

What Killed Australian Cinema & Why is the Bloody Corpse Still Moving?

A Thesis Submitted By

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Abstract

In 2004, annual Australian viewership of Australian cinema, regularly averaging below 5%, reached an all-time low of 1.3%. Considering Australia ranks among the top nations in both screens and cinema attendance per capita, and that Australians' biggest cultural consumption is screen products and multi-media equipment, suggests that Australians love cinema, but refrain from watching their own. Why? During its golden period, 1970-1988, Australian cinema was operating under combined private and government investment, and responsible for critical and commercial successes. However, over the past thirty years, 1988-2018, due to the detrimental role of government film agencies played in binding Australian cinema to government funding, Australian films are perceived as under-developed, low budget, and depressing. Out of hundreds of films produced, and investment of billions of dollars, only a dozen managed to recoup their budget. The thesis demonstrates how 'Australian national cinema' discourse helped funding bodies consolidate their power. Australian filmmaking is defined by three ongoing and unresolved *frictions*: one external and two internal. *Friction I* debates Australian cinema vs. Australian audience, rejecting Australian cinema's output, resulting in *Frictions II and III*, which respectively debate two industry questions: what content is produced? arthouse vs. genre, and how are films financed? government funding vs. private investment. These *frictions* are argued as part of an alternative explanatory model – The Cinematic Machine – formed from three theories: The Rhizome, Centre-Periphery and the Instrumental War, which help narrate Australian cinema's history. By separately examining each of the three concepts – National, Australia, and Cinema – underlying Australian cinema discourse the research contests the existence of an 'Australian national cinema', showing each to be a makeshift construction, prone to mixed interpretations, and utilised to impose Centre's interests. This renders Australian cinema, once renowned for its ingenuity, as dead. Finally, using the Cinematic Machine model, foundations are laid for future research which will remedy this situation.

Abbreviations

ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
AFC	Australian Film Commission
AFDC	Australia Film Development Corporation
AFTRS	Australian Film Television Radio School
AHEDA	Australian Home Entertainment Distributors Association
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
ASHR2	Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
AUSFTA	Australia United States Free Trade Agreement
BC	British Columbia
CGI	Computer-Generated Imagery
DCITA	Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts
DIY	Do It Yourself
FDC	Film Development Corporation
FFC	Film Finance Corporation
FLIC	Film Licence Investment Company
FPAA	Film Producers' Association
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICH	internet Content Hosts
ISP	internet Service Provider
KPI	Key Performance Indicator

MCC	Mass Communication Council
MOI	Ministry of Information
NCOF	National Commission of Audit
NFSS	New Family Structures Survey
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territories
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P&A	Prints and Advertising
PDV	Post Digital and Visual Effects
PIAF	Production Attraction Incentive Fund
PVS	Page Views
QAPE	Qualifying Australian Production Expenditure
RC	Refused Classification
RLAF	Regional Victoria Assistance Fund
ROI	Return on Investment
SA	South Australia
SAC	Significant level of Australian Content
SACC	South Australian Classification Council
SFX	Special Effects
SUHREC	Swinburne Human Research Ethics Committee
UFC	Ultimate Fight Championship
VFX	Visual Effects
WA	Western Australia

Acknowledgments

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18: 1-2

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The prospect of me becoming a (semi)educated man is so far-fetched, that only a mother could believe in it. My mum, Bella RIP, always did. She passed away during my first year at Swinburne and didn't get to see me make it, but her spirit is always with me. My father, Mordechai, bankrolled my education for years. He still finds it hard to believe that I am writing a doctoral thesis. I hope that this research will help convince him. He is, and always will be, my rock and fortress. Coming to Melbourne I met my partner, Yif'at, and we are blessed with a son, Oz. Nothing that I would ever do or write, will come close to the perfection that he is. They make everything worthwhile.

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Candidate Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for award at any other degree or diploma, neither has it been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution. The author undertakes that the work is original and a result of his own research endeavour. To the best of the author's knowledge, this thesis does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text. Proofreading for this thesis was made by Daniel Given.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacob Zuma', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Date: 10 September 2019

Introduction

The Swinburne Shuffle:

The Wild, Untold Story of What Killed Australian Cinema?

Applying for PhD at Swinburne, I was required to send an abstract outlining the ideas for the proposed thesis. I formed two research questions: what killed Australian cinema? and why is the bloody corpse still moving? Basically, what went wrong? and how to fix it? In my mind's eye, I was to shortly state what I believed is obvious, that the Australian cine market was not working, and then produce a short film, with which I intended to demonstrate how a film unit moves via the rhizomatic grid that is internet. I sent my abstract to Associate Professor James Verdon, Chair of the film department. James forwarded it to Associate Professor Carolyn Barnes, who wrote back to me. Carolyn liked my ideas, she had just one question: what is my stance regarding Australian national cinema?

I answered. If Carolyn would care to explain what are Australian, national and cinema, I would gladly form a stance. My argument was that coming to Australia in 2005, speaking semi-coherent English and sufficiently understanding the rhizomatic grid that is Australian bureaucracy, qualified me as an 'Australian' as it does for quarter of the inhabitants of this land, making 'Australian' a loose premise. 'Cinema' was also a term in dire need of definition. The concepts proposed in Bazin's 'what is cinema?' were and continue to undergo tectonic changes. My original intention was to prove that peripheral cinematic units can effectively travel the internet, and that today, audience may be reached in many different ways than via traditional cinema screenings. As for 'national', political scientists would gladly volunteer to undergo a root canal treatment at the local dentist training facility rather than debate this question. National is an infamously difficult term to substantiate. Carolyn accepted my email, invited me to Melbourne, and I thought the matter was settled.

At the first supervision meeting, James listened carefully to my 'what killed, blah blah' speech. His first comment was: 'this thesis is about Australian national cinema', and I experienced a 'Houston, we have a problem' moment. What was obvious to me was not so obvious to James and Carolyn, who are well versed in Australian cinema discourse. Ignoring them is ignoring the discourse I am supposed to address, and ultimately contest. Although it is very poorly defined, with no substantial proof of its existence, the phrase 'National Australian Cinema' is used in Australian cinema discourse to the extent of being axiomatic. Worse, even scholars who do acknowledge the problematic nature of the 'national' construction such as Albert Moran, and Dermody and Jacka, still use it. Adjustments were called for, and this marked the first major shift from my original intention: the need to properly define basic terminology. The scope of the thesis mandated the research would address only the first question.

The question ‘and why is the bloody corpse still moving?’, will not be investigated as I originally envisioned, and will only be addressed shortly in Chapter Nine.

Hence, the research is divided to three parts. Part I lays the factual foundation to the thesis. Chapter One, ‘Borders of Discourse: Literature Review, Research Design and Methods’, introduces the Australian cinema debate surrounding Australian cinema’s renaissance from 1968 to the amalgamation of the Australian government agencies in 2008. It divides the history of Australian cinema into two periods: the rise from 1968 – 1988, and the fall from 1988 – 2008. The literature review examines how academic discussion of Australian cinema was conducted via the problematic national prism and presents areas of research neglected in academia. The research design addresses problems that arise from the current debate, events leading to the research question: ‘what killed Australian cinema?’ and the logic behind its chapter division.

Chapter Two, ‘Theory: Enter the Cinematic Machine’, examines an encompassing question: how does *any* cinema work? Using the idea of the ‘Cinematic Machine’, a meta-concept amalgamated from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s rhizome model, Carl von Clausewitz’s instrumental war and Edward Shil’s Centre-Periphery theory, the model is used to follow film units from inception to completion along the rhizomatic grid. It notes the *frictions* they traverse along the journey from Periphery caused by requirements which Centre – the dominant elites – poses. In Deleuzian fashion, discussion in Chapter Two slips between approaches, disciplines and theories. The chosen theories are case specific and can be evaluated by their explanatory power.

Chapter Three, ‘Rise of the Dammed 1970–1988: New Wave, Ozploitations and 10BA’, presents a history of events from the early days of the Film Development Corporation (FDC) in the late 1960s until the formation of the Film Finance Corporation in 1988 and the AFC’s political involvement within this shift. Some issues such as the emergence of American blockbusters, the global breakthrough success of certain Australian films, and the disappearance of hard-top cinemas and drive-ins, are reviewed to contextualise changes in Australian cinema.

Chapter Four, ‘FFC’s Crying Game: The Demise of Australian Cinema 1988–2008’, reviews events beginning with the formation of the FFC, through the 1990s, the chase after American runaways in the 2000s, the political involvement of funding bodies in AUSFTA, FFC’s failure to meet any of its designated goals, until the dissolution of the three government agencies: AFC, FFC and Film Australia in 2008 and the formation of Screen Australia. As in Chapter Three, global issues such as the 2000s USA-Canada trade war are briefly reviewed to contextualize the Australian disposition toward Hollywood productions.

Part II: Reconceptualises the terms Australian, National, and Cinema. Chapter Five, 'We'll Name it "National": Circumcising National Cinema Theory', asks what is 'national' about cinema? The chapter reviews the evolution of the 'national' concept, its European origins, the methodological problems raised by the absence of a non-national debate, which make all films debated national by default. Methods of inquiry, incorporated from political science, isolate and define terminologies. A case study of the iconic English national text William Shakespeare's *Henry V* and its cinematic adaptations by Olivier (1944) and Branagh (1989) demonstrates how their explicit intentions are disregarded in favour of a 'British national cinema' framework. To resolve these problems, a new taxonomy is offered to situate national classification as reductionist and subject-specific.

Chapter Six, 'You Make Me Feel: Australian Identity in the Lost and Found', asks what is 'Australian'? Two interlaced modes of Centre-Periphery relations in Australian cinema are reviewed: production and content. The chapter argues that government funding bodies, equated with Centre, exercise their financial control over Australian cinema to determine *de facto* what 'Australian' values are. Aboriginal screen representation is the chapter's case study. Being both cohesive and exclusively government funded, Aboriginal screen representation conveys the purest form of Australian 'national' cinema. The chapter demonstrates how the conflicting political stances of Australian prime ministers – Keating's 'black armband', Howard's 'whitewashing' and Rudd's 'moving on' – are reflected in three Australian films from three spheres of production, these being, Aboriginal cinema's *Beneath Clouds* (2002), Australian mainstream cinema's *Jindabyne* (2006) and the Hollywood blockbuster *Australia* (2008).

Chapter Seven, 'Off Centre: Periphery, Pornography, Friction. The Case of Abbywinters.com' confronts traditional definitions of 'cinema' with subversive methods of filmmaking. Despite it being well rooted in Australian consumerism and culture, Australian legislation prohibits the making, distribution and exhibition of pornography, making it 'not cinema'. Yet exclusion from Centre makes pornography a self-sustaining industry, existing purely in Periphery. Abbywinters.com is a unique case study of an Australian internet porn site that managed to establish itself autonomously as one of the world's leading, paid-subscription sites. In 2009, Victoria police raided abbywinters.com's offices under false pretence. Consequently, it had to shut down its Australian operation and relocated to the Netherlands.

Part III: reviews the outcome of Australian cinema and audience reception. Chapter Eight, '"They Learned Nothing and Forgotten Nothing": What Killed Australian Cinema?', brings the debate up to the present, by examining Australian cinema under the ten-year tenure of Screen Australia, 2008 – 2017. The chapter establishes that, basically, nothing changed from the FFC era. Although doubling Australian-government funding for feature film production in its various forms, Screen Australia fails

to meet its designated cultural and commercial purpose. Using previously described methods of inquiry, a review of government policies reveals a short-sighted governmental policy, investing tens of millions of dollars in meaningless and detrimental Hollywood productions. The chapter demonstrates how Centre's ability to control every facet of the Australian film industry – production, themes, and discourse – eventually led to its stagnation and the imminent death of Australian cinema.

Chapter Nine, 'Rhizomatic Paths for Future Research: So, Why is the Bloody Corpse Still Moving?', argues that culture, which cinema is part of, can never die, as it is a form of human expression. Rather, forms of cultural expression evolve. The chapter envisions an alternative to the current model of Australian film production. Returning to the Cinematic Machine, Chapter Nine argues that the internet, that is, the rhizomatic grid, allows cinematic units to *Become* without having to pass through Centre. The lesson to be learned from abbywinters.com is that by exploring a niche, instead of trying to reach a wide audience, a film can find an audience and have far more effect and commercial sustainability. Developing new methods of internet platform production is not only financially prudent but also obviates the need for Centre and exhibition and the *frictions* they generate, ultimately leading to Centre's rejuvenation.

Lastly, I would like to expand about the origins of this thesis. In 2008, an Australian documentary, *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!* (Hartley, 2008) was screened in Bondi Junction. Concurrent with Australian cinema standards, it was screened on Tuesday night at 21:00. Unsurprisingly, the cinema was almost empty and ran for maybe two weeks before being canned. As the film began, I could hardly understand what the participants were saying. Indeed, Australian is a strange language. But they didn't really need to speak. More than twenty years after, the action shown in this documentary looked fresh, vulgar, funny, stupid, exciting, disgusting, rebellious, suspenseful, dangerous, imaginative and downright awesome. I walked out thinking 'these are my people'. I haven't met any of them, but I know them well. It is obvious why Hartley went on to film *Electric Boogaloo: The Wild, Untold Story of Cannon Films* (Hartley, 2014), depicting the people responsible for much of my childhood education. All are grown men, with adolescent mentality. How fitting then, that when the time came to complete my education, these are the people I wanted to write about. And so I did. *Not Quite Hollywood* is available on youtube.com, and I wholeheartedly recommend opening a nice bottle of Aussie beer and watching it. Consider it a complementing research. Working from Periphery, Hartley's work inspired this thesis. In turn, I hope it does some justice to his and my heroes, by recognizing some of their tremendous contribution to Australian culture, and maybe inspire someone else in years to come.

Part I

Discourse. Theory. History.

Chapter One

Borders of Discourse:

Literature Review, Research Design and Methods

Compared to other established cinemas, Australian cinema spans a relatively short timeframe. Although Australian films were made from the beginning of the 20th century, they were shot too far apart to be regarded as products of an industrial effort – a cinema. Australian cinema's renaissance is attributed to the patronage of the John Gorton Liberal government (1968-1971), which was the first to allocate the budget and means to develop sporadic film endeavours into an industry. Australian cinema makes for a distinct and well-defined field of research. It is documented, researched and debated in academia, media and industry publications. Australia's distant locale, its distinct landscape, flora, fauna and hybrid culture, made initially of British and Aboriginal traditions then mediated by diasporic communities and imported cultures, make Australian cinema one in a constant search for identity.

1.1 The Rise and Fall of Australian Cinema

A read through Australian 'New' cinema literature identifies two main periods of Australian filmmaking: The Rise: 1968-1988 and The Fall: 1988-2008. 'The Rise' began in the late 1960s to late 1980s, this being seen as the golden years of Australian cinema. Thematically, professionally and commercially, this period marks a clear cinematic progression, its high point recognised to be the exceptional success of *Crocodile Dundee* (Faiman, 1986), regarded by many writers as the quintessential Australian film. This period ends with the annulment of the 10BA tax exemptions in 1988. 'The Decline' is seen to begin in 1988 with the formation of the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC) and continues until today, with the FCC's predecessor, Screen Australia. Although continuously stating the need for diversity, commercial viability and independence, during the FFC period the Australian government effectively assumed control over Australian filmmaking to manage it by proxy through its agencies. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, during the FFC period, 1988-2008, Australian cinema was moulded to the government agency's idea of 'quality' filmmaking. After completely failing to achieve any of its intended goals, the FFC was dissolved in 2008 and amalgamated with the two other government film agencies, Australian Film Commission (AFC) and Film Australia, into the current Screen Australia.

Some scholars periodise the evolution of Australian cinema differently. Ryan (2012) divides it into three segments: early years from 1970 to 1975, peak of the 10BA incentive from 1981 to 1988 and return of the Aussie blockbusters and the producers offset from 2007 to 2008 (Ryan 2012). O'Regan

(1996) divides Australian cinema's development into five stages. The four relevant to this discussion are: mid-1960s until early 1970s, mid-1970s to early 1980s, 1980s Australian cinema, and the fifth stage from *Crocodile Dundee* to *The Piano* (Campion, 1993) (O'Regan 1996). Ultimately, all divisions are subjected to criticism though various examples contradict the chosen logic of periodisation. However, validity of an argument does not stem from it being irrefutable, but rather from making enough sense as to not be refuted in the first place.

1.2 Modes of Academic Discussion

In introducing the 'Australian Film Theory and Criticism Project', framing the history and evolution of Australian cinema discourse, King, Verevis and Williams (2008: 124) ask:

What is particular about Australian film theory and criticism? What is its relationship to its international counterpart? Which key positions are established during its period of academicization? How do these positions come about and in which directions do they develop?' (King, Verevis & Williams 2008).

A read through Australian cinema literature draws attention to an Australian particularity. Australian film scholars view their subject matter, that is, Australia, as a young, transitional, not fully-established culture. Although Australia was an active British outpost from 1788 and claimed its independence in 1901, this notion of 230-year-old infancy characterised by uncertainty around its national identity and what it entails is a common Australian concern. From its beginning, writes Arrow (2009: 113), film was argued to be 'a succinct expression of "New Nationalism"'. Barry Jones, a member of the new Australian Council for the Arts and a film industry promoter, promised that Australian-made films would 'help Australians to find out who they are' (Arrow 2009). Sarwal and Sarwal (2009: XXVII) argue that 'the most reverberating national myths in Australia are the myths of identity', pointing to generations of Australians seeking national identity reflected in symbols produced in popular culture (Sarwal & Sarwal 2009). As part of this rhetoric, Jacka (1988: 120) notes 'continual reference to "we", "our", "Australian" as if these terms were unproblematic' (Jacka 1988).

This view is not confined to academia. Arrow (2011: 153) notes that during the 2004 Australian federal election campaign, the Howard Liberal government (1996-2007) promised that, if re-elected, it would 'commission Film Australia to produce a ten-part series of high-quality documentaries on Australia's history' (Arrow 2011). This was perceived to be another round between conservative and revisionist political factions in Australia and Australian academia, being dubbed the 'History Wars', which will be debated in Chapter Six, but it also shines a light on the clear value and redemptive quality Australian public figures place on films as a means to define the elusive Australian national identity. Considering that Australian cinema's celebrated revival was 50 years ago, and this feat has not yet been achieved, highlights this conundrum.

Australian cinema, defined by O'Regan (1996: 71) as a 'middle sized English-Language Cinema' (O'Regan 1996), is commonly described as being challenged internally and externally. Initially, dealing with internal Australian issues, it was depicted as a white culture struggling to break away from its British colonial past and later as a reflection of its identity issues regarding 'Others': indigenous Australians, Asian immigrants, disadvantaged minorities and women (Carter 2009; Ellis 2007; Hamilton 2012). Externally, films produced in Australia by Australian filmmakers and for Australian audiences tried to situate themselves in regard to outsiders: first, to British colonial propriety and traditions which dominated Australian pre-World War II culture, mainly through the successful ocker comedies; second, in reaction to the post-War American dominance of the Australian cine market and production modes. Australian filmmakers did so either by emulating American genre conventions or by claiming to distinguish themselves via *mise en scène* that came to be known as the 'AFC genre'/art-house cinema. Mostly, these endeavours had very limited creative and commercial success. Carter (2009: 44) notes that Australian culture 'will always be *vulnerable* (in negative terms) or *open* (in positive terms) to their products and influence' (Carter 2009).

1.3 Dermody and Jacka & Tom O'Regan

The Australian preoccupation with national identity issues and openness to cultural influences explains why academic discussion of Australian cinema is done almost exclusively via the highly problematic prism of the national cinema theory framework. Two books are pivotal to this national debate, their centrality stemming from being acknowledged by almost all contemporary writers on Australian cinema. Both books were written from a dual disciplinary perspective of system analysis and cultural studies, which are explained in the research design and methods section of this chapter.

The first study is Dermody and Jacka's two-volume *Screening of Australia* (1987/88). Volume One, *Anatomy of a Film Industry*, provides a system analysis of the Australian film industry (Dermody & Jacka 1987). Volume Two, *Anatomy of a National Cinema*, is dedicated to Australian national cinema (Dermody & Jacka 1988b). This dual perspective, pioneered in Australia by Dermody and Jacka, makes a clear distinction between the way the cinematic apparatus works – policies, mechanics, operators, means, practices, forces – and the output of that apparatus – cinematic representations and their cultural impact. Dermody and Jacka separately debated the building blocks of the current academic debate: industry, art cinema, genre films and the much-debated national cinema. Their work documented and reviewed governmental decisions, funding bodies' policies and their implications: The Vincent Report, The Australian Film Development Corporation, and the formation of the AFC are some of the issues debated in their books. Much of the method used in current Australian cinema discourse owes to a way paved by Dermody and Jacka.

Tom O'Regan's *Australian National Cinema* forms part of the Routledge National Cinemas series. In its introduction, O'Regan explains (3) that: 'National cinema writing is neither the analysis of film text nor policy discourse; neither film industry journalism and economic analysis nor film reviewing, but a mixture of each' (O'Regan 1996). Like many of his national cinema theory counterparts, O'Regan fails to explain the difference between national cinema writing and standard cinema writing. He clearly believes that by labelling an argument as 'national', it automatically becomes one. O'Regan's book posits Australian cinema in regard to the Hollywood dominance of the Australian cine market and compares it to various other, both English and non-English speaking, national cinemas.

Both *Screening of Australia* and *Australian National Cinema* have severely dated. Dermody and Jacka published their work circa 1987/88, the year FFC was established, and could not have predicted the detrimental effect of the combined FFC and AFC politics and policies on Australian filmmaking. Nor could they guess the depths to which Australian spectatorship would sink. Without diminishing their formidable, ground-breaking work, some of their perspectives, practical and theoretical, formed during the 1970s and early 1980s in the form of Two Industry Models have lacked relevance for the past thirty years. O'Regan's book, published in 1996, is the most comprehensive work written from within the Australian national cinema framework. As such, it incorporates all its inherent flaws, such as stating that national writing is a, b and c, without explaining what exactly is 'national' about it. Moreover, O'Regan's book was published before the introduction of the internet, which has further subverted the notion of national uniqueness.

In both books, Australian cinema is framed as a national one. This poses a methodological problem of pre-assuming a critical position, that is, that a national cinema exists in Australia, which is similar to assuming that Australian cinema is dead. An assumption provides borders of discourse and clarity of purpose, but also binds writers and readers to a theoretical paradigm in dire need of proof. That more than twenty years after being published, both books are still quoted and debated is both a testament to their academic merit and value and the lack of updated literature challenging the 'national' in the concept of Australian national cinema.

1.4 Reviewing Modes of the 1970s

King, Verevis and Williams distinguish between two dominant approaches to film studies that emerged in 1970s: film studies and film histories. Film studies developed under the influence of British cultural studies and French post-structural theory of the late 1960s, whereas film histories include the work of historians (King, Verevis & Williams 2008). Over time, these disciplines merged. Pike and Ross (1980), Bertrand and Collins (1981), Shirley and Adams (1983), Moran and O'Regan (1989) and Bertrand (1989) published books covering this period from both perspectives (Bertrand & Collins 1981; Moran & O'Regan 1989; Pike & Ross 1980; Shirley 1983).

In the 1970s, Australian films were still traditionally debated as geographically-bound national texts, representing agreed upon artistic merits. The awakening Australian cinema, however, produced two competing strands of films, the lowbrow, larrikin, folk humour genre known as the ocker comedies and the serious 'quality' dramas, known as arthouse films. For O'Regan (1995), ocker comedies dominated the first half of the 1970s, and arthouse films dominated the second half from 1975 when the AFC was formed (O'Regan 1995a). Hutcheson (1996: 40) attributes the AFC formation to the Gough Whitlam government (1972-1975), which believed that by 'portraying historical dramas Australia could prove that it did indeed have a history and therefore a culture of its own' (Hutcheson 1996). From the establishment of the AFC, government funds were used to mobilize Australian cinema to portray the 'correct' Australian image. The self-appointed act of scholarly division between art cinema and the ill-reputed, commercially-prone, genre films is not exclusive to Australian cinema. The consequent collision between acceptance and potential financing or rejection by a centralised elite is the second and most debated of the three identified *frictions* defining Australian cinema, which will be introduced in Chapter Two. Martin (2010: 654) refers to this *friction* as 'the master opposition underlying all the others seems to be: cinema as a lofty artistic pursuit (struggling for purity) versus cinema as a commercial business (destined to impurity)' (Martin 2010a). Bertrand and Collins note the art/commerce dichotomy goes back to the time of the Council for the Arts Film Committee report in 1968 and the inception of the Experimental Film Fund. This is a dominant feature of Australian cinema discourse (Bertrand & Collins 1981).

As with 'national' categorisation, Australian film literature fails to properly conceptualise what is 'genre' and what constitutes 'art'. For example, the AFC primarily financed 'respectable', 'quality' films that, being dubbed by Dermody and Jacka (1987: 49) as the 'AFC genre' (Dermody & Jacka 1987) and discussed mainly in regard to their aesthetics, cultural value and cultural, fit within an allocated criteria (the 'canon'). AFC genre films were mainly adaptations from period novels or plays and presented Australia in nostalgic terms, emphasised the beautiful frame and relied heavily on outback scenery for their *mise en scène*, being cinematic representations of Russel Ward's classic book *The Australian Legend* (1958) (Clancy 2004; Sexton 2005). The 'AFC genre' mistakenly became associated with arthouse cinema, mainly due to AFC's funding policies. In fact, these films were genre films, misinterpreted as 'art', however their production value, as part of system analysis, was little debated.

1.5 Reviewing Modes of the 1980s

As a distinct area of scholarship, system analysis was not prevalent in 1970s academic discourse for lack of an established system to analyse. Only in the 1980s was system analysis introduced to academic debate. It reflected an industry debate on film financing: private versus governmental support (*friction III*). Policy research focused on the introduction of the 10BA tax concessions by the Fraser government

(1975-1983) in 1978 and its implications on Australian cinema. 10BA allowed producers to claim 100% tax rebate for film investment over a period of two years (Bertrand 1989), initiating a surge in private investment in film production. Consequently, Australian films, mostly genre, were being produced and screened like never before. During the 1980s, box office data was not systematically collected, but Dermody and Jacka 'guestimated' that Australian films averaged between 10- 15% of the box office revenue (Dermody & Jacka 1987). The pinnacle of the 10BA era was the phenomenal international success of the privately-funded *Crocodile Dundee*, which was rejected by the AFC but remains the most successful film in Australian history (McFarlane 2005a; O'Regan 1988; Rattigan 1988; Rayner 2000; Zielinski 2008).

10BA was a product of neo-liberal school of economic thought in which a government acts as a market monitor but refrains from direct involvement in the cine market. By and large, this is the American system. In Australia, almost no film is produced without significant government financial assistance (Parker & Parenta 2009), either directly via governmental funding bodies or by the current producer's offset; or indirectly via 10BA concessions or Film Licence Investment Company (FLIC) subsidies. In all cases, it was unanimously agreed by all industry players that the government should foot the bill, or at least a substantial part of it (Colman 2009). This ties Australian cinema to governmental policy, declared or not, and makes it political by default. 10BA generated much pros and cons discourse in academia and the industry, but it is commonly agreed that the practicalities of the initiative were not thoroughly thought through. The scheme was constantly amended to resolve problems raised by former amendments to the original concessions (Bertrand 1989; Burns & Eltham 2010; Burt 2004; Court 1987). Even after 10BA's annulment, ways of encouraging private investment such as David Gonski's unsuccessful FLIC scheme were pursued to resurrect Australian private investment in film production (Clark 1999; Maher 2004). 10BA remained active in one form or another until July 2007 when it was officially closed to new applicants and replaced by the current Producer's Offset (Screen Australia 2014a). Despite its shortcomings, 10BA did succeed in propelling Australian filmmaking forward (Burns & Eltham 2010; Moran & Vieth 2005; Trevisanut 2011).

Most films produced under 10BA were criticised as 'genre' and regarded to lack artistic merit, thus failing to contribute in the quest for the coveted Australian national identity (Bertrand 1989; Dermody & Jacka 1988a; Hall 1980). But the identity discourse itself, being part of the cultural research of Australian cinema, shifted. Responding to Benedict Anderson's highly influential book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, scholars such as Rosen (1984), Crofts (1984), Welsh (1986), Higson (1989), Dermody and Jacka (1988), O'Regan (1988), Hamilton (1991) and Moran (1996) incorporated Anderson's concept of imagined communities to the analysis of their own native cinema.

Anderson (1982) argued nationalism as a historic process in which communities interpret themselves as separate entities from other communities (Anderson 1982). The effect of Anderson's work was a shift in academic discourse from traditional textual analysis, perceived to be hampered by obsolete conventions, to personal interpretation of the text. For example, Crofts (1989) analysed *Crocodile Dundee* via an imagined perspective (Crofts 1989). Avram (2004) explained that 'national' in Australian lingo was recast as social semiotics, allowing audiences to imagine films in relation to their place of production or country of origin (Avram 2004). Hamilton (2012: 2) adds

I proposed the use of the concept of the national imaginary to refer to the way contemporary social orders produce images of themselves against others through new screen technologies which circulate as commodities both internally and internationally. This followed from Benedict Anderson's insights into the way imagined communities arise from the spread of representations through print media (1983) and has been widely applied in the context of contemporary mass media and national identity (Hamilton 2012).

In doing so, academic discourse expanded to an 'imagined' community, now open to personal and mixed interpretations, transforming 'Australia' from an agreed upon (canonised) set of myths, places, people, traditions and themes to include subjects and groups previously excluded from screen representation. 'Imagined' discourse, however, is not without its theoretical limits. Moran (1996) argues that the imagined 'national' marginalizes and displaces identities based on local sources. Championing national cinemas as an antithesis to the powerful Hollywood may seem politically progressive, but from a sub-national or multicultural perspective this term is problematic (Moran 1996). Cunningham (1983: 123) adds:

It is a category into which a melange of auteurist and stylistic imprecisions may be conveniently lumped. The category itself, innocent of theoretical and historical construction, has often merely been equated with the geographical site in which so many stellar moments of auteurist and stylistic excellence happen to have occurred (Cunningham 1983).

Despite critiquing the use of 'national', Cunningham still views it as a 'useful category' as long as it is 'exhumed from the hazardously parlous state I have outlined' (*Ibid.*). It was not. Australian cinema discourse remained firmly within the national cinema theory, witness the ongoing currency of Dermody and Jacka and O'Regan's books. Outside Australia, however, Anderson was highly contested (Elsaesser 2005; Gellner 1983; Jarvie 2005; Segal & Handler 2006; Smith 1996; Thompson 1996), the main critique being that 'nation' is a highly volatile, misused and exploited term. Walker (1978: 378) comments that 'it would be difficult to name four words more essential to global politics than are state, nation, nation-state and nationalism. But despite their centrality, all four terms are shrouded in ambiguity due to their imprecise, inconsistent and often totally erroneous usage' (Walker 1978). National cinema theory failed to account for the significant intervention of government in financial, production and distribution modes, Elsaesser (2005: 36) noting that 'nationhood and national identity

are not given, but gained, not inherited, but paid for' (Elsaesser 2005). Elsaesser raises fundamental, unexamined questions in Australian film studies regarding the actual cost of this imagined national identity. Who pays for the practice of translating an idea into coherent and quantifiable set of values? What is the price of this imaginary national identity? Who benefits from it and is it worth it? These questions remain relevant and open today.

1.6 Reviewing Modes of the 1990s

Rapid globalisation of the 1990s, in terms of film financing, and the emergence of post-colonial discourse brought forth questions of national identity and representation, both in terms of film content and production. The 1990s saw the rise of a second generation of Australian filmmakers who perceived and addressed their Australianness as neither contested nor debated, but a given. Thematically, marginalised groups comprising women, second generation immigrants, gay and lesbian, disabled, plain eccentrics and suburbanites, sought better cinematic representation and challenged the ruling white, heterosexual, bourgeois masculinity of previous decades. Scholars addressed those changes in terms of textual and thematic analysis (Bennett & Beirne 2011; Collins & Davis 2004; Ellis 2006; Gillard 2002; Goldsmith 1999; Martin 1995; Meekosha 2003; Watson & Pringle 1992).

In terms of Australian spectatorship and revenue, however, only a few films achieved commercial success. An exception to common method of production, which became almost exclusively FFC dependent, was *The Castle* (Sitch, 1997). Privately produced and shot on a shoe-string budget, *The Castle* became an Australian success. Lloyd (2002) parallels the suburban low-class white family's fight for ownership of its home with the Aboriginal claim to their land, echoing Australian public discourse after the Mabo ruling of 1992 (Lloyd 2002). Aboriginal directors such as Kevin Lucas (*Black River*, 1993) and Tracey Moffatt (*BeDevil*, 1993) detached their work from traditional Aboriginal representation which was argued to impose a white political and social discursive perception on Aboriginal people (Hodge & Mishra 1991; Rekhari 2008). The act of reconceptualising prior theoretical positions is part of 1990s postmodern, postcolonial discourse. Chapman (2003) distinguishes between the hyphenated post-colonialism – an interdisciplinary discourse examining the relations between colonised and colonizers, and the unhyphenated postcolonialism – a study of cultural, political and economic ecology engulfing both colonial and post-colonial (hyphenated) societies (Chapman 2003). In its Australian context, actively involving indigenous Australians in film production by government film funding bodies proved difficult. Indigenous Australian scholar Marcia Langton, policy adviser to AFC in this matter, argued (1994: 96) that 'the issues are opaque for more general and universal reasons to do with colonial and postcolonial perceptions of "aboriginality", of the "primitive", of the "savage", of

Australian history and of the historical, political, technological and aesthetic issues which film and videomaking and television production accentuate or engender (Langton 1994).

A worldwide economic collapse in the beginning of the 1990s meant private production in Australia became scarce (French 2001; Pickering 2001; Reid 1999). Australian productions turned to overseas for finance, which brought the question of Australia's production identity into academic focus. Balio (1996) suggests two international production modes developed in Australia in the 1990s. The first was Hollywood blockbuster productions looking to cut down on costs, also known as 'runaway productions'. These were actively pursued by Australian federal and state governments. The second were American production houses, most notably Miramax, which purchased films such as *Shine* (Hicks, 1996) and *The Castle*, looking for edgy, low-budget films to turn into indie successes (Balio 1996). Verhoeven (2010), expanding on Dermody and Jacka's Industry One and Two models, suggested a bridging model – Industry Model Three, with films such as *The Piano*, which command bigger budgets, star power and international exposure, yet are artistically aligned to arthouse cinema. These are the 'blockbusters' (Verhoeven 2010b).

Both modes of production challenged traditional identification of 'Australian' cinema. In its *Get the Picture* publication (2002: 328), AFC define 'Australian' productions as shot under Australian 'creative control' but neglect to specify what this control actually entails (Australian Film Commission 2002b). Generally, it was understood to be control over the creative direction of a film or television program (Herd 2004), a perception that received a well-earned wave of public and academic criticism due to the obscure, arbitrary decisions made by the AFC regarding what qualified as 'Australian' (Moran & Vieth 2005; Murray 1995; Ward 2004). The Australian identity of films such as *Green Card* (Weir, 1991), *Lorenzo's Oil* (Miller, 1992), *Dark City* (Proyas, 1998), *The Matrix* (Wachowski, Wachowski, 1999) and *Mission: Impossible II* (Woo, 2000) was repeatedly questioned (McFarlane 2005b; Newman 2008a; O'Regan & Venkatasawmy 1999). Australian identity discourse was not the only one affected by globalisation and Hollywood dominance. Unlike Australian government agencies, the French judicial system had fewer reservations about determining French identity. Van Gorp (2010) notes that a French court denied \$4.8 million (USD) in French government subsidies to the production of *A Very Long Engagement* (Jeunet, 2004) because a third of it was financed by Warner Brothers, an American company (Van Gorp 2010).

Government involvement in local Australian filmmaking deepened during the 1990s. On forming the FFC, the AFC's role was redefined as a governmental film consulting and development agency. Although not accountable for profits *per se*, questions regarding AFC's active political involvement in the annulment of the competing 10BA, content guidelines imposed on scriptwriters, or how many of

the scripts funded by AFC were made into feature films were acknowledged, but not fully pursued (Formica 2011; Rayner 2000; Stratton 1990). The FFC, on the other hand, was formed explicitly to act as a governmental film investment bank, investing government funds in return for equity in the finished films. French (2001: 9) notes that as of 'April 1997, the FFC had funded 111 feature films, of which only five have gone into profit' (French 2001). Although the FFC failures were debated in the media, mainly by those who had little to lose (Buckmaster 2009; Galvin 2008; Maddox 1996; Scarano & Hignett 2009), the obvious question of why this failed anomaly was permitted to carry on was nearly excluded from academic debate.

A review of FFC annual reports and official publications, discussed in Chapter Four, reveals a consistent and intentional effort on the part of the FFC from the beginning of its operation to conceal basic information regarding its failing operation (Barlow 1991a). Detailed recoupment information for those films is nowhere to be found. The only two peer-reviewed articles directly addressing the FFC's shortcomings in its 20-year tenure (Burns & Eltham 2010; McKenzie & Walls 2013) were published well after the FFC ceased to exist. This suggests a disturbing academic lacuna in the discourse surrounding the government agencies' accountability for those decisions and their consequent repercussions.

1.7 Transnationalism: Reviewing Modes of the 2000s

By early 2000s, the Australian national cinema debate, with its inherent methodological flaws, was replaced by the similarly flawed transnational cinema debate moulded around a liberal, leftist discourse and post-structuralist, post-colonialism theories championed by Edward Said (Shohat & Stam 2003). In addition, the rise of internet and cyber-space modes of production and distribution served to challenge the traditional idea of national borders and national cultural production. Ezra and Rowden (2006) define the transnational as a system in which global forces link people or institutions across nations (Ezra & Rowden 2006). Vertovec (1999) sees the transition in the 2000s from national to transnational discourse as a scholarly attempt to reflect millennial globalisation issues such as post-colonialism (hyphenated or not), global ethnic diasporas, modes of cultural productions, avenues of capital, political structures and their engagement and reconstruction of 'place' and locality (Vertovec 1999). Villazana (2013) aligns transnational physical cross-border movement with the expansion of information technology and the internet (Villazana 2013), Higbee and Lim (2010) suggest three counts for the transnational cinema debate: thematic and production crossovers (same themes, different nations; international co-productions); cultural characteristics which exceed national boundaries, such as Arab or Chinese cinemas; diasporic or exilic cinema that challenges the physically and politically bound national cinema framework (Higbee & Lim 2010).

In Australia, the transnational debate is intrinsically involved with the study of multiculturalism, where a dominant ethnicity typically identifies itself either as a 'founding nation' or on collision with the founding nation it originated from. Clyne and Jupp (2011: xiv) argue this situation to be relevant in Australia, 'where "Europeans" (in effect from the British Isles) have only formed the majority since the 1830s' (Clyne & Jupp 2011). This was certainly the case with the white Australian dominant view regarding Britain (*exterior friction*) and toward Australia's Aboriginal community (*interior friction*), until Australian High Court overturned the *Terra Nullius* doctrine and recognised indigenous land rights (Collins & Davis 2004; Gibson 1993; Lambert 2000; Motha 2005). Cultural scholars such as Khoo, Smaill and Yue (2008) and Higbee and Lim (2010) address Australasian cinema from this perspective (Higbee & Lim 2010; Khoo, Smaill & Yue 2008a; Khoo, Smaill & Yue 2008b). Hassam and Maranjape (2010) write about Bollywood (Hassam & Maranjape 2010). Yecies, Shim and Goldsmith (2011) write about the emerging Korean cinema (Yecies, Shim & Goldsmith 2011). All address ethnic groups within Australia and its surrounding cultures, trying to combine their native sensibilities with the Australian/Western dominant culture. The transnational cinema movement also re-evaluates and incorporates films of 1970s into its framework (Moore 2014).

Titling a debate 'transnational', however, does not automatically qualify it as such, no more than the now obsolete 'national' previously did. In effect, the concept of transnational resolved none of the questions raised regarding the national assignation nor canonisation processes of old. Consider Vitali and Willemsen's (2006: 6) proposition that 'films can be seen not to "reflect", but to "stage" the historical conditions that constitute "the national"' (Vitali & Willemsen 2006) or Carter's (2007: 115) comment, 'as we moved through the sequence from "work" to "text" to "discourse" in the way we conceived of literary writings, "hybridity" came to replace "unity" as an aesthetic or ethical value, "transgression" replaced "transcendence"' (Carter 2007). Transnational writers merely replaced the highly problematic national framework with an even less quantifiable cross-border 'space', while extensively employing quotation marks to emphasis their point.

Hjort (2009: 12) argues that 'the term "transnational" does little to advance our thinking on important issues if it can mean anything and everything that the occasion can appear to demand' (Hjort 2009). Shaw (2013: 48) asks, 'are mainstream Hollywood films transnational as they are distributed throughout the developed world? What about films with smaller budgets made in other national contexts that challenge Hollywood domination and explore the damaging effects of globalisation?' (Shaw 2013). Zhang (2006: 37) writes

What is emphasized in the term 'transnational'? If it is the national, then what does this 'national' encompass – national culture, language, economy, politics, ethnicity, religion, and/or regionalism? If the emphasis falls on the prefix 'trans' (i.e. on cinema's ability to cross and bring together, if not transcend, different nations, cultures, and

languages), then this aspect of transnational film studies is already subsumed by comparative film studies (Zhang 2006).

Berry (2010: 119) returned to distinction – one of the two defining characters of the national cinema theory – to note that the most productive way of proceeding is to ask ‘what is distinctive about globalization?’ (Berry 2010). Distinctive globalisation is a contradiction in terms that academia is yet to resolve. By 2000, Australia governments, both federal and state, invested substantial funds and effort to attract international film production to Australia. Australian scholarship began to concentrate, with limited success, on fitting Australian production and creative modes to the modes of global networks of film production (O’Regan & Goldsmith 2002; O’Regan & Potter 2013; Ryan et al. 2014; Verhoeven 2010a; Yecies 2009).

Meanwhile, the effect of governments’ preoccupation with luring international productions to Australia was hardly addressed. Government funding divided Australian film production into lower tier—financed by the FFC—and upper tier—working with runaway productions. As with governmental funding agencies, no critical debate was held into billions of dollars of public funds poured into private international investment (Fox Studios, Dockland Studios, Village Roadshow Studios, 12.5% tax rebate scheme aimed at American runaways), which never paid back or achieved the imagined results. Facts were merely noted, not argued. No one challenged the notion that government funding is essential to film production in Australia. Imminently, by 2006 the ascending Australian dollar value drove international productions away and drove the Australian film industry into a halt. Despite their documented failure in keeping Australian cinema on a sufficient level of investment, or demonstrating any level of commercial sustainability, both the AFC and FFC, joined by state politicians, vigorously lobbied against the Australia - United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) in direct opposition to the Howard government’s economic agenda. The agencies might have temporarily won in their battle to maintain Australian funding structure, but by that time Australian cinema was dead.

As far as cinema is concerned, Australia has it all: vast and varied urban and rural landscape; state-of-the-art production facilities and technical abilities; capable cast, crews, and creative talent with documented international success; billions of dollars of government funding invested in the film industry; population which ranks among the top ten cinema viewing nations in the world with screens to accommodate; and willingness to spend money on cinema. Yet Australian audiences overwhelmingly and consistently shun Australian films. Hardly any of the Australian films produced over the last thirty years managed to leave a lasting mark on Australian culture or recoup its production budget. This thesis aims to explain why Australian cinema completely failed to live up to its potential, effectively being dead.

1.8 Research Design and Methods

Declaring Australian cinema as dead poses a methodological problem of asserting an assumption over facts. By the same token, Australian national cinema – the title of O'Regan's book – is debated to such an extent that it is often forgotten that national cinema is a theoretical prism, not an axiom. Even before addressing the specificities of research design and placing the gathered facts in a coherent analytical framework, the prism itself needs to be redefined. Before arguing Australian national cinema, there needs to be a clear-cut definition of the terms 'Australian', 'national' and 'cinema'. Without these, current discourse – in which everyone assumes they are addressing the same concepts – will merely be repeated.

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part I – Chapters One to Four – examines the evolution of Australian cinema discourse and its borders. An alternative explanatory model – The Cinematic Machine – is presented and a history of Australian cinema is reviewed via this prism. Part II – Chapters Five to Seven – reconceptualises the current Australian national cinema debate by separately addressing the terms national, Australian and cinema. Part III – Chapters Eight and Nine – brings the debate full circle by reviewing the decade 2008–2017 under Screen Australia. The conclusions provided in the previous chapters are attached to the present, while the transformation that cinema is undergoing to rhizomatic internet platform streaming is discussed to suggest avenues for future study and demonstrate why the bloody corpse of Australian cinema is still moving.

Reconceptualising the cornerstones of any discourse is a general requirement. Bordwell (1996) insists that concepts cannot simply exist but need to be linked to quantitative empirical data (Bordwell 1996). Quart (2000) notes that Bordwell's orientation for film studies is a natural-science-oriented model of film analysis that he calls 'cognitivism'. Quart's critique of the Grand Theory that dominated 1970s film studies, revolves around lack of such data to support its grand assumptions (Quart 2000). Rodowick (2007: 93) advances this notion by distinguishing between 'Theory' and 'theory'; the former is a 'highly variable' concept, the latter incorporates science, learning, knowledge and scholarship akin to those of natural sciences (Rodowick 2007). Hence, to avoid repetition of the same discussion mode that Australian national cinema debate currently offers, Chapter Two provides an alternative framework prior to the presented facts. As demonstrated earlier, research will be conducted in two prevalent modes: system analysis and content/theoretical analysis.

Systems analysis debates the quantifiable aspects of cinema production. Data is collected from financial and entertainment media, institutional and industrial publications and submissions to government offices, publications and annual reports from government funding bodies, distribution and exhibition modes, box office receipts, ancillary sales reports and from various industry websites such as IMDbPro, Box Office Mojo and Rotten Tomatoes. In some instances, system analysis parallels

systems theory, but they are different. Whereas systems theory employs rigid methodology for a specific system, its interactions, if any, with other systems are negligible. System analysis allows for a flexible and reciprocal examination of several perspectives: funding bodies, filmmakers, and academic research, allowing to move between different methods of inquiry.

Another form of investigation is an in-depth interview, presented in Chapter Seven. The interview, conducted with Garion Hall, an Australian porn industry producer, allows his experience and unique perspective to turn theoretical and obscure Deleuzian concepts, presented in Chapter Two, into concrete patterns of production. Research for this chapter was approved by or on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Film theory/content analysis debates the qualitative aspects of cinema, that is, films' content, their cultural origins and influences, mainly by comparative methods. Film theory arguments wish to contextualise histories and texts, genres and sub-genres, themes, social issues: culture and sub-cultures, national identity, semiotics, landscape, visual style and intertextuality. This form of analysis, part of the wider discipline of cultural studies, is similar to discussion of literature, myths, politics, policies and ideology. To refine the debate solely to cinema, and although intrinsically connected, this research does not deal with the rise or production modes of Australian television.

Not all required information for this research was readily available. Quantifiable data such as box office records was not systematically collected until the early 1990s. Funding bodies' annual reports and submissions were intentionally written in a misleading way, to conceal business failures, recoupment data and other inconvenient information. Lack of sufficient data means some conclusions regarding funding bodies are based on educated guesses. This method was used by Dermody and Jacka who 'guesstimate' Australian box office to be 10%-15% of total during the 10BA period. Estimations in this thesis have been done with the best scenario and minimal requirements possible. For example, an Australian film is considered a 'success' if it manages to recoup its budget. Similarly, content analysis demonstrates systematic exclusion of Australian genre films and filmmakers by government funding bodies, which manifested a *friction* surrounding their ability to create. Implications and conclusions resulting from these *frictions* will be narrated as the story of Australian cinema unfolds, rather than at the end of the thesis. This form of integrative approach is involved, rather than detached, investigation. It is used in various disciplines across both social sciences and humanities (Driscoll et al. 2007; Jackson & Mazzei 2013; Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005).

Chapter Two

Methodology:

Enter the Cinematic Machine

This research raises the question of assuming a critical position – namely pronouncing Australian cinema as dead – prior to setting out the empirical and theoretical support for this position. Reflecting personal concerns in academic research is a well-debated theoretical issue and a distinct characteristic of 1970s and 1980s Grand Theory discourse. Portraying Australian cinema as a bloody corpse in the title of a thesis, is nothing if not personal. Levi-Strauss (1972: 16-17) employs French term *bricoleur* to explain the limitations of this discussion. *Bricoleur* is a jack-of-all-trades practitioner who ‘works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman’ that ‘even if extensive’ is nevertheless limited, because it is bound to whatever the *bricoleur* has at his disposal (Levi-Strauss 1972). Likewise, when Deleuze (2015) argues for ‘just a theory’ instead of a ‘just theory’, he acknowledges that any chosen theory, by-definition, is personal and limited to the scholar’s knowledge (Deleuze 2015). Deleuze’s argument sources a limited theoretical scope to the extent of a *bricolage*, simultaneously encapsulating its source of strength.

Rodowick (91-92) notes that ‘Post-Theory debate was launched by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, who argued for the rejection of 1970s Grand Theory as incoherent. Equally suspicious of cultural and media studies, Bordwell and Carroll insisted on anchoring the discipline in film as an empirical object subject to investigations grounded in natural scientific methods’ (Rodowick 2007). Bordwell (1989), whose critique effectively terminated the reign of Grand Theory over cinema studies, challenged both traditional canonisation and personal interpretation in film studies. Bordwell argues that as part of its inclusion into academia, film studies initially adopted comparative methods from literature research that were not suited for the medium. They also succumbed to the unifying arguments of the ‘critical methodism’ made by phenomenological, feminist, Marxist or other doctrines (Bordwell 1989). As will be demonstrated in Chapter Five, debating Australian cinema as a national one falls into this category. On the same token, Bordwell was one of the main critics of the personal researcher’s interpretation, the Grand Theory offered. King, Verevis and Williams note (159) that Bordwell’s work:

Occasions a rethinking of some central film theory terms and a return to empirical investigation and an attempt to negotiate the tension between theory and history via a (Deleuzian, nontotalizing) concept of difference, one which can attend to the heterogeneity of historical material (King, Verevis & Williams 2008).

To resolve the conflicts between ‘personal’ and ‘indoctrinated’ cinema debate, Bordwell suggests the ‘historical poetics’ approach, which produces knowledge in answer to two questions:

1. What principles and means construct films, and how do they achieve their effect?
2. How and why have these principles arisen and changed in particular empirical circumstances?
(Bordwell 1989).

The theoretical stance within this thesis adopts two methods of investigation, introduced in Chapter One. The first – system analysis – answers Bordwell’s first question. Chapter Two explains the general principles of cinema by introducing the concept of the Cinematic Machine, an idea that is embedded in three seemingly separate, un-cinematic theories:

1. The Rhizome: is a philosophic, post-structural theory proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The rhizome is a non-hierarchic chain of connections, acting as the grid upon which film units travel. Rhizome allows *Desire*, an abstract energy that propels creativity, to *Become*. It is also allowing *Intermediality* – *Desire*’s convergence on a Plane of Consistency – to become a singular, quantified unit, a film.
2. Centre-Periphery: originally proposed by Edward Shils is a macro-sociological understanding that charts the topography of discourse, being used in the thesis to analyse the grounded positions of players within the field of Australian cinema and the delegation of their respective power. Unlike a classical Centre-Periphery model, this work describes a multidirectional movement from Periphery to a central zone, not specifically to the Centre.
3. *Friction*/The Instrumental War, which draws its terminology from the strategic concepts of Carl von Clausewitz’s *The Remarkable Trinity* and in which players’ identity is determined in regard to their position (Centre or Periphery). The Instrumental war also describes *friction* as an imminent outcome, generated during a film unit’s movement from Periphery to Centre.

Each of these theories presents a different aspect of the journey that a film unit must go through to *Become*. If filmmaking is equated to war, only by completing the journey (producing the finished film), may a film join its predecessors to become part of Australian cinema. Describing and understanding the Cinematic Machine’s properties is essential for the understanding what initially worked and then ceased working in the case of Australian cinema.

The second method of inquiry – content analysis – is applied to Bordwell’s second question. This thesis investigates a geographically, socially, industrially and culturally bound case study – Australian cinema. The theory is presented prior to chapters Three and Four, which document the rise and decline of Australian cinema, as to ground the prescribed theory in history. The theoretical principles are demonstrated throughout the historical review, with the three main concepts of The Rhizome, Centre-Periphery and *friction*/The Instrumental War being debated in Part II of the thesis.

2.1 *Desire. Intermediality. Rhizome: Deleuze and Guattari*

Deleuze and Guattari apply *Desire* to describe a form of abstract energy created and enhanced by random interactions between a flux of ideas, creativity and people. *Desire* propels a 'Machine' which in Deleuzian terminology is any form of gathered knowledge, big or small, important or trivial, loose, or well-articulated. In *Thousand Plateaus* (1987: 4), Deleuze and Guattari write: 'a book itself is a little machine; what is the relation (also measurable) of this literary machine to a war machine, love machine, revolutionary machine, etc. -and an *abstract machine* that sweeps them along?' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Colebrook (2006: 9) notes that the use of machinery throughout Deleuze's entire corpus is not random. Rather, Deleuze believes that life is machinic, being 'a proliferation of connection among natural and technical powers' (Colebrook 2006). In this debate, amalgamated *Desire* is applied to the operation of the Cinematic Machine, its employment and its products – films. The perpetual movement of the Cinematic Machine further generates *Desire* and avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end. Yet at some point, abstract *Desire* does converge, and films do *Become* concrete. The interaction between abstract nuclei – ideas, whims, emotions, moods, fads, aesthetics and people – incorporates some of them into quantified cinematic subunits: data, text, stories, synopsis, forms, budget, script, film, crews, actors, research, book. For example, the website IMDb.com, supplies information and furthers understanding of cinema. While its units are measurable: box office data, number of screens, place of production, est., initially it stemmed from *Desire* of movie buffs to share information about movies with their mates.

In philosophy, ontology is applied to understand the 'essence' (or identity) of a unit, its defining characteristics and tertiary value. For philosophers, the question this thesis poses is what are the unchangeable qualities – the essence – of the Cinematic Machine and its products? By ontologically identifying *When Harry Met Sally* (Reiner, 1989) as a romantic comedy, the qualities it must display are romantic emotions and comedy. Those being the essential and qualifying characters of the genre. Deleuze rejects ontology, arguing that *Desire* generates unmeasurable unique multiplicities that escape any perception of essence. For example, *Harold and Maude* (Ashby, 1971) is an off-beat, romantic comedy with black humour. It features romantic emotions and comedy, yet its subject matter, a love affair between a suicidal young man and a free-spirited old woman, is inherently different from that of *When Harry Met Sally*. Ontological identification of these inherently different films as romantic comedies misses their individual value.

Instead, Deleuze argues for 'flat-ontology'. Delanda (2013: 2) explains that the essential account of species is basically static. A morphogenetic account, which is dynamic, uses factors 'exclusively form-generating resources which are *immanent* to the material world' (DeLanda 2013). We can identify both *When Harry met Sally* and *Harold and Maude* as films by their physical properties – celluloid rolls,

enacted action, camera, editing, etc. – but the adjective allocations of ‘romantic’, ‘black humour’ and ‘off-beat’ are purely in the eye of the beholder. This might seem reductionist, but Deleuze and Guattari argue that a puppet is tied to a puppeteer, who is tied to a nervous system, which ends in a grey matter, which is influenced by a myriad of influences, emotions, experiences, data and situations. We see and quantify an outcome – one puppet, one puppeteer acting in a certain manner – but going deeper, to the source which moves and motivates the puppeteer, that is his *Desire*, is inevitably unquantified and uncharted territory. Hence, they argue (8), ‘we do not have units (*unités*) of measure, only multiplicities or varieties of measurement’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). *Desire*’s unquantified abstraction might seem to be a flaw in its too wide of an explanatory power; but Deleuze and Guattari welcome it.

Although *Desire* cannot be measured, its multiple effects may be observed via another Deleuzian concept – *Intermediality*. Pethő (2011: 6) argues *Intermediality* as an act of redefining and re-contextualizing, ‘contrasts between the “natural”, the seemingly “unmediated” and the “artificial” within the image, as well as “folds” of the immediate and the mediated’ (Pethő 2011). ‘In-between’ perception (*Intermediality*) is a caused by premeditated act, designed to achieve a specific goal, *montage* being its most recognizable form. During the editing stage, the placement of two separate frames in a sequential order is evidence of the *Desire* to create (*Become*) something that is beyond its immediate characteristics. For example, by placing a cross-dissolve effect over a shot of flowers lightly swaying in the spring wind and a following shot of rejoicing children waving their hands in the same direction, a pre-conceived association is formed between blooming flowers and youth. This association is *Intermediality*. Deleuze observes the in-between as the gap between abstraction and concretization; Desire and speech, thought and action, text and image, cinema and television, sound and vision, passion and politics. He writes (14):

It’s this gap that enables them to store up other images, that is to perceive. But what they store is only what interests them in other images: perceiving is subtracting from an image what doesn’t interest us, there’s always *less* in our perception (Deleuze 2015).

In the creative process, going from abstraction to concretization, in-between represents the embryonic stage when ideas, ideals, people and events in varying intensities of *Desire* converge to *Become*. Any quantified expression, a script, budget application form, even a rejection letter, are a concrete result of a multiplicity of abstract possibilities. Again, Deleuzeian terminology is extremely opaque. Witt (1999: 112) notes ‘the apparent obscurity of the notion derives from its catch-all status: it can be (and is) applied in and to a variety of situations and processes’ (Witt 1999).

The third and perhaps the most relevant Deleuzeian concept to this thesis is derived from neurosciences and is the rhizome. Deleuze and Guattari adapted the rhizome – Greek for to ‘take root’ – to illustrate the abstract and temporal grid on which *Desire* travels. They write (7):

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages (Deleuze & Guattari 1987).

Zukauskaite (2014) notes that rhizome is a region of varying levels of intensity that represents lack of hierarchy, decentralization, disconnection and the multiplicity of options originating from temporal coordinates (Zukauskaite 2014). Rhizome defies accepted norms, in favour of spontaneity and expression. Lort (1999) notes that Jean Luc Godard rejects hierarchy because ideas and emotions are abstract forms of *Desire*, unclear even for their own creator (Lort 1999). Godard’s insistence on un-hierarchic multiplicity follows that of Deleuze and Guattari in that any set of methods result in formulated, expected, stagnated and boring cinema. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Five, arguing Australian films as part of ‘national cinema’ forces sub-national groups to either conform, or be disregarded. Sterritt (2010: 13) notes that, ‘One of Godard’s closest affinities with Deleuzian thought lies in his insistence on a radically *intuitive* cinema that opens lines of escape *from* linearity, rationality, and organicity and *toward* the open-ended natural-historical-social multiplicities of the transcendental unconscious’ (Sterritt 2010).

This notion of multiple singularities, ties to Bordwell’s said request for piecemeal research. Lack of hierarchy mean that there is no ‘one’ paradigm by which films are analysed such as ‘national cinema’, nor is there ‘one’ set of values that define ‘Australian’. There are multiplicities of options for addressing Australian cinema, and those should be guided by:

- a. understanding the mechanics of the cinematic machine, and
- b. by explaining how they are applicable to a specific case study – Australian cinema.

Flexibility of form instead of hierarchy allows, for example, the replacement of the three-act structure bound by two turning points, by non-linear storytelling. Lort argues that the non-hierarchic, rhizomatic model was a perfect fit to create a cinematic/philosophical framework where images and ideas can be freely developed in a non-judgemental, non-hierarchical and non-exclusionary way (Lort 1999). A new wave story begins with *Desire*, allowing it to start at any convenient point, at anytime, anywhere. To *Become*, *Desire* travels on a rhizomatic grids such as genre, cinematic traditions, themes or myths,

cultural contexts and semiotic chains. All are tools of their makers' craft and used to suit their specific stories, needs and abilities. Similarly, a story ends as *Desire* wains.

Deleuze and Guattari's contribution to this debate is by locating the basic and fundamental requirements of the cinematic machine and its surrounding ecology. Their delight in abstraction, such as the rhizomatic grid does not diminish its validity. Chapter Seven will argue the internet to be the very concrete manifestation of the abstract rhizome. Likewise, *Desire* may be an abstract, but its effects are easily spotted. Fascination with cinema is a recurring cross-cultural concrete manifestation described in films such as *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (Allen, 1985), *Cinema Paradiso* (Tornatore, 1988) and *Australia* (Luhrmann, 2008). Creative people, aka bohemians – artists, painters, writers, poets, actors, directors, critics – are the visible members of the immediate circle surrounding the Cinematic Machine and the ones most effected by its output. While some parts of the Machine are hidden, the effects are easily spotted.

2.2 Cultural Topography: Centre-Periphery

Edward Shils (1975) contends that society has a Centre. Originating from economics, Shils developed the theory of Centre and Periphery from interpretations of the work of Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. Centre-Periphery models expanded the understanding of psychological, political and culture mechanics and the relationships between Centre and its orbiting peripheries (Shils 1975). Since the 1960s, Centre-Periphery has been both utilized and contested on many counts. Different academics used parts of the theory for their own purposes, defining Centre and Periphery in various ways (Bourdieu 1986; Cattani & Ferriani 2008; Csikszentmihalyi 2014; Lang & Lang 2009; Warczok & Zarycki 2014; Zarycki 2007). The importance and relevance of Center-Periphery theory is not in its claims and assumptions – some misconceived, others dated – but rather, in charting social structures, the forces binding them together and, in this research, the temporal position from which films originate. Applied to film theory, notable works that were influenced by Centre-Periphery theory are Edward Said's (1978) *orientalism* and post-colonial studies, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's: *In other worlds: essays in cultural politics* (1987) and Cornel West's *Keeping Faith Philosophy and Race in America* (2012); each redefined traditional Periphery and the place of the 'other' in it. Their work spurred debate that seeks to locate cinemas in either a national or transnational framework (Ezra & Rowden 2006; Hjort & MacKenzie 2005; Shohat & Stam 2003b; Vitali & Willemsen 2006a).

The study of Centre is understanding the distribution, projection and extent of power in all its forms. Post-colonialism, feminism and Indigenous scholarship gathered academic momentum using the Centre-Periphery framework and demonstrating the way in which Organisational, political, financial, cultural, religious, military and tribal entities were given or denied power. Centre may conceive itself as secular, pluralistic and tolerant, yet it has a serving religion that arbitrates the sacred and employs

symbols, values and beliefs. Shils (1992: 81) further contends that Centre offers modernity by operating a network of purpose-directed institutions, structured activities and roles and nominates people to execute its values and maintain its power. The more people participate in Centre's designated activities, the more 'the mass of the population has become incorporated into society... Most of the population (the 'mass') now stands in a closer relationship to the centre than has been the case either in pre-modern society or the earlier cases of modern society' (Shils 1992). Although Shils rejects the notion that centrality stem from geometry or geography, Rokkan argues that territorial and ecological patterns of centrality resemble those of state/nation's capital (Langholm 1971).

Centre requires an admission fee. Unlike tribal affiliation, membership of modern society entails more than a bloodline, an ecological commitment to a physical territory, or adapting to its environment and to its ruler, benevolent or despotic, willingly or coercively. In exchange for the fruits of modernity, Centre demands adherence to its core values, expounded by a chosen elite who typically sees itself as the custodian of those values. Moreover, Shils argues that accumulated authority expands toward the saturation of territorial space (Shils 1975). The more centralised values are embraced, individuality is traded for unity and a 'civil society' forms. As social attachment grows, a correlating moral responsibility to observe its core values, rules and for sharing in its authority emerges. Individuals cease to be objects of authoritative decisions and begin to act of their own accord to preserve and enhance what they perceive to be central values. In and of itself and detached from allocated values, the emergence of nationalism, to be debated in Chapter Five, signals the level of incorporation into society. Nationalism is neither positive nor negative. A healthy, positive sense of national pride in country, flag and anthem signifies Centre's incorporation of the masses. A sufficient level of social mobility, defined as the movement over time of a person or people from one social status to another, allows Centre to maintain its integrity. Social mobility, imperfect and difficult as it may be, is key for Centre to preserve its locus of authority. By partaking in Centre, individuality is traded for power. Here, Bertaux and Thompson (2009: 1) write:

It is through such processes that basic social structures of class, status and situs (branches of industry) are reproduced or transformed, emerge or disappear... Most people take the structure they see as given and circulate in it. But a sufficient minority contribute to the momentum of change by either creating new spaces within the old structure, or moving (Bertaux & Thompson 2009).

Despite the scope for individuals to penetrate Centre via the mechanism of social mobility, the elites who dominate Centre are mainly responsive to elites of other sectors. Elites are considered as such because of an amalgamated form of power whether military, financial, voting, legislative, organisational or in terms of expertise. There is a constant negotiation of power between different

sub-central groups such as political parties and civil organisations, industrialists and labor unions. These alliances help perpetuate the false notion that elites act as agents on behalf of civil society. In fact, an elite is a sub-Centre group in and of itself. Robert Michels' book *Political Parties* (1911) presents the idea of the Iron Law of Oligarchy, which sees organisational democracy as an oxymoron. Counterintuitive to popular belief, a democratically elected elite does not act to promote the needs and interests of its voters and fair play. Instead, it firstly acts to preserve its own power. This makes organisational democracy unsustainable. Michels argues (27):

As the organization increases in size, this control becomes purely fictitious. The members have to give up the idea of themselves conducting or even supervising the whole administration, and are compelled to hand these tasks over to trustworthy persons specially nominated for the purpose, to salaried officials... democratic control thus undergoes a progressive diminution, and is ultimately reduced to an infinitesimal minimum (Michals 2001).

However, elite's constant negotiation of power forces a process seen to shape the long-term development of all organisations in a conservative direction, including the most rhetorically radical (Sluyter-Beltrão 2016). The more individuals submit to elites who govern the Centre, the more ability elites gain to enforce further submission. Shirer argues that essentially, by embracing Centre, individuals are acting against their own interests. This is the embodiment of the Hegelian dialectics in which the state embodies a supreme right against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be a member of the state (Shirer 1960).

However, Centre has its limits. Shils notes that no society can ever achieve a complete cultural consensus. Natural limitations to the spread of the standards, morals, and rules occur throughout society, creativity being the modification of tradition (Shils 1992). Centre's limitation comes in two constant forms: external and internal. External constraints are achieved by negotiating and delegating power to other elites. Otherwise, competing elites rebel and force confrontation, which threatens Centre's integrity. Thus, Centre is constantly concerned with the distribution, maintenance and replenishment of its own power, self-preservation limiting its ability to constantly expand. The internal constraint, crucial to this debate, is the rebellious nature of creativity. This research focuses on creativity and its ability to penetrate the Australian cultural Centre of which cinema is a part. Without incorporating creative new ideas, Centre stagnates and dies. To maintain its own core values and power, Centre has an ability to incorporate new ideas and apply changes to itself while diluting their rebellious nature. Every form of mainstream culture was perceived at one time as marginal, rebellious and unfit, until it entered the Central zone. Shils (83-84) divides Centre into three cultural categories, each seen to be susceptible to refinement, although some more than others.

1. 'Superior' (refined) culture is distinguished by the 'seriousness of its subject matter', by its coherence and wealth of feeling it expresses. It includes the 'classical arts': painting, poetry,

literature, theater, sculptures, architecture, but also philosophy and scientific research. 'Superior culture' derives its status not from its proprietors', nor from its consumers' identity, but from their singular and innate 'truth and beauty'.

2. 'Mediocre' culture works within the same genres as the superior culture, but it is not as refined and might be better understood as 'popular culture'. It is more reproductive and has not yet attracted 'great talent to its practice', for example, musical theater.
3. 'Brutal' culture partially employs genres of the previous two categories, yet its presentation of pictorials and plastic is of an 'elementary order'. It includes games and spectacles such as boxing and horse races. It has more expressive action and minimal symbolic content. 'The depth of penetration is almost always negligible, subtlety is almost entirely lacking, and a general grossness of perception is a common feature' (Shils 1992).

Shils' division of culture correlates to *friction II*: arthouse vs. genre debated in Chapter One. This division was dated and entirely wrong even at the time it was first published in 1961, having countless cultural examples counter it. For example, Marcel Duchamp's concept of the readymade challenged 'classical' artistic discourse since his 1917 work *Fountain*. Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931) was entirely expressive, yet its penetration of culture was anything but 'negligible'. George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935) emerged from the realm of Shils' 'mediocre' musical theatre. The 1961 re-release of Robert Johnson's highly expressive LP *King of the Delta Blues Singers* deeply influenced generations of musicians, his complete recordings being part of the National Recording Registry in the American Library of Congress.

Nevertheless, Shils' division is important. It demonstrates the pivotal role of elites, of which he is part and parcel, in ceaselessly dividing culture into categories through allocated values: high 'classical arts' and low 'elementary order', superior, mediocre and brutal, arthouse, genre or exploitation, right and wrong, moral and debased. This classification is entwined with the process of film canonisation. Laseur (1991: 375) argues that 'defining the decision as to what constitutes importance and validity in the area of subject material is quite obviously the result of ideological constructions that have little or nothing to do with the specifics of filmmaking' (Laseur 1992). Simply put, it is the classification system that academics, as part of the cultural elites, use to impose Centre's rules and values. Staiger (1985: 10) writes:

Claims for universality are disguises for achieving uniformity, for suppressing through the power of canonic discourse optional value systems. Such a cultural 'consensus' fears an asserted 'barbarism' and a collapse into the grotesque and monstrous, because it recognizes the potential loss of its hegemony. It is a politics of power (Staiger 1985).

Since Centre regulates cultural outcomes of any description, affinity with it allows a level of access to its means, sphere of influence and support. However, unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Centre-periphery theorists do not see cultural representation as the result of random bursts of amalgamated *Desire*. Rather, cultural representations are a function of their creator's respective position in relation to Centre. If creators operate from within the central zone and use its resources, their work is likely to adhere to the orthodoxy of cultural production and be regarded and rewarded as such. Bourdieu (1986: 248-249) refers to this as 'social capital', which he defines as 'membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word' (Bourdieu 1986). The further a group or individuals are positioned from Centre, their ability to project and exercise authority diminishes. For Langholm (1971: 273), 'no matter what things are valued in status and no matter how status is measured, it seems clear that persons of high status are close to the centre of society and persons of low status usually are on the periphery' (Langholm 1971).

As Centre's sphere of power wanes, Periphery begins. Since Centre does not create films, but does supply its means and social capital, every convergence of a film unit is relatively peripheral to Centre. Well-established filmmaker could be situated within the central zone, while unestablished filmmakers come from Periphery. Cattani, Ferriani and Allison (2014) argue that inhabitants of Periphery are such for various reasons: belonging to an excluded ethnic, tribal or gender minority, individualism and contempt for authority, lack of economic, social, educational or cultural capital, institutional misrepresentation, inability to organize or project power, reach masses and partake in shaping Centre, geographical distance or language and religious barriers. All lead to discontentment with Centre's norms, morals, values and rules. They (258-259) write:

Several studies (e.g., Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995; Faulkner 1983; Faulkner and Anderson 1987; Giuffre 1999) have found empirical support for an oppositional structure permeating cultural fields, in which a relatively small number of established players have the necessary material and political resources to enforce norms and standards for evaluating cultural productions that conform to their specific interests (Cattani, Ferriani & Allison 2014).

To gain Centre's approval, an idea, project, text, style or script originating in Periphery needs to travel a greater distance and sustain more *friction* than a similar idea generated within the central zone. Their inherently limited resources and chances to get noticed and prove their worth are limited. Hence, to get noticed, their work is likely to depart from a field's canons and expectations. Exploitation cinema, which will be discussed in Chapter Three and pornography debated in Chapter Seven, are prime examples of peripheral filmmaking that contrasts sharply with prevailing central

expectations and are perceived as rebellious. Accordingly, exploitations' efforts to move from Periphery to Centre generate more *friction* and are more likely to be rejected.

Desire to create forms a film unit, usually in Periphery, which then travels along the rhizomatic grid, toward Centre, to receive means for it to eventuate. To get noticed, peripheral filmmakers' strategy is to produce work that departs from Centre's expectations. However, the more rebellious this work is, the more *friction* it will sustain. Along the rhizomatic grid filmmakers' passion, reason and chance are rigorously challenged. Some films prevail, but most do not. Acknowledging *friction* as an imminent outcome, inevitably employed by Centre's gatekeepers, allows for formation and preparation of a set of rules.

2.3 Instrumental Collision: Clausewitz. The Remarkable Trinity. Friction

On War (1832) is widely considered *the* founding text on modern strategy. It was written by a Prussian general, Carl von Clausewitz, as an instruction manual for students in the military academy he headed, summing his vast experience in some of the bloodiest battles of the Napoleonic wars: Jena-Auerstädt (1806), Friedland (1807), and the infamous carnage of Borodino (1812). Clausewitz wrote his book in Periphery, twice removed from Centres of his day: the Prussian central command, which rejected him; and the philosophical and social salons where intellectuals and nobility gathered. Despite serving in the Prussian army from the age of 13 and advancing to the rank of Major-General, Clausewitz was an outsider in an army whose central command was reserved for the *Junkers* – Prussian nobility. Howard (2010: 5) notes that 'although Clausewitz passed his life as a member of that exclusive body... he was temperamentally an outsider' (Howard 2002). Klinger (2006: 79) argues that this was reflected in his writing, done 'from the perspective of a weak country that had been habitually victimized by its stronger neighbours' (Klinger 2006). *On War* was deemed for certain obscurity and endured only because Clausewitz's widow, Marie von Brühl, published his work posthumously. Helmuth von Moltke the elder, Prussia's Army Chief-of-Staff, was an avid Clausewitz reader. Moltke's victories in the German unification war of 1866, loosely based on principles discussed in the book, cemented its validity and paved the way for German involvement in two World Wars.

Clausewitz understood wars to be a new nationally mobilised and modern phenomenon. Pre-Napoleonic wars were scrimmages, limited in intensity and scope, fought by mercenaries and small standing armies. Subjection was derived from a geographical location, not from national identity. Nation, or nation-state, was a new concept introduced by the French revolutionaries of 1789-1793. Until then, most Europeans were vassals or subjects of the monarchy that happened to own their land. The French Revolution shattered this age-old concept. It gave French people citizenship. Napoleon's *Grande Armée* – the first national army – made them fight for it. What France lacked in military training, equipment and regimented form was compensated for by a national draft and fanatic

zealously for country, flag and leader. Clausewitz, who loathed French culture, tried to understand how untrained French civilians managed to convincingly defeat the trained Prussian soldiers. Along the way, he re-invented the science of strategy.

How is this nineteenth century book of military thought relevant to Australian cinema? First, it demonstrates how a text travelled from Periphery into the Centre of contemporary thought. Second, like the previous two theories, *On War* transcends traditional boundaries between intellectual disciplines. Unlike other generals, Clausewitz envisioned the next war, not the one already fought. He references tactics, logistics, sociology, psychology, political science and philosophy, and demonstrates how an intellectual abstraction is transformed into a concrete plan of action (Cormier 2014). Clausewitz writes about the War Machine, but his principals: the 'Remarkable Trinity' and '*friction*', transcend military thought and may as well describe the structural reality cinematic units encounter on their way from Periphery to Centre. 'A theory that ignores any of them', wrote Clausewitz, 'would conflict with reality to such an extent, that for this reason alone it would be totally useless' (Summers 1984).

Two of Clausewitz's concepts are vital for emerging filmmakers: The Remarkable Trinity which explains internal interactions between the group which wants to produce the film, and *friction* which explains the external difficulties the group as a whole encounter when trying to obtain the means for, and during production. Internally, Clausewitz identified three hierarchic levels of participants in war: soldiers and field officers, central command and policymakers. Those correlate to the three levels of filmmaking: the creative artists (writer, director, actors) are soldiers. Producers (management) are field officers, and central command/policy makers are the financial bodies (executive producers/investors/funding bodies). Clausewitz named the interaction between the different levels 'The Remarkable Trinity' (*Wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*).

Every level in an army expresses its *Desire* differently. Villacres and Bassford (1995: 9) note that soldiers operate by emotions and must display 'primordial violence, hatred and enmity'. Commanding officers must display reason and calmness, which allows them to seize 'the play of chance and probability', but also emotions that will inspire their soldiers. Policymakers must be emotionally detached – instrumental – and display 'war's element of subordination to rational policy' (Villacres & Bassford 1995). The same interaction applies for filmmaking. Filmmakers need passion, stamina and endurance, to realise their ideas which many times are not refined or coherent enough. Producers need to display emotion and *Desire* to encourage filmmakers, but also a sense of grounded reality, to engage in 'the play of chance and probability'. Executive producers, investors and funding bodies need to be detached from emotions and judge the film unit purely on the merits of its potential: economic

and cultural. Clausewitz's most famous aphorism, 'war is the continuation of politics by other means', is derived from this cold, analytic and instrumental school of thought.

Summers (1984) refers to the interactions within the Remarkable Trinity as the 'Strategic Equation' (Summers 1984) which assumes *Desire* to be a quantified resource and that rules may be formed to achieve a specific result, that is, to produce a successful film. The Strategic Equation is the cornerstone of modern strategy and it disconnects film production from the realm of creative chance and fortune, to turn it into science. *Desire* to make a film is never enough, and not every display of *Desire* achieves the same goal. Understanding the Remarkable Trinity is understanding the calculus of energy and policymaking required to achieve a specific goal and is as applicable to filmmaking as in regard to war.

Externally, film unit encounters setbacks on its way from Periphery to Centre. Clausewitz points to the imminent gap (Deleuze's *Intermediality*) between theory and practice, plans and the actuality of war. Numerous situations inhibit army units on the battle ground (Deleuze's *multiplicities*), and Clausewitz was acutely aware that when armies collide, the reaction diverts the forces from their designated goal. He named those encounters – *frictions*. Clausewitz (1997: 66) writes:

In war, through the influence of an infinity of petty circumstances, which cannot properly be described on paper, things disappoint us, and we fall short of the mark. A powerful iron will overcomes this friction; it crushes the obstacles, but certainly the machine along with them (von Clausewitz 1997).

Friction is not a randomly chosen concept, nor is it confined to colliding units on the battlefield. 'Friction happens', writes Lee (1999: 47-48), 'when opposing will and chance come into direct contact' (Lee 1999). It is a series of small, petty situations and obstacles such as a lack of supplies, broken gear, insufficient number of horses (vehicles) or crew members, delays, rough weather, miscommunication. All generate an X-factor that impedes a film unit from achieving its intended goal. Anything standing between a quantified unit, be it an army unit, a film crew, a text or any other motivated move and its designated Centre, creates *friction*.

Clausewitz argued that the study of *friction* bridges the gap between theory and real war. If *Desire* to *Become*, propels an idea forwards, then opposingly, *friction* grinds it to a halt. It correlates any interaction between the different levels of film production, which causes movement forward to retract. *Friction* happens when a script is rejected or sent for 'further development', when green light turns into red, or when distribution is delayed because a competing film is released. It is inevitable and familiar to everyone who has ever engaged in filmmaking, anywhere around the world, at any time, in any capacity, with any kind of budget from the biggest Hollywood blockbuster to the smallest student project. Military personnel spend much of their time training for situations of *friction*, because

their lives depend on their effective responses. Opposingly, few filmmakers are even aware that *friction* exists as a concept, or that it can be diagnosed, quantified and reduced before-hand.

2.4 Bottom-Up: The Workings of the Cinematic Machine

How is the film unit effected by the principles described so far? While settings, participants and objectives vary, the principles of the Cinematic Machine are universal and timeless. The Cinematic Machine generates an abstract, positive energy – *Desire* propelling a film unit to travel a rhizomatic grid, where multiplicity of outcomes is possible. Along the way, a concrete *negative* energy – *friction* – is generated from this movement. *Friction* is resolved by employing obtained means and skill, to complete the film.

A film begins when the Cinematic Machine generates enough *Desire* to *Become*. *Desire* propels creative nuclei to merge on the ‘plane of consistency’ and form Deleuze’s multiplicity – an entity that originates from creative elements and forms a loosely quantitative film unit such as a script’s first draft. This unit begins its travel on a rhizomatic grid of random connections from abstraction to a concretization, from Periphery to Centre. Filmmakers strive to keep their original vision and artistic integrity – often opposing norms and etiquette – intact. They are confident that the power of their ideas is enough to reach an audience and make an impact. Every mainstream, A-list Hollywood projects originated in Periphery. For example, *X-men* began as unsuccessful comics by Stan Lee. For decades, it was the social marker of American nerds. When J.K. Rowling wrote *Harry Potter*, she was an unemployed, single mum, living in Edinburgh. The fact that obscure children’s stories about superhero-mutants and an orphan-magician occupy and dominate Centre is a testament to its constant utilizing of Periphery to rejuvenate itself. However, filmmakers’ limited ability to independently turn those ideas into a concrete unit in Periphery, inevitably makes them turn to Centre. On the plane of consistency, a Centre – an amalgamation of power of any sort – gravitates movement from Periphery. An audience paying to watch a film, for example, form a Centre. It may be at a 3D Imax theatre, or on a white sheet hung in town hall. The difference between these Centres is their respective size and power, the distance a film travels and the amount of *friction* generated.

Hollywood with its distribution chains, is firmly situated within many central zones. Indie films are sporadically made in Periphery, they travel further and accumulate more *friction*, which limits their ability to effectively penetrate Centre. Conversely, the motivation of Centre’s gatekeepers is not to help filmmakers achieve their goal, but to preserve Centre’s dominance, which they perceive as synonymous with their own power. Whenever rebellious, peripheral content challenges central values, Centre will apply or deny its power, that is, modify or reject the project to protect itself. Filmmakers are constantly faced with the choice to alter their vision or be rejected. This situation dulls the edginess of Periphery’s rebellious nature, but simultaneously poses a dual challenge to Centre’s

omnipotence. Gatekeepers constantly calculate film units' outcome – the finished film – and how it would fare with an audience. Too much applied power and the cinematic unit will either be rejected or conform and become identical to other units, causing Centre's failure to rejuvenate. Too little power and Centre is liable to lose its control over norms and destabilise. Failing to produce a significant mass of creative units, will cause *friction* between the gatekeepers and their audience, with filmmakers and from other gatekeepers such as media or academia, further destabilizing Centre's own position and power. Employing Clausewitz's strategic equation to the Australian Cinematic Machine would have sought ways to reduce *friction* and elevate the potential of film units being produced. This is where Australian cinema went astray. The literature review presented in Chapter One reveals three consistent *frictions* that define Australian cinema. The first is external, the other two are internal.

Friction I: Australian cinema vs. Australian audience. This external *friction* examines the relationship between Centre – Australian cinema, defined as the sum of films produced in Australia between 1968 to 2018 vs. Australian audience, its immediate recipients.

Friction II: arthouse vs. genre. *Friction II* revolves around the questions of what content is suitable for Australian audience. Generally it is debated in Australian cinema discourse as arthouse cinema/AFC genre vs. genre/Ozploitation cinema.

Friction III: government funding vs. private investment. As part of system analysis, *friction III* examines the question what should 'we' finance: Australian films or Hollywood blockbusters, in terms of policy: private investment, entrepreneurial effort vs. government funding, subsidized labour.

It should be noted that although government funding has been associated with arthouse and private investment (via 10BA, FLIC, the current Producers Offsets) with genre cinema, the two interior *frictions* only partly overlap. For example, from the mid-1990s Australian government funding, both state and federal, is allocated to draw in Hollywood runaway projects, which are exclusively genre based.

2.5 What Movies Do We Make: Arthouse vs. Genre

Australian cinema is argued to be predominantly influenced by two competing cinematic traditions: Hollywood and the British cinema (McFarlane & Mayer 1992; O'Regan 1996; Rayner 2000a). While arthouse is largely associated with the British tradition, genre almost exclusively corresponds with Hollywood, the dominance of which makes it a global Centre for all filmmaking. McFarlane and Mayer (1992) argue that although British films were more ideologically tuned to Australian traditions and culture, it was Hollywood narrative conventions that have been translated into current Australian cinema (McFarlane & Mayer 1992).

Arthouse is often analysed and argued in one of two methods: *Auteur* Theory and Semiotic Based. The *Auteur* Theory considered 'an outgrowth of the cinematic theories of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc', foregrounds the importance of the director as the controlling creative force in the film's production of meaning. *Auteur* analysis groups directors' films and seeks generalisations about their thematic concerns, it is most identified with French new wave movement. Semiotic Analysis, derived from the Greek word *sēmeiotikos* ('of signs') and from *sēmeioun* ('interpret as a sign'), foregrounds the importance of individual signals and signs, which are grouped, sorted and formed into texts. Semiotics usually involves lengthy textual analysis and either ignores, or significantly downplays, questions of industrial production and audience response (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2017, McMahon & Quin 1998/1999).

Arthouse embodies an endemic contradiction. It prides itself in challenging viewers to accept a vision that is often personal, edgy and different. Its individuality makes it, at least in the eyes of its creator, into 'art'. Yet recouping its investment and admission into popular discourse and culture mandates common tastes and consensus, the exact opposition of uniqueness. This contradiction is especially relevant to Australian cinema, which is mainly government funded. Films that are mistakenly perceived as arthouse address and many times reaffirm 'national' or 'cultural' issues considered by funding bodies as 'important'. Thus, their subject matter is ceded to a hierarchy of values that by definition erode any claim to singular artistic vision. Arrow (2009: 115) points out that AFC films were criticized exactly on this account. 'Critic Ann Hutton claimed they avoided the question of what Australianness might mean in the 1970s by restating the "myths of what it had been"' (Arrow 2009). Dermody and Jacka (1987: 31-32) write:

Art Cinema defines itself, 'against Hollywood', not with any genuine radical counter-position, but in terms of two counts of difference: art (until recently not much admitted into Hollywood discourse) and foreign national identity... The resulting films, therefore tend to be part of nationalist and elitist ('art') discourses... Industry rhetoric is frequently drawn from the art-cinema's domain of quality and nationalism; and government funding practice certainly has been the string-of-films approach rather than the encouragement of specific film practices (with specific social and historical implications) (Dermody & Jacka 1987).

Genre is defined by McMahon and Quin (5) as a 'framework of conventions, an established reference system, which shapes the work of the production by the filmmaker' (McMahon & Quin 1998/1999). Stam (2000) notes that genre does not limit itself to a source of personal inspiration as arthouse does. Genre could be any form of storytelling. Story based, as in the war film, or literature based as in comedy or melodrama. It could borrow from other medium such as musicals or be performer-based as the Astaire-Rogers films were. Blockbusters are budget-based spectacle, while arthouse films enjoy artistic status. Genres could address racial identity as in the case of black cinema, be location such as

Westerns or sexual orientation as in the case of Queer cinema (Stam 2000). The rise of blockbusters and its implications on Australian cinema will be further reviewed in Chapter Three.

The word *genre* in French, means 'kind' or 'class' and genre films act as a classification system for both viewers and filmmakers. By employing narrative conventions and semiotics via *mise en scène*, audiences are stirred through a narrative path to an expected goal. Chandler (1997) notes films are routinely classified in media and the press as 'thrillers', 'westerns' and so forth to leverage audience expectations as to the type of entertainment offered (Chandler 1997). McFarlane (2009: 80) writes:

Genre film-making thrives on exploiting tensions between familiarity and novelty: too few familiar elements and we may not recognise the genre connection; too few *unfamiliar* ones and we may well be bored. It is a matter of some expectations gratified, others subverted (McFarlane 2009).

The Genre classification system is all prevalent, not only in Hollywood and established production companies, but also with American Indie (short for independent) films, which are not to be confused with arthouse cinema. Genre adheres to narrative conventions intrinsically linked to structure and outweighing directorial vision, which is to service the finished film. Westerns require a climactic showdown. Romantic comedy demands a delayed love interest. Buddy films require a road trip or heading to war mission, where friendship will be challenged. Like arthouse, genre also employs semiotics and controls its *mise en scène* to facilitate a quicker differentiation between protagonist from antagonist. The assignation to genre defines its own plausibility. A Merchant-Ivory film entails costumes and period reconstruction. Sci-Fi films are VFX driven and require lengthy and expensive post-production. An Australian outback rites of passage drama will employ young actors in remote locations. Genre's definitions are used to sort means such as crew, cast, budget, promotion to achieve a designated goal.

Although the terms 'arthouse' and 'genre' are well established and frequently used by Australian film industry personnel, film critics and academia as means to respectively describe 'high' and 'low' culture and personal vs. structure driven films, their exact meaning is open to personal interpretation. Ryan (2010) notes that in recent years, Australian genre cinema has 'become synonymous' with Ozploitation cinema, yet there is a distinction between the two. He writes (11)

Ozploitation is an umbrella term for diverse and very different movie genres... the term emphasises exploitation and trash cinema – though only a small percentage of these films are indeed exploitation films – which detracts from more important discussion of how Australian cinema engages with popular movies genres (Ryan 2010c).

The crux of Australian cinema debate revolves around the question what did the Australian Cinematic Machine produce over its first forty years of operation? Are Australian films unique, individual, un-replicable, worthy of the arthouse classification, proper reflections of the unique Australian identity?

Or are Australian films generic, marketable, mass-produced (if not mass-consumed), units of genre or Ozploitations? To answer these questions, Australian identity definitions need to be established. These questions are further examined in the second part of this thesis, but first Chapters Three and Four present *a* history of Australian cinema, introducing this unresolved debate that runs throughout Australian cinema.

Chapter Three

Rise of the Dammed 1970-1988: New Wave, Ozploitations and 10BA

Until the 1970s, Australian cinemas exhibited mainly Hollywood and British films with the odd European film. The Australian film market, which in 1965 boasted around one thousand movie theatres and grossed \$50 million in yearly revenue for exhibitors, proved that, per capita, Australians were among the top cine-goers in the world (Shirley & Adams 1983). Young Australian audiences, eager to connect their experiences with the world and learn more about their own lives, wanted Australian-made films. Dermody and Jacka (48-49) note that, throughout the 1960s, the Australian film industry's worker unions, the producers and filmmakers from the Mass Communication Council (MCC), the Film Producers' Association (FPAA) and film buffs from the Melbourne Film Festival formed a coalition that effectively lobbied for the government to recognise cinema as a field of national policy, which entails a considerable financial investment. Each group had a different agenda. The film buffs thought of cinema in terms of art, akin to opera, ballet and literature. The unions thought of an industry in terms of continuity of employment. The MCC perceived it as a supporting field to television, but the producers, who wanted to transition from commercials and short industrials to feature films, understood it was economically infeasible to do so without government support. 'Their model was not European Art-cinema, but Hollywood with an Australian flavour' (Dermody & Jacka 1987). Rayner (2000: 7) noting that the polarisation between "film as an industry and commerce vs. film as art" has dominated Australian filmmaking since its renaissance' (Rayner 2000). From its very onset, *friction II* was evident in the yet-to-be-formed Australian cinema.

Eventually, writes Hall (1980: 173), the Gorton government (1968-1971) appointed a committee that recommended three primary objectives for the industry's reboot: establishing an Australia Film Development Corporation (AFDC) to provide money for prospective producers, a film and television school in Sydney and an experimental film and television fund (Hall 1980). Collins (1987: 254) attributes the Australian new wave's origins to the new and frankly nationalistic era formed in 'the personage of John Gorton (and, to lesser extent, Gough Whitlam) the rare spectre of a prime minister who cared more for film than opera or ballet' (Collins 1987). In 1970, Gorton introduced the AFDC Act to Parliament. Dermody and Jacka (49) note that Gorton explicitly stated that the Corporation would seek to 'encourage the production of films which are box office successes', demonstrating 'excellences of production'. 'We believe', he declared, 'that after a period of time properly made investments will be returning profits to the Corporation and there will be no need to replenish the fund each year: That

is our objective and the measure of the scheme's success will be judged partly on this' (Dermody & Jacka 1988b).

Australian cinema was envisioned by the government as a commercial enterprise in which its involvement would be limited and short-lived. Concurrently, cinema was to help Australians develop a sense of national identity. Underlying these objectives were two assumptions: first, that government should limit its involvement in the film business, the way it does with other sectors such as education or mining and the educational; and second, a political assumption that cinema forms a national identity. These assumptions never eventuated. Nowhere in the academic literature reviewed is there any mention of a debate on whether those two objectives were attainable. Rather, they were taken as a given. However, Gorton's endorsement did revitalise Australian cinema. One hundred and fifty-three films were produced in the 1970s, nine times more than the preceding decade. These films saw young Australian filmmakers addressing Australian sensibilities, culture and humour in films made for Australian audience. *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (Beresford, 1972), *Alvin Purple* (Burstall, 1973), *Number 96* (Benardos, 1974), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Weir, 1975), *Storm Boy* (Safran, 1976), *Mad Max* (Miller, 1979) and *My Brilliant Career* (Armstrong, 1979) were films that enjoyed considerable commercial success. It was the golden age of the 'New Australian Cinema', or the 'Australian New Wave' in relation to its European counterparts. Australian directors, cinematographers and actors gathered Australian production experience, which allowed them to further develop international careers (Arrow 2009; Collins 1987; Hall 1980).

The importance of the Australian film renaissance was not only in introducing Australian talent abroad, most importantly to Hollywood, but also in forming an industry that could co-produce films and import international talent. Such was the agreement signed between the AFC and France's *National de la Cinématographie*, which allowed producers to apply for funding in both countries. International talent, such as Dennis Hopper in *Mad Dog Morgan* (Mora, 1976), Kirk Douglas in *The Man from Snowy River* (Miller, 1982), Sigourney Weaver in *The Year of Living Dangerously* (Weir, 1981) and Jamie Lee Curtis in *Roadgames* (Franklin, 1981), appeared in Australian films despite vigorous opposition on the part of the workers' unions known as the Actors Equity (Parker & Parenta 2009). Stratton (1990: 9-10) quotes producer Joan Long (*Caddie*, 1976) who accused foreign actors of 'reaping the benefit of our low costs and our unique locations; they are reaping the benefits which years of government support have made possible' (Stratton 1990).

The flow of talent, funds and ideas proved pivotal to expanding the newly established industry, not only in terms of incorporating international methods that allowed Australian filmmakers to transcend their limited, immediate Australian experience, but in also supplying opportunity for young people to

acquire the experience needed to become craftsmen. In Hartley's *Not Quite Hollywood*, many of those young filmmakers, cast and crew admit they knew very little of proper filmmaking, did not understand what they were making and were not able to articulate it in terms of implication or cultural context, all of which are acquired with thirty years hindsight. Yet the need to say something – *anything* – as obscure and incoherent as it might have been, fuelled and propelled them to action. In Deleuzian terms, they embodied *Desire*. What they lacked in established methods, procedures, experience and knowledge was compensated for with sheer exuberance, energy and innovation. This energy was met by means, supplied by the government. The result of whatever quality or artistic merit was captured on film. Those nucleuses of *Desire, Became*.

3.1 In search of the Beautiful Image: The AFC Genre

At its formative stage, the role of the AFDC was to foster the production of low-budget 'frankly commercial' films as part of its strategy for Australian films. Its intended goal was to gain initial success with the Australian public. Writes Arrow (2009: 113):

How fitting, then, that the first film produced with Film Development funds was the Adventures of *Barry McKenzie* (1972) directed by Bruce Beresford and based on a comic strip created by Barry Humphries... *Barry McKenzie* parodied this anxiety by depicting a vulgar, ockerish Australian on a collision course with the 'Mother Country'. The film was a box office triumph (Arrow 2009).

Two strands of Australian cinema, reviewed in Chapter Two, emerged during this early period: arthouse and genre. Arthouse employed itself with 'important' questions of Australian national identity and racial issues, of mythology, history, art and culture. Such films included *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (Schepisi, 1978), *My Brilliant Career*, *Breaker Morant* (Beresford, 1980), *Gallipoli* (Weir, 1981), *Phar Lap* (Wincer, 1983) and *Robbery Under Arms* (Crombie, Hannam 1985). Genre films, dubbed 'Ozploitations' (Aussie exploitations) in Hartley's film *Not Quite Hollywood*, were American B-movie rip-offs and unashamedly commercial. They relied on excess amounts of sex, violence, blood, gore, horror and lowbrow humour (aka ocker comedies) and proved to be immensely popular. Such films included *Stork* and *Alvin Purple*, the *Barry McKenzie* films, *The Man from Hong Kong*, (Trenchard-Smith, Wang, 1975), *Fantasm* and *Patrick* (Franklin 1976, 1978) and the *Mad Max* trilogy (Miller, 1979, 1981, 1985). The initial commercial success of genre was due in part to the introduction of the R-rated classification system, which allowed for adult-oriented content to be screened. *Alvin Purple* made \$4 million at the box office and became the most successful Australian film ever released (Buckmaster 2014; Laseur 1992).

The run of successful, yet vulgar, Australian sex comedies added insult to injury. Decision makers felt ocker did not reflect 'true' Aussie values. Ryan (2012: 45) attributes Australian decision makers' refusal to adopt genre films as an 'attempt to differentiate itself from Hollywood, which has always been

interested in refining and developing specific film genres' (Ryan 2012). Michalk (1981: 46) quotes producer Sam Gelfman, a representative of the New South Wales Film Corporation, as commenting that '[American] studios stated orientation is profit, whereas Australians tend to talk about identity. That's the consideration that comes up time and again' (Michalk 1981).

Toward the mid-1970s, Australian films, traditionally low budget, became government dependent. Support from the AFDC and its later and more dominant form the AFC, became a prerequisite for film production. McFarlane (1987) notes that virtually no film could be made without the AFC's approval, which assessed and selected the initial projects, funded their development and regulated their progress until scripts and budgets met its requirements. The AFC provided an average of 50% to 60% of a film's production costs, 75% to 80% of its marketing expenses and 95% of the vital script development funding (McFarlane 1987). Between 1969/70 and 1979/80, government funding provided an average of 54% of the total of an Australian film's budget, 27% came from the private sector and 19% from film industry's self-resources. Between 1970 and 1977, only four films in Australia were privately produced (Parker & Parenta 2009). Stratton (1980) notes that in 1975/76, the first year of its operation, the AFC's annual budget was \$6.5 million. Of this, \$4 million was allocated to the operation costs of Film Australia – the government's documentary filmmaking arm. By 1979/80, AFC's budget amounted to \$10 million, to which \$2.5 million were added from return on investments. During this period, the AFC supported about 50 feature films. 16% showed profit, 49% were complete write-offs and the rest, while not profitable, returned some of the investment (Stratton 1980).

The shift from mainly financing documentaries to predominantly producing fiction was no accident. AFC funds were not meant for the violent, vulgar, sexually explicit films, Ozploitations which held no regard to the national agenda. 'After the early burst of the successful "ocker" comedies', writes Turner (1993: 105), 'the film funding bodies restricted their support, largely, to "quality" films. This meant "art" films but it did not mean avant-garde or experimental films' (Turner 1993). Dermody and Jacka write (49):

The dominant aesthetics operating in Australian films of the seventies have been what we call the 'AFC genre' (the dominant feature of which the 'beautiful image' derived from TV commercial values), the social-problem film with its origins in Grierson-inspired Commonwealth Film Unit values and TV naturalism (narrative strategies which derive from TV drama conventions) (Dermody & Jacka 1987).

Some filmmakers readily embraced the AFC genre. Peter Weir (46) comments, 'If they'd put their money they've invested in our films into public relations, they could not have achieved a more positive image for the country' (Michalk 1981). So much for the subversive counterculture, led by contemporaries of French new wave or the Hollywood cine brats.

As will be demonstrated later, Weir's readiness to portray 'positive' imagery, so different from *Barry McKenzie's* ockerish vulgarity, certainly did not hurt his career when he returned to Australia from his 1980s Hollywood stints to receive government funding. Other filmmakers, who were less inclined to partake in the quest for a positive national identity, did not fare as well. Bertrand (329) notes that on 6 July, 1978, producer/director Terry Bourke, director of *Inn of the Damned* (1975), complained in a letter to The Australian newspaper that 'big pictures are toppling the golden-haired boys of the Australian cinema'. Bourke, writing under the pseudonym Robert Jordan, was referring to Burstall's *Eliza Fraser* (1976), Weir's *The Last Wave* (1977) and Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978), all of which had budgets much higher than the average for that time (Bertrand 1989). Indeed, 'respectable' arthouse films were made on larger budgets. *The Chant of Billy Blacksmith's* budget was made for \$1.28 million, *My Brilliant Career* for \$925,000, *Breaker Morant* for \$800,000 and *Gallipoli* for \$2.6 million (Murray 1995). 'Mysteriously', writes Stratton (2), the AFC 'repeatedly rejected' *My Brilliant Career*. Funding came from the New South Wales Film Corporation (NSWFC), Greater Union and private investors (Stratton 1990). Bertrand (331) notes:

The establishment in 1976 of the Creative Development Branch (CDB) of the AFC had further institutionalized the split between what was seen as the commercial industry (making feature films for release in mainstream cinemas to mass audiences) and the non-commercial (making films that expressed personal creativity or political dissent, for release in Art house cinemas and through the alternative network, to specialist audiences) (Bertrand 1989).

As the AFC imposed its norms and standards on the film industry, Ozploitations became harder to finance and to profit from, which was the initial attraction for independent producers. In a conscious attempt to differentiate themselves from the 'AFC genre' and enhance commercial potential, Ozploitation filmmakers spent big portions of their small budgets on excess. Special effects, rivers of fake blood, elaborate fight scenes, life-threatening stunts, fast-moving cars and explosions substituted 'Australianness' with commerce. Ozploitations corresponded directly with their American contemporaries. Aussie horrors like *Patrick* and *Roadgames* (Franklin, 1978, 1981: \$400,000, \$1.7 million) are blood brothers to American films *Carrie* (De Palma, 1976) and *Duel* (Spielberg, 1971), action-adventure like *Mad Max* (Miller, 1979: \$380,000) is a rip-off of *Death Race 2000* (Bartel, 1975). Softcore films like *The ABC of Love and Sex* and *Felicity* (Lamond, 1978, 1979: \$70,000, \$200,000) correspond directly with *Emmanuelle* (Jaeckin, 1975) (Murray 1995).

Despite their questionable morals, educational and aesthetic value(s), as products inherently geared toward young audiences and from a pure filmmaking point of view, Ozploitations' redeeming quality was their low budgets. These made it possible for producers and investors to recoup their investment on relatively small distribution in American grindhouse cinemas, local Australian hardtop cinemas and drive-in circuits, thus assuring continued production. 'Before the 1950s teenagers went to cinemas to

neck in the dark recesses of the stalls', writes Collins (223), 'but watching a film from the back seat of a Holden gave amorous couples much more privacy and space to manoeuvre' (Collins 1987). Arrow notes that a 1964 survey of drive-in audiences found more than 70% of the audience were between 15-24 and almost 85% were younger than 30 (Arrow 2009). Those venues did not require cinematic quality or high production value, but fresh, cheaply-made films. What Ozploitations lacked in the former, they compensated for by being present and relevant. Writes Martin (2010: 19):

A way of breaking the insularity, the gridlock of an often inward-looking, scarcely exportable national (and nationalist) production, usually more tied to local television styles and themes than the *lingua franca* of international entertainment genres or transnational art cinema modes. George *Mad Max* Miller, for one, has understood this since at least the beginning of the 1980s (Martin 2010b).

Mad Max is the first Ozploitation to obtain a nationwide distribution deal in North America, break American market barriers and become an international blockbuster. An absent question from academic discourse, but crucial to this research is what made *Mad Max* succeed where a dozen other films, better budgeted, casted and helmed, failed? What did Miller understand and, more importantly, what did his audience understand, that made this connection so viable?

The two prerequisites from any film of any genre or description are relevance and presence. Relevance mandates that an audience, unlike and diverse as they may be, connects with a film. Presence mandates that films are always about their own time in its portrayal of events, be it the depiction of the 1415 Battle of Agincourt in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (Branagh, 1989), or *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977), which takes place in a '*Galaxy far, far, away*'. *Mad Max* may be set in a futuristic, post-apocalyptic desert environment, but its inhabitants – the rebellious, anarchic misfits, road bandits – look very much like refugees from a 1970s Sex Pistols concert. They are relevant as a slightly distorted image of the film's recipients, young people in Australia and America who did not care about national identity, Australian or otherwise, but who were totally *en vogue* with punk culture of Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten and company and with petrol-consuming, high-speed vehicles and excess violence. *Mad Max* is about them, or what they can easily *Become* and young audiences flocked to see it. Unsurprisingly, the AFC refused to acknowledge this simple truth and refused to finance Miller's film (Murray, Beilby & Mora 1979).

There is a reason why Ozploitations were rejected by the establishment. Laseur (375) argues that 'in a situation where some films are in Tania Modleski's words "engaged in an unprecedented assault on all the bourgeois culture is supposed to cherish" (the nuclear family, law and order and other cornerstones of the middle-class realm), these texts will be marginalised' (Laseur 1992). Staiger, pointing to Centre's tendency to protect its own, writes (19) of 'networks of taste-makers support those who support them. Achieving recognition for marginal approaches is difficult in part because it

threatens the center of power' (Staiger 1985). Backed by media and later by academia, who supported 'meaningful' 'national' oriented films and dismissed genre cinema, a rift emerged between what Centre envisioned as Australian cinema and the Australian audience. Turner (106) argues that film reviewing in Australia supported the anti-commercial conservative aesthetic. Hence, Peter Weir's 'quality' period drama *Gallipoli* was applauded as the 'best film from anywhere', but popular action films like *The Man from Snowy River* were referred to as a 'puffed up horse opera about love in the high country' (Turner 1993). Conversely, despite positive reviews and its official selection to the prestigious Cannes Film Festival, *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* – dealing with indigenous Australians' rights – was a box office disaster (Arrow 2009; Hall 1980).

Bertrand notes (351) that a survey conducted in 1977 by Spectrum Research interviewed one thousand Australians from Sydney and Melbourne. It found that the average Australian was not interested in supporting Australian films; the great majority of interviewees wanted to be entertained and thought that Australian films were poorly produced, inadequately budgeted and stereotypical. Audiences felt safer knowing they were going to a well-publicised, highly-praised overseas production, rather than risking a sub-standard Australian film (Bertrand 1989). O'Regan (1996: 86-87) attributes this attitude to the social similarities between Australia and the U.S., arguing, 'There is not as large a gap between the locally produced cinema and the dominant Hollywood cinema, both share a common language and a raft of common cultural infrastructures' (O'Regan 1996).

Regardless of how narrow the gap was, the Spectrum Research findings reiterate the relevance of *friction I*. Australian audiences persistently avoided Australian cinema. Limited market potential in Australia meant that if Australian films were to succeed, they had to go abroad. *Friction II* is demonstrated in that successful films such as *Mad Max* were rejected by the establishment (government funding bodies and media) for failing to meet 'national' criteria, while films that portrayed a sense of 'Australianness' (AFC genre) such as *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* were shunned by the public. Having failed to achieve its original mandate and pull out of film funding, the Australian government sought better ways of financing Australian cinema.

3.2 The Trials and Tribulations of 10BA

Come the 1980s, the Australian film industry stagnated. As a rule, Australian-conceived and executed films were regularly being made, but profits were not. Despite sporadic commercial successes, Australian films, both arthouse or genre, were rarely profitable and attracted very little private investment. The growing dependence of filmmakers on government funding, combined with a small Australian market and strict AFC requirements for Australian content and labour, made film production a struggling business. Hall (176) wrote, 'no one on the creative production end is making a living out of feature film production , and I mean a *living*, not a *fortune*!' (Hall 1980).

Joseph Skrzynski, a former investment banker, was appointed to head the AFC. Skrzynski's logic was that of a banker, that is, reduce government involvement in film financing and draw in the private sector. In 1978, a new tax incentive of the *Australian Income Tax Assessment Act (1936)*, named 10B, enabled investors and screen producers to claim a 100% tax rebate for film investment for films that met certain requirements such as Australian crews and cast, locations and themes, over a period of two years. A year after 10B was introduced, a report was commissioned by the AFC from Peat, Marwick, Mitchell management consulting services (PMM report), which emphasised the importance of films as commercial rather than artistic entities (Bertrand 1989). In October 1980, Section 10B was amended again. The benefits for tax deduction were raised to 150% tax write off for expenses and for 50% of the profits to be tax free. The new section was named 10BA and remained active, in various forms of refundable claims, until July 2007 when it was officially closed to new applicants and replaced by the current Producer Offset (Screen Australia 2014a).

In terms of film production and box office *per se*, the initiative was a big success, perhaps too big. In the 1970s, the yearly Australian film production averaged 15. In the 1980s, it rose to 27. In 1981/82, an all-time high of more than 40 films were produced; all were genre. In 1979/80, private film investment was \$2 million. By 1984/85, it grew to \$186 million. Financing film projects surged but became driven, and mostly underwritten, by investment bankers rather than film production companies. In 1985/86, about 30,000 investors invested \$130 million in 10BA projects. Out of 146 films that billed domestic gross of more than \$1 million in Australia, ten were Australian and only one, *Alvin Purple*, was made before 1976 (Bertrand 1989). Burt writes (2004: 158) that, at one point, the level of funding for film exceeded the total amount of government funding granted to all other arts combined (Burt 2004). Stratton (5-6) notes that about 270 feature films were made in the 1980s, compared to 110 films in the 1970s. Film companies such as Filmco, UAA, Adams-Packer and Burrows Film Group were formed to take advantage of the new concessions. The AFC estimated the total budget of 10BA productions to be around \$985 million. 'It is not recorded how many of those films wound up in profit – under 10BA, they did not really need to' (Stratton 1990).

The first unnatural boom that resulted from the euphoria with which this tax exemption was received did not persist. Mildly put, 10BA was not a well thought through initiative. Many of the 40 films produced in 1981/82 under the auspice of the 10BA were artistically challenged and achieved very short screening time in cinemas, if any, before disappearing into the abyss of the developing VHS home video market. Many were non-indigenous in the sense envisioned, that is, Australian theme, location, cast and crew, thus failing to contribute to the Australian national identity. This led to fears that Australia would become an offshore branch of Hollywood, specialising in cable fodder.

The more successful 10BA became, the greater the criticism it received. Film production became a means for tax evasion, rather than for supporting filmmakers (Burns & Eltham 2010; Burt 2004; Dermody & Jacka 1988b; Stratton 1990). Bertrand notes (349) that Treasurer John Howard and Robert Ellicott, Minister for Home Affairs, under which 10BA was operating, issued a joint statement: 'Deductions will be available in the year of income in which the capital is actually extended by the investor, e.g. at the time that the money is paid into the relevant production account' (Bertrand 1989). This amendment forced producers to finance, produce and release films within a tight timeframe of a single financial year. As Formica (2011: 55) notes, 'the so-called "twelve-months rule" failed to take into consideration the actual day-to-day needs of film-makers' (Formica 2011). This resulted in a massive shortage of film crews over the given period of several months during actual production and unemployment for the same crews for the rest of the year. Lack of crews meant a cross-industry shortage in skilled labour, failing to produce the 170 films given certification under 10BA. Producers were forced to lobby for the right to import foreign crews. Given the already heated debate with the Actors Equity regarding the practice of hiring international leading cast to improve the film's commerciality, this lobbying undermined the original purpose of 10BA – developing the Australian film industry and market. To accommodate the industry's need for local crews, the AFC set up a training scheme, just to find out that high quality professionals learn their craft over time.

Further government concern about the cost of 10BA concessions saw these progressively reduced, first to 133% write off for expenses and 33% tax free, then to 120% and 20% on profits and finally in 1988 to 100% for expenses. Even at reduced rates, the scheme, with its generous 16.4% and then amended 5.5% tax rebates, favoured affluent Australians who had funds to invest. The Hawke Government (1983-1991) was concerned that the 133/33 deal was costing the Australian Treasury about \$70 Million a year, although Treasury accounting did not consider offsets which were argued to have reduced the revenue loss to \$20 million a year. The government also wanted to reform an unjust tax system by attacking the tax shelter industry. To increase profits, producers had to rely on presales, which altered the dynamics of film production. Distributors demanded creative input to protect their investments, which meant further diminishing 'Australianness', and giving them greater leverage over Australian producers when it came to collect future profits (Bertrand 1989; Moran & Vieth 2005; Stratton 1990).

Problematic as 10BA was in terms of tax evasion, favouritism and execution, the scheme's merits were overlooked at the time; the perception that Australian films were potential blockbusters, hence a profitable business investment, revitalised industry funding. In terms of genre filmmaking and from a pure industrial and infrastructure point of view, 10BA did the film industry a great service. Although many of these films were simply tax minimisation projects, they also provided a training ground for

performers and crew to hone their craft. Thus, in a backdoor way, 10BA achieved some of its goals in increasing short-term cash flow to the film industry, generating work for young filmmakers and building infrastructure (Burns & Eltham 2010; Burt 2004; Formica 2011; Moran & Vieth 2005). Trevisanut (2011) notes that Industrial/infrastructure arguments are usually absent from the pronouncements of academic, government funding bodies and producers, which tend to focus on the quantitative bottom line of production costs, box office takings and ancillary sales (Trevisanut 2011), this information being easily read, quantified, published and manipulated. As Chapters Four and Eight will show, box office charts and weekend opening figures are regularly used by Australian funding bodies to manipulate opinions in their favour, although they mean very little. Infrastructure arguments, which are part of system analysis, are harder to measure and require in-depth understanding of the industry and access to usually inaccessible privileged information.

10BA approached film financing as a business, maximizing profits and lowering costs. It failed to drive and secure the private investment continuity and to develop commercially sustainable screen production in Australia. Once the concessions were dropped, so did the level of private investment. Although inefficient and not fully thought through, 10BA did allow film management companies, specialised investment banks and insurance guarantors to develop. Investment professionals looked at Australian cinema through a business prism of stringent budgets, lack of professional crews, small margins in a small local market, the relatively high cost of prints and advertising (P&A), the fickle nature of public taste and the growing need to expand a film's international presales. It was the 10BA school of thought that allowed for future government and state concession to draw the 1990s international, mainly Hollywood, runaway productions to Australia. Highly technical, visual effects (VFX)-driven films such as *Inspector Gadget 2* (Zamm, 1996), *Dark City* (Proyas, 1997), *Pitch Black* (Twohy, 2000), the *Matrix* trilogy (2000-2003) and *Superman Returns* (Singer, 2006) were produced in Australia using Australian talent. This would not have been possible without developing prior experience through the wider effects of 10BA.

Friction III directly posits government funding against the 10BA. The profit-oriented 10BA funding regarded films as commodities, made by studios or production houses on their own accord. This is the American film system in which government intervenes only when public interests are compromised, or when promoting offensive or age inappropriate material. *Friction III* was never resolved. In real time, the merits and shortcomings of 10BA were not fully thought through. The scheme's operation and regulation issues were not adjusted to market abilities and needs, meaning the problems it created were not addressed. In the high risk and low profit Australian film environment, 10BA never realised its full potential. The Actors Equity/AFC stance supporting Australian labour was a noble idea, but it came with a price tag. As shown, low budgets meant employing inexperienced Australian crews,

resulting in poor technical ability, which further undermined the confidence of Australians in Australian films and hampered their commercial potential. If before the institution of 10BA the captains of the film industry failed to understand the amount of time it takes to properly train professional film crews, they should have understood this in hindsight, after unsuccessfully running the training schemes with the AFC. They did not.

3.3 Battle of the B's: Blockbusters vs. Exploitation Cinema

Toward the end of the 1980s, Ozploitation's time as a defining cinematic movement was running out. The annulment of the 10BA, shifts in public taste, the rise of television and home video, the disappearance of drive-ins and local neighbourhood hardtop cinemas were all contributing factors. Ironically, it was the success of one of their own that drove the stake through exploitation cinema's heart. As with other cinematic processes, the forces that eventually brought down exploitation cinema emerged a decade prior. On 20 June 1975, a little horror film named *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975), opened in North America across on 464 screens: 409 screens in the U.S, the rest in Canada. Not only did *Jaws* open on wide release, but it was also accompanied by an unusually massive, nationwide TV spot campaign. Until that time, wide releases were reserved for potential failures, being a studio attempt to recoup as much revenue on opening weekend before word came out that the film was a dud. Mainstream, solid earners, were usually platform released, opening slowly, gaining critics' approval and word of mouth momentum and expanding to more theatres over time. Critically-acclaimed Oscar-winner *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972) had opened three years earlier on five screens. *Jaws* broke that mould. It earned \$7 million (U.S) over its first weekend, recouped all its production costs by the second and made \$260 million (U.S) before its initial domestic run was over. The first blockbuster was born.

When legendary exploitation producer Roger Corman saw *Jaws*, he understood that exploitation cinema's time was running out, commenting (2011: 206):

It's not only bigger, but it's better. And I thought that with *Jaws* the major studios were starting to cut in to what I'd been doing. A little bit later, *Star Wars* came out. And when I saw *Star Wars*, I thought, my compatriots and I are in trouble. It was clear at this point that the major studios were starting to do what we did a number of years ago, but were doing them bigger (Nasr 2011).

Exploitations worked on a small revenue and high turnover business model. In case of a failure, the lost investment was absorbed by other productions. Footage shot for one production would serve in another. Their low budget demanded contemporary themes to save on costumes and production design. Live action compensated for lack of expensive special effects (SFX). Drive-in culture, habituated by young people looking for a place to congregate, guaranteed an audience and steady income for exhibitors and venues for producers. Essentially, and for all their fancy SFX and wide promotion, blockbusters such as *Jaws* are *über* exploitations, B movies made with an A budget and promoted

accordingly. Escalating production costs and P&A budgets drove producers to heavily invest in effects, grunts and explosions, which translate easily into foreign languages, thus securing their international prospect and now considerably larger overall investment. Former Head of Paramount, Robert Evans, commented (30) that 'the making of a blockbuster is the newest art-form of the 20th-Century' (Shone 2004). Caves (2000: 165) notes that:

The major distributors hence settled into producing primarily what are called high-concept films, meaning that their content and style can be conveyed briefly and unambiguously... The national-saturation release grew to 2,000 screens in the 1980s. National TV advertising campaigns cost \$10 to \$15 million (U.S.), and this method also entails a heavy cost of prints of the film (2,000 at about \$1,200 (U.S) each adds another \$2.4 million (U.S)) (Caves 2000).

Consequently, Balio (1996) argues that booking new releases into 2,000 theatres meant that, on average, production costs rose from around \$9 million (USD) in 1980 to close to \$24 million (USD) in 1989. P&A costs per film tripled to over \$12 million (USD) on average by 1989. Pre-opening weekend advertising for 'event' films was \$10 million (USD) or more. In return, 'ultra-high' grosses were made (Balio 1996).

Blockbusters offered young audiences more entertainment value for their ticket. Proven and bankable stars such as Tom Cruise in *Top Gun* (Scott, 1986), Eddie Murphy in *Beverly Hills Cop* (Brest, 1984) and Sylvester Stallone in *Rocky III* (Stallone, 1982) and *Rambo II* (Cosmatos, 1985) promised multi-million-dollar profits to the studios and in turn were given multi-million-dollar contracts. Hence, 1980s films became star-driven vehicles and production prices soared. Bigger sets and thrills were accompanied by complicated SFXs, multi-channel sound design played on state-of-the-art Dolby surround sound systems and screened in better equipped, air-conditioned cinemas with which drive-ins could not compete.

Blockbusters are by no means personal or unique artistic expression. They are genre based and demand simple, formulated, often known cross-over stories that offer something for everybody. Grandparents are not partial to overt sexuality when taking their grandchildren to multiplexes. Husbands are less inclined to take their wives to a romantic dinner followed by a slasher movie. Most exploitations, by the mere subject matter they exploit – sex, vulgarity, violence, horror or shock – limit their potential demographics. To compete with blockbusters, exploitations needed a wider appeal, but could not provide one. It was not their nature. By the end of the 1980s, blockbusters marked the end of the exploitation and grindhouse cinema era and transferred low-budget genre filmmaking into the direct-to-video market. Australian films, even successful ones, did not achieve the same status American blockbusters received. McFarlane and Mayer note that *Jaws* and *Star Wars*, respectively produced in 1975 and 1977, were still among the top ten 'All-Time Oz Rental Champs' ten years later.

Picnic at Hanging Rock and *Mad Max*, respectively produced in 1975 and 1979, slipped to the 81st and 73rd places (McFarlane & Mayer 1992).

Oddly enough, the turning point for Australian cinema was a well natured, non-offensive, outback ocker comedy, *Crocodile Dundee*. Nothing in its initial making suggested it would become to Australian cinema what *Jaws* had been to Hollywood – a game changer. In monetary terms and international recognition value (system analysis), *Crocodile Dundee* is the most significant Australian film ever shot. Upon its release in 1986, it made \$174,803,506 (USD) in America and an additional \$153,400,000 (USD) globally. In Australia, it took in \$47,707,045 (AUD), a record not broken in 33 years (Box Office Mojo 2015a; Screen Australia 2017c). Hoorn (2015: 122) notes that *Dundee* is also responsible for boosting Australian tourism ‘so much so that Australian tourism officials “talk about visitor figures in terms of BD or AD; that is, before or after *Dundee*”’ (Hoorn 2015).

The cultural impact of *Crocodile Dundee* and its sequel, *Crocodile Dundee II* (Cornell, Turnbull, 1988), on Australian cinematic debate will be further discussed in Chapter Six, but the phenomenal box office success they enjoyed and the fact that were critically well received, both in Australia and internationally, produced an extensive debate among film scholars, eager to join Australia with global trends, making *Dundee* a central reference point when discussing Australian cinema. Rattigan (1988: 153) notes *Dundee*’s paradox:

It seems to be inescapably *Australian*, yet its construction cinematically speaking is American. That is, it is a *Hollywood* film – aesthetically speaking. This may partly explain why the film has been equally popular in the United States. *Crocodile Dundee* doesn’t challenge by its otherness; it confirms by producing an image of Australia, for Americans that is distinct but not different. Other, but not alien (Rattigan 1988).

Rattigan’s assertion is that *Crocodile Dundee* – Australia’s quintessential cultural icon – is not an Australian film, at least not in the sense given thus far. It is neither genre, nor arthouse. Rather, it is a Hollywood blockbuster. As such, it required a distinct kind of storytelling, star power and considerable capital investment and marketing budgets. *Dundee*, accordingly, and untraditionally for an Australian film, had these in abundance and more importantly, upfront. *Dundee* was conceived, co-wrote, starred, and largely financed by Paul Hogan, the most prominent Australian television personality and the most recognised Australian face in America, thanks to a series of television commercials. *Dundee*’s \$8.8 million production budget was very big by Australian standards. Even so, Crofts (1990) details 24 alterations made in *Dundee*, mainly editing out Australian slang and outback imagery to fit the American taste, before it was picked up for distribution by Paramount Pictures, appearing on hundreds of screens in Australia and thousands across the U.S. (Crofts 1990). By adopting American standards of genre and semiotics, *Dundee* was the first film made in Australia that managed to transcend the three inherent frictions plaguing Australian cinema, rendering them irrelevant.

Friction I: In terms of audience reception, *Dundee's* enormous box office revenue and its subsequent retail video sales, dispelled any doubt about the commercial potential of Australian-themed films. It proved that Australian audiences would watch Aussie designated films such as *Dundee's* Australian cut, provided there was a good story and characters they could identify with.

Friction II: Altering a finished film to suit the American market is something that undermines arthouse, but *Dundee* challenged Australian genre filmmaking as well. Post *Dundee*, an Australian theme or setting could no longer be considered a valid excuse for a commercial failure. *Dundee* represented a distinct contemporary Australian imagery and themes. In doing so, it dropped both the argument for 'respectable', that is, non-ocker national themes, as well as the genre argument for losing Australianness to allow a film international commerciality. Rattigan notes (149) that the films preceding *Dundee* tended to present their myths either in terms of 'this is the way we were', or 'this is the way we may be'. *Dundee* bypassed the sense of tentativeness about presenting its Australianness by simply saying 'this is the way we are' (Rattigan 1988).

Indeed, *Dundee* paved the way for three of the few Australian successes of the 1990s, *Strictly Ballroom* (Luhmann, 1992), *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Elliott, 1994) and *Muriel's Wedding* (Hogan, 1994). All similarly address their characters and setting as part of who and what they are. Arrow (158) argues that their success is neither because of nor despite their Australianness. They portray their experience as it is perceived, same as *Dundee* presents its experience. However, she writes, 'while these films harked back to the ocker films in their broad grotesque characterisations, they also offered new ways of seeing Australia in their depiction of suburbanites (and inner-city dwellers) whose life were shaped not by the bush but by popular culture' (Arrow 2009).

Friction III: *Dundee's* bottom line forced Australian producers to recalibrate their funding practices. While Hollywood films were raising their production value, offering better value and expanding their hold on international markets, Australian films could not afford to stay behind. Even *Dundee's* large budget, in Australian terms, was considered small when compared to a standard Hollywood budget. To stay in business, Australian genre cinema needed to raise its budgets and employ star power. Ozploitations' low budgets and production values were rendered obsolete.

3.4 Evolving Standards, Devolving Market

Dundee's success also marked the point where the two strands of Australian cinema – arthouse and genre – co-existing from its revival eventually parted ways. Government-funded films continued to be produced with low budgets, addressing Australian sensibilities and gaining limited to no commercial success. Ozploitation producers, who shared *Dundee's* core perception and cinematic values, but not the same production means, acknowledged that viewers were no longer content with low production

values. Along with the annulment of the 10BA benefits, several other market changes contributed to the demise of Ozploitations.

The 10BA was largely responsible for the developing television mini-series market. O'Regan (1988) notes that in 1987, it was estimated that only three mini-series were produced before 10BA and 50 were made during the 10BA operation. In 1984/85 alone, 24 mini-series were produced for a budget of \$84.4 million (O'Regan 1988). Arrow notes (158-159) that a 35% quota for Australian content, introduced in 1989, made Australian drama commonplace in the 1980s and 1990s. Their limited running times, usually three or four nights, high production values and historical subject matter made them 'event-television' (Arrow 2009). 'Event' labelling, that is, 'important' television guaranteed air-time, market share, high ratings and ensured advertising income. Mini-series affected Ozploitations in two ways. First, they diverted funding from Ozploitations with their constantly narrowing market. Second, mini-series proved to be a safer investment for producers and a stable employment prospect for filmmakers. Ozploitation directors such as Tim Burstall (*Attack Force Z*, 1981), Richard Franklin (*Patrick*, 1978) and Brian Tranchard Smith (*Dead End Drive in*, 1986) transformed their careers to television direction. Others simply vanished.

The downside of this was that mini-series were everything that Ozploitations were not: respectable, popular, well-funded, financially secured and predictable. Television imposed a regimented content and work procedures compared to the creative freedom Ozploitations offered. 'Airable' content demands no profanity, overt sexuality or nudity, refraining from excess violence, gore and blood. Television, especially free-to-air at this point in time, was dependent on income from advertisers who were concerned about preserving their client's brand image, more than the artistic freedom of expression. Dermody and Jacka (1986) write:

The nature of cable television, which – so far, and at least in America – is not very different in audience address and aesthetic style from broadcast TV, makes it likely that the product which is more 'international' in style, more aesthetically and politically conservative, will be preferred because it is more easily sold (Dermody & Jacka 1987).

The film industry personnel's dependence on Australian television assignments for employment also instilled television methods in terms of craft, procedure and bureaucracy. Television scripts entail different kinds of dramatic or comedic arc and demand uncomplex and instantly recognizable situations. Television is shorter and structured for commercial breaks. Television direction means working in the service of the product, with little to no visual or dramatic vision. Stringent budgets and tight deadlines made television productions revert to proven scene coverage, rather than complex cinematography and camera movement with elaborate lighting and setups. Cinematic innovation, or plain disregard for safety regulations when it came to stunts and SFX, were replaced with draconian

insurance policies. All of the above instilled work habits and traditions that are hard to break. Thus, even when drama was finally shot as film, rather than for television, those practices remained. Australian films were made, in essence, as telemovies screened in cinemas. The all-prevalent 'AFC genre' so dominates Australian cinema that it does not even occur to funding bodies, producers and directors that a distinct difference exists between the mediums.

As far as screens were concerned, Australia was always at the cutting edge of the exhibition industry. Verhoeven (2010: 152) notes that as early as the late 1960s Australia already had 'film complexes'. Hoyts Cinema Centre 'complex' in Melbourne, hosting three screens and designed by Peter Muller, was the second to open in the world and 'the following year, Hoyts opened its Entertainment Centre in Sydney, claiming it to be the world's largest at seven screens'. Between 1986 to 1996, Hoyts and Village Cinemas opened more than 40 multiplexes in suburban shopping centres (Verhoeven 2010a). The transition in the second half of the 1980s to multiplexes located in shopping malls dealt another blow for Ozploitations. In addition to their escalating production costs, local producers needed to cover rising exhibition costs, now screened at prime CBD locations. The rapidly regressing number of low-end cinemas, local hardtops and drive-in exhibition venues was affected by the rising sales of VCRs. Caves writes that in 1983, distributors obtained 39.2% of their revenue from theatrical releases, 13.4% from videocassettes and 47.4% from television screening. By 1993, these figures had respectively become 18.6%, 47.7% and 33.7% (Caves 2000). Australia was no different. O'Regan notes (121) that outside the first circle of theatrical release, which was reserved for the inner-city cinemas, releasing a film on videocassette was killing the general release and drive-ins.

In 1979, the first year that VCRs were nationally sold across Australia, the total domestic video sales amounted to \$30 million. By 1983, the total domestic sales approached \$1 billion. By 1985, 50% of households in Australia had a VCR. Personal admission fees to drive-ins or cinemas were substituted by young audiences for the shared price of a single video rental. Migrants, traditionally customers of local hard-tops, were able to watch films in their own native tongue. Between January 1982 and July 1986, almost 200 cinemas and drive-in closed (Caves 2000). Even pornography, the bastard child of filmmaking, found a better distribution with VCR. Australian connoisseurs could get their taste for the real thing in the dark privacy of their home, soon becoming 'around 30 per cent of feature-film sales or rentals' (Collins 1987).

3.5 Introducing the Responsible Adult: The FFC

Throughout the 1980s, the AFC continued to finance films by 1970s standards. Its members watched how their overseas offices in Britain and America are used by independent Australian producers while AFC's role diminishes to that of a cultural supplier for Australian film weeks and festivals. 'AFC's reputation in the industry has suffered a decline', notes Stratton (11), 'there was a fear that the

government (at the time a Liberal Government under Malcolm Fraser) would tire of funding the AFC' (Stratton 1990). Formica (48-49) notes that 'the AFC was effectively self-congratulatory with respect to its own practices and avoiding scrutiny of adherence to *its own recommendations*' (Formica 2011). To protect their own position, AFC personnel strived to terminate the competing 10BA. In January 1987, David Court, an AFC policy advisor, published a 'Supplementary Paper' after his previous suggestion to annul the 10BA was rejected. This time, Court proposed the FFC as a 'film bank'. Productions that managed to get initial finance, usually to the sum of 35% of the proposed budget, would receive the rest from the FFC in return for an ownership stake and a cut of the film's future profits.

The AFC discussion paper advocated a national bank that would be responsible for nurturing cultural as well as commercial enterprises. In a correspondence with Burns and Eltham (4), Court explains that:

The idea was that it would be market-driven, that is, responsive to the investment decisions of distributors, sales agents, TV networks etc. But it was understood to require continuing subsidy. The FFC was a model for delivering that subsidy (Burns & Eltham 2010).

This statement is false. FFC was not discussed as a 'subsidy delivery' mechanism, but solely as a film bank, that is, a commercial entity. Court (1987: 14) wrote about his proposal:

Decisions would be made in a commercial context: matching budgets against known or researched market potential, 'discounting' presale and distribution agreements, and potentially offering a full complement of merchant banking services (Court 1987).

Nowhere else in the literature reviewed is there a reference to FFC, but as a film bank. Rayner (2000: 131) notes that the AFC circulated a discussion document calling for 'the establishment of a national film bank', which would 'make investments in Australian films (as certified by the minister) on a purely commercial basis, but it would be able to scrutinise budgets and costs in a way not possible under 10BA' (Rayner 2000). Stratton notes (377) that Kim Williams, former head of the AFC and the FFC's first chair (1988-1990), assured that 'the FFC has no creative involvement in the films. Filmmakers must accept responsibility for the films that are made' (Stratton 1990). French (2001: 9) wrote that 'it was intended that the FFC would fund commercially viable films and it was hoped that these films would return enough of their investment to become at least partly self-sustaining' (French 2001). Dermody and Jacka (1988: 20) argue that 'the announcement of the corporation was made purely in financial terms, there was little or no debate about the cultural and aesthetic consequence of the system it was replacing' (Dermody & Jacka 1988a). Further, in an open article to the industry, Clyde Holding (1989: 36), Minister for the Arts, argued that the rationale behind the decision was to adopt better governmental funding control, adding:

There would be no more budget blowouts; a film bank can be selective in what it funds. It can set minimum criteria and assess projects as competing priorities for a limited money supply. Production budgets can no longer be padded out with unnecessarily large fees. Raising finance will no longer be in itself such as expensive venture... Stopping short of actually making the films ourselves, I think this Government has made a substantial contribution to kick-starting the film industry and providing a stable base for growth and development (Holding 1989).

The only problem was that the FFC formation was not Holding's decision. Formica (51) notes that Australian film producers were suspicious and critical about the 'state of affairs of the Australian film industry'. Their concerns stemmed from unnecessary bureaucratic difficulties that plagued the 10BA scheme and the unwelcome interference of the AFC in production matters and creative decisions that should have been left to producers (Formica 2011).

As will be established in Chapter Four, those suspicions proved to be completely founded. Phillip Adams – the author of the original report from 1969 which led to the establishment of the AFDC and a long-time AFC player who produced *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* and *We of the Never Never* (Auzins, 1982) – had a very different perspective on the events leading to the FFC's formation. Adams told Barlow (1991: 39):

Kim Williams [first FFC Chairman] and I sorted it [the FFC] out over lunch in Sam Chisholm's office. We had previously tried about 50 other formulas but could never get the Minister to agree. We had a wonderful replacement for 10BA going back as far as the Tax Summit. The FFC was our baby. We by-passed the Arts Minister and went straight to Keating. Had Keating not been Treasurer at the time, and had we not taken this tactic [which scandalized the political process], the FFC never would have happened... They talked figures to each other and I did the politics. It was a political miracle at a time when everything was being cut to the marrow (Barlow 1991a).

After a long industry debate and after involving itself in policy matters to protect its own interests, the government accepted AFC's recommendation to establish the FFC. Its initial yearly budget was \$70 million, which was less than half of the \$150 million 10BA was argued to cost and this budget was to be progressively reduced as its investments began to generate returns and it became self-sufficient (Rayner 2000; Stratton 1990). And so, in keeping with Michels' *Iron Law of Oligarchy* where Centralised elites act to preserve their own power and with a declared financial orientation, the FFC came to be.

Chapter Four

FFC's Crying Game:

The Demise of Australian Cinema 1988–2008

In 2008, just before closing its doors and merging with other film agencies to form the new Screen Australia, the FFC attached to its last annual report a picture-filled, graphically-enhanced, glossy white on black and red chromo booklet, modestly titled *1988 – 2008: A Celebration of Twenty Years* (2008). The FFC's mission was described (14) as 'strengthening a sense of Australian' identity by 'Entertaining and informing audiences with a diversity of Australian programs; Enhancing the commercial viability of Australia's independent screen production sector and showcasing Australia's screen production industry to the world... Our Mission', ends the quote, 'completed' (Film Finance Corporation 2008a). Chapter Four examines how complete FFC's mission was.

4.1 Popcorn Merchants, Jetsetters, and Dreamers: The FFC Partnership

In October 1987, a global financial crisis hit economies around the world. On average, worldwide stock prices fell by 25%. In Australia, they fell by 40%. By the beginning of the 1990s, 17 of the 18 members of the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) went through a period of economic recession. With a struggling economy and reduced 10BA rebates, private film investment, a risky business in the best of times, became rare in the 1990s, shrinking the Australian film industry. In 1990/91, 27 films were made, these having a total budget of \$113 million. In 1992/93, 23 Australian films were made, these having total budget of \$63 million. Despite rising production costs, film budgets remained almost the same. The average budget for an Australian feature shot in the 1980s (adjusted to 1997 dollars) was \$3.6 million. The average for 1996/97, for example, was \$3.8 million. Private film funding was cut in half. In 1990/91, 15 Australian films raised \$45.7 million under the 10BA scheme. In 1999/2000, only seven films used 10BA to raise \$20.4 million. The economic recession also affected television. Two major television networks, Seven and Ten, went into receivership. A third, Channel Nine, was sold, restructured and downsized. The tele-movie and mini-series market for television, which had thrived under 10BA, dried up (Maher 2004; O'Regan 1995b; Reid 1999).

With private investment virtually gone, Australian filmmakers were left with two strategies: international co-production or approaching investors for initial, limited, production budget and relying on the FFC for the rest. Some managed to raise off-shore funding. *Green Card* was a French/Australian co-production, *Black Robe* (Beresford, 1992) was an Australian/Canadian co-production and *Until the End of the World* (Wenders, 1991) was an Australian/German/French co-production. Screen Australia (2012) notes that following the signing of the Australia/Canada agreement in 1990, four of six co-

production made in 1990/91 were with Canada (Screen Australia 2012). These co-productions mostly resulted in arthouse films with limited commercial success. Most Australian filmmakers had to look elsewhere.

By the beginning of the 1990s, FFC proved to be the main source of finance for Australian filmmakers. The FFC budget (2002) reveals that in 1988/89, its first year of operation, it invested \$19,149,449 in six feature films, accounting for 68% of their budgets. By 2000/01, the FFC invested \$32,348,527 in feature films, which accounted for 55% of their budget. Between 1988-2000, FFC invested a cumulative \$372,551,991 which accounted for 56.1% of the production budget of 148 Australian films (Film Finance Corporation 2002). French (20) argues that, 'this level of investment suggested something of the AFFC's intended role, namely to function as a sort of film bank, offering loans at preferential rates and enjoying the right of "with profit" participation in the projects invested in' (French 2001).

As demonstrated in Chapter Three, even well-funded Australian films are low budget compared to Hollywood films. Between 1990/91–1997/98, 85% of Australian films were made with a budget of under \$6 million. 30% of the Australian films were made for \$3-\$6 million (high Australian production value), 27% were made for \$1-\$3 million (mid-range Australian production value) and 28% were made under \$1 million (low Australian production value). The last category of under \$1 million dollars, writes Reid (18), is the 'province of emergent filmmakers' who, to begin with, have very limited box office potential (Reid 1999). In 1999/00, aside from *Moulin Rouge!* (Luhmann, 2001), all Australian features were made for under \$6 million, with 42% being made for less than \$1 million. Hollywood continued to dominate the Australian cine market. All top five box-office grossing films in Australia in 1999 came from the U.S. and grossed more than \$20 million in Australia. The average budget of those Hollywood films was \$81 million (\$52.7 million U.S.) per production, compared to the 24 Australian films released the same year for an average production budget of \$3.1 million (Australian Film Commission 2000; Maher 2004).

The production financing matrix also changed. Prior to the FFC's formation in 1988, the responsibility for Australian film financing was divided. AFC and state agencies gave qualifying films limited assistance. The AFC mainly helped with development funds or by giving initial financial support. State agencies propelled their local economy by assisting with location permits or by insisting on local production and post-production facilities. Once a film was finished, government involvement ended, save for sending prints to film festivals. 10BA's role was to facilitate producers sourcing private investment with marketing and distribution being left to them. The advent of the FFC changed this *modus operandi*.

To qualify for FFC assistance, producers first had to demonstrate a film's financial potential by raising around 35% of its budget. Only then did the FFC finance the remaining 65%. This demand altered the balance of power in the film financing market. Maddox (1996) notes that, in a crippled economy, producers were approaching corporate executives to finance films instead of investment bankers, who under the 10BA concessions were able to raise those sums from a larger number of small private investors (Maddox 1996). This meant that production feasibility, decisions and responsibilities were effectively transferred from producers, private investors and bankers to distributors and exhibitors – the only entities willing to finance films upfront – and then to the FFC. Demanding presales as proof of commerciality embodies two assumptions:

1. Distributors' or exhibitors' willingness to deposit funds upfront equals proof of the film's potential market success.
2. Distributors' or exhibitors' motivation to deposit funds upfront, as opposed to a finished film, is identical or even resembles that of the FFC, that is, both parties will invest the same effort in promoting the film.

Both assumptions proved false. First, exhibitors' motivation for investing in film stems from a completely different source to market feasibility. Unlike producers, who are invested in a film's outcome and rely on ticket sales to make their profit, the bulk of exhibitors' profits does not come from screening films, but from selling popcorn and soft drinks. Epstein (2006) argues that to achieve this goal, exhibitors cannot afford to screen Australian films if they do not generate sufficient revenue, regardless of their positive reviews. Should they fail to provide those, they are promptly moved to smaller auditoriums, their screenings sessions reduced or simply cancelled (Epstein 2006). By investing upfront in Australian films, exhibitors take part in the Australian film community, but unlike the FFC, they are secured financially. Should the film prove a success, they collect first cut from both the box office and earnings, and from future profits. Should the film fail, as it almost always did, exhibitors still take first cut from the box office, which recoups some of their investment and the rest is just written off as a relatively small, bad investment, being deducted from other taxable earnings. Instead of paying the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), exhibitors invest in films.

The second assumption that film promotion – a lengthy and costly project, relying mainly on excellent connection with exhibitors – will be approached with the same enthusiasm by distributors and the FFC was no more than wishful thinking. Gillezeau (2004: 40) writes, 'they often put up the least money, are first in line for any receipts or income and jet around the world going to fabulous film and TV markets at your expense. Consequently, some independent filmmakers see distributors as little more than a necessary evil' (Gillezeau 2004). By requiring presales for further funding and then trading

funding for an imaginary equity, the Australian government was no longer aiding filmmakers from the sidelines. Unwisely, by the early 1990s the Australian government, via the FFC, became *de facto* executive producer for Australian cinema; business partner to dreamers, popcorn merchants and jetsetters. The state funds in NSW, Queensland and Victoria and the AFC's 'special production fund' soon followed. Burns and Eltham (4) note that the long-term effect was that Australian film production became 'overwhelmingly taxpayer-financed' (Burns & Eltham 2010).

4.2 American Dreaming: Hollywood, Indies, and Aussie films

During the 1990s, the U.S. film market underwent significant changes that influenced Australian cinema. American independent distribution companies such as Miramax, New Line Cinema and October Films, specializing in American independents films (indies) came to prominence. The Sundance Film Festival became the primary vetting platform for international arthouse cinema, showcasing clever, low budget, films such as *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (Soderbergh, 1989), *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino, 1992) and *Clerks* (Smith, 1994). Miramax also tapped into the small, inexpensive arthouse niche with films such as *The Crying Game* (Jordan, 1992) and *Shine* (Hicks, 1996), making both into box office hits and Oscar winners. Their success led the major studios to invest substantially in arthouse films, which led to increased competition. Australian films, traditionally arthouse and small budget, were directly affected from these changes.

As demonstrated at the end of Chapter Three, the FFC's original role was that of a film bank, assessing commercial viability of a project and investing funds in its production, *c'est tout*. However, the Australian film exhibition market offered Australian films very little returns. Australian film distribution was limited to under 25 prints, or above 75 prints for a potential hit. Generally, Australian films were sent to film festivals to generate some attention and hopefully secure a distribution deal in several territories. Only then was a small number of prints released in multiplexes or in specialised arthouse cinemas for a second run. Costly advertising campaigns were kept to a minimum as was the potential profit. The earnings, in the rare case of a hit, were roughly divided between the exhibitor who took 33%-40%, all the advances to the distributor and only then was the rest passed to the investors and creators of the film. Ancillary returns from TV and foreign countries took at least four years before full recoupment could be achieved (French 2001; Reid 1999). As will be demonstrated later, four year recoupment is extremely unlikely. Even so, it would take the FFC at least five years (four years of recoupment plus a minimum one year of production) to collect equity of any description on its film investments. Meanwhile, it needed to keep investing directly in production costs and incurred management costs (indirect investment) for its former investments, undermining its financial impartiality.

This fared poorly. Table 4.1 – ‘Cumulative Investment from 1988/89 — 2007/08’ – in the FFC’s final annual report (2008b: 30) reveals a declared loss of 80% on all of its investments. In 20 years, the FFC invested \$1,345,759,566 in 1,165 projects (feature films, adult and children’s television and documentaries), but recouped only \$274.2 million (20.34%) on all its productions. Its explanation of these poor results is obscurely phrased and reveals a consistent pattern of avoiding any specific information about its activities. Consider this excerpt (14) from the 2007/8 report:

The level of recoupment to the FFC depends on the quality and marketability of the finished product, the level of presales, the degree of subordination by the FFC to other investors and how lucrative the territories are from which the FFC recoups its investment. Despite the tight international marketplace and the strong Australian dollar, the FFC achieved an increase in net recoupment from last year... Feature films generated \$6.19 million (68%) of the FFC’s recoupment for the year (Film Finance Corporation 2008b).

Table 4.1 – FFC Cumulative Investment from 1988/89 – 2007/08

INVESTMENT OVERVIEW					
CUMULATIVE INVESTMENTS FROM 1988/89 — 2007/08					
YEAR OF INVESTMENTS	NO. OF PROJECTS	PRODUCTION SLATE (\$)	FFC INVESTMENT (\$)	NON-FFC INVESTMENT (\$)	NON-FFC INVESTMENT (%)
1988/89	34	69,021,178	38,934,579	30,086,599	43.6
1989/90	57	179,956,214	78,423,725	101,532,489	56.4
1990/91	41	136,365,628	64,053,389	72,312,239	53.0
1991/92	51	113,487,600	65,333,689	48,153,911	42.4
1992/93	65	109,823,210	67,583,315	42,239,895	38.5
1993/94	59	103,858,513	68,025,916	35,832,597	34.5
1994/95	63	119,078,549	70,517,086	48,561,463	40.8
1995/96	62	142,703,888	72,522,143	70,181,745	49.2
1996/97	54	90,005,407	49,880,465	40,124,942	44.6
1997/98	58	128,674,593	69,169,040	59,505,553	46.2
1998/99	55	108,309,251	53,075,685	55,233,566	51.0
1999/00	65	135,384,816	72,463,735	62,921,081	46.5
2000/01	48	131,762,254	62,454,107	69,308,147	52.6
2001/02	54	109,948,356	56,471,442	53,476,914	48.6
2002/03	53	150,977,194	68,643,747	82,333,447	54.5
2003/04	56	134,584,269	62,516,864	72,067,405	53.5
2004/05	66	232,252,491	89,570,633	142,681,858	61.4
2005/06	64	186,953,513	76,692,424	110,261,089	59.0
2006/07	74	198,006,126	73,990,566	124,015,560	62.6
2007/08	86	291,462,491	85,437,015	206,025,476	70.7
TOTAL	1,165	2,872,615,541	1,345,759,566	1,526,855,975	53.2

Altogether, the FFC invested \$622,140,816 (46.9%), in 248 Australian films. If FFC’s average investment is around 50% of the budget, why does its recoupment hinge on the ‘degree of subordination to other investors’? The 2007/08 annual report does not indicate how much of an ‘increase in net recoupment from last year’ was received, not as part of the investment overview or as a separate recoupment table. The figure ‘\$6.19 million recoupment’ is given as text on page 14, not

as part of the table located on page 30. Fine print, at the bottom of the chart, states that 'excluded are production loans, print and advertising loans and Film Fund projects', without specifying what that amount is, what projects received these loans, or if they were ever returned.

Reading the FFC table of investments raises basic, factual, questions:

1. How many of the 248 films produced by the FFC over its 20 years returned their full original investment and what were their titles?
2. How many and what titles generated 68% of the 2007/08 recoupment?
3. What was their production year?
4. What was the sum total invested in those production and P&A loans and Film Fund projects?
5. Were those loans and projects paid back, and if so, when?

There are numerous examples of factual vagueness in the report, all leading to the conclusion that basic information is withheld. The FFC's lack of transparency is a consistent pattern. Barlow notes (30) that 'FFC Chief Executive John Morris informed me that I had to approach the individual producers of each film, even though the information I required was fairly basic (final budgets, release dates, box office takings, casting, etc.)' (Barlow 1991b). Maddox (1996) argues that ignoring the FFC's responsibility for public funds began with the Australian government's 1992 'Moving Pictures Inquiry', which excluded any in-depth discussion into FFC's investment process. *Strictly Ballroom's* unexpected success was harnessed by the FFC to divert criticism from leading directors and other industry players who favoured the competing 10BA. A second parliamentary review, conducted in 1995, did not limit itself to examining the FFC's poor financial investments, but also considered its ability to achieve the Keating government's 'cultural objective' (Maddox 1996). McKenzie and Walls (2013: 275), who examined the FFC films' performance, note that their data is partial and collected from publicly available annual reports 'along with spotty coverage of other film covariates (e.g. budget and advertising)' (McKenzie & Walls 2013). Burns and Eltham write (9):

A true investment bank would have demonstrated more regular and transparent reporting and feedback mechanisms on recoupment targets and it would also have endured significant commercial pressures as the losses stacked up – pressures the FFC largely avoided, perhaps because of its tacit role as a government owned industry financier. This omission may have inadvertently influenced the FFC's organisational evolution as a – quasicommercial entity (Burns & Eltham 2010).

The FFC, suffice to reiterate, was founded as a commercial bank, but operated as a private enterprise, skilfully avoiding government scrutiny. This resulted, for example, in lack of definitive answers to the basic question of how many of the 248 films produced by the FFC recouped their budget. Only in 2017 – ten years after the FFC was shut down – was Screen Australia willing to release the films' titles,

without *any* additional information, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight. Before this time, the exact number was estimated to range between eleven and thirteen titles, which include *Green Card*, *The Adventures Of Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert*, *Muriel's Wedding*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Shine*, *Two Hands* (Jordan, 1999), *Chopper* (Dominik, 2000), *The Wog Boy* (Vellis, 2000), *Looking For Alibrandi* (Woods, 2000), *The Man Who Sued God* (Joffe, 2001), *Lantana* (Lawrence, 2001), *Rabbit Proof Fence* (Noyce, 2002) and *Crackerjack* (Moloney, 2002). French notes (23) that by 1996/97, the FFC had already financed 111 feature films of which only five went into profit: *Green Card*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Muriel's Wedding*, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *Shine* (French 2001). With the possible exception of *Green Card*, all the other films are 'sleepers', surprise commercial hits that no one, including the FFC's management, could predict. A hit rate of less than 5% over a period of ten years (1988–1997) based on sheer luck – especially in the case of *Shine*, heavily promoted by Miramax to win an Oscar – suggests that the FFC failed to act as a viable financial institution, its *raison d'être*. Maher notes (11) a consistent decline in FFC recoupment from mid-1990s onward, yet even this did not change investment policy (Maher 2004).

Table 4.2 – FFC Recoupment from 1996/97 – 1999/2000

Financial Year	FFC Recoupment (millions)
1996/97	12.1
1997/98	9.1
1998/99	7.1
1999/2000	3.7

Craik (1997) notes that the Howard government was elected in 1996 with a declared intention of cutting government spending. David Gonski was appointed to chair an investigation into film production. His approach was to downplay the Keating government's 'screen culture' policy and examine filmmaking on a business basis and in terms of its export potential (Craik 1997). Gonski's review into tax loopholes caused producers to fear a government excuse to cut down on its spending. Special concern was given to Section 51.1 of the Tax Act, which afforded Australian investment in American films via section 10B of the act, under the pretence of foreign business investment. 10B had less stringent local content and residency requirements than the widespread 10BA concession. For example, in 1993, Paul Hogan used section 10B to finance his film *Lightning Jack* (Wincer, 1994). Hogan raised \$35 million (\$24 million USD) in the Australian stock exchange and shot his film in the U.S. with an American cast using Australian funding and claimed tax benefits.

Although Gonski opposed what he saw as an excuse to invest in Hollywood films, he did not recommend the annulment of Section 51.1, mainly because it also served as a legitimate business tool used by many Australian companies to claim deductions on expenditure incurred in producing taxable income (Groves 1997; Murdoch 1993). Eventually, writes French (28), Gonski recommended the current broad 'funding envelope' for the film and television industry continue for five years. Additionally, he proposed the Film Licence Investment Scheme (FLIC) to lure back private investors reluctant to invest in Australian films after the annulment of the 10BA incentives. Investors' reluctance resulted in Australian films being insufficiently financed, with their poor preproduction and production values partly accounting for their low commercial success, which in turn drove private investors away. In November 1997, Gonski's new FLIC scheme aimed 'to raise capital of up to \$20 million a year' in providing 'a 100 per cent tax concession to investors in companies... licensed to invest in a slate of film and television production' was introduced (French 2001). As with the FFC's equity plan, this scheme proved too optimistic for the actual state of market investment.

Maher writes (9), 'the pilot Film Licensed Investment Company (FLIC) scheme had raised \$22.4 million in private sector investment as of 30 June 2000. Considerably short of the \$40 million permitted'. By 1999/00, Australian feature film production continued to decline. Sales to foreign markets diminished as government and private sector investment contracted. The annual number of Australian-produced films dropped from 41 in 1998/99 to 31 in 1999/00. The level of foreign investment in Australian feature productions, however, eclipsed both government and private investment. In 1997/98, it represented 64% of the total feature film investment and 66% in 1999/00 (Maher 2004). The Australian film industry was looking outward to Hollywood.

4.3 Runaways' Run: Aussiewood

The economic recession of the early 1990s had an upside for the Australian film industry. A devalued Australian dollar, trading at 50¢ USD, saw Hollywood studios eager to cut costs look to Australia. Yale (2012) defines runaway productions as Hollywood film and television productions outsourced to foreign locations. Often these were high-end, VFX-driven films, which require adequate production facilities and extensive, time-consuming, postproduction labour and expertise, driving up production budgets (Yale 2012). Miller and Ledger (2001) note that thirty-one national film commissions were set up across the globe between 1990 and 1998, many with sole concern of attracting foreign capital. American production budgets translated into direct financial investment and employment for professional crews and also provided a financial boost for supporting industries such as construction and hospitality. They write (106):

Runaway TV and film production from the United States amounted to \$500m (USD) in 1990 and \$2.8bn (USD) in 1998. By the end of the 1990s, it was allegedly costing LA another \$7.5bn (USD) annually in multiplier effects, plus

20,000 jobs. Hollywood's proportion of overseas productions went from 7% of its total to 27%, according to a study undertaken by the Monitor Group for the Directors and Screen Actors Guilds. Eighty-one percent of runaways went to Canada, a total of 232 in 1998 compared to 63 in 1990 (Miller & Ledger 2001).

Australia actively pursued Hollywood productions. A U.S. Department of Commerce committee (2000) looking into the subject of American runaway productions found that Ausfilm – the Australian government's organisation tasked with promoting filming in Australia – engaged Hollywood productions. It noted that Australians argue that the entertainment business is an international one and that the U.S. should expect to share production with other countries (Australian Film Commission 2002a; U.S. Department of Commerce 2000). This argument was not reserved for Australians. 'Internationalism' was the 1990s Australian cinema's axiom as government and state officials offered local production incentives, subsidies and preferential tax rates to lure American investment. O'Regan (1995) notes that between the 1988/89 and 1992/93 financial years, foreign investment amounted to 39% of the total budget of feature film, television drama and documentaries in Australia. The government agencies invested additional 33% and local broadcasters, distributors and private investors accounted for the other 28%. In this period, twenty-eight foreign films were fully shot in Australia for a budget of \$289 million, thirty-three productions were shot overseas for a budget of \$289 million, and twelve official co-productions were shot for a budget of \$113 million (O'Regan 1995b).

The devalued Australian dollar, trading at 62¢ on the American dollar, cheaper labour and construction materials, combined with an active approach from Australian state governments proved attractive for runaways. The Warner-Roadshow partnership was established on the Gold Coast with a soft loan and a long-term lease at a favourable rate from the Queensland State Government. Docklands Studio in Melbourne was projected to receive at least \$40 million over a 20-year period from the Victoria State Government. *The Matrix* (The Wachowskis, 1999) was shot in Fox's Sydney studios, opened in May 1998 at an estimated cost of \$200 million with the generous help of the New South Wales State Government. High-profile blockbusters like *The Matrix* and *Mission Impossible: 2* (Woo, 2000) saved Warner Bros. and Paramount Studios respectively up to 30% compared to Los Angeles production prices. Local film industry employment rose from 5,998 in 1994 to 15,191 in 2000. The AFC estimated that the global U.S. runaway production annual worth in 1998/99 was \$1.7-\$2.8 billion (USD). The value of the aggregated budget spent on film and television productions in Australia was \$118 million (USD), which amounted to 4-7% of the budget spent that year (Australian Film Commission 2002b; Burns & Eltham 2010; French 2001; Newman 2008a).

As with the AFC's commercial orientation, the move toward 'internationalism' and pursuing American runaways could not cover the inherent *frictions* within the Australian film industry. Claims resurfaced

that American productions employed local crews in secondary positions, using Australia as a back-lot location rather than an equal supplier of talent. Herbert Pinter, a production designer from Queensland, told *The Economist* (1998) 'the Americans call Australians "Mexicans with mobiles" these days. They treat us really as a third-world country, because we're cheap, but we also have the technical skills' (The Economist 1998). An AFC research report (35-36) found that 69% of Australians working for foreign productions were discontent; 45% resented being treated like 'cogs in the wheel' while only 28% felt they were involved in decision-making and creative processes (Australian Film Commission 2002a). Herd (2004: 28) comments, 'in an analysis of the key production credits of 13 foreign features and 31 foreign television dramas shot in Australia between 1996 and 2001 has shown that only 47% of credited roles on feature films and 62% on television dramas were occupied by Australians' (Herd 2004).

For some, 47% participation in prestigious Hollywood productions such as *The Matrix* or *Mission: Impossible 2* afforded personnel and crews higher wages and firsthand experience, working on cutting-edge, high-budget blockbusters. Others saw only longer working days and occupational health and safety hazards. Although unions negotiated overtime wages for the 12-hour American workday, compared to the 10-hour Australian standard (Australian Film Commission 2002a), strong forces within the Australian film community still considered the government agencies as meta-union bodies, geared to protect Australian employment. Internationalism and off-shore capital raises *frictions II* and *II*. Here, Moran and Vieth note that the issue of film's 'Australianness' was more than an academic debate about nationality, determining which films qualified for government funding (Moran & Vieth 2005). The AFC (2002: 328) offered the following definitions for Australian related productions:

Australian: those produced under the creative control of Australians; Co-productions: those in which creative control is shared between Australians and foreign producers. These may be official co-productions, but not exclusively so, since treaties are not required for two producers to co-operate; Foreign productions: those made under foreign creative control, but shot substantially in Australia (Australian Film Commission 2002b).

However, the AFC neglected to specify what 'creative control' constituted. Herd writes (xvi) that usually it was understood to be the 'essential decisions about the creative direction of the film or television program' (Herd 2004). The AFC's definitions received a well-earned wave of public and academic criticism. Ward noted that productions like *Moulin Rouge*, *Babe* (Noonan, 1995) and *Peter Pan* (Hogan, 2003), creatively directed by Australians, were qualified as Australian yet funded by offshore capital with an orientation to the international market (Ward 2004). Others (Barlow 1991a; Moran & Vieth 2005; Murray 1995) note *Green Card* as the prime example of this contradiction in being a French/Australian co-production, shot in New York, starring French actor Gerard Depardieu and American actor Andy McDowell, with only post-production done in Sydney. The AFC recognised

it as Australian. Murray (1995: 5) asks ‘what has an essentially bureaucratic ruling to do with the renegade world of cinema?’ (Murray 1995). John Morris, the FFC’s Chief Executive reasoned his investment (34) as follows:

Peter was the writer, the director and the co-producer of that film. He chose to tell a story set in New York about an American and a Frenchman, but it’s an Australian story. If you look at the film, it doesn’t look like an American film, it looks like a Peter Weir film. Peter is an Australian, so it’s an Australian film (Barlow 1991a).

Another example is *Dark City* (Proyas, 1998), an Australian futuristic noir-sci-fi film that predates *The Matrix* by a year. *Dark City* was shot in Sydney’s Fox Studios for a budget of \$27 million (USD). Proyas, an AFTRS graduate, wrote, directed and produced this film and met AFC criteria of funding, although *Dark City* had nothing to do with Australia. It starred Britain’s Rufus Sewell, with Americans William Hurt, Kiefer Sutherland and Jennifer Connelly in other main roles and is set in a generic noir city. Australians were cast in secondary roles and the post-production was done in Australia. Proyas candidly noted (188) that ‘the film is very strongly set in an American context... I’ve never had any real interest in making an “Australian film”’ (O’Regan & Venkatasawmy 1999). Contrastingly, *Fortress* (Gordon, 1993), a futuristic American escape-from-prison genre film, did not get AFC approval and was rendered a foreign production. *Fortress* was produced by an Australian company, Village Roadshow. Production and post-production were entirely done in Queensland by Australian cast and crews. It starred American Christopher Lambert. What made *Fortress* foreign and *Dark City* Australian? O’Regan notes (7) that, ‘blockbuster action features like *Fortress* (1993), *Sniper* (1994), *Escape from Absolon* (1994) and *Street Fighter* (1995) – have been, by and large, quarantined from being seen as part of the Australian cinema’ (O’Regan 1995b).

This is the crux of *friction II*. All of O’Regan’s examples are un-shamefully genre, echoing *Dark City* and *Green Card*. However, where the latter were made by members of the old boys clubs, crafting ‘quality’ filmmaking, *Street Fighter*’s (de Souza, 1994) source material was a computer game and starred Belgian Jean-Claude Van Damme, thus being considered foreign pulp. Goldsmith (2010: 203) argues that the citizenship/residency of Australian-ness renders qualitative judgements about the subject matter of the work meaningless. The ‘significant Australian content test’, he writes, ‘privileges certain roles and emphasizes “creative control” by Australians’ (Goldsmith 2010). The Significant Australian Content (SAC) will further be debated in Chapter Eight but determining what does ‘Australian’ actually mean was never resolved.

4.4 Over the Border: Blockbuster Trade War

By the beginning of the 2000s, the Australian film industry was, as usual, struggling. Reasons for this varied from global and American market changes following 9/11, rising production costs due to the appreciation of the Australian dollar, tougher regional competition from New Zealand and effective

American trade union campaigns making runaways come home. As the exhibition industry grew in number of screens, new releases and cinema attendance, Australian interest in Australian films, that is *friction I*, continued to decline.

Hollywood exports continued to expand during the early 2000s. In 2002, Hollywood box office increased by 13.2% overall – the biggest growth in two decades. International revenue was \$9.64 billion (USD) – up 20% to 2001. From 2000 to 2005, audiovisual exports increased by 20%. In 2005, the entertainment industry's trade surplus was \$9.5 billion and amounted to 12% of the entire U.S. private-sector service trade surplus, bigger than the combined balance of the telecommunications, computer and information industries. In 2007, the entertainment industry's trade surplus was \$15 billion in exports, 23% higher than in 2006 and the highest since tracking began (McDonald 2011; Miller & Maxwell 2006). Not everyone was enthusiastic about these results. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and the Directors Guild of America (DGA) commissioned the Monitor Group Report, which showed that since the beginning of the 1990s, the U.S. economy lost \$10.3 billion (USD) to global productions (Conley & Simmens 2001). Data collected by the Centre for Entertainment Industry Data and Research (CEIDR 2006) found that the global production expenditure surged from \$788 million (USD) in 1998 to \$2.496 billion (USD) in 2005. The U.S. market share of blockbuster production budgets fell from 76% in 1998 to 43% in 2005. Concurrently, global blockbuster production budgets surged from 24% to 57%. The value of blockbuster budgets exceeding \$50 million (USD) rose by 33% from \$3.287 billion (USD) in 1998 to \$4.363 billion (USD) in 2005. In the U.S., it fell by 25% from \$2.499 billion (USD) to \$1.867 billion (USD) (Centre for Entertainment Industry Data and Research 2006).

Canada, which received 80% of the runaway production budgets, was at the centre of a trade war. SAG and DGA formed an alliance with other labour guilds to promote the 'U.S. Independent Film and Television Act of 2001', a bill designed to keep work in the U.S. The bill failed to pass. Unlike their Australian counterparts, American federal legislators are notoriously reluctant to let government intervene in trade unions and private commercial enterprises affairs, especially when the latter are two of the world's biggest media conglomerates: News Corporation (owner of Fox Studios in Sydney) and AOL Time-Warner (owner of Warner Roadshow's Studios on the Gold Coast). Other strategies, including local state legislation, were successful. In 2002, Louisiana and New Mexico implemented their own film and television production incentives. By 2010, 43 of the 50 states in the U.S. were offering film incentives, although McDonald (2007: 926) argues that these efforts created 'a race to the bottom'. Lack of unified national policy for runaway productions failed to protect creative clusters in Los Angeles and New York. In 2004, the Canadian firm Neil Craig Associates issued a counter report that argued that the Canadian expenditure on runaways in 1998 was \$1.7 billion (USD), not \$10.3 billion (USD) as the Monitor Report claimed. It also noted that annually, Canada purchased \$1.3 billion

(USD) worth of cinema admissions, sales and rental of video cassettes and DVDs, broadcast license fees and other revenues. Between 1998 and 2003, the value of the distribution of U.S. movies and television programs in Canada was more than \$6.5 billion (USD) (McDonald 2007).

Canada was not the only one to enjoy the runaway bliss. Following the economic success brought by the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-03), New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark (1999-2008) perceived filmmaking as a high-value industry with a significant role in revitalising the economy. Newman (2008b) notes that New Zealand funded \$2 million (NZ) of the required \$10 million (NZ) for director Peter Jackson's transformation of Wellington businesses into a high-end production studio cluster. The expected benefits to Wellington's regional economy over ten years were \$250 million (NZ), assuming one mid-range movie every two years. In case of a big-budget movie at the same timeframe, the expected revenue was \$659 million (NZ). Consequently, these facilities were used by productions such as *The Legend of Zorro* (Campbell, 2005), *X-Men: The Last Stand* (Rattner, 2006) and *The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep* (Russell, 2007) (Newman 2008b). By comparison, New Zealand's investment in its film industry in 2000 and 2001 was respectively \$114 and \$126 million (USD). Australia invested in the same years \$83 and \$84 million (USD) (Screen Australia 2014b). Write (2006) notes a report commissioned by AusFilm from Malcolm Long and Associates that estimated that by 2000 annual global runaway productions was between \$3.2-\$4.7 billion (USD). Australia's annual share was estimated to be 6%, or \$325 million (\$211 million USD). IMDb, which accounts for productions not budgets, places Australia's share as 3% in 2002 and 5% in 2003 (Write 2006). At best, Australia was a small-time player.

To stay afloat, Australian companies applied for and received both federal and state government assistance. Central City Studios, Melbourne's first purpose-built film and television studio complex, cost \$120 million, for which Victoria's state government provided a low-interest loan of \$24 million. Village Road Show received an \$8 million loan from the Queensland state government to expand its facilities, reasoning that since its opening in 1991, it had generated \$815 million (\$430.6 USD) for the local economy. The New South Wales state government invested \$32 million in infrastructure to facilitate the building of Fox Studios in Sydney (Burman & Murdoch 2002; Groves 2003; The Economist 1998). Soon government investment in infrastructure became direct employment subsidies. In March 2005, the South Australian government announced an additional 6% return on all crew wages and a 10% rebate on cast and crew salaries paid to SA residents for 50% in-state productions. Queensland offered 4.75% payroll rebate for minimum \$3.5 million in-state expenditure, or when bundling two or more projects with a minimum \$5 million expenditure within four years. Salary rebates for productions of \$1 million expenditure were offered to local cast and crews. For an expenditure of \$15 million in Queensland, the maximum rebate was \$300,000. The Victorian state government divided its funding

between high and low values. To qualify for the Production Attraction Incentive Fund (PIAF), a minimum of 70% expenditure, or \$3.5 million were to be spent in Victoria. The Regional Victoria Assistance Fund (RLAF) encouraged local and footloose filmmakers to use locations outside metropolitan Melbourne for five or more shooting days for up to \$100,000 rebate per project (Centre for Entertainment Industry Data and Research 2006).

Initially, this policy worked. The AFC estimated the total spend by foreign productions for the financial year 2002/03 was \$140 million compared with \$130 million in 2001/02. Seventy-nine percent was spent on features and 21% on television productions. However, high-end infrastructure and competitive incentives meant growing dependency on foreign productions that could afford them. When, in 2000/01, the ATO rejected what it considered to be the 10B tax loophole – 100% tax write off claims for Village Roadshow-Warner Bros.' *Red Planet* (Hoffman, 2000) and for 20th Century Fox's *Moulin Rouge!* – their producers bluntly told the Australian government they would take their business elsewhere. American productions demanding assistance for private productions was not unique to Australia. Miller and Maxwell note American film producers' tendencies to raise foreign funds through overseas tax shelters. For example, nearly 20% of the \$15 billion (USD) expended on Hollywood production in 2000 was based on German tax subsidies and funds from its high-technology *Neuer Markt*. In 2001, the figure amounted to \$2 billion (USD) (Miller & Maxwell 2006).

The Howard government's promise to cut public spending promptly folded. Groves (2001) notes that arts minister Richard Alston trumpeted an immediate Canadian-style 12.5% tax rebate for big-budget films and mini-series so that films like *The Matrix* sequels, produced via 10B, would be eligible (Groves 2001). The Australian Labor Party supported the new scheme, which passed in March 2002. To qualify, productions with a budget under \$25 million had to spend at least 60% of their total budget (\$15 million) in Australia. Productions with budgets exceeding \$26 million automatically qualified. The government expected the average rebate to be 10% of a film's total production outlay. Foreign production in Australia was estimated to be around \$850 million in 2005/06, based on a sizeable increase in the number of large and medium sized productions each year (Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates 2002). On 4 April 2002, the offset was retroactively available to qualifying productions ready for distribution or exhibition on or after 4 September 2001.

4.5 Upstairs/Downstairs: The Australian Condensing Market

By the time the offsets were offered, government involvement in film funding was not even questioned. In its 2006 report, the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA, 2006: 1) stated the offsets policy aims in providing 'increased opportunities for Australian casts, crew, post-production and other services to participate in large budget productions; and showcase Australian talent' (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts

2006a). These objectives sought to secure and build below-the-line employment in the film industry to maintain Australian expertise in a highly professional and competitive market. Above-the-line positions for Australian writers, directors and lead actors were seldom used in Hollywood productions. Just as the government via the FFC assumed the role of Australian cinema's executive producer, it was now – by adjusting legislation, taxation and incentives – taking on responsibility for sustaining the film industry's workflow. Alas, what was meant to sustain Australian employment effectively achieved the opposite.

The declared logic of the rebates was to support below-the-line portion employment of the film industry. Only Hollywood could regularly spend \$25 million to qualify for the offset. It is easier to make a \$25 million-looking film for \$25 million than to make a \$5 million-looking film for \$250,000. It is easier still when 12.5% of the cost is subsidised, courtesy of the Australian government. The rebate indirectly subsidised employment via one-off American productions, supporting the strongest link of the international film production chain. Worse, those incentives were given with no guarantees of reciprocation on the part of the recipients to commit to produce a succession of projects. Worst of all, indirectly subsidizing the below the line part of the industry artificially sustained a higher and uncompetitive wage level. Given a choice, Australian professionals would give their best to American productions that received government assistance to pay for their talent.

The offset split Australian cinema to an upstairs/downstairs class system. Downstairs were the Australian FFC-sponsored, arthouse, low-budget productions with poor-to-none commercial viability. Upstairs were the government-financed, multi-million-dollar Hollywood runaways, which were exclusively genre films. No one expected Hollywood films to have any national-related value or even artistic pretence. National identity requirements were reserved for Australian filmmakers, imposing further limitations on their ability to tell their stories. Australian producer Andrew Mason, who worked on *Dark City* and *The Matrix*, observed (47) that Australian films 'have been increasingly squeezed away from anything to do with fantasy or science-fiction because of budget limitations imposed by the financing structures' (Ryan 2012).

At first, the 12.5% rebate policy yielded results. The AFC report (2006) showed that on April 2001, the time of the offset's introduction, the level of foreign film and television production was \$216 million (\$185 million of film and \$31 million in television). In 2004/05, foreign production increased to \$248 million with \$243 million of that sum (approximately 98%) invested in film and foreign television productions. Television production, made for lower budgets, did not qualify for the rebate and fell to \$4 million. Foreign production accounted for 73.4% of feature production and 46.3% of total features and television drama production expenditure in Australia, a rise of 20% compared to the 10-year

average of 53.5% for features and 31.5% of the total productions. Over ten years, foreign productions averaged 76% of film and 24% of television productions in Australia. The rebate also terminated all Australian midrange \$3-\$6 million television, telemovies and feature film productions, which were not eligible for the offset yet paid production costs as though they were (Australian Film Commission 2006).

Initially, notes Write, the incentives created by both Australia and New Zealand to lure American productions were successful. However, by 2003, the American state incentives and trade union lobbying against runaway productions were coming into effect. On February 2003, the Canadian government raised its incentives for qualifying Canadian labour costs from 11% to 16%. In November 2004, the U.S. government responded by allowing smaller-budget film producers to claim 100% of their annual expenditure (Write 2006). Australia incurred collateral damage from this trade war. A Money Penny Business and Taxation Services report (2003: 5-6) compared government rebates in Sydney, NSW and Vancouver, British Columbia for qualifying production budgets of \$25 million (USD). The report noted that the Australian and Canadian currencies respectively appreciated to 65¢ and 73¢ to the U.S. dollar. Australian below the line labour costs were 'approximately 12% higher' when the overtime was factored in. The report found that Sydney net production costs was \$19.6 million (USD), compared to \$21.2 million (USD) in Vancouver, which amounted to \$1.6 million or 7.5% savings in favour of Australia. Combined with the Aussie tax credit, the savings would amount to 10.4% of the production budget, compared with Canada's 7.14% (Money Penny Business and Taxation Services 2003).

This report should have alerted government policy makers to a problem, but it did not. Currency-based policy is a risky proposition due to its fluctuating nature. Out of the 10.4% advantage to Australian films, 7.5% was based on a favourable, but marginal, 8¢ currency rate of the devalued Australian dollar. With the rebate, for a budget of \$25 million the advantage Australia offered foreign producers over Canada was 3.26% or \$815,000 (USD), the rest was currency exchange based. Further, the AFC's research report clearly stated (14) that 'half of the LA producers interviewed explicitly listed the exchange rate as one of the factors that influenced their decision to bring a project to Australia. Others simply referred to the whole economic package without specifically mentioning the exchange rate' (Australian Film Commission 2002a).

Both reports addressed the fundamental shortcoming of Australia's foreign production policy; Australian infrastructure and professional expertise were insufficient to independently draw foreign production when competing with Canada or New Zealand. Australian labour was more expensive and infrastructure was just as good elsewhere. The closer geographical proximity of Canada to Hollywood,

availability of creative clusters in New Zealand, Canada and California and mounting political pressure to keep American employment in the U.S. saw Australia coming up short. This should have indicated that something was intrinsically wrong with the way Australian federal and state governments were pouring funds into privately-owned production facilities and foreign productions. By 2004/05, the strengthening Australian dollar was wreaking havoc in the Australian film industry. Between the offset's introduction in 2001 and November 2006, the value of the Australian dollar, trading at 77¢ to \$1 U.S. (International Monetary Fund 2006) had appreciated 45.1% against the U.S. dollar. Accordingly, a Gold Coast City Council report (2006) to DCITA noted that Australian-funded expenditure in Australia declined by 26% from \$336 million in 2001/02 to \$248m in 2004/05. Co-production expenditure declined by 64%, from \$111 million in 2001/02 to \$40 million in 2004/05. Total expenditure in Australia declined by 19%, from \$662 million in 2001/02 to \$536 million in 2004/05. Midrange productions for 'movies of the week', \$3-\$6 million, declined from an average of six per year in 2000/01 to only one in 2004/05. The 10-year average of foreign-funded TV drama expenditure was \$34 million in 2001/02, declining in 2004/05 to \$5 million. Foreign expenditure in Australia marginally increased from \$216 million to \$248 million (Gold Coast City Council 2006).

The AFC (26) concluded that despite a significant drop of more than 50% in foreign production, which was expected in 2005/06, 'foreign production remains a vital element of the Australian audiovisual industry'. This statement neglected to consider how vital the Australian audiovisual industry was to foreign productions. As it panned out, not very. An assessment conducted by DCITA noted (33) that the accounting firm of Threadgold, Plummer, Hood prepared budgets in 2005/06 for a collective production expenditure of over \$1 billion, none of which eventuated (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts 2006a). However, the declining foreign expenditure, the fluctuating currency exchange rates and uncompetitive, subsidised wages did not stop industry players from making further demands.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) requested (2006: 2) adjusting the Qualifying Australian Production Expenditure (QAPE) to 'at least' 70% of the film's total production expenditure between \$15 million and \$50 million, allowing 'interim claims prior to the completion of the production'. Basically, MEAA suggested that the Australian government not only refund, but actually bankroll, foreign productions as they went. MEAA also suggested piggybacking for a two-year period for production from the same entity that would not qualify in their own right and introducing an additional incentive 'for productions that film overseas but wish to undertake postproduction in Australia' (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance 2006). The FFC (2006) suggested an increase to a 15% rebate to compete with Canada and New Zealand, a 40% rebate for Australian productions with a budget of at least \$1 million and no cap on investment (Film Finance Corporation 2006b). The Gold

Coast City Council (GCCC) (2006: 5) asked for 'only minimal changes' to the existing Refundable Film Tax Offset Scheme, namely adding Australian production services to the offset, allowing piggybacking to meet the Offset's requirements and allowing the AFC's funding to be included in the funding limitations (Gold Coast City Council 2006).

The DCITA report noted that all submissions were in favour of the Offset continuing in some form and that most agreed it should be delivered via tax exemptions. 'The NSW FTO', noted the report (39), 'believes that the Offset is the most appropriate means to encourage high-budget production' and Village Roadshow thought that 'the tax Offset has been a success and is an appropriate and necessary means by which to attract foreign products to Australia'. Offset, naturally, conserves Centre's power, by forcing producers to apply for its approval, whereas the 10BA tax exemption obviates the need for funding bodies, city councils and the MEAA. DCITA concluded the two major factors for the decline of foreign production were the appreciation of 45.1% in Australian dollar between April 2001 and 2006 and the continuing improvement of tax incentives internationally. The situation was not expected to improve in 2006/07. DCITA's report also estimated that in the four years reviewed, 2001/02 through 2004/05, there were \$885 million in QAPE projects. The analysis estimated an average of \$69.8 million per annum and a total of around \$279 million were attracted to Australia because of the Offset. The Commonwealth incurred \$114 million in rebate and administration costs, which was (6) 'just a little over a breakeven situation', also finding (50) that 'the net cost was reduced to the extent that the Offset was successful in attracting additional offshore productions that would not otherwise have come to Australia' (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts 2006a). Even at the declining prospect of attracting future productions, the legitimacy of government involvement in film financing may still be argued as means to secure Australian employment. If it managed to do so without losing money or even losing some money in the process, it would be a legitimate, if controversial, policy. It did not.

In 2002/03, employment in the film industry was 16,427 workers. In 2006/07, it was 13,844 workers. The drop of 2,583 jobs was due to the film industry's inability to draw foreign productions. In 2006/07, only 31.9% of the positions in the film industry were full-time employment, 40.9% were casual/temporary positions and another 5.7% were permanent part-time. Four percent were working proprietors and partners (above the line) (Screen Australia 2008). At the time DCITA was publishing its findings, less than one third of below the line workers in the film industry were making their living solely from their government protected craft. The DCITA report noted that positions such as technocrane operators and stunt performers who rely on big-budget productions were not available because Australian productions could not afford special and visual effects (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts 2006a).

This was a long time coming. In 1994, Peter Thompson observed (22) that '[a]lmost no locally produced films can afford to use the new studio facilities because Australian budgets are pegged by various factors at about the \$3 million mark'. He predicted a two-tier industry would develop, with the top tier eventually outpricing itself and the lower tier being strangled by a lack of capital investment (O'Regan 1995b). By the end of 2006, the two-tier Australian film industry was polarised. The upper tier, due to an appreciated Australian dollar, outpriced itself in a global race to the bottom bidding war. The lower tier consisted of those unfortunate Australian filmmakers, persistent or foolish enough to scrape up the FFC's required 35% advance, toiling to produce products with no commercial prospect in an ever-declining Australian cine market.

4.6 Up Hill, Down Stream: More Cinema, Less Australian in the 2000s

Two opposing trends characterised the 2000s domestic Australian cine market. General attendance flourished, but Australian cinema attendance declined. Between 1997 and 2006, the number of screens in Australia rose from 1,422 to 1,964 while seat numbers rose from 387,000 to 467,000. By 2010, Australia ranked as the sixth-most heavily-screened country in the world, measuring around 90 screens per million audience members. Between 1988-1996, suburban cinemas, built in shopping malls to a multiplex format of six or more screens, expanded their revenue from 30% to more than 50%. By the beginning of the 2000s, 65% of Australia's population – 10.4 million Australians over 15 – attended cinemas at least once a year, 4.1 million Australians attended cinemas between six to twenty times a year and 700,000 Australians frequented cinemas 21 times a year or more (Given & Goggin 2013; Hancock 2007a). McKenzie and Walls note that between 1997 and 2007, the average number of new films released each year was 281 with a minimum of 246 new releases in 2000 and a maximum of 329 new releases in 2006 (McKenzie & Walls 2013).

As argued previously, Australians love cinema but refrain from watching their own. Moran and Vieth argue (30) that the 2002 statistic informs a 'degree of domination' by the American films, resulting in 22 (8.5%) of the 258 new releases in 2002 being Australian and 172 (66%) being American. The total budget of all the Australian films represented 1% of the total budget of the American films. The Australian box office share was \$41.8 million (4.9%), compared to the American share which was 80% (Moran & Vieth 2005). McKenzie and Walls note that the average yearly release of Australian films in the first half of the 2000s was 21 (7.5%), but this accounted for only 3.8% of the annual domestic box office gross (McKenzie & Walls 2013). These figures suggest that 30 years after the Australian government began supporting its film industry, *friction I* was still unresolved. Commercially and in terms of Australian viewership, the first two financial years of the new millennium – 1999/00 and 2000/01 – were the best for Australian cinema and yielded a record high of 7.9% and 7.8% respectively. 2003/4 was the worst year and yielded a record low of 1.3%. Henceforth, viewing figures

and box office takings barely manage, at best, to hang around 5% annually. It is thus important to understand what the makings of the Australian turn-of-the-century limited success entailed.

By early 2000s, it also became clear that the FFC was a money losing operation. Never amounting to the envisioned film bank, the FFC's rhetoric promoted less business and more cultural-identity oriented objectives. Its mission statement in the 2001/02 annual report (2002: 1), was 'to strengthen cultural identity by: supporting a highly professional and creative Australian screen production industry; entertaining and informing Australian audiences with a diversity of screen images; showcasing Australia's screen production industry to the world' (Film Finance Corporation 2002). Not to be confused with the AFC mission, which focused its efforts (2001: 120) 'on the independent production sector – companies and individuals who are not affiliated with broadcasters or major distribution and exhibition companies' (Australian Film Commission 2001), that is, the lower tier of the Australian film industry is the FFC's prospective clients. This begs the question of how, having failed as a viable bank, did the FFC fare in achieving its amended, cultural mission?

4.6.1 Objective 1: Supporting a highly professional and creative Australian screen production industry

The FFC's Financial Overview for 1999/2000 (2000: 54) is phrased as follows:

The result for the Australian Film Finance Corporation for the financial year 1999/2000 was a loss of \$4,968,940 after: Commonwealth Government grant of \$48.015 million; other revenue of \$4.47 million; write off/provision for loss on film investment of \$52.92 million; administration expenditure of \$4.53 million representing 8.6 per cent of total revenue. By 30 June 2000, the FFC had cumulatively committed \$884.44 million to 688 film and television investments. By the end of the financial year the Corporation had expended all its available funds except for \$9.95 million (Film Finance Corporation 2001).

The FFC's 2000/01 annual budget was based on a \$48.015 million Commonwealth operating grant. Another \$9,946,623 was added as cash held from 1999/00 and other sources of income (interest, equity collected, tax refunds, etc.) On 1 July 2000 – the beginning 2000/01 financial year – under the column 'Total cash receipts in the course of operations' were \$59,462,936. By the financial year's end, on 30 June 2001, under the column 'cash at the end of the financial year' was \$16,209 (Film Finance Corporation 2002). During the course of a single year, the FFC spent almost \$60 million. Added to the budget for 1999/00 of \$52.92 million that was written off, this amounts to close to \$113 million spent in the course of the first two years of the 2000s. Where did \$113 million go on the FFC's best two years?

The FFC's annual reports of 1999/00 and 2000/01 include 'new production investment commitments' tables (2000: 16; 2001: 15) that show that it had invested \$35 million in thirteen feature films (48% of its budget) in 1999/00 and \$32.3 million in ten feature films plus another \$0.5 million as production

loans to two feature films (54% of its budget) in 2000/01 (Film Finance Corporation 2001, 2002). In two years, FFC invested \$67.5 million in twenty-five feature films. Of those, only the following six films are considered successful and (as of February 2018) still rank on Screen Australia's 'Top 100 Australian feature films of all time' (Screen Australia 2017c).

Table 4.3 – FFC Film Successes 1999/2000 – 2001/2002

Financial Year	Title	Australian Box Office
1999/2000	<i>Two Hands</i> (Jordan, 1999)	\$5,478,485
1999/2000	<i>The Wog Boy</i> (Vellis, 2000)	\$11,449,799
1999/2000	<i>Looking for Alibrandy</i> (Woods, 2000)	\$8,280,335
2000/2001	<i>Chopper</i> (Dominik, 2000)	\$5,912,119
2001/2002	<i>Lantana</i> (Lawrence, 2001)	\$12,286,683
2001/2002	<i>The Man Who Sued God</i> (Joffe, 2001)	\$8,546,867

The combined domestic box office gross for these six features is \$51,954,288 million. A lack of non-aggregated data makes the mission of determining the actual measure of their financial success difficult. However, studies of Australian films' budgets and earnings provide an educated understanding of their potential recoupment.

First, in 2001 the AFC commissioned a detailed study to review below the line production costs using the original budget of *The Sum of Us* (Burton, Dowling, 1993). The study literally examined the original budget line by line. The study found (39) a rise of 68% in production costs between 1993, the time *The Sum of Us* was shot, and 2001 when the study was conducted. It also notes the more rigorous current production practices as a factor driving budgets higher (Australian Film Commission 2002b). Reid noted that the average film budget during the 1990s was \$3.8 million (Reid 1999). Hence, under AFC's conservative calculation of a 68% price rise and while assuming no additional costs for above the line star power, in the 2000s an average Australian film would cost around \$6.4 million. Second, the FFC's culminative investment table (30) presented earlier reveals that in the five years 1999/00–2003/04, it invested in fifty-four feature films with total budget of \$294,905,441. The average production budget for FFC is \$5.5 million per film (Film Finance Corporation 2008b).

Under a lenient calculation of \$5.5 million budget per film, *Chopper* (\$5,912,119) and *Two hands* (\$5,478,485) barely managed to earn enough domestic gross to cover the cost of a regular, midrange budget film, even where distribution (P&A) and exhibition costs are excluded, and they certainly were not. This fact did not stop the FFC claiming (2003: 2) in its submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts that both *Chopper* and *Two Hands* were 'box office hits' (Film Finance Corporation 2003). The other four films, *The Wog Boy*, *Looking for Alibrandy*, *Lantana* and the *Man Who Sued God*, grossed on average \$10,140,921 each. Assuming a very conservative charge of 50% of the box office gross for distribution (P&A), exhibition and additional costs such as advances to produce the film and star power contracts, their average median earnings after these costs were deducted is just over \$5 million. The following data demonstrates these earnings:

Table 4.4 – FFC Film Successes 1999/2000 – 2001/2002 with Estimated Median Earnings

Financial Year	Title	Australian Box Office	Estimated Median Earnings
1999/2000	<i>Two Hands</i> (Jordan, 1999)	\$5,478,485	\$2,739,242.5
1999/2000	<i>The Wog Boy</i> (Vellis, 2000)	\$11,449,799	\$5,724,899.5
1999/2000	<i>Looking for Alibrandy</i> (Woods, 2000)	\$8,280,335	\$4,140,167.5
2000/2001	<i>Chopper</i> (Dominik, 2000)	\$5,912,119	\$2,956,059.5
2001/2002	<i>Lantana</i> (Lawrence, 2001)	\$12,286,683	\$6,143,341.5
2001/2002	<i>The Man Who Sued God</i> (Joffe, 2001)	\$8,546,867	\$4,273,443.5

With the very unlikely assumption that there were no special above the line, star power contracts for Oscar winner Geoffrey Rush and Hollywood veteran Barbara Hershey and an average of \$5.5 million production budget, only *Lantana's* \$12,286,683 domestic gross might have recovered the median mark.

Table 4.5 is featured in the FFC's 2000/01 annual report (22) titled – *Top 20 FFC-Financed Feature Films at the Australian Box Office* (Film Finance Corporation 2002) – and indicates why the FFC consistently refrained from publishing its own actual investment recoupment portfolio figures. Australian box office domestic gross figures are irrelevant and misleading. Most of the FFC's declared top-twenty box office earners from *Chopper* (number 9) downward did not make their average \$5.5 million budget back, even with the exclusion of P&A costs.

Table 4.5 - Top 20 FFC-Financed Feature Films at the Australian Box Office

No.	Title	Domestic Gross Australian Box Office
1	Strictly Ballroom	\$21,760,400
2	The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert	\$16,459,245
3	Muriel's Wedding	15,765,571
4	The Wog Boy	11,436,221
5	Green Card	10,611,000
6	Shine	10,164,498
7	Looking for Alibrandi	8,224,504
8	Reckless Kelly	5,860,000
9	Chopper	5,552,743
10	Two Hands	5,478,485
11	The Sum of Us	3,296,004
12	The Delinquents	3,288,907
13	Cosi	2,815,738
14	Sirens	2,802,764
15	The Heartbreak Kid	2,785,741
16	Antarctica	2,706,801
17	Dating the Enemy	2,674,524
18	Bootmen	2,641,130
19	Death in Brunswick	2,620,954
20	The Big Steal	2,519,758

As to the question of how many FFC feature films did, eventually, manage to return their budget, the answer is found in the AFC's 2006 submission to DCITA (13), which states:

Since its inception the FFC has invested in \$2.2 billion worth of production and recouped a total of \$249.7 million to June 2005. The FFC has invested in 193 feature films and as of 2003/04 had fully recouped its investment in nine features since 1988/89. The FFC's current budget allocation is \$70.5 million (2006/07) (Australian Film Commission 2006).¹

With \$16,209 left of a yearly \$60 million budget of 2000/01 and no substantial recoupment to supplement its film investments, FFC was now depleting its financial resources without providing any financial evidence that would justify a track record of nine out of 193 films (4.6%) recouping their budget. Adding insult to injury, in mid-2004 FFC added an 'evaluation door' to its already successful marketplace process. The FFC's expert staff provided 'creative input' and assessed the quality of feature film projects (Film Finance Corporation 2006b). This expert advice was laced with its

¹ AFC mistakenly claims \$2.2 billion. \$1.2 billion, is consistent with FFC's investment at the time.

underlying financial power. Australian filmmakers were caught between the rock and the hard place. Declining creative 'suggestions' lead to a dead end; accepting FFC expertise almost guaranteed the fate of those 239 films that never made their budget back. Ozploitation director Bert Deling (*Pure Shit*, 1975) explained:

They are the same 12 or so people who made all this crap in the past that no one wants to see. They get hold of a hundred percent of all the governments' money... these f***ers who may have made two or three features, bland sort of things which get two weeks at some art house cinema here and never sell overseas, they want a big kill (Buckmaster 2009).

The 'evaluation door' demonstrates yet another divergence from the FFC's original mandate. *Friction* // changed in the 2000s from what films should be made to what films meet the FFC's expert approval? With the Australian film industry polarised between high-end Hollywood runaways directly supported by the government via its QAPE scheme and low-budget Australian films having to comply with FFC suggestions or not be made, the FFC's first objective of supporting a highly professional and creative Australian screen production industry was rarely met.

4.6.2 Objective 2: Entertaining and informing Australian audiences with a diversity of screen images

McKenzie and Walls argue (249) that despite FFC films being better advertised and more widely compared to similar films, Australians have low interest in Australian films and 'we find that the level of FFC funding had no impact on revenue performance at the Australian box office' (McKenzie & Walls 2013). Given that FFC's second mission statement is 'entertaining and informing Australian audiences with a diversity of screen images', it is difficult to understand how Australian audiences were 'entertained and informed' by the very films they refused to see. Moran and Vieth note that the expectations for Australian films were minimal. Revenue of \$1 million at the box office was considered successful. In 2002, for example, ten Australian films earned between \$1.3 million to \$7.7 million. In terms of the overall market impact the Australian film industry box office is negligible, but in terms of its place in the cultural life it is of great importance (Moran & Vieth 2005). The FFC's unmistakable long-term financial failure was cloaked in an argument for long-term cultural impact.

In the FFC's 2003 submission *Inquiry into Future Opportunities for Australia's Film, Animation, Special Effects and Electronic Games Industries* (12), the attached Table 4.6, titled 'FFC financed feature films released from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002' offered the following explanation:

The most successful title, *Lantana*, was seen by 3.89 million Australians in 2001/02, through its combined theatrical and video release. *The Man Who Sued God* was a particularly popular title on video, reaching a combined theatrical and video audience of 3.73 million Australians (Film Finance Corporation 2003).

Table 4.6 - FFC financed feature films released from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002

Title	Theatrical Market		Video Market		Total Audience
	Gross Box Office	Audience	Rental Units Shipped	Audience	
<i>Lantana</i>	12,296,976	1,400,567	33,000	2,485,890	3,886,457
<i>The Man Who Sued God</i>	8,546,867	973,447	39,590	2,761,403	3,734,850
<i>The Bank</i>	2,519,895	287,004	18,750	1,255,500	1,542,504
<i>He Died with a Felafel in his Hand</i>	612,550	69,767	4,900	410,130	479,897
<i>Let's Get Skase</i>	225,009	25,627	4,800	441,936	467,569

Table 4.6 raises several questions as to the validity of its findings. First, this data is unreferenced and does not indicate where the FFC obtained these figures. Given that viewership of video rentals is especially difficult to substantiate, it is hard to determine if the figures were statistical calculations and if so, what method was used to collect and produce them. For example, the FFC's combined figure of 3.89 million viewers for *Lantana* ignores a prevailing video rental pattern of re-watching feature films at home. In that case, the film's exposure might be smaller than claimed. As demonstrated with box office revenue, figures for total rental units (DVD and VHS) shipped means very little in terms of return on investment (ROI). As with film recoupment data, information regarding revenue from rental earnings is undisclosed.

Second, the FFC's claim that *The Man Who Sued God* 'was particularly popular' is questionable. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics data, the Australian population at 2001 amounted to 19,603,502 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001), a signal rental audience figure of 2,761,403 (14% of Australia's population) is an unlikely number. Assuming that the claimed figure of 2,761,403 audience represents the number of audience divided by the number of the rental units shipped, then the table shows that by far the most watched rental in the list is *Let's Get Skase* (George, 2001) with 92.07 views per rental unit shipped, rather than *The Man Who Sued God*, with only 69.75 views per rental unit shipped.

Third, the FFC's claim is not supported by Screen Australia's data. Figures for the 'Top 25 retail video titles, ranked by units sold, 1998-2013' show that in 2001 and 2002, none of the titles in the table made it to the top retail videos list, not in DVD nor in VHS formats (Screen Australia 2013). Screen Australia's 'Top 20 rental video titles hired (all formats), 1998-2005' reveals that in 2001 *Lantana* reached number eighteen in DVD rentals and only *Lantana* and *The Bank* (Connolly, 2001) reached numbers twelve and fifteen respectively in VHS rentals. None of those films made it into the 2002

charts (Screen Australia 2005). Only two of the FFC's twenty feature films managed to get into the lower half of the rental market. *The Man Who Sued God* was not among them.

The FFC's features performance in the home consumption market proves to be less dominant than that portrayed to the House of Representatives committee. The table attached is not substantiated by Screen Australia's data. Since it is unreferenced, there are no means to evaluate its raw data. The diminishing numbers in respect of Australian film viewership and consequent box office earnings, combined with the low performance of Australian titles in the video home consumption market, undermine the FFC's claims to entertain and enlighten the Australian public.

4.6.3 Objective 3: Showcasing Australia's screen production industry to the world

As with previous claims, the FFC's third mission statement is difficult to substantiate due to lack of data. The evaluation methodology used here relies mainly on American market statistics, accumulated box office takings, number of screens played and yearly ranks of box office earnings. American exposure would indicate, at least partly, how successful the FFC was in exposing Australian cinema to the world's biggest English-speaking market. Equivalent quantitative information for commercial screenings in other countries cine markets is unavailable. However, countries in which Australian films played commercially were counted to demonstrate their international exposure. Participation in one of the five major film festivals – Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Toronto and Sundance – was also reviewed to indicate cultural success. Other film festivals were not counted as their size offers minimal screenings for participating films, limited audiences and smaller distribution option.

Australian films from the 2000s seemed under budget and parochial. Accordingly, Australian-themed films failed to connect with audiences abroad. Of the FFC-produced films of 1999/00 and 2001/02, the two most successful years in terms of Australian audience reception, only *Lantana*, a suburban drama/murder mystery, was selected for screening by the Toronto film festival, one of the five major festivals.

Both 1999/00 hits, *The Wog Boy* and *Looking for Alibrandy*, were rite-of-passage depictions of Australian suburbia's immigrant/WASP relations. These are well-explored themes for Australian cinema and culture but proved less relevant abroad. Both failed to secure U.S. distribution, but each managed to play in three countries. *The Wog Boy* was picked up for commercial distribution in New Zealand, Germany and Greece while *Looking for Alibrandy* played in New Zealand, Italy and Spain (IMDb 2000a, b).

Both 2000/01 hits were crime stories. *Chopper* was a biopic of Australian folk-hero, Melbourne crim-turned-author Mark 'Chopper' Read. *Two Hands* was a Sydney small-time-suburban-crook's-robbery-gone-wrong genre story. *Two Hands* did not secure American distribution, but played in New Zealand, the Czech Republic and Spain (IMDb 2001b). *Chopper* was picked up for American distribution. It opened in the U.S. on April 2001, played 14 screens and earned a total of \$236,185 (USD). In all, *Chopper* played in 14 countries (Box Office Mojo 2000).

As a measure of *Chopper's* cultural impact, it should be noted that nine days after *Chopper's* American premier, *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles* (Wincer, 2001) opened across 2,123 American screens. It earned \$25,635,682 (USD) in America and an additional \$13,802,992 (USD) globally (Box Office Mojo 2001a). In Australia, *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles* earned \$7,759,103, compared to *Chopper's* \$5,552,743 (Screen Australia 2017c). On Box Office Mojo's chart of American Domestic Grosses for 2001, *Chopper* is placed at number 260, earning less than the English-dubbed version of *Lumumba* (Peck, 2000), which earned \$352,296 and ranked 246th and the documentary *Porn Star: The Legend of Ron Jeremy* (Gill, 2001), which ranked 236th and earned \$421,516 (USD) (Box Office Mojo 2001d). *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles* ranked number 87 (Box Office Mojo 2001c).

Lantana, released in the U.S. on December 2001, was the FFC's number one Australian release in the 2000s. It played on 108 American screens and earned \$4,623,189 (USD) and another \$11,124,261 globally (Box Office Mojo 2001b). Altogether, *Lantana* played 22 countries and ranks 153rd on Box Office Mojo's chart of American Domestic Grosses for 2001, just behind the rereleased, 3.5 hour long, *Apocalypse Now Redux* (Coppola, 1975), which earned \$4,626,290 and ranked at 152 (Box Office Mojo 2001c). *The Man Who Sued God*, the second Australian hit of the 2001/02 production year, failed to secure American distribution but was picked up for distribution in seven countries (IMDb 2001a).

Altogether, during 1999/2000 and 2001/02, U.S. exposure to Australian films produced with FFC investment amounts to two features: *Chopper* and *Lantana*, playing on 122 American screens. Their combined American box office takings were \$4,859,374 (USD). The combined international exposure of all six films reviewed is forty-two countries. Only *Lantana* managed to be selected for a major film festival. This is the bulk of Australian international film exposure during this period.

4.7 Bill Kill: Venture Capital, Free Trade and the Fragile Australian Culture

In its 2000/01 annual report, the FFC's chairman Geoff Levy claimed (5) that 'despite its successes, 2000/01 was a disturbing year in terms of the critical shortage of funding facing the industry'. The rise in production and erosion of government funding in buying power, argued Levy, were not reciprocated by revenues from networks, distributors and other buyers of Australian film and television programmers. 'These factors jeopardised the FFC's ability to underpin the critical mass of production

needed to sustain a healthy local production industry, which, in turn, underpins the high budget offshore American production now flourishing here' (Film Finance Corporation 2002). Levy's concerns were not entirely unfounded. The looming Australia/US Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) negotiations, launched on April 2001, were threatening to relieve the FFC from its responsibility to underpin and sustain.

AUSFTA negotiations were not conducted among equals. ABS data shows that in 2001 Australian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was \$670.029 billion (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003a). The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis found American GDP for 2001 to be \$10.1 trillion (U.S.) (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2008). Keays (2005) notes that 11% of Australian exports were sent to the U.S., representing only 0.7% of American imports, which meant bigger Australian dependency on American markets than vice versa. Neither party stood to gain greatly from the agreement. Given notes (2004: 9) that an economic model commissioned by the Australian government in 2001 showed that 'Australian GDP would eventually increase 0.33 per cent and US GDP 0.02 per cent if all trade barriers between the two countries were removed' (Given 2004). By the end of negotiations in May 2004, some barriers remained and AUSFTA was still criticised for further extending the trade gap (Tiffen 2010).

Matthews (2003: 32) argues that the Howard government's motivation to engage in the AUSFTA stemmed from a mutual international trade liberalisation economic creed, 'but reconciling this overreaching philosophy with the realities of certain sectors – and the immediate impact that changes to industry regulations could have on them – is difficult' (Matthews 2003). In his address to the Australian APEC Study Centre Conference (2004: 2), the AFC's chairman Kim Dalton demonstrated the difference between the Australian and the American approaches. Australians sought to 'ensure that the negotiations take account of Australia's cultural and social policy objectives' whereas the Americans wanted to 'pursue disciplines to address discriminatory and other barriers to trade in Australia's services market' (Dalton 2004). Much like Sam Gelfman's remarks, twenty years later Australians spoke of cultural objectives while Americans stressed business. As demonstrated in Chapter Three with the formation of the FFC, both funding bodies, the AFC and the FFC, lobbied against AUSFTA on the basis of self-preservation in direct opposition to the government's economic agenda.

The AFC and the FFC were not alone. The prospect of American products, mass produced and cheaply made, competing directly against artificially expensive, subsidised, quota-regulated Australian products had the entire sweep of Australian film and television industry perspiring. Free trade levels the playing field. American filmmakers would be entitled to the same benefits as Australians when applying for government funding. Australian filmmakers would freely be able to fend for themselves

in America, just as American indie filmmakers do. The American demand for free and equal access to the Australian governmental gravy train, a role traditionally reserved for AFC and FFC personnel along with members of the old boys' club, or worse, removing the train, the gravy, and the club altogether, was making them anxious. This may also explain the source of the FFC's 20.34% recoupment and apparent anxiety. Government quotas mandating broadcasters to air Australian content would be removed under AUSFTA. All Australian parties directly and indirectly involved in the film industry rejected this notion on principle, to save Australian culture. The FFC stated (6)

As the world's leading audiovisual producer, the US believes it has much to gain by eroding regulation measures in other countries and is prepared to use the free trade negotiations with Australia to win precedents that could be used in negotiations with more lucrative markets in Europe (Film Finance Corporation 2003).

In an urgent motion to Parliament, the NSW Premier and Minister for the Arts, Bob Carr (Hansard 2, 2003: 5591), addressed the house on behalf of all Australian state premiers while noting that more than 70% of Australian filmmaking was done in NSW. Carr was concerned that American films account for 70% of the 250 titles released in Australia annually and for 90% of the box office takings. He noted that 'my kids know more about American culture than they do about our own, simply because of the onslaught of American culture' (Parliament of New South Wales 2003). Carr was factually wrong. ABS data shows that NSW accounted for 55.5% of the businesses, for 50.1% of the employment and for 58.1% of the income of the Australian film industry, not for 70% of Australian filmmaking (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003a). Carr also failed to mention that, in 1998, the NSW government under his leadership invested \$32 million 'to restore the land's rundown infrastructure' for 20th Century Fox's studios in Sydney (The Economist 1998). Back then, it was investment to ensure Australian production future. Now it was endangering the Carr children's cultural horizons. None of the industry bodies objected to federal and state governments pursuing, spending and investing millions of Australian taxpayer's dollars on American runaways, but exposing the market to American content and equal competition was a danger to Australian culture. Even the debate itself was prosaic. Dermody and Jacka date American dominance of the Australian cine market back to the 1960s as one of the primary arguments in favour of reviving the Australian film industry (Dermody & Jacka 1987).

The debate, however, resurfaces the relevance of *friction III*: What films do we finance and who should finance them? Australians certainly had both the resources and the professional knowhow to invest and manage high-budget blockbuster production. ABS data (2003) shows that on 30 June 2003, \$7.5 billion was committed to venture capital investments, compared with a revised \$6.9 billion in 2002. Investors committed \$4.8 billion of funds drawn down at 30 June 2003, an increase of 10% compared to \$4.4 billion in 2002. Most funds were sourced domestically, with 93% of them coming from

Australian investors (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003b). Why were Australian blockbusters not produced independently?

The answer lies in an ABS (2004) survey of 2002/03 that shows that 2,174 film and video production businesses generated a yearly income of \$1.596 billion and incurred \$1.504 billion in expenses. The operating profit from the video and film industry before tax was \$91.7 million, representing an operating profit margin of 5.9%. The overall industry added value to the Australian GDP by film and video production businesses was 0.09% or \$668.2 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004). By comparison, the revenue generated from *Spiderman* (Raimi, 2002), the top-grossing Hollywood film for 2002, was \$821.7 million (USD.) (Box Office Mojo 2002c). The funds for Australian investment were available, but the profit from filmmaking was marginal at best. Further, the KPMG (2006: 12) report titled *Historical poor performance of Australian films* nominates the reasons for the lack of private investment: no vertical integration, over reliance on presales, a history of bad box office performances, a lack of development funds, lack of universal subject matter, recognisable cast and directors and poor or insufficient marketing. Most of all, the incentives offered by Howard's Liberal economy market creed did not fit the bill. KPMG's report states that, to recoup a \$100 investment, an investor must earn \$200 to meet the 46.5% tax rate, even when 100% of the investment exempt from tax, this being described as 'unlikely' (KPMG 2006). Against these potential reforms stood the government funding bodies, state governments and the entire Australian film and television industry. Who and what interests were they protecting?

In 2003, thirty-three years after the Australian film revival, with more than a \$1 billion spent on hundreds of failing films, the Australian audience demonstrated a consistent cultural indifference to Australian films. Australian filmmaking amounted to an annual 5.9% profit margin and to 0.09% of the Australian GDP, resulting in a complete lack of private Australian investment. The Australian film industry consisted of 16,427 employees, mostly working as part time or casual workers and earning uncompetitive, unionised, subsidised wages and totally dependent on government funding and fluctuating exchange rates for survival and relying on market that is American dominated since the 1960s. Yet this did not suggest any kind of failure to any of the parties involved. In the AFC's chairman Dalton's words (152), 'these figures underscore the importance of ongoing support from the Australian Government through both regulation and subsidy if our local industry is to survive against the Goliath of the US audiovisual industry' (Trevisanut 2011).

By negotiations' end, Australian tax concessions, international coproduction agreements, the Indigenous program funding, spectrum allocation processes and universal service policies were not affected by AUSFTA. Neither were the subsidies and cultural activities investments. AUSFTA retained

much of Australia's control of existing programs and policies, but this control was reserved only for existing technologies. In the new technologies' arena, the Australian government would not be able to exercise its influence. Given (21) argues that, while Australia was free to adopt protective policies for current audiovisual and cultural activities, the circumstances in which it can exercise its powers in new media markets was limited, this amounting 'to more concessions than many in Australia's audiovisual and cultural industries might have hoped, but less than they feared' (Given 2004).

4.8 *Little Big Fish: The Mystic Allure of the FFC's Trinity*

In its 2005/06 annual report, Brian Rosen, the FFC's chief executive, declared (10) that 'there's an endorsement out in the worldwide market that Australian films are something an audience wants to see' (Film Finance Corporation 2006a). Maddox (2003) notes that the ascending Australian dollar meant that levels of foreign financing for Australian films dropped from an average of thirty productions a year at the beginning of the 2000s to nineteen productions in 2003, the lowest in eight years. The yearly production value of foreign films was cut from an average of \$131 million in 2001 to \$49 million in 2003 (Maddox 2003). In 2005, the Australian box office fell by 10% to \$818.5 million. Only twenty-seven (8%) out of 330 new releases were Australian. They earned \$23 million (2.8%) of the domestic box office. It is difficult to determine the sources of Rosen's confidence. Still, Australian viewership was up from 1.3% in 2004, but below the ten-year average of 4.8% (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts 2006b). 'Canberra's politicians', wrote Smith (2005: 8), were breathing down Rosen's neck, expecting his 'evaluation' system which outright rejected 60% of the forty-nine evaluated projects to yield some results (Smith 2005).

The FLIC scheme, suggested in 1997 by the Gonski report, was about to expire. Financially, FLIC was a failure. Only Content Capital and the Macquarie Film Corporation were granted FLIC licenses. They managed to raise only \$22.4 million of their possible \$40 million concessional capital target, both failing to meet the allocated \$20 million dollars and neither applied a second time (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance 2005; Sinclair 2006). In its 2006 DCITA submission, the AFC reasoned (13) that 'despite a recommendation that the FLIC Scheme provide a 120 per cent tax concession on investment in the licensed company, a pilot scheme was introduced with a 100 per cent concession on any investment' (Australian Film Commission 2006). The AFC failed to explain the difference between its proposed 120% FLIC rebates scheme and the former 1980s 10BA tax concessions, which the AFC fiercely lobbied against. However, in the dire straits of Australian filmmaking even this meek stream of finance was reinstated. In June 2005, the Film Licensed Investment Company Scheme Act was passed allowing to raise production capital of up to \$10 million per year for two years with a 100% tax concession.

Naturally, when the Mullis group applied and received a FLIC license for *Little Fish* (Woods, 2005) – the first project to go through the FFC evaluation system – the industry was full of anticipation. Mullis' board included seasoned professionals, the American producers Barrie Osborne and Richard Keddie, Australian actors Hugo Weaving and Noni Hazlehurst and director Fred Schepisi. Under FLIC, Mullis could claim an upfront 100% tax deduction up to \$10 million raised in each of 2005/06 and 2006/07. Simon McKeon, another Mullis member and executive chair of the Melbourne office of Macquarie Bank, said (4) the group took 'an American-style studio view' of the Australian industry and planned to finance several films over a number of years (Sinclair 2006). Mullis's website described *Little Fish*, as a 'drama feature film, targeted to a wide audience (in the aged 18-40 category) in the same vein as "Shine" and "American Beauty". Little Fish is a distinctive project with strong universal appeal' (Mullis Partners 2005).

Little Fish had the coveted FFC *Trinity* of a respectable \$9.7 million (\$7.7 million USD) budget, marquee star power in Cate Blanchett, Hugo Weaving, Sam Neil and Noni Hazlehurst and the FFC's 'quality subject matter' stamp of approval. The story was set in western Sydney and depicted the struggles of an ex-heroin addict (Blanchett) to get her ex-rugby-star boyfriend (Weaving) off his heroin addiction while trying to come to terms with her hard past, which included her son's amputation and her experiences with her addict ex-boyfriend. Critically, *Little Fish* received 89% freshness on Rotten Tomatoes (Rotten Tomatoes 2006) and was officially selected by the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival. However, it is challenging to reconcile an 'American-style studio view' aimed at wide demographics and universal appeal with the depiction of Sydney druggies. Domestically, *Little Fish* earned \$3,829,869 at the Australian box office (Screen Australia 2017c). Given the previously debated distribution and exhibition expenses of 50%, it failed to recoup its budget of \$9.7 million. Internationally, *Little Fish* was picked up for distribution in the U.S., U.K and five other countries. In America, it played a single screen for a week, earning a total of \$8,148 (USD). In the U.K., *Little Fish* earned £112,829 (\$280,332) and played 20 screens for two weeks. Globally, the film earned \$4,365,295 (\$3,240,358 USD) (Box Office Mojo 2005a). To date, the Mullis Group has not produced another project.

Similarly, *Candy* (Armfield, 2006), produced the following year, also featured the FFC's *Trinity* of budget, 'quality' novel-based script and marquee names in Heath Ledger, Abbie Cornish and Geoffrey Rush. *Candy* depicted two Sydney lovers' destructive relationship spiralling down into heroin addiction; Sydney druggies seemingly resonate with the FFC's expert evaluation team. *Candy* earned an abysmal \$752,536 (\$563,499 USD) in Australia and \$57,695 (\$44,720 USD) in America (IMDb 2006). It failed to reach the \$5.5 million benchmark and earn its budget back. The average box office performance of *Little Fish* did not stop the FFC from trumpeting it as a cinematic triumph. In the FFC's

‘Review of Australian Government Film Funding Support’, submitted to DCITA in August 2006, the FFC’s wrote (15):

The results for FFC films released in 2005/06 and 2006/07 show an increase in domestic box office performance, relative to the size of the release. (Note that an unusually small number of films, six only, were released during the period) (Film Finance Corporation 2006b).

This statement, as its second part, are typical of the FFC’s creative writing and is well worth examining. First, following 2004, which was the worst year in documented Australian film history, ‘an increase in domestic box office performance in 2005/06 and 2006/07’ is hardly a feat to boast about. Attendance for both years was well below the ten-year average of 4.8%. This statement might be considered a half-truth. Second, the phrase ‘relative to the size of the release’ is misleading. Release size lies with distributors’ and exhibitors’ understanding of a film’s potential. Icon Distribution, which handled *Little Fish*, did not think it had quite the commercial appeal that Mullis group and the FFC envisioned. Furthermore, previously reviewed Mackenzie and Walls’ statistical analysis found that, if anything, Australian films are over-released, yet underperform and that their performance has nothing to do with the FFC (McKenzie & Walls 2013). Third, the sentence, ‘note the unusually small number of films, six only, were released during the period’, is crafted to distance the FFC from its responsibility for Australian film production and the consequent audience’s lack of interest in the films it produced. Further, it is unclear to what period the text is referring to. In 2005/06 the FFC invested in seventeen features; in 2006/07 it invested in fifteen features (Film Finance Corporation 2008b). All were released for commercial screening. The FFC’s statement is false. The FFC continues (15-16):

The most commercially successful feature was the **low-budget**, horror film *Wolf Creek* (\$6 million). Two **smaller releases**, *Little Fish* and *Look Both Ways* (\$3-4 million each) also did very well, with *Little Fish* **out-grossing** all other specialist releases (i.e. under 70 screens) in Australia in 2005, including such American and European films as *Crash*, *A Good Woman*, *Ladies in Lavender* and *Downfall* (Film Finance Corporation 2006b).²

What does the sentence ‘Two **smaller releases**, *Little Fish* and *Look Both Ways* (\$34 million each) also did very well’ mean? Smaller than what? The sentence implies that *Little Fish* and *Look Both Ways* (Watt, 2005) were either:

- a. Smaller releases budget-wise, in relation to *Wolf Creek*’s low-budget. This statement is false. *Wolf Creek*’s budget was \$1.4 million (Ryan 2010b). There is no relevant data on *Look Both Way*’s budget, but on average the FFC has invested \$2.7 million in its films (Film Finance Corporation 2008a; Smith 2005), which amounted to roughly 50% of a film’s budget. *Little Fish*’s budget was \$9.7 million.

² The bold marking is my own.

- b. Alternatively, if 'smaller releases' refers to *Wolf Creek*'s distribution, this implies that both films were successful, but not as successful as *Wolf Creek*. This statement is also false. *Little Fish* failed to earn its \$9.7 million budget back. *Look Both Ways* made \$2,969,712 in Australia and additional \$105,067 (U.S) in America (Box Office Mojo 2005b; Screen Australia 2017c). Meaning, it failed to return the \$5.5 million median required from Australian films to make their budget back. *Wolf Creek* did exceptionally well, was widely released both in Australia and the U.S., and earned \$16,188,180 million (USD) in America and \$11,574,468 (USD) internationally. A total of \$27,762,648 (USD) worldwide (Box Office Mojo 2006c).

This textual analysis might seem petty. As with other FFC texts, it might also be dismissed as a poorly written, unreferenced and unsubstantiated attempt to reflect some positive light on a very negative situation. This is not the case. The sentence stating *Little Fish* out-grossed American films such as *Crash* (Haggis, 2004) in Australia deserves a second read. *Crash* played in Australia for ten weeks and grossed \$2,145,254 (\$1,646,902 USD) (Box Office Mojo 2004) compared to Australia's native *Little Fish*, which grossed \$3,829,869. There begins and ends the comparison, otherwise *Crash* is everything that *Little Fish* is not. *Crash* was independently produced and shot in the more expensive Los Angeles for an estimated budget of \$6.5 million (USD) compared with *Little Fish*'s \$7.7 million (USD) budget in cheaper-to-produce Sydney. Like *Little Fish*, *Crash* was also officially selected by the Toronto International Film Festival, but it was also nominated for six Academy Awards, winning Best Motion Picture, Best Writing-Original Screenplay and Best Achievement in Film Editing. It grossed \$54,580,300 (USD) and \$43,829,761 (USD) internationally. Globally *Crash* earned \$98,410,061 (USD) (Box Office Mojo 2004), *Little Fish* earned \$4,365,295. *Crash* ranks forty-ninth on Box Office Mojo's *Top 2005 domestic grosses* compared with *Little Fish*'s 535th position (Box Office Mojo 2005c).

DCITA's review sought to understand the Australian film industry situation. Not everyone at DCITA who read the FFC's submissions was fully acquainted with the film industry's nuts and bolts. Hence, governments rely on trusted bodies to deliver full and accurate information, even uncomfortable truths. This was not the case. All of the above examples are intended to give a false impression. The FFC's 2006 submission to DCITA is consistent with the FFC's previous misleading and false documents and annual reports reviewed, as is the multi-pictured, graphically-enhanced, self-congratulatory 2005/06 annual report, modestly titled *An Exceptional Year in Pictures*. In it, Rosen claimed (38) that '2005/06 was another big year for the FFC' (Film Finance Corporation 2006a). Aside from the previously discussed *Little Fish* and *Candy*, all other FFC's exceptional 2006 films – *Ten Canoes* (de Herr, \$3,511,649), *Kokoda* (Grierson, \$3,138,501), *BoyTown* (Carlin, \$3,135,972) (Screen Australia

2017c) and *Clubland/Introducing the Dwights* (Nowlan, \$1,920,861) (Box Office Mojo 2007) – unexceptionally failed to recoup their budgets.

Kenny (Jacobson, 2006), by contrast, had none of the FFC's ingredients for an exceptional film: no marquee names, no budget and no quality Australian story. Worse, it did not obtain the FFC's expert-evaluation stamp of approval, only that of 'Splashdown, corporate bathroom rentals', a Melbourne-based toilet company that sponsored its production for less than \$500,000 in funds, labour and toilets (Petrie 2015). Wilson (2006) notes that *Kenny* was 'more anecdotal than plot-driven and shot on appropriately grainy video, this is one of the few phoney documentaries that could conceivably be mistaken for the real thing' (Wilson 2006). Yet *Kenny* made \$7,778,177 at the box office (Screen Australia 2017c), managed to get American distribution and earned \$81,082 (\$69,220 USD), playing on six screens for ten weeks (Box Office Mojo 2006b). It also played in New Zealand and the U.K, but generally, outside Australia *Kenny* failed to convey its ocker humour. The domestic gross for Australian cinema in 2006 was 4.6%, nearing the ten-year average, largely due to *Kenny's* commercial success. Most significantly, *Kenny*, along with *Saw* (Wan, 2004) and *Wolf Creek* (McLean, 2005), marked the rebirth of Ozploitation cinema.

The clear cultural preference of the Australian audience did not change the FFC-approved-bleak-pics. In its investment overview, the FFC notes (10) that of twenty-three feature films produced in 2007, six productions 'had budgets in excess of \$7 million (including three high profile international co-productions)' and the average feature film budget was \$6.94 million (Film Finance Corporation 2008b). *Romulus, My Father* (Roxburgh, 2007) is the most successful FFC film in 2007. It depicted a post-WWII Romanian family's immigration to Australia and its struggle with betrayal, incest, mental illness, suicide and death. Australian Eric Bana and German Franka Potente were leads. *Romulus'* budget is undisclosed. It earned \$2,589,674 in domestic box office (Screen Australia 2017c). In America, *Romulus* played three screens for one week, earning \$3,118 (\$2,791 USD) (IMDb 2007). Given the previously debated distribution and exhibition expenses of 50%, it stands to reason that neither *Romulus*, nor any other Australian film, made their budget back in 2007.

All of the above suggests that, by the second half of the 2000s, all three *frictions* remained unresolved. By 2006, *friction I* was so apparent that DCITA's review noted (9) a 'considerable debate about the degree to which the film industry is genuinely responsive to audience demand'. DCITA also suggested a 'need for both Government policy makers and industry stakeholders to reconsider their focus' (Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts 2006b). Consequently, a wide debate in the Australian industry, media and academia (Dale 2005; Gianne 2009; Nowera 2010; Pearlman 2011; Ryan 2012; Swift 2013; Verhoeven 2005) commonly titled 'What's wrong with

Australian Cinema?', that is, *friction II*, dominated Australian cinema discourse and split debaters into two groups. Verhoeven (2005) argued for films as arthouse and cultural identity extensions, writing that, 'the problem in Australia is that we have become a viewing population not a viewing nation. In other words, while we like to watch films, we do so in a way that has almost no relationship to the national agenda' (Verhoeven 2005). Gunawardena thought that, 'the Australian Film Finance Commission requires government funded films to have a particular Australian cultural angle to be reflective of our society in some way... good story telling can be lost in this pursuit for nationalism'. Clark, following Ken Hall's argument, advocated for genre, showmanship and entertainment value, commenting, 'No one is going to pay a \$15 premium for banal content...No more outback flics, no more suburban dramas, no more historical epics, save these for a free to air tele-movie on auntie' (Dale 2005).

This leads to *friction III*: Whose responsibility is it to finance Australian cinema? The government, with its perpetually money-losing funding bodies, or private investors reluctant to lose their money? The highest-grossing Australian picture in 2006 was *Happy Feet* (Miller, 2006) produced by Warner Bros. for \$110 million (USD), which earned \$11.1 million in Australia. The second was *Kenny*, independently produced for \$500,000 and which made \$7.6 million (Hancock 2007b). Even so, 'when *Kenny* made \$5 million at the box office', said Jacobson in an interview, 'I still owed my investor 250,000 bucks. So what hope have you got?' (Scarano & Hignett 2009). Producer Julie Ryan (*Ten Canoes*, 2006; *Dr Plonk*, 2007) describes this as the dilemma between risking a bigger financial loss or staying narrow within the confines of arthouse and making little, if that (Bosanquet 2007).

Some filmmakers managed this feat, but most did not. The sleeper *Undead* (Spierig Brothers, 2003) privately produced, preceded *Saw*, *Wolf Creek* and *Kenny* and proved that Ozploitations were not dead, just hibernating. But *Undead* was a horror film, a genre that fits the low-end production bill. *Undead* and *Kenny* were the exceptions. Private investors were reluctant to invest in the Australian cine market. To break into mainstream, required larger, unfound, budgets. Meanwhile, two seemingly unrelated changes in Australian cinema came about in 2008. The first was structural, the forming of Screen Australia and announcement of the 40% Producer's Offset. The second was cultural, a documentary *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild Untold Story of Ozploitation!* The two events seem unconnected but were intrinsically entwined and marked another major transition in Australian cinema.

4.9 Road Games: The Second Coming of Ozploitation Cinema

In its 2006 request for submissions, DCITA noted (5) that 'it is frequently suggested that the industry needs to make a transition from a cottage industry to one which is based on successful business enterprises, possibly through a restructuring' (Department of Communication, Information

Technology and the Arts 2006b). The AFC concurred, stating (56) that ‘whilst the AFC believes current structures demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness, it also believes the same outcome could be achieved through a merged or newly created agency’ (Australian Film Commission 2006). The ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ of the Australian funding system were demonstrated previously, but surprisingly media, academia and industry players shared the same view. A review of more than 70 submissions that responded to DCITA’s request (Attorney-General’s Ministry for the Arts 2006) reveals two prevailing contentions. First, feature films need to be afforded more means. Mechanisms varied for how this would happen, film write-off schemes, extended tax rebate and extension of 10BA and 10B being the favourites. Second, it was unequivocally the funding bodies’ position that the government should foot the bill.

The FFC argued for a 40% rebate for feature films with a budget of over \$1 million, reasoning (32) that ‘it is most difficult to secure high levels of confidence for this format. Note that although it is the riskiest format in terms of its economics, feature film also has the greatest “blue-sky potential”’ (Film Finance Corporation 2006b), ignoring the fact that no FFC film with a budget of \$1 million or under, ever had ‘blue skies’. The AFC argued that Refundable Film Tax Offset was well received by high-budget offshore productions shooting in Australia and should also be made accessible to independent Australian productions (Australian Film Commission 2006). The funding bodies’ position was accepted and on March 2008, as part of the 2007/08 federal budget, the Howard government announced two conclusions. First, the Producer’s Offset, which offers producers a rebate of up to 40%, depending on criteria such as Australian content, domestic production and postproduction expenditure. Second, the announcement of Screen Australia, which amalgamates the three government film agencies: the AFC, the FFC and Film Australia, into one agency which responsibilities include (4):

The functions of Screen Australia are to: Support and promote the development of a highly creative, innovative and commercially sustainable Australian screen production industry; and Support or engage in: The development, production, promotion and distribution of Australian programs; and the provision of access to Australian programs and other programs; and support and promote the development of screen culture in Australia; and undertake any other function conferred on it by any other law of the Commonwealth (Australian Government ComLaw 2008).

Forty years after Gorton’s endorsement of ‘frankly commercial’ films and twenty years after Holding’s assurance that ‘short of making the films ourselves’ the government has done everything for Australian filmmaking, the Howard government deduced that ‘commercially sustainable’ films are what Australians really need. Ryan (2010: 86) notes the new head of Screen Australia, Dr. Ruth Harley, advocated ‘a new era for Australian Screen industries’, particularly by ‘attracting larger audience and achieving greater commercial viability’ (Ryan 2010a). The nature of this newfound goal, embodied in *Australia* (Luhmann, 2008), is discussed in Chapters Six and Eight.

The second event to change Australian cinema's discourse was a small documentary – *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!* – conceived while its maker, Mark Hartley, was preparing the Umbrella DVD catalogue. Hartley befriended veteran director Richard Franklin, commenting (8), 'I couldn't read about Richard in any books about Australian film then, and there has been little written since' (Galvin 2008). *Not Quite Hollywood* was three times declined by the FFC before director and cine scholar Quentin Tarantino, an avid fan of Australian exploitations and veteran director Brian Trenchard-Smith, endorsed it and facilitated it being made. *Not Quite Hollywood* sparked a wide debate in academia about the place of those largely forgotten, trashy-yet-beloved genre films (Balanzategui 2017; Martin 2010b; McFarlane 2009; Mills 2010; Pearlman 2011; Ryan 2012; Ryan & Goldsmith 2017; Thomas 2009). It also sparked the genesis for this research. The Australian Film Television and Radio School's (AFTRS) publication, *Lumina*, dedicated an issue to the subject titled 'Genre is Not a Dirty Word' (Pearlman 2011), inevitably prompting the question 'Whoever said it was?'

Not everyone accepted the film's premise. McFarlane (2009: 80) argued that 'there were always generic traces at work in our films; and, further, genre doesn't account for everything exciting in recent Australian cinema' (McFarlane 2009). Thomas (2009: 92) contested some of the films depicted in the documentary such as *Road Games* as being irrelevant to the exploitations title, that is, low-budget filmmaking. She agreed that Ozploitations were indeed marginalised from the mid-1970s by the government and arts sectors 'to create films that were deemed to portray Australia and Australian filmmaking, in a more positive light to an international audience' (Thomas 2009). Martin (2010: 20) critiqued Hartley's film as composed history of a 'peculiarly savage taste':

In the end, the story it tells is too neat, too singular. It has certainly helped to shake things up within the frequently moribund scene of Australian film culture, and it has given some credit where it is due. But it also... represents a closing-down of avenues, from a paradoxically philistine, anti-intellectual position (Martin 2010b).

Ryan and Goldsmith (2017: 2) make three criticisms of Hartley's film, targeting its failure to distinguish at a terminological level between exploitation cinema, which uses 'excess; exploitative marketing; titillation; and gratuitous violence, gore and nudity' and regular Australian generic filmmaking. They note the referencing of an idiosyncratic selection of 1970s and 1980s film texts, rather than a definitive or representative account, combined with for the disregarding of 1990s genre films while jumping straight into their 2000s descendants *Wolf Creek* and *Rogue* (McLean, 2007). 'Consequently', they write (3), 'although the term is widely used, the object of study and its terms of critical reference are vague and only partly understood' (Ryan & Goldsmith 2017). Ryan and Goldsmith raise an important point. Indeed, as argued in Chapter One, insufficient empirical definitions plague Australian cinema discourse. As for *Not Quite Hollywood's* idiosyncratic selection, perhaps it is a bit too much to expect

from a 104-minute documentary. *Not Quite Hollywood's* main contribution to Australian cinema discourse lies elsewhere.

The Oxford Dictionary defines 'guilty pleasure' as a noun, 'something, such as a film, television programme, or piece of music, that one enjoys despite feeling that it is not generally held in high regard' (Oxford Dictionary 2015a). The AFC and the FFC are guilty of denying Australians such pleasure. Their entire existence revolved around the notion that some films should be regarded with high esteem, while others should not. Director Phillip Mora (8) argues that 'they [the government film bodies responsible for funding pictures] had a "Merchant Ivory" idea of what Australian films should be, but of course they never said that and never will say that' (Galvin 2008). Chapters Three and Four substantiate Mora's statement. Guilty pleasure runs through forty years of Australian cinema's history reviewed thus far. What content should be portrayed? What is the 'correct', 'national' image? *Friction* is a reaction. As Chapter Seven will argue, Australians consistently refuse to be told what to watch. Herein lies *Not Quite Hollywood's* importance, not by evoking discussion of the past, a good enough reason in and of its own, but by shedding light on inherent problems of the present.

The three defining *frictions* of Australian cinema were neither resolved, nor addressed, by DCITA. The FFC's complete and utter twenty-year failure was conveniently dissolved into Screen Australia. The question of personal accountability for the loss of \$1.345 billion of Australian tax payer's money did not seem to merit any investigation, neither at the government level, nor in academia. Research papers addressing the FFC's conduct are scarcely found. The reasons for this research gap will be discussed in Chapter Eight. Before that, to address the problem of insufficient empirical definitions, Part Two of the thesis examines the three pillars of Australian cinema discourse: 'National', 'Australian' and 'Cinema'.

Part II

Reconceptualising

Australian. National. Cinema.

Chapter Five

We'll Name it 'National': Circumcising National Cinema Theory

Australian national cinema debate is axiomatic in Australian cinema discourse. However, very little debate is dedicated to the question of what 'national' entails. Despite adopting a liberal disposition of global, transnational and multi-cultural discourse in the 1990s, the concept of national cinema persists as a preeminent scholarly apparatus for differentiating native cinemas from Hollywood films. Two requirements qualify films as 'national' – internal cohesion and external distinction – mandating a subsequent 'non-national' discourse to mark the 'national' film as distinct. The absence of non-national debate suggests that films become national through connection to a physical territory or by means of being regarded as such by academia, thus failing to meet the distinction criterion and rendering the term national superfluous. Yet national cinema and its exclusionary canonisation process continue to be inadequately debated. An analysis of different renditions of *Henry V* – England's most iconic and mobilised national text – demonstrates how explicit and opposing visions are neglected to accommodate their linking to an obsolete 'British national cinema' concept. To update national cinema discourse and render it more precise, Chapter Five introduces a new taxonomy – *national films* (patriotic), *films that are national* (critiquing centre) and *nationalistic films* (propaganda). A fourth category, the *un-national* film, removes the need to categorize every native film as part of national discourse and situates the former three as reductionist, subject-specific categories.

5.1 National. Cinema. The Original Sin

National cinema is a strange beast, born of an unholy matrimony between culture and politics. During the silent film era and up until World War I, German, French and American films freely competed as equals for international viewership. But the Great War disrupted European film production, allowing Hollywood studios to assert their distribution power over European markets. To protect their own, local cinemas assumed national traits and were branded artisanal. This entitled them the same government cultural protection offered to literature, theatre, opera and museums (Uricchio 1996). It also traded artistic individualism and freedom of expression for a position as *vox populi*, instigating the false notion that European cinema is separatist and elitist, the opposite to Hollywood's fanfare entertainment. Once governments were invited to intervene, film production was mobilised to preserve their understanding of cultural identity. This was the original sin.

Consequently, two modes of national cinema debate developed: the cultural and the economic. The first negotiates national cinema via textuality and content analysis. The second approaches national

cinema production as a policy outcome via system analysis. This division allows distinction between system/industrial arguments that categorise films such as *Superman II & III* (Lester, 1980, 1983) and *Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick, 1987) as Hollywood productions, although physically made in England, and content/cultural arguments where films reflect national culture, local craftsmanship and sensibilities (Christie 2013; Hill 1992; Uricchio 1996).

As a separate academic discipline, film studies are a product of the post-World War II era. Initially, in the local context, films were debated culturally as representations of what a nation *ought* to be, suggesting a political and social semiotics link to language, depiction of a common space, themes, national history, cultural and religious traditions and national social organisation. Avram (2004: 24) notes that in the 1960s and 1970s, 'films were only included in the canon of the national cinema if they fulfilled a national aesthetic and thematic criterion' (Avram 2004). Of incremental importance, but largely neglected, was the role governments played via their funding bodies and policies, production, distribution and exhibition modes, audience reception, especially box office data, media and critical discourse itself. The political upheavals of the 1960s saw the emergence of 'New Waves' of young, rebellious, filmmakers across Eastern and Western Europe as a result of discontent with their traditional cinemas and their thematic, ideological and practical representations of 'correctness'. Crofts (2006) attributes three main conceptual developments to New Wave: the reinterpretation of generic conventions such as film noir and the annexing sub-generic styles such as spaghetti westerns to the nation of production; a focus on the filmmaker's authorship; and a less censored representation of sexuality (Crofts 2006). Similarly, the 'Grand Theory' that dominated 1970s film research reflected personal concerns of the researcher. Leftist political discourse, especially in England and France, denounced the traditional gathering of statistics and other kinds of quantified data – the trademarks of system analysis – as empiricist, reasoning that looking at cinema as a quantifiable, that is, as equally measured industries, drops the claim for distinct, national uniqueness.

Cook (1996) notes that linking cinema to a specific national representation allowed leftist writers such as Tom Narin, Ernesto Laclau, Antonio Gramsci and Benedict Anderson to implicate British cinema, for example, in the Empire's historical wrongdoings (Cook 1996). Thompson (1993: 361) demonstrates Cook's argument by reviewing Jean-Louis Baudry's essay 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', which claimed that the camera lens reproduces a monocular, bourgeois perspective. She asks, 'how could any film escape the sway of the codes built into the machinery itself?' (Thompson 1993). Bordwell (21) challenges scholars who hypothesised on more than the 'triumvirate of Marx, Freud, and Saussure, but also Vico, Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, and the host of others', producing 'what Jonathan Rée has dubbed the *nouveau mélange*' (Bordwell 1996). Harbord (2007: 5) contends that 'film historiography provides not so much reconstruction and uncovering of

events as a reflection of our current fascinations and intellectual concerns' (Harbord 2007). Personal interpretations prevailed and, by the mid-1980s, scholars including Rosen (1984), Crofts (1984), Welsh (1986), Dermody and Jacka (1988), O'Regan (1988) and Higson (1989) leveraged Anderson's imagined communities. Academic discourse shifted from what national cinema *should* be to what academics imagined it *is*. Both Thompson and Avram note the distinction academics make between national and international cinemas, 'thereby', argues Avram (25), 'overcoming many of the problems associated with the ideologically constructed nature of the "national"' (Avram 2004).

Despite Avram's claim, the conceptual linking of nation and cinema is still current and highly problematic. Hayward (2005: 82) argues that 'by binding the concept of nation to state (literally by hyphenating it), the state has legitimate agency *over* and *of* the nation' (Hayward 2005). Herein lies the problem. A state is not a community as Anderson so famously claimed, nor is it a cultural apparatus, although it is certainly susceptible to competing cultural influences and traditions. It is a political contrivance – a machine – with a recognised, quantified structure designed for governance. A state's ability to control its cinema via funding and policy inevitably forces social and cultural communities to comply with its specific set of values. When a state is coupled with cinema – which is indisputably imagined – culture becomes a by-product of politics. Instead of opting for empirical, concrete, multicultural and cross-referential interrogation of the general political rules by which a nation influences and operates cinema (system analysis), national cinema debates intertextuality, the vaguer and far easier political-cultural-theoretical option. For example, Vitali and Willemsen's (2006: 9) poorly written and pompous argument that, 'films are clusters of narrative strategies that position spectators within layered conceptions of the nation-state inevitably in tension with each other' (Vitali & Willemsen 2006).

5.2 National. Cinema. Problematised

Why is coupling nation and cinema considered problematic? Higson (1995: 7) sees a cinema as national when it shares a 'coherent and unique identity and stable set of meanings' (Higson 1995). Silberman (1996: 298) depicts national cinema as a conceptual category, 'most obviously in the construction of a canon of films' (Silberman 1996), forming a two-way relationship between nation and cinema; one is functionalist (instrumental), a canon of films portraying the essence of the nation, and the other reductionist, including not all films produced within state borders (the national zone), just the chosen ones. Canon construction is problematic on both accounts (Moran 1996; Willemsen 2006). System-wise, forming culture involves institutional, repressive and economic decisions, legal framework of censorship (declared or self-imposed), training institutions, employment in national media structures, government licenses and corporate law. Content-wise, creating a 'canon' by Centre, inevitably shuns sub-cultural groups (the Periphery) that do not comply with its values within the

national zone and diasporic films that comply with Centre's values, but produced outside the national zone.

Qualifying a cinema as national demands from any chosen group of films *internal cohesion* and *external distinction*. To be regarded as a separate cinematic entity, films need to demonstrate similitude of particular traits and/or sensibilities that are not to be found in any other cinema (e.g. Australian ocker comedies, Japanese manga). Simultaneously, they need to be cohesive enough to demonstrate traits that will mark them as similar, for example, particularities of humour, visual style and theme. Without the discursive construction of external distinction and internal cohesion, there is no national cinema debate. Failing to achieve one or both is precisely where national cinema theory is contested.

Elsaesser (2005: 36) styles cohesion as 'another name for internal colonization' (Elsaesser 2005). Uricchio (1996) sees it as a masking economic interests and the inherent divide between elites' interests to those of mass culture (Uricchio 1996), while Schlesinger (2005: 18) questions national cinema's ability to address questions of interaction between communicative communities, for example, today's global, cross-cultural flows, 'because that is not where the theoretical interest lies' (Schlesinger 2005). Yet, there is a deeper issue with national discourse. Can a sovereign nation-state entertain a non-national cinema within its production borders? This is a self-refuting yes/no question that undermines the whole of the national argument.

No: In the absence of non-national cinema, all films of a certain nation-state become national by default. The requirement for distinction is not met; or met by virtue of geographic borders rather than any cinematic merits. Yugoslavian produced cinema, such as *Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1988), proves both textually and production wise, that borders are naught. 'No' makes the term national redundant.

Yes: If there is a non-national cinema, then where is it? Who and what determines its distinction? Who determines what constitutes the 'canon'? Once Centre obtains control over the 'canon', it becomes an exclusionary, political process in which cultural elites, national cinema theorists and bureaucrats determine what is in and what is not. National cinema becomes a matter of forced cohesion, rather than a cultural expression. The exclusion of Ozploitations, discussed as part of *friction II*, embodies this contradiction.

Either way, academia does not fare well. Cinema's involvement in a state-initiated, political process of constructing cohesion renders the term national irrelevant, either by being too encompassing to be effective or by revealing it to be a dependant by-product of the state, prone to conformity.

5.3 Intertextuality. Methodology. Askew.

To dodge this political implication, film scholars' main strategy for divining national cinema is textual analysis of what they regard as 'national'. Rosen (2006: 17) believes that national cinema is 'a body of textuality' (Rosen 2006); Higson (1989: 37) argues a 'hegemonising, mythologising process... a strategy of cultural (and economic) resistance' (Higson 1989). Vitali and Willemsen (2) understand it to be a 'cluster of cultural strategies' (Vitali & Willemsen 2006). These examples are no more than empty words. The use of 'strategy' suggests coherence, method and long-term planning. Culture formation is a long, negated and murky process. Theoretically, culture is an outcome of artistic freedom, social movements and sensibilities. But even assuming strategy in regard to culture, who formulates this strategy? Who determines the 'body' of the textuality? What are the mechanisms behind it?

To understand the mechanisms of national cinema, Higson identifies four categories: economics, thematic, consumption and critical evaluation (Higson 1989). Hayward (1993) offers two axes – mobilisation and textual – by which films are enunciated as national and what value (national/not national) is allocated to these mobilised films (Hayward 1993). Higson's first and third points are system analysis and correlate with Hayward's first axis, while the second and fourth points are part of a general, wider, film theory discourse and correlate with Hayward's second axis. Neither argument, however, explains what is particularly 'national' about these categories, or how they differ from traditional analysis of Hollywood or cinema in general. Hayward bypasses the inconvenient political question, regarding the identity of those who 'mobilises' texts and proceeds to examine intertextuality via her two suggested axes.

The first axis addresses distinction. Hayward identifies (5) distinction as '*the cinema*' at the centre of the nation and its peripheral cinemas: avant-garde, cult, censored and proscribed by 'a triumvirate composed of historical, critical and state discourses' and by archival institutions (Hayward 1993). Equating '*the cinema*' with Centre is certainly a valid methodology. However, the Centre-Periphery theory is not particularly national. By equating national with Centre ('*the cinema*'), national cinema is politicised and opened to the previously discussed criticism about its identity. The second axis addresses cohesion. Hayward offers seven typologies to mark '*the cinema's*' cohesion: narratives, genre, codes and conventions, gestuality and morphology, the star as sign, cinema of the centre, cinema of the Periphery and cinema as a mobilizer of myths. These typologies are not distinct at all. Hollywood cinema is commonly analysed via the same narrative, genre, codes and conventions methods.

Hayward, like O'Regan's claim demonstrated in Chapter One, believes that by referring to an analytical method as 'national' it becomes one. Similarly, she suggests (12) gestuality and morphology as means by which national cinema can be defined. 'What separates Arletty, Simone Signoret and Brigitte Bardot

on the one hand from Bette Davis, Joan Crawford or Susan Hayward on the other?’ she asks, ‘The answer? The gesturality and the morphology of the body’ (Hayward 1993). How exactly is gesturality measured? Is there a morphology-meter? Are there any empirical evidences to support this claim or is this observation based on Hayward’s role in the ‘triumvirate of historical, critical and state’ discourses?

Even assuming Hayward’s claim of distinctive French gesturality is substantiated, it means very little. There may very well be a cultural difference between American and French actresses and their gestures, but what makes their gestures ‘national’ and not just plain French gestures? The question that is not asked, but should be, is how does the gesturality of Arletty, Simone Signoret and Brigitte Bardot compare to French new wave’s icons such as Jeanne Moreau, Anouk Aimée and Catherine Deneuve? Surely Hayward would not claim that French new wave – explicitly founded as a rebellion against ‘*the cinema*’ of its time – was Centre? If there were a gestural distinction within the nation, what qualifies the former actresses’ gestures as ‘national’ and the latter not? If there is not such a distinction, then gesturality is a general part of France and French cinema, but not a distinctive national character.

Hayward’s arguments exemplify a lack of sufficient distinction between categories and the pervasive neglect of filmmaker’s intentions by way of forced cohesion. This exposes a yet deeper problem in the academic impulse to canonize films. Intertextuality, the creed of national cinema theorists, depends on the individuals who allocate its value. At times, those display sheer ignorance of basic terms. Consider Vitali and Willemsen’s proposition (6):

Compared to US black films, black British films are strikingly British, and yet in no way can they be construed as nationalistic. They are part of British specificity, but not of British nationalism: especially not if you remember that British nationalism is in fact an imperial identification, rather than an identification with the British state (Vitali & Willemsen 2006).

Even before Brexit exposed the inherent challenges to the existence of ‘Britain’, the term ‘British state’ never appeared in the Oxford Dictionary. The term ‘United Kingdom’, which is comprised of the four different and separate nation-states of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, does appear there (Oxford Dictionary 2015b). At best, a claim could be made for black English or black Scottish films compared to their black American counterparts. Moreover, nationalism does not equal imperialism, suggesting Vitali and Willemsen’s miscomprehension of the difference between basic political science terminologies. Specifically, British ‘imperial identification’ ≠ nationalism (Hays 1953). As will be demonstrated later, nationalism, in and of itself, is neither a positive nor a negative term; it is the value that scholars such as Hayward and Vitali and Willemsen allocate to it during the flawed canonisation process that determines the path of the national cinema discourse. This allocation

arbitrarily ignores the filmmaker's intent and eventually impairs national theory's arguments. To demonstrate this, a case study of the different incarnations of William Shakespeare's *Henry V*, one of England's founding, most iconic, national texts, is used to assist in drawing these conclusions.

5.4 King. Idiot. Henry V

In 1588, a small English fleet managed to defeat the superior Spanish armada and prevent a possible invasion of England. To commemorate the occasion, Queen Elizabeth I commissioned a play from William Shakespeare, adept in penning Lancastrian plays to create what Leach (2004: 19) calls the 'myth of England' (Leach 2004). Lane (1994) argues that the play was conceived by and written in support of the English monarchy to boost public morale and facilitate drafting 100,000 men to the war effort (Lane 1994). Shakespeare harkened back to King Henry V's victory at the 1415 Battle of Agincourt, in which a small English army managed to defeat, against all odds, a superior French force. The parallels to Spain were clearly understood and the monarchy's significance was further enhanced. Chapman (2005: 120) regards it as 'by far the most patriotic, most pro-England play that Shakespeare ever penned' (Chapman 2005). Winston Churchill (1956: 404), a devout reader, describes the battle as 'the most heroic of all the land battles England has ever fought' (Churchill 1956). The problem is that in the annals of military history, the Battle of Agincourt ranks high among the dumbest battles ever fought. It represented no actual English claim, merited no political sense, demonstrated an abundance of ignorance, arrogance and lack of strategy, yielded no material gains and achieved no substantial diplomatic stake or military goals. Yet its ongoing importance transcends long forgotten accomplished military victories precisely because, thanks to Shakespeare's talent, it is perceived as a triumphant victory.

On his accession to the throne of England, young Henry V pressed a highly questionable claim to the French throne. France was a substantially bigger, more populated and unified country than England. Henry's endeavours were never likely to succeed, but when the jingoistic French Dauphin sent him tennis balls instead of a mandatory tribute, Henry used this diplomatic insult as a pretext for war, which vastly overstretched English resources. Nevertheless, on 13 August 1415, Henry's army of 2,000 men at arms and 6,000 bowmen³ crossed the English Channel and laid siege to Harfleur until late September, leaving little left of the campaigning season. Henry's remaining army, those who survived battle and dysentery, was further cut down by the garrison left behind to protect the newly conquered, insignificant town. Thompson (1983) notes that Henry rejected sound advice to safely sail to the English stronghold at Calais and improbably sought to march the 150 miles in eight days,

³ Opinions vary as to the size of the English army and range up to 12,000 men plus non-military aids. See footnote 38, in Honig 2012.

claiming that France's rightful king should be able to walk anywhere upon his land (Thomson 1983). At the best of times, even without superior and hostile French forces, this meant a hazardous, logistical challenge that included crossing the Seine and Somme rivers. On the eve of St. Crispin's Day, 24 October 1415, a French army led by King Charles VI of France intercepted the English army *en route* on the plains near the village of Agincourt. Henry's army was exhausted, outnumbered, malnourished and demoralised by the perpetual rain (Bennett 1991; Oman 1906; Thomson 1983). On the day of the battle, Henry, who singlehandedly led his army into this dire situation, addressed his men with a speech immortalised in Shakespeare's words (1982: 19), 'if we are marked to die, we are enough to do our country loss; and if to live, the fewer men, the greater share of honour' (Shakespeare 1982).

Heavy rains in the week before made the battlefield a quagmire. A deadly mixture of the French military command's inexperience, chivalry and plain stupidity allowed the English longbow archers an undisturbed march into the mid-field. Once in range, they released steel-headed arrows that pierced the French cavalry's armour. Stuck in thick mud, the heavily-clad French man-in-arms could not move. Once fallen, they could not independently get up. Lightly-equipped Englishmen climbed on them and cut their throats as they lay. The ill-equipped, dismounted French were forced to fight on their feet, their numeric superiority and speed lost, their lances and swords rendered useless, as their second line pressed to their backs. Tragically, a small group headed by French noblemen reached behind the English lines and stole Henry's crown and personal belongings. Believing that the enemy's numbers were greater, Henry issued a command to execute all surrendering Frenchmen. Even in terms of medieval warfare, this was savagery and an example of Henry's ruthlessness (Earl 1972; Matusiak 2013).⁴ The French spirit was broken, and England won the battle. Henry returned triumphant to England, but his victory was short lived. He married the King of France's daughter who bore him a son, Henry VI, but died in Paris aged 35. His son's kingship of France was never established. Joan of Arc led the French rebellion against him and was sent to the stake in his name. Soon after, the Tudor lineage took over as monarchs of England and renounced any claim to the French throne. Agincourt, however, remained an English national myth, a benchmark of its bravery.

Henry's juvenile claim to the French throne and unfeasible excursion to France were purely in the declarative realm. No one conquers France with 8,000 soldiers. Henry substituted hard, cold military facts with popular but useless notions of grandeur. Perhaps this very quality appealed to Shakespeare. Although it has its dark moments, *Henry V* is a crowd pleaser. Henry is idealised as the young and just king, refusing to yield against overwhelming odds. The English are portrayed as good, the French are bad, and the story is about triumph of the human spirit. Accordingly, Hendrik (2003: 470) attributes

⁴ For a full account of the Battle see (Burne 1956)

the play's potency to Anderson's imagined community. In his St. Crispin's Day speech, 'Henry pictures Agincourt's battle already done, from the future perspective of the victory's anniversary' (Hedrik 2003b).

Unlike contemporary cinema, which highlights 'based on true story' as a signifier of the film's validity, *Henry V* is accepted as the 'true story'. As demonstrated, it is certainly not. In the national imaginary collective, the myth endured. The facts did not, witness Churchill's enthusiasm. This discrepancy did not go unnoticed. Gleicher (1991: 150) asks, 'is this effective and spectacular, but peculiarly partial, version of Shakespeare better than none at all?' (Gleicher 1991). Phillips (1946: 83) argues that the apparent bias in omitting the flimsy reasons for the English invasion of France makes the play into 'a national anthem in five acts' (Phillips 1946). Deats (1992: 285) notes that, for some, Henry is 'an exemplary Christian monarch', for others 'the perfect Machiavellian prince', threatening to spit babies and rape the daughters of Harfleur (Deats 1992). Leach argues that Shakespeare's plays are often open to conflicting interpretations but resist the ideological confinement to which critics and directors try to place them (Leach 2004). It is advisable, then, to address *Henry V* as Shakespeare's canonised rendition of events and against this personal understanding to review its two screen adaptations.

5.5 *Henry V* (Olivier, 1944): *King Gallant*

In 1940, the Films Division of the British Ministry of Information (MOI) issued a 'Programme for Film Propaganda', instructing British studios on how British character and national ideals of independence, toughness of fibre, sympathy with the underdog, love of freedom and democracy and capacity for sacrifice were to be portrayed on screen. As Cook suggests, what London officials considered to constitute national ideals also serves as outline for what 'National Cinema' is perceived (Cook 1996). By 1943, in the midst of World War II, London was largely destroyed by German air raids. English public morale was at its lowest. MOI offered Laurence Olivier, a young English actor, to participate in a screen adaptation of *Henry V*, reputedly at the suggestion of Prime Minister Churchill. Olivier was already an established Hollywood actor. He had narrated several short propaganda films and utilised Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day speech when advocating war effort.

After being turned down by several known directors, Olivier assumed the directorial role. Chapman notes (121) that although Olivier claimed that only 'minute alterations' were made in the text, in fact about a third of the play was expunged, mainly to allow for the Agincourt depiction, but also to comply with official MOI propaganda directives (Chapman 2005). Every available assistance was given to facilitate the film's production. This included granting Olivier a leave from service and funding expensive three-strip Technicolor film stock and the only suitable camera in England. 700 Irishmen, 150 horses were recruited, and unprecedented £80,000 were spent for the ten-minute depiction of the Agincourt battle. The total budget amounted to £475,000.

Every frame in the film is nationally orchestrated. It opens with a crane shot of 1600s London, descending into Shakespeare's own Globe Theatre. The narrator's request, 'a kingdom for a stage', nominates it as a representation of the English kingdom. When the action shifts to Southampton and the Boar's Head tavern, the film enters an epic 'historical' space filmed with moving camera, outdoor locations and realistic battle scenes (Crowl 2006; Donaldson 1991). Olivier's approach to cinema is theatrical. His use of static camera, shallow cinematographic perspectives that end in two-dimensional medieval backdrops and refrain from zoom-ins and close-ups keep the audience as spectators as in theatre. The French court represented the luxury, richness and wealth, this being juxtaposed to the English plain clothed simplicity and humbleness (Agee 1958; Davies 2000; Jorgens 1977). Olivier's historical indulgences are easily spotted. The sun shines on the green and dry meadows of Agincourt. Dust comes from under the horses' hooves and a long tracking shot accompanies the bannered French cavalry shifting from a walk to full gallop. Tarzan-like English soldiers leap off trees. Similarly, Henry's personal *mêlée* against the French Constable, while his soldiers idly stand and cheer, is accompanied by thundering, gallant musical score. Crowther (1972: 61) found that 'Olivier visions the gist of medieval pageantry, the ageless, romantic, storybook notion of the Battle of Agincourt' (Crowther 1972).

Others were less romantically inclined. Phillips (1946: 82) thought that 'what Mr. Olivier has given us is a Twentieth-Century conception of a Sixteenth-Century conception of a Fifteenth-Century King' (Phillips 1946). Beauchamp (1978: 228) argued that 'Olivier has systematically and tendentiously gutted *Henry V*, or rather butchered it — and recognizable chunks occasionally float disjointedly to the surface of the pasty patriotic ragout' (Beauchamp 1978). Others (Crowl 2006; Geduld 1990) noted the grace with which Olivier glides through his Agincourt and its portrayal as a medieval pageant. It is too easy to mock the film's pomposity. Indeed, Olivier's cinematic approach is dated, more filmed theatre than cinema, echoing the spirit of the soon-to-be-over Empire. But films should be judged as of and for their time, thus chiefly as Olivier's mobilised rendition of *Henry V*.

5.6 *Henry V* (Branagh, 1989): *Blood in the Mud*

In 1989, Kenneth Branagh made his directorial debut in a cinematic adaptation of *Henry V*, a role he portrayed for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Inevitably, his version was to be measured against Olivier's. Both were promising, young stage actors, first-time directors, portraying the same iconic English figure. Both were hailed as distinguished adaptors of Shakespeare. Unlike Olivier's version, Branagh's production was initiated through his company on a shoe-string budget of \$9 million (USD), allowing for only a few dozen extras. Famously, Patrick Doyle, Branagh's mate and the film's score composer, was an extra in the Agincourt scene. Branagh, acutely aware of the inevitability of comparison, set out to mark his film as different as possible. His vision was darker, sceptical of the

divine premise of the play, which Aeibischer (2006: 115) notes 'could work as a political thriller, as a detailed analysis of leadership, and a complex debate about war' (Aeibischer 2006). Branagh substitutes rain and mud for the grass and sunshine, lines omitted by Olivier were restored. Geduld (1990: 43) argued the film was 'a strong anti-war statement that suggests the malaise, the self-questioning disillusionment of Margret Thatcher's Britain in the aftermath of the Falklands war...His Agincourt is not a pageant but a blood bath' (Geduld 1990).

Branagh's affinity lies with popular culture. Derek Jacobi, the chorus, dressed in contemporary clothes strikes a match in the dark. He switches on the lights, revealing himself among curtains and filming equipment, not a theatre stage. The camera travels through doors with the audience from contemporary into historical 'film space' but lurks in the shadows of dimly lit interiors. There is no establishing shot. Instead, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely, debate (conspire) the church's advantages from Henry's invasion of France. Henry's first entrance reminds Pauline Kael of that of *Star War's* Darth Vader and Branagh himself claimed to 'come over as batman' (Purcell 1992). His extensive use of close-ups forced by limited sets and a calculated directorial decision immerses his audience in the action. When the plot moves outside, the scene is cloudy, grey and raining. Branagh's Henry is a king-in-the-making, ambiguous and doubtful, righteous and ruthless, compassionate and resolute, a manipulated manipulator caught in a political conspiracy between church (Canterbury and Ely) and his nobility (Canterbury and his mentor, Exeter). He is a humanist who invades France, slaughters its people and hangs his old drinking buddy Bardolph for stealing, unflinchingly watching and crying throughout the execution. 'I had no desire to beg an audience's forgivingness', wrote Branagh (281), 'they had to make up their own minds about the fascinating, enraging conflict between the ruthless killer and the Christian King' (Helmbold 2005).

Branagh's Agincourt is a war of attrition in muted colours. A gritty affair full of mud, smoke, greed, blood, terror and death. There are no galloping horses, just riders pulled down and drowned in puddles. An Englishman stops to loot and gets stabbed in the back. Sam Peckinpah-style, slow-motion shots depict arrow-pierced bodies and York's crucifixion-like death. It is pornography of gore and pain, displayed in intimate close-ups for the audience to feel. Branagh also edited out textual inconveniences. He depicts mounted Frenchmen massacring the English luggage boys, which is 'expressly against the law of arms' as Fluellen cries, not to mention historically incorrect. Missing is the English execution of the defenceless French prisoners. Present are Montjoy's plea on behalf of the French 'to book our dead' and Henry's magnanimous permission, both equally fake. Hedrik (2003: 218) notes that 'his noble thuggery is restrained only by the interruption of the announcement of the English victory... Losing control is, however, chiefly a charisma-enhancing authentication... an orchestrated spontaneity' (Hedrik 2003a). Branagh's extremely long tracking shot at the end of the

battle epitomises this notion. Instead of celebrating victory, Henry carries the luggage boy's body across the corpse-laden battlefield to the Church hymn *Not unto us, O Lord*. Here too, storytelling substitutes historical facts and is designed to juxtapose Henry's divinity and malevolence, employed in the service of Branagh's war-is-hell-but-we-are-humane concept.

Not everybody bought into it. Breight (1991: 98) noted that Branagh attempted to manufacture a religious and responsible Henry, when 'Shakespeare problematises the first and absolutely negates the second' (Breight 1991). Leach notes (120) that critics were divided:

John Simon argued that Branagh shows 'leadership as a hard-won personal achievement, rather than, as with Olivier, the divine right of kings and movie stars'... and Colin MacCabe denounced 'the cultural nostalgia... complicit with Thatcher's hideous mimicry of Churchill' (Leach 2004).

Is Branagh's film a contemplative mediation on the evils of war? Or is it a celebration of the man-who-did-what-a-man-has-to-do like Olivier's? Branagh treads a fine line between criticism of Henry and his problematic conduct and embracing his kingliness/celebrity. His Henry may weep like a late 20th Century male-*nouveau*, but for all his self-proclaimed anti-war ideology, Henry is still a (Hollywood?) hero/star; same as Olivier's, just better disguised. Be that as it may, scholars unanimously agreed that this is Branagh's rendition of *Henry V*.

5.7 Mass Distinction. Forced Cohesion.

Henry V epitomises the problematic nature of the 'national' classification. In their own way, in their versions of Shakespeare Olivier and Branagh address national issues of their time. Both films are clearly British national cinema but make opposite use of the same text. Olivier hails Britain's just war and is pro Britain's political Centre. Branagh projects the British public's discontent with the Falkland Islands sordid military affair and critiques Britain's political Centre. How does classifying both as 'national' further our understanding of these films? Higson (279) suggests that:

National cinema is... a profoundly complex issue, and in the end it cannot be reduced only to the consideration of the films produced by and within a particular nation-state. It is important to take into account the film culture as a whole, the overall institution of cinema, and in particular to address the question of consumption (Higson 1995).

Not so. National cinema is quite simple. It imposes two basic measures on any group of films: external distinction and internal cohesion. Before addressing the 'overall institution of cinema' and reverting to 'questions of consumption' that have nothing to do with the national classification discourse, it is important to examine the criteria at hand.

Distinction mandates that a specific type of films such as *Henry V* – a Shakespearean screen adaptation – would exclusively be found in British national cinema and no another. This is not the case. Shakespearean adaptations in all forms are used by filmmakers from cinemas around the world:

Anthony and Cleopatra (Blackton, Kent, 1908), *Othello* (Welles, 1952), *Tromeo and Juliet* (Kaufman, 1996), Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) and *Ran* (1985) and *West Side Story* (Robbins, Wise, 1961) to name a mere few. Conversely, there are distinct generic films that are largely excluded from national discourse. *Godzilla* (Honda, 1954) is Japanese horror. *Fistful of Dollars* (Leone, 1964) is Italian spaghetti western. *Stork* (Brustall, 1971) is Australian ocker comedy. *Shaft* (Parks, 1971) is an African-American Blaxploitation. Each represents a distinct sub-genre, clearly addressing national themes and sensibilities. Yet, despite their distinction, these particularities are categorised as 'genre films', rather than national signifiers. Being denied both the title of 'national' and of 'non-national' cinema exposes the bias with which these distinctive cinematic particularities were met.

Another present absent is the American national cinema. Unlike their overseas counterparts, non-studio American films such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Sigel, 1956), *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1970), *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Foley, 1992) and *Lone Star* (Sayles, 1996) are categorised as 'independent' cinema, not as national signifiers. Similarly, Hollywood produces scores of national films from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (Capra, 1939) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (Ford, 1940) to *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962) and *All the President's Men* (Pakula, 1976) to *Independence Day* (Emmerich, 1996) and *Armageddon* (Bay, 1998). Why are Hollywood films exempt from national categorisation? Consider *Hero* (Zhang, 2002) and *Lincoln* (Spielberg, 2012). Both address national themes, sensibilities and cinematic traditions. What makes the first 'national' Chinese cinema and the latter 'Hollywood'? Perhaps 'national' refers to geographically-bound films? If so, why are *The Matrix* and *Moulin Rouge!* considered Hollywood, yet entirely produced in Australia? The requirement for distinction is made, but not met.

Cohesion requires that English Shakespearean productions would share internal similitude, which no other production of Shakespeare in other national cinemas would display. Where is the similitude in the case of *Henry V*? Olivier's film draws on theatrical traditions and aesthetics. Branagh's affinity lies with American popular culture. Cinematically, they are apples and oranges. The same forced cohesion, debated in Chapter Three, drafts films such as *Green Card*, *The Piano*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, *Dark City* and *Predestination* to the ranks of Australian national cinema. The only cohesion these films display, except for partly being funded by Australian government agencies, is that their subject matter has nothing to do with Australia, its culture and the non-Australian story they tell. Forcing the term 'national' does not advance *any* understanding of these films.

Not only are national cinema's categories arbitrary, meaningless, fluid and forced, they address no real academic need. Perhaps, historically, local markets needed protection from Hollywood's economic and cultural domination, but a century of attributing 'national' to native cinemas all around

the world only perpetuates the false presumption of canonised films' national uniqueness, while truly unique films, wrongly associated with 'Hollywood' or 'genre', are neglected. As Bordwell suggests, there are enough commonplace, text-book methods to sort films which offer basic, factual, empirical approach to any chosen set of films, rather than the national assignation with its perpetual susceptibility to constant external challenges.

5.8 Discussion: National. Nationalism. Taxonomy.

Another problem in the national cinema debate is lack of contextualisation and plain misunderstanding of basic political science terms. 'National' and 'nationalistic' films are addressed as the same. They are not. In and of themselves, films do not carry any value save the one allocated to them. Yet there is a difference between national and nationalistic films. National films are made to reaffirm a nation's established convictions or characteristic. They are shamelessly patriotic, a positive value. Chapman (9) writes that 'the propaganda imperative of *Henry V* was to present Henry's victory at Agincourt as an allegory of the present war'. Chapman is wrong. Olivier's version is not propaganda. Shakespeare's text was mobilised to strengthen an existing, established English national identity, not to impose superiority of English ideology over that of Germany or France. As Chapman himself (122) notes, it was 'an opportunity to assert the topicality of the film for the war-weary audiences' (Chapman 2005).

Conversely, nationalistic films – derived from nationalism – are propaganda (negative value) and are made to animate abstract ideals and posit the superiority of an ideology, race or religion over others. Nationalistic is allocated a negative value because only in totalitarian regimes does the reigning ideology equal nation. There, films are compulsorily unified by Centre to promote an exclusionary, *collective* ideology. However, this division is not without its own complications, chiefly, the always problematic act of value allocation. One person's propaganda is the another's patriotism. This categorisation is in the eye of the beholder, fluid instead of empirical. To resolve this, national-related films are situated on a continuum divided into three types:

1. National/patriotic (Centre): films dealing with a nation's history or construction, explicit or implied. National films reaffirm national identity and represent a nation's central values. National films include *A Trip to the Moon* (Méliès, 1902), *Ivan the Terrible, part I* (Eisenstein, 1945), *Exodus* (Preminger, 1960), *Hero* and *Lincoln*. All depict national construction and are pro their respective Centre.
2. Films that are national (Periphery): Those are films dealing with national themes, factual or fictitious, folklore and myths in a critical manner. National theme ≠ national film, anti-war films being the prime example. Categorizing is done by their makers' stance and subject matter. Such are *All is Quiet on the Western Front* (Milestone, 1929), *Westfront*

1918 (Pabst, 1930), *The Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo, 1966), *The Deer Hunter* (Cimino, 1979) and *Born On the Fourth of July* (Stone, 1989) all critique their respective Centre.

3. Nationalistic films (Propaganda): films that advocate superiority of an ideology, race or values over other competing ideologies. Nationalistic films include *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915), *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925) and *Triumph of the Will* (Riefenstahl, 1935), respectively depicting and glorifying Ku Klux Klan, Communist and Nazi ideologies. They were produced to support a totalitarian ideology in a biased or misleading way and promoted a political cause or point of view.

Consider African-American or Jewish representation in *Birth of a Nation*, the glorifying depiction of Nazi rallies in *Triumph of the Will*, or White Russians fate in *Battleship Potemkin*. Are they anything like Henry's (England) or French portrayal in either of the cinematic versions? Olivier and Branagh refrained from factual depiction of French prisoners being slaughtered, precisely to not appear to be condoning such a heinous crime. Had some director portrayed French prisoners' slaughter to glorify England or imply that this is the way England should act toward other nations, that film would qualify as nationalistic. Chapman (1) notes that 'In Totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, propaganda films used historical stories to make explicit parallels with the present. *Jew Süss* and *Alexander Nevsky*, for example, were consciously allegorical films whose meanings were apparent to audience at the time' (Chapman 2005).

Jud Süß (Süss) is an excellent example. It is Lion Feuchtwanger's 1925 biography of Joseph Süß Oppenheimer (1692–1738), an assimilated Jewish/German financier rising to prominence as financial advisor to Carl, Duke of Württemberg, caught in a sexual/political/religious scandal, convicted and executed based on an obscure anti-Semitic law. Two films adapted Feuchtwanger's book: *Jud Süß* (Mendes, 1934) and *Jud Süß* (Harlan, 1940). They are worlds apart. Mendes' version – an 18th Century moral tale depicting a love/hate, Jewish/Gentile relationship – generated little attention and fell into obscurity. Harlan's film is inherently different. Fearing for his wife's life, Harlan directed this version under the personal supervision of Joseph Goebbels, the Third Reich's Minister of Propaganda. Jews were depicted as filthy lechers. *Süss* masquerades as a German, infiltrates society and tricks an innocent German maiden into sexual acts. Finally, he rapes her.

The film is a benchmark of the anti-Semitic propaganda produced in Nazi Germany. 'After the second world war', writes Shefi (2003: 34), '*Jud Süß* was banned from public theatres in Germany and most of the Western countries and pressure to destroy it was brought to bear on its creator' (Shefi 2003). Technically, Harlan's *Jud Süß* meets every criterion of German national cinema. It was initiated, produced and financed by the state (Centre), directed and acted by German talents and screened in

Germany to enthusiastic German audiences. Its subject matter addresses German national sensibility of its time. Further, it is distinct; nowhere else were such anti-Semitic films made, filmmaking being a predominantly Jewish-owned and controlled business. It is also cohesive. *The Eternal Jew*, (Hippler, 1940) and *The Rothschilds* (Waschneck, 1940) were produced by Goebbels for the same purpose. Respectively categorising *Henry V* and *Jud Süß* as propaganda for democratic Britain and Nazi Germany cannot be accepted as a valid argument. Neither is referring to both films as representations of their respective national cinemas. Moreover, *Jud Süß* is no longer a part of German national cinema, because current German Centre outright rejects *Jud Süß*' anti-Semitic stance. It is not judged by means of production, nationality of its cast and crew, or by its distinction or cohesion. Its affiliation is not due to academic or bureaucratic categorisation. *Jud Süß* is solely judged by the stance allocated to it by its makers. If this is the case with *Jud Süß*, there is no reason to group other films under the national category, simply because they are far less offensive.

Quod. Erat. Demonstrandum.

5.9 Conclusion: The Un-National

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that national categorisation is an academic prism. It is not necessarily the best or worst of them, just one way by which textual meaning, sometimes hidden from its own makers, is deciphered. However, it is the makers' meaning that needs to be understood, not the academic who allocates its meaning. The last category of this debate is the case of films that have nothing to do with national related issues. Occasionally, even this happens:

4. Un-National Films: Films that debate filmmaker's stance as the defining and ultimate criterion in film classification. Some filmmakers address social issues. Others wish to entertain, inspire or shock. Some films are box office oriented. Some take pride in their artistic integrity. Others strive for experimental filmmaking. Common to all is the Deleuzian *Desire to Become* and engage with an audience.

Billy Elliot (Daldry, 2000), for example, belongs to a well-established British social realist cinematic tradition. Its plot is depicted against the backdrop of the 1984/85 coal miners' strike. Toward the end of the film comes an amazingly powerful, gut-wrenching shot. Having lost their battle, their strike efforts shuttered, the defeated miners quietly crowd into an elevator, close the door and descend into the mine. This shot transcends the specificity of the national, the miners' immediate political reasons for their strike. One does not need to be acquainted with the miners' pure hatred of Margaret Thatcher to feel their pain and defeat. Anyone, speaking any language, who has ever been beaten by the system, anywhere, at any time, understands it immediately. *Billy Elliot* speaks universally. To group it as part of British national cinema is to diminish its cross-cultural power.

It seems that filmmakers' personal visions have been somewhat lost in the national debate. As Guback contends (10), 'consider the Chaplin film or those in the Italian neo-realist tradition. They were international but in a much different sense. They were able to convey *human* message in terms understandable to people everywhere' (Moran 1996). Guback argues national cinema, but bundles Chaplin, an established Hollywood vaudevillian entertainer, with low-budget Italian neo-realism. Even so, if Chaplin, De Sica and Daldry manage to transcend their locality and speak universally, why confine their work to a specific national cinema? Theirs is just cinema, bridging cultural gaps. For filmmakers, it is plenty.

The present time demonstrates rapid global changes. Drought and famine caused by climate change drive people from their land. Physical borders are torn down by waves of refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing war-torn countries. Trumpism, Brexit and the rise of radical Islam and nationalistic right-wing parties across Europe challenge traditional national integrity and identity. The national debate is returning and replacing the multi-cultural, politically correct, liberal-dominated discourse of the past two decades. Cinema is there to reflect and inspire those changes. If the national cinema debate strives to stay contemporary and relevant, it needs to adapt. It must adopt more an accurate, reductionist and factually-based, analytic tools. The categories suggested are only a first step in this direction. Further debate is both desperately needed and most welcomed.

Chapter Six

You Make Me Feel:

Australian Identity in the Lost and Found

Aboriginal cinema is the purest form of Australian 'national' cinema. Adhering to the two national prerequisites presented in Chapter Five, it is both cohesive in being government funded, low budget and socially oriented, and distinct in that no other cinema presents Aboriginal Australians to this extent. Advancing Aboriginal screen representation is a declared and agreed upon Australian policy, but also a highly disputed matter. Being government funded, politicians exert their agency over Australian content to portray an ideological understanding on screen. The crossroad of Australia's 'History Wars' and Australian cinema sees right and left factions of Australian academia, politics, media and society split over the question of the rightful place of Aboriginal peoples in Australian history and their consequent screen representation. Three Australian features from three spheres of film production – Aboriginal cinema's *Beneath Clouds* (2002), Australian mainstream cinema's *Jindabyne* (2006) and the Hollywood blockbuster *Australia* (2008) – are argued to represent three conflicting stances of Australian Prime Ministers: Keating's disputed 'black armband', Howard's unapologetic 'whitewashing', and Rudd's 'moving on' policy. Consequently, Australian screen representation tends to form as governmental-distributed currency, not a free form of artistic expression, questioning Australian cinema's validity as a signifier of a cohesive Australian identity.

6.1 Left, Right and Centre: Australia's History Wars

Australian cinema is a government subsidised industry. The government funding bodies – the AFC, FFC, Film Australia and later Screen Australia – used their financial ability to exercise control over portrayed issues, values, style and screen representations. The 'AFC genre', coined by Dermody and Jacka (49) as the 'dominant aesthetics operating in Australian films of the seventies' (Dermody & Jacka 1987), is a prime example. The FFC's mission statement mandates (14) 'strengthening a sense of Australian identity' (Film Finance Corporation 2008b). The FFC was founded on a (131) 'purely commercial basis' to 'scrutinise budgets and control costs' (Rayner 2000), with an explicit assurance from its first CEO, Kim Williams (377), that 'the FFC has no creative involvement in the films' (Stratton 1990). The mere act of selecting content to fit an abstract and disputed Australian identity politicised Australian cinema and declared it to be a government currency, distributed by Centre's agents.

Instead of addressing this anomaly, politicians sought to harness it to their advantage. As demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, cinema and politics always mingled. Prime Minister Gorton's reason for supporting Australian cinema was to 'develop a feeling of nationalism'. Phillip

Adams bragged that the FFC wouldn't have eventuated without the support of treasurer Keating, which bypassed objections by Arts Minister Holding. The AFC and FFC actively lobbied against AUSFTA and, in 2004, the Liberal Party promised to commission a documentary series on Australia's history from Film Australia. The latter was perceived as another round in the History Wars conducted between the 'black armband' and 'whitewashing' factions of Australian academia, media and politics, focusing on Aboriginal history and its rightful place in the construction of Australia (Dalrymple 2007; Hage 1998; Madley 2008; McKenna 1997; Veracini 2006; Windschuttle 2003). Collins and Davis (2004: 55-56) note that Howard's neo-conservative government was 'keen to refute the black armband view of Australian history' and an unprecedented cluster of feature films between 2000-2003, 'taking a left-liberal approach to the history and present impact of British colonisation of Australia' (Collins & Davis 2004).

Two issues dominated the History Wars, the Mabo ruling of Australia's High Court, which recognised indigenous ownership ('native title') over their lands, and Howard's outright refusal to offer an apology to the 'stolen generation', a government program extending from the 1910s to 1970s to dissolve the Aboriginal race by forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families. Manne (2009) locates three Australian Prime Ministers – Keating, Howard and Rudd (2007-2010) – on a continuum of Left, Right and Centre. Keating acknowledged white Australian crimes against Aboriginal people, Howard apposed this view venomously and Rudd addressed it as a mixed achievement with elements of both 'glory' and 'shame' (Manne 2009). The Liberals won and in 2007 Film Australia announced it would develop an 'editorial architecture' for the series (Film Australia 2007). Why should a government agency develop an 'editorial architecture' for a much-disputed, political-historical-cultural struggle? Rundle (2007) suggests a divide between public opinion, consistently re-electing Howard and the artistic/cultural community suggesting that Howard's government didn't represent 'real', liberal, cosmopolitan Australia (Rundle 2007b).

In 2004, Australian cinema viewership by Australian audience reached an all-time low of 1.3% and Australian films' annual viewership in the 2000s rarely exceeding the 5% mark (Screen Australia 2018), highlighting the conundrum according to which Australian Prime Ministers and the artistic/cultural community overvalue the limited effect that moving pictures have on the Australian public. Further, a film's affiliation with Australian cinema does not automatically qualify it as a contributor to Australian identity. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the AFC definition of 'Australian' as 'produced under the creative control of Australians' was highly contested and only intermittently applied. Moreover, for Australian audiences – the core recipients of portrayed national identity – industrial technicalities such as financial or creative control, cast and crew's nationality and filming location mean nought. Film's contribution to Australian identity lies mainly in the realm of screen representation, that is, *friction II*.

While box office data is no measure of quality, it indicates a film's ability to connect and impact Australians.

6.2 MIA: Australian Identity

Being First Nations, Aboriginal people are undisputedly Australian. Their screen representation is defined by Moore and Muecke (1984: 35) as a discipline 'studied in a partial and ideological way', uses representations or traditional native signifying practices, 'articulated with other practices, such as film-making' (Moore & Muecke 1984). It is distinct and cohesive, and is stated in AFC's third objective (2001: 1) to 'facilitate and resource the participation of Indigenous Australians in the Australian film, television and interactive digital media production industries' (Australian Film Commission 2001). Aboriginal cinema's inclusion in Australian cinema validates the latter as 'national', but also questions this validity as it is also an articulation of *an* ideology.

Despite its position as a national signifier, for a long time Aboriginal cinema was marginalised and perceived as antagonistic to mainstream historical and screen discourses and popular audiences (Bennett & Beirne 2011; Dolgopulos 2014). Witness the History Wars, or what Davis (2007: 6) regards as 'the thorny issue' of Aboriginal cultural appropriation by white filmmakers (Davis 2007). Films such as *Uncivilized* and *Jedda* (Chauvel, 1937, 1955), *Walkabout* (Roeg, 1972), *Storm Boy* (Safran, 1976), *Yolngu Boy* (Johnson, 2001), *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Noyce, 2002) and *Ten Canoes* (de Heer, 2006), all directed by white men, are contested in academia. Hayward (2012: 21) believes that 'the films reveal as much about the imagination of Australia's colonisers as they do of actual Aboriginal cultures' (Hayward 2012). Moore and Muecke (38) argue that Aboriginal representations tend to be 'displaced towards dominant discursive formations (the universities, history as drama) and away from the immediate concerns of the minority groups' (Moore & Muecke 1984).

Even determining an academic framework is an issue. Some debate Aboriginal representation as part of Australian cinema (French 2014; Hamilton 1991; Hayward 2012; Morphy 2005) within a postcolonial, leftist discourse. Others (Casey 2003; Langton 1994; Mishra & Hodge 2005; Motha 2005; Rekhari 2008) depict Aboriginal Australians as the perpetual 'Others'; explicitly before the Mabo decision and implicitly afterwards. There is an 'anti-colonial' framework, defined by Dey (2006: 2) as 'theorizing colonial and re-colonial relations and the implication of imperial structures on the processes of knowledge production and validation the understanding of indigeneity, and the pursuit of agency, resistance and subjective politics' (Dey 2006). Dey's definition posits any attempt to address indignity – save that of the anti-colonial framework – as a by-product of a long-gone imperial identification. With these conflicting theoretical frameworks in mind and given that Australian cinema is a government sponsored venture, watching Australian films raises questions: whose Australia do we see on screen? Keating's 'black armband', Howard's 'whitewashing', or Rudd's 'moving on'?

agendas? More important, what value, including the one in this research, is allocated to those films: postcolonial (hyphenated or not), anti-colonial or national? Can a film represent both?

To answer these questions, three Australian films were chosen as case studies. All address Aboriginal Australians from different perspectives. *Beneath Clouds* (Sen, 2002) represents Aboriginal cinema. *Jindabyne* represents mainstream White Australian cinema. *Australia* represents an Australian go at a Hollywood blockbuster. Inevitably, any film selection is arbitrary and open to contradicting examples. Yet production-wise, these films strongly represent their strand of cinema and filmmaking practices while generating enough academic discourse to serve as signifiers on Mann's suggested continuum, linking Aboriginal representation as part of Australian identity within shifting political tides.

6.3 Petty Crims & Unemployed Drifters: Black Armband in *Beneath Clouds*

Lena (Danielle Hall), the protagonist of *Beneath Clouds*, is a 14-year-old, fair-skinned and blonde teenager who (164) 'wears her in-betweenness on/in her skin' (Collins & Davis 2004). Lena's estranged, biological father, of whom she only has vague memories, is of Irish decent. Her neglectful mother and drunkard, abusive partner are Aboriginal. After learning that her best friend is pregnant, Lena leaves her small Aboriginal community to find her father in Sydney. On the back roads of New South Wales she meets Vaughn (Damien Pitt), an Aboriginal boy of her own age who has escaped a juvenile detention centre to visit his neglectful, dying mother. Vaughn's skin colour bears on his identity ('blackfellas') as a mixed source of prejudice and pride.

Using the road trip genre, over the course of 24 hours the pair experiences racism and compassion, white police harassment, domestic Aboriginal violence and sexual assault to forge comradeship. On this, Walsh (2003: 12) writes:

Lena and Vaughn suffer no bullshit. They have the close-mouthed scepticism of those who are on the margins. Anger is their defence but it chokes other emotions, and the project of the narrative is to ripen that anger to include emotions which might renew the protagonists (Walsh 2003).

The most poignant scene of the film occurs when an old Aboriginal woman traveling with them asks Lena, 'where your people from, girl?' Lena's indigenous identification, which eluded Vaughn until that point, surprises him, but both keep quiet. Walker (2002: 15) notes, 'a silence shouting "shame" across the cultural divide that binds them together' (Walker 2002). Tsiolkas (2002: 8) writes, 'after a while I wanted someone to talk, to articulate, and to argue. I can accept the conceit that Vaughn does not recognise Lena's aboriginality but precious little is done to illuminate the meanings in this mis-recognition' (Tsiolkas 2002). Gall and Probyn-Rapsey (2006: 428) contest this by stating, 'we could read the *demand* for speech and argument as the problem' (Gall & Probyn-Rapsey 2006). Their response exemplifies what Downing and Husband (2005: 126) refer to as the 'distinctive challenge of

Indigeneity', the need for non-indigenous people to adopt an alternative perspective of the 'spiritual, social, economic and cultural values in indigenous peoples' relation to their land and resources' (Downing & Husband 2005).

The old Aboriginal lady's question crystallises and problematises the film. Indignity leaves no doubt. Without Lena's 'people', she is devoid of her heritage, history, tradition, scenery, roots, land, clouds and sky, the sum of her identity. Collins and Davis (167) argue that 'for Lena to continue to hide her aboriginality would be not only to deny the history she has learned to recognise in the land but also to take responsibility for a history that is not her own' (Collins & Davis 2004). Indignity, however, is only a perspective. Vaughn is represented as the bearer of Aboriginal identity (Collins & Davis 2004; Palmer & Gillard 2004), but as Clark comments (2008: 233), this analysis disregards 'a 2pac poster on his bedroom wall. A signifier of American gang culture, guns, drugs and rap music' (Clark 2008). Both Lena and Vaughn wear Nike outfits associated with gangsta culture. Pearson (2011: 152) suggests an alternative reading of the film, addressing the 'racist police who pull over the aboriginally-identified car' (Pearson 2011), while ignoring that the car in question is a pimpmobile named 'Black Beauty' and that Vaughn's 'gangsta cuz's' conceal a gun and ditch marijuana at the sight of police.

In another scene, Vaughn and Lena, taking refuge in a deserted church, tear a Bible to start a fire. McCarthy's (2004: 23) writes, 'the two protagonists share but also now contest a history that has Christianity as the civilising ideology of colonialism' (McCarthy 2004). Engebretson (2004: 267) notes that the National Catholic Life Survey shows that in Australia only 5% of Catholics between the ages of 15 and 19, born into the faith, attend Church regularly. Statistics from other religions in Australia confirm this trend. 'In the private, individualized world of religious belief in Australia', she writes, 'the language generally used to talk about Christianity does not reach them' (Engebretson 2004). Lena and Vaughn contest nothing. Like 95% of Australian teenagers, they are oblivious to religion, theirs and others. Rap music and Nike outfits are their style, not religion or Aboriginal traditions. Alternatively, if Sen is the one contesting Christianity, consider the public reaction to a white protagonist matter-of-factly desecrating an Aboriginal holy artefact.

There is absolutely no problem with Sen's depiction of burning a Bible. With minute limitations, artists enjoy the freedom to tell their story their way. Similarly, Charles Chauvel, widely criticised for his 'anti-assimilationist message' (Buckmaster 2015a) and Aboriginal depiction in *Jedda* (Moore & Muecke 1984; Rekhari 2008) should enjoy the same freedom. He does not. 'I think that *is* the issue', argues Lydia Miller, an Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Arts in the Australia Council for the Arts (6), 'it is about appropriation in some respects, because the Western notion of the artist as hero goes right up against Indigenous cultural paradigms of cultural material belonging to the

community from whence it comes from' (Davis 2007). Casey (2003: 108) contends that 'European representations of Aboriginal and Islander cultural identities have played a major role in justifying and validating the violence of colonialism... Equally, self-representation has been a major factor in Indigenous resistance and survival' (Casey 2003). Thus, *a priori*, Chauvel's representation of *his* white Australian experience is equated with justifying violence and colonialism. Sen's Self-Aboriginal-representation relying on the road movie format, an established *American* genre, is 'resistance and survival' not appropriation. Indigenous apprehensions about white cultural 'appropriation' cease when pictures are sequentially assembled in 24 fps and distributed in cinemas for money, not an Aboriginal artistic tradition, but a white one.

Adopting these arguments epitomise leftist white guilt. Aboriginality or 'Indigenous cultural paradigms' are automatically qualified as 'good'. Challenges to them, such as that portrayed in *Blackfellas* (1993, Ricketson), are associated with 'colonialism' or, worse, 'racism'. McKee (1999: 143) problematizes 'true' or 'realistic' Aboriginal screen portrayal. 'Representations of indigenous lawyers are less "realistic" than representations of "miserable battlers", petty crims, boozers, unemployed drifters' (McKee 1999). Not so. Consider *Little Fish*, *Two Hands* and *Somersault* (Shortland, 2004), all portray white druggies, petty crims, boozers and unemployed drifters, a fact no one seems to mind. From start to finish, there is nothing in *Beneath Clouds* to suggest that Lena has an Aboriginal identity, or that she made the wrong choice by ditching it. While Muriel's efforts to escape her small town and neglectful family in *Muriel's Wedding* are applauded by critics and audiences, Collins and Davis suggest that Lena's same decision is 'denying her history'. Muriel is white, that is, she doesn't have a history. Lena's neglectful mother is Aboriginal, which automatically binds her to traditions she clearly does not care for. To answer the old Aboriginal woman's question 'where your people from, girl'? They are in Sydney ma'am, and they are of Irish decent.

6.4 Down by the River: Whitewashing in Jindabyne

Acknowledged as a commentary on Howard's governance and his refusal to apologise in the 'stolen generation' controversy (Bye 2010; Columpar 2014; Lambert & Simpson 2008; Rundle 2007b; Ryan 2006; Strange 2007), Ray Lawrence's *Jindabyne* (2006) is another specimen of the FFC's expert evaluation process debated in Chapter Four. *Jindabyne* relocates to Australia the story of oblivious small country town weekend fishermen who find and ignore a floating body of a murdered young Aboriginal woman by tying it to a branch to enjoy their annual fishing trip. Irishman Stewart Kane (Gabriel Byrne), once a champion car racer, currently an ageing, unhappily-married garage owner, is looking for time away from his estranged and guilt-ridden American wife Claire (Laura Linney). Realizing that Raymond Carver's short story *So Much Water So Close to Home*, previously featured as one-eighth of Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993), does not sustain feature-length running time,

Lawrence and script writer Beatrix Christian compensate by burdening *Jindabyne* with themes of rape and murder, postnatal depression and child neglect, children's cruelty and rites of passage and indigenous interracial tension. As if these weren't (bad) enough, the film is laced with didactic symbolism and metaphors that Lambert and Simpson (2008: 1) see as 'traumas which inevitably resurface to haunt the present' (Lambert & Simpson 2008). Bye (2010: 131) finds those traumas to be 'underwritten by a history of Australian nationhood founded on the fallacious notion of terra nullius' (Bye 2010), that Strange (2007: 131) argues are necessary to explore the 'conditions for reconciliation in a colonial settlement' (Strange 2007).

When the fishing party's actions become known, condemnation by the town's people, the Aboriginal community and their spouses follows. Unable to justify or undo what was done, each of the men behaves differently. One flees town. The others try to carry on as usual while refusing to apologise. Meanwhile, tensions run high. Hot-headed Aboriginal youth spray graffiti around town, vandalize an office in an angry rampage and break windows. Bye (134) argues that 'the dead girl's family are not only grief-stricken but deeply shocked and angered by the fishermen's disrespect, and they attribute the men's apparent indifference to racism' (Bye 2010). How so? Was this behaviour less appalling in the Carver short story in which the murdered woman was white? Throughout *Jindabyne*, there is not a trace of racism toward Aboriginal people, their traditions, or social issues because Aboriginal Australians are not addressed in the film. To be part of current Australia, argues Casey (111), Indigenous Australians need to be present. 'The post-Mabo negotiations depended on recognition of Indigenous Australians in the present, their present rights, their present communities and their present connection with their culture and land' (Casey 2003).

In *Jindabyne*, school children are shown a glimpse of *Snowy Hydro – The Jindabyne Story* (p. Snowy Mountains Authority, c. 1965), a documentary about old Jindabyne shot before the town was flooded. 'Documentaries', notes Arrow (161), 'make up 45 per cent of programmes communicated to the more than four million students in Australian classrooms' (Arrow 2011). *Snowy Hydro* serves to demonstrate what Australian children are taught at school and as a reference point. It features Australian icon Banjo Paterson's home, three churches for the townsfolk and the local boy scouts branch; it doesn't, however, feature *any* Aboriginal people. As if flooding 1,880 square kilometres of their land has no effect on them. As if Aboriginal people are not a part of 1964 Jindabyne. Unlike the nationalist films reviewed in Chapter Five, *Snowy Hydro* is not a racist film *per se*. Its maker simply perceived Jindabyne as a white town and their film addresses white concerns. Forty years later, *Jindabyne* still addresses white concerns. Aboriginal people that appear in it are a randomly-chosen victim and minor roles of a girlfriend or community member, tasked with displaying different levels of discontent with the fishermen's actions. *Jindabyne's* Aboriginal characters don't stand on their own, their job is to move

the plot along. If their grief is different to that of other groups, it is not presented in the film. Lawrence's depiction of the smoking ceremony doesn't demonstrate how this practice helps the Aboriginal community negotiate their grief. Rather, it turns them into the Australian *bon sauvage* – an exotic, spiritual people. Uncontextualised in the present, as Casey's suggests, *Jindabyne* links itself to *Snowy Hydro's* cinematic tradition of excluding aboriginals, rather than breaking from it.

Even the role of Stewart Kane, after returning from his trip, consists of doing nothing, denying the audience the mandatory dramatic transformation a protagonist must undergo. Only Claire is determined to make good on her husband's behaviour. Despite objections, she visits Susan, the murdered young woman, in the morgue, contacts the grieving family and urges the men to show remorse. Columpar (2014) notes that Claire's persistence pays off when Stewart and his fishing mates and their families join her at the smoking ceremony, designed to usher Susan's spirit to another place and to cleanse her mourners. Stewart apologises on behalf of the fishermen and enables personal and public reconciliation between Susan's kin and those who didn't know her (Columpar 2014).

At its core, Carver's story is a short morality tale, or rather, lack thereof: explicitly, the fishermen's indifference to the tragic crime committed against a young woman; implicitly, as a demonstration of the oppressive day-to-day grey reality, grinding working class people to a state of apathy. *Jindabyne* fails to address both accounts. What was posed in Carver's story as a small, private dilemma – the cost of not doing the right, humane, thing – has collapsed in *Jindabyne* to what Rundle (2007: 41) notes as public hysteria. The universal focal point turned into an Aussie grand debate about 'what a specific colonial people owe to the colonized' (Rundle 2007a). As a metaphor for white/Aboriginal relations, it gets worse. Strange (132) notes that *Jindabyne* reflects both the populism of the Australian government regarding indigenous people the indifference of Australians 'too weary to contemplate social justice issues' (Strange 2007). Is this the reason that Claire – the film's moral compass – has an *American* not Australian identification? America is a nation built on African slavery and which systematically disowned indigenous people on its mainland and abroad. America, unlike multi-cultural Australia, *never* acknowledged its spotted past. The Australian public may be weary, but whoever chose this metaphor, or approved this script, was certainly asleep.

6.5 Northern Exposure: Moving Post Australia

Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* was the flagship of newly launched Screen Australia. Luhrmann's explicit intention was to direct a fictional epic in the vein of *Out of Africa* (Pollak, 1985) to shed light on what he describes as 'the greatest scar in the history of this country: The Stolen Generation'. He adds, 'everything in the film is drawn from reality and factual research, but all of it is in service of a greater romantic gesture. It's a mythologised Australia' (Luhrmann 2008). Given the centrality of the issue in Australian debate, and its blockbuster budget and exposure, the film was widely debated in the

Australian media (Bolt 2008; Buckmaster 2016; Ellis 2008; Greer 2008; Rundle 2008; Schembri 2008), with McGee (2012: 145) noting that ‘even in the most positive reviews, there was a distinct note of negativity’ (McGee 2012). Papson (2011) argues that *Australia* generated criticism on two accounts – false historical depiction and failing to address its core issue, the exploitation of Australian Indigenous people – ‘the latter is particularly relevant because the film’s alternative history is a multicultural Oz’ (Papson 2011). Particularly, criticism was aimed at Professor Marcia Langton, Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, for championing *Australia*’s ‘self-conscious national myth-making’ (Greer 2008; Konishi & Nugent 2009; Waddell 2014). Langton (2008) wrote:

This eccentrically postmodern account of a recent frontier delivers a few gut punches... reading it through the lens of post-colonial literature, is its pride in the ingenuity, bawdiness and larrikinism of Australians of Aboriginal, British, Chinese and European descent living side by side in a complicated caste system (Langton 2008).

Australia raises two important questions: Is its depiction of Aboriginal life ‘real’ enough to serve as an Australian identity marker, despite its historical inaccuracies? and ‘Can this ‘self-conscious national myth-making’ be connected to a governmental policy? Rosenstone (1995: 6) divides the theoretical question of ‘real’ historic depiction into explicit and implicit categories. The explicit is a ‘reflection’ of current social and political concerns; the implicit ‘sees the motion picture as a book transferred to the screen’ underlaid with the assumptions that written history is the only way to understand ‘the relationship of past to present’ (Rosenstone 1995).

Luhrmann (2008) explicitly declared his intention was to direct an epic. Slides at the beginning and the end of *Australia* explicitly present the audience with a brief explanation: one about the stolen generation at the beginning and Rudd’s official apology for it in the end. Hogan (2010: 70) notes that the reference to Rudd’s apology ‘suggests both white culpability and atonement, so the film’s narrative both reveals the injustices of colonialism and offers absolution to white Australia’ (Hogan 2010). Screen Australia would certainly subscribe to that, but the overwhelming criticism of Luhrmann’s inaccurate historic depiction of Aboriginal life, intentional or not, suggests that his intention to ‘re-mythologize Australia’ was not accepted. The problem with *Australia*, however, is not with its historical inaccuracies. The theoretical continuum that ranges between cinematic naturalism to realism allows Luhrmann the discretion to subordinate historic imagery and behaviour. Drover (Hugh Jackman) may have Rhett Butler’s social manner and sport an immaculate white tuxedo as much as having mutant healing power and sporting adamantium claws. Moreover, dubious historical depictions are a prevalent Hollywood fixture. The actual assassination footage of President Kennedy was notoriously reshot in *JFK* (Stone, 1991) to support the film’s theory, Zyklon B imagery was used to service suspense in the inane *Schindler’s List* (Spielberg, 1993), and the homicidal rapist Francis Marion was favourably depicted as the protagonist of *The Patriot* (Emmerich, 2000), to name a few. Historic

accuracy is not a requisite in Hollywood blockbusters and shouldn't be a factor when judging Luhrmann's text.

Rosenstone's implicit category is more relevant to this discussion, as it addresses 'the relationship of past to present', that is, Luhrmann's pre-World War II past is presented in the way that he would like to see us today. Here, Langton's assertion of the 'eccentrically postmodern account' read through 'the lens of post-colonial literature' is misused. 'The concept of postmodernism is undoubtedly fashionable', writes Morawski (1996: 1), 'but as so often happens (especially in the humanities) to categories used as catchwords or slogans, it has come to suffer from semantic fuzziness' (Morawski 1996). Jameson (1988: 14) notes postmodernism's fascination with B-grade *American* culture in the form of Las Vegas strips, advertising art, airport paperback literature and motels, all of which sees the 'erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture' (Jameson 1988). Hill and Every (2001) problematize postmodern cinema as a predominantly American form, which tends to absorb, ignore, or marginalize national, local and independent cinemas. Simultaneously, the postmodern American film needs to reduce its own specificity to become global (Hill & Every 2001) while Hayward (2006) divides its aesthetic into four inter-related concepts: parody and pastiche, prefabrication, intertextuality and *bricolage* (Hayward 2006).

Australia draws heavily on the American western and romance genres, iconography and conventions and obsessive trivia, literally quoting *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) among scores of other Australian and American films. Although Papson argues that '*Australia* (with the exception of Langton) has not been read as a parodic text' (Papson 2011), some of Hayward's broad concepts, notably pastiche, prefabrication and *bricolage*, make it, for Denison (2009), 'hard to argue that *Australia* is a film about Australia at all' (Denison 2009). *Australia* certainly meets *American/globalised* aesthetics, but if this is so, it cannot be a case of 'self-conscious national myth-making'. National and postmodernism are contradictory terms, with nationality being the essence of specificity, founded on adherence to the hierarchy of central values, the very 'modernism' which postmodernism contests. If indeed *Australia* is national cinema, it needs to demonstrate internal cohesion and external distinction. It meets neither. Production-wise, *Australia's* Hollywood scale budget, cast and distribution are uncommon in Australian filmmaking. Content-wise, if *Australia* is a new 'Australian national myth' – as Langton's argues – she needs to demonstrate how it relocates former Aboriginal representation. This does not happen.

Structurally and formatively, *Australia* is an epic, fictional, Hollywood romance, as Luhrmann states. The Hollywood romance is structured to unite a white man and a white woman in marriage. Nullah (Brandon Walters), the Aboriginal boy narrating the film, his National Geographic grandfather (David

Gulpilil), native traditions and spiritual, supernatural powers are all *semiotics*, not the story. Nullah's role is to tame the shrew Lady Sarah (Nichole Kidman) by developing her maternal instincts and preparing her for marriage. To do so, Nuallah aligns his own Aboriginal rainbow serpent story by singing 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'. Only by conforming to an American/white convention can Nullah fulfill his cinematic purpose and become what McGee calls (163) 'the instrument of its transformation and redemption' (McGee 2012). Hollywood standards are equally applied. Initially, Luhrmann's intention was to kill the Drover while rescuing the Aboriginal children from Mission Island, but Twentieth Century Fox's executives vetoed this ending (Luscombe 2008; Malkin 2008). Killing the hero is an Australian sensibility. Hollywood convention requires the Drover to consummate his marriage to Lady Sarah. This alone eliminates AFC's 'Australian creative control', required to consider *Australia* as an Australian film.

Australia is resolved in the classic Hollywood tradition. Reunited Drover, Lady Sarah and Nullah return to Faraway Downs and Drover recites *The Wizard of Oz*'s motto: 'there is no place like home'. But which home is Nullah returning to? The celebrated Australian High Court's Mabo ruling – recognising Indigenous Australians' right to 'own' an obscure title to their native land – is a Western concept that is imposed on Aboriginal Australians' and did not resolve their claims. Aboriginal people walkabout their land, they don't own it, at least not in Faraway Downs' white-fence-around-the-garden sense. Isn't Faraway Downs the embodiment of Aboriginal grievance against white colonial settlement? White ownership of Australia remains intact, with or without Kevin Rudd's/Mr. Boss' apology. *Australia* merely presents Aboriginal people who accept it.

6.6 Discussion: in-Between Success and Failure

Cinematic identity is an elusive term. It requires audience participation and identification with onscreen fictional portrayal, which nonetheless feels real. To achieve such identification and participation, filmmakers employ an array of mechanisms which, when done enough times, become genres – cinematic DNA strands. Chief among these is the Hollywood understanding that despite all hardships, the protagonist *always* prevails. This reaffirms the viewers' belief in the protagonist, that is, him or herself. Generic conventions are Hollywood's DNA. Discussing Australian identity raises the question of the nature of Australian cinematic DNA. Thematic arguments, such as Aboriginal/white Australian relations frame the debate, they are not an answer. To discern Australian identity, Aboriginal/white relations portrayed onscreen need to echo everyday Australian life so the audience will feel a bond to them. How is this done? When asked about the difference between British and American humour, Stephan Fry (2012) remarked:

It strikes at the heart of what is American optimism... a refusal to see oneself in a bad light... the belief that you can be lectured at, or indeed given a sermon at. That's the Protestant base of America. The American comic hero is a

wisecracker, who is above his material and who is above the idiots around him... All the great British comic heroes are people... whom life craps [on] from a terrible height... They are an utter failure... Comedy is the microcosm that allows us to examine the entire difference between our two cultures (Fry 2012).

Fry situates British comedy as being about failure, and Hollywood as being about success. That is their cinematic DNA. Australian cinema, traditionally situated between British and American cinema, respectively developed the two production modes, presented in *friction II*: Arthouse/AFC genre and genre/Ozploitation films. *Beneath Clouds* and *Jindabyne* stem from British cinema's social realism and the social problems films of post-WW II Britain, which were morality tales with social repercussions, 'often flawed by a naïve faith in the incorruptibility of British institutions' (Brook 2014). *Australia* is an Australian cinema's attempt to achieve commercial and artistic success, Hollywood-style, that is via genre conventions.

The film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, released in 2002, the same year as *Beneath Clouds*, is one of the few FFC-produced films that managed to recoup its budget. In Australia it earned \$7,562,439 and is the number 46 Australian earner of all times. Globally, it earned \$16,217,411 (USD) (Box Office Mojo 2002b; Screen Australia 2017c). It is an Australian success. Both films are based on actual events. *Beneath Clouds* is an extrapolation of director Ivan Sen's own biography growing up in an Aboriginal community in NSW. *Rabbit-Proof Fence's* source material is the true story of three Aboriginal girls who escaped in 1931 from the Moore River Native Settlement, north of Perth, and walked 2,400 km along the Australian rabbit-proof fence to return to their community at Jigalong, Western Australia. Both films address the same issue, and in doing so – their audience – in a contrasting manner. Manne notes a desire among Australians to 'avert their gaze' from their own history and to think of their country as largely 'innocent of wrongdoing' (Manne 2009). In the Hollywood tradition, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* ends the heroine's odyssey at home and allows its audience the cathartic experience needed to distance themselves from Australia's chequered past. McFarlane (2003: 60) reasons this success in that *Rabbit-Proof Fence* followed the Hollywood imperative of not 'explicitly addressing social ills; they were films about individuals, rather than about a race' (McFarlane 2003). Identification, then, is with the protagonists and their remarkable journey, not with their native origins. They happen to be aboriginal, but may as well have been native Americans, as in *The Last Mohican* (Mann, 1993), or Afghani refugees, as in the *Kite Runner* (Forster, 2007). *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is about individual success. As Martin (2002: 25) notes 'it is (as Aborigines say) a "whitefella" film about blacks...rather than such authentic indigenous cultural artefacts as Ivan Sen's Berlinale winner *Beneath Clouds* (2002)' (Martin 2002). *Beneath Clouds* offers no redemption. Sen's whites are authoritative, racist figures. Aboriginals are marginalised and prone to violence. Lena's motivation to escape her confinement is understood, but her journey ends halfway through, leaving the audience with the responsibility to make sense of

a disturbing social, political and present situation. *Beneath Clouds* is about Australia's failure to integrate Aboriginal people into its collective – not an easy pill to swallow or identify with. This may suggest why, despite its positive reviews and international film festival awards, *Beneath Clouds* performed abysmally at the box office, earning \$218,085 on its \$2.5 million budget (Box Office Mojo 2002a).

If *Beneath Clouds* is about failure, *Jindabyne* is *the* failure. Addressing 'the Great Australian Silence' – Australia's capacity to forget its Aboriginal people – *Jindabyne* pretends to critique Howard's refusal to apologize for past wrongdoings yet marginalizes Aboriginal people in exactly the same way. Consider *Ghost Dog – The Way of the Samurai* (Jarmusch, 2000) in which an African-American hitman (Forest Whitaker) adheres to the Japanese samurai code in the service of an Italian mafioso. Could *Ghost Dog* work without immersing its audience in both Samurai and Italian mafia cultures? Never. Could *Jindabyne* work if the victim were from a Greek community in New Jersey? Absolutely. Relocating the American to Australian setting, then, achieved nothing. Are audiences more informed about the aboriginal perspective after watching *Jindabyne*? Not really. The victim's aboriginality has nothing to do with the story. It is merely a sticker that qualifies the film as dealing with 'important' 'Australian' issues. Who is the audience required to identify with? Claire is a White American protagonist who has nothing to do with the murder or the indifference the fishermen display toward it. The film was not only a commercial failure – it reached 54th place at the Australian box office, recouped \$4,165,518 million of its \$10 million budget (Box Office Mojo 2006a) – but miserably failed to understand the nature of its own material. Aboriginal people are no more present in *Jindabyne* than they were in *Snowy Hydro*, 35 years prior. The symbolic apology issued by the fishermen resolved nothing.

Contrastingly, *Australia* has the pungent smell of success. Ticking every box in Screen Australia's production-dream wish list, *Australia* had it all: an Australian director, leading stars and stellar cast. Using an Australian crew, it was entirely produced and shot in Australia on a \$130 million budget, with commercial industry tie-ins to support its publicity, and had Hollywood studio backing and distribution. *Australia* is indigenously aware, politically correct and dinky die Australian themed. It earned \$37,555,757, making it the second-highest grossing Australian film of all time. Clearly the Australian audience, despite mostly negative reviews, recognised something in *Australia* which they connected with. What is *Australia's* Australian DNA? There is none. *Australia* is an American film.

6.7 Return of the Yobo: Crocodile Dundee

Only three Australian films appear in Screen Australia's '50 Films of All Times' list: *Crocodile Dundee*, *Australia* and *Babe*, respectively reaching 12th, 34th and 37th place (Screen Australia 2017a). Most films that inhabit this list suggest that Australian audiences connect with Hollywood films, not with

Australian ones. *Australia* is no exception. Debating Australian identity and identification, perhaps it is better to look at *Australia's* older, far more accomplished brother, the quintessential non-Australian movie – *Crocodile Dundee*.

Dundee stems from ocker humour. From *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* via *The Castle* to *Kenny*, ocker defines its protagonists, and in doing so, itself, as laid-back, self-deprecating losers by default. Comedic effect is achieved by clashing yobos with social propriety. Celebrating the larrikin is an Australian sensibility that links ocker's DNA to Fry's tradition of British failure. Yet on its release, Bazza McKenzie, epitomizing Aussie vulgarity, was embraced – to the horror of his creator, Barry Humphries – by young, white, Australian males who also wanted to put their 'sheilas in a frenzy'. As director Philippe Mora quipped, 'there are always morons who see satire as documentary' (Hartley 2008). As with *Australia*, *Dundee* was perceived as a blockbuster, with a hefty \$8.8 million budget and Paul Hogan's star power. John Cornell, *Dundee's* producer, explained (163) that 'they wanted to make a Disney film without the Disney label' (O'Regan 1988). The outcome was a non-offensive, extremely well-executed, high-concept blockbuster. *Dundee* also operates in the classic Hollywood romance genre. Its outback imagery, mandatory kangaroos and crocodiles, painted Aboriginal people and laid-back, rugged-yet-sensitive bushmen humour are semiotics, not the story. The film's pivotal scene sees Dundee and Sue (Linda Kozlowski) threatened by a New York hoodlum armed with a switchblade. Dundee's responds, 'that's not a knife... that's a knife' as he draws his bowie knife, slashes the hoodlum's jacket, then claims his prize by kissing the girl. 'Make my day' phallic symbolism is a *Dirty Harry* (Siegel, 1972) motif, not Australian, self-deprecating ocker humour (McFarlane 2005a; Rattigan 1988). Zielinski (2008: 131) argues that 'American values are not unsettled or found wanting in any way... Little wonder the film was so acceptable' (Zielinski 2008). *Dundee* made a staggering \$47,707,045 in Australia, a record unbroken in 32 years (Screen Australia 2018). When Australian audience connected with *Dundee*, they did so via American genre and semiotics, not Australian. They connect via Disney, not via *Barry Mackenzie*. *Dundee's* DNA is success.

Similarly, when Australians flocked to see *Australia*, they came to see the Wolverine mate with 'our Nicole'. In the test screenings, they rejected Luhrmann's original ending of killing Drover, explicitly stating 'there is no reason to kill off Wovie (Jackman) in this one – come on' (Malkin 2008). *Australia's* Northern Territory scenery and Aboriginal screen representation are means to amplify the hero's setbacks. *Australia* has nothing to do with 'national myth-making', self-conscious or otherwise. Arguing so leads back to the same methodological problems of forced cohesion, demonstrated in Chapter Five. *Australia's* audience wanted an epic, classic Hollywood romance, with beautiful Hollywood stars, and that is exactly what they got. Success.

Quod. Erat. Demonstrandum.

6.8 Conclusion: No Identification. No Identity

Australian cinema's failure to develop a coherent narrative style, embodied in *friction II*: arthouse vs. genre, bears on its ability to enunciate Australian identity. As demonstrated with *Australia*'s screen test, audiences expect a clear, *a priori* understanding of what they are paying for. Otherwise, they don't come. Hollywood supplies this understanding via well-honed genres; Australian cinema does not. This lack of Australian understanding is the basis for *friction I*.

Identity requires identification, which cannot be achieved by imposing concepts on audience. Currently, in the monocacy of government funding, which declares its mission to integrate Aboriginal people into its 'national' collective. Instead of insisting on coherent closure, as the Twentieth Century Fox's executives did when correctly vetoing Luhrmann's original ending, Australian arthouse films indulge in self-congratulatory view of their progressive attitude toward 'social problems' such as Aboriginal screen representation. All three films present flawed Aboriginal screen representations. Sen displays poor craftsmanship when leaving the social issues he convincingly raises in *Beneath Clouds* unresolved. *Jindabyne* displays a basic misunderstanding of the very argument it raises and marginalizes Aboriginal people in the same way as the people it pretends to critique. *Australia* subordinates Aboriginal screen representation to its own generic needs, making it no more than a prop. In Australian cinema discourse, aboriginality is never contested. Instead, it opts to force contrivances that do not work. An Aboriginal filmmaker may depict the burning of a Bible, but white filmmakers cannot 'appropriate' Aboriginal folk legends. Lena can't just be a troubled young girl running from home like Muriel, she must model her racial identity. The fishermen from *Jindabyne* cannot be ignorant idiots without also being accused of racism and *Australia*'s connection to current Australian political debate requires two slides, as the beginning and end, addressing the stolen generation and Rudd's apology for it. Otherwise, *Australia* has nothing to do with Australian identity or cinematic traditions. It is just another largely-forgotten Hollywood blockbuster.

Australian identity, as any other, grows from within. Only by adhering to Australian sensibilities, traditions, humour and practices, can Australian cinema distinguish itself externally, as Hollywood and British cinemas do. Only then will Australian cinema discern Aboriginal screen representation, for what it really is – a vital and important part of Australian culture, independently standing on its own, open to criticism, with no concessions. Until that time, Australian cinema is doomed for failure.

Chapter Seven

Off Centre: Periphery, Pornography, Friction.

The Case of Abbywinters.com

Until now, the underlining assumption in discussing the formation and expansion of Australian cinema in this thesis is that nuclei – ideas formed in Periphery or on the outskirts of centre – converge into cinematic units and travel a rhizomatic route. Film units are required to pass through Centre, that is, government funding bodies, to *Become* and join the ‘Australian Cinema’ corpus. This suggests a unidirectional movement for film unit: from Periphery, through Centre, and on to Australian cinema. But what of peripheral films that *Become* without going through Centre with its imposed mediating *frictions*? Abbywinters.com is an Australian pornography site that challenged Australian laws, norms, aesthetics and filmmaking practices from 2000 to 2009, when it was legally forced out of Australia. In its unique approach to pornography, abbywinters.com bypassed Australian Centre and reached the top tier of porn sites on the internet. Inadvertently, it turned abstract Deleuzian concepts into a concrete instance of filmmaking. The case of abbywinters.com demonstrates how peripheral films *Become* and connect with their audience without Centre, questioning the relevance and necessity of Centre.

7.1 The Field of (Dirty) Dreams

Pornography is a traditionally marginalised, peripheral cinema gravitating toward Centre (Attwood & Smith 2014; Bradley 2018; McNair 2002; Paasonen, Nikunen & Saarenmaa 2007; Pope et al. 2007; Stanley 2004). Simpson (2004: 635) argues that ‘porn is no longer flirting with the mainstream...it is the mainstream’ (Simpson 2004). As a distinct cinematic genre, pornography emerged in 1896 in France in the films of Eugène Pirou and Albert Kirchner. Screening pornography in nickelodeons and brothels in France, Germany and the U.S. expanded the way in which sex workers and the establishments were promoted (Heffernan 2014; Tarrant 2016). Pornographic films were soon smuggled into Australia. Despite the scale and continuity of the production and consumption of pornography, it was only from the mid-1960s – with the loosening of censorship laws and the sexual revolution – that it became widely known as being ‘out there’. What sustained pornography production during decades of prohibitive legal and moral measures is that, unlike other marginalised cinemas, pornography has always been extremely lucrative. Barnett (2018) argues that *Deep Throat* (Damiano, 1972) was produced for around \$45,000 (USD) – 2.6% of a regular Hollywood budget at the time – and made \$125 million (USD), an extraordinary ROI ratio (Barnett 2018).

The advent of the internet has offered pornography a vast, uncharted and initially unlimited field of operation to disseminate its products and make money. The internet is the embodiment of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, being examined as such across diverse academic fields (Beck 2016; Buchanan 2007; Clothier 2005; Høstaker 2017; Mackness & Bell 2015; Styhre & Sundgren 2003). Web distribution offered increased accessibility and privacy to porn consumers, opened new domestic and international markets and established ways to bypass restrictions on pornography imposed by the Centre. As the business of pornography relies solely on expediently interacting with customers, visual content delivery via the internet was spearheaded by porn companies, as were billing methods, banner advertisements, trafficking and data mining, video streaming, broadband connectivity, interactive webcams, mobile internet, digital rights management and virtual reality (Coopersmith 2000; Darling 2017; Paasonen 2011; Ratner 2018; Roberts 2006). Soon, porn site management shifted from traditional content producers to IT programmers who realised the profitability of data trafficking and wrote codes accordingly (The Economist 2015).

The investment in cutting edge technologies was made possible because of market demand. Yet, even after pornography became a multibillion-dollar industry, its revenue remained heavily clouded due to a multitude of business models ranging from a single webcam at a private home to porn conglomerates such as Mindgeek, which own multiple porn tube sites and film production companies. The profitability of porn production and distribution is undoubted, but problematic to ascertain (Paasonen 2011; Voss 2012). At pornography's high point, before the 2008 world-wide economic crisis, pornography was estimated to be worth anywhere from \$10 to \$14 billion (USD) to \$40 billion-\$50 billion (USD) annually (The Economist 2015). Comella (2008: 61) notes this makes it 'more lucrative than Hollywood and professional baseball, football and basketball combined' (Comella 2008).

7.2 *Unsolicited Friction: Porno Does Mainstream*

The vast number of websites containing 'adult' materials, professional, amateur or otherwise, makes the task of counting them impossible. Mazières et al. (2014) collected data on thousands of videos (Mazières et al. 2014). Gmeiner, Price and Worley (2015: 7) and combined four different methods of inquiry: New Family Structures Survey (NFSS), analysis of Google trends search terms, subscriptions to a porn site and page view data from Pornhub. Noting that determining their data relevance to be 'a major challenge' (Gmeiner, Price & Worley 2015); Stark (2007: 1) reviewed and categorised a sample of 68,150 web pages. Of the 63,105 working pages, 1,382 (2.19%) were categorised as 'adult' content (Stark 2007). The actual number of adult page viewed is vastly bigger. Rosen (2013) reported that in 2012, Pornhub had 2.5 billion page views (pvs), YouPorn had 2.1 billion pvs, Tube8 had 970 million pvs and LiveJasmin had 710 million pvs, with Wikipedia having about 8 billion pvs (Rosen 2013). As pornography travelled to Centre via the internet, it generated more restrictions. Governments,

educational and religious organisations, along with feminist theorists, challenged pornography for a myriad of reasons from ending production and distribution of child exploitation and its alleged negative effects of sexually explicit content on children and adolescents to protecting disenfranchised minorities employed in sex work. Even legal pornography – depiction of explicit sexual acts between consenting adults over the age of 18 – is frequently challenged (Darling 2017; Diamod 2009; Lindgren 1993; Pope et al. 2007; Rea 2001; Simpson 2004; Voon 2001; Watson 2010). Coleman and Held (2014: 9) observe that ‘the study of pornography always begins from a position of justifying itself’ (Coleman & Held 2014). Tarrant (2016: 6) notes that, until recently, academia dismissed pornography as ‘lowbrow, silly, or as meaningless fluff’ (Tarrant 2016) while Kohut (2014) argues that ‘pornography’ debate typically includes a token discussion of the difficulties of its actual meaning, distinguishing between the acceptable erotica and the unacceptable obscenity (Kohut 2014). Paasonen, Nikunen and Saarenmaa (2007: 1) note that:

Definitions of pornography are notoriously ephemeral and purposely used when marking the boundaries of high and low culture, acceptable and obscene, ‘normal’ and commercial sex. Porn is a dirty word, which is often replaced with the terms adult entertainment or erotica: the former is a concept preferred by the porn industry and journalism whereas erotica is used in separating the artful from the artless, the beautiful from the ugly (Paasonen, Nikunen & Saarenmaa 2007).

Albury (2004: 197) argues that ‘the production, distribution and consumption of pornography have traditionally been understood in terms of morality [since] The Judeo-Christian tradition sees sex as an expression of ‘*private “married-love”*’ (Albury 2004). Morality, however, is a relative term. Rosen (3) notes that the public screening of *The Kiss* (Heise, 1896), depicting a sixteen to fifty-one second (depending on the version) kiss between fully-clothed John Rice and May Irwin caused one critic to exclaim that ‘magnified to gargantuan proportions, it is absolutely disgusting... Such things call for police intervention’ (Rosen 2013). Today, the reaction, not the act, is the anecdote, although explicit depiction of varying forms of sexuality still generate a moral-based reaction from many quarters. Marxists debate pornography in terms of sexual labour. Feminists scholars argue that pornography objectifies and dehumanizes women in the service of male sexual fantasies (Albury 2004; Klesse 2018; Weitzer 2014). Bennett (2013: 87) contends that these ‘well-worn feminist, liberal and moralistic arguments... have historically constituted much of the scholarship around pornography regulation’ (Bennett 2013). Regardless of how pornography is perceived, the mere act of defining a text as ‘pornography’ in literature, art, cinema, television or video games, questions its validity.

The common distinction between the arty erotica and the vile pornography correlates with Shils’ division of ‘Superior’, ‘Mediocre’ and ‘Brutal’ culture as discussed in Chapter Two and is as irrelevant as they are. It also mirrors the canonisation process that includes texts as ‘national’ as debated in

Chapter Five. Canonisation or exclusion are one of the same, as both are mounted by elites in academia, government, media and religious bodies. Here, Beattie (2009: 47) argues:

The very fact that a censorship process exists indicates that community values are far from seamless and consistent. Part of the reason why pornography and violent media are expelled with such vigour is founded in the denial that producers and consumers are situated within the very spatial confines of the community. Historically, these subjects are identified, quarantined, pathologized, criminalized, demonized and marginalized by censorship practices (Beattie 2009).

7.3 No-Sex Down Under: Censoring Australian Pornography

Australia has an ambivalent attitude toward pornography. The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia holds three fragments of the first American stag film *A Free Ride* (c. 1915-1917), its former ownership unknown (Matthews 2014). The Australian government sought to formally control pornography from the mid-1970s via the introduction of an X-rating classification and taxation. Yet, although Australian law lacks a legal definition for 'pornography', adult magazines are sold on every street corner. Australian legislation affords the Commonwealth, states and territories legal means mainly via 'The Commonwealth Classification Act (1995)', 'The National Classification Code' (2005) and the 'Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012' (Federal Register of Legislation 2012, 2013, 2017). Penfold (2006: 345) argues that, although the Commonwealth has legislative power to restrict the commercial carriage and hosting of pornography, the federal governance system does not give the government censorship power, or that of taking punitive measures toward individuals who create, upload, download, or possess pornography. This power is reserved for state governments, seeing significant variation across state and territory legislations (Penfold 2006).

Dalton and Schubert note (2011: 35-36) that although 'all states and territories have enacted legislation giving police power to enforce classification decisions in their respective jurisdictions', only the South Australian Classification Council (SACC) has power to 're-examine' classification decisions, creating a different classification system for SA and the rest of Australia (Dalton & Schubert 2011). Jacobs (2004) critiques both the Western Australian Censorship Act of 1996 and South Australia's Internet Censorship Bill of 2002 as intrusive to adult industries and free speech practices for allowing the police to evaluate what is deemed 'offensive to children' and arrest individuals accordingly, as an ad hoc state law intended to forego the mechanisms of the Australian federal government (Jacobs 2004). Conversely, Henderson (2015: 173) draws attention to the ACT as 'the only Australian jurisdiction in which all aspects of the sex industry (sex work, the production and sale of pornography and the retail and live entertainment industries) are legal and regulated' (Henderson 2015). As a result of the federal/state divide in addressing pornography, Australian laws have permitted private possession of pornography since 1983 (Electronic Frontiers Australia 2006), while prohibiting the sale,

exhibition or renting pornography in all states except the NT and the ACT, the latter providing most of the interstate production and distribution of pornography in Australia.

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC, 2011: 40), reviewing the 'National Classification Scheme', estimated the existence of a 'grey market' of nationally distributed X18+ publications and DVDs at \$20–30 million per annum. The ALRC also noted (164) that although the Refused Classification (RC) represents 'the censorship end of the classification spectrum', it is 'not illegal' to possess RC materials except in Western Australia and prescribed areas of the Northern Territory (Australian Law Reform Commission 2011). Three film classifications are relevant to this debate:

R18+ – restricts content to audience over the age of 18;

X18+ – content depicting sex between consenting adults and is legal only in the ACT and parts of the Northern Territory; and

RC – Refused Classification, cannot be shown, sold, hired or distributed in Australia (Arts Law 2014; Dalton & Schubert 2011).

Evans notes that Schedule 5 of the 'Classification Act 1995' offers a civic censorship mechanism that allows public complaints to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) about internet content. An investigation by ACMA will determine whether there is 'potential' or actual 'prohibited content'. If content falls within one of the banned classifications, ACMA will instruct the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to take it down if it is hosted in Australia, or block access to it if not (Evans 2006). Further limitations are imposed on pornography producers and distributors by the 'Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012' (2012, II: 13). Depiction of 'fetishes such as body piercing, application of substances such as candle wax, "golden showers", bondage, spanking or fisting' is forbidden in the X18+ restricted classification (Federal Register of Legislation 2012), thus forbidden altogether. Stardust (2014: 243) argues that 'federal, state and territory laws impose tight control on where, how and what kind of pornography can be made, sold and exhibited in Australia, with penalties of fines and imprisonment' (Stardust 2014). Mills (2000: 152) claims that the Howard government, which passed these amendments, turned a debate about human rights and freedom of speech into one of national identity, as if 'a "true blue" Aussie has an obligation to rid the screen of anything other than straight vanilla sex – and traditional conservative politics' (Mills 2000).

In its appeal to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics, the Eros Association (2016: 3) argued that costly government taxation, bureaucracy and rigorous classification requirements effectively terminated the importation of legal pornographic films into Australia from 2013, but these measures did not cease illegal pornography importation, as unclassified 'versions of overseas adult films of every

genre and persuasion' roam freely and are accessible to all (Eros Association 2016). Even the Australian Home Entertainment Distributors Association (AHEDA, 2010) argued against classifications applied to artistically acclaimed, mainstream titles such as *Apocalypse Now: Redux*, *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese, 1976) and *Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, 1971), all classified as R18+ (Australian Home Entertainment Distributors Association 2010).

Classifications may be overturned. A four-second depiction of nonconsenting fellatio denied *Dead Man* (Jarmusch, 1995) classification. Unsimulated sex in *9 Songs* (Winterbottom, 2004) resulted in X18+ classification, but this was reclassified as R18+ on appeal. The majority of the review board found the sex scenes to be contextually justified, 'of serious intent' and as having 'artistic merit'. Bennett (88–89) that argues that, 'Classification law thus sets up a hierarchy of sexually explicit films. Within the R18+ classification fall "serious" and "artistic" films, which attract the least regulation and can be distributed as a commercial product' (Bennett 2013; Mills 2000). Even film festivals, a traditional outlet for peripheral cinema, are subjected to classification. Dalton and Schubert (56) note *Ken Park* (Clark, Lachman, 2002) was banned from the 2003 Sydney Film Festival. In 2010, *L.A. Zombie* (LaBruce, 2010) was denied exhibition at the Melbourne Film Festival and 58 films were refused classification, all but two being 'clearly pornographic in nature' (Dalton & Schubert 2011). This division replays *friction II*: the pornographic version, whereas arthouse – erotica – is approved, and standard pornography – genre – is excluded.

As with DVDs and film reels, pornographic web content is also subject to government approval. internet Content Hosts (ICH) or ISPs can be fined up to \$11,000 a day and imprisoned for up to two years if they do not take down unsuitable material from their servers at ACMA's request. If the material is not hosted in Australia, the site is added to ACMA's blacklist and Australian ISPs are required to block access to it (Jacobs 2010; Levin 2010; Stardust 2014). In March 2009, ACMA's blacklist was published on Wikileaks, revealing that along with poker and regular pornography websites, harmless websites such as a Queensland dentist, a school canteen and an animal carer were blocked. The then Communications Minister Stephen Conroy admitted the list existed but blamed the 'Russian Mob' for hacking it (Levin 2010; Moses 2009).

7.4 Australia ♥ Porn

In Australia, state regulations for commercial pornography are not rigorously enforced by the police as long as lines of 'normative' behaviour are not transgressed. Swan and Patten (2011) from the Eros Association estimate that around 1,000 stores across Australia sell X-rated videos and erotica products (Swan & Patten 2011). McKee, Albury and Lumby (2008: 48) note that selling sexually explicit material in Australia is illegal, but mail-orders from companies such as Adultshop are legal and 'conservatively estimated to be worth \$320 million per year' (McKee, Albury & Lumby 2008). *Sexpo* Australia is the

largest adult show in the world, being held annually since 1996 and accumulating a total of 3 million visitors by 2016. Typically, each show draws more than 60,000 visitors, 49% of them female. Research conducted by the Eros Association found that the 2010 Melbourne exhibition generated \$8 million in income for the Victorian economy. The 25-35 year-old age group spends \$150 per head on average at the exhibition (SEXPO Australia 2011, 2016).

Ropelato reports that in 2005/06, Australia was the fifth largest consumer of online pornography and spent the fourth greatest amount on pornography per capita in the world. Collectively, Australians spend \$2 billion (USD) per annum on pornography, or \$98.20 (USD) per capita. The U.S., the fourth largest consumer of online pornography, had an annual revenue of \$13.33 billion (USD), or \$44.67 (USD) per capita. Australians were fifth in the world in using the word 'porn' in 'Search Engine Request Keyword Trends' (Ropelato 2014). Pornhub Insights (2017) reports that in 2017 Australia ranked eighth on the 'Top 20 Countries by Traffic' visiting its website. Australians spent an average of 9 minutes and 51 seconds per visit. Their favourite search term was 'lesbian' (PornHub Insights 2017).

Studies demonstrate growing Australian acceptance and use of pornography. Stardust notes (248-249) that a 2002 survey conducted by La Trobe University in which 25% of Australians reported watching X-rated films regularly. A 2006 AC Nielson poll reveals 76% of Australian adults support the legal and restricted availability of explicit non-violent films. Only 30% claimed to be offended by explicit erotic films (Stardust 2014). Surveying 1,023 Australians from all geographic locations and age groups, McKee, Albury and Lumby found that 33% of them consume pornography. Younger people tend to consume more pornography. 58% of respondents were religious and 55% were in a monogamous relationship. 58.8% of the participants felt that pornography had a 'very positive' or 'positive' effect on their attitudes towards sexuality, 34.6% felt it had 'no effect' and 6.8% thought it had a 'negative' or a 'large negative' effect (Lumby 2008; McKee 2007; McKee, Albury & Lumby 2008). Rissel et al. (2017) conducted the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships (ASHR2), which surveyed 9,963 men and 10,131 women aged 16 to 69 years from all Australian states and territories. They found that 84% of men and 54% of women watched pornography, 76% and 41% respectively watching it in the year prior to the survey. Their conclusion (239) was that 'looking at pornographic material appears to be reasonably common in Australia, with adverse effects reported by a small minority' (Rissel et al. 2017).

7.5 Abbywinters.com: The (Naked) Girl Next Door

On 15 June 2009, Victoria police raided the home and offices of Garion Hall, co-founder and proprietor of the Australian adult website, abbywinters.com. The police reacted to accusations raised by an ex-employee and *The Herald Sun* (Moor 2007) of an underaged model's pictures being posted on the site.

Hall (2017)⁵ denies the allegations and maintains that, as an adult industry standard, abbywinters.com always complied with the 18 U.S.C. 2257 Record-Keeping Requirements, meaning all models are over 18 years of age (Legal Information Institute 1990). 'We shot over 2,100 models over the years and not a single one of them was underage', he states. 'A five point system identifies the model by five different people, before and on the day of the shoot, photographs their IDs and keeps them on file to make sure that this does not happen'. The police were issued with copies of all requested information and the allegations were to be proven false. However, during the raid, DVDs containing explicit materials of models performing lesbian sex and urinating were confiscated. Since Section 24 of the 'Victorian Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 199', states that 'a person must not, for the purpose of gain, make or produce an objectionable film' (Parliament of Victoria 2001), Hall was charged on December 2009 with 54 counts of pornography-related offences. 'They suspected it to be "offensive to a reasonable adult"', he notes.

Abbywinters.com was founded in 2000 by Hall and Abby Winters, a female photographer fed up with mainstream pornography. 'As a consumer, I was always disappointed by the quality of erotica. I had a thing for amateur models', Winters told Ruberg (2008), 'sites always tried to make amateurs look [like professionals]... they totally missed the appeal of an amateur model in the first place!' (Ruberg 2008). Although over the years, claims were made that Abby Winters is a pseudonym for Hall himself (Alptraum 2008; Johnston 2012), but he insists that Abby Winters is a real person who left the business in 2004. Regardless, from its establishment, abbywinters.com situated itself as an alternative, twice removed from Centre. Gregory (2017: 89) describes this as the 'Australian pornoexotic', which is 'double distancing – firstly in relation to its outsider status in pornography and secondly in relation to the exotic narrative that frames the pornographic content' (Gregory 2017). Production wise, abbywinters.com is peripheral both to the Australian Centre and the San Fernando Valley, California, the adult industry's hub (Verrier 2011). Australian legislation denies abbywinters.com government funding, 10BA private investment, commercial exhibition, or distribution. Culturally, abbywinters.com challenged codified American porn aesthetics that dominate both the American and Australian markets. As Swan argues, lack of Australian-made pornography means importing American porn aesthetics which 'are like American food — big and over the top. Big hair, big nails, big tits, big dicks — it's bullshit, it's fake' (Johnston 2012).

Hall dispensed with scripted narrative and insisted on wholesome, next-door-neighbour-type 18-25 years old amateur, non-actor, Australian women. His models came in all shapes, sizes and ethnic backgrounds. All promoted a natural body image and comfortable behaviour. Models wore no

⁵ All quotes made by Garion Hall, are taken from a personal interview. See: (Hall 2017)

makeup. Some were unshaven and they shed their own clothes. On-site locations included the models' own bedrooms, living rooms, or outdoor group activities such as nude bicycle riding, swimming and yoga. Scenes were shot on one or two handheld cameras and were naturally lit. Models performed 'intimate moments', solo or mutual masturbation scenes and graphic, unsimulated lesbian sex, typically for between 15 to 60 minutes. All of this gave the videos an intended and unique documentary visual style. Conversations about models' sexual preferences and expectations, carried out in an Aussie accent before and after the shoot, situated the scenes as 'Australian'.

Illustration 7.1 – Abbywinters.com Models



The first photo shoots were poorly made. No one wanted to see them, let alone pay for them. However, Hall was determined. He posted the photos on Usenet, taught himself web design and the

site took off. 'By 2001 we were turning up \$14,000 a month', he comments. 'It went up from there'. At its peak, in 2008/09, abbywinters.com moved into the top tier of internet pornography sites with around 30,000 paying customers. Hall comments that, 'most porn sites are privately owned, so you don't hear much about them or their revenue. I spoke to my peers and our earnings were certainly on par with the industry. Although I do not have exact figures, my gut feel is that we were between the 40 to 50 most successful porn sites on the net'. Considering the previously discussed availability of around 25,000 porn sites, most of which offer free content, this is an accomplishment few Australian filmmakers or websites can boast. To achieve this market infiltration, Hall argues that, 'we used a lot of feedback from our customers. Five guys, from around the world, gave us very detailed notes. It wasn't technical advice. They weren't filmmakers, just professional porn consumers'. The key word when discussing abbywinters.com with Hall is 'customers' not 'audience', this being associated with commerce, not filmmaking. Hall does not see himself as a filmmaker but as a businessman, stating, 'we pay close attention to what customers are asking us for and what they really mean, and try to work out the difference between those two'.

Working out the difference is not simple. Pornography ranges between two meta-categories, the professional and amateur. The advancement and affordability of home HD cameras and screens, intuitive editing software and broadband technology consistently erodes the distinction between the two. Hollywood, professional porn studios offer high production values, multiple camera angles, professional editing, exotic sets and porn-star power. Amateur, do-it-yourself (DIY) video clips offer low production values, single, static or handheld camera angles, insufficient lighting and no editing, resulting in unmediated intimacy. Paasonen (75) argues that 'The look and feel of nonprofessional, amateur production [serves] to enhance a sense of "truth" and authenticity that is central to the genre' (Paasonen 2011). Abbywinters.com walks the thin line between the two. Shoots are planned and executed by what Hall calls the 'abbywinters.com paradigm', but the end result has a seemingly unpolished, intentionally rough feel to it. Lynn notes that abbywinters.com offers the one-on-one feel of interactive webcam sites, the production values of a studio and the 'genuine sexual energy of good amateur video' (Lynn 2008).

If amateur is the meta-genre within which lesbian sex is one of a throng of genres, then abbywinters.com specializes in the niche, sub-genre of amateur-lesbian-teen-sex – a fetish. 'Customers have preferences – fetishes', explains Hall. 'There is nothing special about them in this regard. It is the nature of the industry. They will not pay \$30 a month if the site doesn't have exactly what they need. Some see our website and say: "These girls are ugly, why would anybody want to subscribe to this s**t?". The nuances are totally lost on people who aren't fans'. Darling (210) notes that instead of addressing the whole range of pornographic possibilities, producers such as Hall found

that by accommodating narrower customer preferences, they were able to ‘create and sell traditional content, because it is difficult to find rare or highly specific interests elsewhere’ (Darling 2017). Hall explains that ‘In 2008, we conducted some in-depth research into what our customers want to see. Our customers find abbywinters.com models accessible. They are the girl from the supermarket, the bank, or the receptionist at their company and they absolutely *don’t* want to see them getting naked too early. This became fundamental to our brand’.

Hall’s approach to his subject matter distinctly departs from conventional porn. By accommodating his customers’ preferences in using natural and familiar settings, models perceived as authentic, letting his cameras roam freely on set and disregarding traditional film practices such as crossing the line, clean shots and free use of close ups, Hall did more than answer his customers’ question, ‘What would the girl on the bus look like (very) naked?’. Advertently, he rid his audience of the fourth wall that still dominates traditional pornography. In this regard, Mulvey (1975: 10) writes:

The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect... Here curiosity and the wish to look intermingles with the fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world (Mulvey 1975).

Abbywinters.com is pure scopophilia (voyeurism). Focusing on customers’ sexual nuances and preferences is nothing if not narcissistic. Hall claims it was done for purely commercial gain. Nonetheless, his approach has a significant cultural value. Conventional porn, like traditional cinema, uses the fourth wall to keeps its audience at arm’s length as unparticipating spectators. Feminists’ argument against porn is that it amplifies male voyeuristic tendencies and objectifies women as sexual objects. DIY videos offer more intimacy, but technically fail to achieve professional viewing quality. Abbywinters.com marries the two. Rather than objectify models as unattainable Hollywood/porn stars, abbywinters.com’s customers display a *Desire* to connect with them. This is as close as they will get, without physically being there. For challenging U.S. and European hegemony of exploitative and misogynist porn, Swan rightly sees Hall as a revolutionary pornographer. ‘Feminists call for good porn as a way of dealing with bad porn, and as soon as someone starts doing that, they get pushed out’ (Johnston 2012).

This raises the question of both Hall’s models and his customers’ national identity. Does abbywinters.com address an Australian audience? Hall argues, ‘not at all. We were tagged as “Australian amateurs” and “girls from down under”. It has a great appeal for Americans, who were always about 65% of our customers. They saw us as an alternative to mainstream porn.’ Gregory (90) writes:

The characteristics of the Australian pornoexotic largely apply to global audiences... Australians are familiar with the notion that Australia is both exotic and familiar... The pornoexotic relies on recognizable symbols of the exotic (landscape, people, icons); however, if porn producers included icons such as the Sydney Opera House, they would open themselves up to prosecution (Gregory 2017).

Hall didn't even have to use Australian icons. Depiction of Aussie girls having sex in their own bedrooms sufficed to convict him. Fifty-two of the fifty-four counts of the initial obscenity charges, including those of producing and posting underaged pornography, were dropped. Hall pled guilty to two charges: 'possession of a commercial quantity of objectionable films' and 'producing an objectionable film'. He was fined \$6,000 and that was almost that. Hall comments, 'of course, this is our key product. Once we were fined, we couldn't shoot pornography in Australia anymore. In 2010, we relocated [from Melbourne] to Amsterdam, which was incredibly frustrating. What we produced was not extreme or violent. Forty people lost their jobs, not to mention that the site made between \$11-\$12 million in 2008, roughly \$3 million of that were profits and half, about \$1.5 million were taxed'. This makes Hall one of few Australian filmmakers who — on top of not receiving *any* government funding — actually made profits for Australia.

7.6 Discussion: Displacing Australia's Erogenous Zone

Pornography affords Australian cinema a mirror-like reflection. If Chapter Six revolved around defining what is 'Australian'; 'pornography' defines what is 'un-Australian'. The Australian government successfully suppressed commercial porn production but did not suppress consumption. Like regular film units, Australian pornography, whether DIY or professional products, is made and travels along rhizomatic routes from Periphery to a Centre, seeking connections. Due to its controversial, subversive nature, it is presented with legislative barriers constructed to prevent Australians from engaging with materials deemed as 'unfit' by Centre. Hence, all three previously debated *frictions* that embody Australian cinema are present when debating pornography.

Friction I: Australian Cinema vs. Australian audience sees government support films that are overwhelmingly shunned by the Australian audience. Pornography is the exact opposite. Despite prohibitive legislation and risk of potential prosecution by the government, a substantial proportion of the Australian audience actively engages with pornographic content, either by producing or consuming it. The market gap for content that Australian pornographers are unable to legally produce is replenished by accessing off-shore online pornography.

Friction II: arthouse vs. genre deals with cinematic depiction of sexuality. The existence of a government Refused Classification mechanism demonstrates Centre retaining its authority over 'art' and public norms, even when film festival curators and their audiences explicitly state them differently. As with non-sexual films, Centre's inclination regarding sexually-explicit films such as *Dead*

Man, 9 Songs or *In the Cut* (Campion, 2003) is toward art. Those perceived as artistically meritorious, classified R18+ and allowed Australian screening. In doing so, Australian filmmakers who want to create within Centre and screen their work are forced to conform. Pornography — a thinly sliced genre — depicts rebellious narrative driven films such as *Rape Me* (Despentes, Trinh Thi, 2000), *Ken Park* and *L.A. Zombie* along with plotless pornography, which are Refused Classification, being forbidden public viewing and remain in the Periphery.

Even if the output of sites like abbywinters.com is nothing more than made-for-profit, sub-generic pornography, they still command artistic merit. As Bourdieu (242) points out, ‘the class of practices whose explicit purpose is to maximize monetary profit cannot be defined as such, without producing the purposeless finality of cultural or artistic practices and their products’ (Bourdieu 1986). Andy Warhol’s pointless Campbell’s Soup Cans (1962) and *Pink Flamingos* (Waters, 1972) — a benchmark of vulgarity — are permanent fixtures at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mumford (2013: 70) asks, ‘can something then be seen both pornographically and aesthetically at the same time?’, arguing it can (Mumford 2013). Pornographers do not necessarily contextualize their work in academic terms or articulate it as Warhol and Waters did; abbywinters.com’s body of work nevertheless consistently demonstrates visual style, production values and body types that challenge the dominant American aesthetics and porn conventions. These aesthetics and attributes appeal to customers who engage with the site, reiterating the relevance of *friction I*.

Friction III: government vs. private funding may seem superfluous to this debate. Australian legislation prohibits any kind of funding for pornography production, governmental or private, yet reserves the right to enjoy, via taxation, its forbidden economic fruits. In fact, it is *friction III*, with its commercial logic, that stands the government attempt to suppress pornography on its head. Paasonen notes that the proliferation of sub-categories, fetishes and personal choices offered to online customers demonstrates that ‘mainstream’ is far from being something stable or unified (Paasonen 2011), proliferation being *the* ultimate marker of market need. McCann (2010: 31) declares pornography to be ‘the abject of the liberal-capitalist order’, adding that the liberal public sphere tends to disconnect Australian customers’ cultural consumption from its fundamental economic and biological factors (McCann 2010). Australians’ consistent willingness to pay for pornography makes the government’s attempt to suppress its production and distribution futile.

Pornography’s consistent entrepreneurial commercial success legitimises it as a cinematic practice. Is commercial success the only mark of cinema? Certainly not. It is, however, an excellent indicator of its makers’ ability to connect with their audience. Ozploitations defied Centre’s morals and were extinct due to lack of funding and changing distribution patterns. Pornography, backed by online

technology, thrives. If, until this point, debate was held under the guise of unidirectional movement from Periphery to Centre, the rhizome/internet subverts the very notion of Centre and its hegemony by simply bypassing it. The Australian Communications and Media Authority's blacklist – acting as Centre – serves no purpose. Should a website be blocked, the connection between the amorphous supplier and his anonymous customer is not broken, merely displaced. Abbywinters.com's servers were located off-shore long before it had to relocate its physical office space. Its customers, Australian and international, were likely never aware of this and certainly not bothered. The displacement merely deprived the ATO from millions of taxed dollars, proving once again the Australian government's inability to understand its own film market.

7.7 Mediated Desire: Where Truth Lies

What lesson does pornography afford us? In his seminal *What is Cinema? part II*, Bazin (2004: 161-162) portrays the standards of the American pin-up girl, which were simultaneously shaped and reinforced by cinema, as a result of a historical circumstance – the tidal wave of sexual repression caused by the Hays Censorship Code of 1931 – 'cinematic eroticism wasted away in artifice and hypocrisy. Then came Mae West'. It was West's curvature, cutting wit and overt sexuality that demonstrated an alternative female model to the dominant Hollywood convention in which movie stars were hiding their breasts and living on grapefruits. Thus, writes Bazin:

The Mae West of the future will doubtless not have the generous curves of a Fifi Peachskin. But neither will she have to react against the same artificialities and shams; shocking or chaste, shy or provocative, all the American cinema needs from her is more authenticity (Bazin 2004).

Bazin's requirement for cinematic authenticity is naïve at best. Neither American cinema aesthetics, nor porn, are authentic, because America itself is unauthentic. Robinson (2010: 71) notes that while American consumer culture glorifies pleasures of food such as "'indulging" or "diving into" "creamy" chocolate', it forbids similar gratification from sex (Robinson 2010). It is no coincidence that 'Food Porn' — the act of fetishizing food — is described by McDonnell (2016: 240) as 'both a voyeuristic practice and a visual aesthetic' (McDonnell 2016). An American porn/food aesthetics permit fetishizing only inanimate objects, reflecting the core feminist argument that participation in pornography objectifies women. As if humans, female or male, are not allowed to be sexualised. Robinson argues (72) that 'objects (just like animals) do not have sexuality. Being a sexual object is a contradiction in terms' (Robinson 2010). This constitutional hypocrisy dominates American and in the absence of local production, also the Australian screen.

Conventions, however, are meant to be broken. Mae West was considered promiscuous, lewd and immoral, as were John Rice and May Irwin for publicly kissing on screen. Yet cinema, at its very core, challenges boundaries of acceptability and demonstrates not only what *is*, but rather, what *can* be. If

Harrison and Ogden (2018: 2) note that, today, porn is understood as a 'highly visible aspect of mainstream contemporary social life' (Harrison & Ogden 2018), it is only because West, Rice and Irwin, along with Linda Lovelace, John Holmes, Nina Hartley and Jenna Jameson, among scores of others, were allowed – in the purest of Deleuzeian fashion – to *Become*. Society's norms would not change if filmmakers, pornographers or mere rebels, had not made pornography. By pushing social propriety's envelope, the act of depicting and distributing pornography propelled technology. Culturally, pornography redefined norms, which ultimately penetrated and rejuvenated Centre. Today, screening a kiss is socially acceptable, women can be opinionated, sharp and sexy and pornography is no longer smut sold in dark alleys, but as a form of economic transaction and sexual negotiation.

In his little niche on the internet, Garion Hall articulates the abstracts of Deleuzeian metaphors into quantifiable, embodied form. Framing this discussion is the knowledge that Hall depicts young Australian women having sex. The admission fee to his site is \$30 (USD) per month. It is the obvious, most noticeable commercial causality, yet there is a deeper level. The site's *raison d'être* is to subvert American porn conventions and display an alternative. First, abbywinters.com defines itself by what it is *not*. Hall's insistence on 'regular' girls engaged in 'real' (unacted) sexual desire converges with the amorphic Deleuzeian *Desire* onscreen – unmediated form, face, body and action. This is what *it* looks like. How it *is*. Hall's domain is intermediality, which Pethő argues to be the contrast between what is perceived as 'natural' and 'unmediated' and what is 'artificial' within *a* frame. Hall does more than indulge his customers fetishes. He actively mediates between the abstract, unsatisfied sexual *Desire* that drives them to his website to a finalised, filmed desire. The result appears to be an amateur, DIY video, but it is not. In actuality, Pethő's 'seemingly "unmediated"' clips are directed, edited and distributed for money. Hidden in the background is a visual language, consciously defying accepted porn conventions. This is the visible (re)construction of watching pornography. It is an artificial construction, as cinema is, yet in between the 'folds' of the frame, *Desire* envisioned meets desire depicted and forms a new connection. It is as real as cinema and pornographic gets – the authenticity Bazin envisioned.

Quod. Erat. Demonstrandum.

7.8 Conclusion: Bluenose. Exclusion. Stagnation.

Lastly, can abbywinters.com be considered part of Australian cinema? Other genres may answer this question. None of *film noir's* greats such as *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941), *Double indemnity* (Wilder, 1944), *The Big Sleep* (Hawks, 1946) and *Touch of Evil* (Wells, 1958) was shot as '*film noir*'. Originally, they were hardboiled, low-budget B-movies. *Film noir* is a term coined twenty years later by writers at the French journal *Cahiers du cinema*. Acknowledging them as such allowed *Chinatown* (Polanski, 1975) and *Blood Simple* (Coen Brothers, 1984). Similarly, coining 'Ozploitations' afforded

low-budget Australian genre films such as *The Cars That Ate Paris*, *Mad Max and Road Games*, a thematic framework that later was consciously emulated in *Death Proof* (Tarantino, 2007).

Like *film noir* and Ozploitations, 'Australian cinema' is a theoretical construction. Like any theory, either it recognises and emulates new themes and aesthetics, or forever is stuck in debating Australian 'national' cinema. Currently abbywinters.com is rejected from the corpus of Australian cinema. Legally it was forced out of Australia. Culturally, it is an anecdote when debating Australian censorship. However, abbywinters.com is very much cinema, displaying original aesthetics and visual style, mediating and negotiating sexual norms. It is as Australian as any of the Centre's approved films discussed in Chapter Six. Its peripheral origins correlate to Australia's self-perceived marginalised position. Certainly, it does not accommodate wide tastes, nor is it argued that it should. Perhaps its scope is narrow, niche, boring, lewd and vulgar. It hardly matters. As long as Australian cinema stays locked to new ideas such as abbywinters.com personifies, it will stagnate. Much of *Friction I: Australians rejecting Australian cinema*, suggests this to be the case.

Part III

Dead on Arrival.

Australian Cinema &

Audience Reception

Chapter Eight

‘They Learned Nothing and Forgotten Nothing’:

What Killed Australian Cinema?

An old Jewish adage predicts that when the Messiah comes, all ills, save one, will be healed. The blind would see, the crippled would run and the hunchbacks would walk straight. Only fools would not be wiser. Why? Because the blind, crippled and hunchbacks pray for remedy. For fools, everything is fine. To resolve a problem, it needs to be acknowledged. Until now, this research has limited itself to the first forty years of Australian cinema (1968-2008), this being examined via three main *frictions*, establishing patterns of production and perception. Chapters Three and Four examined the rise and fall of Australian filmmaking from a factual perspective. Chapters Five, Six and Seven explored the problematic concepts of ‘National’, ‘Australian’ and ‘Cinema’ underlying its operation. Chapter Eight considers the period 2008-2017 under Screen Australia, applying conclusions from previous chapters. There is no point in (re)arguing the FFC’s utter financial and cultural failures. No accountability was demanded from its executives and no action taken to change fundamental market flaws. No problems acknowledged, none resolved. For all parties involved – government, industry, media and academia – everything is just fine.

8.1 *Déjà Vu: ‘Matters We Consider Relevant’*

What changed in the first decade of Screen Australia? Not much. *Friction I*: Australian cinema vs. the Australian audience remains the main problem. Australian box office attendance for 2008-2017 is 4.06% compared to the previous decade under the FFC, 1998-2007 of 4.76% (Screen Australia 2018). While the FFC peaked twice in 2000 and 2001, averaging 7.9% and 7.8% respectively, Screen Australia has only 2015 with 7.2%, attributed by Jericho (2015) to the commercial success of *Mad Max: Fury Road* (Miller, 2015) (Jericho 2015). *Fury Road*, a pure genre film, may suggest the resolution of *friction II*: genre vs. arthouse. To some extent, it does. While most of the big budget Australian films that qualify for various producer offsets are genre, the lower budget films are still mainly arthouse, for reasons discussed later. Yet *friction II* debates *Australian* arthouse vs. genre films. According to Screen Australia’s guidelines (2011), an Australian film must demonstrate a ‘Significant level of Australian Content (SAC), referred to as “meeting the SAC test”’. Criteria include the subject matter of the film, place of production, the nationalities and places of residence of the persons who took part in the making of the film, the production expenditure incurred and ‘any other matters that we consider to be relevant’ (Screen Australia 2011). The latter criterion essentially nullifies any need for the others, effectively creating two groups of Australian films – those required to meet the SAC test and those that do not.

Tunny (2013) notes that *The Great Gatsby* (Luhmann, 2013), a quintessential American story led by American cast, qualified as 'Australian' and received the 40% producers offset reserved for Australian productions (Tunny 2013), undoubtedly for being produced and directed by Baz Luhrmann. This group of high-budget films with no Australian relevance, helmed by veteran Australian directors includes films such as *Mao's Last Dancer* (Beresford, 2009) and *Hacksaw Ridge*. *Fury Road*, for example, is a Warner Brothers franchise, produced and directed by Australian George Miller, shot in Namibia and led by British and South African actors Tom Hardy and Charlize Theron. Only the editing took place in Australia. The film's contribution to Australian employment was minimal. Its contribution to Australian culture and identity is non-existent. It does not meet the SAC criteria. *Fury Road*, made in 2015, replays the discussion regarding Peter Weir's 1991 *Green Card*, shot in America, led by French and American actors, directed by an Australian and edited in Australia. The question is not whether these films are Australian, as both are clearly not, but rather why do Screen Australia and the FFC adamantly reserve the right to determine what is 'Australian'? One answer is found in box office attendance of Australian films. In 2014, it was 2.4% and 1.9% in 2016. Excluding *Fury Road* and 2015 box office results, Screen Australia's nine-year average is 3.77%, but by including 2015 results, it climbs to 4.06%. Thus, the phrase 'matters that we consider to be relevant' translates in the case of *Fury Road* to Screen Australia's ability to manipulate domestic box office results and justify its existence.

Like the FFC before it, Screen Australia's SAC evaluation process is withheld, but unlike the FFC's annual reports, which supplied accumulation tables, Screen Australia's annual 2015/16 report (2016) scatters hard and relevant information under headings like 'Did you know' and 'Quick facts' trivia. For example, Australian feature films' theatrical release investment is \$1.8 million (33) while 'Net revenue to Screen Australia from its investments in screen content' (34) is domestic \$2.4 million and international \$4.1 million. No explanatory information is given as to how many domestic or international films contributed to these figures nor cumulative table provided to explain Screen Australia's ongoing recoupment. Detailed investment in feature films is only found in Appendix 3 (74-75) (Screen Australia 2016a). Even the FFC data is undisclosed. In 2017, 'to meet the high level of curiosity', George and Rheinberger (2017: 38) published on behalf of Screen Australia a list of the FFC films that recouped their budget.

As estimated in Chapter Four, only eleven FFC-funded films recouped 'between 101 per cent and about 500 per cent'. Exact recoupment figures, production notes, budgets, or explanation about the FFC's investment decision process are undisclosed. Additionally, five more films recouped 90% on average of their budget. *Lantana*, which was discussed in Chapter Four, Table 4.4 – FFC Film Successes Estimated Median Earnings, as the only film that might have recouped its budget at the box office in 2001, earned by 2017 only 90% of its budget (George & Rheinberger 2017). However by 2017, when

Screen Australia released this partial information, the FFC's recoupment figures have become meaningless. As of 1 July 2015, under the cloak of 'empowering' producers, Screen Australia reverted all of its FFC recoupment entitlement to their producers (Screen Australia 2015b). Twenty years of failed FFC investments, amounting to \$622,140,816, were quietly wiped away.

Friction III: Government funding vs. private investment also remains unresolved. As the Australian dollar devalued, trading at 70¢ to the American dollar, Hollywood was once again considering Australia as a location option. In 2012, the Gillard government (2010-2013) trumpeted financing a Marvel Entertainment franchise, *The Wolverine* (Mangold, 2013), with a one-off payment of \$12.8 million in exchange for an estimated expenditure of \$80 million and 2,000 jobs for Australians. In fact, as Jericho (2012) notes, the one-off payment was added to the 16.5% 'Location Offset', valued at \$13.2 million in tax rebates. Combined, both offsets totalled \$26 million, 'a touch over 30 per cent of the film's \$80 million budget' (Jericho 2012). Another \$22 million were initially committed to Disney's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* but reallocated to *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales* (Rønning, Sandberg, 2017) (Quinn 2018). Likewise, the Turnbull government (2015-2018) allocated \$47 million for the production of *Thor: Ragnarok* (Waititi, 2017) and *Alien: Covenant* (Scott, 2017).

The practice of financing Hollywood pictures for the short-term benefits of obtaining government subsidised temporary jobs was criticised in both Australia and internationally (Crompton 2006; Eltham 2013; Madden 2001). Potts (2015) notes that Arts Minister Mitch Fifield reasoned that every dollar of this investment supports 3.57 jobs and generates \$3.25 to other industries. However, subsidised jobs add zero or even create a negative net effect as they are paid for by taxing other sectors (Potts 2015). Jericho argues that government investment 'will bring in \$300m in offshore investment to Australia's economy and create 3,000 (temporary) jobs, but there are plenty of other companies that would add jobs and growth were they given a 16.5% tax break' (Jericho 2015). Worse, Screen Australia was required to foot the \$47 million bill out of its own budget by selling its Sydney property for \$35 million, the additional \$10.3 million being deducted over four years of a 3% budget cut per annum. Consequently, Metro Screen, a Sydney non-profit film school, was shut down (Buckmaster 2015b).

Tannenwald (2010) reports research on forty-three U.S. states' film subsidies, which collectively spent \$1.5 billion (USD) per annum instead of investing in education, health care, public safety and infrastructure. Subsidies were awarded to state-based producers; positions offered included hair dressing, security, carpentry, sanitation, moving, storage and catering, which were unlikely to build long-term economic development with subsidies spending outweighing economic benefits and support of subsidies reliant on flawed studies (Tannenwald 2010). Tunny notes that the OECD criticised New Zealand's 'very large subsidies for the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy' preferring countries to

invest in market reforms, education and health rather than film production, which brings temporary jobs (Tunny 2013). In 2014, the National Commission of Audit (NCOF, 2014) appointed by the conservative Abbott government (2013-2015) issued a comprehensive Australian industry report that reiterated the importance of the government's 'setting the right environment for market competition', noting (phase I: 162):

The benefits of industry assistance accrue entirely or largely to the firm or industry supported, favouring one firm or industry over others. The shortcomings associated with governments 'picking winners' are well known. Rather than relying on taxpayer support, market competition provides powerful incentives for firms to improve the quality of goods or services (National Commission of Audit 2014).

The NCOF (Appendix II: 10) recommended the halving of Screen Australia's budget, the merging of the Australia Council, Australian Business Arts Foundation, Screen Australia and the Bundanon Trust into a 'single arts council' and a reorientation to a strict focus on Australian content, 'including those with an historical perspective that might not otherwise be funded' (National Commission of Audit 2014). These recommendations were outright rejected, reactions ranging from 'devastation' and 'outrage' to predictions that the film industry would return to the 'stone age' (Needham 2014; Nicholson 2014; Quinn 2014).

8.2 Go Figure: Full Time Equivalent Jobs

The Abbott government was replaced in 2015, before implementing the NCOF's suggested cuts. In January 2017, Arts Minister Fifield referred an inquiry into the sustainability of Australia's film and television industry to the Parliamentary Communications and Arts Committee, which published its findings by December 2017. From the establishment of the FFC in 1988 up to the 2017 inquiry, nine investigations were carried into various facets of the Australian film industry, excluding the NCOF, which was not dedicated to cinema *per se*, but did look at Screen Australia as part of a wider context. Despite continued and proven failures on the part of the FFC and Screen Australia, the findings of none of these investigations were implemented leaving the course of film production in Australia unchanged, including its primary dependence on government funding. To understand why Australian cinema is argued to be dead, it is vital to follow the reviewing process.

In 2016, Screen Australia commissioned two reports, 'Measuring the Cultural Value of Australia's Screen Sector' from the accounting firm Olsberg SPI (2016), and 'What are our stories worth? Measuring the economic and cultural value of Australia's screen sector' from Deloitte Access Economics (2016). Respectively, these reports address *frictions II* and *III*. Crompton (2006: 68) notes that 'the motives of a study's sponsor invariably dictate the study's outcome' (Crompton 2006). These two reports are no exception. Screen Australia submitted both to the Parliamentary Communications and Arts Committee. In Screen Australia's own report, 'Screen Currency: Valuing Our Screen Industry'

(2016: 6), it stated that 'Screen content under Australian creative control' generates \$2.6 billion and affords '20,158 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) jobs' per annum (Screen Australia 2016b). This statement is false. The 20,158 FTE jobs figure, which pertains directly to the size of industry supported, is taken from the Deloitte-Access report (1) and constitutes:

Broad Australian Content which includes feature film, **drama TV and documentaries as well as other types of screen content**. This includes (but is not limited to) news and current affairs, light entertainment, reality shows, lifestyle/food/travel shows and televised sports content (Deloitte Access Economics 2016).⁶

The 'other types of screen content' components are detailed in Footnote 2 (2), but the actual source of the figures source and the numbers for each FTE job category are unreferenced. These are comprised of:

Information media and telecommunications incorporates publishing and broadcasting (including internet), motion picture and sound recording, internet and data processing services, library and information services and telecommunication services. Arts and recreation services incorporates heritage activities, creative and performing arts, sports and recreation services and gambling services (*Ibid.*).

It is unclear why library and information services, internet and data processing, heritage activities or sports, recreation and gambling services are included in the film and television industry. In its Key Findings page (v), the Deloitte report presents three groups of FTE job providers: Broad Australian content 20,158 FTE jobs, footloose productions 4,090 FTE jobs and game developers 1,055 FTE jobs. Added together these are mistakenly counted as '25,304 FTE jobs'.⁷ Category definitions (2-3) are:

1. 'Broad screen content':
 - a. '**Core Australian content**': 7,650 FTE jobs, defined as 'made under the creative control of Australians and is scripted, narrative content, capturing **feature film, drama TV and documentaries only**'.
 - b. 'Other types of screen content': 12,508 FTE jobs are unreferenced and contain irrelevant industries such as heritage, sports and gambling.
2. Footloose productions: 4,090 FTE jobs, defined as 'television and film production activity occurring in Australia as a result of large budget, international-studio financed productions'.
3. Game developers: 1,055 FTE jobs, defined as 'predominantly small to medium-sized independent studios and studios of international publishers' (Deloitte Access Economics 2016).

⁶ All bold statements appear as they do in the original Deloitte-Access report.

⁷ The correct figures total 25,303 FTE, not 25,304 as the Deloitte-Access report notes.

The following table breaks down the 25,304 FTE figure:

Table 8.1 – Complete Full Time Equivalent Jobs by Group

Sources of FTE jobs	Number of FTE jobs
Broad Australian content	20,158
Core Australian Content	7,650
Unaccounted Labour figures	12,508
Footloose Productions	4,090
Game developers	1,055
Total	25,303

First, it is unclear why the 'Broad Australian content' warrants 'other types of screen content'. For example, a UFC (Ultimate Fight Championship) match is an American sporting event broadcast in pubs across Australia. It is included in the 20,158 FTE job figure, but the report fails to demonstrate how this 'other type of screen content' affects Australian employment. Moreover, Screen Australia explicitly claims (6) the entire 'Broad Australian content', that is, all of the 20,158 FTE figure, to be 'Screen content under Australian creative control' (Screen Australia 2016b).

Second, the footloose category of 4,090 FTE jobs is 'labour income paid to Australian creative talent (i.e. cast and crew)' as result of government investment in Hollywood productions. This figure is misleading. It relates to production-based, ad-hoc employment, which by definition is the opposite of Full Time Equivalent. Moreover, Australian cast and crews do not work exclusively for 'core Australian content' or footloose productions. For example, production staff may be counted as part of the broad Australian content for their regular jobs and again if their company is contracted by a footloose production. The significance of this is that of the claimed 25,304 FTE jobs, 12,508 FTE jobs (49.43%) are unaccounted for and additional 4,090 FTE jobs (16.16%) are of questionable casual employment.

The use of FTE job figures is not incidental. In its own 2016 report, Screen Australia quotes (2016: 5) a former Deloitte Access report to claim that film and television production and distribution industries include 'about 46,000 full time equivalent employees' (Screen Australia 2016b). A read through the quoted report, 'Economic contribution of the film and television industry in Australia' (2015: 4), reports 'Direct Contribution' employment for 2012/13 as 39,025 FTE jobs. However, a footnote in Table 2.4 (5) shows that the source for this figure is 'Deloitte Access Economics estimates' (Deloitte Access Economics 2015). Different variables are used in the 39,035 FTE figure of 2012/13 as opposed to those of the 25,304 FTE figure of 2015/16. The first includes exhibition, retail, rental and on-line employees. The latter include heritage activities, sports, recreation and gambling services. Both clearly contain sectors that have very little to do with the industry ambit of Screen Australia. For example, Australian film exhibition barely amounts to 4% of the Australian exhibition industry's business.

Conversely, ABS data (2013: 3) directly relevant to Screen Australia shows that, as of June 2012, only 15,760 people were employed in film and video production and post-production businesses across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). No breakdown for positions is provided, but even assuming full-time employment for all 15,760, it is much lower than the claimed 39,025 FTE figure. The most recent ABS data in the form of 'Characteristics of Employment, Film and video production and post-production businesses in 2015/16' (2017) totals 17,100 production and post-production jobs in Australia and provides the following position breakdown: 1,306 proprietors, 2,536 paid directors and management, 6,418 full-time employees, 867 permanent part-time and 5,973 casual workers (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017). Plainly, Screen Australia prefers the commissioned, exaggerated and favourable estimations over the freely available ABS data. It is beyond the scope of this research to evaluate the claimed \$2.6 billion annual economic contribution generated by the screen industry, but it stands to reason that if 65.59% of the FTE jobs claimed in the Deloitte Access report are questioned, so are the economic benefits they generate for the Australian economy.

8.3 *Spinning the Tale: Indifference for Local Stories*

The Olsberg SPI report has its share of misleading information. Its survey of 1,049 respondents found 271 'separate pieces of content' identified as 'Australian'. These mix films and television, *Crocodile Dundee*, *Mad Max*, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* as well as Australian soap *Home and Away* and the current affairs program *Four Corners*. Out of the cinematic 'pieces of content' mentioned, only *Rabbit-Proof Fence* was created under the auspice of government funding, the Olsberg report's *raison d'être*. *Crocodile Dundee* was made under the 10BA scheme and the original *Mad Max* was privately produced (Murray, Beilby & Mora 1979) precisely because the AFC refused to finance it. Further, *Dundee* and *Mad Max* are irrelevant examples for today's Australian film market. Under the title 'A preference for local stories', the (1) Olsberg report states that:

Only 2% said that they don't watch Australian content, while 64% said that local content accounted for up to half of their media diet, and 22% reported that most or all of their viewing was Australian. 35% of respondents said they were more likely to watch a program if it's Australian, compared to 14% who stated that they were less likely, dovetailing with previous research which identified the strong cultural distinctiveness of domestic production (Olsberg SPI 2016).

Both Charts 4 and 5 (12)⁸ suggest the exact opposite. Australians display indifference to Australian content. Chart 4, 'Amount of Australian Content Watched', shows that 2% will watch 'none', 31% watch 'a little' and 33% watch 'some'. The difference between 'a little' and 'some' is not explained. On average, 66% of the interviewees show none to some interest in Australian content (up to 50% consumption). Conversely, only 17% watch 'mostly' and watch 5% 'almost all' on average, 22% show

⁸ Charts 4 and 5 in the Olsberg report are respectively numbered as Tables 8.2 and 8.3, in this research.

preference to Australian content (more than 50% consumption). An additional 9%, 'don't know' (neutral).

Table 8.2 – Amount of Australian Content Watched

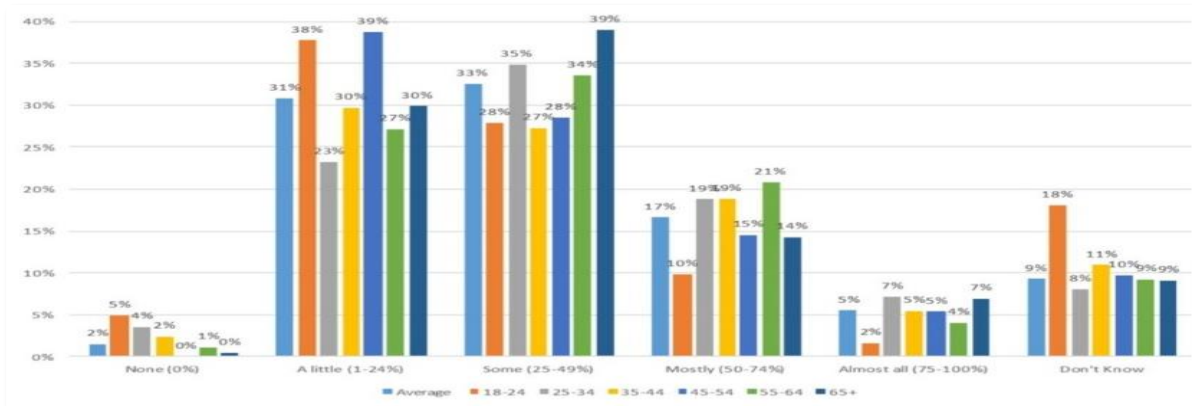
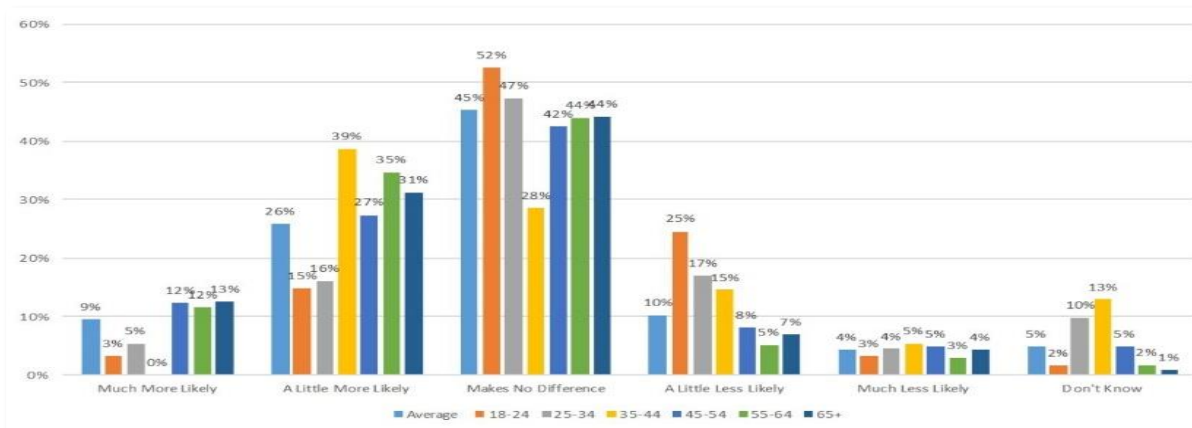


Chart 5, 'Impact of Australian content', shows that Australian content 'makes no difference' for 45%, 'a little less likely' for 10% and 'much Less Likely' for 4%. On average, 59% of Australians are indifferent or actively avoid Australian content. Conversely, 26% are 'a little more likely' and 9% are 'much more likely'. On average, only 35% of Australians actively seek Australian content. Additional 5%, 'don't know' (neutral).

Table 8.3 – Impact of Australian content



The Olsberg report presents 'case studies' that give a distinct impression that whole unedited passages were cut and pasted from various, unreferenced sources. Case study Number 4 (27), for example, describes *Gallipoli* (Weir, 1981) as 'being a production which took a key role in structuring the nation's understanding of a seminal moment in their own history' (Olsberg SPI 2016). The campaign was fought in 1915, *Gallipoli* was released in 1981. Does the report suggest that before the film 'restructured' it, the 'nation' did not understand Gallipoli?

The History Wars, presented in Chapter Six regarding Aboriginal screen representation, were also conducted over the question of Australian involvement in World War I (Bendle 2009; Kelly 2011; Lake 2010; Moses 2011). Blair (2005: 99.1) notes that Gallipoli attracted an 'inordinate amount of attention', being firmly embedded in the 'conservative psyche of the nation' (Blair 2005). Cochrane (2015) argues that the political right insists that left-wing historians were violating cherished memories of the past (Cochrane 2015). Manne (2007) notes Keating's discontent with Gallipoli, fought in Turkey for the British Empire. Keating failed to replace it with the battle of Kokoda so Gallipoli remains 'Australia's only sacred soil' (Manne 2007). Bendle (2009: 7) notes that Howard mobilised the myth of Gallipoli and its qualities, which the left sees as 'suspect, or invalid, or even pernicious' (Bendle 2009). Inferring that a 35-year-old fictional film 'reconstructed' a monolith representation of Australian involvement in Gallipoli is factually wrong.

Gallipoli raises contradicting interpretations. For Bennet (2014), it represents an anti-imperial sentiment, led by Whitlam and Bill Gamage's influential book *The Broken Years* (Bennett 2014). Manne notes that the film corresponded with the left's objection to the Vietnam war and the right's perception of the British command's incompetence (Manne 2007). Clarke (2006: 58), pinpointing *Gallipoli's* strength and weakness, argues it as 'stunningly simple', well demonstrating 'the mindset with which young men entered the First World War' (Clarke 2006). As demonstrated in Chapter Five, contradicting interpretations of national texts is commonplace in cinema. Surely Gallipoli – the defining Australian myth – deserves more than one interpretation. Yet not until *The Water Diviner* (Crowe, 2014), 33 years later, was Gallipoli addressed in Australian cinema and with no battle depiction. One reason is financial. Australian filmmaking is predominantly low budget. *Gallipoli* eventuated due to Robert Stigwood and Rupert Murdoch's financial support, which afforded a costly historical reconstruction including 4,000 extras and location shoots in Egypt (Broadbent 2009; Clarke 2006). A second, more pertinent reason is that Gallipoli is a volatile issue in Australian debate. Government funding bodies are unlikely to allow revisionist views – left or right – sure to alienate one side or both. Thus, instead of political controversy fuelling art, rejuvenating Centre and challenging Australians in seminal issues, Screen Australia champions middle-of-the-road, fictional films such as *Australia* and *Gallipoli*.

The *pièce de résistance* of the Olsberg scholarship is the literature review (i-iii) of O'Regan's *Australian National Cinema*, Dermody and Jacka's Two Industry model and Verhoeven's Third Industry model, 'the art-house blockbusters' such as *The Piano* (Campion, 1993). Jan Chapman (ii), *The Piano's* producer, notes Australian films include:

A strong visual sense, building on Australia's diverse range of landscapes, as well as unconventional and unique characters. Such production values help Australian films stand out against their backdrop, representing Australia to the world, and as a result generating cultural value and soft power (Olsberg SPI 2016).

It is unclear how *The Piano*, shot in New Zealand, is relevant to 'Australia's diverse range of landscapes'. The extent of *The Piano*'s connection to Australia is that it initially received AFC and New South Wales Film and Television Office script development funds. *The Piano* was financed by French company Ciby 2000, directed by Kiwi Jane Campion and cast with Kiwi Sam Neill and Americans Holly Hunter and Harvey Keitel. Chapman is a former FFC board member. Her most financially successful Australian film, *Lantana*, an urban drama, never recouped its budget, let alone achieved Verhoeven's 'art-house block-buster status'. All of Chapman's productions are partially government or state funded, making her an interested party. This information is lacking from the Olsberg report.

As for the theoretical models, Dermody and Jacka mapped the Australian film industry of the 1970s and 1980s and published their work in 1988, with the annulment of the 10BA benefits and before the FFC terminated almost all private, genre filmmaking, that is, Industry Model Two. For the past thirty years, there are no two competing Industry Models in Australia, just the one government-funded model. Verhoeven's Industry Three model, 'the art-house blockbusters', was published in 2006. It is unsubstantiated by any supporting facts. *The Piano* ranks number 38 in the U.S 1993 Domestic Grosses. It earned \$40,157,856 (USD), while all blockbusters that year earned over \$100 million (USD) (Box Office Mojo 1993a, b). Arthouse successes such as *The Piano*, *Strictly Ballroom* and *Muriel's Wedding* were aggressively promoted by Miramax at the height of its power, the company being notoriously evasive in paying filmmakers their share of profits after deducting all of its extensive promotion costs (Biskind 2004; Perren 2012). Given the presented P&A, exhibition and distribution costs, box office figures mean very little in terms of actual profits. Most important, between 2006 – the time Verhoeven published her model and 2016 when the Olsberg SPI report was submitted – not a single arthouse Australian film has recouped its budget, let alone achieved 'blockbuster' status. The extent of all three models is obsolete, uncontextualised and unsubstantiated in the current Australian cine market.

O'Regan published his National Australian Cinema book in 1996. Since then, national cinema discourse has been challenged by the transnational cinema debate of the early 2000s, which questioned, via examined diasporas and adjoining cultures, the centrality of national texts. Moreover, O'Regan's theory was published prior to the introduction of the internet, which further subverted the perception of singular national uniqueness. As demonstrated in *Gallipoli*'s case and in Chapters Five to Seven, 'National', 'Australian' and 'Cinema' are unquantifiable concepts, prone to personal and conflicting interpretations.

8.4 Last Cab to Nowhere: The Parliamentary Inquiry

The Parliamentary Committee accepted unreservedly Screen Australia's submissions. In the chapter 'Overview of Australian Screen Industry', footnotes 5-11 (2-4) quote the Deloitte Access report and footnotes 12-18 (4-5) quote the Olsberg SPI report. The report describes (3) the 25,304 FTE jobs as 'broad figures', not as commissioned estimations. *Gallipoli* (4) demonstrates an 'instrumental value' which helped to 'define Australian self-identity'; 'institutional value' for its 're-establishing respect for ANZAC and Australia's contribution to the Gallipoli Campaign'; and 'intrinsic value' that is 'highly subjective' but conveyed nonetheless 'through its moving story and its iconic imagery and music' (Committee on Communications and the Arts 2017). The instrumental and institutional values are one in the same and respect for the ANZAC was never lost. No independent, factual data were provided or required, such as ABS employment figures or viewing figures, for *Gallipoli* since its initial release in 1981 to establish its on-going importance.

All parties appearing before the Committee were unanimous in their demand for more budget, overlapping offsets and lowering expenditure threshold requirements to support Australian cinema. The Committee notes (13) that since the tax incentives' introduction in 2007 'over \$1.6 billion has been provided to support the sector, with over \$1 billion provided through the producer offset alone, for stories with significant Australian content' (Committee on Communications and the Arts 2017). \$1.6 billion over ten years exceeds the \$1.345 billion spent by the FFC over twenty years, practically doubling government investment. The generous government funding, however, did not find its way into regular Australian film productions as the Committee notes (62):

Screen Australia funding is capped at \$2 million for a theatrical feature, generally accounting for no more than 65 per cent of the budget and inclusive of any producer offset amount, but can go higher under exceptional circumstances and at the Board's discretion (Committee on Communications and the Arts 2017).

If \$2 million are 65% of the average Australian production budget, as the Committee notes, then 100% is around \$3 million. This figure is factually wrong. The average for 1996/97 was \$3.8 million (Reid 1999). Moreover, despite the poor track record of Australian films at the box office, Screen Australia places the average Australian production budget on consistent rise by decade, with a slight setback in the 2010s (Screen Australia 2017b). Table 8.5 demonstrates this. All its figures are in 2017 dollars:

Table 8.4 – Average Production Budget by Decade

Decade	Budget (Million)
1970s	1.78
1980s	5.92
1990s	6.89
2000s	8.93
2010 - 2017	8.7

Sheehan (2009: 8) comments that ‘it is not uncommon to hear overseas distributors, producers and sales agents comment that Australian feature film budgets are inordinately high when compared with the sale prices paid for them’ (Sheehan 2009). Maher, Silver and Kerrigan (2016) quote the research of the ARC Centre, ‘Understanding Australian Screen Content Producers: Wave 2’, findings that only 27% of Australian producers acknowledged they were operating with inflated feature film budgets, particularly considering their low ROI expectancy (Maher, Silver & Kerrigan 2016). Those arguments, which go against the grain of popular belief that Australian films are under budget, correspond with McKenzie and Wall’s conclusion (267) that under the FFC ‘Australian films are advertised more heavily and released on more screens relative to (similar) competing films, yet they under-perform in terms of opening week and cumulative box-office revenues’ (McKenzie & Walls 2013). George and Rheinberger regard box office data (5) as ‘woefully inadequate’ yet present a top ten table of Screen Australia’s box office earners. They write (7):

The budgets of the films in the top 10 list are higher than usual: an average of \$12.89 million compared to \$6.86 million for all 94 films. The range of the top 10 is \$4 million to an unusual \$28 million – the second most expensive cost \$21.6 million. The range of the sample is \$560,000 to \$28 million. Seven of the top 10 had budgets of more than \$9 million... There are 24 films with budgets of \$9 million or more among the 94 films (George & Rheinberger 2017).

It is unclear how the average film budget is claimed by George and Rheinberger to be \$6.86 million when Screen Australia published an average of \$8.7 million for the 2010s and \$8.93 million for the 2000s, or how this aligns with the Committee’s average of \$3 million. Given Screen Australia’s data, or lack thereof, it is impossible to independently substantiate its statements. For example, Screen Australia meticulously refrains from publishing film budgets, although they are regularly published in the media. George and Rheinberger reason (25) that ‘it is not possible to provide the budgets of the top ten films because several of the producers would not agree to it’ (George & Rheinberger 2017). A

brief internet search reveals *The Dressmaker's* (Moorhouse, 2015) budget to be estimated at \$17 million while *Lion's* budget was \$12 million (Groves 2015; Vanity Fair 2016). Screen Australia invested \$350,000 in a version of *The Dressmaker* and another \$500,000 in its P&A (Screen Australia 2015a, 2016a), yet how much, if any, investment was made in *The Dressmaker* or *Lion's* actual production budgets is undisclosed. George and Rheinberger note that by February 2017, *Lion* – Screen Australia's most successful film – has not recouped its budget, although it earned (5) \$19.82 million in Australia and (13) \$127.3 million internationally (George & Rheinberger 2017). The significance of this is that after earning \$147.12 million at the box office, *Lion* has not yet recouped a \$12 million budget (8.15% of the box office share).

In the 2015/16 annual report, George analyses (44) the film *Last Cab to Darwin* (Sims, 2015), a standard Australian road trip drama budgeted at nearly \$4 million. Screen Australia invested \$978,500 in the film, considered an Australian success. It played on 350 screens, earned \$7,406,951 and ranks forty-seventh of all time at the Australian box office. George notes the following deductions from this sum: 10% Government Sales Tax (GST), 66% for exhibitor's fees, 35% for distribution and \$300,000 for a distribution guarantee and when a specific box office target was reached (Di Rosso 2015; Screen Australia 2016a, 2018). Of the initial \$7,406,951 at the box office, only \$1,218,573 (16.41%) remained to cover the film's expenditure. In the U.S. – considered the most important market along with the UK – the film played four screens and earned \$34,193 (USD) (Box Office Mojo 2015b). No additional data was found. *Lantana* made \$12,286,683 in 2001 but had not managed to recoup its budget by 2017. *Last Cab to Darwin* ranks as the number eight box office earner in George and Rheinberger's study, indicating that out of the ninety-four films analysed, eighty-six films effectively have less of a chance to recoup their investment. Conservatively, 92.5% of Screen Australia's film investments are very unlikely to be recouped, the same recoupment pattern as the FFC displayed.

None of this math, nor delving into hardcore and detailed Screen Australia's discrepancies, is reflected in the Committee's report. In complete opposition to the NCOF, the Committee's list of recommendations (xv) includes raising the single offset of 30% for all types of qualifying production including film and television, increasing the location offset to an internationally competitive level of 30%, decoupling the location and PDV offsets so that both can potentially be claimed for the same production and allowing any content platform to claim location and PDV offsets for QAPE, which are to be reduced to \$5 million 'specifically for pilot features' (Committee on Communications and the Arts 2017). No discussion regarding Screen Australia's failing investments, nor an explanation of how this increased budgeting would further future ROI figures were published by the Committee.

8.5 Baring the Facts: Screen Australia's Truths

George and Rheinberger (2) begin their analysis 'by getting a truth out of the way'. None of the 94 films analysed recouped its budget. This said, several arguments permeating Australian funding bodies' discourse follow. Every paragraph begins with a bold quote from this analysis and is followed by a short discussion.

Claim 1: 'Making money is not Screen Australia's key motivation' (2). The *Screen Australia Act 2008* explicitly mandates the 'development of a highly creative, innovative and *commercially sustainable* Australian screen production industry'. When no Australian film manages to recoup its budget, Screen Australia, as the FFC before it, fails to achieve its goal. No indication was found that the commercial imperative was authorised to be disregarded.

Claim 2: 'Home grown films have significant cultural value' (3). Over the past twenty years, Australian cinema attendance consistently declines, averaging 4.06%, including the previously discussed non-Australian themed films. Contrastingly, Maher, Silver and Kerrigan note general Australian cinema attendance to rank ninth of the top ten international cine markets in 2012, with a revenue of \$1.2 billion (USD) per annum (Maher, Silver & Kerrigan 2016). The Olsberg report found 59% Australian indifference to Australian content. These figures suggest lower than claimed cultural significance of 'home grown' films to Australians.

Claim 3: 'Making and distributing films directly contributes to the strength of the economy through jobs and economic activity' (3). According to ABS data, the Australian film industry employs 17,100 people, 6,840 of whom are employed in part time or casual capacity. Those jobs are directly government subsidised via Off-shore production funding and various Offsets and indirectly via state tax benefits for resident employees. As Potts argues previously, at best, this creates a zero net effect.

Screen Australia's claims for economic contribution via employment mock thousands of graduate students pursuing in vain a career in film, television and media. Rossiter and Alcaraz (2016) note an annual output of 7,000 graduates from Australian tertiary institutions and additional 4,200 graduates of vocational education providers and registered training organisations. Census figures indicate that only 22% of media employees graduated in media studies. Former Metro Screen CEO Christina Alvarez states (2) that 'Screen Australia has made it clear that development of emerging screen practitioners is no longer part of its mandate but is the responsibility of the education sector'. In screen production, the majority of individuals occupy a low ranking position for the first sixteen years of their career, graduates often undertaking non-renumerated work experience or placements while (3) 'only one in 80 first time feature filmmakers in Australia will go on to produce, write, or direct more than five

feature films in their career. (Rossiter & Alcaraz 2016)' Metro Screen, which commissioned this research, was shut down to finance *Thor: Ragnarok* and *Alien: Covenant's* \$47 million investment.

Excluding proprietors and senior management level, the Australian film industry offers 13,258 full time, part time and casual jobs. Each year, 11,400 new graduates are willing to work for lower wages, or none at all. For employers, it is a seller's market. For practitioners, the first priority is to establish themselves. This encourages conformity to Centre and its values, which the government, the major Australian studios and Screen Australia have every incentive to keep.

Despite economic objections, politicians reap the media exposure of providing high profile, yet temporary jobs and having their picture taken with Hollywood stars (Australian Associated Press 2017). Further, since the Howard government's eleven-year reign, Australia has had six governments in eleven years: Rudd, Gillard, Rudd II (2013), Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison (present). A lack of successive governance results in short-term policy, which yields media attention translated into immediate political benefits, but is detrimental for the other sectors that pay its price. Attempted budget cuts result in an orchestrated Australian screen union campaigns enlisting celebrities who plead to spare the industry, which supports '25,000 jobs' from being 'gutted'. Soon after, a new government offset insures \$140 million for Hollywood productions over the next four years (Broinowski 2018; Harmon 2018; Make it Australian 2018; Quinn 2018). Although government funding doubled over the last decade, no action was taken to restructure the two-tier polarised cine market described in Chapter Four. Neither the upper tier – Hollywood pictures shot in Australian studios and Australian productions that manage to get their QAPE and PDV offsets, nor the lower tier – films directly funded by Screen Australia – can support themselves independently.

Under the pretence of sustaining the Australian film industry, all major Australian studios, Fox in Sydney, Docklands in Melbourne and Village Roadshow in Queensland, benefit directly from this policy. Potts refers to this practise as 'rent seeking effects, where the beneficiaries of the subsidies (the film studios) spend resources lobbying for these tax breaks' (Potts 2015). The studios merely mediate between Hollywood and Australian governments and in return offer Australians subsidised, below the line, temporary employment. For example, in March 2018, Paramount's *Dora the Explorer* project, shot in Village Roadshow's Queensland studio, requested additional \$20 million to the 16.5% offset. Canberra refused and the QLD government picked up the tab for an undisclosed amount (Hall 2018; SBS Movies 2018). Without government subsidies, or in case of an appreciation of the Australian dollar as happened between 2006-2008, the studios shut down. While studios invest revenue in their own high end equipment and expert animation production houses, they are too expensive for the lower tier's budgets. Government subsidies to Hollywood productions put studio's fees beyond the

financial reach of the Australian film industry that government subsidies are meant to sustain. Hence, there is no independently produced Australian *Happy Feet*, although the film's components, the production means and talent, are Australian. The lower tier of Australian productions is reduced to dramas, horror and relying on Australia's 'diverse range of landscapes'. The particularity of Aussie humour further reduces Australian comedy's international prospects.

Aveyard (2011: 36) argues that Australian filmmaking are criticised for their 'under-developed scripts, low budgets and dark, depressing subject-matter' (Aveyard 2011). Australian films are low-budget only when compared to Hollywood production standards. Compared to American indies, Australian films are overbudgeted. Leipzig (2016) reports an annual production of 550 independent films whose average budget is around \$1 million (USD) competing for 8% of the American box office, in addition to 'hundreds or thousands of movies that get digital-only deals, via companies like Amazon or Gravitas' (Leipzig 2016). \$1 million (USD) is roughly \$1.3 million, compared with an average Australian production budget of \$8.7 million. *Sleeping Beauty* (Leigh, 2011), for example, is a small, lower-tier Australian drama exploring young female sexuality. Screen Australia invested \$1,489,950 of its \$3 million budget (Screen Australia 2010). The film has no star power and used on-location Sydney settings. What components in *Sleeping Beauty* entail a \$3 million budget? Screen Australia refuses to divulge any production budgets to reveal funds' allocation.

Sleeping Beauty's screening at the prestigious Cannes film festival 'was followed by a smattering of claps and an answering burst of boos' (Bunbury 2011). On Rotten Tomatoes, the film received 49% freshness and 32% in the audience score (Rotten Tomatoes 2011). Globally, including Australia, it earned \$460,998 (USD). In America, it played on four screens, earning \$36,578 (USD) (IMDbpro 2011). Conversely, back in 1977, when the AFC refused to finance *Felicity*, John Lamond formed a unit trust and sold a hundred units at \$1,250 each. *Felicity* was stunningly shot for \$170,000, earned \$532,000 in Australia and sold well globally (Murray & Beilby 1978). This entrepreneurial approach was afforded by 10BA and allowed filmmakers the independence to portray *their* vision on screen. Centre – be it the AFC, the FFC, Screen Australia or the National Classification Scheme – allows only restrained displays of sexuality. The 'arty' *Sleeping Beauty*, yes; 'sexploitation' such as *Felicity*, or pornographic abbywinters.com, no. 'Undeveloped scripts' and 'depressing subject-matter' are another name for forced cohesion to Centre's values, combined with a designated multiplex screening orientation, which restricts content to G, PG and M classification. Edgy, adult, or violent, M15+ and R18+ categories' content will limit screening sessions and further narrow earning possibilities. This unification of tamed, unauthentic and ultimately boring films, results in *friction I*.

Claim 4: ‘Marketing, media and critical attention peaks as a film opens on the big screen and if it succeeds there it can generate positive word of mouth that helps expand the film’s reach’ (5). Film marketing is divided to wide and platform releases. There is no indication that either generates any favourable returns. *The Dressmaker* earned \$20.28 million and played 384 screens, averaging \$52,812 per screen. *The Railway Man* (Teplitzky, 2013) earned \$7.28 million and played 109 screens, averaging \$66,788 per screen, not accounting for its smaller P&A expenses. Regardless of how many screens they play, Australian films such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Last Cab to Darwin* are arthouse filmmaking, too weak to recoup their budget locally and uncompetitive with American indies.

Claim 5: ‘All 94 films continue to attract revenue however small the dribble, because of the so-called long tail’ (5). In terms of subject matter, Australian films’ reliance on G, PG and M categories makes their long-tailing potential barely adequate for free-to-air television programming. Aside from their move into high-budget film production (Mendelson 2017), streaming giants such as HBO, Netflix, Amazon and Apple spend an average of \$5-7 million (USD) on a single drama series episode, with fewer limitations on sexual depiction, strong language and violent content. High-end, VFX and period dramas are currently pushing \$20 million (USD) per episode, all produced with A-list Hollywood stars and directors (Ryan & Littelton 2017; Scot & Manhola 2016; Sweney 2017). Australian films, programmed as one-off slots, offer nothing that American streaming giants do not already have in abundance and for cheaper rates. If *The Last Cab to Darwin* failed to recoup its budget on 350 screens and an additional four screens in America, it is very unlikely to do so via revenue generated from long-tailing. *Lantana* is proof of this.

8.6 Discussion: Engage. Educate. Inspire.

All three *frictions* discussed throughout this research remain unresolved. *Frictions I and III* are easier to substantiate. Audiences are indifferent to Australian films, which are unprofitable and afford zero financial reward to allow their makers continued employment. As with the FFC before it, Screen Australia reverts to arguments linked to cultural significance associated with *friction II* and underscored by the false axiom of Australian national cinema.

‘National’ is a construct meant to divine internal cohesion and external distinction of a prescribed group. National ontology inevitably determines who is in and who is not. The American *Hacksaw Ridge* and *The Great Gatsby* are rendered Australian national cinema, while Ozploitations, ocker comedies and pornography are not, despite being rooted in Australian culture. As an academic practice, the national cinema classification allows to find similarities and group films. In the actuality of film production, adhering to ‘national’ concepts forces cohesion of practices, themes and norms. ‘National’ requirements are the source of *friction I*, presenting a distinct disparity between Centre and Australian audience.

‘Australian’, represented by *friction II*, is Centre’s perceived orthodoxy of what *ought* to be instead of what it actually *is*. The documentary *Snowy Hydro – The Jindabyne Story*, discussed in Chapter Six, excludes Aboriginal people because Jindabyne’s reconstruction is perceived as a matter affecting the white townspeople. To rectify this abhorrent notion, in *Beneath Clouds*, *Jindabyne* and *Australia* aboriginality is ‘acknowledged’ as ‘Australian’ instead of being one. Similarly, in the Parliamentary Committee’s report, *Gallipoli* ‘defines Australian identity’; *Gallipoli* defines, not its viewers. Bazza McKenzie or Kenny are denied ‘Australian’ entitlement, although they clearly are. By dropping the larrikin, Australian cinema lost its authenticity. This resulted in didactic and ultimately boring films.

‘Cinema’ addresses *friction III*. To *Become* part of ‘Cinema’, a film unit traveling the rhizomatic grid needs to penetrate Centre. The less *frictions*, the easier it is to *Become* and the less influence Centre has. Conforming to Centre’s demands allows cinematic units to *Become* in exchange for their authenticity, but inauthentic films are not interesting and fail to connect with audiences.

Frictions II and *II*, determining what is ‘Australian’ and maintaining financial control, are Centre’s key interests. Contrary to its claims, Screen Australia’s interests are not to promote Australian cinema, but rather to maintain its own control. Michals’ (2001: 8) ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’, presented in Chapter Two, argues that organisational imperatives such as maintaining Centre’s locus of control give rise to democratic aristocracy, that is, elites who ‘can embrace half the people or an indeterminately smaller number’ (Michals 2001). Choosing who and what to embrace is a political decision, not an artistic one. This was demonstrated over and over again. Phillip Adams (39) explicitly noted, ‘we by-passed the Arts Minister and went straight to Keating... had we not taken this tactic [which scandalized the political process], the FFC never would have happened’ (Barlow 1991a). The FFC and the AFC actively lobbied against AUSFTA, contrary to the Howard government policy, in response to fear for their own position, not to protect Australian cinema, which by 2004 was in dire straits due to the rising value of the Australian dollar.

When asked about *Green Card*’s investment, the FFC’s CEO John Morris answered, ‘Peter is an Australian, so it’s an Australian film’ (*Ibid.*). Screen Australia’s ‘matters we consider relevant’ directly connects to this remark. Peter is an Australian as are Bruce, Baz, George and Mel (actually, an American), members of the old-boys-big-budget-film-club that produced *Mao’s Last Dancer*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Hacksaw Ridge*. All are ‘Australian’ not by their subject-matter, but by affiliation with Centre and their perceived commercial potential. None meet Screen Australia’s SAC test, nor are they required to. Garion Hall, founder of abbywinters.com, is also an Australian as are his cast, crews and production facilities, but his work – snubbed as pornography – is not.

Yet abbywinters.com does offer something that veteran filmmakers cannot – youth and authenticity. The division between Australian and non-Australian, arthouse vs. genre, high and low is fictitious and ultimately futile. Deleuze and Guattari note (10) that ‘good and bad are only the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). The original *Mad Max* is a would-be-forgotten-Ozploitation had it not achieved the redeeming quality of success. Ingenuity, fresh ideas, exuberance and energy, all the qualities *Mad Max* displayed, are those of young people. They may fail, waste production funds and produce unwatchable, vulgar junk, but they just might succeed. *Mad Max* did. To succeed, however, they must be afforded an opportunity. Bourdieu (244) argues the accumulation of cultural capital as a labour of inclusion, assimilation and time, that must be invested ‘personally by the investor’ (Bourdieu 1986). Currently, almost all Australian filmmakers struggle to find employment if they choose to stay in Australia.

Although the designated investor, Screen Australia, declares (55) its first KPI (Key Performance Indicator) is to ‘engage, educate and inspire’ (Screen Australia 2016a), evidence points to the contrary. When declining viewing figures and ROI is not a ‘key motivation’, when double standards apply, the SAC test for lower-tier filmmakers and ‘matters we consider relevant’ for veterans, when emerging screen practitioners are no longer part of Screen Australia’s mandate and thousands of graduates cannot find a job and pursue their dreams and when assets are sold and Metro Screen is shut down to finance meaningless Hollywood film productions, Screen Australia neither educates nor inspires. Worse, it fails to rejuvenate. Sheehan (2009: 3) argues that production-distribution relations via the economic concept of ‘principal-agent problem’, where the agent’s expertise forms an ‘information asymmetry’ with the principal, who relies on his services (Sheehan 2009). Screen Australia employs a similar strategy. Lack of transparency and independent audits with inaccessibility to relevant information allows Screen Australia to hide inconvenient information under an abundance of biased reports that serve to conceal rather than reveal. Investment decisions, accumulation tables and production budgets, notes and recoupment figures are not published. Estimations and unsourced references are used instead of facts, inconvenient survey findings are spun and meaningless professional jargon such as ‘media diet’ or ‘soft power’ are unquantified or supported. Attaching O’Regan and Dermody and Jacka’s models as appendices does not further understanding of the subject at hand, nor does it demonstrate scholarship. Uncontextualised, this merely puffs up the number of pages submitted. All this is done with an understanding that these reports are rarely read and that no one bothers adding up figures or examines footnotes.

As stated at the introduction to this thesis, the academic lacuna of peer-reviewed literature regarding Screen Australia leaves Australian cinema discourse severely lacking. Academia is the only Centre capable of generating competing scholarship to that of Screen Australia, yet only few Australian

academics within film studies research this central body and its operations. It is sobering to consider that there are a very limited number of career opportunities in Australia seeing members of Australian academia and government funded bodies intermittently exchange positions. Prudent career advancement dictates a restraint of criticism, another proof of Centre's ability to delegate power to competing elites to maintain its own. Doing so, the same ideas, such as Verhoeven's Third Industry Model, are perpetuated. For example, David Court, whose work papers were used to form the failed FFC, later headed the AFTRS Centre for Screen Business and currently works as an Executive director at the Compton School in Canberra, along with Professor Deb Verhoeven, Chair of Compton's academic board, who previously served as CEO of the Australian Film Institute. They have published a peer-reviewed article together (Cameron, Verhoeven & Court 2010). Uniformity of thought leads to stagnation. With no challenge proposed, Centre's failure to rejuvenate itself is eminent.

Centre's ability to control every aspect of Australian cinema – production, themes and discourse – is its own undoing. There is no Australian national cinema. There never was. There is only Australian cinema and the films it has produced over the past 30 years adhere to the same principles, disciplines and practices. Unchallenged, Centre stagnated, withered and died. What killed Australian Cinema? Conformity – the poison of any artistic endeavour.

Quod. Erat. Demonstrandum.

8.7 Coda: Requiem in Australian Minor

Every solution begins by acknowledging a problem. Australian cinema, constrained, classified and expensive, produces unwatchable and unwatched films. Past successes such as *Strictly Ballroom*, *Muriel's Wedding* and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and current misperceived successes such as *Red Dog* (Taplitz, 2011), *The Dressmaker* or *The Sapphires* (Blair, 2012) do not contradict any argument raised in this research, nor do they propel Australian cinema forward. They merely act as fig leaves to justify and tighten Centre's hold over government funding, despite its ongoing and multiple failures.

'They learned nothing and forgotten nothing', quipped French statesman de Talleyrand-Périgord regarding the Bourbons' entrenchment in monarchical *idée fixe*. Government funding is similarly entrenched in Australian cinema discourse. Australian cinema is dead, whether the corpse is acknowledged or not. However, times are a-changin' and cinema is undergoing tectonic shifts. Internet streaming platforms are not more of the same. Netflix is not another company with a different logo. What was, will soon no longer be. If this point hadn't passed through, just ask the Bourbons.

Chapter Nine

Rhizomatic Paths for Future Research:

So, Why is the Bloody Corpse Still Moving?

Two observations are deduced from this research: First, Australian Centre is currently shut down, making it unfeasible for cinematic units to penetrate. *Frictions* generated along the way from Periphery to Centre, grind filmmakers' *Desire* to *Become*. Film units that do manage to penetrate Centre are forced to conform to its norms, thus simultaneously failing to reach an audience and to rejuvenate Centre. Second, as demonstrated in Chapter Eight, by its own account 92.5% of the films produced by Screen Australia will never recoup their budget, and the other 7.5% profitability is highly unlikely. This suggests that the current economic model, in which Centre releases films into cinema exhibition, hoping that Australian audience will flock to see them, is invalid. Thus, the two main problems confronting filmmakers on their way from Periphery are:

1. lack of production means, completely or insufficiently, creating an inability to *Become*.
2. Poorly produced content doesn't effectively connect with the audience, resulting in the inability to profit from their effort.

9.1 Defining the Problem

In his analysis of the origins of creativity, Csíkszentmihályi (2014: 71) argues that individuals are not the proper level of analysis. Rather, creativity is 'a systems-level phenomenon defined internally by the corporate culture and externally by the business environment. Second, the multileveled systems view of the corporation suggests a difficulty in translating internal creativity into external creativity' (Csíkszentmihályi 2014). Csíkszentmihályi offers the prevalent system theory's version of hierarchy which dominates Australian cinema discourse. Individuals (filmmakers) need a corporate culture (Centre) to manifest their creativity. Interaction with their potential audience (external creativity) is achieved via Centre. To an extent, Cattani and Ferriani agree with this notion, suggesting creativity to be an interplay between two components: new ideas and social endorsement shapes the outcome of individual creativity, within a nominated field. They write (824):

First, we predict that individuals who occupy an intermediate position between the core and the periphery of their social system are in a privileged position to achieve creative results... Second, we suggest that the same benefits of an intermediate core/periphery position at the individual level can be replicated at the team level when one individual works in a team whose members come from both ends of the core/periphery continuum (Cattani & Ferriani 2008).

Cattani and Ferriani note two important aspects for film units on their way to *Become*: privileged position and an ability to replicate intermediate position, to team level. A privileged position within Australian cinema, for example, would be a producer who previously worked with the Australian funding bodies before, is familiar with their decision process (corporate culture) and enjoys easier access to their resources. Such were Philip Adams, and Jan Chapman. However, when choosing what films to produce, producers will accept projects that conform to Centre's norms and are likely to be produced. Centre's tendency to expand absorbs the once intermediate. Adams neglected his independent position, and actively involved himself with the formation of the FFC. Chapman simply became part of Centre and served as an FFC board member.

To escape Centre's expansion, Deleuze and Guattari contest the very hierarchy of knowledge, writing (25) 'a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Intermediality – the essence of the rhizome – discussed in Chapters Two and Seven, is not accumulated but temporal. Styhre and Sundgren (2003: 426) write:

While mainstream knowledge management theory treats intellectual resources in a functionalist and instrumental manner wherein organisational resources are dealt with through the use of various managerial practices, the rhizome model emphasises that all inventive and creative activities are always fluid and fluxing, essentially escaping such practices aimed at control (Styhre & Sundgren 2003).

Given that the internet was argued in Chapter Seven as the embodiment of rhizome, filmmakers who work from Periphery and use internet platforms as means to connect with their audience simply bypass Centre. Independently produced internet content contests Csíkszentmihályi's 'corporate culture' and Cattani and Ferriani's 'privileged position', proving that creativity can *Become* without Centre. Hence, individuals and their products are the *only* level that needs to be analysed. Pornography, discussed in Chapter Seven, is not the only peripheral genre to use the internet. Consider the following examples, all peripheral as Periphery gets.

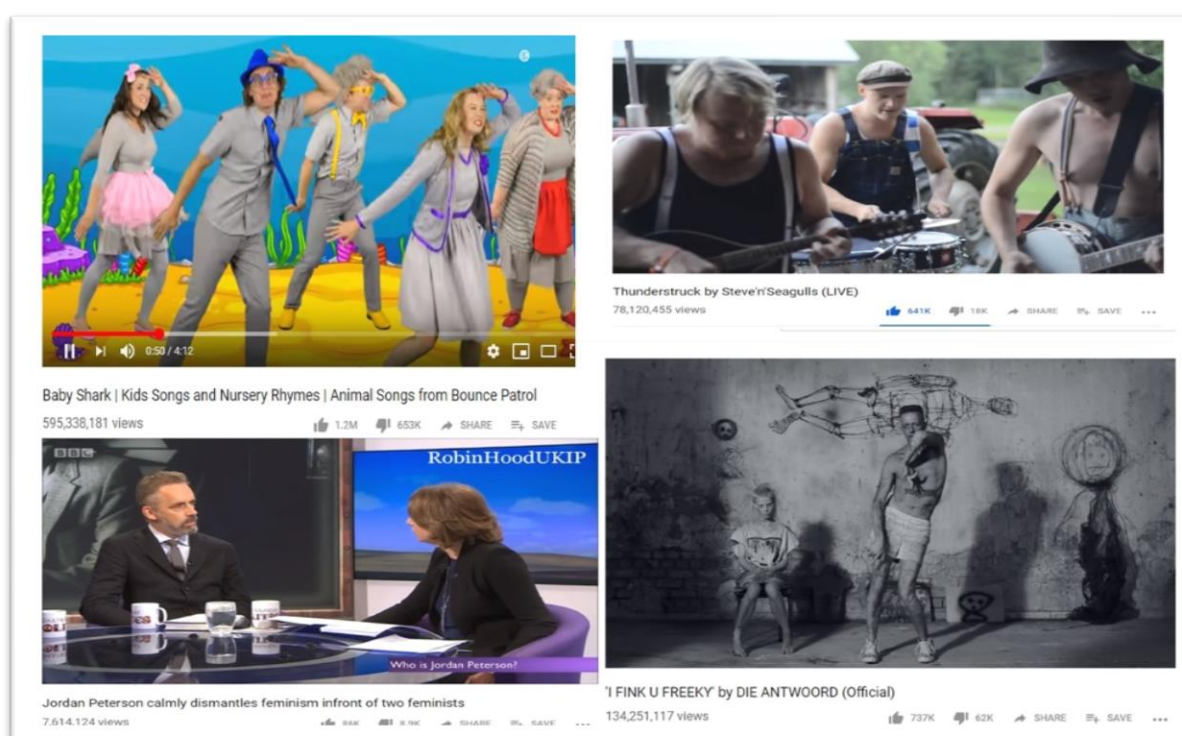
Steve 'n' Seagulls is a Finnish bluegrass band, covering rock and metal songs. Their videos are shot on-location, usually in their rural surroundings, using a single handheld camera and natural lighting. Their 2014 cover of AC/DC's *Thunderstruck* became a YouTube sensation and received more than 78 million views (Steve 'n' Seagulls 2014).

In 2012, *I Fink U Freaky*, an extremely violent video clip containing stark, graphically-explicit sexual imagery by Die Antwoord (Afrikaans for 'The Truth') – a Cape Town hip hop/rave group – launched a very successful international career. Die Antwoord emerged from *Zef* – a white, lower class, South African counterculture. Currently the clip's viewership has passed 134 million views (Die Antwoord 2012).

Bounce Patrol is a Melbourne children's entertainment group, formed in 2012. On May 2018, the group released its cover of the nursery rhyme *Baby Shark*. Within a week, the clip passed one million views on YouTube. It has now passed 600 million views (Bounce Patrol 2018).

In 2016, Jordan Peterson, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto, came to prominence as the voice of neo-conservatism. His objection to the Canadian government's Bill C-16, which criminalised the act of not addressing transgender people by their own chosen gender, and his general rejection of political correctness, gathered more than 150 million YouTube views. Currently, he is a bestselling author, sold-out lecturer, and a 'Rockstar academic' (Peterson 2018).

Illustration 9.1 – YouTube Successes



What do two music bands, a kids entertainment group, and an academic have to do with Australian cinema? The same thing that abbywinters.com does. They are independently produced and use internet distribution to bypass Centre. Vogel (2010: 47) notes that 'the Net is a constantly evolving organism, and anyone on it can be a global publisher or a broadcaster of self-produced content, with no need to obtain a government agency license or to navigate a labyrinth of corporate gatekeepers' (Vogel 2010). Watching these clips, the natural tendency is to classify and judge them by the merit of their content: this is music, children's music, and Peterson is a (controversial) academic. This approach forms *friction II*: arthouse vs. genre, whereas personal or group preference (Australian funding bodies) allocates value to gain agency over the items reviewed. Baby Shark's compliance with Australian

national identity, the age classification of Die Antwoord's music/imagery potential viewers, or Peterson's views being acceptable or not – all qualifying standards of Australian Centre – are irrelevant. The only issue that matters is the measure of Bounce Patrol's success in connecting 600 million times with their one to three-year-old audience. Peterson's 150 million YouTube views suggest that his views stir reactions to questions of ethics, gender identity, policies and norms. Not many academics can boast such an accomplishment. Yet these examples are limited in length, expression, subject matter, and scope, and require fewer production means than a regular feature narrative film, which is the core film unit debated in this research. They are not 'cinema'.

9.2 What is Cinema?

Two answers come to mind. First, 'feature film' is an arbitrary term. The Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Media, Entertainment and Other Audiovisual Terms (2014: online) defines 'feature' as a 'motion picture with a running time of at least 30 to 60 minutes'. French *Académie des Arts et Techniques du Cinéma* qualifies feature at one-hour running time, 'of at least 1,600m on 35mm film'. The American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences requires at least forty minutes running time, or seventy minutes for animated features; and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts is satisfied with more than thirty minutes (Kroon 2014). These conflicting definitions are easily contested, not only by varying length, but also by French requirement for actual celluloid as the exhibition media, disregarding digital projection; or the American distinction between animation and live-action running time, disregarding Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) advancement that blurs the difference between the two.

Second, the definition of cinema itself, which is an accumulation of features as well as short films, is constantly shifting. Rudolf Arnheim (1999: 559) retracted his initial rejection of the use of sound in films. He notes that in the 1930s silent cinema, which worked 'very well', was threatened by 'technical inventions and a popular appetite for lifelikeness threatened the purity of the medium'. Notwithstanding the problematic value allocation: 'very well', and 'purity of the medium', he retrospectively acknowledged that disqualifying one type of film, favouring the other, is wrong. Arnheim writes (561)

The film medium, as I recognize now, profits from a freedom, a breathing space... It is free to use sound or no sound, color or no color, a limited frame or an endless space; it can exploit depth or use the virtues of the flat plane. This freedom puts the film more closely in the company of the other performing arts, such as the theatre, the dance, music, or pantomime (Arnheim 1999).

Similar arguments are made for the internet as an exhibition media. Pethő argues (36-37) the internet displays 'forms of private moving picture consumption similar to early, pre-cinematographic techniques of cinema (see for instance, Lev Manovich's idea that QuickTime is similar to Edison's

kinetoscope)'. She also suggests that a 'revisionist' film history accounts not only for production factors, such as the QuickTime software, but also 'envisages the history of cinema not as a linear progress in time, but as a set of paradigms that can be re-visited and refashioned' (Pethő 2011). Both Arnheim and Pethő see the cinematic paradigm as transient, just as Deleuze and Guattari argue it. For them, theoretical definitions are supposed to fit the current reality of filmmaking, not to have films fitted into their definitions. The exact opposite of Screen Australia's SAC requirements.

In the beginning of *Pierrot le Fou* (Godard, 1965), American director Sam Fuller, appearing as himself, is asked what exactly is cinema? His answer: 'a film is like a battleground. It's love, hate, action, violence, death. In one word, emotions'. But what are 'emotions'? One's comedy bores another; some delight in horror while others cringe. This poses the same theoretical problem raised by Bordwell in Chapter Two – lack of empirical definitions for commonly used-terminology. Further, even when a film unit, of any description, manages to extract an emotion from its audience, that is, managed to connect, it is unclear what the empirical definition of 'audience connectivity' entails.

Every sleepless parent knows of infants' tendencies to repetitively watch their favourite film. Why, for example, is a two-year-old girl glued to the screen whenever Elsa from Disney's *Frozen* (Lee, Buck, 2013) appears? Infants haven't formed knowledge-based structures to connect with films, but their connection is self-evident, and can certainly be argued as audience connection. Researchers such as Kowalski and Bhalla (2018), and Lauren, Madeline and Zachary (2018), apply existing theories: psychodynamic and feminism, respectively, to fit *Frozen*'s merits to their own paradigm (Kowalski & Bhalla 2018; Lauren, Madeline & Zachary 2018). These unifying arguments are what Bordwell calls 'critical methodism', fitting previous conventions to a chosen case – *Frozen*.

Moreover, if the Disney corporation – personifying Csikszentmihályi's 'corporate culture' – is argued to have tools such as market research, vast resources, cutting-edge production capabilities, cast and crews expertise, star power, and a centrally situated distribution chain that allow for better understanding of its audience connectivity, how did films such as *Treasure Planet* (Clements, Musker, 2000), *John Carter* (Stanton, 2012), and *The Lone Ranger* (Verbinski, 2013) become box office failures? What is the empiric definition of 'failure'? *Treasure Planet*, which is a commercial failure, that is, it failed to connect with large audiences, is considered among film buffs to be a cinematic gem, that is, a cultural success. Here, Del Vecchio et al. (2018: 1) ask 'why do some movies become an almost immediate success going viral around the globe while others are quickly forgotten?' (Del Vecchio et al. 2018). Expanding this question, how did *Baby Shark*, produced on a shoe-string budget in Periphery, generates such an inordinate amount of viewing? Considering the different definitions for 'feature' length, the fact that *Frozen* is roughly twenty-five times longer than *Baby Shark* does not disqualify

the comparison. Length, origin and type of content, production budget, and other traditional categories or measurements increasingly become meaningless. As McLuhan (1964: 305) noted, ‘the content of any medium is always another medium’ (McLuhan 2003). The point of creating a text is connecting with an audience, be it for commercial gain, cultural, or any other reason. Impact is the message.

9.3 A Brave New World: AI and the Cinematic Experience

Until recently, audience connection was researched mainly as a by-product of the films box office, or long-tail revenue (Trevisanut 2011; Vogel 2010). Success was attributed to director’s expertise, cast performances, the size of the marketing campaign, or even a fortuitous turn of events – such as Peterson’s popularity rise, tapping into growing public unease with political correctness. However, this interpretive approach is being challenged by computer scientists, who use IT capabilities, data mining and social media analysis to predict audience preferences and form business models (Aveyard 2016; Governo, Teixeira & Brochado 2017; Webster & Lin 2002). Reagan et. al (2016: 5) employed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithm to analyse 1,327 stories from Project Gutenberg’s fiction collection. They argue that six structures can predict the measure of narrative’s success: ‘rags to riches’ (rise); tragedy or ‘riches to rags’ (fall); ‘man in a hole’ (fall-rise); Icarus (rise-fall); Cinderella (rise-fall-rise); and Oedipus (fall-rise-fall). Acknowledging their work to be a preliminary exploration into this field, Reagan et al. note (11) that their analysis bilaterally examines the narrative structure, ‘consideration of the emotional arc for a given story is important for the success of that story... beginning with the emotional arc and aiding in the generation of compelling stories’ (Reagan et al. 2016). Similarly, Chu and Roy (2017) used neural networks methodology, which combines audio and visual information from 509 full-length Hollywood films and 1,326 from Vimeo channel of short videos ranging between 30 seconds to 30 minutes, to determine the ‘universal shape’ of emotional arcs (Chu & Roy 2017). Based on Reagan et al.’s six structures, Del Vecchio et al. developed a Natural Language Processing (NLP) and computational narratology-based filter, to map the screen content of 6,174 scripts, and determine an emotional trajectory for each motion picture. Their findings (32) show audience preference to the ‘man in a hole’ trajectory, ‘irrespective of the movie genre’ and ‘not dependent on the movie production budget’. They conclude

It may appear that when evaluating movie scripts, motion picture production companies should opt for scripts offering *Man in a Hole* emotional journeys... this would be an oversimplification of our results. We show that when emotional arcs are combined with different genres and produced in different budget categories any of the 6 emotional arcs may produce financially successful films. Therefore, a careful selection of the *script-budget-genre* combination will lead to financial success (Del Vecchio et al. 2018).

If until this point *friction II* was argued as arthouse vs. genre, that is, personal singular inspiration contradicting generic conventions, Del Vecchio et al.’s work suggests treating them as a

complementing structure. Narrative conventions, genre – ‘man in a hole’ is situated on the bottom, making sure that the protagonist will be confronted with appropriate challenges, and resolved by overcoming them. The art part, situated on top, presents the story’s generic attitude: comedy or drama and *mise en scène*, demonstrating how unique are the challenges and how inventive is their resolution. Same as a building, genre is the structure, art being the décor.

It is no wonder that both Reagan et al. and Del Vecchio et al., come from the field of algorithms, AI, and neural networks. The internet allows for data to be interpreted more efficiently than ever before. Accordingly, film research is being conducted by computer scientists, who are not bound to previous conventions. Similar to IT programmers who took over pornography from traditional producers, their approach to content is data based, making research in the field one step closer to ‘cognitivism’ – Bordwell’s natural science-oriented model.

Yet certain questions remain open. The quoted articles (Chu & Roy 2017; Del Vecchio et al. 2018; Reagan et al. 2016) assume previous knowledge-based structure as an answer to a measure of a film’s future success. Reagan et al.’s six narrative typologies suggest that pursuing a particular narrative, ‘man in a hole’, will predict a level of connectivity. I argue that although their work is a major step in the right direction, it is still a crude instrument. For example, in 2003, producer Jerry Bruckheimer, director Gore Verbinski and star Johnny Depp, issued *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* (Verbinski, 2003) as part of Disney’s attempt to reinvigorate its Disneyland ride’s waning popularity. By all accounts, the film was destined for oblivion. However, Johnny Depp (in a sidekick capacity) decided that pirates are 17th-century rock stars and fashioned his Captain Jack Sparrow accordingly. The rest is film history. In summer 2013, the Bruckheimer-Verbinski-Depp team attempted *The Lone Ranger*’s makeover, with Depp again in the sidekick’s role as Tonto. The film is estimated to have lost \$190 million dollars (Graser 2013). Understanding past narrative patterns is important, and indeed, current research explores the cinema-internet-audience connection, yet it is not enough. Americans use the phrase ‘Monday morning quarterback’ – American football being played on Sunday evening – to describe hindsight wisdom. The problem facing film production is predicting connectivity, beforehand.

9.4 Ending and Beginning

A future model will seek to remove *frictions* in the creative process. Research should explore audience connectivity not *post factum*, that is, after the film was produced, but as part of the creative process. By no means does this suggest that research can substitute creativity. It merely complements it, allowing it a clearer vision of its potential audiences by developing internet-technology-based tools. If a bluegrass group from Finland, or a hip-hop band from Cape Town, can find their audience, there are

factors that can be distilled. There are lessons to be learned and patterns to be unravelled. Hopefully, future research will do that.

In the years spent around creative people in Australia, both students and professionals, trying to produce my own work, encountering and sharing their difficulties in producing theirs, I found an abundance of struggling creativity: actors, writers, producers, animators. Sometimes the production experience felt like standing on a mountain of gold, with only a teaspoon to dig it out. In his autobiography, Ken Hall, one of Australian cinema's founding fathers, writes (176):

Despite the euphoria engendered by the publication of wild and often unfounded 'success' stories the Australian film 'industry' is in fact not an industry at all. There are scattered active groups but, significantly, no one on the creative production end is making a living out of feature film production. And I mean a *living*, not a fortune! (Hall 1980).

Hall published his memoirs in 1980. Forty years later, not much has changed. Yet at its core filmmaking is the unsubstantiated, optimistic *Desire* that – against overwhelming odds – your story will *Become*. The three *frictions* debated throughout this research are no celestial decree, nor an imminent outcome of the Australian market. My hope – substantiated or not – is that this research will allow filmmakers to make a *living* out of feature film production. *Living*, not a fortune.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Human Research Ethics Annual – Report Form



SWINBURNE RESEARCH Human Research Ethics Annual - Report Form

DATE OF REPORT: 04/11/2018
REPORTING PERIOD: 01/10/2017 to 04/11/2018

SECTION A: PROJECT DETAILS

SUHREC Project No:	2016/001		
Project Title:	Girls from Down Under: The Case of Abby Winters (Formerly 'What killed Australian cinema and why is the bloody corpse still moving?')		
Chief Investigator/ Supervisor:	A/Prof James Verdon		
Faculty/Div:			
Current Approved Duration:	07-09-2016	to	06-09-2019
Student Investigators:	Jacob Zvi		
Co-Investigators:	A/Prof Carolyn Barnes		

If there are any corrections or further details needed to the above, please clarify below.

NB If there are personnel changes not previously notified, please check C2 as applicable

SECTION B: PROGRESS SUMMARY

B1 Status of the Project (as at the date of this report)

Please check [double-click] one or more of the following:

PROGRESS REPORT

- ☐ Data collection/access yet to commence [Explain below then go to B3 then Sect D]
☐ Data collection/access commenced/continuing [Explain below then go to B2 →]

FINAL REPORT re HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH STUDENT COMPONENT ONLY*

(*To be completed when a project is still continuing but the HDR student has completed their component of the project. Explain/complete rest of form as appropriate(B2 to D) to demonstrate ethical acceptability of the project to date or continuing.)

- ☐ For thesis submission and examination purposes only
 Name of relevant student: _____ ID number of student: _____

FINAL REPORT

- ☒ Data collection/access completed [Explain below then go to Sect C →]
☐ Project Abandoned before data collection/access [Explain below then go to Sect D]
☐ Project abandoned during or after data collection/access [Explain below then go to Sect C →]
☐ Other

Please provide a brief explanation as to the project status indicated, including any delays.

Data collection completed as designed.

B2 Participants

How many participants have been recruited to date?

B3 Given any delays or other factor (as per B1 above), do you need an extension of ethics clearance without any other modification to the project?

☐ No ☐ YES. If YES, please give the new date for end of data collection/access:

dd / mm / yyyy

NB information given below re changes may mean a simple extension of ethics clearance cannot be given and a separate ethics clearance application process for modifications needs to be followed.

SECTION C: CONDUCT OF PROJECT

C1 Compliance with the approved protocol

Has the project been conducted in line with the approved protocol, including standard and any special conditions of ethics clearance?

☒ Yes ☐ NO

If NO, please provide a brief explanation.

C2 Project / Protocol Modifications / Additions

Please check [double-click] one or more of the following if there are any:

- ☐ Changes/additions to project investigators (including students) and personnel accessing identifiable info
- ☐ Changes/additions re project personnel deriving a personal benefit from the research
- ☐ Changes/additions to the research protocol (title, aims, procedures, measures, sampling, etc)
- ☐ Changes/additions to the consent instruments/arrangements (including re personnel)
- ☐ Changes/additions to the recruitment material/methods
- ☐ Changes/additions to participant sampling or numbers
- ☐ Changes/additions to project resourcing (financing or otherwise)
- ☐ Other changes/additions

Have any of the above changes been put for ethical review?

☐ NO ☐ Yes

If No, please briefly explain the situation, including any separate submission(s) for ethics clearance for the modification(s) indicated. NB This form cannot be used for modification requests. Information on applying for ethics clearance for any modification(s) can be found [here](#):

C3 Project incidents

Have there been any incidents that affected the conduct of the project or which have impacted adversely on participants and/or the researchers?

☒ NO ☐ YES

If YES, please provide a brief explanation including with respect to any reporting to Swinburne or other authority:

Level of impact of incident:

Would any of the incidents related above be considered serious?

[Serious adverse events (SAEs) include, eg, harm or distress to individuals or groups, loss of significant or sensitive data, breach of confidentiality.]

☐ NO ☐ YES

If YES, please provide a brief explanation including with respect to any reporting to Swinburne or other authority, where appropriate attaching a copy of the report(s):

C4 Issues or experiences of ethical significance?

Have there been any issues or experiences which have been or remain of ethical significance, especially as regards the ethical conduct of the project and/or project outcomes, including any actual or potential conflicts of interest not identified previously or formal complaints received/processed?

☒ NO ☐ YES

If yes, please briefly explain.

C5 Project Outcomes (as at the date of this report)

Please check all of the following:

Compensatory payments made or prizes awarded and records kept	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a
Student thesis/theses submitted for examination	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Results have been published or presented	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Results are to be published or presented	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a
A lay summary of the project outcomes is given below [^]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Project outcomes have been made available to participants	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a
Project outcomes are to be made available to participants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> n/a

If Yes or No, please provide a brief explanation as to the items checked as appropriate:

PhD project is nearing completion but has not yet been submitted.

[^]Brief lay summary of project outcomes (not more than ¼ page):

Interviews have been conducted with three central figures in the operation of abbywinters.com: CEO and founder Garion Hall, and two senior staff members. However due to thesis' scope limitation, only half of the period, 2000-2009 was reviewed. The material addressing the period 2010-2018, will be reviewed in a future peer-reviewed article.

C6 Study Materials/Documents

Please check one or more of the following:

- ☒ Project documents/material securely stored for the minimum period
☐ Project material to be made available for future research/other researchers. If so, in what form?

Briefly explain what storage or archiving has occurred, including the location(s) and length of secure storage as well as intended secure data disposal arrangements:

Abbywinters.com staff members, were only audio recorded, without an identification. The interview files were saved in coded files, without identification attached to them, and stored on a private cloud, accessed only by me. The transcripts were deleted, and only original audio recordings are kept for future publication.

Are research material retention and disposal arrangements in line with what was outlined in the approved project protocol? ☐ NO ☒ YES

If NO, please explain why.

C7 Project Audits

Please check one or more of the following:

- ☒ Project self-audit(s) have been conducted during or at conclusion of project
 [Click [here](#) for a self-audit tool]
☐ Swinburne audit(s) have been conducted during or following completion of the project
☐ External audit(s) have been conducted during or following completion of the project

Please provide a brief explanation as to any audits conducted:

SECTION D: DECLARATION BY CHIEF INVESTIGATOR/SUPERVISOR**DECLARATION BY CHIEF INVESTIGATOR(s)/STUDENT SUPERVISOR(s)**

I declare that the above report accurately reflects the outcome or progress of the project to date

I acknowledge that an internal Swinburne or external audit may be conducted on the conduct of the project and as regards secure data retention/disposal.

Signature & Date: 16.02.2019 

Name of Signatory & Position: James Verdon, Chair, Department of Film and Animation

Student Investigator(s) (where possible)

I agree with the above declaration signed by the Chief Investigator/Supervisor

Signature & Date:  (e-signature) 15 Feb. 19

Name of Student: Jacob Zvi

For Swinburne Research use only:

Progress Report ☐ Final Report ☐ HDR report ☐

- ☐ 'Received' status on SEBAT, CI notified
- ☐ 'Satisfactory' status on SEBAT, CI notified
- ☐ Presented at SUHREC meeting _____

Research Ethics Office Notes:

Date and initial: _____

Subject: Acknowledgement of Report for SUHREC Project - 2016/001

RES Ethics <resethics@swin.edu.au>

Tue, Mar 12, 4:18
PM

to James Verdon, RES Ethics

Dear James,

Re: Final Report for the project 2016/001

'Girls from Down Under: The Case of Abby Winters (Formerly 'What killed Australian cinema and why is the bloody corpse still moving?')' (Report Date: 11-03-2019)

The Final report for the above project has been processed and satisfies the reporting requirements set under the terms of ethics clearance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Regards
Research Ethics Team

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