



MONASH University

TRADITIONS OF THE NEW:

GREG MCLEAN'S *WOLF CREEK* AS A CINEMATIC LYNCHPIN

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ABSTRACT

Greg McLean's 2005 horror film, *Wolf Creek*, was a catalyst film for the resurgence of horror film production in Australia. Made on a production budget of \$1.2 Million (AUD), *Wolf Creek* was innovative in pioneering the digital high-definition shooting format and revived cinematic realism in Australian horror films through its handheld cinematographic approach. This study positions *Wolf Creek* as a landmark horror film at the "intersection" of two distinctive film making movements in the history of Australian cinema: the cinematic traditions of Australian film making established during its film revival of the 1970s and 1980s, and a new generation of Australian horror film makers in the 2000s, led by McLean, who reconceptualise these traditions and make them accessible to an emerging youth demographic.

Wolf Creek amalgamates ideas from Australian film making and is an overt evocation of Australian cultural and colonial history through its visual references to the traditions established in key films of the 1970s and 1980s. These traditions include the employment of the Australian landscape as the context for an exploration of Gothic horror, a tradition that is seen in Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (1971) and Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), and a return to the iconic masculine archetype as represented by Australian male film stars Chips Rafferty, Jack Thompson and John Jarratt in his early acting career. Thus, by employing innovative and contemporary film making methods synonymous with the digital era, *Wolf Creek* offers this youth demographic a film product in the lineage of Australia's cinematic and cultural history.

Moreover, McLean's overt use of realistic and graphic violence in *Wolf Creek*, as well as his adaptation of cinematic tropes inherent in American horror and exploitation cinema from the 1970s, positions the film as a contemporary cinematic exploration of violence in the new post-9/11 world order. By drawing on "Post-Vietnam War" examples of violent exploitation films, such as John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972) and Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972), and well-known slasher films such as John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1979), *Wolf Creek* offers a bold statement about the nature and meaning of violent behaviour and evokes not only Australian film making traditions but a range of cinematic conventions adopted internationally.

Finally, by grossing \$29 Million (AUD) worldwide through box office sales, *Wolf Creek* has arguably opened a space for other Australian horror films in not just the domestic market but in the global film arena. This study also examines the slew of Australian horror films released post-2005 and between 2007 and 2010, such as Jamie Blanks' *Storm Warning* (2007) and Jody Dwyer's *Dying Breed* (2008), as well as the expanding *Wolf Creek* franchise of movies and television series. I argue that *Wolf Creek* has created a cinematic blueprint, imitated by a new generation of Australian horror film makers, one that has spurred a wave of horror films that similarly reference cinematic traditions and embody a distinctive 1970s aesthetic.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Luke Creely, certify that the ideas, findings, analysis and conclusions presented in this thesis are entirely my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award.

Signature:

Date: April 20, 2020

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Wolf Creek was released in 2005 as a cinematic product geared to a new generation of moviegoers. The film's writer, co-producer and director, Greg McLean, signals this intention from the offset. We open in Broome, Western Australia. It is 1999. Youth inhabit the coastal fringe and populate the sun-kissed beaches. Director of Photography, Will Gibson, endows the beach landscape with a picturesque aesthetic and depicts it as an alluring site occupied by blithe and free-spirited twentysomethings on vacation. British tourists Liz Hunter (Cassandra Magrath) and Kristy Earl (Kestie Morassi), and Sydneysider Ben Mitchell (Nathan Phillips), are introduced as the film's protagonists. Gibson's handheld camera moves with frenetic intensity as the three friends interact. Jason Ballantine's editing is terse with rhythmic cuts that showcase brief postcard-style grabs of Hunter, Earl and Mitchell in their Broome-based social space. They attend a poolside party and are framed as extroverts at the centre of the action. Mitchell is positioned as an alpha male trendsetter in this space. He is the camera's focal point as he runs across a table, shirtless, bodyboard in tow, and plunges into a pool. As he strikes the water, the electronic dance soundtrack hits top volume. The onlooking partygoers, including Hunter and Earl, soon join him in the water.

This initial sequence of the film is useful to consider as an example of the contemporary cinematic style employed in *Wolf Creek*. In this example, the gaze from high-definition digital cameras is used to anthropomorphise the beach landscape and position it as a "character" by inscribing its features and colours with augmented detail. As John Jarratt, who plays the film's antagonist, Mick Taylor, recalls in his autobiography, *The Bastard from the Bush: An Australian Life*, this digital shooting gauge "was still very new for the time" (289). Peter Shelley likewise notes that *Wolf Creek* helped facilitate this "postmodern technique of handheld camerawork in high definition digital" (200). The elliptical editing in the sequence, which, as Ballantine reveals during an interview for behind-the-scenes documentary, *The Making of 'Wolf Creek'*, "had to punch" and was designed to "hook" the audience (2006), manipulates the film's temporal structure by fragmentising narrative action. Throughout this study, I identify similar instances of

style in *Wolf Creek* and examine the construction of a new type of visual language that combines digital film making technology with overt inferences to film tradition.

1.1 Origins of the Research

The primary function of the horror film is to provoke fear and dread in the audience, who identify emotionally with the plight of fictional screen characters as they are menaced by a malevolent force. It is a genre of film designed to be “experienced”. As Stephen Prince argues, “the experience of horror resides in this confrontation with uncertainty, with the “unnatural”, with a violation of the ontological categories on which being and culture reside” (2). For Prince, horror films deviate from the cultural and social status quo and transcend into the uncharted, “unnatural” facets of the human experience. Audiences are compelled to watch horror films because they offer a form of catharsis by enabling them to confront and rationalise the anxieties and “uncertainty” that they encounter in their own lives.

The origins of this study, and my personal journey of discovering *Wolf Creek* and developing an interest in the horror genre, are best explained in this experiential way. Family, friends and colleagues have continuously asked me throughout my candidature, “why horror films?” and “why *Wolf Creek*?”. Frankly, the psychological phenomenon of watching horror films, and the allure of a film like *Wolf Creek*, is something that I have had difficulty conceptualising. I watched *Wolf Creek* for the first time as a teenager. It had a monumental impact on me. At the time, I didn’t know anything about the horror genre or Australian cinema. But I instinctively knew that the film was “different”, and it stuck with me. As a university undergraduate, I rediscovered the film during a Cinema Studies unit and watched it repeatedly. Now, with a deeper understanding of film theory, the history of Australian cinema and the horror genre, the film stands out for me even more as a distinctive text worth further critical examination.

Wolf Creek was the film that inspired my own independent film making journey. Gibson’s handheld camerawork influenced my personal cinematographic style. It likewise ignited a now

decade-long passion for horror cinema. While absorbing the film as an undergraduate, I was additionally intrigued by how Australia was aesthetically represented through vast outback landscapes. Like Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, who reside in Australia's metropolitan coastal regions and venture into this unmapped wilderness, I too was born and raised in an urban setting. There was an expansive space in the centre of the continent that was alien to me. It made me want to travel the country and explore. I became fascinated by Australian colonial history and outback culture, and consequently watched as many classic Australian films as I could, including Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (1971) and Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), two films that are discussed at length throughout this study.

With this burgeoning interest, it was apparent to me that *Wolf Creek* was a film that necessitated critique. Far from simply being a derivative genre film, it was constructed with purpose and distinction. I became aware of the intertextual associations between the visual language in *Wolf Creek* and the Australian cinematic landscape tradition of the 1970s, exemplified through *Wake in Fright*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and Ken Hannam's *Sunday Too Far Away* (1975). I identified associations between Jarratt's characterisation of Taylor and iconic masculine archetypes from Australia's cinematic heritage and real-life figures from Australian popular culture, such as Foley (Jack Thompson) in *Sunday Too Far Away*, Mick Dundee (Paul Hogan) in Peter Faiman's *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), and country singer Slim Dusty. I began to position the film as a cinematic and cultural lynchpin that amalgamates the styles and conventions established during Australia's film revival of the 1970s and the emergence of digital film making trends in the 2000s. These observations ultimately became the catalyst for this study.

1.2 Key Concerns

This study positions *Wolf Creek* as a landmark horror film at the "intersection" of two generations of film making in the history and development of Australian cinema: the "older" generation of Australian film making during its film revival of the 1970s, and a "newer" generation largely accustomed to the aesthetics of MTV music videos of the 1980s and 1990s. As I argue throughout the thesis, *Wolf Creek* combines core ideas from Australia's cinematic

past and employs overt representations from Australian cultural history, colonial history, and the national tropes established by Australian film makers of the 1970s, such as Weir and Hannam.

One of these representations is the deployment of the Australian landscape as the context for an exploration of horror. Emerging in the 1970s, as seen in *Wake in Fright*, was a specific “type” of horror film entrenched in the Australian Gothic tradition. Jonathan Rayner, in ““Terror Australis”: Areas of Horror in the Australian Cinema”, observes that “the earliest and most distinctive brand of horror film to be recognized in Australian cinema of the 1970s was the gothic” (99). He notes that the defining characteristic of the Gothic horror genre is human intervention in otherwise untamed landscape: “the investment of the Australian landscape as a site of the uncanny is a key feature of the gothic, but in the earliest instances it is the human habitations in the landscape that represent the true locus of horror” (99). Aligned with Rayner’s observation, this study draws focus to this representation in Australian cinema explicitly referenced in *Wolf Creek*: urban characters from metropolitan milieus who transgress in rural spaces and inadvertently combat the violent territorial disposition of the outback in its numerous embodiments and forms, as seen in collectives of wildlife, a single beast or animal, or a human “monster” such as Taylor.

Moreover, this study examines the cinematographic styles in key Australian landscape films of the 1970s and 1980s, such as *Wake in Fright*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Sunday Too Far Away*, but also in Gillian Armstrong’s *My Brilliant Career* (1979), Weir’s *Gallipoli* (1981) and George T. Miller’s *The Man from Snowy River* (1982). Drawing on Ross Gibson’s “Formative Landscapes” (1988), I argue that the visual framing of the Australian outback in such films personifies the landscape as an omnipresent “character” rather than a passive geographical setting. A close analysis of each film reveals a cinematographic convention in the Australian landscape genre that is revised in *Wolf Creek* via Will Gibson’s digital camera: recurring vistas that are rhythmically inserted throughout the film to symbolise an expansive landscape that is averse to urban transgression and to suggest its presence as a living entity.

Another key concern presented in this study is that the figure of Taylor in *Wolf Creek* marks a return to the iconic masculine archetype as represented by Australian male film stars Chips Rafferty, Jack Thompson and Jarratt in his early acting roles. Taylor's distinctive costume and physical appearance, which, according to McLean on the *Wolf Creek* DVD Audio Commentary, has "visual resonance" with "a lot of iconic images" from Australian culture and cinema (2011), conflates different masculine "types" drawn from Australian film traditions: the "ocker" archetype, the rough-as-guts small town labourer, and the mythologised national "hero" or "digger". This study additionally examines the interactions between Taylor and Mitchell in *Wolf Creek*, who each embody conflicting representations of masculinity within Australia's broad cultural discourses: Taylor as a "traditional" masculine type evoking the Australian outback working class of the 1950s, and Mitchell as a "modern" urban millennial of the 2000s and the epitome of surf culture. I argue that conventional representations of masculinity in Australian film, culture and popular media have shifted and contemporary audiences are now positioned to see traditional notions of masculinity in a new light. McLean's pioneering style of film making, and the deploying of the character of Mitchell in juxtaposition to Taylor, thus presents a contested view of masculinity in *Wolf Creek*.

By grossing approximately \$29 Million (AUD) worldwide through box office sales, *Wolf Creek* has opened a space for Australian horror film production in the global film market. This study additionally explores the complex interplay of internationally recognised horror film structures, forms and modes referenced in *Wolf Creek*. For one, McLean's overt use of graphic violence in *Wolf Creek*, as well as his adaptation of cinematic tropes inherent in American horror and exploitation cinema from the 1970s, positions the film as a contemporary Australianised exploration of violence in the new post-9/11 world order. This study draws on "Post-Vietnam War" examples of violent American exploitation films, such as Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972), Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* (1971), and interprets them to be part of a provocative film making "movement" that frames violence as a metaphor to explore the innate callousness of human nature. The violent set pieces in such films are organised on screen in specific ways: via a proximity between the bodies of the perpetrator and victim, the

foregrounding of these bodies at the edge of the frame, and protracted close-ups which draw the audience's eye to the victim's physical and psychological trauma. As this study demonstrates, the explicit violence in *Wolf Creek*'s second half, inflicted by Taylor on Hunter and Earl primarily, has visual affinity to this cinematic "movement" of the 1970s in terms of how it is configured and framed.

The narrative structure of *Wolf Creek* resembles the conventional slasher film format employed in numerous American horror films of the 1970s and 1980s, such as John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978). Referencing Adam Rockoff's *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986* (2002), which offers a useful overview of the seven key "elements" and characteristics of the slasher film, this study also examines *Wolf Creek*'s intertextual relationship to not only *Halloween* but other prototypical slasher films, such as Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980) and Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Indeed, I argue that *Wolf Creek* subverts the core "elements" of the slasher film that Rockoff identifies and that define *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. McLean, for example, revises the "Final Girl" trope, coined by Carol Clover in *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992), to refer to the female survivor of the slasher film: despite intimations that Hunter will survive Taylor's rampage, it is Mitchell instead who remains alive at the film's conclusion, while both Hunter and Earl are murdered. *Wolf Creek*, too, departs from the traditional American suburbia setting of the slasher film, as evident in *Halloween*, and relocates to the sparse Australian outback. As this study highlights, *Wolf Creek* can thus be decoded as a slasher film that offers a reimagining of the American formula within an Australian setting and context.

The final concern of this study is the rapid amplification of Australian horror film production post-2005, as fostered by *Wolf Creek*. I suggest that *Wolf Creek*'s specific "brand" of film making (its handheld camera aesthetics, the natural improvisational performances of its actors, and its employment of the Australian landscape as the context in which horror and violence manifests) is now a horror blueprint, imitated by a new generation of Australian film makers. Building on the work of Mark David Ryan in "Whither Culture?"

Australian Horror Films and the Limitations of Cultural Policy” (2009) and “Australian Cinema’s Dark Sun: the Boom in Australian Horror Film Production” (2010), I examine the phenomenon of Australian horror film production in the 2000s, and argue that a new “type” of Australian horror film has emerged post-2005: the landscape horror that moves beyond the national frame of Australia into the global film arena and uses the Australian outback as a setting and a space of contestation and violent engagement between the natural order and urban transgression.

1.3 Research Difficulties

In investigating the concerns of this study, some research difficulties emerged. One of the difficulties of this research, which I encountered throughout, is the lack of literature on the visual language and cinematic style of *Wolf Creek*. Given the film’s emergence in the digital era, its bravura cinematographic depiction of the national landscape and its pioneering use of high-definition cameras, this gap in the literature is surprising. To me, *Wolf Creek* is a landmark film that peaked during a key moment of transition in the development of modern cinematic digital technology. It gave shape and new life to a dormant Australian horror film industry that has since boomed. It is a film steeped in visual references to the national ideology propagated through Australian cinema of the 1970s. As such, I believe the film and its style to be significantly undertheorised.

I found the lack of literature on this aspect of the film to be particularly problematic when analysing the recent *Wolf Creek* franchise, discussed in later chapters. With the sequel, *Wolf Creek 2*, released in 2014, Season One of the television series in 2016 and Season Two in 2017, there is little to no academic (or even critical) literature that examines the visual style employed in these additional cinematic and televised entries. As such, Chapter Nine of this study mostly consists of my personal critique of the expanding franchise, the intertextual threads between entries, and the transitions and developments in McLean’s film making approach. It is hoped that despite this limitation, my analysis of the *Wolf Creek* franchise as a product emerging within a

contemporary system of distribution and streaming platforms, sheds new light in the niche academic field of Australian horror film theory. There is thus much scope for further research on *Wolf Creek* as a key case-study text in Australian cinema, which I discuss in this study's conclusion.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis Structure

This study is organised into nine chapters that explore the concerns as outlined in Section 1.2. It is arranged into three sections. The first section, Chapters One, Two and Three, introduces the thesis, my methodology, and *Wolf Creek* as my case-study text. The second section, Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven, examines the *four* distinctive cinematic conventions that I argue *Wolf Creek* references and then reconfigures for a contemporary audience. Chapters Four and Five consider the film's intertextual relationship to tropes in Australian cinema. Chapters Six and Seven then shift focus to the international horror sector and how the film simultaneously moves beyond the national frame and becomes a global phenomenon. The final section, Chapters Eight and Nine, concludes the thesis and outlines the influence of *Wolf Creek* on Australian horror production post-2005.

Below is a short summary of each individual chapter:

Chapter Two examines the diverse methodological approach of this thesis (Film Genre Theory, Australian Film Theory, Horror Film Theory and the concepts of Film Style) to build the theoretical framework for the study. This chapter additionally presents a literature review of key academic sources that are employed throughout this study.

Chapter Three introduces *Wolf Creek* and provides background information about the film and the film makers involved in its creation. This chapter offers context for the analysis conducted throughout the study and briefly explores the Australian film making climate of the early 2000s in which *Wolf Creek* originated, as well as other horror films released internationally that coincide with *Wolf Creek* in the establishment of a global horror trend.

Chapter Four examines the visual characteristics and aesthetic conventions in Australian landscape cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. It then identifies similar characteristics and conventions in *Wolf Creek*, offers a close analysis of its compositional make-up, and argues for it as a contemporary reimagining of these embedded national cinematic tropes.

Chapter Five extends this focus by examining Australian film traditions about masculinity, stemming from the 1970s. It positions the figure of Taylor as a conflation of these “traditions”, various masculine archetypes and male screen personas. I argue that, through the character of Taylor, as evident in his iconic costume and colloquial language, *Wolf Creek* draws on these traditions, inherent in both cinematic expression and popular culture, and presents a new representation of destructive masculinity for contemporary audiences.

Chapter Six focuses on the American slasher film sub-genre and the international horror film tropes that *Wolf Creek* implements from this genre. I argue that *Wolf Creek* offers a contemporary reimagining of traditional slasher film structure with its distinctive setting in the Australian landscape and its inversion of the genre’s tacit characteristics and elements.

Chapter Seven builds upon this emphasis on global horror film traditions and critiques the graphic depiction of violence in American “Post-Vietnam War” films from the 1970s. This chapter identifies intertextual links between the framing of violence in *Wolf Creek* and the visual representation of violence in American exploitation cinema.

Chapter Eight offers an analysis of Australian horror films released post-2005, mainly between 2007 and 2010, and argues that the distinctive film making style, structures and themes employed in *Wolf Creek* have strongly informed a new generation of horror film makers and have fostered a cinematic blueprint for contemporary horror film production in Australia.

Chapter Nine builds on the discussion of post-2005 Australian horror film making and examines the *Wolf Creek* franchise in the context of a prolific and emerging culture of horror film making in Australia. This chapter theorises the developing mythology in the *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe and the positioning of Taylor (and Jarratt) as the central figure in the franchise's fictional world and public marketing.

1.5 My Personal Connection to *Wolf Creek*

Wolf Creek is a film which I argue marked a new direction for Australian horror film production. It is a film which was made in the transition period from analogue to digital modes of shooting. Its evocative visual language inspired an emerging generation of horror film makers in Australia to make similarly violent cinema with an emphasis on aesthetics. As briefly mentioned in Section 1.1, I position myself as part of this new generation of film makers who are inspired by McLean and *Wolf Creek*. I also position myself as an avid member of the new youth demographic that the film targets.

Like *Wolf Creek*, my own short films in the horror genre examine the chasm and violent discord between characters from opposing social and cultural contexts. As pioneered by McLean and Gibson, I shoot with digital cameras and enjoy the accessibility and cost-effective benefits of this technology. My directing approach similarly oscillates between the immediacy of a handheld camera to capture improvisational character interactions and static long-shots to frame exterior spaces in rural and isolated milieus. One of my short films made in 2015, titled *Playground*, encompasses all of these features: shot in the Country Victoria bush landscape with entirely improvised dialogue, violent confrontation emerges between a local bush dweller and an urban transgressor. It was a film made in the style of *Wolf Creek* with influences from *Deliverance*.

Indeed, when I re-discovered *Wolf Creek* in my undergraduate study, as discussed in Section 1.1, it caused me to reflect on the inimitable language of film in a completely new way. It inspired a deep interest in cinema that soon formed into a passion to also be a film maker. It thus

encouraged me to pick up a movie camera and have a go at making a film. As such, when determining which film text to examine in this study, it had to be *Wolf Creek*.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND KEY LITERATURE

This study examines *Wolf Creek* through three key theoretical lenses which form a diverse methodological approach. The first lens introduces film genre studies and outlines theory about genres and their function in cinema. Within this lens is an ensuing examination of horror film theory and a focus on the American slasher film sub-genre and Australian horror cinema. The second lens explores *Wolf Creek*'s interrelationship with Australian film history, the theory that supports this history, and the cinematic conventions which distinguish Australian cinema as a "type" of national cinema. The third and final lens combines these ideas about genre analysis and national cinema within the tradition of film style. This tradition draws focus to cinematic forms, film making techniques, the spatial relationship between screen elements, temporal structures, and in the case of *Wolf Creek* and horror cinema, specific methods of framing action, motion and violence. Thus, this study offers an examination of the distinctive visual language in *Wolf Creek* and McLean's pioneering film making style. Critical to this lens, too, is an emphasis on *Wolf Creek*'s intertextual associations with landmark films from Australia's cinematic past. By amalgamating each lens into a broad methodological approach, this thesis builds a framework, based in a range of contexts, for decoding the film's textual properties and constructions and interpreting its representations and themes.

2.1 Film Genre Studies

An analysis of its elemental characteristics positions *Wolf Creek* as exemplar of the horror film genre. At its core, *Wolf Creek* is a genre film which embodies the tacit conventions, tropes and trappings of horror film formula. A suitable starting point in developing the methodological approach for this study, therefore, is generating an understanding of film genre theory, including the history and interrelated functions of genre, the binary relationship between genre and cinema, and the limitations of genre studies.

Gaining traction in the 1960s and 1970s, film genre criticism rejected the auteur theory that was first introduced by the writers of the French magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s and then

solidified as a theoretical concept by American author Andrew Sarris in the early 1960s. Where auteur theory examines the inimitable and personal “style” and approach of an individual director as a way of constructing a theoretical label for the emerging trailblazers of the French New Wave, film genre theory diverts emphasis to mainstream Hollywood cinema and proposes a shared space and category for film texts from multiple directors based on familiar sets of traits.

As Stephen Neale points out, the “impact of auteurism...enabled both a systematic charting of a great deal of Hollywood’s output, and much detailed discussion of form, style, theme and *mise-en-scène*. It thus provided those wishing to analyse – and validate – Hollywood cinema with a critical stance and with a valuable set of critical tools” (9).

This “systematic charting” of Hollywood cinema through a new “critical” lens that expanded on auteur theory gave impetus to studies on the intertextuality of film texts. According to Susan Hayward, for example, intertextuality, which refers to “effects of different texts upon another”, should be a “major consideration” even when evaluating the distinctive stylistic features of an auteur, given that any film text must ostensibly be, in some way, “influenced by those of others” (362). Indeed, all film texts, to some extent, imitate, refer to, and borrow from other texts. To understand a film, we must first identify the web of “influences” that it is comprised of. It is by this token that we can classify films into genres according to these communal sets of “influences” and collective textual properties. As Annette Kuhn puts it, genres consist of films that implicitly “refer to each other” and “depend” on the formation of intertextual associations between texts (177). Throughout this thesis, I identify a network of intertextual “influences” which I argue have shaped the visual language of *Wolf Creek* and McLean’s film making style.

For the purposes of this study, and to position *Wolf Creek* as a horror film which adheres to the traditions of genre film making and a specific history of “influences”, we must first interrogate and outline film genre theory. Barry Keith Grant offers this introductory statement about film genres: “put simply, genre movies are those commercial feature films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations” (1). As Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis similarly put it, cinematic genres are “groups of films that share a set of narrative, stylistic and thematic characteristics and conventions” (347). Indeed, film genres

are categories (or sub-categories) of films that bare similar conventions and traits, such as common plots, subject matter, themes, motifs, character archetypes and iconographies. Different film genres, such as the comedy, the western, the musical and, in the case of *Wolf Creek*, horror, are bound by a codified set of elements which establish an inferred contract and tacit understanding between the film maker and the audience.

The genesis of film genre criticism can in fact be traced to the writings of American author Robert Warshow and pioneering French film critic and theorist, André Bazin. For both Warshow and Bazin, archetypes play an imperative role in the classification and branding of film genres. Warshow's "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner", for example, informs early film genre theory and proposes that the "Westerner" archetype, a recurring and symbolic figure central to the American Western, consolidates a thread between films such as Henry King's *The Gunfighter* (1950) and George Stevens' *Shane* (1953) that binds them together within the same cinematic category. In terms of the American Western as the case-study focus for this generative theoretical position, Bazin, in "The Western: Or the American Film Par Excellence", expands on Warshow's proposition and argues that it is the "durability" of this archetype that positions the American Western as an "essence of cinema" and a prototypical film genre (140-41). For Bazin, films in the American Western genre, such as John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939), are resolute, robust, reliable, and offer a standardised set of tropes, such as the lead male hero, the "Westerner".

Although this framework is limited in that it doesn't recognise the fluidity and variations of archetypes in genres, as well as the stylistic shifts which occur in genres over time, it is still useful to employ as a reference point in this study. Indeed, Taylor is positioned in *Wolf Creek* as a mythical archetype that shares key attributes with well-known film characters and public figures from Australia's cinematic past and popular culture. As examined in Chapter Five, Taylor's affiliation with these figures, and the way in which McLean and Jarratt construct him to both subscribe to and revise the traditional Australian masculine archetype, positions *Wolf Creek* within the "genre" of 1970s Australian landscape cinema, the broader national cinematic traditions in which these characters reside, and the contemporary landscape of the Australian film industry. In this way, Warshow and Bazin's framework offers a rudimentary basis for

understanding a core principle of film genre theory that others have expanded on and that I will likewise extend in this study.

This emphasis on the American Western as the superlative cinematic genre and ideal case-study to examine commonalities between films is advanced by Edward Buscombe in “The Idea of Genre in the American Cinema”. It is Buscombe’s work that I position as a reliable framework to decode the generic conventions at play in *Wolf Creek*. Emerging in 1970 as film genre theory began to take shape, Buscombe writes about the taxonomy of film genres that are differentiated by their adherence to textual structures such as iconographies and settings. He argues that the “defining criteria” in genre classification is “what we actually see on the screen”: the geographical space and setting where narrative action unfolds, costume, props, and the “miscellaneous physical objects that recur” between films (15-16). For Buscombe, audience interactivity is a decisive factor in the sustainability of film genres, which depend largely on audiences forming intertextual associations between films based on recurring aesthetic trends.

To illustrate this point, Buscombe examines the “visual conventions” and iconographical images in classic American Western films, such as in Howard Hawks’ *Rio Bravo* (1959), Fred Zinneman’s *High Noon* (1952), and Peckinpah’s *Ride the High Country* (1962). He argues that the “conventions” and “images” of the American Western form a distinctive historical “framework within which the story can be told” and decoded by the audience (16). According to Buscombe, there is an indexical quality to film genres such as the American Western which form a tradition from which film makers draw. I make a strong case in this study for Buscombe’s framework as one theoretical basis for conceptualising the function of landscape iconography in *Wolf Creek*. As a key area of focus in Chapter Four, Gibson’s framing of the Western Australian outback locates *Wolf Creek* within the heritage of 1970s Australian cinema and as part of its distinctive and iconic landscape “genre”, in which a durable aesthetic and cinematographic pattern recurs across several key films.

To understand the role of the recurring landscape iconography in *Wolf Creek*, however, we must also decode the meanings that this imagery conveys. It is for this reason that Rick Altman’s 1984

article, “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre”, is also considered as a referential basis for this study. Expanding on Buscombe’s framework, Altman not only emphasises a genre’s semantic elements (its textual components and characteristics) but draws strong focus to syntax (how these components and characteristics are arranged and sequenced to construct meaning). Here, Altman positions the film making process as fundamental to the solidification of genres. As he argues, a film’s semantic properties, when systematised into a recurrent syntax, form the primary basis of genre: “generic meaning comes into being only through the repeated deployment of substantially the same syntactic strategies” (39). For Altman, audiences construct intertextual associations between films, and translate genre codes, through the identification of a familiar syntax. Employing Altman’s theoretical position, and as examined in Chapter Four, we can decipher, for example, the repeated insertion of landscape vistas in *Wolf Creek* (one of the film’s core semantic elements) as evoking the ubiquity and omnipresence of nature as it bares down upon and oppresses our protagonists (syntax).

However, while early film genre criticism offers a partial basis for the construction of my methodology, these approaches also reveal significant limitations. One of these limitations is that such criticism forms a view of film genres as fixed categories based on resemblances in form, style and content and does not address the complex interplay between the textual properties inherent in genre films, technological advancements, shifts in film culture and audience viewing habits, and evolving social and cultural contexts. As Daniel Chandler notes, genres are constantly adapting and are “‘fuzzy’ categories which cannot be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions” (3). While *Wolf Creek* is defined in part by its adherence to longheld cinematic traditions that can indeed be made sense of via formal approaches to genre studies, I also position the film as a culturally resonant cinematic product that revises these traditions through modern film making sensibilities which have adapted to new forms of technology emerging in the 2000s. As such, alternative and more contemporary approaches to film genre theory which take into consideration today’s progressive cinematic landscape must be outlined also.

One of these approaches pertinent to this study is Andrew Tudor's emphasis on audience, as well as the "culture" and "context" which informs genre films. As he argues, film genres are defined by the cultural and sociological contexts within which they operate: "the crucial factors that distinguish a genre are not only characteristics inherent in the films themselves; they also depend on the particular culture within which we are operating" (7). For Tudor, film genres are fluid and progressive representations of "the cultures in which they are made, and the cultures in which they are exhibited" (10). Audiences classify films into genres and employ these classifications to form meanings for texts. As Tudor also notes: "genre is a conception existing in the culture of any particular group or society; it is not a way in which a critic classifies films for methodological purposes, but the much looser way in which an audience classifies its films" (9). Therefore, as cultures transition and evolve with developments in technology and evolutions in film making trends, audiences concurrently adapt their cinematic tastes. Film genres, as Tudor views them, are malleable and reflective of progressive cultures and the vigorous audiences cultivated within these cultures.

Similarly, Paul Watson addresses the importance of "culture" in the formation of sustainable and substantive film genres as they adapt to the contemporary film climate. He contends: "we do need to rethink our conceptions of film genre by looking beyond the cinema for our inspiration, to place the question of film genre squarely within the broader context of mass-mediated culture" (153). Grant agrees and notes that "whatever their politics, genre movies are intimately imbricated within larger cultural discourses as well as political ones" (6). To form an adequate understanding of genre, according to contemporary film genre criticism, we must not focus exclusively on the texts themselves but on the reciprocal interrelationship between text and context. In the case of *Wolf Creek*, understanding the "context" within which the film (and the subsequent franchise, including the two-season television series released on the Australian streaming-service Stan) was produced may assist us in appreciating the film as an adequate case-study reflection of how genre films have developed and adapted to the digital era. Indeed, as an example, I draw focus throughout this study on *Wolf Creek* as a pioneer of the HDCAM shooting format and how this technology revises the visual compositions distinctive of the Australian

landscape genre of the 1970s, as well the cinematographic codes and conventions reminiscent of international horror films from the 1970s and 1980s.

This study employs key ideas about film genre outlined in this section and applies these ideas to an analysis of *Wolf Creek*. I emphasise the visual language in *Wolf Creek* and how its aesthetic constitution simultaneously reflects and then subverts several genres: the traditions of outback Australian cinema, the slasher film sub-genre, and American exploitation cinema from the 1970s. Indeed, I position *Wolf Creek* as a cinematic product geared to a youth audience which emerged and coincided with a revolution in digital technology and dynamic shifts in film making sensibilities. Given, as I argue, that *Wolf Creek* is a film at the “intersection” between tradition and the new, between the history of Australian cinema, horror cinema and contemporary forms of film production, this section offers an overview of developments in film genre criticism and how the selected frameworks are employed to isolate *Wolf Creek* as a multi-faceted genre film released at a point of transition in cinema.

2.2 Horror Film Theory

The primary genre that *Wolf Creek* subscribes to is horror. As such, an additional focus in this study is about horror film theory, including its core structures and film making traditions. Before exploring the key semantic features of this genre, it is important to first define what the horror film is and its primary function. Bruce F. Kawin, in *Horror and the Horror Film*, understands the horror film this way:

Horror is a compound of terror and revulsion. Imagined horror provides entry to a made-up world – one that could be richly, fantastically imagined or dead-on realistic – where fears are heightened but can be mastered. In doing so, it accesses a core of fears we may share as humans, such as the fear of being attacked in the dark, as well as some fears that are specific to culture, such as the fear of water associated with the power of ghosts in many Japanese horror movies. It also calls on a vast range of the revolting, from guts to vermin, and much of the art has depended on making an image, a monster

or an event both scary and repulsive. Above all, the horror film provides a way to conceptualize, give a shape to and deal with the evil and frightening. (Kawin 3)

For Kawin, the horror film presents a “made-up world” that projects the innate and repressed communal fears of human beings. As noted in this study’s introduction, audiences watch “made-up” representations of themselves to challenge these fears embodied within the figure of a “monster”. The horror film enables the audience to confront the abstruse and mysterious nature of human vulnerability.

The key aim of the horror film maker is to use cinematic techniques to elicit in the audience fear and dread as well as encourage them to consider the nature of their vulnerability. As Kawin goes on to note, the “goal” of the horror film is “to frighten and revolt the audience” (4). Douglas Keesey agrees: “Horror has, as one of its primary aims, the goal of frightening us. This fear might be a matter of jump scares or creeping dread. It could be provoked by shocking gore or shuddery ghosts. But whatever the particular cause or impact, fear is horror’s defining element” (1). As both Kawin and Keesey point out, the horror film is centred around this fundamental exploration of fear and its consequences. In *The Making of ‘Wolf Creek’*, McLean himself explains that “the object of this kind of film is purely to scare the crap out of the audience” (2006). In *Wolf Creek*, McLean invokes fear in the audience through the employment of not only established horror film conventions and techniques but also the adept use of handheld cameras. Essentially, these cameras position the audience as voyeurs, immersed in the terrifying action and aligned with Hunter, Earl and Mitchell’s experience as Taylor menaces them.

In the horror film, it is the antagonist, or the “monster”, who embodies and provokes fear. Robin Wood, in “An Introduction to the American Horror Film”, argues that the narrative basis in American horror films of the 1970s and 1980s is “the relationship between normality and the Monster” (204). This “relationship” is centred around the challenging of the “normal”, or the social and environmental status quo, in which ordinary life is threatened by an unfamiliar entity or figure. The “monster”, such as Michael Myers (Nick Castle) in *Halloween*, Freddy Krueger

(Robert Englund) in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and Cropsy (Lou David) in Tony Maylam's *The Burning* (1981), unsettles the familiar geographical setting and social space of the protagonists. For the audience, fear is invoked by the "monster" who exists in the societal periphery and infiltrates the safe recesses of the "home". In *Wolf Creek*, as examined in Chapter Six, McLean subverts this convention: rather than Taylor entering Hunter, Earl and Mitchell's Broome locale, it is his domain and landscape that is instead penetrated. The extreme violence in *Wolf Creek*, which is the key focus of Chapter Seven, materialises when Taylor's territorial instincts are thus provoked.

Indeed, as Barry Langford writes:

Horror is ambivalent: on the one hand, it unmaskes latent unspeakable desires in (white, patriarchal, bourgeois) society and shows the inadequacy and hypocrisy of the culture that demands such repression. On the other, it identifies its protagonist(s) and through them the audience with a project of re-suppression, containment and restoration of the *status quo ante* through the violent elimination of deviance and disturbance – the destruction of the 'monster'. (Langford 159)

Langford argues that the "destruction" of the "monster" is an obligatory narrative resolution for the horror film that reflects the "unspeakable desires" innate in human beings and the cultures and societies that they inhabit. *Wolf Creek*, for example, is based on and "inspired" by real-life crime cases that occurred in the Australian outback. I discuss this briefly in Chapter Three. As represented through the character of Taylor, dark "desires" appear to be repressed but then become manifest through prolonged physical and psychological isolation in the remoteness of the landscape.

Prince extends this argument and delineates a social theory about the horror film and the "monster" archetype. Rather than drawing focus to the implicit textual structures in genres, Prince hypothesises that the horror film is a "visualization of the dialectic between linguistic and socially imposed systems of order and the breakdown of those systems through their own

internal contradictions” and that the “monster” “represents those unmapped areas bordering the familiar configurations of the social world” (122). For Prince, the “monster” threatens the natural order and the composition of a familiar social world. As he argues, the “monster” is an “anomaly” who operates “outside” this social structure and then invades it to “elicit horror and anxiety” (122).

Paul Wells concurs with Prince and points out that “the horror genre has become increasingly concerned with the relative and fragile nature of existence” and that the “monster” is a “projection of particular threats, fears and contradictions that refuse coexistence with the prevailing paradigms and consensual orthodoxies of everyday life” (9). Elaborating on this observation and Prince’s key argument, Wells additionally suggests that “horror texts engage with the collapse of social/socialised formations” (9-10). For both Wells and Prince, the horror film embodies broader cultural and societal anxieties. In *Wolf Creek*, for example, Taylor’s xenophobia and racism, analysed in Chapter Nine, evokes an evident cultural anxiety stemming from a fear of the outsider that has deep roots in Australian history. Taylor’s engagement with violent behaviour, and the fear he elicits in doing so, can be viewed as an extension of this anxiety.

An additional research interest for horror film theorists is the shifting representations of gender in the horror film. Given that traditional gender roles are subverted in *Wolf Creek* through an inversion of the “Final Girl” slasher film paradigm, a concept that is introduced in this section and then further examined in Chapter Six, this research focus is useful to consider for this study. The precursor to gender-based interpretations of the horror film is Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, which argues, fundamentally, that the cinematic framing of the “image of the woman” is geared for the “gaze of man” (17). The representation of female characters in cinema, according to Mulvey, positions the tangible female body as an “object” that is visually configured for the “gaze” of the male spectator.

Influenced by Mulvey, Clover argues that the horror film “spend(s) a lot of time looking at women” (8). Clover develops a gender-orientated interpretation of 1970s American horror films,

such as *Halloween* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. As a counterpoint to other horror film theorists, such as Neale, who argues that the female characters in *Halloween* are “victims” of “male aggression and male power” (367), Clover, while not disagreeing entirely, alternatively proposes that female characters are simultaneously empowered and portrayed as heroic in horror film narratives. She points to the “Final Girl” archetype in slasher films, and in the specific case of *Halloween*, Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis), as a heroine who represents the shift from traditional depictions of female screen characters. For Clover, the emergence of heroines such as Strode, and Sally Hardesty (Marilyn Burns) in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, has fostered progressive “sex-gender system(s) of horror” (16) that promulgate strong and robust female characters in the horror film.

Linda Williams, in “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess”, similarly identifies a transition in the representation of female characters in American horror films of the 1970s and 1980s. As she argues: “even in the most extreme displays of feminine masochistic suffering there is always a component of either power or pleasure for the woman victim” (8). Williams, like Clover, theorises that in the horror film, the female “victim” “seems to oscillate between powerlessness and power” (8). Referencing *Halloween* as a case-study, as Clover likewise does, Williams argues that the horror film offers two divergent images of the female “victim”: the immobilised and physically inept “victim”, and the audacious “victim” who is positioned as heroic. The horror film, according to Williams, constructs this dual identity for female characters, whose metamorphosis from “powerless” to “powerful” is embodied in the “Final Girl” archetype.

Williams’ analysis is particularly useful as a key reference point for this study. In *Wolf Creek*, this “dual identity” is apparent: in the film’s second half, from the moment that Hunter wakes in one of Taylor’s sheds, drugged and bound at the wrists and feet, she is depicted as resourceful and courageous by freeing Earl and maintaining her wits by devising a plan for their escape; Earl, on the other hand, is overtly frightened and emotional, and relies on the unencumbered Hunter to protect her. Hunter is ostensibly set-up with the agency of a hero in the mould of Strode and Hardesty, while Earl is positioned as an incapable “victim”. When Taylor murders Hunter first, and then kills Earl later, McLean offers a critique of gender roles in the horror film.

Ultimately, it is Taylor's masculinity that prevails. This critique of horror convention, and the multifaceted construction of female characters in *Wolf Creek*, is examined in Chapter Six.

2.3 The Slasher Film Sub-Genre

Wolf Creek also adheres to the iconic formula and tropes of the slasher film horror sub-genre. Rockoff's framework for defining the slasher film and its core structural and visual characteristics is a useful starting point for exploring this sub-genre. Rockoff argues that although the slasher film "is not easily defined" and is indeed a "rogue genre", "there are some distinctive and consistent elements which are prevalent in enough films that a workable, however malleable, definition of the slasher can be formed" (5).

The binding "elements" of the slasher film, according to Rockoff, are as follows:

1. **The Killer**, who, with a few notable exceptions, is typically an "ordinary person" who "seeks vengeance" for a "past injustice" or trauma.
2. **The Weapon of Choice**, which is usually a knife or a variant sharp metal object used by the antagonist to slay his or her victims.
3. **Special Effects and the Dawn of Savini**, which refers to significant advancements in special effects make-up employed in the slasher films of the late 1970s and early 1980s, with iconic special effects make-up artist Tom Savini at the forefront of these advancements.
4. **Setting**, which is often an isolated and "universally recognized place associated with adolescence", such as summer camp, college, or the "comforting streets of suburbia".
5. **Past Event**, in the form of a prologue, where the antagonist, typically as a child, "witnesses a traumatic event, usually to a family member, or is the victim of a

devastating, humiliating or harmful accident, prank or tragedy”. This past event becomes the impetus for the antagonist’s murderous rampage.

6. **The Final Girl**, a female archetype for the “lone survivors of the killer’s rampage”. The “Final Girl” is “defined by her toughness, resourcefulness, determination and perseverance” and, unlike her friends, who the antagonist kills across numerous violent set pieces, “survives to fight the killer in the film’s climactic sequence”.
7. **Eyes of the Killer – Subjective Point of View**, where the use of subjective camera represents the antagonist’s line of sight and makes the audience “vicarious participants in the murders”, “forcing them to identify with the villain, not the victim” (5-15).

Rockoff’s framework is a neat summation of the conventions of the slasher film. Pioneering slasher films of the 1970s and 1980s, such as *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, which encompass all seven of Rockoff’s proposed characteristics, have come to define the sub-genre. Chapter Six examines *Wolf Creek*’s relationship to traditional slasher film structure and identifies McLean’s repositioning of the conventions that Rockoff outlines.

Rockoff’s framework for interpreting the slasher film is informed by other literature which similarly aims to classify the sub-genre through common textual features evident in case-study films. For Jim Harper, the recurring “monster” archetype is a tether between slasher film texts. Harper identifies a list of “qualities” that the archetypal slasher film “monster” possesses. The first is that they are “almost exclusively male” (41). Although there are notable exceptions in the slasher film canon, such as Mrs. Voorhees (Betsy Palmer) in *Friday the 13th* and Angela Baker (Felissa Rose) in Robert Hiltzik’s *Sleepaway Camp* (1983), this gender characteristic is evident in most films released during the golden era of the late 1970s and 1980s. The second is that “generally they also act alone” and kill autonomously (41). The slasher film “monster” is an outcast and a nomad, ostracised in the societal fringes and unable to assimilate into the habitat they invade. Harper then goes on to argue, thirdly, that the slasher film “monster” can be separated into two distinct categories. He defines the first category this way:

One group seem to be evolutionary throwbacks, somehow ‘incomplete’ human beings who lack the necessary qualities that separate man from animal. They rarely speak, and their movements show none of the refinements that mark out ‘civilised’ man. Often they are deformed or mutilated, psychologically as well as physically. Like many of civilisation’s monsters they are banished to the wilderness, living in forests and deserted houses. These killers are often presented as being outside society, and a threat to the natural order of civilised life. (Harper 42)

He describes the second as follows:

The second group mostly consists of ‘normal’ human murderers, with one or two exceptions. They are articulate and agile, and usually engage in conversation at some point. Although obviously deranged, they tend to bear no physical disfigurement that would prevent them from mixing in civilised society. This is usually their greatest advantage, allowing them to avoid detection until the last minute. (Harper 42)

Harper’s definition is important to consider in the case of *Wolf Creek* and the character of Taylor. Indeed, as the “monster” in *Wolf Creek*, Taylor appears to fit “both” of Harper’s categories: his physical appearance and costume is typical of the rural setting he inhabits, his demeanour is affable, and he engages with Hunter, Earl and Mitchell through seemingly benign conversation. Yet, he also traverses and kills in the remote wilderness and “outside” civilised or regulated social and cultural structures. Harper’s ideas thus offer an important analytical framework to understand the complex nature of Taylor’s villainy.

As the antithesis to the slasher film “monster”, Clover’s “Final Girl” archetype is also a key recurring characteristic of the slasher film. Expanding on Clover’s proposition and Williams’ assertion about the fluidity of gender representation in the slasher film, John Kenneth

Muir notes that the “Final Girl” is “an admirable character, a survivor, and a positive role model for youngsters of both sexes. Rather than being exploited, the final girl in the slasher paradigm is a winner, a champion. She is the one, after all, who possesses the most potent power” (25).

According to Muir, the “Final Girl” trope, popularised by Strode and Nancy Thompson (Heather Langenkamp) in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, offers an assenting representation of female empowerment, countering views that the slasher film, and horror cinema more broadly, designs the cinematic image for the male gaze.

Indeed, as James Kendrick points out, the “Final Girl” represents progressive sex-gender dynamics, sheds conventional modes of femininity, and is “masculinized” when she destroys the “monster”. He writes:

The Final Girl is a survivor, the one person among the young group of victims who not only avoids death, but actively appropriates the power of the gaze (she is able to *see*, while her friends cannot) and turns the killer’s violence against him. The Final Girl is much like her friends, in that she is young and healthy, but unlike them, her youthful vitality is not immediately coded as sexual. Rather, the Final Girl is either explicitly virginal (e.g., Strode in *Halloween*) or simply has more sexual restraint than her friends (e.g., Nancy in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*). As a result, she is not easily reduced to a sexual object. The Final Girl’s victory over the slasher is central to Clover’s understanding of the complex gender dynamics of the slasher film, arguing that the Final Girl is ambiguous in her sexual identity. Although she is physically female, she often has more masculine interests, and during the course of the film she is both explicitly feminized in undergoing the agonizing trials of victimhood, and then masculinized by destroying the killer and saving herself, often impaling him with his own (phallic) weapon. In gendered terms, then, the Final Girl literally turns the table on the slasher, symbolically castrating him while she is phallicized via her appropriation of his violence. (Kendrick 321)

For Kendrick, the “Final Girl”, akin to William’s core argument introduced earlier, is inscribed as both “powerless” and “powerful”: by not being “reduced” to a “sexual object” like her friends, she represents a shift from the “agonizing trials of victimhood” and “appropriates” the violent “masculine” predisposition of the “monster” to eliminate him. The “Final Girl”, therefore, embodies what could be viewed as the “masculine” trait of autonomy in her violent pursuit to restore the status quo.

Sue Short concurs with this position and argues that by “overcoming physical and psychological adversity”, the “Final Girls” of the slasher film provide “an image of self-sufficiency and resilience that sets them apart from female characters generally seen in cinema” and transcend “the usual parameters of proscribed female behaviour by exhibiting a degree of violence and cunning in order to fend off their attackers” (48). As Short proposes, the “Final Girl” archetype presents a progressive representation of gender stereotypes in the horror film and subverts the barrier differentiating codes of behaviour deemed as categorically “masculine” and “feminine”.

In *Wolf Creek*, as analysed in Chapter Six, McLean transposes the “Final Girl” archetype from a female protagonist to a male. Despite intentional and misleading allusions that Hunter will survive the film, given that she overtly exhibits the traits embodied and made famous by Strode, Thompson, and Alice Hardy (Adrienne King) in *Friday the 13th*, it is Mitchell instead who is rescued and makes it out alive. By subverting this slasher film genre convention, McLean establishes a “Final Boy” paradigm and effectively creates a new genre trope.

2.4 Australian Film History and Theory

The second conceptual lens in this study is understanding *Wolf Creek* within Australia’s national cinema, including its history and the various contexts which inform it. Tom O’Regan’s *Australian National Cinema* is a crucial resource for delineating, defining and theorising this history and these contexts. At the core of O’Regan’s work is what constitutes a “national cinema” and whether this definition applies to the Australian Film Industry. As he writes:

A national cinema is made of the films and film production industry of particular nations. National cinemas involve relations between, on the one hand, the national film texts and the national and international film industries and, on the other hand, their various social, political and cultural contexts. These supply a means of differentiating cinema product in domestic and international circulation...Like all national cinemas Australian cinema is a collection of films and production strategies.

It is a critical category to be explored. (O'Regan 1)

National cinemas, for O'Regan, not only consist of film texts organised under national umbrellas but are distinguished according to how these texts are consumed and decoded by local and international audiences. They are defined by the contexts unique to each nation which shape production and then reception.

O'Regan applies this broad definition to the specific case of Australian cinema. Characterised by its unique set of conventions and "contexts", such as the personification of the outback landscape, and its basis in stories from Australia's past, this cinema, according to O'Regan, can be understood as a niche category in the international cinematic arena. On one level, as I argue in this study, *Wolf Creek* is a representative example of the Australian national cinema that O'Regan describes: it draws on and constructs meaning in its relationship to Australian cultural history, such as through its affiliation with the Australian Gothic landscape tradition, examined in Chapter Four, and is concurrently geared to both domestic and international audiences by amalgamating Australian cinematic tropes with established, internationally recognised film genres, such as the slasher film and American exploitation cinema of the 1970s, explored in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven respectively.

Expanding on O'Regan's understanding of Australian cinema is Albert Moran and Errol Vieth's study of Australian cinema as a "genre" and "type". *Wolf Creek*, a film which is unequivocally "Australian" in its iconography, settings, character types and colloquial dialogue, as well as through its overt references to Australia's cinematic history, can be understood in these terms. In *Film in Australia: An Introduction*, which aims to "promote the study of Australian feature films

in terms of genre” and “provides an overview of the system or corpus that is Australian feature film output” (1), Moran and Vieth offer an account of Australian cinema which recognises and examines its various types, classes and sub-genres. They draw strong intertextual associations between a range of Australian films with shared structural and visual characteristics. In doing so, they attempt, as they put it, to “identify a larger system of local narrative screen types” and provide “an Australian film genre taxonomy” (6). For Moran and Vieth, like Buscombe’s framework for genre classification, this “genre taxonomy” helps me understand the functions and the meanings which shape Australian cinema.

Similarly, for Graeme Turner, Australian films, at least the films produced in the 1970s, are systemised and bound by their “constructed Australianness through landscape or history rather than through popular cultural forms” (194). Turner goes on to argue, as Moran and Vieth do, that Australian cinema represents a departure from the dominant Hollywood formula and distinguishes itself by its “recognizable stylistic characteristics” (194) shaped by the national Australian ideology. As he puts it:

These characteristics are not just the quirks of certain film-makers, fortuitously working in the same industry at the same time. They are the results of a number of textual and contextual determinants. The dominance of an aesthetic visual style is produced by the ideology of the AFC and other film commissions (and, in turn, the governments overseeing their funding) who saw in it a signification of the sophistication of the culture. (Turner 194-195)

According to Turner, the “stylistic characteristics” which emerged in Australian films during the 1970s formed a “type” of cinema purposefully cultivated and shaped by Australian film policymakers and funding bodies and dominated by The Australian Film Commission (AFC). For Turner, the formation of Australian cinema as a “genre” was not a haphazard phenomenon but the result of calculated planning and the manufacturing of a distinctive “aesthetic visual style” which adhered to a specific “image” of Australia endorsed by the AFC.

Rayner's *Contemporary Australian Cinema: An Introduction* also theorises Australian cinema as a distinct "genre". Like O'Regan, Rayner chronicles the history of Australian cinema and examines the contexts which shape Australian film production. However, it is Rayner's analysis of key films and film making "movements" in Australia's cinematic past which is valuable as an academic foundation for this study. Rayner, for example, explores the origins of the landmark films which embody the Australian Gothic tradition, such as George Miller's *Mad Max* (1979). He likewise writes about Australia's film revival of the 1970s and the internationally successful "period films" synonymous with the era. Rayner, for instance, provides an analysis of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, which he describes as "inspiring the cycle of period films" and "endowing the new Australian cinema with an aesthetic maturity belying its age" (63). Finally, he writes about representations of Australian-ness and masculinity in Australian cinema and employs case studies which focus on depictions of maleness and male behaviour in several films which I similarly explore and analyse, such as *Wake in Fright* and *Sunday Too Far Away*.

Another of Rayner's works, *The Films of Peter Weir*, extends his analysis of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and conceives the film as both a case-study of Australian cinema and one that should also be positioned in comparison to the other films in Weir's oeuvre. However, the unique place of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* in the work of Weir is strongly emphasised. As he writes, "*Picnic at Hanging Rock* remains the film with which Peter Weir's name is most closely associated and maintains its place as one of the keystones of the Australian film revival" (59). Rayner's focus on *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and Weir's filmography, which, in his own words, "demand a close textual study and thorough structural analysis" (8) is useful to consider as a reference point for this research. Indeed, in Chapter Four, I analyse the film making conventions in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and position them as pivotal to *Wolf Creek* and its cinematic revival of an evocative Australian landscape, especially through the application of high-definition digital cameras.

Akin to Rayner's analytical approach is Brian McFarlane's *Australian Cinema 1970-1985*, which chronicles the foundations of Australian cinema and its emergence as a national cinema in the early 1970s. McFarlane's book is important to consider for this study because of its theoretical

focus on the key themes, ideologies and iconographies embodied in Australian cinema, such as its portrayal of working-class Australian men in rural spaces and male bonding within that space. In the same manner that I analyse *Wolf Creek*, McFarlane critiques the visual language in key films such as *Wake in Fright* and *Gallipoli* and examines the “images” employed in each film. As he asserts: “Among the most commonly recurring images projected by Australian films of the last dozen or so years are those denoting (a) a man’s country, (b) mateship, (c) antiauthoritarianism, (d) a wide, open land, (e) the Aussie battler, and (f) the competitive instinct” (47).

Each of McFarlane’s “recurring images”, which he relates to the iconography and archetypes in key Australian films from the period, re-emerge and recur decades later in *Wolf Creek* and are amalgamated in the construction of the multifaceted figure of Taylor. The analytical focus that McFarlane ascribes to the visual elements of film form and mise-en-scène provides an exemplar for the style of analysis used in this study. Take, for example, his analysis of Russell Boyd’s cinematography and framing of the landscapes in *Gallipoli*:

Russell Boyd’s camera shows remarkable feeling for the empty spaces, not so much hostile and indifferent to man, and this very indifference serves to highlight the growing bond between the two young men who will ultimately arrive at Gallipoli by separate paths. The emptiness of the landscape has a thematic significance in stressing Australia’s physical isolation in 1915, marvelously encapsulated in Archy and Frank’s meeting with the old man (Harold Baigent) as they cross the empty lake. They are on their way to fight in a war thousands of miles away; in this vast salt pan they meet someone who has never heard of the war. During their trek their mateship grows and their attitudes to the war are crystallized. (McFarlane 80-81)

Here, McFarlane draws attention to Boyd’s camera technique, specifically his framing of Australia’s “empty” landscapes, and concurrently explores the themes, meanings and representations embodied within this form. The landscape is thus positioned in *Gallipoli* and by

Boyd as an allegorical statement about Australia's colonial history and the isolation of the land. I ascribe similar analytical focus to Gibson's distinctive cinematography in *Wolf Creek* and how his framing of the landscape evokes similar themes of isolation and entrapment in a rural spatial context.

McFarlane again displays this proclivity for close analysis and an emphasis on the visual language of film in "Horror and Suspense", which is devoted to the slew of horror and thriller films released in Australia during the 1970s. McFarlane's critique of Weir's horror film, *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974), encapsulates this distinct analytical style. In one part of his analysis, he writes: "When the Mayor pursues Arthur into the countryside on a sunny afternoon, one gets a quintessential Weir image: a deceptively sleepy town nestling in the hills, but which increasingly, one realizes, is an inescapable death-trap for anyone trying to get in or out" (63).

In this example, McFarlane draws focus to the disposition of setting, how physical space is denoted within the composition and, importantly, what this presentation communicates to the audience about the claustrophobic nature of an otherwise "sleepy town". McFarlane's approach to analysis is later reinforced when he discusses the materiality of action in the film, including objects which come in and out of view of John McLean's camera: "the spikes on the leading car climb into the frame from the bottom right corner, then fill the screen" (64). I similarly examine the sequencing of action and motion in *Wolf Creek* and how this action is framed within the film's various spaces.

The literature delineated in this section provides a theoretical platform and basis for the analysis of *Wolf Creek* in the chapters to follow. By understanding the Australian film industry in terms of "genre" and as a distinctive "type" of cinema, this study locates *Wolf Creek* within a specific cinematic ecosystem codified by a unique set of film making conventions and tropes.

2.5 Australian Horror Theory

Wolf Creek is an important film to examine, as I argue, because it is a hybrid text that reimagines

Australian cinematic conventions, incorporates sub-textual inferences to Australia's colonial history, employs digital film making practices, and embodies a globally recognisable horror film format. It also marks a point of transition within the Australian film industry as a proliferation of films suddenly emerged post-2005 within the horror sector. It is useful, therefore, to draw focus to the history of horror film production in Australia and the theory which attempts to understand it. By and large, the Australian film industry, at least in comparison to other national cinemas, such as Hollywood, or Japanese cinema, has produced comparatively few horror films across its history. As Ryan puts it, "horror films have existed in the shadows of Australian cinema" (189). The Australian horror films which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, "Ozploitation" movies, as coined by film maker Mark Hartley in his documentary, *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!* (2008), are under-researched and are located, as Ryan notes, "at the margins of Australian screen culture" (189).

Much of the literature on the Australian horror film tends to focus on the critique of singular case-study texts or small collectives of texts. Shelley's *Australian Horror Films, 1973-2010*, for example, provides a synopsis and critical analysis of seventy-six key Australian horror films produced between 1973 and 2010. Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, in "Fatal Distractions: Australian Horror Beyond National Cinema" and "Helpless Baby, Evil Child: The Loved Ones", examines Rupert Glasson's *Coffin Rock* (2009) and Sean Byrne's *The Loved Ones* (2009) respectively. Likewise, Boris Trbic, in "The Low-Budget Australian Horror Film", explores the impact of *Saw* on the Australian low-budget horror film making market and its status as a catalyst film for the surge of Australian horror production in the 2000s. In this study, I isolate *Wolf Creek* for analysis in the same way that Shelley, Heller-Nicholas and Trbic isolate their case-studies; and I position *Wolf Creek*, like *Saw*, as a landmark film in the emerging Australian horror film making subculture of the 2000s.

Although the existing academic literature on *Wolf Creek* is limited and draws little focus to visual language and modes of production, as I do in this study, I reference several texts which define the film as a depiction of insular Australian outback culture as epitomised through the maniacal Taylor. For Gemma Blackwood in "*Wolf Creek: an UnAustralian Story?*", the film

presents “socio-political readings of Australian attitudes to international tourism” (492) by suggesting that Taylor’s psychopathy is a “dark fantasy” (497) and a distorted symbol of the ingrained xenophobia and racial intolerance that pervades this culture. Likewise, Matthew Clayfield’s, “That’s Not a Knife: Performing Masculinity in Greg McLean’s ‘Wolf Creek’”, examines, as I do in Chapter Five, innate masculine behaviour in this culture and the “images and affectations of two ideas of masculinity” (133) that materialise when Mitchell invades this cultural space and ignites Taylor’s territorial predisposition. John Scott and Dean Biron’s “Wolf Creek, Rurality and the Australian Gothic” similarly positions the Australian landscape as a tactile and metaphorical space that evokes dual aspects of outback culture, one that oscillates between idyllic representations of the land and its sinister underbelly that lurks within: “*Wolf Creek* arguably emphasizes an urban-centric cultural construct of the rural (one only reinforced by the mass media in its sensational reporting of specific outback horror stories) as a site of either idyll or the horror” (320). These texts are thus useful as a basis for deciphering *Wolf Creek* as not just a film but as a cultural commodity. This understanding is particularly significant in Chapters Four and Five when I briefly return to these works.

Perhaps the most notable case-study focus on *Wolf Creek* outside of this thesis is Sonya Hartnett’s monograph of the film for the Australian Screen Classics series (2011). In Hartnett’s account of *Wolf Creek*, she reframes the key events, scenes, sequences and set pieces through illustrative prose, and offers insight into the true Australian crime cases that informed McLean’s screenplay. I likewise draw focus to the real-life cases that inspired *Wolf Creek* in Chapter Three. Although I do not employ Hartnett’s work as a key referential source in this study, it is important to acknowledge it as a major attempt to decode the film and its basis in broader Australian cultural discourse. Moreover, the sheer inclusion of *Wolf Creek* in the Australian Screen Classics series, which also includes Louis Nowra’s study of *Walkabout* (2003) and Tina Kaufman’s analysis of *Wake in Fright* (2010), positions it as a seminal Australian film that necessitates critical exploration. For me, and as I expand on in this study, this “critical exploration” of *Wolf Creek* should recognise not only the film’s strong affiliation to Australian culture and cinematic convention but its simultaneous appropriation into the global horror film market and its movement beyond the limitations of the national frame.

Recent literature on Jennifer Kent's *The Babadook* (2014) is useful to consider here. For example, the work of Jessica Balanzategui, as well as Amanda Howell, positions *The Babadook* as landmark text that represents a shift towards the globalisation of Australian horror. Balanzategui in particular argues that hybridised contemporary Australian horror cinema, such as *The Babadook*, "traverses the cultural boundaries and divisions that tend to constrain understandings of Australian horror cinema". As she observes, "*The Babadook* thus illuminates the need to move beyond firmly entrenched oppositions that limit discussion of Australian horror films, for these polarities narrow considerations of the genre in an Australian context (30). For Balanzategui, *The Babadook* expresses on one hand distinctive ties to aspects of the Australian Gothic Horror and Ozploitation cinema. On another, it is overt in its references to mainstream Hollywoodised horror. Thus, it transposes niche Australian genre conventions into a globally accessible horror film format. As Balanzategui theorises, the international acclaim of *The Babadook* therefore calls into question the constraints that regulate academic debates and broader perceptions about Australian horror cinema. Indeed, the implications of Australian horror cinema in international film contexts are far more extensive than much of the existing literature permits. It is a genre that requires additional scrutiny and scholarly attention. Given that the premise of this study is to challenge the prevailing understandings and attitudes about Australian cinema by examining the implications of *Wolf Creek* within the context of a burgeoning international horror film industry post-2005, Balanzategui's article offers a suitable framework to draw inspiration from.

However, the key Australian film theorist most significant for my research is Ryan. Ryan's work, within this limited academic field of Australian horror film analysis, provides a theoretical platform from which I offer my own alternative critical framework for looking at *Wolf Creek*. Ryan's work bares similarities to Balanzategui's in that his writing is primarily based around policy, culture and the global horror market. In the first of his key works, "Whither Culture? Australian Horror Films and the Limitations of Cultural Policy", he explores the Australian horror film production sector of the 2000s and interrogates Australian cultural policy and the marginalisation of the horror genre. As he points out, cultural policy governing Australian

cinema “has sought to fund films cultural enough to subsidise...in an attempt to foster a positive sense of national identity” (48) The horror film, which is viewed as “disreputable”, is regulated and “excluded” because it falls “outside (the) certain constructs of Australianness” (48) that are fostered and promoted to international audiences through Australian cinematic output. As a result, the Australian horror film “boom” of the 2000s has led to increased “tension” within the industry (48).

Ryan poses a challenge to cultural policy-makers, who he refers to as evoking “narrow” viewpoints that have “written off horror” and “barely” recognised it as a tradition of Australian cinema (47). He writes that this “narrowness” is disadvantageous for emerging Australian film makers because it “denies” them “certain possibilities” and carries “negative implications for the broader production milieu” (54). Ryan, instead, outlines several “advantages” of horror film production: firstly, that the horror film is “well suited to the industry’s financing limitations” and first-time film makers with low production budgets; secondly, that it has “developmental value” and has been “important to the careers of established and emerging filmmakers”, such as McLean and his rise as a key player in the Australian film industry post-*Wolf Creek*; and finally, that the horror film is “internationally popular” and generates broad interest and revenue for the Australian film industry (54). By outlining these “advantages”, Ryan positions the horror film genre as crucial for the advancement of Australian cinema internationally.

Ryan expands this argument in “Australian Cinema’s Dark Sun: The Boom in Australian Horror Film Production”. He points out that the “surge” in the 2000s of Australian horror film production has opened a cinematic space for global distribution networks that promote the Australian horror film genre. These networks, according to Ryan, “have turned their attention towards Australian horror production” and are now “opening the doors to (the) international finance” of the Australian horror film (34). This has resulted in a vigorous Australian film making subculture that specialises in low-budget horror production. Ryan points out what he refers to as “policy implications” (37) stemming from the proliferation of Australian horror production in the 2000s. As he argues, “growth is occurring across national boundaries as a result of globalization”, and due to the “international inputs” of overseas distributors, Australian

horror film makers choose to “bypass government-administered finance models” to produce their films (37). This stands in contrast to the “narrow” Australian “notions of cultural content” that is driving policy and the financing of films (37). The circumvention of domestic policy appears to be critical for Australian horror film makers who, as Ryan argues, produce horror films geared to international audiences and to fit the standards of international financing systems.

This study utilises Ryan’s framework for understanding the policy implications of the Australian horror film phenomenon of the 2000s, and draws on the work of Balanzategui, Howell, Shelley, Heller-Nicholas and Trbic to offer a close analysis of *Wolf Creek* with an emphasis on film style and aesthetics. The purpose is to locate *Wolf Creek* as a catalyst film within this “phenomenon”, as well as employ a theoretical approach in the tradition of film style, to examine the film’s distinctive visual language shaped by its emergence during the dawn of the digital film making era.

2.6 Film Style Analysis

This study examines *Wolf Creek* within the national frame and history of Australian cinema, understands it in terms of “genre”, as a ground-breaking cinematic product of the digital era, and then as a significant case-study text to explore the implications of globalised film culture on Australian production in the 2000s. Building on these key focuses, the third and final methodological approach of this study offers a close analysis of the film’s visual language and distinctive cinematic “style”. Through this lens, I analyse the form, aesthetics, structures and film making devices employed in the film, how each device combines on screen to construct meaning, the relationship between theory about what constitutes film style, how cinematic styles develop through national cinemas, and the circulation of style and visual trends in genres.

Adrian Martin provides a useful introductory overview of the term “film style” or what he claims are the “basic inventory of stylistic elements in cinema”: the “properties of the image (*mise en scène*, here including the pictorial elements of camera framing and production design); properties of the soundtrack; acting performance; and editing” (21). Film style, according to Martin, refers

to the taxonomy of visual and aural “stylistic elements” – or, the “properties” of the frame – which share space and interact on screen. In the case of *Wolf Creek*, these “stylistic elements” include the use of high-definition cameras, the MTV-style handheld filming techniques and elliptical editing procedures, the evocative colour grade which characterises the outback landscape, and the verisimilitude of the lead performances by Jarratt, Macgrath, Morassi and Phillips. Based on Martin’s position, to determine the “style” of a film, then, as I aim to do throughout this study in my examination of *Wolf Creek*, we must first develop a clear understanding of the “inventory” of cinematic devices at play (like the devices listed above), and the symbiotic relationship between these devices as they combine to create a unique visual language.

This understanding of film style is supported by John Gibbs, who likewise offers a valuable framework which I utilise in this study. Gibbs, like Martin, argues that to interpret the “style” of a film, we must consider and scrutinise the various “combinations” of cinematic elements within the frame and the subsequent construction of meaning. For Gibbs, this means an analysis of *mise-en-scène*, or a study of the visual components that constitute a specific cinematic image. As he puts it:

‘*Mise-en-scène*’ is used in film studies in the discussion of visual style...for the student of film, a useful definition might be: ‘the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised’... (these contents) include lighting, costume, décor, properties, and the actors themselves. The organisation of the contents of the frame encompasses the relationship of the actors to one other and to the décor, but also their relationship to the camera, and thus the audience’s view. So in talking about *mise-en-scène* one is also talking about framing, camera movement, the particular lens employed and other photographic decisions. *Mise en-scène* therefore encompasses both what the audience can see, and the way in which we are invited to see it. It refers to many of the major elements of communication in the cinema, and the combinations through which they operate expressively. (Gibbs 5)

As Gibbs points out, when distinguishing the visual language and “style” of a film, the way in which film makers position and “construct” images through the arrangement of these components is a vital area of consideration. Akin to Altman’s theory in Section 2.1 about the binary relationship between semantics and syntax in genre classification, “film style”, as both Gibbs and Martin view it, refers not just to isolated film parts but to the dynamic interactivity between these parts and their engagement within the frame.

Expanding on these core ideas, David Bordwell theorises that to understand film style, we must first understand the complex mechanics and various functions of cinematic images. The role of the film maker(s) in the construction of these images, including the Director, Director of Photography, and Film Editor, is positioned by Bordwell as imperative in this process. Indeed, it is within this conceptual framework also that I examine the visual language in *Wolf Creek*, the key stylistic features in McLean’s directing, and the meanings located within these features. As Bordwell contends:

From a filmmaker’s perspective, images and sounds constitute the medium in and through which the film achieves its emotional and intellectual impact. The organization of this material – how a shot is staged and composed, how the images are cut together, how music reinforces the action – can hardly be a matter of indifference. Style is not simply window-dressing draped over a script; it is the very flesh of the work...by centering our inquiry on film style, we are trying to come to grips with aspects of cinema that matter very much to how films work. No adequate theory of film as a medium can neglect the shaping role of style. (Bordwell 8)

This “shaping role of style”, as I argue throughout this study, distinguishes *Wolf Creek* as a film that transcends the limitations of the local industry and moves into the international film arena. Through an examination of the film’s “style”, which, as Bordwell puts it, refers to the “very flesh of the work”, it is my view that *Wolf Creek* cemented a mode of film making that has pioneered a distinctive “type” of horror cinema post-2005. It is the aim of this study to analyse this cinematic “type” and explore how McLean combines core cinematic elements to construct new

meanings and communicate new ideas about the horror film for both domestic and international audiences.

While sound design and film music are crucial elements to consider when examining film style, as Bordwell points out, I do not position them as key focuses in this study. For this research, I am primarily concerned with the “visual language” in *Wolf Creek*, the gaze of cameras to frame the landscape, violence and action, the construction and design of “images”, and then the sequencing of these images through visual editing to create an innovative horror film syntax. It is through the application of high-definition digital cameras and an MTV editing approach, rather than aspects of sound engineering, that the film distinguishes itself as a watershed cinematic product of the digital era. The intertextual associations that I form between *Wolf Creek* and 1970s Australian and American cinema, for example, are based around visual affiliations rather than similarities in soundscapes. While I discuss elements of Pete Best’s sound mix and François Tétaz’s score in *Wolf Creek* throughout this study, and while I recognise the importance of these elements, my discussion about sound is geared to how it enhances or informs the visual properties of the film. Film sound as an isolated component is not, in my opinion, one of the defining features of *Wolf Creek* which necessitates critique.

My close analysis of *Wolf Creek*, which identifies the cinematic techniques, aesthetic components and visual arrangements that contribute to the film’s generative “style”, is strongly influenced by Martin’s *The Mad Max Movies* and his analytical approach to examining the iconic Australian film trilogy. *The Mad Max Movies* is part of the Australian Screen Classics series, several books of which I acknowledge in this chapter, including Hartnett’s *Wolf Creek* (2011). Martin’s emphasis on “style”, film technique and form, as well his interpretative framework for understanding the configuration and construction of action set pieces and camera movement in all three films, has helped me conceptualise my own approach to the analysis of *Wolf Creek*, the framing of the landscape in the film, and the way that the film’s violent sequences are choreographed and filmed. As Martin argues, the *Mad Max* films are best understood as trailblazing case-studies in their unique application of “style”:

Any fan, theorist or filmmaker who makes the effort to really get inside the moment-by-moment mechanics of these films will discover how richly they reward stop-frame analysis. Conversely, the further that discussions of the *Mad Max* series get from the nitty-gritty fine grain of images, sounds, cuts and formal structures, the less persuasive and convincing their arguments become. The ascription of ‘higher motives and themes’ is indeed a problem when one ends up with a detached, abstract, second order analysis that loses touch not only with what Miller called the ‘kinetic quality of film’, but also the energy and novelty that made these movies such an astonishing *event* within Australian cinema. (Martin 6).

Here, Martin frames his scholarly approach to the *Mad Max* series as one that puts front and centre what Bordwell describes as the “flesh” at the heart of a film text: the textual elements and structures that form its nucleus, and the “style” that arises through the assembling of these parts on screen. This is likewise what I aim to do and the key reason why I position *The Mad Max Movies* as a pivotal text which forms a referential basis for this study. Where Martin’s book is not as concerned with the “higher motives and themes” in the *Mad Max* trilogy as it is with an analysis of Miller’s film making approach and the mechanisms of his action set pieces, my study *does* examine the “higher” motives and themes evoked through McLean’s direction, the film’s aesthetic constitution and its *mise-en-scène*. I combine an analysis of the mechanics of “style” in *Wolf Creek* with an examination of the film’s broader associations and embedded meanings. It is in this way that my study both employs and expands on Martin’s framework for film analysis.

At numerous points in this study, including in the introduction, I refer and have already referred to McLean’s direction, Gibson’s camerawork and Ballantine’s editing as adopting an “MTV style” or an “MTV approach”. It is important therefore to define what I mean by this and how I apply this term throughout the study. By “MTV style” or “MTV approach”, I am referring to a specific *aesthetic* and cinematic style, or, as Marco Calavita coins it, “the MTV aesthetics trope” (15). This “trope”, which Calavita relates to Hollywood cinema, was influenced by early music videos that targeted youth culture and was created for, broadcast on and popularised by the American MTV channel, launched in 1981.

For Calavita, there are three defining “characteristics” which form the foundation of the trope and which I argue construct *part* of the basis of “style” in *Wolf Creek*. The first is the “frequent use of popular songs for a film’s soundtrack, especially for montage sequences of characters” (15). In *Wolf Creek*, Daddy Cool’s song, “Eagle Rock”, an Australian pub anthem released in 1971, is employed for the opening credits montage sequence and is analysed in Chapter Six. The second is a “tendency” to “privilege gloss, atmospherics and camerawork” (16). Gibson’s immersive handheld cinematography, the immediacy of his camera to the action or subjects in frame, the film’s lavish colour grade, and the framing of rural vistas as visual spectacle, aspects of the film’s style which I examine throughout this study, suggests a conscious application of “gloss”, “atmospherics” and inventive “camerawork”. The third involves “jittery rhythms” and “manic editing that often features flash-cuts, jump-cuts, and the stirring together of varied film stocks, colours and speeds” (16). This is most patent in *Wolf Creek* in the opening Broome-based prelude sequence, where Ballantine’s feverish editing and quick cuts move at breakneck speed with a chaotic “rhythm” that plunges the audience headfirst into a social space of bonding and excitement for frivolous millennials. Given that the film is set in 1999 and that Mitchell, Hunter and Earl grew up in the 1980s, it can be assumed that our protagonists themselves are not only aware of MTV culture but are an active part of it. It is likely that they watch MTV and engage with its content. *Wolf Creek* can therefore be read as a self-reflexive meta commentary on the culture that MTV helped cultivate.

It is not my view that this affiliation with MTV represents *all* aspects of style in *Wolf Creek*. As I argue throughout this study, *Wolf Creek* pays homage to and references a broad range of cinematic traditions. These traditions include Australian landscape cinema, the Australian Gothic Horror tradition, American exploitation film of the 1970s, and the slasher film horror sub-genre. *Wolf Creek* does this, too, by engaging with digital technology. The “style” of *Wolf Creek* is not embedded in or defined by a specific element or to a sole cinematic influence. It is instead the amalgamation of various techniques, approaches, modes and forms, including an application of aesthetics derived from MTV music videos.

This study builds a conceptual framework based on the theory discussed in this section and offers an interpretation of the visual “style” and form evident in *Wolf Creek*. Akin to Martin and his overview of the *Mad Max* series, I seek to understand the film making devices deployed in *Wolf Creek* and position these devices as cinematic constructions that revive core themes from Australian cinema, Australian cultural history, the American horror genre and violent American exploitation cinema. By employing this diverse methodological approach, I examine the cinematic language of *Wolf Creek* from a variety of analytical positions and within a multitude of contexts. Ultimately, my view is that *Wolf Creek* is a lynchpin film with a distinctive aesthetic “style” that amalgamates ideas about national cinema, genre and horror into an internationally accessible cinematic product for the digital era.

CHAPTER 3: PRODUCTION CONSIDERATIONS IN *WOLF CREEK*

This chapter offers perspectives on the foundational processes involved in the production of *Wolf Creek*, including the global horror film trend that it was a part of, how the film was funded and developed and key factors which motivated McLean's distinctive and iconic film making style. It thus provides background information and context for the analysis provided in the chapters that follow. Given that much of this chapter examines the facets of production exclusive to *Wolf Creek*, and the inspirations for key creatives in the production team, a significant portion of the referential material is based around recollections and testimonies from the practitioners involved in the making of the film. The reminiscences of McLean and Jarratt are thus employed and relied on in this chapter to give shape and context to stories from the set and the preparational procedures undertaken during pre-production and principal photography.

3.1 A Global Horror Film Trend

After a period of relative inactivity in the 1990s, the early-to-mid-2000s saw considerable growth in international horror film production. Although this surge in horror output is typically associated with American films such as *Saw*, James Wong's *Final Destination* (2000), Eli Roth's *Cabin Fever* (2002) and *Hostel* (2005), and Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses* (2003) and *Devil's Rejects* (2005), a spike in violent cinema was also taking shape globally. Indeed, one of the limitations of this thesis is that it does not draw focus to the concurrent horror film production booms in Asia and Europe. Throughout this study, I examine the intertextual associations between *Wolf Creek* and American horror and exploitation cinema of the 1970s. One of the key findings of this research is that there is a symbiotic relationship between Australian and American modes of horror production. It is therefore necessary here to likewise consider the affiliations and differences between *Wolf Creek*, an emergent Australian horror industry, and the simultaneous release of American horror films that typify this early-to-mid-2000s upsurge: *Saw* and *Hostel*. Nevertheless, a slew of savage and explicitly graphic cinema swept the globe. In Japan, Takashi Miike's *Audition* (1999) and Kinji Fukasaku's *Battle Royale* (2000) displayed brutal portrayals of the violence that human beings are capable of inflicting on

each other. In France, screen violence and gore was fetishized by a new extreme wave of horror films, such as Gaspar Noé's *Irréversible* (2002) and Alexandre Aja's *High Tension* (2003). There were production booms in Turkey, Scotland, Spain and Scandinavia. Horror was back in vogue and, as Adam Charles Hart notes, cinema by the mid-2000s was "dominated by the spectacular display of pain and torture" (342).

This upsurge in horror production was likely influenced by the devastating aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Indeed, in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent destabilisation of the world order, the horror film, according to Aaron Kerner, was motivated by a "deep well of anxiety spawned by the fear of terrorism" (23). A considerable portion of Chapter Seven draws focus to the impact of 9/11 on the horror film making movement of the 2000s in response to this "anxiety" and "fear", and the leading role that *Wolf Creek* plays in consolidating the movement. Most literature on post-9/11 cinema categorises this ensuing cycle of horror films released in the early-to-mid-2000s as part of the "torture porn" genre. Isabela C. Pinedo, for example, defines the "torture porn" film as being "ultra-violent" and focusing "on the capture and torture of sympathetic characters who are subjected to extended and graphic torment, shot in spectacular close-ups that dwell on the details of injury" (345). Likewise, Angela Ndalians understands the "torture porn" film, or "New Horror" cinema, as she proposes, as having a "different agenda", one in which "the audience is ruthlessly confronted with violence, intense gore and, often, a social critique that refuses to hold back the punches" (15). *Wolf Creek* is typically linked with *Saw* and *Hostel* as exemplars of this new mode of horror production. Because of *Wolf Creek*'s assimilation into the American film market and onto American screens upon release, as well as its inter-textual relationship to American exploitation cinema of the 1970s, it often draws strong comparisons to its "torture porn" and "New Horror" counterparts.

The comparisons between *Wolf Creek*, *Saw* and *Hostel* arise mostly from commonalities in style. Shared aesthetic features, such as visceral handheld cinematography which draws the audience in close and places unrelenting and prolonged visual emphasis on the suffering of victims and the destruction of their bodies, define each film and the "torture porn" genre. *Wolf Creek*, in my opinion, bares strong aesthetic similarities to *Saw* and *Hostel* in terms of how violent images are

negotiated, framed and sequenced on screen. In each film, the camera is immersive and the editing pulsates, resulting in a flurry of shots that accentuate bruised and torn flesh, seeping wounds, bloodied limbs, and the fallibility of the human body in the face of an insatiably violent and unstoppable force. As Ben McCann observes, this “traumatic breaching” of the human body “could be displayed both as a physical manifestation of the fear of corporeal attack and the promise of an almost-pornographic pleasure in seeing the body opened up in increasingly graphic ways” (32). For McCann, films such as *Saw*, *Hostel* and, in the case of this study, *Wolf Creek*, embellish screen violence via the brutalisation of the human body to critique widespread societal anxieties in the volatile post-9/11 world. In Chapter Seven, I offer a close analysis of the “aesthetic features” and key violent “torture” sequences in *Wolf Creek* which depict an explicit “breaching” of the bodies of Mitchell, Hunter and Earl.

While *Wolf Creek* has affiliation with *Saw* and *Hostel* and is indeed a landmark entry in the global “torture porn” canon, it concurrently serves as a point of difference in a derivative and cyclical horror sub-genre. This difference is related to *setting*. While *Saw* takes place in dingy interiors, framed by the single bathroom space that Gordon (Cary Elwes) and Stanheight (Whannell) are entrapped within, and where the bulk of graphic scenes in *Hostel* occur in a dimly lit and dilapidated dungeon setting, the violence in *Wolf Creek* unfolds in exteriors, in the Australian rural and the heart of the continent, under the sweltering sun and against the pitch black backdrop of night. As an extension of Australian cinematic and cultural history, *Wolf Creek*, when released in 2005, revived a dormant local horror film sector and transcended the boundaries of the national industry to form an internationally viable horror film product that was new and innovative in scope and setting. What *Wolf Creek* ultimately reinforces, however, is that, in the films that form part of this global horror trend of the early-to-mid-2000s, human beings are always vulnerable in the face of a prevailing monster. Evil and savagery always triumphs. The claustrophobia dictated by the confines of setting in *Saw* and *Hostel* is still applicable in *Wolf Creek*. As Jim Schembri points out in his review of the film for *The Age*, “McLean, (in *Wolf Creek*), captures the spatial irony of the Outback – how even with space all around you, there can still be no place to run” (2005). Despite the vastness of the landscape, Mitchell, Hunter and Earl, like Gordon and Stanheight, or Paxton (Jay Hernandez), Josh (Derek

Richardson) and Óli (Eyþór Guðjónsson) in *Hostel*, are always entrapped, always under the omnipresent gaze of Taylor, with nowhere to escape or hide.

3.2 The Etiology of the Film

The original *Wolf Creek* screenplay was markedly different to the screenplay McLean took to production in 2004. As he recalls during a 2017 interview for the *FilmInk* YouTube Channel:

Before I made the first film, I spent about eight years trying to write movies and get into film making. I was developing this idea about a group of tourists in the outback being menaced by this character, who became Mick. That was my first vision for what became *Wolf Creek* (and) at the time I couldn't (go through with the idea) because I didn't have the resources or the experience to pull off that kind of thing. (McLean 2017)

This “first vision” concept for the screenplay was to include multiple sub-plots and characters and was intended to geographically cover more expansive territory in rural Australia. In *The Making of 'Wolf Creek'*, he offers this explanation:

The last draft before this draft (the version of the screenplay taken to production) was a very big complicated affair. Within that movie, there was a time where the characters in that film saw this video tape of some of Mick's previous victims. On that tape was three backpackers. And at the end of writing that very big, expensive script, I again looked at it and thought, “it will never happen, it's too expensive.” And then (I) basically just thought, “why don't I (just) tell that story?”. (McLean 2006)

By condensing the film's narrative to a single plot about three characters being menaced by Taylor, McLean, with funding from Film Finance Corporation (FFC Australia), South Australian Film Corporation, 403 Production and the True Crime Channel, minimised production expenditure and was able to produce *Wolf Creek* on a budget of \$1.2 Million (AUD).

To effectively utilise this low budget, McLean planned to shoot the film on a MiniDV camcorder. He was inspired by the Dogme 95 film making movement made famous by Danish film makers Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg. Like the French New Wave movement that preceded it, the Dogme 95 film making method promoted cinematic realism and the traditions of character, performance and storytelling by rejecting the use of extravagant special effects and technology. In their self-written manifesto, “Dogme 95: The Vow of Chastity”, Von Trier and Vinterberg declare that the aim of the Dogme 95 movement was to combat “new technology” and “counter the film of illusion” (87-88). McLean wanted to employ this mantra in his own film making. It was Gibson who convinced him to instead shoot the film in the wide-lens HDCAM format that is now synonymous with the film’s distinctive visual style. In an interview for the *Popcorn Taxi* YouTube Channel, titled “Wolf Creek – Part 2”, McLean states:

I was going to shoot this film on MiniDV because I was a big fan of the Dogme film makers and what they were doing (and) the idea of shooting on very low-quality video. Their purpose was to keep films affordable and focus on story and character. What that look also does is give the feeling to the audience that this is actually real. That was what I was originally planning to do, was shoot on MiniDV and do it very cheaply. It was actually Will Gibson who suggested to me that I should look at HD. (McLean 2011)

The ground-breaking decision to use the HDCAM format in *Wolf Creek* enabled McLean and Gibson to blend the “Dogme” approach of location shooting and cinematic realism with contemporary modes of cinematography, such as the use of handheld camera. This style of camerawork helped to elicit a natural and intuitive performance style from Jarratt, Magrath, Morassi and Phillips in the mould of “Dogme” and, before it, Jean Rouch’s Cinéma vérité genre of documentary film making. Indeed, as Morassi points out during an interview for the Future Movies website, conducted by Raam Tarat, “he (Gibson) used a handheld camera, so you were free to move around and that kind of helped, to give those kind or organic, natural performances” (2005).

Unlike the “complicated” early drafts of the *Wolf Creek* screenplay and McLean’s original intention to use affordable camcorder equipment, plans which shifted as the film transitioned into production, Jarratt was always the actor McLean had in mind for the role of Taylor. As McLean recalls in an interview on the *DP/30: The Oral History of Hollywood* YouTube Channel, while studying at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in the 1990s, he was first intrigued by Jarratt as a performer when he saw him play Charlie in the stage version of Nick Parson’s *Dead Heart* (1996):

I saw John in this play, which later went on to become a film, and saw him in a different way because everyone in Australia knows John Jarratt. I had a perception of his work which was he played dozens of characters but generally likeable nice guys. I saw him as a very evil twisted dark character, and it just lodged in the back of my brain that, “wow, this guy has incredible range”, and I just saw him in this new kind of way for myself. Years later, when we were casting *Wolf Creek*, the idea struck and came from the notion that people who get in the truck with these serial killers really like the guy that they get in with. And I thought, “who’s more likeable than John?”. (McLean 2014)

By casting Jarratt as the “evil twisted dark character” of Taylor, McLean inverts Jarratt’s typecast affable screen persona, a proposition I examine further in Chapter Five. According to Jarratt in *The Bastard from the Bush*, he did not audition for the film. Instead, McLean sent him the screenplay and offered him the role. Jarratt recalls: “he (McLean) was at NIDA in the early nineties when I played the hard-arsed cop in *Dead Heart*; so when he wrote *Wolf Creek*, I was the actor he was thinking about” (289). As McLean was an unknown name in the industry at the time, having only directed short films and television commercials, Jarratt took some convincing. As he continues:

I walked away from the meeting (with McLean) in a quandary. I thought we were fucked, and that the film would be below par. On the other hand, I was impressed with Greg: he was bright and knew what he was talking about, he knew what he was up

against and he seemed on top of it. I thought that if he could get the script on the screen it'd be okay". (Jarratt 289)

When McLean and producers Matt Hearn and David Lightfoot raised the required \$1.2 Million (AUD), Jarratt accepted the role and began his pre-production preparatory work.

3.3 The Making of the Film

Principal photography for *Wolf Creek* took place over five weeks in outback South Australia. Most of the film was shot in remote areas of the Flinders Ranges. The film's scenes were shot chronologically, so Jarratt was not involved in the first week of filming. He used the week to isolate himself in the South Australian wilderness and develop his character. Jarratt's preparative style has roots in the Method Acting approach, popularised and made famous by Polish-born American theatre practitioner, Lee Strasberg. The Method Acting process involves emotional identification with a fictional character where the actor engages with personal experiences and memories to construct a realistic performance. Influenced by the pioneering methods of Konstantin Stanislavski, Strasberg chronicles the development of this approach and his celebrated methodology in *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method*.

As a graduate of NIDA where this approach was taught extensively, Jarratt was ostensibly influenced by the Strasberg system. Indeed, as he recalls in *The Bastard from the Bush*:

We shot the first week of the film in Adelaide. I wasn't involved in those scenes, so I hired a car and headed into the outback on my own. I drove from Adelaide to Lake Eyre, an eight-hour, 700 kilometre drive north. I enjoyed the solitude and tried to cloak myself in Mick's demeanour. I've always loved the vastness of the outback. I passed abandoned homesteads and rusted cars, trucks and machinery, the rotting remains of hardship and failure being gulped back into the relentless red earth. Tough country. Mick Taylor was among it all the time; he had to be one tough motherfucker". (Jarratt 291)

Jarratt's recollection offers an insight into his own acting methodology stemming from these teachings. This methodology was not just confined to pre-production, and he remained "cloaked" in Taylor's "demeanour" during his four weeks on set as well. As Morassi remembers it in her Future Movies interview, "he said to me during the rehearsal period that he wanted to keep his distance from us before we started shooting because he wanted us to believe that he could be this madman. So he tried not to get too close" (2005). In *The Bastard from the Bush*, Jarratt explains his on-set approach and acknowledges the Method Acting style this way:

It was interesting inhabiting the Mick character. I'm not a method actor; if I'm asked, my reply is, 'No, I'm a professional actor.' But with Mick, I had to go there because we're not the same human being. Many of the characters I've played are not that far from me. I became a loner during the shoot and I didn't mingle much with the other actors. If I did, I'd have a bit of Mick running through me. (Jarratt 292)

Jarratt's approach to his performance influenced Morassi and Magrath's own acting methods. This is most evident during Earl's "torture" set piece, which was filmed across three days. According to Morassi, she "wasn't able to indulge in much humour for those three days" and needed to sustain a "certain state" (2005). For Magrath, who was also interviewed for the Future Movies website by Johan De Silva, the Method Acting approach to character development was essential to combat the challenge of having to transition "from hanging out on set with a few people straight into such high drama on the word 'action'!" (2007). This common approach to their performances during the key sequences and set pieces in the film's second half, examined in Chapter Seven, may have created verisimilitude in their screen interactions, especially in regard to the violent confrontation between their characters.

Moreover, during principal photography, McLean and his production team encountered unforeseen rainfall while filming at Hawker in the Flinders Ranges. It had been ten years since the region had experienced rainfall. The sequence scheduled to be filmed was Hunter, Earl and Mitchell's arrival at the Wolfe Creek Crater. As McLean recalls in *The Making of 'Wolf Creek'*:

We did three location recces up into Hawker near the Flinders Ranges. When we first went there, there was dust that thick (that) you put your foot down and the dust sprayed out (and we thought), “this is great, it looks like Central Australia, it’s fantastic.” We went to a location that had not been rained in for ten years. We rock up there with the whole crew. And it started to rain. It sent the schedule into chaos. We all went mad running around trying to find new locations. It was carnage. (McLean 2006)

Instead of eliminating the scene altogether, McLean decided to improvise and incorporate the rainfall into the screenplay. As Gibson remembers in the *Making of* documentary:

We went back to (the) script and thought, “how are we going to deal with this?”. Greg and I both almost at the same time realised, “you know what, this is actually perfect”, because at this point in the story, in the arc of the characters, and the arc of their journey, this is the point at which it goes from being a really fun holiday trip into something much more sinister. (Gibson 2006)

During the re-written sequence at the Wolfe Creek Crater, the unanticipated weather interruption, which appears at odds with the dry heat and arid landscape captured in most of film, is seamlessly integrated into conversation between Hunter, Earl and Mitchell. As they approach the Crater by car, the overcast sky is observed by Hunter when she says, “I hope it doesn’t rain”. Later, as they sit beneath an umbrella in the rain, Mitchell says, “It will clear, give it a couple of hours”. Hunter and Mitchell’s dialogue can be understood to reflect similar conversations that McLean and his production crew likely had with each other as they determined the best course of action in combating the disruption to the schedule.

This forced adaptation to the screenplay and the rewritten Wolfe Creek Crater sequence emphatically presents the audience for the first time with one of the film’s key thematic premises: the notion of an omnipresent anthropomorphised rural landscape and the unpredictable phenomena that occur within it. Indeed, when Hunter, Earl and Mitchell pack their car and attempt to leave the Crater, they comment on the peculiarity of their watches “stopping”. This

overt reference to *Picnic at Hanging Rock* locates the film in the Australian cinematic landscape tradition of the 1970s and is given added impetus within the sequence itself by the “strange” phenomenon of the rainfall which precedes it.

3.4 References to Real-Life Crime Cases

Wolf Creek opens with this title sequence: “The following is based on actual events. 30, 000 people are reported missing in Australia every year. 90% are found in one month. Some are never seen again”. According to Hearn on the *Wolf Creek* DVD Audio Commentary, he and McLean spent five months re-writing and collaborating to ensure the text was worded correctly (2011). Taylor’s physical characteristics and modus operandi, explored in Chapter Five, as well as the film’s subject matter involving the graphic murders of tourists in the Australian outback, links *Wolf Creek* to real-life Australian crime cases, ones that have been entrenched in the national psyche and popular culture. As Dmetri Kakmi writes, the film “touched a raw nerve”, “was taken straight from the headlines” and was “topical” when released (76). For Kakmi, *Wolf Creek* is a cinematic extension of the “raw” cultural anxieties of Australians exacerbated by recent “headlines” about homicides from the 1990s.

Wolf Creek’s most overt connection to these “headlines” is the criminal case filed against Ivan Milat, an Australian roadworker convicted in 1996 of the murders of seven backpackers. The most explicit visual inference to Milat in *Wolf Creek* is a signpost that reads “Navithalim Mining Co.” Paul Anderson, writing for *Herald Sun*, agrees and points out that the inclusion of this signpost, which features the name “Ivan Milat” in reverse, is a “hidden on-screen reference” (2014). As Taylor tows Hunter, Earl and Mitchell’s broken-down Ford to his campsite, Hunter’s point-of-view reveals the signpost as they enter the site. When Hunter offhandedly suggests to Earl and Mitchell that the sign may belong to “some sort of mining operation”, her naïve impression mirrors the similar credulity of Milat’s real-life victims who all voluntarily got into his vehicle.

The bodies of Milat's victims were discovered buried in the Belanglo State Forest, located southwest of Berrima in New South Wales. Three of his victims were identified as German, two as British, and two were of Australian nationality from Melbourne. All seven of Milat's victims were aged between nineteen and twenty-two. The first two bodies uncovered in the forest were British backpackers Joanne Walters and Caroline Clarke. McLean appears to base the fictional Hunter and Earl on Walters and Clarke. Firstly, like Hunter and Earl, Clarke and Walters were female backpackers of British descent travelling in Australia. Secondly, Morassi and Magrath were both in their twenties during the film's production in 2004 and played characters of a similar age; likewise, Clarke was twenty-one when she was murdered, and Walters was twentytwo. Finally, it is Milat's distinctive modus operandi in the murders of Walters and Clarke that may be the inspiration for *Wolf Creek's* violent second half: like Walters, who Milat stabbed fourteen times in the back, including one in her spine severing her nerves and paralysing her movement, Hunter is murdered and similarly paralysed by Taylor with a solitary stab in her spine; and like Clarke, who Milat shot in the head ten times with his Ruger rifle, Taylor, likewise armed with a Ruger, murders Earl with a single shot in her back.

Furthermore, Jarratt's depiction of Taylor can be read as a constructed representation of Milat and the Australian outback serial killer stereotype. In an interview on the *JustSeenItReviews* YouTube Channel, McLean understands this stereotype as follows:

These guys that it's based on actually lived quite normal lives away from where they went and did their stuff, and that's really one of the fascinating and I think terrifying things about the character, and serial killers in general: the public face that someone presents to the world and then, they may have lives and families and jobs and things, an entirely different subconscious life where they go off and do these horrific things (and) then come back into that world. (McLean 2014)

According to testimonies documented in an episode of the *The Crimes that Shook the World* television program, titled "The Backpack Murderer", Milat, like McLean describes, presented an affable "public face" to his Eagle Vale community before his arrest and conviction. As his

neighbour, Amanda Howard, recalls in the episode: “he’d be someone who would have a joke with you after work. He was a hard worker and always worked hard in all the positions that he’d held. Generally, the consensus was that he was a friendly guy” (2006).

The pleasant “public face” that Milat presented appears to have highly influenced the fictionalised on-screen character of Taylor as played by Jarratt. When he first meets Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, Taylor is eccentric yet cordial, and presents a conventional image of Australian masculinity that is aligned with the affable larrikinism made iconic in *Crocodile Dundee* and the character created by Paul Hogan, as well as overseas cultural export, Steve Irwin. In Chapter Five, I look closely at Taylor’s “public face” and deconstruct the character as the masquerade drops and he reveals himself as the inverted antithesis of this traditional larrikin archetype.

Wolf Creek not only draws on Milat but on a broader set of real-life crime cases about tourist disappearances and homicides in outback Australia. Joshua Robertson’s article in *The Guardian*, “Alone in the Outback: Attacks on Backpackers Play on Deep-Seated Fears”, documents the spate of homicidal crime cases to have unfolded in the Australian outback over the past two decades: as well as the seven murders Milat was convicted for, the 1997 death of Japanese tourist Michiko Okuyama in Cairns, the 2014 rape and murder of French student Sophie Collombet at Rocks Riverside Park in Brisbane, and the 2001 murder of British backpacker Peter Falconio on a remote stretch of the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory, for which Bradley John Murdoch was convicted. According to Robertson, these examples “jointly formed the basis” of *Wolf Creek* and the character of Taylor (2017). The cases outlined by Robertson in his article, as well as several cases that he does not point to, such as the mysterious disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain at Uluru in 1980 and the disappearance of American tourists Thomas and Eileen Lonergan at the Great Barrier Reef in 1998, builds a history of unusual outback crime cases from which McLean borrows.

Aside from Milat, the real-life case that *Wolf Creek* references most conspicuously is the murder of Falconio by the notorious figure of Murdoch. The parallels between *Wolf Creek* and the

Falconio case were so overt that in 2005, while Murdoch's trial was still underway, the Northern Territory court placed an injunction on the film's state-wide release amid concerns that the film could impact the outcome. Indeed, according to Wheeler Winston Dixon, Murdoch can be read as a real-life "model" for Jarratt's fictional characterisation of Taylor (200). Murdoch, in the same way that Jarratt portrays Taylor on screen, is a tall and physically intimidating figure. In *Wolf Creek*, Gibson's camerawork draws emphasis to Taylor's similarly imposing and powerful stature through low-angles that gaze up at him as he hovers above a bloodied Hunter immobilised on the ground below. This scene is examined in detail in Chapter Seven.

The specific circumstances of the case, in which Falconio's partner, Joanne Lees, manages to evade Murdoch, hide from him in the scrub, and flag down a truck driver to be rescued, is embodied in *Wolf Creek* through Mitchell's similarly constructed escape set piece. As Shelley argues: "At the end of the movie Ben is rescued by a young couple in an orange and white Volkswagen microbus, which pays homage to the real-life Peter Falconio and Joanne Lees, on whom the story is partly based" (204). The complications Lees endured convincing the Australian courts, media and public about the events which transpired and led to Falconio's murder, in which she was suspected of perpetrating the crime herself, is likewise echoed in *Wolf Creek's* closing intertitles:

Early investigations into the case were disorganised, hampered by confusion over the location of the crimes, a lack of physical evidence and the alleged unreliability of the only witness. After four months in police custody, Ben Mitchell was later cleared of all suspicion.

Mitchell can therefore be interpreted as the fictional cinematic embodiment of Lees and the aftermath of Falconio's murder. However, unlike Murdoch, who was arrested in August 2002 and convicted of Falconio's murder in December 2005, Taylor, in the *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe, remains unconvicted and looms unstoppable in the vast expanse of the Australian outback. As the film alludes, while Murdoch and Milat were discovered, arrested and convicted,

many others serial killers may still be roaming the outback undetected, covertly wreaking havoc on any credulous tourists or travellers that they encounter.

The production considerations offered in this chapter build an etiological narrative for the creation of *Wolf Creek* as a key player in the new Australian horror cinema of the 2000s. The film making process is the sum of various moving parts. From preproduction to principal photography to post-production, numerous factors, often unforeseen, emerge and shape the end product. In the study of film language and aesthetics, these “factors” are important to consider. This became particularly evident to me when analysing *Wolf Creek*. My aim in this chapter, therefore, is to draw focus to the “factors” which are unique to *Wolf Creek* and the story of its creation. These crucial aspects of the film’s production history, as I argue, give context to the distinctive cinematic “style” that I examine in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4: *WOLF CREEK* AND THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE TRADITION

Australian cinema is partly characterised by its unique representation of the country's expansive landscape. Many films from the 1970s, such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Sunday Too Far Away* and Nicholas Roeg's *Walkabout* (1971), personify the landscape as an omnipresent "character". In the 2000s, arguably, no Australian feature film has visually encapsulated the landscape as vividly as *Wolf Creek*. In this chapter, I discuss the affinities between *Wolf Creek* and the conventions of Australian landscape cinema established in the 1970s and 1980s. By examining the lineage of films that draw visual focus to the landscape and anthropomorphise it as a "character", I argue that *Wolf Creek* embodies aspects of this cinema and is a modern example of filmic codes and characteristics that have been seen in Australian films for decades. Given *Wolf Creek*'s HDCAM shooting format, explored in Chapter Three, these "codes" and "characteristics" are reimagined and reconfigured onscreen for an emergent youth audience. *Wolf Creek* can therefore be interpreted as an amalgamation of landscape cinema traditions, conventional film making forms and styles, and contemporary cinematic trends.

4.1 Theorising Australian Landscape Cinema

There is limited focus in the literature on the innate "film making" conventions of Australian landscape cinema. Gibson's "Formative Landscapes" is perhaps the most comprehensive theoretical exploration of Australian landscape cinema written to date. In "Formative Landscapes", Gibson presents a sociohistorical framework which he uses to understand landscape cinema and explore its relationship to Australian colonial history. According to Gibson, the landscape is typically positioned as the "common denominator" and as a "leitmotif and ubiquitous central character" in Australian cinema (21). It is therefore positioned as "something much more than an environmental setting for local narratives" (21). Gibson interrogates this "preoccupation with the natural environment" in Australian cinema by posing this question: "what can the cinematic rendition of the land tell us about Australian culture in general?" (21). He then proceeds to argue that Australia, unlike other ancient "Old World" countries and civilisations, is by comparison a "young society" which is "sparsely populated and

meagrely historicized” (22). As a result, “to white sensibility most of Australia has traditionally been construed as empty space devoid of inhabitants, architecture, agriculture and artefacts” (22), and so its national landscape is mythologised and translates as the “structural centre of the nation’s myths of belonging” (23). This, as Gibson puts it, propels the “idea of the intractability of Australian nature” (23).

Given what he claims is the ostensible “intractability” of the landscape, Gibson then contends, while referring to case-study films such as *Sunday Too Far Away* and *Mad Max*, that landscape cinema tends to feature stories about “heroic individualism” because “the society *en masse* cannot make a mark on the land” (26). He suggests that it is for this reason that landscape cinema depicts characters that “hew” individual paths while communing “with the spirit of the land” (26). Even in the character-based narratives of *Sunday Too Far Away* and *Mad Max*, the camera is intensely focused on the landscape, as Gibson argues, a preoccupation which becomes “translated and utilized as an element of myth” and as a “sign of supra-social ‘Australian-ness’” (27).

For Gibson, though, this cinematographic focus on the landscape in Australian cinema is “not the unmediated re-presentation of a portion of reality; it is a *presentation*, a newly created or arranged portion of the reality of the cultural world” (27). He goes further to suggest that filmic representations of the Australian landscape are “presented images” that are “manipulated” to offer an impression of Australian culture (28). Based on this premise, Gibson moves on to argue that “in the Australian setting”, images of the landscape have “customarily been construed as a sign of nature” that can “alter” the “national mythology” and make people “start to think differently” about Australian culture (28). According to Gibson, the visual emphasis on the landscape in Australian cinema is a determining factor in the shaping of Australia’s national identity.

Other Australian film theorists, such as Rodney James Giblett, tend to agree with Gibson’s analysis. Giblett argues that the “different landscapes” presented in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, for example, “can be read allegorically as characters that act out a drama of the colonial history of

the land” (121). Giblett suggests that “these filmic landscapes are a character” and identifies three distinctive landscapes in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*: firstly, “the golden summers of rolling countryside, the landscape of agriculture and pastoralism”; secondly, “the landscape of the bush of the picnic grounds at the base of the rock”; and thirdly, “the rock itself” (121). Like Gibson, Giblett conceives landscape cinema through a sociocultural lens and as an “allegorical” and figurative representation of Australia and its “past”, embodied in a set of films which emphasise and “characterise” the national landscape and the pervasive cultural, social and ideological systems which form the basis of Australian society.

I position Gibson’s understanding of Australian landscape cinema as useful to consider for this study. “Formative Landscapes” is a theoretical platform from which I offer an alternative critical framework for examining the visual depiction of landscape in Australian cinema. Indeed, Gibson’s focus is on the formation of Australia’s national identity through constructed cinematic images that position the outback landscape as a “character” and as an allegorical representation of Australia’s cultural and colonial history. For me, this is evident in *Wolf Creek* and can be identified through Will Gibson’s cinematographic framing of the Western Australian landscape which emphatically reinforces the setting and “space” where horror unfolds. However, what “Formative Landscapes” does not draw as much attention to are the “film making” traditions in landscape cinema, such as the positioning of cameras at remote distances to the landscape and recurring insert shots of landscape vistas. In this chapter, I not only examine the key ideas conveyed through Australian landscape cinema, as Gibson suggests, but also offer an analysis of the visual language and shot construction in key landscape films of the 1970s and 1980s. *Wolf Creek*, as I argue, employs a range of cinematic devices and embodies a distinctive visual “style” that positions it within this film making lineage.

Extending the work of Gibson and others, an additional scholarly thread is apparent in contemporary film literature which draws attention to “Australian” themes in landscape cinema crafted for international audiences. For Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, landscape cinema in the 1970s not only facilitated the development of a lucrative and robust national film industry but equally “established Australian film as an international genre” (75). Many of the films which

constitute this “international genre” position the landscape as menacing and uninviting to outsiders. Employing *Mad Max* as a case-study example, Roslyn Weaver postulates that the supposed “rhetoric about the dangers of the Australian landscape” has become emphatically international in scope and has proffered a national cinema which portrays the “land as hostile” (84). As Weaver points out in *Mad Max*, and also in reference to *Wake in Fright*, landscape cinema thematically embodies an “ever-present contrast between the power of the hostile land and the helplessness of the civilised humans” (85). Indeed, this “contrast” is encapsulated in *Wolf Creek* via cinematographic constructions: as Hunter, Earl and Mitchell transcend by car into Taylor’s spatial domain, the camera, in conjunction with the ominous twangs of Tétaz’s film score, frames them as “helpless” and their Ford as a small, infinitesimal object dwarfed by the landscape’s “power” and ominous expanse.

This idea is also noted by Rayner, who points out that “the landscape has been used to ambiguous or negative effect in Gothic and some period films” (117). He does suggest, however, that in some landscape features, such as *Gallipoli*, a paradoxical “celebration of a distinctive landscape” is presented (117). This “celebration”, as Rayner argues, is exemplified by the “numerous productions’ which present a positive view of landscape in the “development of a national character” and “the (masculine) national type”, resulting in a “distinctive resource or selling point to be used to an aesthetic and commercial advantage” (117). *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, for example, which had significant commercial success overseas, is an overt example of this paradoxical representation: the picturesque tranquillity of the Woodend countryside is juxtaposed to the perilous mystique of the rock nearby. In *Wolf Creek*, this paradox is represented through the “changeover” between geographical “spaces”: when Hunter, Earl and Mitchell transition from their idealistic coastal habitat to the obstinate Western Australian desert, two divergent representations of the Australian landscape are presented and juxtaposed. *Wolf Creek*, through Taylor, represents the antithesis to the positive representation of the “national type” proposed by Rayner. The rural landscape in *Wolf Creek* is not “celebrated” as it is in *Gallipoli* or *The Man from Snowy River* and is instead positioned as “dangerous” and as a metaphorical extension of Taylor’s malevolence.

4.2 Stylistic Conventions in Australian Landscape Cinema

As discussed in Section 4.1, there appears to be a lack of literature about the technical film making aspects of landscape cinema. As such, this chapter explores the cinematographic conventions in landscape cinema which represent the landscape from multiple visual perspectives. As examined in Chapter Two, this tradition in landscape cinema facilitates, as O'Regan suggests, a "type" of cinema. The representation of landscape via camera positioning is also examined within Buscombe's framework for classifying films into genres through the identification of recurring iconographies.

One of the stylistic trends in Australian landscape cinema is to open with a wide-shot of a desolate landscape setting, situating the audience in a remote space. Typically, this compositional approach then employs recurring imagery of the same landscape from various camera positions. The landscape is therefore rendered as anthropomorphic: an omnipresent and pervasive "character", as Gibson and other theorists argue, that is an "active" and personified representation of Australia and its culture rather than being a passive location.

This emphasis on landscape as a "character", and the formation of a national identity through landscape cinema, was arguably proliferated by the reinforcement of landscape imagery in Australian features from the 1970s. It is a key visual characteristic, too, in *Wolf Creek*.

In *Wake in Fright*, Director of Photography, Brian West, implements this trend to frame the landscape as a space of abjection. The film opens, for example, with a 360-degree panning shot of the secluded outback town, Tiboonda. Before the audience is introduced to protagonist John Grant (Gary Bond), a contractually bonded middle-class teacher posted to Tiboonda, the film's outback locale is revealed and visually emphasised through the remote camera positioning and a panning technique which covers the full scope of the expanse. Throughout the film, an aesthetic pattern emerges as the landscape is framed and interpreted using a variety of long shots and wide angles. Vistas of the Bundanyabba outback setting, where Grant is stranded for most of the film,

are rhythmically intercut and reinforce the vastness of the surrounding landscape which engulfs Grant and induces his gradual descent into madness.

Similarly, in *Sunday Too Far Away*, set on a remote sheep station during the 1956 Australian shearer's strike, the plight of knockabout gun shearer Foley and his co-workers, as well as the legal challenges they encounter, is visually embodied through the representation of a stifling and arid outback landscape. Akin to *Wake in Fright*, *Sunday Too Far Away* opens on the land and in nature: the beginning composition fades in from black to a long shot of the sky during sunset, scorched in stark orange by the sweltering sun. Throughout the film, Foley and his male colleagues are consistently shown to be glazed in sweat. Dust permeates the air around them. The ubiquitous sun is harsh and pervades the frame. In *Sunday Too Far Away*, the combative landscape generates an unrelenting heat and looms as an omnipresent backdrop to the non-union labourers who arrive and threaten Foley's employment.

This figurative positioning of the landscape as an entity that is complicit in the human struggle is likewise employed in *My Brilliant Career*. Set in late nineteenth century Australia, the film opens with an extreme long shot of a modest farm cottage positioned as the central faraway object in a rural farmstead setting. As the young and radical Sybylla Melvyn (Judy Davis) strives for emancipation from her conservative upbringing in the country, the predicament she faces is visually manifested through the film's reiteration of landscape imagery. Vistas of Melvyn's country town setting recur in the film's syntax and are framed using long shots that symbolise her entrapment.

A similar film making approach emerges in films which offer a positive view of the Australian landscape. In *Crocodile Dundee*, for instance, the audience is immediately thrust into the Northern Territory rural milieu where Dundee resides. The opening shot of Dundee's Walkabout Creek setting, aurally punctuated by the echoes of a didgeridoo and shrill bird squawks, is introduced via a sequence of aerial shots which romanticise the widespread rocky terrain beneath. Here, Boyd's camera lingers on the landscape and positions it as an idyllic representation of rural Australia inhabited by benign locals such as Dundee.

Another example to consider is *The Man from Snowy River*. Set, like *My Brilliant Career*, in late nineteenth century Australia, the film opens with a static composition of an agricultural station in a secluded rural locale during the early evening. Throughout the film, imagery of Harrison's (Kirk Douglas) homestead, in conjunction with shots of neighbouring paddocks, grass fields, hills, cliffs and rockfaces, is injected at key points in the narrative. For example, the landscape is idealised and sustained during the romantic interactions between Jim Craig (Tom Burlinson) and Jessica Harrison (Sigrid Thornton), and as Craig and Harrison "break in" a prize cult, close-ups revealing their intimacy are intercut with sweeping deep-focus shots of the immersive landscape. Unlike in *Wake in Fright* and *Sunday Too Far Away*, where the landscape is depicted as punitive and as having an adverse effect on its inhabitants, the landscape in *The Man from Snowy River* is characterised as benevolent and accommodating to Craig and Harrison's burgeoning romance.

The paradoxical representation of the Australian landscape that Rayner suggests is evident in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. The opening image in the film establishes the "place" that the narrative is geographically situated. The image, which fades in from black, first reveals its foreground: rows of lush green trees atop a stretch of landscape spread across the frame. The top half of the frame is obscured by opaque fog clouds. The introductory intertitles are superimposed and tick over, centre-frame. The sound mix encapsulates the serene ambience of the bush setting, interspersed with bird chirps. As the intertitles fade and the fog clouds push into the foreground, Boyd's camera racks focus to a panoramic view of the Hanging Rock. As the rock is made visible, a muffled rumble is added to the sound mix and blended with the ambient tones of the bush exterior. Like the films referenced above, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* is then punctuated by recurrent insertions of wide-shot camera angles, either of the rock itself or the landscapes which border it. The momentousness of the landscape and the implied paranormal qualities of the rock are juxtaposed and reinforced visually via Boyd's camera and Film Editor Max Lemon's sequencing of these images.

I understand each of these cinematic examples to be part of an important film making convention in Australian landscape cinema, one which amplifies visual focus on the landscape and

represents it as a recurrent “character”. Based on Buscombe’s framework, this fetishizing of the landscape becomes a defining element in each film’s aesthetic and positions them within the same distinct cinematic “genre”. As I argue, *Wolf Creek*’s wide-angle framing of the Western Australian outback, using HD cameras mounted atop scaffold towers, as well as Ballantine’s sequencing of these frames in the edit, is an overt reference to the Australian landscape genre established in the 1970s and the film making conventions embodied within it.

4.3 Landscape as a “Character” in *Wolf Creek*

The landscape in *Wolf Creek* is visually depicted, as it is in *Wake in Fright*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Sunday Too Far Away*, *My Brilliant Career* and *The Man from Snowy River* as a sentient “character”. According to Jarratt in the *Making of ‘Wolf Creek’* documentary, the film’s camera emphasis on landscape anthropomorphises its outback setting as “a fifth character” (2006). Schembri likewise observes that the film “works so splendidly”, in part, because of this characterisation of landscape and “Outback mythology” (2005). For me, this emphasis positions the film as a contemporary example of what Gibson, in “Formative Landscapes”, theorises as the constructed mythologising of the landscape in Australian cinema.

In *Wolf Creek*, contemporary Australia in the late 1990s is represented by the visual oscillation between two distinctive landscapes: the populated coastal Broome landscape, inhabited by Hunter, Earl and Mitchell and located on the beachside fringes of the continent, and the uninhabited sparse outback landscape located in Australia’s centre where Taylor resides. When Hunter, Earl and Mitchell cross the geographical and cultural threshold from the comforts of their urban milieu to the unfamiliarity of Taylor’s exotic outback landscape, they become dislocated in an alien environment. This dislocation is visually punctuated, as it is in *Wake in Fright* when Grant stumbles through the foreign Bundanyabba wilderness, by recurring longshots of the vacant stretches of highway and vast outback vistas in which they are immersed.

These two divergent representations of modern Australia evoke a transition from the idyll landscape, synonymous with the film’s opening scenes in the metropolitan hub of Broome

populated by twentysomething urbanites such as Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, to a space, both culturally and geographically, of abjection where “horror” awaits. It is through this literal and metaphorical transition between “spaces” that McLean characterises the remote landscape as threatening and entrenches it in the Australian Gothic horror tradition, as understood by Rayner. As John Scott and Dean Biron also argue in “Wolf Creek, Rurality and the Australian Gothic”:

What at first presents as idyll transforms or reveals its true type, leading to a loss of control on the part of the protagonists. What is notable is the way in which the idyll, a seemingly passive space existing for the consumption of materialist urbanites, seemingly revenges itself by consuming those who would consume it...given the significance of the beach in Australian landscape iconography, it is not surprising that *Wolf Creek* opens with images of three young backpackers frolicking in the waters off Broome, Western Australia...the opening raucous beach party and subsequent spectacular sunrise highlight the friendly atmosphere of Australia’s coastal fringe. Early scenes present conventionally enough as a coming-of-age road movie, as the trio drive their weather-beaten car through scenic, but increasingly isolated and desolate, landscapes. As the three venture further from the coastal fringe, the terrain is transformed into an alienating landscape of bullet ridden signs and dead wildlife. Signs of human habitation melt away as they venture further from the coast, as though hiding from the tourist gaze. The emptiness of the landscape is symbolized through its dryness. (Scott and Biron 311-312)

According to Scott and Biron, *Wolf Creek* constructs the Australian outback landscape via the lens of the urban gaze: as a foreign space of decay, estrangement and hostility with little “human habitation”. This “urban gaze” may likewise represent the progressive views of McLean’s targeted youth demographic. In the *Making of ‘Wolf Creek’*, McLean echoes his intention to personify the outback as a space where urbanites are aliens when he states:

The character of the outback is a very big part of the movie because it’s one of the scariest elements of it. One of the basic ideas (in the movie) is if you take some people into a space, into an isolated place, and cut off all their communication, you’ve then laid

the groundwork for thrilling things to happen. The Australian outback is the perfect place to do that. (McLean 2006)

For McLean, the film's point of transitioning to horror is located in Hunter, Earl and Mitchell's movement from their urban locale to an "isolated" rural setting, where traditional modes of "communication" are severed and replaced by an unfamiliar set of social and cultural mores. The specific point at which this cultural and physical "transition" occurs is reflected through the stark difference in how the film's two landscapes and "worlds" are represented and framed.

The opening sequences of *Wolf Creek*, described in this study's introduction, situate the audience in the sunlit municipal Broome landscape. In contrast to the bleak colourisation of the film's rural landscape, as well as its perceived "dryness", as Scott and Baron point out, the Broome landscape is characterised, like in *Sunday Too Far Away*, by the pervasive presence of the sun which illuminates each composition. It is likewise characterised by an overt abundance of water which symbolises the luxuries and excesses synonymous with a generation of partying millennials frolicking in Australia's coastal regions. The film begins, for example, with a static long shot of the still Broome beachfront as waves gently break and spill over a stretch of goldenbrown sand, etched in footprints. Later, during a party sequence, Mitchell, who is positioned as an extraverted party-boy in his metropolitan habitat, is doused in beer by partygoers and jumps into a pool of water.

Water creates a symbolic distinction between the landscapes in the film. For Jon Stratton, in "Dying to Come to Australia: Asylum Seekers, Tourists and Death", one of the film's key "binaries" is "reinforced by the amount of water in the Broome scenes". He goes on to suggest the following:

Structurally, from onshore in Australia, water is associated with civilisation. We see the three backpackers mucking around in the hostel's swimming pool. They sleep on the beach and in the dawn before they leave, Liz goes for a swim. In contrast the outback is

completely dry. In Australian mythography the drier the outback, the more lawless and threatening it is. (Stratton 125)

The “mythography” that Stratton alludes to, where the barren outback Australian landscape symbolises a collapse of the societal mores associated with urban civilisation, is a convention synonymous with Australian landscape cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Employing Tudor’s framework for classifying genres according to the cultural contexts that films are produced and consumed within, the motif of water in *Wolf Creek* locates the film in a genre tradition geared specifically to the norms of Australian cultural life as depicted in landscape cinema. The opening sequence of *Walkabout*, for instance, reveals a high-rise property on the Sydney coast. Several shots show a teenage girl (Jenny Agutter) and her younger brother (Luc Roeg) swimming in a pool. Behind them is a large body of water. Later, when the girl and her brother are abandoned by their father (Meillon) in the outback, they are stripped of the habitual “comforts” associated with their urban upbringing. Their dislodgement in an alien landscape is in turn represented by the absence of water.

In *Wolf Creek*, as Hunter, Earl and Mitchell travel further from civilisation and deeper into uncharted outback territory, the landscape becomes a “character” that gradually envelops them. Insert shots of wildlife reinforce the mysterious omnipresence of the landscape. Aligned with the cinematic traditions of 1970s Australian landscape features, Gibson’s vistas are intercut with higher frequency and framed from more expansive camera positions to suggest the characters’ isolation. They become ensnared in an unmapped landscape ostensibly governed by Taylor. Ed Gonzalez, in his review of the film for *Slant Magazine*, agrees and puts it this way:

McLean methodically evokes a self-contained universe expressive of a profound sense of mystery and isolation...the film’s locale seems to represent an otherworldly place untouched by accepted societal mores; it’s as if Mick believes he’s the only person in this world and as such is entitled to govern it as he sees fit...characters charge into the desert, so blinded by the heat and dirt that they come to resemble moving Rorschach ink blots.

Like the film's opening shot, these images are expressionistic in nature; they express a gripping vision of characters struggling and resisting to be made out by a terror at once terrestrial and alien. (Gonzalez 2005)

As Gonzalez points out, the outback landscape presented in *Wolf Creek* is a "self-contained universe" and site where horror unfolds in the Gothic tradition. For me, while I agree that the rural landscape presented in *Wolf Creek* dislodges Hunter, Earl and Mitchell in a seemingly isolated "universe" and spatial anomaly where they are severed from civilisation and the urban life that they are acquainted with, I position it to simultaneously evoke the "reality" of outback Australian culture, which in actuality consists of vast untamed expanses of desert and where nomad figures such as Taylor do exist. *Wolf Creek*, as I understand it, employs landscape imagery to create both a mythologised image of the Australian outback in the Gothic horror tradition and a stark and realistic representation of rural Australia.

Moreover, McLean and Gibson's anthropomorphising of the landscape, which, as Gonzalez additionally argues, is "expressive of a profound sense of mystery" and depicts an "otherworldly place" (2005), recalls Weir and Boyd's visual depiction of the ethereal *Picnic at Hanging Rock* landscape. This overt aesthetic borrowing positions *Wolf Creek* in the Australian landscape film genre established in the 1970s through AFC-funded "period films" such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. In *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, private school girls, Miranda St. Clare (Anne-Louise Lambert), Irma Leopold (Karen Robson), Marion Quade (Jane Vallis) and Edith Horton (Christine Schuler), step outside the familiar confines of Appleyard College and the regimented behavioural standards implemented by headmistress, Mrs. Appleyard (Rachel Roberts), by leaving the scheduled Valentine's Day picnic to traverse the alien terrain of Hanging Rock. Boyd's camera frames the rock from a multitude of obscure angles as the schoolgirls traverse its narrow crevices. Lemon's disjointed sequencing of these images, as the schoolgirls trek further into the abyss of the rock, evokes their alienation and the loss of "time" and "place". The rock and its surrounds, like the outback landscape in *Wolf Creek*, engulfs them. Boyd's lingering cinematography, complemented atmospherically by the eerie tones of the pan pipes in Gheorghe

Zamfir's score, suggests this engulfing, as the schoolgirls become dislocated in the landscape. The film's visual language suggests that they have crossed the threshold into a timeless "otherworldly" void.

The triviality of human existence in comparison to nature and the rural landscape is an important theme in both *Wolf Creek* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. According to Peter Matthews in "Assessing the Moral Landscape: Postcolonial Violence in Australian Films", it is this essential premise that creates "visible resonance" between the films (52). One of these "resonances" is "the congruent element of a journey being taken to a geographical landmark that serves as a marker of the sublime" (55). In both films, characters are lured to these "landmarks" to symbolise youthful intrusion in the natural order provoked by a curiosity about the unknown. In *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, the schoolgirls, led by Miranda, are impelled to explore the rock and traverse the alien landscape after learning about its mysterious formation a million years prior. In *Wolf Creek*, the impetus for Hunter, Mitchell and Earl's trek into the Australian wilderness is to visit the site of a historic meteor crash, the Wolfe Creek Crater. When they arrive at their destination, they look out over the horizon and marvel, mouths slightly agape, at its vastness. Indeed, as Matthews points out, Gibson's framing of the crater's expanse, with a camera that is always moving, "evokes the awesome power of nature and the smallness of humanity in this picture" (55-56). This characterisation of the rural landscape in *Wolf Creek*, as a site of "power" that entices inquisitive urban youth into the unknown, locates the film in the cinematic lineage of landscape features such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* which embody similar features.

4.4 Taylor as an Embodiment of the Natural Order

An additional affiliation between *Wolf Creek* and the cinematic traditions of Australian landscape films is the employment of Taylor as a figurative representation of the uncompromising natural order. Taylor is, essentially, the tangible embodiment of the landscape he inhabits. As McLean recalls on the *Wolf Creek* DVD Audio Commentary, Taylor is depicted in the film as a metaphorical "force of nature" (2011). Similarly, Peter Bradshaw, writing for *The Guardian*, suggests that Taylor, who "shows up out of nowhere" to lure Mitchell, Hunter and

Earl back to his campsite, materialises from the heart of a “colossal and implacable landscape” (2005). This notion of a combative natural order and “force”, represented in *Wolf Creek* through Taylor and the unforgiving severity of the rural landscape terrain, is part of a long-held tradition in Australian landscape and Gothic horror cinema.

Take, for example, the strong thematic and stylistic parallels between *Wolf Creek* and Colin Eggleston’s *Long Weekend* (1978). In *Long Weekend*, an urban couple from Sydney, Peter (John Hargreaves) and Marcia (Bryony Behets), venture outside the city and into the Australian wilderness on a camping trip. Peter and Marcia fight incessantly, pollute the environment and kill various wildlife, including a kangaroo and a dugong. In response to this pollution and invasion of the environment, the landscape, which, as Maja Milatovic notes, is “populated by various hostile animals” (78), retaliates. This idea of an omnipresent assembly of wildlife shielding their habitat is evoked in *Wolf Creek*: as Mitchell, Hunter and Earl trek further into Taylor’s landscape, insert shots of emus and birds reinforce the presence of an all-encompassing natural order intent on protecting their domain.

Indeed, the writer of *Long Weekend*, Everett De Roche, during an interview for *Not Quite Hollywood*, explains that *Long Weekend* is about “nature fighting back” and having its “own immune system” to combat people who “become too intrusive” (2008). Thematically, the conflict between nature itself (the landscape and the organisms and wildlife which inhabit it) and those who invade nature (urban characters or outsiders who transgress within it) is a prevalent subtextual focus in Australian landscape cinema, particularly *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, as this chapter has discussed. It is an essential thematic focus, too, in *Long Weekend* and then later, as I argue, in *Wolf Creek*.

The opening shot of *Long Weekend* visually prefigures this core idea of nature as an omnipresent unsettled force maintaining its territory. Vincent Monton’s camera fades in from black to a jagged cliff-face in the foreground. The wind rumbles. A large spider, centre-frame, edges up the rock. Later, two close-ups reveal a mass of scurrying bull-ants on grass shards and the rocky

landscape surface. In all three shots, the stillness and isolation of nature on the surface is juxtaposed to its ominous underbelly.

During *Long Weekend*, the resistive “immune system” of nature is symbolised through a series of violent acts inflicted on Peter and Marcia that culminate in their murders: Peter and Marcia first encounter lightning and heavy rainfall, Marcia is almost hit by a spear from Peter’s speargun despite the safety switch being on, Peter is attacked by an eagle, a possum then bites his hand, a tree branch falls and narrowly averts him (twice), and a flock of birds fly into the car windscreen as Marcia attempts to drive away. Driven to insanity, Peter, now alone and isolated during the night, becomes engulfed and trapped by the combative wildlife and is forced to shoot his speargun, accidentally killing Marcia. Ultimately, at the end of the film, when Peter escapes, finds a highway, attempts flag down a truck driver and is instead hit and killed (the driver was distracted by an eagle which flew through the truck window) the natural order triumphs and successfully eliminates the threat that Peter and Marcia posed. As Catherine Simpson observes, in Australian cinema, “nature is resilient and at times even vengeful towards those who do not treat it with respect”, and in the case of *Long Weekend*, Peter and Marcia “pay the ultimate price and become nature’s prey” (44).

In *Wolf Creek*, however, the “natural order” is represented figuratively, and it is Taylor, not the surrounding wildlife, who safeguards the landscape. As Jarratt writes in *The Bastard from the Bush*, “Mick can’t stand all these bloody low-life young pricks from foreign countries backpacking through his backyard” (290). Taylor can be interpreted as a metaphorical embodiment of the ominous “lurking underbelly” within the Australian landscape. The landscape, effectively, becomes “his backyard”. Indeed, the scene from *Wolf Creek* which best exemplifies this embodiment is the film’s final image. It begins with a static long shot of the setting sun which colours the sky in an amalgamation of yellow and orange hues. A silhouetted Taylor enters the foreground, centre-frame. He wears his trademark Akubra. His Ruger rifle is at his waist. He walks towards the landscape, away from the camera. The shrill twangs of Tezaz’s film score build to a crescendo as Taylor recedes into the distance and visibly dissipates back

into the landscape with a slow fade. Ultimately, after murdering Hunter and Earl, “intruders” in his habitat, Taylor has apparently maintained the natural order with which he is complicit.

One of the “forms” of nature inherent in Australian landscape and Gothic horror cinema that *Wolf Creek* similarly draws inspiration from is the wild untamed animal or beast as the central antagonist. Take, for example, Russell Mulcahy’s creature horror film *Razorback* (1984). Written by De Roche, the film is based in a rural outback community visited by American wildlife reporter and animal rights activist Beth Winters (Judy Morris), who travels to the community to document and expose an illegal pet food processing factory, managed by local hunting enthusiasts Benny Baker (Chris Haywood) and his brother Dicko (David Argue). The figure of the violent undomesticated razorback, like the plethora of wildlife in *Long Weekend*, embodies nature’s internal resistance to human intrusion and, as Milatovic argues, represents “a sense of retribution for the exploitation and harming of the wildlife” (77). Similarly, in Arch Nicholson’s horror film *Dark Age* (1987), it is a saltwater crocodile who violently attacks and kills “intruders” to preserve its Northern Territory lakeside habitat. Here, the thematic premise of nature seeking vengeance and maintaining the natural order is, as Ryan contends in “Horror”, “literalized in the form of killer crocodiles” (191). In *Wolf Creek*, Taylor can be read as a conflation of these various embodiments and “forms” of nature which occupy Australia’s rural landscapes.

This personification of nature transcends Australian landscape cinema and can also be identified in American thrillers and animal horror films of the 1970s. Steven Spielberg’s *Jaws* (1975), for instance, positions a Great White Shark as an antagonist and maniacal “killer” who protects its ocean habitat by violently dispatching those who inhabit the water and encroach its territory. As Michael Fuchs argues, the violence in *Jaws* evokes the “dichotomy between human and nonhuman animals” (180). During the film, Matt Hooper (Richard Dreyfus), an oceanographer who assists local police chief Martin Brody (Roy Scheider) in capturing the shark, delivers an important line of dialogue when he mentions that the shark, a territorial predator, has “staked a claim” on the ocean landscape by slaughtering swimmers. The conflict between nature and human intervention, which is manifested through the violent disposition of the shark, appears to

be a universal theme represented within a range of international screen contexts. This suggests that *Wolf Creek* can also be understood as not just belonging to the traditions of Australian landscape cinema but to a global cinematic phenomenon where landscapes are employed as sites for violent confrontation and horror to unfold.

In this chapter, I have drawn focus to the landscape imagery in *Wolf Creek* and position it as a contemporary reimagining of the cinematographic trends and tropes of 1970s Australian landscape features. *Wolf Creek*, like the key Australian films referred to in this chapter, such as *Wake in Fright*, *Sunday Too Far Away* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, characterises the rural landscape as having presence through visual cinematic constructions that embody ideas derived from Australia's colonial history and the notion of the human pitted against nature. One of these key ideas, embedded in the Gothic horror tradition, is the rural landscape as a malevolent force and space where violence materialises. Taylor, as I argue in this chapter, comes to represent and embody this violent and punitive "force" within the landscape of *Wolf Creek*.

CHAPTER FIVE: MASCULINITY, TAYLOR AND *WOLF CREEK*

In *The Making of 'Wolf Creek'*, McLean points out that Taylor is an “interesting combination for a character” (2006). Recently, during an interview for American-based film podcast *Shock Waves*, he likewise recalls that, when designing Taylor’s costume, he and Costume Designer Nicola Dunn “took elements of iconic figures” from Australian popular culture, such as Slim Dusty, “and put them into one character” (2016). These quotes, and numerous other examples across a range of media interviews and commentary, reveal McLean’s apparent intention to construct Taylor through recognisable masculine icons from Australia’s cultural and historical past.

Using McLean’s revelation as an impetus for further analysis, this chapter positions the character of Taylor as an amalgamation of “types” drawn from Australian masculine film traditions, stemming predominantly from cinema at the conception of the Australian film revival in the 1970s. Taylor appears to be a collocation of various masculine characters emerging in such cinema, such as the “ocker” archetype, rough-as-guts outback labourer, and the mythologised national “hero” or “digger”. Drawing upon Jarratt’s own upbringing in rural Australia, I additionally examine the transtextual relationship between Taylor and characters from Jarratt’s own filmography spanning across four decades, as well as the careers of other celebrated masculine figures in Australian cinema and culture such as Rafferty and Hogan.

Finally, I explore the interactions between Taylor and Mitchell, who each embody conflicting representations of masculinity within Australia’s broad cultural discourses: Taylor as a “traditional” masculine type evoking the Australian outback working class of the 1950s, and Mitchell as a “modern” urban millennial of the 2000s. This chapter argues that traditional representations of masculinity in Australian film, culture and popular media have shifted and contemporary film audiences, such as the mid-2000s audience that *Wolf Creek* is designed for, are now positioned to translate these representations in a new way. McLean’s innovative style of film making, and the deploying of the character of Mitchell in juxtaposition to Taylor, presents a progressive view of masculine power dynamics within *Wolf Creek*.

5.1 Jarratt's Early Cinematic Roles

As a starting point for this discussion of masculinity, I position the film roles from Jarratt's acting career as a substantive influence on the visual and psychological constitution of the character of Taylor. Jarratt's childhood in outback Australia is important to consider here. Born and raised in Wongawilli, a remote mining town south of Wollongong, he spent the early part of his life, as he describes in *The Bastard from the Bush*, in houses that "were rough-as-guts shacks, which men with building skills had transformed into quaint cottages" (3). In 1963, aged ten, Jarratt moved with his family to Island Bend in New South Wales after his father, Bruce, got a job as an overseer in the Snowy Mountains Scheme. As Jarratt recalls: "I don't know the population of the town. There must have been sixty or seventy houses, so that's about 300 people" (44).

Jarratt's upbringing in the remote Wongawilli and Island Bend communities, and early assimilation to that lifestyle, informed the specific character types he later portrayed across his filmography. During the *DP/30* YouTube interview, McLean clarifies that this was one of the key reasons he cast him as Taylor in the original film: "He knew so much about the character because he understood the world of the character". In the same interview, Jarratt then added: "I was born and raised in the outback, in the bush. I understand those kinds of characters" (2014). On multiple occasions during interviews, Jarratt has cited his father as a significant influence for him when rehearsing Taylor's dialogue and developing the character's iconic drawl and intonation. As he writes in his autobiography:

Mick was a rough, tough outback bloke with a sense of humour. I thought to myself, *Whom do I know that fits this bill? Dad!* So Mick Taylor is an impersonation of my father. I hasten to add that dad was not psychopathic or evil, so I added 'evil serial killer' to the mix. Dad had a really deep voice; I haven't, so I made Mick's voice gravelly. (Jarratt 290)

Based on these insights into Jarratt's character development and McLean's criteria for casting him, the figure of Taylor, then, can be viewed as not only an amalgamation of colloquial outback culture and localised vernacular as depicted in Australian cinema, but the fictional embodiment of Jarratt's real-life experiences and his familial history.

Before *Wolf Creek*, Jarratt typically portrayed innocuous representations of the Australian masculine type. Beginning in the 1970s, Jarratt forged a reputation for playing outback larrikins and affable country men. Taylor can thus be read as an "inversion" of Jarratt's established screen persona. As Moran and Vieth argue, "*Wolf Creek* comprehensively destroyed any intertextual associations of goodness and clean, suburban living that may have been associated with his screen persona" (110). This persona can be traced to his 1975 role as genial country boy, Albert Crundall, in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Crundall is the young Australian coachman for the similarly aged upper-class Englishman, Michael Fitzhubert (Dominic Guard). Crundall and Fitzhubert share several scenes in which Fitzhubert's mild-mannered and refined sensibilities are juxtaposed to Crundall's out-spoken laconicism. Despite their cultural differences, Crundall's affability, like Taylor's, isn't a pretence – he takes an earnest liking to Fitzhubert and aids him in his effort to recover Miranda and her friends when they go missing at Hanging Rock.

Crundall is the first in a long list of Jarratt's film characters that typify the benign rural masculine archetype in Australian cinema. After *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, for example, he played the conservative and university-educated, Sandy, in Christopher Fraser's drama film, *Summer City* (1977), cordial outback drifter, Tommy Martin, in Howard Rubie's 1950s period film, *The Settlement* (1984), and stoic well-intentioned ranger, Steve Harris, in *Dark Age*. Each of these characters, unlike Taylor, are innocuous representations of Australian outback culture subjugated by male locals. Jarratt's performance as Ned Kelly in the four-part Australian miniseries, *The Last Outlaw* (1980), also connects the actor to broader representations of antiauthoritarian masculine behaviour rooted in Australian history through his portrayal of an iconic character entrenched in bushranger folklore.

However, it was Jarratt's transition to commercial television in the 1990s which inaugurated his iconic screen persona for a mainstream national audience. Between 1995 and 1999, with his then-partner, Noni Hazlehurst, Jarratt presented the long-running Australian lifestyle program, *Better Homes and Gardens*, performing, what he describes in his autobiography, as the role of "someone who could build" and be the "DIY presenter" (256-57). According to Stratton, Jarratt's weekly performance on *Better Homes and Gardens* as an everyday DIY guru creates an "inter-textual association" with *Wolf Creek* which makes Taylor "even more shocking". Stratton poses this question: "Does Taylor's behaviour, or at least the moral propensity for it, exist in every (male) Australian?" (124). As Stratton suggests, Jarratt's embodiment of Taylor, considering the history of his filmography which informs it, aligned with his performance in *Better Homes and Gardens*, invites complex questions about constructions of masculinity in Australian media and cinema. Moreover, Jarratt's role as endearing country farmer, Terry Dodge, in the prime-time Australian television drama series, *McLeod's Daughters*, who he played across ninety-four episodes between 2001 and 2006, also exemplifies the complex "intertextual association" between Jarratt as the villainous Taylor and the benign television persona he cultivated. Indeed, Jarratt was still part of the *McLeod's Daughters* cast when *Wolf Creek* was first released in cinemas in late 2005.

By casting Jarratt as Taylor, McLean does more than simply overturn and challenge embedded notions about Jarratt's screen persona. Embodied in the figure of Taylor, too, are allusions to "other" masculine icons of Australian cinema, such as Rafferty during the less fruitful era in Australian film production of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Thompson as a local "star" in 1970s AFC-funded period films, Hogan in the 1980s, and, to a lesser extent, regular character actors and supporting cast in Australian films such as John Meillon.

5.2 Other Masculine Icons in Australian Cinema

Australia's film industry is an important cultural export. For McFarlane, Australia's national cinema, like other national cinemas, endeavours to "reveal a good deal about itself to the rest of the world" and reinforces the "Australian-ness of the Australian experience" (39). As introduced

in Chapter Two through the theories of O'Regan, Moran, Vieth and Turner, the unique representations in Australian cinema, such as specific settings, character types and visual symbols, distinguishes it from other national cinemas and frames the distinctive Australian cultural experience. It offers a cinematic insight into Australia's national identity.

It is within this framework that I explore the impact of Rafferty and his position as a masculine icon of Australian cinema. Indeed, it is through Rafferty that Jarratt's performance style and masculine "persona" finds its cinematic lineage. Rafferty was Australia's recognisable film actor of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and is revered for his work in representing archetypal Australian maleness. As Moran and Vieth assert, Rafferty was the "major Australian film star celebrity" during a downturn in Australia's cinematic output (16).

Like Jarratt, Rafferty was born and raised in a remote rural area, the mining town of Broken Hill in outback New South Wales. Rafferty embodied a distinctive set of masculine "types" over his thirty-year acting career. These types included the paternal authority figure, as evident later in his career, mainly in his cameo role as stern father figure Harry Kelly in Michael Powell's *They're A Weird Mob* (1966), and the imposing local policeman, Jock Crawford, in *Wake in Fright*, his final film appearance before his death in 1971. He also played the valiant larger-than-life soldier, national hero or drover, related archetypes that he primarily depicted early in his career in Charles Chauvel's war films, *Forty Thousand Horseman* (1940) and *The Rats of Tobruk* (1944), and as Dan McAlpine in Harry Watt's British-Australian cross-over film *The Overlanders* (1946). As Jeffrey Richards puts it, Rafferty's performance as McAlpine contributed to his reputed tag as the "Australian Gary Cooper" (315).

Rafferty became one of Australia's early cultural exports not just because of the iconic screen persona he established but because of his appearances in a string of popular British television commercials about British emigration to Australia in the late 1950s. These appearances positioned Rafferty as an overseas commodity that offered an idealised image of Australian maleness. The commodification of the Australian male film "celebrity" for international audiences was likewise seen in the 1980s through comedian Paul Hogan. Like Rafferty and also

Jarratt, Hogan was born in a remote rural community, the black opal mining town, Lightning Ridge, in northern New South Wales. Hogan was Australia's most prominent export to America during the 1980s. This was partly due to his pivotal role as the "Aussie" abroad in overseas television commercials, such as in a series of Foster's Lager advertisements. Hogan was the public face of the Australian tourism sector and symbolised the larrikinism, laconicism and "masculine" qualities unique to outback Australian culture. As Blackwood observes:

Across the twentieth century and beyond, this *mythos* of the larrikin or 'bloke' has been a resilient one in cultural representations of both the rural and urban Australian male, whether they be rural stockmen, bushrangers, soldiers at Gallipoli or surf lifesavers, even extended more recently (at times) to include females, Indigenous peoples and immigrants. However, it was only in the 1980s that this stereotype was translated and commodified into a global tourist icon by Australian comedian Paul Hogan. Hogan made two contributions to this newer representation: firstly, as the modern Aussie every-male of the 'put another shrimp on the barbie' campaign of the mid-1980s; and secondly, starring as crocodile man Mick Dundee in the 1986 box-office blockbuster *Crocodile Dundee*. (Blackwood 493)

Indeed, it is Hogan's performance as the affable crocodile-poacher, Dundee, in *Crocodile Dundee* and the spawning *Crocodile Dundee* franchise consisting of John Cornell's *Crocodile Dundee II* (1988) and Simon Wincer's *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles* (2001), which propelled him into the international cinematic arena. Hogan's constructed identity as a "tourist icon", geared to the American public, is mythologised in the *Crocodile Dundee* narrative: Dundee, in pursuit of his American journalist love interest, Sue Charlton, (Linda Kozlowski), travels to the States and remains abroad throughout the film's second half. Meaghan Morris agrees and puts it this way:

Crocodile Dundee is an export-drive allegory: the small, remote community of Walkabout Creek, with its fumbling exotica industry (emblematic of Australia's place in

the global cinema economy), manages to export its crocodile-poacher and, with a little help from the American media, market him brilliantly in New York. (Morris 111)

As Morris hypothesises, the cultural phenomenon of Hogan, proliferated through his characterisation of the fictional Dundee, was moulded for the “overseas gaze” and helped simultaneously “manage” both American and Australian audiences.

Morris’ view is useful to consider for this study as a basis for understanding this history of “positive” tourism campaigning and national mythologising through Hogan, as well as through “Crocodile Hunter”, Steve Irwin, in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In *Wolf Creek*, as I argue, this constructed image of the gregarious and inviting Australian male is emphatically subverted through the character of Taylor. Taylor effectively becomes an antithetical “evil” counterpart to Dundee. Whereas *Crocodile Dundee* represents the Australian landscape as idyllic, *Wolf Creek* frames it as a precarious wasteland in which the predatory Taylor lurks. In the landscape of *Wolf Creek*, idyllic representations of the outback, such as those depicted through the work of Hogan and Irwin, do not appear to exist.

As two clearly defined representations of “masculinity” in Australian cinema, much academic work has drawn focus to the relationship between Taylor and Dundee. A significant portion of this focus positions Taylor as the antithesis and negative “inversion” of Dundee and the national bushman archetype. As Ryan argues in “Monster Factory: International Dynamics of the Australian Horror Movie Industry”, Taylor “amounts to a maniacal version of the character of Mick Dundee” (86). Blackwood agrees and writes: “it is clear to see that Mick Taylor’s character is a direct descendant of the conventional, outback man epitomized by Mick Dundee...Taylor is (almost literally) Mick Dundee radically ‘tailored’” (493-94). I also agree with this assertion and likewise position Taylor in juxtaposition to Dundee throughout this chapter. I additionally examine a number of structural and stylistic commonalities between the films and the visual presentation of the characters.

Indeed, in *Wolf Creek*, McLean makes his screen references to *Crocodile Dundee* overt, a point which Blackwood also identifies. Firstly, both characters have the first name “Mick”. Secondly, when Hunter, Earl and Mitchell first meet Taylor, Earl is enamoured with him and says to her friends: “He’s like one of those guys from the outback Australia shows. He’s like Crocodile Dundee or something”. Thirdly, as they sit by the fire at Taylor’s campsite, Mitchell innocently quips to Taylor: “You get to cruise around the bush saying cool stuff like ‘that’s not a knife, *this* is a knife”, echoing Hogan’s dialogue in *Crocodile Dundee*. Finally, in *Wolf Creek*’s third act, when a low-angle shot frames Taylor standing “above” Hunter as she is immobilised on the ground below him, clutching a pocket knife, he clasps a bloodied hunting knife and taunts her by mimicking Mitchell’s quip: “like your little mate said before, you know, that’s not a knife...*this* is a knife”.

McLean’s references also transcend spoken dialogue and focus on visual representations. In terms of cinematography, framing and “style”, the sequencing of shots when both Micks are introduced is visually similar. In *Wolf Creek*, Taylor slowly emerges from darkness as his Ute headlights glare in the otherwise pitch-black background. His key features, the plaid shirt, grey mutton-chop sideburns and Akubra, are illuminated by Mitchell’s torch as he walks from his stationary vehicle towards the protagonists (and the camera). When he intones, “what the bloody hell are you mob doin’ out here? You scared the shit outta me”, he is fully visible and depicted in a medium close-up, centre-frame.

In *Crocodile Dundee*, which has clearly influenced McLean’s directorial choices, Dundee similarly “emerges” into the vacant space of the frame. As the rock soundtrack hits top volume, Dundee, holding a fake crocodile and wearing his Akubra, rises from the pub floor, pushes into the foreground, leans on the bar bench, and says, “two beers, alright? One for me, and one for me mate”. As he speaks, the music abruptly ends. Like Taylor, Dundee’s line of dialogue, which marks his “introduction”, is aurally emphasised by the sudden shift to a purely diegetic sound mix.

5.3 The Akubra as a Masculine Symbol

The physical resemblance between Taylor and Dundee is also evident. Indeed, it is the Akubra hat that both characters wear as part of their distinctive costumes that creates a tangible link between them. It is also one of the key significations between Taylor and a bevy of other male characters across the history of Australian cinema. As Grenville Turner writes, the Akubra, which was “once used by country people as a work hat” shielding them from the harsh Australian sun, is now worn by a “legion of everyday Australians as a national insignia” (1). As he goes on to suggest, the Akubra has thus “become Australia’s national hat” (3).

The Akubra is a marker of the stereotypical bushman and stockman and an emblem of traditional Australian masculinity. Since 1912, various national celebrities and male figures have worn the Akubra as a badge of honour and as a proud masculine patriotic symbol. Renowned Australian bush poet Banjo Patterson, for instance, whose iconic poems, *Clancy of the Overflow* (1889), *The Man from Snowy River* (1890) and *Waltzing Matilda* (1895), impelled the male bush archetype into national folklore, can be identified in historical photographs wearing his trademark curved rim Akubra. Australian country music pioneers and cultural icons, Tex Morton (who was born in New Zealand but emigrated to Australia as a teenager), the “Yodelling Jackaroo” Buddy Williams, and Australia’s “Father of Country Music”, Slim Dusty, each wore an Akubra during most, if not all, of their public appearances, particularly while on stage and during live performances. The Akubra, as well as the Driza-Bone oil skin coat, is a visual signifier in popular culture of Australian maleness.

As such, the symbol of the Akubra is employed in much Australian cinema as a recurring image and motif of masculinity. It is thus a binding agent which represents the different “types” of masculine figures in Australian cinema. The link between these different “types” can be understood through the archetypal framework for classifying genres by Bazin and Warshow, introduced in Chapter Two. In Bruce Beresford’s *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), and his sequel, *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own* (1974), for instance, the title character, Barry McKenzie (Barry Crocker), is always seen wearing his ostentatiously too-large dark brown felt

Akubra. Both films, which, alongside Tim Burstall's bawdy sex comedies, *Stork* (1971), and *Alvin Purple* (1973), brought into vogue the "ocker" Australian male archetype of the early 1970s, provided, according to Rayner, a "portrait of national character" (61). The "national character" of the ocker refers to an unrefined Australian male who speaks in colloquialisms and has a distinctive and localised accent. Ben Goldsmith and Geoffrey Lealand define the term "ocker" as associated with "middle-class stereotyping of working-class Australians" (161). In Australian cinema, the Akubra hat is presented as a symbol of this working-class sensibility.

Barry McKenzie is widely regarded as the quintessential cinematic "portrait" of ockerism who exhibits characteristics synonymous with this stereotype. McKenzie's Akubra, which, like Taylor's, he always wears on screen, is a motif which denotes "Australian-ness" and one aspect of the national "type" emerging within Australia's New Wave cinema. Particularly in the first instalment, which is set abroad in the United Kingdom and tracks McKenzie across a string of sexualised alcohol-infused vignettes, his Akubra is a national marker and the antithesis to the well-pressed suits and groomed appearances of the decorous Englishmen with whom he interacts.

Similarly, in *They're a Weird Mob*, based on John O'Grady's 1957 novel of the same name, the Akubra is positioned, as it is in *Barry McKenzie* and later *Wolf Creek*, as a representation of Australian masculine traditions. *They're a Weird Mob* chronicles the experience of Italian immigrant, Nino Culotta (Walter Chiari), as he arrives in Sydney and finds difficulty assimilating to the Australian lifestyle and decoding cultural norms and the social cues of the locals around him. As such, in *They're a Weird Mob*, Powell juxtaposes Australian masculine archetypes with Culotta's uninitiated European sensibilities. The Akubra is employed as a key visual metaphor to explore this cultural dissonance.

During the film's grandiloquent montage opening, Akubra-wearing Australian bushmen are seen deep in scrubland hunting with rifles, inadvertently firing at each other instead of the targeted wildlife. Accompanied by a male voice-over which reinforces that Australia is a "nation of sportsmen" who will "have a shot at anything that moves", this comically-gearred montage

showcases the Akubra as a marker for the outback larrikin archetype. Throughout the first narrative act in *They're a Weird Mob*, Culotta's cream brown coloured single-breasted suit, which he naively wears to his first day of work as a bricklayer, stands out from blue collar workman's attire and frayed Akubras that his rugged and larger-than-life work colleagues, Joe (Ed Devereaux), Pat (Slim DeGrey), Jimmy (Charles Little) and Dennis (Meillon), wear as reinforcement of their working-class statuses. It isn't until the beginning of the film's second act that Culotta is culturally integrated. Shirtless, sweat-glazed and wearing an Akubra, he digs soil with a mattock, embodies the physical appearance of and appropriates the set of skills evident in the traditional masculine "type". It is from this point that his colleagues accept him as part of their friendship circle and the broader community that they belong.

In *Wake in Fright*, it is again the Akubra which is inscribed as one of several signifiers of conventional Australian masculinity. The "masculine type" represented in *Wake in Fright*, much like in *Sunday Too Far Away*, clearly influenced McLean and Jarratt when developing the character of Taylor. In *Wake in Fright*, this "type", the rough-as-guts beer-drinking larrikin who lives off the land and signposts this lifestyle by wearing an Akubra, is contrasted with Grant's sharp intellect, book smarts, conservatism and immaculate dress sense. Unlike the local Bundanyabba townsfolk, Grant, at no point in the film, is viewed wearing an Akubra or a hat of any description.

Several shots in the film acutely emphasise the Akubra within the frame. When Grant first arrives in the remote town, a single take dolly shot tracks him as he tentatively moves within the local pub, receding into the background as a sea of rambunctious male patrons, many of whom are wearing Akubras, obscure him from camera view. Grant buys a schooner of beer and finds a corner spot to sit. He puts a cigarette to his mouth. As he is about to light up, a sturdy male arm enters the left foreground, holding a different lighter. The lighter is clicked and a flame appears. Grant looks up, and tracking his line of sight, the camera pans screen-left and tilts to reveal Crawford (Rafferty), who stands in front of Grant, his back to the camera. The focal point within the composition is Crawford's light-brown felt Akubra which, given his height, is positioned

“above” Grant’s eyeline and becomes visually preeminent. Because the audience do not yet see Crawford’s face or his discernible front-on physical features, it is his Akubra which stands out as cue to his masculine “type”, and evokes, also, through inter-textual association, Rafferty’s history of portraying characters that are likewise part of this tradition.

The Akubra as a recurring motif in Australian cinema also emerges in the costume design of male characters in mainstream AFC-funded 1970s and 1980s period films. In *Gallipoli*, country boy, stockman and talented runner, Archie Hamilton (Mark Lee), who enlists in the Light Horse during WWI, wears an Akubra as a marker of his rural upbringing and the working-class “type” who inhabits that social and cultural space. Hamilton’s rugged Akubra-wearing bushman appearance is visually juxtaposed to the slick dress sense of Perth-born urbanite and equally talented runner Frank Dunne (Mel Gibson), who enlists in the infantry. According to O’Regan, *Gallipoli* propagated “recognizable types” in Hamilton and Dunne, and ultimately “reconciled country (Archie) and city (Frank)” (20). It is partly through costume design that these distinctly Australian male “types” are differentiated. Indeed, to reflect Dunne’s metropolitan sensibilities, he wears a flat cap throughout the film and not the characteristic Akubra.

Likewise, during *The Man from Snowy River*, based on Banjo Paterson’s original poem, the iconic character of Clancy (Thompson), the mythical drover in Paterson’s *The Man from Snowy River* and *Clancy of the Overflow*, appears during several scenes, on horseback and always wearing his dust-covered, cream coloured Akubra. As Jonathan King puts it, characters wear Akubra hats as “symbols of rugged Aussie manhood” (202). This use of the symbol is seen in the various film adaptations of Patterson’s poem, such as Miller’s 1982 version, which includes culturally and historically immortalised figures such as Clancy, as well as key protagonist Jim Craig (Tom Burlinson).

These cinematic variations of the Australian masculine “type”, from the knockabout “ocker” embodied by characters McKenzie, Purple and Graham “Stork” Wallace (Bruce Spence) in *Stork*, to the outback larrikinism and robustness of Crawford and Foley in *Sunday Too Far Away*, to national heroes of Australian folklore such as Thompson’s portrayal of Clancy in *The Man*

from *Snowy River*, are amalgamated in the figure of Taylor. Taylor's distinctive costume and personal attributes visibly embody and "combine" these masculine representations from Australia's cinematic past. Taylor's appearance, with his plaid shirt rolled up to his biceps and his top button open, evokes, for example, a connection to the sweat-laced and open-shirted Foley and his horde of sheep shearers labouring under the sweltering Australian sun; or to Thompson's character, Dick, in *Wake in Fright*, who is seen during the film with his shirt unbuttoned, biceps exposed, elevated above car level in the back seat of a speeding Ute, on the way to hunt kangaroos, arms erect, rifle in tow.

But it is Taylor's Akubra, like Crawford's, which is visually and allegorically suggestive of a cultural history of which he is part and of the representations of masculinity embodied within it. Like *Wake in Fright* and numerous other Australian films from the 1970s and 1980s, Taylor's Akubra dominates several frames and is aesthetically centralised in several visual compositions in *Wolf Creek*. For example, when Hunter, Earl and Mitchell first encounter Taylor at night, he is hunched over the front of their broken-down Ford, pretending to fix the engine. As the characters converse, Gibson's handheld camera frames Taylor in a medium close-up and is highly reactive to Jarratt's instinctual movement. Whenever his upper torso shifts position, even slightly, Gibson's camera shifts also, tracking the Akubra and ensuring that it is clearly defined within the frame as the dominant focal point.

Akin to the significance accorded to Hamilton and Dunne's hat styles in *Gallipoli*, Taylor, as an embodiment of traditional Akubra-wearing "masculinity", is visually differentiated within this key sequence to the "modern" dress sense of Hunter, Earl and Mitchell. Hunter, for instance, wears a beanie, while Earl wears an ear flap beanie and Mitchell covers his beanie with the hood of his brown jumper. As McLean explains in the *Making of* documentary, Taylor's costume is "very old-fashioned" and distinctive of a "1950s Australian character", while Mitchell's costume is indicative of a "younger generation of Australian males" (2006). The contrast between the hats of Taylor and Mitchell, and thus representations of Australian masculine "types" across several generations, is a key point of analysis which I will return to later in the chapter.

5.4 Colloquial Language and Masculinity

Aside from Taylor's costume and visual constitution, it is the character's employment of colloquial language that similarly positions him as representative of Australian masculine traditions. Taylor's localised dialect, in which he repeats slang terms and phrases such as "Bob's your Sister", "Fair Go", "Tiger" and "Fair Dinkum", resonated with Jarratt who, given where he was born and raised, was immersed in a community where locals habitually used these colloquial forms of discourse.

The scene in *Wolf Creek* which features this discourse most conspicuously occurs forty-three minutes in. Taylor has towed Hunter, Earl and Mitchell's broken-down Ford to his campsite. They sit around a campfire and converse. As Taylor discusses his job of hunting "vermin" and wildlife in the outback, foreshadowing for the audience the sense of doom which is lost on the oblivious protagonists, he gruffly iterates phrases such as "don't work there no more" (saying "no" instead of "any"), words such as "ya" instead of "you", the drawling Australian classic "fair go", and adds "ey?" to the tail-end of statements. Such vernacular is positioned strategically with the formal language structures and patterns of the uninitiated urban protagonists. When Taylor says, "fair dinkum", Mitchell mimics him and repeats the phrase with slight incredulity as though he is hearing it for the first time. Taylor, who fixes his gaze at Mitchell, then replies, "that's what I said", and reiterates the phrase a second time with an eye roll. The discord between the characters of Taylor and Mitchell, represented here through an inability to translate each other's dialect, is later manifested through hostility and violent engagement.

Taylor's conventional modes of Australian vernacular not only evoke the language customarily spoken by Culotta's work colleagues in *They're a Weird Mob*, Dick in *Wake in Fright* or Foley in *Sunday Too Far Away*, but recall the slang dialogue featured in films such as Raymond Longford's, *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919), from the silent era of Australian film production. Based on the 1915 poem of the same title by C. J. Dennis, the film's central protagonist, larrikin gambler, Bill (Arthur Tauchert), from Sydney harbourside suburb Woolloomooloo, speaks in colloquial tongue (communicated to the audience through intertitles). Throughout *The*

Sentimental Bloke, Bill repeats “me” instead of the formal enunciation of “my”, frequently says “bloke”, “bonzer” and “crook”, and speaks the phrase “done me dash”. This set of idiomatic phrases can also be identified decades later in the interactions between the Australian male drovers, led by Rafferty’s character McApline, in *The Overlanders*. The echoes of this sensibility, reinforced throughout the entire history of Australian cinematic production, can be heard in Mick’s culturally-specific slang-based discourse.

5.5 Contrasting Representations of Masculinity

This form of localised Australian bush discourse is not only suggestive of a specific “type” of Australian male from a bygone era, as represented by Taylor, but it evokes, as well, the landscape that the male figures inhabit. As *Wolf Creek* demonstrates, the specific lexical patterns of an Australian male are dependent on geographical location. In the film, two distinctive and divergent masculine representations emerge based on location: Taylor, from outback Australia, who uses traditional bush vernacular with a ribald sense of humour; and Mitchell, an urban twentysomething from Sydney, with a city millennial sensibility, representing a new generation of Australian males.

Like Jarratt, Phillips shares common characteristics with his screen character: he was twenty-four at the time of filming and was born in Melbourne. An intertitle during the film’s opening reveals that the film is set in 1999. As such, in “modern” Australia, these two contradictory masculine representations, embodied not only through the fictional characters of Taylor and Mitchell but also through Jarratt and Phillips themselves as screen actors, simultaneously exist but rarely interact. The positioning of Taylor and Mitchell in the same space, as Mitchell and his friends transition into an environment with which they are unfamiliar, ignites Taylor’s territorialism. Mitchell, as well as Hunter and Earl, is no different to the invading “vermin” that Taylor slaughters for his work to safeguard his domain.

Indeed, both Taylor and Mitchell are dominant male figures in their respective habitats. During the opening Broome sequences of *Wolf Creek*, Mitchell, as I have pointed out during this study,

is the extroverted alpha male in a large group of free-spirited twentysomethings, presumably on holidays from university. Mitchell's inebriated machoism and boisterous bravado ultimately becomes a visual representation for the carefree modern urban male and the youth demographic that the film is geared to. His high-energy antics evoke a set of constructed "masculine" behaviours synonymous with the contemporary male who inhabits, or at least holidays in, Australia's coastal locales and beachside suburbs.

As Hunter, Earl and Mitchell embark on their road trip along the Great Northern Highway throughout the film's first act, and as Mitchell moves further from his prime habitat, the nature of his "masculinity" shifts. The extravagant "behaviour" he is accustomed to exhibiting, as conveyed lavishly in the party scene where he jumps into the pool, becomes exposed as fraudulent in the alien landscape he now infringes. When the group stop at a caravan park in Halls Creek to camp overnight, for example, he demonstrates a patent inability to pack up their tent equipment and a lack of knowledge about camping. As Hearn notes in the *Wolf Creek* DVD Commentary: "this is a great scene because it really sets up how little they know about camping" (2011). Mitchell, here, is shown to be incapable of survival on the land, a capability that the traditional masculine "type", as represented through Taylor, has strong aptitude in.

When they stop for fuel at Emu Creek moments later, a cattle station in the remote outback, Mitchell encounters a male local with "masculine" characteristics that strongly resemble Taylor. Mitchell enters the Emu Creek pub to pay for their petrol and is motioned over by Bazza (Andy McPhee), an imposing tattooed man with a handlebar moustache who employs vernacular similar to Taylor's. Bazza says: "me and me mates are gonna see if your girlfriends would be interested in a little bit of a gangbang", which is followed by raucous laughter from the small group of male patrons he drinks with. Mitchell appears to be unsure what to say, unable to interpret Bazza's ribald humour and colloquialisms. Initially, he says nothing. This crucial moment of interaction prefigures the introduction of Taylor and the masculine "type" indicative of Taylor's geographical setting that is alien to Mitchell. For the first time in the film, the frailty of Mitchell's "masculine" identity is positioned alongside embodiments of the traditional outback Australian male.

The shift that occurs in Mitchell's behavioural output once he crosses the threshold into Taylor's territory may reflect Phillips' own experiences as an actor on the *Wolf Creek* set. As highlighted in Chapter Three, Jarratt was not on set for the first two weeks of principal photography as the film was shot in chronological order. According to McLean, Phillips was, for the weeks without Jarratt, the alpha male among the production crew. When Jarratt began his filming, this dynamic changed. As McLean explains on the *Wolf Creek* DVD Audio Commentary:

Nathan was to a degree the sort of alpha male entertainer with you guys (he is referring to Morassi and McGrath, who were also part of the DVD Commentary), and always goofing off. As soon as John came on, you felt like Nathan's character, I think it was subconsciously, I don't know if it was conscious or not, (but) you feel like Nathan's character became a kid again, because John was now the big alpha male man cracking all the gags and stuff, and you can see Nathan do this thing where he basically becomes almost like a little kid around him. (McLean 2011)

The interplay that materialised between Jarratt and Phillips, as McLean recalls during the Audio Commentary, thus formed "naturally" (2011). Jarratt's status as a cinematic and masculine icon of Australian cinema, and Phillips' young age and inexperience in the industry (he was only four years into his film career at the time) likely contributed to the formation of this "dynamic" between them. This is indeed reflected in their screen performances as Taylor and Mitchell. When Taylor asks Mitchell, "where ya from, mate?", and Mitchell sheepishly responds, "Sydney", Taylor jokes, "poofter capital of Australia", and laughs. Echoing his reaction to Bazza's taunt, Mitchell becomes inarticulate and stares incredulously at Taylor, before glancing timidly at Hunter and Earl. Taylor's language is so located that Mitchell cannot decode it.

Later in the film, when they are sitting around the campfire, the interchange between the characters is reversed: Mitchell impersonates Hogan's line of dialogue from *Crocodile Dundee*, examined in Section 5.2, and Taylor reacts by angling his head, akin to a pack animal inspecting its victim, and stares at him, mouth agape, without saying a word. Hunter and Earl laugh at

Mitchell's jibe, but for Taylor, Mitchell's humour does not register. To break the silence, Mitchell nervously asks, "what do you actually do, now?", to which Taylor replies, "well, I could tell ya, but then, I'd have to kill ya". With this response, Taylor regains an ascendancy over Mitchell and re-positions himself as the alpha male in the interaction.

These interactions between Taylor and Mitchell, and the juxtaposition of the characters within the narrative of *Wolf Creek*, are evocative of themes that have long been explored in Australian cinema. Indeed, *Wolf Creek* references cinematic conventions and themes from Australia's past, embodied in the film by Taylor, and revises them for a contemporary audience, symbolised on screen by Mitchell, through the application of film making techniques that originated in the digital era. These innovative techniques, ostensibly pioneered by McLean and his film crew in *Wolf Creek*, represent the shifting landscape of Australian horror film making in the 2000s. McGrath, Morassi and Phillips are actors that are part of a new direction. As such, for the first thirty-five minutes of *Wolf Creek*, the audience is aligned with the actors' screen counterparts and the lens that they view the world through. When Taylor is introduced, however, the protagonists, as well as the audience, are confronted by old ways and the conventions and historical references that have deep roots in Australian cinema and culture. For Mitchell, and the contemporary male film audience he comes to represent, this "history" involves masculine traditions that are alien and do not resonate necessarily with the millennial generation. For me, *Wolf Creek* is a lynchpin film because it offers a new approach to understanding the masculine traditions that are inherent in Australian cinema.

CHAPTER SIX: *WOLF CREEK* AND SLASHER FILM CONVENTIONS

The previous two chapters examined *Wolf Creek*'s transtextual relationship to key films from Australia's cinematic past and the film making conventions inherent in that past. Both chapters locate *Wolf Creek* as a contemporary reimagining of landscape cinema and masculine traditions in the lineage of Australian film and cultural history. Chapter Six expands this examination and argues that *Wolf Creek* transcends the conventions identified in Australian landscape cinema and can subsequently be read as a contemporary example of a film influenced by American slasher films. *Wolf Creek* is, essentially, a slasher film steeped in the American tradition, transposed to an Australian setting with Australianised characters and themes. It is a film therefore accessible to both local and international film audiences familiar with this sub-genre. Employing Rockoff's seven fundamental "characteristics" of the typical slasher film, briefly documented in Chapter Two, this chapter argues that *Wolf Creek* implements and then consciously subverts slasher film conventions for contemporary audiences through new forms of film making synonymous with the digital era.

6.1 Slasher Film Origins and Conventions

Before examining *Wolf Creek*'s relationship to the sub-genre of the slasher film, it is important to first define the "slasher film" and explore its cinematic lineage. The origin of the slasher film is debated among film scholars and theorists. Most academic and critical accounts of the slasher film, such as Rockoff's, position *Halloween* as the film which popularised the sub-genre internationally. In this chapter, I likewise view *Halloween* as the prototype slasher film, and employ it as a point of comparison to *Wolf Creek*. However, numerous precursors to *Halloween* can also be identified as contributing to the formation of the sub-genre. For many theorists, such as Andrew Grunzke, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) helped pioneer the conventions and "hallmarks" of the slasher film now synonymous with the *Halloween* model. Grunzke argues that *Psycho* is the "progenitor" (105) of the sub-genre:

First, just as Norman Bates dressed as his mother before committing murder, many films in the subgenre featured a killer whose gender was ambiguous. Likewise, in many films in the slasher filmography, females, like Marion Crane, who committed sexual transgressions (such as premarital sex or adultery) eventually became victims of the killer. Additionally, the murders in slasher films were, like Bate's murder, almost exclusively bloody stabbings or slashings by hand-wielded, metal weaponry. Though far removed from its successors in terms of both graphic violence and body count, many of the very strict conventions of the slasher genre were inherited directly from Hitchcock's groundbreaking film. (Grunzke 149)

For Grunzke, *Psycho* is a predecessor to *Halloween* because it overtly foreshadows several elements that are symptomatic of the sub-genre. These elements, according to Grunzke, include the ambiguity of the antagonist's gender, the link between sexual promiscuity and a violent death, and the killer's knife-wielding modus operandi. As Kendrick likewise highlights, *Psycho* is "most often posited as the slasher film's originating text" (322). This is, as he argues:

Due to the fact that it is arguably the first film to assemble virtually all of the slasher's structural components into a single film: the psychotic, gender-confused killer; an attractive female victim who is "punished" for her sexual transgressions; stabbing deaths; a Terrible Place; and explicit, bloody violence. (Kendrick 322)

Although *Psycho* does not include teenage victims, a confined setting in American suburbia, and only features comparatively few murders, it prefigures, as Grunzke and Kendrick argue, enough of the binding characteristics of the archetypal slasher film to be considered a catalyst for *Halloween*. While *Psycho* is important in discussions about slasher film history, I do not understand it to be one of McLean's direct points of reference in *Wolf Creek*. McLean's film, as I have argued throughout this study, finds its lineage in the aesthetics and "style" of 1970s horror and exploitation cinema instead.

Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) is another key film that some academics and commentators similarly identify as a predecessor to *Halloween* and the slasher film sub-genre. One of the main parallels between *Peeping Tom* and *Halloween* is the employment of a subjective camera to frame violent sequences. Susan Crutchfield argues that it is for this reason that *Peeping Tom* can be considered "an insightful and disturbing slasher prototype" that influenced *Halloween* (284).

In *Peeping Tom*, Mark Lees (Carl Boehm), a focus puller on a film production crew by day, murders women at night and films their deaths on his portable movie camera. The audience witnesses these killings through the lens of Lees' camera and is thus positioned as an unwitting voyeur to his crimes. Likewise, *Halloween* positions the audience as complicit in the murder of Judith Myers (Sandy Johnson) through the overt use of this point-of-view technique: the film opens with a four-minute tracking shot through the eyes of her younger brother, antagonist Michael Myers (Will Sandin), aged six, as he spies on Judith and her boyfriend (David Kyle) from the exterior of the Myers property, enters the house, treks up the stairs, and then violently bludgeons her to death. While *Peeping Tom*, like *Psycho*, does not feature "all" of Rockoff's suggested characteristics of the slasher film that operate fully in *Halloween*, it established a cinematographic blueprint, demonstrated here, that slasher film makers have imitated ever since.

The cinematic ancestry of the slasher film and *Halloween* can additionally be identified in Italian *giallo* films of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Dario Argento's *Profondo Rosso* (1975) and *Suspiria* (1977). There is an affinity between the narrative structure in a typical *giallo* film and the key narrative elements in *Halloween*, as well as in other notable slasher films. Oliver Carter, for example, sums up the *giallo* formula this way: "a typical *giallo* film narrative will feature a crazed black-gloved serial killer murdering beautiful women in varying exaggerated fashions" (123). Mikel J. Koven similarly argues for a synergy between *Halloween* and the elements evident in *giallo* films. As he puts it: "the black-gloved killers of the *giallo* seem merely to have moved across the Atlantic Ocean toward the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s" (168).

Giallo films can be viewed, then, as akin to the American slasher film: the antagonist, who is characteristically cloaked and disguised in black, adopts a hand-wielded weapon such as a knife or sharp blade and is systemised in how he or she murders his or her victims. Unlike *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, however, where the respective antagonists in each franchise, Myers, Jason Voorhees and Freddy Krueger, are distinguished by their iconic costumes (Myers' white latex mask, Voorhees' hockey mask and Krueger's red and green striped jumper, brown hat, clawed glove and burnt face), the *giallo* antagonists are elusive figures hidden from the audience's gaze and linked by their symbolic black disguise. Based on Bazin and Warshow's proposition for genre classification, it is this recurring costume that forms an association between *giallo* films and positions them within the same cinematic genre.

Other films from the 1970s also have cinematic connection to *Halloween* and the slasher film formula. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, for example, was one of the first American films to base its narrative around a group of youth from both sexes being hunted and violently dispatched by an unhinged psychopath. As Timothy Shary argues, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, which predated *Halloween* by four years, "heralded a new era in Hollywood" due to its "graphic depiction of young people being brutally murdered by a deranged killer – hence the 'slasher' moniker" (57). The most profound link between *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and the conventions of the slasher film that were disseminated into the mainstream by *Halloween*, is the resemblance between Myers and antagonist Leatherface (Gunnar Hansen). This resemblance is centred around their distinct appearance and modus operandi: like Myers, Leatherface does not speak, obscures his face with a mask made of human flesh, and uses a hand-wielded weapon, a chainsaw, to enact his rampage.

Clover observes the similarities between the two iconic antagonists and argues that together they "introduced another sort of killer" into the American cinematic arena of the 1970s, "one whose only role is that of killer and one whose identity as such is clear from the outset" (79). It is through this association of antagonists that *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* embodies more consistent parallels with *Halloween* than *Psycho* or *Peeping Tom* do. Unlike in those films, where the antagonist assumes an identity that ingratiates him in society before he then, as Clover

puts it, reveals his “other self” (79) through his transgressions, Myers and Leatherface lurk in the fringes of society and are reduced to the singular role of a killer. It is the silence of this persona and the void of expectation that elicits in the audience a profound sense of dread. Although the character of Taylor in *Wolf Creek* reveals his full face to Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, as examined in Section 6.3, his anonymity is subsequently maintained through the withholding of his introduction, provoking in the audience a fear of the unknown as the protagonists are placed on a trajectory that ultimately ends in their gruesome demise.

The aetiology of the slasher film paradigm established by *Halloween* can also be traced to Bob Clark’s Canadian horror film *Black Christmas* (1974). Indeed, *Black Christmas* features a number of the tropes later employed in *Halloween*, such as the use of the subjective camera to position the audience as first-person observers of each murder, its college-aged (mostly female) victims, its employment of the “Final Girl” archetype (in the case of *Black Christmas*, Jess Bradford, played by Olivia Hussey), its suburban setting, and the cultural and social space where the narrative takes place, in or around a centralised educational institution.

These similarities have been identified by a range of slasher film scholars. Muir, for example, points out that “all the mechanisms of popular ‘70s slasher films appear in 1974’s *Black Christmas*” (315). He continues by suggesting that *Black Christmas*, like *Halloween*, is “centred around a holiday, features a maniacal killer (and) pits that killer against a group of attractive young people in an isolated setting” (315). The overt parallels between the two films have ignited additional conjecture that Carpenter created *Halloween* as a “rip-off” of *Black Christmas*. This conjecture has been addressed by Clark in numerous interviews. For example, as he recalls in an interview for documentary film, *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film*, during pre-production of an abandoned film project that Clark was hired to direct and Carpenter had scripted, a conversation unfolded about a *Black Christmas* sequel:

John had asked me very quickly (if I intended) to do a sequel to *Black Christmas*. He admired it a great deal. I said, ‘no, this was going to be my last horror film’, and he said, ‘but if you did, what would it be?’, and I simply said, ‘it would be the next year, the killer

would have been caught, he's escaped, he's come back to the town...and I'm going to call it *Halloween*'. So, because of that, there's been a great deal of speculation that he (imitated *Black Christmas*). But he didn't. I think he was influenced (by *Black Christmas*). I hope he was. (Clark 2006)

Whether *Halloween* was derivative of *Black Christmas* and taken by Carpenter from the hypothetical sequel Clark proposed, or it was merely "influenced" by *Black Christmas*, it undoubtedly finds part of its cinematic lineage in Clark's film. Based on their similar structures and shared elements, my view is that *Black Christmas* is the key precursor to *Halloween* and the slasher film sub-genre and is therefore useful to consider as an additional point of comparison to *Wolf Creek*.

Despite *Black Christmas*' earlier embodiment of the slasher film formula, it is arguably *Halloween*, released four years later, that marks the mainstream genesis of the slasher film in not only American popular culture but as a global cinematic phenomenon. Alexandra West, in her horror film podcast, *Faculty of Horror*, notes that while *Black Christmas* contains the same essential characteristics that *Halloween* does, *Halloween* is the prototype and "original" slasher film because of what it "became" due to the commodification of the iconic Myers antagonist and the film's monumental box office success, generating \$USD80.2 million (2013).

The commercial success of *Halloween* endowed other film makers with a proven film making formula for the slasher film. This formula was imitated by dozens of film makers in the 1980s. As Reynold Humphries argues, all slasher films released since *Halloween* have followed a rigorous "dimension of repetition" (139). Altman, in "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre", introduced in Chapter Two, argues that the "repetition" of a familiar syntax between films is essential in the establishment of a recognisable genre. The proliferation of the slasher film in the 1980s, in which most films imitated or were at least influenced by the film making blueprint evidenced in *Halloween*, can be best understood according to Altman's framework.

Based on these cinematic origins and the case of *Halloween*, the remainder of this chapter locates *Wolf Creek* as a contemporary entry in the slasher film cannon. Using Rockoff's set of slasher film "characteristics" as a framework to explore the film, this chapter argues that *Wolf Creek* reflects the tacit conventions of the genre, whilst at the same time circumventing and inverting these traditions. McLean himself, in the *Popcorn Taxi* YouTube interview, describes *Wolf Creek*, on the one hand, as "the ultimate horror film in the book" and being no different to "every slasher film plot in history". But on the other hand, he views his film as a departure from the derivative slasher film genre because he "takes the story seriously" and does something "different" by drawing focus to "reality and realism" (2011). *Wolf Creek*'s adherence to the slasher film formula is apparent on two key levels. Firstly, it features a psychopathic serial killer (Taylor) who menaces and kills a group of attractive youth (Hunter, Earl and Mitchell). Secondly, Taylor adopts hand-wielded weaponry (a hunting knife) as a key part of his arsenal. However, as this chapter demonstrates, and as McLean has acknowledged, *Wolf Creek*, while adhering to the basic skeletal structure of the slasher film, then subverts this formula to position itself as "different" to the body of films activated by *Halloween*. In this chapter, I examine how McLean uses visual language and experiments with cinematic structure to create this variance within the sub-genre.

6.2 *Wolf Creek*'s Atypical Beginning

The opening sequences in *Wolf Creek*, set in the Australian coastal region of Broome, were examined in this study's introduction and also in Chapter Four as part of the juxtaposing representations of the national landscape and the contemporary film making methods employed by McLean in the film. They are additionally explored in this chapter and positioned as an atypical opening in contrast to the traditional slasher film paradigm. *Wolf Creek* begins with several shots of the isolated Broome beach-front. The ambience of the beach landscape is made prominent in Des Kenneally's sound design. The locale then transitions to a vacant stretch of road, lined on either side by palm trees, that cuts through the town centre. Mitchell is then introduced at a car yard buying a used Ford. Hunter and Earl are introduced via a sequence of tight close-ups as they converse near the beach and write on postcards. The sun spills into each

frame. Ballantine jump-cuts between different points in their conversation to suggest snapshot impressions of their interaction. As he recalls in *The Making of* documentary, and I noted in this study's introduction, the film's beginning scenes were intentionally constructed for contemporary audiences emerging from the MTV era:

One of Greg's first comments coming to the cutting room after the shoot was to take an MTV style of attitude to the cutting. He said, "we'll lose the audience if they're not with us for that first ten minutes", particularly (given) that, unconventionally, he had the *Wolf Creek* title so far into the film. So that first ten minutes has really got to hook people (and capture their) interest, because it isn't what they were coming to pay to see nor anticipate, and (they) therefore (may begin) questioning whether they've rocked up in the wrong theatre. It had to punch, so it called for a style of jump-cutting and a lot of the film has implied compression of time. (Ballantine 2006)

The "punchy" opening sequences in *Wolf Creek* instantly locate the film's targeted youth audience in the Broome setting, and position them in that social and cultural space alongside Hunter, Earl and Mitchell through a style of cinematography and editing that resonates with a new generation of filmgoers. In the aesthetics of this opening, McLean and Ballantine subvert the structural conventions of the slasher film. The film's first ten minutes, which, as Ballantine explains in the documentary, are not what the audience are likely to "anticipate", are assembled through an "MTV style" to "hook" them and ensure their focus during the first act preamble before Taylor surfaces.

In contrast to the opening of *Wolf Creek*, the typical slasher film, stemming from the paradigm of *Halloween*, introduces the audience to an inciting incident or past event involving the antagonist, often through the deployment of subjective camera. *Halloween* begins in American suburbia, and not in the rural landscape, as a young Myers, aged six, murders his older sister. The audience are complicit in the murder by witnessing it from Myer's perspective. *Friday the 13th* similarly opens through the subjective lens of an unknown antagonist (later revealed to be Mrs. Voorhees), as she stalks and murders two high-school aged camp counsellors who are

having sex at a campground. *Black Christmas* also adheres to this trope: the film's opening sequence likewise positions the audience outside a sorority house and in American suburbia, at night, where the antagonist's viewpoint is also represented via the device of a subjective camera. As the antagonist moves towards the building, climbs to the upstairs attic, enters the room through a window left ajar, and murders Clare Harrison (Lynne Griffin), the use of the subjective camera positions the audience as being involved and having engagement with the transgression.

Like Rockoff, Richard Nowell argues that this typical slasher film opening “triggers” a series of “events (which) propel (the killer) upon a homicidal trajectory” (21). Two different types of “triggering events” are employed by filmmakers in the slasher films of the late 1970s and 1980s: firstly, a scene depicting the antagonist's “first kill”, framed through a subjective camera, which ignites a “homicidal trajectory” as demonstrated in *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *Black Christmas*; or, secondly, an “inciting incident” from the past which serves as the impetus for the antagonist's psychopathy, usually involving the death of a family member, as evident in Paul Lynch's *Prom Night* (1980).

By contrast, *Wolf Creek* does not include an inciting or triggering incident and instead circumvents this narrative convention. Unlike *Halloween* and almost every other slasher film released after it, Taylor is not introduced or even alluded to until after the film's first act of thirty-three minutes. As examined in Chapter Nine, the impetus for Taylor's psychopathy, which becomes a critical focus in the film's sequel and the subsequent *Wolf Creek* television series, is equivocal in the original film. He is given no backstory or provoking event to justify his psychology. Unlike other slasher films, which foreshadow their horror elements from the outset, *Wolf Creek*, instead, draws the audience into the unfolding plot through an idyllic representation of the modern Australian urban landscape and the youth who inhabit this space. The film's opening sequences resemble a travelogue documentary, rather than the conventional beginning of a slasher film in which events to provoke fear and dread in the audience and prefigure the impending horror are standard.

Additionally, the positioning of the “Wolf Creek” title, in comparison to other slasher films that embody the *Halloween* model, is atypically inserted eight minutes into the film’s running time. Aside from the film’s opening intertitles, the sudden appearance of the title is the film’s first visual evocation of the horror that will soon befall Hunter, Mitchell and Earl. Presented in large white block font on a black screen, as Tétaz’ ominous score, a leitmotif that recurs throughout the film, crescendos before cutting abruptly, the sterile colour combination of the title sequence is juxtaposed to the warm colour grade employed during the Broome-based set pieces that precede it. This is uncharacteristic according to typical slasher film syntax, in which the title sequence is included at the very beginning of the film, either before or just after the inciting or triggering incident. The title sequence is characteristically inserted, also, before the protagonists are introduced and the setting where the killings will take place has been established. According to Muir, this “deadly preamble” in the slasher film, which “basically consist of a series of loosely connected set pieces”, is the “equivalent of James Bond’s pre-title sequence” (23). Akin to the elaborate title sequences deployed throughout the James Bond franchise, the prototypical slasher film title sequence at the beginning is a core structural element of the sub-genre.

The recurring title sequence is a visual motif in the slasher film which employs a specific typography. Typically, this typography features enlarged font on an entirely black screen and special effects animation that characterises the text. As pointed out above, the title sequence is almost always incorporated during the film’s beginning. In *Halloween*, for example, the opening title sequence, which features a floating jack-o'-lantern on black as the introductory orange block credits tick over, occurs in the opening images of the film before the “deadly preamble” and before Strode and her Haddonfield suburban setting is introduced. Similarly, in Ken Wiederhorn’s *Eyes of a Stranger* (1981), the opening titles appear in thick red block font on black and are superimposed for a few seconds over the film’s first visual frame. Amy Holden Jones’ *The Slumber Party Massacre* (1982) likewise reveals its title sequence at the beginning of the film, as the film title, coloured in an iconic red, drips like blood. Even in *Friday the 13th*, the film’s opening title sequence, which is not introduced until several minutes in and after the inciting incident unfolds, still appears before the introduction of “Final Girl” Alice Hardy (Adrienne King). The *Friday the 13th* title zooms in and fills the black screen as a shattered glass

animation disrupts the image. For the audience, the slasher film title sequence is a signifier of the sub-genre, a structural device that elicits anticipation and positions the films within the same cinematic body.

Wolf Creek, by contrast, constructs a title sequence that is emphatically idiosyncratic. After the “Wolf Creek” title card, the film transitions to a two-and-a-half-minute montage of Hunter, Earl and Mitchell as they drive along the Great Northern Highway on desolate country roads and become displaced in the expanse of Taylor’s rural landscape. Shots of the rolling road are sequenced with vistas of the shifting landscape scenery and handheld camera impressions of the blithe and unsuspecting protagonists from inside the vehicle. The introductory credits tick over at the bottom of the frame. The sequence is accompanied by “Eagle Rock”. The song, which became the highest selling Australian single of the year, received high rotation at national pubs, a social space of bonding. McLean’s use of the song not only locates *Wolf Creek* in Australia’s cultural lineage, as examined in Chapters Four and Five, but additionally evokes a sense of togetherness and intimacy between the protagonists which references that history. Unlike in *Halloween* and the subsequent slasher films of the 1980s, which used stand-alone title sequences to signify the genre, *Wolf Creek*’s title sequence is included as a narrative device which becomes part of the story and propels the protagonists into a new social and geographical environment.

The aberrant configuration of the film’s title sequence moves *Wolf Creek* beyond the national frame and positions it as an important cinematic product in the international horror film making arena. The sequence asserts its Australian “difference” through its inclusion of a song that has significant ties to the history of Australian pub culture and its associated ideas about mateship, as well as through its cinematographic depiction of the rural landscape that evokes Australian cinema of the 1970s. As I argue, McLean’s repositioning of conventional slasher film structure, such as in the example described above, draws on the conventions of Australian cinema and culture to proclaim itself as a film arising from the newly formed globalised horror screen culture of the 2000s.

6.3 The Unmasked Antagonist

According to the visual and costuming conventions of the slasher film, the antagonist is typically cloaked in a mask or disguise that makes his or her identity, and gender, ambiguous. Originating in the *giallo* tradition, as explored earlier in this chapter, as well as in *Black Christmas*, in which the antagonist's identity is never explicitly revealed or visibly exposed through the camera, the slasher film antagonist is typically located outside the civilised social structure. He or she is presented as an anomaly or a fringe dweller, an incongruous figure obscured in the shadows, waiting for the opportunity to wreak violent mayhem.

As introduced in Chapter Two, Harper suggests that the slasher film "monster" conforms to either of the following distinct personas: firstly, as the "evolutionary throwback" and "'incomplete' human being" who is "presented as outside society"; and, secondly, as the "'normal' human murderer" who is "articulate and agile" and "avoid(s) detection until the last minute" (41-42). Although numerous examples of the second persona can be located in the slasher film canon, such as antagonist Alex Hammond (Michael Tough) in *Prom Night*, and Kenny Hampson (Derek MacKinnon) in Roger Spottiswoode's *Terror Train* (1980), it is the first persona, as discussed by Harper, that *Wolf Creek* appears to subvert through the complex figure of Taylor.

Iconic slasher film antagonists, Myers, Voorhees and Krueger, could also be ascribed to Harper's first category of personas. Throughout the entire *Halloween* franchise, comprising ten films, novels, comic books, video games and merchandise, Myers, who exists in the societal fringes, is always observed on camera wearing his iconic white mask and navy workman's jumpsuit. Similarly, in *Friday the 13th* and its spawning franchise, Voorhees always wears his hockey mask as an emblem of his serial killer identity. In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Krueger's maniacal and obsessive persona is reinforced by his unchanging costume: a red and green striped sweater, a brown fedora, his overtly disfigured burnt face, and his bladed hands. Even in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, Leatherface wears a ghoulish flesh mask as a symbol of his cannibalism and as a visible marker of his psychopathy.

Indeed, the employment of the mask as a costuming device has deep roots in dramatic work across history, such as in ancient Greek Theatre and the Commedia dell'arte theatre originating in Europe in the 16th century. Stylised masks were used as a unit of performance and as an object of ritual for actors to distinguish character types and to enable them to perform multiple roles. As an important device in cinema also, it is used in the slasher film to “distinguish” the killer from the protagonists, good from evil, and to provoke terror in the audience by divesting the killer of a human face. The archetypal masked assailant, as epitomised by Myers, Voorhees and Krueger, becomes a metaphorical construction that embodies the subconscious fears and anxieties of the audience. The “monster” behind the mask is an imaginary representation and not a literal evocation of reality.

The figure of Taylor partly subverts this traditional mask-wearing slasher film archetype. As pointed out in Chapter Two, Taylor, in many ways, comes to represent Harper's second proposed persona for the slasher film antagonist, while offering a contemporary reimaging of the first. This subversion of the masked killer archetype established by Myers, Voorhees, Krueger and Leatherface, and reinforced later through antagonist Ghostface in Craven's *Scream* (1996), was a conscious construction by McLean and Jarratt. In *The Making of Wolf Creek* documentary, McLean, for example, recalls: “I wanted to create a really iconically Australian bad guy, in the same way that you have Freddy and Jason and all those iconic evil bad guys who essentially (subscribe to the idea of) the bogeyman. I wanted to create an Australian bogeyman” (2006). Gonzalez agrees here and interprets Taylor as self-aware and idiosyncratically Australianised slasher film villain who goes against the conventional grain and is “unaffected by Hollywoodized visions of serial killers” (2015).

Rather than offering a mere imitation of the masked “iconic evil bad guys” from slasher films, ambiguous entities linked by their camouflaged appearances and sub-human personas, McLean creates, in Taylor, a “human” screen villain that becomes a localised evocation of Australia's cinematic and cultural history and the figurative embodiment of the rural landscape he inhabits.

According to Matthews, Taylor symbolises “a return of the repressed” and “defiant Australian spirit whose violence grows out of a deep wellspring of repeated humiliation” (53). Based on real-life Australian serial killers who resided in Australia’s outback, such as Milat, as examined in Chapter Three, Taylor, and the way he is presented and performed by Jarratt, reinforces the presence of evil characters in unmapped habitats and the repressed violent instincts that permeate this culture.

However, while the character of Taylor represents a shift from the traditional slasher film antagonist, parallels can still be drawn between Taylor and his genre counterparts. Jarratt, during the interview for the *FilmInk* YouTube Channel, scoffed at the interviewer’s suggestion that Taylor is “Australia’s Freddy Krueger”. He rebuts by saying, “Me and Freddy Krueger? I’ve gotta act. I don’t wear a mask. It’s my face. There’s a big difference (between Taylor and Krueger)” (2017). In terms of performance, I agree here with Jarratt. Taylor is presented as a real-life “monster” with human attributes, mannerisms and lexical patterns. Krueger, on the other hand, is a fictional nightmarish construction. But similarities between the characters are still apparent. Matthews, for example, points out that *Wolf Creek* and the character of Taylor “borrows from the tradition of the slasher film” (53). He expands this argument by suggesting that, “by setting a slasher film in the Australian outback”, McLean “uses an American rhetorical mode against its inventors” (53).

For me, the figure of Taylor is indeed influenced by this “American rhetorical mode”. Like Myers, Voorhees and Krueger in their respective cinematic worlds, Taylor is the definitive figure in the *Wolf Creek* film universe. Like his counterparts, the character of Taylor (and Jarratt himself) is a commodity, marketed as the transtextual thread between entries in the extended *Wolf Creek* franchise. In the landscape of *Wolf Creek*, he is presented as an untouchable presence and immortal figure with implied supernatural powers and a connection to the land. Akin to the function of Myers’, Voorhees’ and Krueger’s unchanging costumes, Taylor wears the same plaid shirt and jeans across the span of the franchise. This is his costume. His Akubra, which he always wears too, can therefore be read as his “mask”.

6.4 Inverting the “Final Girl” Convention

The “Final Girl” trope, coined by Clover, is arguably the most well-known and cited slasher film convention popularised through *Halloween*. As introduced in Chapter Two, for Clover, the emergence of heroines such as Strode, as well as Hardesty and Bradford before her, fostered a generation of robust female screen heroes. Stemming from Strode is a long line of heroines, or “Final Girls”, in the slasher films of the 1980s who share several common attributes and characteristics. Andrea Subissati, in the *Faculty of Horror* podcast, defines the “Final Girl” archetype and its characteristics this way:

The “Final Girl” is the female lead who confronts the killer, survives the massacre and lives to tell the tale. (She) is very virginal, very pure, she is sexually unavailable in some way, no drugs, no sex, no hedonism whatsoever. Often times has a unisex name (and) has a shared history with the killer. (Subissati 2013)

For Subissati, as well as other horror film scholars, such as Clover and Rockoff, the “Final Girl” is a “pure” idealistic representation of the emerging American youth culture of the 1970s and 1980s and is positioned as divergent to her sexualised friends who indulge in hedonism. Her friends are viewed as distracted and disposable and are subsequently murdered, while her acute awareness and “difference” equips her with the necessary tools and vigilance needed to survive the massacre.

The identity of the “Final Girl” is typically foreshadowed and made overt early in the slasher film. In *Halloween*, Strode is introduced before her friends. As she exits her weatherboard home and walks the streets of Haddonfield, Dean Cundey’s subjective camera, which is voyeuristically positioned at a distance to mirror Myers’ gaze as he watches her, tracks her movement and positions her as a focal point, dwarfed by the breadth of the desolate suburban landscape she inhabits. Throughout the film, Strode demonstrates an awareness of Myers’ presence. Her

hypervigilance is constantly rebuffed by her preoccupied friends. Mathias Clasen identifies these conflicting attitudes between the friends about the impending danger:

The proximal narrative motivation for her survival is that Laurie Strode is the only character who detects and responds adequately to the danger. In one scene, Laurie is walking with her friend Annie and sees Myers standing on a pavement, observing her, and then slipping behind a bush. Annie fails to see Myers but goes to investigate and finds nothing. She dismisses Laurie's anxiety, saying "you're wacko, now you're seeing men behind bushes." In another scene, Laurie is in a classroom, taking notes and looking slightly bored as the teacher is droning away in the background. She looks out the window and spots Myers standing immobile across the street. The teacher then distracts her by asking her a question, to which Laurie promptly delivers an intelligent answer. Not only is she vigilant, she is bright and conscientious – the focal point for our sympathy. Other characters are less keenly observant. (Clasen 103)

As Clasen observes, Strode's intuitive foresight positions her as different to her friends, who are represented as clueless and therefore disposable. Unlike them, she survives Myers' murderous rampage because of her ability to "detect" and "respond" to the "danger" he imposes. Like the scene described above, where Strode traverses the Haddonfield neighbourhood, Cudey's camera is acutely focused on Strode throughout the film as the centralised figure in each frame. This focus is a visual cue for the audience of her inevitable identity as the "Final Girl".

In *Wolf Creek*, McLean and Gibson similarly position Hunter as the focal point in many of the film's key compositions. In one of the film's early Broome-based scenes, Hunter wakes on the beach during sunrise. She looks out past the ocean bed at the horizon. Gibson's handheld camera lingers on her contemplative gaze. She runs into the water, swims, runs back out, and then stands on the sand, her pensive eyes darting in varying directions. Like Strode, Hunter is depicted, in this sequence, as vigilant and "aware", as though she is able to prefigure and anticipate Taylor and the impending danger of the rural landscape that they will soon encounter. As McLean reveals in the DVD Audio Commentary, this scene is constructed as a "false set-up" to offset the

audience's expectations of the "Final Girl" trope (2011). As he explains, the camera's intense focus on and framing of Hunter in this scene, as well as Magrath's evocative performance, misleads the audience to believe that "there's something about this Liz character that means she will ultimately get out of this movie (alive)" (2011). This intentional falsification is noted by Elise Rosser, who points out that despite allusions to her capabilities as a 'Final Girl', Hunter, alongside Earl, is ultimately 'rendered incapable of true escape' (74).

Akin to the example of *Halloween* and the critical scenes involving Strode and her friends described by Clasen above, there are numerous indicators in *Wolf Creek* which are intended to differentiate Hunter from Earl and Mitchell and position her as the film's likely survivor. When the protagonists first meet Taylor, the camera repeatedly cuts to Hunter and captures her reticence and nervous reactions to his colloquial localised language and ribald jibes. By contrast, Earl, whose reactions are given less screen focus, laughs freely with naïve oblivion. In a later scene at Taylor's homestead, Mitchell, as explored in Chapter Five, facetiously mimics Taylor's line, "But then I'd have to kill ya". Earl laughs. But Hunter glares at him and sternly remonstrates, "Did you see the way that he was looking at you?". Mitchell quips back with, "He's just trying to impress us with his great big white hunter thing", to which Hunter replies, "Yeah, but he's doing us a favour, and he probably doesn't appreciate us cracking jokes at his expense. Seriously". Earl then looks at Hunter inquisitively, unable to decode Hunter's anxiety about Taylor and the threat he poses. Here, the audience sees Hunter, like Strode, as possessing and demonstrating a capacity for foresight and caution that Earl and Mitchell do not appear to possess.

McLean appears to knowingly employ these visual identifiers, tacitly recognised by the slasher film audience, and ultimately subverts this expectation by killing Hunter in a graphic and violent set piece that is examined in additional depth in Chapter Seven. Indeed, as McLean asserts in the DVD Audio Commentary: "The whole movie is designed to lead you to believe that Liz is going to survive, and then to completely reverse the expectations...it's about (subverting) the contract with the audience, the unwritten rule of what you can and can't do" (2011). Again, as Rosser

goes on to note, this manipulation of the audience and subversion of horror code reflects a “break” with “tradition” (74). Indeed, McLean shifts the trope even more overtly by sequencing Hunter’s death “first”, before Earl’s. Effectively, Hunter, who is the implied “hero” in the *Wolf Creek* narrative, and who possesses the key characteristics indicative of the “Final Girl” archetype, is murdered first before her far less astute travel companion.

In the uncompromising rural landscape that Taylor inhabits, virtues of shrewdness and vigilance are not necessarily rewarded. The rules of the slasher film that ensure survival do not apply. Taylor comes to represent a maniacal force that cannot be regulated by the awareness and clear headedness of dozens of “Final Girls” in slasher films from the 1970s and 1980s. When Earl dies and then Mitchell unexpectedly survives, McLean offers his “Final Boy” category to the slasher film canon. Blackwood agrees and points out that *Wolf Creek* is a deviation “against the ‘final girl’ horror paradigm” and that “it is Ben, then, who is the ‘final girl’: rescued by European tourists and nearly dying of exposure during his escape” (490). By conspicuously inverting a trope so synonymous with slasher film convention, McLean generates new conventions of Australian horror film production built around innovation, contemporary storytelling, and shifts in “style”, characterisations and film making techniques.

This chapter considers *Halloween* to be the prime example of the American slasher film subgenre and refers to its construction and conventions as a point of comparison to *Wolf Creek*. Rockoff understands the slasher film to be a highly codified sub-genre comprising a range of visual and narrative tropes. *Wolf Creek*, as I examined in this chapter, represents a contemporary Australianised version of the slasher film with many of the cinematic elements of the slasher film established in *Halloween*. However, as I additionally argued, *Wolf Creek* signals its emergence as a unique horror film geared for the international market by constructing a distinct cinematic product for its targeted youth audience. Syntactically, *Wolf Creek* subverts conventional slasher film structures and conventions and pioneers a new “type” of horror film for the digital era.

CHAPTER 7: WOLF CREEK AND VIOLENCE IN CINEMA

Contemporary horror cinema is defined in part by its depiction of realistic violence. *Wolf Creek* is a key Australian example of this trend. One of the striking characteristics of *Wolf Creek* is its realistically drawn violent set pieces. Released in the mid-2000s around the same time as *Saw*, *Hostel*, *House of 1000 Corpses* and *The Devil's Rejects*, as briefly outlined in Chapter Three, it is part of an international resurgence in low-budget horror film production. *Wolf Creek* is readily identified in the exploitation cinema tradition through the explicit nature of its violence. Writing for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Charles Purcell, for example, argues that “there’s something shockingly real” about the violence and “carnage” in the film (2005). During the film’s second half, from the moment that a drugged Liz wakes imprisoned in one of Taylor’s sheds, bound at the wrists and feet, *Wolf Creek* depicts the “shockingly real” nature of violent behaviour and the “impact” of violence on victims. The film thus presents a challenge to the audience about the implications of violent masculine impulses. Violence, for McLean, is an assertion of power and reveals something primal about the human condition and about the innate human desire for ascendancy and control.

7.1 The Link between *Wolf Creek* and “Ozploitation”

For some film critics and commentators, such as Australian filmmaker Mark Hartley, the overt violence in *Wolf Creek* positions it as a modern-day “reinvention” of Australian genre films from the 1970s and 1980s. In Hartley’s documentary, *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!* (2008), he examines the B-grade exploitation films produced in Australia during the post-1970s film revival. Hartley refers to these films as “Ozploitation” movies. *Wolf Creek* is lauded in the documentary as a catalyst film for the regeneration of Australian genre filmmaking in the mid-to-late 2000s that draws on the “Ozploitation” phenomenon. As Martin points out in “Ozploitation Compared to What? A Challenge to Contemporary Australian Film Studies”, *Wolf Creek* is positioned in *Not Quite Hollywood* as a lynchpin film which “mark(s) the return of a repressed cinematic or cinephilic truth” (10). In an interview featured in Hartley’s documentary, English-born Australian filmmaker Brian Trenchard-Smith, who himself directed the horror

exploitation film, *Turkey Shoot* (1982), says that “there’s a new generation in Australia that wants to go back and reinvent” genre filmmaking (2008). Australian Director, Jamie Blanks, who directed *Storm Warning* and was also interviewed in *Not Quite Hollywood*, labels *Wolf Creek* as the frontrunner for this supposed “new generation” of genre filmmaking: “There’s all this activity all of a sudden, and that’s completely due to *Wolf Creek*” (2008).

I argue that this is a narrow view of the phenomenon. There has undoubtedly been a proliferation in Australian horror film production since the mid-2000s, partly as a response to the global success of *Wolf Creek* but also, importantly, due to the release of other Australian-made genre films, such as *Undead*. According to statistical data by Ryan in “Australian Cinema’s Dark Sun: the Boom in Australian Horror Film Production”, 68 horror feature films were produced in Australia during the 1970s and 1980s, only 19 in the 1990s, and then 62 between 2000 and 2008 (25). As Ryan points out, “the worldwide popularity and commercial success of *Saw* and *Wolf Creek* single-handedly triggered sharp growth in contemporary Australian horror production” (32). The post-*Wolf Creek* “growth” in Australian horror film production, then, echoes the production trends of the late 1970s and 1980s which, as Ryan notes and the above data demonstrates, “saw a strong surge in Australian horror production” (27). It is reasonable to suggest that there is some synergy between Australian horror film production from the mid-2000s, including *Wolf Creek*, and Hartley’s idea of the influential “Ozploitation” era.

I further assert that there is a visual connection between *Wolf Creek* and some Australian horror films from the 1970s and 1980s which feature violent imagery. Take, for instance, *Wolf Creek*’s connection to Terry Bourke’s *Night of Fear* (1972), a fifty-minute no dialogue microbudget feature which was, as Ryan argues in “Monster Factory: International Dynamics of the Australian Horror Movie Industry”, “Australia’s first horror film” (78). The film’s producer Rod Hay, when interviewed in *Not Quite Hollywood*, likewise refers to *Night of Fear* as a “trailblazer” in Australian genre filmmaking (2008). For Rosser, *Night of Fear* is affiliated to *Wolf Creek* through its unique employment of the outback as a horror film setting and “provides some historical context for *Wolf Creek* in a specifically Australian setting” (74). Although the unfolding of horror in the Australian landscape has cinematic roots in the Gothic tradition and in

Wake in Fright, as I have contended throughout this study, *Night of Fear* is arguably the earliest example of an Australian horror film which encompasses the prime hallmark of the genre: a victim being menaced by a malicious force in the form of a “monster”. It is via an adherence to this standardised structure, and clear resemblances in narrative form, that *Wolf Creek* may find part of its horror film lineage in *Night of Fear*.

The plot of *Night of Fear* is minimalist and straightforward. A young unnamed twentysomething urban woman, played by Netherlands-born Australian actress, Carla Hooegeveen, crashes her car in a rural locale and is hunted by an unnamed psychopathic hermit, played by Australian actor Norman Yemm. Like Hooegeveen’s urban woman, Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, who are similarly aged in their twenties and who likewise travel by car from the coastal Broome landscape to the Wolfe Creek Crater in the Western Australian outback, also experience car trouble and become dislocated in an alien environment. The violence that materialises in both films, at the hands of Yemm’s hermit and Jarratt’s Taylor, centres on conflict between “civilised” characters from urban municipal settings and “uncivilised” characters from rural outback milieus. This “conflict” between Australia’s varying landscapes and its inhabitants forms the basis for the analysis in Chapter Four.

There are also overt visual similarities between Taylor and the hermit, based on their costumes and physical appearance. Both antagonists visually reflect the effects of the severe climate of the outback environment they inhabit. In *Night of Fear*, the hermit is unkempt, dirty, and sweatsoaked; he wears tattered grey overalls stained with dust and oil. The audience witnesses the full extent of his weather-beaten face for the first time in close-up, with the camera at a lowangle, gazing up at him. Peter Hendry’s cinematography assigns visual emphasis to the hermit’s discernible markings and features. In *Wolf Creek*, when Taylor is first introduced, Gibson’s cinematography also ascribes focus to Taylor’s distinctive outback appearance. Taylor, in this scene, like the hermit, evokes, by appearance, the rough-as-guts working conditions in the Australian outback. The audience is caused to focus exclusively on Taylor and these defining physical attributes that begin to heighten apprehension by the slow reveal of his figure as he

walks towards the camera and transitions from the haze of the background into the sharp focus of the foreground.

Moreover, neither Taylor or the hermit are given a backstory or motivation that explains their crimes. As McLean recalls during his appearance on the *Shock Waves* podcast: “I specifically decided not to reveal anything to do with his (Mick’s) backstory” so that as the terror unfolds, the audience, like the protagonists, “don’t know anything about who he is” (2016). Apart from Taylor revealing his occupation, that he is a contracted pig and vermin shooter, the audience learns nothing about who he is or past events which have shaped his behaviour. As Jarratt writes in his autobiography, this meant that he had to autonomously “work on” and self-develop Mick’s “justification” over several months during pre-production (290).

Likewise, in *Night of Fear*, no context is provided for the violent behaviour of the hermit, who remains mute throughout the film. The audience experiences his psychopathy from the unwitting point-of-view of Hoogeveen’s protagonist. In an interview for *Not Quite Hollywood*, Hoogeveen suggests that the film chronicles her character’s “slow descent into madness” as the hermit menaces her (2008). By contrast, the traditional horror film antagonist, particularly the masked slasher film “monster” whose crimes are typically motivated by a childhood trauma, usually revealed in flashback and always made overt by the film maker (this convention of the slasher film is examined in Chapter Six), the impetus for Taylor and the hermit’s violent behaviour can only be surmised in subtext.

Wolf Creek is also a modern cinematic reimagining of the Gothic horror landscape tradition grounded in Australian cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these films that *Wolf Creek* shares an association with, such as *Long Weekend*, *Razorback* and *Dark Age*, referenced in Chapter Four, are part of Hartley’s “Ozploitation” phenomenon due to their low-budgets and employment of graphic violence. In *Long Weekend*, Peter and Marcia, an urban couple who trek from the city into the precarious rural landscape on a holiday, are menaced and violently attacked by various forms of animals and wildlife. In *Wolf Creek*, akin to *Long Weekend*, recurring shots of the territorial Australian wildlife are inserted and positioned as a threat to

Hunter, Earl and Mitchell as they travel deeper into the rural abyss. Taylor is the human embodiment of the threatening natural order, evoked through this recurring imagery, which uses violence to retaliate against human intrusion. Moreover, Taylor, as the embodiment of a natural order that uses violence as its prime operative mechanism, is linked to the Australian landscape horror film making tradition of the violent animal or beast as antagonist. Like the killer pig in *Razorback* and saltwater crocodile in *Dark Age*, Taylor utilises violence to preserve the inviolability of his habitat. It is through this thematic association that the violent sequences in *Wolf Creek* have affinity with the violence in key “Ozploitation” films emerging from Australia’s film revival period.

7.2 *Wolf Creek* and “Post-9/11 Cinema”

Despite these broader cinematic similarities, I identify a specific aesthetic quality in the violence employed in *Wolf Creek* which is not utilised in most Australian horror films from the 1970s and 1980s. Based on “how” this violence is depicted and represented on screen, I argue that *Wolf Creek* represents more than just a “rebirth” of “Ozploitation” film making sensibilities. I propose that this is evident at one crucial film making level: the way that violence in *Wolf Creek* is portrayed and privileged, based primarily around screen time, performance style, cinematography, and Taylor’s proximity to his victims within the frame. Although there are exceptions, such as George Miller’s *Mad Max* movies, particularly the first, the “kill sequences” in many Australian horror films from 1970s and 1980s are not designed as a confronting and richly visceral exploration of the nature of violent behaviour and are instead framed through a passive camera and as devoid of consequence. Less screen time is assigned to the psychological struggle of victims when confronted with violence and additional visual emphasis is ascribed to the “spectacle” of violence. Each “kill” functions as a moment of “entertainment” for the audience.

As Goldsmith and Lealand point out, many “Ozploitation” films are indeed characterised and defined by such “trashy” B-grade aesthetics (239). In *Not Quite Hollywood*, Miller, who not only directed the *Mad Max* films but was an early champion of genre film making in Australia, refers to such films as “very fast” and “cheap” (2008). Antony I. Ginnane, who produced and

bankrolled several of these films in the late 1970s and 1980s, refers to them, in the same documentary, as being about “slash and cut and kill” (2008). In contrast to *Wolf Creek*, the “kill sequences” in most Australian horror films from the 1970s and 1980s are more aligned with the predictable formula of the slasher film, where each “kill” is sensationalised and bereft of realistic explorations into the impact of violent behaviour.

This is especially evident when examining the “kill sequences” in a film like Terry Bourke’s horror-western, *Inn of The Damned* (1975). Set in Gippsland, Australia in 1896, *Inn of The Damned* is about a villainous married couple, Caroline Straulle (Judith Anderson) and Lazar Straulle (Joseph Furst), who run an inn. Driven to insanity by the death of their two children years earlier, the Straulle couple ritualistically murder each person they accommodate. Each murder, however, is given little screen time and merely serve as a structural function to propel the narrative. The physical bodies of the Straulles, unlike Taylor’s in *Wolf Creek*, are never framed in proximity to their victims and are not composed within the same cinematic space. Each “kill” set piece, of which there are distinctly four, always occurs off-screen, or just offframe. The psychological and physical “impact” of their violence thus lacks confrontation about the consequences of extreme violence.

In the first “kill sequence”, for example, Martin Cummings (John Morris) and his prostitute travelling companion (Hoogeveen), are murdered during a bloodless set piece which plays out over only thirty seconds of screen time. During the sequence, it is insinuated that a giant weight is lowered on them as they sleep, crushing them. While several fleeting close-ups capture Beverley and Cummings’ terrorised reactions and Beverley’s flailing legs, the specific moment of “death” occurs off-screen as Brian Probyn’s camera holds focus on Cumming’s shattered glasses on the floor. Moreover, in the film’s second “kill sequence”, Trooper Constable Moore (Tony Bonner), who attends the inn to investigate the disappearance of Cummings, has his glass of wine spiked and subsequently dies from poisoning. In this instance, the “violence” inflicted on Moore is entirely passive and does not serve as a visible assertion of power. He dies outside the gaze of the camera and the audience does not witness any form of psychological or physical struggle. The depiction of violence in *Inn of The Damned*, as a case example of Australian horror

films from the 1970s and 1980s, diverts from the complex and multifaceted explorations into violence that *Wolf Creek* offers.

In contrast to *Inn of The Damned*, I argue that the aesthetic construction of violence in *Wolf Creek*, and the nature of its “kills” and violent set pieces, more closely resembles 1970s “PostVietnam War” exploitation horror films produced in America. There are four key films which this chapter examines and positions as influential on *Wolf Creek: The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Last House on The Left*, *Deliverance* and *Straw Dogs*. These films, particularly *The Last House on The Left* and *Deliverance*, are characterised by their low-budgets, realistic and visceral ultra-violent content, and significant camera focus on the psychological suffering and trauma of its victims. The violent set pieces in such films are intentionally protracted and employed by the film makers as social and political statements.

Such films were produced as a critique of or protest about American’s involvement in the Vietnam War. Moreover, these films, specifically *The Last House on the Left*, can be interpreted as a response to the American media in the late 1960s and early 1970s and its unregulated and sensationalist coverage of the war. As Morena Groll points out, “one of the most crucial characteristics of Vietnam War coverage was the fact that the US government made no official attempts to censor it” (3). Particularly after the Tet Offensive campaign in 1968, a string of surprise military attacks inflicted on South Vietnam and American forces by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong which resulted in an unprecedented number of fatalities, American households became inundated by graphic “uncensored” televised images of the bloody aftermath. As a result, public support for the American war effort in Vietnam diminished, and the anti-Vietnam movements began to unify.

One way of deciphering the brutal hyper-realistic violence depicted in films such as *The Last House on The Left* and *Deliverance* is by understanding them as a product of this social and political milieu. For the purposes of this study, I argue that each of the “Post-Vietnam War” films listed can be read as allegories which criticise the American media’s perpetuation of violent imagery during the Vietnam War. In each film, the nature of violent behaviour, the

randomness of impulsive violence, and the psychological and physical impact of violence on victims becomes the organising principle within each narrative. It is within this framework that I identify considerable visual and structural parallels between the use of violence in the selected films listed above and *Wolf Creek*'s own relationship to violence. McLean himself has, on numerous occasions in public interviews, made mention of these parallels. In the *DP/30* YouTube interview, for instance, he recalls that his ultimate intention for *Wolf Creek* was to make an “honest-to-god, genuinely terrifying, really intense horror film” with a “70s authenticity”, listing *Deliverance* as one of his reference films (2014). In the same interview, he then goes on to mention that *Wolf Creek* was, on one level, “reacting” to the “films he was dying to see”, films that he labels as “serious horror films”, again listing *Deliverance* as a key film which inspired him (2014).

The parallels between *Wolf Creek* and 1970s American exploitation cinema are indeed identified in scholarship. Pinedo, for example, suggests that *Wolf Creek* “falls into the same category” of horror film which defines *Deliverance* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*: the “hillbilly horror” (351). For Pinedo, *Wolf Creek* achieves this by blending “Australian national symbols” with “internationally recognizable tropes of previous horror films” (351). As she argues:

In its story of Kristy, Liz, and Ben, three hitchhikers stranded in the bush, the film taps into Australian criminal history, invoking the actual disappearance of hitchhikers. Thus, the film situates itself in an Australian context that resonates with local audiences, and also falls into the category of what Linnie Blake calls “hillbilly horror”, which international audiences would be familiar with since John Boorman’s *Deliverance* (1972) and Tobe Hooper’s *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. (Pinedo 351)

According to Pinedo, *Wolf Creek*, which functions as an early entry in the “torture porn” subgenre, as introduced in Chapter Three, strongly resembles the conventions of American exploitation horror cinema and reconfigures the “hillbilly horror”, already known to international audiences, within a distinct Australian outback setting. Akin to *Deliverance* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, at the forefront of *Wolf Creek* is the enduring conflict between urban

civility and rural barbarity. One of the key connections between *Wolf Creek* and 1970s American exploitation cinema, which Pinedo hints at, is the clear emphasis that each film places on extreme violent conflict and its aftermath as analogous to the destructive atrocities of real-world war.

In the same manner that the films listed above are understood as reactions to America's involvement in the Vietnam War, *Wolf Creek*, when released in 2005, was arguably a key player in what Scott and Biron describe as "a slew of horror films" that offer a "response to a post-9/11 world" (314). This branding of the "post-9/11 horror film" was highlighted in Chapter Three. Much has been written about this "slew" and cycle of films. The most notable of these works is Kevin J. Wetmore's *Post-9/11 Horror in American Cinema*. Wetmore's key observation is that, although "there have been few films made about the terror attacks of September 11", the terror attacks have, instead, "been co-opted into other genres, most notably horror" (1-2). He goes on to point out that, since 9/11, themes of "nihilism, despair, random violence and death, combined with tropes and images generated by the terrorist attacks" have begun to "assume far greater prominence in horror cinema" (3).

Laura Frost argues that these "images", which were "so out of the range of typical experience", cultivated a "new psychological landscape" which could only be assimilated into horror cinema, given the genre's focus "on the drama of the unknown and the unreal" (15). This concept of the "unknown" and the ambiguous is further explored by James Aston and John Walliss who, highlighting *Saw* as the seminal "post-9/11 film", argue that the ultra-violent horror films of the 2000s offered "audiences opportunities to confront, understand and possibly work through the traumatic nature of a post-9/11 America" (4). This chapter positions *Wolf Creek* as not only reflecting post-9/11 America but also the collective anxieties generated by terror attacks. As explored in Chapter Eight, *Wolf Creek* is largely responsible for cultivating a generative cinematic space in the mid-2000s that spawned a plethora of ultra-violent Australian-made horror films. The themes and "style" of these films similarly reflect these global shifts in the political and social world order.

7.3 Realistic Violence in *Wolf Creek*

Like *Saw* and *Hostel*, *Wolf Creek* is known for its realistic violent sequences, which Aston and Walliss describe as embodying the “confronting” and “traumatic” post-9/11 landscape. There are two key sequences in the second half of *Wolf Creek* which deploy the violent imagery associated with this unstable social and political climate of the 2000s. The first of these sequences draws the gaze of the audience to Hunter’s point-of-view as she wakes in one of Taylor’s sheds. Bound at her wrists and feet with cable ties, the intensity of her movements as she cuts herself free and escapes through a window is visually evoked by the splintered frames and quick succession of jump-cuts in Ballantine’s edit. Hunter’s distress and psychological trauma is reflected by the immediacy of Gibson’s handheld camera and the focus on her terrified facial expressions and flailing limbs.

Several shots later, once Hunter escapes, runs barefoot across Taylor’s campsite, and finds another shed, the audience is again aligned with her viewpoint: standing outside the shed, she looks inside and sees Taylor assaulting Earl, who is bound upright against a large pole. Metal bars partly obscure the foreground and Hunter’s line of sight. Gibson’s voyeuristic camera pans with rapid motion from screen-left (Hunter’s upright position against the pole) to screen-right (where Taylor stands, metres in front of her). This framing of the action evokes Hunter’s subjective eye and simultaneously represents the terrifying proximity between Earl and Taylor. As Taylor moves towards Earl and violently grasps her, Gibson’s camera reacts by crash zooming closer to the action. As the camera edges closer, cuts in the editing are minimised and the duration of each shot is lengthened. Visual focus is thus drawn to Earl’s trauma and the raw intensity of Morassi’s performance as she fights back and tries to shake free of Taylor’s domineering stranglehold.

The second set piece is built around a syntax of frames that reveal Taylor, knife in hand, standing directly “above” and in close proximity to the wounded Hunter, who is sprawled on the ground beneath. He backs her into a corner. In several fleeting compositions, Hunter’s physical body, bloodied and beaten, is framed in the same space as Taylor’s knife, which he holds low at his

waist. These recurring compositions are cross-cut with low-angle shots suggesting Hunter's subjective gaze as she "looks up" at him. Taylor slashes her fingers. Like the sequence described above, Gibson's camera pushes closer to the action to emphasise Hunter's suffering and the force of Magrath's performance. Taylor picks her up and thrusts her weakened frame against his sturdy physique with a violent grip. He holds her limp body to him and punctures her spine with the blood-stained knife, paralysing her movement. Gibson's reactive handheld camera moves with heightened immediacy and maintains the spatial proximity of their tangible bodies in each frame. Taylor drops her to the ground. After the fatal blow is delivered, and as Hunter dies, face up and mouth agape, she is visually depicted, for the first time in the sequence, as an isolated solitary body in the space occupied by the frame.

Both sequences employ visceral handheld camera techniques and realistic performances synonymous with the digital film making era of the 2000s, as well as close spatial proximity between perpetrator and victim, to accentuate the violence inflicted on Hunter and Earl. In these examples, *Wolf Creek* offers a cinematic depiction of the violence human beings are capable of and inflict on each other in the 2000s. Hunter, Earl and Mitchell's trek into the Australian outback, and their unintended crossover with Taylor, may represent the arbitrary nature of violent behaviour in the post-9/11 landscape, as well as the vulnerability and helplessness of human beings in the wake of catastrophic forces that cannot be regulated. Ultimately, Taylor is a monstrous representation of the world that the new emergent youth audience is now confronted with.

As Dave Hoskin astutely observes:

The hard-edged horror of the late sixties and seventies was clearly influenced by Vietnam and given recent global events it's tempting to wonder whether something similar is happening again. There's been a definite coarsening of our attitudes towards our fellow humans since the War on Terror began, and with torture and mutilation being such a feature of the New World Order, you do wonder whether *Wolf Creek's* more horrific sequences have a wider inspiration than Ivan Milat. Certainly there are times when

Mick's silhouette feels uncomfortably close to that of a soldier: his hat resembles an Anzac's, he's a crack shot with a rifle, and he uses a particularly revolting trick from Vietnam to neutralize one of his victims...because the general tendency in the entertainment industry post-9/11 has been to coddle its audience, raw work like *Wolf Creek* smacks us in the face all the harder. (Hoskin 23)

For Hoskin, there is an irrefutable link between the "hard-edged" disposition of cinematic violence in the early 1970s and the "horrific" violence presented by McLean in *Wolf Creek*. While I do not understand *Wolf Creek* to be influenced by the Vietnam War directly, I argue it is a contemporary resurgence of the cinematic devices symptomatic of American exploitation cinema in the "Post-Vietnam War" era. As *Wolf Creek* was released during the aftermath of 9/11, this chapter offers commentary on how war has shaped media across generations, and the role that cinematic violence plays in disseminating these messages.

To draw parallels between the film making methods and "style" in *Wolf Creek* and "Post-Vietnam War" cinema, it is important to offer a close analysis of the films influenced by Vietnam and their relationship to violence. On one level, the four films are linked by their depiction of amoral and senseless violence as a basic human impulse to assert control. As an allegorical statement on the savagery of the Vietnam War, it is this thematic concept which underpins each narrative. On another level, the films are bound by their corresponding visual structures and the specific way that key violent scenes and set pieces are filmed and performed by the actors. By collating the four Post-Vietnam texts and positioning them as a "collective" of violent films which posed a "response" to America's involvement in the Vietnam War, the violence depicted in *Wolf Creek* can similarly be examined and understood within the specific sociohistorical context of the post-9/11 world order and the upsurge in violent terrorism indicative of the 2000s. Indeed, horror production trends are cyclic and instinctively reactive to global events which are marred in violence, involve widespread death, trigger moral panic and public fear, and upend the world order. Horror films employ violent images to critique the destabilisation of the political, cultural and social world. It is through this lens and within this context that the violence in *Wolf Creek* can be decoded and affiliations can be drawn between the

brutality of post-9/11 cinema and the cluster of ultraviolent films that emerged in America in the early 1970s.

7.4 *Wolf Creek* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*

Film critics and commentators on the horror genre have repeatedly forged strong links between *Wolf Creek* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is arguably the film that *Wolf Creek* is positioned alongside and compared to more than any other. Schembri, for example, argues that there are strong textual and thematic “echoes” between the two films (2005). Gonzalez agrees and observes that “given the slow-crawling pace of its first half and absurdist hell of its second”, the form and structure of both films “invites comparisons” (2005). Similarly, Luke Buckmaster, who writes retrospectively about the film for *The Guardian*, identifies parallels between the central antagonists, noting that Taylor is “possessed by the spirit of Leatherface” (2014).

The resemblances in aesthetics between *Wolf Creek* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* are indeed palpable: a visceral and pervasive camera to frame violence, an emphasis on the prolonged suffering of victims, and high levels of gratuitous and explicit torture inflicted on the human body. This section, however, does not place as much emphasis on these aesthetic commonalities. While the temporal structures and evocative camera techniques implicit in the violent set pieces for both films are important to consider and are still included as part of this analysis, for this study, I am more interested in how the films function simultaneously as cinematic evocations of embedded cultural anxieties and key historical events which have shaped the national consciousness. For me, *Wolf Creek* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, released thirty years apart and in the immediate aftermath of devastating global atrocities, are analogous because they reflect through cinematic expression the permeation of horror and fear into broader cultural and national discourses.

I will still briefly examine the similarities in aesthetics between the two films, particularly in relation to their temporal sequencing of violent set pieces. Additional affiliations are also evident

in terms of the *intensity* of violence and the use of camera to frame this violence. In Section 7.3, I analysed two key “torture” sequences in *Wolf Creek* which employ the immediacy of a handheld camera and a quick succession of close-ups and extreme close-ups to emphasise the extreme brutalisation of the human body. In each sequence, the victim – Earl in the first sequence analysed, as Hunter watches on from afar, and Hunter herself in the second – is subjected to protracted bouts of psychological and physical torment and graphic torture that the audience is made to simultaneously persevere through. The prolonged suffering of victims is likewise a key feature of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and the film’s negotiation of violent images. As Gonzalez notes, the “absurdist hell” of *Wolf Creek*’s second half mirrors the pulverising and unrelenting violence in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*’s final stanza (2005). It is Hardesty’s “sustained plight” (97), as Rose observes, that invites comparisons to the extreme levels of merciless torture that Hunter and Earl are likewise forced to endure.

Hardesty’s “plight” in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* lasts close to thirty minutes of screen time, a “sustained” ordeal that only comes to an end when she escapes the rural homestead of her captors and narrowly evades Leatherface and the pervasive rumble of his chainsaw by jumping into the back of a passing Chevrolet Ute. In the preceding sequences, a restrained Hardesty screams with gut-wrenching ferocity and pleads with the family of cannibals to release her. She is straddled to a chair, bound at her wrists and feet. She is smeared in blood and covered with abrasions. Her bloodied limbs strain and flail. The cannibals mock and torment her as close-ups reveal their manic glee. Hardesty’s confinement to the chair is visually encapsulated through a cacophony of obscure angles, claustrophobic close-ups and extreme close-ups. The space she occupies in each shot is constricted as the camera gradually closes in, exemplifying the extreme confines of her horrifying predicament. The camera pushes into an invasive extreme close-up of her panic-stricken and tear-soaked eyes as her pupils dart and scan the room and streaks of bloodshot red camouflage the white beneath. Akin to the sequence in *Wolf Creek* that I analysed earlier, as the camera moves incrementally closer to an immobilised Earl, mimicking Taylor’s slow and calculated movement into her vicinity, the camera in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* gradually encroaches Hardesty’s space as her perpetrators simultaneously edge towards her and attempt to enact her murder.

The Texas Chain Saw Massacre is, however, a cinematic timestamp that marks the devastating aftermath of Vietnam, as well as the social, cultural and political instability of America in its wake. For me, and as I argue throughout this chapter, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, like *Wolf Creek*, is a filmic critique of war and a “response” to seismic shifts in the global world order. It is a film that has something to say and does so with emphatic brutality. Extreme levels of violence are employed as a metaphor to symbolise widespread fears about destructive human nature. Given its status as both a catalyst text in the slasher film canon and an exploitation film employing cinematic expression to examine the atrocities of war, I position *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* as a vital text for this thesis and as a key case-study in the extensive pool of reference films that have influenced *Wolf Creek*.

As James Rose argues:

(The Texas Chain Saw Massacre) placed the horrific within a contemporary and recognisable America and the horror and violence that haunted that landscape was not an antiquated European monster or supernatural being but *American citizens*, people who hunted, tortured, murdered and, at times, consumed their fellow Americans...they also reflected the times, commenting upon an America which was in the throes of a significant war in Vietnam while experiencing deep civil unrest at home. Horror, it would have seemed, had literally come home”. (Rose 97)

This reflection of “the times” and the appropriation of “the horrific” into the social, cultural and political stratosphere of post-war America is suggested via the foreboding intertitles in the opening frame of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. The scrolling text at the beginning of the film reads:

The film which you are about to see is an account of the tragedy which befell a group of five youths, in particular Sally Hardesty and her invalid brother, Franklin. It is all the more tragic in that they were young. But, had they lived very, very long lives, they could

not have expected nor would they have wished to see as much of the mad and macabre as they were to see that day. For them an idyllic summer afternoon became a nightmare. The events of that day were to lead to the discovery of one of the most bizarre crimes in the annals of American history, The Texas Chain Saw Massacre.

In this title sequence, the ensuing fictionalised events that unfold in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* are given impetus by being framed as part of the “annals of American history”. The horror and “tragedy” which befalls Hardesty, Franklin and their friends in the film is contextualised as having an indelible basis in reality and being an “account” of events which have shaped the national consciousness. I argue that this is in fact true in part. While the “youths”, as well the villainous Leatherface and his crazed family of cannibals are fictional cinematic constructions, they can indeed be read as metaphorical manifestations of the post-Vietnam War American landscape where, as Rose points out, fears about “horror” on homegrown soil were prevalent and American citizens began “consuming” their “fellow Americans” (97). The transposition of these “fears” into the “home” is thus literalised in the *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* narrative: the cannibals, who “consume” their victims after subjecting them to relentless torture, are the figurative embodiment of these widespread anxieties impacted by the atrocities of Vietnam.

Moreover, the film has broader connections to American historical events via the strong affiliation between Leatherface and real-life Wisconsin serial killer and body snatcher, Ed Gein. Known by the moniker, “The Butcher of Plainfield”, Gein was notorious for murdering two women in Plainfield in the 1950s, exhuming a string of other corpses from graveyards, and fashioning the bones, flesh and limbs of these corpses into makeshift artefacts. Gein’s distinctive modus operandi and cannibalism not only facilitated the creation of Leatherface in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* but was likewise transmuted into the multidimensional and much-analysed figure of Bates in *Psycho* and the deranged “Buffalo Bill” (Ted Levine) in Jonathan Demme’s *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). According to Meg Hafdahl and Kelly Florence, Leatherface, whose ghoulish mask is moulded out of human flesh, “exhibits traits that can be traced back to Gein, who admitted

to wearing his suit of skin, as well as masks he'd fashioned from women's faces" (59). Leatherface can therefore be interpreted as the cinematic embodiment of Gein's notorious criminal case, an embodiment first established on screen via Bates fourteen years earlier and then resurfacing through Leatherface in an era of significant American political and social upheaval.

It is via the mechanism of an opening title sequence to frame the film's foundation in reality, and the clear textual associations between Leatherface and Gein, that *Wolf Creek* bares a structural and thematic resemblance to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. In *Wolf Creek*, as briefly examined in Chapter Three, the following title sequence is included during the film's opening, which I will rewrite here: "The following is based on actual events. 30, 000 people are reported missing in Australia every year. 90% are found within a month. Some are never seen again". Akin to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, the events which are alluded to in the *Wolf Creek* title sequence and then transpire by film's end present a fictionalised evocation of apprehensions that permeate Australian culture, exacerbated by global fears aroused in the post-9/11 landscape. The inclusion of this title sequence is a cinematic construct to elicit fear in the audience, foreshadow horror, and evoke recollections of real-life Australian horror stories. Rosser agrees and contends that the film "draws upon anxieties that Australians feel about the outback and is informed by a cultural memory of violent and shocking crimes" (74).

In the same way that Leatherface provokes comparisons to Gein and invokes memories of his crimes, the introduction of Taylor in *Wolf Creek*, as examined in Chapter Four, recalls real-life Australian crime cases in the outback and the perpetrators of these crimes, Milat and Murdoch. Like *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, which can be read as a cinematic representation of the notorious Gein-chapter in American history and the repercussions of war on America's social and political climate, *Wolf Creek* draws attention back to accounts of horror in the outback and the post-9/11 world order of the early 2000s, where such accounts are rendered even more terrifying. Echoing Rose's position on *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* as a film which is a suggestive of a nation "consuming" itself, Scott and Biron argue that *Wolf Creek* "evokes memories of people being consumed by the Australian landscape" (311). In both *Wolf Creek* and

The Texas Chain Saw Massacre, the fear of being “consumed” within one’s own social environment is epitomised not only through subtextual allusions to Gein, Milat and Murdoch but via an emphasis on Leatherface and Taylor as metaphorical extensions of the “anxieties” about rural horror that occupies the collective consciousness of each nation.

7.5 *Wolf Creek* and *The Last House on the Left*

Released two years prior to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Last House on the Left* is another preeminent “Post-Vietnam War” exploitation film that employs immersive camera techniques to frame violent imagery. Indeed, the film is useful to consider as a point of comparison to *Wolf Creek* and is another prime example of how screen violence is fetishized as a cinematic response to global war. The first half of *The Last House on the Left* culminates in two violent set pieces: the rape and murder of Mari Collingwood (Sandra Peabody), and the murder of her friend, Phyllis Stone. The violence is imposed on the teenagers by a gang of four hillbilly criminals: Krug Stillo (David A. Hess), his son Junior Stillo (Marc Sheffler), Fred “Weasel” Podowski (Fred Lincoln) and Sadie (Jeramie Rain). On their way to a rock concert, Collingwood and Stone approach Junior as he smokes outside the gang’s apartment building. They ask to purchase marijuana. Under the pretence of a drug transaction, Junior invites Collingwood and Stone into the apartment upstairs.

That night, they are attacked and held captive. The next morning, they are transported as hostages to nearby woods where they are taunted, stripped naked, beaten, and then made to assault each other physically and sexually. Like Earl’s torture sequence in *Wolf Creek*, the rape and murders of Collingwood and Stone are intentionally drawn-out by the film maker. They are visually characterised by tight claustrophobic framing, an absence of establishing wide shot angles, handheld camera, like Gibson’s in *Wolf Creek*, and protracted close-ups of Collingwood and Stone to visually evoke their terror and to provide unrelenting focus on the bodily impact of violence.

During Collingwood's rape set piece, for instance, a continuous close-up of her and Krug's faces are framed in close proximity. This close-up is maintained for thirty seconds of screen time. Krug, whose face glistens in sweat and is marked by Stone's blood, is pressed against Collingwood as he dominates her against the ground. During the uncomfortably long close-up, the audience is incited to witness the totality of Collingwood's trauma. This technique evokes a frightening immediacy between the perpetrator of violent behaviour and the victim who is forced to endure it. McLean uses this same "manipulation" decades later in *Wolf Creek*, as described above. However, unlike Krug, Taylor does not appear to have a sexual motivation. While he makes sexual insinuations, such as when he says to Earl, while motioning his hand to his genitals, "I always use rubbers...I don't know where you've been", Taylor does not rape her. He also does not rape Hunter or Mitchell. Instead, Taylor's gratification and assertion of power is in the sport of torture and killing. While Taylor and Krug are driven by different impulses, the positioning of their bodies in the frame and in relation to their victims is similar.

The violent set pieces in *The Last House on the Left* are made explicit through realistic blood and gore make-up. Stone, for example, is stabbed multiple times during a sequence of handheld close-ups which draw the audience's gaze to her seeping flesh wounds and blood-splattered legs, as well as the blood-soaked hands and limbs of her perpetrators. In this sequence, the blood make-up is constructed as a visual provocation for ideas about the "impact" of violent behaviour and the futility of war in the aftermath of Vietnam. As Heller-Nicholas observes, *The Last House on the Left*, and the way it is filmed, functions as a "narrative device with which to enter a wider examination of the issues affecting America at the unique time of the film's production" (38), such as the strong anti-war sentiments that had formed in the country. Craven himself explains, during an episode of the Fangoria "Screamography" series, that he "wasn't comfortable with the viciousness in the real world" and through *The Last House on the Left*, aimed to subversively explore violence that was "appalling" and that was "happening to real people" (2006). The violence in *The Last House on the Left*'s first half, therefore, can be read as a critique of "real world issues", such as the American public's desensitisation to violent imagery and the ongoing "traumas" of the Vietnam War.

McLean and Gibson employ a similar device and “style” in *Wolf Creek*. Gibson’s intuitive handheld camerawork foregrounds the copious blood markings on Hunter and Earl’s respective bodies inflicted by Taylor. His camera gets so close that it oppresses their space. Ballantine’s editing comprises various tight frames spliced through jump-cuts that evoke a sense of chaotic motion as Taylor tortures them and they struggle to evade his stranglehold. Through an absence of wide-shots, the violent set pieces in *Wolf Creek* described above constrict the cinematic space on-screen to direct the audience’s gaze to the maimed bodies of Hunter and Earl that are in frightening proximity to Taylor’s imposing physique. Like Taylor’s victims, the audience is positioned inside the action and never let off the hook.

Violence also plays a vital role in shaping the second half of *The Last House on the Left*. Disorientated after her rape, Collingwood escapes and stumbles into a nearby river. Krug shoots her three times from a distance with his revolver pistol. Collingwood’s dead body submerges under the water. Krug, Junior, Podowski and Sadie then seek refuge at a nearby cottage, which happens to be the Collingwood residence. Collingwood’s mother, Estelle (Cynthia Carr) and father, John (Gaylord St. James), discover the crime and set about exacting retribution by dispassionately killing each perpetrator across several violent set pieces. Through violence, Estelle and John regain the control that had been wrested from their daughter. Like Taylor in *Wolf Creek*, violence is the means they utilise to reclaim that ascendancy. As Muir writes, “terrible things happen to innocent people in *The Last House on the Left* with regularity and even so-called “good people” such as the Collingwoods easily resort to brutal violence and bloodlust” (48). In a film like *The Last House on the Left*, lines of morality are distorted and there is no clear right and wrong. As Craven clarifies in his Fangoria “Screamography” episode, there is “no black and white” in *The Last House on the Left*, and the Collingwood parents, who are introduced “as a respectable couple” but end up as murderers, are morally “grey” (2006). Their proclivity for violence is perhaps no different to the violent impulses of the perpetrators they slaughter.

Through *The Last House on the Left*, Craven appears to be examining the innate and instinctual violence that is hard-wired into human beings. This premise is identified by Jon Towlson:

“Violence (in *The Last House on the Left*) is a neverending circle: The victim inevitably becomes the aggressor, so violence becomes an inescapable fact of life; a violation of the self that is, nevertheless, unavoidable” (137). For Towlson, violence is an “unavoidable” fact of life that is manifested as a primal defensive mechanism. It is this fundamental examination, when understood as an allegory for violence in real-world conflicts, such as the Vietnam War, which contextualises *The Last House on the Left* and provides justification for the “seriousness” and brutality of its violent images.

The violence in *Wolf Creek* can also be decoded using this critical framework. Hunter, who breaks into Taylor’s shed and attempts to free Earl, instinctively uses Taylor’s mode of violence as a protective mechanism. She takes his rifle, and although she misfires and shoots him in the ear, performs an act of violence motivated by the desperate pursuit of survival. Later, when Taylor chases Earl in his Holden HQ Statesman, Earl uses her own vehicle, positioned in this sequence as a weapon, to push Taylor’s Statesman off the road. To survive, Earl, who is terrified and hysterical, wields the only weapon at her disposal. However, Hunter and Earl, unlike the Collingwood parents, use violence reluctantly and hesitate before making their moves. Their impetus is survival and ensuring it via any means necessary. Taylor’s violence can alternatively be read as not only motivated by his territorialism but as the instinctive actions of a depraved psychopath who kills in an unmapped rural space where there are no consequences and no one to make him accountable. He is an idealised anarchist whose violence is inbred. This thus positions him as an amoral creature and as a different species to Hunter and Earl, despite the recourse to violence that the protagonists adopt.

7.6 *Wolf Creek* and *Straw Dogs*

Straw Dogs also functions as a cinematic critique of America’s involvement in the Vietnam War and the media-driven sensationalisation of violence in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *The Last House on the Left*, I position the depiction of violence in *Straw Dogs* as having influence on the construction of violent sequences in *Wolf Creek*. Even more so than *The Last House on the Left*, *Straw Dogs* poses fundamental questions about the

relationship between violence and control. It is through this key theme, based on Taylor's use of violence as a territorial mode of operation to maintain the natural order of his environment, that an intertextual link between *Wolf Creek* and *Straw Dogs* can be formed.

The narrative of *Straw Dogs* centres around introverted American mathematician, David Sumner (Dustin Hoffman), who moves to a small-town village in rural Cornwall to live with his Englishborn wife, Amy (Susan George). It is evident early in the film that, despite being set in the UK, at the crux of *Straw Dogs* is a statement about the American public's aversion to the Vietnam War and the American media's controversial reporting tactics. This is clearly explicated in the first act. As two local men help Sumner carry household objects from his car to their new cottage, one of them says to Sumner, "I hear it's pretty rough in the States, sir?" The other then quips, "Oh, have you seen some of it, sir? Bombin', riotin', sniping, shooting the blacks. Can't walk down the streets they say no more." The first local then asks Sumner, "Were you involved in it, sir? I mean, did you take part?" The other local follows up with, "Did you see anybody get knifed?" Sumner, staunchly and without emotion, then replies "just between commercials". Here, Sumner's blunt response and passive-aggressive intonation can be read as a cinematic evocation of the angst shared by the American public of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Like Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, who cross over from their coastal habitat to Australia's rural regions and encounter difficulty integrating with the locals, such as Mitchell's interaction with Bazza at the Emu Creek pub, referenced in Chapter Five, Sumner is unable to interpret the localised Cornwall tongue and struggles to assimilate. Amy, known to most in the community, is sexually objectified by the local men. During a key set-piece in the film, Amy is raped by her expartner Charlie Venner (Del Henney) and, later, by Venner's friend Norman Scutt (Ken Hutchison).

Akin to war conflict between competing countries who fight to preserve their territory, the male characters in *Straw Dogs* use Amy as a pawn in their battle to gain the dominant authoritative hand over each other, and, as Stevie Simkin argues, the film "presents its audience with another ambivalently sexualised female in the form of Amy, a woman prized, appraised and fought over

by men in a battle to control her and, indirectly, one another” (122). He goes on to suggest that, “at the heart” of *Straw Dogs* “is an act of rape, the starkest most brutal expression of the male urge for domination and control of the female” (122). Like in *The Last House on the Left*, it is this “act of rape” in *Straw Dogs* that functions as a principal motivating factor in the film’s vengeful and explicitly violent climatic sequences.

It is the cinematographic depiction of the rape sequences in *Straw Dogs* that bears textual resemblance to the framing of violence in *Wolf Creek*. In the same way that Gibson’s camera draws focus to Earl and Hunter’s physical and psychological entrapment by employing close-ups of their mutilated bodies and frightened expressions, *Straw Dogs* Director of Photography, John Coquillon, directs the audience’s gaze to Amy’s suffering through the immediacy of the camera to the action. During the protracted rape scenes, Coquillon’s camera cross-cuts between closeups of Venner’s and Scutt’s sweat-glazed faces and tight shots which emphasise Amy’s traumatised reactions as she protests and resists their (mainly Scutt’s) violent advances. The close-ups, merged through the technique of elliptical editing reminiscent of Ballantine’s approach in *Wolf Creek*, become erratic and shorter in duration as Amy is progressively overpowered. Like in *Wolf Creek*, the physical bodies of Venner, Scutt and Amy are framed in proximity and always share the same constricted cinematic space. Although there is no rape in *Wolf Creek*, as highlighted earlier, Taylor still positions his body close to Hunter’s and Earl’s and grasps them in a stranglehold, much like the positioning of Venner’s and Scutt’s bodies in relation to Amy’s.

Effectively, Coquillon’s cinematography, like Gibson’s and Victor Hurwitz’s in *The Last House on the Left*, is suggestive of Amy’s physical and psychological immobilisation via the act of violence when she is at her most subjugated and vulnerable. McLean and Gibson employ similar film making and cinematographic techniques, described in the previous section of this chapter, to draw intense visual focus to Earl’s subjugation while she is tied erect to a pole and violently assaulted by Taylor, and Hunter’s spatial entrapment as he domineers and paralyses her with a knife blow to the spine. Akin to *Straw Dogs* and Collingwood’s rape sequence in *The Last House on the Left*, the positioning of Taylor’s body in relation to Hunter’s and Earl’s, and the

compression of space within each composition, reinforces Taylor's ascendancy and the physical suppression of his victims.

Moreover, during Amy's drawn-out rape sequence in *Straw Dogs*, the constricted close-ups of her face draw distinctive visual focus to the shifting nature of her experience of violence. The violence inflicted upon her is viewed to have an "impact" and invokes deeper questions about the complex moral boundaries at play in the film. For Venner, who Amy has had an ambiguous romantic past with, the act of rape is a raw expression of dominance over her, motivated by a desire to be the alpha-male "protector" that he believes Amy wants. During a key turning point in the rape sequence, Amy, who overtly resists Venner's violent advances at first, eventually succumbs to his dominance and begins to embrace him. To visually highlight their connectedness when this shift in Amy's psychology occurs, Coquillon's camera transitions from cross-cutting close-ups to a single two-shot, positioning them together as occupying the same space within the cinematic frame.

As Heller-Nicholas points out, "what begins as a clear-cut sexual assault by Amy's ex-lover morphs into something far different, as Amy's precarious relationship with both Charlie and David explodes onscreen in this strange and inescapably problematic sequence" (46). Like in *Wolf Creek*, the use of space and the positioning of bodies within that space is critical to an exploration of violence in cinema and the psychology of both the victim and perpetrator.

The violence that materialises in the second half of *Straw Dogs* is equally complex and multifaceted in nature. Even more so than *The Last House on the Left*, the film's climactic "revenge" sequence propels the use of violence, like in *Wolf Creek*, as territorial "masculine" behaviour. Sumner, who is emasculated throughout the film by the local men who vie for sexual control over his wife, regains his masculinity and recoups his agency by murdering each local during the film's concluding set piece (except for local Phil Riddaway, played by Donald Webster, who is shot by Amy). Sumner becomes the Last Man standing in the battle for ascendancy. Although he doesn't present as a psychopath or villain, his instinctual recourse to

violence to win the “battle” over the other men is perhaps no different to the intuitive violence employed by Taylor to eliminate Hunter, Earl and Mitchell.

The situation is complicated by the fact that Sumner does not appear to be motivated by a sense of retribution for Amy’s rape or a desire to avenge her honour. As Heller-Nicholas additionally argues:

Amy never *tells* David about the rape; although it is perhaps obvious what has happened, his refusal to acknowledge it simply adds to the list of factors he is in denial about...did David seek to avenge her rape against these two men? No – again, Amy never explicitly tells David she was raped, and he never acknowledges it (he, too, seems to suspect she was “asking for it. (Heller-Nicholas 49)

It is in fact the mistreatment of John Niles (Peter Arne), an intellectually challenged local man who is accused of paedophilia and who Sumner takes a liking to, which appears to be the impetus for Sumner’s violent upsurge. Amy’s rape sequence, therefore, has little bearing on Sumner’s transformation from an innocuous character to a merciless killer. As Heller-Nicholas puts it, the rape sequence serves, instead, as a “site of femininity” and “femaleness” which “masculine dramas” and conflicts can play out upon. (50)

Indeed, as she further explains, “the rape of a woman is not avenged in *Straw Dogs*, it is instead eradicated completely as an issue when David locks down into the safety of his newfound masculinity and an all-male world” (50). Like Taylor and even Bazza in *Wolf Creek*, who instinctively moves to fight Mitchell after being provoked in the Emu Creek pub, one way of reading Sumner’s violent tendencies, as Peckinpah appears to understand them, is that they reflect inbred male culture and impulse male behaviour. However, unlike Taylor, who adopts the conventional mould of a serial killer and whose violent tendencies are overt, Sumner’s impulses are subdued and only incited when his position in the “all-male world” of *Straw Dogs* is threatened.

7.7 *Wolf Creek* and *Deliverance*

Deliverance is a film underpinned by symbolism and a critique of the Vietnam War through exposing the audience to violent and confronting images. Like *The Last House on the Left* and *Straw Dogs*, it too features a protracted rape sequence and incorporates specific camera techniques to draw the audience into the action and to align them with the experience of the victim. The use of violence as an inbred “masculine” assertion of control over other men, akin to *Straw Dogs*, is a notable feature of *Deliverance* also. The most striking resemblance between *Wolf Creek* and *Deliverance*, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, is this enactment of violence as a metaphor to explore the cultural and social dissonance between male characters who inhabit remote rural locales and “civilised” men from urban municipal areas.

As McLean explains during his interview for the *Shock Waves* podcast, “When you look at a movie like *Deliverance*, and this again speaks to what this movie is really about, the horror is you have a person from this world (rural), and a person from this world (urban), and when they meet their points-of-view are so alien that they’re basically different species” (2016). In the same way that Taylor inflicts violence upon Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, “alien species” inhabiting his landscape that need to be “controlled”, the Mountain Man (Bill McKinney) and the Toothless Man (Herbert ‘Cowboy’ Coward) in *Deliverance* violently assault urban man Ed Gentry (Jon Voight) and savagely rape his friend Bobby Trippe (Ned Beatty) as a means of establishing dominance over them in their remote Cahulawassee River valley habitat. Gentry and Trippe, as well as their urban companions Lewis Medlock (Burt Reynolds) and Drew Ballinger (Ronny Cox), who travel from the city to the Cahulawassee region to canoe across the river, represent, as McLean puts it, infiltrating “alien species” transgressing in surroundings they are unaccustomed to (2016). It is this “infiltration” which invokes the Toothless Man and Mountain Man’s territorial instincts and culminates in the violent rape of Trippe.

This sense of “revenge” and retribution materialises in their resorting to the sexual assault of Trippe. Here, the rape of a male character by another is presented as a raw assertion of power and an act of emasculation. The set piece where Trippe is raped bears significant visual

resemblance to Collingwood's rape scene in *The Last House on the Left* and Amy's rape sequence in *Straw Dogs*. In terms of camera positioning and editing structures, it too resembles Earl's protracted torture sequence in *Wolf Creek* and the arrangement of screen action just before Hunter is murdered, where Taylor hovers above her and her agonised expressions are encapsulated through close-ups.

The action of the rape in *Deliverance* is represented through two distinctive gazes: firstly, the gaze of Gentry, who witnesses Trippe's rape while tied to a nearby tree and held by the Toothless Man with a knife to his neck; and secondly, like in *The Last House on the Left* and *Straw Dogs*, the gaze "forced" on the audience, the unrelenting close-up of Trippe, who is exposed, stripped of his agency, and made to "squeal like a pig" as his face is pushed into the dirt and he is violently dominated. The film's editor, Tom Priestley, cuts between both gazes with a structured rhythm that allocates equal screen time to each, so that the audience's focal point is not only drawn to the intensity of Trippe's suffering, but to Gentry's experience and own emasculation, as he is forced to bear witness to the humiliating assault of his friend.

Several medium-close-ups of Gentry, which isolate him as the solitary figure within the composition, are interspersed throughout the sequence and evoke his personal reactions and complex psychological struggle. As Lisa Coulthard observes, there is a "concentrated attention on Ed's forced gaze as he watches powerless as Bobby is humiliated, taunted, abused, and finally raped. The camera aligns the spectator with Ed's point of view, watching the rape from a distance" (175). Effectively, through an oscillation between handheld close-ups and these distant point-of-view shots, distinctive visual focus is ascribed in *Deliverance* to the "consequences" of violence that were magnified and compounded by the "Post-Vietnam War" era that the film was produced within.

This use of "distance", as Coulthard notes, and the manipulation of cinematic space to frame the action of Trippe's rape, offers a distinctive visual syntax that is likewise employed in the violent set pieces in *Wolf Creek*. Like Gentry, Hunter watches Taylor assault Earl from a distant viewpoint. During Earl's torture sequence, the distance of Gibson's camera to the action mirrors

the severity of the violence inflicted upon her: as the intensity of Taylor's violence is amplified, and Taylor physically moves into Earl's personal space, Gibson's camera reacts by pushing into closer proximity to the action and reducing the distance between the audience (the camera's eye) and the bodies in frame.

Moreover, as it does in *The Last House on the Left* and *Straw Dogs*, the relationship between "masculine" assertions of power and instinctive violent behaviour is reinforced in the second half of *Deliverance*. It is here that I form a strong intertextual association between *Wolf Creek* and *Deliverance*. In *Wolf Creek*, as examined in Chapters Four and Five, Taylor is the apparent embodiment of the natural order of his outback landscape and employs violence to combat its invasion. Both Hunter and Earl resort to the base human instinct of violence as a defensive mechanism and assume at different points in the film the conventional "masculine" disposition of violent behaviour to protect themselves against the threat posed by Taylor. In *Deliverance*, like in *Wolf Creek*, violence is the "masculine" means that the four urban men adopt to conquer the Mountain Men.

The Mountain Man who rapes Trippe, for instance, is shot and killed by Medlock with an arrow from his recurve bow. While the Toothless Man evades the four men and is never seen again, Gentry, armed with his own recurve bow and seeking retribution, shoots and kills another Mountain Man later in the film, mistaking him for the Toothless Man who held him against the tree during Trippe's rape. Like Sumner in *Straw Dogs*, Gentry commits murder with little hesitation to reveal his own primal violent disposition when his masculine identity is challenged.

Michael R. Meadows agrees and notes that "Ed's killing of a mountain man exposes his own potential for violence" (127). It is this "potential" for violence, and the emergence of that potential through the violent actions of an otherwise innocuous and respectable urban character like Gentry, that positions *Deliverance* as a social and cultural critique of the violent and morally ambiguous new world order in the wake of the Vietnam War. Likewise, the violence exhibited by Taylor in *Wolf Creek*, which is realistically drawn and examined by McLean, and Jarratt in

his characterisation, reveals the instability of the political and cultural landscape desensitised to random and impulsive acts of terrorism and violence in the post-9/11 world order.

Meadows additionally suggests that the swamp setting and the rapids in *Deliverance* are constructed as spaces where the four men are confronted with the violence of nature itself and must negotiate, with each other and within themselves, their masculine identities. He argues that “their uncertainty about the traditional male role” within a shifting social and political American landscape contextualises “the decision to return to nature” as an “attempt to recuperate a lost masculinity” (127). This “attempt” to recover a misplaced sense of masculinity by navigating an alien social and cultural space is thwarted by nature’s violent territorial instincts. The Mountain Man and the Toothless Man, like Taylor, are metaphorical manifestations of the landscape they inhabit, who work in tandem with their surroundings to eliminate the invading threat.

Thematic parallels can again be drawn here between *Deliverance* and *Wolf Creek* based on the notion of violent retribution. Mitchell, for instance, who is positioned at the beginning of the film as a vociferous male figure in his Broome locale, similarly experiences a “misplaced” masculinity once he transitions to the rural landscape where urban mores and ideas about the “traditional male role” do not translate. Hence, it is Mitchell more so than Hunter and Earl who is initially conspicuous and viewed as a “threat” for Bazza in Emu Creek pub and for Taylor later.

Moreover, Hunter, Earl and Mitchell’s trek into “nature”, representing the supposed carefree entitlement synonymous with a new generation of millennials that the film claims to represent, is thwarted not only by Taylor’s violent rampage but by the anthropomorphised rural landscape itself. Unlike the Broome-based scenes, which feature an abundance of water that symbolises the excesses of urban living, the outback they venture into is arid and stifling, and several key visual cues, such as a bullet-hole in a road sign that they pass by, prefigure the violence and menace that will ultimately befall them in the alien space they are infiltrating.

This chapter argues that *Wolf Creek* represents more than just a contemporary reimagining of the

Ozploitation visual style that characterised Australian horror films of the 1970s and 1980s. While *Wolf Creek* shares some visual and thematic similarities to key Ozploitation films, such as *Long Weekend*, McLean's use of screen violence more closely resembles the American exploitation films released in the aftermath of the Vietnam War in the early 1970s. As a film made not long after the events of 9/11, I similarly position *Wolf Creek* as a violent cinematic product shaped by memories of the war which preceded it. As I identify, the use of cinematic space in *Wolf Creek* and the framing of bodies within that space in the context of violent behaviour, has strong affiliation with the manipulation of space and the proximity between the bodies of the perpetrator and victims in "Post-Vietnam War" films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Last House on the Left*, *Straw Dogs* and *Deliverance*. Through the contemporary film making methodology employed in *Wolf Creek*, McLean's framing of violence gives the film a constructed aesthetic not only geared to the youth demographic of the 2000s but positioned within the lineage of international horror and exploitation film traditions established in the important American cinema of the 1970s.

CHAPTER 8: POST-WOLF CREEK HORROR PRODUCTION

The previous four chapters of this thesis drew attention to the film conventions, visual style, and tropes stemming from Australian outback cinema, American exploitation cinema, and the slasher horror sub-genre of the 1970s and 1980s. These three cinematic traditions, as I argue, have influenced the aesthetics of and form a strong referential basis for *Wolf Creek*. One of the key arguments in this study is that *Wolf Creek* utilises and reimagines these conventions and tropes to form a cinematic style geared for a new generation of moviegoers evolving within digital era. As I suggest, *Wolf Creek* reconceptualises these conventions and repositions them such that they are accessible for contemporary audiences.

Alongside *Saw*, *The Devil's Rejects* and *House of 1000 Corpses*, *Wolf Creek* is responsible for helping to create a broad international cinematic space for the production and distribution of Australian horror films. The period between 2005 and 2008, after *Wolf Creek's* initial cinematic release, saw a significant spike in Australian horror film production. As Ryan documents in "Australian Cinema's Dark Sun: the Boom in Australian Horror Film Production", examined in Chapter Seven, 68 horror features were produced in Australia between 2000 and 2008. Comparatively, only 19 were produced in the 1990s (25). A significant percentage of these 68 films were produced post-2005 in the wake of *Wolf Creek's* international success. Indeed, many of these post-2005 Australian horror films, inspired by *Wolf Creek*, "Australianise" global horror film tropes and established horror genre trends by recontextualising them in an Australian setting with Australian cultural themes and localised character types and vernacular.

In this chapter, I argue that *Wolf Creek* has spawned a new generation of post-2005 Australian horror film makers who employ a similar cinematic style. *Wolf Creek* has cultivated an aesthetic and structural blueprint for the contemporary Australian horror genre film that numerous local film makers, since 2005, have imitated. I position the film, therefore, as a lynchpin between "older" film generations and the cinematic trends of the "new" located in the 2000s era of horror film production. As such, this chapter examines several Australian horror films produced after

Wolf Creek that employ its horror blueprint and also draw on the cinematic tropes inherent in Australian and American exploitation films from the 1970s.

In this chapter, I draw focus to the Australian horror films released between 2007 and 2010. I have selected *Storm Warning* and *Dying Breed*, among others, as case-study texts to analyse due to their visual and thematic affiliations to *Wolf Creek*. Indeed, I position these films as part of the emergent post-2005 cycle of Australian horror films directly influenced by *Wolf Creek* and argue that they thus represent an instant “reaction” to the film. The Australian horror films released between 2010 and 2018 are therefore not within the frame of this study. I do, however, draw focus to the *Wolf Creek* franchise of recent years. While *Wolf Creek 2* and the televised *Wolf Creek* series are indeed part of this post-2005 “new generation” of Australian horror film production, they are not referred to in this chapter and are instead the central focus of Chapter Nine, where the franchise and its expanding film universe as a cinematic phenomenon is explored.

8.1 Rural Landscape Horror

As introduced in Chapter Four, many Australian films of the 1970s, such as *Wake in Fright*, *The Cars That Ate Paris* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, embody, in cinematic form, the Gothic tradition established in Australia from the 19th Century through paintings, literature and poetry which depict the Australian landscape as a site of horror. Gibson’s key theoretical proposition in “Formative Landscapes”, examined in Chapter Four, positions the landscape in 1970s Australian cinema as a ubiquitous representation of Australia’s colonial history and the conflict between the Indigenous communities and white settlers on the land.

Lisa Thatcher, writing for the website, *The Essential*, points out that “Australians have been making a unique style of Gothic film since the 1970s” that “become remarkable statements about the white Australian psyche” (Accessed 2018). Indeed, in 1970s Australian cinema, the Australian landscape is depicted as a complex social and cultural space which white (often

urban) Australians, such as Grant in *Wake in Fright* and Miranda in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, traverse and then become disorientated within.

It is this tradition of the landscape horror film that *Wolf Creek* references, redefines and makes accessible for the consumption of contemporary audiences. Scott and Biron argue that “it is the gothic which informs the narrative of *Wolf Creek*...what is arguably distinctive to this Australian gothic is the realism which informs the narrative and sets it apart from more romanticized European and American variations” (315). As elaborated throughout this study, it is the specific contemporary digital film making methods employed by McLean, Gibson and his production crew, such as handheld camera techniques and an MTV-style editing structure and syntax, that endows the film’s Gothic narrative with “realism” and “sets it apart” as a distinctive cinematic entry in the Gothic horror genre.

It is Hunter, Earl and Mitchell’s dislocation in the rural landscape, and their violent confrontation with Taylor within a space that is alien, that links *Wolf Creek* to its Australian Gothic film predecessors of the 1970s. Scott and Biron go on to explore this link and connection:

This gothic of disorientation, isolation and desolation has been a consistent element in Australian film. Two important features from the dawn of the New Australian Cinema, Nicholas Roeg’s *Walkabout* and Ted Kotcheff’s *Wake in Fright* (both 1971), capture nicely the competing emphasis between rural idyll and rural horror. In *Walkabout*, the familiar trope of individuals (in this case children) abandoned in the outback is mitigated by the presence of a benign and helpful Aboriginal. This allows the more severe aspects of rural danger to be held in check, and the cinematographic depiction of landscape to foreground its beautiful and bountiful nature. By contrast, in *Wake in Fright* the protagonist’s inability to escape his rural entrapment is rendered horrific by the presence of malignant beings who lead him only into danger. (Scott and Biron 315)

According to Scott and Biron, the “disorientation” experienced by the children in *Walkabout* and Grant in *Wake in Fright* when they contest the unfamiliar geographical and cultural space of the

Australian outback forms a specific “type” of Gothic film synonymous with the Australian film revival. It is this familiar trope of the Gothic film and the key thematic premise of conflict between characters from urban and rural contexts, which, like in *Wake in Fright*, forms the visual and conceptual basis of the horror in *Wolf Creek*.

In sum, the international box-office success of *Wolf Creek* has created a space for the production of Australian horror films in the global film market. It has simultaneously formed a film making blueprint that Australian horror film makers have drawn on since 2005. One key aspect in many of these post-2005 horror films is this Gothic horror narrative form of urban characters trespassing in rural terrain and being menaced by locals who adopt violent strategies to defend their habitat. This form is embodied in the American exploitation films referred to in Chapter Seven, such as *Deliverance*, and is a defining characteristic in Australian horror film making post-2005 as established in *Wolf Creek*.

8.2 *Wolf Creek* and *Storm Warning*

Storm Warning is an important film to consider as a point of comparison to *Wolf Creek*'s use of the rural landscape as a site for the manifestation of violent confrontation. The film was written by De Roche who, as mentioned in Chapter Four, also wrote key Australian horror films from the 1970s and 1980s, such as *Long Weekend*, Richard Franklin's *Patrick* (1978), and Franklin's *Roadgames* (1981). De Roche's screenwriting career in the genre helped establish and cultivate Australia's horror film traditions. He wrote the screenplay for *Storm Warning* in 1992 and shelved it due to the confrontational nature of its violent sequences. Australian horror film production in the 1990s, as pointed out earlier in this chapter and in Chapter Seven, was scarce in comparison to production in the 1970s and 1980s. The “Ozploitation” phenomenon and the introduction of the 10BA tax incentive in 1981 for producers of local content had passed. However, the release of *Wolf Creek* in 2005 established new possibilities for horror content in local productions. It employed a contemporary film making methodology to redefine screen violence and repositioned the Australian Gothic tradition for a new audience. Thematically, *Storm Warning* bares striking resemblance to the themes and approaches to filmmaking in *Wolf*

Creek. Indeed, it was brought to production by De Roche at the inception of a new dawn in Australian horror film making and is thus worth examining here.

In *Storm Warning*, urban characters Rob (Robert Taylor) and Pia (Nadia Farès), like Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, venture from their populated municipal habitat and go sailing across desolate coastal marshland. Rob is a well-mannered and decorous barrister. Pia, his wife, is an artist of French nationality. As they approach French Island, they are disorientated, lose their bearings and become lost. They dock their boat in the marsh landscape and, on foot, find a dilapidated farmhouse on a deserted ramshackle property. The property belongs to a violent nomad family, Brett (Matthew Wilkinson), his brother Jimmy (David Lyons) and their father, Poppy (John Brumpton). The violent power imbalance inherent in the family, in which Poppy uses physical and verbal intimidation to coerce Brett and Jimmy into torturing and assaulting Rob and Pia, recalls the violent dynamic evident in Leatherface's family of cannibals in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, analysed in both Chapter Six and Seven. Here, *Storm Warning*, is clearly influenced by the *Wolf Creek* horror film making blueprint, and also derives ideas from and positions itself in the lineage of American exploitation films of the 1970s, with their focus on primal violence and psychopathy.

The violence inflicted on Rob and Pia by the family is motivated by the same masculine territorialism that gives Taylor his impetus in *Wolf Creek*. It is this notion of territory and the means used to protect it that is also embedded in the key American exploitation films examined in Chapter Seven, such as *Deliverance* and also Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977). Through Poppy, Brett and Jimmy, *Storm Warning*, influenced by *Wolf Creek* and Taylor as its key precursor, has helped give shape to this "new" form of Australian horror film production, post-2005. This film reinforces tropes established in American horror cinema of the 1970s and transplants the setting and site for this violent confrontation to the rural Australian landscape, like *Wolf Creek*.

Rayner agrees with this evaluation and points out that the Australian Gothic genre, which both

Wolf Creek and *Storm Warning* seem to fit within, “coheres with the portrayals of monstrous rurality in contemporary American horror films” (104). Rayner references *Deliverance*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *The Hills Have Eyes* as keystone films that the Australian Gothic cinema emulates (104). For Rayner, Australian horror films in the Gothic tradition, like *Wolf Creek* and *Storm Warning*, “cohere” to the structures inherent in international cinema and therefore position themselves as part of the global horror film genre.

Rayner goes on to contend that “the depictions of the rural community” in Australian Gothic cinema such as *Wolf Creek*, “offer a shocking and subversive revision of a natural landscape otherwise presumed to be tamed” and that the narratives “turn on the arrival and intervention of an outsider bearing connotations of urban sophistication” (105). This is certainly apparent in *Wolf Creek*. Hunter, Mitchell and Earl’s “intervention” into Taylor’s landscape represents a transition from the Australian outback as an idyllic space to a hostile site of extreme abjection and violent engagement. Indeed, *Storm Warning* represents a similar binary in its representation of the rural landscape.

“Monstrous rurality” in *Storm Warning* is represented through Poppy, Brett and Jimmy, and the barbaric violence they inflict on Rob and Pia when their territorial dispositions are provoked. Like Taylor in *Wolf Creek*, who refers to Mitchell’s hometown Sydney as “the poofter capital of Australia”, a derogatory evocation of his scorn for “outsiders” and the “urban sophistication” presented by Mitchell in particular, Jimmy taunts Rob and his refined sensibilities by nicknaming him “slick” and “Volvo”. The cultural divergences between the two men, which ignite the ensuing violent hostility, is a fundamental theme likewise explored in *Wolf Creek* and indicative of this emerging “type” of post-2005 horror film in Australia.

Syntactically, *Storm Warning* adheres to the visual pattern established in *Wolf Creek*’s opening sequences. Akin to the narrative arrangement in *Wolf Creek*, examined throughout this study and particularly in Chapter Six, *Storm Warning* employs a structure which likewise deviates from the standard set-up of an inciting incident and instead begins with benign exposition between Rob and Pia as they trek, by car, from their city locale towards the marshlands where the film is set.

This beginning sequence crosscuts between the two characters inside the car, conversing, and aerial shots of the car as it rolls forward on a vacant stretch of highway adjacent to the coast. Like the long-shot vistas of the rural landscape in *Wolf Creek*, which frame Hunter, Earl and Mitchell's vehicle as a small insignificant object dwarfed by the scale and magnitude of their surroundings, this sequence in *Storm Warning* uses a deliberative cinematographic and editing style to represent an oblivious Rob and Pia crossing the threshold into a dangerous and remote space, while engaged in an innocuous conversation about trivial urban matters that have no meaning in a rural landscape governed by a different set of codes and mores.

This cinematographic trend in post-2005 Australian horror films, in which the rural landscape is anthropomorphised and positioned as a "character" through the recurrent insertion of long-shots and vistas, was established in Australian landscape cinema of the 1970s, as examined in Chapter Four. In the horror film making model propagated by *Wolf Creek*, these landscape vistas are visually configured through the lens of digital cameras. Mirroring Gibson's use of high-definition cameras to frame the landscape through a multitude of perspectives, *Storm Warning* Director of Photography, Karl von Moller, employs long-shots of the landscape which envelop Rob and Pia and position them as infinitesimal in the context of the vastness of nature. As they leave the dock and sail towards French Island, several compositions frame the boat from extreme long-shots to emphasise the distance of this solitary object in the middle of uncharted sea, etching closer to the horror that awaits in this remote region. Paul Pirola's score, like Tétaz's in *Wolf Creek*, employs ominous twangs and cavernous drones to aurally evoke the omnipresent natural element that pervades Rob and Pia as they sail.

Moreover, von Moller's deployment of visceral handheld cameras during the violent set pieces in *Storm Warning* strongly resembles Gibson's approach in *Wolf Creek*. This style of cinematography emphasises the proximity between bodies in the frame as violence unfolds. As examined in Chapter Seven, American exploitation films of the 1970s employed camera techniques of similar effect to sustain terrifying focus on the physical and psychological "impact" of violence on victims. As such, *Wolf Creek*, *Storm Warning* and the post-2005 Australian horror film genre can therefore be positioned as part of a cinematic heritage that

began using film cameras in different ways to frame violence and bring immediacy to screen action.

Muir understands this brand of screen violence as belonging to the “savage cinema” (27) that characterised the ultraviolent American films of the 1970s, as examined in Chapter Seven. One of the key components of this “savage cinema”, for Muir, is the relentlessness of screen action and the full-scale intensity of horror, which effectively puts “viewers into the mindset of a caged, hunted animal” (28). Muir’s “savage cinema”, in which he references *Deliverance* and *Straw Dogs* as prime examples, is transposed to an Australian context in *Wolf Creek* and *Storm Warning* and then aesthetically revised through the use of contemporary cinematic techniques and digital cameras.

Indeed, the second half of *Storm Warning*, as it is in *Wolf Creek*, is characterised by its ultraviolent content and high levels of blood and gore, the frenetic motion of von Moller’s handheld camera, and the intense momentum of action sequenced through the fast cuts in Blanks’ and Geoff Hitchins’ MTV-style editing approach. The ferocity of motion is mostly instigated by Pia who, like the Collingwood parents in *The Last House on the Left*, wrests control by imitating the “masculine” violent tendencies of her attackers and brutally murdering them. Enacting her revenge plot after being assaulted by both Jimmy and Poppy, she says to a visibly emasculated Rob, who is beaten and immobilised on the ground, unable to assist in her plan, “to catch a mad duck, you must think like a mad duck”. This line of exposition draws focus to the cinematic heritage of American exploitation films that this study has referenced and that feature characters transgressed on that then appropriate the violent characteristics of their perpetrators to exact retribution. Muir contends that in this “savage cinema”, of which *Wolf Creek* and *Storm Warning* are overt post-2005 Australian examples, violence is typically “the only solution left” to ensure survival (28). This aligns the character of Pia with Hunter and Earl from *Wolf Creek*, who, as explored in Chapter Seven, appropriate Taylor’s mode of violence to survive.

Released only two years after *Wolf Creek*, I thus position *Storm Warning* as an exemplar of the post-2005 Australian horror film. With its focus on territorial violence, camera emphasis on the rural landscape and overt links to the traditions of Gothic horror, it is a similar work of

subversion made in the trailblazing spirit of *Wolf Creek* and produced in the direct aftermath of the film's commercial success. As such, I employ *Storm Warning* as a useful starting point to examine the post-2005 horror film phenomenon in Australia.

8.3 *Wolf Creek* and *Dying Breed*

Another post-2005 example of this cinematic style is Jody Dwyer's *Dying Breed* (2008). Like *Storm Warning*, it embodies the "new" Australian Gothic cinema established significantly through the *Wolf Creek* blueprint. As has been examined throughout this study, in this form of horror cinema, the rural landscape is positioned as a space where urban sensibilities are met with a recourse to violence. The violence in *Dying Breed* unfolds in the rural Tasmanian landscape. Like Hunter, Earl and Mitchell, who trek from their populated Broome locale to the unmapped Western Australian wilderness to visit the Wolfe Creek Crater "landmark", *Dying Breed* tracks urban millennials Jack (played by Phillips with the same youthful bravado that characterises Mitchell), Matt (Whannell), Rebecca (Melanie Vallejo) and Nina (Mirrah Foulkes), who leave the city on "an adventure" to find traces of the extinct Tasmanian tiger species at Pieman River. In both films, it is curiosity and fascination with the unusual by urbanites that prompts the departure from a familiar citified habitat to an alien outback landscape. It is this penetration of a landscape that the urbanites do not belong to that establishes the context for the ensuing horror and ignites a violent response for the natural element and its inhabitants.

Imelda Whelehan agrees and argues that, in *Dying Breed*, "Tasmania's wilderness features as the main narrative space, while its emptiness and the isolation of its inhabitants sets up classic horror genre expectations as the relatively cosmopolitan visitors enter a community whose rules and customs they do not understand" (164). According to Whelehan, the rural Tasmanian landscape, like the Western Australian landscape in *Wolf Creek*, functions as a crucible in which the disparity between urban "rules" and "customs" and the supposed unrefined mores of the remote community manifests through violence. As also seen in *Storm Warning*, it is the innate "conflict" between urban egotism and rural barbarity that recurs as a core thematic element of the Australian Gothic and post-2005 horror film making methodology established by *Wolf Creek*.

In *Dying Breed*, the construction of the dangerous territorial fringe character, as popularised in Australian horror cinema through Taylor, comes to light in the figures of the territorial cannibals. The treacherous disposition of the cannibals and their capacity for violent behaviour is made overt throughout the plot of the film. One of them, for example, says, “Why’d you come here? You tourists turn up, you always interfere, you trample on everything, you spoil everything.” Akin to the rural savages in *Deliverance*, who remain obscured and undetected in their swamp habitat and only surface to eliminate the threat posed by the urban men, the cannibals in *Dying Breed* stay hidden and then show themselves to dispatch the four friends and defend their Tasmanian landscape. Indeed, the alignment between *Dying Breed* and *Deliverance* appears to be intentional by Dwyer and screenwriters, Michael Boughen and Rod Morris, when Jack refers to Pieman River as “Deliverance country”.

The writers of *Dying Breed* explicitly employ the Tasmanian landscape in the film to reference aspects of Australia’s colonial history and cultural past. This is the key idea developed by Gibson in “Formative Landscapes”, based on what informs the visual language and aesthetic constructions in 1970s Australian landscape films. The opening set piece in *Dying Breed* features real-life Irish convict and infamous cannibal Alexander Pearce escaping prison in Van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania), evading police, and then violently murdering one of the officers by biting him on the neck. The cinematic reframing of this real-life event is the narrative impetus for *Dying Breed*, as Jack, Matt, Rebecca and Nina, who intervene on the land that Pearce once traversed in their pursuit of the Tasmanian tiger, are menaced by a family of cannibals who metaphorically embody Pearce’s malevolent spirit.

Akin to *Wolf Creek*, which evokes, through Taylor, an inherent antagonism towards urban dwellers and outsiders that has manifested over time in outback Australian culture, the inference to Pearce’s cannibalism frames the film and the Tasmanian landscape within a history defined by anti-authoritarian and anarchist behaviour. This history is evidenced most conspicuously through the figure of the bushranger. Like *Wolf Creek*, *Dying Breed* employs an American horror film format emerging from the 1970s and relocates this format to an Australian setting and with

Australian themes for a contemporary audience. Indeed, as Whelehan also writes, “Even if homegrown horror is seen as taking its impetus from the American market, it also pays homage to modern Australian horror classics as well as taking on more specifically Australian political themes, around its recent colonial past” (166). The emerging post-2005 Australian horror film genre that I have argued is linked to *Wolf Creek* and developed in *Dying Breed*, blends the tropes of 1970s American exploitation and horror cinema, the Australian cinematic conventions established during its film revival, and key themes relating to Australia’s cultural identity in the rural landscape and the behaviour of male figures within that space.

Dying Breed’s status as a key post-2005 Australian horror film is made more explicit by the casting of Phillips and Whannell as best friends. As examined throughout this study, particularly in Chapter Five, Phillips, and his portrayal of Mitchell in *Wolf Creek*, is positioned as a masculine symbol for the emerging generation of millennials that defines Australian youth culture of the late 1990s and 2000s. This positioning provides a contrast to the rural masculine “type” embodied by Taylor. Whannell, who co-wrote and starred in *Saw*, is likewise at the forefront of the new wave Australian horror film making that this chapter has described. The casting of Phillips and Whannell in *Dying Breed* may evoke, according to Paul Byrnes in his review of the film for *The Sunday Morning Herald*, “a deliberate line of continuity” (2008). The screen presence of Phillips and Whannell forms a strong intertextual association between *Dying Breed* and the two films that I understand to be key predecessors to the emergence of Australia’s new horror film production subculture, *Wolf Creek* and *Saw*. Effectively, the high visibility of Phillips and Whannell in *Dying Breed* positions the film within the same social and cultural space as *Wolf Creek*.

8.4 *Wolf Creek* and the Creature Feature

Alongside this rise in the production of horror films with an Australian Gothic aesthetic, the immediate years following *Wolf Creek*’s release saw an upsurge in creature features where urban characters are menaced by a central wild beast, animal or a collective of wildlife. As explored in

Chapter Seven, this film making trend was established as part of the “Ozploitation” phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s. In key “Ozploitation” films, such as *Long Weekend*, *Razorback* and *Dark Age*, discussed in this study, the natural order of the rural landscape, embodied in animal form, resists intervention and employs violence to eliminate humans who infiltrate and transgress in the space. Like *Storm Warning* and *Dying Breed*, the rural landscape is imbued as a living presence and as the site and context where the violent intervention transpires.

Wolf Creek created a space for the widespread production of Australian horror films. It provided McLean a platform within which he was able to produce *Rogue* in 2007. Through *Rogue*, McLean created his own throwback to the creature feature genre from yesteryear. During an interview for the *ComingSoon.net* film website, he recalls that he first wrote the screenplay for *Rogue* in 1995, twelve years before the release of *Wolf Creek*, and that the film was “always designed to be a classical, old-fashioned monster movie” that featured a “blend” of the “really realistic, genuine suspense and real characters” identified in American horror films such as *Jaws* and *Alien* from the 1970s (2007). For me, *Rogue* does more than simply evoke American genre traditions from the 1970s. It is simultaneously part of Australia’s genre film making heritage. The rendering of a saltwater crocodile as the central villain violently defending its river habitat against a group of invading tourists forms an intertextual association, for example, with *Dark Age*, a key Australian genre film originating in the 1980s through the 10BA tax scheme, which likewise employs a crocodile as the antagonist.

Rogue was produced on a production budget of \$25 million (AUD) in comparison to *Wolf Creek*’s \$1.2 million (AUD). The worldwide popularity of *Wolf Creek* helped facilitate a new production landscape for Australian horror film makers. Armed with the financial scope and resources to produce *Rogue* on a higher budget, McLean was ultimately one of the first beneficiaries of the post-2005 landscape that he himself helped cultivate through *Wolf Creek*. In *Rogue*, a large group of tourists embark on a cruise in Kakadu National Park in the remote Northern Territory river landscape. Based on a real-life 5.1 metre saltwater crocodile nicknamed “Sweetheart”, infamous for a string of boat attacks in the Northern Territory between 1974 and 1979, the villainous crocodile in *Rogue*, which was recreated via CGI and animatronics, can be

inscribed as an animal variant of Taylor, whose violent territorial instincts are similarly provoked when its habitat is infringed.

The positioning of the saltwater crocodile as antagonist in the horror film narrative is similarly employed in David Nerlich and Andrew Traucki's *Black Water* (2007). Produced on a lower scale budget of \$700,000 (AUD), the film features three urban characters, Grace (Diana Glenn), Lee (Maevie Dermody) and Adam (Andy Rodoreda), as they embark on a boat tour in the vast mangrove swamps of the Northern Territory. A single saltwater crocodile capsizes the boat and ensnares them in a swamp clearing. It murders them one at a time. Lee is the only survivor. In her review of the film for the HNN | Horrornews.net website, Lizzie Duncan draws attention to the similarities between *Black Water* and *Rogue* and positions them as both part of the *Wolf Creek* cinematic lineage that employs the Australian landscape as a context for horror. She points out that "ever since *Wolf Creek* was released in 2005, the Australian outback has gained a sinister element to it" and that a "lot of comparisons" have thus been forged between *Black Water* and *Rogue* as two films that feature a killer crocodile as an embodiment of this "sinister element" (2016). Although I agree with Duncan's view that *Wolf Creek*'s positioning of the Australian outback as a frightening and "sinister" void has influenced films such as *Black Water* and *Rogue*, I demonstrate throughout this study that such representations in fact find their lineage in the Australian Gothic horror cinema of the 1970s. *Wolf Creek* was not the first Australian film to employ this theme and is instead influenced by films such as *Wake in Fright* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

In *Black Water*, much like *Rogue*, the saltwater crocodile embodies the intent of the precarious and hostile river and swamp landscape that the urban infiltrators transgress. As Milatovic argues, the crocodile in both films "provides the 'counter-paradisal perspective' on the land that the tourists or 'trespassers' commodify or exploit for their own amusement" (76). For Milatovic, the crocodile employs violence to chastise these "trespassers" for their urban egotism. An alternative reading is that the crocodile, like Taylor, is simply a maniacal force that is unimpeded in the isolated milieu that it inhabits. For me, the crocodile in *Black Water* represents both readings: in much the same way that Taylor's violence is dually ignited by his innate territorialism and the

remoteness of his environment, the crocodile's violence is likewise instinctive but only within the context of the unregulated space that it operates.

Traucki's next film, *The Reef* (2010), exchanges the crocodile for a Great White Shark as a villainous embodiment of the natural order and as an unstoppable monstrous entity, much like the shark in *Jaws*. Unlike the crocodile, who lurks in the isolated recesses of the mangroves, the shark, like Taylor in the outback landscape of *Wolf Creek*, occupies a vast remote territory. Alongside Kimble Rendall's *Bait 3D* (2012), *The Reef*, according to Milatovic, "echoes the sense of terror" that defines the characters' predicament in *Black Water* through the deploying of the shark as a dangerous obstacle as the group of urban characters "struggle to survive the hostile ocean" (77) after their boat capsizes. The shark, as antagonist, and the ocean as a site of horror and violent confrontation, has a genealogy from American cinema of the 1970s, especially in terms of *Jaws*, which positions the urban sophistication of Brody and Hooper with the threatening and unpredictable ocean habitat the shark inhabits and vociferously protects.

In this chapter, I examined the post-2005 Australian horror film cinematic landscape that has been significantly influenced by the production elements and themes evident in *Wolf Creek*. I drew focus to key examples of horror films produced in Australia as an immediate "reaction" to *Wolf Creek*, such as *Storm Warning*, *Dying Breed* and *Rogue*. Within this focus on Australian horror film production between 2007 and 2010, I examined the direct impact that *Wolf Creek* had on this new and progressive wave of Australian horror film making in the digital era. By doing so, I effectively positioned *Wolf Creek* as a lynchpin and revolutionary film that gave shape to a decisive horror film making "brand" and helped facilitate a vibrant and vivacious culture of horror film making in Australia.

CHAPTER 9: THE EXPANDING *WOLF CREEK* CINEMATIC UNIVERSE

Wolf Creek has opened new distribution possibilities for domestic horror production in the post-2005 Australian industry sector. It has helped facilitate a vibrant production climate where Australian horror film franchises are now possible. The current proliferation of streaming and video-on-demand services, such as the Australian-based Stan and ABC iView, as well as American streaming companies Netflix and Hulu, among others, has altered the way that audience's view and engage with visual media. Content can now be consumed in diverse ways and at times and places that suit the audience. Film makers are thus given broader scope to distribute their product and adapt their material to appeal to a new generation of consumers wanting instant content.

Over the last several years, McLean has used this new distribution and production climate to develop the *Wolf Creek* film franchise. In 2014, he released *Wolf Creek 2*. In 2016, he created a six-episode spin-off television series for Stan. In 2017, he used the Stan platform to create a second television series, also comprising six episodes. These film and television sequels were complemented by the release of two prequel novels, *Origin* and *Desolation Game*, both published in 2014. *Wolf Creek* figurines have been manufactured and sold. Clearly, McLean's franchise has now consolidated as cinematic and Australian pop culture phenomenon. Within the *Wolf Creek* universe, the mythology of Taylor has expanded. Indeed, it is the figure of Taylor that has become the transtextual thread between each franchise entry. Akin to the positioning of Myers, Voorhees and Krueger as the centrepiece characters of their respective horror franchises, as examined in Chapter Six, the villainous Taylor (as well as Jarratt) has become the key selling point for McLean as the *Wolf Creek* legend grows.

McLean's initiatives appear to be part of a contemporary global production trend: employing streaming services to expand from and complement cinema outputs. In a similar way, Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* franchise, which consists of three films, all directed by Raimi, *Evil Dead* (1981), *Evil Dead II* (1987) and *Army of Darkness* (1992), was reimaged in television form, with three seasons of *Ash vs Evil Dead* released on Stan between 2015 and 2018. Other classic

Australian films are being serialised via streaming services, alongside *Wolf Creek*. The first season of *Romper Stomper*, for example, set twenty-five years after the events in Geoffrey Wright's original film of the same name (1992), was released on Stan in early 2018. Likewise, a six-episode televised retelling of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was released on Foxtel in 2018.

Chapter Eight positioned *Wolf Creek* at the forefront of a new style of horror cinema in the post-2005 Australian filmic landscape. It examined the essential themes in *Wolf Creek* which are propagated through this new wave of horror film production in Australia. Indeed, an important facet of this “new wave” is the formation of the *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe, made possible in this new Australian horror film landscape where the rate of production has spiked and the demand for content has increased exponentially. This chapter examines each entry in the *Wolf Creek* franchise, beginning with *Wolf Creek 2*, and positions McLean and his collaborators as key local players in this trend towards personal streaming media consumption. I trace the development of Taylor as the lynchpin character within the *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe and examine the mythological construction of his character as it unfolds in the movie sequel and television series.

Finally, in the same way that the original film references Australian cinematic conventions and reveals an awareness of the films which preceded it, as explored in earlier chapters, I draw intertextual associations between the various media outputs and identify the self-referential connections evident within the franchise. While McLean's film making style has evolved from the raw Dogme 95 and Cinéma vérité sensibilities of the original film, and while Taylor has transitioned into new territory across each additional media entry, the franchise does not appear to have deviated too far from its roots, lineage and formula. Indeed, McLean uses the original *Wolf Creek* as a conceptual and semiotic substrate from which all subsequent narrative and character arcs in the franchise are formed.

As outlined in the introduction, literature on the themes and visual style evident in the *Wolf Creek* franchise is limited. Little, if any, scholarly material has been published on the franchise. Throughout this chapter, however, I frame this limitation as a research opportunity with scope

for more focused and expansive investigation in the future. Indeed, while I include insights from reviews written directly after the release of the sequel and television series, much of this chapter, like Chapter Three, is dependent on the recollections and perspectives of McLean to help contextualise my analysis, as well as my own interpretation on how the sequel and television series work collectively to extend the mythology of the *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe.

9.1 The Sequel: *Wolf Creek 2*

As Marc Blake and Sarah Bailey put it, “horror suits the sequel” because of the “lucrative vein of repeatable business”, as verified by the financial successes of model horror franchises *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (108). It was this production paradigm of sequels and the franchising of a key character and concept that McLean sought to cash in on not long after the release of the original film. The *Wolf Creek 2* screenplay, co-written by McLean and horror novelist and academic, Aaron Sterns (who also cowrote *Origin* with McLean), was conceptualised and developed via a vigorous workshopping and re-drafting process throughout the nine-year hiatus.

McLean did not originally want the sequel to be too much of a stylistic departure from the original film. While he wanted to maintain his stylistic roots, he subsequently aimed to expand his film making scope and explore new variations of film style and technique. He wanted it to be more emphatic and grander in scale than its predecessor. Indeed, according to Jarratt in the *DP/30* YouTube interview, “Greg always said he wasn’t going to make a sequel until he felt it was better than the first one” (2014).

A close analysis of *Wolf Creek 2* reveals this shift in McLean’s film making sensibilities during the nine-year gap. He wrote, directed and produced *Rogue* in 2007, a stylistic throwback to B-grade creature features of the 1970s and 1980s, as explored in Chapter Eight, and was Executive Producer on Patrick Hughes’ neo-Western *Red Hill* (2010), shot on location in Omeo, Victoria, as well as Justin Dix’s science fiction genre film *Crawlspace* (2012). It is important to note that both *Red Hill* and *Crawlspace*, although embodying horror film elements, are a hybridisation of

various genres, such as horror, action, science-fiction and police procedural drama. McLean was inspired by these hybridised cinematic forms which juxtapose different genres. In an interview for the *JustSeenItReviews* YouTube Channel, he reveals that *Wolf Creek 2* was a departure from the original film because it aligned closely with the “interests” that he had as a film maker at the time (2014).

An analysis of key scenes and set pieces in *Wolf Creek 2* makes McLean’s development as a film maker clear. Armed with a \$7 Million (AUD) production budget, instead of the \$1.2 Million (AUD) he was allocated for the original film, *Wolf Creek 2* can be positioned as a “reaction” to its predecessor. In terms of shot structure, camera framing and “style”, it deviates from the visceral handheld techniques and documentary-like realism of its predecessor. The staging of action in the film, as well as the sequencing and arrangement of compositions, points to a more conventional cinematic approach typical of Hollywood studio films. In *Wolf Creek 2*, which features Taylor stalking, by car, on horseback and on foot, British traveller Paul Hammersmith (Ryan Corr), who is holidaying in the outback, Toby Oliver’s camera, as well as the action and set-ups, is always moving and suggesting a continuous sense of “motion”.

McLean’s use of well-known American cinematic techniques is indeed overt in *Wolf Creek 2*. The film’s scene structure, which, according to McLean in the *Wolf Creek 2* DVD Commentary, consists of eleven key set pieces and a “series of chases” (2014), builds and then sustains momentum. The transition between set pieces, visually and conceptually, resembles, for example, Steven Spielberg’s *Duel* (1971), which was anchored around an interconnected series of “chases” as David Mann (Dennis Weaver) is pursued by the anonymous Truck Driver (Carey Loftin) in a Peterbilt 281 tanker truck. Through this sequencing of action in *Duel*, like in *Wolf Creek 2*, the subject in frame is always moving and within the gaze of the camera.

In *Wolf Creek 2*, Taylor has high visibility. He is a lurking presence. As Jake Wilson notes in his review of the film for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Wolf Creek 2* “does not repeat the slow burn of the first film” and, instead, “McLean lets his villain dominate from the outset” (2014). This, in my view, diminishes the horror associated with the character. In *Wolf Creek*, Taylor’s “absence”

from the first act provokes a fear of the unknown and what cannot be seen or regulated. It positions him as an elusive character of frightening mystique and as a tyrannical force of nature who plays by his own rules in the unmapped Australian wilderness. The audience are placed at a “distance” to him. His motivation is unknown. In *Wolf Creek 2*, the subtlety of the horror is replaced by a more standardised approach to characterisation. This time, Taylor appears at the very beginning. He is foregrounded from the start and stays there for the film’s duration. As such, he is introduced as a conspicuous villainous entity intent on wreaking immediate havoc, as opposed to the clandestine figure from the original film initially hidden from the audience’s view.

McLean makes his transition to classical film making structures even more overt in *Wolf Creek 2* through his visual references to the American Western genre and the films of John Ford, most notably *The Searchers* (1956). In the *Wolf Creek 2* DVD Audio Commentary, McLean reveals that he “pays homage to” and “riffs” (2014) from the opening scene of *The Searchers*, where Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) returns to his brother’s country homestead in 1868 after serving in the Confederacy during the Civil War. Edwards emerges, on horseback, as a faraway figure in the sweeping West Texas landscape and edges slowly towards the isolated homestead as his family stand waiting to greet him on the porch. In *Wolf Creek 2*, as a stylistic mirror of the framing of Edwards and the immersive landscape, a dishevelled Hammersmith, who has momentarily evaded Taylor, similarly emerges from scrub in the Western Australian desert and staggers in the direction of a secluded cottage in the distance as the arid landscape envelops him. Here, McLean frames Hammersmith from multiple positions through the gaze of a static camera. This signals an evolution in McLean’s film making methodology. The solid shot structure in *Wolf Creek 2*, as evident in this sequence through an absence of the handheld camera aesthetics that defined the original, borrows from classic Hollywood genres such as the American Western and is experimented with by McLean to give new visual shape to the derivative horror film format that he helped cultivate.

Despite these variances in cinematography and shot composition, the performance style that McLean draws from his actors in *Wolf Creek 2* maintains the improvisational nature of the

original film. Pitted against Jarratt for most of the film, Corr plays the traumatised Hammersmith with the raw and vociferous intensity of a battler that recalls Phillips' portrayal of Mitchell after he escapes from Taylor's campsite and staggers across the harsh landscape terrain to safety. Phillippe Klaus and Shannon Ashlyn, who play free-spirited German backpackers Rutger Enqvist and Katarina Schmidt, portray their characters with the youthful exuberance that similarly defined Magrath and Morassi's characterisations of Hunter and Earl from the original. The spontaneity of the dialogue between Enqvist and Schmidt in the film's early scenes echoes the organic interactions between Hunter, Mitchell and Earl.

According to McLean on the *Wolf Creek 2* DVD Commentary, while the "first film was very much (filmed in a) documentary style", the sequel can be characterised by its "vérité style performances in a classic frame". As he goes on to recall, "the idea was to counterpoint the very solid image structure and shot structure with very realistic and organic feeling performances and dialogue" (2014). In creating this "counterpoint", McLean appears to be acknowledging his film making roots while at the same time exploring alternative approaches to shot construction and visual aesthetics. Within the context of McLean's career, *Wolf Creek 2* can be read as a point of transition where his proven formula to facilitate natural performances is repositioned within a distinctly new stylistic frame.

This "proven formula" and proclivity for realistic acting and dialogue is still manifest in his recent projects. It is this generative element of his film making approach that he appears to have sustained across his career. In an interview on the *Variety* YouTube Channel, James Gunn, who wrote the screenplay for *The Belko Experiment* (2016), an American film shot on location in Bogota, Columbia, which McLean directed, stated: "In seeing *Wolf Creek*, I just saw how you (he is referring to McLean) were able to work with actors in such a naturalistic way, which was something that most directors don't these days. It's all very delivered, and the characters in (*The Belko Experiment*) needed to be very natural" (2016). Gunn's assessment offers insight into how McLean's unique approach to directing actors is conceived within the industry. This key aspect has become his defining and most profitable attribute.

Like the “counterpoint” that McLean describes between the “classic” aesthetics of *Wolf Creek 2* and the extemporaneity of his actors’ performances within this frame, a disparity is likewise apparent in the film between the natural acting of Corr, Klaus and Ashlyn and Jarratt’s portrayal of Taylor: unlike Jarratt’s restrained performance in the original film, where Taylor’s identity and motivation remain clandestine, his performance in *Wolf Creek 2*, as Taylor’s impetus is made overt, becomes caricatured. McLean, in the *Wolf Creek 2* DVD Audio Commentary, sees it this way:

We really wanted to demonstrate the kind of scale of Mick’s insanity and the scale of his crimes. Without going completely over-the-top. Mick has been killing for many, many, many years and he’s got any number of victims in any number of these locations in the outback. The first film was really implying what Mick was up to, because you don’t really get to see much behind the scenes of what he’s doing. With this film, what I really wanted to do was take the audience and really just show them pay off of what we were setting up in the first film. We show the audience exactly what Mick’s up to and what he’s all about. And you see his motivation. (McLean 2014)

By heightening the “scale” of Taylor’s “insanity” and revealing “what Mick’s up to and what he’s all about”, the terrifying veil that masks his impetus in the original film is lifted. Taylor becomes fully exposed. Jarratt’s performance in *Wolf Creek 2* thus resembles a loud, crude and maniacal caricatured villain who is overt in his intentions. For me, the horror generated from the character in the first film is no longer operative in *Wolf Creek 2*.

However, while the nature of the horror has arguably shifted, this re-framing of Taylor has, in turn, provided a platform for McLean and Jarratt to expand the fascinating and complex mythology of the character. It is the ubiquitous figure of Taylor, as well as the remote Australian landscape that he traverses and kills within, which has become the thematic thread and transtextual element between each media entry in the franchise. Across the films and television seasons, victims are killed and interchanged. Taylor, meanwhile, survives as the centrepiece of

this cinematic universe. His mythology continues to grow as layers of his backstory are gradually introduced. As a result, the audience becomes invested in Taylor and the figure behind the “mask”.

Buckmaster writes that, in the original film, Taylor’s “grubby hat and shit-eating snarl” is the “only connective tissue” between the varying narrative points of view which shift “between principal characters as they perished” (2014). The character’s motivation was an enigmatic puzzle that the audience had to themselves piece together. He then points out that, by contrast, the second film is “geared much more closely towards Mick” (2014) and that the ensuing *Wolf Creek* franchise is “about” Taylor and the mythology of the character. As each franchise entry unfolds, the motivation for his psychopathy, unlike in the original film, is made clear.

As McLean explains during the interview for *FilmInk* YouTube Channel:

What was compelling I think about the first movie was that people were introduced to a character that was fascinating, and part of that was that there’s no discussion of backstory, no discussion of motivation, there’s no discussion of why or who or why he does what he does. He just is. Mick is the centre of the *Wolf Creek* universe. It’s all about getting closer to engaging with his character, and the second film did that, we got more of his character and he was on screen more. In the first film he doesn’t come on for the first forty-five minutes, he’s only on for a very short amount of time and then he walks out after killing everybody. So we left a big mystery and created an atmosphere where people wanted to know more about him. (McLean 2017)

Although I agree with McLean that *Wolf Creek 2* permitted the audience to “engage” with Taylor and “get closer” to him in ways that they could not during the original film, his recollection about “an atmosphere (after the release of *Wolf Creek*) where people wanted to know more about him” is no doubt influenced by the benefit of retrospection. For me, *Wolf Creek 2* was not designed to accommodate the supposed audience demand for a fleshed-out version of Taylor. For one, *Wolf Creek 2* was released nine years after the original film. My view, as I argued

throughout this chapter, is that *Wolf Creek 2* represents a changing of the guard for McLean and his film making “style”. It is within this new stylistic frame and standardised cinematic approach that the character of Taylor was concurrently adapted and aspects of his psychology were made conspicuous.

Indeed, an important feature of Taylor’s psychology in *Wolf Creek 2* is his ingrained antiauthoritarianism. This is established during the film’s pre-credits sequence. Two highway patrol officers, Gary Bulmer (Shane Connor) and Brian O’Connor (Ben Gerrard), are stationed on a desolate stretch of road in the North Western Australian outback. Taylor shoots past in his blue Ford F100 truck, under the speed limit. Bulmer and O’Connor doctor the number on their speed gun and pull Taylor over. In an interaction which McLean describes, in the *Wolf Creek 2* DVD Audio Commentary, is about the “mechanics of power” (2014), Bulmer and O’Connor patronise Taylor, insult him, book him for speeding, and place a defect notice on his vehicle. Taylor blankets his psychopathy and innocuously protests. The officers smile at each other and do not concede. When they drive away, Taylor drops the pretence: a close-up reveals his menace and disdain for Bulmer and O’Connor, figures of authority, and as he turns his neck screen-right and looks behind him, Toby Oliver’s camera racks focus to Taylor’s Ruger rifle on the dashboard of his Ford. Taylor reclaims power and ascendancy over the “authority figures” by murdering them moments later in two ostentatiously violent and graphic set pieces. Here, McLean echoes aspects of “style” evident in the first film, such as the positioning of the landscape as the site for violent confrontation, and the focus pull to Taylor’s weapon, to prefigure the ensuing horror and reveal his anti-authoritarianism, a feature of his psychology that was not made overt in the original film.

An additional element of Taylor’s psychology and motivation is his xenophobia and deep-rooted racism. While only insinuated in the original film, it is made explicit for the first time in *Wolf Creek 2*. Referring to the film’s concluding set piece, where Taylor holds Hammersmith captive and asks him a string of questions relating to Australia’s cultural history, threatening to sever a finger for each wrong answer, McLean makes note of Taylor’s xenophobia in the *Wolf Creek 2* DVD Commentary:

There's a nice little irony about Mick asking the questions about "when did they start deporting convicts to Australia?". There's a huge part of this sequence and Mick's character that's about why Mick is like he is in the first place and what his beliefs are about foreigners, essentially. We learn in this film that the essence of Mick's character, and the horror of his character, is that he's not only a psychopath but that he's racist and feels justified to kill foreigners, based on this misguided notion of some sort of payback from the convict days when British convicts were dumped in Australia and left to fend for themselves. Mick's still carrying a grudge about that. (McLean 2014)

McLean's insight here positions Taylor as a fictional embodiment of the tensions and anxieties innate in Australian outback culture since the beginning of the twentieth century. I agree with McLean here, and likewise view Taylor, as he is represented in *Wolf Creek 2*, as an avid representation of the white racist Australian. This ingrained xenophobia is intensely reflected in the *Wolf Creek 2* screenplay and through the vigour of Jarratt's performance and dialogue delivery. As Hammersmith is bloodied and bound with cable ties, for example, Taylor bellows, "You expect to come to my fuckin' country, waltz around like you own the bloody place". Oliver's camera positions Taylor in a medium close-up as the dialogue is iterated to draw the audience's gaze to his powerful stature in the frame. Film Editor Sean Lahiff complements this framing of Taylor by isolating him on screen as he delivers the dialogue and by not cutting to a reaction shot of Hammersmith. The sheer force of Taylor's racist upsurge is thus felt by the audience.

Simon Foster, reviewing the film for the *SBS Website*, suggests that throughout the film, Taylor's "xenophobic rants against his victim's nationalities", such as the one described, may offer "some form of commentary on the nation's racist underbelly" (2014). Taylor may indeed be emblematic of inherent attitudes permeating broader Australian culture. As highlighted in Chapter Three, xenophobia, and a disdain for foreigners and those born outside Australia, appears to be the key motivation for the real-life crime cases that inspired McLean's original *Wolf Creek* screenplay and the construction of Taylor as a film villain. It is this issue which is

explored by McLean throughout the franchise. Of Milat's seven identified victims, three were German travellers and two were British backpackers. Falconio, the victim of outback serial killer Bradley John Murdoch, was likewise of British nationality.

Indeed, in *Wolf Creek*, McLean invokes this inherent scorn in Australian culture for outsiders by making Hunter and Earl, who fall victim to Taylor, British. The *Wolf Creek* screenplay acknowledges Hunter and Earl's heritage, when Taylor asks them, "British, are yas?" But in *Wolf Creek 2*, the documented history of the Milat and Murdoch cases is built into the narrative: Taylor's first two victims, Enqvist and Schmidt, who are killed in the film's third key violent set piece, are of German descent, and Hammersmith, who Taylor stalks and tortures for most of the film, is British. Like in the original film, Taylor reveals an awareness about their nationalities through exposition. Recalling his line of dialogue from *Wolf Creek*, he asks Rutger, "Kraut are ya?" and calls him a "Nazi bastard".

Likewise, during the film's final set piece, Taylor iterates vulgar insults at Paul such as "Pommie cunt". As A.A. Dowd puts it in his review of the film for *The A.V. Club* website, such dialogue transplants Taylor's "mad motives from subtext to text", making Taylor an "anti-imperialist bogeyman" (2014). Taylor's transition from "subtext" to "text" between *Wolf Creek* and *Wolf Creek 2*, not just in the overt unveiling of his motivation and psychology but also in relation to the additional screen time and camera focus he is allotted in the sequel, echoes the progression of Myers, Voorhees and Krueger in their respective horror franchises, who, across the numerous films, gradually take centre stage as the protagonist in each narrative.

9.2 *Wolf Creek* Television Series (Season One)

Taylor's aversion to authority figures is likewise reflected in Season One of the *Wolf Creek* television series. In the series, protagonist Eve Thorogood (Lucy Fry), a nineteen-year-old American athlete stranded and on the run after Taylor kills her family, navigates the Australian outback and seeks retribution. Like Hunter in the original film, Thorogood appropriates Taylor's violent modus operandi to combat him.

However, unlike Hunter, who strives only for survival, Thorogood's revenge plot against Taylor appears to be motivated by other factors that position her as a "match" to Taylor. Local Northern Territory Detective, Sergeant Sullivan Hill (Dustin Clare), who investigates Taylor and his crimes, also tracks Thorogood, who steals confidential files from the police station relating to the case against Taylor. She evades Hill across the course of the first few episodes. The introductory set piece in the series' first episode reveals that Thorogood's parents, Roland (Taylor) and Ingrid (Maya Stange), are police officers from Nebraska. Thorogood is therefore from a line of authority figures. Although her actions are motivated by a desire for vengeance, her calculated evasion of Hill is also symbolic of her own anti-authoritarianism and rebellion against her parents. Like Taylor, she appears to be driven by an aversion to authority.

As an inversion of the original film, in which there is no perceivable police presence monitoring Taylor, Hill's investigation into Taylor and simultaneous pursuit of Thorogood is brought into sharp narrative focus. Hill is the television series' symbol of authority. As Thorogood and Hill independently, and, by Episode Five, collectively, edge closer to Taylor, and as he continues to elude them and operate on the outskirts of the law, his anti-authoritarianism is no longer located in subtext but becomes a source of momentum in the plot.

In its most overt reference to the original film, the first season of the series also reintroduces Mitchell in Episode Five (played by Fletcher Humphrys). It is here that the franchise's self-referentiality becomes apparent. Although the television series was produced almost two decades after the events of the original film, and draws focus to a new set of characters, the reintroduction of Mitchell tethers the television series to the original and positions Thorogood in the same conceptual space, landscape and "world" that was first introduced in 2005. In the final scenes of *Wolf Creek*, after Mitchell escapes Taylor and traverses the unrelenting landscape, he is found by two Swedish tourists and airlifted to safety. Intertitles reveal that he moved to and resides in Adelaide. Thorogood, while searching for Taylor in the Western Australian desert, discovers Mitchell's story while flipping through the folder she stole from Hill. The folder features a string of clippings detailing cold cases about tourist disappearances in the outback. She locates a

scraggy haired and unkempt Mitchell, known by the locals as “Jesus”, who now lives as a hermit after moving to Western Australia.

Inside Mitchell’s dilapidated shack, Geoffrey Hall’s camera lingers on walls etched with newspaper clippings relating to his court case and indiscriminate drawings featuring religious symbols. When Thorogood presses him for information about Taylor, he recalls the events of the original film in third person and with barely audible, incoherent exposition: “strung him up like a lamb, he did. Hammered nails through poor old Ben’s living flesh...helped Ben and his pals out when they broke down. Hitched up his truck and towed them back to his place”. This reference to the original film positions the two characters as part of a larger story that is still unfolding. This reinforces for the audience the scope of Taylor’s crimes and the vast territory that he has covered. He is still yet to be caught, still looms large, and in 2016, he is just as maniacal and terrifying as he was in 2005.

While *Wolf Creek 2* solidifies Taylor’s motivation, the film, like the original, is still aesthetically and structurally anchored around the subjective experiences of his victims and their journey evading him. The audience never view Taylor “alone” and outside of the context of him pursuing a victim. It isn’t until Season One of the television series that focus is ascribed to his “private” persona. As Daniel Kurland writes in his review of the season for the *Bloody Disgusting* website: “As Eve is investigating murders and trying to figure out where Mick is, we get to see Mick moving through the Outback in his own element, plaguing areas as he drives through” (2016).

This is particularly evident throughout the first three episodes. McLean and series Director Tony Tilse draw the audience into Taylor’s private space through a kaleidoscope of irregular camera angles, extreme close-ups, and sporadic focus pulls. In several sequences, Taylor is seen to be alone and out of public view. Geoffrey Hall’s cinematography in these sequences, coupled with Pete Smith’s jarring sound mix, suggests to the audience that they have crossed the threshold into a space that is alien. For example, in one continuous long-shot of a now Akubra-less Taylor, who has shed his plaid shirt for a blue singlet, he dances alone and drunkenly, a near-empty bottle of whisky in his palm. Hall’s camera tilts and pivots in rhythm with Taylor as he stumbles

and kicks the dirt. The scene is shot in black-and-white (the only scene in the entire series to adopt this colour scheme) and the frame rate is decelerated so that Taylor moves in slow motion. The incongruity of Hall's camerawork and Steve Evans' editing strongly insinuates that Taylor, and the space he resides in, may be an anomaly located in the societal fringes.

This sequence is important to consider because, for the first time in the entire franchise, it frames Taylor within his personal domain and a space that is exclusive only to him. The shedding of his Akubra and plaid shirt suggests that those items are indeed key elements of a costume, a façade perhaps in itself, a mode of performance that he employs during his killings. His drunken dancing presents a frightening image of a psychopath basking in the ecstasy of his crimes. Indeed, this invasive gaze into a space that the audience is not privy offers an example of the various ways in which the character of Taylor and the broader franchise is expanded during Season One. With direct inferences to the original film, such as the reintroduction of Mitchell, and the inclusion of a strong heroine who matches Taylor's anti-authoritarian drive and is therefore positioned as a threat to his equilibrium, *Wolf Creek* Season One transitions the franchise into new expansive territory and pits Taylor against his best adversary yet.

9.3 Wolf Creek Television Series (Season 2)

Evoked in Season Two of the television series is Taylor's "spiritual" link to the landscape in which he resides. In Episode One, Taylor, pursuing a new set of victims in a tourist bus, drives his Holden HQ Statesman to the end of a dirt road in the Flinders Rangers wilderness and approaches a bitumen T-intersection. As Taylor ruminates which direction the bus took, the film sound swells and pulsates in a cacophony of obscure shrill tones. Layered into the sound mix are piercing notes which shriek and aurally evoke the spirits impelling Taylor's actions. An insert shot of a crow, perched atop a fence stump, symbolises the landscape's spiritual underbelly. Sensing Taylor's presence, it shoots into the sky, screen-left. Taylor's Statesman is guided to follow. The film score which underpins this moment similarly swells whenever Taylor is on screen, implemented into the sound mix as a leitmotif whenever he enters the frame. The

leitmotif is an aural cue for the audience that Taylor may be deeply connected to the natural order.

Throughout the six episodes of Season Two, Taylor employs these “powers” to ensnare his victims. After murdering tour guide, Ian “Davo” Davidson (Ben Oxenbould) at the end of Episode One, Taylor arrests control of the bus in the Flinders Ranges desert, drugs the tourists aboard, drives them north-west, dumps them in the Western Australian outback, and then savagely murders them, one at a time. Indeed, as Jarratt explains during the interview for the *FilmInk* YouTube Channel, “It’s the same premise, Mick plays his game, but it’s a different set of circumstances” (2017).

The “premise” of *Wolf Creek* Season Two is a throwback to McLean’s pre-*Wolf Creek* development phase, explored in Section 3.1 of this study. McLean’s initial intention for the original *Wolf Creek* was to make a film much grander in scope that drew focus to a series of interconnected subplots featuring various characters being menaced by Taylor. McLean did not have the financing or means to create this version at the time. Using the Stan platform to create a serialised version of the *Wolf Creek* format provided McLean with the production tools and scale to produce his original concept for the first film. As a reversion to the genesis of McLean’s cinematic roots, it is not surprising that *Wolf Creek* Season Two is the franchise entry which is most overt in its references to the first film, which was his entry point into the industry. While Season Two expands the mythology of Taylor by broadening the scope of his crimes and the geographical territory he covers, like *Wolf Creek 2* and Season One, it remains intensely faithful to the tropes established in the original film. In many ways, Season Two can be viewed as the televised version of the film McLean wanted to make in the first place.

I believe this is most evident in terms of narrative structure. Akin to *Wolf Creek*’s first act structure, which aligns the audience with the viewpoints of its three protagonists, creating their personalities and focusing on their interactions before their inevitable violent confrontation with Taylor, the second season’s first couple of episodes introduces and assigns significant screen time to Taylor’s new set of victims as they develop as characters on the first leg of their tour.

The television format and its serialised structure across multiple episodes affords McLean screen time and space to explore this bevy of characters and subplots.

In one key sequence, which occurs in the first episode, a slow-motion montage, accompanied by the evocative film score, frames the protagonists taking photographs and interacting against the expansive landscape backdrop. This sequence, which does not feature dialogue, evokes the loose and spontaneous Cinéma vérité filming style and the aesthetics of travelogues which characterise the original film. Sunlight peaks and gleams in each frame as Hall's handheld camera fleetingly sweeps across each character, racking in and out of focus to evoke an ethereal, dreamlike atmosphere. This sequence is steeped in dramatic irony: while the audience are positioned in the idyllic space alongside the characters as they revel in the pleasure of vacationing in nature, they simultaneously feel dread at their impending dislocation from civilisation and enmeshment in Taylor's territory.

Season Two also contains numerous visual and dialogue references to the original film. The audience is thus called to draw intertextual links between the two films. At the beginning of Episode Two, for instance, the audience sees Taylor drug his victims' water. This overt revelation is only insinuated in the original film, where the audience does not see Taylor perform the physical on-screen action of tampering with Hunter, Earl and Mitchell's water. Recalling his dialogue from the original film, he says to his victims, as he passes each a cup, "rain water from the top end". In the original film, Taylor is presented as an elusive figure whose modus operandi was yet to be established. Thus, the only visual clue offered are insert shots of Taylor's water carrier. By Season Two, Taylor's motives are known to the *Wolf Creek* audience. He is no longer the furtive outback dweller that they know nothing about. McLean winks at the audience with this reference and uses it to make them complicit in something that was once concealed from them.

Later in the episode, when American tourists, Danny Michaels (Charlie Clausen) and Johnny Rossie (Adam Fiorentino), are searching for help and become disconnected from the main group,

Taylor approaches them at night in his truck. The shots that ensue visually evoke his “introduction” in *Wolf Creek* and represent another intertextual link between the franchise entries. Like the original film, Taylor “emerges” from darkness. The headlights of his truck compose and give shape to his silhouetted figure. His body is framed as the illuminated focal point against the black backdrop of the night. As he routinely reiterates throughout the franchise when first greeting his impending victims, he says to Michaels and Rossie, who are at first oblivious to his psychopathy, “What the bloody hell are you buggers doin’ out here?”

Moreover, Taylor’s interaction with New Zealander, Richie Langman (Stephen Hunter), purposefully echoes his engagement with Mitchell around the campfire from the original film. Langman, unaware of the danger, rambles to Taylor about vehicle quality and fire safety in the outback. Taylor, framed in a close-up, stares back at him and remains mute, mouth agape, visually resembling the maniacal stare he gave Mitchell in the original film. When Langman asks him, “Have you seen heaps of fires out here? You must have seen lots of ‘em out here over the years, ey?”, Taylor pauses, gleefully, before saying: “Well I could tell ya, but I might have to kill ya”. In both of these examples, Taylor’s emblematic dialogue functions as a catchphrase and as a smirking reference to the films which have preceded it. It has become Taylor’s trademark and signature line within the *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe, a signifier for the audience of the horror that is about to befall his victims.

Later in the episode, when Taylor murders Langman, the framing of Langman’s immobilised body evokes Trippe’s rape set piece in *Deliverance*, examined in Chapter Seven. Like Trippe, Langman is stripped to his white underwear and made to crawl in the dirt. The way that both men are positioned within the composition bears similarity: in visceral close-up, to emphasise the intensity of their trauma and psychological suffering at the hands of their perpetrator. This visual and thematic connection to *Deliverance* positions Season Two within the same referential lineage that *Wolf Creek* subscribes to and thus forms a distinctive link between the two franchise entries.

Another similarity between the original film and Season Two is the connection between Hunter and Rebecca (Tess Haubrich). The casting of Haubrich, who, like Magrath, has dark brown shoulder-length hair and a tall, athletic physical appearance and complexion, forms a strong visual association between the two heroines. Like Hunter, Rebecca is resourceful, calculating and bold. These traits, which she exhibits early in Season Two, position her as a potential “Final Girl” and screen heroine within the series. After Taylor shoots the group tour bus at the end of Episode Two, killing Emma (Josephine Langford) and Wade (Elijah Williams) and severely burning Michelle (Elsa Cocquerel) in the explosion, Rebecca, by Episode Three, becomes the de facto leader of the survivors and begins making decisions for them. The leadership she instinctively displays evokes the decision-making intuitiveness that Hunter exhibits in the original film, in contrast to the fragility and hypersensitivity which Earl displays. The construction of the characters of Hunter and Rebecca forges a strong intertextual link with Thorogood from Season One. Indeed, Thorogood embodies the same personal qualities which define Hunter and Rebecca, and in Episode Three of Season One, determined to find Taylor and seek vengeance, she cuts her hair short. Thorogood’s hair-cut, in which she symbolically sheds her femininity, is framed as the “rite of passage” into the *Wolf Creek* universe, even to the extent of taking on Taylor’s “masculine” disposition.

McLean’s three heroines are each set-up as the likely “Final Girl” in their respective narratives. One of the defining features in the *Wolf Creek* franchise is McLean’s subversion of the “Final Girl” trope. Across each entry, he offers multiple variations of the convention. In *Wolf Creek*, Hunter is set-up as the “Final Girl” but dies first. Mitchell survives the massacre and becomes the “Final Boy”. In *Wolf Creek 2*, the only female victim, Schmidt, is murdered early in the film. Like Mitchell, Hammersmith becomes the “Final Boy”. In Season One, Thorogood survives and fulfils the prophecy of the “Final Girl”. This does not extend to Rebecca in Season Two. In Episode Six, she is killed in one of Taylor’s underground mines, and is out-survived by a character who becomes the unexpected survivor of the narrative, Canadian tourist Kelly (Laura Wheelwright). Indeed, Season Two, as well as each of the subsequent entries in the *Wolf Creek* franchise, provides McLean with a platform for experimentation and an avenue for not only evolving his film making “style” and expanding the mythology of Taylor, but continuing to reference traditional horror film codes and conventions.

In this chapter, I presented a critique on the evolving *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe and examined the ways that the subsequent entries have simultaneously reused and departed from the original film. For me, *Wolf Creek 2* represents a drastic shift from the trailblazing style and aesthetics that defined its predecessor. In *Wolf Creek 2*, the handheld camera is substituted for a classic shot structure and static compositions. Since the release of his sequel, McLean has made his mark in America, directing *The Darkness* (2016) for Blumhouse Productions, *The Belko Experiment* and *Jungle* (2017), based on real-life Israeli adventurer Yossi Ghinsberg and his experience being lost for weeks in the Bolivian Amazon jungle. He has also developed two six-episode *Wolf Creek* television series, released in 2016 and 2017, which are a focus of this chapter. Armed with higher budgets, McLean appears to have now transitioned even further from his film making roots defined by handheld aesthetics and gritty low-budget realism.

Wolf Creek was the product of a specific time and place in the history of Australian horror film production. It afforded new advantages to Australian film makers that McLean himself has become a beneficiary of. However, as I have argued throughout this chapter, despite broadening the scope of his craft, the one key element in McLean's repertoire that he has sustained is the raw, improvisational performance style he generates in his actors. This is evident in all of his work, even his most recent projects. As such, my view is that McLean has now forged a cinematic middle ground and method that blends elements of his formative film making with the stylistic possibilities that higher budgets have opened up for him. An analysis of the *Wolf Creek* franchise, as this chapter has offered, makes this blending of the old and the new distinctly clear.

CHAPTER 10: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Wolf Creek was released as a landmark Australian horror film at the peak of the digital era, as a new technologically adept youth demographic was emerging, and as innovative high-definition technology replaced analogue cameras. Alongside *Saw*, *Hostel* and *House of 1000 Corpses*, among other films, I argue that *Wolf Creek* pioneered a new “type” of horror film post-2005, one which was in turn influenced by the aesthetics of 1970s horror and exploitation cinema. This cinema from the 1970s, as I have discussed throughout this study, includes the Australian landscape genre, Australian Gothic horror, “Post-Vietnam War” American exploitation films, and the slasher film horror sub-genre. *Wolf Creek*, as I understand it, redefines this cinematic “history” and makes it accessible to contemporary audiences through its application of digital HD cinematography, MTV-style editing, and engagement with contemporary film making trends.

Throughout this study, I have identified a number of core research findings. Based on these findings, I position this study as offering an important critical approach for examining *Wolf Creek* and the Australian horror film subculture which it is a part of. My study presents a unique interpretation of *Wolf Creek* by analysing the film’s evocative and highly stylised visual language, its key textual properties, and McLean’s distinctive film making craft that has come to typify a point of transition in the niche Australian horror genre. I conclude this study by suggesting a variety of ways that my approach to *Wolf Creek* and its developing franchise can be employed more broadly in cinema studies. I also discuss the potential avenues of research that it may help generate in the field of Australian horror film academia.

10.1 Research Findings

10.1.1 Analysis of Film Techniques in *Wolf Creek*

In this study, and as a key component of my methodological approach, I drew focus to film “style” and the visual language of cinema. Martin’s *The Mad Max Movies*, referenced in Chapter Two, was

my main source of inspiration stylistically in conducting close analyses of key films which I argue influenced the “style” of *Wolf Creek*. Martin’s book is indeed a mentor text which has helped shape my conceptual framework. His methods of performing film analysis have helped promote my understanding about the pivotal role that the mobile movie camera plays in the construction of cinematic images and the staging of action set pieces. Inspired by *The Mad Max Movies* in part, I conducted my own analysis of various films from the Australian film revival of the 1970s. Through this analysis, I identified a distinctive set of visual tropes, conventions and themes: the cinematographic trend of recurring landscape vistas, the positioning of the landscape as a “character” and as a space where violent confrontation materialises, urban transgression in rural habitats, and the employment of actors such as Jarratt, Thompson and Meillon as masculine icons that signified masculinity, male culture and mateship in remote outback settings.

I then offered a comprehensive analysis of the cinematic language and “style” in *Wolf Creek* four decades later, such as Gibson’s deployment of digital cameras, his handheld camera techniques as evident in the film’s first and final thirds, Ballantine’s elliptical editing, and McLean’s style of direction which cultivated an environment where actors had agency to improvise and facilitate organic and realistic performances. Drawing a comparison between the “style” of *Wolf Creek* and 1970s Australian cinema, I identified numerous visual and intertextual references to established film making conventions and tropes that McLean appeared to want to exploit. I argue that *Wolf Creek* proffers a reinterpretation of these conventions and tropes, and thus positions itself, as well as its targeted youth audience, within a new cinematic lineage characterised by modern film making techniques and the digitisation of film production.

10.1.2 Understanding Horror Codes and Conventions

Via an analysis of several American exploitation horror films and slasher films, with a focus on how violent set pieces are staged, choreographed and framed, I further recognised a set of tacit visual codes and traditions which have come to define the genre. These codes and traditions, as I positioned them in this study, mostly originated in 1970s American horror

cinema. Through my examination of these films, I identified numerous parallels and similarities in “style” between 1970s American horror cinema and *Wolf Creek*. *Wolf Creek*, as I demonstrated throughout this study, evokes through McLean’s ostensibly selfconscious approach the brutality and graphic realism of 1970s American “Post-Vietnam War” cinema in terms of how violent set pieces are constructed. Based on this close analysis, it is my view that scenes exploiting torture in *Wolf Creek* (two of which are analysed in Section 7.3), and the framing of bodies within that cinematic space, strongly resemble the design, arrangement and cinematographic style used to film the polarising rape set pieces and violent imagery in American films such as *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Last House on the Left*, *Straw Dogs* and *Deliverance*. Given these findings, I thus position *Wolf Creek* as a contemporary horror film text with formative ties to this body of 1970s films.

Moreover, during this study, I examined and deconstructed various case-study texts in the slasher film sub-genre influenced by *Halloween*. Employing Rockoff’s theorised “characteristics” of the typical slasher format, as well as my own observations of films within the genre and the data I generated, I understand *Wolf Creek* as a product of the digital era that subverts the inherent conventions of the slasher film. Indeed, I position *Wolf Creek* as a film that transgresses the cardinal “rules” and codes that horror film makers have long abided by. For example, in transplanting Clover’s “Final Girl” paradigm to a male protagonist in Mitchell and creating, essentially, a “Final Boy” category, *Wolf Creek* promotes a reconstructed “brand” of slasher film through its atypical structure, fluid representations of gender stereotypes, and vigorous repositioning of genre traditions. *Wolf Creek* is unabashed about its starring role as a trailblazer in the formation of a new and innovative slasher film “type” and situates itself as a point-of-difference in both the domestic and international cinematic landscape and horror film markets.

10.1.3 *Wolf Creek* as a Visual and Conceptual Blueprint

Through a close examination of the film’s aesthetic configurations, mise-en-scène and “style”, I found *Wolf Creek* to have a visual language which simultaneously nods at the past

and engages with the new. It is a film which makes its references to past films and cinematic “history” overt. Yet, its stylised blend of high-definition cinematography, kinetic handheld camerawork, elliptical editing, realistic and improvisational acting performances, and understated sound design was something I had never seen before in an Australian film. It is the convergence of these two ideas which makes *Wolf Creek* a unique case-study of Australian horror cinema and a cinematic product of the digital age. Watching and analysing the plethora of Australian horror films released in the immediate aftermath of *Wolf Creek*, mostly between 2007 and 2010, I argue that this emerging form of cinematic language has pioneered a new “brand” and “type” of horror film that has since shaped domestic horror production.

I thus understand *Wolf Creek* to be an aesthetic and structural blueprint that Australian horror film makers post-2005 have imitated and from which they have drawn inspiration. This positions McLean as a director of influence in the new dawn of Australian horror film production. *Wolf Creek* has helped to create possibilities and avenues for the funding, production and distribution of Australian horror films. It has opened a space for the development of Australian horror films overseas. As I have identified throughout this study and as I examine in Chapter Nine, McLean himself has used this generative space to establish the expansive *Wolf Creek* cinematic universe and media franchise, comprising a sequel and two six-episode television series that each explore and progressively develop the mythology of Taylor.

10.1.4 *Wolf Creek* as a Lynchpin Film

I locate *Wolf Creek* at the “intersection” of two distinctive generations and “movements” in the history and production of Australian cinema: the conception of the newly formed “industry” of the 1970s, where national tropes and conventions were cemented, and post2005, where technology afforded Australian horror film makers greater scope and production opportunities. As such, I understand *Wolf Creek* as an exemplar of Australian horror cinema in the digital age. Indeed, *Wolf Creek* embodies key visual conventions and

themes rooted in Australian cinematic tradition, such as the traditions of Gothic horror, landscape cinema, and the masculine representations embodied in these traditions. *Wolf Creek*, then, revises this history to create a new cinematic “style” through its application of contemporary film making sensibilities and modern technology.

This “style” and formation of a new “type” of horror film has arguably influenced an emerging generation of film makers who adopt a similar visual and aesthetic style. To demonstrate the emergence of this new generation, this study drew focus to the Australian horror films released in the immediate years after *Wolf Creek* was released, mainly between 2007 and 2010, such as *Storm Warning* and *Dying Breed*. I position these films as “reactions” to *Wolf Creek* that subscribed very closely to its aesthetic blueprint and accessed the cinematic space that it helped create for domestic horror production. I thus conclude that the film is a cinematic and cultural lynchpin and deserves the status of a seminal film in the history of Australian cinema and the horror genre more generally.

10.2 Research Limitations and Contribution to Knowledge

At present, there is limited academic work published on the Australian horror genre. While I did encounter some, such as Ryan’s articles which, as I pointed out during this study, were useful resources for understanding the implications of cultural policy on the development of the 2000s Australian horror subculture, research into the phenomenon and upsurge of post-*Wolf Creek* Australian horror appears to be underdeveloped. Given the spike in domestic horror production in the late 2000s, which was significantly influenced, as I argue and Ryan also notes, by *Wolf Creek*, this was a surprising limitation that I encountered during this study. As such, drawing on alternative academic frameworks to strengthen or challenge my own observations about the Australian horror genre was somewhat problematic.

There are surprisingly few academic sources, too, based around *Wolf Creek* as the text of focus. Given the film’s overt representations of Australian culture and the national film industry, as well as its clear impact on the broad expansion of Australian horror production

into overseas film markets, it is in my opinion a landmark cinematic product and therefore warrants scholarly attention. Harnett's monograph and case-study analysis for the Australian Screen Classic series, *Wolf Creek*, which I referenced in Chapter Two, provides an overview of the film's production, a retelling of the film's major plot points in prose, and offers insight into the real-life crime cases and serial killers that inspired McLean's screenplay and Jarratt's characterisation of Taylor. While Harnett's book arguably does not offer a critical framework or unique way of examining *Wolf Creek*, it is perhaps the best example to date of an entire written work which positions the film as a significant or pioneering text. Similarly, Blackwood's "Wolf Creek: an UnAustralian Story?" (2007), which I draw focus to throughout this study, views the film as an important cultural commodity and explores the relationship between *Wolf Creek* as an evocation of the Australian social experience and the country's tourism sector. Ryan, too, positions *Wolf Creek* as a key cultural product in the post-2005 Australian horror film surge.

It is in response to this limited area of research and gap in cinematic knowledge that I position the findings of this study. Crucially, these academic texts, among others that I critiqued in this study, isolate *Wolf Creek* as a case-study and interpret it as a self-reflexive mirror of Australian culture. While I agree with this perspective and integrate it into an analysis of my findings, this study employs Ryan's articles as a primary theoretical framework and then proposes an alternative critical view that explores the film techniques, cinematic "style" and visual configurations in *Wolf Creek*. In my view, and as I have contended throughout this study, these techniques, this "style" and these configurations encapsulate the Australian horror film phenomenon of the 2000s and an emergent horror film sub-genre. Indeed, it is the distinctive cinematic "style" of *Wolf Creek*, which engages with innovative forms of technology and transposes the conventional slasher film setting from the populated suburbs to the uninhabited rural landscape, that marks McLean's entrance into world cinema as a trailblazer and distinguishes the film as a point of differentiation in a dormant horror industry.

It is imperative to consider cinematic “style” and visual language in the examination of horror cinema. This is because, like comedy, for example, horror film makers employ specific cinematic devices and set-ups to elicit a desired engagement and response from the audience. In comedy, this response is laughter. In horror, it is fear or dread. As I have discussed during this study, the horror film is a representation of the elemental emotions which connect human beings universally. The horror film maker is tasked to invoke these emotions through the construction and sequencing of cinematic images and through the sustainment of tension. My research draws focus to McLean’s film making “style” and his manipulations of the screen that aim to provoke this very response in his audience. There appears to be limited literature that explores the specific shot dynamics and cinematic devices in horror cinema in the comprehensive manner that I do in this study. Certainly, there is little evidence of this in the academic studies of Australian horror cinema, and no focus on the application of “style” in *Wolf Creek*. I position my research, therefore, as an original example of close analysis in the horror genre that plugs a gap in the literature.

My methodological approach is important because *Wolf Creek* is a film that is dense and layered in its references to Australian cultural history. It is a cinematic window into the rural Australian experience and outback culture and draws on many Australian films that came before it. Thus, it is a film that needs greater attention in the literature. In this study, I offered a distinct way of viewing it, understanding its mechanics, and interpreting its codes and themes. For a film that was so important in reviving the Australian horror film industry in the mid-2000s, this attention and analytical focus is entirely apt.

This study also offered a unique synthesis of approaches to the examination of horror cinema. These additional approaches complemented my main analysis of the visual language, form and “style” in *Wolf Creek*. Indeed, I interpreted *Wolf Creek* and this “style” through a combination of key critical lenses and related contexts, including intertextual and transtextual analysis, gender studies and ideas about the representation of masculinity in American exploitation cinema and Australian landscape cinema of the 1970s, and sociohistorical perspectives that positioned the analysis of the film within the shifting frame

of the film industry. This mixed methodological approach enabled me to interrogate the film from a unique multitude of angles, consider the history that gave it shape, and contextualise it as pioneering text within an era of production defined by technological innovation and a transition to digital forms of film making and spectatorship. Given this, I argue that my study sheds new critical light on *Wolf Creek* as a landmark Australian film by offering an amalgamated focus on not only the film as a cultural artefact but as an exemplar of decisive film craft that evokes the progressive cinematic landscape it was released within and the contexts which informed this landscape.

10.3 Recommendations for Further Research

As such, this study has significant potential and scope for further research in the analysis of horror film “style” and the cultural and historical contexts which influence the idiosyncratic creative approaches of film makers. It may, for example, provide a platform for a close analysis of *Saw* that adopts a similar scholarly framework. Emerging alongside *Wolf Creek* as part of the international horror film resurgence of the 2000s, *Saw* is also characterised by its graphic violence and Director of Photography, David A. Armstrong’s, visceral handheld cinematography that immerses the audience in the space where violence unfolds. It is one of the other seminal films that emerged in the digital era and catalysed the emergent horror cinema of the 2000s. As introduced in Chapter Three and then examined comprehensively in Chapter Seven, *Saw* is a film which employs violent imagery, like *Wolf Creek*, to reflect widespread global concern and apprehension about terrorism in the wake of 9/11. A study on the semiotics of its film images could be presented as an interesting counterpoint to my analysis of the similarly geared sequences of violence in *Wolf Creek*.

Moreover, a close analysis of the visual language and cinematic devices employed in *Saw* would be a valuable addition to the limited literature on horror film “style”. What would make *Saw* an interesting film to analyse through this lens is its crossover between Australian and American systems of film making and production. *Saw* was co-written by

Wan and Whannell, who both studied at RMIT in Melbourne. They developed the script in Australia but were unable to acquire financing, despite extensive attempts to do so. In reaction, they produced a short film based off the feature length screenplay on a budget of \$5, 000 (AUD) and submitted it to American production companies to spark interest from backers. The film was picked up by Evolution Entertainment.

One of my key arguments in the final two chapters of this study is that *Wolf Creek* was responsible for opening a space for the production of Australian horror cinema via international film markets and for overseas distribution. Likewise, *Saw*, through the example set by Wan and Whannell, made American financing models accessible for emerging Australian horror film makers. They proved that Australian film makers could “make it” overseas. Thus, a study of the “style” of *Saw*, shaped by its integration of American film making structures and policies, could be generated based off the suite of approaches I employed in this study.

Stemming from this study, too, I hope to see additional focus on horror in mainstream Australian Cinema studies. In my view, the study of Australian horror should not be an obscure niche field. In Chapter Eight, I drew attention to key case-study Australian horror films released in the aftermath of *Wolf Creek*'s commercial success, such as *Storm Warning*, *Dying Breed*, and “Creature Features” such as *Rogue* and *Black Water*. These films, which also have stylistic affiliations to the same cinematic pool of reference texts that likewise inspired *Wolf Creek*, may necessitate further critical analysis. As I highlighted in Chapter Eight, the compositional approaches in various post-2005 Australian horror films, like *Wolf Creek*, find their lineage in the Gothic horror tradition. A close examination and study of this new-age Gothic-inspired aesthetic “style” in contemporary Australian horror cinema, for example, may offer additional insight into the trends employed by horror film makers in the post-2005 production landscape.

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Miike, Takashi, director. *Audition*. 1999. Performance by Ryo Ishibashi and Eihi Shiina, Omega Project.

Miller, George, director. *Mad Max*. 1979. Performance by Mel Gibson, Kennedy Miller Productions.

Miller, George T., director. *The Man from Snowy River*. 1982. Performance by Tom Burlinson, Kirk Douglas and Sigrid Thornton, Cambridge Productions.

Mulcahy, Russell, director. *Razorback*. 1984. Performance by Gregory Harrison and Arkie Whiteley, Greater Union Film Distributors.

Nerlich, David and Andrew Traucki, directors. *Black Water*. 2007. Performance by Maeve Dermody, Diana Glenn and Andy Rodoreda, AV Pictures.

Nicholson, Arch, director. *Dark Age*. 1987. Performance by David Gulpilil and John Jarratt, RKO.

Noé, Gaspar, director. *Irréversible*. 2002. Performance by Monica Bellucci and Vincent Cassel, Les Cinémas de la Zone.

Peckinpah, Sam, director. *Straw Dogs*. 1971. Performance by Susan George and Dustin Hoffman, ABC Pictures.

Picnic at Hanging Rock. written by Alice Addison and Beatrix Christian, performance by Natalie Dormer, Madeleine Madden, Lily Sullivan and Samara Weaving, season 1, Foxtel, 2018.

Powell, Michael, director. *Peeping Tom*. 1960. Performance by Carl Boehm and Anna Massey, Anglo-Amalgamated Film Distributors.

Powell, Michael, director. *They're a Weird Mob*. 1966. Performance by Walter Chiari and Claire Dunne, Williamson-Powell International Films.

Raimi, Sam, director. *Army of Darkness*. 1992. Performance by Bruce Campbell, Renaissance Pictures.

Raimi, Sam, director. *Evil Dead II*. 1987. Performance by Bruce Campbell, Rosebud Releasing.

Raimi, Sam, director. *The Evil Dead*. 1981. Performance by Bruce Campbell, Renaissance Pictures.

Rendall, Kimble, director. *Bait 3D*. 2012. Performance by Xavier Samuel, Phoebe Tonkin and Sharni Vinson, Darclight Films.

Roeg, Nicholas, director. *Walkabout*. 1971. Performance by Jenny Agutter, Luc Roeg and David Gulpilil, Max L. Raab Productions.

Romper Stomper. written by Geoffrey Wright, performance by Lachy Hulme, Jacqueline McKenzie and Toby Wallace, season 1, Stan, 2018.

Rubie, Howard, director. *The Settlement*. 1984. Performance by John Jarratt and Bill Kerr, Queensland Film Corporation.

Roth, Eli, director. *Cabin Fever*. Performance by Jordan Ladd and Rider Strong, Deer Path Films.

Roth, Eli, director. *Hostel*. 2005. Performance by Jay Hernandez and Derek Richardson, Next Entertainment.

Scott, Ridley, director. *Alien*. 1979. Performance by Ian Holm, Tom Skerritt and Sigourney Weaver, 20th Century Fox.

Spielberg, Steven, director. *Duel*. 1971. Performance by Carey Loftin and Dennis Weaver, Universal Television.

Spielberg, Steven, director. *Jaws*. 1975. Performance by Richard Dreyfuss and Roy Scheider, Zanuck/Brown.

Spierig, Peter and Michael, directors. *Undead*. 2003. Performance by Rob Jenkins, Felicity Mason and Mungo McKay, Spierigfilm.

Spottiswoode, Roger, director. *Terror Train*. 1980. Performance by Jamie Lee Curtis, Ben Johnson and Derek MacKinnon, Sandy Howard Productions.

“The Backpack Murderer.” *The Crimes that Shook the World*, directed by Ross Harper, season 1, episode 5, Oct. 2006.

The Making of 'Wolf Creek'. 2006. True Crime Channel.

Traucki, Andrew, director. *The Reef*. 2010. Performance by Zoe Naylor and Damian Walshe-Howling, Atlas Entertainment.

Trenchard-Smith, Brian, director. *Turkey Shoot*. 1982. Performance by Michael Craig, Olivia Hussey and Steve Railsback, Hemdale Film Corporation.

Wan, James, director. *Saw*. 2004. Performance by Cary Elwes and Leigh Whannell, Evolution Entertainment.

Watt, Harry, director. *The Overlanders*. 1946. Performance by Chips Rafferty, Ealing Studios.

Weir, Peter, director. *Gallipoli*. 1981. Performance by Mel Gibson and Mark Lee, Associated R&R Films.

Weir, Peter, director. *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. 1975. Performance by Dominic Guard, John Jarratt, Anne-Louise Lambert and Rachel Roberts, Australian Film Commission.

Weir, Peter, director. *The Cars That Ate Paris*. 1974. Performance by Terry Camilleri and John Meillon, Salt Pan Films.

“Wes Craven.” *Screamography*, Fangoria, season 1, episode 1, 2006.

Wiederhorn, Ken, director. *Eyes of a Stranger*. 1981. Performance by Jennifer Jason Leigh, Warner Bros. Pictures.

Wincer, Simon, director. *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles*. 2001. Performance by Paul Hogan and Linda Kozlowski, Silver Lion Films.

Wolf Creek. created by Greg McLean, performance by Dustin Clare, Lucy Fry and John Jarratt, season 1, Stan, 2016.

Wolf Creek. created by Greg McLean, performance by Tess Haubrich and John Jarratt, season 2, Stan, 2017.

Wong, James, director. *Final Destination*. 2000. Performance by Ali Larter, Devon Sawa and Kerr Smith, Zide/Perry Productions.

Wright, Geoffrey, director. *Romper Stomper*. 1992. Performance by Russell Crowe, Jacqueline McKenzie and Daniel Pollock, Film Victoria.

Zombie, Rob, director. *House of 1000 Corpses*. 2003. Performance by Karen Black, Sid Haig, Sheri Moon and Bill Moseley, Spectacle Entertainment Group.

Zombie, Rob, director. *The Devil's Rejects*. 2003. Performance by Leslie Easterbrook, Sid Haig, Sheri Moon and Bill Moseley, Cinelamda.