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Title: From colonial outsider to postcolonial insider: some screen adaptations from Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa

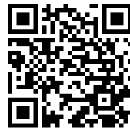
Creator: Wilson, J. M.

Example citation: Wilson, J. M. (2013) From colonial outsider to postcolonial insider: some screen adaptations from Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa. In: Dwivedi, O. P. and Kich, M. (eds.) *Postcolonial Theory in the Global Age: Interdisciplinary Essays.* Jefferson, North Carolina: MacFarland & Company, Inc. pp. 59-72.

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work.

Version: Draft version

http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/6306/



NECTAR

From Colonial Outsider to Postcolonial Insider: Some Screen Adaptations from Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa

Janet Wilson

I. Literature, Film and the Nation-State

The changing relationship between the nation-state and its culture in an era of globalization and transnationalism has come under revised scrutiny during the last two decades. Assumptions such as that the institution of literature is in the service of the nation state or of nationalism were interrogated, for example, by Simon During in 1990, who pointed out that literature works in different social spaces than nationalism, employing different signifying practices, and that the legitimization of nationhood is not a necessary criterion for canonisation of a work of literature (During 138-153). More recently Bill Ashcroft has articulated a position for subjects beyond the boundaries of nationalism and the state in defining the "transnation," a space of potentiality that works within and across the national cultural borders, and the "literary transnation," which has a transformative function because of the utopian function of literature: the imagination's power to envisage a better or different world (Ashcroft 72-85). The necessary but unstable relationship between the nation and its cultural products is particularly true of cinema, which like literature operates outside as well as within nationalism, being transnational or global in its audience appeal, and inevitably dependent on corporate finances and international co-productions as adjuncts or alternatives to state patronage and funding. National frameworks for the production, reception, and interpretation of cinema persist, nevertheless. In his recent book on New Zealand cinema, Bruce Babington acknowledges the challenge to the concept of a national cinema in a global era in which boundaries are necessarily more fluid, but he points out that a national cinema is

still a force in terms of state policy, because necessary for "registering the lived complexities of…national life" and, in more traditional terms, for offering "coherent images of the nation," "sustaining the nation at an ideological level, exploring what is understood to be the 'indigenous,'" and he argues for a more plural and hybridized concept of the nation than these earlier commentators (Babington 16).

This paper proposes to draw on such reformulations of the relationship between literature and the nation as During's and Ashcroft's, as well as modified concepts of a national cinema such as Babington's. It claims that screen adaptations of foundational myths and stories, including their recirculation cinematically, intercept with and develop the national imaginary for global and local audiences. Feature films based on written texts and stories provide renewed engagement with the issues and themes of the original narratives. Recurring motifs that are central to the construction of the national imaginary, notably the Lost Child in Australia and the Man Alone in New Zealand/Aotearoa, are not only reformulated for local consumption by producers and scriptwriters, but also are pushed beyond national boundaries in order to intersect with and interpenetrate other cultural narratives and images. Phil Noyce's feature film, *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), which revisits the Lost Child motif, belongs, for example, to the changing cultural climate inaugurated by the national enquiry into the Lost Generation of aboriginal children of mixed race who were taken from their families in order to be assimilated into white Australian culture. Both the enquiry's report, *Bringing Them Home* (1997) and the film had an enormous impact on Australians, and the film's popularity overseas demonstrates the wide appeal on screen of its literary precursor, Doris Pilkington/ Nugi Garimara's *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* (1996).[i] In challenging received ideas of

national identity and belonging through adapting to the screen colonial stories and other non-fictional genres such as reports, historical accounts, diaries and autobiographies, the cinematic medium demarcates the older form of modernity structured through notions of hierarchy from the concept of a symbolic economy of a new global culture, rooted through reciprocity (Krishnaswarmy 8-9).

Literature and film have always operated to some degree outside nationalism (as the global dissemination of texts implies), and literary and cinematic texts are valued for reasons other than reinforcing nationhood. Yet art forms that recirculate key images of the nation contribute to the renewal of national identity by appropriating the very global forces of production that are often identified as undermining the nation state, and the texts thereby often encourage a more self-reflexive nationalism and assertion of cultural authority. The success of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-03), in New Zealand/Aotearoa, for example, which brought together overseas actors with local production skills and technical expertise, encouraged the Clark government to use a policy of cultural renewal in linking nationalism to its agenda of economic transformation (Williams 183). Screen adaptations also renew national identity by exploiting productively the time lag from the original text, introducing the insights of a new generation, including critiques of gender and class ideologies through a free response to the original script rather than faithful adaptation. This article examines three feature films that, in adapting key narratives of national belonging, have helped reshape the national imaginary by reflecting back to the nation a slightly altered (because externally addressed, and distanced) mirror image of itself, so promoting national self-reassessment: Peter Weir's 1975 film, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, adapted from the 1968 novel by Joan

Lindsay; Roger Donaldson's 1978 film *Sleeping Dogs*, adapted from C.K. Stead's 1971 political thriller inspired by the Vietnam War, *Smith's Dream*; and Brad McGann's 2004 production of *In My Father's Den*, adapted from Maurice Gee's 1972 novel of the same title (Lindsay 1998; Stead 1971; Gee 1977).

The reception of the three films, although thirty years apart, confirms cinema's role in re-evaluating the cultural value of the original texts, and in reshaping the national imaginary. Cinema creates new horizons of expectation and alternative audiences for key national narratives. The novels on which each film is based have gained a new lease of life following the cinematic release, with reprints bearing cover designs that feature iconic images from the films. Now redesigned for overseas distribution, the book covers feature blurbs that allude to the impact of the novel-as-film, thus emphasizing the story's increased social relevance. *Sleeping Dogs*, for example, has long been identified with a turning point in local history and politics, a defining moment in the nation's narrative, as reprints of Stead's novel point out. In depicting a modern dystopia--New Zealand as a fascist state under martial law ruled by a dictator and split between special troops, backed up by American special forces, and factions of opposing guerrilla forces--the film (more than the novel) has been seen as prescient of the civil unrest caused by the 1981 Springbok Tour. In particular, that the Special Police were dressed in helmets and boiler-suits and carried batons made them uncannily resemble the Red and Blue Escort Squads of 1981.[ii] This episode from the film is imaged on the cover of the 1993 reprint of *Smith's Dream* deliberately recalling the 1981 crisis, a time when, according to the *Sunday Star Times* comment on the cover, "Stead's own dream of police lines dividing the people of New Zealand came true for so many." Recent New Zealand cinema has

also played a significant role in promoting the nation as a tourist destination for overseas audiences. Both the economy and the national image have benefited from the cinematic profiling and reinterpretation of New Zealand's landscape as "middle erd" in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, with new tourist ventures featuring the trilogy's landscapes, while Niki Caro's film, *Whale Rider* (2003*)*, adapted from Witi Ihimaera's novella, *The Whale Rider* (1987) drew to international attention the small village of Whangaroa where the filming took place--and where the completed waka (war canoe), a prop for much of the film and central to the ending, is now located (Wood 17). The original preoccupations of the novels are renewed, expanded, and ideologically reinflected in the screen adaptations, and the film versions vastly exceed the reach and impact of the prior print medium.

II. The Lost Child: *Picnic at Hanging Rock*

One of the best-known examples of national cinema's extending literature's role in signifying national history, identity, and heritage is Peter Weir's production of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, which on its release in 1975 became the break-through film of the Australian film renaissance. Joan Lindsay's novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1968), on which the film is based, draws on a central topos in the Australian psyche, the Lost Child, a motif which epitomizes a central trauma of the white settler experience of the desert.[iii] Circulating in both oral and literary narratives since colonization, the trope recurs in numerous real-life stories, some of which have been adapted to the screen: for example, Doris Pilkington's semi-autobiographical story of her aboriginal mother's journey in *Rabbit Proof Fence* was adapted to the film with the same title; the story of Azaria Chamberlain, adapted from the novel by John Bryson, has the cinematic title of *Evil*

Angels (1988); and Nicholas Roeg's classic feature film, *Walkabou*t (1971) is partly based on a novel, *The Children* (1959), by James Vance Marshall. The Lost Child motif emerged originally out of a nexus of preexisting Australian anxieties: the perennial struggle between nurture and nature that draws on negative concepts of Australia as the inhospitable mother country and a culture that excludes women.[iv] These tensions between the white settler and the hostile environment are played out in a series of archetypal contrasts in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*: images of the outback, symbolized by the brooding, anthropomorphic presence of rock with its teeming wildlife, are presented in sharp contrast to the monolithic, rectangular shape of Mrs Appleyard's College. Weir follows Lindsay in shifting the focus from the male outback pioneers of the late nineteenth century to women who are little more than constructions of the patriarchal social order, "pawns in the Australian social landscape," and "objects of male adoration."[v] In this and in other ways, Weir's film, like the two New Zealand films under discussion, illustrates the preoccupations and limitations of the 1970s, the era in which the Australian film revival began. All reflect the male monopoly of screen production and the prevailing monocultural, masculine, white-settler definitions of national identity (Simpson *et al* 22; Campbell 211).

Under Weir's direction, the Lost Child narrative is represented partly allegorically as a form of primitive seduction of three nubile teenage girls and one of their teachers, whose elaborate but incongruous Victorian attire suggests their vulnerability to nature, symbolised by the preternaturally ancient Hanging Rock. Their disappearance, significantly on Saint Valentine's Day, 14 February 1900, as if sacrificial victims to the God of Love, by being devoured or seduced, is marked by the Rock's brooding,

menacing appearance, suggestively evoked in Gheorge Zamfir's "Flute de Pan", the film's signature music.[vi] Weir also expands Lindsay's contrasts of class and nationality: the English aristocrat, Michael Fitzhubert (played by Dominic Guard), who falls in love with Miranda (the "Botticelli angel" who leads the others into the rock) and returns to search for her, and Albert (played by John Jarrett), the orphaned Australian coachman (who Weir, in his visual economy, casts as the dark 'other' to the aryan, golden-headed Michael), who rescues Michael after he falls unconscious on the rock, thereby ensuring the recovery and survival of Irma, one of the three lost girls.[vii] Both young men exist outside the nature-nurture loop in which the women are trapped, and Albert, the true survivor, is associated with "indigenous" Australia in his physical resourcefulness and instinctive awareness of outback dangers. Weir reinforces Australian cultural nationalism in relation to the defining trope of the Australian bush, imaged as both mysterious and threatening, a space that succeeds in disorienting the European subject. Upper-class British colonial life, epitomized in the genteel ambience of Appleyard College, the stifling close fitting outfits of the young women, and the increasingly deranged figure of Mrs Appleyard, the headmistress, is depicted as out of place, alienated from the pre-European, primeval forces residing in the Australian outback. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* expands on the symbolic innuendo of the Lost Child, and as Alison Rudd points out, shows "the chasm opening up between Britain's imperial assumptions and the new society's emergent myth of belonging based on the need to adapt to the landscape." (Rudd 117).

III. **Man Alone: *Sleeping Dogs***

A similar foundational motif appears in New Zealand colonial culture in the early twentieth century: the Man Alone trope was formative to the cultural nationalism associated with the masculine literary tradition that dominated in the 1930s and 1940s, and like the American Adam, a symbol of the innocent solitary in nineteenth-century American literature, the Man Alone trope was so ubiquitous as to resemble a Jungian archetype representing an unconscious collective self-identification.[viii] A paradoxical figure of both existential alienation and self-sufficiency, the Man Alone resists commitment to marriage, domesticity, or a political cause, and he reacts against the prevailing social structures, often exploding under their pressure. Less a hero than the victim of a puritanical, philistine, and materialistic society, he also displays attributes of the rebel (Jones 213). The Lost Child, the Man Alone, and the American Adam are all frontier myths stemming from the experiences of isolation in rural settler societies and the encounter with the harsh, unyielding environment. But the behavior pattern of the Man Alone also points to the uncertain identity structures that existed after New Zealand's break from Britain, reflecting what Mark Williams sees as the fundamental weakness of Pakeha nationalism, because New Zealand, unlike Australia, defined itself less by "acts of filial rebellion" against the imperial center than by "maintaining muted links with the parent culture" (Williams 183-184). Cultural displacement is particularly evident in the ur-text, *Man Alone* (1939) by John Mulgan, whose hero, Johnson, survives a testing ordeal in an encounter with the New Zealand wilderness, while in psychological terms he displays the reduced subjectivity and limited identity structures of the deracinated migrant Englishman who does not belong fully to either culture**.** (D'Cruz and Ross 32, 34; Fox 265).

Maurice Gee's early novel, *In My Father's Den* (1972), is another classic portrait of the Man Alone, one which stresses his psychological imprisonment due to his literal and metaphorical withdrawal, emotional retardedness, and non-conformity. Unlike Mulgan's Johnson, Gee's protagonists are associated with the repressive codes of secular Puritanism, a deeply entrenched force in the national psyche in the early twentieth century. This was manifested as a powerful work ethos, a fear of sentimentality, a concern with respectability, a hatred of extravagance, and, in the younger generation, a tendency to swing to the extreme of over-indulgence in reaction against the strict moral code of the parents.[ix] *In My Father's Den* demonstrates both aspects in the characters of its *bon vivant*, and sexually free-wheeling narrator, Paul Prior, and Paul's driven, sexually repressed brother, Andrew, both of whom suffer from maternal deprivation, and their mother's joylessness and lack of love (Fox 38, 50). The isolation into which Puritanism thrusts its characters, the self-sufficiency and dislike of commitment, is also a feature of Stead's political thriller, *Smith's Dream* (1971). But, as Lawrence Jones points out, the Man Alone figure is demythologized with successive rehandlings and becomes more complex; sympathy for the figure diminishes after the 1950s, and by the 1970s, when the two novels were written, his loner, rebel personality becomes either more inward-looking and guilt-ridden or, instead, the subject of satire (Jones 214). Stead's novel shows the extreme threat to the Man Alone's individual self-sufficiency stemming from civil conflict promoted by fascist forces, while Gee's exposes the negative effects of puritanical rectitude on his psyche. The cinematic adaptations take these perceptions into new directions while retaining some links with the trope's original literary articulations.

Roger Donaldson's *Sleeping Dogs*, the first 35 mm, color, feature-length fictional film made in New Zealand, not only marks the beginning of the nation's new wave cinema, but is also rated as the first significant literary adaptation for film (Martin and Edwards 64; Donnell 101-107). For most of the movie, apart from the ending, the narrative follows that of *Smith's Dream*. The 'Man Alone' is Smith (played by Sam Neill), who leaves his family because his wife is having an affair with his best friend, Bullen (played by Ian Mune), and chooses to live in solitude on an island off the Coromandel. This enigmatic behavior points to an underlying sensitivity and vulnerability that is associated with Maurice Gee's characters, who classically use withdrawal as a form of self-protection, rather than relying on the tough-guy, macho indifference which is characteristic of the pioneering colonial Man Alone figure. According to Russell Campbell, the film has achieved its iconic status by redefining the male Kiwi stereotype in New Zealand cinema, although such a transition had already occurred in the literature (Campbell 211). Like Stead's novel and Mulgan's *Man Alone*, the Smith of *Sleeping Dogs* resists political involvement. He is the little man who is pulled into big events and forced to take sides, as he reluctantly finds himself joining the guerrillas, the Vietnam-style partisans living in the Coromandel, who are led by Bullen and oppose the martial law imposed by the country's dictator. In this dystopian drama about a society threatened by a brutally repressive government in which ordinary apolitical people like Bullen and Smith's wife, Gloria, are driven into opposition, Smith's lack of commitment and ambivalence about violence cannot last long.

Film critic Brian Donnell has noted that the most crucial change to Stead's story is in the characterisation of Smith, who in the novel lives up to the ambivalent "Man

Alone" image by abandoning the rebels and striking out on his own, but who returns in the film to the rebels' camp to rescue Bullen, who has been wounded (Donnell 105). Stead describes Smith's journey through the bush and forest in ways that recall Johnson's marathon crossing of the Kaimanawa ranges in *Man Alone*. His Smith also shows existential angst in questioning the need to surrender his freedom to join any party. But Donaldson and his script-writer, Ian Mune, change these familiar tropes by heightening the action and introducing a completely new theme; that of renewed mateship when the odds are stacked against the pair. The two men, wounded by gunfire and helicopter strafing from the Special Forces, stumble across the range through a hail of bullets and bombs from airforce fighter planes, meeting their death on the other side. The movie has been criticized mainly by overseas reviewers for its narrative flaws such as its over-lengthy ending, the lack of explanation for Smith's actions, the clichéd outcome as "a routine psychological drama about the forced reconciliation between rivals in love" (Cagin). Donnell points out that Donaldson may have turned to the genres of Hollywood cinema, namely the buddy movie, because Smith's last defiant minutes are strongly reminiscent of the endings of such movies as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Midnight Cowboy*, and *Easy Rider* that were popular in the 1970s (Donnell 106).

Certainly, in presenting Smith as a rebel to the end, as a heroic martryr in death, while also demonstrating good-guy qualities (carrying the badly wounded Bullen and admitting that he had walked out on his family prematurely), *Sleeping Dogs* flattens the psychological complexity of his literary counterpart in *Smith's Dream*. But Donaldson's formulaic use of the codes of the action thriller genre to show the impact of political events on the lives of ordinary New Zealanders, along with the hints of moral complexity

about the need for political commitment, gave the film widespread popularity in New Zealand (Martin & Edwards 64), and it retains a vital role in the national imaginary because, as Donnell points out, both novel and film experience renewed relevance whenever civic unrest is manifested (Donnell 102-103). *Sleeping Dogs* is a seminal film. It anticipated the rise of the action thriller, the New Zealand version of the road movie such as *Good-bye Pork Pie* and *Smash Palace*, and the later embodiment of the cultural archetype of the Man Alone who blends macho aggression, a distrust of authority, and a ”countercultural rebelliousness” in these and other movies made in the 1980s that star the actor Bruno Lawrence (Spicer 3).

IV Man Alone and Puritanism: *In My Father's Den*

In contrast to Stead's political thriller, Maurice Gee's crime novel, *In My Father's Den*, explores the psychological consequences of Puritanism (as imaged in the mother's repressive moral righteousness and hostility to any overt physicality, including any form of sexual expression) upon family members. The father retreats to his den, a separate space from the domestic sphere that serves as a shelter. The two sons show pathological dysfunction: Paul Prior, the anti-puritan rebel narrator, is unable to form lasting relationships, and his sexually repressed brother, Andrew, displays archetypal Man-Alone behavior in the irrational act which constitutes the novel's crime-- his murder of the schoolgirl, Celia Inverarity. Brad McGann's film, made 32 years after Gee's novel was written, explores the Man Alone's psychological isolation and social alienation in explicitly psychoanalytic terms, through a cinematic investigation of Paul Prior's thoughts and feelings, through his attempts to uncover the mysteries of the past and to

understand himself through the operation of memory. McGann uses flashback in adapting the first-person retrospective narrator who, in the novel, blends showing and telling in piecing together fragments of the past with its silences and repressions, and those fragments are then juxtaposed with scenes from the present which he is trying to understand (Fox 38). Amplifying this visual representation of Paul's psychology and emotions is a sound track of international music, both classical and popular, allusions to iconic figures of New Zealand literature, and references to contemporary world affairs in Paul Prior's earlier vocation as a war reporter. All widen the scope of Gee's investigation of provincial dysfunction, identified as peculiar to the New Zealand experience, so enhancing the film's appeal.

McGann's is an emotional response to Gee's novel, an imitation rather than an adaptation. Paul Prior (played by Matthew MacFayden), is now a photographer of war atrocities in war-torn Bosnia who has returned to New Zealand on the occasion of his father's funeral (not a school teacher as in the novel, although later he takes up school teaching); the setting shifts from West Auckland in the novel to Roxburgh in Otago; the murder, the catalyst for the novel's story, is announced only half way through in the film; the murderer is not Paul's repressed, God-fearing Puritan brother, Andrew, but Andrew's wife who kills Celia by accident; and finally, the repressive mother who survives in the novel, commits suicide in the film. McGann succeeds in overturning the whole puritan scheme of sexual prohibition, the highly regulated sense of conscience, and the powerful corrective sense of guilt and shame which the mother in the novel imposes (or tries to impose) on her sons, only hinting at this in the finale when Andrew's strange behavior is explained as due to his mother's influence (Fox 267).

McGann follows Gee’s novel in showing Paul as psychologically isolated upon his return to New Zealand: unable to take up again his earlier vocation as a photographer because of his haunted memories of Bosnian war victims, he lacks any real reason for staying. But his meeting and friendship with Celia, a student, catalyzes his attempt to try and understand the troubling events of his earlier life by re-experiencing and hence reconstructing meaning through the movements of his consciousness (and his unconscious) in dream, memory, and reflection. This self-examination takes place in the den, the troubled site of past transgressions. In the film, McGann daringly develops into a new mystery an incident only hinted at in Gee’s novel, concerning the paternity of Celia with whose mother, Jackie in the film (Joyce Poole in the novel), he had had a sexual liaison years earlier, before he left New Zealand. The question arises that Celia might be Paul’s daughter, but in a revelation which comes to Paul in a reverie, it seems that his deceased father had also had a sexual encounter with Jackie, and so the possibility exists that Paul’s father could also be Celia’s father! This is the shameful secret that Paul has to confront in his attempts to come to terms with the past, replacing the psychological struggle delineated in the novel, caused by the mother’s repressive love and her attachment to his mongoloid brother.

In developing this oedipal plot strand, McGann strikes a blow at the Puritan ethos of the novel in which the father should embody the law of God in imposing a moral order. Paul’s father in the novel had stepped outside this role by avoiding his wife and seeking refuge in the den. The film goes further in pointing to the father’s violation of the moral law, by conducting illict sexual relations in the den. Gee's emphasis on psychological dysfunction due to the Puritan loathing of sex and its outcome in a heinous

crime is displaced through the film's visual emphasis on the workings of memory as Paul, through the stimulus of Celia, a shadow or ghost of his former love, her mother, tries to come to terms with his father's transgressions, as well as seeking images of his lost mother**.** Critic Laurence Simmons has identified how memory, dream, and reflection coalesce in the double flashback at the emotional core of the film in which reverie, inspired by sound tracks from Patti Smith's album *Horses*, enables Paul to recall his liaisons both with Celia (in the den) and at an earlier phase of his life with her mother (in his bedroom in a sequence played by different actors) when the same tracks were played. As he points out, the title of Gee's novel acquires added significance as McGann repositions the den as a locale of psychological change and growth, in which Paul comes out from the shadow of his father through rejection, forgetting, and remembering, in a process which can be read as allegorical--a way of escaping the father-nation with its puritan stranglehold (Simmons 195-196).

Global symbols reinforce McGann's "refitting" of Gee's early 1970s story for the twenty-first century: an image of Hope (taken from a painting in the Tate Gallery in London), the atlas and globe, the international star, Dame Kiri te Kanawa singing the haunting "Bailero" (from *Songs of the Auvergne*). Travel and the future frame the characters' fears and desires: Paul's anxiety that he will not overturn his father's shameful secret on returning to New Zealand and Celia's longing to travel to Spain, her ambitions to write. The intertexts of Gee's novel—Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and James Hogg's *Memories and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, titles which fuelled the community's suspicion and condemnation of Paul Prior for Celia's murder--are replaced by markers of the national literary culture: James K. Baxter's poem "High Country

Weather," which Paul's father recites, and Janet Frame's novel *Owls do Cry*, which Paul retrieves from her backpack after the murder. Most radical in McGann's adaptation of Gee's novel, however, is what he calls his anti-linear narrative: the poetic cinematic sequences are interwoven with the murder narrative to the point where they cross-over and reframe it--thereby making the audience intimate with the processes of psychological reconstruction through showing a mixture of events of lived experience with the signs they bear of the affective capacities of cinema itself (Simmons 197).

V. Conclusion: Twenty-first Century Screen Adaptations

New Zealand and Australian screen adaptations in recent feature films have significantly reinterpreted dominant core motifs of their white-settler cultures in response to social and cultural change by engaging with national issues and identity structures in ways that convey a wider relevance. In Australia, the effect of the *Bringing Them Home* national enquiry made many white Australians accept for the first time the burden of guilt, a moral awareness that was ratified in 2008 when the Rudd government issued a formal apology. *Rabbit Proof Fence's* narrative of the Stolen Child revises the Lost Child motif through reference to "White Australia's" national policies on race, providing new moral and social dimensions in contrast to the symbolism that accrued round stories like *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, in which mystery brings with it a sense of disempowerment. It also overturns earlier versions of the motif in narrative terms, although still framed for white audiences; the story is told from an indigenous perspective, actors identifiable as Aboriginal were chosen, and the stolen children find their way home (Wood 11-12). The emblematic lost child who is abducted and abandoned by white Australian society also

mirrors the victimization of poor and working-class children in other cultures whose families could not support them.[x] The social amnesia about these acts of abuse and betrayal has found echoes, for example, in the UK where groups of institutionalized children were shipped off to Australia in the 1930s.

Although 27 years apart, both Donaldson's *Sleeping Dogs*, and McGann's *In My Father's Den*, as adaptations that depart from the narrative formats associated with Man Alone motif, help reshape the masculinist tradition that monopolized the cultural nationalism of the 1930s to the 1970s. Although many films produced since the late 1970s, in their concern over masculine and collective identity structures, show a cultural force which is traceable to the literature of the 1930s, the final moments of *Sleeping Dogs*, which glorify Smith's death as a defiant stand against injustice and dictatorship, overturn the more ambiguous, inward, insular figure of the earlier era in a new-found social relevance (Murray 247). Smith's heroism illustrates the individual's potential to make a difference, so anticipating some of the causes of civil unrest in New Zealand of the early 1980s. In 2004, McGann's assault on the Puritanism of Gee's novel reflects the confidence of New Zealand cinema since the new wave of the early 1990s, and his ambitious interpretation of Gee's story revises its core nationalism in keeping with the potentialities of the visual medium. McGann's *In My Father's Den* suggests the power of cinema as part of a wider culture narrative to promote a different experience of storytelling, one associated with the image-making power of cinema**.** Both productions offer the remnants of their original context in the new cinematic medium, with Donaldson's hinting at what will come in the film-making of the 1980s, and McGann's representing a trace of what has vanished.[xi]

Yet McGann's film also shows cinema participating in the globalized cultural economy with its complex transnational cultural flows. Simmons invokes cultural nationalism in acclaiming the way *In My Father's Den* places local audiences in a New Zealand location with which they were intimately familiar, and his testimony of a collective pleasure in viewing McGann's revised national myth recalls Arjun Appadurai's concept of a "community of sentiment," one which is powerful enough to generate a sense of identity and allegiance, in Simmons's view, to transform national identity in relation to a system of cultural representation (Appadurai 8). In claiming that viewing the film is like occupying a "secret space or 'den' which each of us might recognize, and in which each of us might play,"' he underlines the shift in perception.[xii] Far from being on the outer of society, the Man Alone figure through exploring and reflecting his alienated condition in the visual medium of cinema, gives life "to images that claim us and that form our history," that "confirm our place" by staying with us and forming "an enigmatic centre of ourselves." (Simmons 197) Simmons's metaphor of the "den" of the cinematic experience also points to the new global order in which people use their imagination in the practice of their everyday lives (Appadurai 5), because the communal sharing of the attractions and secrets of filmic engagement suggests this is a new space for the individual reshaping of national identity.

Notes

[i] See Collins, Felicity and Therese Davis. *Australian Cinema After Mabo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 133. Wimmer, Adi. *Australian Film: Cultures, Identities, Texts.* Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2007. 50. Wimmer points out that despite widespread praise from critics, the film was a commercial failure.
[ii] In a Special Features discussion in the 2008 reissue of the film, one of the special effects men commented that in dressing the special forces they used rolled-up newspaper painted black for batons, boiler suits and cyclists' crash helmets.

[iii] On visual representations of this "Ur-angst" in the Australian psyche see Wimmer. *Australian Film: Cultures, Identities, Texts*. 83-8.
[iv] Armellino, Pablo. *Ob-scene Spaces in Australian Narrative: An Account of the Socio-topographic Construction of Space in Australian Literature.* Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2009. 77, citing Schaffer, Kay. "Woman and the Bush: Australian National Identity and Representations of the Feminine." *Antipodes* 3.1 (1989): 3-17.
[v] Armellino. *Ob-scene Spaces*. 78, 79. In Armellino's symbolic reading the two girls and their teacher who vanished had "metaphorically overstepped the boundaries of patriarchal society" (86).
[vi] On Weir's decision to use the techniques of European art-house, see Rayner, Jonathan. *The Films of Peter Weir*. London and New York: Continuum, 2003. 61.
[vii] Class conflict is subordinated to the myth of unity and nostalgia characteristic of the AFC film's nationalist discourses, see Wimmer. *Australian Film*. 36-7.
[viii] Wilson, Janet. "Intertextual Strategies: Reinventing the Myths of Aotearoa in Contemporary New Zealand Fiction". *Across the Lines: Intertextuality and Transcultural Communication in the New Literatures in English*, ed. Wolfgang Kloos. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998. 271-91 (278); citing Anderson, Roland F. "The Rise and Fall of the Man Alone? " *ARIEL: A Review of English Literature* 16.4 (1985): 97.
[ix] Evans, Patrick. "The Provincial Dilemma: After *The God Boy." Landfall* 117 (March 1976): 34. Evans points out that the New Zealand novel features "parents who are Puritans and children who are alienated".
[x] For a study of these transitions see Pierce, Peter. *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
[xi] Williams. "A Waka on the Wild Side". 184-85. Williams identifies a group of films-- *Scarfies* (1999), *Stickmen* (2000) and *The Price of Milk* (2000)-- which recode the signs and markers of New Zealand identity rather than wrestle with it. In *The Price of Milk*, Man Alone is domesticated, suggesting the collapse of this figure into comedy and satir**e.**
[xii] Simmons. "The Story of Our Lives": 193-194.

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