

I suppose it has come to this...

How a Western Shaped Australia's Identity

Introduction

Cinema holds the capability to create and sustain myths and is highly involved in the construction of places and spaces by using these myths (Zimmermann 2009). Furthermore, it is known that cinema has the ability to foster and create something that might be called national identity, a construct based upon the links between a country, its citizens and cinematic reflections and representations of them (Rayner 2000: 2). The fundamental formations often work by means of communicating ideas, beliefs and normative settings on people and places and furthermore notions on societal change and development. These notions are carried by means of popular media and fuse with national myths and beliefs.

In the following I will examine a blend of different approaches focussing on the Australian bushranger Ned Kelly – an Australian folk hero who turned into a national icon, discussing the cinematic Western genre as displayed by popular adaptations of Ned Kelly. I will argue that the charismatic larrikin figure is not only used as a national symbol but also shows the decline and sell-out of the Western genre which the story and the resulting movies are part of. In doing this, I will demonstrate how a single cinematic narration can be seen as key for understanding the mechanisms of cinematic mystification, its side effects, and the necessity for film-geography to deconstruct these elements. The example is embedded in Australian popular culture: the mystification of Ned Kelly, the son of an Irish convict and a first generation Australian. Ned Kelly is probably the only historical figure most Australians recognise, regardless if he is seen as hero or villain (Tranter & Donoghue 2008). All this is comprehended under the perspective of a somehow disappearing or even dying film genre: the Western (Hayward 2000). Ned Kelly – the folk hero – has lived several lives of popular appearance and through different grades of commodification. The Kelly legend has been portrayed on film on several occasions, although only a few of these films are well known. The 1906 film *THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG* is widely regarded as the world's first feature length film. It also became the first of many screen adaptations depicting the Ned Kelly story, including a couple of parodies, such as *RECKLESS KELLY* (1993) and *NED* (2003). Seal argues that there are different levels of social discourse and interaction

and that one has to see the strength of such representations especially on the more official levels of the outlaw heroes. «This representation is projected in various types of commercial and literary production, including the chapbook, the broadside ballad, the newspaper, pulp fiction, non-fiction and ‹faction›, film, television, art and literature» (1996: XI).

The Western as Australian genre

The Western genre as such is usually seen as exclusively American (Warshow³1985). I argue that it is not exclusively so, and that other national cinemas such as the Australian used the framework of the genre in much the same way. The use of a generic Western-like depiction and the frontier myth as advocated by Slotkin (1998) for the American West seems to be applicable to the basic conditions of Australian settlement expansion and the way in which Australia's policy and history is dealt with by popular culture. Turner (1994) argues that Australian cinema was often packaged to demonstrate resonances for the American market, one possible reason for the close thematic vicinity to the true American Western genre.

Robert Warshow sees the Western genre as «an art form for connoisseurs, where the spectator derives his pleasure from the appreciation of minor variations within the working out of a pre-established order» (1985: 444). The specific sense of history which is rooted in all Western movies seems to grow from the historical novel (Simmon 2003: 120) and the urge to justify a nationalistic fight for newly emerging countries and their ideas. Western narratives depict different notions of conflicts, and usually the protagonist is an exceptional fighter.

Australia is grounded on a history of convicts versus prison guards, police troopers and omnipresent Victorian values. As a result, Australians have always stood together, and it seems as if society used to be glued together by some sort of honour amongst crooks, fighting imperial rules and the Empire with its law enforcers that wrongly imprisoned many convict pioneers of the early colonial days (Vanderbent 2006). They weren't all criminals though. The majority were free settlers (Hughes 1986). As Dijkink (1996: 89) supposes, the Australian history of a struggle against a harsh and unforgiving nature can be compared to the American frontier myth and shows the same kind of «romantic ingredient.» Rayner (2001: 9) describes the Australian national identity, which was presented by the cinema, as being arranged chronologically, generically, and textually in relation to the original white, male representation, and its development can be followed easily.

As mentioned above, the Western genre is usually seen as a truly American genre, but it is known that other countries shot Western movies as well (i.e. Germany, Soviet Union, etc.). The focus on the American Western is related to Hollywood's economic power, the numerous output of its studios, and the fact that Aus-

tralia – as one example – must be seen as a rather marginal country, with an even more marginalized national cinema. It is evident that Westerns do not need to take place in the American West or have to be staged in the 19th century, as the specific elements and codes can be found in other types of films as well. The underlying tradition and the ongoing Americana is linked with Western dime novels and started in the 1860s and juxtaposed real and fictional stories of cowboys, outlaws and the conquest of the West. These novels helped laying the foundation for the genre's later success. It is intriguing that the recipients developed a strong heroization of the outlaw, which later became a topos of this genre (Hayward 2000: 464). Cawelti (1971: 34–5) sees some basic plots defining the Western: the Cavalry and Indians story, the Union Pacific or Pony Express story, the homesteaders or squatters theme, the cattle empire story, the lawman story, the revenge story and finally the outlaw story. All that joined with a somewhat formalized or standardized narrative, respectively mode of storytelling of the West, finally contributing to a geographical film genre. The perpetuation of a standardized narrative made the genre easy to understand and easy to follow. Hayward noticed these «narrative rituals of robbery, chase and retribution, of lawlessness and restoration of law are iconographical inscribed in the Western, right down to the very last detail and gesture» (2000: 464). All these seem to offer a pre-set of elements that are developed throughout film history and are appreciable in all Kelly versions. There are definitely additional Australian movies, which fit better into a Western genre frame. Films like Peter Weir's *THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS* (1974), Harry Watt's *THE OVERLANDERS* (1946), or even the *MAD MAX* trilogy are better examples when it comes to the narrative structure of Western movies. All of them use the Western genre's range of components, like the rural setting, the importance of landscape, and the immediacy of social commentary. Typically, the isolated rural settings reveal a much-fractured community: a community that is fractured by prejudice and secrecy (Rayner 2001: 32). Hobsbawm (1963) finds another element that belongs to the rural: social banditry that begins with the arrest of a man for a crime that is tolerated by the local community. In the following, the social bandit turns to a bushranger, hides in the outback and is dependent on the local community that supports him (McQuilton 1982). These backers shaped and created the basis for the later glorification of the social bandit, or as McQuilton puts it: «The sympathizers quickly turn him into a legendary figure: an underdog driven to crime by police persecution, a Robin Hood, a man who kills only in self-defence or just revenge, a man invulnerable against his enemies, whose cause is just» (1982: 59). In addition to this contemporary fame, modern mass media exhibit the aptitude to create a picture that is bigger than life. The mixture of folklore, myth, popular media and the ongoing adjustment within society through current discourse creates a collective memory that results in some sort of national identity; a national identity fitting the narrative tradition of Australian cinema.

Rayner (2001: 11) illustrates what he sees as a major difference between Australian and American Western movies, which seem to be comparable in terms of embedding landscape and specific activity, using a character from *THE OVERLANDERS*: «Nothing romantic about us, y'know. We don't carry guns or shoot up rustlers. We're just plain cattlemen – hard yakka and hard tucker.» The film is based on a poem by Andrew Barton, better known as Banjo Patterson, the author of «Clancy of the Overflow» and «Waltzing Matilda», and is genuinely inscribed in school curricula, just like the literary Ned Kelly and his idea of challenging authorities. The pragmatism shown in the quotation can be found throughout all Australian movies; being also central to Australian Westerns. And even to the Kelly adaptations where it can be widely found. Ned Kelly is usually portrayed as a hard working lad, who gets trapped by the system. Especially the early Westerns of the silent era were simply carrying on «where reality had left off» (Hayward 2000: 463), just like the Australian Ned Kelly cinematography. A quarter century after Kelly had been hung, the film entered the silver screens of Australia and reminded the spectators, only five years after the Commonwealth of Australia had been founded, that the British were losing their influence continuously. No more than a year after the release of the first Kelly movie, the Commonwealth gained its status as dominion and finally was on the way towards national independence. While the nexus of people and place play a vibrant role in constructing the identity of places through storytelling, the senses of place and therefore the intrinsic part of national storytelling create a national imaginary of what was and what might have been. For Australia the protagonists are usually male, of Anglo-Irish background and displayed as daring conquerors of the unknown nature, and, to a certain extent, contenders of the social order. Ward explains that this archetypical male figure «although exaggerated and romanticized has reality, not only because it is rooted in the nation's past, but because it influences present day ideas of how Australians ought <typically> to behave» (1958:1–2). What comes out of Australian cinema and the Western-like movies is a very strong idea that might be called Australianness:

«Australianness is a powerful construct. As a call to some kind of national consciousness, to a generalised consensus about national <type>, behaviour and identity, it is a political construct or at least a construct in the service of a political idea, however undeclared the idea may be ... the strongest body of work on national self-images has been inflected by a white, male Anglo-Celtic, <common man> point of view, larrikin spirited at its most endearing moments, but populist and conservative at its heart.»
(Dermoddy and Jacka 1987: 35)

Most of the movies pose the question why the characters turned into criminals, and usually blame inherited structures from the former British motherland and the omnipresent colonial powers with their Victorian beliefs and moral attitudes, being the opposite to the Australian bushranger mentality (Zimmermann 2009). These

films usually ask for specific staging and a typical way of portraying the cinematic space that conducts the narrative. «Australian space is constructed as a place of stasis, at worst an empty space, upon which the history of genre is simply located, rather than contested, as films are moved into the zones of the mythic or the patriotic, the international, or the nationalist» (Gibson 1992: 28).

The Kelly myth

The analysis of the cinematic and mediated Ned Kelly as a Western character follows Roland Barthes' assumption that the written and communicated discourse carries the myth (Barthes 1964). The term myth is not used in the sense of an untrue or simply fictive story, but rather as a systematic organisation of signifiers around a set of connotations and meanings. Barthes' ideas on myth and the construction of myth itself are based upon the knowledge that it is usually a proposition or a statement (Barthes 1964: 85). In that sense, a myth is a specific way of signifying or rather a denotation based on a historical context. It is more likely a message and not only a singular object nor a notion or an idea. The myth is denoted by its social function and the highly explanatory narrative of what it is part.

For the Ned Kelly narrative, Hobsbawm's model of social banditry fits in very well, as McQuilton (1982) displays. The embeddedness and rootedness of the bushranger in Australia's rural history is most striking and offers an insight to place and time of Australian rural society of the nineteenth century. The character of Ned Kelly, who was born in 1854 and executed in 1880, is a central figure and topos of Australian popular culture and a blueprint for national identity. He is the most famed and thus iconic bushranger of Australian history and embodies a lot of true blue, i.e. Australian clichés and romanticized qualities. It is often argued that Kelly still lives on in the Australian imagination as the personification of some invaluable characteristics like bravery, cheekiness and compassion for his companions (Seal 1996). Ignoring the fact that Kelly was a sought-after criminal with a rather long criminal record, the Kelly Gang always used to have a strong support within Australian society. Ned Kelly carries some similarities with Robin Hood, another popular figure who made his way to the silver screen and helped shaping a sense of place for a specific region.

The ambivalence of the cinematic Ned Kelly character reveals somehow the nation's ambiguous attitude towards the Victorian Motherland and the newly found home in Australia. Throughout different versions of cinematic and television adaptations, the character is obviously operating at the point of juncture of diverse values: he is a caring and thoughtful but impulsive family man who was led into delinquency by the British powers and the harsh life conditions on the one hand. On the other hand, the Australian hero stepped from petty roguery right towards homicide.

In an idealized manner, one can argue that he never wanted to accept the British suppression usually embodied by the troopers and the depicted judges and the various gaols he was sent to. It is challenging that most recipients developed a strong heroization of the outlaw, which became a topos of the Western genre (Hayward 2000: 464).

A myth like that cannot be defined by its object and not by its material nature (Barthes 1964: 86). Using a more quotidian approach it could be said that myths are those potent stories that shape physical and imaginative journeys into places and spaces (Holloway & Hubbard 2001: 116). These myths are often the incitement to shaping people's attitudes towards particular types of place (Holloway & Hubbard 2001: 116). Beyond cinematic adaptations, the stories are grounded in several sections of popular culture, i.e. folklore, comic books, music, novels, and marketing tools. Dijkink states that «the myth places a sturdy man of the wilds against the degenerated European man of culture» (1996: 89), and as such is still part of recent Australian national identity. Similarities within the films can be found in the circumstance that an outlaw is best suitable to represent freedom, and Hayward even observed that the outlaw «asserted individual <rights> over the big bosses» (2000: 468). Kelly must therefore be seen as a fighter for freedom and as precursor for Australian national independency.

The Ned Kelly narrative remains a central myth for a nation of immigrants coming to terms with their country, their nationality and their history, a way by which the majority of Australia's population, living in urban dwellings, can create an imaginative bond to their homeland. Kelly was an individual who kept his ancestors' traditions and stories alive. Apparently, Kelly's life is not suitable as a blueprint for the people's own, given the fierce deaths that surround it, but that is not the function of myth anyway. Myths may contribute to raise ideas of ourselves while posing the questions on what worries a society.

Ned on the screen

Australian cinema, understood as national cinema (Murray 1994, O'Regan 1996, Zimmermann 2009), holds some intriguing facts: not only that *THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG* (1906) was the first feature film of the world ever made, one might say that it was also the beginning of the cinematic Western genre. Charles Tait's cinematic narrative about the Australian outlaw established an almost biopic specialty of the national Australian cinema, from which several versions have made their way to the international screens. Several feature-films, TV-series and documentaries have been made from the story. Ignoring the fact that Kelly was a criminal, the cinema and other popular media have contributed to create an omnipresent national icon. Thus, I argue that these parts of the Australian national myths are based upon a Western narrative.

There are only very few elements of the Australian national cinema having such iconic value as can be stated about the Kelly Gang. The fight against British suppression and the final siege at Glenrowan (fig. 1), a battle which was only outstripped by the woeful defeat of the ANZAC troops at Gallipoli, have to be seen as some of Australia's biggest national stories. Australian identity – at least of the Australians with an Anglo-Celtic background – can be considered to be enormously influenced by the character of Ned Kelly, illustrated by its embeddedness in Australia's popular culture and within the Western genre. Beeton sees Australia's geographical isolation and the «limited access to other cultures» (2004: 125) in the days before mass communications as a main reason for an exclusive and very limited concept and self-image of Australia. The limitation is based on a lack of exchange of information as well as on a reversed image of Australia that was presented by popular media and through «the eyes of the others, be that of Victorian England, visiting American soldiers during World War II, post-war migrants of the 1950s, or the gaze of international sport fans» (2004: 125). «Popular interest in the excited bushranger began to express itself in both oral and media forms, much as occurred in the cases of the British and American equivalents of the Kellys» (Seal 1996: 164). There were very few bushrangers that became part of Australian folklore and even less that «transformed into legendary figures» as McQuilton (1982: 58) argues. This transformation meant that the portrayal was not accurate and that within the folkloristic transformation, the characters were given legendary qualities. The interest in bushranger stories could be seen in various ways as the stories appeared in all kinds of popular media.



1 Official sign of the Glenrowan Wine Region



2 THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG
(1906)

The beginning of the Australian Western history has to be seen in the early documentaries of Joseph Perry, who started as a producer and filmmaker for the salvation-army, and organized evening shows that contained non-fictional film footage. In 1904 Perry invented the cinematic bushranger story, which was in a way very similar to the American Western (Routt 1998). By the year 1906 the evening shows were very successful, and the search for stories to tell found a promising topic in *THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG* (fig. 2). It was rooted in a mixture of lecture, musical accompaniment, and sound effects (Routt 1998). The film was the first to glorify the bushranger, who was only executed 26 years earlier. It was meant to lay the cornerstone for a new genre of bushranger movies, which fit perfectly into the Western scheme as a lot of identification marks can be found throughout all versions. In 1912, the government of New South Wales banned such bushranger movies by law, due to the detrimental influence on the audiences, but the production went on in the shadows (Routt 1998: 385). From this moment on, the oral creation of the Kelly myth was fostered by folklore and songs, poems, legends and sayings sprawled.

This tailor-made base of Ned Kelly's story for becoming a national myth, used and followed the bushranger ethics and the required code of conduct. Between 1930 and 1960, Ned Kelly was taken up by a multitude of media and genres: Kelly narrations and biographies, book chapters devoted to the gang in histories of Australia, several films, collections in song books and recordings, juvenile literature and comic books and single comic strips, and various newspaper articles. Seal (1996: 147) sees the almost ubiquitous image of the Kelly gang as an appropriate icon of romance and adventure in the pioneering past, taken up by mass media and other central economic aspects of twentieth century life, like tourism.

The most commercially acknowledged of the Kelly pictures is the 1970 film *NED KELLY* starring Mick Jagger, and the 2003 film by the same name starring the late Heath Ledger. Despite being highly publicised versions of the story, these two films

were largely savaged by critics for a variety of reasons. The 1970 version of Tony Richardson's *NED KELLY* is best known for Mick Jagger's appearance as a rather folkloristic bushranger and is an example of the emerging foreign dominance within Australian cinema (Murray 1994: 71–2). The film failed to depict a historical correct recount of the story; not to mention the mistake of Tony Richardson to cast Mick Jagger as Ned Kelly, underlining the fact that «one of the iconographic stories of white Australian history» was told by an English (Murray 1994: 72)¹. Let alone the musical score, which contained songs by Kris Kristofferson and Waylon Jennings, best known for their contribution to American country music. The German version of that film even replaced the songs by Kristofferson by songs of the Dutch singer Bruce Low, who is best known for his German country songs in the 1960s and 1970s. Within the film, his contribution could be understood as a ballad-monger, who explains the different sequences and leaves the spectator with a bemused feeling.

Of all the films ever made on the subject, only one can claim to convey the comprehensive story of Ned Kelly while remaining very accurate to the actual events; the 1980 television mini-series *THE LAST OUTLAW*. Written by Ian Jones and his wife Bronwyn Binns, *THE LAST OUTLAW* took advantage of the mini-series concept to be able to pay great attention to historical detail without having the time restraints of a feature length film.

A more humorous adaptation of the Kelly narrative was carried out by the Australian comedian Yahoo Serious, who made a spoof story from the Ned Kelly incident in *RECKLESS KELLY* (1993). Instead of fighting the law and British colonial powers, the main character – a Kelly descendant – fights Japanese businessmen who were widely perceived as a threat to Australia in the 1990s, and their plan to buy his isolated island inhabited only by kangaroos. At the very end, Kelly makes his way to Hollywood to fight against bad plots and cowboy stereotypes. This development has to be seen as a first step into new directions, for the story begins to depart from its original structure and narrative.

The 2003 version of *NED KELLY* by Gregor Jordan (fig. 3), starring the late Heath Ledger, is the most Hollywood-like adaptation of the story. While it was often critiqued for considerable deviations from historical facts, it is the first Kelly movie that can be seen as a super-epic (Vanderbent 2006: 143). Maybe this is the final version of the bushranger narrative, conceivably because of the dying Western genre, as Hayward suggests (2000: 473). What all Ned Kelly adaptations have in common is that they depict a rather educated and mostly well-mannered scoundrel who was forced into a threatening situation by his environment. Furthermore, parallels to

1 Conducted interviews from Glenrowan led to the result that the people in «Kelly Country» in north-eastern Victoria were so upset by the casting of Mick Jagger that they threatened to burn any cinema that showed the movie; as a result, the movie was never screened in the region.



3 The super-epic NED KELLY (2003)

the Western genre can be found in the circumstance that an outlaw is best suitable to represent freedom. Frost (2004: 247) understands Ned Kelly as the logical culmination of the Anglophone outlaw hero tradition, and sees Kelly's folklorisation with a close connection to the American badmen like Jesse James and Billy the Kid: two bandits that were turned into Hollywood topics and became part of the Western myth and popular historiography. Maybe the economic success of Kelly movies and television mini series about bushrangers is linked to the convict history of Australia, but it is definitely the explanation why the Australian national cinema – and the cinemagoers – loves its scoundrels and larrikins.

Ned outside the screen – the commodification of the bushranger

Ned Kelly turned not only into a national icon but also into a national commodity. It seems that the popular character has been overly exploited as media topic in general and cinema in particular that it is not suitable as a national narrative anymore. Especially for a nation with many recent migrants missing the necessary Anglo-Irish background for such stories, there seems to be a need for new stories and probably new heroes as well (Zimmermann 2009).

Other popular interpretations entered the public in other artistic expressions like Sidney Nolan's Kelly pictures of the mid 1940ies or Peter Carey's Booker Price Winner *The History of the Kelly Gang* from 2000 are rather high art and seem to follow another approach of telling the well-known story. There have been many comic book versions of the Ned Kelly legend, none has been as detailed nor as authentic as Monty Wedd's version told in the *Sunday Mirror* in a series over 146 weeks in the mid 1970s. He told the story with an unbiased approach and left it to the reader to make his own determination of Kelly's rightful place in Australia's history. Ren-



4 Ned Kelly Theme Park in Glenrowan, Victoria

dered in a style that looked like earlier etchings, with considerable crosshatching and still demonstrates the appearance in other forms of popular media. All these adaptations led to the development that the national narrative has become globally accessible by using internationally identifiable modes of representation and ways of storytelling that are linked to all kinds of life-world experiences, as for example sport events. At the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, the iconic figure of Ned Kelly appeared in a Nolan-style outfit, a development quite different from 1956 when plans to stage a play about Ned Kelly in the cultural supporting program of the Melbourne games were banned by the authorities, for the inappropriate image of Australia such a play could give (Holland and Williamson 2003: 18).

The tourism industry has branded a whole region under the label of Ned Kelly's life (fig. 1), and the impact is nowadays visible as «Kelly Country», not only by the tourist industry, but also by the local authorities and businesses. The process of mingling fact and fiction over a long period has resulted in the story with all its bits and pieces being inscribed in the land or even the landscape in a Baudrillardian sense of the impossibility to distinguish between fact and fiction. The stories and the landscapes share the myth and are part of a very strong sense of place, to which the cinema has contributed in many ways (Escher and Zimmermann 2001). Film induced tourism is a side effect (fig. 4, 5) and it is very well documented that feature films and specific narratives may create and help promoting specific attractive destinations (Zimmermann 2003; Beeton 2004; Frost 2004). In the case of the



5 Staging of Ned Kelly on the ground of Kelly's last stand in Glenrowan, Victoria

several audio-visual Ned Kelly adaptations, Frost (2004: 248) sees the significance of the very well known story of Ned Kelly as a major influence on the increase of the number of tourists coming to related destinations in Victoria.

The legend of the Kelly Gang has become completely etched into Australian folklore. Even though many people may not know the complete history of Australia's most famous – or infamous – bushranger, just mentioning the name of Ned Kelly stirs an instinct of patriotism. The characteristic plates of armour used by the Kelly gang, in particular Ned's iconic helmet, are instantly recognised symbols of Australian culture these days and can be found on t-shirts, pub signs and labels of wine bottles, and some years ago, Ned Kelly starred in an TV commercial for Nurofen, a well known pain relief. The Kelly myth seems to have left the screen to fill in other gaps and niches of societal needs and will always be around as a part of the moved past.

The last stand

Maybe the story of the Kelly gang in Australian films has outlived itself. Other stories seem to need to be told and most probably, there won't be another cinematic Ned for quite a while. Australian film industry has always taken advantage of the thrilling and dramatic stories about the Kellys, but today the focus seems to be on new topics, even if the genre's main principles seem to remain the same. *THE PROPOSITION* (2005) by John Hillcoat or *VAN DIEMEN'S LAND* by Jonathan auf der Heide (2009) tells about the moral decay of Ned Kelly's generation in a far less optimistic and rather grimy way, using extraordinary landscape photography to transport the narrative.

While the American Western has been using the heroization of outlaws primarily to mythologize the West, the Australian Western has been telling the story of

suppression to prepare in a way the long path to Australian autonomy and the overcoming of the British. Studying Australian film carefully is basically studying the history of Australia (Vanderbent 2006: 155), which is the story of pushing boundaries and frontiers (Hughes 1986). This similarity to the history of the United States is definitely the reason for genre analogues of the Australian and the American Western.

White Australian identity seems to be partially constructed through the omnipresent story of Ned Kelly which was partially «cleaned» by the great storytellers of the cinema. Telling a story of an old-fashioned and overcome Australian image, which can still be found as Larrikin culture, still seems to be shaping identity; people in Australia seem to prefer to be on the wrong side of the law. And if you follow Australian cinema as a history lesson, as Saskia Vanderbent (2006: 155) suggests, there is one thing you learn: «if you work hard with a smile on your face and you manage to stoush a copper at least once in your lifetime then you must be a good sort no matter if you're a «pom», «blackfella», «tart», «bloke», «wog», «kiwi» «yobo», or any other type of «bloody Aussie.»

Shortly before the 2003 Kelly adaptation came to global cinemas, Huggan (2002: 149) saw signs of a renaissance of the folk memory associated with the Kelly gang. The major reason is seen in the current appeal of a variety of nation-based outlaw mythologies to a transnational memory industry. The reawakening of the character seems to lead towards an end of the genre for it seems to have come to an end as it can be seen in all products of popular culture. Maybe the Ned Kelly character is finally ready to leave the silver screen as part of the Western genre. The final impersonation by the late Heath ledger could be the last adaptation for a long time and gives the Kelly myth and maybe the Western genre the chance to rest in peace, or a chance of being reborn in a new arising tradition of Australian cinema, as Australia seems to be the place where Western-wise all began and where it might come to an end.

I guess, such is life...

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