

**HISTORY OF VICTORIAN FILM SOCIETIES
AS EXEMPLIFIED BY
THE CAMBERWELL FILM SOCIETY**

DOROTHY MAVIS JENKINS

Diploma in General Studies (The School of Mines and Industries Ballarat, Ballarat
Victoria)

Diploma of Education (State College of Victoria Hawthorn)

Bachelor of Education (La Trobe University)

Graduate Diploma of Business: Policy Studies (Deakin University)

Master of Commerce (Deakin University)

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. I affirm that to the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Name: Dorothy Mavis Jenkins

Signature:

Date:

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the history of Victorian film societies as exemplified, by the Camberwell Film Society, from the 1950s to the 1990s. The study was prompted by the paucity of philosophical and conceptual literature about film societies. As a result, little is known about how and why they were formed. The purpose of this study is to investigate these issues.

During the 1950s there was an upsurge of interest in the formation of film societies in the state of Victoria. By the 1990s, the Victorian film society movement had undergone a cyclical pattern of periods of exciting growth followed by episodes of stasis or declining interest. The Camberwell Film Society was selected for the study because it has functioned continuously from its founding in the mid-1950s to the 1990s, emulating these patterns of growth. It remains a viable film society in 2014.

Three themes establish the framework for the thesis. These are: the connections between three factors, globalism, localism and film; the contribution of Camberwell's socioeconomic context to the creation of a place conducive to the founding of a film society and, the role of adult, self-directed learning in a community environment, particularly following WW2. Like *leitmotifs*, these themes recur throughout the study.

The study contends that the genesis of film societies lies in the 1890s with the development of machines such as the Kinematograph and Kinetoscope: the former captured moving images, the latter projected these images onto a screen for public viewing. These inventions were the catalysts for the establishment of the film industry which quickly developed into an international entity. Driven by a profit motive, the earliest movies were produced for entertainment purposes. Gradually, diversity of product crept into the film industry, prompting discerning viewers to distinguish between the concepts of film for entertainment/business and film as art. By the early 1920s film groups and ciné-clubs, precursors of film societies, were forming, keen to pursue the notion of cinema as art. Film societies evolved from these early groups. The film society movement grew rapidly in Europe and Britain and, eventually, internationally. These early societies were described as being non-profit, voluntary, community groups in which membership was by subscription. One of the significant and enduring features of film societies is that they not

only screen films but they also provide opportunities for engaging with, and studying the films, through post-screening discussion sessions. Another feature is the passionate attachment of core society members to the filmic world. In many cases, the ongoing management and success of a society are attributable to these core members. These features became the characteristics of traditional film societies. The study found that, formed in the mid-1950s, the Camberwell Film Society demonstrates the characteristics of a traditional film society.

It is concluded that reasons for the formation of film societies include the production of appropriate filmic product, the existence of a community or group of people who are passionate about film and wish to share this passion with others and, the desire to participate in, and learn more, as part of a filmic educational culture.

List of Abbreviations

ACOFS	Australian Council of Film Societies
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ARFS	Australian Religious Film Societies
EMB	Empire Marketing Board
FOSU	Friends of the Soviet Union
FVFS	Federation of Victorian Film Societies
GPO	General Post Office
IFFS	International Federation of Film Societies
NFSA	National Film and Sound Archive
NSW	New South Wales
PMG	Post Master General
RSL	Returned Servicemen's League
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
WW2	World War 2

CHAPTER ONE

History of Victorian Film Societies: as exemplified by the Camberwell Film Society

Introduction

This thesis is a historical study of a social movement namely, film societies, which emanated from the establishment and ensuing globalisation of the film industry. The film industry that frames this study was launched in the 1890s following the development of inventions to capture moving images and, to project these onto a screen for viewing. The first projectors were limited in their projection capacity permitting individual screenings only. Building on these limitations, innovative inventors quickly created machines capable of projecting moving images for public viewing. These inventions, cameras to capture moving images and projectors for public screenings, represent the genesis of the film industry and the associated awareness of movies¹ as a form of entertainment. These developments encouraged community interest in film, *per se*, and this ultimately led to the establishment of local film societies.

The subsequent globalisation of the industry moved at a pace which is astonishing given the comparative limitations of international communication in the late 1890s, and early 1900s, when compared with those of the 21st century. By the 1920s, discerning filmic audiences were differentiating between the concept of movies as entertainment and movies as art. As a consequence of this differentiation, film societies were formed to meet the needs of people who wished to screen and study films exploring the idea of movies as a serious and distinctive art-form. Generally, it is agreed that the first film society was founded in Paris in 1924² followed by London on 25 October 1925.³ Prior to World War 2

¹ 'Films' and 'movies' are used interchangeably throughout this study

² The researcher is aware that in April 1907, in Paris, Edmond Benoit-Levy established a 'Film Club' and that this club may be perceived as being the first film society. However, the club was a type of library containing cinematographic documents and it had a projection room whereas the primary purpose of a film society is the screening and study of films.

Retrieved from Film Society http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_society

(WW2), other countries were interested in the creation of film societies, for example, in 1935 the National Film Society of Canada⁴ was launched. Nevertheless, WW2 contributed to a hiatus in the expansion of the film society culture globally. Following the end of this war, the number of film societies grew swiftly in countries such as Britain where they were well-established prior to WW2.⁵ In addition, in the mid-to-late 1940s and the 1950s, the film society culture was introduced into countries such as Australia where it was received with lively interest.

Generally speaking, one of the characteristics of Australians is that they are early adopters of new technology and new social concepts. In the 1940s and 1950s their keen response to the new concept of film societies is evident in the speed with which individual societies, and overarching state and national bodies, were founded. The Australian Council of Film Societies (ACOFS)⁶ was formed at a convention held at Newport, New South Wales (NSW), in 1950.⁷ The convention was organised by the NSW Federation of Film Societies. Representatives of the other Australian states were invited to attend.⁸ By this time there were film societies in the states of Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania as well as in the Australian Capital Territory.⁹ One of the convention's objectives was to form an organisation which would 'act as a national body for the importation of films from similar organizations [*sic*] overseas and to enable the whole film society movement to speak with one voice on matters affecting the common welfare'.¹⁰ ACFOS 'comprises delegates from

Ben Davis also identifies other small groups such as ciné-clubs which were precursors of film societies *per se*. Davis, B. (1994). Beginnings of the Film Society Movement in the United States. *Film and History*, 24 (3), p. 3. Periodicals Archive Online, pp. 6-26.

³ British Federation of Film Societies (Archive)-Film Society Movement Retrieved from https://www.google.com.au/search?q=A+Brief+History+of+the+Film+Society+Movement+in+Britain&oq=A+Brief+History+of+the+Film+Society+Movement+in+Britain&aqs=chrome.69i57j69i64.23338j0j9&sourceid=chrome&espv=210&es_sm=122&ie=UTF-8

⁴ National Film Society of Canada Retrieved from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/film-education/>

⁵ British Film Institute. (1937). Why Film Societies? *Sight and Sound*, 6, p. 23. Periodicals Archive Online, p. 168.

⁶ ACOFS is the national body of Australian film societies. Community Film Societies. (2012). *ReelNews*. (8 June), p. 2.

ReelNews is the newsletter of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies which, for a brief period in 2012, traded as Community Film Societies. Federation of Victorian Film Societies.

Retrieved from <http://fvfs.org.au/docs/info00v6%20about.pdf>

⁷ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952). *Olinda Film Festival 1952*. (Program), Author, p. 2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Australian Council of Film Societies

Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Council_of_Film_Societies

¹⁰ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952), op. cit.

each of the state federations of film societies and is, in turn, a member of IFFS, the International Federation of Film Societies'.¹¹

The Victorian Federation of Film Societies (FVFS) was launched in 1949.¹² Over the years, the FVFS has modified its statement of purpose in response to changing circumstances. The following statement of purpose has been chosen to inform this thesis because it presents a clear and comprehensive picture of the community served by the FVFS and, the types of services provided to its members.

The Federation of Victorian Film Societies (FVFS) is a volunteer organization [*sic*] which supports new and existing film societies, non-profit cinemas and film festivals in Victoria and SA or those from other states that have links to Victoria. We provide information and advice on starting and running such organisations, publish a regular newsletter, organize [*sic*] film and public liability insurance for members and represent the interests of member groups.¹³

The earliest film societies formed in Victoria include: Melbourne University Film Society (1947),¹⁴ Surrey Film Society (1948),¹⁵ and Geelong Film Society (1950).¹⁶ In September 1950, there were thirteen film societies registered as FVFS members plus four affiliated members.¹⁷ During the 1950s and early 1960s, the number of film societies established in Victoria burgeoned: in 1955 there were twenty-six members and affiliates of the FVFS¹⁸ by 1958 the number had increased to forty-five¹⁹ while by 1962 there were sixty-two film

¹¹ Community Film Societies. *ReelNews*, op. cit.

Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952),

¹² Victorian Federation of Film Societies. *Journal*, list of members, p. 2. Secretary, Alfred Heintz, 1A Moor Street, Sandringham, Vic. Dated: 29.9.50 held in The University of Melbourne Archives, *Coldicutt, Kenneth John*, 2003.0111, Box 2 of 10, Folder 1/9, Federation of Victorian Film Societies.

¹³ Federation of Victorian Film Societies <http://fvfs.org.au/info.html>

¹⁴ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1955). *Melbourne Film Festival Program 1955*. (Program). Author unknown but most likely the Federation of Victorian Film Societies, p. 8.

¹⁵ Cinephile shared love of film. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/obituaries/cinephile-shared-love-of-film-20120220-1tjw5.html>

¹⁶ Geelong Film Society. (1950). In *The Film Monthly*. November, p. 31.

¹⁷ Victorian Federation of Film Societies. *Journal*, op. cit.

¹⁸ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1955) op. cit., inner side of the program's back cover.

¹⁹ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1958). *Melbourne Film Festival*. (Program), inner side of the program's back cover.

societies registered with the FVFS.²⁰ Clearly, by the early 1960s, Victorians were adopting the concept of film societies with enthusiasm.

Background

Quentin Turnour observes that all ‘histories are functional objects in, and cultural experiences of, the culturally current and urgent’.²¹ At this time, many of the film societies formed in Victoria during the 1950s and 1960 are characterised by factors such as the loss of organisational history and organisational memory, varying lifetimes of individual societies, and the current ages and deteriorating health of many former members. However, the role and function of these societies has never been the subject of enquiry. As noted by Stuart Cunningham and William D. Routt in 1989, ‘the history of film societies in Australia remains largely unwritten’.²² Little would seem to have changed since 1989.²³ Consequently, the researcher posits that it is both culturally and historically urgent that the history of these earliest Victorian film societies be chronicled. Furthermore, given the large number of film societies which have been formed in Victoria since the mid-1940s and, the changes which have occurred in these organisations, it has been decided that one particular society, the Camberwell Film Society, will be used as a case study.

As documented in Chapter Five, at the time of the Society’s formation in the mid-1950s, the City of Camberwell was a separate local government municipality within broader metropolitan Melbourne, the capital city of the state of Victoria. It was a well-established city with a citizenry characterised by higher than average income and educational achievement levels, quality independent and public schools, a strong community spirit and an aspirational culture. It was a community poised for the introduction of something

²⁰ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1962). *Melbourne Film Festival 1962*. (Program), inner side of the program’s back cover.

²¹ Turnour, Q. *Australian Film 1900-1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production* [Book Review] [online]. Media Magazine: Media & Education Magazine, No. 119, (1999). 86-91. Retrieved from <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=903834629759146;res=IELLCC> ISSN:0312-2654.

²² Cunningham, S. & Routt, W. D. (Eds.). (1989). Section 4. Fillums became Films (1940-1956) in Bertrand, I. (General Ed.), *Cinema in Australia. A Documentary History*. Sydney, Australia: New South Wales University Press, p. 182.

²³ The situation is changing at the present time. John Turner is writing a history of Australian film societies. John is a founding member of the International Film Group (IFG) which started life in 1972 as the IBM Film Society. It changed its name to IFG in 1994. John has a long and dedicated association with the Federation of Victorian Film Societies and the Australian Council of Film Societies being a past president of both organisations. He recently rejoined the Croydon Film Society, Victoria, after a sabbatical of thirty years. Source: personal conversation between John Turner and the researcher.

culturally new, intellectually stimulating and different in purpose and practice. In Victoria in the 1950s, film societies met these criteria.

Since its founding in the mid-1950s, the Society has functioned continuously and, in 2014, it continues to carry out its role as a traditional film society. It has been a member of the FVFS since its establishment. In addition, although some of the Society's early documentation has been lost, the available archival material is rich with information about the Society's activities for approximately fifty of the past sixty years of its lifetime. Past and present members are available for interview and the Society typifies other film societies, particularly those founded in the 1950s and 1960s. This research will collect data for a comprehensive description and analysis of the roles, objectives and activities of the Society from the 1950s to the 1990s. Also, the contextual factors—international, national and local—relevant to the Society's formation will be explored. As indicated, the timespan of the research will be from the 1950s to the 1990s. This timespan covers three important phases in the Society's lifetime. The first phase is a period of excitement as the Society is formed, grows and consolidates its identity. The second phase is distinguishable by the Society's declining membership, financial constraints and subdued membership enthusiasm over a number of years. In the third phase, membership is revived sufficiently for the Society to sustain its identity as a comparatively small, but viable, film society.

The primary intention of this research is to explore ideas about adult learning and community engagement through the study of the Camberwell Film Society. The secondary intention is to present an overview of the history of Victorian Film Societies from the 1950s to the 1990s.

Thematic Framework

There are three themes which are paramount in this research. Each of the themes is introduced briefly in the subsequent section, *Introduction*. Then, with the themes representing the headings, a more detailed discussion is undertaken regarding the relevance of each theme in the study.

Introduction

When considered in isolation it could be argued that the case study²⁴ which is central to this thesis tends to place the research within a limited contextual framework. However, the themes which recur throughout the thesis broaden the framework to encompass international and national perspectives relevant to the case study. There are three overarching and occasionally overlapping themes which underpin the contextual framework, as presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, and the discussion of the Camberwell Film Society, which is the subject of Chapters Seven and Eight. The themes are:

- globalism, localism and film;
- socio/economic context that frames the Camberwell Film Society;
- adult self-directed learning in the community.

Globalism, Localism and Film

In a journal article about the relationship between globalism and localism, the researcher observes that such discussions are usually conducted within ‘an adversarial framework, with the advocates of each concept staking claims for its superiority’.²⁵ Furthermore, she continues the discussion asserting that,

such claims ignore the potential richness of ongoing conversations between the global and the local thus attributing minimal value to their interconnectedness, and giving scant recognition to their potential for creating new knowledge based on integrating global and local experiences.²⁶

²⁴ A case study is ‘a method of studying social phenomena through the thorough analysis of an individual case. The case may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of social life. All data relevant to the case are gathered, and all available data are organised in terms of the case. The case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single case. It also provides an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked with other methods’. Theordorson & Theordorson, 1969, quoted in Punch, K.F. 2009, *Introduction to Research Methods in Education*, Sage Publications Ltd., London, p. 120.

²⁵ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). Film Societies: A Place where the Global and the Local Connect. In *The International Journal of the Humanities*, 9 (4), p. 37.

²⁶ Ibid.

This idea of an ongoing conversation between the global and the local having the potential to integrate their experiences, ultimately creating new knowledge, is central to the discussion of this theme: *Globalism, Localism and Film*.

With the invention of cameras such as the Kinematograph which captured moving images, and machines like the Kinetoscope which enabled the projection of films for public viewing, American film production and distribution companies began their domination of the international film industry. The globalisation of American filmic products, redolent with American culture, was pervasive and unremitting. In many countries there were groups of people concerned about this form of American imperialism. Concerns about cultural imperialism are still evident in numerous contemporary national cultures.²⁷ Simultaneously, as discussed in Chapter Four, parallel with this globalisation, filmmakers from various nations were experimenting with their individual directorial styles, investigating and trialling various cinematographic techniques and, with their scriptwriters, exploring a diversity of filmic subjects and narratives. This parallel development of localised diversity of filmic thought and action provided a counterpoint to American ascendancy in the international film industry.

One of the outcomes of this parallel development, and eventual interface between the global and the local, was that a wider range of movies representing a diversity of both old and new filmic genres became available for screening; new knowledge was created by this interconnection between the global and the local. The discovery of this new knowledge was driven by the interface between the global and the local at the production, distribution and exhibition levels of the film industry. In other words, it was a ‘top-down’ film industry approach to the creation of new knowledge. Ultimately, this new knowledge contributed to filmic audiences differentiating between a filmic entertainment culture and, film as a distinctive art-form, leading to the establishment of community film societies. By definition community film societies are local, not-for-profit groups whose volunteer members are passionate about film. They meet for the purpose of viewing and studying films through the process of discussion. Membership is by subscription. In Australia, as the number of community film societies grew, state federations of film societies and the

²⁷ Hai-Ha Vu. (2012). *The Nature of “Englishization” and Critical Perspectives on its Linguistic, Sociocultural and Pedagogical Legitimacy: The Case of 1990s-Born TESOL Trainees in Vietnam*. (Unpublished PhD Thesis). Monash University, Chapter 3, *passim*, pp. 442-476.

national film societies' body, ACOFS, were established. ACOFS is a member of the International Federation of Film Societies. This is an example of a 'bottom-up' or 'grass-roots' approach to the interface between the global and the local. Film societies were, and still are, formed in local communities with the intention of viewing and studying films. It is not intended to imply that, for example, in Victoria each film society has direct interface with the global film industry. Rather each society has indirect interface *via* state and national film society federations, initially, and ultimately through the International Federation of Film Societies.

Throughout this study there are many examples of interconnectedness and ongoing conversations between the global and the local. These include the most obvious illustrations such as members of the Society connecting with the themes and directorial styles of international filmmakers in the Society's post-screening conversations. Other less directly observable but significant instances, are evident in factors such as the interface between the international documentary film movement and the development of a filmic educational culture. The researcher contends that a filmic educational culture was a critical factor in the establishment and growth of community film societies.

Socio/Economic Context that Frames the Camberwell Film Society

From the federation of Australian states in 1901²⁸ to the end of WW2 in 1945, Australia's economic, political and social fortunes fluctuated: the influenza pandemic of 1918 swept across national borders claiming over fifty million lives;²⁹ an economic boom in the 1920s³⁰ preceded the Great Depression of the 1930s.³¹ From 1939 to 1945, WW2 absorbed Australian society, politics and its economy.³² Nevertheless, by the 1950s and 1960s the Australian lifestyle was characterised by economic and political stability accompanied by a

²⁸ Fisher, J. (1968). *The Australians. From 1788 to Modern Times*, (2nd reprint 1977). Adelaide, Australia: Rigby, pp. 204-208.

²⁹ Connelly, M. (2008), *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control the World's Population*, Cambridge, Mass., USA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, p. 4. Retrieved from Taubenberger J.K. (1918). Influenza: the mother of all pandemics. *Emerg Infect Dis* 12:15 (2006) <http://74.125.153.132/search?q=cache:k7DXLVI24K0J:pubget.com/paper/16494711+1918+influenza+the+mother+of+all+pandemics&cd=5&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au>

³⁰ Louis, L. J. & Turner, I. (1968), *Problems in Australian History. The Depression of the 1930s*, (Reprint 1970). Melbourne, Australia: Cassell, pp. 9-10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

Fisher, *op. cit.*, Chapter 14, *The Great Depression*, pp. 224-232.

³² Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-239.

period of social transition.³³ These changes were influenced by, and evident in, factors such as:

- the arrival of European migrants under the Federal Government's immigration program;³⁴
- an increase in the disposable income of many people as the demand for labour outstripped supply creating favourable conditions for unions and employees to negotiate improved working conditions including higher wage and salary levels;³⁵
- a consequential increase in people's leisure time;³⁶
- an increase in the number of people undertaking tertiary education;³⁷
- the introduction of The Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS) in March 1944. This Scheme provided opportunities for educational and vocational training for ex-servicemen and women necessary for them to be re-established in suitable civilian occupations'.³⁸

The argument in relation to this study is that in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s there were groups of people whose interest in the arts was heightened by a range of factors including the arrival of European migrants who had been immersed in the arts since childhood, a more affluent community and a better educated polity.³⁹ In many instances, these groups of people were looking for a broader range of cultural activities beyond those which were traditionally Australian. They had the income, leisure time and appropriate education to pursue these aspirations. These factors were accompanied by the notion of social betterment and a growing aspirational culture. Forming a film society with the intention of viewing films other than those produced to achieve high levels of box-office ratings, becoming informed about new film-making trends and techniques, and discussing these with like-minded people, may have been perceived by some groups of people as a stimulating and alternative cultural option.

³³ Ibid., pp. 239-242.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 240. A. Inglis. (1983). *Amirah, an un-Australian Childhood*. Melbourne: Heinemann, *passim*.

³⁵ Blainey, G. (1982). *The Blainey View. From the ABC Television Series*. Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission and Macmillan, p. 134.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Australian Government. *Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme administrative records-Fact sheet 178*, National Archives of Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs178.aspx>

³⁹ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*. Inglis, (1983), op. cit.

Adult Self-Directed Learning in the Community

The concepts of adult and community are complex and abundant with differing interpretations: depending on the context in which these are applied, they may be defined differently. Reference to the concept of adult indicates that it may be defined chronologically for example, legal age at which one may be licensed to drive a car; or the age at which a young person is considered old enough to consent to being a participant in a sexual activity. When linked with education the concept of adult may refer to people who are post-secondary education students or older adults returning to study or to specific age-cohorts when the subject is government or student social service benefits. In the context of this thesis an adult is defined as any person aged 18 years or over. This definition is in accordance with the guidelines for membership of a Victorian Film Society.⁴⁰

Similarly, the concept of community is applied as liberally and as imprecisely. School principals sometimes refer to the school community; in such cases it could be assumed that the community comprises current students, teachers, school administrators and parents. However, it may also include ex-students, local residents and local tradespersons. Politicians at all levels of government speak about factors such as community concerns, community expectations, community responsibilities implying that the electorate is one vast, amorphous, conforming, depersonalized group of people. Generally, in this thesis, the concept of community is used in two ways. In the first instance it is applied in its geographical or locational sense for example, Chapter Five explores the history of the City of Camberwell. Central to this history is the idea of people bonded by their locational boundaries coming together as a community for purposes such as civic improvement and the social betterment of its citizens. In the second instance, community may be related to people coming together because of a commonality of interest but not necessarily residing in the same location. To add clarity to this discussion, the following section presents the perspective of one sociologist concerning the different ways in which groups form and interact.

In 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies, a German sociologist introduced the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* to describe two contrasting ways in which people interact

⁴⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*. November, 2.

in groups or associations.⁴¹ The first concept, *Gemeinschaft*,⁴² is characterised by factors such as adherence to group mores and loyalty to the group taking precedence over individual self-interest. The second concept, *Gesellschaft*,⁴³ describes a group or association in which, amongst other distinguishing features, an individual's self-interest is one of the primary motivations for membership and commitment to a group's purpose and ongoing existence. '*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, as concepts, thus embody or reflect many things: legal, economic, cultural, and intellectual; even ... the division between the sexes. But at the heart of each concept is the image of a type of social relationship and of the affective and volitional elements of the mind entering respectively into each'.⁴⁴ Underpinning the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is Tönnies theory that 'all social relationships are created by human will. As social facts they exist only through the will of the individuals to associate'.⁴⁵ Tönnies identifies two types of human will: natural will and rational will.⁴⁶ The former, natural will, is integral to the concept of *Gemeinschaft*: 'people ... associate themselves together, as friends do, because they think the relation valuable as an end in and of itself. ... Groups in which natural will predominates may range from those held together by intellectual ties to those bound by the instinctive liking or sympathy of biologically related individuals'.⁴⁷ In the latter, *Gesellschaft*, rational will, means and ends are 'sharply differentiated'.⁴⁸ Also, 'the inner relationship of the associated individuals with one another may vary from one situation to another. For instance, a group or a relationship can be willed because those involved wish to attain through it a definite end and are willing to join hands for this purpose, even though indifference or even antipathy may exist on other levels'.⁴⁹ Rational will underpins the concept of *Gesellschaft*.

Although in sociological theory the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* may be differentiated by their individual characteristics, Tönnies argued that in conducting

⁴¹ *Gemeinschaft & Gesellschaft* (social theory)-Britannica Online Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/228066/Gemeinschaft-and-Gesellschaft>.

⁴² Ibid, *Gemeinschaft*.

⁴³ Ibid, *Gesellschaft*.

⁴⁴ Nisbett, R. A. (1967). *The Sociological Tradition*. (Reprint 1972). London: Heinemann, p. 78.

Cahnman, W.J. (1973). *Ferdinand Tönnies – A New Evaluation*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Tönnies, F. (1963). *Community and Society*. (Translated from the German and edited by C. P. Loomis). New York: Harper & Row, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

empirical research there would be a merging or mixing of these characteristics in the group or association being studied.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the value of these two different concepts is that without them ‘one may not be able to analyse [*sic*] this mix’.⁵¹ Consequently, this case study will require not only understanding the composition of the group and its purpose but also an appreciation of the group’s characteristics as demonstrated in factors such as group dynamics, social relationships and culture.

Contentions

In this study there is one major contention followed by two minor contentions.

Major Contention

That the establishment of film societies provided adults with opportunities for self-directed learning in the community.

Minor Contentions

That people aspired to have increased access to a wider range of films for the purposes of education and entertainment.

That the growth of a filmic educational culture fostered ongoing engagement between film and the community.

The Researcher

This thesis reflects a number of areas in which the researcher is interested. These areas are: history, the film industry, organisations and community education. Although the researcher’s academic studies in history are not extensive she is keen to understand why particular ‘things’ happened, what happened and the associated outcomes for people, places and organisations. Her interest in organisations reflects both her professional experiences and academic studies; as an associate director at a Melbourne metropolitan Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institute she was responsible for organisation development; her master’s degree, undertaken by research, explored the relationship between organisational culture and organisational performance. Through the TAFE sector of education, the researcher was introduced to adult education in the community being chairperson of a Melbourne metropolitan regional council of Adult Community and

⁵⁰ *Gesellschaft*, op.cit., p.2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Further Education (ACFE). Also, she was chairperson of the Statewide association of ACFE regional council chairpersons for two years. These experiences in ACFE complemented the researcher's interest in the philosophies and concepts of community and community groups undertaken as an undergraduate student. In addition the researcher's undergraduate studies included units in film studies focusing on the production and history of films.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One commences with an introduction to the genesis of the film industry and its relevance to film societies which are the subject of this thesis. This is accompanied by a sketch of the birth of the first film societies in Paris and London and their entry into Australia. The focus of the chapter then narrows to present an outline of the establishment of film societies in Victoria. This is followed by an overview of the background to the research issue culminating in the identification of the study's research problem. Then the rationale for selecting a particular film society, the Camberwell Film Society, as a case study is clarified. Also, attention is drawn to the study's thematic framework and contentions. Following this, the researcher's interest in the subject and her reasons for undertaking the study are explained. The chapter concludes with this section titled, *Structure of the Thesis*.

In Chapter Two relevant, substantive literature about the history of film societies, internationally and nationally particularly in relation to the state of Victoria, Australia, will be reviewed. In addition, this chapter will consider relevant philosophies underpinning the concepts of community and community groups. A detailed presentation of the study's research methodology will be the subject of Chapter Three. Central to this chapter will be the discussion and analysis of historical research methodology and its relevance to this study with its primary focus on a community-based organisation. In addition, the rationale for selecting the narrative interpretative style of writing and interpretation chosen for the study will be examined. Following this broad discussion of historical methodology and the preference for a narrative interpretative style of presentation, the focus of the chapter will narrow to consider the primary sources available to the researcher. These primary sources include documents, interviews and artefacts. Then the discourse will proceed to the reasons for selecting the oral history method followed by an exploration of the value of

images as evidence or illustration. The role of triangulation in establishing the accuracy and reliability of the study's data and, its crystallisation, will bring the discussion of the methodology to a close. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the research methodology and its appropriateness for this study.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six will describe the various contextual factors which created an environment conducive to the establishment of Victorian film societies, generally, and Camberwell Film Society, particularly. The researcher is not proposing any cause and effect relationships between these contextual factors. Rather, she is asserting that these were parallel developments each having a significant influence on the growth of the film society movement. Chapter Four will explore pertinent trends and developments in the international and Australian film industries from the 1900s⁵² to the 1960s including: cinematographic developments, significant and new trends in production styles, the emergence of new genres of film, and a broadening of themes into more diverse and challenging areas of the human condition. In examining the Australian film industry, particular attention will be given to those distinctive characteristics which may have differentiated it from international film production houses, and their products, stimulating national interest in Australian films. Chapter Five will concentrate on the history of the City of Camberwell. It will provide glimpses of Camberwell's development from being the traditional hunting grounds of the Wurundjuri people to becoming one of Melbourne's well-established and affluent suburbs. Vignettes will be offered of the lifestyles of Camberwell citizens as the state of Victoria flourished from the late 1800s until the Depression of the 1930s, was then beset by the demands of WW2 and, recovered to benefit from the comparatively stable post-war years of the 1950s and 1960s. This discussion will contextualise the development of film societies in Victoria for which a social environment conducive to the formation of such groups was inherent. The focus of Chapter Six will be on the role of John Grierson, a Scotsman, in the recognition of the educational value of non-theatrical documentaries and in the creation of the international documentary film

⁵² During the 1890s and early 1900s cinematic equipment and techniques advanced rapidly in Europe and America. However, it would seem there was little use of this technology in Australia prior to the early 1900s. Our Own Screen Dramas. Unsigned article in *The Picture Show*, November 1919 reprinted in *An Australian Film Reader*. A. Moran & T. O'Regan. (Eds.). (1985). Sydney, Australia: Currency Press, pp. 21-23. R. Megaw. (1968). American Influence on Australian Cinema Management, 1896-1923. Published in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, June 1968. Reprinted in *An Australian Film Reader*, A. Moran & T. O'Regan. (Eds.), (1985). Sydney, Australia: Currency Press, *passim*.

movement. In addition, Grierson's influence on factors such as the establishment of national film boards such as the Australian National Film Board, and the shaping of a filmic educational culture are explored in this chapter. Chapter Six also considers the role of Kenneth Coldicutt, and members of the Realist Film Association, in the development of a filmic educational culture and the creation of the film society movement in Victoria.

In Chapters Seven and Eight the history of the Camberwell Film Society will be comprehensively described and explained with reference to primary sources such as minutes of committee of management meetings and program schedules. A detailed discussion of what occurred, who was involved, why, when and how it occurred, within the contextual framework, will be undertaken in these chapters. The final chapter, Chapter Nine, will present the conclusions arising from the study with reference to the study's themes and contentions. Additionally, this chapter will include recommendations regarding future research in the field of film societies.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to review relevant, substantive literature concerning the history of film societies with particular reference to critiques and investigations of the philosophies and conceptual frameworks informing their development, and the role of these societies throughout the 20th century. An initial literature search conducted at the commencement of this study indicated a paucity of such material. A recent more exhaustive literature search, including a meeting with Graham Shirley, Senior Curator, Film, National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, suggests that this situation has changed only minimally both internationally and in Australia. Nevertheless, as indicated in Chapter One, the situation is beginning to change with a history of Australian film societies currently being written. The author is John Turner. He has been a member of the FVFS since 1973 and is a past president of FVFS and ACOFS.⁵³

There is an abundance of literature about the history of the motion picture industry, internationally and in Australia. This literature contains a wide-ranging body of knowledge. It investigates the technical inventions driving the industry's success, the creative brilliance of many directors and the ascendance of motion picture production companies to positions of power in the marketplace through the vertical integration of their businesses.⁵⁴ The role of government policy is covered comprehensively, film festivals are described, explored, reports prepared and books written. The literature includes material which is descriptive, analytical and interpretative. It provides a rich and significant source of information for Chapter Four of this thesis. However, although within this abundance of literature references are sometimes made to film societies, these tend to be for illustrative or explanatory purposes as opposed to investigations of the societies' roles and functions within the world of film.

⁵³ Refer to Chapter One, footnote 23, for more details about John Turner.

⁵⁴ 'Vertical integration refers to a firm's ownership of vertically related activities. The greater the firm's ownership and control over successive stages of the value chain for its product, the greater its degree of vertical integration'.
Grant, R. M. (2005). *Contemporary Strategy Analysis*. (5th ed.) Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing, p. 392.

Other information about the societies is available through international, national and state federations of film societies. In some cases, this information includes brief histories about when and where the societies were formed. In most cases, the material covers operational and functional matters such as membership numbers, film programs and annual reports. A number of societies have individual websites advertising their programs, containing guidelines for joining their society, listing conditions of membership, reminding members about special events and sometimes stating who is involved in functions such as decision-making and leadership. Without doubt all of these resources are valuable providing opportunities for analyses such as the identification of numerical trends in membership, changes in program preferences, the financial health of societies as well as comparative studies of film societies based on locational differences. However, in the absence of contextual and theoretical knowledge about the societies, an appreciation and understanding of their role and significance is restricted to what, when, where and how it happened and who was involved, leaving the question of why it happened unanswered.

Given this dearth of relevant, substantive literature about film societies, the following sections of this chapter are informed by the scattered references made to film societies in the literature about the motion picture industry as well as to the historical and operational information which is available. The essential nature of film societies is that they are voluntary, community groups engaged in the arts. As appropriate, references will be made to the literature concerning these types of groups.

The next section will provide an overview of the prelude to the establishment of the motion picture industry and the subsequent founding of some of the earliest film societies. This will be followed by a section which explores the role of these community film societies and identifies significant changes in that role. The chapter will conclude with comments about the significance of the presented data in gaining a critical appreciation and understanding of the history of film societies. In addition, the conclusion will identify gaps in the literature and recommend strategies for further literature searches. It is regrettable that film societies *per se* have not received similar attention as that given to the film industry.

Founding of the Earliest Film Societies

As asserted in Chapter One, the catalyst for the formation of the film industry and, the subsequent founding of film societies, was the invention of machines such as the Kinematograph, which had the capacity to capture the moving image, and the Kinetoscope, which enabled the moving image to be projected onto a screen for public viewing. Similarly, as alluded to in Chapter One and explored in more detail in Chapter Four, the neophyte film industry grew swiftly establishing its presence as a predominant form of entertainment globally. As the industry's growth continued, a diverse range of filmic product was created. This diversity and growth were accompanied by a growing awareness that the production of some films was motivated by profit while others, although still driven by commercial imperatives, were more artistic containing 'elements that lifted them to the level of art.'⁵⁵ Cinema developed a dual focus: 'Cinema as business or cinema as art'.⁵⁶ People from various places and backgrounds, recognising these different products, were attracted to the idea of meeting like-minded individuals to explore and discuss films, particularly those with artistic intent. They formed groups with this intention and film societies were established one of the first being founded in Paris in 1924.⁵⁷ The researcher acknowledges that different authors nominate different dates regarding the founding of the first film society. Nevertheless, it seems that the film societies instituted on these alternative dates may be different, by definition and practice, from the community film societies which are the subject of this research.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, regardless of this issue, the concept of film societies became a reality and soon found international acceptance. 'By 1925 there were groups in Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Scotland and the United States'.⁵⁹ A new international phenomenon was launched. The characteristics of this new phenomenon, community film societies, are explored in the next section of this thesis.

Characteristics of Film Societies

As previously observed, the earliest community film societies were formed with the intention of examining films categorised as being artistic as opposed to those produced and

⁵⁵ J. Weiner. (1973). *How to Organize and Run a Film Society*. New York, USA: Macmillan, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Refer to Chapter One.

⁵⁸ Refer to Chapter One, footnote 2.

⁵⁹ Weiner, op. cit., p. 2.

marketed with a strong commercial orientation. Also, the societies chose to avoid screening Hollywood productions by concentrating on the work of film directors such as those in Europe, for example, Victor Sjöström of Sweden, Sergei Eisenstein of Russia and Fritz Lang of Germany.⁶⁰ Weiner argues that it was through the film societies that members became familiar with the expertise and creativity of many of these European directors.⁶¹ She also observes that although the film societies recognised that some of the commercial films had artistic appeal and style they preferred to screen movies not readily available on the commercial circuit.

Ben Davis, in investigating the founding of the film society movement in the USA, adds a theoretical perspective to the factors which underpinned the recognition of the dual cinematic focus. Davis asserts that the ‘alternate [*sic*] cinema movement first arose in 1917 in Paris with the writings of an early film critic, Louis Delluc’.⁶² Together with another film theorist and critic, Ricciotto Cabanudo, Delluc pursued the idea of ‘an alternative exhibition outlet’.⁶³ It was proposed that these outlets, called ciné-clubs in Paris and later known as film societies in England, would screen films of historic and artistic importance including foreign and experimental movies.⁶⁴ Davis purports that these types of films were not available ‘to the public because they were regarded as competition or as non-commercial by the film industry, or as censorable by the moral guardians of the time’.⁶⁵ The effect of this restrictive practice was that Parisian cinéastes formed ciné-clubs to screen the types of films which were not available to the public through commercial cinemas.⁶⁶ The ciné-clubs developed a number of operational principles some of which are evident in contemporary Victorian film societies. For example, the clubs were non-profit membership organisations and held regular screenings, sometimes weekly at other times monthly, of important films which were categorised as being non-commercial.⁶⁷ Davis states that the first time this concept of a ciné-club became a reality was when the *Club des Amis du Septième Art* (CASA) was established in Paris in 1920. This appears to contradict the observation made in Chapter One that the first film society was founded in Paris in

⁶⁰ Weiner, op. cit., p. 2.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Davis, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

1924. As previously stated, these differences may arise from a definitional issue regarding what constitutes a film society and a similar question regarding ciné-clubs. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assert that, in the early 1920s, Paris was the location for the founding of the earliest film societies. Davis closes his reflections on these youthful film groups by remarking that these ‘film societies in Paris and London eventually developed a limited, but educated, audience for noncommercial [*sic*] films and stimulated the development of regional societies’.⁶⁸ As aforementioned, and as contended by Davis, very early in the history of film, discerning viewers set-up film groups using a variety of titles including ciné-clubs, film societies or just calling themselves film groups, to screen non-commercial films particularly those of historic or artistic intent.

In England, the Film Society, sometimes referred to as the London Film Society, was founded on 25 October 1925, at the New Gallery Kinema [*sic*] in Regent Street, London. One of its initial objectives was ‘to screen more of the avant-garde material which had not found an outlet in the commercial cinemas’.⁶⁹ During its first season The Film Society screened ‘39 films, 20 of which had never been screened in England before’.⁷⁰ The founding members of The Film Society included H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw,⁷¹ Sidney Bernstein, a film exhibitor responsible for creating ‘one of the first four British independent television companies, Granada, in the 1950s’,⁷² Anthony Asquith who became a highly respected British film director,⁷³ and Ivor Montagu, a member of the British aristocracy, who at the age of twenty was on the executive committee of the Holborn branch of the Labour Party eventually joining the Communist Party and, a close friend and champion of Sergei Eisenstein.⁷⁴

In a tribute to The Film Society, which disbanded on 23 April 1939, it is observed that ‘The Film Society had been created initially because its originators wanted to see the films

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ O Movimento dos Cineclubes. *A Brief History of the Film Society Movement in Britain*. Retrieved from http://weblog.aventur.eu/movcineclubes.weblog.com.pt/arquivo/a_brief_history_of_the_film_society_movement_in_Britain.html

⁷⁰ BFI. *The Film Society 1925-1939 a Guide to Collections*, BFI National Library, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/library/collections/special/film-society.pdf>

⁷¹ *The British Federation of Film Societies – A Brief History*, BFFS Advice Leaflet 001, BFFS, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/library/collections/special/film-society.pdf>
BFI. *The Film Society 1925-1939*, op. cit.

⁷³ Anthony Asquith. Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002190/bio>

⁷⁴ BFI. *The Film Society 1925-1939*, op. cit.

it presented themselves, and assumed there were other like-minded souls who would also be interested'.⁷⁵ After WW2 the Film Society was not reformed. In 1975, when reflecting on the reasons for not reviving the Film Society, Ivor Montagu remarked that 'there were fewer unshown [*sic*] worthwhile films to hunt. Already the last two seasons before the end had cut down the regular eight performances to six'.⁷⁶ Montagu then poses the question of what is the need for the Film Society 'when so many of its aims had been attained, so many reinforcements had arrived to take over?' The reinforcements or agencies which 'had ... taken up the banner' included the British Film Institute (BFI), British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS), and the 'emerging film festivals'.⁷⁷ This is an example of a group of people, which included left-wing intellectuals, who came together to form a film society their main objective being to screen and, to draw public attention to avant-garde films rarely exhibited in the commercial cinema sector. The Film Society closed once the founders felt they had achieved their main objective.

As early as 1919 a film group was established in the USA. It was located in Woodstock, Maryland. Davis implies that little is known about this group apart from it being 'restricted to a small area and, perhaps, to a limited period of time'.⁷⁸ He describes it as a 'nonprofit organization created and maintained as a collaborative work of love by a group of cinéphiles'.⁷⁹ This film group usually 'held its weekly or monthly screenings in a space supplied by a generous host agency, often a university'.⁸⁰ In October 1925, a ciné-club was launched in New York City by Symond Gould, an entrepreneur. This new club was called the International Film Arts Guild. Membership was by subscription and screenings were conducted on Sundays at the George M. Cohan and Central theatres. Within twelve months of its opening, this club was transformed into a for-profit 'entrepreneurial specialized theater [*sic*]' screening non-commercial movies but providing an 'alternate [*sic*] exhibition counterpart' to the mainstream commercial cinemas.⁸¹ These entrepreneurial specialized theatres were forerunners of the 'art house' or the 'little cinema' enterprises.⁸²

⁷⁵ BFI. *The Film Society 1925-1939*, op. cit., p. 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Davis, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

Establishing specialised theatre outlets became a very successful business venture for its owner Symond Gould.⁸³

Each of these entities, the Woodstock group and Gould's ciné-club, exhibited some of the characteristics of the film societies formed in the state of Victoria after WW2. The Woodstock non-profit film group was created and maintained as a collaborative work of love by a group of cinéphiles, in a community environment, dependent on the generosity of a host agency for a space in which to screen its films. The factors arising from this description of the Woodstock group pertinent to this study are that the group was formed by people who were passionate about film, it was a non-profit association and, films were screened regularly. Membership of the for-profit enterprise in its original form as a ciné-club, was by subscription, as is the case with Victorian film societies. Also, the films screened by the Woodstock group and the ciné-club, before and after the transformation of the latter into a specialised theatre, were important but without appeal to commercial cinemas.⁸⁴ Similarly, since their formation in the 1950s until the advent of DVDs, the majority of the films screened by Victorian film societies had limited commercial appeal. These films were typified by their focus on filmic content and cinematographic techniques of artistic and historic importance as well as non-theatrical documentaries.

Although the Woodstock group only functioned for a short period of time, as asserted in the article by Davis, there are two more factors relevant to this study emanating from the establishment of this group. These are the issues of place and space. Regarding place, Davis writes that the Woodstock group 'seems to have been restricted to a small area'.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, as alluded to by Davis, there is insufficient evidence to investigate the relationship between the film group and its place, a small area. However, there is sufficient evidence to investigate the importance of place in relation to the development of Camberwell and its environs into a community favourable to the establishment of a film society. This development is the subject of Chapter Five with reference to a wide range of secondary sources. These sources include archival material held by the Ashburton Branch of the City of Boroondarra Library, the publications of noted Victorian historians like

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Geoffrey Blainey⁸⁶ and Don Garden⁸⁷ concerning the history of Camberwell and Victoria, as well as historical studies pertaining to the early settlement of the eastern Melbourne metropolitan area of which Camberwell is a part.⁸⁸

For film societies, the concept of space embodies matters such as the availability of an appropriate projector and screen, adequate seating for members, accessibility of location, provision for refreshments, a venue of a suitable size and venue hiring costs. Although space was not an ongoing issue for the Camberwell Film Society, on a number of occasions Society members found it necessary to find a new screening venue. Two of the major issues prompting the Society's search for alternative venues were changes in membership numbers and venue hiring costs. A further investigation of these matters is undertaken in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Nonetheless, in contravention of the general principles of literature reviews but given the paucity of relevant, substantive literature concerning film societies, the researcher offers the following contemporary example of the significance of place and space in this discussion of the history of Victorian film societies. Bright is a small Victorian town 'in the beautiful alpine region of North East Victoria'.⁸⁹ It is 80 kilometres distant from the nearest cinema which is in the regional city of Wangaratta. This cinema is described on the Society's website as mainly showing 'blockbuster movies'.⁹⁰ In 2006 the Bright Film Society was formed with a membership of thirty-five. Over the years the membership has increased to eighty. "Films are shown at the RSL rooms on the fourth Wednesday evening of the month, with an extra session if there is a fifth Wednesday; and an occasional Sunday afternoon session is followed by dinner at a local restaurant".⁹¹ Bright's location in a place

⁸⁶ Blainey, G. (n.d.) *A History of Camberwell*. (Reprint. First published in 1964). Melbourne, Australia: Jacaranda Press.

Blainey, G. (1982). Op. cit.

Blainey, G. (1984). *Our Side of the Country. The Story of Victoria*. Sydney, Australia: Methuen Haynes.

Blainey, G. (2005). *A Short History of the 20th Century*. Camberwell, Australia: Viking an imprint of Penguin.

⁸⁷ Garden, D. (1984). *Victoria. A History*. Melbourne, Australia: Thomas Nelson.

⁸⁸ Priestly, S. (1979). *Cattlemen to Commuters*, Sydney, Australia: John Ferguson. Vaughan, W. D. (1960). *Kew's Civic Century*. Kew, Victoria, Australia: W. D. Vaughan Pty. Ltd.

Brennan, N. (1972). *A History of Nunawading*. Melbourne, Australia: Hawthorn Press.

McCallum, J. (1998). *Struggletown. Public and Private Life in Richmond. 1900-1964*. (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Hyland House.

⁸⁹ Bright Film Society [Retrieved from http://bright.filmsociety.org.au/](http://bright.filmsociety.org.au/)

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

eighty kilometres from the nearest cinema is a significant factor in that the film club was able to operate in a non-competitive cinematic environment. Additionally, the level of enthusiasm evident in the growing number of members suggests that in this place distant from a regional city there was a group of people interested in forming a community arts group such as a film society. Having a space at the RSL rooms in which to screen films is also significant to the success of the Bright Film Society. As previously mentioned, the concept of space regarding a film society, is defined by a number of factors including the critical requirement for a suitable projector and screen. The significance of this space at the RSL rooms for the Bright Film Society, is enhanced by the flexibility of its use, as available to the film society. The researcher acknowledges that there are other factors such as the lack of appeal of the types of movies screened at the nearest cinema and, the sense of community evident in dinner at a local restaurant following the occasional Sunday afternoon screenings, to which the success of the Bright Film Society may be attributed. However, the emphasis in this section of the discussion is on the importance of place and space in the formation and continuity of film societies.

In 1933, more than ten years after the formation and demise of the Woodstock film group and, eight years following the opening of Symond Gould's first ciné-club, two film societies were established in New York City. These were The Film Forum and the Film Society.⁹² The Film Society followed the early European model of film societies being more cultural than political 'focusing on the aesthetic and technical aspects of film rather than on their potential for social and political change'.⁹³ Whereas, The Film Forum exhibited a strong, political left-wing stance. However, unlike their counterparts in Paris and London 'which lasted ten or more years', these film societies foundered within six months of opening.⁹⁴ Davis contends that the main reason for the comparatively short lifetimes of these societies was that each represented the scheme or dream of an individual which could not be sustained over a long period of time. Whereas, for example, the London Film Society was formed by a group of 'friends who were interested [*in*] and cared about films and the art of the cinema got together and formed the Film Society'.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, 'these two organizations marked the beginning of a sustained film society

⁹² Davis, op. cit.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

movement in the United States'⁹⁶ with the aesthetically-oriented model eventually being favoured. It is this model, as opposed to the political model with its emphasis on social and political change, which characterises Victorian film societies, generally and, the Camberwell Film Society particularly, as described and discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Summary

The descriptions and contentions discussed in this section of Chapter Two indicate that, generally speaking, the catalyst for the formation of film societies was the recognition of the duality of cinema: cinema as business/ entertainment and cinema as art. In the early 1920s, ciné-clubs and film societies were formed in Europe and London to develop an appreciation of cinema as a particular art-form. The programs of these clubs and societies expanded quickly to include films of historic importance as well as foreign and experimental movies. In 1919, a film group had been formed in Woodstock, USA, but its lifetime was brief. Nonetheless, some of its operational principles are evident in contemporary film societies. It was not until the early 1930s that the film society movement began to evolve with any substance in the USA.

Two models or frameworks emerged within in which the early film societies were formed, these were: an aesthetically-oriented model and a model focussed on bringing about social and political change. The European-based aesthetically-oriented model was the more successful of the two models during the early years of the development of the film society movement. It is the model which underpins Victorian film societies generally, and the Camberwell Film Society, particularly.

The characteristics of community film societies evident in this discussion indicate that a community film society is a,

non-profit, voluntary organisation, founded and maintained by a group of cinéphiles or *cineastes* using an aesthetically-oriented model as opposed to a political model. Membership is by subscription and films are

⁹⁶ Ibid.

screened regularly on subjects of historic and artistic interest as well as foreign and experimental films. In addition, the factors of place and space play an important part in the establishment and maintenance of a successful community film society.⁹⁷

At the time of writing this thesis in 2014, it is not insignificant to note that it is ninety-five years since the establishment of one of the first known film groups at Woodstock, USA, in 1919. These ninety-five years suggest an atmosphere of vigor and longevity about the societies which is not always a characteristic of community groups. During those ninety-five years there have been many changes in the film society movement. Some of these changes are identified in the following statement from the FVFS,

The peak number of FVFS member societies was around 70 in the mid 70's [*sic*] when "Art-house" films were rarely screened in the cinemas, but by 2006 this number had dropped to 45 societies, possibly due to the fact that many cinemas began to screen quality films, and perhaps also due to the increasing difficulty of getting suitable movies on 16 mm film – the mainstay of the film society until that time. Since 2004, when video projection became technically and economically feasible, more and more societies began to screen their films from DVD, and these societies began to expand as their programs improved because virtually any movie is available on DVD.⁹⁸

On 10 October 10, 2013, the number of film societies registered with the FVFS was seventy-seven indicating a substantial increase in membership since 2006. The changes identified in the above statement refer to changes in the programs of commercial cinemas, the decreasing availability of 16 mm film and, the development and ready availability of DVDs. In the statement, it is implied that these changes all had an impact on film societies and their membership. During the ninety-five years since the establishment of the Woodstock film group, the role of film societies also has undergone many changes as these

⁹⁷ Researcher's summary of the preceding discussion.

⁹⁸ Federation of Victorian Film Societies Inc. *About the Federation of Victorian Film Societies*. Retrieved from Information Sheet 00 Version 6.info00v6 about.doc

community groups have evolved in response to their environment. Some of these changes are identified and discussed in the next section of the thesis.

Evolving Role of Film Societies

In continuing with her overview of the role of film societies, Weiner proposes that the evolution of the film industry was accompanied by gaps, or pockets of unmet demand for particular types of films, in the marketplace. As each gap opened a new market for film societies was discovered.⁹⁹ Consequently, the evolution of the film industry was paralleled by the creation of new markets for film societies. Weiner nominates the first of these changes as the introduction of sound movies. She argues that the ‘silent foreign film was universally understood and its few titles were easily translated, so there were no problems with international distribution’.¹⁰⁰ Conversely, with the introduction of sound, audiences attending commercial theatres responded less favourably to foreign films with foreign language conversations. Cinema audience numbers declined and commercial theatres, concerned about their profit margins, screened these types of films reluctantly or excluded them from their programs. Film societies, particularly those in metropolitan locations, aware there was a gap in the market for foreign language films, incorporated these into their programs attracting new members. Weiner acknowledges that as subtitling and dubbing of foreign language films improved, and the general public became more familiar with the titles and content through various European and international film festivals, foreign language films were screened more regularly at commercial theatres. Weiner contends that in the early 1970s, the premieres of some foreign language films were still conducted by film societies. Also, Weiner notes the diversity of films offered by the societies with most including ‘classics of the golden age of silent film, classic comedies and films of the Thirties and Forties in their programming’.¹⁰¹ Weiner concludes her overview of the evolution of the cinematic focus of film societies with two observations. In the first she contends that the major focus of film societies is now on contemporary cinema in the form of films produced and distributed by small, independent companies in the USA.¹⁰² The second observation relates to some societies establishing niche markets through concentrating on a theme, for example, ‘Revival of classics, comedies, serials ...

⁹⁹ Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

from the silent era' or films of a particular era, for instance, 'Foreign and American classics from the Thirties, Forties and Fifties—such as *Citizen Kane*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, ... *Seven Samurai*'. Weiner closes her discussion with the statement that, 'In general, then, a film society provides an alternative in movie entertainment that is not usually available in commercial theatres. The overall effort is film for the sake of art rather than for business purposes'.¹⁰³

At this point in the discussion it is important to point out that the primary purpose of Weiner's book is to present a template for organising and running a film society: it is not intended as a critique or history of film societies. In addition, it is written from an American perspective which may differ from other countries' experiences of film societies. Also, as the book was published in 1973, the observations made about film societies are prior to this date and tend to be general statements without specific dates or references. However, even given these limitations, the background material about film societies in this book provides valuable information for the discussion of the role of film societies in this study.

In 1941, during WW2 film societies continued to meet and screen films in England and Scotland. For example, staff at Bletchley Park, the WW2 code-breaking centre in England, organised a film group called the *Bletchley Park Cinema Club*. They favoured screening films like *Night Train*, directed by Harry Watt and Basil Wright, both associates of John Grierson, and 'even the odd vintage German film'.¹⁰⁴ The Edinburgh Film Guild conducted a number of national programs, which were appreciated by the audiences.¹⁰⁵ Each program was centred round a specific theme. In *An Open Letter to the Film Societies*, Forsyth Hardy expresses surprise that unlike other cultural bodies the societies have not been 'sucked into the whirlpool of war and destroyed'.¹⁰⁶ He also expresses pleasure observing that 'sufficient of the societies have survived to prove the virility of the movement and to suggest that it has won a permanent place among the country's cultural organisations'.¹⁰⁷ The main intention of the letter is to provide assistance to the film

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ McKay, S. (2010). *The Secret Life of Bletchley Park: The WWII Codebreaking Centre and the Men and Women Who Worked There*. London: Aurum, p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ Hardy, F. (1941). An Open Letter to Film Societies in *Sight and Sound*, 10 (38): Summer, p. 30.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

societies with ideas about sources of films and the building of programs around themes. Hardy confirms one of Weiner's contentions that foreign language films were a feature of film society programs. However, in Great Britain 'The import of foreign-language films ceased with the fall of France'.¹⁰⁸ To overcome this difficulty, Hardy identifies a wide range of feature films, short, silent and historical films held by various agencies in their loan collections which are available to the societies. Many of these films are foreign language films. Hardy also alludes to the 'educational work' being undertaken by some of the 'more progressive societies'.¹⁰⁹ Hardy's reference to the educational work of the societies is reflected in Weiner's definition of a film society which she defines as a: 'non-profit cultural organization formed to encourage the appreciation of cinema both as an art and as a medium of information and education, by means of showing films, discussing them and supplying its members with information about cinema'.¹¹⁰

Reference to more recent literature suggests that the role of film societies is still evolving. As well as mirroring or responding to changes in the film industry, it may be a conveyor of concepts of social change, in some instances. In an essay titled, *Desegregating Film History: Avant-Garde Film and Race at the Robert Flaherty Seminar, and Beyond*,¹¹¹ MacDonald explores significant themes in avant-garde film making beginning in the 1940s. He observes that American film societies, such as 'Cinema 16, the widely influential New York film society',¹¹² contributed to audience interest in films about alternative lifestyles: 'One of the crucial currents in avant-garde filmmaking at least since the 1940s has been the representation of alternative sexualities; indeed, the success of the American film society movement and of "underground film" in the 1960s seems to have had much to do with the fact that film audiences were fascinated with cinematic considerations of sexuality, including homosexuality and lesbianism'.¹¹³ Furthermore, not only does MacDonald postulate that film societies influenced public opinion but he implies that in the 1950s film societies had significant social and political influence. He argues that, 'During the early

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Weiner, op. cit., p. 5.

¹¹¹ MacDonald, S. (2009). (Ref. A). *Desegregating Film History: Avant-Garde Film and Race at the Robert Flaherty Seminar, and Beyond*. In *Adventures of Perception. Cinema as Exploration. Essays/Interviews*. Berkley and Los Angeles, California, USA: University of California Press, pp. 10-80.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 60.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

1960s after the heyday of the American film societies, avant-garde films dealing with homosexuality often ran into legal hassles'.¹¹⁴ As an example MacDonald refers to an incident in 1964 in which one of the more controversial films of this period, Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour* (1952), was seized by the San Francisco police leading to a court case: 'A Song of Love is French writer Jean Genet's only film, which he directed in 1950. Because of its explicit homosexual content, the 26-minute movie was long banned and even disowned by Genet later in his life'.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, it does seem that some film societies were instrumental in increasing public knowledge about and appreciation of avant-garde or experimental cinema and, by extension, human sensibility. MacDonald explores the relationship between film, and visual and literary arts, tracing the juxtaposition of visual text and imagery in both silent and sound films throughout the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹⁶ Prior to WW2, these types of films were favourites with members of European and United Kingdom ciné-clubs, precursors of film societies. After WW2, two cinemas in the United States—Art in Cinema film society in San Francisco and Cinema 16¹¹⁷ film society in New York City—introduced American audiences to these types of films by 'reviving significant films that had been important in the European ciné-clubs and in introducing audiences to new avant-garde and documentary work'.¹¹⁸ MacDonald explains the importance of this movement as follows,

During the 1940s and 1950s there was a particular strategic value to the use of "poetic" in conjunction with avant-garde film. That filmmakers can be considered creative artists may seem obvious to us, and it was certainly clear to many avant-garde filmmakers, but for most moviegoers during the first five decades of film history, films were mindless distractions, engaging and skilfully [*sic*] made, perhaps, but certainly not "artistic" in any serious

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ A Song of Love Retrieved from https://www.google.com.au/search?q=un+chant+d%27amour&oq=Un+chant&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l5.8615j0j4&sourceid=chrome&espv=210&es_sm=122&ie=UTF-8

¹¹⁶ MacDonald, S. (2009). (Ref. B). 'Poetry and Film: Avant-Garde Cinema as Publication' in *Adventures of Perception. Cinema as Exploration. Essays/Interviews*, Berkley and Los Angeles, California, USA: University of California Press, pp.102-138.

¹¹⁷ 'Cinema 16 was the most successful and influential of American film societies for more than sixteen years'. MacDonald, S. (2009). (Ref. C.). Up Close and Political. Three Short Ruminations on Nature Films in *Adventures of Perception. Cinema as Exploration. Essays/Interviews*, Berkley and Los Angeles, California, USA: University of California Press, p.174n28.

¹¹⁸ MacDonald, (Ref. B), op. cit., p. 105.

sense ... By emphasizing the relationship of unusual cinematic forms to poetry (and also to painting, collage, and music), Art in Cinema, Cinema 16, and the network of film societies that imitated them were implicitly arguing for the kinds of attention and patience normally accorded to serious works of art.¹¹⁹

Macdonald adds to the profile of film societies by proposing that by screening avant-garde and experimental films featuring the visual and literary arts, film societies provided avenues for filmgoers to gain a deeper appreciation of the value of these types of films. They offered forms of entertainment which, unlike the films of earlier decades, were more than ‘mindless distractions’.¹²⁰ Equally, if not more importantly, filmgoers were encouraged to move beyond categorising some films as being artistic. Rather they were being challenged to open their sensibilities to an appreciation of film as a particular and distinctive form of art.

The educative role of film societies, as alluded to by Weiner and Hardy, appears to be a theme in MacDonald’s references to film societies. He implies a strong education thread in film society programs when writing about nature and wildlife films.¹²¹ He argues that nature films were popular program items in the early days of film societies and ciné-clubs: ‘at its third public presentation, on December 20, 1925, the London Film Society began the “*Film Society Bionomica Series*”, which focused on animal and insect life; and throughout the Film Society’s fourteen-year run, a nature film was regularly included within diverse programs that also included avant-garde works, revived classics, instructional films, animations, documentaries of all sorts, and narrative entertainments from around the world’.¹²² It could be argued that the part played by film societies in conveying concepts of social change, alerting filmgoers to the value of avant-garde and experimental movies, and challenging their sensibilities to accept film as art in its own right, was also broadly educational.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 106. Ciment, M. & Kardish, L. (eds.). (2002). *Positif 50 Years. Selections from the French Film Journal*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, p. 6.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ MacDonald (Ref. C), op. cit., pp. 155-183.

¹²² Ibid., p. 159, footnote10.

The next point in this discussion concerns the role of film societies in providing an alternative exhibition space. MacDonald asserts that this role is under-recognised and under-valued.¹²³ Nevertheless, this has been a continuing and important role of the societies. Since their founding in the 1920s until the present time, in conjunction with other agencies such as cinematheques, film festivals and microcinemas, film societies have offered an alternative exhibition space.¹²⁴ MacDonald highlights the importance of this role not only in creating an exhibition space for audiences to view non-commercial films but it also gives independent filmmakers an incentive to continue expressing their creativity in film.¹²⁵

The subject of alternative exhibition spaces is pursued by the award-winning Indian film director, P. Sheshadri in a report in *The Hindu*, an Indian newspaper, on 10 June 2013. In this report, Sheshadri calls for the setting-up of more film societies to promote good films in the state of Karnataka.¹²⁶ He is reported as saying ‘that although good films were being released, they were not reaching the audience due to various reasons’.¹²⁷ He stressed ... the need to set up film societies that can promote good films’. Referring to the role of film societies that promote off-beat and good films, Mr. Sheshadri said that ‘in Kerala and West Bengal [the] highest number of good films was produced and they reach the audience because of the efforts of the film societies. So ... more such societies should be set up’.¹²⁸ In this report Sheshadri is expressing concern about two issues: the first issue is that ninety percent of the films being produced in Karnataka are for commercial cinemas therefore viewers’ filmic choices are limited; the second issue is that when ‘good’ films ‘that can motivate people to think’, are produced there are not any exhibition spaces for their screening. Film societies fill this need for exhibition spaces for screening alternative, non-commercial types of films. Sheshadri argues that this need has a significance which goes

¹²³ MacDonald, S. (2009). (Ref. D). Interview with Karen Cooper in *Adventures of Perception. Cinema as Exploration. Essays/Interviews*. Berkley and Los Angles, California, USA: University of California Press, p. 371.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. MacDonald, S. (1988). (Ref. E). *A Critical Cinema. Interviews with Independent Filmmakers*. Berkley and Los Angles, California, USA: University of California Press, pp. 9-10.

¹²⁶ Set up film societies to promote good films: Sheshadri. In *The Hindu*, Hubli, June 10, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/set-up-film-societies-to-promote-good-films-sheshadri/article4799049.ece>

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

beyond ‘showing meaningful cinema to people’.¹²⁹ In addition, it is related to winning filmic awards. Sheshadri argues that, ‘If there are many Malayalam films that have been receiving awards, that’s because they have several film societies even in small places to showcase good films to the audience. The entire state of Karnataka has only a few film societies. Where is the space to show good films?’¹³⁰ Also, Sheshadri’s argument supports Macdonald’s assertion that the availability of alternative exhibition spaces encourages filmmakers to produce non-commercial, alternative types of films.

Up to this point in the review of film-society related literature the discussion has focussed primarily on European and American film societies almost excluding societies in other countries. As previously mentioned, the film society movement was, and remains, an international phenomenon. For example, ‘Kerala, the tiny state at the southern most tip of India, with a population of over 30 million, has one of the most vibrant cinemas in India’.¹³¹ It is also the home of a large network of film societies. These societies play a critical in the visual culture of Kerala by supporting and providing spaces for the exhibition of ‘art’ films. The first film society founded in India was in Bombay in 1937. Other film societies followed. The programs of the earliest Indian film societies mainly featured ‘indigenous commercial fare and Hollywood’.¹³² With the formation of the Calcutta Film Society by Satyajit Ray (Chapter Eight), Nimay Ghosh and Chidanandadas Gupta in 1947, this programming pattern changed as films from European and other countries were introduced. This change paved the way ‘for a paradigm shift in thinking about films and, in turn, the process of filmmaking. This film society movement thus introduced world cinema and the world of cinema to the public on a scale that was unimaginable and impossible earlier’. Venkiteswaran posits that ‘the film society movement opened up a new world for the cineastes of Kerala and helped create a new sensibility’.¹³³

¹²⁹ The Times of India. P. Sheshadri wins National Award for seventh time. Retrieved from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-03-20/news-interviews/37871786_1_60th-national-film-kannada-films-malayalam-films

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Venkiteswaran, C. S. (2009). Reflections on film society movement in Keralam. In *South Asian Popular Culture*, 7 (1), pp. 65-71. DOI: 10.1080/14746680802705029

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

As the role of the community film societies evolved and diversified, the societies gave expression to the aesthetically-oriented model which underpinned and informed their establishment and development. It is not proposed that all film societies exhibited all of these roles. Rather that they chose the roles best suited to their purposes and capacity to enact them. As Norman Ellis observed, 'Each society has arisen spontaneously from the desires of its own community, or as the result of the enthusiasm of a few individuals; and each society has retained not only a physical independence, but often a sturdy and admirable freedom of outlook and character'.¹³⁴

Conclusion

This overview of the evolving role of film societies indicates that as the film industry grew and changed, film societies moved with it. These groups identified and filled filmic gaps in the marketplace, created niche markets for various genres of film, generated awareness of social change through program choices, introduced avant-garde and experimental films to their members as well as pursuing the theme of film as a distinctive art-form. Broadly speaking, all of the roles could be loosely termed educational in an informal sense. At times the societies presented formal education programs which included, for example, instructional or nature films. As well as screening movies for the study of film as art, the societies were acknowledging the educational potential of film. Consequently, they were actively engaged in the fashioning of three filmic cultures: film as entertainment/business, film as art and film as education.

¹³⁴ Wilson, N. (1951). Film Societies: a Window on Europe, in *Sight and Sound*, March, 19 (10). Periodicals Archive Online, p. 62.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher discusses and analyses substantive methodological literature relevant to conducting historical research. The discussion commences with an exploration of differing definitions of history, its roles and purposes, the intention being to establish the concept of history which informs the study. This is followed by a discussion of historical research methodologies deemed pertinent to this research. The next section scrutinizes issues associated with writing history, and elucidates the reasons for the researcher choosing a narrative interpretative writing-style. A description of the primary sources available to the researcher is included, attention is drawn to their significance for this study, and the reasons for the employment of various data collection strategies are presented. Then the importance of data validation through the process of triangulation is explored followed by an overview of some of the challenges of data collection and the chapter summary.

What is History: a Diversity of Views and Applications

The concept of history and its role in contemporary society is the subject of a diversity of views and applications. This diversity is evident in the many commonplace uses of history for professional and personal purposes. For example, historical material is sometimes used by novelists as a setting for fictional stories,¹³⁵ while periodically national pride is enthused by the celebration of historical events.¹³⁶ Moreover organisations—small¹³⁷ and large,¹³⁸ for-profit¹³⁹ and not-for-profit,¹⁴⁰ government¹⁴¹ and community¹⁴²—publish the

¹³⁵ Clendinnen, I. (2006). The History Question: Who Owns the Past? In *Quarterly Essay*, 23, pp. 16-20.

Schlink, B. (1997). *The Reader*. (English translation from the German by Carol Brown Janeway). (Reprint 1998). London: Phoenix.

¹³⁶ Odgers, G. (1994). *Diggers. The Australian Army, Navy and Air Force in Eleven Wars. From 1860 to 1994*. (Reprinted in 1995). Sydney, Australia: Lansdowne Publishing, pp. 68-83.

¹³⁷ Ascot Primary School. (1983). *The History of Ascot Primary School No. 2507, 1883—1983*. Ascot, Victoria.

¹³⁸ Jones, H. (Ed.). (1994). *The Bible of the Bush*. (125 Years. 1869-1994. The Weekly Times). Port Melbourne, Australia: Hamlyn.

¹³⁹ The Bulletin. (1980). *The Bulletin*. 1880-1980. *One Hundred Years of Australia's Best all in this Issue*. The Bulletin Centenary Issue, January 29, 1980.

life-story or history of their agency to commemorate a significant event such as the centenary year. Occasionally groups of people express displeasure or act angrily towards other communities often legitimising their behaviour with reference to centuries' old events which, they argue, continue to disadvantage them in contemporary society.¹⁴³ These are a few of the differing perceptions of the concept and role of history in its commonplace applications. Each example reflects the different intentions of individuals or groups of people. However, these differences are connected by a common theme, that is, history is about the past—past lifestyles, past events, past achievements and past animosities. But, is history just about individuals and groups of people reinforcing 'their own beliefs and sense of identity'¹⁴⁴ or does it have more meaning, more significance?

This is one of the issues investigated by John Tosh with Seán Lang in their study titled, *The Pursuit of History*.¹⁴⁵ Tosh contends that approaches taken to conducting historical research may be influenced by factors such as: the subject of the history, its intended primary audiences, and interested parties' assumptions about its significance.¹⁴⁶ In writing about the diverse ways in which people look at, make assumptions about, and sometimes mystify rather than clarify images from the past, John Berger *et al.* propose that,

The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognized for exactly what it is. History always constitutes the relation between a present and its past. Consequently, fear of the present leads to

¹⁴⁰ Royal South Street Society. (n.d.) *Royal South Street Society. The First One Hundred Years. 1879 – 1979*, Ballarat, Australia: *Author*.

¹⁴¹ Jenkins, David Lloyd. (1988). *The Shire of Ballarat. First in the State*. Wendouree, Australia: Shire of Ballarat.

¹⁴² Bennett, Cr. H. P. (Ed.). (1939). *Looking Back Over 100 Years. 1839-1939. A Brief Historical Review on the Settlement and Development of Linton and District*. Linton, Australia: Linton Centenary Celebrations Committee.

¹⁴³ Clendinnen writes “ often stories can be used to create or consolidate hatreds, whether by commission, like the “revised” history of India recently contrived by fundamentalist Hindus with Indian Muslims cast as barbaric invaders, or by omission, as in Japan’s obstinate amnesia regarding what its armies did in China”. Clendinnen, I. (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁴⁴ Tosh, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, *passim*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, Chapter 2.

mystification of the past. The past is not for living in; it is a well of conclusions from which we draw in order to act.¹⁴⁷

For example, Satyajit Ray's approach to filmmaking mirrors these contentions of Tosh and Berger about the concept and role of history. Ray, a renowned Bengali filmmaker, drew on his profound knowledge of India's cultural heritage when producing films such as *Jalsagher (The Music Room)*.¹⁴⁸ The context for the film is India in the 1930s. It was screened by the Camberwell Film Society in April 1969 and is discussed in detail later in this thesis.¹⁴⁹ Ray presents historical conclusions about ways of living and their once cherished ideals that is, the past, as exemplified by a former wealthy, land-owning Indian patrician. He confronts these historically engendered patterns of daily life with more modern values which signal the changing economic and social changes, in India, in the 1930s. In *Jalsagher*, this modernity is typified by the *nouveau riche*. In his role as a filmmaker, Ray chooses not to mystify the past in this period of change and uncertainty. Neither does he exploit the sense of fear which generally accompanies periods of change. Rather, as espoused by Berger, Ray elects to engage with the past, not to live in it, but in order to inform ways of living in the present. However, as an historian, Ray is presenting his particular position regarding the relationship between the past and the present.

This overview of the concept and role of history indicates that in commonplace usage it is characterised by a diversity of views and applications. Nevertheless, the discussion posits that this diversity of applications is unified by the fact that history is primarily concerned with the past. Furthermore, as argued by Berger *et al.* and as evident in Ray's film, *Jalsagher*, this past is not a store of knowledge 'waiting to be discovered'. More precisely, the past and the present engage in a manner which enables the present to draw on the knowledge of the past 'in order to act' in contemporary times. This discussion prompts the question, 'What is the concept of history informing this historical research project?' An attempt to answer this question is presented in the next section of this chapter.

¹⁴⁷ Berger, J., Blomberg, S., Fox, C., Dibb, M., & Hollis, R. (1977). *Ways of Seeing. Based on the BBC television series with John Berger.* (4th reprint). London, Great Britain: British Broadcasting Corporation, p.11.

¹⁴⁸ Refer to *Diversity of Directors* in Chapter Seven.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

An Appropriate Concept

There is a view of history which defines it as a study of the past characterised by the methodical recording of issues and events, the highlighting of dates deemed to be significant, an unquestioning acceptance of these dates and their presumed significance, as well as learning them by rote.¹⁵⁰ This view reflects a nineteenth century attitude to education, including the teaching of history, which emphasised the supremacy of factual knowledge in education and public discourse.¹⁵¹ In 1896, when referring to his intended editing of the *Cambridge Modern History*, Lord Acton stated it would be an exceptional publication recording and presenting ‘the fullness of the knowledge which the nineteenth century is about to bequeath’.¹⁵² Acton continued with this theme observing that,

Ultimate history we cannot have in this generation; but we can dispose of conventional history, and show the point we have reached on the road from one to the other, now that all information is within reach, and every problem has become capable of solution.¹⁵³

It may seem anachronistic to refer to a belief espoused over one hundred years ago and challenged by later historians.¹⁵⁴ However, Acton’s claims are not without merit and relevance to this discussion. From the perspective of Berger *et al.*¹⁵⁵ these claims represent a ‘well of conclusions’, on which contemporary historians may draw to inform their current theories about the concept and role of history. It could be argued that Acton’s ideas about the probability of an ultimate or final history being published, the totality of information being imminent, and the assertion that all problems have potential for resolution, contribute to the concept of traditional history: a form of history based on the supremacy of factual knowledge.

¹⁵⁰ Clendinnen, *op. cit.*, 1-3.

¹⁵¹ Dickens, C. 1955 (c. 1854). *Hard Times*, Oxford University Press, London, *passim*.

Carr, quoting from *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens, states that, “The nineteenth century was a great age for facts. ““What I want”, said Mr Gradgrind in *Hard Times*, “is Facts Facts alone are wanted in life.”” Carr, E. H. (1988). *What is History*. (Reprint of 2nd ed.). London: Penguin, p. 8.

¹⁵² Quoted in Carr, *op. cit.*, p.7, from *The Cambridge Modern History: Its Origin, Authorship and Production* (1907), pp.10-12.

Lord Acton’s observations reflect the widespread mood of optimism and supremacy prevalent in Britain in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Carr, *Ibid*, p.5.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁴ A contradictory view was presented by Professor Sir George Clark in his “general introduction to the second *Cambridge Modern History*”. This view is quoted in Carr, *op.cit.*, 7.

¹⁵⁵ Berger *et al.*, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 11.

Typecast as traditional history, this view of history is often nominated as the preferred mode of teaching history by politicians discomfited by alternative approaches which explore themes and issues.¹⁵⁶ This view engenders an image of the historian as an objective recorder and observer of history as opposed to being a participant in the process of its study. It also suggests that we can ‘know’ the past but, we cannot know the past, we can only know what survives. For instance, in documenting the history of the Camberwell Film Society the researcher sought information about when and where the first meeting of the Society was held. Unfortunately, the minutes of the Society from its inception in the mid-1950s¹⁵⁷ until May 1977, plus other documents, were lost.¹⁵⁸ One interviewee mentioned that the records were burnt in a house fire.¹⁵⁹ A cryptic note at the end of the minutes of the Committee meeting held in May 1978 states, *Please Note Certain papers, including some minutes were lost during reconstruction of Secretary’s house.*¹⁶⁰ Anecdotal material suggested that the first screenings were held at a bowling club and that regular meetings took place in various homes. However, in the absence of any reliable documentation it seemed that the researcher was confronted by an impasse.

As Vansina attests, the further back we go the more difficult it becomes to collect relevant material, ‘the past has gone for good and all, and the possibility of first-hand observation of past events is forever excluded’.¹⁶¹ Consequently, our knowledge and understanding of the past are limited. However, there is another view of history which is defined by a sense of movement, a sense of discovery, a sense of exhilaration as we pursue, investigate and acquaint ourselves with the events and people of past eras: ‘Skillful [*sic*] historians are

¹⁵⁶ In 2006, commenting on his perception of the method of teaching Australian history in the nation’s schools, the then Prime Minister, The Hon. John Howard stated, ‘Too often it is taught without any sense of structured narrative, replaced by a fragmented stew of themes and issues. And too often history, along with other subjects in the humanities, has succumbed to a postmodern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated’. Clendinnen, I. (2006), op. cit., pp. 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ The minutes of the CFS Committee available to the researcher commence with the ‘Minutes of Committee Meeting Held on Monday 16 May 1977, *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*. Property of, and held by, the Camberwell Film Society.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Unfortunately, all our [Camberwell Film Society] early records, which were stored in the garage at the home of one of our secretaries, were destroyed in a fire in his garage’. Jenkins, David Lloyd. (2004). *Interview with Jean Catford*. The name of the particular bowling club is not mentioned in this interview.

¹⁵⁹ Handwritten notes titled ‘Early Days’, possibly written by Mrs Jean Catford, amongst handwritten material as well as newspaper cuttings, film appraisals and other printed ephemera stored in the *Catford Papers*—property of the Camberwell Film Society, n. d., no author, n.p.

¹⁶⁰ Minutes of the CFS Committee held on 16th May 1978. In the *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*. No page numbers.

¹⁶¹ Vansina, J. (2006). *Oral Tradition. A Study in Historical Methodology*. (Published in French in 1961. (Translated from the French by H. M. Wright with a new introduction by Selma Leydesdorff and Elizabeth Tonkin). New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Publishers, p. 185.

above all master storytellers'.¹⁶² In *Jalsagher*, Ray as historian, filmmaker and 'master storyteller', blends historical method of inquiry with cinematographic and storytelling techniques, to create a compelling visual and verbal narrative. This filmic narrative continually moves between the past and the present challenging viewers to discover, explore and weigh the value and relevance of the past in relation to significant changes in contemporary society.

Carr observes that history 'is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his [or her] facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past'.¹⁶³ This feeling of continuity of thought and interaction contrasts markedly with the seemingly static nature of traditional history. Carr's observation is reinforced by Marwick who argues that 'History is a dialogue. Each age must reinterpret its own past'.¹⁶⁴ Marwick extends the boundaries of the dialogue to encompass the reader¹⁶⁵ his rationale being that,

The definitive historical work on any topic has not been written and never will be. The reader may accept four-fifths of a book and reject the other fifth as inconsistent with the rest, clearly reflective of personal or national bias, or perhaps as sheer rhetorical fancy. He may, while finding the book stimulating, reject its findings *in toto*.¹⁶⁶

Marwick's idea of differing interpretations of the past, and the study of historical topics not reaching a point of finality, concur with those of Professor Sir George Clark's response to Acton's concept of ultimate history,

Historians of a later generation do not look forward to any such prospect. They expect their work to be superseded again and again. They consider

¹⁶² Angrosino, M. V. (2008). *Exploring Oral History. A Window on the Past*. Long Grove, USA: Waveland Press, p. 3.

¹⁶³ Carr, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ Marwick, A. (1970). *The Nature of History*. Great Britain: MacMillan, p. 21.

Professor Marwick 'had firm views on the necessity of history, the ability of the trained historian to extract from primary sources something close to objective truth, and the dangers of approaching history via philosophy or grand theories of historical development'. His book, *The Nature of History*, first published in 1970, has been revised and reprinted many times. It is a seminal work for students' of history. Obituary: Arthur Marwick/Education/The Guardian [Retrieved from http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/oct/07/guardianobituaries.highereducation](http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/oct/07/guardianobituaries.highereducation). The above quote is a snapshot of the page in Marwick's obituary, as published on 1 Oct 2009 16:08:53 GMT.

¹⁶⁵ Marwick, op. cit.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

that knowledge of the past has come down through one or more human minds, has been “processed” by them, and therefore cannot consist of elemental and impersonal atoms which nothing can alter ... The exploration seems to be endless.¹⁶⁷

In this response Clark captures the theme of history being a continuing dialogue, an endless exploration between generations of historians, between different interpretations of the significance of historical events, and between established opinions and challenges arising from new discoveries about the past.¹⁶⁸

One example of a continuing dialogue between the past and the present, and factors such as different interpretations and opinions about historical events, alluded to in this thesis, concerns the invention of the Kinematograph in the 1890s.¹⁶⁹ This invention was a device for photographing moving images. It was manufactured by Thomas Edison & Co. There is a continuing dialogue about who invented this revolutionary item of photographic equipment. Some scholars hold the opinion that the inventor was, W. L. Dickson, an employee of Edison & Co. The contrary view is that Thomas Edison, the Company owner, was the creator of the Kinematograph. As acknowledged in this thesis, the scholarly dialogue about this historical event continues.¹⁷⁰

The ideas of continuity and interaction present in the theme of history ebbing and flowing between the past and present may give an impression of history being an unruly, wayward research subject. However, Tosh draws our attention to a process which, while embracing the ideas of continuity and interaction, also recognises their errant potential. He nominates the concept of disciplined enquiry as a critical characteristic of historical awareness and as a tool for reining in this errant potential,

History as a disciplined enquiry aims to sustain the widest possible definition of memory, and to make the process of recall as accurate as

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Carr, op. cit., p.7-8, from *The New Cambridge Modern History*, (1957), pp. xxiv-xxv.

¹⁶⁸ Refer to Connelly, op cit., Chapters Eight & Nine for an example of different interpretations of the history of population control.

¹⁶⁹ Refer to Chapter Four.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

possible, so that our knowledge of the past is not confined to what is immediately relevant. The goal is a resource with open-ended application, instead of a set of mirror images of the present.¹⁷¹

As previously discussed in this chapter, Acton's conclusions imply a disciplined enquiry that Tosh also nominates as a component of historical awareness. However, each of these historians focuses on a different purpose or outcome: Acton's is about finality, the future development of ultimate history. Tosh proposes a process which is both open-ended and disciplined, the aim being to seek a depth and breadth of memory resulting in a body of knowledge which is as authentic and detailed as possible. Nevertheless, even allowing for the different aims of Tosh and Acton, both consider the employment of disciplined enquiry to be a central and continuing thread in the development of historical awareness.

The research method adopted in this thesis is both open-ended and disciplined. This dual faceted research method is evident in the three chapters which constitute the context of the thesis. The intention of these chapters is to document the separate and distinctive contribution of the subjects of each chapter¹⁷² to the cultural/historical genesis of film societies generally, and Camberwell, particularly. The open-ended nature of this method of inquiry enables the researcher to move beyond attempting to identify specific causal factors directly linked to the formation of film societies. Rather this open-ended method creates a rich, kaleidoscopic picture of the interplay between the diversity of factors from which film societies emerged. The disciplined component of the research method in these four chapters is identifiable in the researcher's focus on two specific cultural/historical factors critical to the creation of film societies. These factors are: the evolution of a filmic educational culture and the emergence of an environment—social, economic and structural—favourable to the formation of community groups such as film societies.

The concept of history as a dialogue between the past and the present, between historian and reader, as discussed in this chapter, embodies the idea of interaction and continuity. Such a process has the potential to incorporate a method of enquiry which is both disciplined and open-ended. The interweaving of this method of enquiry, with the concept

¹⁷¹ Tosh, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁷² Chapters Four to Six inc.

of a continuous dialogue, may result in a body of knowledge which is as authentic and detailed as possible at a particular point in time. This concept of history, that history is a dialogue, a continuous, disciplined process of interaction between past and present, informs this research; it also influences the selected research methodologies as presented in the following sections of this chapter.

Historical Research Method: Tools and Techniques

The following discourse on the subject of the tools and techniques of historical research method is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section addresses the issue of different approaches to conducting historical research. Within the second sub-section the question of whether or not historians need to write history is explored while the third sub-section considers basic techniques for writing history.

Narrative, interpretative style of writing and interpretation

Just as there is a diversity of views and applications about the nature of history,¹⁷³ there are also a number of approaches to conducting historical research, interpreting the material and historical writing. Heller describes historical research as ‘the diligent, careful, extensive and systematic investigation to discover or revise facts and theories’.¹⁷⁴ Connell identifies four categories in the field of historical educational research: politicising, celebratory, biographical and historical. He then subdivides celebratory research into four different streams: nostalgic, expository, analytical and interpretative. Of these four streams, analytical and interpretative are the streams most relevant to this thesis: ‘Analytical historical research is more evaluative than the other categories and interpretative historical research is analytical and explanatory, but also includes an analysis of the significance of the events’.¹⁷⁵ The primary sources available for this thesis, and the data collected as part of the oral history component, require both analysis and explanation to appreciate the historical significance of the Camberwell Film Society and the current relevance of the study’s findings. As Barraclough posits, historians not only take their

¹⁷³ Refer to the section of this chapter titled, *What is history: a diversity of views and applications*.

¹⁷⁴ Heller, G. (1998). Historical research in music education: definitions and defences. In *Philosophy of Music Education*, 6 (2), Fall, p. 78

¹⁷⁵ Jenkins, Louise. (2007). *Australian Women Composers, Performers and Music Teachers From 1890 to 1950*. (Unpublished PhD thesis). Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, p. 94.

readers on a journey into the past, they also have a responsibility to present ‘to them, the citizens of the future, an outlook upon the present’.¹⁷⁶

Do historians need to write history?

Tosh, in exploring ways of writing and interpreting historical research, poses the question of whether or not ‘historians *need* to write history?’¹⁷⁷ He posits that some historians place little importance on the skill of creative historical writing characterised by ‘continuous prose with a beginning and an end’.¹⁷⁸ These historians assert that the study of primary sources and their elucidation, rather than interpretation and recognition of any connections between the past and the present, are what matter most.¹⁷⁹ However, Tosh argues¹⁸⁰ in favour of a continuous exchange between the study of primary sources and the ongoing writing and interpretation of historical material. Hancock, returning to the origin of the word ‘history’, endorses this idea of ongoing exchange between primary sources, writing and interpretation: he states that ‘The word history has become so various in its meanings that I hold fast to the original Greek verb: *Historeo* (1) I find out by inquiry, (2) I narrate what I have found. Inquiry and narration—that is my craft’.¹⁸¹ Unequivocal support for this position is given by Carr when he observes that,

I am convinced that, for any historian worth the name, the two processes of what economists call “input” and “output” go on simultaneously and are, in practice, parts of a single process. If you try to separate them, or to give one priority over the other, you fall into one of two heresies. Either you write scissors-and-paste history without meaning or significance; or you write propaganda or historical fiction, and merely use facts of the past to embroider a kind of writing which has nothing to do with history.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ Barraclough, G. (1957). *History in a Changing World* (2nd reprint). Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 29.

¹⁷⁷ Tosh, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Hancock quoted in Petersen, R.C. (1992). *History of Education Research. What It is and How to do it*, Sydney, Australia : NTU Printing/Publishing Services, p.2.

¹⁸² Carr, op.cit., pp.28-29.

Basic techniques for writing history: description, narrative and analysis

While acknowledging there are various ways of writing historical research, Tosh proposes that the ‘three basic techniques of description, narrative and analysis can be combined in many different ways, and every project poses afresh the problem of how they should be deployed’.¹⁸³ His contention is that description and narrative enable the historian to evoke images of the past and analysis provides opportunities for interpretation. These three basic techniques form a trio of writing techniques. Each component makes a different contribution to the writing and interpretation of historical research. In this study, the connections and disparities between each of these contributions is synthesised to form a narrative, interpretative style of writing and interpretation. The role and contribution of each component of the trio to this narrative, interpretative style of writing is presented in the following section.

As posited, the role of narrative in the trio of historical writing techniques requires clarification. By definition and connotation, narrative creates images of storytelling. Eisner observes that teachers convey meaning through telling stories which at their best evoke an aesthetic feeling; ‘we are moved by what we hear just as we are moved, when the text is really good, by what we read. Great teachers like great books show us new vistas’.¹⁸⁴ Clendinnen, while acknowledging the potential power of a well-told historical story, also cautions historians regarding the influence of these stories: ‘Given the power of stories, historians must be on constant alert regarding their uses, because, like their cousins the archaeologists, their obligation is to preserve the past in its least corrupted form’.¹⁸⁵ Tosh concedes there are limitations with historical narrative. He asserts that it may oversimplify causes in history; it may restrict the number of causes to be investigated, the relationships between them and their sequence in time or importance because it ‘can keep no more than two or three threads going at once, so that only a few causes or results will be made apparent’.¹⁸⁶ To overcome this difficulty Tosh contends that,

¹⁸³ Tosh, op. cit., p. 147.

¹⁸⁴ Eisner, E. (1996) Is ‘The Art of Teaching’ a Metaphor? In M. Kompf, W. R. Dworet & R. T. Boak (Eds.). *Changing Research and Practice: Teachers’ Professionalism, Identities and Knowledge*, London: Falmer Press, p. 14.

¹⁸⁵ Clendinnen, op. cit., p.65.

¹⁸⁶ Tosh, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

Historians need to write in ways that do justice to both the manifest and the latent, both profound forces and surface events. And in practice this requires a flexible use of both analytical and narrative modes; sometimes in alternating sections, sometimes more completely fused throughout the text. This in fact is the way in which most academic historical writing is carried out today.¹⁸⁷

This style of academic historical writing which fuses Tosh's trio of writing techniques is particularly evident in Chapters Seven and Eight which present the history of the Camberwell Film Society. For example, the Society screened the film, *Tokyo Story*, in February 1973. A detailed analysis and interpretation of this film within the context of the Society's history, is presented in the section of Chapter Eight titled, *Diversity of Directors*.

Released in 1953, *Tokyo Story*, was directed by the acclaimed Japanese filmmaker, Yasujiro Ozu. At one hundred and thirty-nine minutes in length it is a long film and the language is Japanese. On analysing the review of *Tokyo Story* in the Society's 1973 February *News Journal*, the researcher categorised it as bland and minimalist: the style of writing lacks excitement and the review provides little information about the film or the reasons for its screening. The combination of these three factors—a long film in a foreign language reviewed with a minimum of effort—suggest that *Tokyo Story* may not have been an appropriate choice for the Society's February screening in 1973. However, in the editorial in the same edition of the 1973 February *News Journal*, members were advised that *Tokyo Story* was 'one of the most famous Japanese films produced', that the Society had screened it previously receiving favourable responses, and that the Film Selection Sub-Committee was proud to be screening it for the second time. The researcher's interpretation of these comments is that, regardless of the tone of the synopsis, the film's length, and that it was in a foreign language, *Tokyo Story* was a foreign drama of the type appreciated by film societies. Further research about *Tokyo Story*, conducted by the researcher, confirmed this interpretation. In this example of academic historical writing, narrative, analysis and interpretation are combined to present a picture of the past at one screening in the life of the Camberwell Film Society.

¹⁸⁷ Tosh, op. cit., p. 156.

This overview of the narrative component of historical writing raises questions about the role of description in Tosh's trio of writing techniques: clearly, like narrative, description is an integral part of story-telling. Description is the literary form familiar to novelists and poets. It is used to recreate elements such as feelings, images, perfumes, and sounds of the past so effectively that readers feel 'the illusion of direct experience'.¹⁸⁸ For historians, the crafting of descriptive writing requires a comprehensive understanding of historical sources, an appreciation of the importance of detail as well as an imaginative mind. However, Tosh posits that the descriptive component of historical writing is subordinate to narrative in the art of story-telling: he contends that narrative also conveys 'what it felt like to observe or participate in past events'.¹⁸⁹ While description achieves this through the imaginative use of language, 'modern classics of narrative history' are epitomised by 'exact chronology, the role of chance and contingency, the play of irony, and perhaps most of all the true complexity of events in which the participants so often foundered'.¹⁹⁰ It would appear that narrative provides a pathway with signposts marking significant events along which the historical journey, in written form, is travelled; description, through the use of creative language and imagination, generates the colour, the scenes, the feelings which are part of, and enliven, the historical journey.

Finally, the role of the third of the trio of techniques, analysis, needs to be considered. The concept of history informing this study is 'that history is a dialogue, a continuous, disciplined process of interaction between the past and the present'.¹⁹¹ It will be through the descriptive and narrative components of historical writing that the atmosphere of an ongoing dialogue and a sense of interaction between the past and present will be sustained in this thesis. The analytical component of the techniques will contribute to a disciplined analysis of the historical data and the understandings generated by the analysis. The analysis will take account of a wide range of factors, some of which are presented and discussed briefly within the context of this thesis in the following section, *Elements of Analytical Historical Research*.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Tosh, p. 148.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Elements of Analytical Historical Research

There are four elements of analytical historical research investigated in this section of the study. Each of these elements was extrapolated from the preceding discussion, in this chapter, by the researcher.

Distinguishing between fact and opinion

In conducting a disciplined analysis of historical data it is critical that the historian distinguishes between fact and opinion. For example, in the earliest stages of the study when the researcher initiated personal conversations about film societies with individuals or groups of people, the often expressed opinion was that film societies were a product of left-wing thinkers and activists. As the researcher's investigation into the establishment of the societies deepened, it was found that the Realist Film Association, which provided a variety of support services for film societies in the 1950s, was a left-wing organisation. In addition, Mrs Jean Griffiths, the first Secretary of the Camberwell Film Society, better known as Senator Jean Melzer following her election as a Victorian Senator in the Federal Parliament in 1974,¹⁹² had joined the Communist Party as a teenager, resigning in 1957. She was associated with the Realist Film Association¹⁹³ and joined the Camberwell Branch of the Australian Labour Party in 1966.¹⁹⁴ In 1984, Melzer was Convenor of the *Movement Against Uranium Mining*.¹⁹⁵ In this example, there is an element of congruence rather than difference between opinion and fact as related to the Camberwell Film Society. Nevertheless, without documented evidence the researcher would not have been able to contend that there was a link between the Camberwell Film Society and individuals with left-wing ideals and connections.

Data is interrogated and interpreted within in its historical context

Another important factor in academic historical research is that the data is interrogated and interpreted within in its historical context that is, within the reality of the needs and

¹⁹² Farewell to a great Australian anti-nuclear senator. Retrieved from <http://nuclearnewsaustralia.wordpress.com/2013/06/25/farewell-to-a-great-australian-anti-nuclear-senator/>

¹⁹³ Lowenstein, W. (1992). Interview with Ken Coldicutt, *Communists and the Left in the Arts and Community Oral History Project*, DCM record: National Library of Australia. CD reference: TRC3111/7/3 Ken Coldicutt Disc 2 of 2 30'54" Stereo 12 x (A)

¹⁹⁴ Melzer, Jean Isobelle Retrieved from <http://trove.nla.gov.au/people/727069?c=people>

Melzer, Jean Isabel. Retrieved from <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansards%2F56c6873e-02be-48c1-a805-5a44781c4c92%2F0274%22>

¹⁹⁵ Farewell to a great Australian anti-nuclear senator, op. cit.

situations in which the events occurred.¹⁹⁶ Chapters Four and Five of this thesis provide examples of the historical context, relevant to the interrogation of the data. Chapter Four presents an overview of the interface between the global and the local in relation to the development of the international film industry. The chapter also highlights the influence of politico/social movements such as the Weimar Republic in Germany on filmic culture, both within Germany and in the wider filmic movement. This chapter also introduces the idea of a duality in filmic culture which was identified in the early 1920s. The components of this duality were: cinema as entertainment/business, and cinema as art. Chapter Five, *History of the City of Camberwell*, is a synopsis of the cultural/historical development of Camberwell as it evolved from the hunting grounds of traditional owners into an urbanised, educated, mature community, receptive to the concept of forming a film society. Chapters Four and Five are an intrinsic part of the cultural/historical context within which the data is interrogated.

Taking account of both easily observable events and veiled incidents

The most easily observable events of the Camberwell Film Society are the screenings of films at the monthly meetings. For example, in Chapters Seven and Eight, *History of the Camberwell Film Society*, factors such as the diversity of films selected for screening by the Society, idiosyncratic directorial styles, programming patterns, cinematography techniques, and plot complexity are discussed. Veiled incidents such as the loss of documents and minutes of annual general and committee meetings dating from the formation of the Society to May 1977,¹⁹⁷ and the Society's declining membership from 1977-78¹⁹⁸ onwards are alluded to in Chapter Eight. Although limited information is available about these two incidents they are part of the Society's history, and need to be recounted to ensure the reliability and validity of this narrative interpretative history of the Society. The ongoing issue of declining membership represents a 'true complexity of events in which the participants [members of CFS] so often foundered.'¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Croce, B. *History as the Story of Liberty*, Engl. transl. (1941). Quoted in Carr op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁹⁷ Camberwell Film Society. *Minutes of Committee Meetings and Annual General Meetings: May 1977 to April 1999*.

¹⁹⁸ Table 8.1 *Number of Members by Year 1977-78 to 1984-85*.

¹⁹⁹ Tosh, op. cit., p. 149. This is a repeat of a previously quoted observation from Tosh. Refer to footnote 191.

Searching for specific, critical factors which act as catalysts for change as well as exploring general contextual trends

The previously mentioned Chapters Four and Five, explore general contextual trends relevant to the formation and growth of the Camberwell Film Society. These trends include the globalisation of the film industry and, the development of Camberwell into a mature, metropolitan community. The final chapter in this contextual mosaic is Chapter Six. In this chapter, the researcher's gaze initially centres on the growth of an international documentary film movement under the aegis of Dr John Grierson. Then the researcher's gaze moves from general trends to specific critical factors. It encompasses an outline of structural and technological developments which precipitated the development of film societies in the state of Victoria. Furthermore, reference is made to the specific and critical roles of Kenneth Coldicutt, and the Realist Film Unit/Association, in the upsurge of interest in film societies: this upsurge was evident, especially in the state of Victoria, in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s.

Summary: Elements of Analytical Historical Research

As the preceding discussion under the heading, *Elements of Analytical Historical Research*, demonstrates, the narrative and descriptive elements of this thesis are underpinned by the strength and accuracy of the analysis, in conjunction with constant interaction between the trio of techniques as recognised by Tosh. As well as reflecting the concept of history as a continuous, dialogic process between past and present which underpins this study, Tosh's three-pronged approach to historical writing recognises the importance of analysis and interpretation as nominated by Connell²⁰⁰.

Primary Sources: Definitions and Purposes

Marwick defines a primary source as 'the raw material, more meaningful to the expert historian than to the layman'²⁰¹ generally providing "imperfect and fragmentary evidence"²⁰². These sources may include handwritten papers,²⁰³ diaries, printed materials

²⁰⁰ Jenkins, Louise Ellen, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁰¹ Marwick, op. cit., p.132.

²⁰² Ibid., p.131. Paraphrase of Professor Geoffrey Barraclough's definition of history referred to by Marwick. Source of original reference: Barraclough, G. (1955). *History in a Changing World*. (2nd reprint 1957). Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 29-30.

²⁰³ Marwick argues that a handwritten document may not be an authentic historical record as 'it may be a complete invention on the part of the writer'. Marwick, op. cit., p. 133.

such as official letters, government reports, committee working papers, population statistics, legal documents, surviving structures of old buildings and artefacts from archaeological sites.²⁰⁴ Marwick argues that although it is sometimes difficult to categorise a source as primary or secondary an important indicator is that a ‘secondary source is itself dependent on primary sources’.²⁰⁵ Heller and Wilson state that ‘an account offered by anyone other than an eyewitness is termed a secondary source’.²⁰⁶ Tosh, challenges this view calling for a broader definition which recognises that historians ‘will usually prefer those sources that are closest in time and place to the events in question. But sources more remote from the action have their own significance. The historian is often as much interested in what contemporaries *thought* was happening as in what actually happened’.²⁰⁷

Primary sources have the potential to initiate a dialogue between the past and the present. Croce argues that ‘however remote in time events ...recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate’.²⁰⁸ Peterson proposes that ‘History is created out of the encounter of a historian with a document’.²⁰⁹ Ideally, as historians interrogate the primary sources from their particular place and time in history, they enter into a dialogue with the sources seeking to understand their meaning in their particular historical place and time.

Just as Clendinnen warns historians to beware of the well-told historical story, as previously mentioned, Marwick alerts them to the possibility that some historical documents were written for purposes other than as historical source material. Consequently, the material and arguments contained in these works may reflect a particular point of view—political, social or economic—held by the author.²¹⁰ Marwick reminds the historian that such sources had a purpose and meaning for their authors which

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 132-133. Tosh, op. cit., pp. 53-76. Rodwell, G. (1992). Historical research in education. In D. M. Cavanaugh, & G.W. Rodwell. (eds.). *Dialogues in Educational Research*. Darwin, Australia: William Michael Press, p. 96.

²⁰⁵ Marwick, op. cit., p. 132.

²⁰⁶ Quoted in Jenkins, Louise Ellen, op. cit., p. 96.

²⁰⁷ Tosh, op. cit., pp. 95-100.

²⁰⁸ Croce, op cit.

²⁰⁹ Petersen, op. cit., p. 61.

²¹⁰ Marwick, op. cit., p. 135.

may differ from the intentions of historical researchers of later generations.²¹¹ Distinguishing between authorial bias or exaggeration to strengthen a particular point of view, and the authenticity of the material presented in a book or document, is sometimes a challenge for the historical researcher.²¹² This reminds the researcher that historical awareness includes being alert to issues such as the authenticity and reliability of primary sources.²¹³ Issues such as these are addressed in a later section of this chapter titled *Triangulation*.

In the following section, the primary sources which inform this thesis are discussed. This discussion takes place within the framework of the definitions and understanding of the role of primary sources explored in the preceding sections of this chapter.

Categories of Primary Sources

One of the challenges of historical research, especially when there is an abundance of historical artefacts, personal records and documents, is identifying which resources are primary sources. To assist in this process, the researcher referred to the preceding definitions of primary sources and selected the following criteria for identifying those most relevant to this study:

- eyewitness accounts as recorded in the news journals and minutes of the Committee and annual general meetings of the Society;
- sources closest in time and place to the events or subjects being explored. These include reports and articles from publications such as *Reel News*, the journal of the FVFS, programs for the *Melbourne Film Festivals* in the 1950s and 1960s, and archival material held in The University of Melbourne Archives and the Uniting Church Archives;
- oral history interviews with eyewitnesses, as well as those people close in time and place to what happened, and individuals more remote from the action who have a view on film societies, past and present, based on their experiences.

²¹¹ Ibid, Marwick. Marwick illustrates his argument with the following example. For people studying socialist theory, Engel's book *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), is a significant primary source. However, Engel's intention in writing the book was to expose 'the evils of capitalism'.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Tosh, op. cit., pp. 95-100.

As indicated above, the primary sources for this study include printed documents, handwritten letters and notes, publications and oral history interviews. The wide and diverse range of primary sources available to the researcher precludes the inclusion of all of these in this study. Consequently, the focus is on those sources which fit most closely within the scope of the study, that is, are most pertinent to, and significant for, the research. For ease and clarity of discussion, the primary sources presented in the following section are presented under two headings, *Printed and handwritten primary sources*, and *Oral history*.

Printed and Handwritten Primary Sources

As demonstrated in Chapter Seven, *History of the Camberwell Film Society*, the researcher's most significant primary sources were the Camberwell Film Society's *News Journals* dating from July 1964 to 1993. The news journal for July 1964 contains identifier volume and issue numbers: these are Vol. 2 No. 7.²¹⁴ As these numbers suggest, the July 1964 *News Journal* was not the first journal published. However, the researcher has not been able to find any earlier editions of the journals, even with the assistance of the local history librarian, Myra Dowling, at the Ashburton Branch, City of Boroondara Library. Demonstrably, the primary sources available to historians often provide only fragmentary and imperfect evidence.²¹⁵

The typewritten news journals were published monthly until July 1983 when the pattern changed to bi-monthly publications. Ten years later, in February 1993, the bi-monthly news journals were replaced by an annual schedule of films titled, *Pin-Up Movie Guide*. These schedules contain screening dates, film titles, and brief synopses of the films to be screened each month of the relevant calendar year. In 2000, the title of the *Pin-Up Movie Guide* was changed to *Season of International Cinema*. Each of the three versions of the Society's programs is printed on A4 paper. The news journals were folded in-half, providing four pages for communicating with members on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. A comprehensive description of the news journal is recorded in, 'The Beginning: the First Ten Years 1955-1964'. Chapter Seven, *Case Study: History of the Camberwell Film Society 1955 to 1974*. The A4 sheets of paper on which the pin-up movie guides and

²¹⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, July, p. 3.

²¹⁵ Marwick, op. cit., p. 132.

programs for the seasons of international cinema are printed were folded into three forming tri-fold brochures. The annual film program is on the inside of the brochure with the Society's contact details and advertising material, including images from films, on the three outside folds. Clearly, the brochure is a once a year publication unlike the news journals which were designed as monthly communication vehicles. Nonetheless, the focus of this discussion is on the news journals which provide more comprehensive information about the Society than the pin-up movie guides or programs for the seasons of international cinema. Furthermore, the period covered by news journals is more relevant than the yearly movie calendar-type productions to the first forty years of the Society being studied in this thesis, that is, from 1955 to 1994.

The news journals, pin-up movie guides and programs for the seasons of international cinema accessed by the researcher were part of the late Jean Catford's collection of material about the Society.²¹⁶ Additional pin-up movie guides were supplied by the late Joan Hunter, also a member of the Society for many years. The news journals were a valuable source of 'raw material' for the researcher: they contain an editorial, reports of Committee and annual general meetings, names of office-bearers, information about external activities relevant to members, for example, details about Melbourne Film Festivals and, occasionally, excerpts from articles or books about film societies, for instance, an article titled, *Purpose of Film Societies*, was published in the Society's *News Journal*, November 1973. More importantly, in the context of this thesis, the news journals impart details of the Society's monthly screenings such as venues, dates, synopses of films to be screened each month as well as reviews of the feature film screened in the previous month.

In Marwick's words, much of this material is 'more meaningful to the expert historian than the layman'.²¹⁷ It gave the researcher insights into the activities of the Society and its members which are distant in time. It is doubtful that when the news journals were being prepared that Society members thought of these as future historical documents. The journals are examples of Marwick's 'raw material': the paper on which some of the older journals are printed is yellowing, and fragile, liable to tear easily and, unlike many similar

²¹⁶ Hereinafter referred to as the Catford Papers.

²¹⁷ Marwick, op. cit.

contemporary publications, an editor's red pen has not corrected factors such as formatting, spelling and the occasional grammatical error. The researcher found that handling and working with this raw material cast a spell of its own as she was transported into a more remote period of time. Moreover, in recounting and analysing these activities, and 'virtually' meeting the main protagonists as she interrogated the news journals, the researcher was reminded of Croce's observation that history 'in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate'.²¹⁸

There were other primary sources in the form of raw material which informed Chapters Seven and Eight, particularly, and the thesis, generally. The handwritten minutes of the Society's Committee and annual general meetings from 16 May 1977 to 1994 confirmed as well as added to information extracted from the news journals. Amongst the material in the Catford Papers were newspaper cuttings advertising the Society's activities and meeting arrangements. Some of the cuttings were dated and relevant newspapers named giving the researcher evidence to support reports of advertising campaigns as recorded in the news journals and minutes of the Committee. Nevertheless, the majority of the cuttings were undated and did not include the title of the publication in which they appeared. Additional material held in the Catford Papers, with the newspaper cuttings, includes unsigned handwritten notes, some related to the Society's history and others appeared to be short speeches about the Society. The newspaper cuttings, handwritten notes and speeches are not only raw material but also provide imperfect and fragmentary evidence about the Society. However, although less than perfect, this ephemera is a significant primary source offering glimpses into the Society as experienced by the late Jean Catford who collected, stored and treasured the material in the Catford Papers: most probably, Catford was the author of the handwritten notes and speeches. The Catford Papers and the contribution of Jean Catford²¹⁹ to the Society are discussed later in Chapter Eight.

Other significant printed and/or handwritten primary sources include archival material about Kenneth John Coldicutt, a significant contributor to the development of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria, as argued in Chapter 6, *An Educational Filmic Culture: People, Passions and Politics*. The Coldicutt archival file is held in The

²¹⁸ Carr, op. cit., p. 21.

²¹⁹ Jean Catford joined the Society in 1968.

University of Melbourne Archives.²²⁰ The date range of this material is 1934-1993; it comprises ten boxes with each box containing a number of folders allocated to different aspects of Coldicutt's interests and activities, personal and professional.²²¹ In the context of this thesis, this material is a rich primary source. The researcher spent many hours at The Melbourne University Archives exploring the contents of the Coldicutt Archive and making copious notes about issues relevant to her study. Nevertheless, she found it difficult not to be distracted by the richness of other personal papers and publications of lesser direct importance to her current research, for example, Coldicutt's war service documents.²²² Included in the archive are items such as a copy of a letter signed by Coldicutt to 'The Herald',²²³ a Melbourne newspaper, on the death of Sergei Eisenstein on 12 February 1948,²²⁴ handwritten notes of concern about the 1948 Cinematograph Films Bill,²²⁵ and the Constitution of the Realist Film Association.²²⁶ Either indirectly or indirectly each of these factors contributed to the formation of Victorian Film Societies, as documented in this thesis: Grierson modelled his approach to editing documentary films on Eisenstein's technique, the unification of loosely connected Victorian film societies to oppose the 1948 Cinematograph Films Bill led to the formation of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies (FVFS), and the Realist Film Association provided films, technical assistance and resources for Victorian Film Societies in the late 1940s and 1950s. The researcher found this rich and extensive archival material when searching for an obituary for Coldicutt.

The researcher was given a copy of the program for the Olinda Film Festival, 1952, when she interviewed Edwin Schefferle and Bill Kerr.²²⁷ In addition, Schefferle gave her copies of the programs for a number of the Melbourne Film Festivals between 1953 and 1967: the Olinda Festival acted as a catalyst for the establishment of these Festivals. As a staff member at the State Film Centre, Schefferle played a noteworthy role in the spread of a

²²⁰ Collection: Kenneth John Coldicutt. Retrieved from <http://gallery.its.unimelb.edu.au/imu/imu.php?request=multimedia&irn=6010> Series Table of Contents & Description.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² The University of Melbourne Archives. Collection: Kenneth John Coldicutt. The University of Melbourne Archives. Box 4 Folder 4/5.

²²³ Ibid., Box 5 Folder 4/12.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., Box 6 Folder 6/1.

²²⁶ Ibid., Box 1 Folder 1/2.

²²⁷ This interview was conducted on Monday 14 June, 2012.

filmic educational culture across the state of Victoria and in the State Film Centre's support for film societies. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, the programs given to the researcher by Schefferle and his knowledge of the State Film Centre, informed the researcher about aspects of the broader context critical to the formation of Victorian film societies. Furthermore, Schefferle was a founder of the Geelong Film Society in the 1950s.²²⁸ Also, he was an invaluable member of, and a driving force in, the Camberwell Film Society from the late 1980s onwards.

The aforementioned Melbourne Film Festival programs held by the researcher have been categorised as primary sources: they are printed documents, independent of other primary sources having been prepared for singular events which are now remote in time. Moreover, the content and tone of the program for the Olinda Festival of 1952 demonstrates the commitment of film societies 'to the study and appreciation of the more serious and cultural aspects of the cinema'.²²⁹ The researcher used this statement of intent to support, and provide evidence for, the role of film societies as promulgated by CFS committees to Society members, over many years.²³⁰ Also, the programs assisted the researcher in ascertaining an approximate date for the founding of the Camberwell Film Society.²³¹ The determination of this date was proving to be difficult, as explained in *The Challenges of Data Collection*, the last section in this chapter, the Society's earliest documented records were lost in a house fire in the 1970s. However, the earliest MFF programs contained lists of film societies registered with the FVFS. By referring to these lists, the researcher was able to establish an approximate date for the formation of the Camberwell Film Society.²³² In addition, even in the Festival's infancy, its contribution to Melbourne's cultural life was acknowledged. The Editorial in the 1956 Festival program states that the Festival 'has become the meeting place for everyone who is seriously interested in the film, and is now firmly established in the cultural life of our community'.²³³ This observation further validated the researcher's contention, as stated in Chapter Five, History of the City of

²²⁸ 'Geelong Film Society'. (1950). In *The Film Monthly*, November, p.31.

²²⁹ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952). *Film Festival*. op. cit., p. 2.

²³⁰ For example: Camberwell Film Society. (1992). *News Journal*. June, p. 2.

²³¹ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1955). Program for *Melbourne Film Festival*, op. cit., inner side of back cover. Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1956). Program for *Melbourne Film Festival*. published for the Federation of Victorian Film Societies by F. G Nicholls, President, 24 Fitzwilliam Street, Kew, and A. C. Heintz, Secretary, 1a Moor Street, Sandringham, Victoria, Australia, inner side of back cover. Editorial.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1956). Program for *Melbourne Film Festival*, op. cit., Editorial.

Camberwell, that there was a growing filmic educational culture in Melbourne following the end of WW2. Also, in Chapter Six, *An Educational Filmic Culture: People, Passions and Politics*, the researcher cited additional evidence from the MFF programs, to support this contention, for instance, Professor A. K. Stout, Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy, University of Sydney,²³⁴ a distinguished academic, led discussion on ‘Film and Society’ at the Olinda Festival in 1952.²³⁵ Furthermore, films were sourced from international agencies, for example, East Germany²³⁶ and Finland²³⁷, as well as the Australian Religious Film Society²³⁸ and the State Film Centre,²³⁹ signifying a shift towards a filmic educational culture. As demonstrated in Chapters Seven and Eight, the researcher refers to these programs to extend her knowledge of selected films screened by the Camberwell Film Society.

Primary sources additional to those presented in this discussion were interrogated by the researcher.²⁴⁰ However, in this discussion the researcher chose to focus on the primary sources she ascertained as being most important to her study. In the first instance, the primary sources related to the founding and lifetime of the Camberwell Film Society from 1955 to 1994, the period of the study. The selected primary sources in the second instance, give voice to the role of Kenneth John Coldicutt and the Realist Film Unit/Association regarding the enhancement of a filmic educational culture in Victoria, and the associated expansion of the film society movement. The third primary source is selected programs for the Melbourne Film Festivals from 1955 to 1967. The eclectic nature and total sum of the films screened at the Melbourne Film Festivals created a body of filmic knowledge which contributed to the development of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria.

²³⁴ Stout was ‘an original member of the national Film Board; chairman of N.S.W. Films Council since its formation; President of the Federation of N.S.W. Film Societies and of the Australia Council of Film Societies.’ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952). *Olinda Film Festival 1952* (Program). Author, p. 9.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ ‘Feldberg Fantasia’, 1965, in *Melbourne Film Festival* (1953). (Program). Federation of Victorian Film Societies, 1966, p. 17.

²³⁷ ‘Onnelliset leikit’, (Happy Games), in Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1967). *Melbourne Film Festival 1967* (Program). Author, p.22.

²³⁸ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1967). *Melbourne Film Festival* (1967). (Program). Author, last page of program.

²³⁹ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1956) op. cit., inner side of front cover.

²⁴⁰ For example, primary sources about the early history of Camberwell held at the Ashburton Branch of the City of Boroondara Library, which informed Chapter Five.

In the following section, the focus on primary sources moves away from printed documents and hand-written material to oral history. The subject of oral history is discussed with reference to theories supported by illustrations of their application in this thesis.

Oral History

In this study, oral history is the methodological process; interviewing the methodological tool. Given the longevity of oral history, and the popularity of interviews as a research tool,²⁴¹ much has been written about these factors. This seeming abundance of information suggests that the purpose of oral history and interviews in this thesis require consideration.

Ritchie, an oral history theorist and practitioner, observes that “Memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted and preserved. Simply put, oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews”.²⁴² Oral history²⁴³ is not a new historical research process: in China, three thousand years ago during the reign of the Zhou dynasty, the thoughts of the Chinese people were recorded;²⁴⁴ Thucydides’ history of the Peloponnesian wars (431 B.C.E) includes his personal observations as well as the accounts of other eye-witnesses.²⁴⁵ In the sixteenth-century oral history was used by the Spaniards in the Americas to record the histories of indigenous populations.²⁴⁶ Similarly, the sources for Bancroft’s seven-volume *History of California, 1884-90*, included interviews which sought “the reminiscences of nineteenth-century Mexican military governors and *alcaldes* (civilian officials) and of the first American settlers”.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ Beth Robertson states that, ‘Oral history is as old as humanity but today it is associated with recorded interviews with people about their memories’. Robertson, B.M. (2006) *Oral History Handbook*. (5th ed.). Unley South Australia: Oral History Association of Australia, (South Australian Branch), p. 2.

²⁴² Ritchie, D.A. (2003). *Doing Oral History. A Practical Guide*. (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, p. 19.

²⁴³ The term oral history is comparatively new being first applied in the 1940s. Nevins, A. (1996). Oral History: How and Why It was Born. In Dunaway, D. & Baum, W. (eds.), *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (2nd ed.), Walnut Creek, California: Alta Mira Press.

²⁴⁴ Ritchie, op. cit., p. 19-20.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

Thucydides, 431 B.C.E, The History of the Peloponnesian War, Richard Crawley, Translator. <http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.html>

²⁴⁶ Ritchie, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁴⁷ Marwick, op. cit., p. 43

Throughout the nineteenth-century, the accent on history as a literary art,²⁴⁸ of which oral history represented a significant part, was challenged.²⁴⁹ This challenge culminated in the ‘launching of the Berlin revolution in historical studies’.²⁵⁰ The challengers included Leopold von Ranke who came ‘to be regarded as the founder of the modern discipline of history’.²⁵¹ One of the characteristics of this new approach was the endorsement of ‘documents created at the time historical events occurred’²⁵² and an insistence ‘upon a new precision of documentation’.²⁵³ This led to a devaluing of oral history as an accurate and reliable source of historical evidence deemed to be insufficiently rigorous.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, while historians embraced the newly acquired status of history as an academic discipline and were disdainful of oral history as a valid research tool, the practice of interviewing became more commonplace. There was a greater variation in the subjects explored: journalists, politicians, government officials, and ethnographers found interviewing an effective means of recording contemporary events, current opinions, and lifestyles matters.²⁵⁵

Since the late 1940s onwards oral history has been gradually reinstated as a valid and effective means of gathering, recording and analysing historic and current information for research purposes.²⁵⁶ Given the vigorous disparagement of oral history as a valid research tool and the high value placed on documentary evidence in the century prior to the 1940s, these outcomes may seem surprising. However, a comparison of factors such as technological, social and political in the 1800s, with those of the 1940s onwards, indicates vast changes: letter-writing as a means of communication had decreased, histories written by colonising governments tended to exclude references to indigenous people, and documents prepared by repressive regimes ignored the actual experiences of the general population.²⁵⁷ The belief underlying these selective approaches to recording history would seem to have been that the ‘people that matter leave records, they make history’. By

²⁴⁸ Marwick, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 34-40. Ritchie, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

²⁵⁰ Marwick, op. cit., p. 34.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 36. Barraclough, op. cit., pp. 169-171.

²⁵² Ritchie, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁵³ Marwick, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁵⁴ Ritchie, op. cit., pp. 20-21

²⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

²⁵⁶ Slim, H. & Thompson, P. (1993). *Listening for a Change. Oral Testimony and Development*. London: Panos Publications, pp.11-13.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

corollary, people who leave no records make nothing and have no value'.²⁵⁸ No longer were researchers able to depend on the availability or reliability of written documentation for research purposes.²⁵⁹

Eventually it was realised that 'no one group had an exclusive understanding of the past, and that the best projects were those that cast their nets wide, recording as many different participants in events or members of a community as possible'.²⁶⁰ It was recognised that while written records were generally a sound source of factual material there was often little background information about how and why decisions were made.²⁶¹ The recognition of the value of oral history in filling-in these spaces gradually grew.²⁶² 'Oral history is not intended to replace written sources but to add yet another way of acquiring information. It can amplify the pieces between the bald statement [*sic*] in the minutes'.²⁶³ Clearly, oral history has the potential to encourage a dialogue between the past and the present, to provide avenues for open-ended discussion and to capture the widest possible memories. Oral history is an important component of historical enquiry.²⁶⁴

As previously explained, the official records of the Camberwell Film Society were lost in a house fire in approximately 1977.²⁶⁵ Consequently, the researcher was unable to depend on the availability of written documentation to explain when and why the Society had been formed, and why people had joined. However, by reference to various official documents²⁶⁶ the researcher estimated that the most likely date for the founding of the Society was in the second half of 1955. This left the researcher with a gap of nine years for which she had little information: the Society's *News Journals* for 1964 represented the earliest documented evidence available to her.²⁶⁷ In an attempt to fill-in as many spaces as

²⁵⁸ Riordon, M. (2004). *Unauthorized Biography of the World. Oral History on the Front Lines*. Toronto, Canada: Between the Lines, p. 4.

²⁵⁹ Ritchie, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

Angrosino, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

²⁶⁰ Ritchie, op. cit., p. 24.

²⁶¹ Robertson, op. cit., p. 4. Angrosino, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

²⁶² Angrosino, op. cit., p.2.

²⁶³ Hibbins, G.M., Fahey, C., and Askew, M. R. (1986). *Local History. A Hand book for Enthusiasts*. (2nd impression). Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, p.10.

²⁶⁴ Angrosino, op. cit., p.3.

²⁶⁵ Refer to 'The Fourth Decade 1985-1994', in Chapter Eight.

²⁶⁶ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1955). Op. cit., inner side of back cover.

Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1956). Op. cit., inner side of back cover.

Refer to Chapter Seven.

²⁶⁷ Catford Papers.

possible between 1955, the estimated founding date, and 1964, the researcher conducted interviews with a wide range of people. These included: a staff member from the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI),²⁶⁸ President of ACOFS and FVFS,²⁶⁹ a former member of the Surrey Film Society who attended the Olinda Film Festival-1952,²⁷⁰ Nancye Trigellis-Smith,²⁷¹ widow of the secretary of the Society in the mid- to late-1960s, and Kenneth Coldicutt's widow, Elisabeth Coldicutt.²⁷² By combining the relevant experiences of these interviewees with other material, and using a conjectural process, the researcher was able to develop an interpretative historical representation of why the Society was formed and why people joined.²⁷³

Although 'Memory is the core of oral history'²⁷⁴ researchers are cautioned to beware of accepting interviewees' stories and interpretations about the past without question.²⁷⁵ It is argued that memory is fallible: people may be selective about what they choose to share with an interviewer; different people may offer different interpretations of the same event or recall different aspects.²⁷⁶ Critics extend the argument claiming that these differences may reflect a particular bias or prejudice or an interviewee's desire to protect themselves or others, adulterating the veracity of the interview material.²⁷⁷ These concerns seem to engender doubt about the reliability of data collected through an oral history interview and its role in a disciplined enquiry.

There is a small illustration of the fallibility of memory in this study. Prior to collecting any data for the study, hearsay suggested there was a strong left-wing influence in the formation of the early Victorian film societies. Near the beginning of the research, when seeking information about this left-wing influence and about Ernie Raison, a driving force

²⁶⁸ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*.

²⁶⁹ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Bryan Putt*.

²⁷⁰ Jenkins, D. M. (2013). *Richard Mitchell*.

²⁷¹ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

²⁷² Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt*.

²⁷³ Refer to Chapter Seven.

²⁷⁴ Ritchie, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁷⁵ Robertson, op. cit., p.4.

²⁷⁶ Holbrook, H. (1995). Methodological developments in oral history: a multi-layered approach. In *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 22 (3), p.26.

Refer to Slim & Thompson, op. cit., pp. 140-141 for an analysis of the nature of memory.

²⁷⁷ The same comments could be made about the most well-documented research, underpinned by scientific method, because "no matter how objective they may strive to be historians are creating narratives that reflect their own interests, theoretical assumptions, social class, gender". Angrosino, op.cit., p.2.

in the Camberwell Film Society in the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, the researcher was told that ‘Ernie [Raison] was certainly left leaning but not a communist, and his wife Pat, also’. Moreover, the interviewee thought that Raison had been a school-teacher.²⁷⁸ As the research progressed, the researcher was advised that on leaving school, Raison ‘became an apprentice electrician with the Post Master General’s Department (PMG) where he spent his working life’. Also, Raison ‘claimed to be a union sympathiser and ... to have joined the Communist Party’.²⁷⁹ This demonstrates the fallibility of memory – both parties were acquainted with Raison personally, at different times in his life, but each had a different recollection of his political proclivities and professional status. The researcher was not concerned about the superior validity of either of these recollections over the other. Rather, both recollections confirmed her impression that Raison was left-leaning politically and that he was educated beyond post-secondary level.

Angrosino points out that ‘The most important philosophical debate in the oral history community concerns the accuracy of the recorded data.’²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, Rodwell invests oral history with a seemingly high degree of value arguing that ‘oral testimony’²⁸¹ has become increasingly important for educational historians, and is another form of a primary source’.²⁸² Slim and Thompson²⁸³ also advance the status of oral testimony proposing that,

There has always been a special power in direct speech. The raw recounting of experience has an authenticity and persuasiveness which it is hard to match, and most of us would rather hear someone speak directly than read about them through another’s words.²⁸⁴

The researcher supports Slim and Thompson’s contention that there is a special power in direct speech. In 1992, the late Wendy Lowenstein, a well-known Australian historian in the field of oral history, conducted a number of audio-taped interviews with Kenneth

²⁷⁸ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

²⁷⁹ Grant, J. (2013). *Queensclife Historical Museum*, e-mail to Dorothy Jenkins. Personal contact.

²⁸⁰ Angrosino, op. cit., p.19.

²⁸¹ Rodwell, op. cit., p. 96.

²⁸² Rodwell, op. cit., p.96.

²⁸³ Slim & Thompson, op. cit., *passim*.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Coldicutt and Gerry Harant.²⁸⁵ The audio-taped material has been digitised onto nine compact discs. The interviews were part of an oral history project titled, *Communists and the Left in the Arts and Community Oral History Project*.²⁸⁶

Prior to listening to the compact discs, the researcher had not heard Coldicutt or Harant speak. While listening to them respond to Lowenstein's questions during the interviews, the researcher became more engaged with these two interviewees, and their ideas. It became very clear that Coldicutt was forthright with his opinions with a tendency to be overbearing, feisty, enjoyed an argument, and had a strong sense of humour. Harant made few comments during the interviews. Nevertheless, when he spoke he gave the impression of being a thoughtful, perceptive person giving considered opinions. They recounted their experiences with the Realist Film Association and its support of film societies, with nuances of expression, authority and a depth of passion which are difficult to convey in printed documents or when an event is retold by another person. The researcher felt that being able to hear Coldicutt and Harant's voices gave life to her perceptions of them, confirming that there is a special power in direct speech.

But, all interviews are not oral history interviews.²⁸⁷ Agrosino proposes that oral history requires a systematic approach to the collection and recording of data characterised by 'a clearly defined and carefully maintained process by which a person recalls an event for an interviewer, who records those recollections in order to create a usable historical record'.²⁸⁸ This approach is reflected in Slim and Thompson's observations about the preferred characteristics of 'good interviews'.²⁸⁹ A preference is expressed for semi-structured interview schedules which allow flexibility. Slim and Thompson state that, ideally the interview schedule should be given to the interviewees before the interview giving them time for reflection and marshalling of their thoughts and memories. Prior to each interview, the researcher forwarded a copy of the interview schedule to each interviewee with the Explanatory Statement and a covering letter confirming arrangements

²⁸⁵ Both Coldicutt and Harant were significant figures in the Realist Film Unit and Realist Film Association. Refer to Chapter Six.

²⁸⁶ Wendy Lowenstein. (1992). *Series Communists and the Left in the Arts and Community Oral History Project*. DCM record: National Library of Australia. Oral TRC 3111/7 (Recording and Summary)

²⁸⁷ Agrosino, op. cit., p.7

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p.6

²⁸⁹ Slim & Thompson, op. cit., p. 76

such as date, time and venue for the interview. On receiving the interview schedule, interviewees may be reminded about pertinent artefacts and images in their possession that they would like to share with the researcher. As Gordon Cox observes interviews may be a research tool for ‘gaining information not recorded in documents; developing personal perspectives on people, events and processes; interpreting documents; incidental benefits, including access to private papers.’²⁹⁰ For example, as previously mentioned, Edwin Schefferle gave the researcher a number of MFF programs (1952 to 1967). The programs for the earliest festivals are a rich source of information about organisations such as the Victorian State Film Centre which played a critical role in supporting film societies through its comprehensive film lending library. Other material given to the researcher by Schefferle included eighty-nine film posters, copies of film journals such as *Take One*²⁹¹ and newspaper clippings.

A semi-structured approach provides both the interviewer and interviewee with a guide or map giving shape and direction to the interview supporting the concept of a disciplined enquiry²⁹² This concept is further enhanced if the interview questions are arranged sequentially, maybe chronologically or topically or by interconnecting themes.²⁹³ Such an arrangement makes it easier for the interviewer to refocus the interview if it becomes mired in irrelevant detours or hindered by evasive interviewee responses.²⁹⁴ The researcher always included a notepad and pencil in her interviewing equipment. When an interview seemed to be losing focus she quickly noted the point on the interview schedule to which she needed to return. Then, when appropriate, sensitively she would direct the interviewee’s attention to the relevant point being mindful not to offend the interviewee. However, within this semi-structured and sequential approach it is desirable to allow for the pursuit of interesting and pertinent avenues which may become apparent during an

²⁹⁰ Cox, G. (1996). A History of Music Education in England 1872-1928: a reflexive account of historical research. In *Research studies in music education*, 6, p.33.

²⁹¹ ‘*Take One* (published Montreal, 1966–1979) Founded by three "graduates" of the McGill Film Society -- Peter Lebensold, Adam Symansky and John Roston’. It was ‘the first serious English-Canadian film magazine’... attracting some ‘of the best film journalists of the time’. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Take_One_\(Canadian_magazine\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Take_One_(Canadian_magazine))

²⁹² Slim & Thompson, op. cit., p. 76

²⁹³ Ritchie, op. cit., pp. 91-92. Slim & Thompson, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

²⁹⁴ Hibbins et al., op. cit., p. 11. Angrosino, op. cit., p. 45.

interview.²⁹⁵ A flexible style, coupled with sensitive listening by the interviewer, is essential.²⁹⁶

This combination of a semi-structured interview, a sequential pattern of questions and a flexible interviewing style smooth the progress of an interview. Embodied in these factors is a disciplined manner of inquiry which provides openings for open-ended discussion. Ideally this discussion will be enlivened by the capture of a wide range of memories and characterised by a dialogue between the past and the present. However, while these factors, in conjunction with the systematic interview process, meet the guidelines for oral history interviews they do not necessarily ensure reliable and valid data. To validate the oral history data collected in this study the triangulation method, which requires reference to other sources, will be used,

When oral testimony can be set against other evidence, or one testimony can be compared with another, the variations in accounts, which might be thought a weakness, can be turned into a special strength, an insight into how people make sense of their lives and social worlds.²⁹⁷

Triangulation will be addressed in the final section of this chapter.

Biographies

Forrest reports that, ‘Biographical research is a branch of historical research that deals specifically with the individuals who make history’.²⁹⁸ Tosh urges caution in writing about important men and women because their lives are often ‘more fully and vividly documented’ than most of their contemporaries.²⁹⁹ The inherent danger in this mode of investigation is that a biography which is highly dependent on such sources may present an unbalanced view of the subject, either over-flattering or unflattering, maybe didactic or

²⁹⁵ Slim & Thompson, op. cit., p.76.

²⁹⁶ Ritchie, op. cit., p. 102. Slim & Thompson, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁹⁶ Ritchie, op. cit., pp. 91-92. Slim & Thompson, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

²⁹⁶ Hibbins et al., op. cit., p. 11. Angrosino, op. cit., p. 45.

²⁹⁶ Slim & Thompson, op. cit., p.76.

²⁹⁷ Slim & Thompson, op. cit., p. 141.

²⁹⁸ Forrest, D. (2002). Biographical Research: a component of historical research in education. In P. Green (ed.), *Slices of life: Qualitative Research Snapshots*, Melbourne: RMIT University Press, p. 138.

²⁹⁹ Tosh, op. cit., p. 119.

possibly ‘overlaid with intentions that are inconsistent with a strict regard for historical truth’.³⁰⁰ However, Tosh advocates that for historians to avoid this tendency ‘the essential requirement in a biography is that it understands the subject in his or her historical context’.³⁰¹ In bringing to life the ‘true complexity of events in which the participant so often foundered’ a sense of the subject’s ‘immediacy of experience’ may be created.³⁰² C.V. Wedgood, author of *The King’s Peace 1637-1741*, ‘defined her obligation to the people of the past as being “to restore their immediacy of experience”’.³⁰³

For historians, one of the most significant values of biography lies in its potential for restoring this aforementioned sense of immediacy of their subject’s experiences. A research method for attempting such a restoration is for the researcher to create an awareness of the ‘ideas, practices and processes from the perspective of the individuals who developed them and the time and place in which they were developed’.³⁰⁴ This study includes two mini-biographies. The intention of both biographies is to present a snapshot of the time and place, that is, environmental factors such as social, economic, familial, educational, in which the subjects developed. The motive is to gain a clear understanding of the influences of this environment on factors such as the subjects’ ideas, values, actions and behaviour: ‘plainly the motives of individuals have *some* [*sic*] part to play in explaining historical events’.³⁰⁵ The subjects of both biographies are people who were passionate about film, and had a deep appreciation of its value as an instrument of education. The first subject is Dr. John Grierson, a Scotsman, who was a driving force behind the spread of the non-theatrical, documentary film movement internationally. The second subject is Kenneth Coldicutt, a Victorian, who played a significant role in the establishment of the earliest Victorian film societies as well as the spread of a filmic educational culture primarily in that State. It is highly probable that neither Grierson nor Coldicutt would be well-known outside the world of non-theatrical documentary film however, their involvement and influence in their chosen fields of activity, is significant, particularly in the context of this thesis.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p. 120.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 149.

³⁰³ C.V. Wedgood, *The King’s Peace 1637-1741*, Collins, 1955, p. 16, quoted in Tosh with Lang, op. cit., p. 149.

³⁰⁴ Forrest, D. (2002), op. cit., p. 140.

³⁰⁵ Tosh, op. cit., p. 121

Images

In a historical study of film societies, images as artefacts seems particularly apposite: images may stimulate different meanings, perceptions and interpretations of historical events or actions compared with those excited by written records.³⁰⁶ Also, the inclusion of images as a research tool increases opportunities for open-ended discussion.³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, although these claims about the value of images seem laudable, there are issues of reliability and validity requiring consideration. The latter are important, particularly if images are to be offered as evidence in historical research or for illustrative purposes. The place of images in historical research is the subject of the following discussion.

Images and seeing are inseparable. Berger *et al.* propose that ‘Seeing comes before words ... It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world’.³⁰⁸ In addition, Berger observes that ‘The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe’.³⁰⁹ The act of seeing becomes even more complex when, as Berger explains, ‘We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice’.³¹⁰ This highlights one of the difficulties of using images in historical research, either as evidence or illustration.

Photographers, film directors, painters and others engaged in artistic practices make choices about the composition of their artistic work whether it is a particular frame for a film or something more permanent such as the crafting of a sculpture.³¹¹ they decide what will be included, what will be excluded and how the selected elements will be presented to achieve their artistic objectives. As argued by Roskill *et al.* this is not a new phenomenon: ‘guile and deception’³¹² in art have a history stemming back to antiquity. Viewers also make choices about the way they see or look at photographs and paintings; their seeing reflects their beliefs and knowledge which may change over time, adding further

³⁰⁶ Lawson Pope, J. (2008). *Dalcroze Eurhythmics in Australasia. The first generation, from 1918.* (Unpublished thesis). Melbourne: Monash University, pp. 30-31.

³⁰⁷ Gaskell, I. (2001). Visual History. In P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing.* (2nd ed.). USA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 211.

³⁰⁸ Berger, J. *et al.*, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Clark, K. (1969). *Civilisation.* (Tenth Paperback Impression 1977). London: British Broadcasting Corporation and John Murray, p. 123.

³¹² Roskill, M. & Carrier, D. (1983). *Truth and Falsehood in Visual Images.* Amherst, USA: The University of Massachusetts Press, p. 79.

complexity. ‘Art is not merely the sole property of an object or performance or process executed by someone we call an artist; art is a form of life that results from the interaction between the viewer and the work’.³¹³

Images, seeing, knowledge and beliefs are inseparable.³¹⁴ One of the many difficulties faced by Camberwell Film Society’s Film Selection Sub-Committee was selecting films which pleased all members. However, to paraphrase Roskill *et al.* and Berger’s preceding observations, the ways in which Society members looked at each image on the screen was based on their ways of seeing, their knowledge and their beliefs. Consequently, continuing with the paraphrase, a film is not the sole property of an investor or the lead actors or the production process executed by someone we call a filmmaker: each image or frame is a form of life that results from the interaction between the viewer and the film, the finished product of the filmmaker. Given the inseparability of seeing, knowing and believing, as propounded in this analysis and interpretation of ways of seeing, it is evident that it would be difficult for the Society’s Film Selection Sub-Committee to screen films which harmonised with the different ways of seeing of all members of the Society.

Just as historical researchers are cautioned to be aware of the well-told story and to be vigilant regarding author intent in printed historical work, Berger alerts the researcher to the complexities underlying the creation of images and their interpretation. Like Berger, Burke also advises prudence observing that,

representational art is often less realistic than it seems and distorts social reality rather than reflecting it, so that historians who do not take account of the variety of the intentions of painters or photographers (not to mention their patrons and clients) can be seriously misled.³¹⁵

³¹³ Eisner, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

³¹⁴ These attributes of knowing and seeing also relate to artefacts and clothing: in Peru the *quipu* ‘a series of knotted cords of different colours and lengths ... were tied together and attached to the head-dress in the form of a fringe’.³¹⁴ On seeing a *quipu*, a culturally uninformed visitor to Peru may have assumed it was an adornment to the head-dress. In reality, a *quipu* had a very practical and traditional purpose. It was a mnemonic device used for the oral transmission and memorising of traditional beliefs and practices throughout generations from the time of the Inca Empire: each knot represented a particular aspect of these beliefs and traditions. Vansina, *op. cit.*, pp 36 & 37.

³¹⁵ Burke, P. (2001). *Eyewitnessing. The Use of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, p.30.

However, the preceding cautionary observations do not discount the intrinsic value of images in historical research. As previously acknowledged, they have the potential to awaken our awareness of perspectives about the subject being studied which may not be apparent in the written text. Also, images may fill-in gaps in the historian's understanding or knowledge of the subject being explored.³¹⁶ For instance, one of Yasujiro Ozu's camera techniques was to film at unusual angles such as from the floor with the camera directed upwards towards the actors. This technique created different relationships between the actors as well as different perspectives of space for the viewer. Being unfamiliar with Ozu's techniques, the researcher gained an appreciation of the impact of these camera angles by accessing and viewing images from Ozu's movies online.

Connell asserts that the 'historian is much like a person trying to complete a complicated jigsaw puzzle with many of the parts missing. On the basis of what is often incomplete evidence, the historian must fill in the gaps by inferring what has happened and why it has happened'.³¹⁷ As Gasparini and Vick argue 'photographs constitute a potentially rich resource for historians. Determining how properly to use that resource raises difficult and complex questions to which historians have yet to devote the attention they warrant'.³¹⁸ During the course of this thesis the researcher was given a number of photographs of members of the Camberwell Film Society: these were taken some years ago. However, without names, dates and the venue or function at which these photographs were taken, they are of limited value as historical artefacts for this thesis.

Rather than drawing on images as historical evidence to support her arguments, or for illustrative purposes in this thesis, the researcher sought images to fill-in gaps in her knowledge of what happened, why it happened and how it happened. For example, to expand her background knowledge of the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association, the researcher watched the DVD, *The Archive Project*.³¹⁹ Furthermore, to grasp more fully the effect of Germanic oppositional art on filmmaking during the Weimar

³¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 30 -31.

³¹⁷ Connell, W. F. (1987). Research and writing in history of education. In Keeves, J. (Ed.), *Australian Education: a review of recent research*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, p. 61.

³¹⁸ Gasparini, F. and Vick, M. (2006). Picturing the History of Teacher Education Photograph and Methodology. In *History of Education Review*, 35 (2), p. 30.

³¹⁹ Hughes, J. 2006, Disc 2—The Films. *The Archive Project*, a documentary film about the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association in Melbourne (1945—58). John Hughes Early Works, Melbourne, Australia. Copy held by Mrs Elisabeth Coldicutt, widow of the late Kenneth John Coldicutt.

Republic, the researcher went to a public screening of Fritz Lang's silent movie, *Metropolis*,³²⁰ and to the *Mad Square Exhibition*.³²¹ In addition, pre- and post-WW2 photographs of Camberwell increased the researcher's awareness of the growth of Camberwell from a suburban shopping centre serving the local community, to a large sophisticated entertainment and shopping hub.³²² Clearly, images have the potential to enrich this study however, as Gasparini observes the proper use of this resource requires careful thought and considered application.³²³

Although the researcher asserts that her interest in images arises from her desire to better understand various aspects of the study, she is also aware that the way she sees things is affected by what she knows or what she believes.³²⁴ This observation by the researcher raises questions about the accuracy and reliability of her perceptions or levels of understanding of 'what she saw,' in the images she studied. In the next section of the thesis the technique of triangulation is discussed. Triangulation provides a method for ensuring the accuracy and reliability of research data including images.

Triangulation

This discussion of triangulation commences with an overview of the theory followed by some examples of its application in this study. Burns posits that triangulation is 'A commonly used technique to improve ... internal validity'.³²⁵ Triangulation 'prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions'.³²⁶ Wiersma describes it as 'part of data collection that cuts across two or more techniques or sources: triangulation can be conducted among 'different data sources or different data-collection methods',³²⁷ as well as 'at different times, or in different places'.³²⁸ As matters of interest or

³²⁰ Screened at *The Astor* cinema, St Kilda, Melbourne, 2012.

³²¹ National Gallery of Victoria. *The Mad Square. Modernity in German Art 1910-1937*. Exhibition held in Melbourne between November 2011 and March 2012.

³²² City of Camberwell. (1937c.). *Know Your City. Camberwell's Remarkable Development*. Series 1, 1936-1937. Author.

³²³ Gasparini, op. cit.

³²⁴ Paraphrase of Berger's assertion quoted earlier in this section about images: 'The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe'. Berger, J. *et al.*, op. cit., p. 8.

³²⁵ Burns, R. B. (1995). *Introduction to Research Methods*, (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Longman, p. 272.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

³²⁷ Wiersma, W. (1995). *Research Methods in Education : An Introduction*. (6th ed.). Needham Heights, Mass., USA: Allyn and Bacon, p. 263.

³²⁸ McMillan, J. H. (2008). *Education Research: Fundamentals for the Consumer*. (5th ed.). Boston, USA: Pearson, p. 296.

themes emerge from one set of data, using triangulation, a researcher examines other different data sources searching for similar matters or themes.³²⁹ If the outcomes of such an examination correspond, the initial findings are deemed credible and accurate.³³⁰ The following statement succinctly defines triangulation,

Triangulation is the term given when the researcher seeks convergence and corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon. When you want to make a statement with confidence, you want your pieces of evidence to lead to the same conclusion or inferences. Triangulation can substantially increase the credibility or trustworthiness of a research finding.³³¹

To give confidence to the accuracy and reliability of the data collected for this study, the researcher sought convergence and corroboration of various pieces of historical evidence through triangulation, as demonstrated in the following examples. The first example concerns the independent status of the Realist Film Unit. The founders were, or had been, members of the Victorian Communist Party: hence, there was a not uncommon perception that the Realist Film Unit was a commercial business arm of that Party.³³² One interviewee stated categorically that this was incorrect: the Association was an independent, privately-owned, commercial business.³³³ Cross-referencing with the film, *The Archive Project*, supported this observation,³³⁴ while it was confirmed indisputably when the researcher found the Unit's original Business Registration Certificate.³³⁵ This cross-referencing of three data sources resulted in the authentication of the Unit's status as a privately-owned, commercial business operation.

³²⁹ McMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in Education. Evidence-Based Inquiry*. (7th ed.). Boston, USA: Pearson, p. 379.

³³⁰ McMillan, op. cit., p. 296. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. (4th ed.). Boston, USA: Pearson, p. 259.

³³¹ Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches*. (4th ed.). Los Angeles, USA: Sage, p. 439.

³³² Refer to sub-section titled, *Broadening the Non-commercial Filmic Audience*, Chapter Six.6.

³³³ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt*,

³³⁴ Hughes, J. (2006). Disc1-The Feature, *The Archive Project*, a documentary film about the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association, Melbourne. Copy held by Elisabeth Coldicutt, widow of the late Kenneth John Coldicutt.

³³⁵ Business Names Act 1928, Part 1, Section 15. Form J. Certificate of Registrar-General of Registration of an Individual. Registration of *Realist Film Unit* as a business name. Dated and signed on 25th October, 1946, held in The University of Melbourne Archives. Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2.

The subject of the second example is the development of a filmic educational culture in the Camberwell Film Society. As described in Chapters Seven and Eight, *Case Study: History of the Camberwell Film Society from the 1950s to the 1990s*, in the Society's news journals, members were reminded constantly about the importance of post-screening discussion: this suggested the development of a filmic educational culture within the group. In the late 1970s, a formalised filmic review process, based on post-screening discussions, was implemented. The outcomes of these reviews were summarised and reported in the Society's news journals. These formalised processes strengthened the researcher's perception of the growth of a filmic educational culture within the Society. In addition, as the researcher interrogated the items in the Catford Papers,³³⁶ she found a list of handwritten discussion questions for the film,³³⁷ *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, screened by the Society in February 1994.³³⁸ This further supported her contention regarding the Society's filmic culture.

The researcher acknowledges that it would be spurious to argue that each of these pieces of evidence, by itself, indicated the existence of a filmic educational culture in the Society. However, the researcher asserts that the convergence of the three factors—an ethos of filmic-study through post-screening discussion, the practice of formulating questions for this activity, and an ordered review and reporting process—provide evidence of a filmic educational culture within the Camberwell Film Society.

These two examples of triangulation confirm the reliability and validity of the relevant gathered data and its associated assumptions. Sometimes the outcomes of triangulation cast doubt upon selected data. Nevertheless, either way, confirmation or doubt, the outcome contributes to the researcher's understanding of the level of reliability and validity of the research data.

³³⁶ Catford Papers. (2001). Property of the Camberwell Film Society.

³³⁷ The list of questions is in the Catford Papers, 2001, section titled 1994 Film Guide.

³³⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1974). *News Journal*. February.

Challenges of Data Collection

Sometimes researchers are confronted by numerous challenges when collecting data for their historical research. These challenges may be related to the unavailability of documented evidence or, in other cases, an abundance of data may present problems regarding its recording and categorisation for analysis. In the following section a number of the data collection challenges faced by the researcher in this study are presented. Each challenge is identified separately and described under its specific heading.

Date Society was Founded

Reference to the program for the 1956 Melbourne Film Festival Program indicated that the first known secretary of the Society was Mrs. J. Griffiths, 4 Grace Street, Camberwell. A search of *White Pages* for an entry for Mrs Griffiths, Camberwell, was unproductive. There were four entries for the surname Griffiths in Camberwell and surrounding areas but, not any of these were for Griffiths, Grace Street Camberwell. The researcher telephoned each of the four numbers explaining the reason for her inquiry but Mrs Jean Griffiths was not known to any of the people who answered her call. At this stage of the research, it seemed that the researcher was confronted by an impasse: there was little which had survived about the earliest days of the Camberwell Film Society.

The unavailability of documented evidence about the founding of the Camberwell Film Society presented a significant problem for the researcher in writing about the first ten years of the Society. However, a search of programs for the Melbourne Film Festival from 1952 to 1967 found that a list of film societies registered as members of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies was on the inner side of the back cover of each program. By examining these lists the researcher was able to estimate that the approximate date for the founding of the Society was the latter part of 1955.

Society's First Venue

Similarly, little has been uncovered about the venues at which the Society held its screenings in those early days. Prior to being Secretary of the Camberwell Film Society, Mrs Griffiths held the same position with the South Camberwell Film Society which may have been a precursor of the Camberwell Film Society. Also, the latter's bank account is with the Australia and New Zealand Bank (ANZ Bank), South Camberwell Branch. The

researcher thought that the South Camberwell Film Society may have met at the South Camberwell Bowling Club rooms. Consequently, she reasoned that if the South Camberwell Film Society were the forerunner of the Camberwell Film Society then the latter Society may have continued to meet at the South Camberwell Bowling Club rooms.

In searching for information about the South Camberwell Bowling Club, the researcher found that in 1996 the South Camberwell and City of Camberwell Bowling Clubs combined to form the Camberwell Central Bowls Club.³³⁹ A Club History Project Team has been formed to document the histories of both Clubs. The Project Team Coordinator is Peter Filmer. The researcher contacted Filmer asking if there were any references in the history of the South Camberwell Bowling Club to the hiring of a room by the South Camberwell Film Society in the mid to late 1950s. He advised that the Club 'did not let out their pavilion until 1970'.³⁴⁰ Filmer proposed that the 'alternatives most likely are Gardiner and Tooronga (where Hawthorn U3A now is) on the other side of Burke Road, and City of Camberwell which was very close to Camberwell Junction'.³⁴¹ The researcher followed-up Filmer's suggestions concluding that Gardiner and Tooronga were highly unlikely venues because of their location and histories.³⁴² Regarding the City of Camberwell, the researcher contacted the Royal Victorian Bowls Association. She explained her mission and was advised that 'it would be an issue for the historian and that, at present, as the Association is packing-up prior to moving, getting access to the material could be difficult'.³⁴³ Once again the researcher felt she was facing an impasse.

Collating and Analysing the Data

Throughout the period of the research, 192 copies of the Society's *News Journals* were available to the researcher. Three of these were for the Society's first decade, 108 were for the second decade, thirty-five for the third decade, and forty-six for the fourth decade.

³³⁹ Camberwell Central Bowls Club Retrieved from http://ccbc.candyit.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=45&Itemid=75

³⁴⁰ Filmer, P. (2013). *Camberwell Central Bowls Club: Club History*. Work-in-progress. Camberwell, Australia: Camberwell Central Bowls Club History Project Team.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Tooronga Bowling Club. Retrieved from <http://www.ashburtonbowls.com/history/Tooronga%20Bowls%20Club%20History.pdf>

Gardiner Bowling Club. Retrieved from <http://www.ashburtonbowls.com/history/Glen%20Iris%20Bowls%20Club%20History.pdf>

³⁴³ Advice given to the researcher during a telephone conversation with a staff member at the Royal Victorian Bowls Association. The Association's contact details were retrieved from <http://www.truelocal.com.au/business/royal-victorian-bowls-association-inc-head-office/hawthorn>

Consequently, one of the challenges faced by the researcher was identifying a method for interrogating this large number of primary sources. The majority of the news journals were too fragile for photocopying and then colour-coding the various issues and topics. The method chosen was to establish a framework of four ten year periods, in chronological order, from 1955 to 1994 the years analogous to the study.³⁴⁴ Headings and sub-headings for each decade were determined based on the Society's activities and operations during each of these ten year periods. Consequently, in some decades the headings and sub-headings are similar, while in other cases there are differences. Details of the format and process for recording and analysing the data are presented in the Introduction, Chapter Seven. The Introduction is followed by a narrative, interpretative exposition of the Society's history from 1955 to 1994 in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Managing and Categorising an Abundance of Data

In the discussion of primary sources, the researcher has alluded to the challenges of interrogating Kenneth Coldicutt's archival file held in The University of Melbourne Archives. Prior to searching Coldicutt's archive the researcher identified the categories of information needed for her study. Establishing these categories was important because searching archives is a time-consuming process and, generally, research studies are confined by specific timeframes. However, as previously explained, given the serendipitous nature of Coldicutt's archival material, the researcher found it challenging to avoid being distracted from the main purpose of her search. Constantly, she had to remind herself about the priorities of her archival search, that is, the identified categories of information.

There were other primary sources which generated time and data management challenges, for example, listening to the Lowenstein interviews with Coldicutt and Harant and making notes about matters pertinent to this study. There were nine compact discs with an average of forty minutes of interview on each disc. The forty minutes ballooned into much more time given pauses and replays to ensure the researcher's notes were relevant and accurate.

³⁴⁴ This framework was based on the model adopted by the South Camberwell Bowling Club for recording its history.

As demonstrated by the examples described in this section, data collection is challenging. Nevertheless, it can be most rewarding as the data collected from various sources is collated and analysed to inform a research project. Some of the collected data is important, often critical, in understanding and discussing the context of a study. This is demonstrated in the three chapters which follow the conclusion of this chapter. These three chapters present the context of the thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that historical research is complex and challenging. Sometimes it can seem bewildering, as the researcher found when she was confronted by a paucity of data in one case, and an over-abundance of it in another case. However, the research methodology, as detailed in this chapter, clarified her thoughts providing a framework for the research. Also, there were moments of serendipity throughout the research when unexpected data was uncovered or connections were made between different sources or types of data. For the researcher, one of the most significant historical research methodology challenges, emanating from this chapter, is maintaining a balance between the concept of history as a continuous dialogue between the present and the past and, conducting historical research as a disciplined enquiry,³⁴⁵

History as a disciplined enquiry aims to sustain the widest possible definition of memory, and to make the process of recall as accurate as possible, so that our knowledge of the past is not confined to what is immediately relevant. The goal is a resource with open-ended application, instead of a set of mirror images of the present.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ Tosh, op. cit., p. 2.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. This quote is also cited in the section of this chapter headed, *An Appropriate Concept. Factual knowledge or a continuous dialogue between the past and the present.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Interface between the Global and the Local

Part One: Introduction

The Camberwell Film Society which was established in the mid-1950s, and remains a viable, functioning film society in 2014, is the focus of this thesis. This section of the thesis constitutes the context within which the Society was founded and which ultimately shaped its development.³⁴⁷ Due to the complexity of the social and cultural issues that comprise the context, three separate discussions will be undertaken and each will be presented as a separate chapter. The three chapters are titled, Chapter Four, *Interface between the Global and the Local*, Chapter Five, *History of the City of Camberwell: An Enclave Apart*, and Chapter Six, *A Filmic Educational Culture: People, Passions and Politics*.

This chapter, Chapter Four, is divided into two sections: Part One and Part Two. Part One explains the purpose of the three separate contextual chapters each representing an integral component of the study's context. Part Two, *Globalism and Localism Connect*, begins with an outline of significant elements of the genesis of film societies. These include technological, sociological, artistic and economic developments which underpinned, and were associated with, the establishment of the film industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The framework for their presentation is the creation and growth of the film industry internationally and, in Australia, which led to the development of a filmic culture driven, initially, by the perception of film as entertainment. This was followed by the recognition of film as a distinctive art-form bringing a dual focus to the concept of filmic culture: a business-driven filmic entertainment culture and a culture of film as art. Part 2 concludes with an overview of the expansion and diversification of the film industry leading to the growth of an eclectic range of movies including documentaries, newsreels and feature films. One of the outcomes of this diversity was a nascent filmic educational culture.

³⁴⁷ Brundage, A. (2013). *Going to the Sources. A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*. (5th ed.). Chichester, Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, p. 4.

Chapter Five, *History of the City of Camberwell: an Enclave Apart*, presents a historical synopsis of the evolution of the Camberwell area from traditional aboriginal hunting grounds to a thriving metropolis with a distinct community identity. Sketches of the factors which shaped this distinctive identity are presented. These factors include the constraining influences of geography on the initial growth of Camberwell; sociological developments such as an early emphasis on education, and the relationship between economic factors and the creation of an aspirational culture. Chapter Five concludes with the proposition that, in Camberwell, by the late 1940s, early 1950s, there were people who had reached a point in their personal development favourable to the formation of community groups, such as film societies, characterised by the screening of non-commercial movies.

Nevertheless, by themselves emergent groups such as film societies, a vibrant film industry and a nascent filmic educational culture, are insufficient to explain the blossoming of film societies internationally, as well as in the state of Victoria during the late 1940s and 1950s. Other factors were critical to this social and cultural development. These are investigated in Chapter Six, *A Filmic Educational Culture: People, Passions and Politics*. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the concept of culture which informs this study. The focus of the chapter then turns to the international documentary film movement driven by a Scotsman, John Grierson, and his associates. This movement made a significant contribution to the growth of a filmic educational culture which underpinned the development of community-based film societies. The shaping of Grierson's personal frame of reference, which was elemental to the development of the documentary film movement, is also a component of this chapter.

The chapter then concentrates its attention on a range of factors which supported the establishment of community film societies within Australia as well as locally, in the state of Victoria. The factors include: technological innovations such as the design and production of 16 mm cameras and projectors; infrastructure improvements, for example, the extension of the Victorian electricity supply to outer metropolitan and regional areas; and political decisions leading to the establishment of the Australian National Film Board and state film centres. Chapter Six, which opened with a global perspective, closes with a local ambience as it explores the contribution of Ken Coldicutt and the Realist Film

Association to the founding of Victorian film societies in the 1950s, as well as to the growth of a filmic educational culture.

Part Two: Globalism and Localism Connect

This section commences with an introduction to two inventions which were catalysts for the establishment of the movie industry and remain the most critical components of the industry today—cameras capable of capturing moving images and projectors which enable the projection of moving images for public viewing. This is followed by a brief description of Australia’s earliest responses to moving pictures, a new form of entertainment. Then a small number of the contributions of an American film pioneer, D. W. Griffiths, are presented followed by observations about the relationship between the Weimer Republic and German cinema. These observations precede a short discourse regarding the use of film for educational purposes by the National German Socialist Party (Nazi Party). The focus of Part Two then proceeds to the idiosyncratic contributions of various international filmmakers to the globalised film industry. The final segment of Part Two moves to film production in Australia up to the 1950s and the growing awareness of its educational value. A range of conclusions close Part Two.

From Static to Moving Images

‘Throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in France and America, there was a lively interest in the development of devices to photograph and project moving images onto a screen’.³⁴⁸ In the 1820s, a number of optical toys were designed which gave the impression of pictures in motion through the viewing of a ‘series of drawings ... in rapid succession’.³⁴⁹ The development of these toys was followed by inventions such as processes for producing high quality still photographs, a photographic ‘gun’ for studying moving animals and the creation of ‘flexible celluloid roll film’.³⁵⁰ As referred to in Chapter One, one of these inventions was the Kinematograph invented by W. K. L. Dickson of the Edison Company, in 1890.³⁵¹ The Kinematograph was a contrivance for

³⁴⁸ Jenkins, D. M. (2012) op. cit., pp. 39-40.

³⁴⁹ These optical toys included the Thaumatrope, Zeotrope and Praxinoscope. Shirley, G. & Adam, B. (1989). *Australian Cinema. The First Eighty Years*. (2nd ed.). Sydney, NSW, Australia: Angus & Robertson, p. 4.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ The researcher is aware of the ongoing scholarly argument regarding the particular roles of Thomas Edison and W.K.L. Dickson in the invention of these devices. However, the argument is peripheral to this

filming ‘rapid sequences of photographs’.³⁵² Within twelve months of the development of the Kinetograph, the Edison Company invented the Kinetoscope which enabled film to be projected for individual viewing.³⁵³ These technical advances were followed quickly by the invention of a machine with the capacity to take and project film for public viewing.³⁵⁴ ‘Amongst the first inventors to create such a machine were the French brothers, Auguste and Louis Lumière. The Lumières held their first public screening ‘in the basement of the Grand Café in Paris’³⁵⁵ in 1895’.³⁵⁶ The cinematic experience was born: ‘the essence of the cinematic experience is its communal nature whilst retaining privacy for the individual sitting in the darkness of the cinema as he or she sees their dreams appear before them’.³⁵⁷

The cinematic experience, as a point of differentiation between individual and public viewing, remains a significant characteristic of commercial cinema in contemporary times. More importantly in the context of this thesis, the cinematic experience was a fundamental element in the founding of the earliest film societies. As observed in Chapter One, the first of these societies was formed in Paris in 1920: groups of like-minded individuals formed societies to screen, then share and explore their thoughts and feelings about movies, especially those with artistic intent. The essence of the societies’ discussion flowed from members’ shared cinematic experiences in a communal setting. As will be shown in Chapters 7 and 8, this shared cinematic experience has been, and remains, a critical informant of communal discussion at the Camberwell Film Society.

thesis. D. Robinson. 1996, *From Peep Show to Palace: the Birth of American Film*, New York, Columbia University Press in association with the Library of Congress, Washington DC, p. 19. G. Hendricks. 1964, *Origins of the American Film*, Reprinted in 1972, Arno Press & The New York Times, New York, USA, pp. 69-71.

³⁵² Shirley & Adams, op. cit.

³⁵³ Ibid. For a detailed description of the development of the kinetoscope refer to Chapter 2, ‘Sorcerer and Apprentice: Edison, Dickson, and the Kinetoscope’ in Robinson, D. 1996, *From Peep Show to Palace: the Birth of American Film*, foreword by Martin Scorsese, New York, Columbia University Press in association with the Library of Congress, Washington DC, pp. 19-34.

³⁵⁴ Lumière Brothers. 2009, *In Encyclopædia Britannica.*, from Encyclopædia Britannica: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1403398/Lumiere-brothers>. Accessed November 21, 2009

³⁵⁵ Weiner, J. (1973). *How to Organize and Run a Film Society*, New York, USA” MacMillan, p. 1.

³⁵⁶ Hendricks, G. (1961). *The Edison Motion Picture Myth. The Literature of Cinema*, reprinted in 1972, Arno Press & The New York Times, New York, USA, pp. 138-142; Shiach, D. 1998, *The Movie Book. An Illustrated History of the Cinema*, Anness Publishing Ltd., London, p. 10. Jenkins, D. M. (2012), op. cit., p. 40.

³⁵⁷ Shiach, D. (1998). *The Movie Book. An Illustrated History of the Cinema*, Anness Publishing Ltd, London, p. 10. Hendricks, G. (1961). *The Edison Motion Picture Myth. The Literature of Cinema*, (Reprinted 1972), Arno Press & The New York Times, New York, pp. 138-142. A shorter version of this paragraph was published as follows: Jenkins, D. M. (2012). Film Societies: A Place where the Global and the Local Connect. In *The International Journal of the Humanities*, 9 (4), pp. 39-40.

Early Australian Responses to the Moving Image

‘The motion picture industry grew rapidly. By the end of the 19th century, Lumière agents had travelled widely internationally, capturing street scenes, outdoor entertainment activities and landscapes on film. Other entrepreneurs, such as magicians, saw the commercial potential of including motion pictures in their public performances. In Australia, with the development of ‘story’³⁵⁸ films, the Salvation Army sensed the power of this ‘connecting narrative’³⁵⁹ to enhance and expand its social work’,³⁶⁰

in 1900 Joseph Perry, assisted by sons Ori, Stan, Joseph and Reg, made the ‘Soldiers of the Cross’, claimed to be the first feature film, the first ‘spectacle’. Shooting of this Salvation Army epic took place in June, July and August of 1900, mainly in the grounds of the Salvation Army girls’ home at Murrumbena, where the young ladies made the costumes and acted as extras’. Other scenes were shot at the Richmond Baths (the drowning of a Christian martyr in the river Tiber) and in [*sic*] a tennis court at Elsternwick’.³⁶¹

As observed in Chapter One, in the 1890s and early 1900s, the speed with which information about the production and screening of movies was transmitted throughout the world was astonishing given the comparatively slow forms of communication at that time. For example, the Salvation Army produced and screened *Soldiers of the Cross*, in Melbourne, within eighteen months of the invention of instruments such as the Kinematograph and Kinetoscope.³⁶² As Graham Shirley and Brian Adams remark, ‘Cinema was working to shorten distances and widen human horizons well before the Wright brothers made their first powered flight in 1903’.³⁶³

³⁵⁸ Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 11.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Jenkins, D. M. (2012), op. cit., p. 40.

³⁶¹ Bertrand, I. (Ed.). (1989). Section 6. A Question of Loot. In I. Bertrand (General Ed.), *Cinema in Australia. A Documentary History*. Sydney, Australia: New South Wales University Press, p. 368.

³⁶² For a detailed account of Perry’s introduction to cinematography and his production of *Soldiers of the Cross*, refer to Shirley & Adams, op. cit., pp. 10-14.

³⁶³ Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 5.

Australian entertainment entrepreneurs, such as J. D. Williams, recognised the economic potential of moving pictures: ‘In 1909 J. D. Williams opened Australia’s first continuous cinema at the Colonial Theatre, Sydney ... introduced special matinees and a twice-weekly change of programme, and from five luxurious cinemas in Sydney, he expanded throughout Australia and New Zealand’.³⁶⁴ Employment opportunities increased with ‘over a hundred permanent and temporary picture shows in Sydney employing about 2000 people’ in 1911.³⁶⁵ While, by 1913, in Melbourne, there was evidence of changing cultural and social patterns as indicated by the ‘65,000 people ... attending city and suburban cinemas on a Saturday night, in addition to the 14,000 who went regularly to stage productions’.³⁶⁶ By 1915 movies were a popular means of entertainment in Australia with Hollywood dominating ‘the global film industry by the late 1910s’.³⁶⁷ Robinson observes that by ‘1913 American films had begun to exert a hold over the audiences of the world that would never be relinquished’.³⁶⁸

A Pioneer Film Director: David Llewelyn Wark ‘D. W. Griffith’

In America, in the early 1900s D. W. Griffith, ‘America’s most prominent pioneer film director’,³⁶⁹ quickly comprehended the entertainment and commercial value of moving pictures. Of particular interest to this thesis are Griffith’s method of pre-release testing the entertainment value of his films, his use of realism in films, his establishment of a new filmic genre and employment of newer cinematographic techniques. Griffiths would preview films or sections of films ‘not once or twice but dozens of times, in out-of-the-way places. These were mostly secret forays into the hidden villages of the surrounding countryside’.³⁷⁰ These previews were based on Griffith’s dependence on ‘audience reactions. Whatever audiences responded to was right, no matter how wrong it might seem from any other consideration, and anything audiences did not respond to was wrong,

³⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 23. John Benson provides a vivid description of the success of film exhibition in the suburbs in, Benson, J. (1995). *Film in Footscray: Early Film Exhibition in the Suburbs*. In Berryman, K. (ed.). *Screening the Past: Aspects of Early Australian Film*, Canberra: National Film and Sound Archive, pp. 49-59.

³⁶⁷ *The American Historical Review*, 115, no. 5 (December 2010), p. 1451.

³⁶⁸ Robinson, D. (1996). *From Peep Show to Palace: the Birth of American Film*. Foreword by Martin Scorsese. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 139. A shorter version of this section, *Early Australian Responses to the Moving Image*, was published as follows: Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Film Societies: A Place where the Global and the Local Connect*. In *The International Journal of the Humanities*, 9 (4), p. 40.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 127.

³⁷⁰ Brown, K. (1976). *Adventures with D. W. Griffith*. (Reprint). California: DaCapo Press, p. 59.

regardless of how finely enacted or how beautifully photographed'.³⁷¹ From Griffith's perspective the previews contributed to the entertainment success of his films and, more broadly, to a filmic entertainment culture. The motivation underpinning these previews is reflective of the perception that 'by 1915, movies were a popular means of entertainment for the masses'.³⁷²

In 1912, Griffiths released a film about the world of gangsters titled, *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*. It is widely credited with being the first gangster film, establishing a precedent for future films in this genre.³⁷³ In addition, it is also 'credited for its early use of follow focus, a fundamental tool in cinematography'.³⁷⁴ The film was shot in the city of New York in the home territory of the street gangs. Described as 'New York's other side',³⁷⁵ this area was 'made up of dingy rooms and hallways, saloons, narrow streets teeming with immigrants, and underworld alleyways filled with garbage cans, dust, and debris'.³⁷⁶ As well as this pictorial realism Griffiths 'cast actual street hoods and gangsters from the neighbourhood as extras to authenticate his footage'. This emphasis on the realism of cast and location is reflected in the work of filmmakers such as Basil Wright, an associate of John Grierson in the non-theatrical documentary film movement, and Ken Coldicutt, a notable contributor to the growth of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria. The individual inputs of Wright and Coldicutt into filmmaking are discussed later in Chapter Six.

The concept of film as entertainment, an inextricable component of film as business, as practiced by Griffiths, remains a driving force in film production. It is an integral component of a world-wide filmic culture which, by the mid-1920s, consisted of two

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² 'In its first ten or twelve years in this century [20th] the cinema was not taken seriously. It was cheap entertainment for the masses. The intelligentsia scoffed at the new-fangled nonsense that would soon fade away. The Press gave it scant attention and ... as for it being the new "art form", that would have brought gales of mirth'. Hall, K. G. (1980). *Australian Film. The Inside Story*. Summit Books: Sydney, Australia, p. 17.

³⁷³ Wellington Film Society. *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* Retrieved from <http://www.filmsociety.wellington.net.nz/db/screeningdetail.php?id=62> The source for the review of *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* on this website was cited as: Eugene Rosow, *Born to Lose: The Gangster Film in America*, OUP New York, 1978.

³⁷⁴ *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

³⁷⁵ Schneider, S.J. (2009). 101 *Gangster Movies You Must See Before You Die*. Sydney, Australia: Harper Collins, p. 10.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

strands: film or cinema as business/entertainment and film or cinema as art.³⁷⁷ A third strand, a filmic educational culture, which underpinned the growth of Victorian film societies in the 1950s, emerged prior to WW2 gaining impetus during, and following the ending of, this war.

Weimar Republic, Nazism and the Moving Image

Throughout the 1920s the European film industry was particularly creative and innovative. During the period of the Weimar Republic 1919-1933,³⁷⁸ Berlin ‘for a brief, fragile moment ... was at the centre of culture that generated not only epochal advances in science and technology, but also an outpouring of literature, philosophy and art of profound originality’.³⁷⁹ This Germanic outpouring included: the music of Kurt Weill,³⁸⁰ literature of Bertolt Brecht,³⁸¹ paintings of Felix Nussbaum (1904-1944)³⁸² and Rudolf Schlichter (1890-1955),³⁸³ and the rise of artistic movements such as Dadaism.³⁸⁴ Simultaneously, as part of this artistic agitation, cinematic art flourished, often inspired by the imagination and technical skills of Germany’s Jewish population: for instance, silent movies such as Fritz Lang’s, *Metropolis*,³⁸⁵ and Eric Pommer’s, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) and *Dr*

³⁷⁷ Weiner, op. cit., p. 1.

³⁷⁸ Nochimson, M. P. (2010). *World on Film. An Introduction*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 111-113.

³⁷⁹ Tregear, P. (2013). Weimar Republic Berlin: A Silenced Witness. In program for *ACO 2013 Concert Season. Barry Humphries’ Weimar Cabaret*. The Australian Chamber Orchestra, p. 8.

³⁸⁰ ‘Weill, Kurt, ... (born March 2, 1900, Dessau, Ger.—died April 3, 1950, New York, N.Y., U.S.) German-born American composer who created a revolutionary kind of opera of sharp social satire in collaboration with the writer Bertolt Brecht’.

Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/639002/Kurt-Weill>

³⁸¹ Biography of Bertolt Brecht 1898—1956. Retrieved from <http://www.gradesaver.com/author/bertolt-brecht/>

³⁸² *The Mad Square: Modernity in German Art*, exhibition at The National Gallery of Victoria, 25 November 2011—04 March 2012. The exhibition includes some of the paintings of Felix Nussbaum a German/Jewish surrealist painter. Nussbaum died in Auschwitz on 31 July 1944. Retrieved from <http://www.felix--nussbaum.com/> .

³⁸³ Ibid. The exhibition includes some of Rudolf Schlichter’s paintings. Schlichter was a German visual artist. Retrieved from <http://www.rudolf-schlichter.com/>

³⁸⁴ ‘A European artistic and literary movement (1916-1923) that flouted conventional aesthetic and cultural values by producing works marked by nonsense, travesty, and incongruity’.

Retrieved from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/dadaist>
 ‘The movement was, among other things, a protest against the barbarism of the War [WW1] and what Dadaists believed as an oppressive intellectual rigidity in both art and everyday society; its works were characterized by a deliberate irrationality and the rejection of the prevailing standards of art’.

³⁸⁵ One description of *Metropolis* is that is ‘a 1927 expressionist epic science-fiction film’
http://www.google.com.au/search?q=eric+Pommer&rls=com.microsoft:en-au&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&startIndex=&startPage=1&gws_rd=cr&ei=ofYSUq3TMqTpiAfjpYGwBQ#fp=6e562f0ca559df91&q=metropolis+1927&rls=com.microsoft:en-au&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAAG0ovnz8BQMDgzoHsxCXfq6-gZF5XIVBmRIHiJ1ilmSuxRuQWlScnxeS75tflpnayTp9ot7x9p1XpzIac655u9ndVnEaAD5aVdpEAAAA

Mabuse, the Gambler (1922). This period is described as the Golden Age of Cinema.³⁸⁶ It contributed to the recognition of the differentiation between cinema as business/entertainment and cinema as art. This differentiation underscored the formation of the early film societies with like-minded individuals being attracted to the idea of meeting to discuss films, particularly those with artistic intent.

During the 1930s and early 1940s the Nazi (National Socialist) Party, led by Adolf Hitler,³⁸⁷ became the dominant political force in Germany extending its power across Europe during WW2. The anti-Semitic policies of the Nazi Party led to the exodus of many skilled European-Jewish film industry artisans and entrepreneurs from Germany:³⁸⁸ in 1933 and 1934 over eight hundred technicians and producers left Hitler's Germany for Hollywood including artists such as Weill and Brecht.³⁸⁹ Initially, many of these refugees fled to Paris with some eventually moving to Vienna or London. Others migrated to the USA where they sought employment in the American film industry. Indirectly, the fledgling Australian film industry may have been influenced by these refugee filmmakers through their contributions to the production of British³⁹⁰ and American films. Throughout this period the German film industry remained productive and technically innovative, particularly through the production of national propaganda films influenced by the agenda and ideology of Hitler's National Socialist Party.³⁹¹ David Bathrick writing about the 'State of the Art as Art of the Nazi State' acknowledges that the Nazi regime used its cinema,

to reshape the values and social imagination of the German people in the cause of war and ethnic genocide, its propaganda-driven methodological approach, together with its strong emphasis upon a particular canon, led

³⁸⁶ Retrieved from

Totalitarian Society in Germany, *Nazi Germany*, n.d. p. 19. <http://www.thecorner.org/hist/total/n-german.htm>

³⁸⁷ Retrieved from

The Development of the Nazi (National Socialist) Party, *Nazi Germany*, n.d. pp. 9-18.

<http://www.thecorner.org/hist/total/n-german.htm>

³⁸⁸ Retrieved from

Totalitarian Society in Germany, *Nazi Germany*, n.d. p. 19. <http://www.thecorner.org/hist/total/n-german.htm>

³⁸⁹ Tregear, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁹⁰ Bergfelder, T. & Cargnelli, C. (eds.) (2008). *Destination London. German-speaking Emigrés and British Cinema, 1925—1950*, New York: Berghahn Books, *passim*.

³⁹¹ Nazi Plans. (1941). In *Sight & Sound*, 10 (38). Summer, p. 30. Reprinted from Motion Picture Herald April 26th 1941.

to some misunderstanding concerning the nature of Third Reich cinema in its entirety.³⁹²

Nevertheless, Bathrick posits that,

Of the approximately 1,100 feature films produced between 1933 and 1945, eighty-six percent of them were not officially coded as political by the regime. In addition to melodramas and detective stories, almost half of all films made in Germany at this time were comedies and musicals, many of them similar in genre if not in quality to movies coming out of Hollywood during the same period. After the war a vast number of these were gradually cleared for showing in East and West Germany.³⁹³

The researcher acknowledges that Bathrick's observations are open to a range of interpretations depending on the prism through which these are viewed: such interpretations may include political, ethical or moral perspectives. The prism through which the researcher interprets these observations is the context of this thesis, in particular, the status of the international film industry following the end of WW2. The researcher posits that following the end of the WW2 there was a pool of technically skilled people capable of, and most probably interested in, revitalising the European film industry as well as re-establishing Germany's pre-war status as a leader in the production of art-house films. The researcher recognises that the Nazis understood and used the power of film as a tool to educate and reshape the values and imagination of the German nation. The researcher also acknowledges that the intent of the Nazis in employing the power of film in this manner was evil: 'Hitler's war, ... eventually engulfed the greater part of the world ... Forty million people are said to have been killed, large numbers of them ... defenceless victims. And all because neither the German people nor the leaders of the Western Powers recognized evil in time'.³⁹⁴

³⁹² Bathrick, D. (2002). *Modernity Writ German: State of the Art as Art of the Nazi State*. In R. C. Reimer. (ed.) (2000). *Cultural History through a Nationalist Lens. Essays on the Cinema of the Third Reich*. (Reprinted in paperback in 2002). Rochester, New York: Camden House, p. 1.

³⁹³ Ibid,

³⁹⁴ Grant Duff, S. (1982). *The Parting of Ways. A Personal Account of the Thirties*. London, UK: Unwin Paperbacks, p. 215.

However, the critical point for this thesis is the powerful educational role of film. This particular role of film is a recurring theme in this chapter as well as in the development and ongoing growth of film societies. In addition, the conclusion arrived at from the preceding analysis is that, in Germany during the Weimar Republic and again when governed by the National Socialist Party (Nazi Party), political ideologies and culture were intertwined with artistic culture, generally, and cinematic art, particularly. The relationship between the two factors, government and cinema, was more oppositional in the Weimar period, while in the Nazi State it was more compliant. Nevertheless, regardless of the characteristics of the relationship, this intertwining of government and cinematic cultures, particularly exhibition practices, is part of the cultural/historical narrative of the film industry from which film societies are not immune.³⁹⁵

A Glimpse of the Globalised Film Industry

Meanwhile, the globalisation of film production as well as film exhibition was rapid. Prior to WW2, different filmmakers in numerous countries were expressing a wide variety of perspectives through a diversity of narratives, national cultures and cinematographic techniques. Jean Renoir (1894-1979), a renowned French film director, directed films with challenging narratives and characters such as *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (Boudu Saved from Drowning) in 1932³⁹⁶ and *La Grande Illusion* (The Grand Illusion) in 1937.³⁹⁷ The Camberwell Film Society screened *Boudu Saved from Drowning* at their screening held on 23 July, 1968. In the July 1968 *News Journal* the synopsis states that, ‘this Renoir has the mellow glow of an old master. The Seine, from which Boridu [*sic*], the tramp, is dragged protesting and the Marne, to which he later commits himself to escape the trap of a bourgeois existence, are lovingly depicted. The style is unobtrusive, and the pace unhurried’.³⁹⁸ The crafting of this synopsis creates a feeling of poetry in motion reflecting the style of the film, *Boudu Saved from Drowning*, or ‘poetic realism’ as introduced in the following paragraph.

Renoir also ‘made his mark by pioneering a cinema in which there was less dependence on montage (editing) and more use of the camera as a surrogate for the deep focus and fluid

³⁹⁵ Bertrand, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

³⁹⁶ Nochimson, op. cit., pp. 34 & 34.

³⁹⁷ Nochimson, op. cit., pp. 35 & 36.

³⁹⁸ *Camberwell Film Society*. (1968). *News Journal*, July, p. 2.

movements of the human eye'.³⁹⁹ This aesthetic combined with his 'extremely liberal social attitudes' produced work 'which has been labelled poetic realism'.⁴⁰⁰ This term, poetic realism, has been applied to the work of Robert Flaherty, an American filmmaker, which was an inspiration for the international documentary movement founded by John Grierson. The links between Flaherty and Grierson are discussed later in Chapter Six.⁴⁰¹

Sergei Eisenstein was a Russian filmmaker who, unlike Renoir, placed much importance on montage, a component of the editing function of film production.⁴⁰² 'In film language, montage means the uniting of shots of seemingly dissociated objects in such a way that they take on a new qualitative relationship to each other in the mind of the spectator'.⁴⁰³ As shown later in this chapter, Eisenstein's practice of juxtaposing two seemingly disparate filmic shots to distil a new quality or relationship between them⁴⁰⁴ was adopted by Grierson as a component of his theory of documentary film production. Another feature of Eisenstein's films was the idea of 'typage' which he fashioned 'from the traditions of the Italian Commedia dell'Arte'.⁴⁰⁵ In practice, 'typage' meant that, rather than employing professional actors, Eisenstein studied the features of a wide range of people forming a composite picture of the type of person or persons he wanted to fill various roles in a film. Once he had constructed his image Eisenstein then searched for the individual 'he considered ... as the best and truest image of the type'.⁴⁰⁶

Behind the theory of 'typage' was philosophical reasoning. As Sergei Eisenstein ... expressed it: 'A thirty-year-old actor may be called upon to play an old man of sixty. He may have a few days or a few hours

³⁹⁹ Nochimson, op. cit., p. 32.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Refer to Chapter Six.

⁴⁰² Seton, M. (1978). *Film Language—Potemkin*. In Marshall, H. (ed.). (1978). *The Battleship Potemkin*. New York, USA: Avon Books, pp. 341-346.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, p. 343.

It was while working with Esfir Shub, an editor of foreign films at Goskino, that Eisenstein was introduced to the power of editing to create new relationships between two filmic shots. O'Mahoney, M. (2008). *Sergei Eisenstein*. London, UK: Reaktion Books, pp. 52-53. Goskino was the acronym for the Central State Photographic and Cinematic Enterprise established in Russia, in 1922. Kenez, P. (1985). *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Mass Methods of Mobilization 1917—1929*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 201.

⁴⁰⁵ Seton, op. cit., p. 341.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p.343.

rehearsal. But an old man of sixty will have had sixty years of rehearsal'.⁴⁰⁷

The concept of 'typage' is evident in Ermanno Olmi's film, *The Tree of Wooden Clogs*, which was screened by the Camberwell Film Society in February 1981.⁴⁰⁸ The story is set 'in the beautiful countryside of the Bergamo [Italy] region'.⁴⁰⁹ It is about the interconnected lives 'of five peasant families'.⁴¹⁰ Instead of employing a professional cast, Olmi used villagers from the Bergamo region whose portrayal of the characters is magnificent.⁴¹¹ To paraphrase Eisenstein, unlike professional actors, these villagers had been rehearsing for their roles as peasants throughout their daily lives.

Eisenstein was also an educator and artist.⁴¹² The power of film to educate is demonstrated in *Battleship Potemkin*, one of Eisenstein's intentions being to raise community awareness of a politico-social issue within an art-form overtly designed to 'affect every man', while implicitly seeking to effect social change.⁴¹³ Eisenstein's political and filmic views resonated strongly with Ken Coldicutt (Chapter Six), as is evident in his paper titled *Cinema and Capitalism*, written in April-June 1935.⁴¹⁴

By 1896-97 the film industry had established a presence world-wide including countries as culturally different and distanced from each other as Brazil and Japan. By the early 1900s films were a popular form of entertainment in Rio de Janeiro⁴¹⁵ with cinemas mainly screening locally produced films.⁴¹⁶ The 'golden age', *bela época*, of Brazilian cinema was

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 342.

⁴⁰⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*, February, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Seton, op. cit., p. 339.

⁴¹³ Seton, Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Coldicutt, K. (1935). *Cinema and Capitalism*. Retrieved from <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/classics/clasdec/cold2.html>

⁴¹⁵ The capital of Brazil until 1960. Capital of Brazil Retrieved from <http://geography.about.com/od/politicalgeography/a/Capital-City-Relocation.htm> Accessed 31 August 2013

⁴¹⁶ Rist, P. (2005). A Brief Introduction to Brazilian Cinema. In *Off Screen*. 9 (6), p. 1. Retrieved from

http://www.offscreen.com/index.php/phile/essays/intro_braziliancinema/
History of Cinema in Brazil. Retrieved from <http://www.filmbirth.com/brazil.html>

from 1908—1912 when film ‘production reached as high as 100 short films per year’.⁴¹⁷ Sound was an early addition to film exhibition in the early 1900s because,

the vast majority of Brazilians ... were illiterate, sound became already in 1910 a part of the (musical) cinema. Interpreters and actors behind the screen accommodated in music and voices. In 1920 movies were synchronized with records, making ‘dubbing’ possible ... The ironic part is that making sound possible at such an early stage in history, production declined during the thirties because of the sound producing costs.⁴¹⁸

During these years, the first Brazilian feature film, *Os Estranguladores (The Stranglers)*, made by Antonio Leal was screened.⁴¹⁹ Following this period the film exhibition market was dominated by foreign films.

Following the introduction of sound, Brazilian filmmakers created a distinctly Brazilian filmic genre, the *chanchada*. It was ‘derived from the Hollywood revue and backstage musicals mixed with Brazilian comic theatre and carnival’.⁴²⁰ An attempt was made to counter the ‘perceived vulgarity of popular *chanchada*’ with the establishment of the Vera Cruz film production company. The company folded in 1954 for various reasons one being that, unlike D. W. Griffiths, ‘the Vera Cruz filmmakers neglected to take into account the tastes of Brazilian audiences’.⁴²¹ In 1953, Alberto Cavalcanti, a former associate of John Grierson,⁴²² and ‘the most successful Brazilian-born film director before the 1960s’,⁴²³ produced the film, *O Canto do Mar (Song of the Sea)*, which ‘in its realism looked forward to the greatest period in Brazilian cinema history, the Cinema Novo of the 1960s’.⁴²⁴ This was a film movement which ‘would tell the truth about the miserable plight of Brazil’s marginals, while championing the richness of their culture’.⁴²⁵ This emphasis on social

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Refer to Chapter Four.

⁴²³ Rist, op. cit.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

realism echoes the work of Basil Wright's Realist Film Unit in London,⁴²⁶ in the mid to late 1930s, which focussed on the production of socially-purposive films. Also, films in this genre were the main filmic product of the Realist Film Unit, Victoria, Australia, in the mid to late 1940s.⁴²⁷ Wright, a successful author and film director, was an associate of John Grierson.

Japan provides another example of a rapidly growing film industry skilled at adopting, then adapting, Western film production models and methods to suit its purposes. On the other hand, rather than Westernised content, 'Japanese cinema told tales derived from Japanese culture and history'.⁴²⁸ In 1897 the first public screenings of short movies took place in Tokyo. The exhibitors were French and American; their screenings were separated by a couple of days; their ambition was to find new markets for their filmic products. However, by 1904 the enterprising Japanese had taken the first step towards creating a Japanese-style, domestically controlled movie industry.⁴²⁹ They began by modifying the Western designed and manufactured movie-making equipment that enabled them 'to send teams of filmmakers to the front lines of the Russo-Japanese war',⁴³⁰ which was from February 1904 to September 1905.⁴³¹ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese film production companies upgraded their management practices, operational strategies and technical knowledge by visiting Hollywood studios to study American business models and technological developments.⁴³² Consequently, by the 1940s Japanese film production companies' business models and management strategies were Westernised. Nevertheless, the content of their films stemmed from a Japanese history and culture which arose from centuries of feudalism: although by 'the twentieth century, pure feudalism had disappeared ... its flavour remained'.⁴³³ Akira Kurosawa (1910—1998), was one of the filmmakers who addressed these tensions between Westernised production techniques and traditional Japanese filmic content.

⁴²⁶ Refer to Chapter Four.

⁴²⁷ Refer to Chapter Six.

⁴²⁸ Nochimson, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ Russo—Japanese War. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/514017/Russo-Japanese-War>

⁴³² Nochimson, *op. cit.*

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

Films such as Kurosawa's, *The Seven Samurai* aka *Shichinin no sumurai* (1954), prompt the question of whether or not some feudalistic values and practices can be viable in post-WW2 in Japan.⁴³⁴ The Camberwell Film Society screened *The Seven Samurai* in September 1973. Unfortunately, the response of members to the film is not reported in the October *News Journal*. The synopsis of the film in the September *News Journal* states, 'Sixteenth century Japan. A primitive village, dreading the annual raid of bandits who carry off the harvest and the village girls, decides to hire Samurai to help them defend themselves. This great film by Akira Kurosawa provides more than just adventure, but a psychological adventure as well'.⁴³⁵

Kurosawa films are distinguished by his editing which juxtaposes moments of motionlessness with elements of restless agitation. Both of these techniques became part of the American film production repertoire. Kurosawa attempts to balance American innovations with Japanese hereditary ideals'.⁴³⁶ Also, his work provides an example of the meeting of the global, such as American innovative production techniques, and the local for instance, filmic content and his editing techniques, in the making of his films.

Conclusion

National borders and cultures are not impermeable to filmic concepts, content and cinematographic techniques characteristic of a globalised film industry or inspired by another national culture. Nevertheless, as indicated by the inventiveness of the Brazilian and Japanese film industries, such concepts, content and techniques were adapted, as appropriate, to suit the national culture and characteristics of the recipient country. In addition, as demonstrated by the American film industry's adoption of Kurosawa's practice of juxtaposing moments of motionless with elements of agitated restlessness, the flow of filmic knowledge also flowed upwards from the local to the global.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*, September, p. 3.

⁴³⁶ Nochimson, op. cit., p. 216.

Film Production and Education in Australia until mid-1950s: an Overview

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Australian film industry produced a diverse range of feature films and silent movies.⁴³⁷ Saskia Vanderbent avers that the first Australian documentary was produced by the Salvation Army's Limelight Department in 1901.⁴³⁸ Titled, *The Inauguration of the Commonwealth*, this film is historically important being 'widely known as the first film record of the birth of a nation'.⁴³⁹ 'The number of local features released in 1911 and 1912 reached a level unequalled until 1975, a peak year in the much later revival'.⁴⁴⁰ In 1911 at least 'fifty-two narrative fiction films' were released. 'Pioneering stars of this period were the director Raymond Longford and his partner, the actress, writer and editor Lottie Lyell. Together they set precedents for the forthcoming film industry'.⁴⁴¹ For example, *The Sentimental Bloke*, directed by Raymond Longford, an 'acknowledged Australian cinema classic' was released in 1919.⁴⁴² It marked the 'emergence of an authentic Australia cinema'.⁴⁴³

Actuality or non-fiction films such as documentaries and newsreels⁴⁴⁴ were popular throughout these early years. Documentaries were especially well-liked when screenings were supported by synchronised running commentaries, that is, 'lectures or stories illustrated by cinema synchronisation'.⁴⁴⁵ These types of screenings were called 'lecture films'.⁴⁴⁶ One of the well-known filmmakers of this period was Captain Frank Hurley whose productions included, *Into Australia's Unknown* (1915), and, *In the Grip of the*

⁴³⁷ Leigh, M. (1988). Curiouser and Curiouser. In S. Murray. (ed.), *Back of Beyond. Discovering Australian Film and Television*. North Sydney, Australia: Australian Film Commission, p. 79.

Pike, A. & Cooper, R. 1980, *Australian Film 1900—1977. A Guide to Feature Film Production*. Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Oxford University Press in association with The Australian Film Institute, pp. 1-113.

⁴³⁸ Vanderbent, S. (2006). *Australian Film*. Harpenden, Herts, Great Britain: Pocket Essentials, p. 13. Ben Goldsmith. (2009). Settings, Subjects and Stories: Creating Australian Cinema. In A. Sarwal & R. Sarwal (eds.). *Creative Nation: Australian Cinema and Cultural Studies Reader*. (2009). New Delhi, India: SSS Publications, p. 13.

⁴³⁹ Vanderbent, S. (2006). *Australian Film*. Harpenden, Herts, Great Britain: Pocket Essentials, p. 13.

⁴⁴⁰ Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 24.

⁴⁴¹ Vanderbent, S. (2006). *Australian Film*. Harpenden, Herts, Great Britain: Pocket Essentials, p.11.

⁴⁴² Collins, D. (Ed.). More than Just Entertainment. In Ina Bertrand (Gen. ed.). 1989, *Cinema in Australia: A Documentary History*, Kensington, NSW, Australia: New South Wales University Press (NSWU), p. 88.

Documents (a) to (f), pp. 88-91 attest to the critical and financial success of this film.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 36.

⁴⁴⁵ Collins, op. cit., p. 96.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

Polar Ice (1917).⁴⁴⁷ Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper posit that this ‘period was characterized by diversification in the uses to which film was put’⁴⁴⁸ one example being, ‘war stories’, particularly during WW1 (1914-18). Moreover, the Australian government also recognised the value of film as a ‘medium for news’, and as a means of ‘promoting recruitment’ to the nation’s armed forces actively engaged in WW1.⁴⁴⁹ In addition, ‘film versions of popular plays’ were produced by J. C. Williamson Ltd,⁴⁵⁰ and some charitable organisations arranged for films to be produced for fund-raising purposes.⁴⁵¹ In 1911, prior to the commencement of WW1, the Commonwealth government appointed its first full-time cameraman,⁴⁵² or ‘chief Commonwealth cinematographer’.⁴⁵³ Megan McMurchy asserts that from the time of this appointment and,

taking a rather broad definition of “documentary”, it is possible to see the history of documentary film-making in Australia represented by a continuous line of *government* documentary production intersected by discontinuous strands of *independent* documentary production (with the latter encompassing varieties of both political and commercial documentary-making.⁴⁵⁴

As previously mentioned, the production of Australian feature films declined from at least ‘fifty-two narrative fiction films’ in 1911,⁴⁵⁵ to ‘a level of rarely more than 10 features a year until WW2’.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

⁴⁴⁸ Andrew Pike & Ross Cooper. (1998). *Australian Film 1900-1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production*. (Rev. ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press, p. 49.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁵² Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 36.

⁴⁵³ Pike & Cooper, op. cit.

⁴⁵⁴ McMurchy, (M). (1994). The Documentary. In Scott Murray. (Ed.). (1994). *Australian Cinema*. St Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin in Association with Australian Film Commission, p. 179.

⁴⁵⁵ Allard, A. (Ed.). Grand Gala of Gab. (1928-1939). In Ina Bertrand (General editor). *Cinema in Australia. A Documentary History*. Kensington, NSW, Australia: New South Wales University Press, pp. 154-155.

⁴⁵⁶ Pike, A. (1980). ‘The Past : Boom and Bust’, in Scott Murray (ed.) & Peter Beilby (assoc. ed.), *The New Australian Cinema*, Melbourne, Australia: Thomas Nelson Australia Pty. Ltd., p. 11. Refer to Shirley & Adams, op. cit., pp.74-99, and Pike & Cooper, op. cit., pp. 86-87 for a comprehensive explanation of this decline in the production of feature films.

The 1930s were characterised by the introduction of sound, restructuring of the industry and the emergence of newsreels produced by *Cinesound Review and Movietone News*.⁴⁵⁷ Also, in 1930, the Victorian Education Department initiated a study ‘to investigate the value of using films in schools’.⁴⁵⁸ The results of the study indicated that the most effective way of using films as a teaching resource was to combine screenings with teacher commentary. A follow-up survey found that of the 275 students who participated in the study, 129 (46.9%) attended a ‘picture theatre’ once per week indicating the ‘wide-spread popularity of the cinema with the younger generation’.⁴⁵⁹ In its 1930 report about the study, the Victorian Visual Education Committee passed six resolutions, one of these being particularly pertinent to this thesis. This resolution states that,

the Visual Education Committee is of the opinion that the moving picture, provided that it is properly produced under the supervision of educational experts, is a valuable adjunct to class teaching. The Committee, in passing this resolution, is influenced by the results of the experiment carried out in Victorian schools under the Committee’s direction.⁴⁶⁰

In this resolution the Committee recognises the value of the moving picture as an educational resource particularly when combined with teacher commentary. This indicates that the concept of cinema as entertainment, as experienced by the majority of children in the Committee’s study, was broadening to encompass the concept of a filmic educational culture.

Visual education committees were not alone in recognising the educational value of films. In Sydney, in October 1937, at the General Synod of the Church of England in Australia, it was moved that,

a committee should be appointed to approach other Christian denominations with a view to forming a religious film society to co-operate with the corresponding society in England. With the small

⁴⁵⁷ Pike & Cooper, op. cit., p. 200.

⁴⁵⁸ Allard, op. cit.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

population in Australia it would not be possible for one section of the Church to bear the cost of a satisfactory religious film service, but all Christian Churches could carry out the scheme, working in co-operation with the Religious Film Society in Britain.⁴⁶¹

By 1937, religious film societies in Britain were well-established and were active members of the British Film Institute.

In February 1938, the first Australian screening of *Fabiola*, a religious film was held at the Congregational Church, Lennox Street, Richmond.⁴⁶² On Saturday 15 October 1938 it was reported in *The Argus* that the ‘use of films in church services is steadily increasing in Melbourne’.⁴⁶³ Readers were further advised that films will be screened at the evening services of four churches one of which was the South Camberwell Methodist Church. Whether or not there were any links between this church and the South Camberwell Film Society, which preceded the founding of the Camberwell Film Society, is not known. In addition, in the 1950s the Hartwell Presbyterian Church established a religious film group. The suburb of Harwell is adjacent to South Camberwell. Although investigating the relationship between the screening of religious films in churches and community film societies could be interesting, such an investigation is not within the parameters of this research. Nevertheless, there are two points emanating from this discussion which are pertinent to this study. The first point is that the screening of religious films set a precedent for screening films for purposes other than entertainment; the second point is that the screening of films in churches set a precedent for the use of venues other than commercial cinemas. The report in *The Argus* continues stating that a ‘film library for church and Sunday school services has been established by the Church Film Society, at Capitol House, Swanston street [*sic*]’.⁴⁶⁴ The creation of the Church Film Society and the setting up of a film library suggest that in the late 1930s, in Melbourne, there was a strong interest in, and frequent use of, films in Sunday schools and churches as an adjunct to more traditional ways of spreading the Christian message and educating church congregations.

⁴⁶¹ ‘Church of England Constitution. (1937, October 22). ‘New Committee to seek Diocesan Unanimity’. In *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic.

⁴⁶² Denominational Activities. (1938, February 12). In *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

The Australian Religious Film Society (ARFS) was founded in 1945 following the end of WW2. As a participant in the program for the Olinda Film Festival of 1952, the ARFS presented three religious films *Ruth, Queen Esther and South of the Cloud*,⁴⁶⁵ which were introduced by the Reverend Hamilton Aikin, Managing Director, Australian Religious Film Society. The ARFS was a member of the FVFS which formed a committee to organise the Olinda Film Festival and Reverend Aikin was a member of that committee. In an article in the program for the first Melbourne Film Festival held in 1953,⁴⁶⁶ Reverend Aikin stated that,

as an alternative to or substitute for the ministry and the Word and Sacraments, films have no place in a church. But wisely handled as an *aid* [*sic*] they are proving throughout Australia, in churches of all denominations, to be fulfilling a powerful and profitable function. Films make the Bible live and illustrate the highly significant place which religion has in every civilized community, and how its application affects every aspect of human life. So much so that whereas in 1945 only two congregations in all Australia used motion picture films, today over 1000 churches have installed sound projectors and regularly use 16 mm. films in worship and teaching.⁴⁶⁷

In this overview of religious film societies in Australia after WW2, the excitement with which some churches successfully incorporated religious films into their services is evident in the number of 16 mm film compatible sound projectors purchased by Australian churches in the period from 1945 to 1953. This provides another example of the use of film for educational purposes. Aikin emphasises the educational power and potential of religious films predicting that with ‘vision and courage’ new ground will be broken ‘in the realm of religious teaching’.⁴⁶⁸ The preceding examples of films being used for didactic purposes in educational and religious organisations, provide further evidence of a growing

⁴⁶⁵ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952), op. cit., 5.

⁴⁶⁶ The first Melbourne Film Festival was held at the Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton Gardens, Melbourne, in conjunction with the Convention of Australian Council of Film Societies on Labor-Day Week-End, March 6th to March 9th, 1953. Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1953). Program, op. cit., inside front cover of program and contents page.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

educational culture in Australia, particularly in Victoria, both prior to, and following, WW2.

During WW2, 1940-1945, propaganda films and newsreels flooded the market while the production of feature films almost ceased in Australia.⁴⁶⁹ Following the end of WW2, film production in Australia was dominated by British and American interests. Some of these films, as typified by *The Overlanders* and *Kangaroo*, had distinctly Australian themes. Local film producers including Charles Chauvel, Cecil Holmes and Ken Hall continued to produce feature films and documentaries experimenting with alternative themes, issues, modes of acting and production techniques compared with the traditional style of American films.⁴⁷⁰

Writing about the Australian film industry in the early 1950s, John Heyer⁴⁷¹ stated that although 'Australia is now the largest film consumer per head in the world', the quantity of films it produced was 'hardly noticeable' but the films were not without quality.⁴⁷² Heyer cited three films⁴⁷³ as examples of filmic products 'all well above average in their respective classes'.⁴⁷⁴ One of these films, *The Back of Beyond*, won the Grand Prix Absolute at Venice against some two hundred films from thirty-two different countries'.⁴⁷⁵ These developments, and the revitalisation of the European film industry, resulted in new and different types of films becoming potentially available to the Australian film community in the 1950s and 1960s.

As demonstrated in the preceding discussion in Part Two of this chapter, since the earliest days of the establishment of the film industry, interface between the global and local elements of the industry has been constant. Indisputably, America is a powerful force in the industry's globalisation. However, the examples presented in the discussion, provide evidence of ways in which non-American filmmakers and production companies adapt globalised filmic management practices and cinematographic techniques to reflect their

⁴⁶⁹ Pike & Cooper, op. cit., p. 247.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 263—264.

⁴⁷¹ Heyer, J. (1955). *The Film-Struck Country*. In *Melbourne Film Festival Program-1955*. Carlton: Ford & Son Press, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

local traditions, cultures, and the idiosyncratic techniques and filmic creativity of individual filmmakers.

Conclusions

This narrative, interpretative discussion of the development of the film industry leads the researcher to a number of conclusions. The focus of these conclusions is the significance of the film industry—its genesis and globalisation—for the film society movement.

The first conclusion is that the genesis of film societies lies in the invention of instruments designed to capture and, project for public viewing, moving images. These instruments were critical for the development of the film industry and the associated founding and growth of film societies.

The second conclusion is that the interface between the global and local film industries was twofold in its effect on film societies. In the first instance, it created a diversity of filmic product, that is, films which provided a range of stimulating and challenging plots and themes for the film societies' post-screening discussions. In the second instance, the filmmakers' disparate cinematographic techniques, such as editing and camera angles, were redolent with opportunities for society members to appreciate the complexities of film production and, to recognise film as a distinctive art-form.

The third conclusion is that the global/local interface of the film industry played a role in the growth of a more sophisticated and discerning international filmic audience. Their perception of the value of films moved beyond cinema as a form of business-driven entertainment to an appreciation of cinema as a distinctive form of art. The result was the recognition of a dual filmic culture: a filmic entertainment culture and a filmic art appreciation culture. The filmic needs of the former group were met by commercial cinemas; while the filmic needs of the latter group were met, increasingly, by the formation of community film societies.

The fourth and final conclusion is that a third cultural stream emerged from this global/local interface, a filmic educational culture. The diversity of educational intention associated with this cultural stream is evident in a number of examples presented in the

preceding discussion. Four of these examples are presented as follows: in the 1930s, Hitler's National Socialist Party (Nazi Party) used film as an educational tool to 'reshape the values and imagination of the German people in the cause of war and ethnic genocide', whereas in Australia in the early 1900s, the Salvation Army sensed the power of film 'to enhance and expand its social work'. In the 1930s, the Victorian Visual Education Committee stated that films represented a 'valuable adjunct to class teaching' while in the 1950s, the Reverend Aikin acknowledged the educational power and potential of religious films for teaching the Christian message.

However, by itself, this emerging filmic educational culture was insufficient to generate the escalation in the growth of Victorian film societies in the late 1940s and 1950s. This growth also required communities which were receptive to the idea of forming film societies, and that had the capacity to make the concept of a filmic educational culture a reality. As will be shown in the following chapter, Chapter Five, *History of the City of Camberwell: An Enclave Apart*, there was a community of people interested in establishing a community group such as a film society in the 1950s, in the state of Victoria.

CHAPTER FIVE

History of the City of Camberwell: an Enclave Apart

Introduction

The history of any country or nation is complex whether it is about an ancient civilization in which myth and factual evidence maybe intertwined, or the well-documented historical records of a 19th century European nation-state. Similarly, the history of the comparatively recent European settlement of Australia, a continent distant from the then known world of the late 18th century, is not without its complications.⁴⁷⁶ Likewise, the history of geographical localities within countries or nation states is not straightforward: it excites interest, challenges the intellect and generates admiration for the people whose dreams, foibles, determination and ingenuity created the history. In this chapter, an overview of the history of Camberwell from its early days to the 1960s is presented. This overview identifies characteristics favourable to the establishment of a film society which are linked to, or are continuing themes in, the history of Camberwell. It describes the complexities of Camberwell's transition from the hunting grounds of the traditional, indigenous Australian owners to a well-developed, urbane municipality within metropolitan Melbourne, capital city of the state of Victoria.

The initially challenging relationship between the topography of Camberwell and its comparatively slow growth is explored, as well as the gradual recognition of the advantages of the topography and their impact on the nature and status of the community. Place, which in this discussion incorporates both geography and topography, is a quintessential element in the growth of Camberwell. This exploration of the formative role of place is followed by a brief description of the people, the citizens of Camberwell. Together with place, the dreams, determination, and ingenuity of the people, as expressed

⁴⁷⁶ Bongiorno, F. (2012). Real Solemn History and its Discontents: Australian Political History and the Challenge of Social History. In *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 56, pp. 6-20. McCalman, J. (1998). *Struggletown. Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900-1965*. (2nd ed.). South Melbourne, Australia: Hyland House. Inglis, A. (1983). *Amirah, an un-Australian Childhood*. Melbourne, Australia: Heinemann. Haebich, A. (2011). Forgetting Indigenous Histories: Cases from the History of Australia's Stolen Generations. In *Journal of Social History*. 44 (4), pp. 1033-1046.

in community, civic and business life, created an environment that accommodated the establishment of a community film society in the 1950s. The chapter closes with a summary of these accommodating factors and their significance in the establishment of a community film society.

From Hunting Grounds to Early European Settlement

Prior to the arrival of the first Europeans in the area now known as Melbourne, the traditional owners of the land were the Wurundjeri or ‘white gum people’.⁴⁷⁷ Their hunting grounds included the gently sloping hills, shaded creeks and cool gullies abundant with native animals five to seven miles east of Melbourne.⁴⁷⁸ The Wurundjeri called this part of their traditional lands, Boroondara, meaning ‘shady place’.⁴⁷⁹ This shady place was to become the site for Camberwell and its environs, resulting in the displacement of the traditional owners by European settlers.⁴⁸⁰

Attracted by the lush green grasslands surrounding Port Phillip Bay, Tasmanian⁴⁸¹ pastoralists were determined to acquire land around the Bay for grazing and farming. From 1835, enterprising pioneers such as John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner settled on, and established a variety of small businesses at, the future site of Melbourne. On his arrival in 1836, John Gardiner,⁴⁸² a Tasmanian banker and storekeeper, was one of the earliest

⁴⁷⁷ Blainey, (1984), op. cit., p. 8. The phrase ‘white gum tree’ refers to a species of eucalyptus trees having white trunks. Until recently, it was not uncommon for Australians to call ‘eucalyptus’ trees, ‘gum’ trees.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid. The boundaries of the Wurundjeri’s traditional lands radiated from Melbourne north-west to Macedon, north-east to Healesville and east to Warragul.

⁴⁷⁹ Blainey, G. (1964). *A History of Camberwell*. Melbourne, Australia: Jacaranda Press, p. 1. City of Camberwell (Ref. C). (1954). *First Centenary Anniversary of the Proclamation of Camberwell as a Local Government Area on 11th July 1954. Unveiling of Plaque*, Mayor’s speech of welcome to guests attending the unveiling ceremony, 17 July 1954. In possession of Ashburton Library, City of Boroondara Library Service.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, City of Camberwell (Ref. C). First page of Mayor’s speech. In this speech, the Mayor acknowledges the presence of aborigines in Victoria for many thousands of years prior to white settlement. This statement would have been most unusual in 1954 when there was little acknowledgement of aborigines as a people or as traditional owners of the land.

⁴⁸¹ In 1835 Tasmania was known officially as Van Diemen’s Land. In November 1854, an ‘Act to establish a Parliament in Van Diemen’s Land’ was passed and then ‘reserved for royal assent which was granted on 4 May 1855 ... After the passing of this Act the name ‘Tasmania’ was used instead of ‘Van Diemen’s Land’. However, it should be noted that, ‘From 21 August 1842 Tasmania had been used in the title of the Church of England bishopric’. This suggests the probability that the name Tasmania was in common usage prior to the passing of the Act in 1854. Clark, C.M.H. (1971). *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900*. (7th reprint). Australia: Angus and Robinson, p. 345.

⁴⁸² Brennan, N. (1972). *A History of Nunawading*. Melbourne, Australia: Hawthorn Press, p. 6. Priestly, S. (1979). *Cattlemen to Commuters*. Sydney, Australia: John Ferguson, p. 5

settlers to graze cattle on the sloping hills and green fields of Boroondara:⁴⁸³ ‘For a rent of £10 a year he ran cattle over all those grasslands now covered by the cities of Hawthorn, Kew and Camberwell, the first cattle station in southern Victoria’.⁴⁸⁴ By 1838, although unsurveyed, a major part of the then officially titled Parish of Boroondara,⁴⁸⁵ was occupied by four pastoralists.⁴⁸⁶ This pattern of larger blocks of land being leased or purchased in the Parish persisted into the 20th century.

Place and Constrained Growth in the Parish of Boroondara

Meanwhile, during those early days of European settlement, communities established close to the nascent village of Melbourne, situated on the coastal plain, grew rapidly:⁴⁸⁷ within three years, Melbourne expanded from ‘a miserable settlement of thirty or forty tents, huts, and bark-roofed sheds’ in 1837 to a town of ‘4,000 people, thirty hotels and three newspapers’ in 1840.⁴⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the development and sale of land in the Parish of Boroondara languished.⁴⁸⁹ In 1845, by which time areas of the Parish adjoining Melbourne had been surveyed, only four of eighteen surveyed allotments offered for sale were sold.⁴⁹⁰ By 1850, in the area of the Parish of Boroondara which eventually became the City of Camberwell, the population was ‘probably less than one hundred people’.⁴⁹¹ The small number of properties, probably fewer than a dozen, were separated by the hilly terrain and forests of native timber.⁴⁹² The topography of the Parish, distinguished by bush-laden hills and creek-defined gullies, made it a less attractive option for residential purposes or

⁴⁸³ Vaughan, W. D. (1960). *Kew's Civic Century*. Kew, Australia: Author, p. 13

⁴⁸⁴ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., p. 2.

⁴⁸⁵ Robert Hoddle, Senior Surveyor, Colony of New South Wales, named the Parish of Boroondara, in 1837, when he visited the site for Melbourne with Governor Bourke.

Marvellous Melbourne. Robert Hoddle, Survey of Melbourne, 1837 – Museum Victoria. Retrieved from <http://museumvictoria.com.au/marvellous/early/measuring.asp>

⁴⁸⁶ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., p. 4 & Appendix 7.1.

⁴⁸⁷ McCallum, J. (1998). *Struggletown. Public and Private Life in Richmond. 1900-1964*. (2nd ed.). South Melbourne, Australia: Hyland House, p. 9.

⁴⁸⁸ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., pp. 2-3.

⁴⁸⁹ ‘The first recorded land transaction was in 1841, when a selection was made by P. [sic] Elgar. It comprised a huge area of land bounded by Burke Road on the West (the old five-mile boundary), the River Yarra and Koonung Creek in the North, Elgar Road in the East, and Delaney’s Road, now Canterbury Road, in the South. Surveyors were sent from Sydney to make this and other special surveys, and 5,120 acres was the area allotted’. City of Camberwell (Ref. A). 1933, *Souvenir of Camberwell. Melbourne’s Most Beautiful Garden Suburb*. Victoria, Australia: The City of Camberwell, p. 2. Held in the Local History Restricted Access section at the Ashburton Library, City of Boroondara Library Service. Garden, D. (1984). *Victoria. A History*.: Melbourne, Australia: Thomas Nelson, p. 59. Brennan, op. cit., p. 9.

⁴⁹⁰ City of Camberwell (Ref. C), op. cit., section heading *Early Land Sales*, third and fourth pages of Mayor’s speech.

⁴⁹¹ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., p. 5.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

manufacturing enterprises than the flat coastal and river plains of Port Phillip Bay. At this stage in the development of the Parish of Boroondara, place was a limiting factor.

Market Hindrances

In the 1840s, one of the most significant hindrances to markets for many small farmers and timber merchants in the area of the Parish of Boroondara, now known as Camberwell, was the condition of the roads. Bullock-wagon tracks, heavily furrowed and often impassable in wet weather, served as roads for drays with heavy loads of timber and farm produce destined for Melbourne markets. The state of the roads was exacerbated in the 1850s, when gold-seekers on foot or horseback, sometimes with drays, travelled along these roads to the Warrandyte goldfields.⁴⁹³

In addition, access to Melbourne markets from the Camberwell area was hampered by the Yarra River on its western boundary, as well as on its southern edge in conjunction with Gardiner's or Kooyong Koot Creek.⁴⁹⁴ 'The first punt across the Yarra at the foot of what is now known as Denham Street, Hawthorn, did not operate until 1840 and was the main means of access to the Parish [of Boroondara] until it was replaced by a wooden toll bridge in 1851'.⁴⁹⁵ Restricted access to Melbourne markets limited peoples' incomes and was disheartening, as to gain even a small livelihood was hard and challenging: timber felling was a dangerous and difficult occupation, while the light, sandy soil of the small farms required constant and painstaking care to be productive. Once again it is evident that in its earliest years Camberwell was defined by place in the form of its topography and geography constraining residential and industrial development. In addition, these place-related constraints were further encumbered by the poor condition of its roads. However, change was coming.

⁴⁹³ Ibid. pp. 11 & 24. Garden, op. cit., pp. 65 & 71.

⁴⁹⁴ City of Camberwell (Ref. C), op. cit., section heading *Boroondara*, third page of Mayor's speech.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

Roads and Community Identity

In 1853 the Victorian Legislative Council⁴⁹⁶ enacted legislation for ‘making and improving roads in the Colony of Victoria’.⁴⁹⁷ This Act called for the establishment of a Central Roads Board with responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the Colony’s main roads and bridges.⁴⁹⁸ The Act also proposed the formation of district roads boards to supervise the development, and ensure the maintenance, of roads in their neighbourhoods. Blainey describes the process for appointing these boards as being ‘remarkably democratic’.⁴⁹⁹ Within a year, ‘the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Charles Hotham, proclaimed the Boroondara Road District and defined its boundaries’.⁵⁰⁰ The boundaries encompassed three areas namely: Camberwell, Kew and Hawthorn. In 1860, both Kew and Hawthorn were divided into two separate municipalities and proclaimed cities.⁵⁰¹ In 1856, dissatisfied with the state of the roads in their district and critical of the seeming inaction of the Central Roads Board, a group of settlers met and agitated for the establishment of a roads board for the Boroondara District.⁵⁰² On 4 October 1856,⁵⁰³ a board was duly elected. The nine Board members were all men of substance being either ‘farmers, landed gentlemen, or men with city interests’.⁵⁰⁴ However, at the Board’s annual election held on 4 October 1858, voters elected a ‘bush blacksmith and an innkeeper’ to replace ‘two wealthy candidates’.⁵⁰⁵

⁴⁹⁶ On 1st July, 1851, the Act proclaiming Victoria a separate colony from New South Wales was proclaimed and ‘the first Legislative Council opened in St. Patrick’s Hall, Bourke Street, Melbourne, on 13th November, 1851’. City of Camberwell. (Ref. C), op. cit., section heading *Self Government*, second page of Mayor’s speech.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., section heading, *Local Government*, second page of Mayor’s speech.

⁴⁹⁸ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., p. 11. Garden, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

⁴⁹⁹ The appointment process insisted ‘that all members of a district board should face election annually and that the rates should be decided at the annual meeting of all landholders and householders’, Blainey, 1964. Ibid., p. 11

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁰¹ City of Camberwell (Ref. B). 1937c, *Know your City. Camberwell’s Remarkable Development*, Series No. 1, 1936-1937, City of Camberwell: Camberwell, Victoria, Australia, p. 4. It was not until 20th April 1914 that Camberwell attained the status of a city.

Council of the City of Camberwell. (Ref. D), (no pagination), 1954, *The City of Camberwell, Melbourne, Victoria. Its Historical Outline, Social and Welfare Activities, Cultural Institutions, Services and Future Development*, Melbourne, Australia.

⁵⁰² Blainey, 1964, op. cit.

⁵⁰³ Ibid. pp. 13-14. City of Camberwell, (Ref. C), op. cit., section heading *District Road Board*, fourth page of Mayor’s speech.

⁵⁰⁴ Blainey, 1964, op. cit., p. 14. City of Camberwell (Ref. C), Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Blainey, Ibid. 19. The two wealthy candidates standing for re-election were Thomas Power, a landed gentleman, and Edward Khull, a gold-broker.

Blainey raises the theme of democracy arguing that the replacement on the Board of two men of substance by a blacksmith and innkeeper reflected ‘a democratic bias amongst the farmers and small landholders who dominated the seven hundred ratepayers’.⁵⁰⁶ Given the underlying sense of community identity evident in Camberwell from its formation and as the area matured into a thriving metropolis, perhaps it was not just a ‘democratic bias’ which influenced voters’ choices in the Roads Board election of 1858. Maybe their preference for two local small businessmen, a blacksmith and an innkeeper, was underpinned by an incipient sense of community identity. Similarly, this embryonic sense of community identity may have played a part in the decision of a dissatisfied group of settlers taking action, in 1856, to improve local roads by forming a roads board.

The proclamation of the Boroondara Road District in 11 July 1854, was one of the first links in a chain of events which led to a group of people in the Parish of Boroondara forming a community of interest through their active engagement with place. The intention of the engagement was for infrastructure development through the improvement of the District’s roads. The immediate outcome of this particular engagement included factors such as farmers and timber merchants having better access to markets as well as reducing damage to their drays and other vehicles. Overtime, the improved roads contributed to the district being opened-up for settlement. Perhaps the most significant longer-term outcome of this engagement was that the involvement of settlers in decision-making reflected a nascent sense of community identity. As this sense of community grew, place was perceived to be less of a constraining factor in the growth and development of Camberwell. Rather, it was recognised as an advantage; the topography of Camberwell was acknowledged as a component of place which could be managed for the benefit of its residents and its business community.

Evolution of a Community

This section of the chapter provides a sketch of Camberwell from the 1860s to the late 1870s during which its population grew comparatively slowly. The sketch identifies changing attitudes towards Camberwell’s topography, previously deemed as unfavourable for residential growth and, the emergence of an aspirational culture. Then a brief overview

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

of the impact of these changing attitudes and emerging culture on Camberwell's growth is presented. This is followed by the description of a few of the significant infrastructure improvements and investment strategies which gave impetus to commercial and private investment in Camberwell. Also, the contribution of traditional social institutions such as churches to attitudes of social betterment is examined.

Overview

By the late 1860s, a mixture of housing could be seen, and a diversity of occupations was represented in Camberwell. Small mixed farms, vineyards, orchards, and market gardens were scattered throughout the area. The preference for purchasing larger blocks of land, evident in the 1840s, was still prevalent in the 1860s. Nevertheless, the growth and development of Boroondara remained unhurried: in 1861 the population 'was just over 1,100 and by 1881 it had increased by only a third, growing much more slowly than Victoria⁵⁰⁷ as a whole'.⁵⁰⁸ However, the comparative slowness of this growth, the availability of large, reasonably priced allotments for residential development,⁵⁰⁹ the different and sometimes challenging topography, and an incipient sense of community identity combined to create an ambience which fostered the creation of an aspirational culture.⁵¹⁰

Changing Perceptions and an Aspirational Culture

As previously observed, one of the major changes in peoples' attitudes towards Boroondara was related to its topography: once perceived to be unfavourable for residential development it began to be viewed more favourably.⁵¹¹ Changes in some perceptions were related to the felling of timber on the bush-laden hills exposing 'the attractiveness of views across Port Phillip Bay and towards the ranges from the hilly Camberwell terrain'.⁵¹² Also, as previously stated, improved roads were opening-up the area to new settlers. Because it had not attracted factory and foundry operators in earlier

⁵⁰⁷ The Act of Parliament declaring Victoria a separate colony from New South Wales was passed on 01 July 1851. For more details, refer to footnote 496 in this chapter.

⁵⁰⁸ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., p. 33.

⁵⁰⁹ City of Camberwell (Ref. A). 1933, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵¹⁰ For the purpose of this study, aspirational culture is defined as people aspiring to, or creating, a distinctive set of 'beliefs, way of life, art and customs', that is, a culture, which they share and accept as being appropriate for their particular type of society. Retrieved from http://www.ldoceonline.com/Sociology-topic/culture_1

⁵¹¹ Garden, op. cit., p. 177.

⁵¹² Blainey, (1964), op. cit.

years, the Parish of Boroondara was free from the grit, fumes and smoke which pervaded the inner city suburbs: in 1871 Boroondara did not have a factory and there was ‘only one a decade later’.⁵¹³ This pleasant environment caught the attention of a growing number of city businessmen, professional people and, possibly, upwardly mobile individuals interested in acquiring small estates in Camberwell and other eastern and south eastern localities, where the land prices were reasonable and the air was fresh and clean: ‘Boroondara [*sic*] as it was then known, was changing from the quite [*sic*] semi-rural scene and atmosphere to one of exciting growth and change’.⁵¹⁴ In addition, property ownership with its associated perceptions of status is a distinctive facet of an aspirational culture.⁵¹⁵

Additional Infrastructure and Investment

Three other events supported the acquisition of property in a pleasant environment with picturesque views. The first of these was the introduction of a water service to Camberwell in 1872.⁵¹⁶ The second event was the extension of the railway line from Hawthorn to Camberwell on 3 April 1882,⁵¹⁷ making commuting to the city more convenient and more affordable. This was followed closely by the third event, the inflow of new capital from overseas, particularly Great Britain, which was available for investment in public and private ventures including buildings in areas such as Camberwell.⁵¹⁸ ‘Tremendous impetus was given to the sale of land shortly after the extension of the railway, which eventuated in that wave of madness known as Land Boom, 1886-90’.⁵¹⁹

Churches: Traditional Social Institutions and Social Betterment⁵²⁰

The burgeoning land sales of the 1880s, and the brisk residential growth and expansion of the commercial centre were accompanied by the establishment of many new church

⁵¹³ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵¹⁴ Gunson, A. G. (1979). *A Short History of Camberwell Congregational Church*. Publisher and place of publication unknown. In possession of Matheson Library, Rare Books section, Monash University, Clayton Campus, Victoria Australia, p. 2.

⁵¹⁵ City of Camberwell (Ref. A). 1933, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵¹⁶ Garden, op. cit., p. 177.

⁵¹⁷ City of Camberwell. (1954), op. cit., section heading *Railways*, sixth page of Mayor’s speech.

⁵¹⁸ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., p. 55.

⁵¹⁹ The City of Camberwell. (Ref. A), op. cit., p. 3.

⁵²⁰ For the purpose of this study social betterment is defined as a ‘formal improvement, especially in someone’s social and economic position’. Retrieved from <http://www.ldoconline.com/Sociology-topic/betterment>. .

buildings, one of these being the Camberwell Congregational Church.⁵²¹ In 1979, a history of this church was compiled by a member of the church congregation, A. Gunson. Although it is only one example, a closer look at the growth and development of the church, as viewed by Gunson, provides some insight into the life and role of churches in Camberwell between the 1880s and the 1950s. As previously mentioned, in the 1950s one of Camberwell's many churches, the Hartwell, Presbyterian Church, established a film group.⁵²² The use of film for educational and illustrative purposes, and the setting up of film societies by religious organisations, is discussed earlier in this study in Chapter Four.

In November 1886, a committee was formed with the objective of building a Congregational Church in Camberwell. Gunson judged 1886 as a propitious time to be embarking on such a project stating that,

The year is 1886, but no one despite their faith in the future of this choice part of a fast growing metropolis could have imagined such growth, such property, for Camberwell could well be described as a place of good address ... Camberwell citizens are substantially people with pride in home ownership.⁵²³

Following the formation of the Committee, events moved comparatively rapidly: on 29 April 1888 Church services celebrating its opening were conducted;⁵²⁴ church membership grew rapidly and church activities expanded quickly. During the recession of the 1890s, although challenging for the congregation, church finances held their 'ground in difficult days'⁵²⁵ and 'despite the necessity for careful management of finance' the church donated monies to the Indian Famine Fund and for Bushfire Relief.⁵²⁶ It would seem there was a high level of dependency on direct giving.⁵²⁷ This form of giving was also a critical component of raising funds for the maintenance and growth of Catholicism in Camberwell

⁵²¹ Gunson, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵²² *Melbourne Film Festival Program*. (1955). List of Federation of Victorian Film Societies Members and Affiliates is inside back cover.

⁵²³ Gunson, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

particularly in the early 1900s.⁵²⁸ In relation to the 1930s depression, Gunson's focus is on its general impact rather than its effect on church members, either individuals or families, observing that,

There was still unemployment following the 1929 recession and those whose lives were more or less untouched by this experience were in many ways not fully conscious of its impact but it was more widespread than realised.⁵²⁹

Although Gunson acknowledges the seriousness of these depressions and concedes that some people were more or less immune to their impact, he is rather reticent about the effect of the depressions on less fortunate members of the church's congregation.

This may suggest that the depressions were not a major issue affecting the church's congregation: generally speaking, members of the congregation may have been employed in areas less vulnerable to the effect of the depressions, or their financial commitment to the church may have remained a very high personal priority even in times of financial hardship. Alternatively, given factors such as the area's aspirational culture with its overtones of social betterment, its strong sense of personal pride, and the conservative nature of church congregations at that time, people suffering financial hardship during these depressions may have chosen not to speak publicly about it. Nevertheless, given the state-wide impact of the depressions in Victoria it would seem highly unlikely that these did not have an impact on some members of the Camberwell Congregational Church. Garden describes the depression of the 1890s as shattering the 'dreams of thousands of Melbourne families'⁵³⁰ while he observes that the 1930s depression in Victoria, as elsewhere, had a terrible impact on the lives of most people. 'Few were able to escape the effects of unemployment, reduced income, failed businesses or low returns, and the picture of the early 1930s is one of poverty, privation and misery'.⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ Sheehan, M. (n.d.). *Victories in Camberwell. A History of Catholics in Camberwell*. Pakenham, Australia: Pakenham Gazette, p. 22.

⁵²⁹ Gunson, op. cit., p. 52.

⁵³⁰ Garden, op. cit., p. 215.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 362 & 366.

Regardless of the reasons for Gunson's reticence about the impact of either of these depressions on less financially fortunate members of the Camberwell Congregational Church, there was a constant emphasis on property acquisition by the church, as well as its development and ongoing maintenance during these periods.⁵³² In addition, in the 1930s as in the 1890s, there was a steady flow of donations to various agencies, including local fund raising events such as Hospital Sunday, local and international church missions, and survivors of natural disaster, an example being the victims of the 1931 earthquake in the City of Napier, New Zealand. These financial contributions continued to be funded partly by direct giving but a major source of funding was from the proceeds of activities such as fetes and concerts.⁵³³

This overview suggests that, within Camberwell from the mid-1880s to the 1950s there was a community of people who were civic-minded, with a perspective about the type of community they wanted to create. Also, these people had an awareness of their social responsibilities which extended beyond their local boundaries. In addition, members of this community would seem to have had at least an average, if not an above average income, given factors such as the maintenance of church emphasis on property acquisition and its ongoing maintenance, and the congregation's steadfast generosity to agencies supporting people in need.

Blainey offers a broader overview of the growth and role of the churches in the development of Camberwell which is not inconsistent with the previously mentioned interpretations from Gunson's history. Blainey asserts that the census of 1881 indicated a strong Protestant affiliation in Boroondara.⁵³⁴ At the end of the land boom in the 1880s and 1890s there was a marked growth in nonconformist congregations such as the Presbyterians and Independents⁵³⁵ and, in the 1901 census, compared with other Melbourne local government areas, Boroondara had a higher percentage of nonconformists.⁵³⁶ Although Blainey is unsure of the reasons for these differences he proposes that,

⁵³² Gunson, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

⁵³⁴ Blainey, 1964, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

Possibly Boroondara as a fashionable new suburb attracted a large percentage of Independents and Presbyterians because they tended to be wealthier individually than members of other churches ... Moreover, once certain denominations had become strong in Camberwell ... they became even stronger; many house-buyers preferred to choose an area where their own church was strong. Whatever may have caused the distinctive religious pattern of Boroondara, that pattern hardly altered in the first twenty years' of the 20th century.⁵³⁷

Blainey's proposed connections between religious affiliation, income levels, suburb of choice and property preference tend to support the researcher's previously mentioned interpretations based on Gunson's history of the Camberwell Congregational Church.

However, this interpretation which focuses on the non-conformist churches tends to obscure the contribution of Catholics to the underlying objectives of social betterment and creation of an aspirational culture within the Camberwell community. In exploring reasons for the building of Our Lady of Victories church⁵³⁸ in Camberwell, Sheehan acknowledges that 'the socio-economic status of Catholics, at the time Our Lady of Victories was constructed, was generally very low within the archdiocese of Melbourne, indeed throughout Australia'.⁵³⁹ Given these factors, Sheehan speculates that Our Lady of Victories was constructed not just to impress with its grandeur or for 'didactic purposes' or to 'assert Irish nationalism' but perhaps, 'it was intended to encourage Catholics, the majority of whom were existing in oppressed circumstances, to attempt to alter their social condition and acquire some material benefits'.⁵⁴⁰ It would seem that an ethos of social betterment and an aspirational culture were pervading Camberwell regardless of income levels or religious affiliations.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., pp. 77-78.

⁵³⁸ The church was opened in 1918. Sheehan, op. cit., p. 14

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

Maturation of a Community

By the end of the 19th century, Camberwell was forming its own distinctive community identity. The district had been opened-up by individual entrepreneurs such as graziers, small farmers, timber cutters and inn-keepers. Frustrated by the state of the winding and furrowed tracks which served as roads, the settlers came together to agitate for better roads eventually being granted permission to form the Boroondara Roads Board. The formation of the Board was democratic in process and represented a community activity as distinct from an initiative instituted by an individual citizen.

Gradually, the district was transformed from a place of small farms and timber felling into an urban centre with the development of business premises and the building of residences reflecting the newly acquired wealth and status of residents.⁵⁴¹ These developments were well-planned based on principles of well-designed subdivision of land for business and residential purposes, the allocation of land for parks and recreation, and street beautification with extensive tree planting.⁵⁴² The community's sporting interests were complemented by the provision of appropriate sites and facilities.⁵⁴³ Over a period of time, the availability of a comprehensive range and number of health services expanded.⁵⁴⁴ Similarly, public transport services evolved eventually connecting areas within the municipality and, Camberwell with other suburbs.⁵⁴⁵ Libraries were constructed and cultural pursuits such as concerts for the people were introduced.⁵⁴⁶ The contribution of the citizens of Camberwell to World Wars 1 and 2 in the 20th century, both in the loss of life of service forces members fighting overseas and in activities such as supporting various appeals including the Food for Britain Appeal,⁵⁴⁷ may have expanded people's view of the world heightening their awareness of other nationalities and cultures as well as strengthening their sense of civic duty.

⁵⁴¹ Blainey, (1964), op. cit., pp. 66-67. City of Camberwell (Ref. B). (1937c). *Know Your City, Camberwell's Remarkable Development*, Series No. 1, 1936-1937. Held in the Local History Restricted Access section at the Ashburton Library, City of Boroondara Library Service, p. 5.

⁵⁴² Ibid., City of Camberwell. (Ref. B), pp. 4-8. The City of Camberwell. (Ref. A), op. cit., p. 3.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., City of Camberwell. (Ref. B), pp. 9-12.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 13, 15 & 16. Ruskin Publishing. 1954, *The Ruskin All-about. Camberwell Edition*. Melbourne: Ruskin Publishing Pty Ltd in association with the Camberwell City Council.

⁵⁴⁵ Council of the City of Camberwell, (Ref. D), op. cit., n.p.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ City of Camberwell. 1954, op. cit., section heading, *War Efforts*, seventh page of the Mayor's speech.

From the early days education was important: the first State school in Camberwell was erected in 1867 with Camberwell Grammar School being founded in 1886⁵⁴⁸ followed by Fintona Presbyterian Girls' Grammar School in 1896.⁵⁴⁹ In 1953 the number of schools in Camberwell was: 14 State schools, 6 Roman Catholic; 15 private schools.⁵⁵⁰

In 1937 the Camberwell community was characterised by pride in its charity work, the Council providing a room in which the various auxiliaries could meet and transact their business. At this time there were approximately thirty auxiliaries working to support various hospitals and charities.⁵⁵¹ Council members also encouraged civic pride by congratulating the citizens on the maintenance of their nature strips,

The Council especially appreciates the efforts of the many citizens who regularly mow and keep the street lawns fronting their homes in order, thus enhancing the beauty of the City. It is the policy of the Council to leave a narrow strip of soil between the paving and building line, and delightful effects are obtained in many instances with Dwarf Nasturtiums, Sweet Alyssum, Nepeta, Armeria, Lippia and various kinds of rock plants'.⁵⁵²

This sense of civic pride, linked to the pioneers, was acknowledged again in 1954 by the then Mayor, Cr. John F. L. Goss, J.P.,

Amid the turmoil of pioneering there were those who transplanted from their homelands the delicate seeds of culture and guarded them against the fierce storms of materialism. Religion, Education, Horticulture, Sport and all the amenities of a growing civilization were instituted and lovingly fostered. To those pioneers we pay tribute, for it is on the foundations laid

⁵⁴⁸ Hansen, I. V. (1986). *By Their Deeds. A Centenary History of Camberwell Grammar School, 1886-1986*. Melbourne, Australia: Camberwell Grammar School. Frontspiece: the first page of the first prospectus, 1886.

⁵⁴⁹Fintona, a private girls school was inaugurated in February 1896, with fourteen students and 'by 1901 a hundred girls were enrolled'. In 1910, 'the school was recognized by the Presbyterian Church and became a Presbyterian Girls Grammar School'. Fintona. (1946). *The History of Fintona, 1896-1946*, Melbourne, Australia: McCarron, Bird & Co: pp. 1-3.

⁵⁵⁰ Council of the City of Camberwell. (No pagination). (Ref. D). (1954), op. cit.

⁵⁵¹ City of Camberwell. (Ref. B), (1937c), pp. 15-16

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 8.

by them that our city has progressed to maturity. We are constantly reminded that this progress is still a jealously guarded pride among our Citizens who are ever watchful of its continuance'.⁵⁵³

Conclusions

In summary, the preceding material creates a picture of a mature and somewhat independent community which valued its links to the past and aspired to move forward mindful of those values. The discussion also suggests that within the Camberwell community there were people who aspired to, and had attained, a sense of self, a level of social status and financial security which allowed them the time, money and inclination to pursue opportunities for self-development or self-actualisation.⁵⁵⁴ Self-actualisation is a critical characteristic of individuals and communities intent on forming an interest group such as a film society. Consequently, there would seem to have been a social milieu conducive to the formation of community groups such as film societies within the Camberwell community.

As presented in this chapter, the characteristics of this mature, Camberwell community which provided an infrastructure, and created an ambience for social betterment, an aspirational culture as well as individual and community self-actualisation are:

- economic stability;
- sound commercial and business enterprises;
- population with average or above average income levels and therefore, higher levels of disposable income;
- ample opportunities for education including a comparatively high percentage of independent schools;
- availability of services such as health, sport, public libraries and cultural activities;
- comparatively large number of churches which suggests a strong middle-class cohort in the community;

⁵⁵³ Council of the City of Camberwell. (No pagination). (Ref. D) (1954), op. cit.

⁵⁵⁴ Self-actualisation is a persistent desire to give expression to our unrealised possibilities, 'of becoming the most complete, the fullest, 'you' – hence the term, self-actualization'.

Retrieved from <http://webspaceship.edu/cgboer/maslow.html>

- church members who supported overseas missions and people affected by natural disasters, who may have had a broader world view than some of their fellow citizens;
- a sense of civic pride.

However, while these characteristics combined to create a social environment conducive to the formation of groups such as film societies, particularly in the 1950s, it would be simplistic to argue that they were the only or the main causative factor for the founding of the Camberwell Film Society. Although these were an important element in the Society's contextual background, there were other dynamic factors at work in the international community which played a significant role in the establishment of film societies. One of these factors was the development of the international documentary film movement driven by John Grierson, an enthusiastic advocate of the educational role of non-theatrical documentary films. Other factors included the establishment of the Australian National Film Board in May 1945, the availability of small, lightweight portable 16 mm projectors and, the extension of electricity supplies into outer urban and regional areas. In addition, in Victoria, the contribution of Ken Coldicutt and the Realist Film Unit/Association was a fundamental element in the development of the community film society movement. Factors such as these are discussed in the following chapter, Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX

A Filmic Educational Culture: People, Passions and Politics

Introduction

As argued in Chapter Four, by the end of WW2 the global film industry had a strong local presence in Australia and was producing a diversity of filmic product. This led to the recognition of the educational value of film not only by teaching authorities but also by community agencies such as religious organisations. A nascent filmic educational culture was forming. In Chapter Five it was proposed that by the 1950s there were a number of characteristics evident in the Camberwell community which, when combined, created a social environment conducive to the formation of groups such as film societies. This chapter, Chapter Six, addresses developments at international and local levels that moved along parallel with the factors identified in Chapters Four and Five. These international and local developments played a critical part in the formation of film societies.

The chapter commences with a succinct description of the concept of culture as relevant to this study. This is followed by an investigation into the efflorescence of the international documentary film movement driven by a Scotsman, John Grierson. Grierson's contribution to this movement is presented with reference to the concept of culture as previously mentioned. Also, attention is drawn to the connections between John Grierson, the international documentary film movement and, Victorian film societies. The focus of the chapter then funnels downwards from the global to the local the latter being represented by the state of Victoria. Infrastructure and political decisions supporting the founding of film societies in Victoria are identified and their relevance to the establishment of film societies is noted. This discourse is followed by an investigation into the contribution of Ken Coldicutt, a controversial Victorian left-wing thinker and activist, to the setting-up of Victoria's film societies and the proliferation of a filmic educational culture. The chapter closes with a summary of the links between the global, the local and film societies, as presented in the discussion.

A Concept of Culture

The concept of culture is problematic: it has many different meanings depending on the particular context and historical period relevant to its application or discussion. Sometimes it relates to the arts both visual and performing, at other times it is descriptive of traditional ways of behaving while, in additional instances, it may be used by a group such as a football club as an explanatory device to rationalise why its players are not performing as well as opposition teams.

Culture is pervasive establishing belief systems, behavioural norms, practices, and values pertinent to groups characterised by a diversity of factors such as varying sizes, nationalities, occupations, political persuasions, religious ways of life and social activities. Culture has the capacity to be cohesive cementing relationships within a group, ensuring group strength and cocooning members from adversity; conversely, it may be divisive contributing to intra- or inter-group tensions as aspects of a particular group or groups' beliefs and cultural practices are challenged. However, regardless of the different meanings and characteristics of culture, each culture is derived from ways in which people conceive of, and interpret, their worlds as they experience them. Culture is a phenomenological concept. George Miller, producer of the Mad Max films, proposes that the source of culture may be the 'collective unconscious'⁵⁵⁵ arguing that,

All of us carry highly personalised narratives. They make up the mosaic of who we are and what we believe. Most of the time they are implicit or subliminal because we don't apprehend life by the intellect alone ... We ... carry them (the narratives) like a set of tools to help explain the world and guide our way through it. When there is an interconnected set of stories we call it a mythology. When it's shared by a group of people, it becomes a culture.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ George Miller quoted in Jenkins, D. M. (1999). *A Study of Culture and Organisational Change at a TAFE Institute*. (Unpublished Master of Commerce thesis), p. 29.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

Throughout the first fifty years of the 20th century there were many people whose personal narratives contributed to the efflorescence of a filmic educational culture in Australia, particularly in the state of Victoria. It is not possible in this study to acknowledge all of these contributors. However, to elucidate ways in which individuals' conceptions and interpretations of their worlds, as they experienced them, contributed to the growth of a filmic educational culture in Victoria, the distinctly different personal narratives of two people are explored in the following section of this thesis. These people are John Grierson, an international figure in the documentary film movement and, Ken Coldicutt, a Victorian and a passionate advocate of the educational value of film. Grierson and Coldicutt had different viewpoints, different lifestyles, different motivations, and different educational experiences but were united in their perception of the educational value of film, particularly films in the documentary genre. As indicated in the Introduction to this chapter, Grierson's narrative is presented first. It is followed by an overview of Victorian infrastructure improvements and political decisions supportive of film societies. This overview leads into Ken Coldicutt's personal narrative. All of these factors had a part to play in the evolution of Victoria's filmic educational culture which gave added impetus to the numerical growth of the State's film societies in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Dr. John Grierson 1898-1972

Brian Winston contends that 'John Grierson is without question the totemic ancestor ... of the British documentary film'.⁵⁵⁷ Winston then qualifies this statement by noting that, from his point of view, there is a contradiction in the Grierson story whereby Grierson's comparatively limited practical experience in the direction and production of films, contrasts with his status as 'one of the most important and influential figures of world cinema in the middle decades of the last century'.⁵⁵⁸ Likewise, John Chittock, asserts that 'Grierson's influence on factual film-making was immense'.⁵⁵⁹ However, like Winston, Chittock qualifies his recognition of Grierson's achievements and status: from Chittock's

⁵⁵⁷ Winston, B. (2000-2001). Book and Film Reviews, Jack C. Ellis. John Grierson: Life, Contributions, Influence. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. (2000). In *Visual Anthropology Review*, 16 (2). Fall-Winter 2000-2001, p. 92. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/var.2000.16.issue-2/issuetoc>

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ The Grierson Trust: John Grierson, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.griersontrust.org/john-grierson.html>

point of view Grierson was motivated by a high level of self-interest and was insensitive towards his fellow workers.⁵⁶⁰

Grierson was, and is not, without his critics. He was philosophically, professionally and personally passionate about the idea that documentary films could present and interpret reality in a manner which was both ‘socially purposive’⁵⁶¹ and aesthetically pleasing. Consequently, Grierson provoked sometimes equally passionate criticisms of his work, achievements and personality. However, it is not the researcher’s intention either to defend or to explore these criticisms any further. Rather it is to assert that a person with less tenacity of purpose, a more moderate self-image, a narrower, less acute intelligence, and deficient in the area of a well-formed philosophical frame of reference, may not have succeeded in generating such a widespread and lasting legacy of documentary film-making as Grierson accomplished. Within the context of this thesis, the importance of Grierson’s legacy is its contribution to the evolution of a filmic educational culture, and the associated growth of Australian film societies, particularly in the state of Victoria.

Formative Years

In the mid-1920s, John Grierson revived the concept of the documentary idea⁵⁶² as a valuable and creative form of cinematographically providing ‘representations of the real world’ through a process of ‘the creative interpretation of actuality’.⁵⁶³ Grierson argues that documentary ‘is a clumsy description ... The French who first used the term only meant travelogue’.⁵⁶⁴ For Grierson, the concept of documentary is much broader and deeper than a travelogue: he posits that its substance includes current themes, arguments, events, that is, ‘affairs of our time’.⁵⁶⁵ These are cinematographically produced to tantalize viewers’ imagination in a manner directed towards heightening the diversity and richness

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Aitken, I. (1992). *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement*. London, England: Routledge, p. 148.

⁵⁶² Winston, B, op. cit. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/var.2000.16.issue-2/issuetoc> Winston states that, ‘the term had been used in English more than a decade earlier by the photographer Edward Curtis. Curtis was proposing cinematographic ‘documentary works’ before 1914, but had felt the need to embed such ‘documentary material’ in purely fictional narratives, of which he completed only one. *In the Land of the Headhunters*, p. 92.

⁵⁶³ Ibid. Shirley & Adams, op cit., p, 164.

⁵⁶⁴ Grierson, J. (1979). *Grierson on Documentary*. (Abridged ed.). With an introduction by Forsyth Hardy. London, England: Faber and Faber, p. 35.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

of their worlds, raise levels of awareness about social issues and as a mode of self-education.⁵⁶⁶ In Grierson's words the,

documentary idea ... demands no more than that the affairs of our time shall be brought to the screen in a fashion which strikes the imagination and makes observation a little richer than it was. At one level the vision may be journalistic, at another, it may rise to poetry and drama. At another level again, its aesthetic quality may lie in the mere lucidity of its expression.⁵⁶⁷

To understand Grierson and his passionate commitment to the documentary film genre, it is essential to appreciate his conception and interpretation of his world.⁵⁶⁸ The factors which shaped Grierson's ideas throughout his formative years are critical to this conception and interpretation. As Ian Aitken observes,⁵⁶⁹ the 'documentary film movement was founded and led by John Grierson, whose ideas were fashioned by the society within which he spent a significant proportion of his formative years: that of central Scotland between the turn of the century and 1924'.⁵⁷⁰

Born on 26 April 1898 in Cambusbarron, a village near the city of Stirling in Scotland,⁵⁷¹ John Grierson was the son of Scottish school-teachers who, although conservative by class,⁵⁷² were 'socially and politically conscious and believed in the value of education and debate'.⁵⁷³ However, the political stances of Grierson's parents were not necessarily like-minded: from his early years 'Grierson had been influenced by two, often contradictory influences: a liberal idealism which he inherited through his father, and a more radical socialist commitment which he inherited through his mother'.⁵⁷⁴ Between finishing school

⁵⁶⁶ Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 164.

⁵⁶⁷ Grierson, op. cit., p. 13.

John Grierson paraphrased in Federation of Victorian Film Societies. *Melbourne Film Festival – 1953*, Program, 1953, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, p. 18.

⁵⁶⁸ Refer to Chapter 6, regarding the contribution of individuals to the formation of cultures.

⁵⁶⁹ Aitken, I, op. cit., p. 16.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p. 1. Winston, op. cit. Grierson, J. (1979), p. 92.

⁵⁷² Grierson, J, Ibid.

B. Winston, B, op. cit., p. 92.

⁵⁷³ Aitken, op. cit., p. 24.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 22 & 46. 'Cambusbarron was a mining village, and during the periodic strikes and lockouts, the Griersons played an active role in helping the destitute miners. Grierson's mother ran a soup kitchen, and

at Cambusbarron, and continuing on to university, there was a 3½ year break in Grierson's studies caused by World War 1 during which he served as a telegraphist on North Sea mine-sweepers. Aitken proposes that the 'early knowledge of advanced communications technology, which Grierson's employment as telegraphist gave him, may well have influenced his later interest in the mass media, and in documentary film'.⁵⁷⁵ Following his demobilization in 1919, Grierson studied at Glasgow University gaining a Masters Degree in philosophy and literature. At this time Glasgow was the centre of a significant working class struggle in Scotland characterised by industrial discord, economic depression and social dispossession.⁵⁷⁶ It is very likely that this depressed economic and social background would have had some sway on Grierson's philosophical and moral ideas, particularly given the social and political sensitivities of his parents. Nevertheless, the influence of this debilitating community unrest on Grierson appears to have been cerebral, being limited to 'political discussion groups' while at university, as opposed to active political participation.⁵⁷⁷ Nevertheless, in 1952, Grierson acknowledges that, 'what I may have given to documentary—with the working man on the screen and all that—was simply what I owed to my masters, Keir Hardie, Bob Smilie and John Wheatley', moderate reformists in Scottish industrial and economic discord in the 1920s.⁵⁷⁸

While at Glasgow University, the contradictory influences of Grierson's parents 'were reinforced ... when he was influenced by both neo-hegelianism⁵⁷⁹ and the socialism of the

was politically active on behalf of the miners. John himself was involved, through helping his mother in the soup kitchen, and came into frequent contact with the miners'. Aitken, *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁷⁶ J. Grierson. (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 1. For details about this industrial and social discord refer to: Red Clydeside: A history of the labour movement in Glasgow 1910-1932 Retrieved from <http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/redclyde/>

⁵⁷⁷ Aitken, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁵⁷⁸ Hardie, Smilie and Wheatley were moderate reformists, a movement which 'found its institutional embodiment in the Independent Labour Party which, though originally founded as a working-class party, had always attracted middle-class support'. Aitken. *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34.

⁵⁷⁹ 'Neo-Hegelianism, the doctrines of an idealist school of philosophers that was [*sic*] prominent in Great Britain and in the United States between 1870 and 1920. The name is also sometimes applied to cover other philosophies of the period that were Hegelian in inspiration—for instance, those of Benedetto Croce and of Giovanni Gentile. Neo-Hegelianism in Great Britain developed originally as a natural sequel to the semipopular work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle. Its exponents sought to give philosophical expression to a widely felt antipathy to the prevailing materialism and utilitarianism and turned to the writings of G.W.F. Hegel and the German school as containing penetrating, if oracular, statements of an alternative view'. "Neo-Hegelianism." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/408658/Neo-Hegelianism>

Independent Labour Party'.⁵⁸⁰ Also, amongst other philosophers studied at university, Grierson explored the teachings of A. D. Lindsay, a professor of moral philosophy, resulting in the integration of these contradictory influences into a reasoned philosophy,

By 1924 Grierson's ideas consisted of a synthesis of social democratic constitutional reformism, and an idealist philosophy which had been derived from Kant and Bradley, and formulated under Lindsay. This formed the conceptual core of what was later to become his theory of documentary film.⁵⁸¹

The factors presented in this overview of Grierson's formative years, and his synthesis of their influence into a reasoned philosophy, preceded his introduction to the world of film production with its power to communicate ideas and factual information about the real world.⁵⁸² On recognising the power of film, not only to communicate but also to educate, Grierson was able to shape and articulate his vision for the authentic use of this medium to represent and interpret reality within the framework of a philosophy which was both theoretical and personally experiential. His recognition of the power of film as a mass communication medium occurred during his years in the United States.

United States Interlude

Between 1924 and 1927 Grierson lived in the United States having been awarded a Laura Spellman Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to study 'Immigration and its effects upon the social problems of the United states'.⁵⁸³ His studies led him to the conclusion that 'the best way of resolving the social problems caused by immigration was through the use of forms of mass communication which were accessible to the immigrant population'.⁵⁸⁴ Later on, he modified his original research subject to include 'Public opinion, social psychology and newspaper psychology'.⁵⁸⁵ His ensuing investigations into the newspaper industry provided

⁵⁸⁰ Aitken, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² John Grierson in writing about education asks, 'Why is it that our educational methods seem so far away from the realities of the human struggle?' Hence, his emphasis on real life, real events, real issues in his vision for documentary films. Grierson. (1979), op. cit., 157. For an extensive argument about education refer to Grierson, op. cit., Chapter 3 Propaganda and Education, pp. 141-155.

⁵⁸³ Aitken, op. cit., p. 48.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

him with opportunities to submit articles for publication initially about movies,⁵⁸⁶ ‘and later to examine the reactions of the film-going masses as measured by the box-office’.⁵⁸⁷ In addition, while in the United States Grierson met Walter Lippman who proposed that, ‘rather than the press, he [Grierson] look into the movies. Perhaps they were the form best suited to turn citizens’ attention to the decisions that needed to be made in common, and to provide them with a basic education in the factors to be considered’.⁵⁸⁸ As a consequence of his research findings and his investigations into newspapers and cinema-goers’ attitudes to movies, Grierson now had a filmic tool, a mode of communication, which had the power to inform and influence the masses.

Furthermore, while in the United States, Grierson became familiar with the work of the Russian film director, Sergei Eisenstein,⁵⁸⁹ when his film *Potemkin* was released in the United States in 1926. Grierson ‘observed at first-hand how the principles of symphonic structure and dynamic editing were applied for persuasive purposes’.⁵⁹⁰ Also, at this time, Grierson met Robert Flaherty director of *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Moana* (1926).⁵⁹¹ While Grierson was impressed by the filmic techniques demonstrated by Eisenstein,⁵⁹² he also applauded Flaherty’s ability to make a ‘poetic statement of natural beauty’.⁵⁹³ Grierson observed that his knowledge of cinema had been,

learned partly from the Russians, partly from the American westerns,
and partly from Flaherty, *Nanook*. The Westerns give you some notion

⁵⁸⁶ J. Grierson. (1979). Acknowledgements, p. 7 & passim. This reference includes many of Grierson’s journal articles published in *Cinema Quarterly*, *World Film News*, and *Documentary News Letter*.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁸⁸ Ellis, J. (1989). *The Documentary Idea: A Critical History of English-Language Documentary Film and Video*. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, p. 59.

⁵⁸⁹ Ivor Montagu posits that Eisenstein was a ‘ruthless, brilliant, charming artist’ who ‘was ready for any personal sacrifice, as well as to sacrifice anyone else, when beneath the sway of creative passion’. Montagu, I. 1970/71, ‘Book Reviews, Sergei Eisenstein and Upton: Sinclair: The Making and Unmaking of *Quo Viva Mexico*’, Harry M. Geduld and Ronald Gottesman, *Sight and Sound*, International Film Quarterly/Winter 1970/71, 4 (1). London: British Film Institute, p. 53.

⁵⁹⁰ Grierson. (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 11. Aitken, *op. cit.*, pp 74-79.

⁵⁹¹ Grierson first used the term documentary in relation to *Moana*, Flaherty’s second film. Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁵⁹² Grierson. (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 11.

For Eisenstein ‘everything was in the cutting and he could not decide that until he sat down to it’. Montagu, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁵⁹³ Grierson quoted in Aitken *op. cit.*, p. 79.

of the energies. The Russians give you the energies and the intimacies both. And Flaherty is a poet.⁵⁹⁴

Grierson now had a mode of communication and a conceptual understanding of documentary films with the potential to reach the masses: it captured Flaherty's filmic passion for naturalistic subjects and poetic cinematography,⁵⁹⁵ and encapsulated the importance of the symphonic production techniques of Russian filmmakers designed to achieve ultimate harmony of image, sound and message for persuasive purposes.⁵⁹⁶ Additionally, Grierson had a philosophical framework within which to develop his documentary principles⁵⁹⁷ and ideas. The next step was to give coherence to his theories and vision by making these a reality.⁵⁹⁸

In 1927, by the time Grierson returned to Britain his intentions had clarified. To him films were primarily a means of reaching and influencing public opinion: 'I look on cinema as a pulpit and use it as a propagandist'.⁵⁹⁹ However, Jack Ellis qualifies the concept of propaganda regarding Grierson remarking that he was, 'a very discerning and sophisticated propagandist who realized the utility of beauty in selling ideas—and recognised it when he saw it'.⁶⁰⁰ In other words, as John Baxter succinctly observes, Grierson 'preached persuasively in England of the necessity for cinema to record reality with the same care as it did fiction, showing that in real life there is as much beauty as in the contrived patterns of drama'.⁶⁰¹ Furthermore, Grierson's vision included the establishment of a 'socially purposive, State-funded documentary film movement, which would ... work with political legislators, and at the same time contribute towards a process of social reform'.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁴ Grierson. (1979), op. cit., p. 20.

⁵⁹⁵ This concept of 'poetic cinematography' pervades Flaherty's work: *Louisiana Story*, the last major film made by Flaherty before his death on 23 July, 1951, has been described as 'a real educational film; it is also a poem, and the two things work together'. Federation of Victorian Film Societies. 1952, *Film Festival Olinda—1952*, op. cit.

⁵⁹⁶ Grierson. (1979), op. cit. Essay titled, 'Drifters', pp. 19-22.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

⁵⁹⁸ Grierson explains that, 'You photograph the natural life, but you also, by your juxtaposition of detail, create an interpretation of it'. Ibid, p. 38.

⁵⁹⁹ Ellis, op. cit., p. 72.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ J. Baxter. (1970). *The Australian Cinema*. Sydney, Australia: Angus & Robertson Ltd, pp. 79-80.

⁶⁰² Aitken, op. cit., p. 148-149.

Philosophy and Vision Become a Reality

Grierson returned to England in 1927. At this time in Britain, as in many other countries, there was already a strong filmic culture which recognised film as a source of entertainment as well as a distinctive art-form. Grierson's vision for documentary films had the potential to create a parallel filmic culture—a filmic educational culture.

Initially, Grierson worked at the Empire Marketing Board (EMB),⁶⁰³ a government agency, eventually being appointed head of the Board's Film Unit which was established in 1930. At this time, the Secretary of the EMB was Stephen Tallents.⁶⁰⁴ He anticipated the potential effectiveness of the motion picture as a public relations instrument and recognised 'that Grierson was exceptionally well qualified to initiate its use'.⁶⁰⁵ Under Grierson's leadership, the Unit produced and screened films as well as engaging many young well-educated people in 'not only filmmaking but the sort of social commitment that motivated Grierson'.⁶⁰⁶ Ellis gives practical expression to Grierson's idealism and social-reformist concepts when he observes that,

What he [Grierson] wanted films to do was to make the state and the society function better. He thought that collective effort, cooperation, and understanding could lead to a better world—not only better food and housing, better teeth and better schools, but a better spirit—a sense of being part of a valuable society with room still left for individual satisfactions and eccentricities.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰³ 'The EMB had been established in 1926 to promote the marketing of the products of the British Empire and to encourage research and development amongst member states. The broader purpose implicit from the outset was to substitute for the decaying military and political ties of empire the economic ones of a commonwealth of nations'. Ellis, op. cit., p. 60.

⁶⁰⁴ Later on knighted becoming Sir Stephen Tallents. Ibid., Ellis, p. 60.

'*Sir Stephen Tallents* was a writer, philanthropist, the founder of public relations in Britain and arguably the world's first multi-media entrepreneur. Inspired by the example of the theatrical impresario *Michel Saint-Denis*, Tallents used his position at the governmental advertising agency, the *Empire Marketing Board* (1926-1933), to sponsor the creation of *John Grierson's* documentary film school'. Retrieved from <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/1179594/index.html>

Grierson describes Tallents as maintaining 'with John Stuart Mill that "it is the artist alone in whose hands truth becomes impressive and a living principle of action"'. Grierson. (1979), op. cit., p. 63.

⁵⁰ Ellis, op. cit., p. 60.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

These young filmmakers became part of the documentary film movement with a number establishing ‘successful reputations in their own right’,⁶⁰⁸ sometimes in countries other than England.⁶⁰⁹ An Australian example of this filmmaker diaspora is that in the mid-1940s, Stanley Hawes, one of Grierson’s acolytes, came to Australia to take-up a position as Producer-in-Chief of the Department of Information’s Film Division. In 1946, Hawes produced a film about the correspondence school for country children in New South Wales which was nominated for an American Academy Award in 1947.⁶¹⁰ This is an illustration of the spread and influence of Grierson’s documentary movement. Moreover, it is an early example of a local production gaining recognition in the globalised film industry: a reversal of the usual global to local pattern as discussed earlier in this thesis.⁶¹¹ The concept of connections between the global and the local is reflected in the following statement made by Basil Wright, one of Grierson’s protégés,

documentary built up a true conception of practical internationalism in which national characteristics and national achievements were seen to form the best basis for interchange of ideas and the promotion of mutual understanding between peoples.⁶¹²

In addition, Hawes was to play an important role in maintaining the Australian Department of Information’s documentary production, ‘in the mid-1940s ... despite constant attempts by the government to stifle development and one distinct threat of closure’.⁶¹³ As will be discussed later in the thesis, documentary films were an important component of Victorian film society programs in the 1950s and 1960s.

To encourage more people to view and value documentaries, Grierson and his colleagues ‘developed a method of nontheatrical distribution and exhibition’.⁶¹⁴ This included public screenings in London, lending of 16 mm films cost free through the EMB library, and an

⁶⁰⁸ For example, ‘Edgar Anstey established the Shell Film Unit ... Donald Taylor, Paul Rotha and Stuart Legg established the Strand Film Unit, and Basil Wright established the Realist Film Unit’. Aitken, op. cit., p. 136.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 2. Baxter op. cit., p. 80.

⁶¹⁰ Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 178. Baxter., Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Refer to Chapter Four, *Interface Between the Global and the Local*, passim.

⁶¹² Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 165.

⁶¹³ Ibid., pp. 191-192.

⁶¹⁴ Ellis, op. cit., p. 61.

outreach program which screened films in country areas. This type of operational lending model was adopted by the Victorian State Film Centre following its establishment in 1946.⁶¹⁵ In England, in conjunction with the prodigious production, exhibition and distribution of documentary films, Grierson and his associates were prolific writers for various journals and newspapers as well as establishing ‘house journals of the documentary movement: *Cinema Quarterly* (1932-6), *World Film News* (1936-8) and *Documentary Newsletter* (1940-47)’.⁶¹⁶ The publication of articles in the house journals and through external agencies was significant in broadening and informing a wider range of people, such as Australian filmmakers and cinema enthusiasts, about the documentary movement, as well as contributing to the evolution of a filmic educational culture.⁶¹⁷ Also of direct significance to this thesis is the formation of the Realist Film Unit, in London, by Basil Wright, and the production of documentaries such as *Workers and Jobs* (1935) filmed in an unemployment exchange, *Housing Problems* (1935) which addressed the housing issues faced by slum dwellers and *Today We Live* (1937) which explored the impact of unemployment on miners.⁶¹⁸ The formation of Wright’s Realist Film Unit and the associated production of socially purposive British films would seem to be echoed in the founding, in Melbourne, in the 1940s, of the Victorian Realist Film Unit⁶¹⁹ which produced a number of socially purposive films.⁶²⁰ As will be explored later in this thesis, the founders of the Victorian Realist Film Unit established the Victorian Realist Film Association which provided support for, and advice to, the Victorian Film Society movement.

Following the collapse of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) in 1933, in England, the Board’s Film Unit was transferred to the General Post Office (GPO).⁶²¹ Even though the GPO Film Unit was a highly successful and well regarded British film production body⁶²²

⁶¹⁵ Refer to footnote 587.

⁶¹⁶ Aitken, op. cit., p. 177.

⁶¹⁷ Refer to Chapter 4.

⁶¹⁸ Aitken, op. cit., pp. 138-139.

⁶¹⁹ Refer to section about Kenneth John Coldicutt later in this chapter.

⁶²⁰ Hughes, J. (2006). *Disc1-The Feature, The Archive Project*, a documentary film about the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association, Melbourne. Copy held by Mrs Elisabeth Coldicutt, widow of the late Kenneth John Coldicutt

⁶²¹ Aitken, op. cit., p. 126

⁶²² One of the most successful and long-lasting films made by the GPO Film Unit was *Night Mail*, 1936. Directed by Harry Watt, in conjunction with Basil Wright, two of Grierson’s protégés, ‘*Night Mail* is the most celebrated of Watt’s pre-war films. Recording the journey of a postal train from London to Glasgow, it

as well as being financially profitable,⁶²³ it was difficult for it to withstand the ‘ambivalence, indifference, and sometimes hostility, on the part of certain groups within the establishment and film trade’.⁶²⁴ In 1936, a Committee of Enquiry was set up to review the Film Unit.⁶²⁵ Grierson, recognising that his dream of a State-funded Film Unit,⁶²⁶ producing aesthetically presented and socially purposive documentaries would not be realised, resigned from the GPO Film Unit in June 1937⁶²⁷ and ‘formed *Film Centre*, an advisory and co-ordinating body for the documentary film movement’.⁶²⁸

In the late 1930s Grierson conducted a study for the Imperial Relations Trust visiting a number of countries including Canada, New Zealand and Australia.⁶²⁹ The study’s objective was ‘to compile a report on the state of official documentary work in each country and make suggestions about future activity’.⁶³⁰ As a consequence of recommendations arising from this study, Canada established a National Film Board. In 1939, Grierson accepted an appointment as the first ‘Film Commissioner for the National Film Board of Canada’.⁶³¹ Unlike Canada, Australia was slow to act on Grierson’s recommendations not establishing a national film board until 1945.⁶³² One of the Canadian National Film Board’s responsibilities which had a direct impact on Australian film societies stated that it was ‘to concern itself with “distribution of Canadian films in other countries’.⁶³³ As will be demonstrated later in this thesis, films produced by the Board were screened regularly by the Camberwell Film Society.

is an example of “drama on the doorstep,” to use a Grierson phrase—everyday and close to home, yet lovely and lasting. It may be the ultimate blend of Grierson’s ethic (social purpose) and aesthetic (formal properties). It is a paradigm of propaganda so intertwined [*sic*] with art that the viewer experiences pleasure while absorbing the message (painlessly, effortlessly, and probably even unconsciously)’. Ellis, op. cit., pp. 70-72.

⁶²³ Aitken, op. cit., p. 148.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., p. 150.

In his essay, *The Course of Realism*, Grierson argues that the source of some of this adverse reaction was that ‘fundamentally, the sin has been to make the cinema face life. This must inevitably be unwelcome to the complacent elements in society’. Grierson. (1979), op. cit., p. 77.

⁶²⁵ The Film Unit survived the enquiry only to be dismantled within six months of the end of WW2 in 1945. Aitken, op. cit., p. 148.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., pp. 148-149. Although this was Grierson’s vision, most of his productions were funded through sponsorships.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., p. 136.

⁶²⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/454202/index.html>

⁶²⁹ Shirley & Adams, op. cit., p. 165.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Aitken, op. cit., p. 149. Ellis, op. cit., p. 124.

⁶³² Shirley & Adams, op. cit., pp. 165 & 176.

⁶³³ Ellis, op. cit., p. 125.

Post World War 2 in Australia

In Australia, after WW2, the growth of the documentary movement continued with documentary filmmakers such as John Heyer, a former Hawes associate, being appointed head of the Shell Film Unit. In this role, one of Heyer's many significant achievements was the production of *The Back of Beyond*, 'an examination of life on the Birdsville Track of central Australia and the people who live there.'⁶³⁴ Shirley and Adams posit that this film distils 'the Australian character and its environment in a way that equals the earlier classic documentaries of Grierson and Harry Watt'.⁶³⁵ Heyer was also a 'stalwart of the postwar film society movement'.⁶³⁶ In the 1960s the Camberwell Film Society screened a number of films produced by the Shell Film Unit. In addition, Grierson protégés such as Harry Watt, directly and indirectly influenced the production of documentary films about, and on location in, Australia. In the mid-1940s, Watt came to Australia to direct *The Overlanders* (1946), a quintessential Australian story, on behalf of Ealing Studios.⁶³⁷ This film was in the documentary style, 'stressing Watt's background as one of the Grierson group and director of the famous *Night Mail*'.⁶³⁸ After WW2 Grierson's documentary movement was a critical factor in stimulating the development of Australia's documentary film industry.

Summary

To paraphrase Miller's concept of culture, Grierson carried with him a highly personalised narrative which made up the mosaic of who he was and what he believed.⁶³⁹ The genesis of this narrative was a family environment which valued education and political debate enriched by the differing political stances of his parents. Grierson's narrative was given added definition and depth by his encounter with the philosophical theories of Hegel and Kant culminating in the work of Lindsay. Through these encounters, Grierson formulated a reasoned philosophical framework, that is, 'a relatively coherent ideology',⁶⁴⁰ which embraced the seemingly contradictory political values of his parents.

⁶³⁴ Baxter, op. cit., pp. 80-81. Shirley & Adams, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., Shirley & Adams, p. 194.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, p. 178.

⁶³⁷ Baxter op. cit., pp. 168-170.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

⁶³⁹ Refer to *A Concept of Culture*, presented earlier in this chapter.

⁶⁴⁰ Aitken, op. cit., p. 47.

In 1924, Grierson carried his narrative, 'like a set of tools',⁶⁴¹ to the United States where, challenged by the issue of immigration and its associated problems, he concluded that the dilemma could be resolved through forms of mass communication accessible to most people. As a consequence of his experiences in the United States, Grierson formed his concept of the documentary idea: a filmic form of mass communication presenting State-funded, socially purposive films, in which reality was filmed with the same level of creativity and attention to detail as were fictional films.

On his return to Britain in 1927, Grierson's documentary idea was, in a sense, more myth than reality: it was a vision – an interrelated set of ideas - underpinned by a philosophical framework. However, through a number of factors including: his leadership and initiative at the EMB and the GPO resulting in the production of a prodigious number of documentary films; his encouragement and employment of talented and well-educated young people in the field of documentary film production; the support he received from gifted and influential people such as Sir Stephen Tallents; his friendship with filmmakers including Robert Flaherty and Alberto Cavalcanti,⁶⁴² and the copious number of articles he wrote for journals and newspapers, the documentary movement steadily took shape and structure. The success of the movement was evident not only in the copious production of documentary films, globally, but also in the evolution of a global filmic educational culture. Australian film societies, a component of adult education,⁶⁴³ were beneficiaries of this global evolutionary process: the films provided a resource for screening and discussion at the film societies' meetings, while the filmic educational culture created a cultural ambience germane to their role in the arena of adult education, at the local level.

At the same time as the documentary movement was taking shape and gaining influence globally, there were movie enthusiasts in Australia whose ideas about the role and value of documentary films were moving in a similar direction but, in a local environment. The contribution of one of these people, Kenneth Coldicutt, is the subject of the following section. It is preceded by an overview of infrastructure developments and political

⁶⁴¹ George Miller quoted in Jenkins, D. M, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁶⁴² Grierson. (1979), *op. cit.*, pp. 78 & 112.

⁶⁴³ Shirley & Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

decisions which supported the development of Australian and, in particular, Victorian film societies.

The Prelude: Infrastructure Developments and Political Decisions

Throughout the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s, there were many factors which were introductory to the establishment and growth of film societies. Generally speaking, these factors were broadly-based and not just specific to Camberwell and its environs. Their contribution was that they created a technological, social, economic and political environment favourable to the formation of film societies. Advances in technology included moving away from ‘a carbon-arc light delivery system to small, compact, affordable 16 mm [*sound*] projectors’.⁶⁴⁴ This resulted in film production being more efficient⁶⁴⁵ and projection equipment becoming more transportable and more affordable. Also, the cost of 16 mm film developed during WW2 and its wide availability following the war, ‘made it ideal for use in film societies’.⁶⁴⁶ Many schools in the state of Victoria acquired 16 mm sound projectors increasing their use of film as an educational medium, and generating greater awareness amongst school communities about the potential use of film for activities other than education.⁶⁴⁷ The extension of electricity supplies into outer urban and country areas not only enhanced community life-styles but also provided easy access to lighting and power for projection equipment. In addition, most communities had community halls which were suitable and available for the screening of films,

these halls were open, they were accessible; it’s a small step to go from a Saturday night dance in the hall to a Thursday or Friday night film screening. A hall was cheap to hire; it provided a sense of community cohesion all of which ... is interesting in a period of post-war recovery.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁴ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*. 1930s-1940s : World War II and the Development of Nuclear Graphite Retrieved from http://www.graftech.com/getdoc/cfa0a285-8e40-4d47-ac6e-af01de6e9ad6/History-of-GrafTech_Sept-2011.aspx

⁶⁴⁵ In describing his experiences in film production at Cinesound in the early 1930s, Australian film producer/director, Ken G. Hall writes that ‘Most of the lighting came from the, even then, old fashioned Kliegel ‘broads’ or floods of the silent era which were, of course, carbon arcs. They hissed and fumed to ruin many a take’. Eric Reade. 1975, *The Australian Screen: A Pictorial History of Australian Film Making*, Preface by Ken G. Hall, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, Australia, p. 7.

⁶⁴⁶ *The British Federation of Film Societies – A Brief History*, BFFS Advice Leaflet 001, BFFS, p. 1

⁶⁴⁷ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

After WW2, attitudinal changes were evident in the gradual diffusion of a sense of hope throughout communities, and an expectation of improvements in life-styles as rationing was abolished and the sense of frugality which had pervaded communities during the war began to dissipate. As the economy became more buoyant, larger houses were built and ownership of motor vehicles increased. Generally, there was a feeling that ‘this was the end of a horrible war and that we are going to build a bigger and better society’.⁶⁴⁹

During the mid-1940s there is evidence of an increasing public interest in documentary films, silent classics and opportunities for developing a sense of film appreciation. In response to this interest and growing demand, the Melbourne Film Society was founded in 1944. By 1954 the Society had eight hundred and sixty members. In 1947 the Melbourne University Film Society was created presenting ‘a programme of selected 16 mm. films each week’ and presenting, noteworthy features about five times each term’.⁶⁵⁰ The formation of these film societies would seem to reflect a desire for social betterment, or maybe part of the wish to build a better society, in the form of cultural appreciation and acquisition of knowledge in the mid-1940s.

As the attention of the Commonwealth Government of Australia gradually refocused away from war-time commitments to internal domestic matters, policy decisions were made which indirectly gave support to the establishment and growth of film societies. One of these policy decisions resulted in the establishment of the Australian National Film Board in May 1945.⁶⁵¹ The role of the Board was,

to expand, promote, assist and coordinate the production, distribution and importation of films for school and adult education, social development, international understanding, trade and tourist expansion and immigration. The various State Governments were invited to form State Advisory Committees to assist the Board in its duties in making or acquiring suitable films and to act as distributing agencies.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Melbourne Film Festival Committee. (1955). *Melbourne Film Festival 1955*. Program, Melbourne, Victoria Australia, p. 8.

⁶⁵¹ Retrieved from

[http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?component=daViewAgency&breadcrumbPath=Home/Access the Collection/Browse The Collection/Agency Details&entityId=2325#](http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?component=daViewAgency&breadcrumbPath=Home/Access%20the%20Collection/Browse%20The%20Collection/Agency%20Details&entityId=2325#)

State Advisory Committees were formed quickly with the Victorian State Film Centre being established in December 1946.⁶⁵² As a consequence of the Centre's establishment film societies, prospective and established, had access to a wide range of 'educational and documentary' films for screening. As one interviewee remarked: 'All of a sudden there was a service that could supply people's interest in film'.⁶⁵³ However, as will be shown in the following section of this chapter, the role of the Victorian State Film Centre in supporting film societies extended beyond the provision of films for screening.

Victorian State Film Centre

From its establishment in 1946 until 1983, the functions of the Victorian State Film Centre were supervised by the Victorian Documentary Film Council which also was responsible for advising 'the Government of Victoria on all matters relating to documentary film'.⁶⁵⁴ Under this arrangement, the State Film Centre had seven functions, four of which are directly relevant to this research project. These four functions were:

- to collect and maintain a list of all suitable documentary and educational films
- to assist and promote the more extensive exhibition of these films in schools and approved public bodies
- to place prospective users of films in contact with the source of supply of suitable films
- to acquire copies of suitable films.⁶⁵⁵

In essence the State Film Centre was formed 'with the express purpose of buying films to disseminate education and film culture to Victorians'.⁶⁵⁶ The first chief Executive Officer of the Centre was Neil Edwards. Edwards had been 'associated with films since 1931, originally as projectionist'.⁶⁵⁷ A long-term association with film, often starting in

⁶⁵² Jenkins, D.M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*.

⁶⁵³ Ibid. Culture Victoria – State Film Centre. Retrieved from <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/state-film-centre/> Our History. <http://www.acmi.net.au/history.htm> .

⁶⁵⁴ Retrieved from

[http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?component=daViewAgency&breadcumbPath=Home/Access the Collection/Browse The Collection/Agency Details&entityId=2325#](http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?component=daViewAgency&breadcumbPath=Home/Access%20the%20Collection/Browse%20The%20Collection/Agency%20Details&entityId=2325#)

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid

⁶⁵⁶ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*.

⁶⁵⁷ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952). Olinda. Program, content page.

A long-term involvement with the world of film, and a passion for it, are characteristics of many of the industry's well- and lesser-known protagonists including interviewees for this research project.

childhood, is a characteristic of a comparatively large percentage of interviewees for this project as well as significant players in the formation of film societies.

In January 1947, shortly after its establishment in December 1946, the State Film Centre purchased its first film opening its library in April 1947.⁶⁵⁸ The Centre gradually built-up its collection and by 1955 had acquired,

over 4,500 documentary and educational films from every corner of the globe: community films from Canada and Britain, technical films from America, art films from Belgium, France, Japan, Denmark and Sweden, experimental films, many early films of historical interest, and a wealth of material from Australian producers.⁶⁵⁹

It was estimated that by 1955 the State Film Centre had 1,500 regular organisational borrowers including film societies, and that its films reached ‘an audience of some 2½ million people each year’.⁶⁶⁰ In addition, the State Film Centre introduced ‘a mobile projection service, screening films in 70 country towns throughout ... Victoria’. The Centre also conducted regular screenings of a diverse range of documentary films in the city of Melbourne, and set up film distribution centres in some regional cities ‘providing a better film service for people in country areas’.⁶⁶¹ As well as being a source of films, the State Film Centre offered assistance with technical issues.⁶⁶²

In carrying out its role as required by its legislated functions, the Victorian State Film Centre played a critical role in the establishment and growth of film societies. Its role extended beyond the provision of documentary and educational films for screening and discussion to offering assistance with technical problems. Equally important was the part it played in enhancing the state’s filmic educational culture through the diversity of its film collection and the screening of films in both country Victoria and in metropolitan areas.

⁶⁵⁸ Retrieved from

[http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?component=daViewAgency&breadcumbPath=Home/Access the Collection/Browse The Collection/Agency Details&entityId=2325#](http://access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?component=daViewAgency&breadcumbPath=Home/Access%20the%20Collection/Browse%20The%20Collection/Agency%20Details&entityId=2325#)

⁶⁵⁹ Melbourne Film Festival Committee. (1955), op. cit., p. 9.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid. D. M. Jenkins. (2012). *Interview with Edwin Schefferle and William Kerr*.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

This diversity of content and the provision of Statewide opportunities for more people to see films may have contributed to a heightened awareness of the value of film and an interest in forming or becoming a member of a film society. In 1955 it was stated that,

The potential audience for documentary films in Victoria has been estimated at 10 million each year ... In a war-troubled world, the need for an informed public is of paramount importance. The Film Centre is playing its part in the struggle for a better world'.⁶⁶³

Nevertheless, although all of the preceding factors were pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, some peripheral pieces, others central components in the establishment and growth of film societies, the part played by individuals and single events was also significant in the formation of film societies. This influence of an individual at the international level is demonstrated in the personal narrative of John Grierson as presented earlier in this chapter. The contribution of an individual to the formation of film societies in the local environment is discussed in the following section in the form of a personal narrative about Ken Coldicutt.

Kenneth John Coldicutt: 22.03.1915–03.04.1993⁶⁶⁴

Wendy Lowenstein, an Australian oral historian, describes Coldicutt as an 'exceptionally tenacious, straightforward, passionate and blunt-spoken man, [who] stood up to all authority'.⁶⁶⁵ These personal attributes were critical to Coldicutt's determination to promote, exhibit and, eventually produce, the types of films which, in the context of this research, are categorised as being non-theatrical documentary-type films. Moreover, as

⁶⁶³ Melbourne Film Festival Committee. (1955), op. cit., p. 9.

⁶⁶⁴ *Extract of Death Registration*, issued at Melbourne 19 April 1993, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, *Coldicutt, Kenneth John*, 2003.0111, Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/4. Inglis, A. *Some Memories of Ken Coldicutt*, a hand-written memorial tribute held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/4.

Note that as the coffin was lowered, those present at the memorial tribute were asked to sing the song, 'The Red Flag'. This request was preceded by the following explanation :

'There is a song, written in 1889 at the time of the Great Workers' Strike, that always moved Ken deeply. To Ken it symbolised loyalty not to an ideology, but to the ageless struggle of ordinary working people for human dignity'. Hand-written note headed, *Kenneth John Coldicutt, b. 22.3.1915, d. 3.4. 1993*, n. d., no author, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/4.

⁶⁶⁵ Summary of oral history interviews with Ken Coldicutt conducted by Wendy Lowenstein, 1992, for the oral history project, *Communists and the Left in the Arts and Community Oral History Project*, DCM record: National Library of Australia. This summary, compiled by the late Wendy Lowenstein, is held by Martie Lowenstein, Wendy's daughter.

will be shown in the following overview of Coldicutt's contribution to the growth of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria, these attributes provoked both applause and criticism of his work and his ideals. Like Grierson, Coldicutt was, and continues to be, the subject of varying opinions about the value of his achievements and his political views.

The researcher recognises and acknowledges that the passionate purpose driving Coldicutt's work was political—the creation of a socialist society in which the value of working people would be recognised, their voices heard, and their struggle for human dignity ameliorated.⁶⁶⁶ However, the argument in this research is not about the social desirability, political correctness or historical appropriateness of Coldicutt's political views. Neither is the argument in this research about Coldicutt's contribution to the maintenance 'of what is seen as an oppositional film culture in the post war years', in Australia, as posited by Deane Williams.⁶⁶⁷ Rather, the argument is that, as a consequence of Coldicutt's political and filmic passions he zealously pursued opportunities for producing and procuring non-theatrical documentary-type films, and screening these to disparate audiences advancing the growth of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria.

Shaping of a Polemicist: Early Experiences and Attitudes⁶⁶⁸

Ken Coldicutt, the oldest of a family of eight children,⁶⁶⁹ was born on 22 March, 1915, at Ararat, a small regional city in the Australian state of Victoria, where his father worked as a turner and fitter at the Victorian Railways Workshops Ararat Depot. Over the next few years, the family moved to Ballarat followed by a shift to the Newport /Spotswood area of Melbourne where Coldicutt grew-up.⁶⁷⁰ These transfers were at the behest of the Victorian

⁶⁶⁶ Refer to footnote 665.

⁶⁶⁷ Williams, D. (1995). Making Waves: The Realist Film Unit and Association. In *Screening the Past: Aspects of Early Australian Film*. Ken Berryman, (ed.). Acton, ACT, Australia: National Film and Sound Archive, p. 170.

⁶⁶⁸ Within this study polemicist is defined as: a person versed in 'the art or practice of disputation or controversy'. Webster New Ideal Dictionary. Alternative definition of polemicist: 'a skilled debater in speech or writing'. Retrieved from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/polemicist>

⁶⁶⁹ The University of Melbourne Archives. 2003, *Coldicutt, Kenneth John*, 2003.0111, Historical Note, Summary of Collection Contents.

Coldicutt's parents were John Donald Coldicutt, d.o.b., 21 September 1885 and Edith Gertrude Coldicutt (nee Rowe), d.o.b., 26 March 1892. Genealogical information held by Dr Gregor Coldicutt, Coldicutt's oldest child.

⁶⁷⁰ Lowenstein, W. (1992). Interview with Ken Coldicutt, *Communists and the Left in the Arts and Community Oral History Project*, DCM record: National Library of Australia. CD reference: TRC3111/7/1-51 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 1 30'55" Stereo 11 x (A)

Railways which had workshops throughout Victoria including Ballarat and Newport.⁶⁷¹ During this period, Coldicutt's father built a family home in Melbourne following which the Victorian Railways 'wanted him to go to the country again'.⁶⁷² He did not want to return to the country; the Union was unable to help him and he left the Victorian Railways.⁶⁷³ Eventually, Coldicutt's father became an independent business operator opening a delicatessen shop and building a couple of retail outlets in Essendon.⁶⁷⁴ However, in the 1930s these businesses foundered due, in part, to the Great Depression⁶⁷⁵ of that time but also as a result of competition arising from the diversification of established and well-known businesses in the area.⁶⁷⁶ Coldicutt states that his father 'couldn't keep-up the bank payments on the shops and went back to work for the Railways again after letting the bank take-over his property'.⁶⁷⁷

The degree to which Coldicutt's father's experiences with the Victorian Railways, the Union and private enterprise contributed to the shaping of Coldicutt's political awareness is not known. Nonetheless, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that these factors would have had a subliminal affect, if not an overt influence, on his political outlook and values. Nevertheless, it was around this time, early to mid-1930s, that Coldicutt's political consciousness became more acute. The major trigger for this politicisation appears to have been the Australian Federal Government's socio-economic policies during the Great Depression.⁶⁷⁸ In the interview with Lowenstein, Coldicutt asserts that,

I was never a supporter of the Labour Party because in the years when I started to become politically aware the Labour Party had already

⁶⁷¹ Established between 1886-1888, the 'Newport workshops were the Victorian Railway's main workshops for just over a century'.

Former Newport Railway Workshops (Heritage Listed Location) On My Doorstep.mht

⁶⁷² Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/1-51 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 1 30'55" Stereo 11 x (A)

⁶⁷³ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt.

⁶⁷⁴ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/1-51 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 1 30'55" Stereo 11 x (A)

⁶⁷⁵ For a comprehensive overview of the impact of the Great Depression in Australia refer to The Great Depression retrieved from <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/great-depression>

⁶⁷⁶ In the Lowenstein interview, Coldicutt refers to one of these businesses, Carters, an egg production business in Werribee which set-up a number of grocery stores including one next to Coldicutt's father's store in Essendon. Coldicutt observes that, for his father, 'That was the last straw'! Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/1-51 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 1 30'55" Stereo 11 x (A)

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Martin, A. W. (2001). The Politics of the Depression. In Manne, R., (ed.), *The Australian Century. Political Struggle in the Building of a Nation*. (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Text Publishing, pp. 80-118.

distinguished itself by agreeing with the demand that they should deal with the Depression by cutting wages and pensions.⁶⁷⁹

Coldicutt concludes these assertions about the Labour Party in a manner reflecting Lowenstein's perceptions of his political passion and directness of expression when he states,

And from that time I have never deviated from my position that the Labour Party never was then, never will be, anything of value to the working class nor does its professed interest in socialism mean a damn thing!⁶⁸⁰

In 1935, on his twentieth birthday, Coldicutt joined the Australian Communist Party.⁶⁸¹ In the following years, until his resignation in 1951, Coldicutt's membership of the party was a factor which contributed to him being viewed, particularly by persons of authority, as an ideologically motivated political and social maverick.⁶⁸² However, this perception would seem to miss the passion underpinning Coldicutt's commitment to Communist thought and action. For Coldicutt, this passion was embodied in the Communist anthem, *The Red Flag*, which for him symbolised 'loyalty not to an ideology, but to the ageless struggle of ordinary working people for human dignity'.⁶⁸³ As will be illustrated in the following sections of this overview of Coldicutt's role in the establishment of a filmic educational culture in Victoria, his commitment to this ageless struggle is a reverberating echo.

⁶⁷⁹ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Davies, P. (2007). 'Fanning the Spark of Hope' (in a Cold, Dark War): The Archive Project, in *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*, issue 152 (Apr 2007), p. 46. Retrieved from <http://search.informit.com.au/fullText:dn=800844511424940;res=IELLCC>

Hansard, 20th October, 1948, quoted in paper titled, *Playing Merry Hell: A Report on the Work of the Realist Film Association During 1948*, 07 February 1949, no signature held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2, Constitution Realist Film Association.

Personal letters to Coldicutt containing both negatively critical, and positive comments about him personally and professionally, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/6.

⁶⁸³ Inglis, A. *Some Memories of Ken Coldicutt*, a hand-written note read at the memorial tribute on 05 April, 1993, held in The University of Melbourne Archives op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/4.

Lyrics: The Red Flag. Retrieved from <http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/music/lyrics/en/red-flag.htm>

Labour Party Anthems- Top 10 songs the Labour Party has used over the years. Retrieved from <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/labour-party-anthems---top-213223> Accessed 05 February, 2013.

Coldicutt's personal characteristics, his father's employment and business experiences, the plight of workers and pensioners disadvantaged by Federal Government policy during the Great Depression, and his perception of a gap between the rhetoric of the Labour Party and the reality of its actions, particularly regarding the working class, contributed to the shaping of Coldicutt as a polemicist. In this role he was skilled in both the art and practice of disputation and controversy, particularly in relation to the growth of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria. However, there were other factors which added to Coldicutt's role as an advocate, often in an adversarial capacity, regarding the merit of socially purposive documentary films, apolitical and principled film censorship, as well as the rights and responsibilities of film societies: these other factors included his tertiary education experiences and his fascination with film.

Education and the Fascination of Film

Coldicutt became interested in film in the 1920s when 'he was still a kid'.⁶⁸⁴ This interest was stimulated further while he was a student at Melbourne University as a holder of a State Senior Scholarship.⁶⁸⁵ Coldicutt's university studies included chemistry, physics and mathematics.⁶⁸⁶ One of his brothers⁶⁸⁷ also attended Melbourne University gaining an engineering degree.⁶⁸⁸ Lowenstein posits that, in Australia, in the 1930s it was 'pretty unusual'⁶⁸⁹ for a working-class⁶⁹⁰ family to have a child studying at Melbourne University and it would have been atypical to have two children from the same working class family who were university students.⁶⁹¹ Nevertheless, having two children at university suggests that within Coldicutt's family there was an interest in, or encouragement for, the children to undertake studies at tertiary level. Coldicutt's father, as a turner and fitter in the Railways, was a skilled tradesman; the development of these skills would have required a period of apprenticeship comprising both on-the-job training and experience, and formal studies. Nonetheless, while at Melbourne University, instead of concentrating on his university

⁶⁸⁴ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit.

⁶⁸⁵ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt.

⁶⁸⁶ Lowenstein, W. (1992), op. cit.

⁶⁸⁷ Coldicutt had two brothers – Alan Brownlee, d.o.b. 27 January 1917 and Colin, d.o.b. 10 April 1920. Genealogical information held by Dr Gregor Coldicutt, Coldicutt's oldest child.

⁶⁸⁸ Lowenstein, W. (1992), op. cit.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ The social group consisting of people who are employed for wages, especially in manual or industrial work. http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/working+class 2012.

⁶⁹¹ Lowenstein, W. (1992), op. cit.

studies, Coldicutt chose to spend most of his time at the Victorian State Library learning about film history and film theory.⁶⁹²

During this period, Coldicutt became particularly interested in the writings and films of Soviet Union film producers such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin.⁶⁹³ This interest is evident in the aforementioned paper titled, *Cinema and Capitalism*, written by Coldicutt in 1935, the year he joined the Communist Party. In this paper, an ideological polemic about film and politics, Coldicutt explores the subject of cinema as art arguing that capitalism with its emphasis on the market imprisons the ‘film artist’⁶⁹⁴ within social, economic, political and artistic conventions stifling the creative potential of filmic expression. Conversely, Coldicutt asserts that, in Soviet Russia the film artist has much more freedom and power to probe such conventions giving expression to his creativity, training and aesthetic background.⁶⁹⁵

The style of the paper, *Cinema and Capitalism*, is unequivocally didactic reflecting a missionary-like zeal as Coldicutt passionately presents his vision for the future of film as an art-form which will embrace and supersede all other art-forms, ‘it is destined largely to supplant the older arts, at the same time absorbing the valuable features of each’.⁶⁹⁶ In addition the paper indicates that, like Grierson, Coldicutt appreciates the power of film as a propaganda tool observing that it is the ‘most powerful of propaganda media’,⁶⁹⁷ it both ‘gives expression to the masses’ and ‘also speaks to the masses’.⁶⁹⁸ These observations reflect Coldicutt’s commitment to working people’s struggle for human dignity suggesting that he viewed film as being not only a resource for educating people but also giving them a voice, the motivation, skills and knowledge to be heard.

⁶⁹² As a consequence of this overwhelming interest in the world of film, Coldicutt ‘never graduated’ from university. Jenkins, D. M. (2012). Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt. Williams, op. cit., p. 171.

⁶⁹³ Williams, op. cit., p. 180.

⁶⁹⁴ Coldicutt, K. (1935). *Cinema and Capitalism*, with an introduction by Deane Williams, p. 8. Williams states that *Cinema and Capitalism*, was the first article which Coldicutt wrote about film. It was written for Melbourne University Labour Club’s magazine ‘*Proletariat*’. Retrieved from

http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screening_the_past/classics/clasdec/cold2.html

Coldicutt was Editor of ‘*Proletariat*’ for at least two editions in 1935, July—September and Oct.—Dec. Both of these editions include articles written by Coldicutt. His article on film, *Cinema and Capitalism*, does not appear in either of these editions copies of which are held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 7 of 10, Folder 7/6.

⁶⁹⁵ Coldicutt, K. (1935), op. cit.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

Again in tandem with Grierson, Coldicutt understands the techniques of film production, particularly the importance of editing, which accommodate the development of ‘several ideas simultaneously ... by the process of editing or montage, the dynamic images of the film are juxtaposed and made to reinforce and to conflict with each other’.⁶⁹⁹ By drawing parallels between the ideas and stances of Grierson and Coldicutt towards film, it is not being posited that there was professional or personal contact between them. Nevertheless, given Coldicutt’s passionate interest in the theory and history of film, it would not seem unreasonable to assume that he was familiar with Grierson’s publications about filmic theories and production techniques. Also, the coincidence of Grierson and Coldicutt’s filmic thought and approach, and the influence on Coldicutt of internationally acclaimed film directors such as Soviet Russia’s Eisenstein and Pudovkin, are a reminder of the ongoing nature of the filmic connections between the global and the local.

Factors such as Coldicutt’s filmic passion, knowledge of both the history of film and film production techniques, his understanding of the instructive role of film and its power to speak to the masses, and his political beliefs energised his contribution to the development of a filmic educational culture, particularly in the state of Victoria. However, equally importantly in the growth of this filmic educational culture were Coldicutt’s personal characteristics such as his exceptional tenacity, his direct manner and mode of speech, and his willingness to stand-up to all authority. Ultimately, these personal characteristics were to be crucial in protecting film societies from censorship proposals and government intentions re non-commercial films.

Broadening the Non-commercial Filmic Audience

From the point of view of broadening the non-commercial filmic audience and, as a consequence, extending the concept of a filmic educational culture, the years between 1936 and the commencement of WW2 in 1939, were productive along the east coast of Australia, particularly in the state of Victoria. This was not due to a well-developed strategy but rather as a consequence of a number of seemingly separate events, some of which were loosely linked by the involvement of Ken Coldicutt. In 1936 the Friends of the Soviet Union (FOSU) imported a film titled, *Modern Russia*,⁷⁰⁰ a three hour silent film compiled

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit.

from Soviet Union newsreels plus film taken by visitors to the Soviet Union. Coldicutt describes the film as a ‘bit of a hotch-potch’⁷⁰¹ but of interest to the working class movement. Nevertheless, the film was used extensively by the FOSU with Coldicutt travelling around country Victoria screening it.⁷⁰²

Also, in 1935 Coldicutt was appointed to the position of film manager for the FOSU. In this role, Coldicutt gained extensive experience ‘in film importation, distribution and screening, that would prove invaluable to the film society movement in Melbourne in later years’.⁷⁰³ Coldicutt was most active in the film society movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. His relationship with this movement is explored further on in this analysis of Coldicutt’s contribution to the growth of a filmic educational culture in Victoria.

Subsequent to his departure from the FOSU in 1937, Coldicutt became ‘national film organiser for the Spanish Relief Committee’.⁷⁰⁴ Peter Monteath explains that as well as non-Spanish volunteers going to Spain to provide assistance in the civil war, where possible, numerous people ‘campaign[ed] furiously at home to raise funding; others produced work which was designed to sway public opinion in favour of one side or the other’.⁷⁰⁵ Hence the establishment of the Spanish Relief Committee in Australia and Coldicutt’s commitment to its activities. In his role as National Film Organiser for the Spanish Relief Committee, Coldicutt persuaded the Committee to purchase ‘one of the first 16 mm sound projectors imported into Australia, and toured with it around the Melbourne

Modern Russia was described as a ‘tour through Soviet Russia, from the Western Border to the Urals, from Leningrad to the Black Sea ...[showing] ... Factories, Creches, and Rest-homes, the People at work and play’. It constituted ‘Three Hours of Entertainment and Education’ Typewritten advertisement for the screening of the film ‘for five nights only at the Friends of the Soviet Union Hall, 233 Castlereagh Street, Sydney’ in May 1936. Held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 7 of 10, Folder 7/4.

⁷⁰¹ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

⁷⁰³ Williams, (n.d). op. cit.

Williams, (1995). op. cit., p. 171.

⁷⁰⁴ Williams, (n.d). op. cit., p.3.

Spanish Relief Committees were formed throughout Australia between 1936 and 1939 to raise money for the relief of Spanish people who were ‘fighting international Facism’. Coleman, J. (1937). Letter to the Editor, *Western Argus*, 17 Dec., Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, p.2. Retrieved from <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/34961643> The Spanish Civil War began in July 1936. Amirah Inglis, hand-written notes titled ‘Some Memories of Ken Coldicutt’ at his memorial tribute held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/4.

G. Thomson Zainu'ddin, 'Marshall, Alma Elizabeth (1879–1964)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/marshall-alma-elizabeth-11061/text19685>

⁷⁰⁵ Monteath, P. (1994). *The Spanish Civil War in Literature, Film, and Art*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, x.

suburbs and the country towns of Victoria'.⁷⁰⁶ As proposed by Richardson, technological developments which led to the manufacture of 16 mm sound projectors were one of the factors underpinning the growth of film societies.⁷⁰⁷

Another of Coldicutt's significant major projects in this role was travelling along the east coast of Australia from Melbourne to Cairns, for a period of eight months, screening various films about the Spanish Civil War. This tour was undertaken in 1938.⁷⁰⁸ Coldicutt's physical stamina, personal commitment to the project and the difficulties he overcame throughout the tour are well-documented: Williams observes that these 'screenings and Coldicutt's singular vision of political activism is [*sic*] still revered by his contemporaries today'.⁷⁰⁹ The researcher acknowledges that Coldicutt's exceptional tenacity of purpose and passionate commitment to this outreach project are clearly evident in his political activism at this time. However, it is the outcome of these factors, and Coldicutt's actions, which are more directly relevant to the argument being advanced in this section of the thesis: it is recorded that during the eight months of the tour of '8851 kilometres ... 25,000 people in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland saw the films'.⁷¹⁰ This suggests that these 25,000 people were given the opportunity to view non-theatrical, non-commercial, documentary-type films produced to inform, as opposed to commercial films designed to entertain. In northern Queensland the films were received enthusiastically by cane cutters, particularly those of Southern European origin.⁷¹¹

By holding screenings at locations accessible to working class and ethnic communities, Coldicutt was providing them with opportunities to connect to the value of film as a source

The Spanish Civil War commenced on 17 July 1936 and ended on 01 April 1939. Retrieved from <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/spanish-civil-war/>

⁷⁰⁶ Williams, (n.d.), op. cit.

Williams, (1995), op. cit., p. 171.

⁷⁰⁷ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*.

⁷⁰⁸ Detailed correspondence and reports regarding this tour are held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 7 of 10, Folders 7/1 & 7/2.

Williams, (1995), p. cit.

⁷⁰⁹ William., (n.d.), op. cit.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

Amirah Inglis, hand-written notes titled 'Some Memories of Ken Coldicutt' read at Coldicutt's memorial tribute held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/4.

⁷¹¹ Williams, (n.d.). op. cit.

Williams referring to Inglis (1987) advises that this tour 'went as far north as Cairns and Townsville where the films were received with much enthusiasm by the Italian, Spanish and Yugoslav cane cutters who donated large amounts of money'.

Inglis, A. (1987). *Australians in the Spanish Civil War*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, p. 92.

of information: the screenings offered opportunities for informal learning. In addition, as part of this informal learning process, and reflective of Coldicutt's political passions, these films had the power to increase viewers' sense of self-value as well as reminding them of the global struggle of working people for human dignity. Some of the films about the Spanish Civil War in the mid to late 1930s gave expression to the plight of masses of ordinary people trapped in a civil war between Nationalist and Republican forces. For example, one of the earliest Hollywood produced films about this war was, *The Last Train to Madrid*, released in 1937 by Paramount studios. It is 'set against the background of the besieged Spanish capital'.⁷¹² The film is concerned with the plight of refugees fleeing from Loyalist-held Madrid.⁷¹³ These films also had the potential and power to speak to the masses of viewers in ways which allowed them to move beyond the intellectual boundaries of just receiving information, to interpreting and exploring it outside their existing frames of reference. This raises the possibility that people viewing films about the Spanish Civil War increasingly recognised the distinction between film, as a form of entertainment, and film as a source of education, precipitating the growth of a filmic educational culture.

In addition, it is acknowledged that the primary intention of these screenings by the FOSU and the Spanish Relief Committee was political.⁷¹⁴ Nevertheless, it would seem that the unintentional consequences included communities becoming more alert to the value of non-commercial, documentary-type films as having an educational value contributing to the genesis of a filmic educational culture. Moreover, the practice of taking films to communities outside metropolitan boundaries was a feature of the Grierson movement's 'method of nontheatrical distribution and exhibition',⁷¹⁵ once again drawing attention to similarities between these two players, Grierson and Coldicutt, in the development of a filmic educational culture. Also, in undertaking this outreach program, Coldicutt may have been influenced by the Australian tradition of a 'touring showman' screening films in country areas: throughout the first two decades of the 20th century, in Australia, 'moving pictures were brought to isolated areas by horse and cart, then motorised truck with a combination of newsreel, scenic and dramatic vignettes'.⁷¹⁶ Likewise, as previously

⁷¹² Monteath, op. cit., xxiii.

⁷¹³ *The Last Train from Madrid*. Retrieved from <http://www.answers.com/topic/the-last-train-from-madrid>

⁷¹⁴ Williams states that 'Coldicutt's experiences with the SRC confirmed his belief in the political efficacy of film'. Williams, (n.d.). op. cit., p.4.

⁷¹⁵ Refer to section about Grierson earlier in this chapter.

⁷¹⁶ Williams, (n.d.), op. cit., p. 4.

mentioned, the practice and value of outreach or nontheatrical screenings was embraced by the State Film Centre of Victoria following its formation in 1946 reflecting the success of such screenings.

Coldicutt's resolute sense of purpose and passionate commitment to the power of film to inform people are also manifest in his enjoyment of the intellectual challenge of shaping and articulating a well-researched argument.⁷¹⁷ These characteristics are evident in one of his many confrontations with the censor during the latter years of the 1930s. These confrontations also demonstrate Coldicutt's direct manner and mode of speech, and his willingness to stand-up to all authority, as previously observed by Lowenstein. Consciously or subconsciously he was able to use his skills of interrogation and argument to heighten community awareness of the value of non-theatrical, documentary-type films thus fostering the consciousness of a filmic educational culture.

One of Coldicutt's first encounters with the Victorian censor, Mr James McRae,⁷¹⁸ was when a ban was placed on the Soviet Russian film, *October: Ten Days that Shook the World*, from being screened in Victoria.⁷¹⁹ When challenged about this decision, the censor argued that there were many historical inaccuracies in the film. This delighted Coldicutt who 'had lots of fun'⁷²⁰ pointing out the many historical inaccuracies in commercial feature films imported from the USA. With the exception of people interested in civil liberties, Coldicutt received very little community support for his campaign against the censor's ban. However, the campaign was successful. Coldicutt attributes the campaign's success to the 'amount of newspaper publicity which was generated, rather than by the number of prominent people'⁷²¹ involved. He states that he was given 'plenty of space'⁷²² by the Press

Bertrand, I. (General editor). (1989). *Cinema in Australia. A Documentary History*, Kensington, NSW, Australia: New South Wales University Press, pp. 5, 6, 8, 53 & 73.

Long, J. 1977, *The Picture Show Man*, an Australian film produced and written by Joan Long, directed by John Power. Gordon Glenn & Scott Murray, 1977, 'John Power', in *Cinema Papers*, July 1977, pp. 23-25, 91.

⁷¹⁷ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt.

⁷¹⁸ Andrew Spauill, 'McRae, James (1871-1939)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. Retrieved from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mc-rae-james-7443/text12959>

⁷¹⁹ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Ibid.

and avows that, at that time, if a principled stand were taken against the censor then the Press would be interested.⁷²³

Once again, it is the unintended consequence of these activities that has direct relevance within the context of this thesis: by giving the debate between the censor and Coldicutt ‘plenty of space’, the Press unintentionally highlighted the availability and diversity of films other than those produced for commercial and/or entertainment purposes. As a consequence, the curiosity of the community was stirred and public awareness heightened regarding the educational value of non-commercial films. As well as raising awareness, the Press reports of the debate may have challenged some members of the community to seek more information about, or perhaps aroused a desire to view, the film, *October: Ten Days that Shook the World*, the subject of the dispute. Following the success of Coldicutt’s anti-censorship campaign, the film was screened for two weeks at what was to become known as the Savoy Theatre.⁷²⁴

Factors such as changing perceptions, changing attitudes, changes in behaviour and the acquisition of new information, contribute to the modification of existing cultures or the development of different cultural streams. As a consequence of Coldicutt’s political convictions, and his perceptions of the role of film as an educational tool, he zealously pursued opportunities for screening non-commercial films to uninformed audiences. In this research, changes emanating from Coldicutt’s tenacious determination to take documentary-type films out of non-metropolitan theatres to locations and venues accessible to a wider audience, the new knowledge presented in these films, and the publicity given to his high profile public debate with the censor, led to changes in community filmic perceptions, attitudes and behaviour. These changes contributed to the growth of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria particularly from the mid to late 1930s.

⁷²³ Ibid. Coldicutt had a set of newspapers cuttings about the censor’s action, and his campaign, which amounted to about 150 inches in the Melbourne press.

⁷²⁴ The Savoy Theatre was in Russell Street, Melbourne. It was named the Savoy in 1939 having been known as The Imperial since 1934. The building dated back to the 1850s and was originally the Temperance Hall of Melbourne. In the 1950s the Savoy began to screen foreign films eventually establishing itself as a foreign language film theatre. Following its closure in 1963, the Savoy was demolished. Retrieved from <http://caarp.flinders.edu.au/venue/157/view>

Shortly after the end of the Spanish Civil War on 1 April, 1939,⁷²⁵ the world was once again ensnared in war, WW2 1939—1945. In 1940 and 1941 during the early stages of the war, Coldicutt taught at the Church Grammar School, Launceston, Tasmania.⁷²⁶ While at Church Grammar School, Coldicutt introduced ‘Saturday night picture shows ... at the School’. The programs mainly featured educational films complemented by ‘famous productions such as “Grass,”⁷²⁷ ... and others’.⁷²⁸ As stated previously, in the 1930s, Coldicutt had advanced his theory of the power of film as an educational tool by screening movies about the Spanish Civil War to audiences such as Queensland cane-cutters and ethnic communities. In the early 1940s, at the Launceston Church Grammar School, Coldicutt engendered a greater awareness of the power of film to educate through film programs, and to audiences, that were very different from those associated with the Spanish Relief Committee screenings. The concept of a filmic educational culture was spreading across a diversity of social, economic and academic backgrounds.

During WW2 Coldicutt joined the Royal Australian Air Force.⁷²⁹ He became a pilot⁷³⁰ but was not involved ‘on the war-front at all’ describing his war-time service as being ‘non-combative’.⁷³¹ Coldicutt observes that his openness about his Communist membership and

⁷²⁵ The Spanish Civil War commenced on 17 July 1936 and ended on 01 April 1939. Retrieved from <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/spanish-civil-war/>

⁷²⁶ *The Launcestonian*. (1940). No. 47 (New Series). December, p. 1. Held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 3/7.

The Launcestonian. (1941). No. 48 (New Series). June, p. 1. Held in The University of Melbourne Archives, Ibid., Box 4 of 10, Folder 3/7.

The Launcestonian. (1941). No. 49 (New Series). December, p. 1. Held in The University of Melbourne Archives, Ibid., Box 4 of 10, Folder 3/7.

⁷²⁷ ‘Grass: A Nation’s Battle for Life (1925) is a silent documentary film ... It is considered [to be] one of the earliest ethnographic documentary films ... In 1997, *Grass* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry ... “as being culturally, historically and aesthetically significant”. Retrieved from *Grass*: (1925) film. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grass_\(1925_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grass_(1925_film)) Accessed 7 February, 2013.

[In a contemporary review of a book about the making of the film, the reviewer describes the film as being ‘beautiful, enduring, and profound’. Beeman, W. O. “Grass: Untold Stories”. *The Middle East Journal* 65.3 \(2011\): 520+. *Academic OneFile*. Web.](#)

One of the inspirations for this movie was the ‘success of Robert Flaherty’s “Nanook of the North” released in 1921. Bahman Maghsoudlou Retrieved from .

<http://www.mazdapublisher.com/BookDetails.aspx?BookID=256>

⁷²⁸ *The Launcestonian*. (1941). No. 48 (New Series). June, p. 5. Held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 3/7.

⁷²⁹ Coldicutt enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force on 18 July, 1942; the date of his discharge was 24 April, 1945, *Statement of Service and Discharge*, Royal Australian Air Force, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/5.

⁷³⁰ On Coldicutt’s discharge document it states that, at that time, he was a navigator. *Kenneth Coldicutt War Service Documents*, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/5.

⁷³¹ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/1-52 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 1 31’55” Stereo 11 x (A) and CD reference: TRC3111/7/2 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 2 30’21” Stereo 12 x(A)

beliefs would appear to have been viewed unfavourably by his superiors, although this disfavour was expressed covertly rather than overtly.⁷³² While this is interesting historically, it is not directly relevant to the context of this thesis apart from confirming Lowenstein's observations about Coldicutt as being undeterred by authority and expressing himself in a straight-forward manner. However, £300 of Coldicutt's war-time service deferred pay⁷³³ enabled him, in conjunction with Bob Matthews, 'a Worker's Theatre stalwart',⁷³⁴ and Gerry Harant, to establish the Realist Film Unit in late 1945.⁷³⁵ Matthews, who owned a 16 mm film camera, also contributed £300 towards the cost of establishing the Unit. The Realist Film Unit was registered as a business name on 25 October, 1946.⁷³⁶ There was, and still is, a perception that the Realist Film Unit was owned and operated by the Australian Communist Party. Coldicutt often corrected this perception explaining that 'the Realist Film Unit is a private business with its own business address and should not be addressed c/o A.C.P. [Australian Communist Party]'.⁷³⁷ Given the growing paranoia about Communism both in Australia and elsewhere,⁷³⁸ it was important in the mid to late 1940s, and in the 1950s, that this difference was clearly understood. Such an understanding is equally important, now and in the future, in ensuring historical accuracy in any discussion about the Realist Film Unit.

⁷³² Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/1-52 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 1 31'55" Stereo 11 x (A) and CD reference: TRC3111/7/2 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 2 30'21" Stereo 12 x (A)

Williams, (1995), op. cit., p. 180.

⁷³³ Davies, op. cit., p. 44.

Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/2 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 2 30' 21" Stereo 12 x (A)

⁷³⁴ Hughes, J. (2006). Disc1-The Feature, *The Archive Project*, a documentary film about the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association, Melbourne. Copy held by Mrs Elisabeth Coldicutt, widow of the late Kenneth John Coldicutt.

Williams, (n.d.), op. cit., p. 4.

⁷³⁵ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/2 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 2 30'21" Stereo 12 x (A)

Jenkins, D. M. (2012). Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt.

⁷³⁶ Business Names Act 1928, Part 1, Section 15. Form J. Certificate of Registrar-General of Registration of an Individual. Registration of *Realist Film Unit* as a business name. Dated and signed on 25th October, 1946, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2.

⁷³⁷ Extract from a letter to Mr. James A. Coleman, Secretary, Frankston A.C.P., Park Street, Seaford, dated Wednesday July 30, 1947, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 5 of 10, Folder 4/12.

⁷³⁸ Clohesy, L. (2012). *Australian Cold Warrior: The Anti-Communism of W. C. Wentworth*. (Unpublished thesis). Melbourne, Australia: Victoria University, passim. Retrieved from <http://vuir.vu.edu.au/15770/1/ClohesyLachlan.pdf>

Beilharz, P. (2008). Elegies of Australian Communism. In *Australian Historical Studies*, 23(92), 293-306, passim. Retrieved from

<http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/doi/abs/10.1080/10314618908595814>

Prime Facts. Australian Prime Ministers Centre. May 2012, *The Communist Party Dissolution Act 1950*, Flyer available from Museum of Australian Democracy, Parkes, ACT, Australia.

High Court of Australia. *Decision in the Communist Party Case*, Canberra, 1951 Retrieved from <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/HCA/1951/5.html>

Realist Film Unit and Realist Film Association: late 1945 to early 1950s

The pattern of Coldicutt's activities from late 1945 to the early 1950s reflects his preoccupations and *modus operandi* from the mid-1930s to the early 1940s. The creation of the Realist Film Unit⁷³⁹ in late 1945, realised one of Coldicutt's objectives. This Unit offered an alternative and affordable film-production option for agencies interested in using the medium to raise public awareness of particular issues but who found commercial and government film-production companies too costly. One of the Unit's film-production clients was the Brotherhood of St Laurence.⁷⁴⁰ This alliance between the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Realist Film Unit is an example of a social justice agenda crossing ideological boundaries. The Brotherhood of St Laurence was 'founded on 8 December 1930 in the Anglican parish church of St Stephen in Adamstown, a working class suburb of Newcastle'. In its role as a religious organisation the Brotherhood serves both 'the church and the community' seeking 'a better deal for disadvantaged people' through both the alleviation and prevention of poverty.⁷⁴¹ As previously mentioned, Coldicutt and the Realist Film Unit were driven by a social justice agenda with a particular emphasis on disadvantaged people. Although underpinned by different ideologies, both the Brotherhood and the Realist Film Unit recognised the value of film as a medium for heightening community consciousness about social justice issues.

During its short life-time the Unit produced five films with social justice themes. These films included, *These are Our Children* and *a Place to Live*.⁷⁴² The emphasis in the Unit's

⁷³⁹ The emphasis throughout the remainder of this section is on the Realist Film Unit, rather than on Coldicutt as an individual. While Coldicutt would seem to have been a dominating influence, the success of the Realists was dependent on the assiduous manner in which Bob Matthews, Gerry Harant and Betty Lacey (later Mrs Elisabeth Coldicutt), and others, worked in executing the Realists' aims. Williams presents a comprehensive description of the roles of Matthews, Harant and Lacy in the Realists. Williams, D. (1995), op. cit., pp. 172-180.

⁷⁴⁰ One of the films the Unit made for the Brotherhood was, *These are Our Children*. This film was about children growing-up in the inner suburbs and the reasons for their delinquency. Lowenstein, W. (1992). Op. cit. CD reference: TRC3111/7/2 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 2 30'21" Stereo 12 x (A).

These are Our Children was one of a trilogy of films made by the Realists for the Brotherhood of St Laurence. The other films were, *A Place to Live* (Ken Coldicutt 1948), and *Beautiful Melbourne* (Jack Fitzsimmons 1947). Hughes, J. 2006, Disc 2-The Films, *The Archive Project*, a documentary film about the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association, Melbourne. Copy held by Mrs Elisabeth Coldicutt, widow of the late Kenneth John Coldicutt.

Australian Screen. All titles produced by Realist Film Unit. Retrieved from <http://aso.gov.au/titles/companies/Realist+Film+Unit/> In particular, refer to the curator's notes.

⁷⁴¹ Brotherhood of St Laurence Retrieved from <http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/ServingCommunity/agencies/Pages/BrotherhoodOfStLaurence.aspx>

⁷⁴² Williams, D. (1995), op. cit., 180-183.

films was on ‘working class struggles of the time’.⁷⁴³ The intent of these films was to dignify the lives of working class people by giving a voice to their struggle making it a subject worthy of public consideration, and ameliorating action.⁷⁴⁴ Films were screened for a diversity of organisations and audiences at a wide variety of venues, including out-of-door screenings, at both metropolitan Melbourne and regional locations.⁷⁴⁵ There was a high level of interest in these screenings, for example, in 1947, ‘the Realists gave 238 public screenings to audiences totalling 31,000’.⁷⁴⁶ All of these factors—film themes, diversity of audiences and venues, and outreach screenings— echo Coldicutt’s operational strategies of the mid to late 1930s. These strategies introduced, or affirmed, the educational value of films, particularly non-theatrical documentary-type movies, to increasingly diverse audiences, further spreading the concept of a filmic educational culture. However, by 1948 the Unit was foundering financially: the Realists range of services and staff were reduced; Coldicutt was the only employee existing on half the basic wage and, members decided that, for the Unit to survive, an organisational restructure was vital.⁷⁴⁷

Also, during this period of uncertainty, it became apparent to the Realists that,

they had developed so many connections with various community organisations it became important to provide advice and physical help ... [by] providing projection equipment to these organisations and, as a

Hughes, J. (2006). Disc 2-The Films, *The Archive Project*, a documentary film about the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association, Melbourne. Copy held by Mrs Elisabeth Coldicutt, widow of the late Kenneth John Coldicutt.

⁷⁴³ Inglis, A. *Some Memories of Ken Coldicutt*, a hand-written paper held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4 of 10, Folder 4/4.

⁷⁴⁴ Deane Williams describes these films as ‘agitational’ films. Agitational is an emotive word conveying ideas ranging from ‘stirring-up violent emotions or actions’ to ‘attempting to arouse or influence public interest in something esp. by discussion or appeals’. Webster’s New Ideal Dictionary, USA: 1978. The latter definition would seem to be more reflective of the Realists’ intentions in producing films than the former definition.

⁷⁴⁵ Realist Film Unit. *Circular* (to supporters). (1948, February 12). 2nd Floor, 330 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2

⁷⁴⁶ Realist Film Unit. *Circular* (to supporters), Thursday 12, 1948. 2nd Floor, 330 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2

⁷⁴⁷ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/4-52 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 1 47’46” Stereo 11 x (A)

result of, or partly in the course of this, there sprang up a number of local film societies'.⁷⁴⁸

Forty-five years later when reflecting on these events Harant,⁷⁴⁹ one of the founders of the Realist Film Unit, posits that 'although at that particular time it appeared to be coincidental, in the long-run it maybe was the most important activity we were engaged in'.⁷⁵⁰ In 1948, the Realist Film Association was created.⁷⁵¹ The Realist Film Association's Constitution stated that,

The Name of the Organisation shall be "REALIST FILM ASSOCIATION". It shall incorporate the Realist Film Unit, and the name Realist Film Unit shall be retained for films to be produced by the Association.

The Aim of the Realist Film Association shall be to develop the use of film as a force for social progress.⁷⁵²

To continue operating, the Association relied largely on voluntary labour. Its functions were characterised by the adoption of the Realist Film Unit's roles, plus the offering of additional services in the form of film and projector hire, film enhancement material such as music for silent movies and program notes, and technical assistance which included film

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid., CD reference: TRC3111/7/3 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 2 25;47" Stereo 12 x (A). At this point in the interviewee, Coldicutt observes that the establishment of *The Melbourne Film Society*, in 1945 towards the end of WW2, preceded any of the Realists work. (p. 4 of the researcher's notes for cassette 5.)

⁷⁴⁹ Harant was, 'an Austrian immigrant whose technical expertise in repairing cameras, projectors and other equipment allowed the Unit and Association to continue its [*sic*] activities on a shoestring budget'. Paper titled, *Behind the Front. The Realist Film Unit and Association*, no date, no author however, a comment in footnote 32 suggests that the author may be Deane Williams. Paper held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2, Realist Film Association.

⁷⁵⁰ Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/3 Ken Coldicutt Disc 1 of 2 25;47" Stereo 12 x (A).

In February 1994, at the Sixth History and Film Conference held at La Trobe University, Bob Matthews, one of the founders of the Realist Film Unit, screened *Prices and the People*, a short documentary made by the Unit in 1946. Liz Burke, a filmmaker, in attendance at the Conference writes, 'Bob's talk made me realise that without the Realist Film Unit there would have been less chance of a film society movement getting off the ground ...Of course, I'm not saying the Realist Film Unit caused it all, but rather that there is a whole history behind the issues of film culture today which is rarely discussed or even paid lip-service to.' Burke, L. 1994, "The Answer is "Yes", in *FILMNEWS*, February 1994, p. 5, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2

⁷⁵¹ *Constitution of the Realist Film Association*. 1948. Copy held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2

⁷⁵² Ibid.

maintenance.⁷⁵³ A comprehensive range of educational programs typified by hands-on training such as projection classes,⁷⁵⁴ and theoretical pursuits, for example, film appreciation discussion groups,⁷⁵⁵ were offered regularly by the Association.⁷⁵⁶ The provision of these services and educational programs confirms Coldicutt and Harant's previously acknowledged awareness of the needs of the growing number of film societies, and other community groups, requiring program support and technical assistance.

Simultaneously, the supply of non-theatrical documentary-type films was increasing. The Victorian State Library's collection of these types of films expanded following the opening of its film library in 1947. After WW2, various embassies and consulates established film libraries. Community film groups were able to borrow films free of charge from these organisations. As the supply of documentary-type films available for community film groups to borrow increased, the levels of demand for this product escalated, resulting in an upsurge in the quantity and types of program-related services and technical support tasks required by the groups. The decision of the Realist Film Association to provide a range of program-related and technical support services for these groups was an important factor in validating the arrival and acceptance of a filmic educational culture in the state of Victoria. In reality, the Realist Film Unit, as the Realist Film Association, had metamorphosed into an 'extraordinary educative film society'.⁷⁵⁷ The decision of the Realists to provide a wide-range of support services to community film groups, corresponded with a similar range of services and support mechanisms being offered by the Victorian State Film Centre, further endorsing the presence of a filmic educational culture.

⁷⁵³ Realist Film Association, *Roneoed brochure describing services available to the public*, May 1950, Realist Film Association, New Theatre, 92 Flinders Street, Melbourne Central, passim, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2.

⁷⁵⁴ Realist Film Association, Realist Film News, June 1950, Realist Film Association, New Theatre, 92 Flinders Street, Melbourne Central, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 Folder 1/1, Realist Film Association—Film News.

⁷⁵⁵ Realist Film Association, Realist Film News, January 1954, Realist Film Association, New Theatre, 92 Flinders Street, Melbourne Central, p. 3, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/1.

⁷⁵⁶ Realist Film Association brochure, *A Series of Discussions on Film Production*, to be held at New Theatre, 92 Flinders Street, Melbourne commencing: Sunday February 24th, 1952 at 2.00 pm, front cover, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2

⁷⁵⁷ Hughes, J. 2006, *The Archive Project*, introductory notes to this documentary film about the Realist Film Unit and the Realist Film Association, Melbourne. Copy held by Mrs Elisabeth Coldicutt, widow of the late Kenneth John Coldicutt.

The value placed on this filmic educational culture is unmistakeable in the community backlash against the Victorian Cinematographic Films Bill⁷⁵⁸ introduced into the Victorian Legislative Assembly on 20 October, 1948, by the Hollway-McDonald Government.⁷⁵⁹ Mr. Cremean, M.L.A, speaking to the Bill said, ‘It may—and I hope it will—be a check on the activities of the Realist Film Unit, which up to now has played merry hell with its propaganda exhibitions’.⁷⁶⁰ The Realists conducted a feisty, protest campaign against the Victorian Cinematographic Films Bill.⁷⁶¹ Major supporters included the Trade Union Movement, the Religious Film Association and other non-commercial organisations that were film-users. Once again there was a coalescence of groups with differing ideologies. In this instance it was not to produce a film, as exemplified by the relationship between the Brotherhood of St Laurence, but to protect the community’s access to a product. Through its narrative power, the product, in the form of non-commercial films, was integral to the way in which these groups conveyed their messages and values, to their audiences.

In essence, the Bill had the potential to give more restrictive powers to the Victorian State censor, and to require all non-commercial film exhibition organisations to comply with the same registration and fee-paying requirements as commercial businesses—such fees would have been financially prohibitive for community film societies, and other groups such as religious organisations that screened films regularly. Coldicutt argues that ‘we got tremendous amounts of support from all sorts of organisations which had been making use of films and this was an example of the fact that all of the advice and support we’d been giving to non-commercial organisations produced a positive result when it came to

⁷⁵⁸ This Bill included amendments to the Theatres Act of 1928, amendments to the Theatres Act of 1932, and the Cinematograph Quota Act of 1935. Lowenstein, (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/3 Ken Coldicutt Disc 2 of 2 30’54” Stereo 12 x (A).

A paper titled, *Information on the Restrictions Imposed on the State Film Centres and on the State Government’s Cinematograph Films Bill*, n.d., no author, which presents an overview of the Bill is , held in The University of Melbourne Archives op. cit., Box 6 of 10, Folder 6/1.

Williams, D. (1995), op. cit., p. 178-179.

⁷⁵⁹ Realist Film Association. 1948, *Playing Merry Hell*, title of a 1948 report for the Realist Film Association, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 6 of 10, Folder 6/1.

⁷⁶⁰ Hansard. (1948, October 20). Quoted in paper titled, *Playing Merry Hell: A Report on the Work of the Realist Film Association During 1948*, no date, no signature no indication of the status of the paper, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2, Constitution Realist Film Association.

⁷⁶¹ Circulars, letters and summaries of the Bill are held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 6 of 10, Folder 6/1.

‘During the 1940s the Realist Film Association, which had its office at 92 Flinders Street, campaigned against the political censorship of films (both the banning and cutting of films) by the Victorian Documentary Film Council of 110 Victoria Street, Carlton.’ Retrieved from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00315b.htm>

defending the interests of non-commercial film users against unjust Government legislation'.⁷⁶² Eventually the Bill was defeated.

Coldicutt and the Realist team, were filming, screening and, through the filmic medium, speaking to a broad range of people, geographically, socially and politically. Some of the filmic subjects which focused on working class struggles and disadvantage, were politically unpopular. Nevertheless, through the screening of these oftentimes unpalatable subjects, as well as films of historic and artistic value, Coldicutt and the Realist team, unwittingly perhaps rather than intentionally, were adding a broader dimension to community perceptions of a filmic educational culture.⁷⁶³ Film, and its content, were no longer circumscribed by the notion of cinema as entertainment: the production of non-theatrical documentaries, as screened, and sometimes produced, by Coldicutt and the Realists, further legitimised the role of film as a powerful and popular educational tool which not only spoke to communities, both advantaged and disadvantaged, but also gave them a voice.

A Filmic Educational Culture Becomes a Reality

Additionally the degree to which the concept of a filmic educational culture was becoming embedded in Victorian community life, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, is evident in the founding of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies in 1949.⁷⁶⁴ The Federation was, and still is, an umbrella group for community film societies. This was followed by the holding of the Olinda Film Festival in 1952 organised by the Victorian Federation of Film

⁷⁶² Lowenstein. (1992), op. cit., CD reference: TRC3111/7/3 Ken Coldicutt Disc 2 of 2 30'54" Stereo 12 x (A).

The Realist Film Unit designed and distributed a petition to the State Government urging the withdrawal of the *Cinematograph Films Bill*. The actual number of people who signed the petition is unknown at this stage of the research project but given the number of original signed petitions held in The University of Melbourne Archives, it would seem to have been a very large number. Signed petitions held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 6 of 10, Folder 6/3.

⁷⁶³ As well as producing films, the Realists 'ran a kind of de facto film education film program by organizing many hundreds of screenings of classic European and Russian cinema, along with the work of avant-garde American, British and Canadian filmmakers, influenced by the work of the Italian Neo-Realists'. Davies, op. cit., pp. 44-46.

Author unknown possibly attributable to Deane Williams, n.d. however dates in the paper suggest mid-1990s, *Behind the Front. The Realist Film Unit and Association*, held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 1 of 10, Folder 1/2.

Williams, (1995), op. cit., p. 180.

⁷⁶⁴ *Melbourne Film Festival Program—1955*, op. cit., p. 8.

Societies.⁷⁶⁵ This Festival was the predecessor of the Melbourne Film Festival.⁷⁶⁶ Films featured at the Olinda Film Festival included one of the Flaherty classics, *Louisiana Story*,⁷⁶⁷ and films from the Shell Film Unit which was directed by John Heyer.⁷⁶⁸ As previously mentioned, Heyer, a protégé of Stanley Hawes, a Grierson associate, produced the Australian documentary classic, *The Back of Beyond*. Baxter, in *The Australian Cinema*,⁷⁶⁹ describes Heyer⁷⁷⁰ as a film producer ‘whose deeply committed productions are probably the finest documentaries made in Australia’.⁷⁷¹ In addition, other films featured in the Festival program included: religious films,⁷⁷² films relevant to discrete subject areas such as science and educational techniques,⁷⁷³ and many international films.⁷⁷⁴ The Festival had six aims of which two, in particular, give practical expression to the concept of a filmic educational culture.⁷⁷⁵ The two particular aims were,

- To bring together Australian film enthusiasts so that they may see films which would not otherwise be available and to encourage these film enthusiasts to talk films, think films, and exchange views to their mutual advantage.⁷⁷⁶
- To provide professional help for the users of every type of film.⁷⁷⁷

In the state of Victoria, people were exhibiting forms of behaviour which demonstrated the acceptance and embodiment of a filmic educational culture into their various world views and practices. Examples of community behaviour which validate this observation include

⁷⁶⁵ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. 1952, *Olinda Film Festival—1952*, *passim*.

⁷⁶⁶ Following his death in 1988, Erwin Rado was credited with founding ‘the Melbourne Film Festival’. However, in a letter to the Editor of *The Age*, dated 7th February, 1988, Coldicutt disputes this claim arguing that ‘the Festival was founded not by any individual but by a flourishing film society movement’. Coldicutt then proceeds to document the Festival’s establishment process as well as briefly describing the contribution of some of the key players. A copy of the letter is held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 6 of 10, Folder 4/13.

⁷⁶⁷ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. 1952, *Olinda Film Festival—1952*, (Program), op. cit., p. 25.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 13 & 24.

⁷⁶⁹ Baxter, op. cit., p. 79.

⁷⁷⁰ John Heyer chaired the inaugural meeting of the Australian Council of Film Societies (ACOFs) held ‘in Sydney in November 1949’. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Council_of_Film_Societies

⁷⁷¹ Baxter, op. cit., p. 80.

⁷⁷² Federation of Victorian Film Societies. 1952, *Olinda Film Festival—1952*, (Program), op. cit., pp. 22-23.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21 & pp. 26-30.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the formation of organisations such as the Realist Film Association and the Federation of Victorian Film Societies, the strength of community opposition to the then Conservative Victorian Government's Cinematographic Films Bill, and the success of the Olinda Film Festival. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, in the state of Victoria, a filmic educational culture was no longer just a perception or an aspiration; it was a reality.

Coldicutt's active engagement with the film society movement, and his passion for film as an educational tool, were still evident in the 1960s. In 1962, he joined Camberwell Grammar School as chemistry master. Although the school 'then owned only one 16 mm sound projector, a 16 year-old Pyrox Victor in poor repair', Coldicutt was soon 'presenting class-room films in chemistry, general [science] and mathematics'.⁷⁷⁸ A film club was established attracting audiences to frequent lunch-time screenings. Eventually, due to the popularity of the screenings, these went beyond lunch-times to the regular presentation of 'evening screenings of feature films'.⁷⁷⁹ Coldicutt explains that in 1968, 'we had no difficulty in enrolling more than 1000 members and it was necessary to run two screenings of each program, on Friday and Saturday evenings every fortnight'.⁷⁸⁰ The film club lapsed in 1969 but was reformed in 1970 by 'an enthusiastic group of boys and new staff members [who] revived the Society on a much sounder organisational basis than before'.⁷⁸¹

Conclusions

At the commencement of this discussion the researcher acknowledged that much of Coldicutt's work was driven by his political commitment to a socialist society, as well as his recognition of the value of film as an educational tool. As a result Coldicutt sought openings to acquire, produce and exhibit non-theatrical documentary films designed to increase public awareness of socioeconomic inequalities. Coldicutt's main objective for these screenings was political. Nevertheless, the incidental outcome was to increase the level of access audiences had to a wider range of films other than those for entertainment. This may have led to people perceiving the educational value of films precipitating the growth of a filmic educational culture. For example, cane cutters in Northern Queensland

⁷⁷⁸ Coldicutt, K. (1971). 'Visual Literacy at Camberwell Grammar School', *Script, Screen & Stage*, 4 (3), p. 26. A copy of this article is held in The University of Melbourne Archives, op. cit., Box 4, Film Appreciation in Schools 3/7

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

were exposed to the issues behind, and the devastation caused by, the Spanish Civil War in the mid to late 1930s. Also, during the late 1940s, the Realist Film Unit, founded by Coldicutt and a small number of *cineastes*, produced and screened films about the struggles of working class people. The screening of these films was well-patronised both in Melbourne and in the regions, for instance, in 1947 the Realists conducted 238 screenings. The total audience for these screenings was 31,000.

Not only did these screenings have the potential to contribute to the growth of a filmic educational culture but they fostered an ongoing engagement between film and the community. This type of engagement is evident in the community reaction to the Victorian Cinematographic Films Bill introduced into the Victorian Legislative Assembly on 20 October 1948, by the Hollway-McDonald Government. It was a Bill with potentially negative consequences for community film societies. The Realist Film Association in conjunction with members of organisations such as the Trade Union Movement, Religious Film Association, and non-commercial film user groups, conducted a spirited campaign against the Bill. The press supported the Realist-led campaign which, eventually, was successful. This example demonstrates one of the ways in which the community was engaging with film for purposes other than entertainment.

The final point to be made in this discussion of Coldicutt and The Realist Film Association is that, in reality, the Association metamorphosed into an exceptional educative film society. This resulted from the Association's provision of a comprehensive range of services, technical equipment and educational programs to film groups and, its engagement with various community organisations. In addition, this engagement and these supportive activities encouraged the formation of many community film societies. Together, the Realist Film Association and the film societies provided adults with opportunities for self-directed learning in the community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Case Study: History of the Camberwell Film Society from the 1955 (*ca.*) to 1975

Introduction

The history of the Camberwell Film Society⁷⁸² is presented chronologically, in historical narrative style. As the story unfolds, it reveals periods of excitement and passion as challenging films were screened and the identity of the Society was shaped. These periods of creative activity were followed by quieter interludes when the content and themes of the chosen films were more conventional and the Society's image more constrained. These varying levels and types of activity were driven by individuals and circumstances.

The history of the Society, as investigated in this study, covers a period of approximately forty years. For clarity of presentation and ease of comprehension the story of the formation and development of the Society is divided between this chapter, Chapter Seven and the following chapter, Chapter Eight. Each chapter is divided into two main sections followed by a summary. Each of the four sections, spread across the two chapters, represents a ten year period, in chronological order, commencing with the ten years from 1955 to 1964. The notion of decades has been selected as an appropriate structure for presenting the Society's historical data. This method generates compact units of historical material for factors such as comparative analyses between the decades and for more readily identifying the cyclical patterns of creative activity, followed by quieter interludes, as experienced by the Society. The first section in Chapter Seven describes the formation of the Society and, in conjunction with the second section, reflects on the establishment of the Society as part of the filmic educational culture of metropolitan Melbourne. The third section which opens Chapter Eight, highlights some of the issues confronted by the Society during a mostly constraining interlude, while the fourth captures the sense of excitement as the Society was rejuvenated and then enters a long-term period of stasis. Chapter Eight closes with a summary of the growth and development of the Society and its place in the filmic educational culture of metropolitan Melbourne.

⁷⁸² In this chapter, the Camberwell Film Society is mostly referred to as the *Society*.

Founding of the Camberwell Film Society: the First Ten Years 1955 (ca.) to 1964

Although an extensive search has been conducted to establish the definitive date for the founding of the Society, that date is not known to the researcher at the time of writing this section of the study.⁷⁸³ Anecdotal evidence suggests that the records of the Society's early years were lost when 'all our early records, which were stored in the garage at the home of one of our secretaries, were destroyed in a fire in his garage'.⁷⁸⁴ Anecdotal evidence also infers that, in its formative years, the Society met at the premises of a Camberwell bowling club.⁷⁸⁵ Research to date has not been able to either confirm or dispute this evidence.⁷⁸⁶ Nevertheless, given the detailed analysis of available documents relevant to the establishment of the Society, it is conjectured that the Society was formed in the latter half of 1955.⁷⁸⁷ Also, it is assumed that two film societies—Camberwell Film Society and South Camberwell Film Society—either merged or, in the latter part of 1955, South Camberwell Film Society changed its name to Camberwell Film Society. The latter would seem to be most probable given that the secretary of both societies was the same person, at the same address: Mrs J. Griffiths, 4 Grace Street, Camberwell. The simultaneous, active existence of two film societies with almost identical names and locations, and with the same secretary, seems unlikely. In addition, the conjecture that the Society was formed in 1955 would appear to be supported in the edition of *Reel News*, April 2006, where it is stated that, 'Camberwell FS [*sic*] is one of Victoria's oldest, turning 50 last year'.⁷⁸⁸ However, the source for this assertion is not cited in the newsletter. Consequently, the source may be one of the documents referred to by the researcher in her earlier remarks about the year in which the Society was formed.⁷⁸⁹ This is not disputing the validity of the document, rather it is arguing that the observation made in *Reel News*, may not be based on a new material.

⁷⁸³ Refer to sub-section titled, *Date Society was Founded*, in Chapter Three.

⁷⁸⁴ Jenkins, David L. (2004). *Interview with Jean Catford*.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁶ Refer to Chapter Three.

Camberwell Central Bowls Club

http://ccbc.candyit.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=45&Itemid=75

⁷⁸⁷ Refer to Chapter Three.

⁷⁸⁸ Federation of Victorian Film Societies. 2009, *Registration Number Historic Master*, 22/03/2009

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

As previously discussed,⁷⁹⁰ there was a third film society, Hartwell Presbyterian Church Film Group, which may have been a party to the formation of the Camberwell Film Society. However, although a search was conducted at the Uniting Church Archives, this has been neither confirmed nor denied. As a result, it is important to note that the preceding observations are based on conjecture rather than being evidence-based.

The current paucity of both primary and secondary sources limits the scope and accuracy of any attempts to present an historical, interpretative narrative of the earliest days of the Society. However, the researcher has interrogated relevant primary and secondary sources which inform her research, in a general sense, in an endeavour to create a historical representation of this initial period of the Society. It is important to establish an understanding and perception of these early days, even if it is minimalist: these early days form the foundation of the period described in this thesis as a ‘time of passion’ for the Camberwell Film Society.

An Interpretative Historical Representation

Product and Models

By the mid-1950s product for screening was readily available to the Society. Victorian film societies were able to select films from the abundant and diverse film stock available through agencies such as the Victorian State Film Centre, the Realist Film Association, large international corporations, for instance, Shell Australia, and various embassies and consulates.⁷⁹¹ Eight years after its founding in 1946,⁷⁹² the Victorian State Film Centre alone had ‘a collection of over 4,500 documentary and educational films from every corner of the globe: community films from Canada and Britain, technical films from America, art films from Belgium, France, Japan, Denmark and Sweden, experimental films, many early films of historical interest, and a wealth of material from Australian producers’.⁷⁹³ As well as product being available for screening by 1955, throughout the previous eleven years a number of film societies had been established in Victoria providing working models for fledging film societies in that State. These included: The Melbourne Film Society (1944),

⁷⁹⁰ Refer to Chapter Three & Chapter Four.

⁷⁹¹ Refer to footnote 919.

⁷⁹² Refer to Chapter Six.

⁷⁹³ *Melbourne Film Festival Program—1955*, op. cit., p. 9.

The Melbourne University Film Society (1947), Surrey Film Society (1948),⁷⁹⁴ and Geelong Film Society (1950).⁷⁹⁵ In addition, technical services and support were obtainable through agencies such as the Realist Film Association and the Victorian State Film Centre. By 1955, the accoutrements and models for establishing and conducting a film society were present and accessible in the state of Victoria.

People and Filmic Passions

Nevertheless, the reasons why people specifically founded the Camberwell Film Society, in particular, are not known at this stage. However, there were many factors which aroused the appetite of individuals and groups of people in Victoria, and throughout Australia, for films other than commercial feature films during the 1950s and beyond. In the 1950s Camberwell represented, and still represents, a microcosm of Australian society characterised by a well-educated community with an above average income level and an aspirational culture. Consequently, it is most likely that the factors which kindled an interest in non-commercial films Australia-wide resided in the Camberwell community during the 1950s. These factors were diverse, sometimes very personal often reflecting almost a lifetime of interest in, and love of film.⁷⁹⁶ Amongst the factors was the constant recognition of the potential of the cinematic experience to educate through the viewing of films of historical and artistic interest, international films,⁷⁹⁷ and non-theatrical documentary films designed to creatively present and interpret reality.⁷⁹⁸ Some people were imbued with a love of the cinema which stemmed from having a childhood role in a film.⁷⁹⁹ While for those young people growing-up in country towns, the local cinema, usually known as the picture theatre, was the major source of entertainment: captivated by the filmic world, some of these young people pursued a career in the art of film production.⁸⁰⁰ The filmic enthusiasm of a few interviewees was engendered by a significant other in the form of a parent, close relative or family friend, who was fascinated

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

⁷⁹⁵ *The Film Monthly*, op. cit., p. 31.

⁷⁹⁶ Jenkins, D. M. (2013). *Interview with Richard Mitchell*. Jenkins, D. M. (2013). *Interview with Richard Keyes and James Sandry*. Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Elisabeth Coldicutt*. Jenkins, Dorothy M. (2013). *Interview with Mary Bona*.

⁷⁹⁷ Kalina, P. (2012). *Obituaries. Cinephile shared love of film*, Ray Fisher Creative Director, Film Festival Organiser 12-2-1929–25-12-2011, in *The Age*, Tuesday February 21, 2012 p. 14.

⁷⁹⁸ Jenkins, D. M. (2013). *Interview with Richard Keyes and James Sandry*. Grierson in Chapter Five.

⁷⁹⁹ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Nick Richardson*.

⁸⁰⁰ Jenkins, D. M. (2013). *Interview with Richard Keyes and James Sandry*.

by film, often attending the cinema regularly.⁸⁰¹ Yet others expressed a passion for working with projectors;⁸⁰² this passion was, at times, associated with a flair for showmanship as the skill and role of the projectionist in the art of screening a film was perfected.⁸⁰³ The depth and strength of the discussion about the films, as experienced by attendees at the Olinda (1952), and following film festivals, was a factor which motivated some people to join a film society.⁸⁰⁴ Moreover, as previously stated, prior to the holding of the Olinda Film Festival in 1952, a number of successful film societies had been formed in Melbourne providing models for the formation of newer societies. By weaving together these general findings from an interrogation of the research data, with the contextual material already presented in this thesis,⁸⁰⁵ a tentative representation of the earliest period of the Society may be formed.

Interpretation and Fact: From the General to the Particular

There was an abundance of cinemas in Camberwell and its environs, particularly from the 1930s to the 1950s. These cinemas provided opportunities for children growing-up throughout this period in Camberwell, and its environs, to attend the movies regularly, with some of them developing a lifetime love of, and interest in, films.⁸⁰⁶ These attendances may have been with or without a significant other.⁸⁰⁷ In the aspirational culture of Camberwell, with its comparatively higher levels of disposable income, some parents may have been motivated to pursue drama or music performance activities for their children leading to their appearances in stage or film roles, for example, Barry Humphries, a globally celebrated stage satirist, grew-up in Camberwell attending Camberwell Grammar School⁸⁰⁸ before moving to Melbourne Grammar School.⁸⁰⁹ These comparatively higher disposable income levels, combined with above average levels of education, would have enabled the private ownership of projectors amongst interested

⁸⁰¹ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Bryan Putt*.

⁸⁰² Jenkins, D. M. *Interview with Ed Schefferle*. Jenkins, D. M. (2013). Interview with *Richard Mitchell*.

⁸⁰³ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Bryan Putt*. Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

⁸⁰⁴ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*. Jenkins, D. M. (2013). *Interview with Richard Mitchell*.

⁸⁰⁵ Refer to context chapters, Chapters Four, Five and Six.

⁸⁰⁶ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*. Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Bryan Putt*.

⁸⁰⁷ Jenkins, D. M. (2010). *Interview with Bryan Putt*.

⁸⁰⁸ Humphries, B. (2002). *My Life as Me*, Camberwell, Victoria, Australia: Viking an imprint of Penguin Books, pp. 5, 26, 40, 62.

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 100 & 112.

members of the Camberwell community.⁸¹⁰ Similarly, these two factors—higher levels of disposable income and educational attainment—when coupled with an aspirational culture—may have prompted some people to explore options for viewing non-commercial feature films such as those of historic interest or international films. Also, it is highly probable that the four major Melbourne film festivals held in Victoria by the mid-1950s, empowered attendees intellectually through stimulating discussion. Moreover, these festivals had the potential to broaden participants’ horizons through the cinematic experience as characterised by an audience’s shared understanding of ideas and issues, and the communal expression of emotions. These festivals were attended by a number of Camberwell citizens including those with clearly observable left-wing credentials.⁸¹¹ In addition, the strength of the religious films movement,⁸¹² particularly amongst non-conformist churches, suggests there may have been cohorts of people within church congregations exploring filmic educational or entertainment alternatives to the types of movies screened at mainstream commercial cinemas.

Diversity of Means: Unity of Intent

Although it is based on conjecture rather than phenomenological evidence, the picture emerging of the group of people who founded the Camberwell Film Society, as well as the members in its earliest days, reflects a diversity of factors such as motivation, experience, knowledge, intention, political values and religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the diversity of these characteristics was subsumed under the common goal or aspiration of forming a film society: in those days ‘film societies ... were the only conduit film lovers had to ... international cinema’.⁸¹³ This suggests that the formation of the Camberwell Film Society was based on a sense of ‘rational will’.⁸¹⁴ Rational will is described as underpinning a situation in which ‘a group or a relationship can be willed because those involved wish to attain through it a definite end and are willing to join hands for this purpose, even though indifference or even antipathy may exist on other levels’.⁸¹⁵ In simpler terms it is ‘a social

⁸¹⁰ Henry Glennon, projectionist for the Camberwell Film Society, owned the projector used for film screenings during the 1960s. Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Refer to Chapter Four.

⁸¹³ Kalina, P. (2012). *Obituaries. Cinephile shared love of film*, Ray Fisher Creative Director, Film Festival Organiser 12-2-1929—25-12-2011, in *The Age*, Tuesday February 21, 2012, p. 14.

⁸¹⁴ Tönnies, op. cit., pp. 4-5. Nisbett, op. cit., p. 78. Cahnman, op. cit.

⁸¹⁵ Tönnies, op. cit.

group held together by practical concerns, formal and impersonal relationships'.⁸¹⁶ As observed in Chapter One, Ferdinand Tönnies, a German philosopher and sociologist, uses the word *Gesellschaft* to describe this type of social group driven by rational will. Rational will is in opposition to the concept of 'natural will',⁸¹⁷ which is defined as people associating 'themselves together, as friends do, because they think the relation valuable as an end in and of itself':⁸¹⁸ Tönnies uses the term, *Gemeinschaft*, to describe social groups driven by the concept of natural will. In this study it is posited that the means or channels which brought people together to form the Camberwell Film Society were 'sharply differentiated',⁸¹⁹ from the objectives or ends which they wished to achieve. Consequently, it is conjectured that, 'in the beginning', the Camberwell Film Society was formed by a group of people with a diversity of characteristics such as motivation, values and experience, including filmic experience, but driven by a sense of rational will who, metaphorically speaking, 'joined hands' to achieve a 'definite end' in the form of a film society. Whether or not this conjecture, and attempted reconstruction of the Society's early days, has any validity will be tested in the following sections of this historical narrative.

Operations, Identity and Culture Established

Introduction: Operations

The earliest primary source material about the Camberwell Film Society, available for this project, dates from July 1964. As a result, this section of the historical narrative moves from conjecture and reconstruction, to the interrogation and interpretation of the Society's historical records and associated research. However, for 1964, the primary source is limited in its scope comprising three of the Society's newsletter for the months of July, October and December of that year. These newsletters, in conjunction with associated research undertaken by the researcher, represent the main sources of information for the following section of this historical narrative about the Society from July to December 1964.

⁸¹⁶ Gesellschaft Retrieved from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/gesellschaft>

⁸¹⁷ Tönnies, op. cit., p. 5. Nisbett, op. cit., p. 78. Cahnman, op. cit.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., Tönnies.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

Screening Arrangements

By July 1964, the Camberwell Film Society was well-established. From February to November, members met on the fourth Tuesday of each month⁸²⁰. The final screening for each year was conducted on the second Tuesday of December followed by a festive supper supplied by the Society. In accordance with the principles of operation for film societies, all of these screenings were restricted to Camberwell Film Society members only. Additionally, two or three special screening nights were held throughout each year to which potential members were invited. The venue for screenings was the Camberwell Civic Centre Theatrette, Town Hall, Camberwell. Sometime during the financial year, 1964-65, there had been a change of venue for the Society, the new venue being the Town Hall Theatrette. The change is noted by the editor of the *News Journal*, October 1964, as being 'a popular choice, because we have already passed the total membership for 1963/64'.⁸²¹ Even so, the name and location of the previous venue are not mentioned in the newsletter.

The Society's News Journals

At this time, the Society's news journals were published monthly, on a calendar year basis. The journals were posted to members prior to the relevant screening, whether it was a monthly⁸²² or special screening.⁸²³ The journals were registered 'at the G. P. O. Melbourne, for transmission by post as a periodical'.⁸²⁴ The price of each news journal was 'Threepence'.⁸²⁵ The journals usually consisted of four pages including the cover. On the cover, the name of the Society, Camberwell Film Society, is stated clearly as is the title of the publication, *News Journal*, and the Society's membership of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies is acknowledged. Furthermore, on the cover is a stylised logo using the letters 'c f s' to represent the Camberwell Film Society: the 'c' and the 's' are designed as a set of sprockets with the 'f', fashioned as a strip of film, seemingly threaded through these stylised sprockets.

⁸²⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, December, 3 (3), p. 2.

⁸²¹ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, October Special Screening, 2 (10), p. 2. Given the discrepancy between the volume/number of this news journal when compared with the volume/number of the December *News Journal*, 1964, 3 (3), the researcher assumes that volume 3 commenced in October 1964 for the regular monthly screening of the Society.

⁸²² Camberwell Film Society. (1964), *News Journal*, July, 2 (7).

⁸²³ Camberwell Film Society. (1964), *News Journal*, October Special Screening, 2 (10).

⁸²⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1964), *News Journal*, December, 3 (3), front cover.

⁸²⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1964), *News Journal*, July, 2 (7), p. 2.

Generally speaking, the second⁸²⁶ page of a Society news journal was for editorial purposes. Sometimes it was used for reports about significant events such as annual general meetings or reminders about coming activities, for instance, Melbourne film festivals; at other times there were critical film analyses and, occasionally, short essays on subjects such as the purpose of film societies and the value of filmic discussion appeared. As previously noted, the earliest Society news journals available for this research are from 1964 of which there are only three. These are the journals for monthly screenings in July and December, and a journal for the October Special Screening. Reference to each of these journals indicates the variety of topics addressed in the editorial, page 2: in the journal for the July screening, the editorial page contained a report on the Annual General Meeting of the Society held on Tuesday, 23 June, 1964, which included the names of the Committee members for 1964-1965; a new member, Miss J. Abbott, was welcomed to the Committee as were continuing, and new, Society members; all members were reminded that subscriptions for the current financial year were due.⁸²⁷ The editorial page of the news journal for the October Special Screening 1964 presented a different set of topics and issues.⁸²⁸ These included: reviews of the main feature films for September and October, highlighting reasons for the selection of the films, and their value regarding knowledge enhancement as well as enjoyment.⁸²⁹ In addition, members are reminded that there are still membership vacancies however, it is implied that members exercise caution in proposing new members because ‘we [the Committee] will be pleased to communicate with only friends you feel could be interested’.⁸³⁰ Also, the Society’s indebtedness to the German Consulate and State Film Centre, suppliers of films for the October Special Screening, is expressed, while the Society’s gratitude to, and dependency on, suppliers of film, generally, is articulated clearly: ‘We would mention again that it is the co-operation of the film libraries, both cultural and commercial which makes it possible for the Society to operate’.⁸³¹ The focus of the editorial page in the edition of the news journal for the screening on Tuesday, 08 December, 1964, is on reminding members about the arrangements for the last screening for 1964, and the first screening for 1965 which will be on Tuesday, 23 February; thanking members for

⁸²⁶ Reference to the journals, will indicate that the cover page acted as page 1. This practice continued until the April 1975 edition of the Society’s *News Journal*, from which time onwards the pages were not numbered.

⁸²⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, op. cit., p. 2.

⁸²⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, October Special Screening, op. cit., *passim*.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

their support throughout 1964; and giving early advice to those members interested in attending the 1965 Melbourne Film Festival about changes in the registration procedures.⁸³²

Three Committee Members and Their Backgrounds

The operational year was consistent with the financial year with the Annual General Meeting for the year 1963-1964 being held in June 1964. The Society's Committee of six members, for the year 1964-1965, was elected at the Annual General Meeting. The first meeting of the Committee for the year 1964-1965 was held sometime between the Annual General Meeting, in June, and the Society's screening on Tuesday 28 July, 1964. The office-bearers were elected at this meeting: the name of each office bearer, with the title of the office held, is presented in the Society's *News Journal* for the screening on 28 July. The Committee members and their positions were:

Mr. E. Raison, President

Mr. H. Glennon, Vice-President

Mr. S. Trigellis-Smith, Secretary

Mr. R. W. Lyon, Treasurer

Mr. H. G. Jacka, Committee

Miss J. Abbott, Committee

With the exception of Ernie Raison, President, and Sydney Trigellis-Smith, Society Secretary, very little is known about the members of the Committee.⁸³³ In an early interview for the research, it was thought that Ernie Raison, President, was a school-teacher with an interest in history and that politically, he was left-leaning: 'Ernie was certainly left-leaning but not a communist, and his wife, Pat, also'.⁸³⁴ In addition, he was a strong supporter of the Melbourne Film Festival being on the organising committee.⁸³⁵ He and his wife were childless;⁸³⁶ they retired to Queenscliff where Raison was an active member of the Queenscliff Historical Society until his death in 2009.⁸³⁷ Later material, offered to the

⁸³² Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, December, op. cit.

⁸³³ Refer to Chapter 3.

⁸³⁴ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

⁸³⁶ Ibid.

⁸³⁷ Refer to Chapter 3.

researcher by a member of the Queenscliffe⁸³⁸ Historical Museum,⁸³⁹ formerly the Queenscliff Historical Society, paints a more comprehensive picture of Raison: he was born in 1926 his parents being Tom and Clara Raison who lived ‘near St James Cathedral in West Melbourne’ ... where ‘his father may have been a verger’.⁸⁴⁰ Raison attended the Drummond Street, State School, Carlton. On leaving school he became an apprentice electrician with the Post Master General’s Department (PMG) where he spent his working life. Raison was a member of the team which installed the first Telecom computer system. ‘He claimed to be a union sympathiser and ... to have joined the Communist Party’.⁸⁴¹ ‘In about 1951’ Raison met his wife, Pat, through the New Theatre group, a left-wing organisation. They lived in Glen Waverley, moving to Pt Lonsdale on Raison’s retirement, where he became actively involved in various community organisations. He was ‘an indefatigable researcher’ with a particular interest in the history of Queenscliff co-authoring two booklets ‘relating to a) lighthouse and b) fishing’.⁸⁴² At the time of his death in 2009, Raison was writing a history of Queenscliff which the Queenscliffe Museum has published under the title of, *Queenscliffe the founding years*’.⁸⁴³

In the 1964-1965 period, Henry Glennon had a dual role—he was both vice-president and projectionist. Also, at this time, the Society used Glennon’s projector.⁸⁴⁴ It is understood that Glennon ‘lived in a very nice part of Camberwell ... wasn’t married ... may have lived with his sister’⁸⁴⁵ and loved using his projector. For example, Glennon was happy to screen movies at children’s birthday parties, ‘when the children had a party, Henry Glennon would often come along and show a film. He loved showing films, it was a great pleasure for him’.⁸⁴⁶

⁸³⁸ ‘The two spellings of Queenscliff are historically based: Queenscliff refers to the town. Queenscliffe refers to the Borough which includes Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale.’ Retrieved from Queenscliffe Maritime Museum <http://www.maritimequeenscliffe.org.au/About%20Us.htm>

⁸³⁹ Grant, J. (2013). *Queenscliffe Historical Museum*, e-mail to Dorothy Jenkins from Jocelyn Grant former President, Queenscliffe Historical Museum, dated 5 June, 2013. Anecdotal evidence given to the researcher suggested that, prior to his death, Ernie Raison, had been an active member of the Queenscliffe Historical Museum. The researcher contacted the Museum regarding these comments. The former Museum President, Jocelyn Grant, sent an e-mail to the researcher containing the additional information about Ernie Raison. The researcher holds copies of the e-mails exchanged between herself and the Society.

⁸⁴⁰ Grant, J. (2013). *Queenscliffe Historical Museum*, e-mail to Dorothy Jenkins.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁴ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancey Trigellis-Smith*.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid.

Unlike Raison, Sydney Trigellis-Smith was not left-leaning ‘but his mother was’.⁸⁴⁷ Trigellis-Smith’s mother, Beryl Randall Trigellis-Smith, (1892-1985), was a woman of independent thought and action. She was a trained teacher, nurse, and psychologist, gained a certificate in institutional management and, in 1939, was appointed as the first stipendiary probation officer of the Children’s Court in Melbourne.⁸⁴⁸ ‘she was a social worker before the idea of social workers came about’.⁸⁴⁹ Randall Trigellis-Smith’s aunt, ‘Kate Sampson was the mother of (Sir) Robert Menzies’;⁸⁵⁰ her father was ‘the conservative member of the House of Representatives for Wimmera, 1906-1919.’⁸⁵¹

Sydney Trigellis-Smith, an only child with an absentee father, lived with his mother at his maternal grandparents’ home in Camberwell. He grew-up in an atmosphere of social awareness and action for social improvement, as exhibited by his mother, coupled with a familial political conservatism as evident in his maternal grandfather’s parliamentary career and his mother’s relationship to Robert Menzies. Trigellis-Smith attended Scotch College for most of his schooling, was an avid reader, collected books—in particular first editions and military histories eventually being the author of several military histories, excelled at sport, and his mother ‘encouraged him in anything he wanted to do’.⁸⁵² One of the outcomes of this upbringing was that he became,

very interested in films ...He was really a film buff; he knew every old film and knew every film that was on.⁸⁵³ He loved films like *Battleship Potekim*, *Nanook of the North* ... he also loved art-house films and that was what the Camberwell Film Society mostly showed.⁸⁵⁴

Unlike Henry Glennon, Trigellis-Smith was not interested in the technical aspects of film production or screening such as projectors. Following war service in the AIF in WW2,

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

Trigellis-Smith, Beryl Randall (nee Beryl Randall Sampson). Retrieved from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/trigellis-smith-beryl-randall-15575> This article was published in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 18, (MUP), 2012.

⁸⁴⁹ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

⁸⁵⁰ Trigellis-Smith, Beryl Randall, op. cit.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

⁸⁵² Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

Trigellis-Smith returned to Melbourne where ‘he joined his uncle's firm, Consolidated Merchandising Co, and worked there until his retirement’.⁸⁵⁵ In the 1960s, through an abiding, affectionate friendship between Trigellis-Smith’s wife, Nancye, and Amirah Inglis,⁸⁵⁶ the first wife of the late Ian Turner, a controversial historian and politician, and member of the Victorian Communist Party,⁸⁵⁷ the Trigellis-Smiths became regular supporters of the Melbourne Film Festivals, ‘We went to all of those festivals, everything, in the 1960s ... Day after day my mother-in-law used to come and look after the children—they were all young’.⁸⁵⁸ It was at these festivals that Sydney Trigellis-Smith met Ernie Raison, ‘Syd met Ernie through that [MFF] because he was interested in films’.⁸⁵⁹ Trigellis-Smith became involved with the Camberwell Film Society through Raison who asked him to join and take-over the role of secretary. At that time the Society needed a competent secretary and Trigellis-Smith was ‘very good at doing those ordinary sorts of things’.⁸⁶⁰ Based on the preceding material, it is assumed that while working in his uncle’s firm, Trigellis-Smith developed the skills identified by Raison as indicative of a competent secretary. The friendship between Nancye Trigellis-Smith and Amirah Inglis acted as a catalyst for the Trigellis-Smiths’ support for the MFF where Sydney Trigellis-Smith met Ernie Raison and became secretary of the Camberwell Film Society. In addition, it appears that Beryl Randall Trigellis-Smith, by minding her grandchildren while their parents attended the Melbourne film festivals, continued to provide encouragement for her son in doing ‘anything he wanted to do’.⁸⁶¹

This overview of three members of the Society in 1964 reflects the argument presented earlier in this section that the means or channels by which people join film societies are diverse, they are sharply differentiated but these differences are subsumed under the objective of reaching a defined aim. Raison was a skilled electrician and an active

⁸⁵⁵ Sydney John Trigellis-Smith. Obituary.

Retrieved from <http://www.scotch.vic.edu.au/gscot/GSSep99/p34obit.htm>

⁸⁵⁶ Inglis, A. (1995). *The Hammer & Sickle and the Washing Up: Memories of an Australian Woman Communist*. Melbourne, Australia: Hyland House, pp. 110-111.

Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

⁸⁵⁷ Turner, Ian Alexander Hamilton (1922-1978). Retrieved from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/turner-ian-alexander-hamilton-11895> This article was published in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 16, (MUP), 2002.

Inglis (1995), op. cit., p.116.

⁸⁵⁸ Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

participant in community life whose interest in the Melbourne Film Festival reflected his passion for non-commercial film; Glennon owned a projector, loved screening movies, was willing to share his projectionist skills and equipment with others perhaps revealing an element of showmanship; Trigellis-Smith, from a privileged background educationally and socially but growing-up in an atmosphere of contrasting political philosophies, developed a love of films which was eclectic with a particular interest in art-house films.⁸⁶² In addition, Trigellis-Smith's pathway to membership of the Camberwell Film Society was circuitous and complex: it wound its way through his wife, Nancye's, friendship with Amirah Inglis and her then husband Ian Turner. Motivated by the Turners' passion for the MFF and its disparate range of films, the Trigellis-Smiths also became enthusiastic supporters of the festivals. It was at one of these festivals that Trigellis-Smith met Ernie Raison who invited him to join the Society, and take over the position of Secretary. However, the differences between these three protagonists, regardless of factors such as their motivation, experience, education, political affiliations or family background, were subsumed under a passion for film as expressed in their membership of the Camberwell Film Society. Consequently, Raison, Glennon and Trigellis-Smith provide an example of people who, as previously posited, through the concept of rational will, metaphorically speaking, 'joined hands' to achieve a 'definite end' in the form of a film society,⁸⁶³ in this case the Camberwell Film Society.

The Films

The films screened in the months of July, October and December 1964 are presented in Table 7.1. Reference to the table shows that four short films and three feature films were screened during this period. Ten different classifications have been identified for the categorisation of the films with some films appearing in more than one classification. As indicated in Table 7.1, five films are classified as documentaries, four as foreign movies, two as historical, with one film only in each of the other classifications which are: biography, performing arts, fine arts, classical drama, industry, political and comedy. Of the five documentaries, two are Australian productions—*Russell Drysdale* and *In the Wake of the Bounty*, another two—*Ballet in Chile* and *Des Hommes Dans Le Ciel*, are German

⁸⁶² Later in their lives, both Trigellis-Smith and Raison became published authors in subjects of historical interest.

⁸⁶³ Refer to the discussion of *Gesellschaft* in Chapter One.

and French films respectively, and the fourth film in this classification, *The Titans*,⁸⁶⁴ is part of the Shell History of Motor Racing, produced by the Shell Film Unit in Great Britain.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶⁴ In the Society's program for Tuesday, 28 July, 1964, p. 3, the title of this film is given as, *The Titians*. The correct title is, *The Titans*.

⁸⁶⁵ A History of Motor Racing: The Titans, 1935-1939 Made in 1962. Director-Mason Bill Production Company-Shell Film Unit. Production Country-Great Britain. Retrieved from <http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/sift/title/15656?view=synopsis>

Table 7.1 Classification of Films Screened July, October and December 1964⁸⁶⁶

Date of Screening	Title of Film & Brief Synopsis	Documentary	Biography	Performing Arts	Fine Arts	Classical Drama	Historical	Foreign	Industry	Political	Comedy
July 28	The Titians [sic] B & W 19 mins Part 4 of a series of Shell films about the evolution of motor racing covering years 1935 to 1939; film features racing cars and European racing circuits of that period.	•					•	•	•		
July 28	Twelfth Night USSR 1956 Colour 90 mins Foreign film which offers an insight into Shakespeare from a Russian viewpoint. There are some simplifications of the story because of the Elizabethan speech. An elegant production which captures the play's enchantment.					•		•			
October 19 Special Screening	Ballet in Chile West German 1961 B & W/Colour 13 mins This film is potent with opportunities for discussion which include: a foreign ballet company performing a modern ballet, Orff's controversial cantata premiered in 1937, and the techniques used to create a dramatic filmic effect.	•		•				•			
October 19 Special Screening	Russell Drysdale Australia 1961 Colour 15 mins A biographical documentary which transports the viewer into the world of the other, in this case an Australian artist, Russell Drysdale. The viewer is able to reflect on Drysdale's career through an analysis of his paintings and his awareness of his environment, both urban and the Australian outback.	•	•		•						
October 19 Special Screening	In the Wake of the Bounty Australia 1933 B & W 50 mins This film presents an overview of the historic story of the Bounty mutineers, their settlement on Pitcairn Is, and a description of life on the island in 1933, the year in which the film was made. The film concludes with a 'short dramatic episode'.	•					•			•	
December 08	Des Hommes Dans Le Ciel France 1959 Colour 18 mins. Described as fascinating 'pictures of Parachutists [sic] in actual free fall'. The cameras are attached to parachutists' heads creating an unusual effect.	•						•			
December 08	Go West USA B & W 1940 A 'burlesque of the Western', this is a film without a story, hidden meanings or 'symbolic plot which requires explanation ... It is a world where disorder succeeds and order appears as a dismal failure'.							•			•

⁸⁶⁶ The references for, and citations in, the above table are the CFS *News Journals* for the months of July, October and December 1964. In all cases, the relevant page number is 3.

The characteristics of the films classified as a ‘documentary’ do not confine them to this category only. In the short film, *The Titans*, the subject is the evolution of motor racing during a particular period time, 1935 to 1939, thus classifying it as a film about ‘industry’ and as an ‘historical’ film. *In the Wake of the Bounty* is the only feature film in the ‘documentary’ classification. Like *The Titans*, this film also falls into two other classifications: ‘historical’ and ‘political’. Reference to Table 7.1 indicates that, *In the Wake of the Bounty*, covers two separate historical periods: 1789, the year of the mutiny and the arrival of the mutineers at Pitcairn Island, followed by a description of the island and its inhabitants in 1933, the year in which the film was made. The political aspects posited as contributing to this film’s classification as ‘political’ include not only the mutiny of the crew against authority, particularly as represented by the ship’s commander, William Bligh, but also the distribution and exercise of authority and power, on Pitcairn Island, in 1933.⁸⁶⁷

Of those films not in the ‘documentary’ classification, but demonstrating characteristics suitable for inclusion in other classifications, the short film, *Twelfth Night*, and the feature film, *Go West*, are interesting examples. Neither of these films is an Australian production and each film is from a different continent, country and culture: *Twelfth Night* was produced by the USSR with some adaptations reflecting the Russian culture and is classified as ‘foreign’ and ‘classical drama’; *Go West* is a comedic film made in the USA and marked by a distinctive brand of American burlesque or farce in which the Marx Bros specialised. Consequently, in this analysis of the films screened by the Society in 1964, *Go West* is classified as ‘foreign’ and ‘comedy’. In addition to these films providing members of the Society with opportunities for reflecting on factors such as the various types of films made, their countries of origin and themes, the films screened were rich and diverse in areas such as content, issues, technical facets and production techniques. Three of the short films screened, *Ballet in Chile*, *Russell Drysdale* and *Des Hommes Dans Le Ciel* highlight some of the richness and diversity.

⁸⁶⁷ William Bligh 1754—1817 Retrieved from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bligh-william-1797> This article was published in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 1, (MUP), 1966

The synopsis for *Ballet in Chile*,⁸⁶⁸ a West German production made in 1961 describes it as the,

Chilean Ballet Company shown in rehearsal and in performance of modern ballet based on Carl Orff's 'Carmina Burana'. This Company was formed by former participants of the modern company of Kurt Joos. The first half of the film is in Black and White, but when 'Carmina Burana' starts dazzling colour is introduced and heightens the dramatic effect greatly.⁸⁶⁹

Just a brief glance at this synopsis quickly highlights the varied topics with potential for stimulating discussion encapsulated in this film. The topics include: modern ballet, the dance company of Kurt Joos and Carl Orff's 'Carmina Burana'. A more in-depth discussion may lead to information being sought about the Chilean Ballet Company, for example, whether or not the Company was a government-funded organisation or a private sector entity. The Australian film, *Russell Drysdale*, produced in 1961, is a short film but it offers a different set of topics and issues for increasing Society members' awareness, and knowledge of the other: 'The career of the artist is illustrated mainly through the medium of his paintings, many of which are studied in some detail. From his early urban inspired work, we observe his growing interest in the Australian outback and its people'.⁸⁷⁰ The comparison between Drysdale's early and later paintings, and the contemplation of the lifestyles and people of the Australian outback, are two of the topics presented in this film. The third film, a 1959 French production, is titled *Des Hommes Dans Le Ciel* It is described as 'fascinating pictures of Parachutists [*sic*] in actual free fall. Photography is done by cameras attached to the heads of the parachutists and the effect is quite unusual'.⁸⁷¹ The subjects for discussion arising from this film, such as the photographic technique employed to capture the parachutists in free fall, are very different from those arising from either *Ballet in Chile* or *Russell Drysdale*.

⁸⁶⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, October Special Screening. 2 (10), p. 3.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷¹ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, December. 3 (3).

Whether or not the Society held formal discussions about the films after the screenings is not indicated in the journals for July, October and December 1964. Nevertheless, some observations on the editorial page of the news journal for October, suggest that members were encouraged to extend their thinking beyond the actual content of the films as this appeared on the screen. A report about the previous month's screening is included in the October *News Journal*. It states that,

Our September screening was an interesting departure from the usual programme [*sic*] in that we screened a Western, together with a critical analysis of the same film. This is the second time we have shown a film, together with some background detail and we feel that this adds to the knowledge and enjoyment of the programme.

In the same edition of the news journal, the preceding report is followed by some remarks about the main feature, *In the Wake of the Bounty*, for the October screening:

Our programme [*sic*] for this evening ... is interesting as an early example of Australian film production. Although this is not classed as a 'great' film we are of the opinion that it should be shown, more from the point of view of the period covered and the description of an island life, than an example of film making.

These reports give some credence to the researcher's contention that Camberwell Film Society members were persuaded to broaden their thinking beyond the content of the films. The inclusion of background material in the form of a critical analysis for the September screening was designed to extend members' perspectives about the film by adding to 'their knowledge and enjoyment of the programme'. In relation to the screening of *In the Wake of the Bounty*, the news journal editor acknowledges that this is not claimed to be a 'great' film but advises members that it is worthy of screening because of its historical value as 'an early example of Australian film production' as well as 'from the point of view of the period covered'. In addition, the editor asserts that the film has the added value of describing life on an island. The tone of these editorials reflects a Society which was either

characterised by, or aspired to be personified as having, a filmic culture which embraced the educational value of films, that is, a filmic educational culture.

Identity and Culture

By the end of 1964 the Camberwell Film Society had established itself as a not-for-profit organisation which met on the fourth Tuesday of each month, with the exception of January, for the purpose of screening documentary films, and films of historic and artistic value and interest. Two or three special screenings were held each year to which people interested in joining the Society were invited. The Society was a member of the Victorian Federation of Film Societies, an umbrella organisation formed to support community film societies. The Society printed, and distributed to its members, a monthly newsletter titled *News Journal*. The journals provided members with information about matters such as coming events, and reports on important meetings, for instance, the Society's annual general meeting. These journals were the major form of communication between the Society's committee and its members. The journals were catalogued with volume and issue numbers and were registered with the GPO, Melbourne 'for transmission by post as a periodical'. Communication by printed news journals, their cataloguing and postal registration, suggest an element of organisational professionalism within the Society in 1964.

The diversity of the films screened by the Society in July, October and December 1964, suggests a thoughtful and methodical selection of films. Reference to Table 7.1 demonstrates the diversity of classifications with many of the films appearing in more than one classification category. Countries of production, filming techniques, topics and issues explored in the films were varied ranging from free-falling parachutists through historical events to the fine and dramatic arts. Society members were provided with an abundance of opportunities to learn about factors such as other people, their behaviour, traditions, industries and artistic pursuits.

Although there is not any official record of formal discussions of the films in the journals for 1964, there is evidence that members were encouraged to extend their body of knowledge beyond the actual content of the film as it appeared on the screen. Consequently, it is asserted that by the end of the first ten years of the Society its identity was

characterised by a strong sense of its value as a community film society, as expressed in the organisational professionalism which underpinned its operations. In addition, given the diversity of the selected films and the encouragement given to members to enhance their filmic knowledge, it is averred that, ten years after its founding, the Camberwell Film Society demonstrated the attributes of a filmic educational culture.

The Second Decade 1965-1974

Introduction

Unlike the first ten years of the Society's existence, when there were only three of the Society's *News Journals* available for just one year, 1964, news journals were available for each calendar year of the second decade, that is, from 1965-1974. The maximum number of journals published *per annum* was thirteen: one journal for each of the months from February to December inclusively, with an additional journal for each of the two special screenings. Nevertheless, although thirteen journals would have been published for each year of the second decade, there were only two years—1969 and 1974—when a full complement of journals, that is, thirteen, was available to the researcher. For each of the other eight years, the number of journals available varied from five for 1965, to twelve for each of the years 1966, 1970 and 1971. Reference to Table 7.2 shows the variation in the number of journals available *per annum*, in the second decade, for this research project.

Table 7.2 Number of *News Journals* available *per annum* during the Second Decade 1965-1974*

	Years of Second Decade										
	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	<i>Total no of Journals</i>
<i>No of Journals per annum</i>	5	12	8	10	13	12	12	10	9	13	108

*Source: *Camberwell Film Society News Journals 1965 to 1974*

The journals for the early years of the second decade were characterised by a liveliness of expression and content characteristic of the strong sense of filmic passion evident in the

Society's first ten years. However, in the later years of the second decade the tone and content of the journals did not reflect the same depth of filmic passion as in the previous decade. In the following sections, a description of the Society's activities for this second decade is presented, as well as observations about the Society's changing culture.

Operations: Continuation of 'modus operandi'

Generally, the *modus operandi* of the Society established during its first ten years continued throughout the second decade. As in the previous decade, screenings were held on the fourth Tuesday of the month from February to November with films being screened earlier in the month in December. The pattern of two additional screenings being conducted, one in May, the other in September, remained unbroken. With the introduction of decimal currency into Australia, the cost per issue of each news journal changed from threepence to three cents. The journals usually followed the precedent of being four pages in length with an editorial on page two, and film synopses on page three while a report of the annual general meeting, held in June, remained a constant feature of the July issues of the journal.

The news journal cover was unchanged while an additional statement about the journal's periodical status, 'Registered for posting as a periodical Category "B"', was introduced at the top of the second page. In February 1968 the Society advised members that, 'All correspondence [is] to be addressed to the Secretary, P.O. Box 179, Camberwell 3124'. Prior to the acquisition of the post office box correspondence had been sent to the secretary's private address. Another change, which occurred later in the second decade, was that membership fees were increased from \$3.50 for a 'husband and wife'⁸⁷² to \$5.00, and from \$2.50⁸⁷³ to \$3.50 for a single membership.⁸⁷⁴

Change of Screening Venue

A significant change occurred during late 1974, the last year of the second decade. A Special General Meeting of the Society was held in conjunction with the November screening.⁸⁷⁵ At this Special Meeting members were asked to consider the Committee's proposal that, in 1975, the Society move to a new venue for its film screenings. The

⁸⁷² Camberwell Film Society. (1969). *News Journal*, June, p. 7.

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*, July, p. 2.

⁸⁷⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1974). *News Journal*, November, p.3.

Committee's reasons for the relocation were that 'Better viewing facilities and more comfortable accommodation are available at little extra cost'.⁸⁷⁶ Members responded favourably to this proposal and in the December *News Journal*, 1974, it is stated that,

The Committee has decided that it would be in the interests of the Society to change the venue of its screenings to the theatre of the State College of Victoria, 442 Auburn Road, Hawthorn ... Facilities at the State College include all projection equipment and as the charges are moderate the proposal is also financially attractive.⁸⁷⁷

In addition, the Committee was hoping that the new venue 'will encourage an increase of membership ... for the society'. Reference to Table 7.3, *Number of Registrations by Year for the Second Decade*, will show that membership in the second decade peaked at 204 in the operational year 1970-71. During 1972-73,⁸⁷⁸ membership numbers exhibited a slight downward trend to 195. In 1973-74, this downward trend continued with the number of members being 175. This was the year in which the decision was taken to move to a new venue.

Table 7.3

Number of Registrations by Financial Year for the Second Decade 1964-1975*

	Financial Year	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74
Number Of Registrations	210										
	200							204			
	190						190			195	
	180				179						
	170		176								175
	160										
	150					157					
	140	145									
					NA					NA	

*Source: *Camberwell Film Society News Journals 1965 to 1974*

⁸⁷⁶ Camberwell Film Society. (1974). *News Journal*, November, p. 3.

⁸⁷⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1974). *News Journal*, December, p. 1.

⁸⁷⁸ Reference to Table 7.3 will show that membership numbers for 1971-72 were unavailable.

Membership and Restricted Screening

Attendance at film society screenings was restricted to ‘members only’, that is, subscribers whose subscriptions were current. It seems that amongst Society members there may have been some confusion or ambivalence about this restriction. This assumption is based on the following statement which is printed in the April 1966 edition of the news journal,

Members are reminded that our screenings are open only to persons who are members of the Society, and that membership is not transferable. This is necessary to comply with contracts the Society has with film distributors. Breaking the condition could limit our film supply.⁸⁷⁹

Around this time, ‘Members only’, was included as part of the heading for the screening dates and venues in the journals. In addition, members were given constant reminders to show their membership cards at the door. Even with the preceding explanation for, and regular reminders about screenings being restricted to financial members, this issue became an ongoing irritant until November 1973, when the Committee again stressed that,

One of the conditions of membership with the Federation of Film Societies, is that society screenings are open to paid members only. There are many reasons for this, partly tied up with film hire regulations. To be a member one must also be at least 18 years of age.⁸⁸⁰

Nevertheless, in an attempt to ameliorate the situation the Committee ‘developed a scheme’ which it ‘hoped will bring some satisfaction all round’.⁸⁸¹ The scheme was that in each financial year,

each member will be allowed to bring a total of two guests to one screening during the year. They need not be both for the same screening. When a guest is brought, members must produce their membership ticket to a member of the committee for notation.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁹ Camberwell Film Society. (1966). *News Journal*, April, p. 2.

⁸⁸⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*, November, p. 2.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*

This report about membership and screenings, in the news journal of November 1973, is followed by a short article titled, *Purpose of Film Societies*.⁸⁸³ The intention of the article is to describe, and differentiate between, the purpose of commercial cinemas and film societies. The main points of the author's argument are that 'commercial cinema's sole purpose is to entertain' and in doing so, these cinemas steer 'clear of real controversy';⁸⁸⁴ whereas, film societies aim to 'further the appreciation of film and of new experiments in the medium', they welcome controversy, and films screened 'should entertain; but entertainment value cannot be the sole criteria for film society programming, nor can audience approval or disapproval'. The article concludes with the proposition that, it 'is part of the function of film societies to continue as the spearhead of new experiments and talents, even at the risk of committing errors of judgment and taste. Film societies must remain at least one step ahead of their audiences'.⁸⁸⁵ Two questions related to this proposition are then posed for Society members: *Do you agree?* and, *How does the Camberwell Film Society shape up to this?*

Unfortunately, a copy of the news journal for December 1973 is unavailable. It may have included a report about the responses to these questions. The responses may have given a sense of shape and meaning to members' perceptions of the purpose of their film society. In addition, these responses may have exposed differences between members' perceptions of the role of film societies, and those of the Committee. Nevertheless, the content of the article, *Purpose of Film Societies*, and the questions emanating from it, demonstrate the Committee's commitment to a concept of film societies which placed a high priority on film appreciation, found filmic newness and experimentation challenging, and welcomed an engagement with controversy as well as valuing filmic entertainment. Factors such as these contributed to the development of a filmic educational culture, in film societies, which moved beyond the boundaries of a filmic culture characterised by the concept of film as entertainment.

⁸⁸³ The contents of this article are supported by the following statement that film societies 'are devoted to the study and appreciation of the more serious and cultural aspects of the cinema'. Federation of Victorian Film Societies. (1952). *Film Festival Olinda*, Program, op. cit., p. 2.

⁸⁸⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*. November 1973, p.3.

⁸⁸⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*. November 1973, p. 3.

Melbourne Film Festivals

Throughout the first half of each year, in the second decade of the Society's existence, one of the features of the journals was information about the annual Melbourne Film Festivals. Preliminary notice for the Festival appears in the February 1969 edition of the journal with members being advised of its tentative commencement date, informed that further 'details will be announced as soon as available, and cautioned that 'applications for festival bookings will be restricted'.⁸⁸⁶ Additionally, members were told in an underlined statement, and in an uncompromising tone, that 'only one person can apply on a festival booking form and that person must be a financial member of a film Society for 1969'.⁸⁸⁷ The news journal of March 1973 advises that members are 'entitled to preferential booking again for this year's Festival', and gives details of the process for applying for an application form. On receiving their application forms members were urged to complete and return these promptly to the Festival Committee. Generally, the festivals were held in the month of June. During the second decade, the main venue for the Melbourne Film Festival was the Palais Theatre, St. Kilda, Melbourne.⁸⁸⁸

In the April 1972 edition of the journal there is a request from the Melbourne Festival Committee for film society members to undertake staff duties, 'on a voluntary basis', at the 1972 festival.⁸⁸⁹ The article is comprehensive covering almost two pages of the journal. It includes a staffing roster showing dates, times and number of volunteers required for each session. The required clothing for both women and men is detailed and it 'is particularly requested that jeans not be worn. Please co-operate'.⁸⁹⁰ Important or critical points in the article are sometimes underlined and are, most often, in the upper-case, for example, 'MEMBERS SHOULD ONLY VOLUNTEER FOR DUTY IF THEY ARE QUITE SURE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO BE THERE ON TIME OR IN CASE OF A GENIUNE EMERGENCY PROVIDE A RELIABLE SUBSTITUTE TO TAKE OVER THEIR WORK'.⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁶ Camberwell Film Society. (1969). *News Journal*, February, p. 2.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1968). *News Journal*, March, p. 2. Camberwell Film Society (1969). *News Journal*, February, p. 2. Camberwell Film Society. (1972). *News Journal*, March, p. 2. Camberwell Film Society. (1974). *News Journal*, March, p. 2.

⁸⁸⁹ Camberwell Film Society. (1972). *News Journal*, April pp. 2-3.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 3. Underlining is as in the news journal.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid.

As previously mentioned, the request for volunteers to assist at the Festival is a constant factor in the news journals for this second decade. These requests suggest that the level of funding available for the Festival was inadequate to cover all costs. However, there is a more significant factor for this research project arising from these annual requests for volunteers: the willingness and availability of film society members to assist in the day to day running of the Melbourne Film Festivals provides evidence of a growing filmic educational culture, particularly within the Melbourne metropolitan area, and more generally throughout the state of Victoria. Programs for the Melbourne Film Festivals during this second decade ‘placed a high priority on film appreciation, found filmic newness and experimentation challenging, and welcomed an engagement with controversy as well as valuing filmic entertainment’.⁸⁹² These ideals, as espoused in the article, *Purpose of Film Societies*, published in the November 1973 edition of the Society’s news journal,⁸⁹³ are some of the key characteristics of a filmic educational culture.

The Films

Number of Films and Length of Screening Times

During the second decade of the Society’s existence at least three hundred films were screened by the Society. The number of films screened *per annum* varied from forty-seven in 1969 to twenty-two in 1974.⁸⁹⁴ Similarly, the number of films shown at each screening differed, depending on the length of the selected films—feature and supporting: for example, in April 1966 the feature film, *Le Joli Mai*, one hundred and eighteen minutes in length, was unsupported; in November of the same year the feature film, *Death of a Cyclist*, eighty-five minutes in length was supported by three short films providing an additional screening time of twenty-eight minutes. As a result, although the number of films screened for each of these months differs—one in April and four in November, the total screening times were similar—one hundred and eighteen minutes in April, and one hundred and thirteen minutes in November.

Generally speaking, the parameters for the length of screening times, per screening session, appear to have fluctuated between one hundred and fifteen and one hundred thirty-five

⁸⁹² Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*, November, p.3.

⁸⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁴ 1969 and 1974 were the only years in which thirteen, the maximum number of CFS *News Journals per annum*, were available during the second decade.

minutes throughout the second decade. Table 7.4 presents a sample of the length of film screening times for selected months in the second decade. Reference to the samples of screening times in this table shows that the shortest time, during the second decade, was in October 1974 being eighty minutes for the screening of *M Comme Mathieu*. Conversely, in April 1968, the length of screening time was one hundred and fifty three minutes. The feature film screened during this month was a Czechoslovakian production titled, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, of eighty minutes in length. It was supported by a film made by the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit, *From the Tropics to the Snow*, and *This is Lloyds*, produced by Associated British Pathé for Lloyds. Together, the screening time for these supporting films was seventy three minutes which, with the eighty minutes for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, totals one hundred and fifty three minutes of screening time in April 1968.

Table 7.4

Sample of Length of Film Screening Times for Selected Months in the Second Decade 1965-74*

Calendar Years	June 1965	February 1966	March 1967	April 1968	May 1969	November 1970	June 1971	August 1972	September 1973	October 1974
Length Of Films Screened In Minutes				153						
		131			131		134			
	126								126	
			117			113		116		
										80

*Source: *Camberwell Film Society News Journals 1965 to 1974*

It is conjectured that some flexibility in the screening parameters was preferable given that the films chosen by the Society's Film Selection Committees may not always have been available from suppliers, when requested, requiring substitution. Replacement films may have been different in screening lengths from those initially selected. In addition, in October 1974, the screening of, *M Comme Mathieu*, was followed by discussion 'led by Mr. Ken Mogg',⁸⁹⁵ described as 'a film specialist and teacher of film at RMIT and Coburg Teachers' College'.⁸⁹⁶ In this instance, the Committee may have decided to allocate the time and space, usually taken by supporting films, to activate one of the roles of a film

⁸⁹⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1974). *News Journal*, October, p. 2.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

society, the discussion of screened films, under the leadership of a film specialist and teacher. The researcher also asserts that the leadership of discussion by Ken Mogg, a well-known film educator,⁸⁹⁷ provides phenomenological evidence of the Society's filmic educational culture.

Overview of Films Screened during the Second Decade

In this section an overview of the films screened, and issues arising during the second decade, is presented. The primary source of information for this presentation is the *News Journals* for the period from 1965 to 1974. The presented material, both descriptive and analytical, is organised under a series of sub-headings each indicative of a theme or an issue evident in the *News Journals*. Given the large number of films screened—in excess of three hundred—throughout the ten years, it is neither practical nor realistic to attempt to classify each film using the format as for the first ten years of the Society. However, to maintain some consistency of analysis, reference to the classifications in Table 7.1, regarding selected films, is made as appropriate. The following section commences with national themes identified in a number of the Society's programs, flowing onto a discussion about the diversity of the directors.

National Themes

Screenings devoted to films—both feature and supporting—with a national theme were a regular component of the Society's programs from 1965 to 1974. In February, at the first screening for 1965, each of the three films screened concentrated on a different aspect of life in the Netherlands. In addition to the films being about the Netherlands, the director of each film was Bert Haanstra, a well-known Dutch documentary film-maker.⁸⁹⁸ The title of the feature film was, *Fanfare*; it was Haanstra's first feature film. The film is humorous, skillfully uses its 'human material', and is set in the picturesque Dutch village of Giethorn. The supporting films were, *Delta Phase 1*, described as a 'description of the welding together of a series of Netherlands islands into a continuous delta', and *Glass*, in which superb photography contrasts the expertise and patience of the glass-blower with the 'mechanical uniformity of the machine'. The three films fit into the documentary and foreign classifications providing a common thread in the program of February 1965. By

⁸⁹⁷ Ken Mogg. Retrieved from http://www.labyrinth.net.au/~muffin/ken_c.html

⁸⁹⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.berthaanstra.nl/english.html>

way of contrast, diversity of classification and content of these films is apparent with *Fanfare* having a comedic flavour while both *Delta Phase 1* and *Glass* reside in the industry classification but are concerned with different industries—topographical redesign⁸⁹⁹ and construction, and glass-making, respectively. As well as a diversity of subject matter, the films are rich with discussion material such as the technical skills of, and images captured by, the cinematographers, and the employment history of Haanstra who, in 1956, was appointed producer and manager of the Shell Film Unit, in Venezuela. An additional item for discussion may have been whether or not humour is different across national cultures: *Fanfare*, a comedy, was highly successful in France, and continues to be popular, but it was hardly noticed abroad.

This pattern of a national, filmic theme is repeated throughout the Society's second decade, for example, in February 1966, a program of French films was screened.⁹⁰⁰ The feature film was Rene Clair's 1949 classic, *La Beaute du Diable* (Beauty and the Devil).⁹⁰¹ This film was accompanied by two supporting films, *Le Pilier De La Solitude*,⁹⁰² a documentary about Alpine climbing, and *Le Pont de Tancarville*, a documentary filmed over three years highlighting the building of a new Tancarville Bridge over the lower Seine. Other examples of national filmic themes include a Canadian theme in May 1970,⁹⁰³ a focus on Australia in both August 1972⁹⁰⁴ and October 1973,⁹⁰⁵ and in June 1974,⁹⁰⁶ two films featuring Japan: one of these films is traditional in style and content, the other, *Aido—Slave of Love*, directed by Susimi Hani, is a product of the 'New Wave that reinvented Japanese cinema in the late 1950s and 1960s'.⁹⁰⁷

⁸⁹⁹ This term has been 'coined' to cover the number of diverse industries employed in the construction of the continuous delta, the subject of the film, *Delta Phase 1*.

⁹⁰⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1966). *News Journal*. February, 4 (8), pp. 2-3.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*

⁹⁰³ Camberwell Film Society. (1970). *News Journal*. May Special Screening, p. 3.

⁹⁰⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1972). *News Journal*. August, p. 3.

⁹⁰⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*. October, p. 3.

⁹⁰⁶ Camberwell Film Society. (1974). *News Journal*. June, p. 6.

⁹⁰⁷ As if Our Eyes Were in Our Hands – The Films of Susumu Hani Retrieved from <http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2013janmar/hani.html>

Diversity of Directors

Throughout the second decade, the Society screened films directed by a wide diversity of film-makers. The availability of these films for screening reflected the eclectic and voluminous range of films available through agencies such as the Victorian State Film Centre, National Library Australia and Federation of Victorian Film Societies, embassies representing foreign countries for example, France, Germany and Czechoslovakia, international corporations for instance, Shell Australia and Volkswagen (Aust. Ltd.), and other suppliers as typified by Quality Films Ltd., and 16 mm (Aust.) Pty. Ltd.⁹⁰⁸ In addition, the filmic preferences and knowledge of the Society's Film Selection Sub-committee members would have been a critical factor in the selection of films for screening.

A sample of four films screened during the second decade has been selected to convey an impression of the diversity of directors. Of the four directors, the work of two of them displays a Western perspective while the productions of the other two directors are more Eastern, stylistically and ideologically. In the following overview of the directors and their films, those expressing a Western point of view precede those manifesting more Eastern attitudes and methods.

The first film in the sample was shown at the Society's screening in March 1966. The film, made in 1952, is titled, *Le Carosse d'Or (The Golden Coach)*. It was directed by Jean Renoir, the second son of the Impressionist painter, Pierre-Auguste Renoir; the cinematographer was Claude Renoir, Jean Renoir's nephew.⁹⁰⁹ The film notes, as presented in the news journal, describe this film as 'something of a puzzle' however, the notes also include insightful observations about the film for pre-screening reading by members.⁹¹⁰ The notes commence with a synopsis of the story-line, followed by a critique. The critique, presented below, provided opportunities for members to be analytically discerning as they viewed the film,

⁹⁰⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1966). *News Journal* July. 4 (13), p. 4.

⁹⁰⁹ Jean Renoir. (2013). 1894-1979. Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0719756/>

Jean Renoir. 2013. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/498192/Jean-Renoir>

⁹¹⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1966). *News Journal*. March. 4 (9), p.2.

Like most Renoir films, this film is something of a puzzle. The story is loose and the supporting cast disappointing. However, the decor is beautifully apt and gay, the photography of a rare subtlety and the music excellent. Renoir's real concern is with the background of the players—the child tumbler, the old woman clown and the acrobats. With these he is at ease while he has a satirical treatment of the Viceroy's Court. The acting triumph is, of course, that of Magnani ⁹¹¹—a great performance. Through all, we are always aware of Renoir's insight and humanity.⁹¹²

The critique has the potential to motivate Society members to move beyond a perception of film as entertainment to an understanding of film as a source of self-learning, an integral component of a filmic educational culture. The critique invites Society members to be aware of factors such as the filmic art expressed in the décor, cinematography and music. Also, they are alerted to the subtle importance of the background players, as well as Renoir's satire which is underpinned by his acute understanding of what it is to be human.

The second film selected for discussion in this section is, *Ordet (The Word)*, made in 1955 and directed by the Danish film-maker, Carl Dreyer. One reviewer describes Dreyer's films as being 'associated with emotional austerity and slow, stately pacing, ... [he] made films that glisten with blood, sweat and tears; the Scandinavian winter wind may forever howl outside the door, but inside it's a hothouse of conflicting desires and orthodoxies'.⁹¹³ *Ordet* was screened as part of the Society's program in May 1967. Based on the film notes in the Society's news journal for this screening, the preceding review of Dreyer's work seems particularly apt. *Ordet* embraces two plots: the first tells the story of 'a young farmer, Johannes, who believes he is Christ. Towards the end of the film ... a girl's faith enables him to perform a miracle'.⁹¹⁴ The second plot exposes the narrow-mindedness and animosity between two families when the son of a lively, down-to-earth farming family

⁹¹¹ Anna Magnani, 1908-1973. A celebrated Italian actor from the 1940s to the 1970s. Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0536167/bio> .

⁹¹² Camberwell Film Society. (1966). *News Journal*. March, 4 (9), p.2.

⁹¹³ Jessica Winter. 2007, *The Rough Guide to Film*. Quoted in TSPDT Carl Theodor Dreyer. Retrieved from <http://www.theyshootpictures.com/dreyercarl.htm>

⁹¹⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1967). *News Journal*. May, 5 (12), p. 3.

wishes to marry a daughter of the other family who belong to ‘a strict religious sect’.⁹¹⁵ The film notes close with the statement that ‘the film deals with the same subject of bigotry and hatred that figures in all the work of this director... *Ordet* is a challenging film that cannot fail to provoke thought and discussion’.⁹¹⁶

The film notes for this screening were comprehensive. In addition to the preceding material the notes advised members that Dreyer, 1889-1968, had ‘only made a total of four features during the sound period’.⁹¹⁷ The first of these feature films was, *The Passion of Joan of Arc* made in 1928 which ‘is well known through the film society movement’.⁹¹⁸ The other three films were: *Vampyr* in 1932, *Day of Wrath* in 1943 and *Ordet* in 1955. As well as providing guidelines for members to enhance their appreciation of the film’s structure, with its two sub-plots, the notes had the capacity to engender a greater awareness of the issues such as ‘bigotry and hatred’ evident in Dreyer’s work. The issues of bigotry and hatred permeate all human societies suggesting that *Ordet* is a film which is as relevant today as it was in May 1967, when screened by the Society.

In April 1969, the Society screened *Jalsagher (The Music Room)*, a film written, produced and directed by Satyajit Ray. Ray, 1921-1992, was an eminent Bengali film director, writer and composer. He held a degree in science and economics from Calcutta University.⁹¹⁹ Furthermore, Ray studied at the Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan, founded by Rabindranath Tagore, who had been ‘a close friend of his father and grandfather’.⁹²⁰ While at Santiniketan Ray developed an appreciation of Oriental art—Indian sculpture and miniature Japanese woodcuts and Chinese landscapes ... Till then, his exposure to art had been limited to only the western masters’. Consequently, Ray’s frame of reference embraced both Western and Eastern perspectives about art. Furthermore, he was acquainted with great filmmakers such as Jean Renior, John Huston and Akira Kurosawa who represented French, American and Japanese world views and filmic cultures, respectively. Moreover, Ray was a member of the juries at the Berlin International Film

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid.

⁹¹⁹ Satyajit Ray Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0006249/>

⁹²⁰ Satyajit Ray Retrieved from http://www.satyajitray.org/bio/at_shantiniketan.htm

Ray’s father, Sukumar Ray, was a prominent poet and writer who specialised in the history of Bengali literature. Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0006249/>

Festival in 1951 and Venice Film Festival in 1982.⁹²¹ Additionally, Ray was ‘a fan of the Tintin comics’, wrote ‘several science-fiction short stories’, was a ‘talented graphic artist’, and was ‘made a Fellow of the British Film Institute in recognition of his outstanding contribution to film culture’.⁹²²

Following the end of WW2, throngs of American servicemen arrived in Calcutta. As a result, Calcutta cinemas responded quickly to their entertainment needs by screening the most recent Hollywood films. This provided Ray and his friends ‘with a feast of films’.⁹²³ In 1947, this abundance of films led to Ray and some of his friends co-founding ‘Calcutta’s first film society. Battleship Potemkin was the first film they screened’.⁹²⁴ Satyajit Ray was quintessentially an erudite cosmopolitan: his obituary in *The New York Times* was headed ‘Satyajit Ray, 70, Cinematic Poet, Dies’.⁹²⁵ While most of his films are set within an Indian context, the themes are generally universal. *Jalsaghar*, the Ray film screened at the Society’s screening in April 1969, epitomises this style of production.

Considered by some reviewers to be one of Ray’s most significant films, *Jalsaghar* (*The Music Room*), is about ‘the decadence of the *Zamindars*’.⁹²⁶ The notes about the film in the Society’s news journal for April 1969 state that the, ‘Once wealthy, aristocratic landowner Muzur Roy sits on the roof patio of his crumbling palace in the early 1930s, surrounded by traces of his former grandeur’.⁹²⁷ This grandeur is exemplified by a once beautiful music room built, some years earlier, in opposition to the pleading of Roy’s wife for him to restrain the lavish spending of his ever-decreasing wealth.⁹²⁸ The notes also refer to the film production method which includes ‘a long flashback ... in which Muzur Roy recalls his own son’s sacred thread ceremony⁹²⁹, four years earlier’.⁹³⁰ This flashback is prompted

⁹²¹ Biography for Satyajit Ray Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0006249/bio>

⁹²² Biography for Satyajit Ray Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0006249/bio>

⁹²³ Satyajit Ray. http://www.satyajitray.org/bio/film_society.htm

⁹²⁴ Satyajit Ray. http://www.satyajitray.org/bio/film_society.htm

⁹²⁵ Satyajit Ray. Cinematic Poet, Dies Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/24/movies/satyajit-ray-70-cinematic-poet-dies.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> p. 1.

⁹²⁶ ‘A **zamindar** or **zemindar** on the Indian subcontinent was an **aristocrat**, typically **hereditary**, who held enormous tracts of land and held control over his **peasants**, from whom the zamindars reserved the right to collect tax (often for military purposes)’. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zamindar>

⁹²⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1969). *News Journal*. April, p. 2.

⁹²⁸ Plot Summary for *The Music Room* (1958) *Jalsaghar* (original title) Retrieved from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0051792/plotsummary?ref=tt_ov_pl

⁹²⁹ A puberty ceremony. Plot Summary for *The Music Room* (1958) *Jalsaghar* (original title) Retrieved from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0051792/plotsummary?ref=tt_ov_pl

⁹³⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1969). *News Journal*. April, p. 2.

by the sound of music wafting through the air from a ‘ceremony at a nearby home’,⁹³¹ of a *nouveau riche* family whose fortune is derived from debt collection activities.⁹³² The notes also direct Society members’ attention to the film’s background music which features the playing of the sitar by the ‘great player ... Vilayat Khan’.⁹³³

Generally, in most film societies before a film is screened, it is introduced by a member of the society or a visiting expert. It is conjectured that the introduction to *Jalsaghar* may have included biographical material about Satyajit Ray, ‘a great and extraordinary movie maker’,⁹³⁴ with ‘a passion for the cultural heritage of India’,⁹³⁵ a familiarity with both Eastern and Western perspectives, and the experience of establishing a film society in Calcutta in 1947. This type of biographical information had the potential to generate a stimulating discussion about the contribution of this Bengali filmmaker to the international film industry which, in the late 1960s, was still predominantly Western in its ideologies, themes and production techniques. The film notes in the *April News Journal*, 1969, raise a number of interesting discussion topics. One of these topics is the universal issue of the ‘clash of old and new values and the effects of rapid political and economic change on individuals’.⁹³⁶ An associated topic is the interlacing of personal identity with factors such as status, wealth and family heritage, and the potential for some individuals to lose their sense of personal identity if the interlaced factors unravel. Ray set these universal themes within the context of an Indian culture in which the historic role of the zamindars was being challenged, in part, by the wealth and aspirations of the *nouveau riche*. In *Jalsaghar*, Ray also embraces other aspects of the Indian context such as the sacred thread ceremony and sitar music to introduce viewers to facets of India’s traditional, cultural heritage. In introducing viewers to this traditional, cultural heritage, Ray is also challenging them to think about the relationship between their sense of personal identity and their cultural heritage.

⁹³¹ Camberwell Film Society. (1969). *News Journal*. April, p. 2.

⁹³² Plot Summary for *The Music Room* (1958) *Jalsaghar* (original title) Retrieved from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0051792/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl

⁹³³ Camberwell Film Society. (1969). *News Journal*, April, p. 3.

⁹³⁴ Satyajit Ray. Cinematic Poet, Dies Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/24/movies/satyajit-ray-70-cinematic-poet-dies.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> p. 1.

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Ibid.

In *Jalsagher*, a foreign film in the style of a classical drama, Ray provided opportunities for members of the Society to move in a different direction from the deeply-seated, fermenting elements of bigotry and hatred exposed in Dreyer's film, *Ordet*, whose work is 'devoted principally to human emotions'.⁹³⁷ Also, the conflict between traditional and contemporary cultures in *Jalsagher* offered contrasting themes and cinematographic techniques for discussion when compared with the puzzling complexities of Renoir's elegant, *Le Carrosse d'Or*. Similarly, rich discussion opportunities emanate from the disparities between Renoir's work, underpinned by his satire which is simultaneously softened by his sensitive insights into the background players, and Dreyer's dramatic and raw exposure of human emotions in *Ordet*.

The fourth director is the Japanese filmmaker, Yasujiro Ozu, 1903-1963. His acclaimed film, *Tokyo Story*, was screened by the Society in February 1973. At one hundred and thirty-nine minutes in length, *Tokyo Story*, is a long film.⁹³⁸ Consequently, it was not supported by shorter films. The synopsis of *Tokyo Story*, as presented in the February News Journal for 1973, is minimalist stating that,

An elderly couple decide to go to Tokyo to visit their married children. All of them are very distant as they have their own lives to live; only their widowed daughter-in-law welcomes them. They return to their country home and shortly after the mother dies.⁹³⁹

Not only is the synopsis minimalist, it is also bland seeming to provide little material to provoke a lively, challenging discussion. The subject of generational indifference and misunderstanding parallels many such situations world-wide. Nevertheless, members were advised that the film is 'certainly one of the most famous of Japanese films ever produced'.⁹⁴⁰ In addition, the editorial promotes *Tokyo Story* as a film 'that has been screened before, when it was met with considerable commendation, and the Film Selection Sub-Committee are [*sic*] proud to have been able to reprogram it for February'.⁹⁴¹ The

⁹³⁷ TSDPT—Carl Theodor Dreyer, op. cit.

⁹³⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*. February, p.3.

⁹³⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

previous screening of *Tokyo Story*, and its favourable reception, suggest that a pre-screening introduction was given at that time, followed by post-screening discussion. Similarly, given the minimalist synopsis and the acclaimed filmic status of *Tokyo Story*, it is assumed this pattern of pre- and post-screening activities was employed at the second screening in February 1973. Without these types of activities, it would have been difficult to optimise Society members' filmic appreciation of this complex film particularly regarding factors such as culture, theme, and production techniques.

Much of Ozu's work 'is characterized [*sic*] by camera angles. He frequently kept the camera fixed below waist level ...The angles are why the rooms in his films loom cavernously; the use of space is also subtly disconcerting to American audiences'.⁹⁴² It is probable that Ozu's camera work and the associated effect on perceptions of space would have been a source of stimulating discussion amongst Society members. Ozu also used patience as 'a tool to create anxiety slowly, and' to yield 'portraits of meticulously realized minimalism'.⁹⁴³ Examples such as these of Ozu's filmmaking techniques, had the potential to provoke stimulating discussions amongst Society members more accustomed to the ubiquitous tracking, panning, fades and dissolves of American cinematographic techniques.

Regarding facets of Japanese culture, Elvis Mitchell argues that Ozu 'points out the obsolescence of his country's formality while still observing it'.⁹⁴⁴ Mitchell describes *Tokyo Story* as another of Ozu's 'best-known implosive dramas ... severe and devastating'.⁹⁴⁵ Tony Rayns, writing in *Sight & Sound*, offers a more satirical view of Ozu's work, generally, than Mitchell. Also, Rayns presents a less dramatic perspective than Mitchell's, in relation to *Tokyo Story*. Rayns observes that the film 'stands up well as 'both social satire ... and social commentary ... The story hinges on a decay in the bonds that united families before the war; hence the nostalgic tone'.⁹⁴⁶ However, the language used by

⁹⁴² Mitchell, E. A Director's Calm as a Relentless Force. *New York Times* 4 Oct. 2003:B17. *Academic OneFile*. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/docview/92532192/fulltextPDF?accountid=12528>

⁹⁴³ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁶ Ozu Yasujiro, *Tofu Maker* by Ryans, Tony. *Sight & Sound*, Feb2012, 20 (2). Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/ehost/detail?sid=f87607ab-9f0a-46da-9adb-cbd74be86564%40sessionmgr10&vid=2&hid=10&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSdzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=vth&AN=47599932>

these critics does not capture the Zen-like⁹⁴⁷ stylistic essence of the film which is evoked by Nick Wrigley when he states that ‘Ozu’s examination of the slow fracturing of the Japanese family in *Tokyo Story* is filled with quiet resignation, a neverending [*sic*] acceptance and the realization that tradition is subject to change’.⁹⁴⁸

Jim Jarmusch postulates that a sense of style, as opposed to being fashionable, is central to Ozu’s work. Jarmusch asserts that films ‘made by Ozu (or the works of any masters, for that matter) may drift in and out of fashion, but their stylistic strengths and particularities are not movable’.⁹⁴⁹ A succinct statement about the distinctive characteristics and style of Ozu’s work as a filmmaker is provided in one of his obituaries.⁹⁵⁰ It states that, after WW2 Ozu, with the scriptwriter Kogo Noda, created

several masterpieces: Late Spring (1949); Early Summer (1951), and Tokyo Story (1953)—films that depicted the relationships within the Japanese family with unequalled depth and simplicity. His signature style—a low camera angle, an objective remove from the story, an absence of dissolves and camera movement combined with his aesthetic and humanist values, to earn Ozu a reputation as one of the greatest ever film-makers. Though at home he was considered ‘too Japanese’ for foreign audiences, he won numerous international awards during the late 1950s.⁹⁵¹

Tokyo Story is a complex and challenging film which overflows with topics and ideas for discussion which is a central role of film societies.

It is acknowledged that the references in the preceding section were published post-1973, the year in which the society screened *Tokyo Story*, a second time. Consequently, it is

⁹⁴⁷ Mitchell, op. cit.

⁹⁴⁸ Senses of Cinema—Yasujiro Ozu. Retrieved from <http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/ozu/> Refer to this website for a comprehensive and sensitive description of the ‘overwhelming sensibility running through all Ozu films’.

⁹⁴⁹ Yasujiro Ozu Retrieved from http://www.jimjarmusch.net/miscellanea/author_jim_jarmusch/appraisals/yasujiro_ozu.html

⁹⁵⁰ Yasujiro Ozu Retrieved from <http://www.madman.com.au/actions/directors.do?directorId=518&method=view>

⁹⁵¹ Ibid.

recognised that, apart from the minimalist film review in the Society's February 1973 *News Journal*, Society members may have had limited access only to other sources of information about the director, Yasujiro Ozu and his highly valued film, *Tokyo Rose*. This suggests the possibility of a restricted and dispiriting post-screening discussion. However, on the contrary the researcher asserts that, most probably, the discussion was thoughtful and lively. This assertion is based on the power of the film, as it was being screened in February 1973, to challenge and provoke Society members to engage in an active, post-screening discussion. The language used by members may not have reflected filmic terminology but, the factors described in the preceding synopsis of Ozu's work would have been recognised. These factors include: Ozu's unusual camera angles; the associated distortions of perceptions of space; the changing of traditional family values and relationships; whether or not Ozu presented these changes as being 'severe and devastating' or in a manner reflecting 'a quiet reservation, a neverending [*sic*] acceptance ... that tradition is subject to change'. The abundance of ideas, controversy, and themes evoked by the screening of *Tokyo Rose* had, and still have, potential for a rich and meaningful discussion.

This sample of the work of four different film directors, Renoir, Dreyer, Ray and Ozu, whose films were screened by the Society during its second decade, indicates that the Committee 'placed a high priority on film appreciation, found filmic newness and experimentation challenging, and welcomed an engagement with controversy as well as valuing filmic entertainment'.⁹⁵² As previously stated, these ideals are some of the key characteristics of a filmic educational culture.

⁹⁵² Camberwell Film Society. (1973). *News Journal*. February, p. 3.

Identity and Culture

The films screened during the Society's second decade were characterised by factors such as different directorial production techniques, disparate ideologies, diversity of cultural heritage, filmic plots and sub-plots, and themes. These factors indicate that the Society actively sought to broaden its members' angles of vision to encompass, not only directorial diversity but also, a multiplicity of individual and national frames of reference as presented on the screen. Clearly, the Film Selection Committee's choices of films demonstrate the Society's commitment to a filmic educational culture.

As stated in the Introduction to this chapter, Chapter Seven, the third and fourth decades of the Society, are investigated in the next chapter, Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight

Case Study: History of the Camberwell Film Society

1975 to 1994

In this chapter, Chapter Eight, the Society's history covering the third decade, 1975-1984, and the fourth decade, 1985-1994, is addressed. The chapter commences with an overview of the Society's operations at the beginning of the third decade investigating the sense of unease which pervaded the Society at that time. Then a highlight of the third decade, the introduction of a formalised method for reviewing and assessing the feature films screened by the Society, is described and discussed. This filmic review method was introduced towards the end of the third decade. This discussion leads into the fourth decade which begins with an overview of the Society's operations during this period. This overview indicates that the Society had reached a period of stasis. The focus then turns to an exploration of the reasons for the Society's longevity as a viable film society.

The Third Decade 1975 to 1984: Operational Overview

Overall the Society's operations during the third decade differed minimally from the previous two decades. Screenings continued to be held on the fourth Tuesday of each month but at the new venue—Theatrette, State College of Victoria, Hawthorn. The format for the news journals, graphics on the cover, and price remained unchanged. The news journals continued to be published monthly until June 1983 when members were advised that the journals would be published quarterly instead of monthly.⁹⁵³ The Committee requested that members keep the quarterly journals 'for programme reference and marking 4th Tuesdays of the month, except December 13th (2nd Tuesday)'.⁹⁵⁴ However, throughout the remainder of the decade the journals were published bi-monthly⁹⁵⁵ rather than quarterly.⁹⁵⁶ Consequently, until July 1983 the maximum number of journals published *per annum* was thirteen. Following the change to bi-monthly publications, the maximum

⁹⁵³ Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*. June, p.2.

⁹⁵⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*. June, p.2.

⁹⁵⁵ 'Bi-monthly' meaning every two months. Retrieved from <http://oxforddictionaries.com/words/does-bimonthly-mean-twice-a-month-or-every-two-months>

⁹⁵⁶ Camberwell Film Society. *Minutes of Committee Meetings and Annual General Meetings: May 1977 to April 1999*, n. p.

number of news journals published *per annum* decreased to six or seven depending on the number of special screenings conducted.

The journals continued to include reports about the Society's annual general meetings; there was less detail about the Melbourne Film festivals but there were regular requests to members to nominate for positions on the Committee,⁹⁵⁷ particularly as office-bearers,

COMMITTEE IN CRISIS!

'Owing to sickness, resignation and the effluxion of time ... we urgently need new members to share in the work of running our Society. If YOU are able to help, the time is NOW! Any Committee member will be delighted to welcome you and explain what this entails'.⁹⁵⁸

Delegates were sought as the Society's representatives on the FVFS (Federation of Victorian Film Societies). The benefits to the Society of such representation were that topics 'of general interest to Film Societies are discussed at the meetings and, time permitting, films are screened at the conclusion of some'.⁹⁵⁹ In addition, the news journals continued to incorporate reminders about the purpose and characteristics of film societies which differentiated them from commercial cinemas⁹⁶⁰ as well as drawing members' attention to the arrangements in the Society's Constitution for bringing guests to screenings.⁹⁶¹ Also, in circumstances of declining membership, members were asked to assist with publicity to attract new members.⁹⁶²

Membership and Finances

This section is composed of three sub-sections. The first sub-section addresses the issues associated with a declining membership. The second identifies a number of the Society's strategies for increasing membership while the third concentrates on ways of retaining current members.

⁹⁵⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*. June, p.1.

⁹⁵⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*, June, p.2.

⁹⁵⁹ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*, April, p.1.

⁹⁶⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*, October, p. 2. Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*, August, p. 2.

⁹⁶¹ Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*. April, p. 2.

⁹⁶² Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*, September/October, pp. 2-3. Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. July, p. 1. Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*. August, p. 2

Membership in Decline

Reference to Table 7.3 *Number of Registrations by Year for the Second Decade 1964-1975*, indicates that from a high point of 204 members in the Society's second decade, membership declined to 175 in the decade's final year. Reference to Table 8.1 *Number of Registrations by Year from 1977-78 to 1984-85*, shows that throughout the third decade membership declined even more dramatically than in the second decade—from eighty-eight in 1977-78, the first financial year in the third decade for which membership numbers are available, to twenty-seven in 1984-85. In attempting to reverse this decline, the Committee sought reasons for it. Proffered reasons included 'too many foreign films, films requested by members not shown ... Good films on Channel 0, 28, video and the area itself- Camberwell - being a district of elderly and retired people'.⁹⁶³ In response, the Committee instituted a range of strategies, to support the Society's ongoing viability. These strategies are described further on in this section about membership.

Table 8.1 Number of Registrations by Year from 1977-78 to 1984-85⁹⁶⁴

	Financial Years 1977-78 to 1984-85	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
No. of Members	80-90	88							
	70-80		74						
	60-70			66	67	61			
	50-60								
	40-50						44		
	30-40							32	
	20-30								27

*Sources: *Camberwell Film Society News Journals 1977-78 to 1984-85*.

Since its inception, the Society had been financially viable. Until 1983-84, financial reports presented at annual general meetings exhibited credit bank balances and were characterised by an excess of income over expenditure. However, while the financial statements for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85 exhibited comparatively small credit bank balances of \$198.43 and \$114.33 respectively, both of these financial statements were distinguished by an excess of expenditure over income, a reversal of the Society's usual financial pattern. The major financial difficulty for the Society was that, regardless of the number of

⁹⁶³ Minutes of Annual General Meeting 26 June 1982, *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁶⁴ *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*. Minutes of Committee Meetings and Annual General Meetings, 1977-1984. Figures for the first two years of the third decade, that is from 1975-76 & 1976-77, were not available

members, for example, whether 204 or twenty-seven, the Society's most significant costs, venue hire and film hire, were the same. Consequently, the Committee worked strenuously throughout the third decade to attract new members and to reduce costs of administration items such as postage.⁹⁶⁵ From a financial point of view, one of the advantages of gaining new members would be that their subscriptions would contribute to the strengthening of the Society's finances ensuring its ongoing viability.

Strategies to Increase Membership: External Focus

Strategies to support the achievement of the objective of higher membership levels included placing advertising pamphlets at public libraries in the City of Camberwell and surrounding neighbourhoods,⁹⁶⁶ contacting organisations such as early retirement groups,⁹⁶⁷ members dropping publicity leaflets into residential letter boxes,⁹⁶⁸ and submitting small articles for publication in community newspapers for instance, Camberwell Press, Progress Press, Waverley Gazette and Toorak Times.⁹⁶⁹ Throughout the third decade, current members were encouraged to bring along a friend in the hope that the friend may join the Society.⁹⁷⁰

We urge our members to please make every effort to introduce friends to boost our membership. We are just breaking even with our finances but an increase would enable us to be more flexible with film programming which is the prime aim of the Society. PLEASE DO YOUR BEST!⁹⁷¹

Furthermore, to increase the attractiveness, and financial accessibility of membership, the annual subscriptions, which had risen to \$25.00 per single, \$40.00 per double and \$44.00 per family *per annum* by 1982-83, Table 8.2, were reduced for the last two years of the third decade to \$22.00 per single and \$35.00 per double subscription.⁹⁷² The family subscription was abolished in the financial year 1983-84.

⁹⁶⁵ Minutes of Committee Meeting. (1983, September 13). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁶⁶ Minutes of Committee Meeting. (1981, June 18). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁶⁷ Minutes of Committee Meeting. (1981, July 13). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁶⁸ Minutes of Committee Meeting. (1982, June 16). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1984). *News Journal*. February, p. 2.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷² Table 8.2 *Membership Subscriptions for the Third Decade 1975-76 to 1984-85.*

Table 8.2 Membership Subscriptions for the Third Decade 1975-76 to 1984-85*

	Years of Third Decade	1975-6	1976-7	1977-8	1978-9	1979-80	1980-81	1981-2	1982-3	1983-4	1984-5
Annual Subscriptions	Single	NA	10.00	10.00	10.00	15.00	18.00	20.00	25.00	22.00	22.00
	Couple/Double	NA	16.00	16.00	16.00	25.00	30.00	34.00	40.00	35.00	35.00 ⁹⁷³
	Family	NA	20.00 ⁹⁷⁴	20.00 ⁹⁷⁵	20.00 ⁹⁷⁶	30.00 ⁹⁷⁷	35.00 ⁹⁷⁸	40.00 ⁹⁷⁹	44.00 ⁹⁸⁰	abolished ⁹⁸¹	

*Sources: *Camberwell Film Society News Journals 1975-76 to 1984-85.*

Minutes of Committee and Annual General Meetings from 1977 to 1984, Camberwell Film Society Minute Book, n.p.

Nevertheless, as indicated in Table 8.2 *Number of Registrations by Year from 1977-78 to 1984-85*, the Society's membership decreased rapidly from eighty-eight members in the third year⁹⁸² of the decade, to twenty-seven in the final year. Neither the marketing nor the financial strategies were able to arrest the downward trend in the Society's membership in the third decade.

Strategies to Retain Membership: Internal Focus

Concurrently with developing and implementing strategies to arrest the membership decline, the Society introduced ideas and activities designed to stimulate and maintain the interest and enthusiasm levels of its members in the third decade. Gradually, throughout the second decade there was a change in the tone and content of the journals: as previously observed, the content had become minimalist and the tone bland. With the exception of the February 1975 *News Journal*, this minimalism and blandness characterised the journals for

⁹⁷³ In the absence of any contradictory information, it is assumed that the subscriptions 1984-85 were the same as for the previous year 1983-84.

⁹⁷⁴ Minutes of Committee Meeting. (1977, May). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁷⁵ Minutes of AGM. (1977, June). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁷⁶ In the absence of any contradictory information, it is assumed that the subscriptions 1978-79 were the same as for the previous year 1977-78.

⁹⁷⁷ Minutes of Committee. (1979, May). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁷⁸ Minutes of Committee. (1980, April). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁷⁹ Minutes of AGM. (1981, June). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁸⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*, June, p. 2. Minutes of AGM June. (1982). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n. p.

⁹⁸¹ Minutes of AGM. (1983, June). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁸² As previously stated 'Figures for the first two years of the third decade, that is from 1975-76 & 1976-77, were not available'. Minutes of Committee Meetings and Annual General Meetings. (1977-1984). *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page

the first six months of 1975. Nevertheless, following a change in the composition of the Committee at the Society's Annual General Meeting in June 1975, the journals once again exhibited an inviting tone and intellectually enlivening content.

The July 1975 *News Journal* provides some examples of these changes: members were notified about the National Film Theatre of Australia's new address. Also, this notification was accompanied by advice to members regarding the National Film Theatre's activities: it was proposed that Society members 'Watch the newspapers for special announcements. Plans include all-night screenings for those who suffer insomnia!'⁹⁸³ These examples had the potential to extend Society members' filmic awareness externally to encompass the broader world of filmic activity in the wider community. Other inclusions with a similar intent were information about film festivals, for example, Hall's Gap Annual Film Festival in November 1982,⁹⁸⁴ and notification about special screenings at commercial cinemas.⁹⁸⁵

Another feature of this inward focus is evident in the Committee's decision to act promptly regarding the implementation of members' ideas for increasing, as well as maintaining, membership levels. In July 1975 members were informed that 'immediate action is being taken on suggestions raised at the last Annual General Meeting [held in June 1975].'⁹⁸⁶ These actions included: increased efforts to 'publicise the Society'; 'stick-on name tags at screenings hopefully to initiate 'more social contact and a club-like atmosphere', and plans 'to stimulate film appreciation' by placing less emphasis on formal discussion screenings guided by invited guest speakers, to discussion screenings led by a member. This should present a perfect opportunity for unrestrained comments'. Members were informed that discussion screenings were 'very much part of film society activity, they are also something rarely found outside the film society. A break with the formalised setting of a cinema, they can provide a more meaningful encounter with a film'.⁹⁸⁷ A detailed example of a discussion screening is examined later in this overview of the Society's third age under the heading, *Discussion Screenings and Assessment*. Together with these strategies the Society introduced film nights, at local cinemas, for members. A 'film society style' film

⁹⁸³ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. July, p. 2.

⁹⁸⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. June, p.2.

⁹⁸⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. February, p. 2.

⁹⁸⁶ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. July, p. 3.

⁹⁸⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. August, p. 1.

was chosen from ‘the increasing number now available commercially and the group booking would yield a substantial discount’.⁹⁸⁸ Titled a ‘Social Night’, these types of film nights continued intermittently throughout the third decade.⁹⁸⁹

In addition to the preceding strategies, Ian Davidson, from the Federation of Victorian Films Societies attended the Society’s Committee meeting held on 7 July, 1982, to discuss ways of cutting costs and updating screening programs.⁹⁹⁰ Cost-cutting methods proposed by Davidson included obtaining films from ‘embassies, State Film Centre ... and the National Film Library’.⁹⁹¹ He also recommended that, to update programs, the Committee consider including more short films.⁹⁹²

Sometime between late 1975 and 1978, in conjunction with the discussion screenings, the Society formalised a method for reviewing and assessing the films featured at monthly screenings. It is difficult to be precise about when this review method was developed given the unavailability of news journals throughout the period, as demonstrated in Table 8.3 *Number of News Journals available per annum during the Third Decade 1975-1984*, plus the loss of all minutes for Committee and Annual General Meetings prior to 1977. Reference to the news journals indicates that these member-based reviews and assessments were either discontinued, or not reported in the journals, from mid-1983. The last review and assessment reports available to the researcher appear in the June 1983 *News Journal*. From this time, June 1983, until the end of the third decade, only general critiques of films following their screening were published in the news journals.

Table 8.3 Number of News Journals available *per annum* during the Third Decade 1975-1984*
Years of Third Decade

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	Total no of journals
Journals <i>per annum</i>	7	nil	nil	1	nil	nil	10	10	4**	3	35

*The thirty-five news journals for the third decade available to the researcher.

**Journals published bi-monthly from July 1983

⁹⁸⁸ Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 07 July 1982. *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁸⁸ Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 16 May 1977. *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁸⁹ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. June, p.1.

⁹⁹⁰ Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 07 July 1982. *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁹¹ Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 07 July 1982. *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

⁹⁹² Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 11 October 1982. *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, no page.

The pro-forma for reviewing and assessing the films was designed to include a table for scoring with four grades from A, the highest grade to D, the lowest. On the pro-forma there was provision for members' comments as well as their film requests. Each member completed the pro-forma after viewing a feature film. The scores were collated and the aggregated figures, as well as comments and film requests, were published in the following month's newsletter. The value of this method of review to the Committee is described in the June 1982 *News Journal*: 'other values of the survey slips are the % evaluation of the three aspects of each film, ... [which] gives us a numerical value for easy comparisons, also valuable comments are obtained and feed [sic] back to the members in our Journal'.⁹⁹³ Some examples of this mode of review and assessment are presented later in the overview of the Society's third age under the heading, *The Films and Discussion*.

A Sense of Unease

Before moving on to a discussion about the films screened during the Society's third decade, there are some factual elements, as well as perceptions about the Society, which require assembling for comment and reflection. This period of interest embraces the latter part of the Society's second decade and the early years of the third decade. The researcher has observed that throughout this period, with the exception of the news journal for February 1975, there was a change in the tone and content of the journals: these publications were devoid of the passion evident in previous years. Reference to Table 8.3 indicates that there were not any journals available to the researcher for four years: 1976, 1977, 1979 and 1980. For 1978, the only journal available to the researcher is for October. This edition is not printed on the traditional CFS news journal pro-forma but is photocopied onto two foolscap sized sheets of paper. The final paragraph of the October 1978 *News Journal* indicates that, at that time, the Society was experiencing problems with 'the production of the *News Journal*'. The heading for the relevant paragraph is 'HELP!' The substance of the paragraph is, 'The Secretary has yet to solve the problem of the production of the "*News Journal*". If you are able to help with typing and/or duplicating would you please contact him'. As previously stated, this period—the latter part of the second decade and throughout the third decade—was characterised by declining numbers in the Society's membership.

⁹⁹³ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. June, p. 3.

Separately, these issues may not appear to be important. However, collectively they suggest that throughout this period the Society was experiencing a period of change and instability. The following motion moved at the Society's Committee meeting held on Monday 16 May 1977 provides support for this assertion. At this meeting the President, Mr. Williams moved 'a vote of thanks to the retiring Secretary, (Mr. Graham), and Treasurer, (Mr. Lennie), for their efforts in raising the standard of the Society over the past two years'. This implies that the Society's standards required improvement in the years preceding 1975. The two operational years referred to in the motion, 1975-76 and 1976-77, coincide with the changes in tone and content evident in the journals from July to September 1975, as well as the eventual development of, and active participation of members in, an advertising strategy and discussion screenings.

The Films and Discussion Screenings

As stated previously, only thirty-five news journals were available to the researcher for the Society's third decade. Compared with the one hundred and eight journals available to the researcher for studying the Society's second decade, thirty-five is a small number. Nevertheless, the majority of these thirty-five news journals provide comprehensive synopses of the films screened during the third decade, as well as detailed summaries of members' reviews of the films, and their lists of requested films. Drawing on this rich and detailed material, the following section of the thesis commences with a brief reflection on the film screening times for selected months in the third decade. This leads into the development and implementation of a method for members to review and assess the films screened by the Society. The development and implementation of the review method involved three stages each being explored sequentially in the next section. The section closes with observations about the identity and culture of the Society in its third decade.

Film Screening Times

The main purpose of this section is to capture examples of film screening times, to identify any differences and similarities in the lengths of these times, to ascertain the reasons for these differences and similarities and, to present this material for consideration.

As indicated in Table 8.4 *Sample of the Length of Film Screening Times for Selected Months in the Third Decade*, the shortest screening time was for the film, *Love*, directed by

Károly Makk, a Hungarian film director and screen writer. *Love* was screened by the Society in March 1982.⁹⁹⁴ It was produced in 1971. The themes of *Love* include dying with dignity, and the weaving of fantasies to protect someone facing death.⁹⁹⁵ The longest screening time was one hundred and forty minutes in October 1978. The program for this month comprised ten short films of varying lengths from five to twenty-eight minutes. These films covered a variety of subjects including the Munich Olympic Games, geometric ballet, defensive driving and health care for people over thirty years of age: the majority of the shorts were mini-documentaries.⁹⁹⁶

Table 8.4 Sample of the Length of Film Screening Times for Selected Months in the Third Decade

	Selected Months	July 1975	1976	1977	October 1978	1979	1980	August 1981	March 1982	February 1983	June 1984
Times in Mins			NA	NA		NA	NA				
	140-149				140						
	130-139										
	120-129										
	115-120										118
	110-115	110									
	100-110							105			
	90-100									90	
80-90								88			

*Source: Society's News Journals for the above months and years in the third decade.

Only two minutes longer than Makk's film, *Love*, the feature film at the February screening in 1983 was, *When Josef Returns*. Made in 1975, this film is also a Hungarian production. It was directed by Zsolt Kezdi-Kovacs.⁹⁹⁷ Although only ninety minutes in length, *When Josef Returns*, was not supported by shorter films. Unlike the Society's programs for the previous two decades, the use of shorts to support feature films does not appear to have been a regular programming characteristic of the Society's third decade.⁹⁹⁸

The screening times for the other three films appearing in Table 8.4 were in the 100 to 120 minute range. In August 1981 the Society screened *Kramer vs Kramer*, 'a story of contemporary relationships, values and choices'⁹⁹⁹ particularly regarding marriage, divorce and child custody. The film is one hundred and five minutes in length. In July 1975 the

⁹⁹⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. March, p.2.

Retrieved from Károly Makk <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0067814/>

⁹⁹⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. March, p.2.

⁹⁹⁶ Camberwell Film Society. (1978). *News Journal*. October, p.1.

⁹⁹⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*. February, p.1.

⁹⁹⁸ This observation is made cautiously because of the comparatively small number of the Society's *News Journals* available to the researcher for studying the organisation's third decade.

⁹⁹⁹ Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*. August, p.1.

Society screened two episodes ‘from the adventurous life of Arsen Lupen [Arsnè Lupin] an incorrigible con-man’.¹⁰⁰⁰ The Arsnè Lupin films are based on a series of detective/crime fiction novels written by Maurice LeBlanc a French author. The total screening time for the two episodes was one hundred and ten minutes.¹⁰⁰¹ Two films, a feature and a short, were screened at the Society’s meeting in June 1984. The feature film, *Linus*, was ninety-eight minutes in length; the supporting feature, *Tennis Elbow*, required twenty minutes making a total screening time of one hundred and eighteen minutes in June 1984. *Linus* was produced in 1979 by Vilgot Sjoman, a Swedish film director. The full title of the film is, *Linus Eller Tegelhusets Hemlighet*¹⁰⁰² In the Society’s June 1984 *News Journal*, it is stated that *Linus* is the ‘best of his [Vilgot Sjoman] 13 films]. The film ‘focuses on Linus, a sixteen year old boy who witnesses a murder ... His life is not the same after this event’.

In the discussion about the length of screening times in the second decade, it was posited that the fluctuations in screening times were related to factors such as substitutions for preferred films due to their unavailability, different lengths of the films screened, whether or not shorts were screened in conjunction with the feature film, and varying times allowed for discussion.¹⁰⁰³ Given that there is not any evidence to suggest otherwise, it is concluded that the observations about screening times for the second decade also apply to screening times for the third decade.

In addition, the study of screening times has highlighted, once again, the Society’s recognition of the educative value of screening films driven by different national and personal directorial perspectives and styles. This is one of the themes explored by the researcher in analysing a sample of the films screened in the Society’s second decade. Of the six films studied in the preceding analysis of screening times in the Society’s third decade, two of these, *Linus* and *When Joseph Returns*, were produced by Hungarian filmmakers, Károly Múkk and Zsolt Kedzi-Kovacs, respectively. Set in Sweden, *Linus*, was directed by Vilgot Sjoman, a Swedish filmmaker. *Kramer vs Kramer*, a product of the American film and distribution company, Columbia Pictures, was directed by the American

¹⁰⁰⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. February, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰¹ Arsène Lupin series by Maurice LeBlanc – Goodreads Retrieved from <http://www.goodreads.com/series/41315-ars-ne-lupin>

¹⁰⁰² Retrieved from http://www.fandango.com/linusellertegelhusetshemlighet_v161129/plotsummary

¹⁰⁰³ Refer to Table 7.4 Sample of Length of Film Screening Times for Selected months in the Second Decade.

screenwriter and film director, Robert Benton. The longest screening time is for the program of ten shorts screened in October 1978. Of the ten shorts screened, five were Canadian productions, three were from the United Kingdom, one from Germany while the country of production of the final short is not specified. Regarding *Arsné Lupin*, there are numerous films produced in a number of different countries about the adventures of Maurice LeBlanc's 'gentleman thief'. In the Society's July 1975 *News Journal*, the titles of the two episodes screened at the meeting are not stated. However, it is stated that the two episodes 'were adapted for French T.V.'¹⁰⁰⁴ Furthermore, the status of these episodes as French productions is confirmed in the Society's August 1975 *News Journal*.¹⁰⁰⁵ Through selecting films produced in a variety of countries by a diversity of filmmakers, the Society's Committee introduced members to a broader range of world views, cultural traditions and hearing foreign languages as spoken in everyday use. In addition, members were being provided with opportunities to explore the ways in which each of the filmmakers conveyed their perspectives through their idiosyncratic use of factors such as cinematographic techniques and production styles.

The diversity of the program structures amongst the six screenings studied in this section is also interesting. As previously observed, the program for March 1965 presented two episodes of *Arsné Lupin* while ten shorts of varying lengths were screened in October 1978. Feature films only were screened in August 1981 (*Kramer vs Kramer*), March 1982 (*Love*) and February 1983 (*When Josef Returns*) whereas in June 1984 the program comprised a feature film, *Linus*, and a short, *Tennis Elbow*. There does not seem to be an obvious reason for the different program structures. Perhaps, the structure of each program was governed by the availability of films at that time. Nevertheless, the viewing of shorts, features and documentaries provided Society members with opportunities to investigate the different cinematic conventions, such as script-writing, editing, composition of each frame and use of space,¹⁰⁰⁶ required for the successful production of each of these different categories of film.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. July, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. August, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Refer to section headed, *Diversity of Directors*, in *The Second Decade*, Chapter Seven.

Discussion Screenings and Assessments

As reported earlier in this study of the third age of the Society, one of the strategies implemented by the Committee to enthuse and retain current members was ‘to stimulate film appreciation’ by placing less emphasis on formal discussion screenings guided by invited guest speakers, to discussion screenings led by a member. The Committee argued that this process ‘should present a perfect opportunity for unrestrained comments’.¹⁰⁰⁷ Members were reminded that, unlike commercial cinemas, the informality of the Society’s discussion screenings was potent with opportunities to explore both subtle and obvious messages, as well as the use of different filmic cinematographic techniques, in the films.

The first of these member led discussion screenings is reported in the Society’s August 1975 *News Journal*. The heading for the report is ‘Guest Critic’. The report is introduced with the statement that,

In this new section of the News Journal, it is planned to give the amateur critic a chance to express views on the previous screening. This should assist members who were unable to attend, and will no doubt raise a few eyebrows amongst “opposition” critics. All calculated to raise interest! Volunteer critics will be sought at each screening, and they will be requested to pen a few lines for the next issue of the Journal.¹⁰⁰⁸

The first guest critic was (Mr) Imre Torey. He began his critique by answering a member-posed question regarding why the Society screened ‘so many French films’. Torey explained that ‘there is a dual answer: they’re available at a lower rental and have tremendous audience appeal’.¹⁰⁰⁹ The latter was confirmed by the twin-features in July: the two adventures of Arsene Lupen [*sic*]. Torey then proceeded to give a comprehensive review of the two episodes of *Arsné Lupin*. He commented on the quality and authenticity of the indoor sets which he asserted were complemented by the ‘out-door shots’. Torey declared that the ‘natural colour’, ‘excellent print’ and ‘easily legible subtitles’ made the two episodes ‘certainly the best film[s] in recent months’. He also spoke favourably about

¹⁰⁰⁷ Refer to section in this chapter headed, *Strategies to Retain Membership: Internal Focus*.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. August, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

the technical production, and described the plots as being ‘well-selected’ and ‘executed with the finesse that is so characteristic of the French cinema’. Torey finished his critique by commending the performances of the actors, both those with minor parts and those with lead roles. In this critique, Torey accounted for the filmic production components of the twin-episodes of *Arsné Lupin*, for example: set design, cinematography, plot selection and execution, acting skills and quality of the print for screening. Torey’s critique provides an example of the filmic knowledge resident within the Society.

Torey may or may not have acquired some of this knowledge from sources external to the Society and enhanced it through his Society membership. Alternatively, Torey’s filmic experiences within the Society may have been the major source of this knowledge. Nevertheless, the source of Torey’s knowledge is not the significant factor in this argument. Rather the major point of relevance is that in acting as ‘guest critic’ and sharing his knowledge with Society members, Torey’s behaviour demonstrated an awareness of the educational value of film. Like Grierson and Coldicutt, he not only appreciated the artistic and entertainment value of film but also its potential for knowledge creation.

However, whether or not Torey’s comprehensive review stimulated discussion about the screening of *Arsné Lupin* is uncertain: the August 1975 *News Journal* does not mention any discussion. Nevertheless, it seems that there was some dissatisfaction with this strategy because, although discussion screenings continued, these were in a slightly different format as evident in the results of discussion at the Society’s screening in August 1975. At this screening the feature film was, *The Exterminating Angel*. Following the screening there was a discussion ‘in which comments and criticisms were raised by most members’. The outcome was that, ‘the “Guest Critic” section of this issue of the Journal will comprise a summary and joint conclusion of the Society, rather than that of an individual member of the audience’.¹⁰¹⁰ Consequently, the critique of *The Exterminating Angel*, was led by a member but the conclusions are those of the Society not of an individual member.

The outcomes of the Society’s discussion about *The Exterminating Angel*, screened in August 1975, and reported in the September 1975 *News Journal*, provide an example of a

¹⁰¹⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. September, p. 2.

stimulating discussion screening activity.¹⁰¹¹ An overview of this report is presented below as an example of members of the Society engaging in a meaningful encounter with a film. Also, this ‘eager’¹⁰¹² engagement of the Society’s members with Bunuel’s film, *The Exterminating Angel*, provides evidence of a filmic educational culture within the Society.

Eager Engagement in a Discussion Screening

The Society screened *The Exterminating Angel*¹⁰¹³ on Tuesday 19 August, 1975.¹⁰¹⁴ Described as ‘a mixture of surrealism and black comedy’,¹⁰¹⁵ the film was made in Mexico, in 1962, and directed by the Spanish director, Luis Bunuel. The central characters are a ‘group of socially prominent guests [who] arrive for a formal dinner party but find themselves unable to leave the drawing room after the meal. Some unexplainable [*sic*] force prevents their escape and as time passes the social order begins to break down. The guests give in to fear, superstitions and irrational acts as the disasters mount’.¹⁰¹⁶

The report of the discussion in the Society’s September 1975 *News Journal* describes it as being ‘ably led by a member, Mr R. Lyon, who had no trouble involving members as we were eager to express our differing or similar views’.¹⁰¹⁷ There was general agreement that the characters’ behaviour deteriorated ‘in the stress situation’ and that the acting was ‘generally good’. Also, there was agreement that the atmosphere of the film was achieved through different filming angles, light changes and background music. Other issues included the use of captions, the claustrophobic ambience of the film, the symbolism embedded in it even though it was a fantasy, and whether or not it would have been more effective if the film, which was photographed in black and white, had been made in colour. Members explored the meaning of the title, *The Exterminating Angel*, but were unable to reach a conclusion on this issue. It was thought that the title ‘may have referred to the young woman who let them [the film’s protagonists] out of the house at the end’. The

¹⁰¹¹ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. September, p. 2.

¹⁰¹² Ibid.

¹⁰¹³ The Exterminating Angel Retrieved from <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/93550%7C0/The-Exterminating-Angel.html>

¹⁰¹⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*. August, p. 1.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁶ The Exterminating Angel, op. cit.

¹⁰¹⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1975). *News Journal*, September, p. 2.

report of the discussion closes with the observation that the ‘general consensus of opinion was that the film was not enjoyed, but it was not a waste of time’.¹⁰¹⁸

As is evident in this report, the entertainment value of the film was not the only criterion by which Society members measured the worth of the film. They also took account of the acting, technical details such as lighting and camera angles, and screenplay.¹⁰¹⁹ As previously asserted, engagement with a film through communal discourse is a significant characteristic of film societies which differentiates them from commercial cinemas.

Formalised Reviews and Assessment

Four film reviews using the Society’s formalised method review and assessment are presented in this section. The earliest review available to the researcher was for *The Maltese Falcon* which was screened by the Society in September 1978. The discussion of this review is followed by the inclusion of three other reviews. Two of these three films were screened on the same night, in March 1981. The first is a cinematic biography about a woman who is determined to conduct a symphony orchestra when this was perceived to be the prerogative of men; the second is a documentary concerned with China which provokes a variety of responses from the Society’s members. The third film in this trilogy is an adaptation of Agatha Christie’s novel, *Evil under the Sun*, an enigmatic murder, screened at the Society’s September 1982 screening. The films differ from each other in style, subject and directorial approaches. Reference to the following sub-section indicates that through the formalised review process members’ were confident about expressing their critical judgments concerning the films, as opposed to seeing them just as a form of entertainment. These reviews provide evidence of the Society’s filmic educational culture. The films are investigated in more detail in the following sections.

Earliest Review Available: ‘The Maltese Falcon’

As previously reported,¹⁰²⁰ at some stage between late 1975 and 1978, the Society formalised a method for post-screening reviews and assessments. The method, as described earlier, incorporates a table for scoring with four grades from A, the highest grade to D, the

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁹ Screenplay defined as ‘the script for a film, including instructions for sets and camera work’. Retrieved from <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/screenplay>.

¹⁰²⁰ Refer to section in this chapter headed, *Strategies to Retain Membership: Internal Focus*.

lowest. The table was part of a pro-forma which also had provision for members' comments as well as their film requests. The earliest report on these reviews available to the researcher is in the Society's news journal for October 1978. The review is for the film, *The Maltese Falcon*, a 'Warner Bros film noir'¹⁰²¹ production, screened at the Society's meeting in September 1978. The response categories and aggregated scores by percentage are presented in Table 8.5.

September Screening 1978

Table 8.5 Summary of Members' Responses to the Film, *The Maltese Falcon**
Responses by Percentage

	• *	A	B	C	D
Response Categories	Screenplay	-	57	33	10
	o Acting u	22	39	39	
	Technical Details	15	57	28	-

*Source: Camberwell Film Society. 1978, News Journal, October 1978, p. 1.

Reference to the aggregated scores indicates that the highest level of response (57%) was for the categories of Screenplay and Technical Details at Level B, followed by Acting which received a 39% response at both Levels B and C. Screenplay did not receive any responses at Level A, while at this level Acting and Technical Details received comparatively small percentages of responses being 22% and 15% respectively. The smallest percentage was 10% for Screenplay at Level D. These responses are reflected in members' comments regarding *The Maltese Falcon*, which included, "Old hat" and "Outdated". Although the Committee agreed with these comments, they argued that, 'considering the 37 years since it was made, we think the Falcon has a rightful place in the aviary of the film industry'. *The Maltese Falcon* 'premiered in 1941'.¹⁰²² Also, on the response slips members identified a number of films they would like screened.

Given that *The Maltese Falcon* premiered in 1941, and members' responses to it, the Committee found it 'interesting to note ... that these same slips carry requests for films such as the following: 'WATERLOO BRIDGE' (1940); 'MRS. MINIVER (1942);

¹⁰²¹ The Maltese Falcon Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Maltese_Falcon_\(1941_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Maltese_Falcon_(1941_film)).
Definition of film noir: a movie about crime that uses dark shadows and lighting to show the complicated moral nature of the subject. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/film%20noir>

¹⁰²² The Exterminating Angel, op. cit.

‘CHARLIE CHAPLAIN AT THE CIRCUS (1937)’. This mismatch between members’ responses to *The Maltese Falcon* and their nominated film preferences, although ironic, demonstrates the value of members being actively engaged in the discussion of a film. As the Committee had anticipated when introducing the practice of member led discussions, these provided a ‘perfect opportunity for unrestrained comments’. The outcomes are also supported by the concept that viewing only is insufficient to achieve learning outcomes: viewing needs to be accompanied by study and discussion. This concept and practice of study and discussion were recognised in an article published eleven years earlier in the Society’s *News Journal* of April 1967,

The fundamental purpose of a commercial theater [*sic*] is to exhibit movies. A film Society goes beyond this purpose of mere exhibition inasmuch as its purpose for existence is to afford its members opportunities for study and discussion. Very rarely will the beginning student of cinema develop his critical judgment of movies by mere exposure.¹⁰²³

The implementation of a formalised method of review and assessment enabled Society members to give voice to, and share, their critical judgments of *The Maltese Falcon*. Even though the review method for *The Maltese Falcon* was more structured and formalised than for *The Exterminating Angel*, members eagerly engaged in the group discussion. The behaviour of the members in this review process exhibits one of the characteristics of a filmic education culture, that is, members valued the opportunity for studying and discussing the film.

Three More Reviews

Three more reviews are presented in this section as examples of members’ assessments of films from two genres not yet covered in this discussion of the Society’s third decade. Two of the films, ‘apart from being documentaries ... are also deep seated biography and travelogue’.¹⁰²⁴ These were shorter films screened on the same night, Tuesday 24 March, 1981: they were selected in response to members’ requests for documentaries. The titles of

¹⁰²³ Camberwell Film Society. (1967). *News Journal*. April, p. 1.

¹⁰²⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*. March, p. 1.

the films are: *Antonia: a Portrait of the Woman*, and *The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir*.¹⁰²⁵ The third film is, *Evil Under the Sun*, an ‘Agatha Christie mystery of 117 minutes in “Adriatic” colour during high summer in 1939’.¹⁰²⁶ It was screened on Tuesday 28 September 1982.¹⁰²⁷

Antonia: a Portrait of a Woman, is a cinematic biography of Antonia Brico. Brico was determined to conduct a symphony orchestra but struggled to achieve this ambition because she was a ‘woman and an artist in a field dominated by men’.¹⁰²⁸ The film encompasses Brico’s formation of the “The New York Women’s Symphony”, her friendships with illustrious musicians such as Jean Sibelius and Sir Adrian Boult, and ‘tells how she survived with spirit and intelligence’.¹⁰²⁹

The synopsis of, *The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir*, describes it as ‘a fresh ... invigorating ... and enthralling cinema experience directed by Shirley MacLaine and Claudia Weill’.¹⁰³⁰ The China visited, and filmed by MacLaine and her team, exhibits ‘values... so different from our own’ that it emerges as a nation which is ‘both fascinating and frightening’.¹⁰³¹

Society members’ reviews for *Antonia* and *The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir*, are presented in Tables 8.10 and 8.11. Reference to these tables shows that the categories of ‘Screenplay’ and ‘Acting’, as used in the review of *The Maltese Falcon*, were replaced by one category titled, ‘Public Appeal’. It is assumed that this change occurred because the films reviewed in these two tables are documentaries consequently, the categories of ‘Screenplay’ and ‘Acting’, while appropriate for a drama in the *film noir* genre, are inappropriate as response categories for a documentary. The review results for *Antonia* and *A China Memoir* were published in the April 1981 edition of the *News Journal*.¹⁰³² The Committee described the results as ‘most pleasing’.¹⁰³³ Members’ comments, which were

¹⁰²⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*. March, p. 1.

¹⁰²⁶ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. September, p. 1.

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*. March, p. 1.

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰³¹ Ibid.

¹⁰³² Camberwell Film Society. (1981). *News Journal*. April, p. 1.

¹⁰³³ Ibid.

not presented separately for each film, included: ‘excellent, extremely interesting, most enjoyable ... a real-life drama’.¹⁰³⁴ Regarding *Antonia*, it was felt that the editing could have been better ‘and a stronger conclusion would have made a greater climax’.¹⁰³⁵ In relation to *A China Memoir*, some members would have appreciated more shots of the scenery while others were of the opinion that the ‘questioning of the Chinese could have been more selective and probing, instead of rather superficial and trivial’.¹⁰³⁶ These examples demonstrate that within the Society there was developing a sense of filmic connoisseurship.

Table 8.6 Summary of Members’ Responses to the Film *Antonia**
March Screening 1981
Responses by Percentage

		A	B	C	D
Response Categories	Public Appeal	75	25	-	-
	Technical Execution	60	40	-	-

*Source: Camberwell Film Society. 1981, *News Journal*, April 1981, p. 1.

Table 8.7 Summary of Members’ Responses to the Film
*The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir** **March Screening 1981**
Responses by Percentage

		A	B	C	D
Response Categories	Public Appeal	75	25	-	-
	Technical Execution	65	35	-	-

*Source: Camberwell Film Society. 1981, *News Journal*, April 1981, p. 1.

As indicated by the numerical responses and combined comments about the films, the screening of these documentaries was a success. Nevertheless, it was evident that the review process empowered members to exercise their critical judgment. This is demonstrated by members’ comments about improvements in the ‘editing’ and

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid.

‘conclusion’ in *Antonia* and, their references to the inadequacy of the scenery and requirement for more in-depth interviews in *A China Memoir*.

This is an example of Society members’ sense of film appreciation moving beyond measuring the worth of a film as a form of entertainment. Rather, their reviews indicate that they asserted their critical judgments about production and research techniques with clarity and confidence. Perhaps for some members their personal film review method encompassed factors such as filmic production and research techniques. However, they may not have given voice to these critiques until the introduction of this formalised review method. Others may have acquired, and internalised, the skills and attitudes relevant to this broader review practice but were hesitant about verbalising these publicly. Nevertheless, regardless of these factors, the outcome is that the Society’s formalised review process gave members’ permission to express their thoughts concerning technical details and interview techniques, as part of the communal discourse about the documentaries, *Antonia* and *A China Memoir*.

As previously stated the third film, *Evil under the Sun*, was screened on Tuesday 28 September 1982. It is a British film, in the style of a mystery drama released in February 1982.¹⁰³⁷ The inspiration for the film was Agatha Christie’s novel of the same name written in 1941. The main protagonists are a group of privileged people including representatives of British industry and theatre, a Hollywood columnist, two Broadway producers plus an Irish gigolo: the main character is Christie’s ‘supersleuth extraordinaire’ Monsieur Hercule Poirot.¹⁰³⁸ As is usual in a Christie mystery novel, murder is committed, Poirot has at least nine prime suspects and ‘each and everyone has the motive and a cast iron alibi to go with it!’¹⁰³⁹

The outcomes of members’ review of, *Evil under the Sun*, are presented in Table 8.8. The percentage responses indicate that the film was well received at the screening. Overall, as

¹⁰³⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. September, p. 1.

Evil Under the Sun Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil_Under_the_Sun_\(1982_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil_Under_the_Sun_(1982_film))

¹⁰³⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1982). *News Journal*. September, p. 1.

¹⁰³⁹ Ibid.

reported in the October 1982 *News Journal*, the attendees ‘enjoyed this enigmatic murder story, with its lavish production, with the feeling that Christie never fails to please’.¹⁰⁴⁰

Table 8.8 Summary of Members’ Responses to the Film *Evil under the Sun*
Responses by Percentage

		A	B	C	D
Response Categories	Screenplay	45	55	1 person	
	Acting	68	32		-
	Technical Details	45	50	5	-

*Source: *Camberwell Film Society. 1982, News Journal, October, p. 1.*

Approximately two-thirds (68%) of the group scored Acting at Level A with the other third (32%) responding less favourably rating it at Level B. At 45% each at Level A, Screenplay and Technical Details received a less favourable response than Acting. The higher percentages of responses for Screenplay and Technical Details were at Level B with 55% and 50% respectively. One of the advantages of this type of review is that everybody’s score is included in the assessment as demonstrated in Table 8.8: one person, anonymously, was able to record, and have acknowledged in the aggregated score, their assessment of Screenplay at Level C. Similarly, 5% of the attendees at the screening of *Evil under the Sun* were not as impressed with the Technical Details of the film as the other 95% rating it at Level C. However, regardless of the nature or level of their assessment, it is acknowledged in the aggregated scores.

In a general discussion without the capacity to physically record all responses, the score of an individual or a numerically small group may not be heard or acknowledged. This has the potential to leave these respondents feeling aggrieved that their voice has not been heard. In addition, in an organisation characterised by a filmic educational culture it is important that all views, favourable and less favourable, are heard and acknowledged. When heard and acknowledged, less favourable views often enrich a discussion by adding another perspective or value to it keeping the culture alive and responsive to change.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid.

Furthermore, the following quote highlights some of the ways in which Society members were alerted to the other, whether animate or inanimate, through the viewing of *Evil under the Sun*. In this example it is through the knowledge and experience of one of the members, ‘an art lover’, that attendees’ awareness of a particular aspect of the film was heightened. Their attention was drawn to ‘the title backgrounds, the beautiful aquarells¹⁰⁴¹ by Hugh Casson. With their subtle tones and light texture, depicting the Adriatic scenery and its romanesque [*sic*] architecture, they were indeed a delightful introduction to the rest of the theme’.

Remainder of the Third Decade

The last time that the outcomes of the formalised review process were presented in the Society’s news journals was in June 1983. The status of the formalised review process, at this time, is unclear. However, the non-inclusion of the aggregated results from the formalised review process, and members’ comments in the journals suggest that it was discontinued. Nevertheless, throughout the remainder of the Society’s third decade, synopses of films for upcoming meetings, and reviews of films screened in the previous months, were presented. These were written in the lively and informative style that had become a characteristic of the journals since the mid-1970s. Nonetheless, it is difficult to determine if the reviews of films screened in the previous months were based on members’ comments in post-screening discussions, or were the views of an individual or small group.

Reference to Table 8.9 indicates that the film programs for this latter part of the decade continued to be varied including different genres, different directors and different themes. Nonetheless declining membership, financial uncertainty and difficulty in attracting new members to the Committee were *leitmotifs* and dispiriting for the Committee. This is evident in the last decision recorded in the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Society held on 26 June 1984. The decision states, ‘It was agreed that finances permitted the continuance of the Society for the next 6 months. A show of hands as to those prepared to join for that period was seven members’. The total number of members present at this Annual General Meeting was eleven.

¹⁰⁴¹ Correct spelling is ‘aquarelle’. <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/aquarelle>

Identity and Culture

Although there was a sense of unease prevalent in the Society in the later part of the second decade and early years of the third decade, generally the Society continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to the concept of a filmic educational culture. As in previous decades, this commitment was evident in the diversity of films screened as well as the ongoing reminders to members that post-screening discussion was an important role of a film society. This role was reinforced with the introduction of a formalised review and assessment process which gave practical expression to the Society's filmic educational culture. Nevertheless, the dramatic decline in the Society's membership (Table 8.1 *Number of Registrations by Year from 1977-78 to 1984-84*) and its uncertain financial status raises the question of, 'What was it that enabled the Society to continue functioning?' This question will be explored in the next section titled, *The Fourth Decade 1985-1994*.

Table 8.9 Classification of Films Screened July 1983 to June 1984

Date of Screening	Title of Film	Documentary	Biography	Performing Arts	Fine Arts	Drama	Historical	Foreign	Industry	Political	Comedy
26 July 1983	Aida ‘Aida was our first full length opera film. Most enjoyed the superb singing and orchestral performance of the French Opera but the monotonously dark scenes could have had a few brighter spots to allow some variation behind the musical aspects. Full marks to the singers and orchestra’. ¹⁰⁴²				•	•					
23 August 1983	House without a Father Germany ‘A complicated parallel story of two families without father or keeper in post-war Germany. More than a simple story, the secondary plots made this film far better than average. Life at the top and bottom was well connected through the two boys who brought some of the adults quite close. A most interesting psychological treatment of a common occurrence’. ¹⁰⁴³					•		•			
27 September 1983	Pierre et Paul France 1969 Colour 1 hr 40 mins Dir : René Allio ¹⁰⁴⁴ This film presented Society members ‘with all the problems a contemporary Parisian can accrue from the pressures around him ... suddenly his world starts crumbling: father passes away, mother moves in girl leaves, work denied ... Suicide, the only solution. Or is it? This is what the director is asking through Pierre, and the audience is given the question. Having seen the film, have you thought about an answer?’ ¹⁰⁴⁵					• fiction		•			
25 October 1983	The Morals of Ruth Falbfass Germany 1972 Colour 89 mins Dir: Volker Schlöndorff ¹⁰⁴⁶ A reasonable standard of acting, which is more difficult to judge in a foreign language film, a lavish milieu and beautiful background was not quite enough to take the film too seriously. Even the sub-plot ... failed to generate more tension. The “hired” killers were					• Crime		•			

¹⁰⁴² Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*. July, p.2.

¹⁰⁴³ Camberwell Film Society. (1983), *News Journal*. August, p.2.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Pierre et Paul Retrieved from <http://www.myfrenchfilmfestival.com/en/movie?movie=4002>

¹⁰⁴⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*, September, p.1.

¹⁰⁴⁶ The Morals of Ruth Halbfass Retrieved from <http://mubi.com/films/the-morals-of-ruth-halbfass>

	never convincing ...But ... a bit of entertainment was forthcoming and we got it from "Ruth". ¹⁰⁴⁷											
22 November 1983	The Red Poster France 'A notable French film, won the Jean Vigo Prize in 1976 ...A group of amateur theatrical performers were planning a show on the French Resistance. To some, the idea was new, to others a re-enacting of the war years, bringing back disturbing memories. Their acting did not quite translate the aura of the days of occupation to our members'. ¹⁰⁴⁸					•		•		•		
December 1983	First Monday in October USA 1981 Colour 1hr 38 mins Dir: Ronald Neame ¹⁰⁴⁹ 'A pseudo-feminist idea about the first female judge on the U.S. supreme Court was exploited fully as a comedy as well as a likelihood except for the age of [Jill] Clayburgh. Her effect on the personal relationships and court activities of the other eight judges turned the evening into one of the most enjoyable of 1983'. ¹⁰⁵⁰					•						•
28 February 1984	All About Eve USA 1950 B & W 138 mins Dir: Josef Mankiewicz ¹⁰⁵¹					•						
27 March 1984	The Chapman Report USA 1962 Colour 125 mins Dir: George Cukor 'Based on the best-selling novel by Irving Wallace that was inspired by the Kinsey Report on the sexual mores of suburban women, the film follows the personal (read sexual) lives of four women (Claire Bloom, Jane Fonda, Shelley Winters and Glynis Johns) with four separate sexual hangups, ranging from frigidity to nymphomania'. ¹⁰⁵²					•						•
April	Frances USA 1982 140 mins Dir: Graeme Clifford					•						
22 May 1984	The Winslow Boy Great Britain 1948 Col/B & W 117 mins Dir: Anthony Asquith ¹⁰⁵³ 'A classic **** in its own right, an Anthony Asquith film of Terence Rattigan's play about a barrister's defence of a Naval cadet accused of theft'. ¹⁰⁵⁴					•						
26 June 1984	Linus Sweden 1979 Colour 98 mins Dir: Vilgot Sjoman									•		

¹⁰⁴⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1983). *News Journal*. November, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1984). *News Journal*, February 1984, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴⁹ First Monday in November Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082382/>

¹⁰⁵⁰ Camberwell Film Society. (1984). *News Journal*. February, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵¹ All About Eve Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0042192/>

¹⁰⁵² The Chapman Report Retrieved from http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0055841/plotsummary?ref=tt_ov_pl Camberwell Film Society. (1984). *News Journal*. May, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵³ The Winslow Boy Retrieved from <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/95987/The-Winslow-Boy/>

¹⁰⁵⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1984). *News Journal*. May, p. 2.

The Fourth Decade 1985 to 1994

Operational Overview

There are two sub-sections under the heading of *Operational Overview*. The first provides an outline of three factors, Membership, Operational Assistance and Finance, while the second affords a glimpse of the Society's News Journals, Film Assessments and Films. By this time the Society had entered a period of stasis characterised by continuity of programs and operations, rather than significant changes, negating the need for a detailed study of the Society's operations during the fourth decade.

Membership, Operational Assistance and Finance

At the beginning of the fourth decade two operational changes occurred: the first change was that Society moved from the State College Theatre, Hawthorn, to the Theatre at the Camberwell City Library, a 'more centrally located venue'; the second change was that screenings were conducted on the 'third Wednesday of each month at 7.45 p. m.'¹⁰⁵⁵ instead of the fourth Tuesday. It was anticipated that the more central location would attract new members. Nevertheless, throughout the fourth decade membership remained a persistent issue although strategies such as holding subscriptions at the same level as at the end of the third decade¹⁰⁵⁶ were introduced.¹⁰⁵⁷ Other strategies to increase membership included reminding members of the drain recurrent operational costs made on the Society's finances.¹⁰⁵⁸ Also, the Society's financial year was changed to 01 December to 30 November, the previous period being from 01 July to 30 June.¹⁰⁵⁹ To complement this change, it was decided to conduct the Society's annual general meeting in November or March: it was thought 'that February is a more likely month for new members to join the Society'.¹⁰⁶⁰ The strategies met with some comparative success membership increasing from twenty-seven in 1984-85¹⁰⁶¹ to forty-five in June 1994.¹⁰⁶² Similarly, there were

¹⁰⁵⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1985). *News Journal*. February, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Table 8.2 *Membership Subscriptions for the Third Decade 1975-76 to 1984-85*.

¹⁰⁵⁷ The annual subscriptions were: \$22.00 single, \$35.00 double. Camberwell Film Society. 1993, *Pin-Up Movie Guide*, reverse side.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1986). *News Journal*. April/May, p. 2. Camberwell Film Society. (1988). *News Journal*. September/October, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Camberwell Film Society. (1992). *News Journal*. August/September, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁶¹ Table 8.2 *Membership Subscriptions for the Third Decade 1975-76 to 1984-85*.

¹⁰⁶² Camberwell Film Society. 'Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 6th June, 1994'. In *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*, n.p., held by the Camberwell Film Society.

periodic requests for volunteers to join the Committee and/or assist with operational matters such as arranging ‘publicity in libraries and newspapers, select, collect and return short films, post or letterbox the News Journal, [and] oversee supper preparations’.¹⁰⁶³ In response to these requests there were some changes in Committee membership.¹⁰⁶⁴ The Society’s financial situation improved during the fourth decade: the starting credit balance being \$114.33¹⁰⁶⁵ while at the end of 1994 it was \$591.21.¹⁰⁶⁶ This higher credit balance was assisted by an annual grant from the Camberwell City Council. The grant was first received in 1986,¹⁰⁶⁷ and was still being granted in 1994¹⁰⁶⁸ at the end of the fourth decade.

News Journals, Film Assessments and Films

During the fourth decade, the Society’s news journals were characterised by a lively, inviting tone,¹⁰⁶⁹ comprehensive film synopses,¹⁰⁷⁰ a wide range of interesting articles,¹⁰⁷¹ and information about operational issues designed to keep members well-informed about the Society’s management.¹⁰⁷² Additional items included information about appraisal screenings. Monthly appraisal screenings were conducted by the FVFS.¹⁰⁷³ Minimal reference had been made to these screenings in the journals for the previous decades. Information about other agencies such as the FVFS,¹⁰⁷⁴ and questionnaires challenging members to think about issues such as why they joined a film society, were sometimes

¹⁰⁶³ Camberwell Film Society. (1985). *News Journal*, June/July, p. 2. Camberwell Film Society. (1986). *News Journal*. June/July, p. 1. Camberwell Film Society. (1990). *News Journal*. February/March, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Camberwell Film Society.(1988). *News Journal*. July/August, p. 2. Camberwell Film Society. (1990). *News Journal*. September/October, p.1.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Refer to ‘Membership and Finances’, *The Third Decade 1975-1985*, in this chapter.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Camberwell Film Society. ‘Financial Report presented at the Committee Meeting held on 6th December, 1994’. In *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book* held by the Camberwell Film Society.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Camberwell Film Society. ‘Statement of Receipts and Payments for period 2-4-85 [*sic*] to 30/4/86 [*sic*]’ in Minutes of Meeting held on 30th April, 1986’. In *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Camberwell Film Society. ‘Statement of Receipts and Expenditure 1/1/1994 to 31/12/94 in Minutes of Meeting held on 17th May, 1995’. In *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*.

¹⁰⁶⁹ For example, the Society’s *News Journal* July/August 1991 includes synopses of feature and short films for July and August, viewers’ comments and gradings from appraisal screenings, proposed program for July to December 1991 plus small pen and ink illustrations. The tone of the writing conveys a sense of passion about the Society as well as the films. Camberwell Film Society. (1991). *News Journal*, July/August, p.1, *passim*.

¹⁰⁷⁰ For example, the Society’s *News Journal* April (1989) includes synopses for three Australian films and one film each from Canada, Germany, Sweden and the USA. Camberwell Film Society. (1989), *News Journal*. April/May, *passim*. A particularly comprehensive synopsis for the film, *Danton*, a French/Polish production made in 1982 is included in Camberwell Film Society.(1992). *News Journal*. April/May, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷¹ An example is presented in the Camberwell Film Society *News Journal*, April/May 1992, pp. 1 & 3. The journal includes a synopsis of the film to be screened on 15 April, 1992, *Douglas Mawson: The Survivor*, as well as a photograph of, and brief biographical notes about, Mawson.

¹⁰⁷² Camberwell Film Society. (1990). *News Journal*. February/March, p.2.

¹⁰⁷³ Camberwell Film Society. (1985). *News Journal*. June/July, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1989). *News Journal*. April/May, p. 3.

included in the news journals of the fourth decade.¹⁰⁷⁵ On average, five or six bi-monthly news journals were published *per annum* resulting in total of between fifty and sixty journals for the fourth decade. Thirty-three of these journals were available to the researcher. Just a glance at these journals indicates that the publication of each edition accounted for a considerable allocation of time, effort and research by volunteer members. Consequently, it is not surprising that in 1993 the bi-monthly news journals were replaced by an annual film calendar titled a, *Pin-Up Movie Guide*.¹⁰⁷⁶

Members continued to review and rate the films.¹⁰⁷⁷ They also participated in the Society's yearly selection of films: each year, a sample list of films available for the following year was included in the relevant news journal, and members were invited to nominate their preferences.¹⁰⁷⁸ The Film Selection Committee referred to members' collated preferences when selecting the annual film program. The emphasis on post-screening film discussion, 'an important aspect of film societies',¹⁰⁷⁹ was maintained. For instance, the discussion questions for the film, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, screened in 1994, were:

AUDIENCE APPEAL

Did you enjoy the film?

Why?

Do you think the producer set out to prove anything—in other words did he have an aim in choosing this story?

CHARACTERIZATION

Were the characters well—cast?

Who would you say was the best actor-actress?

OTHER

Was the barbecue scene credible?

Is it a film you could see again?

Do you feel you need to see it again to understand it?

The style of the above presentation of the questions mirrors the emphasis, for example, underlining and use of upper case, and spelling, for instance, 'characterization', as these

¹⁰⁷⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1989). *News Journal*. September/October, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Camberwell Film Society. (1993). *Pin-Up Movie Guide*.

This change is detailed in 'Printed and Handwritten Primary Sources', Chapter Three, *Research Methodology*, in this thesis.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1991). *News Journal*. September/ October, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Camberwell Film Society. (1992). *News Journal*. October, November and December, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Camberwell Film Society. (1991). *News Journal*. June/July, p. 2.

appear in the original list of questions, hand-written on a piece of scrap paper.¹⁰⁸⁰ The categorising of the questions under three headings reflects the review method introduced by the Society in its third decade.¹⁰⁸¹

The Committee frequently sought members input into different ways of conducting post screening discussions.¹⁰⁸² The films selected¹⁰⁸³ for screening included quality films,¹⁰⁸⁴ documentaries,¹⁰⁸⁵ a variety of older¹⁰⁸⁶ as well as recent films,¹⁰⁸⁷ theme nights¹⁰⁸⁸ and shorts to supplement or contrast with the main feature.¹⁰⁸⁹

The preceding discussion creates an image of a community film society at the end of its fourth decade beset by membership and management issues but continuing to screen an eclectic range of good quality, thought-provoking films, previously mentioned financial problems having been amended by a grant from the City of Camberwell.¹⁰⁹⁰ In relation to membership there were two significant issues: the first related to attracting new members; the second was concerned with motivating more members to take responsibility for the

¹⁰⁸⁰ Although the original list of questions is unsigned, a comparison of the hand-writing with that of Jean Catford strongly suggests that she was the author. *Catford Papers*, property of the Camberwell Film Society.

¹⁰⁸¹ Refer to Tables 8.5 Summary of Members' Responses to the Film, *The Maltese Falcon*, and Table 8.6 Summary of Members' Responses to the Film, *Antonia*.

¹⁰⁸² Camberwell Film Society. (1991). *News Journal*. June/July, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸³ The selection categories are based on the outcomes of a discussion about, 'What makes a Good Film Society?' Camberwell Film Society. (1988). *News Journal*. June/July, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁸⁴ For example, *Pfingstausflug*, a German film made in 1978, directed by Michael Guenther, 'a gentle film full of pathos and humour about an elderly married couple who leave their old people's home, clandestinely'. Camberwell Film Society. (1989). *News Journal*. April/May, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸⁵ For example, *History in their Hands*, a Swedish film about the gradual loss of traditional Swedish handcraft techniques and designs. The post-screening assessment of one Society member was: 'Excellent film of little known Swedish crafts. Well-photographed, full of surprises'. Camberwell Film Society. (1990). *News Journal*. April/May, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸⁶ For example, *Equinox Flower*, Japan, 1958. The film examines 'the clash of old and new cultures ... using the theme of arranged marriages'. Camberwell Film Society. (1991). *News Journal*. July.

¹⁰⁸⁷ For example, *Raise the Red Lantern*, made in 1991, a film about 'the fourth wife of a wealthy nobleman'. Camberwell Film Society. (1994). *Pin-Up Movie Guide*, October.

¹⁰⁸⁸ For example, a German film night on Wednesday 28 August, 1985. The feature film was, *Vodka, Bitter Lemon*, a mystery drama. The short was the light-hearted comedy, *Gute Reise* (Bon Voyage). Camberwell Film Society. (1985). *News Journal*. July/August, p.1. Another example is the screening of two older Australian films, *Douglas Mawson*, *The Survivor*, and *Jedda*, in response to a request from the Camberwell City Council for the Society to join in local celebrations of the National Trust's *Hidden Heritage* week from 04 to 16 April, 1992. Camberwell Film Society. (1992). *News Journal*. April/May, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁸⁹ For example, the program for Wednesday 17 February, 1993, included the short film, *Fats*, a U.K. film made in 1980 the subject being fats as a significant contributor to heart disease. This contrasted with the light-hearted humour of the feature film, *Father of the Bride*.

¹⁰⁹⁰ The first Camberwell City Council grant to the Society, included in an annual statement of receipts and expenditure, is for the period from 31 May 1985 to 30 April 1986. Camberwell Film Society. 'Statement of Receipts and Payments 31-5-85 to 30/4/86. Minutes of AGM Meeting held on 18th June, 1986'. In *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*.

Society's day-to-day administration and its longer-term management. These observations refocus attention on the question raised at the end of the third decade, 'What was it that enabled the Society to continue functioning?' At this point of the study the question remains unanswered: the researcher will attempt to answer it in the following section.

An Unanswered Question

From the interrogation of the data collected about the Society, the researcher concludes that there were three distinctive features of the Society which enabled it to continue functioning throughout the third and fourth decades and into contemporary times. The three factors are:

- that there was a core group within the Society who were passionate about good quality, challenging and informative films;
- that this group was equally passionate about the principles and functions of film societies, particularly their educational role through the viewing and study of films, and
- that the Society was,¹⁰⁹¹ and remains, a *Gesellschaft* type of organisation, meaning that it is characterised by 'a form of social integration based on impersonal ties',¹⁰⁹² as opposed to a *Gemeinschaft* type which is typified by 'a form of social integration based on personal ties'.¹⁰⁹³

The core group included, Henry Glennon,¹⁰⁹⁴ who was elected to the Committee in July 1964, the first year for which documented evidence is available for the study.¹⁰⁹⁵ As required by the Society, Glennon provided his personal projector for screenings, and his services as projectionist, over a period of four decades until ill-health forced his retirement in 1990. As previously stated, Glennon 'loved showing films, it was a great pleasure for him'.¹⁰⁹⁶ The husband and wife team of Rupert and Jean Catford joined the Society in 1968: Rupert was a member until his death on 2nd August, 1991.¹⁰⁹⁷ He carried out numerous functional and management duties in the Society: these included being president

¹⁰⁹¹ Refer to sub-section of Chapter Seven titled, *Diversity of Means: Unity of Intent*.

¹⁰⁹² *Gesellschaft*. Retrieved from [http://www.oxfordreference.com/-/Gesellschaft - Oxford](http://www.oxfordreference.com/-/Gesellschaft-Oxford) Reference

¹⁰⁹³ *Gesellschaft*. Retrieved from [http://www.oxfordreference.com/-/Gesellschaft - Oxford](http://www.oxfordreference.com/-/Gesellschaft-Oxford) Reference

¹⁰⁹⁴ Camberwell Film Society. (1990). *News Journal*. June, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Camberwell Film Society. (1964). *News Journal*. July, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Refer to section of Chapter Seven titled, 'Three Committee Members and Their Backgrounds'.

Jenkins, D. M. (2012). *Interview with Nancye Trigellis-Smith*.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Camberwell Film Society. (1991). *News Journal*. November/December, p. 1.

many times, treasurer, projectionist, delegate to the FVFS and by attending the FVFS monthly appraisal screenings, with his wife Jean, where they ‘judged the suitability of films for inclusion in our Society’s programs’.¹⁰⁹⁸ Until her death Jean Catford also made a major contribution to the well-being, management and effective functioning of the Society. She was a member of the Committee from 1975 to 1990 holding the positions of secretary and president on many occasions. As a former school-teacher she had a passion for learning¹⁰⁹⁹ which was expressed in her strong support for post-screening discussion, and her regular attendance at a wide range of film festivals. The lively, attractive and informative news journals of the Society’s fourth decade are a tribute to the dedication of Jean, and the late Joan Hunter, to the Camberwell Film Society. Hunter’s contribution to the news journals in the form of articles, surveys and an occasional quiz, were designed to challenge members to consider their reasons for joining the Society, as well as the many ways in which they could assist in its day-to-day functions and management.¹¹⁰⁰ Hunter was a regular member of the Committee frequently holding the position of president or secretary. Imre Torey was Convenor of the Film Selection Sub-Committee from 1977 until his resignation from the Society in 1990. Two other members, Edith and Ken Barton, served the Society loyally for over nineteen years¹¹⁰¹ initially typing and duplicating then later, following the introduction of electronic copiers, printing the monthly news journals. These people were part of a core group of members whose commitment to the Society enabled it to function in a period of declining membership, as well as management and financial difficulties. However, regardless of the depth of the Society’s core members’ passion for films, and film society ideals, without ‘ordinary’ members its longevity would have been doubtful, following the membership decline after reaching its high-point in the financial year 1970-71.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Jenkins, David L. (2004). *Interview with Jean Catford*, transcript of interview held by researcher, Dorothy M. Jenkins.

¹¹⁰⁰ For example, ‘A.F.I. Awards’, in Camberwell Film Society. (1989). *News Journal*. September/October, p. 3.

¹¹⁰¹ The first reference the researcher found to the Barton’s work for the Society is in the Society’s July 1981 *News Journal*, p. 1. The reference states that ‘Edith and Ken Barton will continue to type and duplicate the monthly Journal’. The present continuous tense of the verb infers that the Barton’s had undertaken the printing and duplicating duties previously.

In the context of this study, it is posited that, ‘ordinary’¹¹⁰² members like core members, join and bond with the Society to give expression to, and nurture, their filmic passion. It is also evident that there is a wide variation in their membership tenures, as demonstrated by the Society’s fluctuating membership levels. As a result, it is concluded that the Society is primarily a *Gesellschaft* type of organisation, as hypothesized by the researcher regarding its early days: that is, it exhibits a form of social integration, based on impersonal ties, with a strong commitment to factors such as an issue, an ideology or an intellectual or artistic passion which cross boundaries typified by ethnicity, gender, social status and/or generations.¹¹⁰³ This type of organisation enables people to come together for varying periods of time, throughout their individual lifetimes, and the lifetime of the group, to achieve a definite end, which in this study is to nurture and enhance their filmic passion. For some people, for instance, core members of the Society, the nurturing and enhancing of this passion may be a lifelong commitment, for others, for example, ordinary members, it may be a shorter process contributing to the variations in membership tenure as evident in the Camberwell Film Society. Consequently, it is concluded that the longevity of the Society is attributable to the combination of the following factors: a core group of members passionate about films and film societies, this core group is supported by other members with differing levels of commitment to films and film societies as characterised by their fluctuating membership tenures, and a *Gesellschaft* type of organisation in which people come together to achieve a definite end, that is, to nurture and enhance their filmic passion.

Summary

Following the end of WW2, there was a wave of enthusiasm for the formation of film societies to view and study, through discussion, non-commercial type films. The Camberwell Film Society was founded in the mid-1950s as part of this enthusiastic wave. Available evidence suggests there was a left-wing influence in the film society movement generally, and in the establishment of the Camberwell Film Society, particularly. Furthermore, a growing interest in the educational value of films, described in this thesis as a filmic educational culture, underpinned and flourished in film societies. For Camberwell Film Society, the crest of the wave was in the financial year 1970-71 when

¹¹⁰² The term ‘ordinary’ members is introduced in this section of the thesis to differentiate between core and non-core members.

¹¹⁰³ Refer to sub-section of Chapter Seven titled, *Diversity of Means: Unity of Intent*.

membership peaked at two-hundred and four. As the wave of enthusiasm dissipated membership declined until at the close of the third decade, financial year 1984-85, there were twenty-seven members. This number had increased to sixty-three at the end of the fourth decade.¹¹⁰⁴

Throughout these years of fluctuating membership, undeterred by financial, management and membership issues, a small group of members with a passion for film, and a strong commitment to the culture and practices of film societies, maintained the Society's presence in the Camberwell community. Other people joined the Society for differing periods of time, to nurture their filmic passion, contributing to the Society's ongoing existence. The persistence and legacy of the core group of members is evident in the Society's longevity: it is still functioning today, that is, in 2014. In addition, the Society continues to be characterised by its recognition of film society ideals such as member participation in film selection, post-screening discussion and filmic assessment. Moreover, throughout its lifetime the Society has been typified by a form of social integration based on impersonal ties with its emphasis on achieving a definite end, as opposed to a social group in which personal ties are central to the group's formation and its objectives. Initially, the Camberwell Film Society's objective was to establish a film society. Following the achievement of this goal, the Society's ongoing aim has been, and still is, to maintain a film society distinguished by a filmic educational culture in which members are able to nurture and enhance their filmic passion.

¹¹⁰⁴ Camberwell Film Society. 'Minutes of Committee Meeting held at the home of Jean Catford on 6th December, 1994'. In *Camberwell Film Society Minute Book*.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to bring together material relevant to the themes woven through this thesis. The three themes, identified in Chapter One, are:

- globalism, localism and film;
- socio/economic context that frames the Camberwell Film Society;
- adult self-directed learning in the community.

Following a brief overview of the purpose of the research and a restatement of the problem, the findings of the research are discussed. The three themes represent the discussion headings. Then the contentions, of which there are three—one major contention and two minor contentions, are presented and discussed in relation to the findings. Ultimately suggestions for further research will be offered.

The major contention is:

That the establishment of film societies provided adults with opportunities for self-directed learning in the community.

The two minor contentions are:

That people aspired to have increased access to a wider range of films for the purposes of education and entertainment.

That the growth of a filmic educational culture fostered ongoing engagement between film and the community.

Brief Overview of the Research Purpose

The intention of the research is to write a narrative, interpretative history of Victorian film societies as exemplified by the Camberwell Film Society. The problem which defined the research is that although a large number of film societies were formed in the 1950s and 1960s in Victoria, little is known about their genesis, role and functions. Given that it is more than sixty years since the first of these societies was established,

the researcher posits that it is both culturally and historically urgent that the history of these earliest Victorian film societies be recorded. Because of the complexities of working with the large number of film societies formed over the last sixty years, it was decided that one particular society, the Camberwell Film Society, would be used as a case study. This Society was chosen because it was founded in the mid-1950s during the flurry of activity to form film societies and, it has functioned continuously since that time. It is still a viable, conventional film society, although its membership is comparatively small. Past and present members are available for interview. Even though the records of the Society's earliest years have been lost, comprehensive documents pertaining to the last fifty years of the Society's sixty year lifetime are available for the research. A detailed history of the Society is the subject of Chapters Seven and Eight. The findings of the research relevant to the thematic framework follow this overview of the study's research purpose.

Thematic Framework

As indicated in the Introduction to this chapter, the three themes of the research form the headings for the following discussion.

Globalism, Localism and Film

As stated in Chapter One, the focus of this theme is on the continuing nature of conversations between the global and the local, the subsequent interconnections between them and, the ensuing shared creation of new knowledge. This focus was chosen because of its potential for identifying rich and productive outcomes of the relationship between the global and the local. Sometimes, these types of outcomes are not recognised or appreciated when the concepts of the global and the local are investigated within an adversarial framework. In this thesis, with its emphasis on connections between community film societies and the film industry worldwide, the researcher asserts that a thematic framework characterised by ongoing conversations between the global and the local, as well as the creation of new knowledge, offer a more constructive research model than an adversarial approach. As is evident throughout the study, there was considerable global influence in local developments. For example, although an international figure, Grierson was a catalyst for change in Australia including the establishment of the Australian National Film Board and, in the stimulating impact his

international documentary film had on the development of Australia's documentary film industry after WW2.

Chapter One introduces the theme of interconnectedness between global and the local with two examples. The first example describes the parallel development of two aspects of the infant film industry in the early to mid-1900s: America's growing domination of the international film industry and, the alternative often innovative styles of film production being explored by film directors in other countries. As these parallel developments intersected, new knowledge was generated characterised by factors such as new genres of film, different acting methods and different directorial strategies. Ultimately, this new knowledge was incorporated into film production leading to filmic audiences discerning two distinct filmic cultural streams: film as entertainment/business and film as art. As a consequence, film groups and ciné-clubs, precursors of film societies, were formed for the purpose of discussing film as a distinctive form of art. As asserted in Chapter One, it is generally agreed that the first film society was formed in Paris in 1924. This example is a 'top-down' illustration of the outcomes of ongoing conversations between two parallel developments in the film industry at the global/national levels. These conversations resulted in the construction of new filmic knowledge. Eventually, this new knowledge constructed at the global level informed the development of film societies at the local level.

The other example included in Chapter One relates to a 'grass-roots' or local initiative which indirectly connects Australian community film societies to an international filmic organisation, the International Federation of Film Societies. For instance, the Federation of Victorian Film Societies was founded in 1949 in response to the burgeoning number of Victorian community film societies established in the late 1940s. Each Victorian community film society was, and still is, eligible for membership of the FVFS. Once registered as a member of the FVFS, each society elects its delegates to attend meetings of the State body. Consequently, each Victorian film society has the potential to be directly connected to the FVFS. The FVFS is a member of ACOFS, the national council for Australian film societies, and ACOFS is a member of the International Federation of Film Societies. Consequently, each Victorian film society is indirectly connected with ACOFS, as well as with the International Federation of Film Societies. Although this

ability to feel part of a greater whole has now been replaced by global media and the internet, in the past, feeling part of an international community would have given Australians a sense of being part of a larger filmic culture.

In Chapter Four the notion of an ongoing conversation between the global and the local is explored in more detail. It commences with a reminder that a new global industry, the motion picture industry, grew out of local inventions such as the Kinematograph and Kinetoscope. Entrepreneurs recognised the potential of these inventions for creating new knowledge in the form of a new entertainment industry with global ambitions. As a result, the motion picture industry was founded. In addition, the genesis and continuity of film societies lies in the invention and development of these instruments. Also, the concept of the cinematic experience generated at public screenings of films is introduced in Chapter Four. It is observed that this experience was an essential factor in the establishment of the first film societies. In Chapter Eight it is speculated that the cinematic experience may be a contributor to the longevity of some film societies.

Examples of the contributions of individual filmmakers to the fledgling movie industry are described in Chapter Four. Such contributions signify the creation of new knowledge in film production, the emergence of a dual filmic culture and a growing recognition of the educational value of film. In addition, the contributions provide examples of the localisation of film production in a globalised industry. The following section presents some examples of these contributions, as detailed in Chapter Four. These individual contributions could address social issues, make aesthetic judgments and explore innovative filmic techniques.

The work of D. W. Griffith, a pioneer American film director in the early 1900s, provides an example of social issues being addressed in film. Griffiths produced the movie, *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*, which is credited with being the first gangster film paving the way for the creation of a new genre of films. In this film, Griffiths introduced the concepts of locational and social realism by shooting the film in the neighbourhood of New York's street gangs, and including gang members as extras. Similarly, Sergei Eisenstein, a Russian filmmaker, was keen to educate his filmic audiences: he sought to raise their awareness of politico-social issues through films such as *Battleship Potemkin*.

The French director, Jean Renoir, demonstrated an interest in the aesthetics of film by favouring films with challenging narratives and complex characters such as *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (Boudu Saved from Drowning), made in 1932 and screened by the Camberwell Film Society on 23 July 1968. In Berlin, during the period of the Weimar Republic 1919-1933, cinematic art flourished as part of an outpouring of artistic talent, frequently agitational in style. Silent movies like Eric Pommer's, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) and Fritz Lang's, *Metropolis*, were products of this era demonstrating that information could be presented in an aesthetically artistic manner. These films were precursors to the recognition of two types of cinema: cinema as business/entertainment and cinema as art.

In Japan, prior to WW2 Japanese film production companies exhibited an awareness of innovative business and filmic techniques. The companies adopted American business models and technological filmic developments but, their films retained traditional content reflecting Japan's feudal history. In Australia in the early 1900s, the Australian Salvation Army appreciated the educational value of film using it to advance the Army's social work and religious precepts. At this time, the production of religious films for educational purposes was an innovative use of film. By 1930 the Victorian Visual Education Committee was of the opinion that movies appropriately produced and presented would add value to classroom teaching. While in 1937, the Church of England in Australia proposed that other Australian Christian denominations be approached regarding the formation of a religious film society. Religious film production and religious film societies were active in Britain at this time. These examples provide evidence of a diversity of thought and action at local levels of film production and exhibition which co-existed with a globalised film industry. The work of many of these filmmakers was commercially viable suggesting ongoing connections between the two spheres, global and local. The outcomes of this discussion also point to an increasing level of recognition of the educational value of film and the presence of an incipient filmic educational culture in Australia.

Socio/Economic Context that Frames the Camberwell Film Society

Generally speaking, place is an important factor in relation to the development of a community as well as an individual as described in Chapters Five and Six. In the 1950s

and 1960s the place called Australia was characterised by factors such as economic and political stability, full-employment, average or above average wages generating increased levels of disposable income, an eight-hour working day allowing time for recreational and cultural activities, a growing recognition of the value of secondary and post-secondary education, and a comparatively small but well-established independent school system. As concluded in Chapter Five, in the 1950s Camberwell was a place in the state of Victoria which exhibited these characteristics in conjunction with a sense of social betterment and an aspirational culture. It was a place which typified communities with an environment conducive to the formation of film societies. A cultural/historical overview of the development of Camberwell into this type of community is presented in the following section.

By the beginning of the 20th century Camberwell was a growing urban centre characterised by those elements of place which, at that time, defined a more affluent and educated citizenry. These included: well-established churches, a diversity of schooling choices in the form of public, independent and Roman Catholic schools, an expansion in the number of business premises, residential projects reflecting the newly acquired wealth and status of its residents, the provision of civic facilities such as libraries and, pride in the community's charity work. These characteristics were still evident in Camberwell in the early 1950s when enthusiasm for forming community film societies escalated. When combined with the socio/economic characteristics of Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, as identified earlier in this discussion, an image of a mature, affluent, educated community with a sense of pride in its achievements emerges. Inherent in these types of communities are individuals or groups of people who are pursuing opportunities for self-development or self-actualisation. The researcher asserts that self-actualisation is a personality trait of people with a disposition favourable towards forming an interest group such as a film society. Consequently, the researcher concludes that in the 1950s Camberwell was a place with a stable socio/economic environment, a sense of community pride and an aspirational culture conducive to the formation of groups such as film societies. She also asserts that this investigation into the socio/cultural history of place, in this study, has given her insights into the past while informing her understanding of the present, that is, the present being the 1950s, the period in which the Camberwell Film Society was formed.

Adult Self-Directed Learning in the Community

A comprehensive description and discussion of the history of the Camberwell Film Society is presented in Chapters Seven and Eight. Reference to these chapters shows that Society members were encouraged to extend their thinking beyond the content and entertainment value of the films screened at the monthly screenings. For example, in Chapter Seven reference is made to the notes regarding the Society's feature film for October 1964. The film was, *In the Wake of the Bounty*, an Australian film made in 1933. The notes explain that although 'this is not classed as a 'great' film we are of the opinion that it should be shown, more from the point of view of the period covered and the description of an island life, than an example of film making'. These notes prompted members to reflect on the historical era in which the mutiny on the *Bounty* occurred and to compare island life with, perhaps, life on a large island continent such as Australia. As identified in Chapters Seven and Eight, the Society's management committee constantly reminded members that the process of study through discussion was a critical aspect of film society membership, emphasising that it was one of the factors which clearly differentiated film societies from commercial cinemas.

Another example of members being offered opportunities for learning through the Society is evident in various editorials in the news journals which differentiate between the roles of commercial cinemas and film societies. One particular article published in the Society's news journal for November 1973 and, summarised in Chapter Seven, contends that film societies enhance levels of film appreciation, support new experiments in the filmic medium and welcome controversy as a catalyst for discussion.

In addition, opportunities for adult self-directed learning were evident in the support services provided by the Realist Film Association/Unit to the emerging Victorian film society movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These opportunities, identified in Chapter Six, were available through activities such as film appreciation programs and hands-on training for projectionists. The active involvement of Victorian film society members in the organisation and management of the early Melbourne Film Festivals, as detailed in Chapter Seven, also promoted self-directed learning given the broad and diverse range of films screened at the festivals.

The final point to be made in this discussion about adult self-directed learning in the community, is demonstrated in Ken Coldicutt's personal narrative, as explored in Chapter Six. As a holder of a State Senior Scholarship at Melbourne University, Coldicutt's studies included chemistry, mathematics and physics. Nonetheless, while at Melbourne University, instead of concentrating on his university studies, Coldicutt chose to spend most of his time at the Victorian State Library learning about film history and film theory. Coldicutt's prodigious knowledge of film is exhibited in his paper titled, *Cinema and Capitalism*, written between April and June 1935 and, introduced into this study in Chapter Six.

The next section presents the findings regarding the study's contentions.

Major and Minor Contentions

Major Contention

That the establishment of film societies provided adults with opportunities for self-directed learning in the community.

The findings of the study support this contention. This is demonstrated by one of the major characteristics of film societies which is to provide opportunities for the study and discussion of films following their screening. Examples of these discussions, as experienced by members of the Camberwell Film Society, are presented in Chapters Seven and Eight of this study. Sometimes these discussions were led by Society members while at other times guest presenters, knowledgeable in the field of film, introduced the feature film then chaired the ensuing discussion. One of the innovative strategies introduced by the Society to enhance the quality of discussion was a formalised review and assessment method, as described in Chapter Eight. Following discussion, members were given a form on which they were asked to review the feature film according to three categories of response and four graded levels of measurement. The outcomes of these assessments were summarised and published in the Society's news journals.

Minor Contentions

That people aspired to have increased access to a wider range of films for the purposes of education and entertainment.

The findings of the study support this contention. The primary purpose of the film industry since its establishment in the 1890s and early 1900s was entertainment. As the

industry grew, it produced a wider range of filmic products. This diversification included documentaries and films which were intrinsically historically, aesthetically and artistically appealing. People quickly recognised these product differentiations: the dual concepts of cinema as art and cinema as entertainment/business were born. By the 1920s film groups and ciné-clubs, the precursors of community film societies, were forming to explore the concept of film as art through the screening of movies more or less disregarded by commercial cinemas. With the introduction of the film society movement, opportunities arose for people to have increased access to a wider range of movies. That they aspired to have such access is supported by the rapidity with which film societies were founded, for example in the state of Victoria, following the end of WW2. The burgeoning growth of film societies at this time is explored in Chapter One and Chapter Four of this study.

That the growth of a filmic educational culture fostered ongoing engagement between film and the community.

The findings of the study support this contention. Some of the earliest film societies were underpinned by, and contributed to, the growth of a filmic educational culture which fostered engagement between film and the community. In London in the mid-1920s, the London Film Society was formed with the objective of introducing more people to the avant-garde genre of film. The London Film Society engaged people in this filmic genre for fourteen years, closing in 1939 when the founders felt they had met their objective. In Victoria, in the 1930s and 1940s, church communities engaged with film as a means of enhancing the delivery of their message through the engagement of their congregations with film. In addition in the 1930s, in Victoria, traditional educational agencies such as the Victorian Visual Education Committee acknowledged the high level of school children's engagement with movies as entertainment. Subsequently, the Committee recognised the potential of the moving picture as a valuable teaching resource for engaging children in education. The Committee proposed its employment in the classroom subject to certain conditions. These are some examples of the findings of this study regarding the relationship between a filmic educational culture and community engagement with film. In the following section the limitations of this study are identified.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include:

- the paucity of philosophical and conceptual literature published about film societies limiting a theoretical analysis of their place in the community and in the world of film;
- the loss of the Society's official, documented records for the years from its establishment in the mid-1950s to 1977. This loss placed limitations on the quantity and range of primary sources available to the researcher in preparing a history of the Camberwell Film Society's first ten years. Fortunately, the Catford Papers included a copy of the Society's news journals from 1964 to 1977 providing valuable, if incomplete, information for the Society's second decade;
- in 2014, the Society is entering the fifty-ninth year since its establishment. Consequently, many of the members from its first decade had either died or because of age-related disabilities were not available for interview. This limited the researcher's access to people who participated in its founding or were members during its first decade and, finally
- the selection of one film society as a case study limits the research and findings to a particular society, in a particular community, in a particular place, with a particular culture. Consequently, the findings may or may not be representative of Victorian film societies, generally.

Suggestions for Future Research

As observed in the Introduction to this thesis little is known about film societies and, given the ages of many of these groups founded in the late 1940s and 1950s, it is both critical and urgent that their histories be recorded and that the philosophies and concepts underpinning and shaping them be explored. As stated in the limitations, this case study is but one example of the many film societies formed throughout Victoria during the past sixty to seventy years. Consequently, it is suggested:

- that additional research be conducted into the history of Victorian film societies and,

- that investigations be undertaken to identify and/or establish the philosophical and conceptual theories which underpin and shape film societies.

There are many film societies throughout the state of Victoria. Often, these societies are differentiated by factors such as location, ethnicity, focus of their programs, e.g., classical or international or historic films, the length of time they have been established and, the general characteristics of their members such as occupation, age, socio/economic factors and levels of educational attainment. Given this diversity of factors, it is suggested that:

- a comparative analysis of a cross-section of these societies be conducted to identify similarities and differences between them to contribute to the establishment of a body of knowledge about these community groups.

In conducting this study the researcher met, and sometimes interviewed, a number of people who were passionate about film and film societies. Some of these people are the ‘unsung heroes’ of film societies. They play a significant role in developing and maintaining their film societies over the long-term and, in organising them on a day-to-day basis. Their contributions to their particular film society and to the wider field of film societies and filmic culture are often not recognised nor celebrated. Consequently, it is recommended that:

- research be undertaken to record the biographies of a number of these people as relevant to the establishment of a body of knowledge about film societies.

In conclusion, the researcher observes that the cultural/historical framework for this thesis illuminates the role of film societies as their genesis is investigated with particular reference to the Camberwell Film Society. Also, the study provides insights into the links between these seemingly commonplace community groups and, global aspects of the film industry, giving film societies a sense of global identity. Additionally, although the study is limited to one film society, it is evident that film societies are an integral component of the culture of the filmic world.

Appendix A: Approval for project from the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans



MONASH University

Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 18-September-2008
Project Number: CF08/2464 - 2008001266
Project Title: Case study of a Victorian Film Society (1950-1990)
Chief Investigator: Dr Jane Southcott
Approved: From: 18-September-2008 To: 18-September-2013

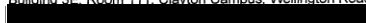
Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained and a copy forwarded to SCERH before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to SCERH before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by SCERH.
4. You should notify SCERH immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to SCERH and must not begin without written approval from SCERH. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. SCERH should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by SCERH at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.


 Professor Ben Canny
 Chair, SCERH

Cc: Mrs Dorothy Jenkins

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
 Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton


www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html
 ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

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