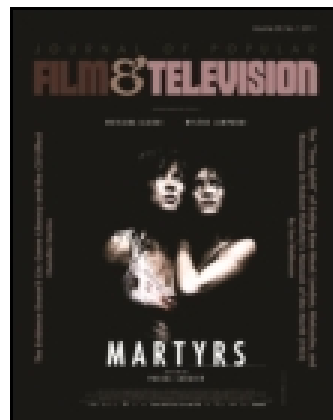


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### In Quest of Self-Identity: Gallipoli, Mateship, and the Construction of Australian National Identity

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# IN QUEST OF SELF - IDENTITY



## Gallipoli, Mateship, and the Construction of Australian National Identity

BY MAREK HALTOF

*"If  
there had not been  
a Gallipoli,  
Australians  
would have  
invented it."*

(DOBREZ AND DOBREZ 74)

**G**allipoli (1981) was my graduation film," stated Peter Weir treating this work as the end product of the period when he was particularly interested in myths and dreams (Bonardi and Bonardi 42). *Gallipoli* was also his most Australian-oriented film, as he searched for the roots of national identity in the World War I battle of Gallipoli—marginal for the war as a whole, but of great significance for Australians and their national identity.

What does this "graduation" mean? Although Weir does not provide any specific explanation, he does suggest a turn towards professionalism and filmic maturity. It also announces a move from low budget films made in his own country, toward high budget films made in the United States that reflect a style common to American film production. Furthermore, "graduation" and *Gallipoli* indicate a turn towards simplicity and clarity, towards specific genres, a shift from the mysterious oneiric landscape of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and *Last Wave* (1977).

In his 1986 interview for *Film Comment*, Weir once again emphasized the importance of *Gallipoli* in his artistic development. For him, it

is a breakthrough film which came after one year of studying European and American cinema. *Gallipoli* is also his "least personal film" and his favorite one. "It was the first time," he claims, "I think I had real confidence in what I was doing, some understanding of craft, while still being an apprentice (McGilligan 30).

As opposed to Weir's earlier films, *Gallipoli* is based on authentic historical events, the participation of Anzac (Australian and New Zealand) troops in the 1915 Dardanelles campaign. "The wireless tells and the cable tells, how our boys behaved by the Dardanelles," Henry Lawson begins his "Song of the Dardanelles" (Lawson 155). Nevertheless, the film is not simply an attempt to reconstruct those events but deals with Weir's favorite theme—that of individuals facing strange events in a hostile environment. This metaphysical cast of theme gives way to a psycho-sociological approach that finds reflection in Weir's choice of thematic opposition. The cosmic oppositions from Weir's earlier films, dream versus reality (*The Last Wave*); nature versus culture (*Picnic at Hanging Rock*), are replaced by a more concrete dichotomy in *Gallipoli*: Australia versus Britain.

The purpose of this endeavor is to

define the notion of “the Australian nation” by going back to, and examining such local stereotypes and mythology as good Australians-bad foreigners, the myth of innocent Australia, the attributes of Australianness versus Britishness. Employing visual stereotypes, Weir does not want to deconstruct but rather to reinforce the mythic elements constituting the Australian national identity. Such a cinematic purpose was strongly advocated by Phillip Adams:

We got into this industry for one reason: to give ourselves a national voice, to give ourselves a sense of na-

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**Weir's *Gallipoli*: Australian soldiers confronted with the severe laws of an alien war.**

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tional purpose and a national identity, and to throw it that way would be a disaster and a fiasco. (“Two Views” 71)

Of course, Weir's film is not the first artifact to play upon the modern Australian self-image. *Gallipoli* is deeply rooted in the local mythology of Australia as well as in the national literacy and painting tradition. And as such, Weir's film may be seen both to derive from, and continue on in the discussions on national identity as well as nationalist feeling, which emerged distinctively for the first time by the end of the nineteenth century. The changing attitude toward the Australian landscape, the romanticization of the bush and the bushman, and the emergence of local artists, painters, poets, and writers

interested in defining their new environment, contributed to the nation-making process. Finally, the Boer War with Australia's participation, but under British command, was a kind of “emotional substitute for a real war of independence” (Eddy and Schreuder 153). The war correspondent and poet A. A. G. “Smiler” Hales put it bluntly:

A nation is never a nation  
Worthy of pride or place  
Till the mothers have sent their first  
born  
To look death in the field in the face.  
(quoted in Eddy and Schreuder 144)

The title of Weir's film refers to 1915 Gallipoli campaign during the First World War. Australian and New Zealand troops landed on the Aegean side of the Gallipoli penin-



sula near the end of April 1915, and fought there through December 1915, when the troops were evacuated. The film's climax is the suicidal, senseless attack on Turkish trenches undertaken by the eighth and tenth Light Horse Regiments of Anzacs. The Gallipoli battle has an important place in Australian history and mythology, and lives on in film, literature, and historical works. It was an event of national significance. Bill Gammage, historian and advisor on the film, notes that before Gallipoli, in November 1914, the Australian cruiser "Sydney" had driven aground the German light cruiser "Emden." This victory was celebrated as conferring adulthood on the Australian navy. To build a nation, however, a more spectacular event was needed. "The time was awaiting the event," concludes Gammage ("Anzac" 57).


Despite its title, *Gallipoli* is not a "war film" or an "anti-war" film, but a "celebration of the national ideology," as Jane Freebury has observed in her symptomatically subtitled article "Screening Australia: Gallipoli: A Study of Nationalism on Film" (5). The film places emphasis on parallels between personal and national history. The protagonists, Archy Hamilton (Mark Lee) and Frank Dunne (Mel Gibson), resemble Australia itself—young, inexperienced, enthusiastic. In the first part of *Gallipoli*, Archy's trainer, Uncle Jack (Bill Kerr), reads to his family passages from Kipling's *Jungle Book*, where Mowgli becomes a man. Later, for Archy and Frank, the battle marks their passage into manhood, and for Australia, the baptism and fire and, consequently, the birth of a nation. Albinioni's funereal *Adagio for Strings and Organ* serves to emphasize the painful moment.

Weir's film contrasts the essence of Australianness (mateship, the outback, isolation, innocence) with the corruption, depravation, and crowdedness of the rest of the world. Australia's isolation from the world's issues and hence its innocence is strongly stressed, particularly in the

first part of the film, which takes place in Western Australia's outback. The key scene of Archy and Frank's meeting with an old man with a camel in the desert emphasizes this distinctly. The old man, Stumpy (Harold Baigent), does not know about the war and has never been to Perth. When Archy explains why Australians are involved in the war, the old man cannot understand. Weir's (and scriptwriter David Williamson's) sense of humor puts it this way: "Still, can't see what it's got to do with us (doubts Stumpy) . . . If we don't stop them they could end up

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The change from colonial to national literature was connected to a shift from a nostalgia for Europe to national awareness and an idealization of the bush.

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here (Archy) . . . And they are welcome to it (answers Stumpy looking around at the vast desolate countryside)." The sense of Australia's isolation is given by emphasizing the emptiness and immensity of the landscape.

In combining themes of isolation and images of landscape, Weir accentuates an aspect central to the Australian mythology of self-identity. As a rule, the Australian landscape is one of the most important elements of the New Wave period films. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *Sunday Too Far Away* (1975), *The Mango Tree* (1977), *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978), *The Irish-*

*man* (1978), *My Brilliant Career* (1979), and many others employ the landscape to generate the essence of Australia. The Australian landscape in these films is the source of meaning—a distinctive characteristic that has its own discursive function. It typifies the "real Australia" and establishes the differences between Australian and European culture.

There was always a visible duality for Australian artists representing the Australian landscape. One group of artists, particularly with European background, perceived the land as hostile, dangerous, constituted of alien nature. Another group of artists tried to capture the uniqueness of the land and to describe its physical environment, promoting and even idealizing the land. Exploring their physical environment, they attempted to overcome the "colonial inferiority complex." The change from a colonial to a national art was linked primarily with a different perception of the landscape: from alien and hostile to human and mythic, with marked preference for the local, Australian, over the English-imperial.

The Heidelberg School of impressionist painting, a distinctive Australian school of painting between 1885 and 1890, established popular images of the rural landscape. Earlier, colonial painters emphasized the vastness and the strangeness of the new continent. However, as early as 1875, William Ford saw the bush as a pleasant setting resembling an English park. His painting *Picnic at Hanging Rock Near Macedon* depicts Victorian families resting in an Eden-like Australian bush. Representatives of the Heidelberg School (Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Charles Conder, and others) not only depicted effects of light and color, but introduced and interpreted Australian sunlit landscape. McCubbin's *The Lost Child* (1886) can be seen as a metaphor of Europeans in Australia. It shows a child standing in a bush, dressed in a blue-green colors and visually camouflaged among gum trees. This motif often appeared

in Australian paintings and prints, for instance, in the popular prints of Samuel Thomas Gill (*The Australian Sketchbook*, 1865). Later painters, most notably Sydney Nolan, Russell Drysdale, and Arthur Boyd, stressed the uniqueness of the landscape and its metaphysical and mythic content. The landscape thus became mythologized and perceived as distinctively Australian.

Australian writers also were concerned with explaining and promoting their environment. Like the painters, they supported nostalgia for the rural lifestyle while describing Australia's non-European landscape. In particular, the bush and the bushman stood for the "real Australia." The change from a colonial to a national literature was connected with a specific shift of emphasis: from nostalgia for Europe and a related representation of the outback simply as an exotic background for novels of European experience (e.g., in the writings of Ada Cambridge or Rosa Campbell Praed), to national awareness, and to the situation where the bush is seen as distinctively Australian and hence idealized in the works of Henry Lawson, Andrew Barton "Banjo" Paterson, Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy, Bernard O'Dowd, and others.

Given this history of a consciously articulated attempt to emphasize the specificity of Australian geography and experience in cultural expression, it is perhaps inevitable that these expressions should take on a mythic dimension to become, like the Australian landscape itself, larger than life. "Australia is a small country with long journeys," states George Seddon (13). Russell Boyd's photography in *Gallipoli* stresses the emptiness of the landscape. The monochromatic sandy colors of three deserts (Australian, Egyptian, and Gallipoli), and the khaki color of the soldiers' uniforms, contrasted with a blue sky, dominate the film. The oneiric images of boys crossing the Australian desert, night scenes under the Pyramids, landing at Gallipoli, and the underwater scene there, and many other images enhance the at-


mosphere of Weir's film. They create more myth than historic reality.

Similar to *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Last Wave*, the protagonists of *Gallipoli* move toward something unknown, toward an undefined force. When they reach the finale, one of them, the innocent virginal Archy, loses his life. Although *Gallipoli* is not a "mystery film," its mythic content, enhanced by carefully used cinematic devices, produces a dreamlike effect. All historical inaccuracies of the film are entirely subordinated to newly arisen mythology.

The landscape in the first part of

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**E**ach country has its own "frontier." For America, this was the West and its pioneers; for Australia, this is the landscape of the interior and the bushman, who symbolizes the nation.

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*Gallipoli*, many times reproduced in earlier Australian films, helps to achieve visually what is strongly emphasized in the desert scene. In this particular scene, crucial for the film's presentation of Australia's isolation in 1915, Weir employs the immensity of the landscape and juxtaposes it against the boys' youthfulness, enthusiasm, and desire to see the world. If in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Last Wave* the director plays on nature-culture oppositions, in *Gallipoli* he stresses the unity of man and the landscape that is only seemingly hostile to man. Weir seems to employ the landscape in the way in which John Ford created an

archetypal landscape of the American West. For both Weir and Ford, the landscape is the source of meaning. Although at first glance human figures seem to be alienated from this realm, ultimately they are neither powerless nor insignificant. On the contrary, human beings people the tamed landscape, which is a key factor in the establishing of a mythology of both the American West and the Australian outback.

Weir chooses the outback as a starting point for his film, similar to the most successful Australian films of the past decade. Although Australia is one of the most urbanized countries (most Australians lived and still live in a few large coastal cities), one of Weir's protagonists (Archy) comes from the countryside (bush), which symbolizes the "true Australia" based on a male-dominated society. The Australian rural worker (the bushman) embodies all Australians. The rural virtues are contrasted with the decadence and moral corruption of the city. Frank, the working-class Irish boy from the city (larrikin/ocker), has become corrupted by the city. He can be saved only by his relationship with a noble bushman. The pattern, which was employed later by the director in his *Witness* (1985), is present in the Australian cinema from its beginnings. In his *Legends on the Screen*, John Tulloch shows that the thematic concern of the Australian cinema in the 1920s was to establish the contrast between the city and the bush. He goes on to suggest that this opposition replaced the class antagonism of Australian society. Interestingly, this same opposition is the source of international success in such films as Paul Hogan's *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), which play upon the distinction between the rural Australian and urban-American.

Russel Ward's study *The Australian Legend* (238–59) tries to explain the role of the Australian landscape in film and literature in terms of "frontier theory" elaborated by the American historian F. J. Turner. *The Australian Legend* draws upon literature, folk songs, and documents to

trace and explain the development of the Australian self-image. In Ward's view, the typical Australian is an inheritor of the last century's bushmen, whose prestige, not numbers, was always greater than that of city-dwellers. An answer to the problem of why such prestige should have been afforded the bushman in Australian culture is partly suggested by Turner's "frontier theory." Before Turner, the historians tended to explain the American past with reference to European influences. His achievement was to show how "frontier influences" were no less important to an understanding of the local history. According to Ward, the Australian outback performed the same function: it helped to develop national cohesion. Each country has had its own "frontier." For America, this was the West and its pioneers; for Australia, this is the landscape of the interior and the bushman, a folk-hero who symbolizes the nation, the hero whose lifestyle and character differ from those of other nations. Like American pioneers, bushmen entered and conquered the alien landscape. They tamed the hostile environment, made it human, and thus performed a central civilizing, nation-building function. For Ward, the myth of the Australian frontier and frontiersman promoted the growth of nationalism and shaped the present-day stereotypes of "typical Australian" behavior. On the other hand, however, according to Ward, the romanticization of the bush was promoted by the nationalists who tried to establish the difference between British and Australian culture.

In his *Australian Cinema 1970-1985*, Brian McFarlane discusses images commonly projected by Australian films of the last decade: a man's country, anti-authoritarianism, a wide-open land, the Aussie battler, and the competitive instinct (47). Apart from the landscape, *Gallipoli* contains all elements mentioned by McFarlane. As with nearly all Australian films dealing with the past, Weir employs these important



**Mateship, as dramatized in the relationship between Frank (Mel Gibson) and Archy (Mark Lee), is the leading motif in *Gallipoli*.**

elements of national identity and promotes them.

Weir develops the discourse on mateship by showing that the boys' rivalry and different attitudes toward war originate in their different family backgrounds. "It's not our bloody war," says Frank. "It's an English war—it's got nothing to do with us." His father also tells him not to fight for the English, who murdered his grandfather "five miles from Dublin." The boys' attitude toward the war resembles the well-known stanza of Henry Lawson's *The Ballad of the Cornstalk*. He writes about the Boer War:

I'm going to the war, and I don't  
know what it's for,  
But the other chaps are going with  
the Bush Contingent men,  
And if I should stay behind, there'll  
be trouble in the wind  
For my girl will throw me over when  
they come back agen.  
(quoted in *The Australian Experience of War* 18-19)

Unlike Frank, Archy grows up in a family with strong pro-British feelings and his joining the Light Horse

is, apart from an opportunity to change something in his life, an answer to the call "The empire needs you!"

This mateship (comradeship among males), frequently present in Australian cinema, and which Weir dramatizes in the relationship between Archy and Frank, is the leading motif of *Gallipoli*. Mateship has mythological character in Australia and is embedded not only in working-class values but is constitutive of Australian male self-image. Always in the center of this myth is the bushman, whose attributes were later transferred to the Anzacs at Gallipoli. The virtues of the frontiersman suited the political situation. In his acclaimed study *The Australian Legend* Russel Ward makes comparison between the character of the Australian soldier and the character of the bushman:

Comradeship and loyalty, resourcefulness and adaptability are as necessary to the one life as to the other. And just as the bushman liked, on principle, to emphasize his "inde-

pendence" from his masters, while being sometimes on good terms with the individual squatter, so the digger liked to be thought that he cared nothing for the officers as a class. (231)

Paterson and Lawson, for instance, saw the bushman as the embodiment of all Australian virtues. They mythologize him and mateship in innumerable poems and stories. In his famous *Shearers*, Lawson writes,

And though he may be brown or black  
Or wrong man there, or right man,  
The mate that's steadfast to his mates  
The call that man a "white man!"  
They tramp in mateship side by side—  
The Protestant and Roman—  
They call no biped lord or sir,  
And touch their hat to no man!  
(*Poetical Works* 103)

And thus, surprisingly, the myth of Gallipoli and the myth of Australia are about man. The landscape of *Gallipoli* is reserved for men—there is no place for women in the Big Australian Myth. Characteristically, as Brian McFarlane points out, "if the mateship is no longer an important motif in Australian literature, several films of the past decade have helped to reinforce the myth (54).

Archy and Frank's friendship, beginning with their first Freemantle race, is continued throughout the film. Its dramatization enables Weir to develop a personal story instead of an historical epic. He personalizes history and thus indicates concern with its human aspect. As Sam Rohdie notes about *Gallipoli*,

The film becomes neither real, nor fictional, but a game of belief and disbelief between the two, it is one which Peter Weir knows how to play with more than ordinary competence. (196)

Another important element of the Australian national identity, anti-authoritarianism, is presented as an anti-British feeling. Weir claims that "the larger issue is not the anti-British viewpoint, but the pro-Australian viewpoint" (Bonardi and Bonardi 42), though these two elements are inseparably linked in the film. British officers are caricatured as monocled and moustached cynics and their



treatment of Anzac troops as unfair. The Anzac's sacrifice is contrasted with the selfishness of the British who are "just sitting on the beach drinking cups of tea." Ultimately, the British are blamed for the massacre of Australians. Likewise, Bruce Beresford in his *Breaker Morant* (1980), while showing Australian participation in the Boer War, employs many anti-British stereotypes in order to win a sympathetic and positive attitude towards Australians. Many of these same stereotypes of the negative Englishmen can be traced to early bush balladists' verses. For instance, Lawson, in "A New John Bull" describes an English gentleman who "shakes hands like a ladies' man," "hates to soil his hands," "removes the grime of gunpowder and polishes his nails." Lawson concludes ironically,

Although he never showed a sign  
Of aught save sympathy  
He was the only gentleman  
That shamed the lout in me. (*Poetical Works* 43)

In his *Social Patterns in Australian Literature* Tom Inglis Moore argues:

The cultural clash was sharpened by the discord between English and Australian manner and speech. The educated English settler was repelled by the colonial informality, crudity, and coarseness. The native colonial in turn usually scorned refinement as an

unmanly affectation of the English gentry and preferred to be "rough but honest," illogically equating the two and suspecting the sincerity of anyone refined. (99)

In expanding upon the negative image of the Englishman, while simultaneously creating and emphasizing the innocence of Australia (characteristically, the most innocent among Australian soldiers is named Snowy), Weir posits the outside world in its entirety as aggressive (embodied in war), dishonest (embodied by British officers), corrupted (in the Cairo scene), and marked by death (the scene at Gallipoli). Furthermore, to generate the sense of Australia's innocence, *Gallipoli* contains a sequence showing soldiers being recruited to the Light Horse. A wooden Trojan-like horse, symbol of cunning as well as imposture, appears bearing the appeal "Join the Light Horse!" A similar point of view regarding the innocence of Australia as opposed to the corruption of the outside world is shared by Bill Gamage, whose book *The Broken Years* (1974), based on the diaries and letters of one thousand Australian soldiers during the Gallipoli campaign, emphasizes that the innocence of the Australian soldiers clashed with severe laws of the alien war.

Both Weir and Williamson admit that their inspiration while working

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Australian soldiers set against the Egyptian pyramids reinforce *Gallipoli's* central image of innocence vs. experience and death.

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on the film was C. E. W. Bean's official history *The Story of ANZAC from the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, first published in 1921. According to Bean, at that time an official war correspondent and later historian, Australian soldiers were the finest in the imperial Army thanks to their bushman qualities (Inglis 20). This corresponds to Henry Lawson's description of Anzacs as "The youngest and strongest of England's brood" ("Song of the Dardanelles" 155). C. E. W. Bean argued that the digger at Gallipoli was the product of the bush.

The Australian was half a soldier before the war, indeed throughout the war . . . the Australian soldier differed very little from the Australian who at home rides the station boundaries every week-day and sits of a Sunday around the stockyard fence. (White 132)

Bean also stressed the democratic nature of Anzacs: the Australian army was egalitarian. Officers frequently fraternized with their men; they were not separated from soldiers. In the film, Major Barton (Bill Hunter), a fatherly Australian officer, is contrasted with the British officers. Barton cares for his people and is on friendly terms with them. Their final

tragedy is also his tragedy. British officers are presented as anachronistic figures, remnants of the declining Empire.

Competitiveness, another mythic aspect of Australia's national identity, is presented starting from the very first sequence. Archy's uncle is training him in a ritual-like fashion to sprint. The same ritual is repeated by Archy at Gallipoli before the final charge towards the Turkish trenches. The long sprint of the protagonist both commences and ends the film. There is, however, another, metaphorical, aspect of the race. In Egypt, Archy and Frank race toward the pyramid-tombs. Innocence is con-



(Left) Frank and Archy cross the desert in *Gallipoli*. (Below) Archy and Frank race among the pyramids: competitiveness illustrates one of the mythic aspects of Australian national identity.



trasted with experience and death. In an earlier scene, the camera portrays the Anzacs' camp at night against the pyramids. Australians' tents resemble small pyramid-tombs. However, pyramids are not only symbols of death but also of immortality. Although the Australians' way to the trenches of Gallipoli is marked by joyful moments (e.g., the nurses' ball in Egypt, naked Aussies swimming underwater as if taken out of the reality above), the viewer is reminded of watching a drama—a powerful drama about virginity lost.

The same competitive spirit, as well as Australia's newness, is strongly emphasized in the famous scene of the Australian rules football match played against the background of the Egyptian pyramids. There is a clash between the young and old culture, naiveté and craftiness. Later, at Gallipoli, where everything seems too serious and cruel for Australians, this spirit is inappropriate; they senselessly die attacking the enemy. A freeze-frame of Archy Hamilton ends the film. This final frame shows one life that was ended too early, but at the same time the freeze-frame symbolizes, preserves, and immortalizes Archy via the cinematic process.

If the battle of Gallipoli marked for Australians the symbolic birth of their nation, Weir's *Gallipoli* plays upon the notion of the nationhood and on the self-image of Australians. Although it does not share the same optimistic, patriotic spirit as does, for instance, Charles Chauvel's *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1942), *Gallipoli* pays homage to earlier films about Australia's participation in World War I and quotes Chauvel's filmic version of those events. The images of the battle already appeared in Alfred Rolfe's 1915 propaganda feature *The Hero of the Dardanelles* and, repeated many times over in later films, they survived almost untouched. Sylvia Lawson goes so far to suggest that


There are sixty-six years of history between these two intensely mythic shots (soldiers against the Egyptian pyramids at sunset—M.H.); there is almost no

ideological space between them at all. The first celebrates the Australian soldier; the second that mateship, which, Bean proposed, invigorated their soldiering. (11)

Although extreme in her opinion, Lawson accurately stresses the conservative character of the local film industry. "There are not fighting films," wrote a surprised Gideon Bachman in his 1976 article on the state of the Australian film industry (36). In terms of content, Weir's film creates the same notions as Chauvel's *Forty Thousand Horsemen*; however, unlike its predecessor, *Gallipoli*

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**A**ccording to Sydney Nolan, "There is a certain innocence about being an Australian. It is being part of a dream which hasn't been shattered or burnt out."

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reinforces mythic images of what is supposedly "Australianness." "In a country with a short history, the few high points become inflated into mythical proportions," says the scriptwriter David Williamson (quoted in Hutton's *First Australian History* 215). Weir's film does not intend to discuss real issues connected with "war," "patriotism," and "the nation." Instead, it tries to present the essence of the "true Australia"—a mythic, pastoral landscape peopled with mythic characters.

In its attempt, Weir's film corresponds with Sydney Nolan's pictures of Gallipoli. Nolan painted naked

Anzacs who bathe on Gallipoli beaches. They are presented not as living figures but as myths existing in Australian culture. They are archetypes vital to the national legend. Weir's Archy Hamilton and Nolan's diggers function as icons—ahistorical, myth-like figures constituting the Australian psyche.

The image of World War I and the battle of Gallipoli are presented, of course, from a justifiable Australian point of view. "The story . . . gives us back our history. This is what having a film industry is all about," announced a delighted Philip Adams soon after the film's premiere ("Gallipoli" 11). But what are the results of the image of Australia presented in *Gallipoli*? The question is whether the abuse of innocence, as a feature characteristic for Australia, does not sound anachronistic in our times. By refreshing old stereotypes, is *Gallipoli* able to help to create a nation? The answer is partly given by an approving attitude of the Australian school authorities: The Victorian Education Department produced the film study guide of *Gallipoli* for use in secondary schools.

We are dealing with a country where language is no longer a distinguishing attribute for national identity. In post-colonial nations, this situation causes a peculiar aim for defining the differences between colonialism and colonised. Local history and local characters are put on a pedestal as "noble, heroic or tragic" (Freebury 8). All national cinemas manipulate the audience's emotion with powerful national symbols. Australian cinema is in the process of creating that symbolism by employing stereotypes of current and foundational myths dealing with Australia. The main task is to delineate the difference between Australianness and Britishness and yet to preserve the sense of British heritage. The images from Australian New Wave films do not show Australians as "second-hand Europeans" who "pullulate timidly on the edge on alien shores," as A. D. Hope wrote in his poem *Australia* (13) but as de-

scendents of noble bushmen and self-sacrificing diggers at Gallipoli.

The emergence of Australian New Wave films coincides with the discussion on the national image of Australia. The nationalism offered by these films clearly differs from the one projected by the so-called "ocker films" such as Bruce Beresford's *Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972) and *Don's Party* (1976) or Tim Burstall's *Alvin Purple* (1973). The ocker films celebrate contemporary urban heroes (ockers) with their vernacular, characteristically vulgar behavior and masculine habits. These popular films were attempted for the Australian market and successfully competed with Hollywood products. The New Wave films are mostly period films that define nationhood not only by its current mythologies and realities but by locating the discourse on the meaning of the Australian nation in the colonial past and during the first years of independence. Anne B. Hutton views the growth of films promoting local history and landscape as a political and economic act. For her, the decision to promote the outback was a reaction "to the encroachment of American values in urban Australia" ("Nationalism" 153). Heavily sponsored by the government, the period films produce more sophisticated images of Australia's past, acceptable for the domestic and foreign markets. By stressing the importance of the landscape and the rural virtues of the bushman, the period films offer a different kind of nationalism. They reinforce popular images of Australia earlier elaborated by the representatives of the Heidelberg School.

Some critics see the similarities between Weir's film and Hugh Hudson's *Chariots of Fire* (1981)—both films have two runners-mates whose personalities differ distinctively, and both share similar narrative patterns. Nevertheless, as William J. Palmer states, there is a huge difference between the two films, which can be compared to "the difference between romance and reality . . . *Gallipoli* is *Chariots of Fire* for the real world" (244).

Writing on *Gallipoli*, Sylvia Lawson asks the following question:

For how much longer must it be assumed that we should identify "Australia" with images of innocent youth, opposed by repressive Authority and doomed by forces beyond any visible source of control? (11)

Continuing Lawson's argument, one must deduce that the production of innumerable images of youth and innocence, as a feature characteristic for Australia, has become a local speciality. *Gallipoli* presents innocent Australians as characters seemingly satisfied with the fact that they are not English. Perhaps, therefore, this is what being an Australian means? Sydney Nolan puts it as follows: "There is a certain innocence about being an Australian. It is being part of a dream which hasn't been shattered or burnt out" (quoted in Eagle 189).

This article discusses *Gallipoli* and its role in the debate on Australian national identity not because Weir's film is unique but, on the contrary, because it is typical. This film validates existing stereotypes in order to articulate the Australian national identity. Populistic images, reinforcing values from the bush ("frontier" values), define a national character in contrast with the British one and explore how Australia differs from England within the context of a shared heritage.

*Gallipoli* and other Australian films of the New Wave period try to reconstruct a continuity between the past and the present in order to reinforce, rather than to deconstruct, the popular images directly taken from the mythologized past. Commonly projected images of the naive, innocent, "rough but honest" Australian male victimized by the British are repeatedly shown in Australian films. Moreover, Ward's thesis, with its apotheosis of the digger-soldier as the embodiment of Australian psyche, serves as a valuable model for the representation of the national type. The bush and the bushman still represent the "real Australia." Nevertheless, these images, which

have been promoted within and outside the country, have little to do with present-day Australia.

The inability to come to terms with real Australian identity causes a peculiar situation. In *Gallipoli* and other Australian films the nostalgic, mythical vision of innocence is presented as "real" and is employed in order to self-define and to project this image overseas. It may prove the assumption that, being unable to express their true uniqueness, Australians have to apply mythic resolutions.

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