wells. After Wetona learns

that Tony was never sincere, she sees his cowardice during the Indian raid on Hardin's house. When the chief learns the truth, he stops the raid, apologises to Hardin, and shoots Tony as he flees. Quannah tells Wetona he will take her back, but since she and Hardin are now in love, they remain together. Listed in some Library records as Heart of Wetonina. (AFI)

JUST SQUAW

Public Archives of Canada/Dawson City Collection

Superior Pictures, 1919

Director/Producer: George E. Middleton; Writer: Earle Snell

Cast: Beatriz Michelena, William Pike, Andrew Robson, Albert Morrison,
D. Mitsoras, Jeff Williams, Katherine Angus

4 reels (inc.; reels 1-3 and 5 of 5 only), 2,127 ft., 35mm, ref.

print

FEB 8387-90

Before she dies, an Indian woman asks her half-breed son never to tell his sister Fawn that she is white. Years later, Fawn falls in love with a stranger who loves her even though he thinks she is a half-breed. Her brother, now a fugitive known as the Phantom, is accused of killing a man, but the real killer comes forward and confesses. Phantom saves Fawn from the man who stole her from her white father, and her father later kills the kidnapper who confesses that Fawn is white. Fawn and the stranger can now marry. (AFI)

JAMESTOWN

Gift Collection

Pathe, Yale U. Press Film Service, 1923

Director: Edwin L. Hollywood; Adaptation: Roswell Dague; Based on
Mary Johnston's book *Pioneers of the Old South*

Cast: Dolores Cassinelli, Robert Gaillard, Harry Kendall, Leslie

Stowe, Paul McAllister, Leslie Austin

4 reels, 1,152 ft., 48 min., 16mm, ref. print FAA 6264-67

The daily life of the colonists under Sir Thomas Dale in the Jamestown settlement in 1612 is shown, emphasising the threat of attack by the Indians and the Spanish. The capture of Pocahontas, her marriage to John Rolfe, and the end of Powhatan's war are also included. Part of The Chronicles of America series released by Yale University.

THE SCARLET WEST [TRAILER]

AFI/Post Collection

First National, 1925

Director: John G. Adolphi

Cast: Robert Frazer, Clara Bow

1 reel, 185 ft., 35mm, ref. print FEA 7744

The son of an Indian chief is educated in the East and is rejected by his people. After saving a detachment of cavalry from Indians, he becomes a captain in the army and falls in love with a white woman. When he hears about Custer's defeat, he decides to re-join his people. Theatrical trailer promoting the film. (AFI & MH)

THE VANISHING AMERICAN

AFI/Paramount Film Collection

Paramount, 1925

Director: George B. Seitz; Screenplay: Ethel Doherty; Adaptation:

Lucien Hubbard; Photographers: Edgar Schoenbaum, Harry Perry

Cast: Richard Dix, Lois Wilson, Noah Beery, Malcolm MacGregor

10 reels, 9,816 ft., 110 min., 35mm, ref. print

FGC 1728-32

Based on the serial story by Zane Grey which was later novelized, the injustices suffered by reservation Indians are dramatised with the Darwinian theme of survival of the fittest. Nophaie, a southwest Indian, falls in love with a white school teacher on the reservation who teaches him about Christianity. He and other Indians go to fight in World War I, but return to find their lands taken by crooked Indian agents and their people starving. When the Indians decide to revolt, Nophaie tries to prevent the fight, but dies in the attempt.

THE TEST OF DONALD NORTON

AFI/Jonathan Sonneborn Collection

Chadwick Pictures, 1926

Director: B. Reeves Eason; Story: Adele Buffington; Photographer:

Art Reeves

Cast: George Walsh, Tyrone Power, Robert Graves, Eugenie Gilbert,

Evelyn Selbie, Mickey Moore, Virginia True Boardman, Jack Dillon,

Virginia Marshall

approx. 70 min., 3/4" videocassette, ref. print

VBD 8477-78

Based on The Test of Donald Norton by Robert E. Pinkerton, Wen-dah-ben, halfbreed son of Nee-tah-wee-gan, becomes a protege of the Layards, who rename him Donald Norton. He and their daughter, Janet, fall in love when they grow up. He becomes a manager of a

fur-trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company, but is fired by Corrigan, the district manager, after an illness. He becomes district manager of a rival concern. Hearing that his mother has nearly been choked to death, he and Corrigan rush to her side, but she dies before she can clear up the mystery of Donald's paternity. Knowing that Millington, a rival for Janet's affection, killed his mother, Donald goes after him and arrives in time to rescue Janet from Millington's unwanted advances. Millington surrenders the ring he stole from Nee-tah-wee-gan which proves to Corrigan that Donald is his son. Spurned by Corrigan, Nee-tah-wee-gan had set fire to his house, killing his wife, and she took his son for her own. (AFI)

Films where Native Americans was characterised as comic figures

A MIDNIGHT PHANTASY

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1903

Camera: F. S. Armitage

1 reel, 15 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 3256

A cigar-store Indian is standing in front of a picket fence and next to it is a poster of a ballerina. A man appears, steals the cigar from the Indian and escorts away the ballerina who steps out of the poster. The Indian scalps him and hands the scalp to the astonished ballerina. (KN)

AN UP-TO-DATE SQUAW

AFI/Tayler Collection

Pathe Freres, 1911

1 reel, 510 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 9039

An Indian woman dresses in fine clothing after seeing tourists at her reservation wearing similar apparel. She walks through the streets of town and attracts the attention of an English dandy who thinks that she is a white woman. Her husband follows her and scalps the Englishman, but it is painless since he is wearing a wig. Some footage is lacking due to nitrate deterioration. (MPW9:818)

THE TOURISTS

Paper Print Collection

Biograph, 1912

Director: Mack Sennett

Cast: Mabel Normand, Charles West, Tony O'Sullivan, Frank Evans, Grace Henderson, Mack Sennett

1 reel, 143 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5754

Tourists stop between trains at the Albuquerque, New Mexico, railroad depot and examine the wares for sale by Indians. One tourist goes sightseeing on her own and becomes very interested in an Indian chief who returns her interest. His wife leads a group of irate Indian women in chasing the tourists back to the train. (KN)

BIG CHIEF KOKO

AFI/Horton Collection

Inkwell Films, Inc., 1925

1 reel (inc.), 739 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 0245

Cartoonist Max Fleischer is shown in his office sketching a clown in a cartoon. A real Indian enters the door, and the cartoonist proceeds to transfer him to paper. As a pen creature he is teased by the circus performer, until he is forced from the sheet back into real life. Even then, the clown continues shooting paper arrows at the Indian.

(MPW74:67)

THE PALEFACE

Copyright Collection

Comique Film Co., First National, 1921

Director/Writer: Buster Keaton, Eddie Cline

Cast: Buster Keaton, Joe Roberts

1 reel, 800 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FBA 3635

Indians capture Buster Keaton, and his asbestos clothing saves him from burning. They think he is a god and take him into the tribe under the name of Little Chief Paleface. Then he saves the tribe from being cheated by crooked oilmen. (MH)

FELIX GOES WEST

AFI/Elmer Quinn Collection

M. J. Winkler Presents, 1924

1 reel, 262 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FAA 1915

Felix the cat travels west in this animated cartoon and gets into trouble with an airplane pilot, a bear, and a cowboy. He shoots an Indian who captures him and brings him before the big chief. They shoot him like an arrow off into the town where, to his dismay, he lands in front of another Indian--a cigar store one.

Films featuring Native Americans and the white captive motif

RESCUE OF CHILD FROM INDIANS

Paper Print Collection

AM&B, 1903

Camera: Wallace McCutcheon

1 reel, 86 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5185

Frontiersmen free a young girl held captive by Indians. This may be the last part of a series of released under the title The Pioneers. [See also: Firing the Cabin, Discovery of Bodies, and Settler's Home Life.] (KN)

INDIANS AND COW-BOYS

AFI/Tayler Collection

Pathe, 1904

1 reel, 558 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 6519

An Indian marauder is punished by cowboys. The Indian takes revenge by attacking a stagecoach with other members of his tribe and abducting a white woman and child from it. The cowboys pursue the Indians and rescue the woman and child from the Indian camp.

THE END OF THE ROPE

AFI/Douglas Collection

Kalem, 1914

Cast: Mona Darkfeather

1 reel, 1,000 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 7528

Manning, his infant daughter, and Pete are the sole survivors of an Indian attack. Pete is sealed to die in a lost mine, and Indians take the little girl with them, believing her father to

be dead. The girl is adopted by Chief Brown Bear. Twenty years later, Spring Breeze, the chief's daughter, finds an insane old man in the hills and takes him to the Indian camp. He is enticed away from the camp by Mexican prospectors who want the gold nuggets the old man carries. The Indians go to rescue the old man and in the ensuing fight, the old man is hit on the head. The blow restores his memory and he realises that Spring Breeze is his daughter. The chief chases a Mexican, who attempts to climb down a rope to a ledge below. He is about to jump down to the ledge when he sees the chief waiting for him with a knife. Original title is At the End of the Rope. (MPW21:857-58)

THE GAMBLER OF THE WEST

Paper Print Collection

Klaw & Erlanger, 1914

Cast: Linda Arvidson, Charles West, Alfred Paget, Charles Perley, Jack
Brammall, Robert Drouet

3 reels, 1,213 ft., 16mm, ref. print

FLA 5400-5402

The film chronicles the search for a young man, separated from his family following an Indian massacre, who was adopted by Indians and reared as one. His sister succeeds in locating him. (KN)

IN THE DAYS OF THE THUNDERING HERD

AFI/Blackhawk Collection

Selig Polyscope Co., 1914

Director: Colin Campbell; Story: Gilson Willets

Cast: Tom Mix, Bessie Eyton, Wheeler Oakman, Red Wing

3 reels (inc., 3 reels of 5 only), 2,253 ft., 35mm, ref. print FEB 6712-14

In 1849, a pony express rider, Tom, accompanies his sweetheart, Sally, through Indian territory to California to visit her ailing mother. The wagon train is attacked by Indians and only Tom and Sally survive. They are taken as prisoners to the Indians' village where Chief Swift Wind falls in love with Sally, and Starlight, Swift Wind's sister, becomes infatuated with Tom. Sally and Tom are able to escape to a buffalo hunter's encampment after which Sally slips away and summons help. Finally, in California, Sally is reunited with her parents and promises to marry Tom. (AFI)

Films where Native Americans are Dupes

A GIRL OF THE PLAINS

AFI/St. Scholastica Collection

[Bison, New York Motion Picture Co., 1910?]

1 reel, 805 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 3423

After a fight in which a cowhand is fired, the cowhand takes revenge by convincing a group of Indians to join him in attacking his enemy when the man is out riding with his sweetheart. The girl runs off for help, while the young man holds his attackers at bay from a cabin. Help arrives, and the lovers are reunited.

FOR THE PAPOOSE

Public Archives of Canada/Dawson City Collection

Pathe Freres Films, 1912

1 reel, 665 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 7246

A white man is tired of his Indian bride and falls in love with the daughter of a white settler. He persuades the Indians with whom he lives to attack the settlers' camp and kill all but

the white girl, with whom he later escapes, taking his Indian child with him. He is pursued by his wife's brother, who kills him. (MPW12:262)

HEARTS AND SADDLES

AFI/Sherman Collection

Fox Film Corp., 1917

Cast: Tom Mix, Bob Eddy

1 reel (inc.), 1,160 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEB 7538

In their vying for the affections of Victoria, a rancher's daughter, Tom and Sid are fired by her father. Tom gets a job bartending, but he is fired there, too. The two are given jobs driving stagecoaches, and Victoria promises to marry whoever drives the fastest. Potel, another suitor, incites the Indians to attack the stagecoaches in order to get rid of Tom and Sid, telling the Indians that there is fire-water on board. Meanwhile, the mine safe is robbed, and the bandits hide out in the stagecoach, unknown to Tom and Sid. The stagecoach falls down a mountain, a posse goes after the bandits, and Tom rescues Victoria from the Indians. Film is out of sequence and incomplete, so plot continuity is poor.

WHITE OAK

The Niver Collection

Paramount, 1921

Director: Lambert Hillyer

Cast: William S. Hart, Vola Vale, Alexander Gaden, Robert Walker, Bert

Sprotte, Helen Holly

6 reels, 4,837 ft., 35mm, ref. print

FEA 8005-10

Oak Miller, a card dealer, is obsessed with punishing the man who betrayed his sister. That man, Granger, plots with Chief Long Knife to attack a train which is carrying Miller's sweetheart. Miller comes to the rescue, the Indians are dispersed, and the chief kills Granger for betraying his daughter. (AFI)

THE IRON HORSE

Copyright Collection

Fox, 1924

Director: John Ford; Titles: Charles Darnton; Story: Charles

Kenyon, John Russell; Photography: George Schneiderman; Additional

Photography: Burnett Guffey; Assistant Director: Edward O'Fearn

Cast: George O'Brien, Madge Bellamy, Cyril Chadwick, Fred Kohler,

Gladys Hulette, James Marcus, J. Farrell MacDonald, James Welch, Walter

Rogers, George Wagner, Jack Padjan, Charles O'Malley, Charles Newton,

Charles Edward Bull, Colin Chase, Delbert Mann, Chief Big Tree, Chief

White Spear

3 reels, approx. 4,244 ft., sd., 16mm, ref. print

FDA 7812-14

President Lincoln signs a bill (Pacific Railroad Act of 1 July 1862) that authorises the construction of a transcontinental railroad. When the war ends, Davy Brandon joins the Union Pacific as a surveyor and meets Miriam, his childhood sweetheart, whose father is in charge of construction. Davy kills Jesson, Miriam's fiancé, in a fight after Jesson tries to kill him, so Miriam and Davy become estranged. Indians, led by Deroux, attack a construction train, and in the fight, Davy kills Deroux when he realizes that Deroux is the man who murdered his father. Davy goes west to join the Central Pacific which is racing the Union Pacific to the centre of the continent. The joining of the two railroads is

accompanied by the union of Davy and Miriam. Restored version by Karl Malkames with an original piano score by William Perry. (AFI)

Appendix 4 – An advertisement from *The Film Weekly* featuring the American star Eva Novak in *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia


July 14th, 1927. THE FILM WEEKLY Page Twenty-three

"The Romance of Runnibede"

Adapted from a Story by STEELE RUDD.

Featuring EVA NOVAK

C
O
M
M
I
N
G
S
O
O
N



C
O
M
M
I
N
G
S
O
O
N

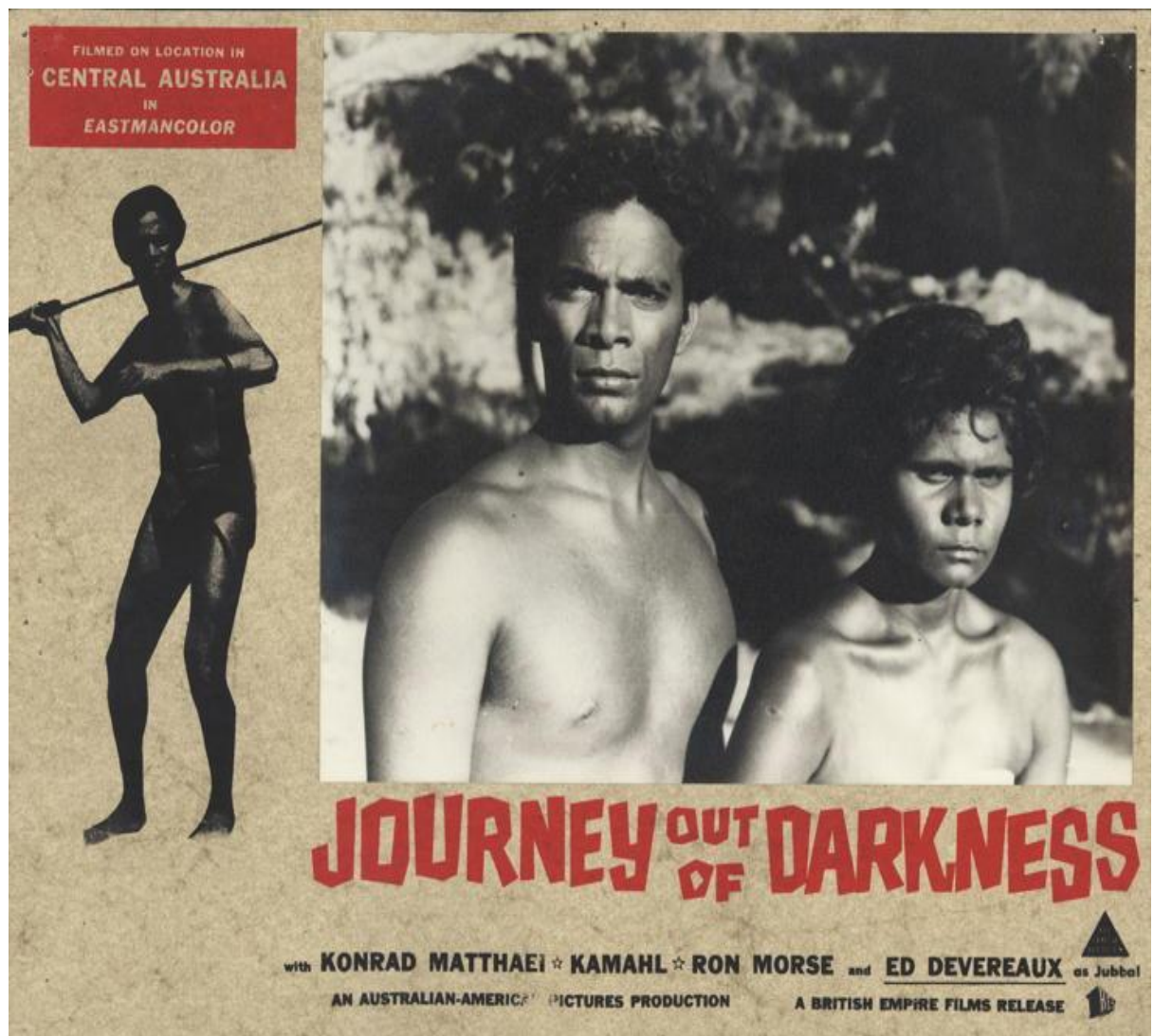
SCOTT R. DUNLAP PRODUCTION
Made in Australia for the World's Markets by
PHILLIPS FILM PRODUCTIONS LTD.,
METROPOLITAN BUILDINGS
56 Hunter Street SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Appendix 5 – A poster advertising the film, *Bitter Springs* (1950) Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia



Appendix 6 - A poster advertising the film, *Journey Out of Darkness* (1967)

Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia



**Appendix 7 – The full lyrics from the song from the film *One Night the Moon*
(2001)**

One Night the Moon

*This land is mine, all the way to the old fence line,
Every break of day, I'm work'in hard just to make it pay.*

*This land is mine, Yea I signed on the dotted line,
Camps fires on the creek bed, Bank breath'in down my neck.*

*They won't take it away; they won't take it away,
They won't take it from me.*

.....

*This land is me, rock, water, animal, tree,
They are my song, my being's here, where I belong.*

*This land owns me, from generations past to infinity,
We're all but one man; you only fear what you don't understand.*

*They won't take it away; they won't take it away,
They won't take it away from me.*

.....

This land is mine.

This land is me.

This land is mine.

This land owns me.

This land is mine.

This land is me.

They won't take it away. They won't take it away,

They won't take it away from me.