THE TREAD OF A WHITE MAN'S FOOT

AUSTRALIAN PACIFIC COLONIALISM AND THE CINEMA, 1925–62

JANE LANDMAN

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PREFACE

This book explores Australia's cinematic engagement with the Torres Strait, Papua and New Guinea in the light of Australia's colonial project within these territories from 1925 to 1962. It is concerned with the part played by the cinema in imaging Australia's emerging colonial nationhood in relation to the Torres Strait, Papua and New Guinea, as well as the ways in which colonial attitudes and anxieties played out in the regulation and censorship of cinema in the nation and its territories.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, colonial, then federated Australia expanded into the 'attainable Pacific', that is, into those territories that were neither already too powerful in their own right, nor already colonised by the British or the Dutch.[1] Colonial Australia sought further territory for three interrelated purposes that shifted in priority: defence against Asian powers and the colonial ambitions of rival European countries; resources; and national self-realisation.[2] For the last, Australians were, on the one hand, fulfilling the heritage of the British 'imperial race' and on the other borrowing 'the Monroe Doctrine and manifest destiny ideas from their American cousins'.[3] Roger Thompson describes such expansionary activity as 'a reflection of Australian patriotism within an Empire nationalism'.

In his study of Federation, John Hirst grants territorial expansion a significant motivating role, as the colonies needed to combine their lobbying power to force an (often reluctant) Britain to uphold their commonly supported imperial Pacific interests against those of the Germans and the French.[4] By 1918, however, this expansionist drive had lost much of its force, for reasons including Australia's

already stretched resources (linked to fears about the so-called 'empty north'), the ideal of 'continentalism' (a nation for a continent) and the 'White Australia Policy'.[5]

Pacific territorialisation begins with the colony of Queensland, which formally annexed contiguous Torres Strait islands in the late 19th century, regarding the Coral Sea, in Clive Moore's view, 'as a Queensland lake, quite central to ... economic and political development'.[6] Acts of annexation in 1872 incorporated islands within 100 kilometres of the coast, and, in 1879, the remaining islands as far as the Papuan shoreline. A government post was established on Thursday Island in 1877, which was the commercial centre of the marine industries and a major shipping port of call.[7] Nestled among a cluster of islands just off the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula, Thursday Island was a relatively accessible Pacific location for Sydney-based film producers, via the regular service provided by the steamship company Burns Philp, and was the site of three Australian 'South Seas' films set around the pearling industry.

Torres Strait Islanders, administered initially by the London Mission Society, were brought under the 'protection' of the same regime as that governing mainland Queensland Aborigines in 1904.[8] In his history of the Torres Strait, Jeremy Beckett argues that the islands were administered in a 'colonial mode', with Islander populations separated from non-Islanders and subject to a surveillant regime of everyday interference, including the restriction of traditional movement between islands. Islander populations were devastated by early contact, and were not sufficiently recovered to furnish the labour needs of the pearling industry until the 1930s.[9]

The desire to exert influence over the lucrative marine industries for *bêche-de-mer*, pearl and trochus shell was an important motivating factor in the colonisation of the strait. Exempted, at the industry's special pleading, from the racially restrictive labour act enacted soon after Federation, the pearl-shell industry continued 'for decades as an enclave of multiracialism and nineteenth-century colonial labour practices'.[10] Ethnic divisions organised clear racial hierarchies among the multiracial and racially intermingled

populations in the strait islands, which Beckett describes as 'stepping stones in a two-way genetic and cultural traffic' between Asia, New Guinea and Australia. Regina Ganter points out that the State, often represented by men with an active financial interest in the industry, 'aided the construction of ethnic group differences', generating an expedient racial order justified by 'scientific' doctrine. Differentiated modes of employment and remuneration were established for Papuans, Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders, South Seas Islanders and Asian workers from Japan, Malaya and the Philippines.[11] 'Protected' Islander workers did not deal directly with boat owners but instead were required to go through government agents, who also banked their wages and regulated their spending.[12]

Displaced European rivalries made a significant contribution to the colonisation of Papua, along with the same general interest in resources and defence that drove Australia's expansion into the Torres Strait.[13] Papua and New Guinea, in fact, were seen as an essential part of Australia's defence until the 1960s.[14] On federating, Australia expressed willingness to assume responsibility for British New Guinea, which was a protectorate of Britain from 1884 until 1888 (established at Australian urging), and a colony from 1888 until 1906. When the Australian Government's Papua Bill was passed, Lieutenant Governor (Sir) John Hubert Murray was appointed Proconsul of Papua, a position he held until his death in 1940. Hank Nelson underlines the national importance of Papua by locating Australian colonial policy within the context of domestic race relations. That Murray, a humanitarian with a commitment to protectionist policies, was selected for this post reflected at least in part the concerns debated in discussions of the Papua Bill: that in Papua, Australians could prevent the injustices perpetrated against Aborigines and that in 'providing [this] example to the rest of the world they would earn expiation'. This concern was evident in policies restricting the alienation of land, the sale of alcohol and regulating the indenturing of labour.[15] Yet the colony was poorly funded, and proved a disappointing investment. The white population, which had increased to 1,219 in 1913, stagnated at this level until 1939. The Asian labour that some colonists felt would help advance

the unprofitable colony was prohibited by an extension of Australia's own restrictive labour policies.

The expropriation of German New Guinea, on behalf of the British, was the first Australian military action of World War I, and retaining control of New Guinea was a national priority in the settlement negotiations after both world wars.[16] In the Versailles peace settlements, Australia was granted New Guinea as a C-class mandate under the supervision of the League of Nations. While granting virtual legislative freedom, the mandate stipulated that Australia should 'promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and social progress of the inhabitants of the territory'.[17] In this instance, Australia assumed control over a prosperous colony that differed from Papua in having a significant Chinese population. Economic considerations drove policy in New Guinea, where pay rates were half that of Papua and working hours were longer.[18] Nelson makes the significant point that after World War I New Guinea developed as a 'virtual suburb of ANZAC' (that is, it was settled almost exclusively by veterans). As it was seized not merely as part of the spoils of war, but on the moral grounds of asserting a more humane colonial regime than that of the brutal German administration, criticisms of its administration were seen as directed at the 'very foundation of Australia's right to rule' and were treated as sedition.[19] After World War II, New Guinea became a 'Trust' territory of the United Nations, and its administration was substantially merged with that of Papua.

Neither Papua nor New Guinea was designated officially as a 'colony'. Papua, for example, was called a 'Territory of Australia', a deliberately ambiguous term that avoided overt association with European colonialism.[20] Such nomenclature also points to mixed investments that can be traced through cultural policy and cultural production about Australian Pacific territorialisation. On the one hand, national self-realisation depends on a racial entitlement to colonial territories in the Pacific; on the other, it depends on differentiating the nation from those acquisitive and exploitative colonial practices that were part of its own formation.

ENDNOTES

1 'Attainable Pacific' is Pacific historian Dorothy Shineberg's term in 'Colonial Australia and the Pacific', a paper presented at the History Institute of Victoria Pacific History series, Melbourne, September 2001. On European rivalries, see Roger Thompson, 1994, 'Holland, Britain and Germany in Melanesia', in K.R. Howe, R. Kiste and Brij V. Lal (eds), *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin. Also see David Walker, 1999, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia: 1850–1939*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press; and, on new imperialist writing and invasion narratives, see Robert Dixon, 1995, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875–1914*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

2 Roger Thompson, 1980, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920*, Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, p. 233. Thompson traces shifts in the Australian colonies' attitudes towards expansion from an early focus on economic concerns and missionary activity in the 1850s to a focus on defence in the 1870s, which heightened in the 1880s in the face of French and German imperialism. In the later part of the 19th century, there was an imperial 'scramble' for territory in the Pacific, and Australian colonies urged Britain to various acts of annexation (such as Fiji, settled primarily by Australians).

3 Ibid., pp. 223–4.

4 John Hirst, 2000, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of an Australian Commonwealth*, South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, pp. 66–7.

5 Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific*.

6 Clive Moore, 1997, 'Queensland and Its Coral Sea: Implications of the Historical Links between Australia and Melanesia', in Malcolm Gillies (ed.), *Northern Exposures*, Canberra: the Australian Academy of the Humanities, p. 79.

7 Jeremy Beckett, 1987, *Torres Strait Islanders: Custom and Colonialism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 45. Torres Strait Islands are known by indigenous and European names. For the sake of clarity and consistency, I use the European usage employed in the films themselves: for example, 'Thursday Island' for Waiben. Other islands mentioned in

these films include Muralong (Prince of Wales), Masig (York) and Mabuiag or Mabuyag.

8 Ibid., p. 46.

9 Ibid., p. 38.

10 Donald Denoon, 'Federation, Anthropology, and the Separation of Australia from Melanesia', in Gillies, *Northern Exposures*, p. 107.

11 Regina Ganter, 1994, *The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait: Resource Use, Development and Decline, 1860s–1960s*, Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, p. 60.

12 Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders*, p. 25.

13 See Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation*, for an account of an earlier, stalled attempt by Queensland to annex Papua to pre-empt German ambitions, pp. 64–6.

14 James Griffin, Hank Nelson and Stewart Firth, 1979, *Papua New Guinea: A Political History*, Richmond: Heinemann Educational, p. 140.

15 Hank Nelson, 1989, 'Changing the Label', in Sione Latukefu (ed.), *A Century of Colonial Impact*, National Research Institute and University of Papua New Guinea, pp. 22–3.

16 Nelson, ibid., pp. 19–36; Griffin, Nelson and Firth, *Papua New Guinea: A Political History*.

17 Griffin, Nelson and Firth (ibid., p. 49) note that there were some military restrictions, and a requirement that Australia report each year to the Permanent Mandates Commission.

18 Roger Thompson, 1990, 'Making a Mandate: The Formation of Australia's New Guinea Policies 1919–1925', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 68.

19 Nelson, 'Changing the Label', p. 29.

20 Hank Nelson, 2001, *Taim Bilong Masta: The Australian Involvement with Papua New Guinea*, Sydney: ABC Books, pp. 12–13.

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INTRODUCTION

> One thing is certain, whether Darwin's Missing Link between man and beast existed or did not exist, the Missing Link between man and man exists in the form of the Kinematograph camera. Can you doubt this as you watch primitive man outside his mud hut with his Stone Age weapons and realize that he could watch you in your cities at work and at play by the same means?
>
> Conquest and annexation of new lands are now out of the question. The explorer's best weapon today is the Kinematograph camera, and though he goes armed with a rifle and revolver, he would put up with anything rather than take life ... so this is the new risk of the modern explorer — he must smilingly stretch forth the hand of friendship to a horde of distrustful natives only too ready to plant arrows in him.[1]

In the latter months of 1924 and early into 1925, the Australian adventurer, photographer and filmmaker 'Captain' Frank Hurley, toured Britain with *Pearls and Savages*.[2] Stuart Cunningham describes Hurley as a 'colossus of Australian cultural representation' and this example of his work was a multimedia presentation that included footage of Torres Strait and Papuan land and seascapes, villages, dance performances and sacred sites, as well as recordings of music and hand-tinted slides, all linked by dramatic narration (also published in book form). 'You can take its marvels for gospel,' continues the *Evening News* review, cited above, 'because, besides being a photographer of great experience and artistry and something of a stage manager, Captain Frank Hurley is a scientist and explorer'. In this journalistic account, filming *restages* the adventure of

discovery. Footage symbolically replaces other acts of appropriation and possession, becoming 'one of the most remarkable trophies ever brought home from the wilds'.[3]

In an eclectic and wide-ranging study of Eurocentrism in the media, Robert Stam and Ella Shohat describe 'colonial discourse' as a 'transindividual and multi-institutional archive of images and statements providing a common language for representing knowledge about a given theme', which the media 'absorb and retool'.[4] It is this 'retooling' that is explicitly cinematic. Stressing the overlooked area of cinema's simultaneous emergence with the project of popularising empire, they identify the cinema's own colonising aspirations and desires:

> Cinema saw itself as the avatar of a new kind of 'interdisciplinary' science which could make 'other' worlds accessible ... it could anatomize the customs of 'exotic' peoples like the anthropologist ... Cinema thus became the epistemological mediator between the cultural space of the Western spectator and that of the cultures represented on screen.[5]

These claims directly evoke Hurley's work. The prodigious output of still and moving photography produced throughout Hurley's long career 'was made possible by diverse but distinctly settler-colonial ventures, ventures which were identified with empire, but which were subordinate to and separate from empire'.[6] The 'new' explorer/photographer 'retools' colonial travel, inviting his audiences not only to partake vicariously in the adventure, but to recognise themselves as the imperial race:

> Travel films hold a special fascination for the Britishers, in whom the pioneering spirit is so deeply engrained. Who would not, if he could, seek out the far places of the earth, and the strange races of the earth?[7]

Cunningham proposes that the body of Australian films made in the Pacific in the first half of the 20th century constitute a cultural and industrial principle that he calls 'second-order colonialism', where such Australian production acts 'as [a] kind of linkman in a chain of representational command from first world metropolises to the alterity of the third world, relaying images of the other through delegated authority'.[8] This term usefully narrows Shohat and Stam's general claim about the epistemological mediation of cinema in respect to the *particular* relationship constituted between Australia and Britain. The cultural principle is evident in responses to *Pearls and Savages* in the British press that conscript the 'colonial' enthusiasms of Hurley's enterprise to a broader retooling, replaying and renewal of imperial ideals. In respect to industry, a 'second-order' role for Australian cinema was underpinned legislatively by the 'empire quota' introduced as part of the *British Cinematograph Films Act* of 1927. An influential report by the General Economic Sub-Committee to the Imperial Conference of 1926 led to this act. It expressed alarm about the threat posed to empire trade and hegemony by the dominance of American cinema, reflecting widespread recognition of the social and cultural importance of this medium and anxieties about its influence. The act constituted a legislative attempt to increase the British cinema's market share by requiring distributors and exhibitors to acquire a small percentage of 'quota' films: eligible films included the productions of the dominions. This attempt to muster an 'empire cinema' to counter Hollywood's market dominance effectively cemented Britain's place as Australian cinema's major overseas market.

The *Cinematograph Films Act* has broadly suggestive as well as directly legislative implications for this research. In Priya Jaikamur's account, it was an 'act of transition' indexing one of the arenas where Britain attempted to redefine and shore up itself as a nation in the face of the diminution of its imperial economic and political power.[9] Notwithstanding the apparent inclusiveness of the quota, however, there was little actual interest in assisting the dominions's own national industries. Instead, their foreshadowed role was suggested in

discussions about the diverse and unique range of 'backgrounds' available to support this intended riposte — backgrounds whose very availability, of course, also spoke reassuringly of the empire's continuing reach and power — as well as, most pertinently, providing much better weather for film-making. The foregrounded narratives envisaged as benefiting from these backgrounds would, as empire loyalists in Australia argued, counter Hollywood's domination by 'present[ing] the glorious birthright of Englishmen'.[10]

The desire for imperial renewal is a consistent focus in the reception of *Pearls and Savages*. Similarly, the production and the reception of the films Hurley made immediately after this British tour were shaped by the imperial desires and fears of the period. With British funding and principal players, Hurley returned, in the words of the trade journal *Everyones*, to the 'New Guinea he knows and the natives he understands ... to give new meaning to the South Seas romance'.[11] These first drama productions for Hurley were melodramas of colonial entitlement set on the empire's fringes. His films initiate a loose and occasional series of colonial adventures set in the 'South Seas' that continues until 1956, a series that foregrounds the exploitation of natural resources (pearls, pearl shell, gold or oil) by white heroes, against a background of the 'natural' resource provided by exotic Pacific peoples and locations.[12]

Hurley's productions were early beneficiaries of this period of intense public and legislative interest in the cinema's impact on and potentialities in respect to Australia's fledgling nationhood and its relations with the British Empire. This book locates the production of an Australian Pacific cinematic imaginary constituted by this series within a broader understanding of these perceived impacts, as expressed in the operation of cinema exhibition and its management in Australia's own colonies, as well as within an understanding of the ways in which Australia's dependency on its relation to empire shaped debates about national film censorship. The indiscriminate reach of Hollywood, from its domestic immigrant audiences to the empire's and the nation's 'whites', as well as its subject peoples, was imagined as undermining and disrupting the tenets of the racialised British imperial world order.

A 'turn to history' in film theory has been driven (at least in part) by the development of methods for historically and socially conceptualised textual study in interdisciplinary cultural studies.[13] As a methodology for historical reception studies of cinema, Barbara Klinger, taking a lead from Tony Bennett, argues for a 'total history' in which all of a film's 'ancillary' texts are also taken into account.[14] Klinger's 'total history' aims to 'provide a sense of what the historical prospects were for viewing at a given time by illuminating the meanings made available within the moment'.[15] Such an approach incorporates aspects such as the film's promotion and journalistic positioning — as well as consideration of the 'habitats of meaning' in which such writing occurs. It includes consideration of reception in different cultural sites as well as consideration of the 'discursive surround', that is, contextual location, thus addressing the 'competing voices involved in a particular film's public signification as a means of attempting to describe its full historicity'.[16]

Klinger sets out a methodology tailored to the institutions of Hollywood cinema, while the researcher of Australia's film history must pursue the dispersed and fragmentary material traces of an industry whose main business was (and remains) the exhibition and distribution of foreign films. The low status and more or less artisanal mode of production of most of the Australian films of this period exacerbates these difficulties. The yield of this research into ancillary texts and the discursive surround is quite uneven and productive sources vary considerably from film project to film project, a circumstance reflected in the differing approaches evident in later chapters. Nevertheless, sufficient evidence has been uncovered to substantially illuminate the 'coloniality' of these South Seas productions.

Proposing a situated approach to the study of colonial culture, anthropologist Nicholas Thomas is critical of the universalising claims of theorists of colonial discourse and of their imagining of a unified or singular discourse. Colonialism, he argues, 'is not a unitary project but a fractured one, riddled with contradiction and exhausted as much by its own internal contradictions as by the resistance of the colonised'.[17] He proposes that studies of the discourses of colonialism need to be

more attentive to historical and geographic contexts, to heterogeneity and internal ruptures — that is to the operations of such discourses in their actual contexts. Such study might throw into question, or at least qualify, the implied unity of purpose and outcome suggested by the term 'colonial project'. Robert Dixon, in a study that focuses on various textual mediations of Australia's relations with PNG and the Torres Strait in the first half of the 20th century, responds to Thomas's call for a more finely nuanced and specifically located understanding of the discourses of colonialism and the relations between culture and governance. His study is concerned particularly to distinguish as distinct the arenas of representation and rule, so as to avoid the collapsing of the realms of the material and the discursive, which he regards as disabling some literary approaches.[18] Dixon introduces the term 'domains of practice' to refer to the particular economies or arenas within which representations circulate to argue that 'the affectivity' of popular texts about travel, for example, have 'no necessary relation to colonial dominance'.[19]

Picture and Picturegoer's review of the Torres Strait and Papua travel film *Pearls and Savages* imagines the mediating link between 'modern man' and 'primitive man' enabled by the modern technology of the 'Kinematograph camera' in disingenuously utopian Eurocentric terms. While marvelling at cinema's potential for a reciprocally inquiring gaze, it nevertheless reproduces a self-affirming viewing position for audiences, making reassuring differentiations between 'the civilized and the primitive, the leisured tourist and commodified other, the spectator from the object of sight-seeing gaze'.[20] The South Seas films that come after *Pearls and Savages* were complex, rich sites 'expressive and constitutive of colonial relationships' [21] however, they cannot be straightforwardly imagined as the 'best weapon' of colonial enterprise. The interrelations between production of films in the Pacific, Australia's emergent colonial nationhood and the colonial regulation of cinema exhibition were multifarious and variable, complexly mediated by industrial, political and social factors, and this book investigates such crucial situational nuances in respect to how cinema can be understood as serving a 'colonial project'. The term

'colonial cinema' comes readily to mind as a genre descriptor for this series of Australian 'South Seas' adventures, given their setting, narratives and their (initially at least) close links to calls for a cinema that would counter, industrially and thematically, Britain's own 'cinematographic subjugation'.[22] Closer examination, however, suggests that such a term fudges important and specific questions of possession and address that are revealed by historically locating such production. For example, in whose estimation would a film be judged as advancing the colonial cause? Further, how is that cause understood in the differing contexts of the colony, the nation and Britain? How do such varying sites of reception influence filmic meaning? Who is the implied audience of such cinema? A term such as 'colonial cinema' implies a misleading unity in that it does not account for the specificities, rivalries and contestation as well as the shifting terms that need to be considered in examining the popular cinema's production and regulation in the national and the colonial context.

AUSTRALIAN AND AMERICAN 'SOUTH SEAS' CINEMA

Between 1925 and 1957 just 13 Australian films were produced that were made or set in the Pacific.[23] This loosely constituted series is comprised of workaday productions, rather than the 'classics' of a national industry. It is perhaps understandable then that in accounts of Australian cinema history these films have received scant attention, and have most often been dismissed as merely or self-evidently generic — that is, as revealing such formal qualities as are symptomatic of Australian cinema's own colonised nature and its subservient cultural product. *King of the Coral Sea* (1954), for example, has been discounted for its derivative nature, its 'exploitative' rather than elegiac intentions towards landscape and its blatant pitch to international markets.[24]

Tom O'Regan provides an alternative scholarly mandate for the study of Australian national cinema, in that he argues against approaches that generate selective canons based on specific (and usually judgmental) desires for a 'worthy' cinema, a practice occurring

under the cover of discerning an 'authentic' national cinema, or a cinema expressing an authentic nationalism. The cover provided by this exclusion or marginalisation in this instance forms part of a broader neglect of the 'decolonised' Western Pacific Island nation-states, and the part, political and symbolic, that these marginal territories have played in the constitution of the nation. Importantly, moreover, the assumption that such films can be dismissed as products of a 'colonised' or merely imitative or commercial impulse is simply too convenient. America and Australia were the primary producers of films in and about the 'South Seas', and this fact, perhaps, contributes to the tendency, in some scholarly writing as well as in some important sites of the films' contemporaneous reception, to 'misrecognise' these films so as to displace or downplay their relationship to, and production of, an Australian colonial imaginary. It is important to challenge or question the putatively self-evident nature of the Australian films' colonial genericity, to re-envisage these films as colonial texts in ways that permit or encourage productive scrutiny.[25]

In 1925, Hurley's two British-financed silent features, *Hound of the Deep* and *Jungle Woman*, were made in the Torres Strait and Dutch New Guinea respectively. Both were released in 1926. The interwar years were the most productive for Pacific-set films. Following Hurley's productions were *The Adorable Outcast* (1928), filmed in Fiji and Sydney; *The Devil's Playground* (1928), a film experimenting with the adaptability of NSW's locations; and *The Unsleeping Eye* (1928), shot in Papua, and not released in Australia.[26]

In the 1930s four further films were produced. The first was Charles Chauvel's *In the Wake of the Bounty* (1933). The remaining three films were made later in the 1930s: the Commonwealth Film Laboratories' *Mystery Island* (1937) was shot on Admiralty Island; the Cinesound production *Lovers and Luggers* (1937) was filmed in the company's Sydney studio employing rear-projected location footage of Thursday Island; and the Commonwealth Film Laboratories' *Typhoon Treasure* (1938) was shot on location in Queensland with the Barrier Reef notionally standing in for islands off the New Guinea coast.

There was an interval of 16 years before the postwar productions of Chips Rafferty and Lee Robinson: *King of the Coral Sea* (1954), shot on Thursday Island, and *Walk into Paradise* (1956), made in PNG. For the latter, Southern International entered into a co-production deal with a French company Discifilm, with whom it made two further features in Tahiti: *The Stowaway* (1958) and *The Restless and the Damned* (1959).

This book focuses on eight of the above-mentioned 13 films, a core group of fictional adventures set in Australian territory. For this reason, little attention is given to Charles Chauvel's singular *In the Wake of the Bounty*, an odd mixture of historical re-enactment interspersed with contemporary travelogue and ethnography, which has attracted significant scholarly attention as a parable about Australia's 'second-order' colonialism.[27] Had *The Adorable Outcast* been based more significantly on its imperial romance source material, it would have been of considerable interest. However, the book connection serves largely as a publicity device for a film comprised of loosely connected spectacular action scenes, showcasing the special effects interests of its American director.[28] *Mystery Island* is another film of only marginal interest in this selection. While value-adding some flora and fauna scenes from its Admiralty Island setting, the film remains nevertheless a relocated manor house mystery. The last two Southern International/Discifilm co-productions are also of marginal relevance as they shift away from Australian territory and the national concerns evident in the production of the earlier work, and retain Australian cast only in minor roles.

How similar are these films to American productions? The Australian films are undoubtedly generic, in that they share a strategy of competing in a marketplace dominated by American product by combining as many generic ingredients as possible with unusual, exotic scenic footage. The peculiarities of the films' generic hybridity, especially as manifested in their use of a 'scenic' or 'documentary' style of filming backgrounds combined with the generic action of the foreground, provides a rich site for analysis. Approaches to genre study that are adaptable to the dispersed nature of South Seas films as

a series, and to their eccentric combinations, focus on genre as a mutable classificatory process occurring across various sites, including the textual and inter-textual as well as the realms of extra-textual discursive activity, as a means of 'understanding the life of films in the social'.[29] The most productive answer to the question of difference lies in the broad overview of the films that follows, along with the discussion of the individual films' national specificities in later chapters.

It is more problematic to make general claims about the diverse body of American productions. Rick Altman makes a useful distinction between two dimensions comprising genre — the semantic and the syntactic. Semantic elements are the 'building blocks' of genre. *Everyones*, for example, itemises the semantics of the South Seas in promoting *The Adorable Outcast*: 'Dusky maids wriggling sensuous limbs, tropical sunsets, swaying palms, and wild waves washing over coral reefs.' In continuing by noting that these 'are well-known ingredients around which island love stories are woven', the article effectively proposes that romance provides the film's syntax.[30] Altman argues that in the major genres emerging in a system of continual production, 'syntax' emerges from repetitions of the semantic field in negotiation with an audience's ritual desires and within the given framework of dominant ideology. This syntax provides an underlying structure making the semantic parts cohere into particular patterns or myths.[31] The American South Seas films, however constitute a 'weak' or semantic genre, and concomitantly, the value of general generic claims is lessened.[32]

Notwithstanding their limitations, critical generic overviews of American productions do nevertheless provide some productive points of contrast with the Australian films, as well as pointing out the interests highlighted by scholarship. Driving these contrasts is geography. American productions were most often filmed in Polynesian Hawai'i, which not only served to represent itself but stood in for Tahiti, Samoa, Vanuatu and Malaysia.[33] *White Shadows in the South Seas* (1919), a film adaptation of Frederick O'Brien's travel book of the same name, is regarded by Norman Douglas and Glenn Man as well representing the generic concerns of the American

South Seas film.[34] This loose adaptation involved imposing a narrative structure at best suggested by the original travel book. Filmed in Tahiti, this was a relatively prestigious production for MGM and employed Robert Flaherty in a supervisory capacity.[35] O'Brien's book revisits the valley in which Herman Melville's well-known ship-jumping protagonist from *Typee* had 'gone native' and Man proposes that these two texts neatly highlight the two concerns he regards as respectively dominating American South Seas films: the myth of the 'noble savage' and that of 'fatal impact'.[36] Douglas describes the film's characteristic 'South Seas' cast:

> A central character ... dispossessed by or alienated from his own society for reasons left deliberately obscure, but in some sort of vague sympathy with island culture; an island woman, almost invariably the daughter of a chief, tragically attracted to the hero ... a handful of other whites personifying an assortment of the values of their civilisation, not all of them laudable, aspects of the decay or at least gradual attrition of native culture by contact with western intruders.[37]

These features make significantly rare appearances in the Australian films. *The Devil's Playground* (which was refused an export permit), *Jungle Woman* (which was barred from production in Australian-controlled Papua) and Chauvel's version of the *Bounty* story (which faced import difficulties with the footage shot in Tahiti), represent exceptions to the more general avoidance (or at least displacement) of the sensitive issue of cross-racial relationships. No mention is made of the fatality of contact and even 'vague sympathy with island culture' is largely absent. Chauvel, for example, testified to O'Brien's pervasive influence in writing about the South Seas, yet though he took great pains to reconstruct the 'fatal' feminine allure of the Tahitian women for the British marines who kidnapped or otherwise enticed them to join their mutinous flight, he evinced remarkably little sympathy for or interest in the fate of these women in the brutal and murderous Pitcairn Island settlement.[38]

Writers on the American South Seas films stress the escapist impulse underpinning the Edenic representations of Pacific Islander life in the Hollywood film.[39] Yet Man also notes that 'the utopian critique of Western culture' implied by the exploration of the destructive impact of white men on the simple and happily primitive Islanders nevertheless functions to 'empower the white characters over the natives by contrasting the Polynesians' one-dimensional simplicity with the Westerners' ability to incorporate the virtues of both cultures'.[40] He argues further that the Edenic paradise of the South Seas is undercut by 'the corrupting influence of a sensual and indolent island life, and the theme of miscegenation' and concludes that the narrative treatment of miscegenation serves to flirt with the pleasures of a simple or 'natural' life while ultimately foreclosing on such possibilities.[41]

Joanne Hershfield, in a discussion of *Bird of Paradise* (1932), sees a similar role for miscegenation and her discussion centres on the racial politics of casting. Hershfield argues that this story of encounter in the South Seas is a metaphor for complex concerns about the white racial identity of America. She argues that the South Seas setting and the casting of the Mexican actor Dolores del Río provide a vision of paradisiacal plenty to audiences in the grip of the Depression, permitting expression of desire for the racialised other, and even sexual relations, while ultimately foreclosing on the possibility of miscegenation by positioning it as a universal taboo, the transgression of which results in the death of a dispensable 'native' woman.[42]

The so-called 'darker' Melanesian islands of the Torres Strait and PNG predominate as the locations for the Australian films. Popular travel and imperial romance writer Beatrice Grimshaw, articulating widely held prejudices about the divide between Polynesia and Melanesia in the early 20th century, draws an evolutionary, moral and psychic line at Fiji. Frank Hurley, similarly, links New Guinea's primitivism to primeval dread:

> East of Fiji, life is one long lotus eating dream, stirred only by occasional parties of pleasure, feasting, love-making, dancing, and

> very little cultivating work ... Westward of Fiji lie the dark, wicked and cannibal groups of the Solomons, Banks and the New Hebrides, where life is more like a nightmare than a dream, murder stalks in broad daylight, and the people are nearer to monkey than to human beings in aspect.
>
> The northern boundary of Torres Strait is like the Threshold of Despair. Faintly through a fitful haze appear fleeting glimpses of a low coast, of dun-coloured seas and mudbanks, a passage of inexplicable evil.[43]

Popular discourses about the 'dark continent' of Africa in some respects prefigure narratives set in PNG, though the debt to literary sources in the Australian films is demotic and owed to traditions that were themselves exhaustively reworked by the 1920s. The Australian film trade at times promoted as interchangeable cycles of South Seas- and African-set stories. The sexual 'lure' conventionally associated with the South Seas is dealt with even more circumspectly in the Australian films than in those Man and Hershfield discuss, even if Australian films deploy the same generic ingredients as American films in promotion geared to competing with American production. Many of the Australian films are about settlement (rather than sexualised adventure tourism), and they negotiate cautiously the terms of Australia's anomalous and precarious geographic isolation, the indeterminacy of its continental north-east boundary constituted by a passage of scattered islands linking Cape York Peninsula to the Papuan coast, and the dangerous proximities thus engendered for a nation anxious to preserve its (putative) whiteness. Demonstrating a 'powerful masculinising and racialising impulse in Australian nationalism',[44] the imaginary of the films tames and inscribes the space of the Pacific by deploying it and its peoples as a background against which are performed deeds of white masculine adventure, thus 'narrat[ing] the Australian identity from its margins in ... the Torres Strait and Papua'.[45]

A focus on orientation in space is evident in the films' prologues. The films fall into two main groupings: those that travel into 'deep

interiors' (of Papua or New Guinea), where steps forward in space also represent steps backward in time; and those narratives that hug the coast — the 'island stories'. The Papua or New Guinea-based films are at pains to establish the courage and endurance of the film-making adventure and to establish authenticating links to the non-fictional world, as in the example of these prologues:

> *The Unseeing Eye*
>
> A pioneering tale of New Guinea, the last stronghold of the savage.
>
> To film and bring back this picture, my small company of Artists had to travel over 30,000 miles. It may truly be said that the Players lived their parts for the conditions of the Interior called for Courage as well as Craftsmanship.
>
> I lift the Veil and reveal a Remote and Grimly Barbaric Corner of our Empire. As long as we have men of the type of our Hero, John Challoner, there is no need to fear for our Mighty Heritage.
>
> *Jungle Woman*
>
> For this story of romance and adventure actually photographed in natural settings of wild New Guinea, the Stoll Company of British Artistes travelled 40,000 miles and braved perils and hardships.
>
> Under the New Guinea scorching tropical sun and hemmed in by perilous jungle, the white man established Merauke.
>
> *Walk into Paradise*
>
> This is the real story of New Guinea — that large Pacific island where today a gallant band of young Australian administrators are [sic] bringing civilisation to the most primitive people left on the face of the earth. The story of a land as yet unconquered where the ranges and valleys of the deep interior have yet to feel the tread of a white man's foot.

In contrast are those narratives taking place on smaller Pacific Islands in the Torres Strait. The bounded and contained land mass of the island has been well established as an exemplary site for imperial

allegory.[46] Bountiful South Seas islands, which provide convenient landfall for castaways, are more random or incidental places, though stories centre on labour and enterprise rather than 'sensual and indolent island life'. The hero often arrives through an accident of chance or fate (*Lovers and Luggers*, *Typhoon Treasure*, *The Devil's Playground*, *Hound of the Deep*) at an isolated European social enclave. Passage by boat maintains (more or less attenuated) links between the shady, beach-facing verandahs of the outpost and the metropolis, while backs are turned to dark hinterlands. Each of these opening sets of intertitles establishes the South Seas island as a marginal zone on the fringe of civilised order where the characters' inherent worthiness is tested — on land or undersea:

The Devil's Playground

Far off the beaten track, in the South Seas, lies a beautiful island — a jewel of the sea. Its water, abounding in low grade pearl shellfish, have [sic] brought a few white traders to its shores. The sinister reputation borne by its native population in fetish and cannibal rites, in the past, and in the wild doings of some of its present white population, have earned the island the name of

The devil's playground.

Hound of the Deep

Set in the Coral Sea that washes the remote shores of North Australia lies a lonely British outpost of civilization ... Thursday Island.

Here men of all colours and races play reckless games with fate in the eternal pursuit of wealth.

The Adorable Outcast

Far from the routes of travel the white man's trading posts cling to the coral beaches. Beyond is the gloomy unknown jungle.

Here all the strange contradictions of civilization bewilder the simple reason of the savage — from the ideals of the missionary, to the sharp practices of the trader.

Both groups of films imagine Australia's own Pacific desires as the spontaneous, naïve and innocent enterprise of a virile, masculine and youthful nation, and the body of the white adventurer at the centre of each film serves as a synecdoche for this appropriating impulse. Relations between foreground and background in the films pivot around notions of gender, race, labour and resources. Indigenous women play marginal roles, while white women function to support the masculine 'desire of narrative', providing the ground and the reward for these male quests.[47] Femininity, geography and natural resources are often collapsed together or subject to a mobile interplay of significations such that the yielding, availability or willingness of one transfers to the other.

The deployment of the Pacific as a third term in negotiating the colonial relationship between Australia and Britain is necessarily a distinctively national feature of the interwar productions. In the triangulated relationships between motherland, nation and colony characterising these films, the actions of the central heroes are legitimised, and at least partially disavowed as a colonial exploitation, in the marginalisation of indigenous characters and in the positioning of colonial Britain as the nation's Other. In the films of the postwar period, there are shifts in the narrative status of indigenous peoples, ones that in an attenuated and mediated way reflect the reinvented national and colonial discourses of assimilation and the trusteeship period respectively. Yet the most significant difference in respect of how these films represent Australia's colonial enterprise and adventures in these two periods concerns the shift in discursive deployment of Australia's colonial ties with Britain. If the interwar productions imagine this national innocence through positioning Britain as the colonial villain, then in the 1950s the nation's apparent 'resolution' or superseding of its formative colonial ties with Britain serves to stand in the place of the resolution of its own colonial entanglements in the Pacific.

This study of Australia's cinematic engagement in the Pacific is presented in three sections. The first investigates the social regulation of cinema exhibition in Australia in the context of the racialised

national and imperial concerns driving the charged public arguments of the interwar years and traces these concerns into Australia's administration of Papua and New Guinea until the early 1960s. Chapter One examines the discussions and debates shaping the practices of film censorship in Australia in the middle to late 1920s, with a view to demonstrating the centrality of race and cultural racism to consideration of the impact and potentialities of cinema for the 'young' nation. Chapter Two provides a specific case study of the regulation of cinema under Australian colonial rule, tracing the policies and practices of cinema censorship for indigenous audiences in Papua and New Guinea from the 1920s until 1962. This chapter also examines the colonial administration's conflict with commercial film-makers over the role of cinema in the 'colonial project' and the Department of Territories' subsequent commissioning of its own documentary production.

Section Two considers Australian 'South Seas' production of the fertile interwar years. Chapter Three discusses Frank Hurley, whose work was so formatively shaped and enabled by the forces of imperialism. Locating the production and reception of Hurley's South Seas melodrama *Jungle Woman* in the context of the push to revive Empire cinema, and considering the nature of its contribution to this project, the chapter examines this film's presentation of the Pacific as a space for privileged imperial mobility, a space which yields — as an intertitle notes — before the 'keen blades of determined men'.

Chapter Four discusses the companion Hurley project *Hound of the Deep*. Similarly melodramatic, this narrative is far more overtly national in its concern to demonstrate the nation's fitness to inherit Britain's colonial responsibilities in the Pacific. Set on Thursday Island, the film turns around a tangled romantic conceit figuring the search for pearls in terms of a legitimising trajectory of imperial and national desire, described by the hero's fateful journey from the metropolis to the settler colony. The foregrounding of this narrative melodramatically establishes the 'innocence' of national colonial enterprise.

Lovers and Luggers, in many respects a replay of *Hound of the Deep*, is the focus of Chapter Four. Alone in this study, *Lovers and*

Luggers was the product of a major production house — Cinesound — and was studio-shot against back-projected footage of Thursday Island. This chapter examines the film's extensive trading in colonial and racial stereotypes in the light of the well-calculated populist address and guaranteed sound entertainment values for which Cinesound was known. Like *Hound of the Deep*, *Lovers and Luggers* also displaces questions of imperial legitimacy onto questions of legitimate gender identity and, through positioning the motherland as the rapacious Other, renders as 'innocent' the nation's own colonial investments.

Section Three comprises two chapters examining the postwar productions of Southern International, films that incorporate the spaces of the Pacific into the nation in unprecedented ways, concerning, respectively, narratives of border protection and the colonial practice of patrolling. Chapter Five briefly discusses *Typhoon Treasure*, by way of establishing some points of contrast, before addressing the chapter's main focus, *King of the Coral Sea*, the final Thursday Island narrative in this study. While with the hero, Ted King (played by Chips Rafferty), at its helm this pearling industry-set narrative is no less a fantasy production of the space of male adventure than earlier films, the geopolitical discourse of the film does reflect the changed imperial power relations of the postwar Pacific. These changes, along with notions of assimilation that form part of the imagining of a modern 'Australian way of life', are reflected in and significantly shape the ways in which this film deploys the Pacific in order to imagine an established nationhood for Australia.

Chapter Six concludes the textual study with a discussion of *Walk into Paradise*, a companion piece to *King of the Coral Sea* much in the manner of the two earlier Hurley melodramas. The result of a partnership between commerce, the Department of Territories and the Territory Administration, this narrative also draws on the model of 'partnership' — an unofficial but popular model for figuring the enlightened maturity of Australia's relations with indigenous peoples during the period of Australia's trusteeship of Papua and New Guinea. The chapter discusses the film's attempts to combine and reconcile its

disparate elements: its 'gallant' story of modern Australia in New Guinea as well as its inclusive approach to generic embellishment; and its 'documentary' impulses, along with its foregrounding of the spectacular appeal of native peoples.

ENDNOTES

1 *Picture and Picturegoer*, review of *Pearls and Savages*, January 1925, and *Evening News*, review of *Pearls and Savages*, October 18, 1924, in press clippings service compilation, Frank Hurley's Papers, MS 883, series 2, National Library of Australia, Canberra (hereafter FH Papers).
2 Stuart Cunningham, 1988, 'Appollinius and Dionysius in the Antipodes', *Photophile*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring), pp. 41–6.
3 *Weekly Westminster*, review of *Pearls and Savages*, December 13, 1924, in FH Papers.
4 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 1994, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, London: Routledge, p. 18.
5 Ibid., p. 93.
6 Julian Thomas, 1991, 'The Showman as Hero: The Photography of Frank Hurley', *Voices*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn), p. 38.
7 *Picture and Picturegoer* review, January 1925, in FH Papers.
8 Cunningham, 'Appollinius and Dionysius in the Antipodes', p. 42.
9 Priya Jaikumar, 2002, 'An Act of Transition: Empire and the Making of a National British Film Industry, 1927', *Screen*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 119–38.
10 Ina Bertrand and Diane Collins, 1981, *Government and Film in Australia*, Sydney: Currency Press, p. 27.
11 *Everyones*, advertising spread, May 19, 1926, p. 26.
12 There are some earlier projects, see endnote 44.
13 Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (eds), 1998, 'Introduction', *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader*, Oxford: Clarenden Press, pp. 6–7.
14 Barbara Klinger, 1997, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies', *Screen*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Summer).
15 Ibid., p. 116.
16 Ibid., p. 110.
17 Nicholas Thomas, 1994, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 51.
18 Robert Dixon, 2001, *Prosthetic Gods: Travel, Representation and Colonial Governance*, St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, p. 6.
19 Ibid., pp. 7–8.

20 These oppositions are itemised in Ellen Strain, 1996, 'Exotic Bodies, Distant Landscapes; Touristic Viewing and Popularized Anthropology in the Nineteenth Century', *Wide Angle*, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 91.

21 Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 2.

22 Jaikumar, 'An Act of Transition', p. 120.

23 There are earlier films listed in Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper's compendium of Australian feature production, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, 1998 (rev. ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, which are excluded from consideration as no prints (or merely fragments) survive. The earliest of these is Raymond Longford's *The Mutiny of the Bounty* (1916), which was shot in New Zealand, Norfolk Island and Sydney. In many respects anticipating Charles Chauvel's 1933 version of the famous story, it was promoted as an educational and historical film. The *Mirror*'s review (December 2, 1916) describes the film as one for 'those who look beyond the meretricious sparkle of screen sensation allied to mawkish sentimentalism ... [an] arresting presentment of an historical happening'. The title of Jack Ward's 1919 film, *Australia's Own*, refers to Australia's newly assumed mandate for the previously German colony of New Guinea. Possibly the inspiration for Hurley's own travel films in Papua, *Australia's Own* also anticipates Hurley's silent melodramas in its grafting of a dramatic narrative over a travel record, notes Diane Collins in *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies: 1896 to the Present Day*, 1987, North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robertson, p. 114. Also lost, as noted in *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, are *The Triumph of Love* (1922), a 'South Sea island romance', and *For Australia* (1915), which includes scenes on 'an uncharted island' but is a war thriller. Only snippets remain of the later non-location-shot *Isle of Intrigue* (1931), a South Seas crime mystery.

24 Bruce Molloy, 1990, *Before the Interval: Australian Mythology and Feature Films, 1930–1960*, St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press; Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, 1983, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, Australia: Angus and Robertson/Currency Press; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900– 1977*.

25 Tom O'Regan, 1996, *Australian Cinema*, New York: Routledge.

26 *The Devil's Playground* is listed as 1928 in Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, a date given by its banning rather than its release. It is mentioned as early as 1926 in newspaper reports. See Chapter Two.

27 See Stuart Cunningham, 1991, *Featuring Australia: The Cinema of Charles Chauvel*, North Sydney: Allen and Unwin; Cunningham, 'Appollinius and Dionysius'; Bill Routt, 1985, 'On an Expression of Colonialism in Early Australian Film: Charles Chauvel and Naive Cinema', in Albert

Moran and Tom O'Regan (eds), *An Australian Film Reader*, Sydney: Currency Press.

28 Visiting director Norman Dawn was better known for his earlier Australasian Films production, *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1927). Beatrice Grimshaw, who wrote the novel on which *The Adorable Outcast* was so loosely based, was one of the most prolific and widely read authors of fiction and travel writing about the Pacific, and a long-term resident of Port Moresby, as notes Liz Branigan, 1993, 'A Nice Spot for a Picnic: Beatrice Grimshaw and the Appropriation of the Body', *The Olive Pink Society Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 41. Grimshaw's novel *Conn of the Coral Seas* concerns the fantastic triumph of British–Australian interests against European rivals in the 'New Cumberlands' (the New Hebrides).

29 Christine Gledhill, 2000, 'Rethinking Genre', in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds), *Reinventing Film Studies*, New York: Arnold, p. 221; Rick Altman, 1998, 'Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process', in Nick Browne (ed.), *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Rick Altman, 1999, *Film/Genre*, London: BFI; Steve Neale, 2000, *Genre and Hollywood*, London: Routledge.

30 *Everyones*, '*Adorable Outcast* Out of the Cutting Room', September 7, 1927, pp. 24–5.

31 Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 34–5.

32 In *Film/Genre*, Altman deploys genre as an heuristic term for illuminating relationships between the cinema industry, its social reception, its fields of scholarship and its textuality. Building on his distinction between the semantic and the syntactic dimensions to genre (and its study), he adds a 'pragmatic' dimension, pointing to the need to appreciate the activating and anchoring of genre and generic terminology in the contexts of its usage and discursivity.

33 Norman Douglas, 1994, 'Electric Shadows in the South Seas', in Diane Aoki (ed.), *Moving Images of the Pacific*, Honolulu: Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Hawai'i, pp. 3–18.

34 Ibid.; Glenn Man, 1991, 'Hollywood Images of the Pacific', *East-West Cinema Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2.

35 A significant exception in respect to genericity in American cinema is Robert Flaherty's *Moana* (1925). The difficulty in classifying this proto-documentary work at the time of its distribution is evident in *Everyones*' (August 14, 1927, p. 34) idiosyncratic description of the film as a 'scenic plus island life natural adventure'. The significant place of *Moana* in the history of the non-fiction film is addressed at length elsewhere (see, for example, Richard Barsam, 1992 (rev. ed.), *Nonfiction Film: A Critical*

History, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Bill Routt, 1989, 'The Fairest Child of the Motherland: Colonialism and Family in Australian Films of the 1920s and 1930s, in Albert Moran and Tom O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen*, Ringwood, Australia: Penguin) suggests that interest in South Seas films was initiated by *Moana*, which sparked imitators in Australian as well as American and European cinemas. Douglas ('Electric Shadows', pp. 4–5), however, is well supported in his view that *Moana* is a quite exceptional 'lovingly crafted and meticulous work on Samoa', whose influence on later fiction films has been exaggerated.

36 Herman Melville, 1963, *Typee: A Romance of the South Seas*, New York: Heritage Press; Man, 'Hollywood Images of the Pacific'.

37 Douglas, 'Electric Shadows', pp. 4–5.

38 Charles Chauvel, 'Showmen of the South Seas', *Everyones*, September 5, 1928, p. 13.

39 Man, 'Hollywood Images of the Pacific'; Douglas, 'Electric Shadows'; Joanne Hershfield, 1998, 'Race and Romance in *Bird of Paradise*', *Cinema Journal*, No. 3 (Spring); Rosaleen Smyth, 1992, 'Reel Pacific History: The Pacific Islands in Film, Video and Television', in Brij V. Lal (ed.), *Pacific Islands History: Journeys and Transformations*, Canberra: The *Journal of Pacific History*.

40 Man, 'Hollywood Images of the Pacific', p. 21.

41 Ibid., p. 27.

42 Hershfield, 'Race and Romance'.

43 Beatrice Grimshaw, 1907, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Isles*, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, p. 14; Frank Hurley, 1924, *Pearls and Savages: Adventures in the Air, on Land and Sea in New Guinea*, New York: G.P.P. Putnan's Sons, p. 21.

44 David Walker, *Anxious Nation*, p. 5.

45 Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, p. 202.

46 See, for example, Martin Green, 1979, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, New York: Basic Books, a study of imperial literature that nominates as the prototype of literary imperialism Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. See Richard Phillips, 1997, *Mapping Men and Empire*, London: Routledge, for a discussion of 'Robinsonades' that imitated this narrative.

47 Teresa de Lauretis, 1984, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

SECTION ONE
Chapter One

THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND?
Race and the regulation of cinema in the interwar years

> In a young country, which is to some extent still in its adolescent stage and is beginning to find itself by developing its nationhood, it should be the duty of those in authority to attempt to direct its ideals along right lines and to encourage the highest types of morality, custom and character.
>
> Film is a new unifying force. It is a medium ... that is more universal [than the press or radio] in its appeal, spreading visual impressions amongst the educated and the illiterate. It is the best medium for popularising British institutions, cultivating British customs and inspiring the younger generation with British ideals.[1]

Cinema, nation and empire in the 1920s

In discussion of cinema's part in the production of an 'imperial imaginary', Shohat and Stam underline the formative links between cinema and colonialism: '[Cinema] emerged exactly at the point where enthusiasm for the imperial project was spreading beyond the élites into the popular strata, partly thanks to popular fictions and exhibitions.'[2] For

these early metropolitan audiences, the adventure of the film's fiction, Shohat and Stam argue, was complemented by the adventure of going to the cinema, generating a psychic space 'available for the play of the virile spectatorial imagination'.[3] In the cinemas of the colonies, communities could be formed among the élite of the colonised population (a group not delimited by literacy) and colonisers, reinforcing a shared identity. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's seminal work, they propose that cinema's common texts helped overcome the geographic obstacles to the formation of the 'imagined communities' of empire: '[C]inema helped cement both a national and an imperial sense of belonging among many disparate peoples.'[4]

This is a persuasive general overview of the relationship between colonialism and cinema that nevertheless requires some qualification in respect to the situation in Australia. Shohat and Stam's study, for example, casts no light on the operations of cinema among the non-urbanised colonised of the Western Pacific. The Australian Territory of Papua and the Australian Mandate of New Guinea effectively had no colonial élites in the interwar years, and practised racially segregated exhibition policies, which judged most fiction and all imperial adventure films as 'unsuitable for natives', as the next chapter discusses.[5] In the 1930s in Australia, the possibility of belonging to a virtual empire community through participation in the shared address of cinematic fiction was facilitated by government intervention that assisted in a revival of the British film industry. Bolstered by the committed support of an active lobby group, British product gained market share and came to represent about 25 per cent of films screened in Australia by 1932.[6] In the middle of the 1920s, however such was the dire state of the British film industry that the notion of a cinema perpetuating empire community and hegemony better describes British and British-Australian *hopes and desires* than their perception of the actual state of affairs. Moreover, among 'those in authority' in Britain, the white settler dominions and in India, something closer to a moral panic over cinema's representations prevailed. Sir Robert Donald, a prominent commentator of the time speaks, for example, of Britain's 'humiliating position' of dependency

on 'foreign supplies'.[7] In Australia, which had one of the highest cinema attendance rates in the world, as much as 95 per cent of the films exhibited were American.[8]

In the interests of presenting Western cinema from a relatively unified 'Eurocentric' perspective, Shohat and Stam pass over British and dominion anxieties about the production of an Americanised (imperialising) imaginary and thus miss much of the detail of the conflicted and uneasy relationship between the British as the self-described 'imperial race' and the threats posed by the shifting global distribution of power, of which the global dominance of Hollywood cinema was a potent sign.[9] An Australian film commentator of the time, Beatrice Tildesley, exemplifies the concerns of the educated middle class when she wonders if 'America's mission is to vulgarise the world'.[10] Concerns about the imperialising and/or populist nature of the Hollywood industry are, of course, common in cultural debate in Australia. Attention to this formatively anxious period, however, reveals some of the finer nuances of the relationship between cinema and colonialism that trouble or complicate the ways in which cinema can be considered as a further discourse or instrumentality of colonialism.

Patrick Wolfe describes 'racialising' as an irrationally intense, visceral and emotional response to hierarchically ordered racial difference that emerges when these differences alone are called on to 'carry the whole burden of domination' — that is, the absence of juridical frameworks such as slavery or in the face of 'the threat of social space having to be shared with the colonised'.[11] Historical documents, such as censorship reports and the evidence presented to the Royal Commission into Moving Pictures (1927–8), suggest that cinema constituted a social and cultural space whose vast global dissemination and democratic address and appeal provoked intense anxieties in Australia and its territories. Figured in highly charged, gendered and racialised terms, American cinema was imagined as promiscuous, indiscriminate and contaminating.

A racialised anxiety also underlies the protectionist stance towards the nation, which the censor claims as the duty of 'those in authority'. The desire for an uncontaminated national body for

Australia is evident in the 'quarantined culture' in place by the early 1920s.[12] Film censorship played a part in imagining the clean and healthy or to borrow Richard White's words, 'young, white, happy and wholesome', national body constituted in the discourses of the insular and protectionist interwar period.[13] But the national body was also one whose youthful vulnerability was at stake in the regulation of cinema from within and without, as is suggested in the censor's stated mission to be 'a watchdog at the ports of entry and departure'.[14]

This vulnerability is specifically racialised in Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, a study popularising the 'new race consciousness' that 'attracted considerable notice' in Australia until the 1930s.[15] Stoddard explores what he considers the 'keynote of twentieth-century world politics ... relations between the primary races of mankind' in the aftermath of the devastating blow to white supremacy brought about by World War I.[16] Describing white Australia's vulnerability in the insistently oceanic mode indicated by the title of his book, he positions the nation as an essential 'inner dike' supporting white supremacy and defending the privileged position of the 'white race' along with its precious 'race heritage'. Matthew Guterl notes that this 'new race consciousness' involved a hardening of the association of race with skin colour (in contrast with a racialising of nationality, for example), such that racial characteristics — and racial entitlement or disenfranchisement — travelled with and marked increasingly mobile populations:

> The debate over 'white world supremacy' focused on the general belief in the congruence of race, class and place that marked that geopolitical world and world economic positions of both the West and 'the darker nations'.[17]

Yet even as this involved the 'whitening' of groups such as the American Irish, as Guterl argues, in Stoddard's work, 'Nordic' whites remained whiter, and more germane to the defence of racial supremacy, than other Europeans. Whiteness was by no means an invisible or

ex-nominated racial category in this discourse. The pro-empire zealot Senator Guthrie, for example, is not alone in singling out the whites of far-flung colonial communities as being particularly vulnerable to the risks posed by American cinema.[18] This racialised rallying call is something of a convention among the reports, letters and so on lobbying for empire cinema and might also reflect Australia's own disquiet with being part of a multiracial British Empire.

In March 1927, in the wake of the Imperial Conference of 1926, the Australian Senate agreed on the establishment of a Royal Commission into Moving Pictures. The attention of this august imperial body to the realm of popular entertainment provided impetus for the establishment of the Australian inquiry and for similar commissions of inquiry that took place in countries including Canada, New Zealand, Britain and India.[19]

Between imperialisms: film censorship in Australia

After World War I, as Dixon notes, 'Australian nationalism was still embedded in imperial patriotism but increasingly affected by globalising commercial forces effectively dominated by American interest.'[20] Cinema, as Donald pointed out, was America's fourth-largest industry.[21] In the American-dominated film industry in Australia in the 1920s, censorship was the principal form of national regulation available, and such regulation, unsurprisingly, deferred to matters of empire as much as to matters of nation, or, to put it more accurately, it understood matters of nation as being inextricably interconnected with empire.[22] In an exemplary circuit of mutual reinforcement and self-congratulation, Donald praised Australian censorship for its rigour and sensible appreciation of the menace of Americanisation, and the Chief Censor, Professor R.S. Wallace, reported back to the nation on this favourable metropolitan notice.[23] The censor's views formed a significant part of public commentary on cinema — people in the position deliberated on the nature of cinema, its relation to the social and national, on possible models for the nature of its communications, and even proposed ideals for its

aesthetics. The report of the Royal Commissioners spells out the national significance of this role:

> [The censor] is able, by his judgement, to assist materially in the moulding of the character of a nation, to direct to a large degree the occupational proclivities of the people and to further the cultural development of the State.[24]

The Chief Censor from 1929 to 1942, W. Cresswell O'Reilly, took such responsibilities very much to heart and in the interwar years instituted a regime for the censorship of imported cinema that Collins described as 'secretive and repressive'.[25] *Everyones*, which once called the censor's report under the stewardship of Wallace 'the Annual Insult', later posed the rhetorical question of O'Reilly: 'Does he forget that he is censor and think he has become a dictator?'[26] But notwithstanding the censor's authority or even his mode of operation, censorship legislation was a form of mediation between government, various social institutions and groups, the 'mass' audience and commerce. Its terms and arrangements, such as the appeal board, allowed some flexibility for interpretation in response to vocally expressed shifts in social opinion. [27] 'The interest that has been taken in our work, both inside Parliament and outside of it,' Wallace concluded in his report for 1926, 'has been of great assistance to us. Since a censor is not applying the standards of his own likes and dislikes to a picture but is trying to interpret public opinion.'[28]

'Empire-loyal' groups such as the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' League of Australia (RSSLA), along with women's, church and educational lobby groups, were important sources of such opinion.[29] John Williams points out that after World War I, an 'inchoate' but effective conservative coalition was given impetus and power in the wake of the massive propaganda machine set in motion to encourage continuing voluntary military enlistment. This group operated to defend Australian high culture against modernist art, which was associated with racial degeneracy and anti-imperialism, 'quarantining' the nation and ensuring the regressive renewal of the

bushman/yeoman agrarian ideal for the nation, which found expression, for example, in the revival of landscape traditions.[30]

Williams argues that such quarantining of high culture was at least in part a reaction to the concession of the territory of popular culture to American domination, though it 'was not America itself that was the threat here; rather, it was a sinister oriental-based contagion threatening cultural values in America as much as elsewhere'.[31] While popular culture is not his central concern, Williams underestimates the opposition of conservative lobbyists and the role of censorship in attempting to quarantine the youthful nation from the 'demoralising' influence of this cinema, as well as rather reductively accounting for what was an over-determined American threat.[32]

In Australia, American cinema was held accountable for a diverse range of social, economic, political and cultural ill-effects, in addition to its primary threat of demoralisation. In his report for 1927, Wallace further ventriloquises British commentary, reiterating his complaints about vulgarity: 'It is hard to retain one's respect for a nation so constantly put before our eyes, as it almost always is on the screen, in an inevitable whirl of surreptitious cocktail drinking, graft, bad taste, hideous domestic architecture and vile manners.'[33] Characterising a cinema designated in these discourses as 'foreign' to British sentiment was this (colonial) vulgarity, with its predominant address to a 'hick', or rural, unsophisticated (Eastern or Southern European) audience; the 'false values' engendered by the sentimentality of the melodramatic mode; and a focus on unwarranted scenes of undress and other aspects of sexuality and loose living. 'Foreign' American cinema also became a convenient repository for any number of a free-floating classed, gendered and racialised anxieties.[34] Collins accounts for the concerns about popular culture in terms of its threat to the class order:

> A middle class and largely Protestant establishment attempted to translate their particular values and behavioural modes onto an enormously popular entertainment and information medium, the values, structure and appeal of which had from the first disregarded

> them, and which, as an instrument of cultural propaganda, appeared to potentially rival their own.[35]

A reflexive stance against popular culture consistently structures discussions; however, as Collins also points out, rallying calls around cinema reform were 'frequently phrased in the language of purification, the rhetoric of social expurgation'.[36] The Good Film League's Vice-President, Reverend Edward West, for example, reported how a delegation of church leaders sat through a whole day of screenings, after which one of his colleagues said, 'My soul is scarred; I am off home to whiten it.'[37] This is one example of a pattern of racialising 'tropological operations [that] form a kind of figurative substratum with the discourse on empire'.[38] In the discourse of the time, West's colleague would have been able to accomplish his cleansing scrub through an immersion in the history and literature of the empire, which, reflecting its elevated purpose, was often counterpoised to its low and salacious other as 'drama of the *highest* order'.[39] Indeed, the elevating modifier makes 'civilization ... the cause of whiteness'.[40] Robert Young notes the inextricable complicity between notions of race — and racism — and those of culture, and cultural self-definition:

> From the 1880s onwards, the cultural ideology of race became so dominant that racial superiority, and its attendant virtue of civilization, took over even from economic gain or Christian missionary work as the presiding, justifying idea of empire.[41]

The Bulletin, which objected to American cinema with 'an uncompromising and persistent vigour', condensed its fears of the feminine and the debased-by-breeding in its claim that American fictions offered a view of '[t]he world seen through the romantic eyes of a half-witted servant girl'.[42] While Donald euphemistically noted the lack of cultural capital among 'hyphenated American' producers, *The Bulletin* complained about profits returned to men with 'mongrel' origins.[43] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, in its extensive commentary on the context and debates at issue in the Inquiry into the Film Industry

in NSW (1934), attributed the failings of American cinema to the domination and avarice of irresponsible, arriviste Jews.[44] Arguing, rather in the face of the evidence of the box office, that Australians had a 'natural preference' for British and Australian themes, the *Herald* also claimed that there was a 'natural' aversion to images of 'Negro crooners shown in "close-ups" hideously large and coarse, each more repellent than the last'.[45]

Concomitantly, the lobby group the Good Film League, like the RSSLA, aligned British cinema with moral authority. This was an exemplarily imperial gesture in its implicit endorsement of Britain's self-presentation as a civilising force, and a naïvely loyal dominion act of faith in a cinema industry that misrepresented the nature and scale of the beleaguered British industry. When in 1927 and 1928, O'Reilly cut or excluded British films to a higher degree than American films, he came under heavy fire from disconcerted conservative lobbyists. In a contorted defence, he argued that empire loyalty dictated the need to *preserve* Australians from stories that British audiences could enjoy with impunity but which, ironically, might do 'incalculable harm' in the dominions by 'convey[ing] the idea that England and her peoples are suffering from various forms of degeneracy, particularly disregard for what is generally accepted as an average standard of morality'.[46] As Williams notes in a different context, Australia in the interwar period needed to be defended against 'almost all that was not British, and some things that were British as well'.[47]

Drawing on concerns expressed in the London *Times*, Reverend West, in his presentation to the Royal Commission, similarly noted the particular vulnerability of the dominions, 'where the preservation of an all British atmosphere, especially among the rising generation, is a matter of Imperial concern ... it touches on the very soul of the people ... a people perpetually fed on foreign films must cease to be able to call its soul its own.'[48] British film-maker and imperial adventure writer Alexander Macdonald (producer of Papuan gold adventure *The Unsleeping Eye*) drew on reports in the British press about the next generation of resentful exiled dominion subjects who

might not be 'blessed with that loyalty to the Homeland which we expect to find in the garden soil of our race'.[49]

At stake in these anxieties about Australia's precious and vulnerable national body is the capacity of the 'imperial race' to breed true. In the testing conditions of the colonial earth, British stock was called on to demonstrate its transportability, resilience and naturalising proclivity. In the discourse of the British film trade, such agricultural figuration mutated into the proposal to 'cultivate' the markets of the dominions, for underlying concerns about dominion loyalty was the awareness that 'trade follows the flag'.

An imperial impetus for British and dominion cinema

In a discussion of the standardisation of modes of filmic address and narration in the emergence of a dominant style of Hollywood narration, Miriam Hansen makes the important point that the mode of film spectatorship thus generated 'made the cinema a most powerful matrix of consumer subjectivity — a symbolic form binding vision and desire with myths of social mobility and homogeneity'.[50] In the 1920s, the power of this 'binding vision' was also recognised, as film was generally held to be a particularly 'impressing' and 'psychological' medium.[51] Those 'myths of social mobility and homogeneity' that Hansen understands as providing an ideological national glue in the immigrant domestic context of American film reception, were often perceived as an unsettling influence in that same cinema's global dissemination.

An earnest and urgent desire to foster a rival subjectivity is evident in the concern to produce a community of empire-educated and British-buying citizens that informs the General Economic Sub-Committee's findings on cinema, reported to the Imperial Conference of 1926. The President of the Board of Trade, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, stressed the need to exploit the 'one great vehicle of propaganda' that he suggested had been ignored in the campaign for British goods. He also addressed the need to produce and fortify empire citizenship as a common bond:

> The strongest bonds are the least definable — a common outlook, common ideals, a common atmosphere exemplified, for instance, in our common literature. If this is so, how can we be content that the Cinema, this new and pervading influence ... should always be in a foreign setting and a foreign atmosphere?
>
> The cinema is not merely a form of entertainment but, in addition, a powerful instrument of education in the widest sense of that term; and even where not used avowedly for purposes of instruction, advertisement or propaganda it exercises indirectly a great influence in shaping the ideas of the very large numbers to whom it appeals. Its potentialities in this respect are almost unlimited.[52]

These sentiments, echoing those of Donald, reverberate further down the interwar years, cited prominently in the report of the NSW Inquiry in 1934 and in a later review of the enacted legislation.[53] The concern to produce pictures of 'British sentiment and outlook' and thus to foster 'the development of the Australian character along British lines' continues throughout the policy debates of the 1930s in the face of the substantial failure of government intervention.[54]

Australian Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce's, response to Cunliffe-Lister's report, recorded in the *Conference Proceedings*, follows the Committee President's lead in privileging empire over nation, couching his own cautious endorsement of the Sub-Committee's recommendations in terms of empire trade and British prestige.[55] The Canadian Prime Minister's response more suggestively evokes the subordinate place of the dominions. He points to the 'unsurpassed opportunities afforded in the dominions' for providing scenery and backgrounds for the 'trained actors of Britain'.[56] The logic of this suggestion is almost exactly realised in Frank Hurley's work with the British Stoll Films, which is discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

The resolution of the conference — to take 'early and effective action to deal with this serious situation' — led to the *British Cinematograph Act 1927*, which established an empire quota, in the

hope of encouraging British production and the exhibition of dominion films in Britain.[57] Also of far-reaching significance was the conterminous establishment of a film division within the Empire Marketing Board, under the directorship of John Grierson. Grierson, the so-called 'father' of the influential British documentary movement, was soon to become a powerful advocate for the establishment of similar government film bodies in the dominions.[58] Australia's response to such urgings was delayed until after World War II, when a government film-making body emerged out of the wartime-established Film Division of the Department of Information.[59] The documentary series commissioned of this body by the Department of Territories in the 1950s represents a critical moment in the history of the relationship between film and colonialism in Australia, as the next chapter discusses.

The empire quota provisions enacted in the *British Cinematograph Act* secured a much-needed British market for Australian cinema, one that was essential to the profitability of most of the South Seas films. However, the coalitions formed around notions of 'empire interest' or 'empire service' were as often provisional, shifting, conflictual and self-interested as they were ideologically committed to common goals. Two examples serve to establish this point. First, at the Royal Commission, Australian film producers expediently sided with conservative empire-loyal groups, with whom they otherwise had little common ground, in the interests of combining forces to lobby for government intervention to ease the structural obstacles confronting their work.[60] Second, the term 'empire film' was itself, as Priya Jaikumar notes in an examination of film regulation from a British perspective, a 'confusing, changeling term'.[61] While the shift to a language of reciprocity in the terms of the quota legislation speaks to the reduced power of Britain to dictate terms to members of its newly formed Commonwealth, nevertheless the *intent* of the act, in Jaikumar's view, was to deploy dominion resources to 'demonstrat[e] Britain's national triumph', in the sense of its imperial strength and its hoped-for triumph over Hollywood through the cultivation of dominion markets. This emphasis became

evident when, in 1934, the NSW state government revisited the question of quotas, introducing an Australian, rather than an empire, quota and the British film trade (itself involved in blind and block booking) employed an inflated empire rhetoric and heavy-handed tactics to defend its pecuniary interests against the attempt to reserve a modest national quota within an empire distribution agreement dominated by British product.[62] Such policy betrayal is reflected, arguably, in the avarice and exploitation that are revealed to reside in the false heart of Stella Raff, the indulged metropolitan socialite of Cinesound's 1936 pearl-fishing romance, *Lovers and Luggers*.

The position of the nation in respect to the imperial push for cinema regulation was ambiguous and complex. In respect to the central concerns about race, on the one hand, Britain's concern to harness cinema's potential to shore up its own positional superiority supported the cultural racism that underpinned Australian self-definition. On the other hand, the perceived risk of moral and cultural contamination and subsequent empire disloyalty placed Australian audiences in an analogous position to the subject races of the empire, as the next section discusses. In the evidence on native races and cinema presented to the Royal Commission (1927–8), a further set of fault-lines in the rhetoric of the empire-as-community is evident.

Evidence presented to the Royal Commission concerning the empire's prestige in the minds of the subject races

The commission met for eight months and heard evidence from 250 witnesses, 'evidence which stood as the most complete and valuable record of Australian cinema's production, distribution and censorship activities up to 1927'.[63] Bertrand and Collins note the social breadth of the investigation beyond these trade concerns — including hearing evidence from educationalists, psychologists, policemen, manufacturers and the church, as well as women's groups and government welfare agencies.[64] It would seem reasonable then to consider the commission's *Minutes of Evidence* as representing a synchronic slice of public opinion.

While the final report of the commissioners constructs three categories for audiences meriting differential treatment in respect to cinema — adults, 'natives' and children — these overlie another hierarchy discernable in the discourses of the commission and more generally in the public sphere, as earlier discussion of cultivation metaphors has shown.[65] Cinema's putatively demoralising force is charted against a 'cultural construction of race'.[66] The middle class of the motherland fears for its progeny in the dominions; in the dominions, the educated middle class fears for the uneducated, the socially abased or marginalised, and for the next generation. Near the bottom of the ladder are the subjugated peoples of British colonies, organised by skin colour. In this account, Pacific Melanesians and Australian Aborigines are accredited with basic, virtually instinctual responses to cinematic imagery.

The most conspicuous feature of the evidence about the effects of cinema on 'natives' is that, notwithstanding its scanty, flimsy and amateur nature, it is asserted with a confidence born from the necessarily knowledgeable speaking position conferred by membership of the imperial race. Young also makes the point that racial theory, however dressed up in 'scientific terms', was always 'fundamentally populist in presentation and tone'.[67] It is, moreover, populism replete with what Edward Said calls 'Orientalist confidence': 'No merely asserted generality is denied the dignity of truth; no theoretical list of Oriental attributes is without application to the behaviour of Orientals in the real world.'[68] The second outstanding feature is how thinly these assertions of a racialised demoralisation overlie rivalry about hegemony and profit.

In this context, the excessively savage and intemperate ranting of Captain Geoffrey Malins' evidence becomes worthy of attention. Malins fraudulently represented himself as reporting for the British trade journal *Cinema* and having links (although left vague) to a British Board of Trade mission to report on potential global markets for British film. *Cinema* soon repudiated his claims: 'Malins is only a motor-cycle salesman and has absolutely no official stand[ing] ... he attempted to produce pictures here but was a total failure.'[69]

Malins' evidence provides an exemplary case of the irrationally intense, visceral and emotional response to the 'shared space' of cinema. Its intensity can also be understood as a measure of British discomfort with its 'humiliating dependency' or 'cinematic subjugation' in the context of an 'expectation of pre-eminence and ... unchallenged access to markets'.[70] In an excessive 18 pages of closely typed evidence, Malins harangued the commissioners, presenting an apogee of anti-American sentiment. Describing American cinema as 'vomitings ... dipping into the cesspools of life and bring[ing] up the mud and filth of hell', he characterised as 'traitors, fools and swine' those who enjoyed it and expressed his concerns about the films' audiences in terms of the debasement of rational thought:

> In war the body is destroyed, mentally and physically; nothing is left but the memory of those who have passed over. But in the present day American films the mentality is being slowly weakened, unbalanced, and for all effective purposes destroyed, and the horror of all this is that a hollow shell remains; an entity exists that has lost all sense of the decencies of life, of all the culture of fine thought, of the ability to absorb and analyse. It craves for the stimulation of the senses, for the false negroid atmosphere of jazz ... it is a sham; something the world would well be rid of.[71]

Underlying Malins' preference for a clean warrior's death over the zombifying effects of Hollywood's seduction is the fact that these films generated huge revenues, 'which [are] completely and irrevocably lost to the Empire or civilization'. Again, empire and civilisation are defined with self-fulfilling circularity. Malins revealed British frustration with a Hollywood style of economic opportunism that ignored the strategies and responsibilities by which British-style colonialism rationalised itself. This was particularly galling in relation to India, where Malins regarded Britain as the rightful beneficiary of any market exploitation:

> These films are playing havoc in the minds of the coloured races of our Empire ... it matters nothing to her [America] that the regenerating, civilising and commercialising of these countries has cost us countless valuable lives and millions of money; it matters nothing to her that thousands of British men and women are tolerating the most ghastly climatic conditions to uphold the prestige and unity of our Empire — self-appointed slaves — to further our ideals and traditions.[72]

The contradictions of these claims are ridden over in a particularly ugly and ruthless colonial extension of *noblesse oblige*, which figures the British as a race of self-appointed slaves, who nevertheless anticipate return on their labour. Malins contributed a great deal more 'evidence' in this vein, but when questioned directly about the possibilities for British cinema to redress this situation, he was revealed as merely proposing a substitution of British block and blind booking of films, whose existence the Australian distributors would have to take on empire trust. While this approach might have found favour with the RSSLA (which proposed empire quotas of as much as 50 per cent at this time), the commissioners rejected this most unhelpful and impractical suggestion.

More moderately expressed views nevertheless reveal a similar rivalry over colonial hegemony, along with similar ideological contradictions. Grace Marsden, of the lobby group the Good Film League, argued that American film was making India 'safe for "Bolshevism"'.[73] Her concern mirrors Malins', in that she notes how the cinema can outpace the colonial administration's moderating influence:

> The picture show has penetrated the remote parts of the country — parts where the Englishman was only known as an ideal, where he is now unworthily portrayed and held up to contempt and ridicule before the inexperienced native.

John Wilkinson, a Melbourne journalist, feared instead for the educated young Indian. Reporting on travels through South-East Asia, India and China, he testified:

> I am satisfied that the films have to a large extent destroyed the respect of the native races for white people right through Asia ... Whilst there may not be a definite anti-British propaganda in [American cinema], the constant screening of American ideals, American ideas of freedom, have imbued the people of India particularly with a feeling of discontent for their lot. Many of them are persuaded that as America ... gained her freedom, they themselves should not be under the domination of the white race.[74]

It would be difficult to nominate a starker example of self-interest. In these respects the cinema can be seen as a convenient scapegoat for broader imperial anxieties arising in consequence of the contradictions of colonialism's self-legitimising claims. The Indian Cinematograph Committee, a similar and contemporaneous commission of inquiry as the Royal Commission but constituted by a board of predominantly Indian commissioners, made the astute judgment that the claims about the social impact of cinema were 'misplaced, without substance, essentially ideological and racially determined'.[75]

The views of the charlatan Malins foreshadow the findings of the Indian commission:

> The native brings to the cinema a mind as plastic and as receptive of impressions as wet clay ... he has no perspective or experience of balance against the influence of lurid sensationalism ... the native believes only what he sees with his own eyes.[76]

The report of the Australian Royal Commission found:

> [Vivid] and lasting impressions are retained by natives, and frequently their imagination is riotously aroused. The film exerts a powerful influence over natives and could instil into their minds dangerous and sinister motives.[77]

It recommended:

> That no moving picture film shall be screened before audiences of aboriginals or natives of the mandated Territories unless such a film has been passed by the Censorship Board as suitable for such exhibition.

The Controller General informed the Secretary of the Department of Home and Territories of this recommendation in a letter that said that the Cabinet had approved referring these matters to the Territory Administrator 'as the suggestion has much to recommend it'.[78] The censor accepted this additional duty and prepared quarterly lists of imported films marked as suitable or not suitable which were distributed to Norfolk Island, Alice Springs, Darwin (and later Nauru) as well as to New Guinea and Papua. It is difficult to imagine what possible use these lists of latest imports would have been to the colonial administrations in these territories that were at the absolute end of the distribution chain — films were regarded as 'junked' once sent 'to the islands'.[79] Moreover, in Papua and New Guinea at least, draconian censorship legislation was already in place. The decision provides further evidence of the lack of information guiding the commission's recommendations on the racial censorship of cinema.

That there was a great deal at stake in these discussions about race and exhibition is evident from the stridency of its discourse. Loyalty to 'empire' is in part an ideological necessity required to legitimise claims about the fitness of the white race to fulfil its self-appointed mission to civilise its 'others'. The debate about censorship indicates concerns about the potential of this relatively new medium to intervene into social and cultural organisation in which a colonial order is central. The interstitial colonial status of Australia is evident in the fears that her isolated white populations are at particular risk. The Australian population's vulnerability links them to the child audience, at risk of moral and cultural contamination and empire disloyalty in an analogous fashion to the subject races of empire. But the final report made strong divisions between these audiences, effectively displacing these concerns. Its recommendations on censorship for native peoples also functioned to buttress

white identity. Under the guise of 'protecting' vulnerable native minds, censorship aimed to defend white sensitivities from the fear that native audiences might lose their awe of white (British) authority when confronted by the spectacle of Hollywood cinema. The British Empire, then, wished to repress the white 'soft underbelly' of Western culture, which Hollywood cinema revealed.[80]

Not long after the Royal Commission submitted its report, *The Devil's Playground* was refused its export permit. This had nothing directly to do with decisions arising from the Commission but rather with Regulation 24, legislation introduced in 1917 and amended in 1926, which required that every imported and exported film receive a certificate of registration from the Department of Trade and Customs before it could be released.[81] Nevertheless, the issues raised in the above discussion offer an illuminating perspective from which to revisit this South Seas colonial melodrama's production and proscription.

The Devil's Playground: national sensitivities and the representation of Australian colonialism

Two other Australian South Seas films faced difficulties with censorship: *In the Wake of the Bounty*, in respect to bringing back into Australia the 'ethnographic' footage of bare-breasted Polynesian dancers, and *Jungle Woman*, which was effectively refused permission to be filmed in Papua by the local administration. While both these productions were finally produced and released, *The Devil's Playground* had no more than trade screenings at the time of its production and was not shown publicly until 1966 when a print was rediscovered — by which time it was an historical curiosity.[82] The film was refused an export permit, a decision upheld on appeal, notwithstanding an existing sale to Universal in Britain.[83] The film was not released locally either, in spite of plans to produce a (possibly first) talking version.

Running for more than two hours, *The Devil's Playground* is a rather rambling production. Its producer, Victor Bindley, had worked in a variety of positions in film and theatre production and in film

exhibition before this venture.[84] He wrote the script, basing it, after a fashion of the day, on the words of a popular song. Bill Routt describes *The Devil's Playground* as 'pure South Seas hokum' and while this is an undoubtedly apt comment, the film is nevertheless of considerable interest in the context of the concerns of this chapter in two main respects: first, the grounds for its censorship and, second, its location within contemporary debates about the suitability and worth of the dominions' territories as filmic backdrops that could compete with America's natural climatic and scenic advantages.[85] *The Devil's Playground* does 'domesticate' the Pacific in the sense that it shows that productions can bypass arduous and costly travel, yet it failed to domesticate its generic enthusiasms in line with the heightened sensitivities prevailing at the time.

Bindley is cited in the *Sydney Mail* as maintaining that he 'set out to prove what lots of American "picture people" have remarked on, that in New South Wales there is the potential to make any kind of film'.[86] The film was shot at Sydney locations — Mosman Town Hall and at Bilgola Beach — representing the Australian-controlled Trobriand Islands, which, since the publication of Bronislaw Malinowski's famous ethnographic study *Argonauts of the Pacific* (1922), had become known as the 'islands of love'. Sydney lifesavers in blackface masqueraded as an unlikely indigenous population and the remaining players were drawn from among students at the 'dramatic art school' being run by Bindley, including a well-known Sydney socialite, Elsa Stenning, in the role of the heroine.[87]

Given the film's very limited exhibition, there is little evidence with which to gauge its contemporary reception. The *Sydney Mail* described the film as 'a vivid and interesting story of the South Seas ... dealing with missionary life, native rebellion and all those ingredients that go to make up an absorbing and entertaining production' and, in what would seem to be an uncharacteristic criticism of Hurley, argued:

> [When the film] is released those who have not read that the entire sequence of exteriors was taken in the vicinity of Palm Beach will

> wonder at the expense of shipping a large company to Papua ... His island atmosphere is flawless. To the lay eye it would appear genuine.[88]

Incredibly, the Controller General of Customs did check to ensure that the film was not a Papuan production when establishing whether it fell under the Censorship Board's jurisdiction, which testifies, perhaps, to successful staging of the background or to the persuasive codification of the South Seas' regime of generic verisimilitude (or both).[89]

A précis of the somewhat convoluted plot is necessary in order to follow an account of the film's censorship. Naneena (so named by the 'indigenous' population), a trader's daughter, is, in the words of an early intertitle, 'as happy and carefree as the native girls' with whom she frolics. Her father, Martin Herle, is in a pearling partnership with the owner of the liquor store, 'Bull' Morgan. Morgan is defrauding Martin, as a necessary corollary to his general villainy and in the conventional hope that Martin's impoverishment will assist him in gaining access to Naneena. A wealthy young airman, Dick, crashes at sea and is cared for by Naneena, with whom he falls in love. They decide to marry and Dick leaves, planning to return with his family on their yacht. Meanwhile, Herle's son, Bobby, returns from college and, acting on his father's hunch, finds proof of Morgan's embezzlement. Alone, he impetuously confronts Morgan with the evidence, and Morgan protects his racket by killing him.

Meanwhile, native resentment of white rule is growing on the island. Chief Trelua foils an attempt by Morgan and his henchmen to murder his wife for the sake of the ceremonial pearl necklace she is wearing, and rebellion breaks out. As the tribal uprising gains momentum, Morgan seizes the opportunity to force himself on Naneena, attacking her with a bullwhip. The film intercuts between the fronts of the open rebellion (the bar, at sea and in the shrubbery) and the return of Dick on his family yacht, which is itself subject to attack by canoe. The island's missionary attempts to forestall the uprising and is killed. His daughter, Morgan and the eccentric oddity,

South Seas Sal ('Morgan's drink-crazed consort'), combine forces. A passing British gunboat is hailed by the stricken yacht and marines soon arrive to quell the unrest. Martin Herle, Dick and Naneena retire to Dick's family's yacht. Naneena is transformed, leaving behind her simple dress for high fashion, and she and Dick embrace for the film's conclusion.

What were the triggering elements that rendered this particular narrative beyond the point of acceptable representation so decisively as to provoke this first-ever export ban? The compilers of the historical reference guide *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, note that the film is 'riddled with clichés from the South Sea genre'.[90] That the film was judged similarly by contemporary commentators is suggested by the surprise expressed at its banning. The *Evening News* noted: 'The story contains the usual island ingredients of pearls, traders, beachcombers and beauties in grass skirts.'[91] *Everyones* reported that journalist attendees of a trade preview 'found nothing particularly objectionable in the story, but all commented on crudities of acting and sub-titles in verse which tended to confuse the tale and strike a false note in the characterisations'.[92] *Film Weekly*, in the context of discussing a possible reconstruction of the film, 'gave credit to the excellent photography, the exterior scenes and technical qualifications', adding with unenlightening vagueness that 'the story would need to be changed considerably if it is to prove of any value'.[93]

Routt notes that the film's scene of 'luridly erotic' sexual violence (the bull-whipping) is unusual for the period.[94] Pike and Cooper argue that the 'athletic energy' of battle scenes as well as this eroticised attack were responsible for its export ban.[95] Neither of these brief speculations, however, take into account the detail of the censor's stated grounds. In a memorandum to the Controller General of Customs, O'Reilly accounted for his decision in the face of critical publicity. He does refer to the attacks on Naneena and the chief's wife, but made further objections:

> [T]he picture depicts the fighting (a native revolt) against whites ... including the murder of a missionary ... [this] would be sufficient to ban the picture if importation into this country were sought. In addition there is the undesirable relationship between the white and native island population, and it would be extremely inadvisable that an Australian production should exhibit to the world in pictorial form, the actions of whites towards native races in such an objectionable light.[96]

O'Reilly's emphatic account justifies his decision on the first stated set of grounds, then adds more justifications before making the further claim that the fact that the Trobriands were under Australian control was the 'conclusive' factor. He quotes four of the possible five clauses of Regulation 24, thus suggesting a *political* as well as the standard moral motivation.[97] In the light of the censor's final comment, and general contemporary opinion that the film was being treated exceptionally, it would seem that clause 'e' of Regulation 24, pertaining to films 'likely to prove detrimental or prejudicial to the Commonwealth of Australia', contributed significantly to its banning.

In this respect, O'Reilly's main concern was with those scenes of a British gunship blasting its cannons into the rebel line in an 'inadvisable' response.[98] Yet given that eight years later (in a less heated climate of film/empire debate) O'Reilly passed *Typhoon Treasure*'s scenes of an Australian adventurer's heedless slaughter of Papuans without qualification, the grounds for considering this film 'undesirable' and 'inadvisable' should be considered in the context of the debates discussed earlier in this chapter. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to conclude that *The Devil's Playground* provides an example of the least-desirable relationship between the nation, empire and film.

Evidently this film measures the distance between an inflated rhetoric of a cinema celebrating the deeds of empire and the representations made by film producers that would circulate among that empire audience (if permitted passage). In its framing of colonised

Pacific Islands as 'the devil's playground', the film focuses attention on the debased and debasing aspects of colonial life. The film's white traders perpetrate some of the worst excesses of colonial exploitation. The sorry criminality of their intentions and actions offers a direct contrast with the self-reinforcing associations made at the Royal Commission and in censorship between the white race, morality and racial duty in the colonial civilising mission. The film's fantasy of the empire's outposts as sites of sinister doings must have been a particularly unwelcome one for a continent so sensitised to its own geographic isolation. Further, tropical degeneration was an uncomfortable topic in an Australia that encompassed a much-publicised 'empty' tropical north, to which it was hopeful nevertheless of encouraging white settlement.[99]

The Devil's Playground revels in images of racially shared spaces — such as the trading post where rough white mariners consort with native women who are clearly sexually available. It takes place in a promiscuous marginal zone of dirty dealing, exploitative commerce, cross-racial desire and debilitating degeneration. In this sense, it mirrors in its representations of the dynamics of colonial trade many of the fears expressed about cinema's own promiscuous passages and degenerating influence. The film's banning thus aptly demonstrates that while the dominions' *backgrounds* provided all that was required to compete against California's rich offerings, the representation of action in the *foreground* raised far more complex issues. Film-makers' imperatives and hence their interpretations of colonial-interest narratives — and this is hardly surprising — departed irreconcilably from those of colonial administrators, parliamentarians and censors. These conflicts of genericity and the service of nation and empire are further considered in the next chapter in respect to Hurley and Macdonald's film-making in Papua.

Collin's point about the *classed* nature of concern about the cinema is also demonstrated in the film's banning. O'Reilly notes that in contrast with books or plays, 'people of all classes and ages flock to the movies' where 'the devices of cinematography ... grip the attention and appeal to the imagination, giving a more heightened reality'

to its representations.[100] The theatrical melodrama *White Cargo* makes a good point of comparison for approaching the specific sensitivities at issue here. Based on the novel *Hell's Playground*, which was adapted for an Australian stage production in 1925, the similarity of the titles suggest that the play was a source for the film.[101] This controversial stage production attracted attention in the parliamentary debate leading up to the establishment of the Royal Commission, with some senators arguing that the theatre should be included in provisions for film censorship. Senator Andrews reiterated the desired link between fictions of empire and moral uplift in complaining that the play '*White Cargo* depicts the worst phases of tropical life. There is nothing elevating in it.'[102]

From the trade's perspective, this African-set colonial tale exploited the same elements as the South Seas narrative, and, in 1927, they promoted *Aloma of the South Seas* as a film that fulfilled the demand for 'a beautiful dusky heroine and a reclaimed white man' generated by the play.[103] Notwithstanding such putative demand, the British film production of 1929 was also banned.[104] Here again was an example of that British cinema that 'might do incalculable harm' in the dominions.

Censorship in this period, as the trade press's periodic outbreaks of annoyance demonstrate, tended to judge imagery quite literally, supposing in turn a similarly literal reading position for even experienced urban audiences, and this judgment was exercised with particular sensitivity in respect to exported film images. The Administration's responses to film-makers' desire to produce colonial adventures in Papua mirrors this response. In other words, viewing positions were not acknowledged as occurring through any kind of generic field of interpretation (or there was no sympathy for such 'uneducated' or salacious viewing positions). Even if the general and trade press saw *The Devil's Playground* as unexceptionally playing out a familiar formula, censorship saw the film as presenting an undesirable and inadvisable account of Australian colonial activity. In stark contrast, in scholarly writing most of the South Seas films — not just the rather trashy *The Devil's Playground* — have been understood as

formatively generic, and thus consideration of them as constituting any relationship to an Australian colonial imaginary has been sidestepped (or even disavowed), even where compelling evidence points in this direction.[105]

A productive middle path between these polarised approaches would examine the ways in which genre is flexibly deployed to accommodate local circumstances of production, distribution and exhibition. It would seem that some degree of self-censorship operated on the part of Australian film producers, who generally eschewed accounts of the contamination or demoralisation of white people on the one hand and of their fatal or debilitating impact on indigenous peoples on the other. These 'worst phases of tropical life' were not permissible in an Australian film, and were questionable in British production too. In this respect, the banning of *The Devil's Playground* provides an indication of the boundaries of acceptable representation of white-indigenous relations and implicitly points to the ways in which acceptable Australian South Seas films reinterpreted generic conventions to accommodate local sensitivities, supporting the view that the Australian South Seas films did not merely de-eroticise Pacific encounters but further de-emphasised the fact of the Pacific as a *shared* racial space. In its role as an 'inner dike' of racial purity, Australia was also culturally and geographically isolated and vulnerable, and could ill afford to permit passage of filmic representations in or out of the national body that undermined its fragile sense of worth and security.

The disparate threads of the discussion about race and regulation in this chapter combine to illuminate the contexts in which the interwar Australian South Seas films were produced and received. First, in the mid- to late-1920s, the relationship between popular cinema, the empire and the nation was highly contested. The supposition that there was in operation a unified Western 'colonial project', with which the cinema was complicit in social and discursive terms, fails to take into account British and Australian anxieties about the changing dynamics of imperial power. Interconnected with class, cultural racism is a structuring element in this discourse, in the

tropological operations organising the figuring of the 'demoralisations' of American cinema, its 'mongrel' site of production and in the figuring of what is at stake in the defence of the healthy white national body. As a necessary corollary, British cinema needed to be imagined, quite unsustainably, in terms that would prop up the overriding justification of the empire: its role as a civilising force. Yet as is revealed in the evidence presented to the Royal Commission, the rhetoric of cultural racism only thinly overlies a desire to deploy cinema to bolster trade on the one hand, and to control disruptive or 'contaminating' ideas on the other — that is, notions disruptive to the racial hierarchies on which the imperial order of the British colonies depended.

Within the national body, concern about American cinema is driven by a powerful conservative pro-empire lobby group, expressing an 'empire attitude' that is 'an imitation of those ruling values that claim to want order everywhere and are particularly suspicious of anyone who is not grateful for regulation'.[106] Yet it cannot be overlooked that Australia's formative relation to empire also provided the bulwark for the privilege claimed by its racial and cultural self-definition. As the concluding rescue fantasy of *The Devil's Playground* unpalatably suggests, the ultimate defence of the empire's whites' claims or assumptions about 'natural' superiority is military. In this dramatic finale, a British gunboat blasts its cannons at the justifiably antagonistic Islanders. The forces of white colonial 'good' (the missionary and the good trader) finish by combining forces with the exploiters and criminals to defend their own interests, and it is this uneasy coalition that the British Navy weighs into to protect with its own decisive firepower. Anne McClintock notes that however haphazard and contested were the operations of imperialism and however fractured or contradictory the discourses generated in its wake, 'the colonials themselves all too often succeeded in settling matters of indecision with a violent excess of militarized masculinity'.[107] The image of the gunboat offers such an excessive resolution to *The Devil's Playground* and represents the least acceptable face of what Stuart Macintyre in another context calls Australia's 'aggressive dependence' on the bolster of empire.[108]

The Devil's Playground is also an extreme example of the gap between the parliamentary call for empire fictions of the 'highest order' and generic production of colonial narratives tailored for commercial distribution, and, as the next chapter will propose, it is in the production of government documentary films that such official desires come closest to being met. There is no evidence for an instrumental link between the banning of this film and the circumspection of other South Seas films in the series; nevertheless the censor's comments do suggest the ways in which the film fails to render a sanctionable version of the national colonial story and they also draw attention to those elements that *were* desirable and advisable in popular accounts of Australian colonialism. These narratives, as Sections Two and Three demonstrate, contribute to the 'project' of legitimatising an expansionary desire that confirmed the nation's fitness to inherit Britain's colonial role and to thus take its own place among the ruling white nations of the world. This legitimacy is at issue in the representation of enterprise as 'innocent' or 'gallant' in other South Seas films, rather than as rapacious or even criminal resource exploitation defended by violence. Whereas *The Devil's Playground* takes place in a space beyond God-given 'civilised' regulation, playing out darker elements of the lure of the Pacific, in the other films (with the notable exception of *In the Wake of the Bounty*) this lure is restricted to the realms of marketing and generic positioning, and is displaced or forestalled in the diegesis. 'Fitness' is shown in reiterated demonstrations of masculine worth in other films, ones that are singularly absent in *The Devil's Playground*'s meandering plot.

These last comments anticipate the discussion in sections three and four of the cautious negotiation of the terms in which the Pacific is imagined as a space of encounter. First, however, the management of popular cinema for the indigenous subjects of Australian territories will be considered. This chapter has linked the vitriolic ranting about the effects of cinema on the native — and the fact of these being taken to heart — to Wolfe's understanding of 'racialisation' as an irrational and emotive response to sharing space with the colonised.[109] The next chapter returns to evidence presented by

Australian concerned citizens about Papua and New Guinea filmmakers at the Royal Commission, and examines this evidence in light of the highly circumscribed provision of commercial cinemas and colonial censorship policy.

ENDNOTES

1 Cresswell O'Reilly, 1932, 'General Statement Regarding Operation of Film Censorship in Australia', October 5, 1932, Sp6/3, B1931/365, Box 1, 1931–32, National Archives, Sydney; Robert Donald, 1926, 'Films and the Empire', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Vol. 100, pp. 497–510.

2 Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 100.

3 Ibid., p. 101.

4 Benedict Anderson, 1991 (2nd ed.), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso; Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 102.

5 Shohat and Stam's notion of a multiracial empire community for cinema seems better supported in some parts of Asia. The Managing Director of Paramount was reported in *Everyones* (October 10, 1928, p. 10) as arguing that substantial profits were to be made in the South-East Asian states of Java, Borneo and Malaya. Noting a change in taste from that for 'wild-and-woolly westerns', Hicks reports on a discriminating taste for comedy: 'The money is amazing. Give them a big picture of the calibre of *Beau Geste* or *Change* and they turn out more strongly than Australians do to grand opera.' In India at this time, there were 250 cinemas, although only 60 that 'deserve the name', according to *Everyones*, January 6, 1927, p. 27.

6 Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, p. 134. Shohat and Stam (*Unthinking Eurocentrism*, pp. 112–13), in the context of the 1930s, note that '[d]espite the United States' own historical origins in anti-British revolt, Hollywood films often demonstrated as much enthusiasm for European empire stories as did the European cinema'. Brian Taves, 1993, *The Romance of Adventure: The Genre of Historical Adventure Movies*, Berkeley: University of Mississippi Press, pp. 172–6, makes the related point that colonial cinema tended to a cautious generality in respect to history so as to avoid any potential offence in desired international markets.

7 Donald, 'Films and the Empire', p. 497.

8 Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, p. 77. Also see Kristin Thompson, 1985, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907–1934*, London: BFI, on the importance of the Australian market to the American film industry.

9 See Robert Young, 1995, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London: Routledge, p. 92, on the British as the 'imperial race'.

10 Beatrice Tildesley, 1930, 'The Cinema in Australia', *The Australian Quarterly*, December, p. 102.

11 Patrick Wolfe, 2002, 'Race and Racialisation: Some Thoughts', *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 59.

12 John Williams, 1995, *Quarantined Culture: Australian Reactions to Modernism 1913–1939*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 5.

13 Richard White, 1981, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980*, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, p. 110.

14 O'Reilly, 'General Statement Regarding Operation of Film Censorship'. This is not to suggest, of course, that the censor imagined all Australians as wholesome, but rather that he desired that popular culture should play its part in promoting this ideal. In his report for 1929 (p. 12), he identifies the general attitudinal problem for censorship: 'There will always be a part of the community which delights in the vulgar, the sex-suggestive, the lawless and the brutal side of life and there are producers who will seek to pander to that section. Censorship is trying under great difficulties to ensure that the better side shall be presented.'

15 Lothrop Stoddard, 1920, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; Walker, *Anxious Nation*, p. 168.

16 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color*, p. 226.

17 Matthew Pratt Guterl, 1999, 'The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation and Empire in American Culture, 1910–1925', *The Journal of World History*, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 344.

18 *Everyones*, 'Senate Debate on Motion Pictures', March 16, 1927, p. 12. In this instance and throughout this chapter, I have tended, like the debates I am citing, to imagine Britain and her imperial interests as themselves relatively unitary and self-evident. This is a misleading simplification that should be acknowledged, but it is outside the province of this work to address the divisions and contestation within Britain itself.

19 Diane Collins, 1975, 'Cinema and Society in Australia: 1920–1939', PhD, University of Sydney, pp. 245–8, makes the point about proliferating royal commissions.
20 Robert Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods*, p. 49.
21 Donald, 'Films and the Empire', p. 500.
22 Commonwealth censorship in the 1920s and 1930s existed in a somewhat uneasy dual system alongside state regulatory functions. Bertrand argues that state censorship tended to be more conservative. Commonwealth censorship had no (formal) jurisdiction over films produced within Australia, unless they sought an export permit. See Ina Bertrand, 1978, *Film Censorship in Australia*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, for a detailed account of the relations between the state and Commonwealth censorship and of both with the film industry.
23 Donald, 'Films and the Empire', p. 503; R.S. Wallace, 'Commonwealth Film Censorship Annual Report 1927', *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 72, p. 5.
24 'Report of Royal Commission into the Moving Picture Industry', *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. IV, ACT, 1927–28, p. 7.
25 Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 113.
26 *Everyones*, 'The Annual Insult', May 2, 1926, p. 4; *Everyones*, 'Does He Forget That He Is Censor and Think He Has Become a Dictator?', April 19, 1934, p. 5.
27 Ina Bertrand, *Film Censorship in Australia*, p. 159. It is worth noting that the film trade, unsurprisingly and self-interestedly, usually supported the interests of the American producers and distributors and argued, with some justification, that in so doing they were acting for the 'silent' majority of the film-going audience who liked American films.
28 R.S. Wallace, 'Censorship Report for 1927', p. 6.
29 Among the RSSLA and sympathetic senators, the most strident criticism was reserved for the misrepresentation or underplaying of the British military role in American war films.
30 Williams, *Quarantined Culture*, pp. 5–7. John Tulloch, 1981, *Legends of the Screen: The Narrative Film in Australia 1919–1929*, Sydney: Currency Press/AFI, p. 350, briefly discusses the film trade's support for the 'Million Farms for a Million Farmers' scheme and offers an interesting discussion of the bush legend in silent melodrama and its playing out of the yeoman ideal.
31 Williams, *Quarantined Culture*, p. 20.
32 Concern about the threat posed by the influence of American cinema and its media more generally, or 'media imperialism', is enduring and

widespread, and this discussion reflects on the national inlfluence given to concerns that were certainly not restricted to the British Commonwealth or to the 1920s.

33 Wallace, 'Film Censorship Report for 1927', citing Iris Berry, a British commentator.

34 See *Everyones*, 'British Cinemas — the "Hick" Standard', March 3, 1926, p. 14; Donald ('Films and the Empire', pp. 498–9) argues that American cinema 'is controlled to a large extent, by men who are either of foreign birth or are hyphenated Americans ... they did not have with them, nor have they acquired, any degree of cultural, educational or intellectual attainments'; Wallace itemises the other complaints in censorship reports for 1927 and 1928.

35 Collins, 'Cinema and Society in Australia', p. 361. A further important dimension to the relationship between class and the cinema is the industry's own moves towards 'gentrification', in the search for a more respectable, educated and affluent audience: see Miriam Hansen, 1991, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, and Tulloch, *Legends of the Screen*.

36 Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 74.

37 *Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry, Minutes of Evidence*, 1927, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, p. 806.

38 Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 137.

39 *Everyones*, 'Senate Debate on Motion Pictures', p. 5.

40 Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 95.

41 Ibid., p. 92.

42 *The Bulletin*, August 26, 1926, cited in Collins, 'Cinema and Society in Australia', p. 85.

43 Donald, 'Films and the Empire', p. 499; *The Bulletin*, cited in Collins, 'Cinema and Society in Australia', p. 86.

44 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Quota Films, Dangers of Haste', August 13, 1934, in *Inquiry into the Film Industry*, 1934, 5/5412, State Archives of New South Wales, Sydney (hereafter SA/NSW).

45 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Where films often fail', January 12, 1934, in ibid.

46 O'Reilly, 'Film Censorship Report for 1930', p. 3.

47 Williams, *Quarantined Culture*, p. 5.

48 West, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 807.

49 Macdonald in West, p. 817.

50 Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, p. 85.

51 For example, Donald, 'Films and the Empire', p. 497; Tildesley, 'Cinema in Australia', p. 92; O'Reilly, 'Film Censorship Report for 1930'.

52 Imperial Conference, *Summary of Proceedings*, including the 'Thirteenth report of the General Economic Subcommittee on the exhibition within the Empire of Empire Cinematograph films', Philip Cunliffe-Lister, 1926, London, p. 403.

53 'Inquiry into the Film Industry in New South Wales', *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 3, 1934–5, Sydney; Theatres and Public Halls Investigation Committee, 'Theatres, Public Halls and Cinematograph Films: Report and Recommendations with Memorandum submitted by the combined Australian and British film industry', *New South Wales Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 8, 1938–40, Sydney.

54 Theatres and Public Halls Investigation Committee Report, p. 15. The papers collected by Frederick Daniells (hereafter FD Papers) in the National Film and Sound Archive's collection contain detailed records of the extensive efforts to support film production in Australia in the nation's and the empire's interest.

55 Stuart Macintyre, 1999, *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 92, describes Bruce as 'assimilated so successfully into the English upper class that his capacity and evolution as a representative of Australian interests were seriously undermined'.

56 Imperial Conference, *Summary of Proceedings*, p. 57.

57 Ibid., p. 406.

58 Richard Barsam, 1992 (rev. ed.), *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 77.

59 Albert Moran, 1991, *Projecting Australia: Government Film Since 1945*, Paddington, NSW: Currency Press, pp. 2–3.

60 Bertrand and Collins, *Government and Film in Australia*, p. 32.

61 Jaikumar, 'An Act of Transition', pp. 122–3, 125.

62 Blind and block booking were the distributor's practice of obliging exhibitors seeking film supplies to accept not only those films in which they had a specific interest, but blocks or packages of releases, sight unseen.

63 Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, p. 78.

64 Bertrand and Collins, *Government and Film in Australia*, p. 28.

65 Marion Benjamin, 1995, 'Dangerous Visions: "Films Suitable and Unsuitable for Native Races"', in Ken Berryman (ed.), *Screening the Past: Aspects of Early Australian Film*, Acton, ACT: National Film and Sound Archive, p. 143, makes the point about the three audience types.

66 Young (*Colonial Desire*) uses this term.
67 Ibid., p. 92.
68 Edward Said, 1978, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin, p. 49.
69 *Everyones*, 'Is Malins a Motor Cycle Salesman or Film Man?', October 12, 1927, p. 7.
70 Jaikumar, 'An Act of Transition', p. 119.
71 Malins, *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 692–709.
72 Ibid., p. 698.
73 Ibid., p. 958.
74 Ibid.,p. 857.
75 Brian Shoesmith, 1988–89, 'The Problem of Film: A Reassessment of the Significance of the Indian Cinematograph Committee, 1927–28', *Continuum*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 84.
76 Malins, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 696.
77 'Report of Royal Commission into the Moving Picture Industry', F.W. Marks, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. IV, 1927–28, pp. 1371–409.
78 Memo from the Controller General to Secretary, Home and Territories, June 11, 1928, 'New Guinea cinematograph film regulations, Prime Minister's Department, 1927–1942', series A518, item C850/1, National Archives of Australia, ACT (hereafter NA/ACT).
79 Andrew Pike, 1983, 'Non-theatrical Film Distribution', in Gene Harris (ed.), 'Papua New Guinea feature film: now or never', *Report of the Feature Film Working Group*, Port Moresby.
80 Shoesmith, 'The Problem of Film', p. 75.
81 Bertrand, *Film Censorship in Australia*, p. 48.
82 *Herald*, 'Mrs Jacoby Really Lashes Out', November 17, 1966, p. 6. There are discrepancies in descriptions of the film that suggest that more than one version, even of the silent film, was made. Eric Reade, 1979, *History and Heartburn: The Saga of Australian Film, 1896–1978*, Cambridge: Harper and Row, p. 73, traces the film through a number of name changes. The censor refers to some plot events that are not in the version held by the Australian Film and Sound Archive, though this is possibly a matter of interpretation. Nor are the subtitles in verse.
83 Memo from Cresswell O'Reilly, Chief Censor, to the Controller General of Customs, February 4, 1928, in 'Film censorship, *The Devil's Playground* Australia's first sound film, 1928–1930', series A425/127, item 1943/5115, NA/ACT.
84 Reade, *History and Heartburn*, pp. 73, 80.

85 Routt, '*The Devil's Playground*', in B. McFarlane, G. Mayer and I. Bertrand (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Film*, South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, p. 104.
86 *Sydney Mail*, 'Films, Theatres and Players', November 7, 1926, p. 22.
87 *Herald*, 'Mrs Jacoby Really Lashes Out'.
88 *Sydney Mail*, 'Films, Theatres and Players'.
89 '*The Devil's Playground* Australia's first sound film', NA/ACT.
90 Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 148.
91 *Evening News*, 'Censor bans export of first Australian talkie', February 7, 1930, p. 3.
92 *Everyones*, 'Censor Bans Local Film for Exhibition Abroad', February 12, 1930, p. 35.
93 *Film Weekly*, '*Devil's Playground* May Be Reconstructed', March 20, 1930, p. 16.
94 Routt, '*The Devil's Playground*', p. 194.
95 Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 148.
96 O'Reilly, '*The Devil's Playground*, Australia's first sound film', NA/ACT.
97 The sections quoted in addition to 'e' were: 'a' (that the film is blasphemous, indecent or obscene); 'b' (that the film is likely to be injurious to morality, or encourage or incite crime) and 'd' (that the film depicts any matter the exhibition of which, in the opinion of the board, is undesirable in the public interest).
98 In his memo, O'Reilly mistakenly describes the boat as Australian.
99 Walker, *Anxious Nation*, pp. 121, 153.
100 Cresswell O'Reilly, 'Overview of film censorship in Australia prepared for the Imperial Conference 1930', series A461, item A318/1/1, part 1, NA/ACT.
101 Copyright application, *White Cargo*, series A1336, item 17935, NA/ACT.
102 *Everyones*, 'Senate Debate on Motion Pictures'. Such was *Everyones*' irritation at the interfering tenor of the Senate debate generally and the senators' distaste for *White Cargo* in particular that it ridiculed the senators and their discussions in a punning mock-up playbill advertising 'a Sennet comedy' and highlighting the absurdity of conservative responses to the play.
103 *Everyones*, review of *Aloma of the South Seas*, February 2, 1927, p. 61.
104 Tildesley, 'The Cinema in Australia', p. 102. Tildesley notes that the banning of the 1929 British film version provided one of those instances where the censor was accused of anti-British bias.

105 For an exception see Reade, *History and Heartburn*, p. 80, who quotes a source suggesting that the shooting incident might have been judged offensive to British viewers by the censor, as well as attracting his attention in respect of the scene in which the 'native' women throw off their skirts before swimming.
106 Routt, 1999, 'Me Cobber, Ginger Mick', in Deborah Verhoeven (ed.), *Twin Peeks: Australian and New Zealand Feature Films*, St Kilda, Victoria: Damned Publishing, p. 27.
107 Anne McClintock, 1995, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and the Colonial Contest*, New York: Routledge, p. 16.
108 Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, 1901–1941, p. 165.
109 Wolfe, 'Race and racialisation', p. 59.

Chapter Two

'MATTERS NATIVE PEOPLE WOULD BE BETTER FOR NOT SEEING'
Government regulation of cinema exhibition and production in Papua and New Guinea, 1925-62

> Motion pictures penetrate to the four corners of the earth ... to the smallest islands in the Pacific; and those 'hellholes' where East meets West.
>
> All natives, including those studying to be pastors or teachers, prefer Western films to documentaries, which shows they are not so uncivilized after all.[1]

The previous chapter argued that scant evidence led the Royal Commissioners to note in their final report that films 'could instil into [native] minds dangerous and sinister motives', a conclusion seemingly encompassing fears about imitative acts of social disorderliness and the concern that the same ideals of freedom depicted in American films might be extended presumptuously to 'natives' imagining of their own rights.[2] There are, unsurprisingly, continuities evident in the anxieties

expressed about the cinema by white communities in Papua and New Guinea. While in Australia the foremost debates about censorship reflected (vocal and conservative) community opinion about the moral health of the white national body, at risk of contamination from 'foreign' influences and dangerously isolated from the anchor of maternal culture, in Papua and New Guinea, administration policy was principally preoccupied with questions of indigenous control. It appeased a fearful white minority who were themselves virtually invisible in censorship policies that were indifferent to the provenance of cinematic production. In the interwar years particularly, fear and resentment centred on the access granted to indigenous people by the cinema: to share in the popular pleasures of white people; in the spaces and services of white towns; and the imagistic display of white women.

'On the prowl': the evidence presented to the Royal Commission

Chapter One disputed the applicability to Australia's Pacific Territories of Shohat and Stam's claim that the cinema addressed an imagined empire-wide community for imperial fictions, forging connections between *evolué* colonised and their colonial masters.[3] A quite different portrait of cinema-going in Papua and New Guinea is drawn in evidence presented to the Royal Commission. Three witnesses — Charles Leake, the officer in charge of the New Guinea Trading Agency, Thomas Breen, a doctor working in New Guinea, and James Beckett, a journalist and former Inspector of Aborigines — testify about cinema in Rabaul, the administrative centre of the Mandate. Beckett's evidence is the most detailed and provides insight into the nature of the white settlers' concerns.

Beckett claims to have 'closely studied the effects of cinematography on the minds of primitive people'.[4] In the light of the previous chapter's analysis of other such 'evidence' it will be no surprise that Beckett's findings unselfconsciously slide into issues of labour and control, or, as Benjamin notes, 'produce [race] as a problem of law and

order'.[5] In his account, natives do not understand fiction and are 'naturally imitative'. On seeing white people behaving in criminal or immoral fashions with impunity, they are likely to desire the same freedom. On the question of segregated film viewing, Beckett complains that in such sessions 'they have an open go and become excited because their white masters are not present to exercise a repressive effect on them'. He concedes nevertheless that there is some potential to use educational film to teach the 'habits of industry'.

His more specific and most sensational claim links cinema viewing with sexual predation:

> The kanaka ... is naturally morose and his chief characteristic is his salacity. The lewdness openly displayed upon many films in sex-problem stories stimulates him with a desire to do likewise and he does ... Houses in tropical latitudes must be open at night and the opportunities afforded the dark-skinned naked footed kanaka to prowl are many.[6]

Such racialised characterisation of the 'kanaka' is a convention of the colonial discourse of anthropology and there is nothing unusual either in the distaste and distrust suggested by Beckett's comments or their signal failure to appreciate any just cause for moroseness.[7] The point to be underlined here about settlers' concerns is that the claim that Papuans had access to 'sex-problem' stories does not hold up well to closer scrutiny. The explicitly gendered colonial anxiety betrayed in this evidence instead suggests some underlying factors influencing Beckett's account of cinema's effects.

In the late 1920s, there were only two commercial cinemas in all of Papua and New Guinea — in Port Moresby and Rabaul respectively.[8] This very low penetration can in part be explained by the fact that there was no indigenous tradition of urban settlement, and a very limited population with access to the cash economy. Entertainment cinema, then, was a service accompanying white settlement. Indigenous peoples were far more likely to see 16mm film screened at missions, schools, mines or even plantations than to see

features at a commercial cinema.[9] The regulation of indigenous access to the cinema was part of an array of ordinances restricting and regulating the nature of contact between Europeans and Melanesians in these administrative centres, where local people were largely unwelcome except in a service capacity. In these small and insular white communities, 'native' curfew restrictions were repealed only in 1959.[10] In Papua, rigid segregation policies saw whites sitting in different sections of the theatre and using different doors from Papuans even though they did not attend the same sessions.[11]

In both territories, a government secretary or magistrate, and later European members of the police, were responsible for previewing and censoring all films intended for screening to native audiences. In New Guinea, the censor (the District Officer), would grant permits only for:

> a) A film which deals with educational matters;
> b) A film which portrays travels or voyages;
> c) A film which portrays events of public importance or of general interest;
> d) A film that deals with industrial matters;
> e) A film which portrays cartoons;
> f) A film which portrays pictures in which all the actors taking part in the exhibition are natives.[12]

Leake testified that the films shown to native audiences were comics and scenics and its does seem most unlikely that these rules could be flouted in the watchful white township, which moreover had a reputation for very heated responses to any signs of native 'excitability'. Beckett's most revealing answer is in response to Senator Grant's query about the incidence of attacks on white women: 'These occurrences are not very common are they?' Grant asks. 'They are not uncommon,' Beckett replies. 'You hear more of those than anything else.'[13]

This answer points to the prevalence of inflammatory town hearsay and gossip and that this pivots on the safety of white women points as much to their symbolic function as to their imperilment by

supposedly overexcited stealthy black men.[14] White women's security, and the status of their racialised femininity, was upheld as a sign of, and a boundary marker for 'white prestige' in the colonies. In the words of the *Papuan Villager*, a newspaper prepared by the government anthropologist (in basic English) for native readers: 'All Papuan natives have to know that white women are sacred and must not be interfered with ... there is no stronger law in this land.'[15]

Complicating and undermining this fraught semiosis is the dangerous porosity attributed to the feminine body in those dominant morphologies that constitute femininity as the negative complement that throws into relief the masculine body's strength, integrity and impermeability.[16] The white female body is the vessel on whose reproductive capacity racial purity depends and this 'elevated' and even desexualised purpose is undermined by the contradictory and shifting figurations by which femininity is constituted in the cinema and other sites of cultural production. It is not surprising that cinema, which so often functions as a repository for contradictory fears and desires about femininity, should itself become so sensitised an arena.

That fears of miscegenation intensify around the perceived provocations of popular cinema speaks to those same perceptions of cinema as itself promiscuous that were raised in the previous chapter. The resentment and distaste structuring so much of the white community's responses to indigenous film spectatorship is, concomitantly, due to the racialising response provoked by the role cinema played as a literal and a virtual shared colonial space.

Hurley and Macdonald at the Royal Commission and in Papua

The 'white prestige' so dear to the hearts of settlers in Papua was predicated on the appearance of control as well as on the control of appearances. Ted Wolfers sees control as 'the primary aim of colonial administrations in Papua and New Guinea until the 1960s'.[17] Murray's rationale for Papua's film regulations lays out this priority:

> In a territory such as Papua, where a handful of white men control approximately 250,000 natives, who not many years ago were engaged in conflict with one another and many of whom were cannibals, it will be readily understood that the prestige of white man is a matter of the utmost importance and that it is highly desirable that the natives should not be permitted to take part in scenes and incidents which might lower that prestige or which might have the effect of encouraging the native to return to his old habits of raiding and head-hunting.
>
> It has taken the Papuan Government many years of arduous and patient work to bring the natives of the Territory to the present stage of control, and anything that might lessen the control already established or interfere with it in any way is to be strictly guarded against.[18]

In August 1925, Hurley was in the Torres Strait filming *Hound of the Deep* and planning his journey to make *Jungle Woman* in Papua. Nearly two years and much public acrimony later, at the Royal Commission, Hurley was still complaining about the 'ridiculous' ordinance that had thwarted his plans.[19] Murray's Statutory Rule No. 9 (1918), a Native Regulation Ordinance, decreed that native peoples were themselves responsible for gaining the permission to be photographed:

> No native shall without first obtaining the permission of a Resident Magistrate take part in the representation of any scene or incident which is being photographed for the purpose of being or which when photographed is capable of being reproduced in moving pictures or in living pictures of dramatic character.[20]

In making their decisions, resident magistrates were to consider 'the probable effect of the scene or incident to be represented upon the minds of the natives concerned'. The list itemising such sources of risk to white control left permissible little of interest to the fiction film-maker:

> (i) [scenes which] suggest anything of a sexual nature;
> (ii) [scenes which] bring a white woman into close contact with natives, though there may be no sexual suggestion;
> (iii) [scenes which] show an attack by natives upon Europeans, or by Europeans upon natives, or by natives upon other natives;
> (iv) [scenes which] show any criminal action or breach of the law whatever, either by natives or others.[21]

On these grounds, Murray telegrammed Hurley that he was unable to provide reassurances in advance about what elements of his screenplay would be allowed, thus effectively barring him from filming in Papua.[22] It seems likely, however, that the fact that Hurley's plans were not realised was due as much to his prior dealings with the Administration as to the nature of the project itself, and Hurley conceded that past dealings 'may have reacted' on him.[23] It was on his third and most ambitious trip to collect footage, musical recordings and artefacts for the illustrated travel lecture *Pearls and Savages* that conflict with the Papuan Administration occurred. Questions were raised about the party's methods in collecting artefacts and curios leading to the confiscation of the expedition's collection in Port Moresby, where it was held up for some months during an investigation into its provenance.[24] Stung by the slur on his integrity, Hurley describes the officials of Papua as 'so narrow minded as not to be able to see nor appreciate beyond the official self centeredness and short-sightedness of their mean conceptions' and records an intention, thoroughly followed through, of 'allow[ing] an armistice in the feud until I can wage war through the press and the theatre'.[25]

In the ensuing public and embarrassing row, Murray and Ivan Champion challenged Hurley's claims about the value of his collection and the extent and nature of his exploration.[26] The inconvenience and embarrassment Hurley caused the Administration, and the affront of his overlooking their own exploratory, anthropological and curating work as well as the generous assistance they provided to his expeditions, generated the great ill-feeling that set Murray decisively against a return visit.

These incidents, though of considerable significance in themselves, have been outlined only briefly here to provide some context for appreciating the contested, conflictual and shifting notions of 'colonial interest' or colonial service that are revealed. To make *Jungle Woman*, Hurley reinvents or repositions his colonial self, from that of being a man of education, exploration and science, the (somewhat discredited) producer of *Pearls and Savages*, to being in the urgent imperial service of an Australian-British film industry. In the midst of this bitter dispute, the *Sun* published on Hurley's behalf an open letter to the Minister of Home and Territories, saying: 'He is now actively endeavouring to resuscitate the British film industry, but some archaic Papuan regulation balks [sic] the effort. I feel sure you give him a sympathetic hearing.'[27] It is testament to the persistence and networking of Hurley's propaganda machine that the story of his being denied access to Papua is conscripted to a number of contemporary arguments in Australia about access and exploitation of locations of the Empire and the conditions for a successful riposte to Hollywood domination.[28]

Yet these arguments failed to sway Murray who, 'on the analogy of the last visit apprehend[ed] nothing but trouble and harm from his return'. In an explanatory letter to the Minister, Murray clarified his objections:

> [N]othing in the nature of an attack by natives on gold miners could be allowed ... Nor is it probable that a party would be allowed to export a film which gave an entirely false idea of the conditions of the Territory — for instance by representing conditions to be much more primitive and dangerous than they really are.[29]

In a postscript, he adds that 'any matters relating to sex could not be tolerated for a moment'.

Yet Alexander Macdonald did manage to make an equally, or even more unacceptable film in Papua less than two years later. This visiting Scot was probably better known as a writer of imperial romances than as a producer and little record of his film work is

evident.[30] There must have been some exchange between these two men of empire, as Macdonald's film uses a little of Hurley's footage. Perhaps tips on circumventing Murray's regulations were also included in this exchange, for Macdonald's Papuan film involved just the kind of spectacle to which Murray objected in Hurley's outline of *Jungle Woman*, and should have been blocked at every level of production: script, actors' permits and export permit. While Macdonald noted that the Administration was not accommodating, he nevertheless succeeded in completing this project.[31] *The Unsleeping Eye* is also a far cruder, more marginal and 'objectionable' (in Murray's terms) production than *Jungle Woman*. It is an awkward assemblage of scenic footage, travelogue and imperial Gothic, with the intertitles rendering 'native' speech in a sort of archaic Biblical style in the manner of Rider Haggard's novels. The production of this film demonstrates the inconsistent nature of the Administration's influence and surveillance, even in the immediate Port Moresby area.

Macdonald testified at the Royal Commission to his concerns about audiences who saw only American films:

> [The audience] become convinced that there is only one nation in the world that produces 'he-men' 'red-blooded men' and heroes generally ... illiterate and ignorant as these mighty masses are, they cannot fail to receive an elementary education that is dangerous to our prestige, for the film conveys its message through the eye, which has universal sight.[32]

Seemingly, his film was intended to redress such ignorance. The narrative chronicles the experiences of gold prospector John Challoner, who is clearly intended as an example of the type of he-man needed to bolster empire pride. The film explains that he is 'the kind of Britisher who penetrates the utmost corners of the earth and is happy there'. Challoner has, by unexplained means, appropriated the strange power of a native totem — the eponymous 'unsleeping eye' — and thus gains influence over the labour and gold of this previously ungovernable tribe. The overblown conceit of cinema's

'universal sight' in Macdonald's evidence echoes other evidence that held that the visuality of cinema was particularly impressive on the empire's subject races. There also seems to be an attenuated and rather incoherent link with the 'unsleeping eye' of his film so that, within the diegesis and through its exhibition, the film enacts a fantastic empowering of the empire, according it and its far-flung representatives the capacity to infiltrate and appropriate exotic modes of power and achieve a super-surveillant ascendancy.

If the case of Hurley's exclusion from Papua indicates the extent of contestation of notions of colonial service, the case of Macdonald's permitted production indicates the risible excesses perpetuated under its name. The claims of the film's intertitles are regularly undercut by the disjunctures and absurdities of the visuals, most particularly during the final he-man-versus-the-evil-sorcerer fight to the death, in which the attending 'loyal savages' cannot, or do not in any case, disguise their evident merriment at the unfolding spectacle.

Later, Macdonald further bolstered 'he-man' pride with exaggerated accounts of his own adventures. He reported on his (and his family's) adventures in Papua to the *Daily Sketch*, claiming that a film of the kind he had produced could not be repeated as 'since we left they started fighting again and 14 of the brave fellows who feature in the film were killed and eaten'. Back in Papua, an irritated Murray cited these claims in a letter to the Prime Minister: 'Mr Macdonald [provides] a spirited account of a tribe he never saw ... [he] and his party were, the whole time, either in Port Moresby, or on or about the Government station at KEREMA' (capitalisation in original).[33] *Everyones* would not have been privy to Murray's rebuttal, but scepticism was evident in its report that The Seven Seas Company was back after two months in Papua 'with adventurous tales of alligators, poisonous snakes, and a narrow escape from a shipwreck'.[34] Even though the film was not released in Australia, *Everyones* reprinted an unflattering review by the British trade paper *Bioscope*:

> In this picture an attempt is made to combine drama with travel interest but with very moderate success, for the story is unreal and ill-

> constructed, and the scenery of the ordinary tropical type. Without casting doubts on the statements of its directors, it is obvious it was unnecessary to travel 30,000 miles, for the picture might easily have been made in Africa or the West Indies.[35]

Beyond these comparatively well-known examples, the Administration's records for Papua show that permits were provided for only 10 productions between 1925 and 1941.[36] Some of these were for 'scientific' and anthropological films such as requests from the Department of Zoology and Anthropology at Sydney University (in 1925 and 1927). Others were for scenics, travelogues and records of company work, four for Fox and Fox Australian Movietone News. Although it was acknowledged in these records that the full extent of production was underestimated (and accounted only for Papua), it was nevertheless clear that in these interwar years film production interest was 'intermittent, haphazard and fragmentary'.[37]

In 1926, Murray made provision for ethnographic film-making by exempting the filming of ordinary scenes of village life from requiring a permit. Murray's intention was to control the 'getting up' of scenes of native life. A village dance, Murray explains in response to an access request, can be filmed without permission, and might even be delayed a little to enable filming, but were that dance performed especially for the camera, permission would be required.[38] This seemingly eccentric distinction becomes more understandable in the light of his distaste for the fantasies and imperatives of generic narratives and his concern — akin to that of censorship in Australia — that images of Papua would be read quite literally. Murray's regulations make little distinction between the *literal* response of the 'native' participating in unsettling recreations of frontier violence and permitted incautious proximity to white women, and the *literal* readings of potential settlers or investors seeing these images. Reflecting on his experiences with Alexander Macdonald and the 'unforgettable' Frank Hurley in a confidential letter to the Prime Minister, Murray justifies his current cautiousness: 'I have already had occasion to invite attention to the wrong impression which is

conveyed by blood and thunder stories of imaginary horrors in Papua; and still more by apparently realistic representations of imaginary scenes of lawlessness.'[39]

It would seem, then, that although film-makers might have served themselves liberally of the rhetoric of empire in pursuing and defending their interests at the Royal Commission, this did not extend to sympathy or interest in the views and priorities of colonial administrations. In Hurley's case, the sympathy expressed for Murray's protectionist policies on earlier visits fades in the face of interference with his self-aggrandising showmanship and commercial imperatives. For his part, Macdonald seems more concerned to preserve for the he-man Britisher film producer/colonist the right to 'penetrate to the four corners of earth' than with the probity of his actions once he is there. Such were the conditions in the Territories that government assistance was required by film-makers, yet this need for assistance carried with it no guarantees of favourable treatment. For its part, the Papuan Administration had no interest in the differences between British-Australian or American production, instead judging fictionalisation itself as unhelpful and even dangerous, although it was unevenly successful in prohibiting such production.

Sitting in the dust: exhibition in the Territories in the postwar era

The interwar years saw little by way of educational, political or economic development for the indigenous peoples of either territory.[40] After World War II, however, the Labor governments of John Curtin and Ben Chifley planned to repay the wartime debt to indigenous peoples with a 'new deal'. This aimed to reform labour conditions and follow through on humanitarian obligations assumed as part of Australia's advocacy of 'the principle of trusteeship' overseen by the United Nations.[41] In the context of an ensuing vastly accelerated program of investment in the development of the Territories, leading to eventual independence, the exhibition of commercial and educational cinema was extended to growing commercial and industrial centres such as Lae and Goroka.[42]

In further signs of the expansion of a market for cinema, the Administration was called on to field enquiries from American distributors (one reassuring the Administration of his expertise in providing unexceptional material for 'natives') seeking direct access.[43] It was called on also to intervene in disputes between potential new competitors and the entrenched exhibitors about access to the native audience.[44] In these cases, the Administration's interventions proved ineffectual. It was able to frustrate and complicate the business of commercial cinema but it could not really improve the quality of offerings or properly regulate shoddy practices.

The steady stream of complaints about the quality of cinemas in the expatriate newspapers the *Rabaul Times* and the Port Moresby-based *South Pacific Post* illustrates the conditions in these cinemas as well as broader expatriate concerns. In Rabaul, editorial comment leads complaint about the poor quality — the age and the predominantly 'B'-grade quality — of the films screened. There are also repeated complaints about the insolent behaviour of Chinese youth during the playing of the national anthem (Asian audiences were not segregated from white audiences). Given his monopoly, the paper argues, the cinema proprietor fails to meet what amounts to public service obligation.[45] In the *South Pacific Post*, complaints focus on the viewing conditions: poor sound, fluctuating volume, projecting the national anthem in reverse, blackouts, poor ventilation and the presence of dogs in the auditorium. The age of films, especially newsreels (some more than two years out of date), is also a continuing sore point.[46]

In the *haus piksa* (the 'native' theatres), however, conditions were far more primitive, improvisational, exploitative and even hazardous. At Lae, film producer Maslyn Williams visited 'a collapsed barn' of a theatre where the proprietor would summarise plot events from the stage before screening films in English. He showed mainly westerns and adventure films and undertook his own censorship by closing the projector slide over the parts of the film he considered unsuitable (scenes of undress and drunkenness). His stated desire to obtain access to educational film was regarded by Williams as merely a ploy to secure a free source of distribution.[47] Mr Towers of 'Native Theatres' Port Moresby gives some indication of the quality of the

program when he complains that his films are butchered by inexperienced officers and maintains that delays to supply have left him re-running the same program for a month.[48] A letter to the editor from the 'Teacher In Charge at Kila Kila', however, provides the clearest illustration of the dismal conditions of the native theatre at Koki, which charges a substantial two shillings for adult admission and one shilling for children:

> The present theatre is built out of scrap material left by the army. It has no roof and the floor is ground and dust. The theatre does not have sufficient seats, though the building is large enough to hold 200 people ... most people have to sit in the dust, whilst scores of them have to stand in the lanes stopping fellows at the rear to see the picture. Most times the projector stops operating for more than five minutes ... Everybody has to wait until it re-operates. Sometimes the people are impatient and those who either sit or stand against the wall make a terrible noise on the wall. Many films sometimes indicate 'not suitable for children' but why are children under 15 allowed to admit?[49]

For the most part, archive records and journalistic commentary consulted in this chapter can provide only grounds for speculation about the experiences of those Melanesians whose enthusiasm for the cinema generated such an extensive bureaucratic challenge for the understaffed and ill-prepared administration of the 1950s. The complaints of Mrs Stewart, the hotel proprietor at Lae, at the Town Advisory Council meeting suggest some possible motivations.[50] In the context of calls for tighter censorship, Mrs Stewart notes that no passes are required to go to the cinema, permitting uncontrolled access to town. Moreover, her servants are rude to customers in their haste to leave their work behind: 'Native servants expect to go to the pictures twice a week, the "boong" [native market] on Saturday night, to religious service on Sundays. What is the place coming to?' As in Beckett's evidence, Mrs Stewart's comment only masquerades as a concern about cinema itself. By this account, the cinema offers her

hard-pressed workers a chance to get together, a reprieve from surveillance and labour and some freedom of movement, in addition to whatever pleasures are available from the screening itself.[51]

Mrs Stewart's mode of thinking was considered characteristically old-style colonial by Williams, who partook of that 'hopeful liberalism', which notwithstanding its own paternalism, wished to reverse postwar priorities and put the needs of the indigenous peoples first.[52] Yet changes made to censorship in the era of the 'new deal' for natives were at best cosmetic. In 1947, legislation mandating separate seating and separate sessions was repealed along with the unilateral power of the Government Secretary (or representative) to prohibit native attendance at any event of public entertainment. Censorship provisions nevertheless protected the practice of racially segregated screenings, as did the development of *haus piksa*. Andrew Pike notes that the wealthier and more educated Papua New Guineans began attending 'European' cinemas in the 1960s, but larger indigenous audiences were not present until the 1970s.[53]

In 1947, censorship was shifted from the province of the police and judiciary to the District Commission. The Director of Education was appointed as the chief censor to whom appeals could be made, though the expense of shipping films back to Port Moresby rendered the appeal process unworkable. Arbitrary powers of prohibition reappear, moreover, in the chief censor's right to refuse or revoke a permit of any film (even once passed) 'prejudicial to the public welfare or the morality of the community'.[54]

The volume of censorship grew exponentially, and each of an increasing number of districts was called on to censor in light of their specific circumstances (mostly concerning the degree of cultural contact). In 1951, an officer from Milne Bay reported that he spent on average five hours a week preparing the weekly native program, a figure repeated in other estimates. The officers of the District Services themselves were not always keen to 'volunteer' their evenings to 'sit in a tin hut censoring the most uninteresting films'.[55] Yet the familiar complaints about indulgent administrative leniency continued along with vocal complaints from distributors and

exhibitors about the inefficiencies and inconsistencies of legislation. For example, though cuts were made to 10 of *Quo Vadis*' (1951) 20 reels, the Rabaul Town Advisory Council still complained about its screening to indigenous audiences.[56] In this town, where films were not imported specifically for native audiences, just one-third of the films exhibited for European and Asian audiences were judged suitable for the locals.

If the town council's complaints about leniency can be seen as continuing Beckett's tradition of exaggeration, the complaints about inconsistency and inefficiency are supported by the department's own files, as well as in the anecdotal evidence of Williams and others. Despite the urgency of Mr Towers' complaint cited above about the supply of censored film, for example, it is not until three years later that new legislation is finally produced. The beleaguered operator further complained that his audiences were able to see uncensored versions of the same films he was showing at the nearby Koki mission. A visiting American distributor reports (perhaps self-servingly) that a native theatre was showing completely uncensored films in a 'sweetheart' deal with administrative staff.[57]

The delay in which Towers was caught up was occasioned by the protracted (and ultimately unsuccessful) attempts to find an acceptable, affordable and uniform way of dealing with censorship, in 16mm and 35mm formats, while still retaining the localised control that so frustrated the economics of distribution. A refusal to expend the necessary funds, as well as interdepartmental rivalries, contributed to the problem, as well as the Administration's inability to deal successfully with the opaque business practices of distributors. The initial impetus to produce uniform legislation across the administratively unified Territories occurred in 1950, but it was not until 1953 that legislation was enacted that provided films with a Territory-wide permit, with the limitation that the Chief Censor could revoke that permit for particular indigenous groups.

While films with colonial themes, such as *Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Drum* (1938) and *East of Java* (aka *South Sea Sinners* [1950]), were repeatedly deemed unsuitable, Westerns — the most

popular fare — were passed without cuts. A scene where a trader was assaulted was cut from *Outcast of the Islands* ([1951], a British crime film set in Malaysia) and the murder of the copilot and a fight between two women were cut from *Miraculous Journey* ([1948], a psychological study of plane crash victims in a jungle). That these cuts were made, while in contrast the indigenous American attack on white travellers in *Stagecoach* (1939) passed without notice, suggests a greater sensitivity in respect to recognisable Pacific and jungle locations and/or a generic exempting of this most popular type of action film.[58]

The conclusive sign of the inconsistency of censorship is that even the Administration's own prepared lists of cut, rejected and passed films are inconsistent, showing a significant number of films simultaneously listed as both suitable and not suitable.[59] This was more than merely a sign of administrative overload and disorder. Indeed, it is difficult to see how consistency could be achieved in the absence of evidence indicating any deliberations about the grounds of censorship. In one unusual letter, the District Commissioner of Rabaul reflects with some disquiet on his own incapacity to establish the grounds on which to base decisions about the censorship of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1950) for an indigenous audience. He asks for a second opinion, but the costs are judged prohibitive.

The Administration's broad parental intent is nevertheless evident, and its paternalism is well captured in Cleland's words. It had in mind something more restrictive than an Australian 'G' rating (the Chief Censor notes that unsuitably disrobed women appear even in 'G' rated films) excluding:

> Anything detrimental to the Crown or Government;
> Brawls between white and coloured races;
> Gangster films;
> Love scenes or drunken scenes;
> Scenes depicting shooting of people in brawls;
> Films depicting slavery or cruelty to coloured people;
> Adverse propaganda;
> Sex films or anything of a suggestive nature.[60]

An updated list of the Department of Native Affairs' recommendations for excision prepared a decade later repeated the above list's emphases, and further included scenes of 'cruelty to animals' and 'children or disabled people being ill-treated'.[61] This doctrinaire infantalisation of the indigenous audience reveals an increasing concern with issues of social control, which became more specifically motivated in the face of organised dissent emerging in the 1960s. The notion of 'staging' access to popular cinema through regionally based censorship — as well as the exclusion of what would now be called 'adult themes' — also indicates the lingering presence of the notion that 'primitive' peoples existed at an earlier stage of cultural development, either as 'children' or evolutionary forebears.

In 1962, the Chief Administrator repealed the specifically racial provisions of cinema censorship, as part of a broader agenda for the removal of discriminatory legislation. Although such changes were urged by visiting UN missions, Wolfers argues that they arose as much from an increasing Australian self-consciousness about how out of step with international decolonising trends was the paternalism of its 'protectionist' and segregationist polices. A letter from the Chief Administrator to the Secretary of the Department of Territories in 1960 records the stated need to relinquish such approaches and the painful reluctance to do so. A committee established to investigate discriminatory legislation was said to have agreed 'that it was easy to go too far and be over-protective'. Yet the letter's main concerns lie not with a reluctantly ceded (but 'well-meaning') paternalism, but once again with law and order. The letter compulsively returns to concern about 'undesirable political content', 'racial problems and racial strife', 'strife, violence and insurrection', 'the colour problem', 'racial discrimination' and 'of course the problems of race relations unsuitably depicted'.[62]

The 1962 legislation adopted Australian censorship provisions. Yet the government never intended the indigenous population to see the same range of commercial films that were available to audiences in Australia. The expatriate community complained bitterly that now they would also be subject to the same policies as native

audiences. Making front-page news, the Chairman of a vocal Town Advisory Council complained that '[s]omebody outside the Territory had cried "discrimination" and the Government had run for cover ... When these regulations are in force Europeans will only be permitted to view films some public servant approves of as suitable for the simple native.'[63] Leaving aside the racist paternalism, this concern was soundly based. In a memorandum to the Secretary, Department of Territories, the Administrator accepts the offer of the Commonwealth Censorship Board to assist by 'forewarning' about films that might be unsuitable in the Territory. Deeming that 'excessive brutality, obscenity and the like' will already be covered by Australian censorship, particular assistance is requested in respect to films

> (1) dealing with racial problems and conflicts to which local audiences could be very sensitive, particularly films depicting 'black versus white' themes with substantial dramatic effect ...
> (2) films having very mature themes which, despite [the] possibility of the dialogue being incomprehensible to the bulk of native audiences, might contain action portrayed in a manner most unsuitable at this stage.[64]

Thirty years after the Royal Commission, Australian censorship regulations were finally adopted, though racially modified 'on the quiet' to continue the Administration's project of staging access to Western popular culture and regulating access to its representations, in the interests of producing a 'better native'.

Commonwealth Film Unit production

The documentary series commissioned from the Commonwealth Film Unit by the Ministry of Territories in the late 1950s is critical in the history of the relationship between film and colonialism in Australia. This yet-to-be-written history represents a substantial and significant study in its own right, but without some brief account included here,

this chapter would be an incomplete or misleading account of the regulation of production and exhibition in the 1950s.

This series of films provided the means for the Department of Territories to achieve unprecedented control over the representation of Papua and New Guinea. Although putatively about the Territories, they exhibit that narcissism that Thomas attributes to colonial discourse — the story of New Guinea is conscripted to the story of Australian nationhood.[65] In a refrain for which the Minister was well known, Paul Hasluck insisted that the films make clear that '[t]his is the Australian nation, accent on Australia — doing one of the many jobs that belong to Australia. Don't make the Territory so remote and so separate.'[66]

After earlier one-off efforts, film production became continuous during the long tenure of Paul Hasluck, who was appointed by the Menzies government in 1951 to a newly created Department of Territories and held this portfolio until 1963. Hasluck recalls that he was nudged into film production by his advisers, in a period of emphasis on the value of 'visual education'. Yet at least part of the impetus to initiate his own production seems to have been the repeated proposals of and requests from independent producers.[67] Maslyn Williams was appointed by the Film Unit as producer in charge and worked on films in PNG during the next eight years. Williams remembers that, rather like Murray before him, Hasluck was sceptical about film, cautious of public relations initiatives and scornful of popular adventure works on PNG, such as those by Ion Idriess and Frank Hurley.[68] Hasluck carefully and comprehensively laid out his view for an 'unvarnished' account of the Territories in a series of meetings with Williams. Williams then undertook an extended research trip before submitting a detailed proposal to the Minister, over which further negotiation took place. A further research trip was then undertaken. This documentary project was directed, instrumental and grounded in a markedly different way to the only major prior government initiated production, the postwar reconstruction project, *Native Earth* (1946).

Hasluck clearly identified three audiences for the film series' educative address: interested Australians; young people with a possible

interest in a career in Papua and New Guinea; and the UN and other international organisations. In a period of bipartisan domestic support for Australian policy on the one hand, and scrutiny by the UN and its visiting missions on the other, it is unsurprising that the department was most preoccupied by the international address of these films. The visual education of indigenous audiences was an early casualty of reformulated priorities.

Hasluck also consistently de-prioritised the production of ethnographic film in the series, though urged to this by the Principal of the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) and Williams. Effectively, this meant that the everyday of indigenous lives was excluded. Instead, these were to be films about Australian 'development' of native life. Native lives were to serve to demonstrate to the UN the scale of 'Australia's 'problem' and to justify any perceived shortcomings in progress. They were, in short, to represent the 'before' of development, as a memorandum stresses:

> The need for suitable screen material to bring home to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations features affecting the administration of the Trust Territory ... demonstration of the extremely backward condition from which a large portion of the population have to be advanced, and the exceedingly difficult terrain over which communications need to be maintained.[69]

Though later Williams managed to incorporate elements of his own stylistic and ideological preferences into his work, he initially adhered closely to the department's agenda. During his preliminary research tour he noted that '[t]here is so much development material to look at here that it is unlikely that I will have the time to do much about the exotic aspects of native life'.[70] The Minister claimed that he was determined to excise the pandering to sensation that characterised earlier representations but it is also the case that scenes of 'primitive' life were clearly seen as problematic and likely to be judged by UN audiences as evidence of Australian negligence or tardiness, or complacency and indulgence. A strongly promo-

tional and narcissistic bent is evident in the so-called 'unvarnished' accounts the Minister desired. The films largely excluded, or at least de-prioritised, the peoples of PNG as audiences while as subjects their everyday lives were ethnocentrically displaced, through the use of terms such as 'exotic' and 'colourful'. Their participation was conscripted to the goal of illustrating Australia's mission.

This mission was for development, especially in the areas of health and education (in collaboration with the religious missions), agriculture and other primary industries and in structures of local governance, and the films were dedicated to the promotion of government policy. Overwhelmingly, the films of the 1950s and 1960s figure colonialism as a logistical challenge, as reducible to and best approached not as an humanitarian or cultural issue, but as a problem of good management. Australia presents PNG as a 'problem' for Australia, and proposes Australian institutions, ideals and attitudes as models for the solution. In the mirror of New Guinea, Australia is reflected as the ideal postwar nation. The most programmatic example of this is the late-1950s black-and-white three-part 'Development' series addressing areas of political, economic and social development which were so important to Hasluck. Indigenous peoples obediently volunteer for the activities that figure their 'after development' lives in image after image of orderly, uniformed (literally, as scouts or nurses for example), sanitary assembly, a further reflection of the emphasis on control and regulation repeatedly noted in this chapter.

The problems with this 'before/after' format were evident at the time. In *Political Development* (1959), the 'before' section shows a lively, adversarial meeting of village elders in a *haus taboran* in the Sepik. In contrast 'after' shows subdued, awkward men in Western clothes sitting at tables and chairs. The ABC-accented male voiceover attempts to anchor interpretations of the scene: 'The best of their way of life is being blended with our democratic institutions.' A record of the responses of Department of Territories staff, however, describes as 'unfortunate' the 'contrast of the lively village discussions and the static spiritless Council meeting, suggesting the ineffectiveness of the

latter'.[71] Williams' is more direct in his criticism: '[P]articipants could not be brought to fully understand the purpose of the film, or to believe in its validity, but could only go through the actions which they assumed were those required of them.'[72]

World War II had made Papua and New Guinea familiar and interesting to a broad range of Australians in unprecedented ways, and in middle of the 1950s public interest in the work of the Australian Trusteeship began to widen.[73] In this context the first colour productions, the introductory survey film *Papua and New Guinea* (1956), and then *New Guinea Patrol* (1958), were both distributed theatrically as well as extensively in non-theatrical circuits such as universities, schools and embassies. The response to these early films was not only overwhelmingly positive, but elicited just the type of sympathetic understanding of the 'problem' that was actively sought from diplomatic and United Nations committee audiences assembled at various Australian overseas missions.[74]

The claimed impetus for film production in Hasluck's account—that is for indigenous visual education—is something of a postscript to this brief account of the Commonwealth Film Unit's production. The usability of educational film in the Territory was circumscribed by the obstacles facing its deployment. In the early 1950s when a visual education officer was appointed to the Special Services Division of the Department of Education, the cheaper and more manageable technology of film strips which could be viewed with pressure lamp projectors was often preferred.[75] In late 1950s outback centres of New Britain saw their first films.[76] The first mobile cinema was a converted ambulance, showing films across thirty-five locations on the Gazelle Peninsula, to audiences who rarely numbered less than four hundred at a time.[77] Educational films could be sourced from the National Library of Australia as well as from local collections.[78] Nelson notes that by the middle of the 1960s there were twenty-five such travelling cine-teams staffed by Papua New Guinean projectionists, taking educational films, including productions made by the Administration, to villages.[79] The production function was later separated out from the Department of Education and became part of

the Administration's Extension Services in the 1960s. This infrastructure for production that carries over into independence and provides an initial base for the production of very differently styled films from the early seventies onwards, included works of major significance in the history of Australian documentary cinema.

Williams offered support, encouragement and such resources as he could acquire, to the Department of Information and Extension Services.[80] When he reflects back on the work of the Unit on the occasion of the 1966 Round Table on Ethnographic Film, an UNESCO sponsored project, he distinguishes strongly between Unit productions and those of Extension Services films, arguing that the latter represented the closest thing to an ethnographic record produced.[81]

Through undertaking its own production and developing non-theatrical circuits of exhibition in the late 1950s, the Administration was able to come closer to exerting the influence it sought (at least at the level of representation), illustrated by the mainly didactic and instructional, but also in part ethnographic interests, of films of the Department of Information and Extension Services.[82] Yet this was a minor part of government film production. The most overtly instrumental deployment of, and the most significant financial investment in cinema in the period examined, however, was in works not directed at indigenous audiences at all, but instead at United Nations bodies and Australian audiences.

It is evident from this discussion that cinema played only a marginal part in the colonial culture of Papua and New Guinea in the interwar years, and a more significant though still circumscribed part in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, this chapter has noted some factors that must severely qualify the notion that fiction cinema functioned as an instrumentality of colonial discourse for indigenous audiences, operating, for example, to 'interpellate colonial subjects by incorporating them into a system of representation', in the words of a frequently cited passage by Helen Tiffin and Alan Lawson.[83]

A more useful way to reflect on the role that entertainment may have played in colonial culture is provided in Richard Maltby's

questioning of assumptions about the 'Americanisation' posited as an effect of Hollywood's export success.[84] Taking the example of the Western, Maltby questions the extent to which this genre can be understood as a vehicle for American mythologising outside its domestic site of consumption. He argues that consideration of the specific contexts of reception (for example, print quality, and in this instance, the viewing conditions of native cinemas), as well as cultural factors (such as the search for common frameworks of interpretation) suggest that film should instead be seen as providing a 'middle ground' between cultures, a place for a creative negotiation of meaning, both inventive and, possibly, actively self-serving.[85]

A low cost junking process of selection on the part of distributors was in the first instance responsible for the commercial films available for screening in the Territories. These already poor quality prints were, furthermore, much abused by low grade projection facilities, and exhibited in erratic screening conditions where English dialogue would have aided narration for only well-educated viewers. The 'butchering' excisions of censorship must have further added to the 'panoply of physical deconstructions' in these prints.[86] The vast cultural differences operating — even in audiences with accumulating film experience — as well as the contexts of exhibition, must at the very least complicate or moderate the operation of entertainment cinema as an instrumentality positioning colonial subjects. Even as administrations permitted the viewing of fiction films in the postwar easing of restrictions (in New Guinea), fictions glorifying the 'deeds of Empire' (inevitably depicting fighting) or representing relations between races (excepting Westerns) were particular targets of censorship policy. In contrast, the disciplinary organisation of racially segregated viewing and the scaled distinction between the provisions of cinemas for white viewers (however modest) and those of improvised native cinemas would seem to be more significant in (re)producing notions of racial entitlement in the Territories. Even so, it is possible to speculate that in the context of the restrictions that organised indigenous life in towns, the cinema provided opportunities that were taken up (notwithstanding its significant entrance costs).

Maltby's deliberations on the contexts and nature of reception outside the United States offers a useful counterpoint to the programmatic Administration's, and the nervous expatriate white population's narrow focus on censorship. For successive administrations along with white communities, cinema exhibition was a site where racial anxieties concerning sharing space with the colonised were played out. It provided access to the space of Western popular entertainment and showed ideas and images — of dissent, conflict, uprising against oppression, 'unguarded' behaviour and white women revealed in unbefitting behaviours (if indeed revealed at all) — that intensified these anxieties. Throughout the period discussed, the exhibition of commercial cinema was regulated by policies that expressed the protectionist nature of governance, at the same time as they were underpinned by a need to exert control, in part at least to appease the nervous white population. During Murray's period of office in Papua, 'control' expressed static rather than developmental aims, signifying the avoidance of 'riotous' excitement and/or otherwise unsettling examples that might be set by either viewing fiction or participating in its making. In the 1950s, 'control' gathers further shades of meaning. It shares with development policy that disciplinary concern to 'produce' the right sort of native as well as reflecting far more specifically motivated fears about organised resistance to government policy and practice. Yet notwithstanding these minor shifts, these policies suggest that the conclusion of the Royal Commissioners, that 'vivid and lasting impressions are retained by natives, and frequently their imagination is riotously aroused' proved to be an enduring one.

However it is evident that even in its own terms the Administration of the 1950s was unable, consistently, to regulate cinema exhibition. It could, and did, nevertheless retard and complicate aspects of the industry even though there was considerable goodwill backing its complex efforts towards enabling access to commercial cinema for indigenous audiences. Yet if cinema can be understood as a potential cultural 'middle ground' of culture, one of cultural adaptation as well as invention, then the question of what

was actually achieved by the Administration's crude approach to censorship is even more open to question. The 'aura of government' conferred by the legislative process of making colonial policy and the weight of its bureaucratic apparatus, in Thomas' view, sometimes served to mask or compensate for very limited or uneven practical control, for the 'gestural character of efforts to govern, sanitise, convert and reform'.[87]

ENDNOTES

1 *Australian Sporting and Dramatic News*, 'Black Brother as a Picture-Goer', October 20, 1928, p. 24; travel notes in Maslyn Williams Papers, MS 3936, box I, folder 1, November 1955, p. 13, National Library of Australia (hereafter MW Papers).

2 *Report of the Royal Commission*, p. 8.

3 Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 101; Edward Wolfers, 1975, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea*, Brookvale, NSW: Australian and New Zealand Books, p. 9, points out that 'Few Papua New Guineans have ever known that "intimate enmity" bred of intense and protracted contact with the coloniser's culture which stimulated nationalism among the *évolués* in other colonies.'

4 Beckett, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 812.

5 Benjamin, 'Dangerous visions', p. 149.

6 Beckett, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 812.

7 Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 6.

8 The spread of cinema into the Pacific Islands was uneven. For example, while in the late 1920s films were exhibited commercially throughout the Cook Islands, there were none in the neighbouring British Solomons until the 1950s, as noted in *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 'Cinema and the Native', September 1956, p. 131. Charles Chauvel, corresponding to *Everyones* ('Showmen of the South Seas', September 5, 1928, p. 13), provides a colourfully chaotic account of Papeete's Theatre Du Moderne that contrasts starkly with the segregated picture-going experience described by Papua and New Guinea's regulations:

> Adapted from a large copra shed, with a native orchestra perched high on the wall playing variated jazz tunes upon windy concertinas, banjos, guitars and mouth organs, the combined sound is little better than that which emanates from Ah Foo's chop suey joint a little

further down the street. A native interpreter chaperones this symphony orchestra, interpreting the English titles to the Tahitians in their own tongue ... Sometimes becoming ambitious he attempts to interpret ahead of the story and is volubly 'told off' by the natives when they find he has led them astray. It is a motley crowd that fills the show; Tahitians, French, English, American, Chinese, Seventh Day Adventists, sailors, beachcombers and Mormons.

9 While the role of the missions is certainly an important component of any comprehensive account of film exhibition in the Territories and a fertile area for further research, it is beyond the scope of this project. Indigenous people conscripted to war service might also have seen films at American military bases, though not at Australian ones.

10 Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule*, p. 45.

11 Regulation 1, Places of Public Entertainment Ordinance, August 10, 1915, p. 152, in *Territory of Papua Gazette*.

12 *New Guinea Gazette*, July 7, 1927, p. 211.

13 Beckett, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 812.

14 I rely for this claim on Amirah Inglis, 1974, *'Not a White Woman Safe': Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Port Moresby*, Canberra: Australian National University Press. This is an important study of the introduction of the White Woman's Ordinance in 1926 — a law mandating the death penalty for rape and attempted rape, and flogging for other sexual offences — which was proclaimed in Papua in response to a vastly exaggerated perception of such danger. Inglis describes heated town reactions as part of a siege mentality on the part of a population obsessed with racial purity and blind to an extraordinary extent to any reason for indigenous resentment. While Inglis discusses factors specific to the Port Moresby community, such as their antagonism towards Murray and disappointment about financial returns, sexuality functioned as an intensified site of racial anxiety in Rabaul and Port Moresby.

15 *Papuan Villager*, untitled item, 1930, p. 2. This newspaper, which was written in simple English for a Papuan readership, is full of advice on how Papuans should behave. Inglis (*'Not a White Woman Safe'*) suggests, however, that its role finally was more reassuring than didactic, as its principal readership was expatriate.

16 Elizabeth Grosz, 1989, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin. Chilla Bulbeck, 1992, *Australian Women in Papua New Guinea: Colonial Passages 1920–1960*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, makes the further impor-

tant point that the equivalence made between the primitive and the sexual in PNG provided a contrast with civilised white men's putative control over their sexuality and masked the much greater incidence of white men's sexual exploitation of Papuan and New Guinean women.

17 Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule*, p. 5.

18 Murray, 'Photographing natives in Papua', in 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Captain Frank Hurley re permission to photograph natives in Papua', series A518, item H141/3/, December 14, 1925, NA/ACT.

19 For example, in Hurley, *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 169–74.

20 Statutory Rule No. 9, Picture Shows, 1918, *Territory of Papua Gazette*, p. 76.

21 *Territory of Papua Circular Instructions*, 1931 (reprinted).

22 Telegrams exchanged between Lieutenant-Governor Murray, Port Moresby, and Captain Hurley, August 13–21, 1925, in 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Captain Frank Hurley'.

23 Hurley, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 174.

24 Murray, with whom Hurley initially had a very positive relationship, in Hurley's account was absent from Papua when the collection was first confiscated. He supported the actions of his officers, however, and an inquiry by the local magistrate found that while 'natives' sold most curios willingly, some items that they refused to sell were stolen by Hurley and McCulloch and the natives were too frightened to protest 'as they thought the expedition was in some way connected with the Government'. The report absolves the two of intimidation or misleading natives but finally reflects poorly on Hurley's methods and those of the Administration itself, in 'Report on Hurley and McCulloch, Resident Magistrate, Kikori to Government Secretary', Port Moresby, March 2, 1923, Frank Hurley Ethnological Collection, 1923, series A1/S, item 23/10606, NA/ACT. See Sally Jackson, 1988, 'A Life in the Open: Frank Hurley's Papuan Odyssey', *Metro*, No. 115, pp. 43–9, and the relevant National Archives files.

25 Entry in diary, January 12 to June 26, 1923, series 1, item 13, FH Papers, pp. 6, 28. At the Royal Commission, Hurley rather disingenuously argued that it was the *Sun*'s proprietors (his sponsors) who 'made such a terrible noise about it' (*Minutes of Evidence*, p. 174).

26 *Sydney Morning Herald*, letters to the editor from J.H. Murray and W.W. Champion, February 9, 1923, in Frank Hurley Ethnological Collection, NA/ACT.

27 *Sun*, editorial letter, August 17, 1925, 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Captain Frank Hurley', NA/ACT.

28 For example, *Just It* ('American and British Films Coming to Grips', October 7, 1926, p. 23) contrasts this treatment with the open access and welcoming conditions provided in America.
29 Murray to the Minister of State for Home and Territories, August 24, 1925, 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Captain Frank Hurley'.
30 There is no record of *The Unsleeping Eye* in either the British or Scottish film libraries. Dixon (*Writing the Colonial Adventure*, p. 12) discusses Macdonald's novel-writing, describing him as one of the many Australian imitators of *King Solomon's Mines* as well as a writer of novels set in the Pacific.
31 *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 814.
32 Ibid., p. 817.
33 Murray to the Prime Minister, November 5, 1932, in 'Films — Papua New Guinea — cinematograph expedition — Mr Melbourne Ward', 1925, series A518, item G141/3/11, NA/ACT.
34 *Everyones*, 'Seven Seas Company Returns', August 5, 1928, p. 7. Pike and Cooper (*Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 148), nevertheless, maintain that the film was a commercial success in Britain.
35 *Everyones*, 'Seven Seas Company Returns'.
36 E. Bonney, Director-General, Department of Information, to J.R. Halloran, Secretary, August 21, 1945, in 'Films to record Australian administration in Papua and New Guinea', 1945, series A5181, item U141/3/1, part 1, NA/ACT.
37 Maslyn Williams, 1966, 'Ethnographic Films Made in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea', *Report Prepared at Request of UNESCO for Presentation at the Sydney Round Table Meeting, July 25–29, 1966*, Sydney: Commonwealth Film Unit, p. 15. That his Administration did not have the means to exploit cinema in the interests of the Territory seems likely. He did provide considerable assistance to the theatrically released *Guinea Gold* (1934), an account of the Guinea Gold No Liability Company's works at the Bulolo River, as noted in attachment to E. Bonney to J.R. Halloran, in 'Films to record Australian administration', NA/ACT.
38 'CRS Cinematograph Expedition', 1932, series A518, item G141/3, NA/ACT.
39 Murray to the Prime Minister, November 15, 1932, in ibid.
40 Thompson ('Making a Mandate') notes that in the far wealthier mandate of New Guinea, with its obligations to the League of Nations, spending on indigenous welfare focused on the fitness and training requirements of the (mainly) plantation workforce.

41 Griffith, Nelson and Firth, *Papua New Guinea: A Political History*, pp. 102–3.

42 List of native entertainment, 25 November, 1953, in Film censorship — regulations, 1947–1962, AN247, FNCA 11/4/1/1, National Archives of PNG (hereafter NA/PNG), notes that in the 1950s commercial cinemas were established in the hinterland of Port Moresby, in the townships of Lae and Goroka and on the Gazelle Peninsula. Port Moresby provided the most 'native' entertainment, with two native theatres screening four sessions a week of films imported specifically for natives. Rabaul had only one native session per week and Lae, two or three.

43 Mr Gridly of MGM to Col. J.K. Murray, Administrator, February 7, 1950, 'Film censorship — regulations', 1947–62, AN247, FNCA 11/4/1/1, NA/PNG.

44 There are a number of these records, such as A518, AH141/3/1, 1954, and EQ836/1, 1955, A452, 1959/3371, 1959–60, NA/ACT.

45 *Rabaul Times*, editorial, February 7, 1958, p. 4; May 15, 1959, p. 1; July 3, 1959.

46 *South Pacific Post*, untitled items, November 10, 1950, p. 9; December 8, 1950, p. 9; December 15, 1950, p. 9; January 26, 1951, p. 9.

47 Travel notes, box I, folder 1, November 2, 1955, MW Papers, p. 71.

48 Towers of 'Native Theatres', Port Moresby, October 31, 1951, in 'Film censorship — regulations', 1947–62, NA/PNG.

49 *South Pacific Post*, letter to editor, July 1953, p. 9.

50 Towers of 'Native Theatres', NA/PNG.

51 Williams (travel notes, box I, folder 1, November 2, 1955, MW Papers) says Mrs Stewart complained to him that the Government was wasting money teaching natives to be insolent.

52 Williams, travel notes, Griffin, Nelson and Firth (*Papua New Guinea: A Political History*, p. 104) use the term 'hopeful liberalism'.

53 Pike, 'Non-theatrical film distribution', p. 151.

54 *Papua-New Guinea Gazette*, 1947, pp. 219–21.

55 'Production of films in the Territory for use by administrative departments', 1950–53, AN 247, SN 367, FNCA 11/4/1/14, NA/PNG.

56 The District Commissioner of Rabaul, J.K. McCarthy, seems exceptional in his attempts to think through what the bases for censorship should be. In response to the Rabaul Advisory Committee's calls for 'a complete banning of [films, magazines, posters and calendars] overloaded with sex', McCarthy challenges the double standards of the sex-magazine-consuming white population and responds: 'It will be

appreciated that the partially undraped human body is of little novelty to the native people ... the normal person, whether he be a European, Asian or native, is not affected by pictures which verge on the borderline of good taste.' Memorandum on censorship of films at Rabaul, from District Commissioner, Rabaul, to the Government Secretary, August 21, 1954, AN247, FNCA 11/4/1/1, 1953, NA/PNG.

57 Towers of 'Native Theatres', NA/PNG.

58 'Films censored for July/August, 1954', AN 247, FNCA 11/2/2, NA/PNG.

59 Ibid.

60 This list comes from a Department of District Services memo (March 13, 1950, NA/PNG), which was to be Circular Instruction No. 104, but it was suspended when it was realised that it could not be applied until the two Territories' separate legislation had been integrated.

61 'Film censorship Papua and New Guinea, 1960', November 1960, series A452/1, item 65/4676, NA/ACT.

62 Donald Cleland to C.R. Lambert, Secretary, Department of Territories, November 17, 1960, in ibid.

63 *South Pacific Post*, 'Stir Over Cinema Censor Decision, Change of Film Laws', June 22, 1962, pp. 1, 3.

64 Cleland to the Secretary, Department of Territories, June 1962, in 'Film censorship Papua New Guinea', series A452, item 65/4676, NA/ACT.

65 Nick Thomas (*Colonialism's Culture*) makes the obvious but often neglected point that most of colonial discourse was not directed at colonised peoples, but rather at the coloniser's domestic populations, further reflecting its fundamentally narcissistic nature.

66 'Films to record Australian administration', March 12, 1956, series A518, item U141/3, part 1, NA/ACT.

67 Castlereagh Films to Hasluck, Proposal for film program, November 16, 1951, in 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Australian Territories Exhibition', series A518, item 0141/3/1, NA/ACT.

68 Maslyn Williams, 1964, 'Foreword', *Stone Age Island: Seven Years in New Guinea*, London: Collins.

69 Memo from Secretary of the Department of the Interior to the Office of Information, January 30, 1952, in 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Australian Territories Exhibition 1952', NA/PNG.

70 Williams, box I, folder 1, November 23, 1956, MW Papers, p. 12.

71 Department of Territories, note for file, October 30, 1958, in 'Production of films recording Australian administration in Papua and New Guinea', 1958–62, series A452, item 61/7890, NA/ACT.

72 Williams, 'Ethnographic Films', p. 39.
73 Paul Hasluck, 1976, *A Time for Building: Australian Administration in Papua and New Guinea 1951–1963*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, p. 213.
74 Various correspondence between the Ministry and Australian missions and embassies, News and Information Bureau, New York, in 'Production of films recording Australian administration in Papua and New Guinea', 1958–62, series A452, item A452/1, NA/ACT.
75 'Production of films in the Territory for use by administrative departments', 1950–53, AN 247, SN 367, FNCA 11/4/1/14, NA/PNG.
76 *Rabaul Times*, untitled item, July 3, 1959, p. 4.
77 *South Pacific Post*, 'First Mobile Cinema in New Guinea', June 1, 1951, p. 6.
78 Pike, 'Non-theatrical film distribution', p. 149.
79 Nelson, 'Write History: Reel History', in *Tides of History*, p. 191.
80 Williams, 'Ethnographic Films', p. 41.
81 Ibid., p. 123. Williams' main criteria for judging a film as 'ethnographic' were that it be well-documented, constitute a coherent record, cover all the diversity of the Territory and provide an 'objective' record free of the structuring biases of the mission or Administration. Extension Services films in the 1960s, which sometimes recycled Commonwealth Film Unit footage, included such disparate titles as *Lusim Trobel Bilong Mipela* (1966), an anthropologically oriented film looking at debt settlement, dances and courtship in the Southern Highlands, and *Leon Fouché, Land Officer* (1968), an instructional film. In a conversation with the author (April 12, 2001), documentary film-maker Gary Kildea remembered that by the early 1970s the approved style of these films was quite unstable as perspective and authority shifted from a conventional white male figure of authoritative leadership to points of view privileging indigenous ways of life. From Film Australia's database, it is difficult to distinguish absolutely between them and the Commonwealth Film Unit productions whose footage they recycled.
82 A similar pattern is evident with the more extensively deployed technology of radio. Irritated by the ABC's failure to cater for any audience but the expatriate one, the minister set up a Department of Extension Services-run network, favouring and training indigenous staff, so as to establish better communications between government and governed. Chronically under-resourced, the success of the service varied across the areas in which it was established, which prioritised sites of unrest, though in these areas the overtly propagandist approach

provoked further hostility, resentment and boycotting rather than providing Hasluck with the public sphere he sought. See I.K. Mackay, 1976, *Broadcasting in Papua New Guinea*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, for this history, which includes an account of the ABC and the Extension Services network merger at independence to form the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC).

83 Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (eds), 1994, *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality*, London: Routledge, p. 3.

84 Richard Maltby, 2002, '"Look at me and love America": Hollywood and Americanisation', paper presented at the History and Film Conference, Adelaide, December 2002.

85 Ibid., pp. 3–6 (page numbers refer to the copy provided to the author).

86 Ibid., p. 5.

87 Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 15.

SECTION TWO
Chapter Three

'THE KEEN BLADES OF DETERMINED MEN'
Travel, melodrama and gender in *Jungle Woman*

> For fifteen years, inclination, endeavour and opportunity have precipitated me into many queer adventures and enriched me at least in experience if not in pocket. Few countries have escaped the prying eyes of my cameras.[1]

Chapter Two described how in public statements made about the production of *Jungle Woman* Hurley effected something of a repositioning of his public persona, from that of the scientist-explorer of *Pearls and Savages* — the man whose photographic 'marvels' could be taken 'for gospel' — to that of an enterprising if lone force 'actively endeavouring to resuscitate the British film industry' — in other words, in the urgent service of the empire's cinema.[2] Contemporary critical responses to this first released product of Hurley's British-Australian co-production deal with Stoll Films are affected by various investments in or positions on this attempt to revive British and dominion cinema, making this the most immediate context for the film's reception. *Jungle Woman* seems to enact perfectly the subordi-

nate place imagined for dominion product in the suggestion that it provides scenic backgrounds for the 'trained actors of Britain.'[3] In this respect the film can be understood as a national project, not so much in the sense that it addresses Australian interest in New Guinean territory and resources, but in that it illustrates how Hurley's work aimed actively to 'resuscitate' or service an imperial pact between Britain and Australia by offering up for filmic exploitation the spoils of Australian sub-imperialism (that is, colonial expansion dependent on British ratification).

Among the series of rather generically confused South Seas films, *Jungle Woman* stands out as a particularly fraught, confused and odd project, and study of its production, marketing and reception demonstrates in turn how contested, uncertain and provisional are notions of 'imperial service' in respect to the contributions of entertainment cinema. Hurley provides a confident summary of imperial agency in his enabling trinity of 'inclination, endeavour and opportunity' (cited at the head of this chapter), claiming the space of the Pacific as a background against which a privileged mobility can be demonstrated. The inescapable 'prying eye' of the camera that Hurley evokes in the epigraph to this chapter also recalls that fantastic empowerment of Western vision proposed in Macdonald's overblown conceit of the 'unsleeping eye'. Yet 'the keen blades of [the] determined men' of Hurley's story falter in their task of carving a clear and purposeful line through colonial space. In *Jungle Woman*, a melodramatic imaginary mode is combined with the exotic 'realism' of travel to produce a narrative about a failed gold prospecting expedition that depends for its restitutive resolution on the fantastically mobile figuration of the 'jungle woman', a character whose presence remains nevertheless reassuring and unsettling.

Hurley's foray into drama production was a brief one — resulting in just the two Stoll co-productions, *Jungle Woman* and *Hound of the Deep*. Discussion of *Jungle Woman* in film scholarship tends to judge the film in the light of Hurley's already well-established moving picture and photographic credentials, the opportunities afforded by its unique location work, and the extensive

enterprise of its production. In these contexts the film is seen as returning little of worth to the national film archive. Arnold Zable calls it 'naïve and simplistic', a judgment substantially supported by Pike and Cooper.[4] Similarly, Francis Calvert deems the film 'very silly' while Rachel Low describes it as 'ludicrous'.[5] Such sparse accounts miss the opportunity to explore *Jungle Woman*'s attempt to conscript the space of the Pacific to an imperial imaginary.

The opportunity and inclination for travel

Hurley shot the location footage for *Hound of the Deep* and then *Jungle Woman* (which constitutes all but a few pick-up scenes shot in Sydney) back-to-back in the latter part of 1925. In so doing, he retraced the steps of early expeditions he had made compiling and then augmenting footage for his illustrated lecture presentation, *Pearls and Savages*.[6] Both of these later films are evidently deeply indebted in incident and epistemology to these earlier travels, as recorded in the richly illustrated book version of *Pearls and Savages*.[7] Thomas argues that the experience of travel, though often itself contradictory, has in recent critique most often been seen as a 'duplicitous tactic of imperial authority'.[8] Defining travel as one of the 'key concepts' of post-colonial theory, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffen, for example, focus on the connections between travel and the colonial acts of commercial exploitation, missionisation and the production of knowledge that assisted in the work of territorial annexation. Travellers 'ostensibly in search of the new ... actually seek ... the already known.'[9] In a similar vein, Shohat and Stam propose that travel films 'lent indexical credibility to anthropology, arming it with the visual evidence not only of the existence of "others" but also of their actual existing otherness'.[10] The editors of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Travel Writing* stress, as does the influential work of Mary Pratt, the importance of travel to a process of national and/or imperial self-fashioning.[11]

The importance of mobility (to be the free agent of one's 'inclination', to be entitled to 'pry') to the fashioning of Hurley's entitled

imperial persona is everywhere evident in his work. (Consider in contrast the resentment of prying or 'prowling' on the part of the 'dark-skinned kanaka' that informed the restrictions on Papuans' freedom of movement in white towns, which were discussed in the previous chapter.) Julian Thomas rightly argues, in fact, that even in his putatively personal diaries, Hurley demonstrates a 'showmanship' dedicated to the assiduous fashioning of his exploits, travels and destinations according to conventional expectations of the imperial adventurer.[12] There is little in Hurley's written account of *Pearls and Savages*, moreover, that might suggest that his travels engendered much 'movement beyond [his] customary assumptions'.[13] To put it another way, his 'customary assumptions' shaped his reporting style, for example, in his satisfaction in finding natives 'just as savage as one could wish' in Dutch New Guinea.[14]

Interlaced with references to imperial literature, the wonders catalogued and illustrated in *Pearls and Savages* speak more to masterful self-presentation than any unsettling of self that might have arisen from his experiences. Elleke Boehmer, noting that imperial travel writing renders new territories in terms recycled from familiar generic frameworks, argues that this pattern demonstrates 'an attempt at both extensive comprehension and comprehensive control'.[15] One example will serve to demonstrate the acuity of Boehmer's insight. At Dauko, Hurley muses: 'Yonder the swell of the old Pacific foams the reef, wafting a time-old anthem — a song of Empire ... On the beach below, Friday croons as he kindles the fire.'[16] The reiteration of 'old' in this sentence ascribes a timeless and natural history to imperial power relations, as if the modulations of the sea itself bring forth a naturalised, imperial order in which the white castaway is forever master and the native forever servant. The reassuring control exercised in the prose of this widely sold book contrasts starkly with Hurley's performance in the public arena, for example, in respect to his imprudent criticisms of Papuan authorities and statements about the 'sex' demands of the American market.

Hurley was disappointed with the American reception of *Pearls and Savages*, and, as he noted in a number of forums including the

Royal Commission, his experience led him to conclude that he needed to 'add drama' to his travel productions.[17] Given the dramatic elements already inherent in this presentation, it is more accurate, however, to propose that from the earliest request of the Australian Board of Missions in 1921 that he produce a film about their work, Hurley's Papuan travel films serially accreted layers of drama.[18] Expressing his disenchantment with 'educational' cinema, Hurley says: 'The idealist who wants to wipe out the sex film must be sufficiently idealistic to spend millions and force the people to see what they don't want.'[19] His loose use of the term 'sex film' fuelled and justified Proconsul Murray's extreme caution, and the connections made between the production of *Jungle Woman* as imperial service and 'sex film' are quite revealing.[20] Hurley's recourse to a transgressive sexual lure points to the extent to which his mastery over the nature of his film-making project was qualified by the demands of market forces and this narrative recycles the tropological sexualisation of territorial 'conquest' as a penetrative enterprise. An uneasy compromise between colonial disavowal of interracial desire (additionally proscribed in relation to Melanesian women in contrast with their fairer Polynesian counterparts) and the sexualised lure of exotic locations is achieved finally in what Stuart Cunningham calls the film's melodramatic 'Victorian pact' — that is, its foreclosing on any temptation to miscegenation.[21] Yet misleadingly racy poster images feature Hurana cradled in Martin's arms while the text claims:

> Love knows no barrier of caste or creed beyond the outposts of civilization.
> A beautiful chieftain's daughter and a wounded young prospector — flung together in the Papuan wilds where no man-made law can reach out to say 'Thou shalt not!'
> Just a man and a woman in another garden of Eden.
> What availed straight-laced convention, when the fierce, primitive call of love rang through the scented air?

Ironically, Murray's film regulations did indeed 'reach out' and forbid the film, forcing a displacement of its production from a dominion-colonised background of Papua to that of Dutch New Guinea, rather undermining the imagined coalition of interest underpinning the pact of empire production. While the poster claims that the film is set in Papua, titles announce that the action begins in 'Merauke'. They do not say where this is while in contrast insisting *precisely* on the gruelling distance travelled by the British cast:

> For this story of romance and adventure actually photographed in natural settings of wild New Guinea, the Stoll Company of British Artistes travelled 40,000 miles and braved perils and hardships.

The film then is forced into a generalised colonial setting rather than one that can be claimed specifically as the birthright of the 'he-man Britisher', the ground of *The Unsleeping Eye*. Hurley, moreover, had written his scenario with Papua in mind, where an extension of Australia's racially restrictive legislation had excluded the importation of Asian labour and where a panoply of ordinances ensured a 'mean and pedantic insistence on the importance of innate racial differences'.[22] For instance, indigenous adoption of Western clothing was severely curtailed. Such ordinances resulted in stark racial polarities that preserved the 'primitive' state of indigenous populations.

While Hurley rails against the 'narrow-minded' and 'short-sighted' protectionist policies of Murray's administration insofar as they interfered with his own film-making plans, it is nevertheless just such a polarised visual economy that he sought, one that meshed with his 'customary assumptions'.[23] James Clifford makes the general point that Western notions of travel (including that of the anthropologist) depend on the convenient and oversimplified figure of a mobile Western inquirer journeying to a fixed-place pre-modern site of inquiry, and this is this world that *Jungle Woman* aspires to represent.[24] As Nicholas Thomas points out, by the 20th century, white explorers who had long been 'discovering' places already known to their indigenous populations were now forced into discovering ones

already known to Europeans as well, and in this unpropitious context (and even to the present day) PNG has proved to be a fertile 'last frontier' for Australian adventurers of all persuasions.[25]

The Dutch site of production, however, was far more unruly and racially hybrid than Papua, and Hurley disparagingly notes on arriving at the port town:

> Never indeed had I seen such diversity of Oriental and Asiatic mixtures and interminglings ... types representative of the countless islands of the Indies, Malay breeds and extractions of every shade from cafe noir to cafe au lait. Natives too, magnificent specimens among this inferior rabble.[26]

The film's scenic footage reveals these cross-currents of Torres Strait cultural interactions as well as the consequences of the transmigration programs of the Dutch colonists. In short, it reveals evidence of many other travels and histories.

One of the particularly odd and unstable aspects of *Jungle Woman*'s story is the deployment of the film's *tertium quid* characters, and this oddity can be understood as playing out or reflecting Hurley's discomfort with the way in which these characters interfere with a polarised visual economy. When the gold prospector Stephen engineers his escape from a native village, he persuades one of his own, similarly captured, carriers, who is unaccountably at liberty, to substitute for his guard. This ruse appears to be dependent on the bizarre and expedient assumption that the film's mixed-race character — the unlikely Indian runner — and the indigenous carriers can be taken as interchangeable with the villagers. In a dastardly act of double-dealing, Stephen sets up the carrier as a decoy (thereby reinstating him as fellow-captive) to facilitate his evasion of the pursuing force. Any popular account of prospecting would have made clear that the carriers and other staff supporting the line were just as much at risk as the chums in this journey. The narrative's lack of interest in the fate of its minor characters' lives is quite conventional but the plot's double-dealings are significant in that they specifically

fudge and manipulate the status of these characters as fellow travellers, rather than as 'fixed-place pre-modern' denizens of the film's site of enquiry.

Dixon concludes his study of Australian imperial adventure by noting the 'sheer difficulty involved in the ideological labour of producing ... the islands as appropriate sites of adventure for English people.'[27] Hurley's Antarctic imperial adventures provided a gratifying 'blank' landscape on which to inscribe male adventure. In contrast, the scenic footage of Dutch New Guinea reveals much that interferes with the presentation of a 'celluloid "preserved" culture', and with the attempt to restrict mobility to that 'something extra' reserved for the cultural construction of whiteness.[28] These contradictions emerge in part because, while *Jungle Woman* attempts nostalgically to imagine a space beyond regulation, its production is dependent on just such regulation. Expeditionary film-making travel was inextricably enmeshed with other aspects of colonisation that inevitably introduced changes that disturbed the picturesque values of the primitive 'Papuan wilds'.

Melodrama and 'realism'

Jungle Woman and *Hound of the Deep* were funded by the British film magnate Oswald Stoll, who had picked up distribution of *Pearls and Savages* in Britain. Stoll was a theatre owner encouraged into production after World War I by the vicissitudes of distribution, and also through a certain degree of national and imperial sentiment.[29] Stoll Films was one of the major British production houses in the early part of the 1920s, and had a commitment to location work. Low describes the company's output as generally stolid and uncinematic (that is, theatrical in conception and style), and as industrially and aesthetically exemplifying the extensive problems facing British cinema of this period.[30] Hurley said he approached Stoll saying: 'I am seeking your support ... to launch a scheme which will ultimately do much towards restoring the prestige of the British film industry.'[31] Stoll provided Hurley with his choice of company players and a modest total budget of £10,000 (including travel).[32]

Much of the discussion of the film in the trade and popular press positioned *Jungle Woman* positively within the contemporary push for film projects that would demonstrate the variety of the empire's filmic backgrounds and their capacity to rival those available to Hollywood. *Theatre, Society and Home*, for example, noted that 'the film reflects credit on the joint British and Australian film enterprise that made it possible, and any little "bloomers" in the story must be overlooked, for it is time the Empire woke up and produced its own films'.[33] Continuity flaws are the most likely 'bloomers' the review alludes to as reviews were generally indulgent towards the Stoll players' old-fashioned theatrical performance style. Yet with its odd mix of scenic footage and narrative, the film does lack dramatic tension and a clear resolution, as even the favourably disposed *Everyones* pointed out.[34]

If by no means compelling melodrama, *Jungle Woman* is nevertheless shaped by its dynamics, and adheres to the conventions of this dominant mode of the silent period.[35] Neale sees 19th-century theatrical melodrama as the 'fundamental progenitor of nearly all of Hollywood's non-comic genres'. In early exhibition catalogues, for example, the noun melodrama is modified by a 'remarkable proliferation of categories', including mystery, crook, society, romantic or Western melodrama, so that the word indicates 'a form of exciting, sensational and above all moving story that can be further differentiated by specifications of setting and milieu ... or genre'.[36] In respect to the South Seas films, such 'specifications' include colonial adventure's emphasis on 'movement through "foreign" lands' and the cultural charting of such space through adventure.[37]

Linda Williams, drawing substantially on the influential work of Peter Brooks, describes melodrama as *the* dominant mode of Hollywood storytelling, concerned overwhelmingly with 'a retrieval and staging of innocence'.[38] Christine Gledhill similarly describes 'a modality which organises ... disparate sensory phenomena, experiences, and contradictions of a newly emerging secular and atomising society in visceral, affective and morally explanatory terms', centrally concerning 'how to live, who is justified, who are the innocent, where is villainy at work now'.[39]

As Brooks observes, the 'irreducible Manicheism' of the melodramatic mode excludes any 'middle ground [or] middle condition' — such as grey areas of moral ambivalence.[40] In the melodramatic imagination of the Australian South Seas films (of the interwar years in particular), there is an analogous avoidance of a middle ground in respect to the imagining of the Pacific as a space of encounter between whites and blacks. The 'backgrounding' of the Pacific and its peoples — for example, in the restriction of the clash between villainy and virtue to the white male players of the love triangle — conscripts the site of encounter as a subordinate background or as a mirror in which national or imperial endeavour can be reflected.

In reviews of *Jungle Woman*, highly variable notions of 'realism' are evoked as a third term mediating between and linking the film's components of travel and drama. Certainly Hurley wanted to retain the allure of the 'authentic' experience of exoticism promised by the travel picture, or more particularly by his own previous work in this genre. This authenticity or 'realism' is shaped by cultural and generic regimes of verisimilitude fashioning travel as well as the quality guarantee and generic expectations generated by Hurley's showmanship. *Everyones* lauds Hurley's success:

> Captain Hurley seems to have made an extraordinarily interesting blend between the accepted drama picture and his own particular type of photoplay of wild scenes. The combination is so deft that one does not realise that both angles are being dealt with equally.[41]

Hurley proposed to Stoll that 'instead of bewigging, bearding, blackening and producing a counterfeit, I want to produce the real thing ... You cannot parody this in a studio.'[42] This finally very flexible approach to the 'real thing' can be linked in part to the particular heightened realism of a Hurley project, the so-called 'Hurley magic'. The four-page promotional spread in *Everyones* demonstrates the point:

> Oversea [sic] movie men have from time to time 'gone south on location' but it has remained for Captain Frank Hurley to give new meaning to the South Seas romance.
>
> In 'Jungle Woman' one finds none of the stock studies of drunken beachcombers, brutal planters, placid missionaries, or ill-treated native girls ...
>
> Instead, the magic of Captain Hurley takes one direct to the New Guinea he knows and the natives he understands. He presents a movie, rich in the majestic tangled, or swampy, pest-infested scenery of the interior — he builds against that background, a logical, easily moving romance of love and jealousy and sacrifice and incidentally cleverly suggests the psychology of the native race.[43]

Seemingly following its own advice to focus on the positive, *Theatre, Society and Home*'s review pays little attention to the narrative and positions the film as travelogue:

> [*Jungle Woman*] supplies new thrills and backgrounds for the jaded picture fan ... the native scenes are filmed with uncanny sureness, and the scenery of New Guinea makes the town-sick one long to pack up is [sic] traps and get to a place 'where every prospect pleases'.[44]

The notion that enterprising location work guarantees realism is evident in the *Brisbane Courier*'s claim that the 'charm of this picture is its absolute naturalness and the grandeur of the setting'.[45] The *Daily Mail* makes the bald claim that 'Captain Frank Hurley has filmed the real thing'.[46] Location work also functions to conflate the realms of the diegetic and non-diegetic in accounts of the adventures of the film's production. For example, the *Courier Mail* reported that 'more than 300 natives attacked the prospectors' camp with a realism that was decidedly uncomfortable'.[47]

Staiger explains that the pervasive claims about realism in advertising of this period included such contrasting aspects as the dramatic rendering of heightened experience (that is, through staging

effects and spectacle) and 'showmanship' (the professionalism of producing suitable entertainments).[48] A scene in which a snake bites Grace Savieri (Hurana) was shot at La Perouse, near Sydney, and *Everyones* promises that it 'will add a real thrill ... [it] shows exactly to what extent the modern movie producer is prepared to go in order to infuse realism into his pictures.'[49] In similar fashion, realism is claimed on the grounds of the hardships of production, especially for Savieri, who could not scratch her mosquito bites for fear of removing her blackening make-up, who suffered from dengue fever, and became covered in leeches while in the river. Location experience even grants an authenticity to Savieri's racial cross-dressing: 'The ordeal with the terrific tropical heat had to be endured, the same as if she were a native girl.'[50]

The melodramatic mode has often been associated with a failure or excess of realism. In respect of *Jungle Woman*, however, and as Staiger and Neale demonstrate more broadly, the discursive relations between realism and melodrama are complex and shifting so that dramatic thrills as well as location shooting invoked notions of 'realism'.[51] Insofar as notions of 'realism' are discursively anchored, it is not in respect to the authenticity of the film's colonial narrative but in respect to the showman-adventurer persona of Hurley, itself formed within the cultural regimes of verisimilitude associated with imperial travel, adventure and showmanship. A remarkably appropriative process of circumscribing the 'real' of colonialism operates in this circularity.

The keen blades of determined men

The film's narrative concerns two gold prospecting 'chums', Martin South (Eric Bransby) and Stephen Mardyke (Jameson Thomas), who are held up awaiting supplies, and visit Peter Mack (W.G. Saunders) and his daughter, Eleanor (Lillian Douglas), at Bunga Bunga, a copra plantation on the fringes of the 'Papuan wilds' (in the claims of the poster). By the time their supplies and carriers are organised, Martin and Eleanor have become close. Jealously watched by Stephen,

Eleanor provides Martin with keepsakes for his journey. Cutting a path through the deep jungle, Martin and Stephen pan successfully for gold. Soon, however, their camp is attacked by a tribe of headhunters and the now injured Martin and Stephen are taken to their village. Their fate is decided by Hurana, (Grace Savieri), who counsels against their execution for fear of punitive reprisals. She takes Martin into her care and tends his wound. Stephen escapes and, on returning to Bunga Bunga, he tells Eleanor that Martin was left for dead and attempts to replace him in her affections. Meanwhile, Martin, now recovered, escapes with Hurana's assistance, and, after numerous close shaves, Martin and she evade their pursuers. Shortly thereafter Hurana is bitten by a snake and dies just as Martin reaches the plantation. Stephen's villainy is revealed and Martin and Eleanor are reunited.

The opening shots of *Jungle Woman* suggest that this is a travel picture rather than a drama about a journey. In between the opening titles, which reiteratively establish Hurley's authorship and stress his company's enterprise, there is a scene of tribal dancing in which an outer circle of dancers in ceremonial dress circles a tighter group. The film cuts to a shot of the main street of the town, marking a straight line through the frame's centre, which is reinforced by the movement of pedestrians away from the camera. The film then moves into narrative mode by introducing the characters. However, the distinction between the frenzied indigenous dancers and (diverse) non-indigenous population of the orderly town so quickly suggested by the composition and movement into these early frames, establishes the formal organisation of the film's visual economy.

The next scenes introduce Peter Mack, Eleanor and the two prospectors. Peter steps into a circle of plantation workers and from there his gaze motivates the camera's shot to Eleanor. Encircling him are bowed workers, and the camera's rendition of his point of view in relaying this introductory shot to Eleanor, over the bodies of plantation workers and sweeping maids, clearly points to the film's relations of power and agency. The next scene of afternoon tea functions as this colonial melodrama's version of the conventional opening of the

mode, in which 'virtue momentarily ... tak[es] pleasure in itself, aided by those who recognize and support it'.[52] This is a ritual moment establishing the domestic civility of white settlement, even 'under the New Guinea scorching tropical sun' and even 'hemmed in by perilous jungle', as the opening titles proclaim.

This early scene also expeditiously establishes the melodramatic triangle of hero-villain-heroine. Fresh-faced Martin is strongly distinguished from the sharp-faced Stephen of darkened eyes, and easily wins Eleanor's favour. The reward of Eleanor doubles the stakes in the chums' quest for gold. Seemingly unaware of the unfolding rivalrous romance, Peter Mack provides the prospectors with his map, a schematic outline marked with a 'starting point' and 'camp', flanked by 'dense jungle' and 'dangerous territory'. This use of the iconography of a 'boys' own' adventure serves to contain as well as heighten the journey's dangers. Film technology adds 'Hurley magic' realism as the shot of the map dissolves into moving footage of scenic wonders.

As the heavily burdened line of carriers moves off with eyes downcast, led by the chums, the intertitle chronicles their passage in terms that recall Robert Dixon's notion of colonial travellers in Melanesia as the 'prosthetic gods' of modernity, their white masculine bodies enhanced by guns and steel.[53] In the words of the intertitle: 'Day after day the tangle of rattan, palms and creepers gives way before the keen blades of determined men.' Surveying the view from the top of an abundant waterfall, Stephen and Martin claim symbolic possession of the place to which their 'inclination, endeavour and opportunity' have brought them. They successfully pan for gold. This marks the end of the first stage of their journey, one insistently foregrounding the penetrative enterprise of their path ('keen blades') into the disorder of primitive landscape ('endless, mysterious jungle').

The second stage of the adventure recalls the first scenic shots, with Martin and Stephen's camp encircled by warriors who close in on the 'chums', wound Martin and take them, and their goods, back to the village and Hurana. Her position in the village is ambivalent. While publicity materials refer to her as a native princess and as the chief's daughter, the intertitles introduce her as a 'captive maid

whose intelligence has given her sway over the chief', suggesting that she too is an outsider, obviously differentiated in appearance and costume from the other village women.[54] Having counselled the chief to spare the chums' lives, she assumes a role as Martin's nurse and servant and her devotion is a key element supporting Martin's continued status as white master, even while captive in the village.

While the figure of Hurana, as will become evident, is deployed with a staggering mobility in the narrative, her racialised femininity precludes that conferring of agency that is associated with white male mobility in Hurley's evocative trinity of 'inclination, endeavour and opportunity'. Consideration of the significations of Hurana depends in large part on consideration of Savieri's racial cross-dressing. The performative assumption of other gendered identities (such as in the practices of cross-dressing) has been held, in the influential work of Judith Butler, to point to the slipperiness of the distinction between 'appearing' and 'being', and an analogous line of argument is developed by Verhoeven in a broad-ranging discussion of gendered cross-dressing and racial masquerade as evidence of the slippery work of categorisation in Australian cinema.[55] But the asymmetrical assumption of other racial identities has more often served to reinforce white mobility and power than to question the terms or validity of racial distinction. Rhona Berenstein argues that in 1930s' Hollywood jungle and jungle horror films, women occupy an interstitial position between black and white men, a 'missing link'. She represents 'a midpoint ... between civilization and jungle', which 'evokes and warns against monstrous possibilities of miscegenation'.[56] Even when reclaimed for civilisation by the adventurer/hero, the wild white woman nevertheless embodies the slippery line of demarcation between civilisation and 'darkness', undermining the racial distinctions of jungle films and pointing to a heart of darkness within whiteness itself. Something of the same anxiety about white women settlers in Papua as an unreliable boundary marker for white men's prestige was also evident in the analysis of film censorship legislation in the previous chapter.

Cunningham rightly emphasises that the various dimensions comprising the 'weird composite' of Hurana's characterisation enable

the film's creaky melodramatic plot. Hers is also a complex *interstitial* position — analogous to the darkened-by-association jungle white women that Berenstein discusses.[57] Hurana is neither indigenous nor white, though she moves in between these in Martin's fevered visions, in which she morphs into Eleanor. 'Bewigged and blackened', she also exists outside Hurley's own established rules for 'realism'. Further, she substitutes (or compensates) for that yielding willingness elsewhere denied the unsuccessful prospectors, effecting that conflation of gender and geography so characteristic in what Shohat so aptly calls the 'venture narrative'.[58] In her figuration are further collapsed notions of sacrifice and resource, surrender and lure. Functioning as a 'missing link', Hurana's interstitial position provides a fantastically accommodating and mobile space, which substitutes for the otherwise disavowed middle ground of encounter in the narrative.

For a brief interlude in the jungle after their escape, Hurana and Martin are 'just a man and a woman in another garden of Eden', as was foreshadowed in the advertisement's colonial promise to reveal the South Seas as a primitive paradise, a lure explaining and justifying the imperial desire to travel and to colonise. Yet in an altogether unsurprising failure to make good on its promotional claims, neither Martin nor Hurana even come close to abandoning 'straight-laced convention' in the face of 'the fierce, primitive call of love'. Instead, in this interlude, Hurana's bush resourcefulness is revealed, adding a further layer of service to her willing subservience to Martin, who finally unbends sufficiently to acknowledge her presence. He assists her to trap a young pig and they forage together in an almost carefree unison. Very soon, however, this innocent pleasure is interrupted by a serpent whose bite offers not temptation, but instead its foreclosure, as Hurana saves Martin at the cost of her own life. In juxtapositions enabled by Stephen's return to Bunga Bunga, the impossibility of Hurana's love for Martin is counterpointed to that of Stephen for Eleanor. Stephen, who has just conveyed the news of Martin's death to Eleanor, croons treacherously in her ear: 'Why not let me console you? It would have been his wish.' From this scene the film cuts back to Hurana, about to be

bitten in her vigil over the sleeping Martin. Hurana looks up to Martin, she looks over him, she looks after him, but Martin neither returns, nor acknowledges her gaze. The conventional impossibility of the heroine uniting with the blackguard is repeated and amplified in the film's racial interdiction. Martin finally staggers into Bunga Bunga carrying the dying Hurana in a pragmatic fireman's lift. Only with the safeguard of Eleanor's presence does he cradle her body and return her final look. In the narrative's resolution, Stephen is disgraced and Hurana conveniently disposed of while Eleanor provides a compensatory reward for Martin's failed quest and lost friendship as well as reassuring evidence of the hero's unfailing racial discrimination.

Williams argues that in order to end happily melodrama needs to restore the 'space of innocence' with which it conventionally begins, so that this restoration 'restore[s] the beginning' rather than achieving a new equilibrium. She links this to melodrama's 'compulsion to "reconcile the irreconcilable" — that is, to find solutions to problems that cannot really be solved without challenging the older ideologies of moral certainty to which melodrama wishes to return'.[59] If these older certainties can be taken to be that colonial order so confidently asserted at the film's outset, then the imperative to punish Hurana for her love for Martin at the same time that the pathos of her sacrifice demonstrates her virtue (as well as compensating for the failure of the 'keen blades' to accomplish their resource raid) can be understood as just such an impossible resolution. Yet even as melodramatic convention permits a space for, but ultimately forecloses on the possibility of miscegenation, by virtue of the established innocence and suffering of Hurana, it nevertheless at least marks the pathos of the sacrifice of native lives in the wake of white incursions. Though this may be a small point, it is a significant one in the light of the very minor roles granted to indigenous characters in Australian South Seas films generally.

In what ways, then, does *Jungle Woman* exemplify, serve and complicate the project of empire cinema? In many respects it does produce an imaginary 'obedient' to an empire-prescribed world

order.[60] The film's visual economy is organised around the straight penetrative lines of the 'keen blades' of white enterprise, while primitive subjects and landscapes provide a static background or, in Hurley's words, the 'furnishings' of Pacific territory. The film's narrative and its production conscript these Pacific resources to the worthy imperial cause: for the former, to demonstrate the entitlement and enterprise of white men, and for the latter, to display and profit from the wealth of the empire's backgrounds.

The reconciliation of the film's melodrama, and of the relations between the foreground of action and the background of resource, depend on deploying the mediating figure of Hurana; that is, they pivot around the fantastic mobility of her racialised and gendered figuration. Yet, like the other mixed-race and Asian travellers in this film who disturb the neat imperial oppositions that conscript travel itself as a sign of imperial entitlement, she also irritates the film's colonial imaginary. The very use of 'sex' points to the compromise made by Hurley in the interests of securing market share for the empire's cinema. Moreover, even as the (circumspect and disavowed) lure of her scantily dressed body is licensed at least in part by the fact of her racial masquerade, the invitation to gaze on the black body is nevertheless a coexistent invitation.

With her frizzy wig and blackened skin, Savieri's racial disguise contrasts strongly with those racially substituting practices of Hollywood where Hispanic actors stood in for South Seas heroines.[61] Nowhere is a wayward invitation to desire more apparent than in the image of Savieri as the centrepiece of a jungle tableau vivant in the window of Mick Simmons' store in Sydney's main shopping street. During this promotional ploy, she appeared twice daily and attracted a considerable (male) crowd in a costume covering 'just enough for the censor' and her 'savage make-up'.[62] In this sense, Berenstein's point about the jungle woman pointing to a 'heart of blackness' within whiteness itself takes form here in pointing to a 'black heart' of cross-race desire subsisting within the pleasures offered by this colonial adventure. Set alongside the strident defences of the white national body that were so much at issue in censorship, this invitation to desire

is unsettling to the extent that it points to a threat to racial integrity from within. Nevertheless, the film's narrative also implicitly 'elevates' the white male body in imagining Martin as simultaneously the inevitably preferred object of the black woman's desire, and as one who, naturally, remains above temptation — indifferent and unseeing.

Perhaps the most overt illustration of empire service provided by the case of *Jungle Woman* is its anticipation of the rather shadowy, background role envisaged for the dominions in the *British Cinematograph Act's* empire quota provisions. In this respect, it is of further significance that *Jungle Woman* makes no specifically national claims, in part perhaps due to the fact that Hurley's project was locationally displaced from Papua. Clearly, the film did not service national colonial interests in any direct way (and its narrative, in Murray's opinion, did rather the reverse). For example, although it was released at a time when rich gold discoveries at Edie Creek were attracting large numbers of prospectors to New Guinea, there were no promotional attempts to link the film's 'realism' to the Australian mining enterprise on which its narrative was loosely based.[63]

In terms of its immediate context of reception, it is not so much the detail of the film's imperial or national melodrama that is at issue, but urgent questions of market share. Finally, though some small empire service can be discerned in respect of the Stoll company, whose minimal investment in Hurley was adequately repaid, such minor efforts did not, of course, 'resuscitate the British film industry'. Average-quality films that called for empire loyalty, for example, in the plea to ignore the film's 'little bloomers' in order to compete with Hollywood fare, were part of the very problem besetting Stoll productions and the Empire's production more generally. Moreover, while Hurley was seen as undertaking empire service in some quarters, and he continued complaining about Murray's restrictive ordinances on these grounds, his work was also conscripted to contemporary arguments that had little sympathy with promoting either Empire or national production, such as those of the film trade, which used the example of Hurley to argue that Australian production was not disadvantaged by American interests.[64]

The next chapter continues discussion of Hurley's dramatic work, examining *Hound of the Deep*, another South Seas melodrama with scenic appeal. Its tighter structure and neat symmetries seem the likely reasons for *Everyones* to regard this production as 'a long way better' than *Jungle Woman*, with which it otherwise has many similarities.[65] Moreover, these qualities can also be related to the film's rendering of a more specifically national narrative of colonial settlement on Thursday Island, on the fringe of continental Australia.

Endnotes

1 Frank Hurley, 1926, 'In Papuan Jungles and Villages: Expedition in Search of a Film', *Sun*, September 6, 1926, p. 12.

2 These quotes are from reviews, first quoted in the *Evening News*, November 3, 1925, and the second in the *Sun*, August 17, 1925.

3 Canadian Prime Minister, *Imperial Conference, Summary of Proceedings*, p. 57.

4 Arnold Zable, 1981, 'The Life and Work of Frank Hurley', *Metro*, No. 56, p. 47; Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 132.

5 Frances Calvert, 1997, 'Frances Calvert on Frank Hurley', *Metro*, No. 112, p. 13; Rachael Low, 1971, *The History of the British Film, 1918–1929*, London: Allen and Unwin, p. 290.

6 This presentation underwent various name changes in its different versions: it was retitled *The Lost Tribe* for the American tour, reverting to *Pearls and Savages* for the British tour. Other versions were called *Headhunters of Unknown Papua* and *With Captain Hurley in the Paradise of Papua*.

7 For example, there is a Hurana in the book, described as 'a thorough woman of the world'. Martin's impatience with native drumming and its superstitious connection to healing — and his summary interruption of this ritual — are also incidents taken from *Pearls and Savages: Adventures in the Air, on Land and Sea in New Guinea*, pp. 124–5. Hurley also records fellow white travellers' enthusiasms for native women. On his earlier expedition, he was accompanied by the Australian museum's Alan McCulloch, a man 'very susceptible' to the beauty of the village girls. In his diary (August 29–October 28, 1922, FH Papers, p. 28), Hurley attributes his own exemption from such desires to the 'many charms' he carried.

8 Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 6.
9 B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffen, 1998, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, London: Routledge, pp. 97–8.
10 Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 106.
11 Ros Pesman, David Walker and Richard White (eds), 1996, *The Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press; Mary Louise Pratt, 1992, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge.
12 Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p. 29.
13 Ibid., p. 6.
14 Frank Hurley, 1926, 'In Bird of Paradise Land: Making Motion Pictures in New Guinea', *Daily Mail*, March 6, 1926.
15 Elleke Boehmer, 1995, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 97.
16 Hurley, *Pearls and Savages*, p. 99.
17 Hurley, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 169.
18 Tulloch (*Legends of the Screen*, p. 288) makes the point that Hurley's travel films already contained drama and he partially attributes trade support for Hurley's first Papuan films to the fact that, in the publicity at least, they promised the same pattern of incident and pictorialism that mass audiences already enjoyed in melodrama. The films thus broadened potential markets in their address to the sought-after 'educated' audience.
19 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Captain Frank Hurley re permission to photograph natives in Papua', 1925, NA/ACT; *Sun*, editorial letter, August 17, 1925.
20 That Hurley chose to superimpose a melodramatic narrative over an exotic background, rather than taking the (debatably) more ethnographically estimable path pioneered by practitioners such as Robert Flaherty of shaping narrative from the materials of indigenous lives, appears to be one of the reasons for critics' disappointment with the film. Low (*The History of the British Film, 1918–1929*, p. 289) argues that a loose genre, the 'exotic', emerged in a number of sites in the early 1920s where a narrative thread linked actuality footage to sustain 'the natural interest in strange and exotic environments'. A highly regarded exemplar is Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922).
21 Cunningham, 'Appollinius and Dionysius', p. 42.
22 Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule*, p. 45.
23 Hurley diary, January 12–June 26, 1923, FH Papers, pp. 6, 28.

24 James Clifford, 1997, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, pp. 97–106.
25 Nicholas Thomas, 1991, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 178.
26 Hurley, 'In Bird of Paradise Land'.
27 Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, p. 201.
28 Ella Shohat, 1997, 'Gender and the Culture of Empire: Towards a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema', in Matthew Berstein and Gaylyn Studler (eds), *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. 32, makes the point about cinematic preservation of the primitive. Richard Dyer, 1997, *White*, London: Routledge, p. 15, makes the points about the construction of whiteness.
29 Low, *The History of the British Film, 1918–1929*..
30 Ibid., pp. 107, 124–7.
31 Hurley, 'In Papuan Jungles and Villages', p. 3.
32 Hurley later denied that it would be possible to make a film for this amount: *Everyones*, 'Hurley Wants Positives Made Here; Also Shilling Tax', June 22, 1927, p. 8. By 1924, the Stoll Company (along with a number of other British companies) was in financial trouble, despite its strong links to distribution: Low, *The History of the British Film, 1918–1929*, p. 123.
33 *Theatre Society and Home*, review of *Jungle Woman*, July 1, 1926, p. 40.
34 *Everyones*, review of *Jungle Woman*, May 16, 1926, p. 16.
35 Richard Koszarski, 1990, 'An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915–1928', *The History of American Cinema*, Vol. 3, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 182.
36 Williams, 1998, 'Melodrama Revisited', in Nick Browne (ed.), *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 50–1.
37 Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, p. 3; Richard Phillips, 1997, *Mapping Men and Empire*, London: Routledge.
38 Peter Brooks, 1985, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, and the Mode of Excess*, New Haven and New York: Yale University Press; Linda Williams, 'Melodrama Revisited', p. 42.
39 Christine Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre', pp. 228–9, 234.
40 Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 36.

41 *Everyones*, 'Frank Hurley Turns Dramatic Producer', May 6, 1926, p. 8.
42 Hurley, 'In Papuan Jungles and Villages'.
43 *Everyones*, 'Hurley's Magic *The Jungle Woman*', May 19, 1926, pp. 23–6.
44 *Theatre Society and Home*, review of *Jungle Woman*.
45 FH Papers, series 2, June 22, 1928.
46 Hurley, 'In Bird of Paradise Land'.
47 *Courier-Mail*, review of *Jungle Woman*, June 22, 1928.
48 Janet Staiger, 1988, 'The Formation of the Classical Style, 1909–1928', in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (eds), *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production*, London: Routledge.
49 *Everyones*, 'Realism', February 10, 1926, p. 8.
50 *Photoplayer*, 'Hats Off to Hurley', May 15, 1926, in FH Papers, series 2. In retrospect, ironically, these exaggerated claims of showmanship might serve to obscure the difficulties of making *Jungle Woman*, which must have been considerable even though Hurley found the administrative cooperation on which affordable success depended. There is only Hurley's account to hand, so the motivations behind the Papuans' participation can only be imagined. Frank Legg and Toni Hurley, 1966, *Once More on My Adventure*, London: Ure Smith, talk a little about the tedious process of re-takes that Hurley recalls. Hurley evinces more sympathy for indigenous workers than the white planters he encounters in his earlier travels in Papua, but in articles recounting the production of *Jungle Woman* he nevertheless describes West Papuans as part of the 'furnishings' of the location. Legg and Hurley (p. 135) recount that the crew travelled from the port town of Merauke to a village called Toerai, two days up the Merauke River by launch, where the film was shot in conditions that were considered 'well nigh unbearable'. 'In Bird of Paradise Land' recounts the complexities of working in a multilingual culture, as does another article in *Everyones*, 'British Actors Return Home', June 2, 1926, p. 30. The *Age* ('Films of New Guinea: Hurley Expedition Returns', January 22, 1926, p. 8) reports that: 'The company worked from sunrise to sunset in a temperature of 135° ... in evil smelling native villages.'
51 Staiger, 'The Formation of the Classical Style'; Steve Neale, 1993, 'Melo Talk: On the Meaning and the Uses of the Term "Melodrama" in the American Trade Press', *Velvet Light Trap*, Vol. 32.
52 Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 27.
53 Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods*.

54 As a casual addition to his discourse on the universality of female desire, Hurley does note that among the native women Hurana's grass skirt occasioned 'as much envy as a Sydney flapper [would show towards] a Paris model on a stranger', unsourced newspaper article in FH Papers, series 2.

55 Judith Butler, 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge; Deb Verhoeven, 1995, 'The Film I Would Like to Make: In Search of a Cinema (1927–1970)', in James Sabine (ed.), *A Centenary of Australian Cinema*, Port Melbourne: AFI/Heinemann, pp. 130–54; Verhoeven, 1995, 'Sheep's Clothing: A Dress in Some Australian Films', in Ken Berryman (ed.), *Screening the Past: Aspects of Early Australian Film*, Canberra: National Film and Sound Archive, pp. 151–9.

56 Rhona Berenstein, 1996, *Attack of the Leading Ladies: Gender, Sexuality and Spectatorship in Classic Horror Cinema*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 162–3.

57 Cunningham, 'Appollinius and Dionysius', p. 44.

58 Ella Shohat, 'Gender and the Culture of Empire: Towards a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema', in Berstein and Studler (eds), *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, p. 28.

59 Williams, 'Melodrama revisited', pp. 65, 74–5.

60 Cunningham, 'Appollinius and Dionysius', p. 44.

61 Hershfield, 'Race and romance', p. 3.

62 *Film Weekly*, 'Australian Showmanship Developed with Greater Union', June 6, 1957, p. 19. The photo accompanying this article about 'exploitation' practices is of an apparently all-male, bowler-hatted crowd.

63 See Griffin, Nelson and Firth, *Papua New Guinea: A Political History*, p. 53, on gold discoveries.

64 Tulloch, *Legends of the Screen*, p. 286. See, for example, a lengthy contribution in *Everyones* ('Australian Films', November 10, 1926, pp. 8–9), which uses the example of modest Saturday-night attendance at the Lyceum for *Hound of the Deep* as evidence of public sentiment against even 'very excellent British-Australian' production as part of its case about the 'menace' posed to distributor interests by proposals for British or Australian quotas.

65 *Everyones*, 'Australian Films'.

Chapter Four

'A PEARL OF THE ISLANDS WHOM ALL MEN YEARNED TO POSSESS' Trajectories of imperial desire in *Hound of the Deep*

> Few passages of the sea hold so much of rude adventure and romance as Torres Strait.[1]

Thursday Island, a modest land mass nestled among a cluster of islands just off the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula, is the site of three Australian South Seas films, the first two of which, made in the interwar years, are the subject of this chapter and the next, while the postwar production *King of the Coral Sea* is discussed in Chapter Six. The first step in a chain of Torres Strait islands stretching to the Papuan coast, Thursday Island provided a readily accessible Pacific location for the Sydney-based producers of these films, offering an 'exotic' racial mix largely excluded from the mainland, as well as appealing images of sail-powered luggers, beaches and Coral Sea reefs.

Hound of the Deep is the second-released film Hurley made with the backing of Stoll Films. Shot first en route to New Guinea, it is a companion production to *Jungle Woman* in that it employs substantially the same cast of lead British players and repeats the strategy of

deploying dominion territory as a background against which to stage a melodramatic narrative. The Thursday Island setting, however, provides a liminal space on the margins of civilisation, rather than a space (putatively) 'beyond' even its outposts. The film constitutes 'a parable in which a young, manly Australia begins to assume Britain's colonial mantle in the Pacific'.[2]

Conventionally, there is a preoccupation in Western constructions of the South Seas with the contaminating indolence of island lives. The unrestrained voice-over of Chauvel's *Bounty* film, for example, describes this debilitating tropical effect as the 'lotus-canker'. Yet there is little of such beguiling Polynesian fecundity troubling life on Thursday Island, with film narratives each in some way concerning the lucrative marine industry for which the island became the commercial centre soon after its annexation by the Queensland government in 1872. Nevertheless, in *Hound of the Deep* pearl fishing is rendered through a tangled conceit revolving around the adventure quest at the narrative's centre. This conceit demonstrates the film's fudging of labouring relations in imagining that white men themselves engaged in the dangerous activity of diving, and in romantically proposing that the deep's rarest treasures were their object, rather than the more mundane shell destined primarily for garment factories.

Scenic melodrama in *Hound of the Deep*

The opening scenes of *Hound of the Deep* are scenic shots of Thursday Island, then the film cuts to Reuben Strong, a wealthy pearler on the point of death. Back in London, his nephew, John Strong (Eric Bransby Williams), listens to the reading of his will. It leaves Reuben's estate to John on the condition that he finds a pearl to match the prize of Reuben's estate — 'the empire pearl' — within two years. Should he fail, 'Black' Darley (Jameson Thomas), Reuben's manager, is to inherit in his stead. Thus the will sets an explicitly imperial challenge to Strong. Before his departure, Strong seeks a sign from the beautiful socialite Lady Cynthia that she will look

kindly on his suit should he return a wealthy man, and in a telegram she allows him to 'hope'.

Arriving at Thursday Island, John is met by Darley and, shortly after starting work, he becomes ill with malaria. His crew retreats to Daybreak Island where 'Cockeye' Jones (W.G. Saunders), a trader, and Marjorie (Lillian Douglas), his daughter, further care for him. 'Cockeye' owes money to Darley, who hopes to use this as leverage in his attempts to seduce Marjorie and Strong's presence interferes with his plans. Darley, moreover, has been informed anonymously of the terms of Reuben's will and decides to rid himself of Strong. He challenges Strong to accompany him to a particularly treacherous pearl bed but Darley's plans are thwarted by Marjorie, who hides aboard the lugger, and instigates the actions that save Strong's life. Darley later drowns during an attempt to escape. Although John now loves Marjorie — who returns his love as a matter of course — he prepares to make his honourable return to Lady Cynthia. Just as his ship departs, however, he receives news that Lady Cynthia has married the attorney so he jumps ship to swim to Marjorie's side.

This screenplay represents a relatively minimalist selection from the possible rhetorical devices available to retard and complicate melodrama's conventional playing out of the Manichean struggle of innocence against villainy, such as sudden reverses, coincidences, hidden identities, misrecognitions and delayed or chance meetings.[3] In their place, the novelty of its setting on Thursday Island serves to pad out and renew the film's drama. The scenic island footage along with the underwater sequences also serve to open out its stagey narrative. Yet as Williams notes, even as '[m]elodrama appears modern by borrowing from realism ... realism [nevertheless] serves the melodramatic passion and action'.[4]

As with *Jungle Woman*, the response of the trade press and other discussions of the film that positively positioned *Hound of the Deep* within contemporary debates about Empire and dominion cinema, ensured that the film's 'backgrounds' assumed considerable importance within the diegesis and in respect to the politicised discourses positioning the film in the market. While Pike and Cooper and

Reade note that *Hound of the Deep* was poorly received, this is far from a representative response. They depend on *The Bulletin*'s review, which complains of the 'hackneyed plot and made-to-order drama, provided by the ancient stage device of a preposterous will'.[5] In contrast, other contemporary reviews, as with *Jungle Woman*, focus particularly on setting.

Everyones describes the film as 'an unquestionably good picture' and as 'a drama of love and passion in an unusual setting'.[6] In a more measured review, *Film Weekly* nevertheless praises the photography and the film's underwater scenes and calls it 'a decidedly original composition'.[7] The *Sun* lists the film's worthy components including an 'excellent story' and 'splendid diving scenes', dwelling on aspects of the setting: 'Thursday Island ... with its romantic palms, and bright beaches, its men and women of many nations, its intrigue, its roughness, its beauty.'[8] *Just It* responds to the picture as travelogue, juxtaposing its own jaded modernity against an Arcadian ideal:

> The beautiful settings are alone worth a bare footed pilgrimage to see it ... [and] will make the Sydneyite long to take out a ticket for a six-weeks' tour around the islands, where for a time he can forget the incessant worries of this vale of tears.[9]

Hurley claimed that *Hound of the Deep* was based on his own 'stirring adventure story' *Pearl of the South Seas*, but the difficulties of locating any evidence for the existence of such a book suggest that Hurley might have failed to follow through on an intention to produce a novelisation of his script (the same is also true of *Jungle Woman*).[10] The film was shot on Thursday and nearby Mariang Islands, with underwater sequences filmed later in a tank constructed at the Great Barrier Reef.[11] It premiered at the Lyceum and Haymarket theatres in Sydney on November 5, 1926, and *The Sun* as well as the trade journals reported that the film was enthusiastically received.[12] Ever the master self-promoter, Hurley's radio shows and preceding presentations might have contributed to this success.

The full-page picture advertisement for *Hound of the Deep* heralds the film as Hurley's 'supreme dramatic achievement' and promises 'adventures and romantic atmosphere of the Southern Seas transported'. As with *Jungle Woman*, there is a disjuncture between the hyperbole of this advertisement's claim to set its love story on the margins of the regulated social order and the very displaced erotics of the conventional melodrama itself. Again, the film promises a sensuality and passion that it is far from delivering:

> **A flaming love story of the tropics**
> IN THE LANGUOROUS PACIFIC WHERE EACH DAY IS A BURNING KISS, AND EACH NIGHT A COOL CARESS, JOHN STRONG SUCCUMBED TO GROWING LOVE FOR THIS GLORIOUS CREATURE OF BEAUTY AND FIRE .
>
> He came from a dizzy world of London society ... he must find a pearl to match the peerless Empire pearl or lose everything.
>
> Then he met a pearl of the islands whom all men yearned to possess. And his greatest rival was the most feared and hated man of the pearling grounds ...
>
> AND in the inevitable and desperate struggle to win the girl both men forget civilization's code, forget honor, forget everything but the hatred that blazed in their breasts, and the prize at stake.

Setting aside the conventionally exaggerated nature of such publicity devices, the film's failure to persist with the troping around tropical heat, passion and the overheating of the moral order rewards further investigation. The film's opening intertitles continue to associate Thursday Island's distance and racial heterogeneity with 'reckless' dangers:

> Set in the Coral Sea that washes the remote shores of North Australia lies a lonely British outpost of civilization ... Thursday Island. Here men of all colours and races play reckless games with fate in the eternal pursuit of wealth.

After a brief scene of gambling, which serves to introduce 'Cockeye' Jones's forthcoming vulnerability to Darley's machinations, Darley takes Strong to the island's vantage point and instructs him to look down onto the houses of the port settlement — 'heat boxes [that will] roast the heart out of you'. A little later, in a replayed variation of the montage of dream imagery wrought by tropical delirium that featured in *Jungle Woman*, Strong's fevered imagination hints at other dangerous transgressions as images of pearls dissolve into Darley's 'penetrating' eyes. However, Marjorie's (the so-called 'glorious creature of beauty and fire') introduction into the narrative signals an abrupt discontinuation, rather than an intensification, of these early gestures. Like Hurana, Marjorie acts first as Strong's nurse. In contrast with Hurana, however, Strong's recovery marks the beginning of a series of scenes of seemly courtship. Coy exchanges are mediated by Islander children, who, prompted by Marjorie, offer Strong tributes of flowers. They picnic on beaches, enjoy an excursion to a nearby wreck and wander through palm-shaded villages. An impression of a *leisurely* rather than 'languorous' Thursday Island prevails. This diffusing of promised heat is a sign of the 'domestication' of the South Seas' sexual lure, its literal taming in the national interests of the film. Far from abandoning 'civilization's code', the film presents a melodramatically styled allegory for Australian colonialism, focusing on property and propriety.

Silent melodrama offered highly conventionalised dramatic conflicts between characters who were true to a 'type' that was easily recognisable and remained fixed.[13] Brooks proposes that such '[p]olarization is not just a dramatic principle but the means by which integral ethical conditions are identified and shaped, made clear and operative'.[14] Polarisation is signalled excessively from the film's outset, in the naming of hero John *Strong* and villain *'Black'* Darley, and reiterated through casting, make-up (Darley's piercing gaze is underlined literally by the generous use of black eyeliner) and in the gestural economy.[15] Pike and Cooper disparagingly refer to Hurley's adherence to 'emotionally naive formulas'; however, the film's adherence to naïveté can better be understood in respect to its attempt to

figure the nation's colonial enterprise as itself naïve and so produce an account of resource exploitation that foregrounds innocence and legitimacy.[16] In *Jungle Woman*, the racialised impossibility of Hurana's love for Martin is mapped over or mirrors the melodramatic impossibility of Stephen's desire for Eleanor. In *Hound of the Deep*, the polarisation through which dramatic conflict is staged is between knowing villainy (linked to or sourced from the metropolis and its goals and rewards) and insouciant innocence, demonstrated in Strong's shifting goals and allegiances, his becoming Australian.

Reuben Strong's dying words establish in imperial and masculine terms the challenge set for John to prove his fitness to assume his legal inheritance. It is significant that Strong answers this challenge, not primarily in respect of a demonstration of masculine prowess (as will the heroes of *Lovers and Luggers*, *Typhoon Treasure*, *King of the Coral Sea* and *Walk into Paradise*), but through suffering. Strong, of course, does find a pearl worthy of the empire's name, but this is of relatively marginal dramatic significance.[17] The action instead focuses on demonstrating the heroic suffering that ensures that virtue is recognised in order to 'orchestrate the moral legibility crucial to the [melodramatic] mode'.[18] Strong first suffers his uncle's unloving gesture in setting a caveat to his will, which is intended to favour Darley, then exile, fever, an attempt on his life and the misery of honouring his promise to Cynthia, notwithstanding his love for Marjorie. The 'moral legibility' centrally at issue in the film concerns the terms of Australia's imperial legacy, and the melodrama serves to justify morally a colonising relay whereby Australia assumes Britain's 'colonial mantle' in the Pacific. What sort of colonist Uncle Reuben has been is not revealed in the film, but should Darley inherit, the business would fall into the hands of a petty tyrant, a drunk who delights in humiliating those in his debt, an unscrupulous opportunist and an exploitative womaniser. Brooks argues that villains represent an evil in excess of any particular motivation, an evil incarnate in the world. Yet Darley's blackness sums up the 'dark' commercial side of colonial relations (like the exploitative traders in *The Devil's Playground*).[19] As his polar opposite in melodrama's Manichean

order, Strong comes to represent the light, the colonial good. In these terms Strong *returns innocence* to the colonial project. This is realised through his own suffering and in his coming to realise that Marjorie is the pearl he most yearns to possess.

Love triangles and the colonial relay

The motifs of *Hound of the Deep*'s allegory of empire/colony relations — ships, pearls, the will and inheritance — are given shape through the film's triangulated hero-villain-heroine relationship. The principal triangle formed by Darley, Strong and Marjorie on Thursday Island is foreshadowed in an earlier metropolitan triangle formed by Strong, Cynthia and the unnamed attorney. Strong, with the characteristic righteous insouciance of the hero, remains unaware of the attorney's jealous surveillance during Strong's last meeting with Cynthia. It is this attorney, unsurprisingly, who alerts Darley to the terms of the will in an anonymous telegram that threatens dark destiny in Darley's repeated readings. The camera obsessively returns to the words the attorney has treacherously appended, 'should he fail *OR DIE* in the attempt'. In addition to these central relationships are the two father figures of the film, 'Cockeye' Jones, the trader and sometime gambler and hapless but morally sound parent of Marjorie, and the dead Uncle Reuben, whose 'will' persists beyond the grave in his demand that his 'sons' compete for his favour, in a fraternal rivalry that encompasses pearls and Marjorie. On Thursday Island, these strongly Oedipal dynamics, and the enclosed space generated by the preponderance of point-of-view shots within the love triangle motivated by jealous surveillance, create a claustral dramatic intensity rather at odds with the quite differently rendered leisurely background of the island settings.

The three characters of the metropolitan triangle are fatefully bound when Strong, en route on the ship, receives Cynthia's telegram. Again repeating the structure of *Jungle Woman*'s narrative, Strong's quest has been doubled by the addition of Cynthia to the promised rewards. Cynthia appears in two scenes, first dressed in an

elegant ball-gown and secondly in a recreational riding outfit. Her class privilege is emphasised, and in her contrast with Marjorie, and with her faithless decision to marry the scoundrel attorney, she comes to stand for the cold heart of the metropolis. The attorney and Cynthia's conjoining links the opportunistic forces of the law with the old world establishment in a thoroughgoing betrayal of the absent colonist. The symmetry of these situations — the establishment and then the severing of the link to Cynthia on the ship — marks the distance travelled by Strong and his reinvention as settler colonist whose ties to the metropolis are not so much broken by abandonment as gratefully relinquished in virtuous recognition of a greater good.

As Cynthia is the sign of the metropolis, Marjorie is the sign of the 'new world', the 'empire pearl' who replaces Cynthia. A resourceful Australian 'outdoors girl', Marjorie partakes of that girl-of-the-bush physicality and independence that is held to characterise the young heroines of Australian bush melodramas in Tulloch's account.[20] In this South Seas melodrama, she is also the principal representative of the explicitly 'good deeds' of the colonial community: she cuddles native children and, in a rather fantastic interlude, leads a group of island women in an exercise program. She rescues Strong from Darley and Cynthia and constitutes an end point for the dispersed desires for possession, conquest, belonging and masculine identity that trouble the plot. When Strong swims to join Marjorie and 'Cockeye' Jones on the pier at the film's conclusion, this newly formed triangle represents a national innocence that has triumphed against bastard pretenders and metropolitan betrayal.

Labour, agency and nation

Pacific historian Donald Denoon makes the important point that '[n]either in reality nor in fiction were relations [with Melanesians] equal, but they were certainly intimate and ambivalent'.[21] The good deeds that are performed for the Islanders by Marjorie (her signs of love and discipline) are certainly well rewarded. Islanders enable white deeds by providing unbidden labour at every turn of white

need. The scene where Strong is met at the wharf by Darley is exemplary. As they walk to the car, a carriage appears on the tracks behind them, and as it moves forward its source of propulsion, a native labourer, moves into the frame. When 'Cockeye' tells Marjorie to take the fevered John to the padre, *she* agrees and then two Islanders appear and *do* the taking. In a centred-frame close-up of Strong gearing up to dive, disembodied black hands perform the labour of securing his helmet. In these cases, native labour functions as an extension of white agency, as a part of those natural resources of which white enterprise 'freely' avails itself.

In a discussion germane to this 'invisible' labour of the porters in *Hound of the Deep* (and the carriers in *Jungle Woman*), Patricia Mellencamp argues that attention to the continuity system of cinema should include consideration of its racial economy.[22] The double dealing with the 'intermediary' characters in *Jungle Woman* — that is, the fact that their status as prisoners or villagers can be manipulated with little heed to continuity — suggests that indigenous peoples subsist at a level below the usual demands of narrative coherence, or conscious awareness. Simultaneously nevertheless, like *Jungle Woman*'s headhunters, the lugger crews in *Hound of the Deep* are highly visible, featuring in images that are crucial to the visual appeal conferred by the film's exotic location, as the reviews demonstrate. In *Pearls and Savages*, and in his dairies, Hurley speaks of his considerable respect for the competence of the indigenous workers who ably assisted his work, and insofar as *Hound of the Deep* acknowledges indigenous labour in its images of able and graceful workers, it does document such an impression.

Such ethnographically-styled scenic shots as the pan across the weathered faces of pearling workers on the dock that open the film, in their very nature render the 'natives' (and even the Japanese and Malay labourers) as an integral part of their environment. A corollary of the collapsing of lands-and-people, or the regarding of people as part of the 'furnishings' of place, is this signal sense of their belonging to this setting. The same certainly cannot be said of the blundering rival male leads. Strong's inexperience and imprudence generate a

pattern of dependency on others. While Strong manages to rescue Marjorie from Darley's drunken embrace, in turn he is the subject of repeated rescues by others: first by his crew, who carry his fevered body to Daybreak Island, then by Marjorie and the padre, then by Darley's crew and even by Pete, a beachcomber character set to spy on Strong by his rival. Strong's realm of effective action is restricted largely to interaction with Darley (and Marjorie). As Strong's narrative counterpart, Darley is, moreover, an almost tragically incompetent villain. In a drunken excess, he clumsily bungles an attempt to kiss Marjorie and compounds his error by leaving evidence of his murderous plans for 'Cockeye' Jones to discover. He is unable to command loyalty from any of his henchmen. At a truly low moment, he himself falls into the giant clam trap he intended for Strong, necessitating a further rescue by another able Islander (although the narrative recuperates this bungle in the limited sense that Strong feels obliged to match Darley's manly recklessness by also diving in these treacherous waters).

Yet if the image of the Islanders is exploited as a picturesque filmic resource and as 'invisible' labour, then the 'backgrounded' nature of these exploitations at least precludes a third — they are not subject to the sort of colonial and melodramatic stereotyping that determines the roles of the white characters in the film. Homi Bhabha has argued influentially that 'racist stereotypical discourse' anxiously repeats that which is putatively already known about — for example, the shiftlessness or childishness of the colonised, such that it makes visible 'the *necessity* of [colonial] rule'.[23] In Hurley's film, as in *Lovers and Luggers*, the focus is on a white commercial community's need to defend its own interests in the absence of any visible signs of governance. If *Hound of the Deep* is not concerned *directly* with issues of colonial rule, it is nevertheless concerned with the legitimacy of Australia's assumption of its colonial inheritance in the Pacific. In other words, the central issue in *Hound of the Deep* is the legitimacy of Australia's perpetuation of the British tradition of colonisation, rather than the need for such rule per se, and the absence of reductive and paternalistic stereotypes in the film's racial economy needs to be understood in this context. Nevertheless, even

though the film's parable of colonial relations is staged between Britain and Australia against a quiescent background, the irritant of the nation's exceptional use of non-white labour needs to be negotiated. It is significant in this respect that in *Hound of the Deep* (and most other Australian South Seas films) the two concerns dominating notions of encounter in the American films of the South Seas — that is, the myths of the 'noble savage' and of 'fatal impact'— are also absent.[24]

Routt argues that while *Hound of the Deep* makes a certain cultural sense as a representation from a colonial perspective, it just 'doesn't do it in a very engaging way'.[25] This failure to 'engage' can in part be explained by the points of disjuncture already discussed: that is, the incongruities besetting the attempt to find a fit between foreground and background — for example, between the claustral intensity of the love triangle and the leisurely and tranquil settings of the scenic background. These disjunctures arise as a corollary of the narrative's appropriation (or colonisation) of the trappings of setting, primarily as a consequence of the film's imaging of pearling as a romantic quest, a figuring that is at the centre of the film's 'parable' of colonial relations. This figuring functions to foreground colonial relations as those between motherland and nation and attempts to corral into or contain in the background those of colonisers and colonised, and concomitantly, of resource exploitation and labour.

Ambivalence and contradiction concerning notions of labour and resources are much in evidence in the following passage from *Pearls and Savages*:

> At Thursday Island, the pearling luggers lay inside the harbour reefs ... symbols of the 'industry' on the sea-girt patch of land. The sight of them, bobbing and swaying on the glittering waves of the tropic harbour, fired the imagination. Viewed from the hill above, their going in and out stirred me profoundly. The quest for sunken treasure holds no stronger lure than the search for pearls ... Pearls are the reward of hardship and suffering — they are indeed emblems of sorrow.[26]

The quotation marks severely qualify the appropriateness of the term *industry* in respect to Thursday Island. The hard work of lugger crews and industrial applications of their harvest are sidestepped, through the metaphoric uses to which pearls are put, and in the island's positioning as the implicit antithesis of Australian modernity, as suggested also by *Just It*'s proposal of 'a bare footed pilgrimage to see it ... [to] forget the incessant worries of this vale of tears'. The disavowed dependencies evident in the simultaneously visible and invisible representation of Islanders are reflected in the slippery glossing over of subjectivity in this extract. Just who is it who performs the hard work and endures the suffering and who obtains the reward?

In this context, Hurley's conclusion that pearls 'are indeed emblems of sorrow' requires closer scrutiny. In the American South Seas film, pearls tend to reveal fatal flaws that lead to ruin, according to Douglas, and in *Lovers and Luggers* the pearl is declaratively associated with the suffering of the white male leads as they strive to meet the imperious demands of a rapacious and feminised metropolitan greed.[27] The opening intertitles of *Hound of the Deep*, which announce 'that men ... play reckless games with fate in the eternal pursuit of wealth', also lends support to the links between pearls and *mis*fortune. But though Strong does suffer in questing after his pearl, pearls are by no means merely 'emblems of sorrow' in *Hound of the Deep*, as I have shown. It is, more to the point, that the shifting desires invested in the pearl constitute a series of displacements that serve to transport the film ever-further from its initial chosen background of the pearling industry.

The pearl, yielded from the soft flesh of molluscs plundered from the ocean's depths, provides a very eroticised image of bounty and surrender, and one that resonates with the displaced erotics of Hurley's 'profound stirrings' provoked by the sight of the luggers 'going in and out'. These meanings complement the premiss of Strong's initial journey, which proffers the resources of the dominion's territories as the ground to demonstrate or renew imperial masculinity. Yet this is again displaced as Strong's desire shifts from

the quest for the empire pearl/Cynthia to the new-found pearl/Marjorie in the film's trajectory of desire. The pearl that 'all men wish to possess' finally is Marjorie, who is not only an idealised sign of nation but a sign of nation as worthy colonist.

By the conclusion of *Hound of the Deep*, Strong has successfully responded to the challenge of his uncle's will and earned his legitimate inheritance. Moreover, he has transcended its terms in his recognition of Marjorie as his true pearl of the islands. His willing suffering through trials and dangers on land and undersea attests to not only his virtue but his innocence and naïveté and these qualities, which legitimise his inheritance, also come to characterise Australia's own colonial project. The trajectory of desire for pearls and their substitutes divorces Strong from the metropolis, and pearls come to represent a resource for becoming nation in the coupling of Marjorie and Strong. Yet rather than serving to merely enrich the empire, pearls service the nation, which itself in turn serves as a resource for the empire's renewal. *Hound of the Deep*, then, contributes directly to the project of legitimatising a national expansionary desire that confirms the nation's fitness to inherit Britain's colonial mantle in the Pacific.

The story of Strong's entitlement depends on its Thursday Island background as the third term deployed to negotiate the colonial relationship between the nation and Britain. This usage, however, introduces elements of dependency that are not always successfully corralled into the background, and they trouble the orderly relationship the film seeks to establish between its foreground, the triumph of white innocence, and the scenic elements necessary to renew this conventional and sparse tale.

In *Jungle Woman*, Hurana has at least a notional place in the film's love triangle, with the impossibility of love for the jungle woman effecting a resolution that forecloses on wayward possibilities at the same time as it upholds the virtue of her sacrifice to Martin South's need, so that it 'reconciles the irreconcilable'. In *Hound of the Deep*, the displacements concerning the pearling industry, and the sorrow of pearl collection, serve this function. Islander characters are

excluded from the colonial parable constituted by the shifting metropolitan/settler triangles of *Hound of the Deep*. This structural exclusion ensures that the Islanders remain the dispossessed in this story. Their marginalisation from the economy of the film's melodrama motivates and rationalises their exclusion from the island's resource economy. The doubled reward of pearl/Marjorie operates as a complex transfer point managing some kind of reconciliation of the vexed issues of belonging, worthy colonisation, desire and national becoming.

Lovers and Luggers, the subject of the next chapter, reconstructs its late-imperial fantasy space of Thursday Island in the studio in Sydney — alone among the films in this study to take this path, rendering it the starkest example of ways in which background and foreground are interrelated in the nation's deployment of Pacific spaces. Indeed, in contrast with *Lovers and Luggers*, the space that *is* permitted for Islander characters in *Hound of the Deep* — their *incidental* presence in the backgrounds, the limited measure of their self-possession — is thrown into relief. Ironically, by the time *Lovers and Luggers* was made in 1937, Hurley had himself become something of a background element, as he was working as a cinematographer for Cinesound and again travelled to Thursday Island, on this occasion as the second unit sent to shoot the footage required for the film's back-projection.

ENDNOTES

1 Hurley, *Pearls and Savages*, p. 9.
2 Routt, '*Hound of the Deep*', p. 218.
3 Gledhill, 'Rethinking genre', p. 232.
4 Williams, 'Melodrama Revisited', p. 67.
5 Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 134; Reade, *History and Heartburn*, p. 51; *The Bulletin* review cited by both, November 11, 1926.
6 *Everyones*, 'Australian films', pp. 8, 30.
7 *Film Weekly*, review, *Hound of the Deep*, November 11, 1926, p. 6.
8 *Sun*, 'Frank Hurley again', November 7, 1926, p. 41.
9 *Just It*, review, *Hound of the Deep*, November 4, 1926, p. 22.

10 *Everyones*, 'Frank Hurley Turns Dramatic Producer', May 6, 1926, p. 8.
11 *Everyones*, '*Jungle Woman*, Underwater Scenes', September 1, 1926, p. 43.
12 *Sun*, 'Frank Hurley again'.
13 Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, p. 182.
14 Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 36.
15 Though the round-faced Bransby Williams also performed on the Sydney stage as Dr Fu Manchu in 1924 — photograph in Walker, *Anxious Nation*, Plate 32.
16 Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 124.
17 In fact, the only pearl traced in the narrative is the one Darley uses to bribe the beachcomber Pete to aid his escape (though Darley drowns anyway). This enables Pete's transformation into a comic version of a metropolitan dandy, who, in this guise, joins the others in the final scene on the wharf.
18 Williams, 'Melodrama reconsidered', p. 66.
19 Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 33.
20 Tulloch, *Legends of the Screen*, p. 397.
21 Denoon, 'Federation, Anthropology', p. 107.
22 Patricia Mellencamp, 1995, *Five Ages of Film Feminism*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p. 226.
23 Homi Bhabha, 1983, 'The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse', *Screen*, Vol. 24, No. 6, p. 35.
24 Though Hurley describes Islanders as 'children of nature' and as 'a likeable people, generous and laughter loving, Arcadians in Utopia' in *Pearls and Savages*, pp. 17, 21. Regarding the 'natives' as children of nature, he is critical of mission influence in its drive to cover the women in 'hideous robes of doubtful morality', although at least part of this distaste might have been occasioned by the disappointment of the exotic-seeking travel-film-maker.
25 Routt, '*Hound of the Deep*', p. 218.
26 Hurley, *Pearls and Savages*, pp. 34–5.
27 Douglas, 'Electric Shadows in the South Seas', p. 6.

Chapter Five

NATIONAL RESOURCES AND NATIONAL RESOURCEFULNESS
Character, identity and the colonial Other in *Lovers and Luggers*

> The tepid opening scenes [in London] ... give little indication of the fine things to come. The real drama, the essentially Australian story, begins when Lloyd Hughes steps off the ship at Thursday Island, and is initiated into the mysteries and dangers of our least known and most romantic industry. It is here that we meet the first symptoms of our industry coming of age. Once we touch native soil, the story takes on animation. The dialogue effervesces with an Australian idiom, familiar types of people — the polyglot population of our northern seaports — crowd insistently upon the tropic scene, and the whole film springs suddenly and joyfully to life.[1]

By 1937–8 when *Lovers and Luggers* was released, faults had appeared in the empire quota distribution agreement with Britain, notwithstanding considerable continuing support in Australia for British cinema and the goal of imperial cooperation. It is no great stretch to imagine these fault-lines as the subtext to the *Argus*'s review of the film, cited above, in the proud distinction drawn between the 'tepid'

London scene and 'real drama' made possible by a valued and specifically national industry. Disagreement between the British film trade and Australian legislators and producers was initiated by the stipulation in the *New South Wales Cinematograph Films (Australian Quota) Act* (1935) that allowed for a specifically national (rather than an empire) quota. Despite vociferous objections by the British trade, this attempt to bolster local production was enacted in the understanding that British film was already granted sufficiently favourable access to the Australian market.[2] The British film trade's hostility towards the failure of the NSW act to mirror the reciprocity of British legislation found its most strident expression in the unwarranted objection that British film was being treated as no less 'foreign' than American product. Calling on the ties of 'consanguinity' in an open letter to the State Government, *Today's Cinema*, for example, argued that Australia was treating the British as the enemy and that reciprocity was a means to 'express racial unity'.[3]

Noel Monkman represented the views of disenchanted and struggling Australian producers, however, in arguing that Britain had the advantage of a larger industry as well as the existing 'generous support in Australia for British product':

> [T]he comparison is so overwhelmingly in Britain's favour as to prompt the feeling that the picture interests of that country ... are so devoid of all sentiment — as to view Australia as a pocket to be picked empty for their enrichment.[4]

In the later months of 1937, Frederick Daniell compiled a series of confidential reports investigating the establishment of an empire-wide production and distribution organisation, for businessman and Empire film supporter Hugh Denison. These reports demonstrate the continuing currency of the concerns about the empire's prestige and status that were discussed in Chapter One. Nevertheless, they also reflect a degree of national disenchantment that echoes Monkman's views in regretting that 'the film producing industry in England is not controlled by imperially minded people'.[5]

In 1938, the quota provisions of the *British Cinematograph Act* were restricted to British films. This move aimed to protect against those 'quota quickies' produced by American companies in Canada that skirted around the act — as well, as in some views, serving to discredit British products more generally in the American market by their poor example. For some in Australia, however this decision was regarded as retaliation for the nation's failure to enact reciprocal legislation.[6] In a report by the Theatres and Public Halls Investigation Committee (1938), a body charged with reviewing the NSW legislation, the absolute importance of access to British markets for Australian product was stressed and a reconciliatory recommendation was made to introduce a 'substantial empire quota on a reciprocal basis'.[7]

In contrast with the primacy of concerns about the relationship between Empire and cinema in the reception contexts of Hurley's silent melodramas, these later legislative negotiations constitute an industrial and political background (or perhaps a subtext) rather than an immediate context for the reception of *Lovers and Luggers*. The principal theme running though the reception was the considerable national investment in (and enjoyment of) the status, quality and success of Cinesound Productions suggested by the *Argus*'s review. Cinesound occupied the pre-eminent place in the Australian industry in the 1930s, and the Cinesound brand functioned in an analogous manner to genre descriptors in positioning the film in its market, providing a guarantee of sound, value-for-money Australian entertainment.[8] Made at the height of the studio's popularity, *Lovers and Luggers* was also one of its most profitable films and, of the 18 features he directed for the production house, Ken Hall nominates it as his favourite film.[9] Unlike other South Seas films, *Lovers and Luggers* was not just a 'one-off' contribution to the occasional Australian series, but rather part of a broader body of studio work. Cinesound's own publicity machinery, moreover, was capable of substantially shaping the context in which the film was received.

The differences between the Cinesound-backed *Lovers and Luggers* and the comparatively artisanal, low-budget *Hound of the*

Deep in part explain the lack of recognition — in scholarly and popular accounts alike — of the similarities between the two. Nonetheless, *Lovers and Luggers* substantially remakes *Hound of the Deep*. Both films are framed as journeys from London on the part of a metropolitan hero who undertakes a symbolically laden search for a pearl with a view to rewards promised by a sophisticated society woman, only to reappraise his loyalties and transfer his desires along with renewing his masculinity. Both deploy Thursday Island as a third term to negotiate Australia's colonial relationship with Britain, while negotiating around the colonial relations with Islanders themselves in a resolution of questions of belonging and exploitation, which are displaced onto issues of gendered colonial and national identity. Unlike *Hound of the Deep*, however, *Lovers and Luggers* demonstrates only the most opportunistic interest in setting. Trading more extensively and more crudely in racial stereotypes than any other film discussed in this book, *Lovers and Luggers*' principal racial anxiety nevertheless rests with white colonial identities and distinguishing among them.

Cinesound and *Lovers and Luggers*

Cinesound Productions was formed in 1932 by Stuart Doyle, the managing director of the Greater Union Theatre Group, to supply films to this group in the early years of the Depression.[10] Cinesound's first and highly successful production, the rural backblocks comedy-melodrama *On Our Selection* (1932), initiated a pattern of feature production that continued until suspended in 1940, when production was restricted to newsreels and official war films.[11] This continuous output for almost a decade, and its exhibitor backing and strong relationship with the audience, constitute a unique phenomenon in Australian film history that has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention.

Many retrospective assessments of Hall's work, especially those fuelled by a post-revival 'heady mix of intellectual and moral contempt', have, in Verhoeven's astute assessment, forsaken produc-

tive attention to the films in favour of appropriating Cinesound's oeuvre to various positions advanced about the nature of the national industry, judging harshly the commercial orientation and Hollywood models of its operation.[12] Verhoeven argues that overdetermined anxieties about the provenance and legitimacy of national production are expressed in tropes that figure Hall's work as disabled, 'permanently partial' and illegitimate.

Andrew Pike, who dissects Cinesound's success in detail, endorses Hall's own assessment of the studio product as 'film ideally calculated and constructed to make money and relax "the average man" after his day at the office or factory'.[13] Sylvia Lawson suggests that this commercial orientation and obedience to American models disqualifies the films from consideration as a national product.[14] While Pike, Molloy, Routt (1989) and Verhoeven (1999) contest this view, none of these writers shows much interest in *Lovers and Luggers*.[15]

Shirley and Adams locate *Lovers and Luggers* in a period of calculated international address, before a return to a greater nationalism preceding the outbreak of the war.[16] When Hall returned from the US in 1935 (with the back-projection technology used in the film), he argued that the way into the American market was to feature the unusual backgrounds of Australia in films 'of international character' — a strategy later adopted by Southern International.[17] Pike's assessment of *Lovers and Luggers* as Cinesound's 'most realised Hollywood imitation ... display[ing] many classic characteristics of the deep-sea diving genre', attests to the success of Hall's strategy.[18]

The film was welcomed as solid, good-value entertainment — as 'a jolly good entertainer', in the words of *The Bulletin*'s review.[19] Popular success in an American ('B') style was considered no mean achievement in the contemporary trade press and newspaper commentaries rendered wary by the uneven achievements of Australian production. The Hollywood comparison was an important theme in contemporary reviews, which were overwhelmingly positive, if a little patronising and indulgent at times. *Labour Daily*'s comment that ' "The best in Australia" has become almost a stock

phrase in welcoming a new Australian film by Cinesound [and] that description hardly does justice to *Lovers and Luggers*', is fairly representative.[20] Major publications such as the *Argus*, the *Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Bulletin*, the *Courier-Mail* and the *Sunday Sun* are among those whose praise of the film measures it favourably against earlier Australian benchmarks and against Hollywood standards.[21] It is significant also that such criticisms as were made show no such general trends as are revealed in the praise for the film. A level of craftsmanship that was considered close to — or at least not embarrassingly far from — international in standard was an important part of the way in which the film was embraced as a national achievement.

Produced and marketed by Cinesound's well-oiled machine, *Lovers and Luggers* could fairly be described as an event in the film calendar of 1937–8. It opened at the Tivoli in Brisbane (and simultaneously in Hobart) on December 30 , 1937, where it 'made history' by being extended into a second week.[22] Although the Sydney season was less successful in terms of the box office, the city's publicity constituted a triumph in itself. A gala premiere at the State Theatre was preceded by a themed charity ball.[23] *Film Weekly* reported:

> Every daily newspaper and magazine has, during the past weeks, devoted big space to Ken Hall's new picture. News breaks, feature stories, fashion display, and general interest pictures have been appearing almost daily.[24]

These claims are well supported in the newspaper clippings filling three large scrapbooks of the Cinesound collection held at the National Film and Sound Archive. Publicity, organised by Nancy Gurr, cast a wide net. The news and fan magazine coverage of Hollywood actor Lloyd Hughes (billed as 'the answer to a maiden's prayer') was extensive, and he was exploited additionally through advertising tie-ins: appropriately for 'Hawley Trooper' sun helmets and 'Debonair' shirts.[25] There was also extensive coverage of

Cinesound's own contract player and home-grown star Shirley Ann Richards, and of featured new player Sydney Wheeler ('the new Wallace Beery').[26] Promotion included street floats, window displays, a chartered lugger in Sydney Harbour and further advertising tie-ins. Cinesound's public relations department also excelled at placing stories in newspapers and magazines about production, inviting readers to participate in a Hollywood-like behind-the-scenes experience. Stories appeared about production (costuming and fashion, Sydney socialites volunteering as extras for the ballroom scene), about 'Australian types' and the lack of Australian male leads, about the scale of the set design and so on.

Frank Hurley, in a story contributed to the *Sun*, wrote that on his return visit to the Torres Strait he found children named in honour of himself and the cast of *Hound of the Deep*. In a less-than-gracious response, he contributed another story under the alliterated title 'Pearls and Parasites': 'A pearling lugger is a hive of diversified activities. Its floating swarm comprises Papuans, Japanese, Aborigines, cockroaches, bugs, fleas and lice.'[27]

Elements in this widely cast net of promotional activities cross over with generic ingredients in the film itself. Neale distinguishes between 'generic verisimilitude', which is constituted by the genre's own conventions and provides an a priori rationale for the 'realities' constituted in the story-world, and 'socio-cultural verisimilitude', which is 'established between the work and what readers believe to be true'.[28] A 'crossover effect' is involved where 'media fictions circulate in society, supplying generic signposts, and, conversely, reabsorbing cultural codes into generic works as markers of authenticity or contemporaneity'.[29] Spreads in women's magazines, for example, described a romantic pearl-diving industry dedicated to feeding women's desire for adornment.[30] The 'humorous' Chinese stereotype in the film, which depends on the notion that Chinese difference is intrinsically amusing, is mirrored in a fluff piece about Hall persuading a Chinese actor to shave his head for a scene.[31]

The crossover effect structuring the discourse about colonisation and nationhood, however, concerns proliferating notions of resource.

The resourcefulness of national production, which contrasts favourably with Hollywood's unimaginably greater resources, as well as metropolitan acquisitiveness, crosses over into the film's narrative of the nation's at once entitled yet innocent exploitation of the Torres Strait.[32] Regina Ganter's history of the pearling industry offers a productive counterpoint to this imagining of Australian enterprise as a battle against the odds. She describes a legacy deriving from the antecedent, relatively unregulated practices of Pacific trade in such materials as sandalwood and labour, practices that persisted even as the marine industries became more regulated and coalesced into large-scale and centralised operations. Like the early traders, pearl fishers were 'resource raiders' who exploited to depletion areas in which they and their crews had little long-term investment, then moved farther afield, buoyed by 'a vision of unlimited resources in an unlimited world'.[33] There is something of the raider in the film-maker's practice, as exotic backgrounds are plundered with scant respect for the specificities of the place or culture.

In a feature spread, the *Age* takes the event of another successful Cinesound production as an opportunity to reflect on those 'strides made in the march of civilisation' that Australia can share with the 'old world' through the medium of film, which can also promote the 'amazing' diversity of Australian landscapes.[34] Such proud display provides evidence of a significant shift in the terms of the nation's pact with the imperial metropolis that was suggested by Hurley's earlier productions — the nation is no longer providing a background to add value to the performances of 'the trained actors of Britain'. Notions of Thursday Island as an Arcadian other to Australian modernity cede to notions of Cinesound's innovation in extending the repertoire of Australian iconography beyond 'kookaburras, emus or koalas'.[35] In the *Age*'s account, Australians are now 'finding the means of expressing ourselves in a picturesque medium, the reflection of ourselves as we live in this far-flung Dominion of the British Empire'. The motherland is the Other and the witness to, rather than the partner in this self-important exhibition.

Trials of imperial character and identity

The opening scenes of *Lovers and Luggers* are set in London, where celebrated pianist Daubenny Carshott (Lloyd Hughes) expresses dissatisfaction with a fame that he feels inadequately demonstrates his manliness. In an exemplary gesture of imperial entitlement, Daubenny spins the globe and selects at random Thursday Island as the site for his renewal of self. On departing, he agrees to bring back a 'very large pearl' to prove his masculine worth to an arch, coldly beautiful metropolitan socialite Stella Raff (Elaine Hamill), with whom he is infatuated. Arriving incognito at Thursday Island, Daubenny rapidly establishes himself among the hard-drinking eccentric white population and befriends particularly Captain Quidley (Sydney Wheeler), a lugger captain and sometime rogue, his daughter, Lorna (Shirley Ann Richards), and Bill Craig (James Raglan), another white diver. He purchases a lugger from Mendoza (Ronald Whelan), a Spaniard down on his luck, and begins his quest to find a pearl.

Daubenny (soon shortened to Daub) finds a pearl and, with Bill Craig's help, survives an attempt by Mendoza to claim the pearl by force. Bill has rendered himself ill by an overextended time spent in the depths, so when he dives to free Daub's blocked lines, he risks paralysis and death. Daub repays this debt by secreting the pearl he has found among Bill's harvest. Daub then discovers that Bill Craig is actually the famous painter Craig Henderson, also on a quest to win the hand of Stella Raff. Meanwhile, Stella, having decided that Daubenny is indeed her true love, travels to Thursday Island only to be confronted by two angry and disenchanted fiancés. Freed from his engagement by Stella's lack of honour, Daub comes to realise that he loves Lorna.

Cinesound preferred to develop its stories from established novels or plays and the claim that this was the first Australian film based on a British novel was further grist to the Cinesound publicity mill.[36] Gurney Slade was a journeyman best-selling author, who wrote boys' own adventure stories as well as more sophisticated

comedies of manners such as *Lovers and Luggers*.[37] Frank Harvey's screenplay considerably condenses and re-organises the novel's cast of characters, as well as re-orienting its geographic matrix. Captain Quidley's eccentric and criminal sides in the novel are toned down and he is made into Lorna's father. Significant changes in the female characters re-configure the novel's imperial connections. Whereas in the book the two female protagonists are loving half-sisters, in the screenplay they are antagonists, one a jaded metropolitan vamp and the other a fresh young Australian 'outdoors girl'. These changes narrow the gap between the book's ensemble of characters and *Hound of the Deep*'s triangulated relationships. Shifting the setting from Broome to Thursday Island, the screenplay also reduces the toing-and-froing from London that positions the metropolis at the novel's centre and base. Instead, the film posits Thursday Island not only as a place of adventurous questing or exile, but as the hero's new home.

Homi Bhabha discerns in the laboured reiteration of racial stereotypes a disquiet or ambivalence that troubles Orientalist discourse.[38] Despite the fact that knowledge of the stereotype is necessarily always already in place, it 'must be anxiously repeated', revealing the stereotype as an indexical sign of the coloniser's masked fears, defences and desires.[39] He elaborates on this ambivalence by arguing that the colonial stereotype is akin to a Freudian fetish, in that it is a repetitious fixation involving the simultaneous knowledge of and disavowal of absence, turning around a lost fantasy of pure origin:

> [The stereotype is] an ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressivity, masking and splitting of official and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse.

The racialised discourse of *Lovers and Luggers* draws on the already known racialised stereotypes with rather daunting self-evidency: Chinese characters are either cold and inscrutable or gullible and

intrinsically comic; lugger crew members are named 'Toffee' and 'Snowball' and, in their childlike simplicity, they require imperious ordering ('chop, chop!') as their labour provides an 'invisible' extension to white enterprise and agency.[40] The marked conversational cleverness of the film — which draws on the epigrammatic archness of the source novel as well as owing some debt to house style — is replete with mannered playfulness and embedded in knowing references to imperial literature. The style of this much-flaunted mastery of English is as much a sign of the film's cultural racism and its work of distinction as are the stereotypes thus articulated.[41] Sitting between the lugger's crew and the Australian-British community is the villain, Mendoza, a Spaniard of dubious descent — and of concomitantly dubious honour and wit — who is referred to as 'dark white' in the shooting script (though this term does not appear in the film itself). This last example points to the main focus of the film's colonial stereotyping that is, the 'anxious repeating' of claims about white identity.

Soon after arriving at Thursday Island, Daub is found in whites and sun helmet ('Trooper Trawler', one supposes) drinking pink gin with the identically attired Bill Craig at the Metropole Hotel. The reiterated white coloniality of this *mise-en-scène* provides the first of the series of lessons that form the film's comedy of (colonial) manners. Bill instructs Daub that no white man wears his sun helmet after dark. The insistencies of the racialised moral order of character in the film — with Lorna, for example, described as the island's 'whitest white girl' and Craig as a 'real white man' — lead Verhoeven to consider that the film is admitting in some way that 'some whites aren't so snowy after all':

> While *Lovers and Luggers* is ostensibly racist in its rhetoric about white culture, it is more ambivalent in its visual hierarchies. Racial and cultural difference in the film relies almost completely on the superficial recognition of character.[42]

Leaving off the helmet after dark does service this reliance on 'superficial recognition'. Yet the film's play around disguise and revelation occurs rather unevenly and in ways that impinge on its hierarchical ordering of racial difference in only the most attenuated ways. In an underdeveloped scene of revelation, Lorna, disguised as a man (and wearing a helmet as part of her disguise), first meets Daub, and soon confesses that this masquerade permits her to walk abroad safely after dark. Her masculine disguise is quickly penetrated (as she can't be a white *man*, she must be a white *woman*) and this exchange leads to no further unsettling of questions of identity beyond this short-lived novelty spin on the first encounter of a budding romance. Underdeveloped also is the revelation of Craig's, as well as Carshott's, true identities. Instead, their true *characters* are articulated well before the plot resolution reveals them to the other white community members as famous artists. In other words, a fundamental recognition of their *true* value pre-empts melodramatic revelations about their *real* identities. The only revelation of structural significance to narrative resolution concerns Stella's character, so the film's insistencies about whiteness are played out primarily not in respect of distinctions across race boundaries, but in respect of the film's central concern that Stella-as-empire is, to rework an apposite phrase, no 'whiter' than she should be — a point pursued in more detail later.

Bill continues Daub's enculturation by describing the function of the top step, one of those recurring motifs in the film that contribute to the fictionalised anthropology of white colonial behaviour which are such a preoccupation in Slade's novel:

> On Thursday Island when men feel beery or romantic, they sit on the top step of their bungalow and yarn and tell the story of their lives. To convey the impression that a story is a howling lie, you say 'come off the top step'.

The top step is the site of rather ambiguous performances of identity in its conflation of revelation and self-invention, although such mobility in self-presentation is as much a sign of imperial entitlement

as a destabilisation of its claims. The top step also provides an ideal location for those declarative performances of character that are shaped by the film's melodramatic mode.

Captain Quidley, or 'Quid', takes up the relay from Bill in the project of Daub's education. While Bill Craig is a class match for Daub, fraternising with Quid demonstrates the social adaptability and mobility of the public-school-educated man, which is another preoccupation in Slade's racialised aggrandising. Captain Quidley steals Daub's jib sail in order to gauge the power dynamics of his future relations with the newcomer. As Daub manages to good-naturedly best Quidley at his own game (stealing his lugger in return), Daub earns his respect, an acceptance signalled in Quid's reiterated phrase, 'He's a doer, is Daub'. This 'act of nomination' is part of that excess of the melodramatic mode that is directed towards rendering legible a morality expressed through sentiment and personality.[43] The epithet 'doer' also recalls Dyer's observation that whiteness is not reducible to the corporeality or race of white people, but is something 'extra' realised in the enterprise that underpins imperialism.[44]

Yet for all the insistencies about character played out in a narrative whose events are provoked by the problem of Daub's masculine identity, there is an odd silence about Daub's actual provenance. Hall complained of the absence of male leads among Australian actors and his hiring of Lloyd Hughes (whom he described as 'more than an actor — he was a man') was, inevitably, conscripted to the story of Cinesound resourcefulness.[45] While the script names Daub as Australian, this detail is omitted from the film. As an American cast as a British-Australian, Daub's indeterminate nationality was perhaps intended to appeal across English-speaking markets, yet the continuing absence of a male Australian lead also speaks to Australian cinema's own precarious purchase on a viable industry. The casting of the colonial heroes of *Hound of the Deep* and *Lovers and Luggers*, moreover, 'plays out at the Thespian level the historical lap-dissolve by which the British-dominated imperialism of the nineteenth century faded into the American-dominated imperialism of the twentieth'.[46]

The concatenation of generic ingredients in the film's trailer and posters speaks to Cinesound's determination to maximise the film's appeal:

> Here is the miraculous answer
> to the world's desire for enchanting
> new settings
>
> astonishing new adventures
> blood tingling new romance
> all the glamour of the tropics
> all the fire of passions unleashed
> all the tenderness of true love
> come to you in a rare and fascinating new setting[47]

Setting brackets the list, providing the 'miraculous answer' that renews the film's adventure and romance. Background is foregrounded and appropriated to national pride, with praise for Hurley's cinematography reiterating the terms of a familiar South Seas 'lazy' lyricism:

> The seascapes, showing the languorous beauty of the tropics, and the enthralling camera studies of luggers under full sail or lazily lying upon calm waters, or racing down the wind bathed in moonlight, are something that even Hollywood's best photographers have not surpassed. The atmosphere of Australia's tropical beauty in one of its most romantic ports has been captured in a way that creates a thrill of pride.[48]

While to some degree each of the South Seas films shares with *Lovers and Luggers* a pattern of foregrounded white action against 'exotic' backdrops, the use of studio back-projection provides the starkest example of this logic at work. The much-praised Hurley background footage is liberally interspersed throughout the film, but there are no dialogue or action scenes set on the beaches or in the villages of

Torres Strait Islands. There is little depth to the field of *Lovers and Luggers*, and such local 'colour' as at times provides for some naturalistic fill has specific narrative motivation. A funeral procession viewed through the window of the bar, for example, provides an occasion to explain the risks of diving and offer a pretext for the working involvement of white owners — as otherwise the 'Japs' would obtain all the pearls. Without any *incidental* presence in the *mise-en-scène*, Islander presence is even more dramatically subsumed to white agency than in *Hound of the Deep*.

In the foreshortened space of the studio, *Lovers and Luggers* is organised on racialised vertical lines. In an opening scene, Daubenny says to his manager, 'The world is open like a billiard table.' His manager responds, 'With pockets, where stars go when they drop off the news page.' The 'dropped off' space of Thursday Island extends further vertically, offering the twinned subterranean spaces of the 'the deep' and its other 'dive', China Tom's bar.

Entering China Tom's, where 'East meets West', the script leaves no cliché of Orientalist fantasy unexploited. This 'character set' was Hollywood-trained art director Eric Thompson's favourite design, using his 'imagination and a certain exaggeration to gain an effect'. With its twisted stairwell leading to shadowy, subterranean space, the set aimed to express the 'feeling that this is a squalid and slightly sinister place'.[49] A hula song-and-dance routine gestures towards the South Seas setting. Then Daub encounters his 'first touch of the Orient', as he puts it, as Lotus, in a mandarin-collared satin sheath and elaborate headdress, gravitates to Daub's knee after seeing the wad of bills he has in hand. This pun is also made in an intertitle in *Hound of the Deep* (though Strong is instead touched for a loan by a dissolute white gambler, down on his luck). The script is at pains to reiterate Lotus' Eastern deceptiveness, directing a performance with a motionless face, 'Manchu-like in its orientalism'.[50] Daub asks Quid what he should do and Quid's response makes it clear that Daub's behaviour draws the line as he replies: 'Your best or your worst.' In Lotus, the Orient is for sale to the highest bidder and it is part of Mendoza's 'dirty' whiteness that he wants to buy in, as Bill has earlier explained to Daub:

> Craig: I can't help having a sneaking feeling for the poor devil [Mendoza]. There's a Chi-Chi woman at China Tom's dive. She's in the market. Mendoza thinks one real pearl will buy her.
>
> Daub (reflective): Funny that.

Daub's reflection underlines the indexical nature of the film's establishment of the East as a cold-hearted and calculating whore. China Tom's restages an earlier test of Daub's mettle that takes place in the less elaborate but no less characterlogical sets of Stella's London settings.[51] Dress and set design in these early scenes complement Hamill's performance of Stella's cold and calculating nature. Daub's willing submission to her is the principal sign (aside from him being a pianist) of the lack of manliness that initiates his journey, speaking to an almost masochistic ceding of independent will. That he comes to have the 'sneaking feeling' that he, like Mendoza, is the dupe of his own misguided desires makes an equivalence of Lotus and Stella. By this scene (about one-third of the way into the film), Thursday Island is already working its cure, renewing Daub's intrinsic integrity as he moves towards drawing the lines that describe the national character.

Resolution in 'the worth of men'

At the end of Slade's novel, Daubenny is revealed as being only one in a series of four young men that Stella has dispatched to 'Lorne' (Broome) and the pearl quest a mere ruse to provide a selection of cultured male company for her much-loved half-sister, Lorna, undertaking the lonely family duty of tending their dying grandfather. In the novel, Stella and Lorna are firm friends and more or less mirror images of one another. Stella's exploitation of male gullibility in the service of sisterhood is, when revealed, taken in gentlemanly good part by Daub who then achieves his goal of marrying her. The film diverges significantly, concluding by exposing Stella's greed, liberating Bill and Daub from their promises to her and concluding Daub's rehabilitation by uniting him with Lorna.

Brooks argues that in the heightened rhetoric of the melodrama, disguises and enigmas are broken through by declarative acts of naming — 'acts of nomination' — that establish true identities.[52] True identities are very much at issue in this comedy of character trial and revelation. The film's most melodramatic confrontation is reserved for Stella. Craig, his health wrecked but spirits restored, gives Stella the pearl and instructs her to 'look in the mirror when you wear it and see the price of Stella Raff'. Daub takes up the accusatory relay:

> I can see you sitting in London, Stella, like a beautifully marked but deadly female spider. But you have your own way of living on your victims. It's not their blood you want, but their sweat and energy. Your web stretches round the world, your victims are everywhere [Oil from Iraq, Tusks from Nigeria, Gold from Ophir, Diamonds from Brazil. Every ship that beats up the English channel is carrying freight for you and the women you represent]. Treasure and blood and sacrifice, and all for what Stella? That you may feed your vanity and your greed — the only passion you have. You are a liar and cheat, Stella Raff.[53]

Various colonial resentments, including empire quota disagreements, might underlie this theatrical nomination of 'who is justified, who are the innocent, where is villainy at work now'.[54] The excess also reflects the 'impossible' enunciative position of the film, as simultaneously coloniser and colonised, exploiter and exploited.[55]

In work on the bush and society melodramas of the 1920s and 1930s, Routt proposes that the importance granted to the father-daughter pair speaks to and reflects this complex split in the 'colonialist' identity of the dominion: 'The colonialist *begins* as a split identity; two sexes, two generations, even two classes co-exist in a symbiotic relation which is itself riddled with paradox and doubling.'[56] The nation's complex interdependencies, yearnings and resentments about the motherland are confronted and rehearsed, Routt proposes, in narratives where the father needs to ensure his

legacy in the next generation, through pairing his daughter with her racial like — that is, someone from the land from which the colonialist has fled or been exiled. The ties of empire are themselves realised in such realisations about the racial and cultural imperatives of inheritance. In this focus on the fraught and painful binds of the nation's formative industrial and cultural relationship with Britain, Routt discerns an uncertain, ambivalent will to domination in the colonial impulse of Australian cinema.

While Routt and Cunningham establish a position between coloniser and colonised as the place from which Australian cultural production is articulated, in the research of both writers far greater attention is accorded to the position of the colonised white nation, reflecting, as Routt rightly claims, the priorities of the texts themselves, which 'play out a drama of "Empire identity" that simultaneously asserts and denies dependence on and independence from Great Britain — and in those films, as might be expected, Aboriginal people are notable mainly for their absence, or in their acquiescence'.[57]

Although *Lovers and Luggers* is not considered in Routt's discussion, it demonstrates the tendencies he describes. Quidley works behind the scenes to promote the romance between Lorna and Daub, and in the film's coda he looks towards the newly formed couple's forthcoming progeny (in a Cinesound convention). 'Identity' in the resolution of the film is paradoxical in that it depends on the one hand on the incorporation of the racial same, as metropolitan colonial man is rehabilitated then tied to the national father-daughter dyad. On the other, it depends on the repudiation of the same, in order to establish the nation's difference by nominating 'where villainy is now'. The film's melodramatic mode of characterisation intersects with and draws on a mode of reiterated racial stereotyping that is riddled with anxiety. The whitest of the whites police their own borders of civility in the democratically styled microcosm of the national body constituted by the white islander community of questers, exiles and settlers, while a cold calculation allies Britain's feminised greed more closely to the film's indulgent Orientalist fantasy about the Chinese than to fellow British stock.

Absenting Torres Strait Islanders entirely, the film exemplifies just how wholly subsumed the generalised Asian 'others' of the film can be to the role of the third term mediating Australia's imperial relationship with the motherland.[58] Shifting attention to the absent and acquiescent amounts to reading the texts against the grain of their own racialised, imperial geographies and foregrounding the part played by the films' putative 'backgrounds', is itself significant in respect to understanding the deployment of the Pacific within an Australian imaginary. Daub's concluding speech in the film calls for such attention. The ambitious script of *Lovers and Luggers* contains many unrealised scenes and one of these is where Daub recognises that he loves Lorna. The marriage proposal that remains is an almost incidental addendum to a speech addressing the rediscovery of his manhood through male bonding: 'You know I used to be a bit of a lounge lizard [but] ... I found out about the worth of men, like Bill Craig and your father and Kishi, in his way.' Imperial illegitimacy attends the effete (writ large in the lisping lounge lizard who accompanies Stella to the island) while legitimacy is conferred on the 'doer', who has discovered the worth of the labouring men who feed metropolitan vanity and greed.

Kishi is one of Daub's Asian crew, and Daub's qualified concession of his worth is a necessary corollary to Daub's rant to Stella. Without the cuts made from the script (as indicated by the square brackets), Australia would be much more evidently positioned along with other subject territories of the empire, yet even as it stands, the speech demands that Kishi's participation in an exploited colonial labour force be acknowledged. Yet if this measured inclusion hints at an identification on the part of the white community with native labour, then it speaks more to the measure of their fear and resentment than to any solidarity, neither interceding into nor moderating the racism of the film's studio recreations.

In *Hound of the Deep*, the issue of colonial resource and labour exploitation is negotiated through an insistence on the innocence of the colonial enterprise that depends on a refiguring of the desired island wealth as Marjorie (Marjorie as 'national treasure'). In *Lovers*

and Luggers, it is negotiated by — or rather buried under — a national imperative to prove resourceful in the face of its own colonial exploitation. In the reception of neither film do the terms of the nation's exploitation of its colonised territories enter discourse. A list of raided global resources to rival Daub's litany of complaint to Stella could be generated in respect of this production — rear-projection from America, source novel from Britain, South Seas song and dance, 50 'coloured extras' from Sydney, and so on. Setting, along with the set dressing of 'coloured extras', are but more ingredients in the cornucopia feeding the goal of providing 'sound entertainment values'. Achieving this goal, moreover, demonstrates the nation's capacity to be an agent of enterprise, and to demonstrate a national resourcefulness that challenges views of the nation as mere resource — as, in Monkman's words, a 'pocket to be picked empty for [British or American] enrichment'.

ENDNOTES

1 *Argus*, review of *Lovers and Luggers*, April 11, 1938, in news clipping collections, in the Cinesound Collection, National Film and Sound Archive (hereafter NFSA).

2 Memo, Chief Secretary's Department, With regard to New South Wales Cinematograph Films (Australian Quota) Bill, January 17, 1935, in 'Colonial Secretary's Department, Cinematograph Films (Australian Quota) Act 1935 — representations of British interests', 9208.2, SA/NSW. British film was admitted free from customs duty and British films could not be selected for rejection when exhibitors were required to remove 'foreign' films in order to screen quota material.

3 *Today's Cinema*, 'Open letter to the New South Wales Government', September 27, 1935, in 'Cinematograph Films (Australian Quota) Act 1935 — representations of British interests', SA/NSW.

4 *Film Weekly*, 'Local producers review British Australian position', June 27, 1935.

5 Resumé of the Australian Group in Frederick Daniell's Papers, August 10, 1938, box 18, NFSA.

6 *Herald*, untitled item, March 13, 1938, in Cinesound clippings, NFSA; Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, p. 154.

7 *Theatres, Public Halls and Cinematograph Films: Report and Recommendations with Memorandum submitted by the combined Australian and British film industry*, pp. 21–2.

8 Altman (*Film/Genre*, p. 104) notes that a fundamental aspect of marketing all Hollywood studio films is the adding of value, or the enhancing of the brand, of the studio label itself. This was clearly a strategy of Cinesound, which, as Andrew Pike, 1972, 'The History of Australian Film Production: Cinesound 1932–1970', MA, the Australian National University, p. 62, points out, kept all the studio's product in the public's view throughout the 1930s through a regular re-releasing policy.

9 Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 180.

10 Pike, 'The History of Australian Film Production', pp. 11–12.

11 Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, p. 161.

12 Verhoeven, 'When Familiarity Breeds', pp. 51, 65.

13 Pike, 'The History of Australian Film Production', p. 87. Pike argues that even if predicated on distribution guaranteed through its parent company, Greater Union Theatres, Cinesound's success was also attributable to a shrewd business sense on the part of Stuart Doyle and his former public relations man, Ken Hall, whom he co-opted as producer/director. Hall's knowledge of the audience and understanding of the market, the professionalism and teamwork of his production crew and cast, and his use of 'Hollywood'-style strategies (including stars, studio production and generic ingredients) are among the factors to which Pike attributes Cinesound's continuous success. On this basis, Pike (p. 69) further argues that the substantial failure of other production companies that were formed in anticipation of support from the NSW legislation (such as Commonwealth Film Laboratories, which made Noel Monkman's *Typhoon Treasure* as well as *Mystery Island*) cannot be attributed to industrial factors alone.

14 Sylvia Lawson, 1979, 'Towards Decolonisation: Some Problems and Issues for Film History in Australia', *Film Reader*, Vol. 4.

15 Pike, 'The History of Australian Film Production'; Molloy, *Before the Interval*; Routt, 'The Fairest Child of the Motherland'; Verhoeven, 'When Familiarity Breeds'.

16 Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, pp. 143–50, 157.

17 Ibid., p. 147.

18 Pike, 'The History of Australian Film Production', p. 103.

19 *The Bulletin*, review of *Lovers and Luggers*, December 29, 1937, Cinesound clippings, NFSA.

20 *Labour Daily*, '*Lovers and Luggers* Cinesound's Latest and Greatest', February 26, 1938, in ibid.
21 For example, *Argus*, 'Australia Produces her Best Film', April 11, 1938; *Age*, '*Lovers and Luggers* ahoy!', April 9, 1938, both in ibid.
22 *Film Weekly*, 'Cinesound Box-Office Winner', January 13, 1938, p. 8.
23 *Daily Telegraph*, 'Corroboree Ground in Ballroom', December 24, 1937, Cinesound clippings, NFSA.
24 *Film Weekly*, 'Wide Publicity for Cinesound's *Lovers and Luggers*', March 10, 1938, p. 24.
25 *Photoplayer and Talkies*, 'He's the Answer to a Maiden's Prayer', 1937, p. 23; *Film Weekly*, 'Wide Publicity for Cinesound's *Lovers and Luggers*', p. 24.
26 *Exhibitor's Monthly*, '*Lovers and Luggers* Cinesound's Greatest to Date', November 8, 1937, p. 31.
27 Frank Hurley, 'Namelinks Friends', *Sun*, June 3, 1937; 'Pearls and Parasites', *Sun*, June 1, 1937, Cinesound clippings, NFSA.
28 Neale ('Questions of Genre', p. 47) draws on the work of Tristan Todorov to make this distinction.
29 Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre', p. 238.
30 *Woman*, 'She Asked for Pearls', July 8, 1937; *Sydney Mail*, '*Lovers and Luggers* — The Dangers and Problems of Pearling in Films', March 2, 1938, Cinesound clippings, NFSA.
31 *Sun*, 'Director Puts Color into Picture', April 16, 1937, in ibid., also repeats the emphasis on resources 'freely' — even subserviently — available for the gathering:

> In response to an advertisement of foreign tropical types to take part ... Mr Hall found the colored world at his feet. He wanted Eurasians, Japanese, Hawaiians, Maoris. He got them and more besides ... Most of them were engaged for the lugger, street and cabaret scenes. More however are wanted, particularly Japanese and there will be another call.

32 *Exhibitor's Monthly*, '*Lovers and Luggers* Cinesound's Greatest to Date', for example, notes that in exploiting the romance and adventure of the pearling industry at Thursday Island, 'Cinesound [has] tackled in a big way a subject which Hollywood with all its resources ha[s] not yet approached.' The use of back-projection is discussed as further evidence of Australian resourcefulness and as part of the studio development towards a 'mature' Hollywood-like technical competence.
33 Ganter, *The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait*, p. 2.
34 *Age*, '*Lovers and Luggers* ahoy!'.

35 *Sunday Sun and Guardian*, 'No Kookaburras, Emus or Koalas', December 26, 1937, Cinesound clippings, NFSA.
36 Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, p. 144.
37 Gurney Slade, 1928, *Lovers and Luggers*, London: Verner Laurie.
38 Bhabha, 'The Other Question', p. 24.
39 Ibid., pp. 18, 34.
40 For example, in the scene of the slow staging of the return of Bill Craig and Daub to the sea's surface (to avoid divers paralysis), the hours grind on as Quid and Laura's anxious gaze directs attention to the foreground of the frame where the supply lines lead down to the endangered men. In the background, meanwhile, two unremarked on Islanders toil without relief at the air pumps.
41 In Slade's 'boys' own' novel *The Pearls of Lorne: A Story for Boys* (1925, London: Nelson), for example, the foundations of imperial English culture are rooted firmly in the training ground of the public school system. The young captain of the rugger team and otherwise all-round good sportsman is forced, on the death of his father, to seek his fortune in Australia so as to avoid the unthinkable — that his younger brother might miss out on a public school education.
42 Verhoeven, 'The Film I Would Like to Make', p. 147.
43 Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, pp. 37–8.
44 Dyer, *White*, p. 14. A 'doer' is described in the novel (p. 52) as signifying 'a bit of a lad, and a hard case, and not mind knocking yourself to bits'.
45 *Film Weekly*, 'Reception for the American Actor, Lloyd Hughes, at Australian Hotel', June 10, 1937, Cinesound clippings, NFSA.
46 Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, pp. 112–3.
47 *Daily Mail*, advertisement, May 12, 1937, Cinesound clippings, NFSA.
48 *Sydney Morning Herald*, review of *Lovers and Luggers*, reprinted in *Film Weekly*, March 3, 1938, p. 20.
49 *Sydney Morning Herald* review.
50 *Lover and Luggers* script in Cinesound collection, NFSA.
51 In a deleted scene from the script (pp. 7–12), a London professor of psychiatry describes women like Stella as byproducts of 'intensive civilization', as cold 'cheats' in their failure to live up to the promise of their beauty, and as a type of woman who is morally culpable in a way that is worse than the honest 'little ladies who walk every night between Piccadilly Circus and Charing Cross Road'.
52 Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 38.
53 Those examples occluded by square brackets — oil from Iraq, tusks from Nigeria and so on — are in the script but do not survive into the film.

54 Gledhill, 'Rethinking genre', p. 234.
55 Routt and Cunningham have described the 'impossible' enuciative position of Australian cinema of this period, at once coloniser and colonised.
56 Routt, 'The Fairest Child of the Motherland', p. 39.
57 Routt, 'Me Cobber, Ginger Mick', p. 24.
58 Routt ('Fairest Child of the Motherland') links the preoccupation with breeding and bloodlines in some of these films (even if displaced onto plot-lines about sheep or racehorses) with racialist concerns about the colonialists' future generations. He suggests that the racism in Australian films of this period is based on no simple expression of racial hatred, but rather is 'articulated ... as a relation of dominance and subordination' (p. 40). He supports this claim by briefly considering that, especially in films set outside Australia (*Jungle Woman*, *In the Wake of the Bounty* and *The Devil's Playground*) from which the anxiety-creating groups of the Chinese and Aborigines are absent, limited positive qualities are evident in the representation of indigenous peoples. He suggestively links the 'refusal to condemn miscegenation outright' in these films to 'a metaphoric parallel between the dual identity of the colonialist and that engendered by and through miscegenation' (p. 41).

SECTION THREE
Chapter Six

'ALL THE WAY FROM THE ARAFURA TO THE CORAL SEA'
Mapping the space of adventure in the postwar Pacific, from *Typhoon Treasure* to *King of the Coral Sea*

Australia is still basically a British community but increasingly dependent on the foreign policy of the United States and living, on what is virtually a large island, within a day's flight of half the people of the world — none of them white.

You may not relish the idea of a Welfare State, that paternalistic form of public administration in which the government regulates almost everything short of the amount of air you breathe … But if you were born, say, a Torres Strait islander, with a skin the colour of boot polish and some proud head-hunters in your family tree, the Welfare State might look pretty good to you … The truth is that it wouldn't be ethical not to let the Torres Strait islander share in the fruits of our civilisation. Besides, to be quite frank, it wouldn't suit us from a political point of view. If we don't let the islander share in at least some of the things we have, some other country …

> may make him a tempting offer. But we depend on his loyalty for the protection of our under-populated north.[1]

The two chapters of this final section consider films produced during the 'decolonising' period initiated by Indian independence in 1947.[2] The third Thursday Island pearling adventure in this study, *King of the Coral Sea*, was released in 1954, 17 years after *Lovers and Luggers*. Although like Hall and Hurley before them, the film's producer and director — Chips Rafferty and Lee Robinson respectively — were drawn to the exotic and romantic possibilities of Thursday Island, the island narrative of this later film figures a significantly divergent social imaginary. The previous two chapters proposed that in the imperial imaginary constituted by the interwar films set on Thursday Island, the distinction between the textual planes of foreground and background was racially constructed with a foreground of (white) action established against and enabled by a background of disavowed Islander (along with other racially marked) labour. In these narratives of entitlement and legitimisation, the romantic conceit of the pearl quest serves to displace questions of labour and industry in favour of staging trials of imperial masculine identity. In the postwar diegesis of *King of the Coral Sea*, the 'lonely outpost of empire' of these earlier films is superseded by a Thursday Island represented, in one of the eponymous Ted King's (Chips Rafferty) lines in the film, as 'the world's number one pearling port', replete with sorted sacks of pearl shell stamped for international export. The narrative is no longer framed by a voyage from London that serves as a metaphor for settlement and self-realisation. Instead, the film's central protagonists are already at home: they are owners, managers and workers in a modern national and global order.

King of the Coral Sea is further marked by the refiguring of power that followed World War II: the Japanese are part of the island's past and a distant current rival and Thursday Island is located in a Pacific that is the shared domain of Australia and America, rather than a site for the negotiation of the colonial relationship between Australia and Britain. Pearler captain Ted King's sidekick is Jack Janiero

(played by Australian Rod Taylor), whose presence in the film is notionally accounted for in King's introduction of him as 'Uncle Sam's wandering boy'. Jack's family name, moreover, no longer suggests the 'dirty white' connections of *Lovers and Luggers*' Spanish miscreant Mendoza, but positively gestures towards the USA's own cosmopolitan population. The name of the company that produced *King of the Coral Sea*, Southern International, also gestures towards such refigured geopolitical relations, confidently forecasting the company's relations with its market and turning around — or leaving behind — the picturesque sense of 'south' as the other side of the white man's world suggested by the term 'South Seas'.

Typhoon Treasure and the 'spirit of adventure'

Before discussing *King of the Coral Sea*, a few points should be made about the cognate project *Typhoon Treasure*, which provides another perspective on the contrast between the interwar years and the 1950s. *Typhoon Treasure* was released less than a year after *Lovers and Luggers*, in September 1938.[3] Its writer, producer and director, Noel Monkman, also produced the underwater scenes for *King of the Coral Sea*. Monkman and Robinson had prior experience in non-fiction film-making.[4] Both films feature 'thriller' adventure plots concerning smuggling and shift away from the love triangles of the interwar melodramas, to focus on 'buddy' action. Both maximise their generic inclusivity in a naïve excess. In a familiar ploy, the suggested marketing catchline for *Typhoon Treasure* itemises the ingredients available to promote the film:

> Adventure in the Paradise of Australia — the Great Barrier Reef. Beauty unrivalled in the world ... Drama, Romance, Excitement — The storm at sea, war with hostile aboriginals, encounters with crocodiles and the dangerous search for fortune on the sea-bed.[5]

Typhoon Treasure was produced by the Commonwealth Film Laboratories, a private company that expanded into production on

the strength of the foreshadowed support of a state film quota, a measure anticipated widely as a consequence of the NSW Film Inquiry.[6] Although the company announced an intention to embark on a continuous schedule of feature production in June 1937, in fact only *Mystery Island* (also released in 1937) and *Typhoon Treasure* — films sharing something of the same naturalist production concept — were produced independently by this company.[7] Monkman was an earnest and committed activist on behalf of Australian cinema, as is indicated by his contributions to public debate about changes to the empire quota mentioned in the previous chapter. He worked without wages on the production, 'because of [his] desire to put Australian films on the map'.[8]

Typhoon Treasure concerns the attempts of Alan Richards (Campbell Copelin) to retrieve his cargo of pearls, sunken off the Pakema Reef, before they can be purloined by a pair of opportunistic villains whose main criminal interests lie in smuggling drugs from Shanghai. Shooting started in June 1937 and final studio scenes were completed in Sydney in December. Little record of the film's production survives: eight weeks were spent on location in northern Queensland on the Russell River and then on Green Island.[9] Made for £8,000, the film was distributed by United Artists.[10]

The diegetic setting for the film is 'Madana', an isolated New Guinea island with a trading post — where isolation motivates the plot's smuggling rather than serving to mark the empire's furthest outreaches. It is not surprising that Monkman, who with his wife and work partner, Kitty, had spent extended periods on unpopulated Barrier Reef islands recording marine life for educational films, should shoot his film in north Queensland, and make a feature of underwater scenes.[11] However, the decision to nominate this space as *not* Queensland invites speculation. Heedless of the film's geographic substitutions, the trade press proposed the film's Barrier Reef location as a key selling point, suggesting tie-ins with travel agents.[12] There was little effort or expense involved in elaborating the geographic ruse of the film; for example, only £50 (in an admittedly tight budget) was allocated for sets on location.

What, then, did this geographic displacement add to or permit in the film? The film is dedicated in its opening prologue to 'the spirit of adventure'. As the genre most nearly associated with imperialism — its 'energising myth' — adventure calls for travel through foreign lands.[13] *Typhoon Treasure* draws on this energising myth and the 'exhilaratingly expansive relationship to the environment' ascribed to the white imperial male, to imagine as hero its profit-motivated South Seas fortune hunter, played by Campbell Copelin, who was cast more usually (and more appropriately by the conventions of typecasting) as a 'lounge lizard'.[14] The colonial setting, then, seems to permit a degree of ruthlessness in the pursuit of mercantile adventure that would, perhaps, be less palatable, or possible, in a domestically set narrative.

This ruthlessness is played out against the native people who are so central to the film's flora and fauna 'naturalist' appeal. Indigenous peoples, in fact, are rather plastically deployed across the film's registers: first seen are Papuans, in the picturesque shots of Alan's rescuers in their canoe, with its distinctive, crab-claw sail; cute children are cuddled by the white woman of the plot, in a conventional display of white kindliness to 'others'; a brief dance sequence provides ethnographic spectacle; the Tarzan-derived bare-chested Utan (a Thursday Islander), plays a third and temporary buddy in the plot; pan-Pacific 'headhunters' provide a secondary menace; and, finally, mainland Aborigines take the roles of the New Guinea native police. The *Sun*'s review aptly reflects this deployment in bundling all the indigenous peoples together with the landscape as natural attractions: 'Those cliffs, those water-laden tropic skies, the splendour of the trees, the fine virility of the natives — all alike are excellent.'[15]

Unlike most of the earlier films that imagine a South Seas without colonial administration or any other form of law, Monkman's narrative includes a Patrol Officer, even if rather unusually he is involved in tracking a smuggling operation. Nevertheless, Alan, his white sidekick, Scotty, and Utan, pass without any prior arrangement through 'headhunter' territory and Alan shoots without restraint those who protest his trespass, then steals one of their canoes. The

Sun reviewer felt sufficiently uncomfortable with these scenes to say: 'If it is to go abroad ... the scene in which Copelin and Valli are attacked by hostile natives and Copelin shoots several down should be deleted.'[16] A little later Utan is also left for dead (after rather cursory examination of an arrow wound to his shoulder), while a couple of the police also lose their lives in the final shoot-out with the villains. It was fortunate that Monkman did not have the budget to take his production to Papua as such a scenario would not have been permitted production. It was, in part at least, such a violent view of white relations with indigenous people that led to the ban on *The Devil's Playground.*

The advertisements do not exaggerate the beauty of featured scenic backgrounds of Australia's northern 'paradise' and the deaths of the Aboriginal and Islander cast and extras are all the more disturbing in the light of the concern shown in the story to protect other elements in the 'natural' environment. For example, the buddies most carefully negotiate bird-nesting grounds and Scotty, thinking better of eating the egg he has collected, returns it to its nest. *Typhoon Treasure* is dedicated to an unselfconscious white adventure that put Australia 'on the map' of an imaginary imperial geography of opportunity and entitlement that mirrors *Jungle Woman.* Again, earnest and naïve nationalism butts up against disavowed colonialist exploitation. *King of the Coral Sea,* while similarly generically positioned for the 'B' market, demonstrates the impact of assimilationist discourses on the politicised geographies of adventure in the 1950s.

Southern International

O'Regan describes one of the distinctive features of Australian cinema as the close production relationship between the realms of documentary and fiction.[17] O'Regan and Cunningham also make the point that the consistent output of the Commonwealth Film Unit is customarily overlooked in estimations of the 1950s as a

period of scarce national film-making.[18] In addition to non-theatrical circuits of distribution (such as libraries, schools, universities and embassies), a significant number of government documentaries — including prestige colour productions such as *The Queen in Australia* (1954) and *New Guinea Patrol* (1958) — were also programmed as support featurettes in commercial theatres. These factors underline the considerable civic importance of the unit's contribution to national culture.[19] Southern International provides an important, if somewhat eccentric, example of the fertile interplay between these contiguous sectors.

King of the Coral Sea was the second production of a company headed by the well-known Australian actor Chips Rafferty and Lee Robinson, a young producer working at the Commonwealth Film Unit whom Rafferty co-opted to this enterprise.[20] Their pilot venture was *The Phantom Stockman* (1953), an outback Western that drew on Robinson's fascination with the Northern Territory. The film was based on a character Rafferty played in a radio serial for which Robinson wrote scripts and which quickly returned a modest profit to its investors. Southern International's next productions, in the Torres Strait and New Guinea, represented an extension of this interest.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Robinson had worked in the Northern Territory for the Commonwealth Film Unit, making *Namatjira, The Painter* (1947), *Crocodile Hunters* (1949) and *Outback Patrol* (1952).[21] He also made *The Pearlers* (1949), set mostly in Broome, but with a brief scene on Thursday Island. That Robinson developed a great interest in, as well as respect for indigenous peoples and their way of life during this work is evident in the films themselves as well as in interviews and in a film proposal he contributed to the journal *Film Monthly*. He proposes as 'the film [he] would like to make' a parable from the perspective of a tribal Aborigine who journeys out to become acquainted with the white man's ways, which he then repudiates.[22] The proposal nostalgically imagines an 'uncontaminated' lifestyle to which the protagonist can readily return, and appropriates an indigenous point of view, at the

same time as it pays close attention to the role of language and the insidious damage done to indigenous subjectivity in its perplexing clash with the 'superiority' of Western civilisation, suggesting a political sensibility and a sensitivity that is not developed in Robinson's later work.

Yet although Robinson never made this 'ideal' film, traces of the desire for its production can be found in his focus on representing a multiracial Australia.[23] A less frankly exploitative approach than that of his predecessors is suggested, for example, by Southern International's unique decision to hold *King of the Coral Sea*'s Australian premiere on Thursday Island, where it played before a capacity house, attracting considerable press attention on the mainland. *Australasian Exhibitor* describes the evening as attracting 'possibly the most polyglot audience ever to see a world premiere' and describes an all-night feast of 'roasted wild pig, turtle, dugong, chicken and fish ... and native dances until the dawn'.[24]

The *Daily Telegraph* sent a reporter to cover the event. 'Lap laps at film premiere' describes viewers assembling in the preceding week, arriving by lugger, launch, skiff and dugout canoe. While the syntax of the journalist's description maintains familiar racial hierarchies, the fact of there being a racially mixed queue, as well as the hybrid cultural space of the event itself, points to a *representation* at least of Thursday Island society niggling at the rigid racial stratification that Beckett describes as well-established by the turn of the century and enduring into the 1950s:[25]

> The visitors set up camps under the island's mango and native almond trees, along the mangrove flats, and on rocky beaches. A diver's moon illuminated the island's Torres Theatre, which seats 400 in the open air under a great fig tree. Bookings opened last Monday week and sold out in five minutes from an overnight queue of whites, halfcastes, Malays and Islanders.[26]

It seems likely that Robinson's experience while working for the Commonwealth Film Unit contributed to the divergent sensibility in

Southern International's approach to and representation of indigenous peoples. In reviews, however, his documentary training was held responsible for his films' weak characterisations, meandering pace and poorly conceived narrative progression. As Robinson struggled to retrain as a director of drama, Southern International relied on Rafferty's experience and understanding of technical craft and on his national fame and (minor) international celebrity. Rafferty's celebrity emerged from two iconic nationalistic roles in the 1940s: the comic digger character of Charles Chauvel's *40,000 Horsemen* (1940) and the rugged laconic bushman/drover of Harry Watt's *The Overlanders* (1946), both roles demonstrating that 'special ordinariness' that Richard Dyer positions as a central component to the successful star persona.[27] During the 1950s, Rafferty drew on these successes, metonymically representing Australia as a bushman, pioneer and digger.[28] Entering into local production with the goal of providing continuous work for himself in Australia, Rafferty's company, ironically, adopted a strategy of minimising the importance of the inaccessible Australian market and self-consciously avoiding the perceived negative box-office appeal of overtly Australian themes. Cunningham describes Southern International as 'develop[ing] a model of negotiating the industry-culture duality well before such terms had sharpened through [contemporary] critical debate'. Yet notwithstanding the films' pitches to an international market, Cunningham further observes that 'some of these films, particularly those in which Rafferty acted, bear significance for a more culturalist notion of a "national cinema"'.[29]

At least in part their approach needs to be understood in the context of the general paucity of fiction film production in the postwar period. From 1946 to 1969, an average of two local feature films a year were produced.[30] The specific difficulties for production in the 1950s — such as capital-raising restrictions affecting the first part of the decade — should be understood against the backdrop of those general factors that have, to greater or lesser degrees, structured Australian cinema throughout its history: the size of the market, the lack of industry investment in production, the need for government

support. The discontinuous nature of production forced actors and crew to seek work overseas, and one of Rafferty's and Robinson's consistent complaints was the difficulty of casting, as actors in Australia were not always ready to risk their continuous employment, mainly in radio drama, in favour of chancy one-off film productions.

Southern International developed a cautious strategy of retelling familiar stories against attractively unusual backgrounds, which in general terms repeated aspects of what Hurley, Hall and Monkman had attempted before. Perhaps they were also responding to the advice of British director Harry Watt, with whom both had worked, to develop Australia's great potential for 'outdoors action picture[s]'.[31] Southern International's was one of a number of 'locationist' strategies dominating approaches to film-making in Australia at the time. O'Reagan describes Robinson's foregrounding of location as 'landscape as exploitation', in order to distinguish it from other contemporaneous projects such as Chauvel's work, which tied nation-building narratives to landscape in epic-scale 'locationist' productions, and the pro-development focus of the classical documentary style, indebted to the success of docu-dramas (such as *The Overlanders*) made in the 1940s.[32] He argues that the absence of any of the financial or industrial support that enabled these other projects resulted in Southern International's films being shifted 'from [their] documentary realist moorings' into an excess of fetishisation as Robinson adapted location shooting to commercial imperatives.

As Robinson points out, it was clearly a successful financial strategy. Made for £25,000, *King of the Coral Sea* returned a little more than this amount in Australia (£26,000), making a profit in its American and British distribution. Britain remained the key market for Southern International, where the film returned £34,000.[33]

In 1953, Gerard Stewart, a staff writer from the illustrated monthly *Australian Magazine*, wrote a cover story on the making of *King of the Coral Sea*, called 'Rafferty's rules in film-making'.[34] Although as much a background piece on Thursday Island as a production report, it does usefully describe Southern International's location-oriented approach to low-budget film-making. The rules

describe an improvisational film practice based on found materials, with practices listed such as: 'Pick your locality first, then write a scenario to it'; 'Keep the costs down by taking only the minimum of actors on location — use local talent as far as possible'; 'Do not erect special buildings ... make sure that all your props can be fitted into a utility'; and 'shoot mainly outdoors ... [against] backgrounds that cannot be found in other parts of the world'. This reliance on local resources and non-professional actors (sometimes performing as themselves, such as in the instance of the Thursday Island police sergeant Charles Peverill) lends an (at times) incongruous docu-drama aspect to their formulaic stories, further complicating the mix of actuality and boy's own adventure fantasy in the films.

Unsurprisingly, New Guinea was their next chosen location, where their project literally crossed paths with producer Maslyn Williams, who was on his first extensive research trip for the series of films commissioned of the Commonwealth Film Unit by the Department of Territories (as discussed in Chapter Two).[35] Paul Hasluck, the Minister for Territories, offered considerable administrative support to Southern International's productions in New Guinea and in the Northern Territory. Robinson was described later by the Secretary of the Department of Territories as a competent and valued associate, 'personally well known to the officers of this department ... [and] anxious to assist Australia's cause in New Guinea'.[36] Robinson returned to the unit to make *District Officer* (1963), one of the many pro-development Australian propaganda vehicles of the period, celebrating the Administration's progress in the Western Highlands.

'A cheerful ... happy race': the Australian way of life and welfare colonialism in the Torres Strait

All Southern International's output was produced in the 1950s. The idea of 'the 1950s', as John Murphy points out, 'has extraordinary salience in popular culture and political rhetoric'.[37] Yet like any such shorthand periodisation, it constitutes a misleading unity. Murphy argues that the first part of the decade, a period of high inflation and

Cold War anxiety, represents a continuation of the concerns of the immediate postwar years, in contrast with the relative stability and prosperity of the second half of the decade (which in these respects continues into the 1960s).[38] Richard White, in accounting for the emergence of a discourse on 'the Australian way of life', proposes that in contrast with the conventional characterisation of the 1950s as a period of (stifling) stability and security, it was instead a period of great change: 'The emphasis on stability, in politics [and] in popular culture was an attempt to maintain surface appearances, the response of society in turmoil.'[39] This necessarily vague and fundamentally emotional response was primarily defensive in its purpose of supposing a unity, homogeneity and stasis to the nation's cultural and social modes, as a defence against the perceived incursions of postwar migration, American influence and Communist expansionism.[40] The identifiable Australian 'reality' that White argues was established during this period is much in evidence in the address of the popular illustrated magazines, which constituted this reality for their readership in their continuing and most often celebratory coverage of the nation and its way of life.

John Murphy usefully extends White's focus in proposing that as an 'indicator of self-congratulation', the way of life also functioned as a 'measuring rod against which the assimilation of migrants and Aborigines was measured'.[41] Despite surface similarities, assimilation in the second part of the 1950s operated in very different ways for these two contrasting groups. Both were supposed to assimilate into this ill-defined Australian way of life, yet however uncomfortable Europeans might have found this 'quaint demand', it was not pursued with the surveillant force of welfare authority as it was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, experiencing assimilation as a further stage in a long history of interference.[42] Moreover, there was — at least by the late 1950s — some degree of reciprocity imagined with European migrant culture, while few concessions were made for Aboriginal difference in assimilationist demands that this poorest of populations conform to middle-class domestic ideals.

Australian anxiety about its Asian neighbours, some of whom were involved in nationalist independence struggles, was bound up with anti-Communist sentiment. The Pacific defeats of World War II, such as the loss of Singapore and the rapid initial routing of Australian forces in New Guinea, followed by anti-colonial independence movements, threatened Australia's geopolitical identity in Asia, where British imperial influence had long served as 'a major buttress of Australia's sense of physical security'.[43] Yet notwithstanding a pragmatic realignment of Australia's strategic and economic interests in the postwar period, Gregory Pemberton describes the policies of the Menzies Liberal government as continuing to conceive of Australia's interests through the 'prism of empire'.[44] He argues that 'the upsurge of Asian demands for self-government was the single most important foreign policy issue confronting Australia after 1945' and supports his claim that the government had retained an 'Empire perspective' by citing the militarisation of Australia's relations with Asia, such as support for the British in Malaya, the French in Vietnam and the Americans in Korea, which in the first two instances was designed to bolster 'legitimate' colonial regimes against nationalist movements.[45]

After World War II, there was, moreover, a shift in the rhetoric justifying colonisation as expressed in the UN postwar 'trusteeship' policies, policies that the Curtin and Chifley Labor governments had actively promoted. The primary rationale of trusteeships was development, to assist in preparing colonies for independence. The Australian Trust Territory of New Guinea (and effectively Papua, by extension) faced unprecedented international scrutiny, and Hasluck argued that the broadening national public interest in Papua and New Guinea in the middle of the 1950s was a response to the belief that Australia was 'doing a good job' of development.[46] International attention directed towards the plight of Aborigines also influenced domestic policy, including the moves towards extending citizenship to indigenous people.[47]

The interest of popular magazines in the Northern Territory, the Torres Strait, Papua and New Guinea needs to be understood in the

light of these significant geopolitical shifts in the wake of World War II and the need for 'new' approaches to domestic racial relations in a decolonising world. These publications were steeped in the prevalent discourse on the Australian way of life, which served to report, represent and unify or assimilate these diverse and marginal spaces of the nation. When Rafferty promoted *King of the Coral Sea* saying 'our ambition is to place on the screens of the world the way of life in Australia', he deployed the sort of montage-view of the nation as abundant resource that was also evident in the pro-development Commonwealth Film Unit productions of the time and in the magazines. 'We want to show people our cities, our beaches, our timber lands, our snow country and things like the scallop fleets of Hobart,'[48] he said. The general-interest illustrated magazines that gave generous coverage to *King of the Coral Sea*, and subsequently to *Walk into Paradise*, such as *Pix*, *People*, *Australasian Post* and *Australian Magazine*, were important 'habitats of meaning' contributing significantly to the linkages, or to an intertextual relay, between assimilatory discourses and the films' significations in their social circulation. Overt cross-promotions were also in evidence: first-time actor Ilma Adey, who played Ted King's daughter, was a regular *Pix* cover girl; Janiero reads an article on the company's boss in an edition of *Australian Magazine*.[49] These linkages in themselves provide evidence of a sociopolitical shift in the nation, since the marginally documentary or docu-drama elements to film cannot explain this contrast between the discursive embedding of *King of the Coral Sea* and, for example, the scattered proliferation of notions of resourcefulness in the promotion of *Lovers and Luggers*.

Researching the article 'Rafferty's rules for film-making' provided the *Australian Magazine*'s staff writer with the opportunity to write further stories about the cultural assimilation of Torres Strait Islanders and the work of the agencies responsible for their care, stories embedded in the broader context of many other stories about the 'cheerful, happy race' of the Torres Strait.[50] 'Rafferty's rules for film-making' begins with a stark polarisation of superseded traditional

and 'assimilated' culture. 'Let's go native' invites readers to share vicariously in the pride of the welfare provisions of the Queensland Department of Native Affairs. 'They dive for your shirt buttons' covers the Department of Native Affairs' regulation and management of Islander labour in the pearling industry.[51] The policy of assimilation into white society was at no stage extended to include Torres Strait Islanders as it was for mainland Aborigines, especially those of racially mixed parentage. Indeed, the reassurance of their continuing status as a 'race apart' might have added value to their potential to generate positive news stories.[52] Yet the measure or yardstick of the Australian way of life was nevertheless operative in discourses about Islanders (and extended even into models for development in Papua and New Guinea). Social and cultural assimilation via a process of 'welfare colonialism'[53] is at the centre of the 'good news' about the Islanders' way of life under a benevolent regime of, in the vernacular of the Queensland Department of Native Affairs, its 'womb to tomb' care. A similar and at times overlapping panoply of anxieties is mediated in the reassuring discourses about the happy island dwellers to Australia's north to those addressed in the broader discourses on the Australian way of life — anxieties about the future of British Australia, fears of Communist elements in decolonising nationalist movements, and continuing fears about the security of porous northern borders.

Each of Stewart's articles measures Islander life against what Murphy calls the 'diffused signifier' of the Australian way of life.[54] The articles are organised implicitly as a dialogue between an enlightened and modern voice and a nay-saying interlocutor exhibiting various outmoded views.

Interlocutor	'Enlightened' position
Outdated racialist	*Support for the government's 'new-deal-for-the-natives' policy*
Welfare is 'mollycoddling'[55]	Welfare has *produced* the 'new native', who is 'specially suited' to the regime of benevolent surveillance of the welfare state.[56]
Natives are racially inferior (dirty, lazy, passive).	Persons with such views need to 'grow up'.[57] 'New' natives are 'not at all what you might expect'; instead, they are clean, self-reliant, entrepreneurial, dignified, loyal, even royalist. One exemplar cited 'carries himself with a self-assurance and dignity'.[58]
Academic/anthropological advice to maintain cultural traditions	The contribution of men of action: Cornelius O'Leary: 'islanders all call him "Father".'[59]
Ancient tribal customs of a savage past: 'The dancers swung wooden clubs … The proper way of using a club was to hit your enemy on the back of his neck so that his skull would not be damaged. Once the skull was broken, it wouldn't buy any goods and couldn't even be used as a trophy.'[60]	White civilisation: '[B]aby bonuses and refrigerators and accident insurance and lace-trimmed underwear and tinned meat, X-ray examination for TB and visual, education to name but a few of the blessings of 20th century civilisation.'[61] 'Torres Strait islanders have come a long way … Christianity, World War Two and Queensland's Department of Native Affairs' mark the differences.[62]

[continued over]

Interlocutor	'Enlightened' position
	...[C]ustoms as ancient even to natives, now an exotic commodity: 'The natives are now three, if not four generations removed from putting a price on your head, but have become adept at putting a price on their own'.'[63]
Indigenous forms of social organisation as 'naturally' Communistic	Anti-Communism: 'At 39, Phillemon Pearson, of Coconut Island, is a native capitalist. He has achieved something Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would never have believed possible. He employs a crew of 10 fellow Torres Straits islanders ... and owns a 60ft pearl fishing lugger worth £6,800.'[64] 'Torres Strait Islanders are better off than white people. The department cares for them their whole lives. It mends their marriages, advances them building loans, defends them in court, provides medical and hospital services and teaches their children, even with visual education.'[65]

The 'new' in these articles is largely a shift in paternalistic rhetoric, awkwardly straddling an attempt simultaneously to transcend and rehabilitate older racisms at the same time as containing any but the most delimited sense of indigenous agency. This is achieved by the insistence that Islanders are the *beneficiaries* of the absolute dependency constituted by the Department of Native Affairs' interference in every aspect of life — a degree of interference that the article admits would be most unwelcome to its own readers. There is also, as an

example of a wider theme, an evident discomfort with indigenous assimilation of Western culture — or the ability to manoeuvre within its constraints — so that success within Western culture is either reassuringly associated with loyalty (such as the display by Islanders of images of the Queen) or seen as a sort of canny presumption (such as in the example of Islanders' readiness to 'put a price' on their labour). Indigenous agency, and even enterprise, needs to be fostered to the extent that possible Communist sympathies are contained, but must nevertheless accommodate a continuing and rather blind monopoly over the sort of understandings and behaviours that such 'new natives' are permitted.

Stewart's articles are evidence of a further spin on the narcissism of colonial discourse, in that policies of welfare colonialism are presented as evidence of white modernity, and its deployment of social technologies that guarantee indigenous wellbeing on their behalf. Welfare agencies replace missionisation in this modern paternalism Islanders call O'Leary not father but 'Father'. And in Stewart's logic it is for Father that 'the natives' will fight. Yet even in such actions, Islanders remain excluded from Australian nationhood. As Stewart points out, '*We* depend on *his* loyalty for the protection of *our* under-populated north' (emphasis added).[66] *King of the Coral Sea* works within the master structures of this discourse, instituting its rival Father, the eponymous Ted King, as the defender of the sovereign strait.

Borders of the national family in *King of the Coral Sea*

King of the Coral Sea tells the story of Ted King (Rafferty), the manager of Merriman Pearling and captain of the most productive lugger of its fleet. Returning to port at Thursday Island where he lives with his daughter, Rusty (Ilma Adey), King finds a body floating at sea. King learns from his second-in-charge, Jack Janiero (Rod Taylor), that the company's young owner, Peter Merriman (Charles 'Bud' Tingwell), is coming to visit. These two plot trajectories run more or less parallel as Rusty acquaints Merriman with the island's attrac-

tions, while Ted and Janiero, at the behest of the local police, become involved in investigating the death. It is soon revealed that the body was that of an investigator trailing a gang involved in smuggling 'prohibited European nationals' into Australia. The plots mesh when Rusty is kidnapped and taken to an outlying island by Grundy (Reg Lye), the criminal mastermind of the smuggling band, who has pretended to be a town drunk, and Yusep (Lloyd Berrell), the embittered main diver of the Merriman fleet. She is held hostage to forestall King's investigation. With the assistance of the aqualung equipment that Merriman has brought along to test, Rusty is safely rescued and the gang dispatched. In the film's final scene, Rusty and Merriman seal the romance in a rather odd underwater variation of the conventional closing clinch.

For the most part, reviews provide evidence of the considerable goodwill towards Southern International's project of Australian feature production. Praise was given to the film's successful mimicry of Hollywood genre, the attractions of its locations and its sound delivery of entertainment, as *Australasian Exhibitor*'s description of the response to a preview suggests:

> Keen trade observers present at the sneak preview classed *King of the Coral Sea* as equal to any of Hollywood's action productions. Observers highly praised the acting, story and photography. The audience found solid entertainment in the film ... the underwater scenes ... brought forth additional applause.[67]

King of the Coral Sea achieves a unique geniality among the South Seas films that is due to a confident modernity underpinning the film, a confidence that it was part of an era that offered closure on aspects of the past. Significant too is the tone set by Rafferty's loose-limbed presence and the utopian impulse evident in the film's response to the qualities of the location itself. *Kinematograph Weekly*, for example, notes that 'it is the film's refreshing lack of pretence, rather than its spectacle, that makes it enjoyable'.[68] This is a film carried along on prevailing currents of wind and sea. There is an elemental poetics at

work in many of its scenes, in the play of light across and under water and of wind in the sparse foliage of hardy coastal casuarinas. An expansionary exhilaration is expressed in performances marked by physicality, by a bodily liberty that includes the 'beefcake' and 'beach-cake' display characteristic of the era, the opening scenes of Ted King at the helm of a lugger in full sail heading into port, underwater scenes and the traditional dance performance by firelight. British trade paper the *Monthly Film Bulletin* seems to be responding to these qualities — albeit with a measure of metropolitan paternalism — in its comment that '[t]his Australian adventure story ... is boisterous and uninhibited, in its unsophisticated way it is quite diverting'.[69]

The persistent south-easterlies that blow across the island figure also as the winds of change, heralding an embrace of the new. This embrace is given narrative form in the subplot involving King's eventual appreciation of the advantages of Merriman's new aqualung equipment, which he initially resists in favour of the more restrictive Thursday Island pearlers' traditional garb of helmet and corselage. Rafferty and Tingwell had initially planned the story around this technology, popularised at the time by Jacques Cousteau. The film's central underwater-thrills scene, in which Merriman rescues King, who is trapped by his fouled air-line, demonstrates the gracious freedom of movement enabled by a mobile air supply, and provides a metaphor for the film's broader turn away from the restrictions of the past.

The film continues the cycle initiated by Rafferty's role as the mystical superhero of the outback in *The Phantom Stockman*, in a role that Cunningham describes as 'exert[ing] a kind of transcendental patriarchal and juridical power'.[70] In this film, Rafferty is indeed the 'king' of the Coral Sea: fleet captain, father, master detective and action hero. *Walk into Paradise* appositively completes a trilogy of such roles, with Rafferty playing a Patrol Officer. In *King of the Coral Sea*, although Merriman is the visiting company owner investigating the running of his business, King's patriarchal position is never in doubt. In a geography lesson staged soon after Merriman's arrival, King takes the company owner to a panoramic vantage point above the town:

> Well, there you are Mr Merriman — the Torres Strait all the way from the Arafura to the Coral Sea. Dead ahead of us is Wednesday Island. There's a chain of islands stretching north of that right up to New Guinea. You could paddle a surfboard from here to New Guinea if you wanted to. That's Tuesday Island out there and beyond that in the distance, 20, 25 miles away is Cape York Peninsula ... This is Horn Island here, it used to be a big air force base during the war and this is Prince of Wales — it's run as a cattle lease ... out there to the west is Friday Island and beyond that the Arafura Sea.

This moment in the film invites diachronic reflection on the imaginary space of adventure in the Torres Strait films. In the becoming-Australian space of *Hound of the Deep*, 'Black' Darley uses this same location to point out to Strong the disheartening challenge posed to colonial man by the tropics, in a film in which dominion backgrounds were to add value to the empire's film project. *Lovers and Luggers* configures Thursday Island through the tired generic semantics and tropes of British colonial adventure. The map onto which Monkman wanted to put Australia with *Typhoon Treasure* imagines an oddly indeterminate colonial space, of fantastic and heedless adventure. Rafferty's stated ambition to put Australia and its way of life on the screen map supersedes these in this 'documentary' iteration. King's perspective marries tourist promotion to an appropriative national inscription of the strait that extends to New Guinea, in the description of its proximity as a surfboard rather than a canoe-paddle away, while the weekday naming voids the strait of any but its colonial history.[71] In contrast with the 'frontier' stories, *King of the Coral Sea* de-marginalises the strait — an analogous incorporation of the marginal spaces of the Northern Territory was taking place in such sites as the popular magazines. Only attenuated or historical ties to Britain remain and the nation's sovereignty over the strait is established as a matter of unexceptional fact. This stocktake of King's measuring gaze nationalises Australia's own colonial territories in unprecedented ways as well as distancing Australia as arrived nation from the entanglements of its British colonial history.

However, much of the geniality of the film — its confident imagining of a modern, masculine, multiracial Australia — is achieved through a familiar narrative trajectory that displaces underlying questions of ownership, belonging and desire. It is in this patterning that the continuities between the residually imperial imagination of *King of the Coral Sea* and that of the interwar films are most evident. Moreover, while Britain is no longer part of a melodramatic triangular relation through which Australia's colonial nationality is negotiated, the narrative's concern with sovereignty and the security of borders and daughters nevertheless speaks to the traumatic loss of the close identificatory ties, and the military buttress of Britain. On the one hand, this loss facilitates the unstuffy modernity of the Australia-America 'buddy' story with its foreclosure on 'older racisms', and on the other it ushers in concerns about the social and sexual conditions of assimilation and the subsequent consequences for the boundaries of the Anglo nation.

In early scenes, the film establishes the absentee owner, Peter Merriman, in a position not dissimilar to that occupied by *Lovers and Luggers*' Stella, that of the metropolitan other (parasitic and privileged), even if in the postwar shift the metropolis has been nationalised. In a reciprocal promotional gesture, King and Janiero learn that Merriman is regarded as the 'Playboy of the Pacific' through an *Australian Magazine* article that represents Peter as altogether too merry and only questionably a man. Janiero scribbles the sarcastic title of 'the great white master' over one of the article's photographs, echoing a claim made in an *Australian Magazine* article that the white master has long since been replaced by the 'friend'. Casting of the city-dweller in the role of non-productive parasite — a characterisation familiar from Australian bush melodramas as well as earlier South Seas films — the film by contrast produces the company's employees as something not quite, yet nevertheless akin to a collective. It is a collectivity of purpose that allies King, Janiero and head-diver, Yusep, with the Islander and Malay crew and shell sorters and packers.

In accounting for his personal liking for the film, O'Regan points to its 'utopian dimension ... of easy and workable', if nevertheless

separate, relations between Islander and white populations.[72] These two points are deeply interdependent. Certainly, the film's scenes of Islanders at work differ significantly from those in the interwar films. While the conventional foregrounding of white action remains, the debt to Islander labour is evident in the film's documentary-related scenes recording the workings of the island's principal industry.[73] The few but significant scenes of Janiero with the leading hand, Salapata Sagigi, in particular, demonstrate a degree of friendly, even personal exchange and an absence of the demand for deference that is such a consistent compositional component in earlier stories that it amounts to part of their regime of generic verisimilitude.

The ease of Islander relations in *King of the Coral Sea* owes a great deal to Rod Taylor's (occasionally unconvincing) performance as a genial American. Janiero shares jokes with Sagigi, and at times demonstrates an amiable failure to exert influence at all over the crew. In minor scenes, the Islander crew is seen as existing in excess of their service to the white action plot. Through his acknowledgment of, and interaction with the workers, the American models for the Australian a better mode of race relations.[74]

Nevertheless, it is the emphatic separateness of the Islanders, their status as a 'race apart', that allows these comparatively utopian relations. Sagigi remains a minor character, corralled from plot events. King soon moderates Janiero's exposure of Merriman as the 'great white master' by shifting the central problem of the narrative to one about whether the absentee landlord can live up to the family's formerly proud name. This effects a familiar displacement — from questions about the incongruity or legitimacy of Merriman's status as landed gentry in the island's apparently democratic social order, onto plot hurdles put in the path of assuming patriarchal rights. Even as the absence of awkwardness or reserve in Sagigi's performance, and the fact that he is individuated, named and credited, shifts his representation into a different economy from that of the general or representative native, he remains embedded in a discursive surround of 'happy Islanders' photo-spreads, where wide white smiles signal a cheerful compliance with Queensland native policy.

Assimilationist anxieties are evident in the fact that the contest for dominance in the film is staged against the mixed-race character Yusep, who alone in the film resents his subordinate status, and has found a way to improve his lot by providing transport for the final leg of Grundy's smuggling racket. For this he uses the lugger he captains for King. Although it is Grundy who masterminds the smuggling scheme and the plan to use Rusty as collateral, the visual contest in the film is with Yusep. Serena, Yusep's Malay girlfriend, is asked to keep house during Merriman's visit, and Merriman seeks clarification about her role:

Merriman:	One further thing, the girl at the house ...
King:	Serena?
Merriman	Yes ... Serena.
King	She's your housekeeper, Mr Merriman [reiterating with emphasis], she does your housework.
Merriman:	In that case, as she'll probably be spending a lot of time at the house, I'd appreciate it very much if you asked her to keep her boyfriends out of sight.
King:	Very well — I'll have a word with her about it tonight.

That night, Merriman cites as evidence of his understandable concern a scene in which Serena and Yusep are merely talking together at the dance performed in his honour. After Merriman's rather autocratic demand, the plot repeatedly uses the white bosses' control over access to Serena to rile and emasculate Yusep. Janiero does just this to provoke a fight with Yusep a few scenes later, to give King a pretext for firing him. They hope that an angry Yusep will lead them to the kidnapped Rusty. Rusty and Serena are thus placed in mirrored plot positions as pawns in the men's struggle for border control.

This pairing is relayed to the extra-diegetic realm, in the cover image of Adey and Francis Celena Chin Soon (the Thursday Island nurse who plays Serena) in the 'Rafferty's rules' edition of *Australian Magazine*. Both appear in sarongs in a cultural transposition 'decreed' by Rafferty to replace the modest mission-styled calico dresses

favoured by women on Thursday Island.[75] Non-Anglo women made very few appearances on the covers of magazines during the 1950s. The cover image conventionally serves to invite 'entry' to the magazine and the most-often bikini-clad 'beach girls' of such covers also function as a sign of the nation, as a sort of national hostess.[76] The collapse of woman and nation effected in the figure of the cover girl is extended into the pages of the magazine, where Australian women figure as an implicit promise of the rewards of assimilation, of abundant, fertile natural bounty. One example among the many is 'Tropical girl' from *Pix*'s promotional series, under the banner 'way of life', profiling the attractions and services of cities and rural towns to entice and educate new migrants.[77] 'Tropical girl' shows Betty in a series of posed photos that display the way of life in the north Queensland town of Mackay. Betty's bounty, like the luscious tropical fruit she cradles or caresses (Betty with coconuts, bananas and pendulous pawpaws), is ripe for the picking. Her racialised femininity is complemented by her role as one of the many 'white nurses [who] find little native charges appealing'.[78]

Adey carries into the character of Rusty the 'beach-girl' (sometimes called 'beach-cake') significations of the nation's youth, bounty and leisure, as is most clearly illustrated in the scene in which Rusty takes Merriman cray-fishing ('I catch them for Dad; he could eat crayfish three times a day,' she explains). Associated with modernity on the one hand, this modified 'outdoors girl' figure is also linked to the 'timelessness' of nature and the primitive. In an instructional photo-spread about hobby photography comprised of a series of flawed, then correct poses, Adey demonstrates how to achieve the look of a 'non-body-conscious beach girl'.[79] This fraught demand on femininity — that it display its 'naturalness' in a simultaneously conscious and unconscious performance for male surveillance — forms part of the substratum of gendered visual conventions of the 1950s. This performative naturalness serves in turn to naturalise the Australian way of life.

The 'Rafferty's rules' article inevitably distances itself from the invitation of the cover image of sarong-clad Soon and Adey. The

photo-spread accompanying the article retroactively installs an unexceptional lens through which to view the front cover, in profiling the friendship between Adey and Soon in a series of images featuring a cross-cultural exchange of domestic lore. One caption describes Soon as 'Thursday Island's number one beauty', while another sternly admonishes that 'Frances is 26, single, and much more interested in nursing than either marriage or acting'. Such double-dealing is a convention of the magazines' style of coy titillation, which extends to *Australasian Post*, the most overtly salacious among the so-called 'general-interest' publications. In such journalism, and in *King of the Coral Sea*, the semiotic interplay between nature, nation and invitation, and femininity, fecundity and display also raises the prospect of sexual, rather than social or ideological pathways to assimilation.

Yet the magazines also prove coy, or even skittish, about the mechanics of assimilation. In an anxious pro-immigration article from early in the decade, *Pix* has an artist sketch the possible face of 'Next Century's Australian Girl'.[80] Although two faces of the potential mix are labelled 'China', both are of white former residents. Social Darwinist fears of racial degeneration seem to underline the artist's reassurance that 'stronger lines of face and figure should not ... take away the animation and vigour which now marks the typical Australian outdoor girl'. Then slipping into a Lamarckian evolutionary model, the article proposes that 'eyes [will become] more mature in expression'. In presenting this set of marginally non-Anglo female faces, it is apparent that the new group is to be 'absorbed' into the gene pool by the agency of Australian men. In another tangential approach, many stories appear about various modes of cultural 'blending' that seem to offer metaphorical models for the mechanisms of assimilation: 'translation', for example, is the term used to describe the popular practice of adapting (or appropriating) 'primitive' motifs or stories into modern dance. A self-serving assimilation-by-trial program is suggested in a letter to the editor concerning a lack of political vision in respect to the development of the Northern Territory, by C.L.A. Abbott, former NT Administrator:

> Nothing would be better for turning New Australians into 'dinkum' Australians than a year or so on railway construction in the North. ... by the time the work was completed they and their families would be completely absorbed into our ways.[81]

In *King of the Coral Sea*, such troubling threads about the integration of others into the national body are resolved by having the character that is assimilated into the way of life in the tropical north being Merriman. He is assimilated through a process of masculine and race-attitude rehabilitation. Abandoned plot lines, such as Merriman's desire for Serena and Janiero's for the boss' daughter, reserve sexual exchange for the Anglo-national family. Along with the plot lines pursued in the film — the threat of unlicensed traffic in people through the strait and the rescue of Rusty from the mixed-race Yusep and the illegal migrants — a grid is formed of permitted and proscribed relations that index anxieties about the security of the nation in the context of its 'modern' welcoming of others in imagining a multiracial Australia. The awkward contrivance of the scenes involving Serena, though in part due to the evident stage fright of this entirely inexperienced young nurse, also plays out these limits and the terms of this welcome. Serena is exotic and virtually mute, an exemplary instance of Southern International's locationist 'exploitation'. She is most welcome as 'nature', yet she remains excluded from the appropriative order of the national/natural that Rusty embodies. As a *natural* object of male desire, she stands corrected in the plot; as it turns out, she is *not* desire, but instead, housekeeper. Rusty's display as beach girl naturalises the discourse of the Australian way of life, while the terms of its performative address to 'new' Australians are spelt out in the narrative of kidnap and rescue.

A corollary of the visual conventions governing feminine display in illustrated magazines is the imperative that masculine men exercise their evaluating gaze. The remarkable reiteration of cartoons making this point speak to prevailing anxieties about a crisis in masculinity so evident in the discourse of popular culture in the 1950s, and to which the reassuring images of an active, adventurous,

outdoors and powerful male agency in the Southern International films are addressed. Neither Janiero nor King stand in for the audience in this respect; this gaze is relayed by Peter Merriman, first in a sideways glance at Serena (familiarly foregrounded in promotion), then in frankly appreciative appraisal of Rusty. All that needs to be proved about potency is displaced onto 'the little gentleman', or the 'pink-gin playboy', as he is described in King and Janiero's banter. He does prove his masculinity, of course, through accepting his place as King's symbolic son, through his pairing with Rusty and by his demonstrated mastery of underwater technology.

The intimate and nurturing relationship between King and Janiero constitutes the most enduring and uncontested in the film. There is a rich vein of material appropriable for a queer reading of this film: Janiero affectionately chides King, 'You can find more ways to mess a boy around', and, like an old married couple, the two finally bestow approval on Rusty's choice of partner. Janiero's beefcake body is displayed to an advantage that mirrors the deployment of Rusty's body, especially in a fight scene that takes place in shallow waters that serve to drench his T-shirt, which is soon ripped to bare his broad torso. Janiero is King's 'boy' rather than Uncle Sam's, acting out a fantastic reversal of Australian-American relations, where the American serves as the Australian's muscle, his biddable and admiring Pacific sidekick.

If the contrast with *Typhoon Treasure* underlines the extent to which *King of the Coral Sea* makes space for the imagining of a genial, multiracial Australia, then the film's assimilationist anxieties demonstrate boundaries of such imagining. While in the narrative concerning Merriman the film stages a rehabilitation of the old 'white master' mirroring that enacted in *Australian Magazine*'s articles on the Torres Strait, it nevertheless, like its precursors, reserves all of the adventure plot, and the resolution of questions of legitimacy, for the one 'king' whose space of national adventure stretches 'all the way from the Arafura to the Coral Sea'. The figure of Rusty reconciles its pleasure in display of the wealth and beauty of its natural resources, and representing that which is at stake in defending the nation from unregulated access or trespass.

A potent sign of closure on the past is the film's stark overlooking (that is, a most radical 'backgrounding') of Australia's formative relations with Britain, and the installation in their stead of the fantasy of Australia as the 'king' of the Coral Sea, backed up by accommodating American muscle. Moreover, the nation's 'maturity' in respect to outgrowing its colonial ties to Britain serves prematurely to 'resolve' or displace the discomforts of Australia's continuing colonial entanglements. If a structuring pattern of displacement in interwar films serves to corral the films' discourse on nation and colonialism to one concerning Australia and Britain/empire, then in this postwar film it serves to displace questions of the nation's legitimacy (and the terms of that legitimacy) in maintaining its Pacific territories, in a premature establishment of the nation as having moved 'beyond' colonialism itself, becoming capable of caring and friendly racial relations.

The year of *King of the Coral Sea*'s release, 1954, was a significant one in respect to Australia's changed relations with Britain, as it saw the mega-event of Queen Elizabeth's tour. The tour was commemorated in the Commonwealth Film Unit production *The Queen in Australia* (1954), a documentary whose discourse on development and assimilation shares much ground with Southern International's production. Rafferty successfully petitioned the Queensland state government to have *King of the Coral Sea* shown to the young Queen. One of the many claims made in the film's publicity, along with the usual generic concatenation, was the line: 'It's the screen adventure the Queen enjoyed.' This casual or opportunistic co-option of the Commonwealth head of state's pleasures to the promotion of this matinee-styled adventure certainly suggests a rather appealing irreverence, in contrast with the centrality (even if hostile) granted Australian-British relations in earlier productions. Yet the overwhelmingly popular event of the tour itself, simultaneously, indexes the nation's residual desire to see and be seen by the motherland.

ENDNOTES

1 Gerald Stewart, 'Taking stock', *Australian Magazine*, December 1, 1953, p. 60; Gerald Stewart, 'Let's Go Native', *Australian Magazine*, September 22, 1953, p. 23.

2 Robert Young, 2001, *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, p. 3.

3 Pike and Cooper, *Australian Film: 1900–1977*, p. 182.

4 During the 1930s, Monkman experimented with marine photomicrography and made a series of short educational natural history films. He later worked for the Commonwealth Film Unit.

5 *Film Weekly*, review of *Typhoon Treasure*, November 3, 1938, p. 20.

6 Shirley and Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years*, p. 104.

7 Ibid., pp. 151–2.

8 Memo from Monkman to Daniell, November 10, 1939, in box 18, FD Papers, NFSA. There would seem to have been a good measure of naïveté in Monkman's earnest approach to national production, revealed in the apparent lack of political acumen and judgment in correspondence in which he sought government and military support for his second feature, the strident flag-waver *The Power and the Glory* (1941), which Monkman proposes as presenting its patriotism in subtle and unobtrusive terms. Major General Sir John Gellibrand, to whom Monkman's script proposal was forwarded for military consideration, replied to his unnamed correspondent that the script occasioned much laughter and 'strained my mental powers since it means reconciling propaganda, entertainment and national atmosphere': Sir John Gellibrand (Major General) to unnamed, February 18, 1940, in *Power and the Glory*, 1940–41, Script and submission, series SP101, item 78/7/4, NA/ACT.

9 *Film Weekly*, review of *Typhoon Treasure*, February 3, 1938, p. 20.

10 Another account in *Film Weekly* ('Premiere of *Typhoon Treasure* at the Brisbane Wintergarden on Sept. 23', September 15, 1938, p. 14) says that the location was the Mitchell River.

11 Kitty Monkton, 1988, interview by ABC Radio, 'Pioneer Film-Makers on the Reef', Sydney; Noel Monkman, 1958, *Escape to Adventure*, New York: Doubleday and Company, and 1962, *Quest for the Curly-Tailed Horses*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

12 *Film Weekly* review.

13 Green, *Dreams of Adventure*, pp. 3, 23.

14 Dyer (*White*, pp. 14–15) accounts for the cultural construction of 'whiteness' in the Western racial imaginary constituted by cinema, an

account that underlines the centrality of imperialism. He argues that the notion of the white body 'involves something that is not of the body ... Something else that is realised in and yet is not reducible to the corporeal'. In contrast with the reducibility of other races to their embodiment, whiteness is augmented in Dyer's account by Christianity, as well as a privileged relationship to the notion of race and enterprise, an irreducible element manifested in imperialism and 'its exhilaratingly expansive relationship to the environment'.

15 *Sun*, review of *Typhoon Treasure*, reprinted in *Film Weekly*, February 3, 1938, p. 20.

16 Ibid.

17 Tom O'Regan, 1987, 'Australian Film in the 1950s', *Continuum*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 11–12; *National Cinema*, p. 238.

18 O'Regan, 'Australian Film in the 1950s'; Stuart Cunningham, 1987, 'Nascent Innovation: Notes on Some Australian Features of the 1950s', *Continuum*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 93–100.

19 The unit underwent a number of name changes, reflecting its changing institutional location and relationships, but for convenience I have consistently used this clearly descriptive title under which it was known for most of the period under consideration; see Moran, *Projecting Australia: Government Film since 1945*, pp. 2–6.

20 The company was initially called Platypus Films. Rafferty had also worked for the Commonwealth Film Unit, and he voiced the Patrol Officer in *Outback Patrol* (1952), but accounts attribute Rafferty and Robinson's working relationship to this radio show.

21 Robinson was assistant director on *Namatjira, the Painter*.

22 Lee Robinson, 'Beyond the Billabongs', *Film Monthly*, May 1950.

23 *Dust in the Sun* (1958), Southern International's last and only commercially unsuccessful film, is a melodrama set in the Northern Territory that parallels the oppression and repression of domestically confined housewives with the containment of indigenous people.

24 *Australasian Exhibitor*, '*King of the Coral Sea* Premiere at T.I. Outmatched Hollywood Said Writer', July 22, 1954, p. 6.

25 Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders*, pp. x, 57–8.

26 *Daily Telegraph*, 'Lap Laps at Film Premiere', July 18, 1954, p. 11.

27 Richard Dyer, 1979, *Stars*, London: BFI, p. 50.

28 Rafferty's 'Australianness' was also constituted in the circulation of his image across the English-speaking film industries. Biographer Bob Larkins (1986, *Chips: The Life and Films of Chips Rafferty*, South Melbourne: Macmillan), for example, attributes American fondness for

Rafferty to their belief that Rafferty was all that they felt an Australian should be.

29 Cunningham, 'Nascent innovation', pp. 96–7.

30 Bill Routt, 1996, 'The emergence of Australian film', in G. Novell-Smith (ed.), *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, p. 246. Diane Collins (*Cinema and Society*) provides a broader context to explain audience decline for cinema that impacted on the double-feature exhibition format on which Southern International depended. Collins argues that in addition to the advent of television later in the decade, dwindling Australian audiences for cinema in the postwar era can be attributed to shifts in lifestyle (such as the move to the suburbs, the high incidence of families with young children and consequent cash redirection), as well as to changes in the nature of Hollywood production itself. Richard White, 1993, 'The Shock of Affluence: The Fifties in Australia', in J. O'Callagan (ed.), *The Australian Dream: Design of the 1950s*, Sydney: Powerhouse, pp. 27–43, notes that Australia's hire-purchase debt of £6 million in 1945 climbed to £100 million by 1952 and to £350 million by 1959. Young people, investing in the setting up of nuclear-organised families, were a less available audience for the movies. Moreover, during the 1950s, the possibilities for entertainment diversified, not only with the earlier-introduced radio, but with clubs (for example, the returned servicemen's club) and longer pub opening hours, as well as new hobbies such as photography and the possibilities opened up by the purchase of cars.

31 Stuart Cunningham and Bill Routt, 1989, 'Fillums Became Films', in Ina Bertrand (ed.), *Cinema in Australia: A Documentary History*, Kensington, NSW: University of New South Wales Press.

32 O'Regan, 'Australian Film in the 1950s', p. 7. He later retracts this term, regarding it as an 'unfair' description used in his attempt to describe the 'curious documentary feel' of the film (1994, '*King of the Coral Sea*', *Cinema Papers*, No. 101 [October], p. 14).

33 Albert Moran, 1987, 'King of the Coral Sea, an Interview with Lee Robinson', *Continuum*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 107.

34 Gerard Stewart, 1953, 'Rafferty's rules in film-making', *Australian Magazine*, September 8.

35 MW Papers, box 1, folder I.

36 C.E. Lambert, Secretary, to the Chief Administrator, Papua and New Guinea, March 11, 1963, in 'Waratah film productions — film activity in Papua and New Guinea', 1963, series A452, item 1963/1307, NA/ACT.

37 John Murphy, 2000, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press/Pluto, p. 3.
38 Ibid., p. 409.
39 White, 'The Shock of Affluence', p. 19; White, 1973, 'The Australian Way of Life', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 18.
40 White, 'The Australian Way of Life'. pp. 534–40.
41 Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p. 67.
42 Ibid., p. 182.
43 David Goldsworthy, 1997, 'Menzies, Britain and the Commonwealth: The Old Order Changeth', in Frank Cain (ed.), *Menzies in War and Peace*, NSW: Allen and Unwin, p. 102.
44 Gregory Pemberton, 'An Imperial Imagination: Explaining the Post-1945 Foreign Policy of Robert Gordon Menzies', in Cain, loc. cit., p. 156.
45 Ibid., p. 164.
46 Hasluck, *A Time for Building*, p. 213.
47 Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders*, p. 173.
48 *Film Weekly*, 'Rafferty Tours with His Film', October 21, 1954, p. 8.
49 See for example *People*'s article 'Coral Sea Mermaid', 11 November 1954, 11–13, a background piece on Adey occasioned by the film.
50 See, for example, *Australasian Post*, 'Trochus Trove', January 15, 1953, pp. 6–8, and *Women's Weekly*, 'Pearl-fishers of Thursday Island', July 18, 1956, pp. 19–20. It is worth noting that in *People*, 'Trochus Fisher', November 17, 1954, p. 45, the success of Fred Walters, owner of a small fleet of trochus fishing boats, is described as having been achieved *in spite of* the interference of local authorities. Born of a Polynesian father and New Guinean mother, Walters was sent to relatives in the Torres Strait and ended up in a mission station on St Paul's Island. His status as a 'native of New Guinea' exempted him from the *Aborigines Protection Act*.
51 Stewart, 'Let's Go Native' and 'They Dive for Your Shirt Buttons'.
52 Beckett (*Torres Strait Islanders*, p. 59) notes that Chief Protector Bleakley saw Islanders in these terms, as an independent Island community.
53 This is Beckett's term, ibid., p. 171.
54 Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*.
55 Stewart, 'Let's Go Native', p. 23.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Stewart, 'They Dive for Your Shirt Buttons', p. 56.

59 'Let's Go Native', p. 23.
60 Ibid, p. 15.
61 Ibid, p. 23.
62 'Rafferty's rules in film-making', p. 15.
63 Ibid.
64 'They Dive for Your Shirt Buttons', p. 56.
65 'Let's Go Native', p. 23.
66 Ibid.
67 *Australasian Exhibitor*, '*King of the Coral Sea* will be released by B.E.F.', May 6, 1954, p. 2.
68 *Kinematograph Weekly*, review of *King of the Coral Sea*, February 24, 1955, p. 13.
69 *Monthly Film Bulletin*, review of *King of the Coral Sea*, 1958, p. 58.
70 Cunningham, 'Nascent innovation', p. 98.
71 Anne McClintock, 1994, 'Angels of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-colonialism"', in P. Williams and L. Christham (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 292–3. Beckett (*Torres Strait Islanders*, p. 24), for example, notes that Torres Strait Islanders were taught that the beginning of 'their' history was the arrival of the London Missionary Society at Darnley Island in July 1871.
72 O'Regan, '*King of the Coral Sea*', p. 16.
73 Robinson's earlier Commonwealth Film Unit production, *The Pearlers*, shows that there were no white divers or crew at work in Broome's industry. Rather pointedly, the only scene involving a white person is occasioned by the finding of a pearl — a lucrative bonus — of which the white boat owner personally takes possession.
74 I have in mind, in making this comment, arguments made that Melanesian relations with American servicemen (and especially the example of African-American soldiers) during World War II provided 'disruptive' models, much at odds with that petty insistence on white prestige and 'native' deference that was so prevalent in the interwar years.
75 Stewart, 'Rafferty's rules in film-making'.
76 Lesley Johnson, 1993, *The Modern Girl: Girlhood and Growing Up*, NSW: Allen and Unwin, p. 48, suggests that while on the one hand the modern girl's modernity stands for delineating a difference from and a sense of closure on the past — that is, a period of great uncertainty during the austerity of war and preceding economic depression — on the other, it points to a democratisation of desire. The eclectic and

even eccentric concatenation of welfare provisions, white goods and modern social technologies of medicine and education cited in the epigraph by way of naming 'but a few of the blessings of 20th-century civilisation' describes another such consumerist pathway to modernity.

77 *Pix*, 'Tropical Girl', January 1952, pp. 16–17.

78 It is the case too, however, that the sexual invitation of the cover girl is conventionally domesticated and sanitised in some way. A photo-strip series of images of a striptease that Adey performs as part of her cabaret act, for example, is accompanied by a story about her domestic devotion to her husband and pets, *Pix*, 'Nightspot Singer', June 1952, cover, pp. 28–9.

79 *Pix*, 'Beach photography', September 30, 1950, cover, pp. 5–8.

80 *Pix*, 'Next century's Australian girl', September 22, 1951, pp. 17–19.

81 *Pix*, letter to the editor, April 14, 1951.

Chapter Seven

ON PATROL WITH CHIPS RAFFERTY
The space of colonial partnership in *Walk into Paradise*

> We should not be unhappy when the native shows signs of taking charge of his own country — this emergence of the native is, after all, the object of our efforts in this country … We should be proud to realise that we have accomplished our goal of lifting the native to our level so that he can become a partner and not a servant.[1]

Walk into Paradise is a project in which many of the concerns traced throughout this book converge. Echoing the strong parallels between *Jungle Woman* and *Hound of the Deep*, this film is very much a companion project to *King of the Coral Sea*. It partook of the same postwar enthusiasm for resource development, and the fact of its production, along with elements of the narrative itself, owe a great deal to the interest in the Territories exhibited in contemporaneous news reports and popular travel writing on Papua and New Guinea. It provides an example of the fertile interplay operating across cultural and generic regimes of verisimilitude, producing PNG in an adventure-indebted mode in fiction and non-fiction accounts of the

period.[2] *Walk into Paradise* also shares with Southern International's previous film an emphasis on 'healthy sentiment [and] virile action', and to an even greater extent it deploys "found materials": the sum of its cast depends significantly on happenstance in regard to the members of the Administration and the New Guinea Police, who play themselves.[3] This time Rafferty plays Assistant District Officer Steve McAllister and Reg Lye is cast as a prospector whose discovery of an oil deposit sets the patrol in motion. A partnership of commerce and government underpins the 'buddy' structure of this film, as the partnership of Australian enterprise and American muscle does for the postwar Pacific in *King of the Coral Sea*.

The distance between *Walk into Paradise* and the sort of film about race relations that Robinson proposed as his ideal (discussed in the previous chapter) was even greater than it was with *King of the Coral Sea*. Contemporary film-maker Cecil Holmes criticises Robinson's blatant pitch to the market as well as the shoddiness of *Walk into Paradise* itself, particularly the dialogue. He argues, further, that when Robinson saw PNG, 'he never saw an Australian colony but simply a big, colourful adventure land'.[4] Holmes's observations seem to be borne out in Rafferty's unselfconscious assertion that Robinson and he were drawn by the opportunity to film with colour stock in 'one of those few remaining frontiers ... where true adventure in the good old tradition still awaits those who seek it'.[5] *Walk into Paradise is*, however, not as straightforwardly nostalgic as Holmes' and Rafferty's remarks suggest.

Of all the South Seas films discussed in this study, *Walk into Paradise* accrues the most eccentric and eclectic welter of ingredients. Paul-Edmund Ducharme — producer for the French company Discifilm — approached Southern International during pre-production for *Walk into Paradise* and together the companies made *Walk into Paradise* as well as two further co-productions, *The Stowaway* (1958) and *The Restless and the Damned* (1959). The involvement of Discifilm on the one hand, and the Department of Territories on the other, along with Southern International's already inclusive approach to generic embellishment, constitutes a filmic amalgam that it is

available for quite diverse appropriations in its various sites of reception. This unstable mix demonstrates forcefully the need to locate understandings of colonial textuality within an appreciation of the pluralised meanings generated for the film across the sites in which it circulates and the intertexts with which it engages.

'Changing old imperialisms for new partnerships'

'Partnership' was a word deployed in respect to the changing (de)colonising terrain of trusteeships in a number of contexts in the 1950s. The youthful Queen Elizabeth, for example, was held to have 'inherited an Empire that has changed old imperialisms for new partnerships'.[6]

In the Territories, the term referred specifically to the model proposed for coffee cultivation in the agriculturally desirable Highlands as a joint venture between white capital and knowledge and local landholders, who were (informally) apprenticed in tutelary partnerships that were to see them become independent primary producers. The aim was for a 'genuine and sincere' partnership of mutual benefit between a new style of white investor-settler and local landowners, in contrast, for example, with the exploitative 'planterist' culture of the longstanding copra holdings along the coast.[7] The resignation of some well-known members of the Administrative service, such as Ian Downs and James Taylor, to take up coffee growing — along with the great interest of film-makers including Robinson — testifies to the very strong appeal of these Highlands, whose fertility, temperate climate and celebratedly spectacular locales did indeed constitute some kind of paradise.[8] Such was the region's popularity with white settlers that, despite the relatively short-lived and circumscribed 'boom' in land expropriation from 1952 to 1954, the district was described widely as a 'Mau Mau' situation waiting to happen.[9]

In its broader application in respect to the Territories, 'partnership' served as one of those words that attempted to redefine postwar relations as moving beyond the rigidly protectionist regime of Murray

in Papua, or the self-interest of Australian policy in New Guinea. While never adopted as an official policy — notwithstanding the enthusiasm of influential proponents such as Ian Downs (who was the District Officer at Goroka during the production there of *Walk into Paradise*) — the persuasive purchase of the notion is evident.

However, as Commonwealth Film Unit producer Williams notes in the extensive journals compiled on his pre-production tours, there was little provision made for the putative partner — the emerging native 'product' of development policy — in the social, cultural and economic structures of colonial society.[10] Even as Williams' diaries record a steadfast faith in the need for a civilising mission, he nevertheless becomes an increasingly sympathetic commentator on native affairs. He charts his own (and his interlocutors') disenchantment with the unquestioned assumptions driving development and is uncomfortably aware of a policy failure to recognise, or account for or manage its cultural costs and the scale of its unanticipated, cumulative disruptions to the social fabric. In a far less temperate critique of the rhetoric of 'partnerships', anthropologist Murray Groves questions its good faith and argues that Australia's principal concern is to maintain the conditions by which it exercises its 'preferential interest in the economy [and] cultural ascendancy'.[11]

Coexistent with such a critique was the complacent, if also anxious, commentary of the popular magazines, which published many 'good news' profiles on Australian development work in New Guinea. Such stories at times sat alongside advertisements for jobs in the territory — work that implicitly offered a return to a virile realm of male adventure seen as at risk in contemporary marriage, with its putative according to women of domestic power and enslaving of men in the bread-winning role.[12]

A virtually exclusive focus on white agency is evident in Colin Simpson's widely published travel books *Adam in Arrows* and *Adam in Plumes* (1953 and 1954), which were also promoted, serialised and mined for feature articles in contemporary magazines such as *Pix*, *People*, *Australian Magazine* and *Australasian Post*.[13] Simpson was the beneficiary of substantial government support and wrote two books

on Papua and New Guinea, both of which straddled World War II, beginning with accounts of exploratory patrols of the 1920s and 1930s and then reprising narration from the moment of Simpson's own arrival and his firsthand experiences of colonial progress in the 1950s. He focuses his amateur-anthropological and rather imperious attention, however, on the salacious and the gruesome in native ritual (the starkly 'other' and abjectly 'primitive'), and on the success of Australian development endeavours.[14] The *Sun-Herald*'s review of *Adam in Plumes* inadvertently points to the contradictory investments of work such as Simpson's, as well as Southern International's, in regretting that 'with progress away from barbarism has come a corresponding decline in exoticism. However, enough of the old life remains to provide a rich field for the anthropologist, and brilliant scope for the colour camera.'[15]

In Gavin Casey's review of *Adam with Arrows*, anxious self-congratulation reaches an apogee. He takes Simpson's books as the evidence with which the critical claims of an 'excitable' (that is, critical) UN can be refuted in the rather defiantly titled article, 'We're doing a great job in New Guinea'. It notes that in Simpson's New Guinea there are some delightful people:

> [B]ut they are not, for most readers, the Kukukuku tribesmen who smoke their dead ... and [beat] each other's brains out. The pleasant people are the patrol officers, the cadet officers, the pioneers with flocks and herds and little cultivated paddocks in the hills, and the gallant women who are there with some of them. All these folk have to be, and are, people of infinite tact, patience and willingness to understand primitive thinking.[16]

The script of *Walk into Paradise* serves itself liberally from a smorgasbord of territory history in such popular journalism as well as from the (sometimes apocryphal) repertoires of the expatriate community. This plot has no villain; the hostile natives of the film are not enemies, but instead serve as a sign of the 'infinite tact and patience' of the celebrated Assistant District Officer Steve McAllister

(Rafferty). The plot concerns the two Kelly brothers who have found oil in a remote, beautiful and previously unknown valley. On the return journey to Mandang, one brother dies from wounds inflicted by hostile villagers. The other, 'Sharkeye' (Reg Lye), is encouraged by the Administration to acknowledge his need for their official support in further investigating the oil find. McAllister leads the patrol charged with overseeing the installation of an airstrip so that geologists can be brought in, all before the start of the Wet season.

This basic story is embellished with the requisite romance as McAllister is obliged to provide escort for a French doctor, Louise Demarchet (Françoise Christophe). A World Health Organisation representative from the UN, she is in New Guinea to field test new malaria treatments. En route the patrol rescues a crocodile hunter, Jeff Clayton (Pierre Cressoy), who is found in an emptied village, feverish and under attack from (another) group of hostile villagers whose sacred animal, the white bird of paradise, he has shot — an element owing more to African stories than New Guinea ones.[17] After various setbacks, the Paradise Valley of the title is reached but the villagers are superstitious and suspicious. The village chief's two sons are dying of malaria and Louise has to try to cure them. In so doing, she incurs the wrath of the local sorcerer and in the ensuing attack Kelly is killed by an arrow. The rest of the party, however, is saved by the children's timely recovery. The plane carrying the geologists arrives just in advance of the rain, and takes back the doctor and hunter, who have fallen in love, while McAllister stays on to supervise the works.

The 'real' story of New Guinea

The framing statements in the introductory voice-over to *Walk into Paradise* provide the title of this book. They attempt to provide an officially sanctioned colonial context for the narrative, while also pointing to some of the signifying practices in its representations:

> This is the real story of New Guinea — that large Pacific island where today a gallant band of young Australian administrators are

> [sic] bringing civilisation to the most primitive people left on the face of the earth; the story of a land as yet unconquered where the ranges and valleys of the deep interior have yet to feel the tread of a white man's foot.

The easy slide over the not-yet nationhood of New Guinea leads into the film's real interest: the story of New Guinea as an Australian story. The progress of the 'young band' inscribes the territory underfoot in space and in time. The highly motivated synecdoche of 'a white man's foot' points to the extent to which the work of exploration, contact and 'pacification' was done by foot patrols, but the white man's tread also actualises the land, in a sense bringing it into history, with the dominating and determined step of the well-shod. Gallantry notwithstanding, the colonisable landscape remains sexualised in the claim to conquer the 'deep interiors'.

This omniscient narration contributes to the film's generic mix an element of the classic documentary style, while the words themselves signal the script's collapsing of the realms of documentary 'truth' and Administration policy and perspective.[18] The film sets out at least to *authorise* the Administration's account — a point passed over in reviews of the film in Australia, in stark contrast with the tetchy remarks of the New Guinea expatriate community. Accommodation of directions suggested by the Department of Territory's script feedback is evident in Rafferty's response, which remarks that its good suggestions have strengthened the story and 'brought the picture closer to an authentic reproduction and, therefore, to New Guinea Administration policy'.[19]

Robinson and Rafferty first toured Papua and New Guinea in May 1954, scouting for locations in the Sepik area. They were reported as having plans to set up a permanent film unit, so taken were they by the availability of material for stories.[20] They initially planned to return with cast and crew in July 1954. Perhaps the involvement of Rafferty in the Australian promotion of *King of the Coral Sea* during August and beyond prevented this; however, it is more likely that the negotiations with the Department, and the diffi-

culties of securing the services of a liaison officer, generated the delay, as it was not until May of the next year that they finally returned. By February 1955, when Robinson wrote to the Chief Administrator to finalise arrangements, he itemised the extent of his discussion about 'the various problems associated with this film': discussion with members of Hasluck's staff, the Prime Minster and the Vice-President of the Executive Council, along with various administrative officers in the Territory. The script, he notes, 'now conforms with overall Government policy and, at the same time, is acceptable to the Department of Territories'.[21]

During the period from May 1954 to February 1955, the story's considerable revisions must have taken place. Three outlines were submitted to the Department of Territories in the process of seeking permission and cooperation. The first two are undated but it seems reasonable to suppose that the first was proffered by way of seeking permission for the preliminary tour and the second after their return. Both are accounts of an Administration-initiated patrol looking for oil, with supporting characters including a female doctor and a labour recruiter of ill-repute. The second draft, more knowing about operations of the District Services, appears to be the one to which the documented response of the Department is directed. Its writer, Douglas McCarthy, was unimpressed.[22] In a memorandum to his assistant, he notes:

> The plot of the proposed story appears to me to be very stereotyped both overall and in detail. I believe that there can be very little if any enduring quality in a picture based on such a story — unless, perhaps, there were such strength in the documentary background as to redeem [its] very poor quality.

He complains about the presence of a woman on patrol and 'the fact that the patrol is prepared to let itself be annihilated without raising a finger in its own defence'. He would have preferred the female character to be a Patrol Officer's wife so that the film might pay tribute to the contribution of (white) women in the Territory. A handwritten comment points to a further concern with the always

sensitive issue of labour recruiters.[23] In the meeting with McCarthy and the Assistant Secretary from the Welfare and General Services Division of the Department of Territories in November 1954, Robinson and Rafferty agreed to avoid reference to recruiters and 'to introduce the woman in a more appropriate manner'. The recruiter becomes a crocodile hunter. The patrol's remarkable forbearance survives redrafting and becomes a central plank in the expatriate response to the film as a piece of government propaganda. A final story outline, submitted in February 1955, had the immodest (but scarcely unprecedentedly so) title of *The New Guinea Story*. In this script, the adaptations required to include the French cast have been made with little disruption — Doctor Dunne has become Doctor Demarcet, while the 'beefcake' role of the crocodile hunter is assigned to Discifilm's Pierre Cressoy.

A few months later, the production crew arrived in New Guinea. Robinson planned for a one-week shoot at Port Moresby, six weeks at Goroka, two to three weeks at Madang and a final two weeks on the Sepik River. The Sepik village, called 'Yahmou' in the film, was shot at Korikoreto and the Paradise Valley scenes were shot at a village some 19km from Goroka called Kamibaramba. The expense and logistical challenges of the location work were considerable and Southern International made some substantial requests for Administration assistance, including one for blocks of land to accommodate a planned post-production base at Port Moresby. While Administrative support did not extend this far, they did assist with cars, drivers and the launch *Koro*, in addition to the services of the native police and the liaison officer, the Assistant District Officer at Goroka, Fred Kaad. Requests for access to 'Natives' (now capitalised) were approved 'subject to special conditions' of the Department of District Services and Native Affairs. No longer governed by Murray's cautious restrictions, the conditions negotiated did not include payment for the police or other indigenous participants.[24]

The collaboration between Southern International and the government represented a compromise whereby the Department was prepared to overlook or largely indulge the market-driven

genericity of the film in the belief that it nevertheless provided good publicity. After a special preview screening given for New Guinea Administration department heads, the principal of the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Sydney was quoted as saying that *Walk into Paradise* 'faithfully represents conditions in the Territory today'.[25] The film was also screened at the Cannes Film Festival, on which occasion the Australian Ambassador was quoted as saying that 'from a diplomatic point of view, the film would show the world how well Australia was discharging her trusteeship obligations in New Guinea'.[26] These are probably generous versions of 'official' responses, but they nevertheless point to some measure of endorsement, as does the continuing support for Robinson on the part of Hasluck and his Department (discussed in the previous chapter).

Kaad essentially plays himself in the film — as the Assistant District Officer at Madang — as well as, in a spirit of true cooperation, the dying, then dead Kelly brother. Kaad recalls that his contribution to the script pertained mostly to matters of the accuracy of Administration policy and (the Administration's view of) conditions in the territory.[27] One set piece in the film explicitly promotes government policy in respect to relations between commerce and government, where Kaad lectures Kelly on the protocols of resource exploitation:

> There's no point in covering up and trying to keep it to yourself because you can't do anything without administration help ... This is your find, your oil, but before you can get a lease to operate the area needs to be opened up and that's our job.

Pacific Islands Monthly complained about this opportunistic insertion of the Administration's point of view, noting that 'unofficial members of the cast (droopy, dopey ... Kelly and the eccentric Clayton), all appear in any but a favourable light, and all to the glorification of the officials'. It called the film 'colourful propaganda for the official policy ... Sturdy officials are unswerving in their task of implementing UNO

edicts' and it described the forbearance of the patrol (in not killing any indigenous people) as 'too naïve for sophisticated audiences' and the price paid for the official assistance.[28] The *South Pacific Post* also describes as a weakness the fact that 'not one belligerent native is slaughtered throughout'.[29]

Yet such politicised responses were restricted to the specifically invested Territory expatriate community. This work of cooperation, the authorisation of the Government's perspectives, the presentation of policy, the care with 'accurately' representing conditions in the Territories, passes unnoticed in the film's Australian reception. Unsurprisingly, the film is positioned very differently in these respective markets. In Port Moresby, it was advertised as the 'The Territory's own picture' and the opening night was attended by the Chief Administrator and an otherwise packed house.[30] Yet it screened only for the customary four-night season at the Papuan Theatre.[31] In Australia, Robinson and Rafferty signed a distribution deal with MGM, which developed a 'top-level publicity campaign' that ran across the capital cities of the eastern states, extending into suburban theatre venues.[32] There was no promotional link made to the Department of Territories. One aspect of the campaign in Sydney was a tie-in with McDowells — a major department store — which *Film Weekly* claims was given over in its entirety to the theme 'Walk into Paradise when you shop at McDowells'. The store was decorated with spears and shields and bird of paradise plumes as well as generic triggers to a tropical ambience — cages of canaries and parrots and displays of orchids. The campaign encompassed promotional angles that accentuated the scenic and travelogue angles of the film as well as exploiting the slimmest of links to foreground Rafferty. He judged beauty contests (one with a matrons' category, who were not required to pose in swimsuits). The first prize of the 'Screen Personality Contest' sponsored by the film was a Qantas flight to New Guinea. Rafferty's involvement in the 'Miss Teenage of Victoria Quest' was also linked to *Walk into Paradise*'s promotion. He also judged a running competition for the best translation of his Tok Pisin utterances.[33] In Melbourne, 'a wild New Guinea Chieftain' promoted the film by

being driven about in a Range Rover, and making an appearance in a Malvern City centenary parade.[34]

In the Australian reviews and commentary, the most immediate context of the film's reception was the difficulties for Australian production, rather than the film's contribution as another 'good news' story about Australia's trusteeship in the territories. *People*, for example, comments on national enterprise: 'The interesting thing about the Rafferty-Robinson combination is that it actually makes films, while a number of other people just talk about making films, or take three years to make one' (this is most likely a reference to Charles Chauvel's epic protracted productions).[35] The *Age* gives 'all praise to producer-star Chips Rafferty for his plucky contribution to the campaign to revive Australian film production'.[36] The significant absence of any discussion of the film's account of Australian enterprise in New Guinea is driven home by, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald*'s review, which narrowly locates the film's distinctive Australianness in its 'relaxed, easy going temper'.[37] Earlier chapters have noted that in the reception of the interwar productions, discussion of these films' coloniality is consistently deflected from the seemingly self-evident — that is, addressing these films as narratives about Australia's own expansion and consolidation — to other relations and concerns, primarily those locating the national production in respect to the industries of Britain and America. Cumulatively, this amounts to a pattern of avoidance, evident also in scholarly commentary, whereby the generic nature of the narratives seems to quarantine these films from consideration as part of a national colonial imaginary. How much more startling it is, however, to note the continuance of this pattern even in the case of *Walk into Paradise*, where the narrative directly concerns matters of considerable contemporary interest and where the production had such a direct link to forces of governance. The film was responded to overwhelmingly as generic entertainment, and while not providing such a source of national pride as did *Lovers and Luggers*, it was nevertheless conscripted to the familiar continuing account of film production as evidence of resourceful Australian enterprise.

On patrol, off the map

When McAllister is first briefed on the destination of his patrol, he exclaims to Kaad that Kelly must have 'walked off the map'. In retracing Kelly's path, the patrol must enter what Anne McClintock calls 'anachronistic space', an organising trope of imperialism in the late-19th-century spacialising a 'permanently anterior time' within modernity.[38] McClintock argues:

> The agency of women, the colonized and the working class are disavowed and projected onto anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity.[39]

She proposes that for Britain in this period, Africa served as the paradigmatic anachronistic space. New Guinea offers a terrain for the replay of such earlier colonial tropes for the 20th century — evidenced in innumerable books and films about New Guinea that focus on what Simpson calls the 'land that time forgot': the already mentioned *Adam* series, *Walk into Yesteryear*, *Stone Age Island*, and so on. McClintock notes that travel to the colonies was often represented as enacting a retrogression away from Western modernity.[40] In the contracted spaces of a New Guinea crisscrossed by flight and radio communications, there nevertheless remained a wealth of hitherto undiscovered 'deep interiors', which could be pressed into service as such anachronistic spaces.

In an early scene at Port Moresby, McAllister is being farewelled at District Services before taking leave. There are no New Guineans in the office though they do enliven the backgrounds in the brief glimpses of the orderly streets of Port Moresby. As a parting gift, McAllister is given a lighter-watch, as potent a portent as can be imagined of his impending trip into anachronistic space. The first stop on his journey is Madang, which in an earlier ellipsis has been established as a 'threshold' of the known world.[41] In this earlier scene, the film cuts from a dishevelled, dirty Kelly carrying rotting

gear through the dense jungle to the emergence of his canoe in front of Madang's manicured lawns and crisply attentive constabulary.

McAllister chooses the 10 police who will accompany him on patrol. On a dramatic high open plain, backed by a mountainous range, the camera pans down from the Australian flag to sounds of the assembly call of the bugle. Sergeant-Major Towalaka is off to one side and McAllister asks if he can 'have him' as they were together through the War. These qualities — his proven loyalty and his conscription to Australian mythology — promote Towalaka to the position of the main New Guinean to be included in dialogue exchanges. This fetishistic display of the flag and regimentals delimits in advance the meanings of the police, those most 'numerous of the government's agents [whose] ... motives and actions were the least recorded'.[42] In a major geographic fudge, the now-ready patrol sets off up the Sepik. Through 'devolving' means of travel — first by air, then launch, canoe and finally on foot — the patrol's passage up the Sepik Valley and into the Highlands is marked as one into an anterior time.

In *Jungle Woman* and *Typhoon Treasure* pan-Pacific headhunters enact their essentially violent nature so that even if they are not of sufficient significance to function as the villains of either film, they do furnish the impulses that define the 'dark' interiors — by which they too are defined — into which the heroes penetrate. In contrast, in *Walk into Paradise*, the patrol's journey is into a 'paradise' of opportunity for pre-modern spectacle. The film's ethnographic interests attracted the most positive public comment. There are scenes of women making sago, children playing on the banks of the river and a sequence of grass-skirted women navigating the branching canals of the Sepik in long narrow canoes. These latter scenes were regarded as 'specially memorable alike for the splendour of colour and of human rhythm' by the *Sun-Herald*'s review.[43] The *Age*'s review proposes that 'tribal spectacle and the Sar'-Major almost make up for the *Jungle Jim* approach'.[44] Similarly, the *Sun-Herald* observes that the film should not be dismissed as a *Jungle Jim* variant on the strength of '[t]he beauty of the colour photography ... the vividness of the natives in their full regalia, and the intimate details of native life'. Such details

are glimpses in the film but they nevertheless acknowledge an existence for the villagers that is prior to the film's demands of them, a shift that measures some distance from the studied racism of *Lovers and Luggers*. Yet these scenes equally bear out O'Regan's view that Robinson's work moved into a realm of fetishistic excess in adapting its locationist interests to market imperatives — thus rendering it an ideal fit in the American 'exploitation' market.[45]

Spectacular crowd scenes predominate — the visual value of indigenous peoples is strongly correlated to mass activity or mass display. Villagers clunk about their 'everyday' lives clad in huge shell necklaces along with every other iota of their traditional finery, one even greeting the visiting launch in a full-body ceremonial mask. The Sepik's banks are lined with poised 'bystanders' who then 'run here' or 'mass over there' at some unseen cue. Spectacle culminates in the huge gathering for the film's finale, in which an airstrip is prepared by the grass being stomped flat by hundreds of dramatically painted and decorated Highlanders. With wild exaggeration, the *Daily Telegraph* reports that 'twelve thousand natives gathered for six days in the great festival that completed Highlands shooting'.[46] The word was put about by Kaad inviting participation in these scenes and he says that the offer was enthusiastically embraced — involvement was seen as conferring some prestige.[47] Notwithstanding the quasi-ethnographic moments that cut against such grand staging of spectacle, *Walk into Paradise*'s fetishising of the massed, decorated native body enacts that disavowal of agency that McClintock discusses, lending to the film a familiar dichotomous subject/object structure, played out as the tourist and the toured, the agent and those acted on, the patient and the primitive.

Distinctions between 'nature' and 'culture' come into play in respect of the (widespread) praise for the 'naturalness' of the performance of the indigenous police and the various villagers in reviews, which serve to reward or recognise their 'naturally' fulfilling the role, in the case of the latter at least, of providing 'indexical evidence of their actual existing otherness'.[48] In a letter to the Port Moresby newspaper, an expatriate contributor aligns the natural with the biddable:

> [F]ull marks ... to the native actors when they were behaving naturally (dancing, orating, the women making sago etc.) but not when they were being troublesome (ambushing, threatening, attacking).[49]

Robinson said that notwithstanding his commitment to surmounting his documentary origins, he felt he could 'get away' with scenes of sago-making as the women were pretty but it was also very much to the point that they were youthful and bare-breasted.[50] *Variety*, reviewing the retitled American release *Walk into Hell*, situates the film between 'exploitation' and 'adventure travelogue'.[51] Rather than undress, however, the broader trend is to fabulous overdressing, though both forms of this gendered specularisation link Robinson's approach to the Hurley of *Pearls and Savages* rather than to the 'prestige' general-release productions of the Commonwealth Film Unit with their awkward negotiation of the 'colourful' aspects of native life.

Yet there are more underlying similarities with Williams's highly acclaimed 1956 Commonwealth Film Unit production, *New Guinea Patrol*, than might be expected from films that were destined for such radically divergent distribution paths. Notwithstanding the different imperatives driving these films, the representations in each are similarly *reassuring* in their disavowal of any autonomous indigenous agency that might interfere with the conscription of New Guinea's story to Australian intentionality. *New Guinea Patrol* is an account of a 'first contact' patrol of moderate significance.[52] The film documents the system for encountering dispersed and 'unpacified' peoples, with an emphasis similar to *Walk into Paradise* on enabling modern technologies. It shows the preliminary surveillance by air, on-ground surveying, mapping and naming, the support of radio contact and airdrops, and finally the combination of technological exhibition (of firepower, for example), gifts and intimidation used to establish 'friendly' relations and extend the government's influence. In *New Guinea Patrol*, the patrol is itself a metaphor for development, its slow steps in space represent the slow staging towards, rather than

away from modern time. Led by an Assistant District Officer, flanked by a bruising young cadet, the patrol shelters at its 'heart' the medical officer, all of whose work is supported or partnered by accompanying police, interpreters, cooks, carriers and occasional hangers-on. The three Patrol Officers form a trinity of modern colonial masculinity demonstrating that 'quality of character and manhood that should make our nation mightily proud that they are fellow Australians'.[53] Considerably less reductive in terms of how it addresses the agency of the patrol and the logistics of its work, of the two, *New Guinea Patrol* is the better sequent to the claims of *Walk into Paradise*'s opening voice-over.

An inverse complementarity is evident in the respective regimes regulating the representation of those people met along the patrol's paths. In contrast with the over-exposure of primitive spectacle in *Walk into Paradise*, Paul Hasluck was determined that the documentaries he commissioned would resist any such 'pandering' to sensation.[54] However, Hasluck's concern for the 'unvarished account', as Chapter Two argues, masked anxieties about the 'primitive' as an indexical sign of Australian tardiness, neglect or failure. The voice-over narration for *New Guinea Patrol* is called on to anchor the signification of the images seen on screen to the Administration's desired interpretation, that of the measure of Australia's challenge. An over-compensatory element comes into play in the claim, for example, that the local people have 'no arts or crafts', while the images of *New Guinea Patrol* register the decorated faces, headdresses of wig, feather and shell on the men and the multipurpose *bilum* (string bags) of the women. 'An unseeing Western eye' casts 'a garment of cultural simplicity ... over the richly dressed Melanesian'.[55]

There were good reasons for *New Guinea Patrol* to focus on the obstacles and complications of the patrol's mission, given its brief to assist in educating audiences about 'the extremely backward condition from which a large portion of the population have to be advanced [and] ... the exceedingly difficult terrain'.[56] Yet while the logistical and technological challenges and the hardships of terrain are visible, the teleology of the film's development discourse leaves

little space to represent the complexities of its passage. The contrast between the film and Williams' diary record of the patrol proves the point. Williams' written account, for example, reveals the extent to which the film plays down the diverse motivations driving police and carriers, and effaces evidence of conflict and resistance. His travel diary records in quotidian detail a convulsing violence to the patrol's passage, which is, unsurprisingly, muted in the film: it tells of a water-boy who slashed his own leg with an axe to avoid being taken as a carrier (an unsuccessful and rather unsympathetically treated ruse); of unwilling carriers so terrified of entering unknown territory that they became literally incapacitated with fright; of villagers beaten, shot and killed and wounded carriers caught in the crossfire. One of the most extraordinary incidents recounted is the bungled second airdrop where cargo landed on a number of men, causing such extensive injury to two old, and presumably less nimble victims that they later died from horrible wounds. Williams maintains that, unlike the patrol's distraught medical officer, the relatives were relatively unmoved by the death of the old men, and that the protracted compensation negotiations brought the patrol closer to this community than any other whose path it had crossed. He also notes the difficulties arising from the unprecedented influx of wealth and Assistant District Officer Sinclair's final abandonment of attempts to find an appropriate way to settle the debt:

> The dead man's brother is worried that if the family inherits all this money that dozens and dozens of other people in the tribe will discover that the dead man's relatives owe them debts of one kind or another and that all sorts of arguments will be brought to light, and that there will be no peace for years to come.[57]

In all the promotional materials for *Walk into Paradise* there is just one sentence — the caption to a photograph, itself partitioned from the main body of the text — that points to a possible counter-narrative to the prevailing ethnocentric development discourse of this far more fantastic patrol account. It accompanies an interview with

Robinson and reads: 'To fix the natives in position in a scene, Robinson gave them chits. Fine in theory, it failed when they persisted in exchanging them so that one selected for a front row was likely to end up in the rear.'[58] While Robinson planned for his chits to 'fix' the natives in line with his judgment of their visual value, they were appropriated into another system of valuation so that his 'theory' was rendered as merely a further component in a scene of exchange over which he had rather limited understanding and control. 'One of the things that a stranger learns,' Nelson observed on a much later journey into village life, 'is that he is not the centre of events; he is temporary.'[59]

There is considerable shared ideological ground between *Walk into Paradise* and *New Guinea Patrol*. Both figure indigenous resistance as an opportunity to demonstrate the 'tact and patience' of the Patrol Officer and *his* cultural versatility. Notwithstanding moments of an impulse that is closer to an ethnographic interest than is evident in any of the previous films discussed, *Walk into Paradise* focuses on a display of natives as 'nature', rather than in respect to any location of their spectacular value in the context of their social and cultural organisation. In *New Guinea Patrol*, the 'native' is revealed as the raw material, or the 'native earth' (to borrow the title of an earlier Commonwealth Film Unit production) on which progress is wrought.

Partnership and performance

By the time Southern International made *Walk into Paradise*, Rafferty — in addition to his celebrity as national icon — was also seen as something of a local hero in respect to his championing of the cause of national film production. Rafferty's was the only 'marquee' name available to Southern International, and the roles written for him traded maximally (and perhaps rather indulgently) on his celebrity, as did the materials encouraging investment in Southern International and the film's promotional activities. Cunningham proposes that Rafferty's hyper-heroised performances under the weaker directorial control of Robinson represent a 'lugubrious congealment of [his]

earlier performances and characterisations'.[60] Yet there is also something of a collision of iconic registers in the casting of Rafferty as a Patrol Officer, which contrasts starkly with the success of his genial performance as Ted King.

In his most romanticised incarnation, the Patrol Officer served as a boundary marker in a definitive sense in that his path putatively marked the line between 'pacified' and uncontrolled territory. In the 1950s, the Patrol Officer was figured popularly in heroic terms, as a sort of new-styled colonial digger, a militarily derived and matured Australian masculinity — as evidenced by the confident assumption of his trusteeship obligations. Colin Simpson (the publication of whose work was well-timed to contribute to Robinson's story revisions), for example, foreshadows the claims of *Walk into Paradise*'s introductory voice-over in describing Australian officers in New Guinea as 'carry[ing] out work as courageous and adventurous and altruistic as any I know of in the world'.[61] Rafferty's larger-than-life, colloquial evocation of the national character sits a little uncomfortably with the educated temperance of the 'gallant' Patrol Officer, as is suggested by the planters' magazine *Pacific Islands Monthly*'s arch trepidation about Rafferty's discomfortingly loud presence: '[We] trembled for the reputation of District Services, which has always been a rather silent service.'[62]

In his examination of the problematic relationship between stardom and performance, Barry King contrasts two primary performance modes: impersonation and personification. 'Personification' is a form of 'bad acting' where the actor is restricted to playing parts consonant with his or her personality.[63] In responses to the earlier production, *The Overlanders* (1946), where the docu-drama nature of the film attracted a lot of comment about 'accuracy', Rafferty is generally praised for his 'naturalism'. In part, this seems to refer to his successful personification of particular mythologies about the national character and guarantee of them through his own authentic embodiment, though *The Bulletin*'s review, for example, seems to want to claim skills in both modes: 'Chips Rafferty may be a consummate actor who can put himself inside the skin of an Australian

drover or he may be a drover who simply lived his part naturally.'[64] By the early 1950s, it is clear that the limited mode of personification is Rafferty's territory: 'Chips Rafferty is, well — Chips Rafferty,' says one review of *The Phantom Stockman*.[65]

It is important to the film's discourse about New Guinea as an Australian story that Rafferty can inhabit the role of the Patrol Officer as a *natural* extension (or expansion) of the national repertoire formed in his iconic roles as drover, bushman and digger. Yet he signally fails to make the transition successfully to embodying this new-styled digger. The film's generic excesses, certainly, do not provide a stable platform and, in fairness to Rafferty, it also needs to be acknowledged that the burden of storytelling, the delivery of the most programmatic dialogue, for instance, fell to him in these projects that involved so many amateur and inexperienced cast members, in demanding location shoots. Yet it is also the case that Rafferty's limitations are greatly accommodated in the script, in his quarantining from the romantic subplot, in this case delegated to the 'foreign' couple, and through the support given to his role as leader by the film's buddy structure. In respect to this first point, *Walk into Paradise* largely recycles *King of the Coral Seas*' strategy of constituting symbolically resonant partnerships of solidarity among men, and displacing troubling issues of fitting and belonging onto the couple, Louise and her hunky hunter.

In one of the film's posters, Rafferty, caught in the open-mouthed shout of command memorable from *The Overlanders*, dominates the frame. Directly beneath him are some 'natives' poised to attack. Still lower in the composition is Clayton, who leans protectively over a thoroughly dominated supine Louise. This composition appositely captures how Louise is deployed in the film, and she brings up the rear in a written description that singles her out as the neophyte:

> Australia's mightiest picture ... Nothing to compare with it ... teeming with screen thrills ... actually filmed in New Guinea where no white man has been before! Towering drama set against a

> background of savagery and excitement ... the drama of a band of men and one woman ... a woman who found a strange, exciting life in a new world. [ellipses in original]

Louise thus provides a necessary and overdetermined site for the projection of all that irritates the film's hermetic homosocial world of Australian male enterprise. Notwithstanding his initial reserve towards this grubby representative of commercial interests, McAllister soon bonds with Kelly over their shared resentment that Louise has been foisted onto their manly enterprise. Although they make her most unwelcome on the launch, for example, they also criticise her choosing to eat alone: 'Must be travelling first class,' snipes Kelly. As a UN representative, she provides visible evidence of the inappropriateness of outside interference in New Guinea. Further, her doubly marked difference — as a woman and as French (or her doubly marked femininity because she is French) — serves to make the film's other 'strangers' seem, well, at home.

McAllister and Kelly become reconciled to the doctor when she changes into khaki, demonstrates a stoic determination to keep pace with the patrol and administers to its medical needs. Conveniently, moreover, the addition of Clayton corrals Louise into a (notionally) romantic subplot. Clayton salaciously comments on discovering her nationality, 'French mmm.' In a scene of pure South Seas kitsch, Louise later takes a shower behind an improvised woven screen, and, while Clayton runs his eye over her exposed shoulders and legs, Kelly speculates about Marilyn Monroe as a candidate to share his forthcoming wealth. Retroactively, this scene redirects the film's gaze away from the greatly more revealed New Guinean sago-makers, to anchor it to its proper object of the blonde white woman.

Yet the romance is a generic concession played out so sketchily that the film itself seems to participate in Kelly and McAllister's grudging accommodation of Louise and Clayton in the plot. Like Rusty and Merriman before them, the couple is feminised and sidelined from the main action. Louise even says to Clayton: 'I don't think you're as hard as you would have people believe.' It is also a

visibly pasted-on component of the co-production: the two French players are offered for visual pleasure — especially in contrast with Rafferty and Lye — while the Australians get on with the important work of leadership and tactful relations with natives.

When the Paradise Valley village is reached, McAllister sets the doctor to work with the chief's ill children, explaining to her that Clayton will have to pretend to be the doctor, as, in another of the film's characteristic displacements, the *natives* would not accept a woman in such a position. He heads off to organise the airstrip, leaving Kelly, Louise and Clayton without government oversight and hence bound to wreak that havoc needed to provoke the narrative's climatic confrontation and they soon oblige. Kelly inadvertently reveals his past hostile association with the village by playing his brother's mouth-organ. Meanwhile, the sorcerer spies Louise taking a blood sample from the children (although she was told *not to* by McAllister). He crawls secretively into her tent, though so ceremonially clad is he that the long feathers of his headdress easily trace his path to her camp bed. In superstitious retaliation, he releases his snake and it slithers up her thigh to sink its fangs into her neck. Coming to the rescue, Clayton opens the wound with his pocketknife and sucks out the venom, after which they begin to kiss. Clayton's vampiric attack preserves the white woman from this violation by the forces of primitivism.

McAllister's return signals a generic shift, away from such suggestive hokum and back to the authorised verisimilitude of the action plot. Confronting an impending attack, he orders his police to fire above the villagers' heads, and in the scenes that so irritated the expatriate community, this order holds even after Kelly has been fatally wounded. Peace is restored when the children recover in the nick of time. Though now might surely be the time to do some medical research, Louise is instead sent home with Clayton, which, along with Kelly's death, clears the space for Towalaka to stand by Rafferty's side in the film's coda.

The geologists have arrived, the rains have begun to fall and Towalaka and McAllister stand together on the airstrip, savouring

their triumph. In a very significant departure from the usual concluding hetero-coupling kiss that founds or legitimises national claims, *Walk into Paradise* finishes with an image of a cross-racial partnership, the terms of which are suggested visually by the Patrol Officer towering over his reassuringly short-of-stature deputy. If the buddy relationship of McAllister and Kelly figures a cooperative partnership of commercial initiative and government regulation and support, this rather slippery substitution of Towalaka for Kelly provides an image of multiracial partnership. This substitution is 'slippery', as Towalaka is only retroactively installed as the partner of the film's enterprise. This final image, then, is one that strives to reconcile a contradiction between the opening voice-over's claim to be describing a 'gallant' civilising mission and its narrative trajectory of oil exploitation for Australian gain, in a partnership that, in Groves' sharp admonishment, ensured Australia's 'preferential interest in the economy [and] cultural ascendancy'.[66]

Australian enterprise is reassuringly embodied in the self-deprecating and unassuming Kelly, who provides another version of the 'innocence' of Australian resource exploitation. His dying admission, that he would never have known what to do with all that money, is a further disavowal of Australia's vested interests. Killing off Kelly also clears the visual slate for the arrival of the 'official' team of geologists who will develop the valley under the cover of disinterested 'science' — as the film reiteratively distances itself from an ending that shows Australians getting rich in their colonial territory.

Towalaka, however, as some reviews suggest, is a 'scene stealer', to some extent exceeding the position granted to him in the film's visual economy and drawing praise (however ideologically self-serving) that is denied to Rafferty. This discussion of Rafferty's problematic personification of a Patrol Officer began as an attempt to tease out the suggestive threads contributing to the lack of credibility attending this attempted extension to his national iconicity. The *Age* cites 'tribal spectacle and the Sar'-Major [as] almost mak[ing] up for the *Jungle Jim* approach' of the film, while the *Sydney Morning Herald* says Rafferty is 'still inflecting his lines as if reading from a story-

book'.[67] A key element of Rafferty's problematic performance is revealed through the contrast between these partnered colonial agents in the linguistic arena of trade and exchange.

The co-production deal required that each dialogue scene be filmed twice, in English and then in French, and in the latter Rafferty, Lye, Kaad and others would mouth the French words for later post-synching (only Christophe spoke her lines for both versions). This exigent accommodation of the needs of the film's international co-production, moreover, takes place in the radically polylingual context of New Guinea. The production's instructions to its indigenous performers were translated into Tok Pisin and then into up to six *tok ples* or local languages.

There was little trouble taken to write good pidgin lines for McAllister for whom — in one of the film's most reductive elements — it functions only in the imperative. In the diegesis, Towalaka resolves all linguistic complications arising. He renders McAllister's 'pidgin' into Melanesian pidgin or a *tok ples* language and then translates the utterances of all of the various people encountered on patrol back into either Tok Pisin or English.[68] Such fudging probably niggles only at the viewer with a 'misplaced' investment in accuracy, but it is also a deployment of Towalaka that at once bolsters and troubles the Patrol Officer's position of agency. Towalaka never initiates exchanges with McAllister — so in this respect he represents an extension of McAllister, and is a conscripted sign of indigenous cooperation. Yet his remarkable flexibility and versatility in the film's linguistic realm is an indexical sign of just how reductively treated is his greater role. If the reliance of John Strong, and other interwar heroes on indigenous labour suggests the dependencies of the white colonial enterprise, the culmination of the occasions where Towalaka performs McAllister's deeds and speaks his words, goes rather further, unsettling the Patrol Officer's apparent monopoly over agency. Towalaka's confidence and competence also point to the emergence of a partner with whom Australia would have eventually to negotiate, as a participant in his own future, rather than as a bit player in a future decided for him.

The partnership the film seems to designate for Towalaka fits well with the paternalistic claims of Maslyn Williams, that we should be proud to accomplish the goal of 'lifting the native to our level so that he can become a partner and not a servant' (cited at the head of this chapter). There is a failure here to admit the possibility that 'the native' might hold aspirations outside the confines of Australian 'understandings' and intentions of them, or indeed to acknowledge the legitimacy of resistance to such goals. A similarly ethnocentric myopia is noted by August Kituai, who argues that historical studies have failed to take into account the role of the police in colonisation and development.[69] He proposes that they were not merely intermediaries but 'aggressive intruders and innovators', and suggests that lack of attention to their contribution preserves the myth that Patrol Officers had (or cared to have) a sound appreciation of police activity and exercised over them an effective control.[70]

If this myth reductively remembers the space of encounter in its evacuation of the police from colonial history, it also calcifies the figure of the Patrol Officer. The most engaging of the Patrol Officer memoirs, such as J.K. McCarthy's *Walk into Yesteryear*, present far more modest, as well as more wonder-filled, accounts of Patrol Officers' experiences than those recounted in the travel writing of Colin Simpson or in *Walk into Paradise*. They concern complex intersubjective journeying — elements that are also hinted at in Williams' diary account of *New Guinea Patrol*.

Dixon draws on Stephen Greenblatt to note that wonder can lead in two directions: 'One path leads to denial and estrangement.' The second leads to a recognition of 'the hidden links between radically opposed ways of being and hence to some form of acceptance of the other in the self and the self in the other'.[71] Another key problem with the role played by McAllister is that his knowledge and understanding is always formed in advance of the fact of encounter, permitting no space for an understanding based on a preparedness to wonder, to engage, or to unsettle and rethink the terms of relations between self and other. Rafferty's is the kind of reassuring 'understanding' that is claimed for the Patrol Officer in popular discourse,

an always-already-formed kind of understanding that speaks to the fully formed and all-knowing subject of Australia's trusteeship. This putatively reassuring according of an inviolate subjectivity to the Patrol Officer in the film is of a piece with the popular discourse about Australia's 'arrived' nationhood. National maturity is demonstrated by Australia's capacity to take her place among the (benignly) ruling trustees of the UN.

The fact that Southern International's film provoked virtually no discussion of Australia's colonial role probably points as much to the dominance of other interpretative frameworks operating in the film's Australian context of reception, as to the shortcomings of Rafferty's performance. Genericity is a key factor: this smorgasbord of potential meanings was activated differentially in its various sites of reception, as the contrast between the sites of New Guinea and Australia reveals. Across its diverse markets, this mobility was successfully deployed. The film's American retitling, *Walk into Hell*, divorces it yet further from that sort of reception that might have been expected in response to the Department of Territories' proffered cooperation.[72] Yet even in its domestic reception (as evidenced by journalistic commentary and reviews), there is little to suggest that the Administration and Department's investment was rewarded in any direct way, even at a time of considerable popular interest in Australia's trusteeship achievements, and its independent national involvement in the UN.

ENDNOTES

1 Maslyn Williams, travel notes, July 4, 1956, folder 4, MW Papers.
2 Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 47.
3 *Kinematograph Weekly*, review of *Walk into Paradise*, May 31, 1956, p. 30.
4 Cecil Holmes, 1967, 'Lee Robinson', *Sydney Cinema Journal* (Winter), p. 29.
5 Rafferty, 1956, Foreword, in Gavin Casey, *Walk into Paradise*, Sydney: Horwitz. This reference is to a novelisation of the film.
6 *Pix*, 'Our Most Personal Monarch', May 30, 1953, p. 21.

7 Ben R. Finney, 1970, '"Partnerships" in Developing the New Guinea Highlands', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 5, p. 122.

8 Fred Kaad, interview by author, April 12, 1999, Sydney. As Finney ('Partnerships', p. 128) notes, this enthusiasm also 'confirmed to locals that coffee growing was surely an important and profitable activity'.

9 Ibid., p. 120. The Mau Mau was a secret sect originating among the Kikuyu people of Kenya, which was active in the 1950s. They aimed to expel white settlers.

10 Williams, travel notes, July 4, 1956, folder 4, MW Papers.

11 Murray Groves, 1962, *New Guinea: Australia's Colonial Fantasy, Chifley Memorial Lecture*, Melbourne: National Press, pp. 5, 13.

12 See, for example, *Australasian Post*, 'Australia's Husbands Revolt', May 14, 1953, pp. 3–5; 'The Mother-in-Law Problem', November 26, 1953, pp. 7–8; 'Why Husbands Leave Home', July 8, 1954, pp. 8–9, and 'Are Our Men Losing their Virility?', August 20, 1953, pp. 7–8. While the *Post* was the most salacious of the general-interest magazines, *Australian Magazine* carried similar stories, as did, to a lesser extent, *Pix* and *People*. Nevertheless, some provision for the interest and even involvement of Australian women in the Territories was also evident in women's magazines. For example, The *Australian Women's Weekly* sent Dorothy Drain on a tour on which she reported in her column, 'It seems to me', May 19, May 26 and June 4, 1954. Drain's commentary on the 'interesting people' — all of whom were white — that she met in her tour of New Guinea is simultaneously an unremarkable or conventional mode of reporting on the territory and a shocking extension of the ex-nomination of whiteness as a racial category.

13 These formed parts two and three of Simpson's 'Adam' trilogy, which began with *Adam in Ochre*. See Jane Landman, 'An Altruistic Adventure': Masculinity and Colonial Partnership in Popular Constructions of Postwar Papua New Guinea', *Australian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2001), for a discussion of Simpson's works and their relationship to Patrol Officer accounts

14 Ibid.

15 *Sun-Herald*, review of *Walk into Paradise*, November 7, 1956, p. 60.

16 Gavin Casey, 1953, 'We're doing a good job in New Guinea and in our bleak Antarctic territory', *Australian Magazine*, December 29, pp. 44–5. This would seem to be the same Casey who wrote a novelisation of *Walk into Paradise*.

17 In fact, birds of paradise were a protected species so Clayton would have had more to fear from the District Services than from the villagers.

18 Moran, *Projecting Australia*.
19 Rafferty to Marsh, Assistant Secretary, Welfare and General Services Division, Department of Territories, November 30, 1954, in *Walk into Paradise*, 1954–55, series A518, item AA141/31, NA/ACT.
20 *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 'Cinema Men's Plans for NG's Big River', May 1954, p. 121.
21 Robinson to Cleland, February 2, 1955, *Walk into Paradise*, NA/ACT.
22 McCarthy was not without justification. This second version would have made a very different film indeed to the final project. In one article about Southern International, Robinson is described as a better director than writer. In respect of *King of the Coral Sea*, it notes: 'His story-line tends to get confused. [He] seems unable to make up his mind which story-line to pursue, so they get criss-crossed wildly' (*People*, August 8, 1956, p. 53). Just such an undisciplined tangent occupied one-third of this second draft. It involves the doctor developing appendicitis and being operated on by untrained members of the patrol on the basis of instructions relayed to an airborne pilot from a doctor at the closest air-control room (while the hostile natives gather menacingly outside).
23 November 1954, *Walk into Paradise*, NA/ACT.
24 Interview with Kaad.
25 *Film Weekly*, 'Pacific Officials Applaud "Walk"', August 2, 1956, p. 1.
26 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 'Australia's Good Show at Cannes Film Festival', May 23, 1956, p. 8.
27 At the time of our discussion, Kaad had little detailed recollection of the concessions made to policy on the part of the production, though he felt that there were just a few moments of this. His most acute recollection concerned the sell-off for charity of the production cast and crew's supplies, which were left behind in their entirety. He said that bidding was fiercest for those blankets in which Françoise Christophe had slept.
28 *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 'Territories Talk-Talk', January 1957, p. 129.
29 *South Pacific Post*, 'Territory film shown at Port Moresby', November 21, 1956, p. 32.
30 Ibid.
31 Yet Kaad recalls seeing the film some four years later at Lae, suggesting that a print continued to circulate in the Territories.
32 *Film Weekly*, 'MGM to Handle Chips' *Walk into Paradise*', June 21, 1956, p. 8.

33 Ibid.; *Film Weekly*, 'Vast Publicity Build-up for *Walk into Paradise*', September 27, 1956, p. 4; 'Screen Tests for "Walk" Finalist', October 4, 1956, p. 10.
34 *Australasian Exhibitor*, 'Lively "Paradise" Selling in Victoria', November 22, 1957, p. 14.
35 *People*, 'Hard Work in Paradise', August 8, 1956, p. 53.
36 *Age*, review of *Walk into Paradise*, October 19, 1956, p. 2.
37 *Sydney Morning Herald*, review of *Walk into Paradise*, October 28, 1956, p. 61.
38 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 30.
39 Ibid., p. 40.
40 J. K. McCarthy, 1963, *Patrol into Yesteryear*, Melbourne: Cheshire; Maslyn Williams, 1964, *Stone Age Island: Seven Years in New Guinea*, London: Collins. Although as McClintock (*Imperial Leather*, p. 41) also notes, disenfranchised pockets of the population of the modern metropolis were seen as similarly, and disloyally, out of kilter with progress.
41 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 24.
42 August Kituai, 1988, 'Innovation and Intrusion: Villagers and Policemen in Papua New Guinea', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, p. 156.
43 *Sun-Herald*, review, October 28, 1956, p. 60.
44 *Age*, review of *Walk into Paradise*, October 19, 1956.
45 O'Regan, 'Australian Film in the 1950s', p. 7. In his interview with Moran, Robinson says that the film made £90,000 in Britain and was one of the top 100 grossing films in America, though Southern International saw only a fraction of this profit as it sold the film outright to an American entrepreneur, Frank Levine, for £35,000. Larkins (*The Life and Films of Chips Rafferty*) claims that Levine cut in extra wildlife footage and used images of Christophe in scanty animal skins in its promotion.
46 *Daily Telegraph*, 'Preview for charity of new film', October 6, 1956, p. 18.
47 Kaad, interview.
48 Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 106.
49 *South Pacific Post*, letter to the Editor, 28 November, 1956.
50 Robinson makes this comment in *People*, 'Hard Work in Paradise'.
51 Variety, review of *Walk in Hell*, July 31, 1957, p. 11.
52 Nelson, 'Write History: Reel History'.
53 Hasluck, *A Time for Building*, p. 83.
54 McCarthy, recording the Minister's views in Department of Territories, note for file, October 30, 1958, in 'Production of films recording Australian administration in Papua and New Guinea', 1958–62, series A452, item 61/7890, NA/ACT.

55 Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods*, p. 20.
56 Lambert to Secretary of the Department of the Interior, January 30, 1952, in 'Films — Papua and New Guinea — Australian Territories Exhibition', NA/ACT.
57 Maslyn Williams, Journal of observations of New Guinea re planning a film, October 1955–November 1956, MMS 1760, State Library of New South Wales, p. 78.
58 *People*, 'Hard Work in Paradise', p. 53.
59 Hank Nelson, 1987, 'Pictures at Tabara', *Overland*, No. 109 (December), p. 8.
60 Cunningham, 'Nascent Innovation', p. 98.
61 Colin Simpson, 1953, Preface, *Adam with Arrows: Inside New Guinea*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
62 *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 'Chips Rafferty, Film Magnate and Slap-happy Screen Actor', April 22, 1955.
63 Barry King, 1991, 'Articulating Stardom', in G. Jeremy and B. Bulter (eds), *Image and Performance in Film and Television*, Detroit: Wayne State University, p. 130.
64 *The Bulletin*, review of *The Overlanders*, November 6, 1946, p. 24.
65 *Film Weekly*, review of *Phantom Stockman*, July 23, 1953, p. 14. Yet as King ('Articulating Stardom', p. 137) points out, the widespread practice of typecasting is based on an association between 'natural' qualities and mimetic functions, so the degree to which any actor is at liberty to impersonate is problematic. Moreover, audiences and films have invested in the 'type', so were it submerged under a sublime impersonation, the box-office 'guarantee' inherent in the function of the star could be undermined. King also notes that 'natural' qualities are enhanced by the 'hypersemioticisation' of the filmic apparatus and reinforced by extra-textual practices, which further overwhelm the norm of impersonation.
66 Groves, *Australia's Colonial Fantasy*, p. 13.
67 *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 28, 1956, p. 61.
68 Rafferty's speech owes more to Hollywood stereotypes of Chinese English than to pidgin. For example, he orders his police to 'fixee fire' rather than 'makim fire'. Most incongruously, however, Towalaka apparently succeeds in persuasively translating Rafferty's pacifying speech to the hostile villagers whose sacred bird has been shot, which Rafferty delivers in a Rider-Haggard-like sacredly cadenced mytho-babble.
69 Kituai, 'Innovation and Intrusion', p. 66.

70 In Bill Gammage's *The Sky Travellers: Journeys in New Guinea 1938–1939* (1998, South Carlton: Melbourne University Press), a painstakingly researched and revisionary account of an ambitious prewar Sepik patrol, the patrol emerges not as an orderly and disciplined formation, but as a shifting set of forces and tensions, mutual misunderstandings and incommensurate purposes and as a painful, intensely disturbing learning exchange. He traces the ripples created in its wake, arguing that the patrol 'convulses' the lives of the people whose pathway it crosses, impacting on individual lives, economies, patterns of hierarchy, prestige and influence.

71 Stephen Greenblat cited in Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods*, p. 123.

72 The French version of *Walk into Paradise* foregrounds McAllister in its re-titling of the film, *L'Odyssée du Capitaine Steve*.

CONCLUSION

The middle to late 1920s was a period when the social, cultural and political significance of popular cinema became a matter of considerable public interest and concern. The imperial impetus for such concerns about the impact and potential of the 'new unifying force'[1] of cinema are revealed in the racialised figuring of the white national body and in the characterisation of the threat from American cinema as 'contaminating' in respect to its racially hybrid site of production. The nation's 'youth', its attenuated links to Britain and its geographic isolation in the Asia-Pacific region led to anxiety about the vulnerability of its white British-derived character. Such concerns were heightened in the context of broader global shifts in power, of which the domination of the British and Australian markets by American cinema was a potent sign. This popular medium seemed to travel unchecked, indifferent to and upsetting the boundaries of the empire's hegemonic and economic control.

Frank Hurley's silent South Seas melodramas were released in 1926, in the same year that the Economic Sub-Committee delivered its important report on the cinema to the Imperial Conference. The report decisively articulated the urgency of the need to intervene in the cultural colonisation of Britain — and its empire — by American cinema. A cluster of interrelated concerns was expressed about the 'almost unlimited' potential of the cinema to educate and shape opinion, taste and loyalties, thus threatening those 'least definable' bonds of British common culture — as well as equally important economic ties.[2] This report led directly into the legislative measures of the *British Cinematograph Films Act* (1927), and its concerns spilled over into the evidence presented at the Royal Commission in Australia.

The empire quota provisions installed by the Act conscripted the cinematic production of the dominions into an arsenal of measures intended to counter Hollywood's market dominance. However, the position imagined for such production was as a supplementary complement to British production, providing a wealth of scenic and unusual backgrounds that in themselves would demonstrate the empire's continuing global reach, in a deal aimed to secure a reciprocally favoured advantage in Australia's market. In the model implied by the Act, Australia was positioned as a background to Britain's glorious imperial history, to its 'national triumph'.[3] Nonetheless, the provisions of the Act did provide important access to the British market.

The films made by Hurley in his co-production deal with Stoll clearly exemplify the concerns of this period. In many respects they obediently anticipate the Act's implied model, transporting British actors to the exotic locations of the dominions' territories, celebrating the mobility of imperial adventuring on the margins of 'civilisation'. Yet Hurley's film work was based on 'ventures which were identified with empire, but which were [also] subordinate to and separate from empire'.[4] Hurley's silent melodramas imagine the emerging position of the nation as a Pacific colonial power and the consolidation of these national claims. As backgrounds for the deeds of young men, Thursday Island and Papua also provided a generous reflection of the nation's own modernity and racial integrity. In a relay of an imperial destiny, Hurley deploys the Pacific as a background site for the projected desires of a national becoming based on the privileged sense of entitlement conferred by belonging to the 'imperial race', as suggested in his own substantive trinity of 'opportunity, inclination and endeavour', and his films suggest the capacity of the nation to reinvigorate imperial strength and extend its reach. In this way, Hurley's films initiate a pattern whereby Australian film-makers turn to the Pacific as a bolster and resource in an analogous demand to that which the Act makes of the dominions.

If the Pacific is imagined in these largely narcissistic ways in respect to a national becoming based on an inherited right or destiny to dominate nearby Pacific territories, equally important is the function

that it serves in mediating the terms of *differentiation* between the fledging nation and its parent culture. In discussion of the national film-making projects of Cinesound and Charles Chauvel, Routt and Cunningham have drawn attention to the 'impossible' condition of Australian production in this period, caught between the positions of coloniser and colonised.[5] In contrast, this book has focused attention on the ways in which this centrally important relationship with Britain provides a site for an incongruous and disturbing disavowal and/or displacement of the nation's own colonial investments. The terms of this differentiation centre on imagining the nature of the 'exploitation' of the resources of colonised territory, and therefore, the sort of refocusing of perspective that this research suggests can be best encapsulated by settling on the term 'Pacific resource adventure' to describe this body of Australian films, rather than the more picturesque one of 'South Seas adventures', with which I began. 'Resource' is at the centre of a cluster of other important words, such as gender, race and labour, as the pivotal terms of a textual analysis directed towards an understanding of the ways in which the legitimacy of the national stake in the Pacific is negotiated.

Given this focus, the Pacific resource adventures would seem to present themselves as exemplary 'colonial cinema', as textual production fashioned by the self-legitimising discourses of Western colonialism. Yet Jaikumer is right to say that 'colonial cinema' is a 'confusing ... changeling' and, I would add, a misleading term.[6] The term 'colonial cinema' fudges important and specific questions of possession and address that are revealed by historically locating such production. These questions were posed in the Introduction: in whose estimation would a film be judged as furthering the colonial cause? How is that cause understood in the differing contexts of the colony, the nation and Britain? How do such varying sites of reception inflect filmic meaning? Who is the implied audience of such cinema — the subject people of colonial regimes? A national, British, or other international audiences?

By way of addressing these questions (and others accrued in the process of research and writing), this book has sought to situate a

reading of these films as parables about Australia's colonial relations with the Pacific, within a research model aimed at elucidating the 'total history' of these texts; that is, to employ a methodology that considers the role of industrial, technological, cultural and social contexts in the production of the films' pluralised, and shifting, meanings. The total history Klinger proposes as a scholarly aim is tailored to studying the historical traces produced by the relatively centralised and self-evidently important industries and production in the studio mode, exemplified by Hollywood practice.[7] Researching 'all the texts' of the South Seas films, in contrast, constitutes a very different project. As Stacey and Kuhn note, film histories are informed, and perhaps frustrated by available resources.[8] Studying Australian film history, the researcher is confronted with the specific challenges posed by the fragmentary nature of relevant archived materials.[9] These difficulties are exacerbated by the low cultural status of these texts and this low estimation of their value has contributed to their scholarly neglect. As O'Regan argues, however, we can learn as much from 'bad' films as from those that are esteemed, just as the processes working to value certain bodies of texts over others are themselves revealing.

What I have been able best to accomplish is to locate an analysis of the films' national and colonial imaginary within an understanding of the contribution of colonial governance and reception contexts formed by the imperatives of the national film industry and its regulation in the interwar years, and within the discursive shifts in colonial governance, particularly in relation to popular postwar discourses of nationhood, for the later films. Such reception-oriented study has been complemented by deploying approaches to genre study that focus similarly on the discursive embedding of films, in order to examine the 'life of films in the social'.[10] Such carefully situated study has produced a more nuanced understanding of the 'coloniality' of these films. For example, in the reception of the interwar productions, discussion of the films' coloniality is consistently deflected from the seemingly self-evident — that is, addressing these films as narratives about Australia's own expansion and

consolidation — to other relations and concerns, primarily those locating these 'resourceful' national productions in respect of the dominance of the industries of Britain and America. Such a pattern, moreover, is evident most starkly in the postwar production of *Walk into Paradise*, where the narrative directly concerns matters of considerable contemporary interest and where the production had such a direct link to forces of governance, yet the film was nevertheless overwhelmingly regarded as generic entertainment and as evidence of resourceful Australian enterprise.

If the theme of Pacific expansion in these 'colonial adventures' remains un-activated or displaced in sites of reception such as popular journalism, this study further suggests that a term such as 'colonial cinema' proposes a misleading unity in that it accounts neither for the contestation which dogged film productions that imagined, or positioned, themselves as serving the colonial cause, nor for the shifting terms that need to be considered in examining the popular cinema's production and regulation in the national and colonial context. For example, the fact that *Jungle Woman* was effectively prohibited in Papua but encountered no problems with Australian censorship, and was reviewed in Australia with responses influenced by positions on the attempt to revive British and dominion cinema, shows how incommensurate were the terms of endorsement for colonial administrations, local regulators and local industry. The banning for export of *The Devil's Playground*, a film taking a different approach to the strategic deployment of dominion backgrounds, similarly demonstrates the divergent investments of commercial filmmakers with a view to international distribution, and wary domestic censorship.

Examination of the regulation of cinema exhibition for the indigenous audiences of Papua and New Guinea supports Thomas' obvious but often neglected point that most colonial discourse was not directed at colonised peoples, but rather at the coloniser's domestic populations, further reflecting its fundamentally narcissistic nature. Thomas's work provides a much-needed corrective to some arguments that tend to figure colonised peoples as themselves

deprived of a voice by its operations or subject to the ideological regimes of such discourses.

This research raises doubts about the capacity of entertainment cinema to 'interpellate colonial subjects by incorporating them into a system of representation', or to generate an imagined empire community within Australia's colonial territories.[11] Relations between the cinema and indigenous subjects, at least as imagined in the evidence presented to the Royal Commission, were insidious and even seditious, rather than ideologically coercive or cooperative. The sort of vitriolic condemnation of American cinema and its perceived undermining influence on the subject peoples of Asia and India — which spilled over into domestic regulation for indigenous peoples — was in part a sign of anxiety about the potential of cinema's universal address to provide a material or virtual 'shared space' for colonisers and the colonised that was deeply disquieting to an established order dependent on the privilege conferred by racial difference. Even leaving aside the complexities of cross-cultural reception, the limited *potential* for cinema to be deployed as an instrumentality of colonial discourse is demonstrated by the severely contained nature of commercial cinema exhibition in Papua and New Guinea (for instance, in contrast with neighbouring Asian territories), where it was restricted largely to white settlements. The regulation of cinema by Australian colonial administrations, especially in the interwar years, centrally concerned the management of the 'sharing' of such urban space, and should be considered alongside various ordinances restricting native access and mobility.

Yet the imagined proclivities of the (reductively constructed) native viewer, and the impact of screened images themselves, were also matters for concern. The conclusion of the Royal Commissioners in Australia — based on scant and self-interested evidence — that 'vivid and lasting impressions are retained by natives, and frequently their imagination is riotously aroused', mirrors the enduring stereotype of the native viewer constituted in the discourse of censorship in Australia's colonies, as one requiring 'protection' from untoward stimulation — that is, from images that successive administrations judged would disturb their control over indigenous populations. Administrations, equally,

responded to the lobbying of nervous white settlers, who frequently understood the threat posed by indigenous access to cinema in gendered terms. They feared that native men's desire for white women would be inflamed by the popular cinema, raising the possibility of miscegenation, which represented a threat to the prestige and the sanctity of the white settler body. Censorship policies provide a further example to support Bhabha's claim that the racial stereotype functions as an indexical sign pointing to the colonisers' own anxieties, demonstrating that 'masking and splitting of phantasmatic and official knowledges' that can be attributed to colonial discourse.[12] Even in the dismantling of racially discriminatory legislation in the early 1960s, there was no intention to share freely a white social imaginary, particularly neither its potentially inflammatory celebration of colonial conquest and victory, nor its function as a repository for fears and desires about women.

Although this research has provided little direct material from which to assess what indigenous viewers themselves might have sought or gained from their cinema attendance, Administration files of the 1950s do attest to the growing volume of censorship, to the cinema's commercial viability, and, by implication, its increasing popularity. Yet such factors as the racially segregated nature of exhibition and the screening conditions of the *haus piksa* qualify the way in which indigenous viewers could be imagined as sharing a common textual experience with their white counterparts, as well as suggesting that viewing circumstances would render filmic regimes of representation somewhat opaque. Moreover, if the cinema can be understood as a potential 'middle ground'[13] of culture, an arena where the interpretation of texts calls on adaptive and inventive responses, then the question of what the Administration was achieving in its crude (and uneven) censorship practice is even more open.

What conclusions remain to be drawn about the national and colonial imaginary that is produced in this slim archive of Pacific resource adventures, and about the changes and continuities that are evident in the period from the anxious 1920s to the apparent confidence of the 1950s, a period in part defined by a sense of closure on this past?

Any such remarks need to first acknowledge that while united by a shared production concept (the desire to exploit exotic neighbouring landscapes) as well as by the territorial claims more or less explicitly asserted, this body of films is nevertheless quite varied. The early gold-prospecting stories, *Jungle Woman* and *The Unsleeping Eye*, for example, recount tales of unsuccessful attempts to exploit Papuan gold resources; the location-based productions could fairly be described as less overtly fantastic in their imagining of the Pacific than those shot in recreated sets in Sydney (such as *Lovers and Luggers* and *The Devil's Playground*). This diversity can in part be ascribed to the discontinuous nature of production, a pattern due overridingly to industrial factors. But the very tentativeness of the series can also be linked to the *imaginative* stretch involved in attempts to culturally claim Pacific territories. The recurrent fault-lines in these texts — such as the awkward attempts to hierarchically organise relations between foreground and background — bear out the considerable difficulties of attempting to conscript and subjugate Melanesian places and peoples to a narrative about the manifest destiny of the nation to realise itself as a ruling white power. 'Intimate and ambivalent'[14] relations between white Australians and Melanesians are evident in the largely disavowed diegetic dependence on the skills and generosity of Islander pearling workers and Papuan carriers that coexists with the significant dependency on the drawcard of unusual settings for these productions. The very attempt to intertwine the narrative of Australian Pacific colonialism and Australian nationhood engenders such closeness and attendant ambivalence.

In those film texts set closest to the mainland continent, on Thursday Island, a national-colonial parable is most clearly in evidence, and questions about the national character, as well as the character of the nation's colonial enterprise and entitlement are posed and resolved. In the interwar-year productions in particular, a melodramatic imaginative mode aims to clarify questions about 'who is justified, who are the innocent, where is villainy at work now'.[15]

In the melodramatic triangulated relations at the centre of *Hound of the Deep*, and *Lovers and Luggers* (and to some degree *Jungle*

Woman), each apex of the triangle — save that reserved for the hero — is shadowed, doubled or opposed, in ways that serve to play out nation/empire relationships. The villain apex in *Hound of the Deep* for example, is occupied by local villain 'Black' Darley, an unscrupulous opportunist; but Darley is (fore)shadowed by the metropolitan attorney, who betrays Strong's trust, and Lady Cynthia, who marries said attorney, in the meantime carelessly forgetting her colonial intended. Marjorie, the heroine (or the 'true pearl'), is at an apex in opposition to Cynthia. She shares this position with her father, and the father/daughter dyad represents the nation, a recurring pattern in Australian cinema of the period more broadly, and one repeated by Quidley and Lorna in *Lovers and Luggers*.[16] As the latent antipathy between metropolis and nation in *Hound of the Deep* segues into the manifest antagonism of *Lovers and Luggers*, a declarative nomination of the metropolis as the site 'where ... villainy [is] at work now' is made. In *Lovers and Luggers*, the local villains — Mendoza and his Chinese co-conspirator — and the casual racism operating in their representation, are indexical signs pointing to the monstrous villain of the piece, the rapacious, neglectful and betraying Stella Raff. She treats the nation as a mere background resource in a manner that mirrors the exploitative practice of those British distributors who regard the Australian market 'as a pocket to be picked empty for their enrichment'.[17]

In contrast with the motherland's mode of colonial exploitation, the resource adventures figure Australia's own Pacific desires as the spontaneous, naïve and innocent enterprise of a virile, masculine and youthful nationalism, for which the body of white adventurer at the centre of each film is a synecdoche. Masculinity is demonstrated — or regained — through a loosening of the shackles of urban living, and the performance of deeds against an exhilaratingly broad canvas of natural spectacle — jungle, cliffs, wild rivers, reefs and coral sands. The performance of the hero offers reassurances about Australia's character, position and future in the Pacific. The worthiness of the masculine is proved in a closed circuit of exchange with proving oneself national. Such a celebration of masculine penetration and

domination of space changes little in the period of my focus, as is underlined succinctly by the words of my title drawn from *Walk into Paradise*'s introductory voice-over: 'the tread of a white man's foot'.

Notwithstanding this prioritisation of the masculine — or as a necessary corollary to it — femininity plays a mobile support role throughout this period, particularly in respect to positioning woman as a sign of nation. The white 'outdoors girls', Marjorie and Lorna, add elements of colonial womanhood to this conventional national sign. Homemakers on the nation's fringes, these women demonstrate their wifely potential by their exemplary care of their fathers and easy command of indigenous labour. The colonial daughter marks the end of the hero's transferred allegiances from metropolis to settler colony, founding national couples whose union consolidates national claims as well as performing their worthiness. The 1950s' beach girl Rusty King, played by magazine cover girl Ilma Adey, continues the plot function of her interwar sisters, in that she facilitates Merriman's masculine rehabilitation from absentee owner, playboy and 'great white master', to the point where he becomes a worthy successor to his family's dynastic claim to Thursday Island's pearl beds. Adey adds to Shirley Ann Richards' ambassadorial role as a 'vivacious, typically modern' sign of nation in the 1930s the modernity of the 1950s — where the body of woman links the bounty of natural resourses to the promise of the rewards of assimilation and where a new confidence in bodily display colonises the spaces of beach and sea as sites for leisure.

With such a focus on white characters, cross-racial desire is evidently a marginal or displaced (or proscribed) element in these Australian Pacific resource adventures, and parallels between the marginalisation of Hurana and Serena further demonstrate the point. In *Jungle Woman*, the racialised femininity of Hurana serves a reconciliatory pivot around which the 'impossible' melodramatic resolution of the film turns. Shadowed by Eleanor in her tenuous position at the 'heroine' apex of the film's romantic triangle, this doubling allows the temptation of cross-race desire to subsist within the pleasures of the colonial adventure. Yet in imagining South as simultaneously the inevitably preferred object of her desire and he

who — naturally — remains above temptation, the film deploys Hurana to demonstrate white racial superiority and integrity, and fantastically figures the space of contact between black and white as one of loving service and sacrifice on the part of the former. In *King of the Coral Sea*, part of Merriman's rehabilitation concerns the redirection of his sexual interest from Serena to Rusty, so that while Serena functions mainly as a further element in the film's exploitation of scenic backgrounds, she is also counterpointed to Rusty. This juxtaposition moreover exposes the limit point in the film's multiracial vision of Australia, in that Serena is excluded from the appropriative order of the nation that Rusty as beach girl signifies.

The most consistent component in an intertextual relay linking the themes of this entire series of texts to the discourse of their reception takes place around variously deployed transfers of notions of resource exploitation and resourcefulness, discursively embedding the films in contexts of reception that foreground the deployment of the Pacific as part of the resourceful national film-making project. That in the films' imaginary it is naïveté and innocence that differentiate the nation's own enterprise from the metropolis in the interwar years requires a radical backgrounding and/or discounting of the contribution of native labour. The prime example of this discounting is the romantic imagining of the pearling industry as a site for white men to quest after the sea's rarest treasures. The triangulated nation-empire relationships of the interwar films effectively exclude Islanders from the narratives' foreground concerns of legitimising a colonial inheritance, which are played out therein. In the films' visual economies, moreover, as well as in their reception, peoples and places are consistently collapsed, rendered as 'nature' and natural spectacle, so that access to indigenous labour becomes a mere extension of the right to those 'natural resources' themselves. There is a jarring deployment of native peoples as at once visible and invisible: highly visible as part of the repertoire of images that are crucial to the visual appeal conferred by the films' exotic locations, as the reviews demonstrate but invisible in their exclusion from the foreground of triangulated relations, and even in their occasional exemption from the rules of continuity.

Such exempting, or the fantastic mobility required of Hurana's characterisation, suggest that indigenous peoples subsist at a level below the usual demands of narrative coherence. Australian dependence on native skills, loyalty and self-sacrifice is rendered 'invisible' to the extent that these qualities are taken for granted, and indeed serve as unspoken or natural signs of white entitlement. In the interwar-years' films, there is little attempt made to legitimise colonial activity in respect of showing that Australia aimed to 'civilise' indigenous peoples (Marjorie's exercise class notwithstanding). Token gestures of caring for the nation's 'others' are restricted to signs of feminine nurturance — such as cuddling cute children. Indigenous men — cast as headhunters — in contrast, are on occasion the target of a heedless and reckless violence that is 'naïvely' incorporated into, or subsumed under, the generic discourse of adventure.

In the postwar films of Southern International, acknowledgment of the contribution of Islanders and the indigenous people of Papua and New Guinea is brought closer to the foreground, as part of a shift in the imagining of interracial relations that is usefully illuminated by reference to the discursive surroundings constituted by popular illustrated magazines. In these accommodating habitats for the discourse of assimilation, 'older'-style racisms are figured as being left behind — along with the foregrounding of ties to Britain — in the anxious yet complacent rhetoric that characterises reportage on achievements of welfare colonialism in the Torres Strait and trusteeship development policies of Papua and New Guinea, at the same time as the unifying discourse of the Australian way of life de-marginalises and overtly nationalises these fringe territories.

In these later texts, 'buddy' relations refigure the films' central dynamics, imagining partnerships that signal the nation's 'arrival' as an independent force, in respect of a backgrounding of the previously formative relation with Britain. In *King of the Coral Sea*, the partnership is one of a multiracial national coalition of Islanders and Asian workers and white management, ably supported by biddable American muscle. In *Walk into Paradise*, it is a coalition of commerce and governance, including a minor place for the object of Australia's

trusteeship labours — the indigenous subject of development. If the interwar films rely on a closed circuit of exchange between notions of national and masculine becoming, these postwar films imagine an Australia that has moved beyond its own coloniality in a rather closed circuit in respect to superseded relations between Australia and Britain. This apparent supersession permits a premature expression of the nation's disengagement with colonial relations, one that circumnavigates the issue of agency on the part of the colonised peoples of the Pacific. The dynamics of this negotiation are played out in respect to the importance accorded the figure of Towalaka in *Walk into Paradise*. The film's stake in the idealised representation of cross-racial partnership is exemplified by the substitution of Towalaka at Rafferty's side in the film's coda for the usual concluding shot of a young romantic couple.

Yet if the interwar films scarcely acknowledge the existence of Islanders beyond their service as 'natural' extensions of Australian enterprise, the limit of this postwar shift is the failure to acknowledge a present (or future) Melanesian existence independent of Australian agency, or differing from, indifferent or even resistant to those Australian goals and intentions. Instead attention is focused on demonstrating the nation's mature shouldering of the 'white man's burden', re-represented in the discourse of trusteeship partnerships as an altruistic adventure in resource development. The able, adaptive, albeit still-accommodating figure of Towalaka foreshadows a period in history when the social and political agency of the peoples of Papua and New Guinea cannot so readily be spoken for by Australian interests.

ENDNOTES

1 Donald, 'Films and the Empire', p. 497.
2 Imperial Conference, *Summary of Proceedings*, p. 403.
3 Jaikumar, 'An Act of Transition', pp. 112–13.
4 Thomas, 'The Showman as Hero', p. 38.
5 Routt, 'On an Expression of Colonialism in Early Australian film' and 'The Fairest Child of the Motherland'; Cunningham, 'Appollinius and Dionysius' and *Featuring Australia*.

6 Jaikumer, 'An Act of Transition', p. 125.
7 Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable'.
8 Stacey and Kuhn, *Screen Histories*, p. 6.
9 Bertrand, *A Documentary History*, p. xviii.
10 Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre', p. 221.
11 Tiffin and Lawson, *De-Scribing Empire*, p. 3; Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 101.
12 Bhabha, 'The Other Question', p. 34.
13 Maltby, 'Look at Me and Love America'.
14 Denoon, 'Federation, Anthropology', p. 107.
15 Gledhill, 'Rethinking Genre', p. 234.
16 Routt, 'Fairest Child of the Motherland'.
17 Monkman, 'Local Producers Review British Australian Position'.

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Filmography

40,000 Horsemen, 1940, Australia, Charles Chauvel, Famous Feature Films.
Australia's Own, 1919, Australia, Jack Ward.
Bird of Paradise, 1932, USA, King Vidor, RKO.
Crocodile Hunters, 1949, Australia, Lee Robinson, Australian National Film Board.
Cyrano de Bergerac, 1950, USA, Michael Gordon, Stanley Cramer.
District Commissioner, 1963, Australia, dir. Shaun Benson, producer Lee Robinson, Commonwealth Film Unit.
The Drum, 1938, Britain, Zoltan Korda, United Artists-Korda.
Dust in the Sun, 1958, Australia, Lee Robinson, Southern International.
East of Java (aka *South Seas Sinners*), 1949, USA, Bruce Humnerstone, Universal-International.
Economic Development, 1959, Australia, Maslyn Williams, Commonwealth Film Unit.
For Australia, 1915, Australia, Monte Luke, J.C. Williamson.
For the Term of His Natural Life, 1927, Australia, Norman Dawn, Australasian Films.
Isle of Intrigue, 1931, Australia, A.R. Harwood, A.R. Harwood Productions.
Lusim Trobel Bilong Mipela, 1966, Australia/Papua and New Guinea, Department of Information and Extension Services.
Leon Fouché, Land Settlement Officer, 1969, Australia, John Martin-Jones, Commonwealth Film Unit.
Moana, 1926, USA, Robert Flaherty, MOMA.

The Mutiny of the Bounty, 1916, Australia, Raymond Longford, Crick and Jones.
Namatjira, The Painter, 1947, Australia, Ralph Foster, Charles Mountford and Lee Robinson, Department of Information.
Nanook of the North, 1922, USA, Robert Flaherty, Budget Films.
New Guinea Patrol, 1958, Australia, Maslyn Williams, Commonwealth Film Unit/Australian National Film Board.
On Our Selection, 1932, Australia, Ken Hall, Cinesound Productions.
Outback Patrol, 1952, Australia, Stanley Hawes, Australian National Film Board.
The Overlanders, 1946, Australia, Harry Watt, Ealing Studios.
Pearls and Savages (aka *Headhunters of Unknown Papua)*, 1921, Australia, Frank Hurley.
The Phantom Stockman, 1953, Australia, Lee Robinson, Platypus Productions.
Political Development (documentary), 1958, Australia, Maslyn Williams, Commonwealth Film Unit.
The Power and the Glory, 1941, Australia, Noel Monkman, Argosy Films.
The Queen in Australia (documentary), 1954, Australia, Stanley Hawes, Australian National Film Board/Department of the Interior.
Quo Vadis, 1951, USA, Marvyn LeRoy, MGM.
The Restless and the Damned, 1959, Australia, Robert Dormann and Lee Robinson, Silverfilm/Australian Television Enterprises.
Sanders of the River, 1935, Britain, Zoltan Korda, United Artists-Korda.
Stagecoach, 1939, USA, John Ford, Walter Wanger.
The Stowaway, 1958, Australia/France, Ralph Habib and Lee Robinson, Discifilm/Southern International.
To Have and To Hold, 1995, Australia, J. Hillcoat, Calypso Films.
The Triumph of Love, 1922, Australia, J. Ramster, J. Ramster Photoplays.
White Shadows in the South Seas,1928, W.S. Van Dyke (and Robert Flaherty), USA, MGM.

Credits for selected texts

The Adorable Outcast (1928)
Australasian Films, A Union Master World Picture
Adapted by Norman Dawn from the novel *Conn of the Coral Seas* by Beatrice Grimshaw
Directed by Norman Dawn
Principal cast:

Edith Roberts	Luya
Edmund Burns	Stephen Conn
Jessica Harcourt	Deirdre Rose
Walter Long	Fursey
John Gavin	Carberry
Katherine Dawn	Elizabeth
Arthur McLaglen	Iron Devil
Arthur Tauchert	Mack
Fred Twitcham	Sir John Blackberry
Compton Courts	Pooch
William O'Hanlon	pearler
Claude Turlon	pearler

The Devil's Playground (1928)
Fineart Films
Adapted from the lyrics of *Hell's Highway* by Ashley Durham
Directed by Victor Brinley
Principal cast:

John R. Allen	Martin Herle
Eliza Stenning	Naneena
Petrie Potter	'Bull' Morgan
Terry Short	the mate
John Haddock	Dick Barrington
Richard Alrich	Reverend Andrew Fullerton
'Dick' Fletcher	Lillian Fullerton
Cyril Callaghan	Chief Trelua
Edna Crofts	Trelua's wife

Stanley Murdoch	Bobby
Vera Campbell	South Seas Sal

Hound of the Deep (1926)
Stoll Picture Productions
Written, directed and produced by Frank Hurley
Principal cast:

Eric Bransby Williams	John Strong
Jameson Thomas	'Black' Darley
Lillian Douglas	Marjorie Jones
W.G. Saunders	'Cockeye' Jones

Jungle Woman (1926)
Stoll Picture Productions
Written, directed and produced by Frank Hurley
Principal cast:

Eric Bransby Williams	Martin South
Grace Savieri	Hurana
Jameson Thomas	Stephen Mardyke
Lillian Douglas	Eleanor
W.G. Saunders	Peter Mack

King of the Coral Sea (1954)
Southern International
Directed by Lee Robinson
Written by Lee Robinson and Chips Rafferty
Principal cast:

Chips Rafferty	Ted King
Charles Tingwell	Peter Merriman
Ilma Adey	Rusty King
Rod Taylor	Jack Janiero
Lloyd Berrell	Yusep
Reg Lye	Grundy
Charles Peverill	Sergeant Charlie Wright
Frances Chin Soon	Serena
Salapata Sagigi	Salapata

Lovers and Luggers (1937)
Cinesound Productions
Directed by Ken Hall
Adapted by Frank Harvey from the novel of the same name by Gurney Slade
Principal cast:

Lloyd Hughes	Daubenny Carshott
Shirley Ann Richards	Lorna Quidley
Sidney Wheeler	Captain Quidley
James Raglan	Craig Henderson
Elaine Hamill	Stella Raff
Frank Harvey	Carshott's manager
Rodney Whelan	Mendoza
Alec Kellaway	McTavish
Leslie Victor	Dormer
Campbell Copelin	Archie
Charlie Chan	Kishimuni
Marcelle Marney	Lotus
Horace Cleary	China Tom
Claude Turton	Charlie Quong
Bobby Hunt	Lady Winter

Mystery Island (1937)
Commonwealth Film Laboratories
Written by Harry Lauder
Principal cast:

Brian Abbott	Morris Carthew
Jean Laidy	Audrey Challoner
W. Lane Bayliff	Captain Druce
William Carroll	Chief Officer Vowells
George Doran	Reverend Abel
Desmond Hay	Packer
Mollie Kerwin	Miss Fortesque
Moncrieff Macallum	Green

Typhoon Treasure (1938)
Commonwealth Film Laboratories
Written by John P. McLeod
Directed by Noel Monkman
Principal cast:

Campbell Copelin	Alan Richards
Gwen Monroe	Jean Roberts
Joe Valli	Scotty McLead
Douglas Herald	Buck Thompson
Kenneth Brampton	Alfred Webb
Norman French	patrol officer
Utan	Utan

The Unsleeping Eye (1928)
Seven Seas Production
Written and produced by Alexander Macdonald
Directed by Alexander Macdonald in association with
Walter H.B. Sully
Principal cast:

Wendy Osborne	Marjorie
Len Norman	John Challoner
David Wallace	Dick Holloway
Native characters [sic]:	
Kora, Mamoose of the Papangis	himself
Yagool, the sorcerer	himself
Haurooka, sorcerer to Mamoose	himself
Bow-men bodyguards to the chief	Ivan, Toku, Barigi, Pokka and others
Papangi and Tugeri warriors	Hill tribesmen of Silo Wa-rami

Walk into Paradise (1956)
Southern International
Adapted by Rex Reinits from a story by Lee Robinson and
Chips Rafferty
Directed by Lee Robinson, Marcel Pagliero

Cast:

Chips Rafferty	Steve McAllister
Françoise Christophe	Louise Demarcet
Pierre Cressoy	Jeff Clayton
Reg Lye	Ned 'Sharkeye' Kelly
Regimental Sergeant Major Somu	Towalaka

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Between 1925 and 1957, thirteen Australian films were produced that were made or set in the Pacific. Through films such as Ken Hall's *Lovers and Luggers*, Frank Hurley's *Hound of the Deep* and Lee Robinson's *King of the Coral Sea*, Jane Landman explores Australia's cinematic engagement with the Torres Strait, Papua and New Guinea and the ways in which this interacts with Australians' responsibilities for, and requirements of colonial government, including issues of defence, exploitation of resources and national self-realisation.

> *Illluminates and important but under-researched and theorised area of filmmaking in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s in Australia, contributing to ongoing debates about Australian identity, cultural history, Pacific peoples and film history.*
>
> Tom O'Regan

Jane Landman is a Senior Lecturer at Victoria University, where she teaches in the area of Media, Culture and Society, and in Studies in Cinema and Television.

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