

Allison Craven, *Finding Queensland in Australian Cinema: Poetics and Screen Geographies* (Anthem Press, 2016)

Queensland's role as a location for film productions, a setting for film narratives, and a locus for local, national, and cinematic identities is the theme of Allison Craven's *Finding Queensland in Australian Cinema: Poetics and Screen Geographies*. Craven's work 'pose[s] the idea of region as a source of cinematic identity, and ... examine[s] how location affects a film's meaning' (1). Using films made and/or set in Queensland as her primary texts, Craven advocates for progressing from a generalised vision of Australia on film towards a vision that foregrounds regional space and identity. In doing so, she considers how these Queensland-based productions contribute to national identity in these transnational times, as well as how Queensland figures into representations of Australia within the broader context of film as a dominant commercial art form and global storytelling practice.

Craven's book is divided into four themed sections with two chapters apiece. The first section concentrates on films produced during periods of rigid, 'monolithic' national identity, exploring films that reinforce a uniform vision of Australia. Objects of analysis here are Charles Chauvel's 1955 race drama *Jedda* and Donald Crombie's 1978 film *The Irishman*, a product of the Australian New Wave reflecting the aesthetic (period setting, glacial pacing, literary and picturesque inclinations, and seemingly uncritical nostalgia for a white Australia of yore) typical of the heritage dramas constituting this film cycle. Craven reveals links between *The Irishman* and *Jedda* (set in the Northern Territory but shot in Queensland) in their dubbing of Indigenous actresses on their soundtracks, registering their uncertainty about presenting Indigenous voices on film and a marked colonial impulse. The second section focuses on onscreen representations of Queensland as paradise, as well as films that undercut this. One such film is Rachel Perkins' tremendous *Radiance*, set in North Queensland but shot in Central Queensland. Unlike *Jedda*, Perkins' 1998 film, based on a stage play by Lois Nowra, foregrounds Indigenous women's voices in a post-Mabo era, dramatising the relationship between home and identity through three women and revealing the dystopia and dark history underpinning the utopia. The next chapter, meanwhile, turns its attention to more utopian cinematic representations of Queensland such as family adventure film *Nim's Island* and Michael Powell's *Age of Consent*. The latter film, a 1969 production starring imports James Mason and Helen Mirren and based on a somewhat autobiographical novel by artist Norman Lindsay, not only preceded the Australian film revival of the 1970s, but with its Elysian island setting showcased a different side of Australia from the rural, inland settings predominantly featured on film to that point.

The third section of Craven's book concentrates on films made on the Gold Coast but set in disparate locations. One chapter examines young adult *bildungsroman* narratives *The Coolangatta Gold* and *Peter Pan*. Craven illustrates how the former film, the biggest-budgeted Australian film of its era, was conceived as a showcase for the Gold Coast and built around the novel concept of staging a real-life quadrathlon, which would go on to become a recurring event. In contrast to this local and locally-set production, *Peter Pan* was helmed by a local filmmaker (P.J. Hogan of *Muriel's Wedding* fame) and utilised local facilities, but was an international film production set in London and faraway Neverland. Another text discussed in this section is Alister Grierson's thriller *Sanctum*, which recreated the less fantastical but nonetheless exotic

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cave systems of Papua New Guinea on its Gold Coast studio sets. In the fourth and final section, Craven turns to the remote settings utilised in the television series *The Straits* and *R.A.N. Royal Area Nurse* and to the town of Winton, which has become a locus for film production thanks to John Hillcoat's *The Proposition* and Ivan Sen's *Mystery Road*, two vital Australian films of the twenty-first century. Craven examines how Hillcoat's 2005 period Western and Sen's 2013 small-town thriller ruminate on the colonial domestication of the outback, its aftermath, and its ongoing repercussions, signalling a contemporary revisionist ethos far from the reactionary productions discussed in the book's first section.

The list of films shot in part or whole in Queensland is long and varied, and while one could arguably create a whole other book comprised of alternative film choices and, by extension, locations – as far as international productions go, I would be especially partial to discussion of the Cairns-shot monstrosity *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, featuring one of Marlon Brando's final, least-dignified performances – the titles selected here are apt, and the insights gleaned from them valuable. Craven is thoughtful and thorough in her analysis, elucidating the relationships between production circumstances, historical and geographical context, and themes of place and identity in her chosen artefacts. Prior familiarity with the texts being analysed is advantageous but not a prerequisite: I was not acquainted with *The Irishman*, *The Coolangatta Gold*, or the television series discussed, but had little difficulty following Craven's analysis. Readers interested in discussion of the films' commercial or critical receptions, aesthetic value, or matters of auteurism may find the volume a little dry, but this does not detract from the book's substance, and such information is readily available elsewhere.

The extra-textual, popular-cultural relationship between films and their settings and/or locales of production is increasingly a subject of commentary: note the widespread discussions of the relationship between Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* films and New Zealand tourism, or the publication of Intellect's popular *World Film Locations* series. Two Australian cities have been subject to books in this series: Melbourne and Sydney. In lieu of any volume on Brisbane or elsewhere in Australia's sunshine state, Craven's book marks a valuable addition to scholarship about Queensland on film. It also marks a worthwhile contribution to discourse on how Australia's maligned but still resilient film industry perpetuates identity, place, and identity-through-place, as well as Queensland's particular role in diversifying onscreen representations of Australia and, by extension, Australian cinematic and real-world identities.

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