Contemporary Urban Indigenous ‘Dreamings’: Interaction, Engagement and Creative Practice

Marcus Wollombi Waters
BA (VisArt), GradDip Screenwriting

School of Humanities
Arts, Education and Law
Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

May 2012
Abstract (Minya-ma...)

This exegesis contextualises my doctoral project — the writing of a feature film script, *Kick up Dust* — within contemporary academic discourses on Aboriginal subjectivity. *Kick up Dust* explores how Indigenous people identify and debate the nature of their own Aboriginal consciousness. The script is written in opposition to the way non-Indigenous conceptions of Indigeneity (in popular culture, the mass media, and educational institutions) have historically misrepresented and characterised Indigenous peoples, without regard to their individuality, through stereotyped images that reside in the popular imagination.

Through the vehicle of the exegesis, I explore possibilities for a new theoretical and conceptual framework for an Indigenous pedagogy that does not rely on notions of cultural identity based in historical essentialist constructs - fantasies of exclusivity, cultural marginality, physicality and morality (Paradies, 2006) — to create a binary oppositional relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship. While this may have worked in the past to create an effective political community, it has created a situation whereby Indigenous people whose lived realities and subjectivities do not align with these essentialising fantasies are vulnerable to accusations of inauthenticity (i.e., of not being ‘real’ blackfellas; of not being seen as an authentic Aboriginal) (Paradies, 2006).

My film text explores the tensions created through the taking on of this historical consciousness, while it also seeks to evoke an intuitive third space through an interplay between the sensibilities of narrator-character and audience to suggest an alternative, non-essentialising, contemporary relationship to history and place, in the formation of possible Aboriginal subjectivities.
To achieve this outcome, *Kick up Dust* does not include actual historical characters, but amalgamations and elaborations of historical constructions as well as invented identities. Thus rather than directly refer to particular history, it provokes dialogue with other possibilities in regard to Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical and contemporary interactions. Only by ‘decoupling’ Indigeneity from historically constructed essentialist fantasies can we acknowledge the richness of Indigenous diversity and start on the path towards true reconciliation in Australia.

Ω

**Preface (Yamma)...**

As a nationally-broadcasted scriptwriter, playwright, and as a Kamilaroi Aboriginal Australian First Nation language speaker, I write this paper having privileged access into the world of Indigenous peoples and wanting to share my thoughts in becoming part of a newly-formed Indigenous academy. I say ‘newly-formed’ because of the very low numbers of Indigenous PhDs in Australia with only 260 doctorates obtained by Indigenous peoples within Australia since records were first kept in 1986 by the Australia Bureau of Statistics: a great majority of these doctorates (215) having been completed since 2001, of these 215 there have been 50 completed by course work and 165 completed by research (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). Having joined the ranks of the Indigenous academy only in the last five years, I am interested in understanding why my Indigenous colleagues remain so ambiguous when defining our own Traditional Indigenous Pedagogy. I want to explore how an Indigenous pedagogy, once defined, can be applied in creative writing and/or the production of the academic exegesis, and contribute to a transformatory pedagogy in other disciplines.
The main focus of my doctoral exegesis is, then, the introduction of what I term ‘autobiographical ethnicity’, established as a form of storytelling embedded deep within my own creative practice. Now, I am well aware that, from outside looking in, such a form of narrative could be interpreted as a form of Indigenous epistemology applied as traditional Aboriginal storytelling — except that throughout my dissertation I will use examples that demonstrate how currently there is no workable definition of what constitutes a clear Australian Indigenous epistemology and/or pedagogy formed from within the Indigenous academy. Instead, what I have discovered is that the Indigenous academy still finds itself in a relationship based upon hierarchy and opposition as it attempts to establish itself through a process of ‘deconstruction’ (a specific and historically-particular form of deconstruction) of colonisation.

It is disconcerting that after 200 years as the gatekeepers of the oldest living intellectual property left in the world, we are still arguing the effects of colonisation. It is a position which has more recently taken on a form of academic boundary construction which, rather than create a sense of independence, has instead created a binary trap for my own Aboriginal people. The trap is that a binary relationship of hierarchy, once taken on, becomes impossible to reverse, and only serves to reinforce the power relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples both within and outside of the academy. Therefore, in applying autobiographical ethnicity as my research methodology, I allow myself the opportunity to create a hypothetical academic, cultural and creative third space as a conscious shift away from contemporary Indigenous studies; I move from critique to project, from negative to positive deconstruction as separate and yet equal to each other, in order to reinvent the Indigenous academy in such a way that allows for a move beyond the binary and its associated power relations.
What you are now about to read is the creative component of my dissertation, the completed 5th Draft of the feature film script *Kick up Dust*, which is currently in development with Screen Queensland having been optioned by New Holland Pictures as Producers. The feature film draft is then followed by the academic exegesis explaining my method, autobiographical ethnicity, as the relationship between journey, narrative, writer and audience. In addition there will also appear throughout the exegesis, excerpts from two manuscripts: a novel, *True God: The Story of William O’Halloran*, and a stage play, *The Happily Absorbed*. These manuscripts were written during my candidature and are still at an early concept stage. I see these works as part of the development of *Kick up Dust*, but they are not for examination in this dissertation.

Cool... wana burra-li ma-li wiima-li wana-ma-li ngiyaningunda (let’s start making dreams happen together...)

Marcus

27/04/2012
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the work itself.

Signature  __________________________________________

Date  __________________________________________
## Contents

### Abstract 1

### Preface II

### Statement of Originality V

### Contents VII

### Acknowledgements IX

### PART 1: Creative product 1

*Kick up Dust* (a film script)

### PART 2: Exegesis 119

1. Introduction (Burra-li yulu-gi…) 119
2. Backgrounds to the study (Ngamilma-li-ayla-y) 129
3. An Indigenous academy (Wiringin-dhiiral) 132
4. Autobiographical ethnicity (Gamilaroi winnunguldah) 136
5. A new hypothetical space (Nhuubala winanga-y-baa) 140
6. Kick up Dust (Gigirrma-li warra-y yuu) 150
7. A note on the creative component (Biiba-ga guwaa-lda-ndaay) 153
8. Before the beginning (Gamilu yilaambiyal…) 155
9. Here I’ll tell a story (Nguwa ngay dhubaanma-li gay) 160
10. Autobiographical ethnicity and my stage play (Gamilaroi winnunguuldah gaalanha ngay mubirr-gaalu) 170
11. Moving towards the film script (Guwiinbaa-gi ngamuulah biibabiiba) 199
12. The creative component evolving (Gaba gaay guwaa-lda-ndaay burrul gi-gi-nhi) 209
13. And further, leading to a conclusion (Gaalanha guwiinbaa, dhuurranmay nganbinganbi warran) 236
14. The fluidity of my own written identity (Burranba-li ngay guyungan mubirr-dhu ali-y) 243
15. What inspired the exegesis (Minya burrul burranba-li ngadhan gaa-biibiiba) 261
16. Conclusion (Waarran) 269
17. A final word (Waarraan garaay) 273

Appendices 275

a.) Edwards/Skerbelis Entertainment in Hollywood for Script Assessment and Development Notes 275
b.) Domestic Script Assessment (commissioned by Screen Queensland) Richard Brennan Teralba Films, NSW 289
d.) Written feedback in response to script assessments (commissioned by New Holland Pictures) Louise Gough as Script Editor 313
e.) The revised ‘Written Treatment’ written by Marcus Waters with Louise Gough as Script Editor 319

Bibliography 339
Acknowledgements

Above all, first and foremost I have to say thank you to my wife Rennae who anchored my soul and supported my disposition no matter how difficult I became to live with. Next is my wonderful children… no father could be prouder.

The thesis itself would not have been possible without the dedication, support and patience of my principal supervisor, Assoc Prof Nigel Kruath, who at times went upon the call of duty in remaining accessible via both phone and e-mail and also the friendship of my assoc supervisor, Prof Stephen Stockwell, who began early discussion almost 5 years ago on the topic and has become invaluable on both an academic and a personal level throughout my journey. I need to give my appreciation also to Dr Patrick West who was initially my supervisor before leaving Griffith University for Deakin University in Melbourne, it was Patrick who began the transition from idea to academic text.

I would like to acknowledge the financial, academic and technical support of the School of Humanities at Griffith University and in particular its Head of School, Assoc Prof Jock Macleod and its Production and Facilities Manager, Bevan Bache both of whom became great mates along the way. The great humor of frustrated stand up comedian Professor Paul Tacon a world authority on the cave paintings and study of my people who provided endless hours of entertainment in the hallway during my research.

The Office for Research at Griffith University who provided ethical clearance in acknowledging the wisdom, authenticity and intellectual property belonging to Elders within my community (Protocol Number ART/04/08/HREC). I also need to give thanks to the Indigenous Research Network at Griffith University especially the Manager Dr Chris Matthews and its senior researcher Dr Glenda Nelda as well as my two Kamilaroi sistas Helen and Catherine Demosthenous all of whom became
essential in helping me get over the line. I am also most grateful to Professor Boni Robertson - Office of Indigenous Community Engagement, Policy and Partnerships at Griffith University who took a chance employing me some years ago and provided the opportunity for me to continue a career in Higher Education.

The research itself became authenticated through the investment and time provided by my three uncles Reg Knox, Paul Spearim and Marshell Bell who allowed themselves to be interviewed and recorded providing for me privileged access into the unpublished versions of Kamilaroi, Gamilaroi and Gamilaraay knowledge that proved invaluable as a reliable method of documenting my own families history and knowledge base. Special mention has to go here also to my aunty Kim Orchard whose own unpublished research allowed me to connect the dots of these family histories and traditional philosophies.

The script became possible thanks to first Ursula Cleary, then Development Manager at the Pacific Film and Television Commission (now Screen Queensland) who saw something in me and like Professor Boni Robertson took a chance. Jock Blair, Project Manager – Development at Screen Queensland who convinced me I could write and Cathy Overett as Producer New Holland Pictures who has slowly been turning a dream into reality… special mention has to go to Louise Gouth as script editor for the sophistication and polish she has introduced.

My whânau (family) in New Zealand who introduced me to the literary classics and provided me with the foundation values as a child that have served me throughout my life. Finally, but by no means least, I thank the many unnamed family, friends and colleagues for their ongoing support and encouragement throughout what has been a challenging emotional and ultimately satisfying journey…

Ω
‘KICK UP DUST’

Written by Marcus Waters

(5th Draft)

DEVELOPED IN PART WITH THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF SCREEN QUEENSLAND
1. **EXT. REMOTE PROPERTY – MORNING**

**INTERCUT WITH**

2. **EXT. LARGE CANVAS BOXING TENT – NIGHT**

A remote Queensland property, an Aboriginal male 15 (ELIJAH) fencing with his Grandfather, 55 (RONALD). Deep within his eyes we see a man that has been knocked down... but always got back up.

The fencing is hard and gruelling work.

**REVEAL:** Letter box number - Lot 132 Rowdy Rd. The Sold sticker planted out front.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
My Grandfather was a boxer - a great boxer. People would come from all around just to see him fight.

**BOXING TENT**

A wild buzz of expectation gathering outside...

ELIJAH (V.O.)
He was with the Jimmy Sharman Aboriginal boxing tents. Each of these boxers became an Australian legend... everyone wanted to know them - everyone wanted to be them...

**REVEAL:** high above the crowd hangs a two-metre-high painted canvas - the greats of Australian boxing, Dave Sands, Les Darcy, Ron Richards, George Barnes, Vic Patrick and Jimmy Carruthers...

ELIJAH (V.O.)
The Boxers would take on all comers from around Australia. What was most important was the sense of pride in first getting in the ring - truth is, not many would last more than three rounds.
INSIDE: A young white boy, 18, crushes hard against the canvas. An Aboriginal boxer standing over him...

PROPERTY

The sound of a drum (O.S.) pulsating like a heart beating as Ronald gestures for Elijah to pick up some dirt and place it in a leather pouch. Ronald coughs — rasping and deep from within his chest. Kisses Elijah on the top of his head then ties the pouch around his grandson’s neck.

Elijah looks in awe — stands in the shadow of his grandfather.

BOXING TENT

The beat of the Drum intensifies against the roar of the crowd as Aboriginal Fighters appear on stage.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
I had no idea these men were second class citizens — I just remember giants standing on a raised platform, gladiators — arms folded, glaring down at the audience.

PROPERTY

Ronald and Elijah walk through the front gate, towards an old wooden Queenslander.

CLOSE IN: The Sold sticker.

BOXING TENT

Ronald is centre piece, arms raised ready to fight.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
My Grandfather was a giant... and I wanted to be just like him.

PROPERTY

Ronald and Elijah on the porch overlooking the property, a cut lunch and two freshly made glasses of homemade lemonade...
RONALD
Ngiyani ngiima yilaadhu
yalagiirray ngiyani gimiyandi
gaalanha yilaalu-gi gi...

Elijah doesn’t understand...

RONALD
We are here today as we
were yesterday and will be
forever... it’s a prayer
taught to me by my father and
his father before him!

Elijah smiles as Ronald ruffles his hair.

RONALD
Baluwaal miinba-y nginu-ngay
giirr wangaarrama-li!

BOXING TENT
A thick crowd of men trying to build up courage as the
caller is working hard to entice them into the ring.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
People are drawn to violence,
slow down at a car accident,
cheer as they watch two mates
near kill each other in a pub
fight. I don’t understand it,
but I have seen it...

PROPERTY
Elijah grabs both glasses and plates, takes them inside –
a good boy, with good manners. Ronald coughs blood into
a handkerchief then quickly folds it up...

BOXING TENT
All the fighters are Aboriginal, coal-black, coffee and
bush-honey coloured men with strong thin legs.

REVEAL: Ronald - slightly younger... hair slicked back.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
I had been raised by my
grandfather for as long as I
could remember - the boxing
tents were part of my life
since before I could walk...

BOXING TENT (EARLIER)

SUPER: Seven years earlier

Deafening roar from a large crowd - cheering as perspiration sprays into the air from two boxers matched blow for blow...

REVEAL: Ronald, late 40’s lean and wiry, is beginning to dominate his much younger white opponent - a muscle ridden Aussie stockman. Elijah (seven years old) stands at the back of the tent matching his grandfather’s every move as if a fighter in the ring.

Silence as Ronald lays out his opponent with a sharp right cross to the head. The stockman’s body bounces up against the canvas, stops, limp against the ground. Elijah runs forward and jumps into the ring. Ronald lifts him above his shoulders as the crowd cheers...

CUT TO:

The celebration and atmosphere from the night before is gone, Ronald spars with Elijah - the tent now empty. Ronald moving back against a flurry of punches that defy the young boy’s age. Ronald brushes past Elijah who now off balance is easy prey - Ronald cannons him hard into the floor.

RONALD
Baluwaal miinba-y nginu-ngay
giirr wangaarrama-li!

Ronald sits next to his grandson on the canvas.

RONALD
Never allow yourself to be beaten... come - sing with me... ‘Binaagh mil mara dinaagh...’

Ronald’s words become faster...

RONALD/ELIJAH
‘Binaagh mil mara dinaagh...’

Ronald teaching the language as they touch the different body parts as spoken in the song...
Binaagh: hands up over their ears...
Mil: cover their eyes...
Mara: shake their hands...
Dinaagh: touch their feet...
They then jump up simultaneously...

**RONALD/ELIJAH**

‘*Yolunguu, yolunguu, yolunguu*...’

They break into a shake-a-leg... a traditional Aboriginal dance.

INSERT: O.S. Sound of the crowd cheering from the night before...

PROPERTY

Now finished their lunch they are back at the fence.

**ELIJAH (V.O.)**

It took us three months to fence that old property - we could have got help but Pop insisted we did it ourselves....

Ronald covered in sweat and dirt glistening in the sun.

**ELIJAH (V.O.)**

Six weeks later my grandfather was dead - tuberculosis.

Ronald reveals the same pouch as Elijah around his neck.

**ELIJAH (V.O.)**

I had never met my father, not until my grandfather died, and there was good reason I had been kept me away from him... he was what my grandfather called giniirr, no good.

Ronald mixes concrete with water then empties it into one of the dug holes, throws in his leather pouch before slamming a large piece of wooden fencepost down covering it forever.
ELIJAH (V.O.)
My father took everything
I had after my grandfather
died. The property my
grandfather had bought was
on our traditional homelands
- and then just like my
grandfather...

Elijah seeing this gets more dirt - fills his pouch to the
brim.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
It was gone...

DISSOLVE:

3. INT. DEPARTMENT of community sERVICES - day
SUPER: Fifteen years later
A letter is being typed on government letterhead.

LETTER

Department of Community Services

Mr. Elijah Waters

9 Nambut Cres

Mt ISA QLD 4825

Our Reference: 287170

Dear Mr. Elijah Waters

We are writing to inform you that we recently took
custody of your younger sister: Katelyn Saunders DOB:
31/12/1996 due to the passing of your Father Mr. Les
Saunders of Lot 132 Rowdy Rd Yetman.

Katelyn is currently in foster care with the Department
of Community Services Goondiwindi.

If you wish to discuss this matter further please do not
hesitate to call the office on 1800 232 687

Yours sincerely

Maureen Grayson
Case Manager: Child Protection
4. EXT. REMOTE bus STATION – early morning

A sleepy Queensland border town, a Greyhound bus pulls in. ELIJAH, now 32 years old, rugged handsome Aussie Cowboy holds the leather pouch his grandfather gave him, tucks it under his shirt, looks down at the letter in his other hand. Gets off the bus, folds the letter into his back pocket - the transit centre empty, no one in sight.

5. EXT. REMOTE COUNTRY property – EARLY MORNING

Letter box number - Lot 132 Rowdy Rd. Elijah stands at a front gate held up solely by the fencing wire between the wooden stakes rotted away over time. A Mortgagee for sale sign is beside the gate, ‘All offers will be considered’ - a distant broken house sits in the skyline.

6. INT. REMOTE FAMILY house – EARLY MORNING

Elijah walks through the house, empty - stops at a bedroom. Posters on the wall show it belongs to a young girl; 14-15 years old... he stops to pick up a framed photo of his younger sister (KATELYN) with two adults.

7. INT. DEPARTMENT of community services – morning

Elijah sits across a desk from SHELLY, Aboriginal, in her late 20’s, Katelyn’s Case Manager - her conservative dress hides a deep fear of failure, she appears flustered as she sorts through a number of manila folders and the paperwork that piles up around her.

ELIJAH
Her name is Katelyn, Katelyn Saunders...

SHELLY
Here it is - Katelyn, 14 years old.

ELIJAH
I had no idea I had a sister.

SHELLY
Really?

ELIJAH
My father was a cancer...

Shelly starts skimming through the file.
ELIJAH
Was best to just cut him out...

SHELLY
I am going to arrange a meeting for you both. At Katelyn’s foster home...

ELIJAH
When?

SHELLY
We’ll contact you - do we have your current details?

Elijah shakes his head in disbelief.

ELIJAH
On one of the forms I filled out.

She passes him a card...

SHELLY
Good, if you need to - just call me on this number...

MAUREEN, Shelly’s older, wiser superior enters.

SHELLY
This is my district manager, Maureen. She will brief you on your obligations and procedures before you meet with, [Looks at file]...

Maureen sits down opposite Elijah as Shelly gathers up all her files and paper work – one file left on the table as she leaves. Maureen begins going through the file...

ELIJAH
Katelyn, her name is Katelyn.

8. INT. BANK MANAGER’S OFFICE - DAY

Elijah sits across from GEOFF, the local bank manager. A hard stern-faced figure in his early 60’s.
GEOFF
I wish I had better news. Your father put out a mortgage just before he died. There is still sixty thousand dollars owing on the property...

ELIJAH
What did he do with the money?

GEOFF
He just drank himself to death, that and gambling... It’s a shame, your grandfather was a real hero around these parts, the boxing tents legendary... I’d like to do what I can to keep it in the family. Unfortunately Les wasn’t made of the same substance and just never recovered after the loss of your mother.

ELIJAH
She wasn’t my mother!

Geoff shuffles through some paperwork.

GEOFF
That being said I also have a professional obligation to suggest what’s best for you. That advice would be to just sell and run - cut your losses. It’s your call?

ELIJAH
Can we organise a monthly lease just until I know what I’m doing?

GEOFF
Income?
ELIJAH
After Pop died my Father took everything. I’ve had to work hard - ended up in Mt Isa with my own earth moving business. I do OK...

GEOFF
Ten thousand dollars upfront as security will take her off the market, after that we can establish a more workable lease month by month... OK?

Elijah stands to his feet, nods in agreement.

GEOFF
Welcome home, son...

9. EXT. OLD QUEENSLANDER - AFTERNOON

Elijah is out the front of a locked-up house on acreage. The house appears secluded within its own misery. A tall security fence surrounds the property, two savage guard dogs barking from inside - Elijah calls out.

ELIJAH
Anyone home?

Eyes beading out from behind a curtain pulled at the window - TEDDY, late 40’s, overweight tight blue singlet and even tighter shorts comes out to meet Elijah.

ELIJAH
I’m here to see Katelyn?

Teddy opens the security gate, not too friendly...

TEDDY
C’mon...

Elijah now inside the compound calls over the two dogs.

ELIJAH
Hey boys...

Elijah lets the two dogs smell his hands, scruffs the back of their necks. Teddy yells at the two dogs to get away.
Teddy unlocks front door, they walk inside the house.

10. INT. OLD QUEENSLANDER - AFTERNOON

The house is even more disgusting than its host - Elijah counts seven foster children including KATELYN, a beautiful bright-eyed Aboriginal girl sitting at the dinner table.

KATIE
Hey, I’m Katie!

Before Elijah can answer, Katelyn is grabbed by the arm, it’s MARJ, the foster mother - Teddy’s perfect mate.

MARJ
No talking at the dinner table!

Katelyn (KATIE) sits down to noodles and bread. Her eyes stay fixed on Elijah who is staring at Teddy sitting down to steak and baked vegies.

ELIJAH
I thought your name was Katelyn?

KATIE
No one calls me that, no one...

Marj taps the table reminding Katie not to speak. Elijah stares back at Marj - she is smoking a cigarette staring back at him. Katie eats her noodles quickly then jumps up having finished dinner.

KATIE
So, you’re my big brother...

Marj again taps the dinner table. Gestures to Teddy still eating - Katie goes to sit back down, Elijah has had enough.

ELIJAH
This is no way to be...

The other children all freeze - Teddy finishes his dinner, gestures to one of the girls to gather his dishes.
The other girls all get up and gather their plates leaving Elijah and Katie alone with Teddy and Marj...

TEDDY
And where have you been all these years, mate?

ELIJAH
Don’t talk to me...

MARJ
What? You think you’re some fucking knight in shining armour – I don’t think so!

Teddy puts his hand out offering to shake Elijah’s hand.

TEDDY
Best we start from scratch...

Elijah looks at Katie, still not having moved...

ELIJAH
Get your camp ready, I’ll sort something out...

Teddy’s hand ignored.

TEDDY
You’re making a big mistake...

ELIJAH
Just let me out, I got nothing to say to you...

The other girls have snuck back into the doorway peeping at what’s going on. Elijah looks back at Katie...

ELIJAH
Don’t worry, I’ll be back!

Teddy opens the door and leaves with Elijah. Marj gives Katie a twisted smile.

MARJ
He won’t be back.

Marj looks around at the other children peeking in through the doorway.
MARJ
They never come back.

11. EXT. ROADSIDE - AFTERNOON

Elijah walking as he pulls the card Shelly gave him out of his wallet from his back pocket, he lifts a mobile phone to his ear... makes the call.

RECORDED MESSAGE
You have reached the Child Protection Helpline... this service is for reporting children who are at risk of significant harm... if there is a life-threatening situation please hang up and dial triple zero now... otherwise please listen carefully to the following options... if you need immediate assistance for a child who could be in serious danger press 1. If you are calling about a child who may be at risk of significant harm, press 2. If you would like to verify the I.D. card of a Community Services case worker, please press 3...

Elijah hangs up, throws the card away...

12. EXT. REMOTE COUNTRY PROPERTY - NIGHT

An old abandoned rusty Ute with the hood up spits, shakes and hisses before the engine finally kicks over. Elijah jumps out from the driver’s seat covered in grease, tools everywhere. Throws heavy chains onto the back, places a plastic Tupperware bowl with a lid in the front seat, kisses the pouch of dirt around his neck - slams the hood down...

13. EXT. OLD QUEENSLANDER - NIGHT

Elijah creeps up to the front gate, calls the two dogs over, allowing them to smell the back of his hands.
ELIJAH
Boys, remember me...

He scruffs the back of their necks and then moves down the fence line taking the two dogs with him. He opens the plastic container and spoons out thick chunks of meat and gravy. As the dogs wolf it down, he attaches their collars to heavy chains and locks them to the fence away from the front gate.

Elijah makes his way back to the Ute and retrieves another heavy chain, wraps it around the front gate then returns to the Ute - starts it up and drives forward ripping the fence out from its foundations.

14. INT. OLD QUEENSLANDER - NIGHT

The front door comes flying off at the hinges as Elijah enters - grabs a mobile phone from Teddy who is frozen with fear and smashes it against the wall. The foster children all come running out from their rooms.

ELIJAH
Landline?

One of the girls points to a phone against the wall as Elijah rips it out and throws it to the ground. Katie is carrying a knapsack packed to the brim with a pillow and points to one of the doors. Elijah kicks it in to find Marj trying to make a call on another mobile. Elijah takes the phone off her and smashes it against the floor walks back out to Katie.

ELIJAH
Let’s go!

The other girls stand in a line as Katie gives each a hug as she walks past.

ELIJAH
C’mon, hurry!

Teddy stands between Elijah, Katie and the doorway.

TEDDY
[To Katie]
You need to think about this, there’s no going back once you walk out that door...
Katie stops, Elijah stands beside her as Teddy backs down. The girls look saddened as Katie leaves with Elijah.

15. EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATE NIGHT

Elijah and Katie are in the old Ute. Katie full of energy can’t stop talking.

KATIE
That was amazing, just hectic!!!

Elijah doesn’t speak – just keeps driving.

KATIE
See Marj’s face? What a bitch! And what about fatso, chubam!!! He was scared shitless, couldn’t move. Did you see his face? Fucking faggot!

Katie looks at Elijah stone-faced. She takes off her jumper revealing two perky breasts hiding behind a tight clinging t-shirt... Elijah can’t help but notice, feels uncomfortable. He drives off the road, slams the brakes.

ELIJAH
I met with your case manager and she hasn’t got a clue about what’s going on. The shit on her desk was piled up everywhere. Didn’t even know your name - I have to get you to some family...

KATIE
We don’t have any family...

ELIJAH
Les had a sister - Aunt Delmay in Brisbane...

KATIE
Dad had a sister, and who the fuck is Aunt Delmay?

Elijah starts the Ute up again.
ELIJAH
Stop swearing, and put yah jumper on - it’s cold.

They edge back onto the open road.

ELIJAH
It’s been a while since I seen her I would have been just a little older than you. We have to ditch the ute, find another way out of town...

KATIE
That’s like a thousand years ago...

Elijah lets out the throttle, the Ute increasing speed now on the open road. Elijah again looking over at Katie who looks out the window as she puts her jumper back on...

16. EXT. BACK STREETS GOONDIWINDI - LATE NIGHT

Elijah and Katie walking, Katie stops. Elijah turns around.

ELIJAH
What?

KATIE
I ain’t catching no bus to no Aunty I ain’t never seen...

ELIJAH
Then go back to the house...

KATIE
 Fucking pedo...

ELIJAH
Don’t...

KATIE
I saw you – in the ute, I’m not stupid...

Katie glares back at Elijah – aware of his indiscretion. The moment is broken as a large Greyhound bus drives past them on its way to the bus station.
ELIJAH
That’s our bus, we can argue later...

Katie doesn’t move.

ELIJAH
Look, I just hadn’t noticed how old... mature... you are. I didn’t mean anything...

Katie gives Elijah a smirk. Frustrated, Elijah does the only thing he can - snatches her bag and takes off after the bus.

Katie smiles, Elijah is kinda cute, she then follows after him.

17. EXT. REMOTE BUS STATION – LATE NIGHT

The bus pulls in, the door opens and the Driver gets out with a couple of passengers and retrieves their luggage. The departing passengers make their way into the shadows of the night, the Bus Driver re-boards, closes the door, restarts the bus...

... just as Elijah and then Katie come tearing around the corner - the bus shunts to a stop as the doors open, Elijah gets on board - waits for Katie.

18. INT. GREYHOUND BUS – LATE NIGHT

Katie climbs in, snatches the bag back off Elijah, searches through it.

KATIE
Don’t ever touch my bag again!

Elijah addresses the Bus Driver.

ELIJAH
Brissi...

BUS DRIVER
One or two?

Elijah looks towards Katie, surprised to see her relief as she uncovers a child’s doll wrapped up at the bottom of the bag.
KATIE
Never been to the big city...

Katie packs her doll back into the bag then walks towards a number of empty seats at the back. Elijah turns to the Driver.

ELIJAH
Two please...

19. INT. BUS – LATE NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH

20. EXT OLD QUEENSLANDER – LATE NIGHT

BUS

Elijah, Katie are sitting next to each other, deadly silence... Elijah is the first to speak.

ELIJAH
Was it your mum’s?

Katie pretends not to hear.

ELIJAH
The doll...

This just upsets Katie.

KATIE
Keep asking – and I’ll kill yah!!

Katie looks out the window – closes her eyes.

ELIJAH
Does she have a name?

Katie turns back to stare daggers at Elijah. His mobile ringtone breaks the moment... an old Slim Dusty song – ‘The Pub with no Beer’.

OLD QUEENSLANDER

Shelly with flashing blue police lights everywhere – Teddy and Marj in the background, interviewed by Police.
SHELLY
Elijah, this is Shelly, is Katelyn still with you?

ELIJAH
Katie – her name is Katie!

SHELLY
You need to bring her back immediately.

ELIJAH
Describe her to me – tell me what she looks like and I will consider it?

SHELLY
You have no idea, Elijah, what you are doing!

Katie grabs the phone.

KATIE
Who’s this?

SHELLY
I’m Shelly – your new Case Manager, are you OK?

KATIE
Well listen, Shelly – Fat fuck was touching us OK... I told Superman here and he smashed the fucker’s door down and saved me... so piss off and do yah fucking job!

Katie hangs up, casually hands the phone back to Elijah.

ELIJAH
You’re lying?

KATIE
What’s it matter? Gets the girls out of the house and gives us some time...

The phone rings again
KATIE
You really should do something
about that ringtone, it’s
retarded...

Katie turns back to the window closing her eyes. Slim Dusty stops abruptly as Elijah turns the phone off.

21. EXT. ROADHOUSE – MORNING

The Greyhound bus pulls out onto the highway. Reveal Elijah and Katie walking down the highway.

22. EXT. REMOTE HIGHWAY – MORNING

It’s hot, sun is shining and Katie is coming to the end of her patience – a car flies past them... and then another...

KATIE
Tell me again why we’re not on the bus?

ELIJAH
Just a matter of time before they check it once they find the ute...

KATIE
Check the bus, find the ute?
This ain’t CSI, no one’s gonna check the fucking bus...

Elijah keeps walking – Katie takes off her jumper, ties her t-shirt up just under her chest exposing her stomach and accentuating her breasts - steps out onto the road.

ELIJAH
Pull your shirt down!

KATIE
How long do you want us to be out here?

Katie, waves down an old Holden station wagon... turns back to Elijah.

KATIE
See!!!
Steve, the driver calls out from the car window.

STEVE
You lost, girly, ain’t nothing that way for miles...

KATIE
We need to get to Brissi.

STEVE
Well jump on in, this is yah lucky day!

Katie blows Elijah a kiss, jumps in the back of the car. Elijah walks up opens the front door, looks at Steve.

ELIJAH
She’s only 14...

Steve puts his hands in the air, non-threatening...

STEVE
Just offering a lift, buddy, ain’t asking for no trouble...

The car starts off down the highway.

23. EXT. FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

Roads are getting bigger with more traffic...

24. EXT. FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

They drive past the Greyhound bus pulled over to the side of the road - Police cars stationed either side are questioning Passengers as they get off the bus.

Elijah starts singing the television theme from CSI written by 'The Who'.

KATIE
Funny bastard!!!

25. EXT. ABORIGINAL HOSTEL WEST END - EVENING

Steve drops Elijah and Katie off. A large sign with an Aboriginal flag out front 'Born Free' Aboriginal Hostel.
26. INT. ABORIGINAL HOSTEL (RECEPTION) WEST END – NIGHT

An Aboriginal male, late 50’s UNCLE ALBERT, humble but distinguished - sits behind a desk watching television (Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?).

   UNCLE ALBERT
   Niels Bohr, you bloody idiot...

Elijah and Katie enter.

   ELIJAH
   Hey, we were looking for...

   UNCLE ALBERT
   Shhh!!! Number C...

Elijah’s face tightens, Katie smiling - both watching to see what is on the television. The contestant chooses option A. - Albert Einstein.

   UNCLE ALBERT
   Dumb arse!!!

The contestant is wrong, should have gone with C.) Niels Bohr, as stated by Uncle Albert who gets up to face Elijah and Katie.

   UNCLE ALBERT
   A series of epistemological challenges, Niels Bohr, the author of the standard or Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics...

Albert pauses - can see they have no idea...

   UNCLE ALBERT
   It was the physicist Niels Bohr who presented most challenges to Einstein and his time space continuum of relativity theory. Between the two of them they started a series of debates that changed our world forever...

   KATIE
   C is not a number...
UNCLE ALBERT

Sorry?

KATIE
You said they should pick number C. C is not a number!

ELIJAH
Katie!!!

UNCLE ALBERT
No, the girl is right, now... how can I help?

ELIJAH
Aunty Delmay, Macintosh?

UNCLE ALBERT
Passed away three months ago...

Elijah and Katie are speechless.

UNCLE ALBERT
You didn’t know?

ELIJAH
All I had was this address. We lost touch years ago...

UNCLE ALBERT
Where are you staying? None of the Aboriginal hostels will put up a young fella with a young girl - not a good look if you know what I mean...

KATIE
Gross - he’s my brother!

UNCLE ALBERT
I’m sure he is - could you wait outside please missy, just as I discuss things with your brother.

Katie gives a strained smile - then leaves.
UNCLE ALBERT
I don’t know your situation, truth is I don’t really want to know but we can’t help. Ten years ago, no problem, throw a mattress down sleep on the floor, real blackfella way. Not today, too much carry on in our community... people take advantage of a good heart and then we lose everything, bloody crazy!!!

ELIJAH
Ain’t nothing like that, I just fell out with her father is all - long ago...

UNCLE ALBERT
Delmay Macintosh was your aunty, Les was your father?

Elijah nods in the affirmative...

ELIJAH
So Ronald Waters be your grandfather?

ELIJAH
Yeah, so?

Albert scribbles down an address on a piece of paper.

UNCLE ALBERT
Greatest bare fist boxer I ever saw. You anything like him this might help?

Albert places the piece of paper on the reception desk.

UNCLE ALBERT
You get to be my age you get to know a thing or two about a thing or two. You can’t get anywhere tonight go out past the river, you’ll find a whole host of factories and warehouses. Plenty St Vinnie’s bins you can sleep in there.
Elijah takes the piece of paper.

UNCLE ALBERT
Plus I’ve heard they can be quite comfortable, just till morning...

ELIJAH
I’ll take yah word for it...

Elijah turns and leaves...

27. EXT. WEST END BUSINESS DISTRICT – NIGHT

Elijah is at a teller machine: On its screen: A large balance but no funds available, Elijah takes his card hits the machine and walks past Katie.

KATIE
What’s wrong?

Elijah shakes his head, keeps walking past a group of street kids hiding in the shadows. Two boys who look Aboriginal acknowledge Katie with warm smiles.

ELIJAH
My business partner...

KATIE
You have your own business?

ELIJAH
I had an agreement with the liquidators and I withdrew ten grand to secure Pop’s property, the mongrels have frozen my funds.

KATIE
You had ten grand!

They are out the front of a large redevelopment site. A small bobcat sits sleeping...
ELIJAH
See that bobcat in the yard. I was fifteen when Grandad died. Les took the lot – so I left... got a job as a truckie’s offsider, ended up in Mt Isa. I saved enough to buy me one of those and started a small earthmoving business, backyards, landscaping, putting in pools, whatever work I could find...

KATIE
You can drive that?

ELIJAH
The real money was in the mines, over the years I saved enough for a tip truck, got myself a grader, leased a massive loader, couple of new trucks and she becomes just too big too manage.

KATIE
You did all that?

ELIJAH
Hired a site manager and the bastard ripped me off. I may have lost the lot...

Katie looks over at the bobcat.

KATIE
So what’s she called?

Elijah talks with great pride.
ELIJAH
That’s a 2006 Bobcat T 190
worth around fifty grand.
That’s a baby compared to some
of the beauties I was driving
just before it all turned to
shit. Front riggers and earth
movers with tires on them
bigger than a bus, powerful
machines worth hundreds of
thousands of dollars...

KATIE
Will you get it back?

ELIJAH
Man gets tired of fighting,
when I got the letter about
you I had already wasted sixty
grand in court, that’s when I
decided to check out Pop’s old
property...

Katie looks upset.

KATIE
And me?

ELIJAH
I’m still here, ain’t I?
C’mon, we’re wasting time...

Elijah walks off – Katie follows...

KATIE
Where we going?

ELIJAH
Rent a room...

BEGIN: MONTAGE

28. INT. WEST END HOTEL/MOTEL – NIGHT

Elijah and Katie at reception – a Mediterranean Woman in
her 40’s shakes her head.
29. INT. WEST END LATE NIGHT HOTEL – NIGHT

Elijah and Katie at reception – an elderly Greek Man in his 50’s shakes his head.

30. EXT. WEST END MOTEL – NIGHT

Elijah and Katie knock on the locked Reception door. The bright lit-up ‘Vacancies’ changes to ‘No Vacancies’.

Elijah and Katie walk off.

31. EXT. ALLEYWAY ST VINNIES CLOTHES BIN – LATE NIGHT

Elijah and Katie standing in front of a large St Vinnie’s clothes bin – Katie shakes her head.

    KATIE
    You’re kidding...

    ELIJAH
    Apparently they’re quite comfortable...

Katie reaches up to the slot, Elijah lifts her up.

    KATIE
    I don’t believe this.

Elijah looks up at Katie’s shapely behind as he pushes her above, feels uncomfortable... pushes her through the clothes slot. He slides her swag in after her. Elijah takes out the note written by Uncle Albert, looks down the street - calls to Katie.

    ELIJAH
    Try and get some sleep, I’ll be back later...

32. INT. CLOTHES BIN – LATE NIGHT

Katie stands amongst a pile of old clothes and blankets, yells out to Elijah.

    KATIE
    Don’t you leave me here, Elijah!
Katie rips open plastic bags holding clothes and blankets, scatters them randomly as if she has done this before... she grabs a couple of pillows making a make-shift bed. Katie takes her doll from her swag.

KATIE
He was asking about you...

Katie makes herself comfortable. Looks over to her doll - tucks her in.

KATIE
Don’t worry... he doesn’t have to know everything.

Katie closes her eyes.

33. EXT. WEST END STREET - NIGHT

Elijah turns his phone on. Ten messages from Shelly. He inserts his bank card into an ATM and taps in a withdrawal of $200.00. A look of despair...

The ATM swallows his card - the screen telling him to consult his bank. Elijah looks at the note from Uncle Albert, sees the address 25 Ferry St, puts it back into his pocket and makes his way down the street.

34. EXT. WEST END INDUSTRIAL AREA - NIGHT

Elijah arrives at the address - stops a safe distance from a gathering of people filing into a warehouse. There’s a hub of noise and activity.

35. EXT. BACK OF WAREHOUSE, ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

People shouting, lots of people, Mercedes-Benz, BMW, late model Australian cars parked out back. These people have money. Elijah enters through a side door.

36. INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Elijah is absorbed into the crowd. In the centre, two bare fist knuckle fighters go blow for blow. The gathering is multi-cultural - Asian, Philippine, Polynesian, African, Lebanese, and Greek and Italians with Turks and Arabs running things in the middle.
High class thugs and gangsters - cheering and yelling numbers... it’s mostly men but there’s a smattering of women - including MAXINE late 40’s who is standing next to CHARLIE, in his 50’s and one of the few white guys in the joint. Charlie is in a suit that would have looked great ten years ago - he is shadow boxing along with the fight and cheering... Elijah moves in closer.

An M.C. (O.S.) calls the fight and crunches numbers. One of the fighters goes down with a thud - Charlie stops cheering, throws his hands in the air, his fighter beaten.

Elijah moves in even closer.

REVEAL: The M.C. a cocky well dressed Turk in a suit, AHMED, late 50’s - gleaming.

Maxine goes with her first-aid kit to help the beaten fighter.

Charlie puts his head down before turning to Ahmed, hands him a large wad of money. Charlie is then jostled by some of the mob angry at having lost money on his fighter. As Charlie makes his way through the jeering mob we see Elijah move ever closer towards him, follows Charlie out away from the rest of the crowd...

37. INT WAREHOUSE OPEN BAR - NIGHT

Charlie, an Irish charmer and rogue, sits down at the bar. He buys a glass of ginger ale and with a concealed flask of whisky makes himself a scotch and dry. He then lights a cigarette as he opens the racing guide, Elijah now standing directly opposite.

CHARLIE
When you’re ready? I’ve got all day.

ELIJAH
I need you to get me in...

Charlie puts down the paper.

CHARLIE
I got a fighter!

ELIJAH
Yeah, busted and bleeding...
CHARLIE
He laid down on me tonight...

Elijah takes the wallet from his jeans pocket, puts $250 on the bar - all he has. Charlie scoops up the money.

CHARLIE
Petty change...

ELIJAH
I just threw ten grand on a lease I couldn’t afford. I need the money...

CHARLIE
What’s in it for me?

ELIJAH
Plenty when I win...

Charlie gets up off his chair.

CHARLIE
Let’s go - see what you’ve got...

Charlie jumps up, counts the money, then folds it over in his hand - walks back towards the action, Elijah follows.

38. INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Elijah and Charlie return to the scene. Most of the earlier crowd have already left...

AHMED
Wudda yah know. Charlie’s back with another loser...

Only the diehards are left. Charlie addresses the crowd.

CHARLIE
OK gentleman, Ahmed looks tired wants to go home, but I say there’s always time for another fight, c’mon let’s build the pot. Never seen the Cowboy before in my life approached me at the bar, easy money!!!
Men start to come forward placing bets as another fighter, DATU, a Philippine - tattooed and wiry walks into the centre of the stage... eyeballs Elijah.

Ahmed looks out towards one of his many goons, CURLY an Irish Pug!

```
AHMED
Alright Charlie, you want to play with pocket money, it’s all yours...
```

Curly moves forward, Ahmed whispers in his ear, both men laugh as they leave... Datu moves around the space occupied by the two fighters, he stops at different times and appears to pray - bowing down on one leg with his head buried into his chest before moving towards another spot.

Elijah listening to Datu as he chants in his native tongue... Datu shapes up ready to fight...

```
ELIJAH
You praying?
```

```
DATU
An acknowledgement...
```

Without warning Datu swings a punch and the fight is on. Elijah easily sways out of the way - moves in, striking Datu flush on the chin. Maxine, now next to Charlie, nods her approval. Datu with a side kick, Elijah blocks it - strikes Datu twice in the chest forcing him backwards.

```
CHARLIE
Shit, this Cowboy can fight.
First opportunity, I want you in there and stop the fight...
```

Elijah moves in closer as they exchange a number of blows. Datu connects with a head butt stunning Elijah. Datu knees Elijah in the groin, Elijah falls to the ground as Datu sweeps his legs out from underneath him. Datu is quickly on top of him - one, then two more head butts - then punches Elijah twice around his right eye. Elijah pushes him off with immense strength.

```
CHARLIE
Quick, get in there and tell him to stay down...
```
Elijah goes to get back up to his feet but Maxine has already got to him.

MAXINE
Stay down...

Elijah looks up at Maxine...

ELIJAH
No!

MAXINE
You wanna make some real money, stay down.

Elijah focused on Maxine does not see Datu coming up over the top – Elijah knocked out cold – blacks out.

39.  EXT.  PARK BENCH BRISBANE RIVER – MORNING

Morning sun - Maxine shines a light into Elijah’s eyes – Charlie all smiles as Elijah starts to come to. Elijah’s POV: slightly out of focus – Maxine digs her fingers into Elijah’s right eye socket... he jumps.

ELIJAH
That hurts...

MAXINE
Like pussy hurt, or real hurt?

ELIJAH
I’ve had worse...

MAXINE
Bit of swelling around yah right eye, how’s your focus?

ELIJAH
I can see...

MAXINE
We’ll need to keep an eye on it, put your head back...

As Elijah puts his head back he notices two burly guys standing over him, he instantly raises both arms as if to defend himself...
MAXINE
Ease up, Cowboy - you think we carried you here by ourselves, now put your head back...

Elijah puts his head back keeping his left eye on the two burly strangers - Maxine puts a couple of drops into his right eye - tends to a cut just above the eye with coagulant salve and tapes it up. She then packs up the first-aid kit, looks over at Charlie.

MAXINE
Just gotta watch that eye - call me later...

Charlie nods - Maxine walks off with the other two guys.

CHARLIE
Where’d you learn how to fight like that?

Elijah gets up sore - he’s beaten up pretty bad.

ELIJAH
I got my arse kicked...

CHARLIE
You should have just stayed down like you were told.

ELIJAH
Just throw the fight?

CHARLIE
First rule of the game - never miss an opportunity to make some real money, no one really saw your fight.

Elijah walks across the park, Charlie follows...

CHARLIE
I got a real good feeling about you, Cowboy. Let me buy you breakfast.

ELIJAH
I have to be somewhere...
CHARLIE
I know a fighter when I see one, and you Cowboy are a fighter...

Charlie hands Elijah a card, now at the end of the park.

CHARLIE
Take my card. Address and details on the back...

Elijah takes the card, turns to walk away - Charlie calls out to him.

CHARLIE
Call me, Cowboy – you won’t regret it...

Elijah keeps walking...

40. EXT. WHAREHOUSE ALLEYWAY - MORNING

Elijah gets to the St Vinnie clothes bin, hits the side.

ELIJAH
Katie!!

No answer, lifts himself up and pokes his head in to have a look - slides back down.

ELIJAH
Shit...

41. EXT. MUSGRAVE PARK - MORNING

Elijah limps through the park, notices Katie is sitting with a group of Aboriginal people under a large tree. Uncle Albert is there - Elijah looks uncomfortable around the mob as he confronts Katie.

They are listening to Slim Dusty...

ELIJAH
Katie, what’s doing?

Katie looks up, can see the bruising around Elijah’s eye.

KATIE
What happened to you?
ELIJAH
Nothing – let’s go...

Albert turns the music down.

UNCLE ALBERT
I see you looked up the address I gave you, how was it?

ELIJAH
I’m still walking...

An Aboriginal man, EDDIE, mid 30’s - not friendly...

EDDIE
Looks like you got pussy whipped, yah bitch!

The group laughs, Albert raises his hand and they stop.

UNCLE ALBERT
Unfortunately, as you can see, we are nowhere as friendly a people as we once were...

EDDIE
Piss off, Albert...

Elijah looking more and more uncomfortable...

ELIJAH
Katie, please I want to go!

Albert nods for her to go with Elijah.

UNCLE ALBERT
Go on, Missy, nothing more important than family...

Katie says her goodbyes to a couple of the older women, kissing them both on the cheek. Albert addresses Elijah.

UNCLE ALBERT
You ever feel the need to come home - you know where to find us...

Elijah leaves with Katie in tow as Albert turns the music back up - it’s Slim Dusty’s The Pub with no Beer.
KATIE
Hey, that’s your ringtone!

ELIJAH
Just keep walking...

Katie leaves with Elijah.

42. INT. WEST END BUSINESS DISTRICT - DAY

Katie and Elijah still walking...

KATIE
What is wrong with you?

ELIJAH
That is not who we are meant to be...

Elijah stops - looks directly back at Katie.

ELIJAH
The Aboriginal men I grew up with did not sit around in parks... they had respect and dignity, men who knew how to carry themselves...

Katie is taken aback.

KATIE
That - back there... is all I know... understand? And I am only here now - because Uncle Albert said... and you wanna talk about dignity - you got me sleeping in a fucking bin.

Elijah closes his eyes - takes a deep breath, takes Charlie’s card from his back pocket.

ELIJAH
I found someone who might be able to help us... really help us.

Elijah waves the card in front of Katie....
ELIJAH
And for the last time - stop fucking cursing!

Elijah resumes walking, looks back at Katie - who then follows after him.

43. EXT. HOSTEL: BOARD & LODGING. - AFTERNOON.

Elijah and Katie pause outside the hostel. Katie looks apprehensive. It’s barely a one star.

44. INT. HOSTEL: BOARD & LODGING - AFTERNOON

Charlie is with TERRY, an elderly Greek gentleman in his early 50’s. They both greet Elijah and Katie.

CHARLIE
Glad you called, Cowboy, this is Terry - he’ll look after everything.

Terry takes Elijah’s bag, but Katie won’t give hers up.

CHARLIE
Come on, time is money, we have a feed waiting for you then Terry will show you both to your rooms...

Elijah and Katie are both ushered out back.

45. INT. HOSTEL: KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Spaghetti bolognaise with garlic rolls is laid out.

CHARLIE
C’mon Cowboy, get stuck in, we start tomorrow...

KATIE
Tomorrow?

CHARLIE
Training, your brother here is going to make us all some money, plenty of money...
Katie throws Elijah a puzzling look – Elijah smiles back.

46. INT. HOSTEL: TWO BEDROOM UNIT – NIGHT

Elijah enters with Katie, Terry follows, holding blankets and pillows. The room is dark and silent, a kitchenette with just a sink and a microwave. A table and chairs in the middle of the room – two doors leading to bedrooms.

TERRY
Looks rougher than it is, share bathroom with the other tenants down the hall. Oh yeah, and river views if you climb up on the roof.

Terry smiling at his own joke – Katie gives a sarcastic smile back, Elijah as silent as the room.

TERRY
Two bedrooms, we have more furniture locked up in dah shed downstairs if you want it?

ELIJAH
I like it just the way it is.

TERRY
One hundred and eighty dollars a week but you can discuss dat wit Charlie.

Katie disappears through a side door. Terry puts the blankets and both pillows on the table.

TERRY
She OK, doesn’t talk much? We can always do with a helping hand in the kitchen?

ELIJAH
She’s fine...

Terry nods then exits. Katie comes back into the room grabs blankets and a pillow.

KATIE
Got my room...
Katie heads back to her room now fully equipped...

47. EXT: WEST END GYM – MORNING

Elijah and Katie look up at a rundown gym. Elijah enters as something unseen down the street has taken Katie’s attention...

ELIJAH

C’mon...

Katie follows Elijah inside, but is still drawn to something further down the street.

48. INT. WEST END GYM – MORNING

Charlie is there already waiting with Maxine. The gym is unused and very clean. Charlie does the quick introductions.

CHARLIE

Maxine, this is...

KATIE

Katie...

CHARLIE

And you already know Elijah...

KATIE

So are you two like, together?

ELIJAH

Katie!

MAXINE

Don’t worry, love, even I ask myself that same question, believe it or not he was quite a handsome fella once, our Charlie...

Charlie smiles – Elijah begins hitting a punching ball.

MAXINE

You have real speed – how’s the eye?

Elijah dismisses the question with a shake of the head.
KATIE
Charlie said Elijah’s gonna make us all rich...

MAXINE
Don’t know about that – but if it’s quick money you need Charlie’s your man, he can get yah brother plenty of fights, great odds, been in the fight game a long time Charlie and I, this was my father’s gym...

Katie, not really listening – her earlier attention taken by a group of girls in private school uniforms now walking past.

MAXINE
Talking about having plenty of money...

One of the girls, CHRYSAL, looks Aboriginal in appearance – Katie can’t stop looking at her.

ELIJAH
We need to discuss a cut?

CHARLIE
That’s a conversation for you and me, privately, but Maxine. She’s ten percent with expenses. That’s not negotiable.

ELIJAH
Expenses?

MAXINE
Trust me, Cowboy. You get yah money’s worth. I keep you in shape – mend all yah cuts and bruises so you can keep fighting...

Katie follows the girls outside, unnoticed by the others.
49. EXT. BOUNDARY ST WEST END - DAY

Katie continues to follow the girls keeping her distance... makes direct eye contact with Chrystal who looks straight through her, this upsets Katie and she decides to go back to the gym.

She cuts through an alleyway only to be confronted by four muscular young Lebanese Gang Members.

GANG MEMBER 1
Shu sexy...

Katie tries to walk past but is blocked by Gang Member 1.

GANG MEMBER 2
Apo-piso!

Katie now surrounded. Elijah arrives just in time!!!

ELIJAH
Katie – you OK?

Gang member 1 grabs Katie, things become serious, hands her off to Gang Member 2.

KATIE
Fucking leave me alone!

The other two thugs step forward.

ELIJAH
We’re not looking for trouble...

Gang Member 1 geeing up his boys...

GANG MEMBER 1
Ay Abo, let me fuck ya’ girl...

The other men start laughing. Elijah looks over at Gang Member 2 now holding Katie by the shoulders – Gang Member 1 goes to push his finger into Elijah’s chest...

GANG MEMBER 1
Abo, bitch...
Without warning Gang Member 1 is spun around by his own hand, Elijah wrenching the man’s arm behind his back. Elijah increases the pressure of the hold bringing Gang Member 1 down to his knees - Elijah bends down whispering into his ear.

ELIJAH
Don’t you call me Abo...

Gang Member 2, still holding Katie - gestures for Gang Member 3 to step in - Elijah using Gang Member 1 as a springboard takes out Gang Member 3 with a side kick that hits him hard to the side of the head - the man collapses to the ground... out cold. Mexican stand-off as Elijah still holds Gang Member 1, stares at the last two Gang Members still standing - Gang Member 2 lets go of Katie.

ELIJAH
Too late for that bro!!!

Elijah lets go of Gang Member 1 as he lets fly with a violent roundhouse kick that cleans up Gang Member 4 - out cold. Gang Member 1 gets back up to his feet shaking his wrist, takes a blade out from his back pocket and holds it in his good hand - he and Gang Member 2 also now with a blade begin to move around Elijah.

Both men charge from opposite directions.

Elijah flips Gang Member 2 into the legs of Gang Member 1 knocking him over. Elijah then lets fly with a flurry of punches that connect one after the other with Gang Member 2 who stands momentarily after taking every blow of the onslaught... then falling back unconscious.

Gang Member 1 gets to his feet - displays a series of choreographed and well practiced moves with his blade. Elijah smiles shakes his head, not impressed - hits Gang Member 1 flush in the front of his face with just one punch breaking Gang Member 1’s nose and throwing him backward onto the ground... out cold.

Katie stands in the middle of the carnage, bodies sprayed around her like ten pins.

KATIE
What the fuck?
ELIJAH
Let’s get out of here - quick...

Elijah grabs Katie as they walk off - Elijah carefully watching for any witnesses left behind.

50. INT. HOSTEL: TWO BEDROOM UNIT - DAY

Katie and Elijah enter.

ELIJAH
Sit down!

Katie sits at the table.

ELIJAH
You can’t just walk off like that...

KATIE
That was fucking hectic!!

ELIJAH
Are you listening?

Katie has had enough, gestures around the room.

KATIE
Look around this room, Elijah. This is all I have, and I don’t know how long I have this...

ELIJAH
You could have got seriously hurt...

KATIE
I didn’t do anything wrong...

Elijah is overcome with emotion, not used to feeling for another human being...

ELIJAH
I should never have gone to Goondiwindi - waste of bloody time...
KATIE
What!

Emotion that until now he has kept deep within...

ELIJAH
I should have just left you in that dump...

Katie lunges at Elijah trying to punch him... Elijah blocks every punch, holds Katie close to his chest, Katie unable to move... an awkward - almost sexual tension is felt between them, this upsets Katie deeply.

KATIE
OK, you should just let me go...

Elijah lets her go...

ELIJAH
I’m sorry...

KATIE
I’m going to bed. I promise I won’t walk off again...

Katie walks to her bedroom, Elijah deeply humiliated by the energy between them.

51. INT. WAREHOUSE WEST END - NIGHT

Elijah is with Charlie and Maxine - they make their way towards another fight. Curly and Datu are warming up, Curly stretching and punching the air as Datu goes through his religious ritual.

Elijah talking with Maxine.

ELIJAH
Things are getting a little crazy with Katie...

MAXINE
Whatever it is - get over it! She’s becoming a young woman and she needs to feel safe, secure... and you’re all she has.
CHARLIE
Switch on, Cowboy. This is research, part of your education.

Curly takes off his shirt - an imposing figure.

MAXINE
The Irishmen is the one we want you to watch, he’s only ever lost the one fight...

ELIJAH
Who to?

CHARLIE
Losia – big Samoan monster, real animal... moved on to cage fighting in the States chasing the big money. You don’t ever want to fight him...

Maxine points out Ahmed.

MAXINE
That’s Ahmed, Curly’s Manager, one of the biggest brokers in town. Bastard has broken Charlie three times...

The fight is about to start, Curly smiling as he walks in towards Datu – Ahmed screaming to the crowd.

AHMED
Last call!!!

A few more people come forward putting money in Ahmed’s hands - the fight starts.

CHARLIE
So I guess we should talk deal, eh?

Datu, quicker and nimble keeps a distance from Curly who is stronger, more powerful. Datu begins to jab but Curly has an impenetrable defence, a forehead as hard as rock which he bows down like a bull between his shoulders with his fists raised high.
ELIJAH
You want to discuss this now as I’m watching the fight?

CHARLIE
Fifty-fifty on all scratch bets and expenses, seventy-thirty I keep all side bets. That’s how it works.

Datu keeps jabbing Curly’s forehead - like hitting rock hurting his hand. Attempts to side kick Curly who grabs Datu by the leg and smacks him to the ground.

ELIJAH
Sixty-forty my favour all scratch bets and you keep expenses. I ain’t paying no expenses, all side bets down the middle...

Datu arches his back and springs back up to his feet. Curly still smiling - makes his way in towards Datu. Curly taking blows to the head and arms... no effect. Suddenly Curly launches forward into a flurry of kicks and punches that stun Datu, Curly then lets loose a flying side kick that sends Datu again to the ground.

CHARLIE
Shit Cowboy, all I’m asking is the going rate. Ask anybody?

Elijah watching Curly’s every move...

ELIJAH
Right now Charlie you have a percentage of nothing!

This time Curly lets Datu get back to his feet. Curly lets loose with a relay of punches to the chest and body of Datu which again has him swaying on his feet.

ELIJAH
We’re going to do things a little differently...

Curly now has Datu by the shoulders begins a series of cruel head butts - one after the other. Datu is helpless held up only by Curly.
ELIJAH
And I have to face that...

Curly looks over at Ahmed like a gladiator waiting for his Emperor’s signal - Ahmed nods his head. A sudden final and brutal head butt sending Datu to the floor - bloodied and broken as he hits the ground... Maxine butts in having been listening in to the entire conversation.

MAXINE
We do it your way...

CHARLIE
Bloody hell, Maxine, what are you doing to me?

MAXINE
How long are you going to be Ahmed’s whipping boy, Charlie? No one saw this boy fight. This could be our one real chance... our last chance!

Maxine looks directly at Elijah...

MAXINE
You hurt this Irish bastard Elijah OK, you understand!!!

Elijah looks over at Curly with Ahmed across the crowd, Curly a strong and intimidating man not tested by Datu. Elijah nods back at Maxine - accepting the challenge...

52. INT. HOSTEL: BOARD & LODGING - AFTERNOON

Elijah anxious, sits alone in the room - Katie enters carrying a brown paper bag, wearing a large pair of cheap sunglasses, clothes that make her look older than she is.

ELIJAH
Where’ve you been?

KATIE
Shopping, Terry gave me a job in the kitchen, fifty bucks - this place has the best op shops ever...

Katie posing...
KATIE
You like?

ELIJAH
You look older - too old...

Katie is stunning - Elijah again made to feel uneasy...

ELIJAH
You promised you wouldn’t just walk off again - what happened yesterday?

Elijah’s discomfort makes Katie feel uneasy...

KATIE
I was working...

Katie puts the brown paper bag on the table, rips it open - an assortment of Chinese dinners and a bottle of coke.

KATIE
That’s what I did with the rest of the money...

Katie sits at the table.

KATIE
You eating?

Elijah sits with Katie across from the table. Katie now having served two plates slides one across to Elijah, she pours two glasses of coke.

KATIE
I’ll take the clothes back.

ELIJAH
Can we talk about last night?

Trying to ease the awkwardness between them Katie takes her doll from her bag - sits her at the table.

KATIE
This is Lucy - she belonged to my Mother. I took her when she passed...

Elijah is taken aback with Katie - the doll a reminder of just how young/vulnerable she really is...
ELIJAH
Lucy...

KATIE
Lucy, her name is Lucy, and no... I don’t want to talk about last night...

ELIJAH
Are we OK?

KATIE
Are you leaving?

ELIJAH
No...

KATIE
Then we’re OK...

Elijah raises his glass.

ELIJAH
To Lucy!

Katie raises her glass.

KATIE
To Lucy...

Silence as they both eat their meal...

53. EXT. ESK, BIKERS HANGOUT - DAY

Back paddock, Bikers club – large gates open to allow Charlie’s old Mercedes to enter. They drive around the back to a gathering with a pig on a spit. There are ten maybe twelve Bikers with women and family – kids playing on a swing, guarded by Rottweilers and Staffies.

The car stops. Elijah gets the door for Maxine.

MAXINE
Thanks, Cowboy...

Charlie now out of the car can’t stop smiling.

CHARLIE
We need to keep you away from prying eyes, mate...
A tall biker, CHINO, early 40’s wearing denim with a Southern Cross bandana taps another Biker on the chest, walks over to the group - greets Charlie.

CHINO
Charlie?

CHARLIE
You must be Chino, good to meet yah!

Chino addresses Maxine.

CHINO
So who do we have here?

MAXINE
I’m the trainer, Maxine...

CHARLIE
What can I say? I’m an equal opportunity employer.

Chino and Maxine shake hands - Chino looks at Elijah.

MAXINE
And that’s Cowboy. Doesn’t say much, talks with his fists.

CHINO
Well, let’s see how much talking he does today.

Chino points to a huge monstrous burly thug, PATCH, angry shaven head with a beard and tattoos, early 40’s. They each put money down. The Biker’s kids are sent away.

54. INT. BIKER’S HANGOUT - DAY

Elijah and Patch come out to fight. They are in the middle of an old unused cattle pen sodden with mud. They square off, people scream for blood. Patch comes forward, two punches. Elijah sways back avoiding both punches with ease. Elijah takes up an old style gentleman’s boxing stance, everyone laughs.

CHARLIE
What’s he doing?
Again Patch rushes forward as Elijah sways out of the way and lands two firm punches to Patch’s ribs as he clumsily falls past.

Maxine
Back to what he knows...

Elijah lands two solid jabs straight to Patch’s face before the big biker can respond. Patch swings wildly only to have Elijah plant another three blows to his ribs. Elijah jumps back out of the way as Patch throws a rally of wild punches none of which make contact. Chino is angry, shaking his head as he looks over at Charlie. Patch is standing a good two feet from Elijah who doesn’t move. Patch taking in deep breaths.

Patch then screams out like a wounded animal as he rushes Elijah who again calmly moves to one side – delivering another body of blows into the side of Patch’s ribs. Patch stands in the one spot, tries to catch his breath. Maxine looks concerned...

Maxine
There’s something wrong...

Even though he is much bigger and more powerful, Patch can’t land a blow on Elijah. He starts swinging wildly, furiously, in the hope he can land just one knockout blow, but Elijah is slowly wearing him down – Patch is helpless to stop the onslaught. He stands again trying to catch his breath.

Charlie
Why doesn’t he just finish him?

Maxine
His mind’s not on the fight...

Elijah undone by his own absence as once again Patch charges forward, this time catching Elijah in a savage bear hug. Patch begins squeezing Elijah tight. Elijah struggles to get free – Patch lands a violent head butt just over Elijah’s right eye opening the cut where Datu caught him earlier. Elijah loses sight momentarily – a bright light creates a silhouette around him.
He’s hurt!

The crowd picks up in intensity, Chino cheers. Elijah responds with a vicious head butt of his own – Patch is stunned. Elijah hits him again with another head butt, another one as Elijah becomes incensed with fury – strikes Patch again. The third head butt is too much for Patch and he releases Elijah who responds with a flying roundhouse kick to Patch’s hurt ribs that knocks the thug backwards – Elijah then lets loose with a flurry of punches into the face that send Patch falling helplessly into the mud.

Elijah stomps down hard on Patch’s ribs – Patch screams out in agony – Elijah then drops his knee into Patch’s ribs causing him to keel over into a baby foetal position... unable to move. Elijah finishes it with a king hit that knocks Patch out cold. Elijah’s onslaught is vicious and brutal, hard to watch – even for this hardened crowd.

The fight over – Elijah stands over Patch, he is breathing heavy opening and closing his eyes trying to regain his focus – he looks angry with himself... frustrated. Maxine gets to him and works the cut with an adrenaline solution and coagulant salve.

What the hell was that?

Nothing, just shook me was all...

That’s not what I’m talking about - and you know it!

Charlie heads towards Chino, who takes off his bandana and throws it to the ground – angry... Charlie gets to Chino and bends over picking up the bandana – dusts it off and hands it back to Chino.

Shit, mate – yah can’t win them all...

Chino snatches back his bandana.
CHARLIE
Just give us our money and we’ll be on our way.

Chino takes a wad of cash from his inside pocket.

CHINO
This has been a bit of a set back for me, old mate. Didn’t think anyone could get through my bloke that easy.

CHARLIE
Truth be told – I didn’t know the Cowboy had that much mongrel in him...

Chino holds the money.

CHINO
I’m thinking you may have just had a real lend of me Charlie, that was just a little too easy...

Chino puts the money back in his inside pocket...

CHARLIE
Hey! I want my money!!!

Charlie is becoming heated, this has caused others including Elijah to move in closer.

ELIJAH
What’s happening?

CHINO
You’re a ringer, Cowboy, wasn’t a fair fight...

One of the other Bikers steps forward, stands beside Chino – lifts his jacket to reveal a handgun.

CHINO
If you want your money you’re gonna have to take it...

Elijah, Charlie and Maxine are heavily outnumbered.

MAXINE
I think we should leave...
CHARLIE
This is not how you do business...

ELIJAH
Charlie, let’s just get back in the car.

CHINO
That’s good advice. You should all just piss off before I feed you to my pigs.

Charlie follows Maxine to the car - Elijah makes up the rear, sizing up the compound. Chino looks around at his thugs as Charlie drives away.

CHINO
See, now that’s how yah do business...

The men all laugh.

55. EXT. BIKERS HANGOUT - NIGHT

Elijah comes out from the shadows, walks down towards a large fence, calls over two large dogs, allows them to lick and smell his wrists - he gets to his feet, keeps a hand down for the dogs, the other opens the gate.

ELIJAH
Good boys...

Elijah scruffs up both dogs in a playful manner.

ELIJAH
Go on, shoo, go and play...

The two dogs leave, jumping over each other like puppies.

56. INT. BIKERS HANGOUT - NIGHT

The Bikers have been celebrating hard their shallow victory over Elijah and Charlie, drugs and alcohol everywhere, only seven of the Bikers remain standing - playing pool. The others, hung out and bent over, falling asleep where they drop - three ladies sitting on a couch. Chino is with one of the girls.
Elijah sets himself at the back of the room. Charlie drives up to the front - beeps his horn and flashes his headlights through the front window. The bikers and girls now distracted allow Elijah to move in on Chino quickly, now has him held, arm behind his back.

Elijah throws a quick couple of kidney punches into Chino before spinning him around like a drunken ballerina who falls to the ground - Elijah now stands in the centre of the room holding Chino’s gun - bikers all around him...

ELIJAH
You owe me some money...

One of the guys playing pool charges Elijah who sways out of the way at the same time sweeping the legs of the biker out from underneath him. The biker somersaults through the air coming down on his back with a thud. Elijah catches the pool cue mid-flight before it can hit the ground. Elijah smiles, tucks the gun into his belt looks at the remaining bikers standing around him.

Elijah then suddenly moves in for the attack - he spins the pool cue around swiftly and precisely like giant nun-chucks - takes out two of the guys’ shins, the other he spins back around taking out his legs. Then, turns on the other Bikers, he spins around like a pinball and takes them out one by one with the pool cue.

Elijah now stands in the middle of the Bikers who lie all around him like fallen ten pins - the entire onslaught on the Bikers’ lair over as quickly as it began. Elijah stands over Chino, prods him repeatedly with the gun.

ELIJAH
Where’s my money?

Charlie and Maxine walk in.

CHARLIE
Elijah, stop...

ELIJAH
It's OK, I took them all out...

MAXINE
Seriously Elijah, stop.
Suddenly another dozen Bikers walk in holding Charlie and Maxine by gunpoint. RONNIE, an old Biker in his early 60’s takes centre stage. Elijah stands hands raised. Ronnie ignores the three strangers and moves quickly towards Chino – hits him hard on the back of the head.

RONNIE
How many times I have to clean up your bloody mess?

Elijah carefully hands the gun to Ronnie.

ELIJAH
We don’t want any trouble...

RONNIE
Who did all this?

CHARLIE
He owes us money...

RONNIE
Is that right?

One of the Bikers gingerly gets up off the floor...

BIKER
It was the young Abo – flogged Patch and Chino refused to pay...

Chino - getting up off the floor rubbing his head.

CHINO
Dad, it was just too easy...

RONNIE
Too easy, what the fuck is wrong with you, boy?

Ronnie then walks over to Patch, badly beaten...

RONNIE
Looks like you got hit by a fucking bus!!!

CHARLIE
Five grand, that’s what he owes...

Ronnie turns to Chino.
RONNIE
Shit, son. Five grand...

RONNIE
[To Elijah]
You did all this - where did you learn how to fight?

ELIJAH
My Grandfather - he was part of the old Jimmy Sharman boxing tents...

RONNIE
Those men were legends...

Ronnie looks over at Chino...

RONNIE
Real men each and every one of them... what was his name?

ELIJAH
Ronald Waters...

RONNIE
Shit, Ronald Waters was the best bare fist, bloody knock 'em down boxer I ever saw...

Ronnie grins, looks over at Patch...

RONNIE
You never stood a bloody chance... shit someone get some fucking bourbon, we’re going to fucking party!!!

Charlie and Maxine watch on as Elijah gets swept away by Ronnie and his crowd of Bikers into another room.

MAXINE
Looks like we’re staying?

CHARLIE
Looks like...

57. EXT. SHOPPING DISTRICT WEST END - MORNING

Charlie’s old Mercedes pulls over as Elijah gets out.
MAXINE
You sure we can’t give you a lift home, love?

ELIJAH
No, Katie will still be at work and I want to surprise her with a few things before she gets home...

MAXINE
Elijah, all of us in the fight game remember the tents. You have the potential to play real testimony to those men, Elijah – to make your Grandfather really proud...

Elijah acknowledges Maxine - with a nod and smile - the old Mercedes pulls out from the curb, Charlie never one for sentiment drives off.

58. INT. OP SHOP WEST END SHOPPING DISTRICT – MORNING

Katie is exchanging the clothes she purchased the previous day with others more suitable...

ELDERLY WOMAN
Are you sure, love? I thought you looked very sophisticated...

KATIE
They weren’t appropriate, thank you...

The elderly woman packs them away and picks up the clothes Katie wants to exchange – a t-shirt with Minnie Mouse on the front and jeans.

59. EXT. OP SHOP WEST END SHOPPING DISTRICT – MORNING

As Katie exits the shop she walks into the group of school girls she saw at the Gym. Katie and Chrystal make eye contact but ignore each other as Chrystal enters the shop - Katie walks away before stopping, she turns and heads back...
Chrystal and the other girls are spread throughout the shop looking at clothes – Chrystal looks up to see Katie standing directly opposite her...

KATIE
Why do you look through me, like you don’t see me?

CHRYSAL
I saw you – you were following us the other day...

KATIE
You didn’t acknowledge me...

CHRYSAL
I don’t know you.

Chrystal’s friends, CAROL, ABBY and MENA all gather around.

CHRYSAL
My Mother doesn’t like me talking with Aboriginals... thinks they’re no good.

KATIE
Wutta you?

Katie looks around at the girls all staring at her.

CAROL
Why does it matter, what she is?

Katie, trying not to let on just how confronted and humiliated she is by what’s happening.

KATIE
It doesn’t...

CAROL
You asked...

Katie still trying to hold herself together...
CHRISTAL
Well I think it matters, I’m not ashamed by what I am, she just wants a better life for me - that’s all...

KATIE
There’s nothing wrong with being Aboriginal...
The girls dismiss any interest in what Katie has to say, move away leaving her alone with Chrystal.

CHRISTAL
I’m proud I’m Aboriginal...
I’m just not all in your face about it - like someone...

Katie doesn’t know if she wants to hit Chrystal or admire her, just knows she feels out of depth.

KATIE
You know what, it doesn’t even matter...

Abby walks over to Chrystal as Katie leaves...

ABBY
That was weird...

CHRISTAL
Shut up, Abby...

Chrystal walks off leaving Abby shaking her head...

61. INT. HOSTEL: BOARD & LODGING - AFTERNOON

Katie walks in, closes the door behind her, she has stolen one of the girls’ school bags, is obviously very upset - Elijah is already there to surprise her.

ELIJAH
What’s wrong - you look like you’ve been crying...

Katie doesn’t speak - walks past Elijah and into her room...
62. INT. HOSTEL: KATIE’S BEDROOM – AFTERNOON

As Katie enters her face brightens. The room has pink princess curtains and sheets with bedsheets and pillow cases, a smile breaks through her tears as Elijah enters.

ELIJAH
Do you like it?

KATIE
Yes, I love it...

Katie throws the bag down, turns and hugs her brother.

ELIJAH
I won my first fight...

Katie looks at Elijah, relatively unscathed...

KATIE
Who’d you fight, a girl?

Elijah looks at the school bag on Katie’s floor...

ELIJAH
What’s with the bag?

Katie sits on the bed.

KATIE
I stole it... these girls, they have everything.

Elijah sits down next to Katie.

ELIJAH
So you stole their bag?

KATIE
They were just so pretty and confident... one of the girls was Aboriginal.

Elijah picks up the bag – starts flicking through it.

ELIJAH
Did it make you feel better, taking the bag?
KATIE
Just wanted something they had...

Elijah then takes out the private school hat from the bag and hands it to Katie.

ELIJAH
Put it on...

Katie does as she is asked – looks at herself in the mirror and then poses to Elijah.

KATIE
How do I look?

ELIJAH
You look beautiful...

Katie jumps up off the bed wanting to avoid another awkward moment between them.

ELIJAH
Katie, it’s OK, I’m not going to hurt you. I was confused – I haven’t had anyone for so long – not someone I care about, but it’s OK – I promise you can trust me.

Elijah sees this as his opportunity to leave but is stopped by Katie...

KATIE
You can kiss me on the cheek, if you want?

Elijah gives her an innocent peck on the cheek, Katie smiling from ear to ear as Elijah leaves.

63. DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES - DAY

Shelly is in her office sitting opposite AYSHA, 12, one of the Aboriginal girls from Katie’s foster home.
AYSHA
It started in the shower...
Teddy didn’t know we could see him but he would sneak around
the side of the house and
watch us through the window.

RUBY, 13, another girl from the foster home...

RUBY
After a while he would come
into the rooms - asked if we
wanted to see his thingy...
wanted us to touch it.

DHARIE, 10, another girl from the foster home...

DHARIE
Katie would sleep behind us in
the beds - keep us between her
and the walls so Teddy would
always grab her... to protect
us.

Shelly’s supervisor Maureen pokes her head into Shelly’s
office during the interview.

MAUREEN
Shelly, a minute please...

Shelly excuses herself and then leaves with Maureen.

64. INT. MAUREEN’S OFFICE, COMMUNITY SERVICES - DAY
Shelly walks in and is confronted with piles and piles of
manila files and paperwork sorted around Maureen’s desk.

MAUREEN
Do you know what these are?

SHELLY
Child Protection case loads...

MAUREEN
37 Child Protection case loads
all under your supervision...
SHELLY
I’m investigating accusations of sexual assault, I’m flat out...

MAUREEN
In addition to Child Protection - you are also responsible for Early Child Intervention, Child Prevention and Out-of-Home Care, almost 70 case loads in all...

Shelly, exhausted and frustrated - bites her lip...

MAUREEN
The system’s not perfect, but in servicing one client you can’t neglect others.

Shelly refuses to show just how much this is upsetting her.

SHELLY
Can I be excused? I have to arrange medical checks and psych reports on the girls I am interviewing.

Shelly doesn’t take her eyes off Maureen, demanding a response, Maureen nods her head - Shelly turns to leave.

MAUREEN
Aren’t you forgetting something!

Shelly turns back around - gathering up all the files on Maureen’s desk.

SHELLY
Sorry...

Shelly turns to leave.
MAUREEN
You have to be one hundred percent certain these girls are telling the truth before you neglect your other duties. We can provide more staff to help with other case loads, but until such time, be aware that some girls have in the past cried abuse, destroyed families – having learnt how to play the system. Not until it’s confirmed do we stop everything else... OK?

Shelly nods a quick acknowledgement and then leaves...

65. INT. HOSTEL: TWO BEDROOM UNIT – MORNING

Elijah enters to find Katie cooking breakfast...

ELIJAH
You’re up early.

KATIE
I have trouble sleeping – bacon and eggs?

Elijah sits down at the table.

ELIJAH
Sounds good... say, after breakfast why don’t we go through those school books, do some homework?

Katie serves up breakfast.

KATIE
I can’t read!

ELIJAH
You can’t read?

Katie sits down.

KATIE
Like, I can read - but I need glasses...
ELIJAH
Glasses?

KATIE
I get headaches. We just
could never afford them...

Elijah jumps up off the bed.

ELIJAH
Let’s go...

KATIE
Where?

ELIJAH
Shopping, five minutes...

Elijah with a strut to his walk.

KATIE
What about breakfast?

Elijah walks back in and throws his eggs and bacon
between two pieces of toast making a quick sandwich and
takes a large bite and smiles at Katie...

ELIJAH (O.S.)
[His mouth full]
Five minutes...

66. INT. OPTOMETRIST OFFICE - DAY

The optometrist, a female in her mid 30’s, holds up a
pair of plain black framed glasses...

OPTOMETRIST
These are our budget range two
hundred and sixty dollars...

Katie looks disheartened.

KATIE
That is a lot of money...

Elijah looks around the shop...

ELIJAH
No, it’s not that. They’re
just so boring...
He spots a flash pair with a modern slick shape.

ELIJAH
How much are those?

OPTOMETRIST
Seven hundred and fifty dollars...

Elijah looks at Katie – still putting on a brave face.

KATIE
The others are fine.

Elijah breaks into a huge smile...

67. INT. LARGE SUBURBAN SHOPPING CENTRE - DAY

Elijah with Katie, who is floating - wearing her brand new, very smart, slick contemporary reading glasses.

KATIE
OK, time for that R.M. Williams cowboy gear to go!

Katie pulls Elijah by the arm - spots an upmarket trendy urban menswear and style cut boutique. MONTAGE BEGINS:

Elijah tries on varying styles of clothes...

Katie shakes her head...

Elijah tries again.

Katie again shakes her head...

Elijah tries again.

Katie breaks out in a smile.

REVEAL: Elijah in tight black jeans, Converse gym shoes and a white t-shirt with a euro sweater over his t-shirt; very urban and very sexy.

Elijah is now being dragged by Katie towards a male hairdressers, Katie with the hairdresser, then Elijah.
KATIE
Trust me, it’s all that’s missing. I’m just going to do a little window shopping and be back later.

Katie leaves...

68. EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT - AFTERNOON
INTERCUT: BETWEEN SCENES AS NEEDED

69. INT. DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES - AFTERNOON

Elijah leaves the hairdressers - contemporary dyed jet black hair confirms his new sexy EMO look. Elijah looks all around for Katie - can’t see her, turns on his phone to see another ten messages from Shelly, provides him with another direct number rather than the 1800 number he tried earlier.

Elijah calls her back...

SHELLY
Hello, Shelly McGrady...

ELIJAH
It’s me, Elijah...

SHELLY
Elijah, thank God, how’s Katie?

ELIJAH
She’s fine...

SHELLY
We need her to come in...

ELIJAH
We need more time...

SHELLY
Elijah, please - her claims of sexual abuse have been substantiated by the other girls in the house, she needs professional help.
Elijah is taken aback by what Shelly is telling him...

ELIJAH
She wasn’t lying?

SHELLY
No – I don’t think so... we are still waiting on tests from the other girls, but I am confident they are all telling the truth...

Elijah hangs up the phone.

SHELLY
Elijah!

But he’s gone.

70.  EXT.  BUSINESS DISTRICT - AFTERNOON

Katie is with Chrystal – they don’t look happy – Chrystal is with her friends, Carol, Abby and Mena. Elijah makes his way over to the girls.

ELIJAH
What’s going on?

CAROL
She’s a thief – she stole my bag...

KATIE
I said I was sorry, I’ll give it back...

Elijah, protective after the call...

ELIJAH
Don’t apologise...

ABBY
Are you serious? She stole her bag.

KATIE
[To Elijah]
Just stay out of this!

The ‘Slim Dusty’ ring-tone plays from Elijah’s phone.
CAROL
What is that?

CHRYSYAL
Slim Dusty ...

The comment sparks recognition in Katie - Elijah turns the phone off.

KATIE
How do you know?

CHRYSYAL
What?

KATIE
The song.

ELIJAH
Bugger her bag - I’ll burn the bastard!

KATIE
Not now, Elijah - please...

CHRYSYAL
I’m done - let’s go.

Chrystal gestures for the others to leave - turns back to face Katie...

CHRYSYAL
It’s my Grandfather’s favourite song, but he’s no better than you two... sitting around parks drinking - waste of time...

The girls all walk off with Chrystal. Mena and Carol fire back one last dagger look as they leave. Katie, upset, shoots an even darker look at Elijah, takes off her glasses and discards them to her bag...

KATIE
See what you have done!

Katie storms off upset - Elijah follows her.
71. INT. BOARD & LODGING - AFTERNOON

Elijah and Katie enter in silence. Katie is still angry, grabs her doll and holds her tight to her chest.

    ELIJAH
    What just happened?

    KATIE
    She called me a thief!

    ELIJAH
    No, about us, why are you angry at me!

    KATIE
    Because I hate you!!!

    ELIJAH
    Tell me about Teddy...

    KATIE
    Fuck Teddy!!!

    ELIJAH
    I spoke to Shelly - she told me what happened...

Katie becomes frozen...

    ELIJAH
    You were telling the truth... on the bus...

Elijah goes to her and Katie throws a number of punches at his chest but he restrains her and then holds her tight to him as Katie breaks down.

    ELIJAH
    I promise you I will never leave...

Katie looks up at Elijah, it’s now or never....
KATIE
Dad loved me so much, I was his little princess – then when I turned 12 everything changed, the way he would look at me. The way all men looked at me, but Dad – he became uncomfortable, but never touched me...

Katie puts her hand up to stop Elijah from speaking.

KATIE
Then when Mum died... there was just me and him and he started drinking, wouldn’t stop. He drank and drank – just faded away. He wouldn’t even look at me...

Katie wipes her eyes, letting go of a pain hidden very deep.

KATIE
There was so much abuse going on in the community – uncles, cousins – even dads touching their own girls. I’m sure he wanted to but he never did. He just stopped looking at me. Instead, he just drank himself to death. It was like I was never there – you understand? He was a good man. He would rather die first, I killed him...

Elijah looks her in the eye.

ELIJAH
No, you didn’t, it was his choice, and he chose to do the right thing. You don’t owe him, not this.

KATIE
I just wanted to protect the other girls – the way he protected me...
Katie continues to cry as Elijah hugs her tight as if to never let go - they embrace for the first time truly as Brother and Sister.

ELIJAH
It’s over. And no one is going to hurt you ever again – I promise you...

Katie lets it all out protected in Elijah’s arms.

72. EXT. MUSGRAVE PARK WEST END - NIGHT

There is a group of around twenty Aboriginal people sitting under a large tree with a number of children playing just away from them. Uncle Albert is sitting with the same two elderly women, laughter and Slim Dusty playing on the stereo. Elijah enters from the shadows.

UNCLE ALBERT
Ay lookee here, Elijah Waters coming in from the cold...

The two elderly women make way for Elijah to sit down next to Uncle Albert - they appear to waddle never quite leaving the ground.

ELIJAH
So you have a granddaughter, Chrystal?

UNCLE ALBERT
She told you, about us?

ELIJAH
Not in so many words, my ringtone, its Slim Dusty - your favourite song.

UNCLE ALBERT
She remembers...

Uncle Albert grabs Elijah by the hand, cuts him off... gestures to one of the old ladies.
I want to introduce you to your Aunty Jean Craigie, your Aunty Delmay’s second cousin through your Great Grandmother Norma Whiteman.

Elijah looks towards the old woman. Her smile shows nothing but love.

Whiteman, Craigie, Macintosh and Waters are just some of the many family names you belong to.

Uncle Albert prods himself in the chest...

Good men do hurtful things when they are damaged - and we are a damaged people...

Chrystal, you’re talking about Chrystal?

I see her every day... always from a distance, never to say hello – I hurt her mother long ago...

Why all this hurt, all this pain?

You can’t have the pain we have in our community and not carry some scars...

I remember my Grandfather ironing his slacks – a crease so sharp it would cut you. Strong dignified Aboriginal men....
UNCLE ALBERT
And underneath all this pain, that is who we really are... the identity you of all people carry. Most Aboriginal men are good men, strong men. I let Chrystal down - like many of us I was a selfish man in my younger days and her Mother was left neglected so I could feel like a man, and so after Chrystal’s Grandmother passed away, her Mother left... taking Chrystal with her.

ELIJAH
So why are you still here... drinking?

UNCLE ALBERT
When have you seen me take a drink? I don’t drink, and I pay the price everyday...

Aunty Jean puts out a hand to grab Elijah’s as their fingers interlock.

UNCLE ALBERT
She believed that by marrying a Whiteman she would escape the abuse - he never hit her, but he’s never home, works too hard... and yes - he drinks too much. Chrystal goes to a fine school and I did get to spend time with her when she was younger, I would like to think she remembers those times we had together - but I can’t leave here... otherwise what do I give her when she is ready to come home?

Elijah is overwhelmed, something very deep connecting him to a time long past. Albert recognises his pain.
UNCLE ALBERT
And here lies the hurt – the capacity to love those around you – no matter how damaged they are. Many don’t have the substance or strength to carry such burden. The journey is too great – so they opt out and hurt all those around them... it won’t always be that way.

Elijah stops his tears from coming, holds himself together – finally... Elijah is coming home.

UNCLE ALBERT
Here. Sing with me, a song from the old mission.

[Hands on ears]
Binaagh...

[Hands on eyes]
Mil...

[Shakes his hands]
Mara...

[Hands on feet]
Dinaagh...

Aunty Jean joins in...

ALBERT/JEAN

[Hands on ears]
Binaagh...

[Hands on eyes]
Mil...

[Shakes their hands]
Mara...

Many of the young children come to join in the singing...

ELIJAH
My Grandfather would sing this to me as a child...

The children continue to identify the individual body parts of the song, laughing and playing...
ALBERT/JEAN/ELIJAH
[Hands on ears]
Binaagh...
[Hands on eyes]
Mil...
[Shakes his hands]
Mara...
[Hands on feet]
Dinaagh...

Elijah jumps up and breaks into a traditional Shake-a-leg (Dance)... the children all join the Corroboree.

ALBERT/JEAN/ELIJAH/ CHILDREN
[Together]
Yolunguu, yolunguu, yolunguu!!

The mob gathered all applaud and cheer as some of the other men join in...

73.  EXT.  SOMERVILLE HOUSE SCHOOL - MORNING

Children and teenagers coming and going, Katie stands alone sees Chrystal, Carol, Abby and Mena walking in as a group – Katie approaches them. The girls stop – Katie hands the bag to Carol.

KATIE
This belongs to you...

Carol snatches the bag.

KATIE
I was jealous and I stole your bag, it was foolish and I’m sorry!

CAROL
Anything else?

KATIE
I finished all your homework!

ABBY
That’s the first time ever Carol has finished all her homework...
Mena and Abby both laugh, Chrystal just glares at Katie.

C
AROL
I’m out of here...

Carol walks off, looks back at Mena and Abby who stay with Chrystal.

KATIE
[To Chrystal]
Did you know that there was this guy Bohr and he challenged Albert Einstein’s theory of quantum physics?

CHRYSMAT
What?

KATIE
Yep, and that between the two of them they had a series of arguments that changed our world forever...

CHRYSMAT
You can’t just claim to know me because you’re black, it doesn’t work like that.

Katie hides her own pain, no matter how deep.

KATIE
He doesn’t drink anymore - he hasn’t had a drink for years... and he was the one who told me about Einstein and Bohr. He’s a very smart and intelligent man, and he’s sorry...

CHRYSMAT
You have no right...
KATIE
No, whatever happened between him and your Mother or whatever, that’s over now, but you are old enough to see him yourself, he watches you every day you know! As you walk to school and back home...

Chrystal looks into the direction of the other two girls waiting...

CHRISTAL
[To Abby and Mena]
Go, I’ll be in soon...

The two girls walk off towards the school.

CHRISTAL
How do you know all this?

KATIE
It’s in his eyes...

CHRISTAL
I have to go to school.

KATIE
I never knew my Grandad, he passed away – but I have been told he was a strong dignified man.

CHRISTAL
My Grandad would tell me stories when I was young, Dreamtime stories of great places far away.

KATIE
If the park is too much, he works at Born Free hostel, Brook Street... just call him.

Chrystal turns to make her way towards the school. Katie calls out to her...
KATIE
You knew his favourite song
Chrystal, that’s got to mean
something...

Chrystal looks back, and then is gone.

74. INT. WAREHOUSE BAY, WEST END - NIGHT

The crazed chanting of a bloodthirsty mob becomes a
thunderous roar as Charlie and Elijah make their way
through stacked furniture and industrial supplies.
Elijah, his heart pounding arrives at an open bay - Curly
and Ahmed waiting. This is as tribal as anything ever
experienced by Elijah.

He closes his eyes to the hundreds of men wanting blood,
betting on the outcome and screaming. He then opens them
to centre on Curly, an imposing and intimidating figure -
Ahmed, ever the showman, enters the pen and the crowd go
wild. Charlie throws his money down into Ahmed’s hands -
tens of thousands of dollars rolled up individually with
rubber bands.

CHARLIE
It’s all there, as agreed...

Ahmed hands the money to one of his many thugs who begins
counting. Elijah is still motionless as he watches
Curly. Ahmed’s thug acknowledges all the money is there.
Elijah spots Datu - still badly bruised and beaten around
the face, Datu acknowledges with a nod of his head...

AHMED
That’s it, no more bets we got
ourselves a rumble!!!

Curly calls out to Elijah in his broad Irish accent.

CURLY
It ends for you today, son...

Ahmed makes his way from the arena - Charlie moves back
behind Elijah rubbing his shoulders.
CHARLIE
Everything I have is in that pot, son, won’t ever get another opportunity like this. It’s now or never... close to a hundred grand waiting at the end of this, Cowboy, just wear him down and stay outta trouble. You just can’t afford to lose... not this!

Elijah looks at Maxine, the urgency of their situation as clear as the nose on her face.

AHMED
Gentlemen, it is time...

Again Elijah shapes up as if in a traditional old boxing stance. The two fighters move in towards one another, the crowd roars. Curly as always his head bowed into his chest using his bald forehead as an impenetrable shield. Elijah begins to jab with his left connecting with Curly’s forehead. Unable to get beyond Curly’s impenetrable shield, Elijah uses one hand to push Curly’s head back, hits him twice flush to the face.

Curly shakes his head, the second blow hurt. Then another jab, again with Elijah’s right as he uses his left hand to push Curly’s head back. Curly is uncomfortable and rushes forward exposing himself to a barrage of open handed slaps rather than punches - Curly taken by surprise as it not only hurts but makes a loud noise against his hard head. The slaps to the head not taking the same amount of punishment to Elijah’s hands as punching it would.

The noise seems to spur the crowd who erupt and Curly lifts his head like a turtle - then bang, bang, two quick jabs from Elijah flush on Curly’s jaw. Elijah moves in, Curly glides back shunting Elijah with his right shoulder pushing him backwards and then unloads with a flurry of punches to Elijah’s ribs.

Elijah steps back out of harm’s way but pushes up against the crowd - some of whom shove Elijah back towards Curly. Suddenly Curly’s forehead crashes into Elijah’s brow just above his right eye and then Curly lets fly with two more stunning blows to Elijah’s ribs and his stomach.
Elijah is hurt, Curly charges forward but Elijah sways away, Elijah keeps moving and swaying as Curly is unable to hit him, the crowd begin to boo, negative tactics seen by Elijah. Curly stops and throws his arms in the air playing up to the crowd - Elijah seizes the opportunity quickly moving behind Curly and punching him again flush, twice in the kidneys. Curly spins around fists flying.

Elijah continues to evade him, replying with numerous jabs and slaps to push back Curly’s head until fully exposed and then suddenly Elijah unleashes a flurry of punches - all connecting around Curly’s face and jaw. Curly lunges forward grabbing Elijah by his arms and shoulders like a vice. A series of vicious head butts from Curly as he pushes Elijah back against the wall trapping him. Elijah’s knees buckle and he loses sight momentarily, a bright light creates a silhouette of all those gathered around him.

CURLY
You’re fucking quick. I’ll give yah that...

Curly hits the back of Elijah’s head against the wall, the crowd goes wild. Elijah still struggling as Curly now has him trapped/pressed against the wall. Elijah receives a series of vicious jabs from Curly to the head. Elijah is opening and closing his eyes trying to restore focus - looks around the room as his vision comes and goes.

REVEAL: To his horror Elijah sees Katie at the very back of the warehouse - having followed Charlie and Maxine. Curly tries to deliver another lethal head butt but Elijah with his vision restored is able to avoid it, wriggles his upper body like an eel back and forth.

Maxine having followed Elijah’s eye line notices Katie at the back - Maxine goes to her, Charlie looks away - and then back again, out of the corner of his eye - anguish as he follows the fight - Charlie then begins to smile.

CHARLIE
He’s getting a second wind...
Charlie looks around for Maxine but she has gone - sees her at the back with Katie - Charlie resumes watching the fight shadow boxing and jumping around. Curly holds Elijah in a bear hug tries to connect with a forehead but Elijah keeps arching his back moving his neck and shoulders around avoiding each attempted blow...

ELIJAH
Wearing you out, old man?

Curly stops, forcing a breath - presses all his weight up against Elijah pinning him to the wall. Elijah begins to wrestle about madly - Curly struggles to hold him. Elijah stops momentarily, can see Maxine trying to drag Katie away but she refuses to leave.

ELIJAH
You got nothing else Curly.
Can’t just sit on me all day...

Curly struggles - time is running out for the older man. The endurance it has taken to hold Elijah down is now taking its toll. Curly stares back at Elijah - all of Curly’s weight holding Elijah against the wall as they face off. For Curly it is now or never. Curly begins screaming as he grabs at Elijah’s face, scratching in an attempt to eye gouge. Elijah responds with a Liverpool Kiss that thunders down flush into Curly’s face. The head butt opens the cut above Elijah’s eye - blood splatters everywhere as Curly steps backwards stunned and exhausted.

Elijah spins around first his elbow and then his shoulder slamming up against Curly’s jaw. The big man is gone, spent. He stands there momentarily just for a moment, before lunging forward at Elijah who keeps just out of reach moving back and forth before then springing forward landing a one-two on Curly’s jaw. Ahmed is not happy - Charlie is cheering - Maxine and Katie both screaming.

Charlie still throwing shadow punches in time with the rapid-fire blows thrown by Elijah who now stands off against Curly in amazement the bigger man is still standing. Curly is gone, breathing heavily - only pride keeping him on his feet.

CURLY
Finish it...
Elijah’s face becomes deadly serious, anticipation of the end. He then he leaps into a flying roundhouse kick that connects with Curly’s head, his body becoming limp – finally his large frame is broken as his body slams hard against the floor – Ahmed shakes his head cursing, the thugs around him shake their heads in disbelief as the crowd goes wild.

Elijah makes eye contact with Datu, both in and then out of focus as the room is now spinning – Elijah hardly able to see as Datu again nods his head, saluting a new champion. Elijah is able to regain focus just enough to see Katie smiling, proud but relieved – the room becomes a dark silhouette – Elijah’s sight gone.

Elijah moves towards Katie, he can hear Charlie’s voice as he is swept up in the crowd. A friendly hand grabs Elijah – it is Maxine who drags him towards Katie – together Katie and Maxine raises his hand high above his head in victory. Elijah starts to regain his vision. Charlie makes his way over to Elijah, Maxine and Katie.

CHARLIE
You had me worried, Cowboy...

Ahmed joins them, smiling at Katie – hands Charlie a briefcase full of cash.

AHMED
It’s all there...

Katie looks away, Ahmed making her feel uncomfortable...

AHMED
We’ll talk soon...

Ahmed tilts his head to acknowledge Katie as she nervously glances back at him. Ahmed then turns to leave as Charlie begins paving his own way through the crowd who part like the red sea. Maxine looks back one last time, as some of the thugs help Curly to his feet. Curly shaking, his legs wobbly, he slithers back down helpless and broken against the floor.

MAXINE
What has this boy just done?
75. INT. HOSTEL: BOARD & LODGING - MORNING

Maxine applies antiseptic salve to Elijah’s cuts, his vision still blurred. He can just make out Katie by his side. Charlie throws money all over the room...

CHARLIE
Did yah see Ahmed’s face, all these years and we’re the ones who come out on top. You fucking beauty!!!

Elijah ignores Charlie, sits up – confronts Katie.

ELIJAH
What do you think you were doing?

KATIE
I want you to stop...

Charlie hears this.

CHARLIE
No way honey, this is just the beginning...

MAXINE
How’s the eye?

Elijah doesn’t want to upset Katie.

ELIJAH
Fine, nothing wrong...

MAXINE
You’re lying, how’s the ribs?

Maxine pushes into Elijah’s side – he jumps back in pain.

MAXINE
Lift your right arm.

Elijah struggles to get his arm above his head, still not finished with Katie.

ELIJAH
You should never have come, that was dangerous...
Elijah then jumps in pain as Maxine massages down underneath the armpit into his side.

MAXINE
Could be rib cartilage...

KATIE
Dangerous, who for, you or me?

Maxine turns to Katie.

MAXINE
Here let me show you what to do...

Katie pulls up a chair next to Maxine who takes her hand.

MAXINE
Lift both his arms as high as he can.

Maxine guides both Katie’s hands down each side of Elijah’s torso, all sexual tension gone - only just brother and sister now...

MAXINE
You’re looking for irregularities, little lumps swelling that don’t match on either side...

Maxine digs in at a certain spot that makes Elijah jump again in pain.

MAXINE
Like here...

Katie smiles...

ELIJAH
OK, that does it, stop - no more!

Elijah jumps up, winces in pain - goes to put on a shirt, picks up some shoes off the floor causing him more pain.

CHARLIE/ MAXINE
What do you think you’re doing?
Elijah gestures for everyone to leave, but the pain is too much.

    ELIJAH
    Out, all of you...

    MAXINE
    We’re not going anywhere that cut above your eye needs stitches...

Charlie stands at the doorway blocking the exit.

    CHARLIE
    We pay her good money, Elijah, should let her do her job.

Elijah turns back towards Maxine and Katie who pats the bed. Elijah sits back down – Maxine looks at Katie.

    MAXINE
    You ready?

Katie nods – she’s ready. MONTAGE BEGINS:

Series of images as Katie holds back tears as she stitches above Elijah’s eye under Maxine’s supervision causing him more pain... Elijah holds Katie’s hand to stop her trembling as he grimaces with the pain. Katie gets through the ordeal. Katie, Maxine and Charlie leave Elijah to rest – Elijah closes his eyes and lies back down on the bed.

    FADE TO: BLACK

76. INT. OPTOMETRIST - DAY

OPEN ON: BLACK SCREEN

    FEMALE OPTOMETRIST (V.O.)
    You have a retinal tear...

REVEAL: the Female Optometrist sits opposite Elijah.

    ELIJAH
    Is it treatable?
OPTOMETRIST
Not if you keep doing whatever it is you’ve been doing.

A BEAT.

OPTOMETRIST
At the moment it’s a tear, over time and with treatment it should heal, but if the retina becomes detached, there’s nothing we can do. You will go blind.

Elijah’s face turns to concern.

77. INT. HOSTEL: KATIE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elijah wakes Katie.

ELIJAH
We have to go back, it’s over...

Katie sits up...

ELIJAH
My eye’s no good, my ribs are hurt bad and we have enough money to start again – confront things.

KATIE
I can’t, I don’t want to go home...

Elijah shows Katie the pouch around his neck...

ELIJAH
What happened to you, what happened to me finishes with our building a home - Pop and I fenced that entire property when I was around your age... this has the dirt in it from the day we finished. He bought the property on our traditional homelands, Katie. It’s what he wanted.
Elijah gets up, walks to the door.

ELIJAH
We’ll rent a car - a flash one, brand new...

Elijah looks at Katie, it’s time to let go of her deepest fears.

ELIJAH
We had to run Katie, but you can’t keep running, otherwise you’ll become lost - it’s time to go home. Everything will be OK, I promise...

Elijah closes the door behind him, Katie holds Lucy tight.

KATIE
My Brother’s taking us home.

78. INT. HOSTEL: BOARD & LODGING RECEPTION - MORNING

Charlie is in deep conversation with Terry.

CHARLIE
Where are they? Elijah’s door’s locked, no one’s home...

TERRY
Gone, packed up and left early this morning... he’s beaten up pretty bad, Charlie...

CHARLIE
Shit Terry, Ahmed’s got Losia to come back... word’s got around how Cowboy whipped Curly!

TERRY
Losia, hell Charlie, you can’t, not the state he’s in...
CHARLIE
You don’t get to say no to
Ahmed, Terry... one way or
another Elijah’s in for the
fight of his life!!!

79. EXT. MUSGRAVE PARK - DAY

Charlie with the mob of blackfellas all of whom are
shaking their heads, Uncle Albert as always amongst them.

CHARLIE
What do you mean no, they must
have said something?

UNCLE ALBERT
Word is he was beaten up
pretty bad...

CHARLIE
Hey, he took the bloody money!

Eddie, still unfriendly speaks up.

EDDIE
How much money?

UNCLE ALBERT
Eddie, no...

CHARLIE
More than you bastards would
see in a bloody lifetime...

EDDIE
Give me a hundred bucks and
I’ll tell you where he is...

CHARLIE
Fifty!!!

UNCLE ALBERT
Eddie, please!

EDDIE
Piss off, Albert, fucking
preacher man...

Eddie turns around looking at all the blackfellas.
EDDIE
Ay, not like you bastards
won’t be drinking dis money
wit me when dis fella go.

They all put their heads down in shame - Uncle Albert
gets up and walks over to Eddie.

UNCLE ALBERT
This is not who we are meant
to be.

CHARLIE
Fifty dollars, that’s what I
said...

EDDIE
His Pops left him and dah girl
a property near Toomelah, just
out past Goondiwindi...

Albert walks off disheartened....

CHARLIE
I know Goondiwindi...

Charlie is smiling from ear to ear.

80. EXT. REMOTE HIGHWAY - DAY
Katie sits next to Elijah driving the new hire car.
Elijah’s Slim Dusty ringtone reverberates.

KATIE
You really have to do
something about that ringtone.

Elijah smiles - answers the phone.

ELIJAH
Maxine, hi...
[Listens]
We’re on our way home...
[Listens]

Losia...
[Listens]
Yeah, I know he almost killed
Curly...
[Listens]
Don’t worry Maxine – I’m not coming back!

Elijah lets down the electric window, throws the phone out of the car and keeps driving. Appears restless...

ELIJAH
That’s that...

KATIE
Retard - you didn’t have to chuck your phone...

ELIJAH
Ahmed’s brought in this Samoan guy...

KATIE
You just change the sim.

ELIJAH
He’s the only guy that ever beat Curly...

Katie looking at her brother, the cut above his eye and covered in bruises - notices the change in expression, the warrior in him has become sparked from the call.

KATIE
So, you got nothing to prove, you beat Curly too...

Elijah smiles back at her then turns to watch the road...

81.  EXT.  REMOTE SERVICE STATION – AFTERNOON

Elijah and Katie come out carrying some groceries. The mood has changed since the phone call, they get into the car and drive off.

Maureen unseen has followed them out of the shop - reaches for her mobile...

82.  INT.  BOXING GYM – NIGHT

Charlie, holding a remote control, is flipping through a number of fights watching Losia on DVD.
CAGE FIGHT – SOMEPLACE – SOME NIGHT

Losia destroys an opponent without mercy.

CHARLIE
Jesus...

Charlie stops the DVD skips forward...

ANOTHER CAGE FIGHT – ANOTHER NIGHT

Losia knocks the guy down – he bounces up only to be knocked down again as Losia stomps down caving in his chest.

ANOTHER CAGE FIGHT – ANOTHER NIGHT

This guy goes down just as hard – just as fast.

ANOTHER CAGE FIGHT – ANOTHER NIGHT

Losia comes out breathing fire as Maxine enters to find Charlie watching the screen...

CHARLIE
He’s gotten even bigger – stronger!!!

Losia grabs his opponent by the back of his neck drives the palm of his other hand into his opponent’s nose breaking it instantly – the opponent falls to the ground.

MAXINE
A move like that could kill you...

The crowd goes nuts.

CHARLIE
He’s out of control...

Charlie turns it off as Losia comes up over the top of the man his knee plunging into the back of his neck – Maxine sees the worry on Charlie’s face.

MAXINE
You told him, didn’t you – where to find them...
CHARLIE
It’s unwritten. You lose as much as Ahmed, you are given the opportunity to win it back. I didn’t make the rules...

MAXINE
What about us, Charlie, we were outta here, finished. Losia will fucking kill him, Charlie, and we lose everything!

Maxine leaves distressed - Charlie alone, goes back to watching the DVD.

83. DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES - MORNING

Shelly is working behind her desk as Maureen enters.

MAUREEN
You need to check the status on the sexual abuse case... you have about 48 hours to finish the report.

SHELLY
That’s impossible! I’m still waiting on the medical and psych evaluations...

MAUREEN
They’re back, Shelly! I saw them myself – we need to have everything documented and ready when the police catch up with them...

SHELLY
You rang the police?

MAUREEN
You must trust me, Shelly - we remain the only boundaries these people have.

Shelly can’t hide her disappointment.
MAUREEN
I have assigned two other officers to help with your other caseloads. 48 hours, Shelly, we can’t let them down!

Maureen leaves as Shelly picks up the phone...

84. EXT. REMOTE HIGHWAY – MORNING
The ‘Slim Dusty’ song playing, Elijah’s phone left on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere.

85. INT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DAY
LOSIA arrives, a huge hulking multi-tattooed Samoan monster who towers over Curly and Ahmed – hands Curly his luggage, no emotion – keeps moving without a word.

86. INT. BOXING GYM – MORNING
It’s Charlie making a call – no answer...

MAXINE
Christ, Elijah... answer yah bloody phone!

87. INT. REMOTE FAMILY HOUSE – MORNING
Katie is in the kitchen eating cereal and drinking an orange juice – Elijah walks in stretching and yawning.

ELIJAH
Still having trouble sleeping?

Katie nods her head...

ELIJAH
After I finish at the bank I’m thinking of going in to see Shelly...

Elijah walks over to comfort Katie.

KATIE
Trust me – everything’s going to be OK.
Katie nods – it’s time to be strong.

88. INT. BANK MANAGER’S OFFICE - MORNING

Elijah is sitting opposite Geoff.

GEOFF
The debts you incurred while in Mt Isa are a real problem...

ELIJAH
That’s being settled in court.

GEOFF
I know, but until such time that you clear the air, everything in your name remains liable to bankruptcy...

ELIJAH
We’re talking about a lousy ten grand – I have cash to pay the difference...

GEOFF
My hands are tied...

ELIJAH
What about Katie - as a trust until she turns eighteen?

GEOFF
You won’t have any title to the property at all - everything will go to her...

ELIJAH
All those years of being on my own and a complete stranger blows the lot - this is permanent, an opportunity to build on my Grandfather’s legacy... I really want this!

Geoff can’t help but admire Elijah’s conviction.
GEOFF
I’ll put together the paper work. And you need a lawyer in regards to that other business. I know someone who will help you – he’s the best.

Elijah gets up and shakes Geoff’s hand.

GEOFF
I didn’t tell you this before, but I was the one who first settled your Grandfather’s property – I’ll do everything I can...

Elijah leaves feeling reassured.

89. INT. REMOTE FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

Katie bounces through the house – just happy to be home. She enters the kitchen, stops suddenly...

REVEAL: a man, one of Ahmed’s goons, he chases after her as she runs into her bedroom – cornered by now two Thugs waiting... during the struggle they smash the photo with her Mum and Dad. The men are too strong and they drag her out of the house.

90. EXT. COMMUNITY SERVICES CARPARK - DAY

Shelly gets into her car - before she knows what’s happening Elijah joins her in the passenger seat.

SHELLY
Elijah, where’s Katie?

ELIJAH
We need someone we can trust...

SHELLY
We, I let her down – and I’m sorry...

ELIJAH
That pig molested her?

Shelly holds up a file from her bag...
SHELLY
This is everything, we got the bastard – he’s going away for a very long time!

The confirmation Elijah was looking for, fights back the tears...

ELIJAH
I just need to set up a few things and then we’ll come in... I promise!

Elijah leaves. A deep breath as Shelly holds her mobile in her hand – decides not to make the call.

91. EXT. REMOTE FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

A late model Holden Commodore drives off quickly leaving nothing but a cloud of dust behind – Katie trapped in the back of the car.

92. INT. PIZZERIA: GOONDIWINDI - NIGHT

Elijah is waiting, customers coming and going...

PIZZA GIRL
Pizza for Smith...

Elijah gets up, hands the girl some cash and leaves.

93. INT. REMOTE FAMILY PROPERTY - NIGHT

Elijah enters, puts down the pizza and car keys.

ELIJAH
Katie!

He walks through the house...

ELIJAH
Katie, you home?

Katie’s bedroom - finds her doll sitting on the bed.

ELIJAH
Katie!!!
The photo of Katie and her parents has been smashed and is lying on the floor - a mobile phone begins to ring... Elijah searches frantically through the house. Elijah gets to the lounge - a mobile phone reverberates in the middle of the floor, Elijah answers it.

ELIJAH
Where is she?

AHMED
I apologise for such drama, but it was essential that we insured your return to Brisbane...

ELIJAH
I’ll fucking kill you...

AHMED
I don’t think so - Charlie has the details...

The phone goes dead...

A number of Goondiwindi Police smash through the back door - all with guns drawn.

SERGEANT MAXWELL
Don’t move, son, nobody’s that fast...

Elijah trapped, nowhere to go...

94. INT. GOONDIWINDI WATCH HOUSE - MORNING

Shelly enters, Sergeant Maxwell waiting...

SHELLY
I came as soon as I heard. Where is Katie?

SERGEANT MAXWELL
We don’t know - he won’t talk to anybody else... asked for you.

Sergeant Maxwell escorts Shelly to the cell - lets her in locking the door behind her. Shelly sits down next to Elijah.
SHELLY
Is Katie safe?

ELIJAH
You have to see Geoff at the bank. He has the number of a lawyer to get me out of here...

SHELLY
Katie, Elijah?

Elijah looks at Shelly...

ELIJAH
I don’t know!

CUT TO:

95. INT. OLD ABANDONED OFFICE - DAY

Katie is trapped - Curly playing cards with the two Thugs that kidnapped her. One of the Thugs takes a packet of smokes out from his back pocket - smiles at Katie.

THUG 1
You smoke?

Katie smiles back at him through her teeth.

CURLY
You crazy?

THUG 1
What? A lot of girls her age smoke...

CURLY
I know what you’re up to, mate. Ahmed will have yah balls - she’s promised goods!!!

The door opens and Ahmed walks in with Losia.

AHMED
[To Katie]
This, my dear is Losia, a legend from the islands of Samoa...
Losia moves in so close that Katie can smell him, she closes her eyes as he holds her face in one hand.

AHMED
Had to offer something other than just money to have Losia come for the fight... hope you understand!

Katie can’t move as Losia nods his approval...

96. INT. GOONDIWINDI WATCHouse - NIGHT

The door opens on Elijah’s cell. Sergeant Maxwell enters escorting Geoff with COLIN GREATORIX, a well-dressed criminal lawyer from Brisbane.

Colin offers his hand to Elijah.

GEOFF
This is Mr Colin Greatorix, Elijah - he’s one of the very best.

COLIN
The whereabouts of the young girl, what have you told them?

ELIJAH
I came home, she was gone...

COLIN
Good, the less they know the better - now the truth, where is she?

Elijah looks away...

GEOFF
Elijah - you have to trust us.

Elijah looks emotional as we see but don’t hear the discussion between Geoff and Colin...

CUT TO:

REVEAL: Sergeant Maxwell watching the conversation through a security camera in a closed room.
97. INT. SERGEANT MAXWELL OFFICE – NIGHT

Colin, Geoff and Sergeant Maxwell...

COLIN
Well Sergeant, you heard the conversation, for the girl’s own safety we have to let him go...

MAXWELL
This may not be the big city, but there are still rules, procedures...

COLIN
She’s in the hands of thugs, Sergeant, you ring your mates in the big city and I guarantee we never see her again.

MAXWELL
I understand, but what you’re asking?

GEOFF
Alan, how long have we known each other? You know who that boy’s Grandfather was... Ronald Waters. All we ask is that you allow us to post bail. No one has to ever know... Elijah will do the rest!

Sergeant Maxwell knows deep down there is only one right thing to do...

98. INT. OLD ABANDONED WAREHOUSE – MORNING

A large crowd is gathered to witness the fight. Once again there is a great cultural mix of people. Chino and Ronnie with other Bikers also there - no one wants to miss this. Charlie walks in with Maxine and is immediately approached by Curly and three Thugs.

CURLY
Heard from your boy?
CHARLIE
He’ll be here...

MAXINE
How is Katie?

Curly takes out a packet of cigarettes from his inside jacket, lights one then offers another to Maxine. She declines but Charlie takes one and slips it behind his ear.

CURLY
She’s OK - not the way we used to do business...

MAXINE
A lot has changed Curly - just look at this crowd...

They scan the room, African, Polynesian, Lebanese, Arabs and Asians...

CHARLIE
It’s spot the bloody Aussie...

Curly heads back towards the waiting Thugs.

CURLY
He’ll be here...

Curly throws the cigarette down and stamps it out on the ground just as a brand new Mercedes, black (Colin Creatorix’s vehicle) pulls up. A hum of expectation builds - the car comes to a stop. Elijah, Geoff and Colin get out... the crowd erupts.

Curly makes his way up the stairs to an office sitting above the bay floor. Maxine spots Ahmed as he opens the office door. Elijah starts to move in through the crowd. Geoff and Colin are both carrying a briefcase each. People separate either side like Moses parting the Red Sea - Elijah gets to Charlie and Maxine.

ELIJAH
Where is she?

Maxine gestures to the office up above the pit. Elijah is in no mood for games, rips off his shirt - looks around the warehouse, spots a large industrial sledgehammer and hurls it at the office door upstairs.
The hammer ricochets off the office door and falls back down the stairs – the door slowly opens. Curly is the first to come out, then Ahmed followed by three goons who have Katie...

ELIJAH

Katie!

The sound of Polynesian drums begins as Losia is revealed to Elijah for the first time... the Samoan boys all jeer and taunt Elijah as their monster walks out from behind the shadows.

Ahmed gestures that it is OK for Katie to go down to Elijah – Katie runs to her brother and holds him ever so tightly not wanting to ever let go.

AHMED

What a crowd, ay Charlie, just like old times...

CHARLIE

Except that there is no honour in any of this Ahmed, we lost that years ago...

Uncle Albert enters holding his granddaughter Chrystal by the hand – amongst the chaos a glimmer of light is offered to Katie as Chrystal mouths a ‘thank you’ across the room... with them a number of strong Aboriginal Warriors and others from Musgrave Park.

AHMED

Well, looks like we’re all here...

The tension – building – Losia walks in towards Elijah.

CURLY

All right, we all know what we’re here for – what am I bid?

Curly is enveloped by those all around him coming forward shouting screaming money. Elijah gestures to Geoff who steps forward and hands Curley a briefcase full of cash.

GEOFF

Fifty thousand dollars...
Elijah looks at Katie...

ELIJAH
That’s everything...

AHMED
I thought this was more personal?

ELIJAH
Oh it’s personal...

Elijah gestures to Katie that it is time to let him go – hands her the pouch of dirt and places it around her neck...

Two of Ahmed’s Thugs grab Katie – she looks at Elijah and then Chrystal who smiles nervously at her as she is led away. The fight is about to start. Losia stands over Elijah. Uncle Albert hands Chrystal off to one of the Aboriginal Warriors, making sure she is OK and then walks to Elijah.

UNCLE ALBERT
You gave me back my life, don’t focus on him, focus instead on your heart, your dhua. Gamilaroi Winnungooldah!

Uncle Albert gestures to the mob of Blackfellas as Chrystal steps back allowing a group of handsome Aboriginal women to make two lines either side of the strong Aboriginal men. They move to the front.

Pauly Spearim the leader amongst them steps forward – screaming out to all those who surround them.

PAULY
Gamilaroi Yulaargaay
Winnungooldah, Yahwuugh!!!

The women are first to begin a traditional dance moving gracefully from side to side as the Aboriginal men all gather around Pauly...

PAULY/ABORIGINAL MEN
Yaahnaay Yulaagii!!!
The Aboriginal men then all move forward in traditional choreographed harmony encircling Elijah as they begin a furious Aboriginal war dance - the Samoan boys reply in kind with their own traditional dance standing face to face against the Aboriginal men. The Kiwis in the crowd not to be outdone respond with a Haka of their own... the crowd now whipped to a frenzy.

Datu then steps forward.

**DATU**

It was an honour to fight you on your country - I pray for your success...

The traditional dances now finished - all other parties disappear into the shadows as Elijah and Losia stand alone - Losia’s eyes rake over Katie then look back at Elijah.

**LOSIA**

Pretty girl, your sister...

Elijah jumps forward but he is evaded by Losia who throws a fist into Elijah’s stomach - the big Samoan hits like a cement truck - Elijah steps backward, his ribs still hurting from the last fight. Elijah shakes his head moves back away from Losia, resumes his traditional boxing stance - the sound of the crowd is deafening.

Losia moves in connects on Elijah’s jaw. The big Samoan is quick for his size. Elijah begins to just hover and evade the approaching Losia wading menacingly in and out of striking distance. They start to move in towards each other again and again shadowing each other’s movements. Losia connects with a jab to Elijah’s head - Elijah lands a first punch on Losia - finding the rhythm of the fight.

Elijah sways backwards as Losia comes forward swinging twice - both missing. Elijah connects with two more on Losia’s torso and his lower stomach. As Elijah again goes to move back Losia charges forward, narrowly missing with a series of quick jabs but connects with a mighty blow again to Elijah’s ribs. Losia then hits Elijah twice over the back of the head as he continues to back-pedal away.
Elijah realising he can’t just keep moving back, shunts under Losia’s chin and upper body with his shoulders exposing the big man’s torso. Elijah then lets fly with a series of rapid punches like a machine gun against Losia’s exposed stomach. Losia pushes him away. They stare off momentarily before both start moving in again. Losia lets fly with two jabs, the second one hitting hard against Elijah - flush on the face. Elijah gets in low and hits Losia hard again in the stomach, over and over again. Losia responds with a fist again on the back of Elijah’s head and then again flush on his chin as he pulls away.

Elijah stunned after receiving a second blow to the chin tries to move away but Losia is too quick responding with a one-two combination that has Elijah weary on his feet. Losia lands another jab to Elijah’s face then looks over at Ahmed and Curly.

LOSIA
This is your champion?

Losia turns around to finish Elijah but can’t find him. The big man looks around as Elijah pops up right behind him and connects with a one-two combination of his own. Then a jab and another jab to the face as Losia is forced back. Elijah lets fly with a roundhouse kick to the stomach that sends Losia flying into some unused furniture. Elijah looks around the room, his eyes begin to go in and out of focus - the figures surround him in a dark silhouette and the bright light returns as his centre of vision.

Elijah can’t see the crowd but can hear them screaming for blood. He begins to regain focus seeing Charlie - the expression on Charlie’s face shows concern as Charlie gestures behind Elijah. Elijah turns - his vision still in and out of focus. Losia coming out of the rubble with the leg of a wooden table... a number of the crowd start booing as Curly moves in between Losia and Elijah gesturing for Losia to let go of the club...

AHMED
Curly, stand down!

CURLY
This is not how it is done...

AHMED
Stand down!
Curly glares towards Losia’s direction as he moves aside shaking his head... there is an uneasy silence coming across the crowd as Charlie steps forward in protest.

CHARLIE
We didn’t sign up for this...
stop the fight!

Elijah is trying to get his focus back, making the most of the delay as Maxine gets to him.

MAXINE
How bad is it?

ELIJAH
It’s a silhouette – just shapes – can’t see...

Some in the crowd are getting restless - they begin shouting Charlie down... having come for blood and no values connected to the past.

ANGRY MOB
Fight, fight, fight...

Datu the Philippine fighter approaches both Elijah and Maxine who is desperately trying to stop the bleeding. Elijah opening and closing his eyes... the crowd still screaming as those with a lust for blood shout over those who protest in disgust...

ANGRY MOB
Fight, fight, fight...

MAXINE
Open your eyes.

Maxine puts some adrenaline eye drops in Elijah’s eye as Charlie throws his hands in the air - his pleads for sanity going unheard amongst the blood lust. Elijah closes his eyes tight.

MAXINE
It’s going to burn, but you will have your sight back, it will be blurry at first but then come good, but only momentarily. When it comes good you gotta finish it, and quickly.
Elijah opens his eyes - moves forward, gestures for Charlie to get out of the way... the fight is on. The crowd go wild... Losia rushes forward and strikes Elijah across the side of his head with the table leg.

Elijah - having avoided a full blow is still struck hard enough that he collapses to his knees, just raising his arm in enough time to stop another full blow striking his head. The sound of the crack as the table leg hits Elijah’s arm is sickening... Losia then kicks Elijah in the back of the head his face falling flat face-down to the ground. Maxine attempts to go to him but is held back by two of Ahmed’s Thugs.

Charlie also held back as he tries to protest against the outcome. Elijah lies motionless in a pool of blood that begins to surround him... above the crowd all he can hear is Katie screaming. Elijah still on the ground spots Katie - he focuses all his energy towards Katie’s scream - this will become his only lifeline - as his thoughts close off everything else around him. He can feel Losia standing over him - Elijah closes his eyes to rest, waiting for his vision to return.

AHMED
Finish him...

Losia stands above Elijah playing to the crowd. Elijah opens his eyes, slowly starts to move - using his hand to clean the blood from his face, focuses on the light at the centre of his vision - turns to cast a shadow of Losia in the silhouette still playing up to the crowd. Elijah again closes his eyes - focuses on Katie screaming.

KATIE
Get up Elijah. Get up!!!

Elijah opens his eyes, the light is beginning to merge into the silhouette providing focus back to his eyes - he can see Losia clearly playing up to the crowd. Elijah starts to move up off the ground - looks up at the Aboriginal people gathered as a group all staring at him praying for him to get back up to his feet.

Uncle Albert begins a slow hand clap as does Chrystal then Pauly Spearim, the Corroboree leader, the other Aboriginal people follow suit and non-Aboriginal alike, Maxine and even Charlie all slow handclapping together...
Elijah starts to rise to his feet.

Elijah looks around the crowd for Katie as Losia in reaction to the crowd slow handclapping turns to face Elijah now slowly back up to his feet, the clapping lifts in momentum. Losia, standing just a few feet from Elijah begins to move in towards the crowd – angry that people are cheering for Elijah...

AHMED
What are you doing? Finish him!!!

Losia walks back towards Elijah swinging the table leg like a Polynesian club.

LOSIA
You put up a good fight Abo, no shame you stay down.

Elijah now crouched down on one knee takes his broken arm and holds it tight into his chest - Losia swinging the table leg from side to side. The hand clapping intensifies... Elijah finds Katie, looks directly into her eyes - she is streaming tears. Losia rushes forward swinging the club as Elijah evades him then winces in pain.

LOSIA
I warn you Abo, I will kill you, then I fuck your sister...

Elijah looks back at Losia still waving the table leg around - Elijah tucks the hand of his broken arm tight into the front of his pants tightening up his belt buckle in securing his arm down by his side... Losia comes forward again swinging the club, but again Elijah sways out of the way...

ELIJAH
You made three mistakes Soli...

Losia moves forward blindly swinging the table leg and again missing Elijah who evades him.

ELIJAH
One, you should never have picked up that club...
Elijah moves forward and retaliates with two strong jabs with his one good arm to Losia’s face and then two more blows to the stomach of the big Samoan. The Crowd erupting spur Elijah on... Losia swings again but Elijah moves inside with two more jabs to Losia’s face, and more rapid punches and knees to Losia’s stomach. Losia stops – the blows he has received to his stomach are finally taking their toll.

**ELIJAH**

Two, you should never have let me get back up...

Elijah uses his shoulder to come up under Losia’s arm and then wraps his own arm around Losia’s, bending it back and then spinning away from Losia having taken the club from his hand. Elijah then continues to spin around connecting with the club to Losia’s jaw and then finishing the move with a round house kick that hits Losia hard under the chin – lifting him off the floor.

The big man’s body lifts off the ground and he then crashes to the floor with a tremendous thud that bellows through the warehouse bay. The big man moves ever so slightly attempting to get back up off the floor.

**ELIJAH**

Your third and final mistake...

Elijah flies into the air spinning like a ballerina – he comes down with the table leg crashing hard smack against Losia’s scull...

**ELIJAH**

Trash talking my sister...

The big man collapses flat lifeless, the fight is over – Elijah lets the table leg fall from his hand and onto the floor...

**ELIJAH**

And don’t ever call me Abo...

There is silence, no one is cheering, no one makes a noise, the hand clapping has stopped – every eye is focused towards Elijah who then raises his arm in victory. The crowd almost relieved it is finally over erupt into a deafening roar as Elijah is embraced by Aboriginal, Samoan, Philippine and Kiwi alike.
The people’s champion!!!

The Greeks and Italians and the few white men present not comprehending what has just happened - then suddenly realising their champion has been beaten. The mobsters attempt to move in on Ahmed - wanting to confront him on the enormous amounts of money they have just lost.

Ahmed’s entourage though, prevent any access to him and instead Ahmed makes his way towards Elijah. Katie now having been released, runs to Elijah and embraces him - she puts the pouch of dirt back around his neck. Maxine gets to Elijah, uses his ripped shirt as a temporary sling for his arm. Ahmed gets to Elijah.

AHMED
That was some fight...

ELIJAH
You owe me some money.

Ahmed gestures for Curly to collect the money.

AHMED
I’m a man of my word.

ELIJAH
You had your fight - now leave us alone...

Ahmed acknowledges his agreement with a nod of the head back to Elijah. Curly hands a money case to Ahmed who in kind goes to hand it to Elijah who gestures for Geoff to take it.

CURLY
A chuisle mo chroí, you made us all proud, boy!

Ahmed hands the case to Geoff.

AHMED
That’s a lot of money, enough to set you up for life, you spend it wisely...

Elijah looks at Katie...

ELIJAH
Two lives...
Ahmed puts his hand out to Elijah who refuses to shake his hand – but does shake Curly’s. Elijah takes one last look at Ahmed – then turns his back, gestures to Colin who comes forward – opens the other briefcase he has been carrying since their arrival.

REVEAL: Lucy the doll – hands it to Katie.

ELIJAH
She missed you...

Katie takes her from Colin before putting her arms around Elijah who puts his one good arm around her.

KATIE
Be careful, you’ll get blood all over her...

One of the Thugs punches a large red knob and the giant warehouse door starts to slowly open. Elijah is now engulfed by all in the crowd as Katie goes to Chrystal and they embrace... all are then escorted out of the warehouse as Pauly Spearim, the Corroboree leader, paves the way singing and stomping through the crowd...

FADE TO: BLACK

99. EXT. COMMUNITY SERVICES CARPARK – 24 HRS LATER

OPEN ON: BLACK SCREEN

ELIJAH (V.O.)
My Grandfather was the only man I ever really trusted, it’s no way to live, I pray every day that one day I will trust someone again like him, someone I can share my life with...

Maureen and Shelly are waiting as Colin’s black Mercedes pulls up in the parking lot. Katie gets out with Elijah... Katie crying as Elijah still beaten and bruised walks her over to Maureen and Shelly – one more hug between Elijah and Katie and then she is taken away towards the building.
ELIJAH (V.O.)
My Grandfather told me that some people are born from Angels - Maran dhinabarra...
Ancestral Beings who ask to come back and help the weak after they had already made it across to the other side...

Katie breaks away and runs back to Elijah... they hug, and then Elijah gestures for her to go back with Maureen and Shelly - which Katie does...

ELIJAH (V.O.)
Others return because they have no place, Demons, Pop called them Giniirr, void of life and understanding...
doomed to live out their lives on this planet with no idea of the future that lays before them after death...

Elijah watches as Katie disappears into the building and then once she is gone Elijah gets back into Colin’s car.

100. INT. BLACK MERCEDES - DAY

As Elijah gets back into the car...

REVEAL: Katie has left her doll Lucy sitting in the middle of the back seat...

ELIJAH (V.O.)
Which are you? my Grandfather would say to me, Angel or Demon... which are you?

FADE TO:

101. EXT. REMOTE PROPERTY - AFTERNOON

Elijah is out the front digging out the old rotting fence posts - finds his grandfather’s old leather pouch still preserved in a piece of concrete...
He chips it out and holds it in his hand - looks up at Lucy who has the other pouch sitting around her neck as she sits upon a new strong firm fence post looking down at Elijah.

Something takes his attention - stops working... a car driving towards him in the distance.

The car gets closer - a new white Departmental Commodore...

Elijah drops his tools as the car comes even closer, can see Shelly in the front driving.

The car comes to a stop as the back door flies open...

It’s Katie!!!

ELIJAH (V.O.)
Angel or Demon... which are you?

Katie runs to Elijah as they embrace - together at last...

- End -
1. Introduction (Burra-li yulu-gi...)

But I’m not happy. My mind might be thoughtful. Because I was at the time really thinking, don’t paint/share this. But they give me the job anyway, and I ask him, uncle and mother: ‘Well, you can do him one this because only part’ — and all this. I don’t touch ‘m secret today from start.
— Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarra

This exegesis is interested in the lack of agreement on what constitutes an Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy, and is an exploration of creative writing as a means to an Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy. It is also interested to propose autobiographical ethnicity as the analytical position from which the creative author writes. The purpose of this introduction is to highlight the importance of being able to recognise a parallel tradition of intellectual development (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) beyond that which is connected to an act of colonisation.

For Indigenous studies to move beyond the process of colonisation, we must first unsettle the power hierarchy that exists within the binary of the present relationship between black and white knowledges. Such a strategy would create equalising recognition of differences through — at least initially — the incorporation of similarities rather than opposition between Indigenous and non-Indigenous intellectual property. This would allow the operations of culture, science and art that criss-cross the Indigenous and non-Indigenous academies of learning to flourish and become multidisciplinary — beyond the current limited status of Indigenous scholarship associated with the necessarily reductive strategies of surviving colonisation. The major problem to be overcome with such a strategy is that the complexities of reinvention remain especially sensitive for many urban Indigenous people, who live in unidentified communities where the need to acquire a sense of identity as a form of active resistance to colonisation is at its strongest but also the loss of language and ceremony practiced prior to colonisation is at its greatest (Paradies, 2006). The work of Yin Paradies is particularly instructive for
my purposes, and will be referenced throughout this exegesis. This is because Paradies gets to the core of the problem — the necessity to “de-couple” Indigeneity from the initially useful strategic pan-Aboriginality that enabled the formation of a political community, because “such deployment … also results in every Indigenous Australian being interpellated, without regard to their individuality, through stereotyped images that exist in the popular imagination” (Paradies, 2005, p. 355).

The Australian Academy profited from its very beginnings by the exploitation of ethnographic representations of Aborigines in moving image and sound produced by Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929), Chair of Biology at the University of Melbourne, Director of the National Museum of Victoria, and Special Commissioner for Aborigines. Spencer’s cameraman filmed the traditional ceremonies of “the Arunta” in 1899 for the purposes of anthropological and scientific research (Tobing Rony, 2007, p. 65), and Spencer used this ethnographic footage for self-promotion, commercial entertainment and spectacle.

Although museum expeditions almost always brought along cameramen proficient in photography and film, the actual use of film for research was rare. Far more often the footage was used for public entertainment … cinema, intended for scientific research purposes, was instead used for public spectacle, as a sensational means for attracting viewers and thus profit. The boundaries between the cinema of science (cinematographe) and the cinema of entertainment (cinematoscope) were never clearly drawn. (Tobing Rony, 2007, p. 65)

Spencer justified his actions, “cautioning his popular audience against the power of words to mask the true savage nature of the Australian Aborigine” (Tobing Rony, 2007, p. 65).

The unique position we once held as Indigenous peoples has become blurred in that we must experience the world from a position that is no longer seen as purely
Indigenous or non-Indigenous (Cowlishaw, 2004, pp. 70-71). ‘Traditional’ has become a dirty word — ironically, a symbol of dispossession (Morrissey, 2003) — as we fight for our right to be understood as contemporary urban Aboriginal Australians from an inherited marginalised position that connects the urban Aboriginal to a sense of grief and loss associated to inherited acts of colonialism that contribute to ongoing poverty and poor health.

Circumstances of extreme poverty are significantly more prevalent among indigenous peoples than non-indigenous groups, and are rooted in other factors, such as a lack of access to education and social services, destruction of indigenous economies and socio-political structures, forced displacement, armed conflict and the degradation of their customary lands and waters. These forces, which are inherited from colonization, are all determined and compounded by structural racism and discrimination, and make indigenous women and children particularly vulnerable to poor health. (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2007, p. 7 [my italics])

The binary as representative of the dominant white culture is everywhere — so much so that the preservation of traditional Aboriginal culture feels like a useless task (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). But, surely, developing an Indigenous identity based in the urban experience means giving up too much in the name of strategy! What place is there, then, for traditional Indigenous experiences and histories prior to colonisation?

As uncles, aunties, fathers, mothers and ceremony leaders we talk about our identity as story and knowledge related to traditional ceremony, practice and ongoing cultural maintenance. But as workers and professionals, the majority of our time is spent discussing the ongoing effects of white culture and genocide — for example, the lack of housing, health and employment issues — as if our culture were only 200 years old. Instead, we should be talking in these same terms in our professional lives. As public servants and academics, politicians and writers, teachers and researchers, we need to
draw upon our sense of Aboriginality as something having endured and survived over thousands upon thousands of years, independent from colonisation and/or invasion. Yet currently all this is replaced by the binary that becomes timeless, tireless and never ending. It is not surprising, then, that we are beginning to lose connection with who and what we are. So we must, as Indigenous peoples, debate among ourselves (and within ourselves) the true meaning in understanding our unique Australian blackness — our Aboriginality/Indigeneity (Paradies, 2006).

Paradies reminds us that

(h)istorically, non-Indigenous approaches to defining and understanding Indigeneity have focused on the need to surveil and control the socialization, mobility and biological reproduction of those with some descent from pre-colonial peoples of Australia. (Paradies, 2005, p. 269)

We have heeded Mick Dodson’s warning in his 1994 Wentworth Lecture — that “without our own voices … Aboriginality will continue to be a creation for and about us” and that this is “all the more reason to insist we have control over both the form and the content of representations of our Aboriginalities” (Dodson, 1994a, p. 19).

In the current situation, discussion on how to nurture and protect our own separate and viable intellectual property as ongoing cultural maintenance prior to and/or opposed to the act of colonisation is hijacked and taken out of contemporary debate. However this boundary-setting and policing serves to alienate Indigenous people (past, present and potentially future) who have somehow retained traditional knowledges outside of the binary relationship of intellectual resistance and colonisation (O’Regan, 1999).
By breaking down the binary relationship established between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, we will allow this parallel traditional Indigenous knowledge base to expand and bloom. In doing so, I suggest that we will encourage questions about the operations of culture, science and art that criss-cross the Indigenous and non-Indigenous academies of learning. I therefore take the position that strategies of boundary construction — though an important stage in Indigenous intellectual development (Nakata, 2008), and a necessary stage in the deconstructive project (Moreton-Robinson, 2008) — arguably contribute to an ongoing act of colonisation.

Nakata asserted that while the scholarly concerns of Indigenous academics are not only “diverse and scattered across the disciplines”, they must always “remain articulated to community concerns and sensibilities” as an essential means to “re-establishing continuities with former traditions and knowledge” (Nakata, 2008, n.p.). Whereas Moreton-Robinson, as both a feminist and an Aboriginal academic, identified that the “fluidity” of relations of power between researched and researcher were “not complicated by blackness”, but rather, by “whiteness” which served to “normalise and situate both the researcher and the researched through their race privilege” (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, p. 73).

Lester Rigney (1997), driven by an emancipatory agenda, argued:

> Indigenous Peoples must now be involved in defining, controlling, and owning epistemologies and ontologies that value and legitimate the Indigenous experience. Indigenous perspectives must infiltrate the structures and methods of the entire research academy. (Rigney, 1997, p. 114)

He developed what he termed an “Indigenist” research strategy, based on “three fundamental and interrelated principles”:
1. **Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigeneist research**

2. **Political integrity in Indigenous research**

3. **Privileging Indigenous voices in Indigeneist research** (p. 116).

It is because of this foundational intellectual work that I can look back, critically, at the project of boundary construction, from a position of reasoning that this created an opportunity to nurture our own intellectual academic independence. To do otherwise would mean that the power imbalance would continue, to the detriment of any progressive cultural and/or creative activism.

The dilemma is that by moving away from our first knowledge base as an authentic form of Indigenous epistemology (i.e. ways of knowing), we may be at risk of reducing what political power and intellectual property we have retained as separate and unique within our Indigenous community. While adopting a hybrid (black/white) identity can be a form of productive ‘contamination’, in deploying this strategy, I must be sensitive to the threat of isolating those Indigenous peoples who have maintained their traditional knowledge base “as separate and parallel to colonisation ‘from contemporary life and full citizenship’” (Brydon, 1995, p. 141).

Traditional Aboriginal pedagogy incorporates epistemology based in a circular and non-linear notion of life and experience (world view, or ontology). It is based in the inter-relatedness of all things and brings together “ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing” (Martin, 2008). This is what at present retains our separation and uniqueness from non-Indigenous approaches.

*When my father was first taught the story of creation he was a young man, I mean 8 years old. That was the beginning of his initiation, see, and then he was taught that same story again at 12. Then again at 18 and again at 30, that same story... it’s a circular thing, in gaining knowledge. Each story take on new meaning, interpretation as you get older, there [are also physical] things you gotta do to, get painted up*
when you young fella and then [you] paint up nephews when you get older, that change [also] to when, that day you get to tell the yarn, you become teacher student and all that business... life was your teaching and learning this was ‘black fella’. (Spearim, 2012)

David Maybury-Lewis attempts to explain this for a non-Indigenous readership, in the following way:

the Aborigines believed that the universe has two aspects. There is the ordinary physical world in which they live and another connected world from which it is derived. This other world, called the dreamtime, or the dreaming, is the major focus of Aboriginal thought, because the principles and powers emanating from it determine what happens in this world. (Maybury-Lewis, 1992, p. 197)

Rob Pope also talks about this unique sense of interrelatedness, as opposed to the way non-Indigenous or Western people think:

…the distinction is an important one. Plato’s image of the magnet suggests a one-way transmission of energy from a divine source through physical and human intermediaries to the audience. His is essentially a monologic, top-down model of the inspirational process. That of the Aboriginal elder is more dynamic and dialogic. It involves two- and many-way flows of energy, and, through them, kinds of reciprocal support and inter-animation. Clearly, then, a lot depends upon the precise process of inspiration; who or what is reckoned to be ‘breathing into’ whom or what, through what means, and with what effects. (Pope, 2005, p.92)

Maybury-Lewis alludes to the impossibility of non-Indigenous people comprehending Indigenous knowledge systems when he states: ‘It is hardly surprising, then, that a well known Aboriginal artist, Bunduk Marika, said recently and most emphatically, that white people would never understand the dreaming’ (Maybury-Lewis 1992, p. 197). The key question is whether such Indigenous epistemology can be nurtured into the
future, as Indigenous scholars join the Academy and what was once unique in cultural practice becomes embedded outside of our own cultural space.

We must take notice of, and position strategically, the traditional strength of the now isolated parallel tradition (the ‘other side’ of the binary) and importantly, ensure it is not relegated to an inferior position. Paradies (2006) conducted an extensive review of literature to establish how Australian Aboriginality has been defined by and within the Academy. He referenced an analysis of “over 700 pieces of legislation” undertaken by McCorquodale (1986), which “found 67 different definitions of the term ‘Indigenous’” (Paradies, 2006, p. 355). Referencing the work of Aboriginal scholars (Taylor, 2001; Huggins, 2003), Paradies noted the emergence of debate whereby Indigenous scholars sought to establish the true meaning of our Indigeneity as contemporary Australians. Jackie Huggins (2003) rejects definitions of Aboriginality by non-Aboriginals; others argue that such a definition (whether official or popular) is a construct of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that is arrived at through a process of dialogue, imagination, representation and interpretation. Marcia Langton (1993) broke new ground in debates about Aboriginal identity when she applied post-structuralist methods to cinematic and televsual forms to argue that the “actual dialogue” was a form of intersubjectivity whereby

the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals involved test imagined models of the other, repeatedly adjusting the models as responses are processed to find some satisfactory way of comprehending the other. (Langton, 1993, p. 83)

The concern with such debate lies in the potential to further alienate those of us who have retained a more traditional knowledge base as the foundation of their Indigenous identity. Philip Morrissey, the Academic Coordinator of the Faculty of Arts Australian Indigenous Studies Program at the University of Melbourne, states that Indigenous
Australians who have continued to maintain a more traditional sense of ceremony and lifestyle are at risk of falling victim to “stereotyped romantic visions of identity” (Morrissey, 2003, p. 191).

The move away from association with a traditional Aboriginal world-view is further demonstrated in the works of Vernon Ah Kee and Yin Paradies:

We’re Aboriginal and they’re traditional Aboriginal and are a white construct… Now what happens in the deserts and remote communities is that people create art and they try to live their lives in a way that correlates to this romanticised idea, and it’s a white construction. That’s why I say that the only authentic Aboriginal people in this country are the urban Aboriginal people. (Ah Kee, 2006, p. 3)

I do not speak an Aboriginal language, I do not have a connection with my ancestral lands or a unique spirituality inherited through my Indigeneity. I have little contact with my extended family, and the majority of my friends are non-Indigenous. (Paradies, 2006, p. 358)

The problem here is that the departure from traditional lifestyle and philosophy becomes an ironic form of authenticity that is born directly from the experience of colonisation. This departure is not a solution to the initial problem associated with our lack of power within a binary position fraught with hierarchical relations. Ah Kee and Paradies are simply reorganising their position — they are not dismantling, or disengaging from, colonisation — and as such the binary remains constant.

Also, it is necessary to demonstrate how the two traditions, Black and White, are always already interwoven, related but without a binary negative power relationship. In this doctoral submission, the creative work is an experiment of creativity and thought, an imagined reality (ontology) that enables the current binary relationship between black and white to be broken down, where difference is identified and respected as equalising rather than hierarchising. We, as Aboriginal Australians, remain the oldest
living culture and collective human consciousness in the modern world, with Australian human occupation occurring anywhere between 60,000 and 110,000 years ago (Flood, 2001, p. 86). I am concerned to assert the importance of this against the position taken, for example, by Ah Kee and Paradies above.

It was during this pre-history to colonisation that our authenticity as a people gained the foundation to survive beyond the binary, and it remains at the core in understanding our Aboriginal identity. What is at stake with the position of urban construction taken as a form of ironic authenticity by both Ah Kee and Paradies is that their strategy, by sacrificing too much, puts at risk our own pre-history and unique Aboriginal identity. It creates only a seeming escape from the non-Indigenous-created binary. It is a negative form of Aboriginal deconstruction.

Furthermore, the issue of whether non-Indigenous representations of Indigeneity are ‘good’ or ‘bad’ means the very construction of this argument is again based on, and remains dependent upon, non-Indigenous representation of our Aboriginality. We must remember that, historically, non-Indigenous approaches in defining and understanding Aboriginal epistemologies have focused on the white need to survive and control the socialisation, mobility and biological reproduction of those with descent from pre-colonial peoples of Australia (Dodson, 1994). Thus

(t)he experience of a history of description, ascription, prescription and oppression would provide more than sufficient reason for insisting that definitions of Aboriginality must be generated by Indigenous peoples ourselves. Such history should impel the strategies we use today. (Dodson, 1994, p 7)
2. Backgrounds to the study (Ngamilma-li-ayla-y)

The problem is that ‘Integration leaves no thrill of victory!’
In other words, if you are addicted to the [fight/flight] mode,
you can never be satisfied with compromise.
— Mary p. Follett

The university is still predominately an institution
for the white person.
— Anderson, Singh, Stehbens and Ryerson

The first university in Australia, The University of Sydney, was founded in 1850; and it was not until the advent of mass higher education in the 1970s based upon “the catchcry of the ‘fair go’” (Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley 1999, p. 353) that Indigenous Australians gained access to Australian higher education institutions. Mass higher education meant that those previously excluded from and/or under-represented in higher education were given access. This opened the doors for Indigenous people to gain entry into higher education.

Four decades of Indigenous higher education have now passed. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in educational decision-making, and closing the gap of equality of access and participation for them as compared with other Australians, are seen as appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous people. Such goals remain the priorities for government in policy on higher education, currently developed and implemented through the agency of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). To achieve these goals, universities have established a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units, such as advisory boards, councils and centres, and what I call the ‘Indigenous Academy’, that is, networks of Indigenous academic staff groups.

The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC), established in 2005 under the then Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), which is now...
enveloped under the banner of DEEWR, provides policy advice to the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The vision is for “a higher education system in which Indigenous Australians share equally in the life and career opportunities that a university education can provide” (IHEAC 2006, p. 10). Achieving that vision presents challenges to the stakeholders, particularly given that Indigenous people are under-represented in higher education, and Indigenous access and participation rates within education subjects throughout universities have steadily declined over the last few years (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010).

In addition, despite claims by a former Minister for Education, Science and Training that the diversity on Australian university campuses promotes “understanding, prosperity and harmony” (Bishop, 2006, p. 394), the National Indigenous Higher Education Network (NIHEN), formed “by Deans, Heads of Schools, Senior Policy Advisors, Directors and Managers of Schools/Units responsible for leadership in Indigenous Education within Australian Universities” (NIHEN, 2009, p. 1), conducted a study examining the work of Indigenous higher education support centres across Australia in which it was reported that some Indigenous students were still experiencing the university as a “hostile and racist place” (Anning et al 2005, p. 49). Similar findings were also reported in Anderson, Singh, Stehbens and Ryerson’s (1998) investigation into the structure of Australian universities and the inclusion of Indigenous people and also their rights. They concluded: “the university is still predominately an institution for the white person” (Anderson et al 1998).

In this environment/landscape/context the Indigenous academy sits. One of the challenges facing the Indigenous academy has been its failure to define an Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy in universities, which has hinged on there being no clear definition currently of what defines an Australian Indigenous epistemology. This was
further substantiated for me through my experience as Co-Chair of the ‘Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Inclusive Curriculum Development and Implementation Working Party’ at Griffith University in 2008, where classification of what defines an ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogy’ had been stated as a priority for ten years of previous meetings and policy-making with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics sitting on the Working Party. Now in 2012 we at Griffith are still yet to have an Indigenous pedagogy established.

According to Moreton-Robinson, any clear definition of what constitutes a workable definition of an Indigenous pedagogy as part of Indigenous Studies will be tainted through an institutional bias, for:

(t)o recognise that whiteness has shaped knowledge production means that academia would have to accept that the dominant regime of knowledge is culturally and racially biased, socially situated and partial. Such recognition would not only challenge the universalist humanist claims to possess impartial knowledge of the Indigenous other, it would also facilitate recognition of the subjects of other humanisms to whom whiteness has never been invisible or unknown. (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p. 88)

As we, the Aboriginal First People of Australia, continue in our third century under non-Indigenous occupation, it is clear we need a workable concept for an Indigenous academy that will deliver curriculum and research that is Indigenous-focused and -sensitive, and not tainted by false constructions of Aboriginal Peoples which define and hamper Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships within universities:

Much of Australian history is characterised by this domination of Indigenous peoples, which was supposedly authorised by the ‘truth’ of Indigenous peoples’ inferiority. As Indigenous peoples were constructed and inferior, the supposed superiority of non-Indigenous peoples could thus be legitimated. The representations of Indigenous peoples today are pregnant with the meanings laid
down by these colonial fabrications… Knowledge about who ‘we’ are today then demands a historical examination of how and why particular forms of language, ideology behaviours, attitudes and belief systems are mobilised to sustain cultural cohesion. (Phillips & Lampert, 2005, p. 14)

This point was succinctly stated by Dodson in his 1994 Wentworth Lecture:

Representations of Aboriginality are not simply an isolated phenomena which we can eliminate. They are both weapons and systems of the oppressive relationship which exists between Indigenous peoples and colonising states. (Dodson, 1994, p. 10)

3. An Indigenous academy (Wiringin-dhiiral)

For the purpose of this exegesis, as stated previously, my definition of an Indigenous academy involves networks of Indigenous academic staff groups working as a collective towards the progression of Indigenous scholarship. This concept is a relatively new phenomenon in university higher education settings.

In 2008 the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, the highest collective body related to Indigenous policy and development at the federal government level — stated in a Submission to the Review of Australian Higher Education the need to “Implement a Cultural Competency Framework” (IHEAC, 2008). The submission identified a need for introducing a competency framework that defined Indigenous culture, as there was a lack of guidance and appropriate terms of reference from
which to work with Indigenous people, and for Indigenous people to work with, in the higher education system.

**KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.2. Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous culture have a powerful and marketable currency; but it is scholarship that has yet to be fully recognised within the higher education sector…

2.2. The responsibility for translating Indigenous aspirations and needs within higher education into practical and sustainable outcomes must be led by universities themselves in partnership with Indigenous educational leaders…

2.6. Cultural competency must be a whole of institution responsibility that develops good citizenship and helps address issues of institutional and individual racism that continue to be faced by Indigenous staff and students in universities…

4.12. Promotion of Indigenous culture in universities, inclusive curriculum and cultural competency which enhance student engagement and success…

6.10. The establishment of formal governance of protocols and principles for Indigenous knowledge…


It is clear when looking at the main points summarised above, over the 40 years that we have gained access to the Academy, we are still yet to identify a working Indigenous pedagogy:

it is scholarship that has yet to be fully recognised within the higher education sector... [i.e. the] establishment of formal governance of protocols and principles for Indigenous knowledge... [and the development of] national principles of Indigenous ethics to support Indigenous knowledge development and use… (IHEAC, 2008)
What I found particularly problematic with the report was that points 2.2. and 2.6. put the responsibility to establish such pedagogy back onto the universities, yet much of my research as discussed throughout this exegesis demonstrates that although the Indigenous Academy is unable to define a working definition of an Indigenous pedagogy it does appear to agree that currently the pedagogy applied by both the universities and Indigenous scholars is incompatible. So why then would one recommend that it is the role of the universities to take the lead in such issues? Surely such intellectual property is the responsibility of the Indigenous academy itself.

Through this process of self-definition — of self-enforced exclusion (What or who is a ‘real Indigenous’ person?) the establishment of a working Indigenous academy never quite becomes successful (Ang 2001) because, instead, strategies in cultural survival end up replacing “one form of tyranny with another” (Appiah, 1994, p. 163). The problem is that many Indigenous people who remain capable of establishing a successful Indigenous academy are instead, as described by Mary p. Follett, “addicted to the fight”: where rather than supporting the ongoing cultural maintenance and survival of the oldest living human intellectual property in the world (quoted in Janke, 2011), we are instead continually “in resistance to the seductions of assimilation and deconstruction of colonialism as an attempt in rebuilding a unique Aboriginal First Nation identity” as an ongoing survival against the systematic evils of colonisation (Ariss, 1988, p. 13). The “fight” then becomes integral to elements in surviving the ongoing colonial imperatives imposed by the Australian nation-state (Russell, 2001, p. 76; Werbner & Modood, 1997, p. 249). Particularly

(i) it is only a narrowness of vision, or a misconception of culture as a frozen state that leads people to limit expressions of essential Aboriginality to the stereotyped pristine. Far from being dead, passive or conservative, the past is dynamic, active and potentially revolutionary in which we can root our autonomy, our sense of ownership of ourselves and our resistance against assimilation... But
if the past was once used as a trap for Aboriginality, we have seen a transformation, whereby Aboriginal people have reclaimed the key to the trap and have found the 'liberating power of remembrance'. The control that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now have over the institute is both a symbol and an expression of the shift in the politics of knowledge which we have achieved over the last 30 years... The repossessions of the past is the repossessions of ourselves. (Dodson, 1994, p. 24)

As a young man growing up and suffering the indignity of the Australian public housing system, I had this sense of negative communal shared identity in the feeling of 'being oppressed' — where not only was my oppression seen as a sense of identity and motivation, but when amongst other Indigenous youth such feelings of resistance became a pleasurable and empowering experience. Ien Ang, a Chinese-Australian, explains this phenomenon:

There is of course an excitement in the self-affirmation and self-assertion that is inextricably linked to the rise of identity politics since the 1960s: there is a pleasure in the sheer realization of a distinctive shared identity and the empowered sense of belonging it imparts. Identity politics, in this regard, is a logical offshoot of the decline of assimilationism and its illusory promise of equality on the basis of a strived-for but never achieved sameness: the politics of identity relies quintessentially on the recognition and mobilization of difference once the ideal of sameness has proved unreachable. Claiming one's difference (from the mainstream or dominant national culture) and turning it into symbolic capital has become a powerful and attractive strategy among those who have never quite belonged, or have been made to feel that they do not quite belong in the West. (Ang, 2001, pp. 10-11)

What is different, however, for Indigenous Australians is that our recent history has been one of forced assimilation, and our objective is not inclusion into, but resistance against domination by the West, and against forms of differentiation based on ascribing negative characteristics to those whom the West label as “others”. So my argument is that the question of self-definition shouldn’t start the discussion.
It should be the discussion’s objective, and its closing point. Thus my strategy of applying autobiographical ethnicity — demonstrated in this doctoral submission — is to inscribe my own ethnic, cultural and racial background by scholarly and creative means, utilising contemporary academic and creative voices, research and storytelling, as expressions of life experience in an active partnership between author and readers.

Ω

4. Autobiographical ethnicity (Gamilaroi winnunguldah)

The need to introduce autobiographical ethnicity as a form of creative scholarship comes from there being no clear definition, in either the Western academy or in contemporary Indigenous studies, which adequately describes the form of research and storytelling that is embedded deep within my current creative/research practice.

In applying autobiographical ethnicity as my research methodology, I allow myself the opportunity to create a hypothetical third space — separate to the binary relationship of authority and status established between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in current Indigenous studies: one that is truly reflective and understanding of both black and white as, like Paradies (2006, p. 358), I refuse to “surrender my other identities” in order to become accepted within an Indigenous academy that is clearly subject to misinterpretation and institutional bias. As a descendent of the Kamilaroi Aboriginal First Nation and also Spanish and Irish origins, I draw upon my ancestry as both the coloniser and the colonised, both “Black and consummately White” (Lehman, 2004). Autobiographical ethnicity allows me a shift from contemporary Indigenous studies,
from negative to positive, by being separate from — yet experienced in and able to analyse — the systematic evils of colonisation, rather than alienated and subjected by them.

Etymologically, the term autobiography is derived from the Greek auto (self), bio (life) and graphein (to write). Autobiographic writing was located within the late Latin category of apologia. Apologia are statements “in defense of one’s opinions, position or actions” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The term ethnicity is commonly used in national population demographics to categorise people on the basis of heritage — “a group of people who have the same culture and tradition” (Macmillan Dictionary). Ethnography is the term used to describe a qualitative research method — predominantly used by anthropologists — whereby “data” takes the form of field notes and or audio-visual documentation derived from the researcher’s close observation of peoples and immersion in their daily lives. This term has been co-opted by researchers from the Humanities and Social Sciences undertaking autobiographical projects to create the conjoined term auto-ethnography.

In the 1960s, theorists of social interaction focused attention on the role of language in the creation of social order, i.e., the collective adoption and internalisation of commonly shared values and norms. A new school of thought known as Ethnomethodology arose out of the work of Harold Garfinkel who critically evaluated the documentary process, arguing for deeper analysis, adding a greater layer of complexity to the idea that a person became a member of a group by virtue of their aptitude for language and sense-making. Garfinkel explained:

the method consists of treating an actual appearance as ‘the document of,’ as ‘pointing to,’ as ‘standing on behalf of’ a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis
of ‘what is known’ about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other. (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 78)

This definition of the documentary process provides for the view that members of a society do not make sense of actual actions in daily social life by simply perceiving them as they currently appear. Instead, it assumes that particular actions can only be interpreted as recognisable by reflexively drawing on past (and then future) “appearances-of-familiar-events” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 78).

The method for collecting data in an ethnographic study is direct, first-hand observation of daily participation, along with in situ participant input, where participant voices do not have the mobility to be otherwise heard. Autobiographical narratives that find publication can operate similarly (Sparkes, 2002, p. 209). Writing about the autobiographical voices of those who do not recognise themselves in the traditional images that literature and society project and uphold as models, Françoise Lionnet proposes that

the self engendered on the page allows the writer to subject a great deal of her ordinary experience to new scrutiny and to show that the polarity fact/fiction does not establish and constitute absolute categories of feeling and perceiving reality. The narrative text epitomizes this duality in its splitting of the subject of discourse into a narrating self and an experiencing self which can never coincide exactly. (Lionnet, 1989, p. 92)

Lionnet suggests ‘self portrait’ is a more effective generic term (than autobiography) because it avoids “the scepticism with which contemporary literary theory has taught us to view any effort of self-representation in language” (Lionnet, 1989, p. 98).

To underscore this point, Lionnet refers to Zora Neale Huston’s autobiographical Dust Tracks on a Road (1942) which, although informed by fieldwork designed to “salvage her own vanishing Negro culture”, because it did not demonstrate “race
solidarity”, was perceived as “insincere and untrustworthy”. In Lionnet’s view, the term ‘authoethnography’ is more suited to works that define “one’s subjective ethnicity as mediated through language, history, and ethnographical analysis, in short ... a kind of ‘figural anthropology of the self’” (Lionnet, 1989, p. 99).

My script Kick up Dust, and also this exegesis, draw on autobiographical ethnicity because the Indigenous academy provides no formal consensus about what represents Indigenous epistemology as a working basis for applied pedagogy. The narrative voice in my script utilises my own requisition of a traditional Kamilaroi Aboriginal language base as a viable alternative: not only as a statement of my authority to speak as an Aboriginal Australian but also in introducing a notion of interconnection between two worlds. The combination of effects derived from a creative performance script and an academic exegesis seem to me ideal as a way into bringing forth a new set of knowledges

... in an era when the diversity of human experience in social groups and communities, with languages and epistemologies, is undergoing profound cultural and political shifts. Although it could be argued that this has always been the case because societies always are dynamic, there is an argument to be made about the rapid loss of languages and cultures through globalization and the significance for many communities of the impact of human beings on the environment. Indigenous communities live with the urgency that these challenges present to the world and have sought through international mobilization, to call attention to these concerns. It is considered a sign of success when the Western world, through one of its institutions, pauses even momentarily to consider an alternative possibility. Indigenous research actively seeks to extend that momentary pause into genuine engagement with Indigenous communities and alternative ways of seeking to live with and in the world. (Smith, 2005, p. 104)
5. A new hypothetical space (Nhuubala winunga-baa)

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant, we have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.
— Albert Einstein

What the physicists did not know, or at any rate did not mention, is that the ideas contained in quantum theory have interesting similarities to the world view of Australian Aborigines, right down to the space-time continuum of relativity theory.
— David Maybury-Lewis

It is important that, as Indigenous scholars, we begin to invent a new hypothetical space that identifies and nurtures difference rather than confronts it — and for this reason I have chosen to include a film script as a creative component within my doctoral submission. The ‘rational’ exegesis coupled with the ‘intuitive’ film script, as Einstein suggests, will create a provisional, hypothetical space where equity and equivalence of ‘black’ and ‘white’ can be imagined and discussed. Playing with difference in this way is, indeed, ‘a sacred gift’. It allows the imagination to move beyond the binary, in an effort to suggest greater understandings, both rational and intuitive.

The film script, as an experiment in thought and a research tool, utilises key philosophies embedded in our Kamilaroi Aboriginal First Nation epistemology before the arrival of the ‘whiteman’, and is a reinvestigation of them. By this means, I move Indigenous scholarship away from academic critique and further towards a provisional hypothetical space which can document a parallel validity and authenticity for both the coloniser and the colonised — black and white, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This research method is related to practice-led research, which, in the Arts, does not adopt a generic research strategy, which would raise epistemological issues (Bell, 2006, p. 85). In creative-practice led research, through “the exegesis” and its “source” (the artwork), practitioners tread a fine line
... between demonstrating our capacity to engage the discourses of other disciplines (in order to make our case more easily understood), and actually distorting the most powerful characteristics of our field ... (Wissler, 1997, p. 88)

... “between the generative act that brings a work into existence and the receptive act that is a proper appreciation of that work” (Davies, 2004, p. 26). While negotiating these boundaries, my practice also creates a space for a reservoir of knowledge which is ‘untapped’ in academia. The opening of this traditional knowledge space has been achieved by observing the following steps (and a new kind of academic dance is created):

Step 1. Create a collective definition of what constitutes an Indigenous pedagogy.

In order to remove the binary relationship of hierarchy and opposition evident in current Indigenous scholarship, my research first addressed finding “that definitive point” which constitutes Indigenous pedagogy. It is a journey that has been encouraged by those close to me whom I respect the most, such as in e-mail correspondence received by a true mentor and friend, Professor Boni Robertson:

You should be proud of the work that you are doing, Marcus. You are articulating in a contextual and practical way, what is known to us to be our cultural framework, that defines externally and internally who we are as Indigenous people. (Robertson, 2009)

It was necessary to define Indigenous pedagogy in such a way that it was cognitively inherent to all that is Indigenous and understood within Indigenous epistemology, but was parallel and equal to a non-Indigenous research methodology.
My strategy to overcome the current academic ambiguity of what constitutes Indigenous epistemology (and, by implication, identity) utilised interviewing, story-sharing and an autobiographical rhetorical construction,

... a self for public, not private, purposes: the displayed self is a strategically fabricated performance, one which stages a useful identity, an identity which can be put to work. It is the quality of that usefulness which determines the politics of autobiographical discourse. In other words, what is the identity being put forward for? (Ang 2001, p. 24)

This construction acknowledges my Aboriginality as inherent, as understood within my family network. Thus my research involved the sharing of stories and lived experiences, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, their collection and analysis.

Step 2. Establish a new interdisciplinary approach that gives recognition to parallel Indigenous traditional epistemologies.

My research became embedded in conversation and observation which was non-linear and circular in its narrative: signposts identified throughout the creative journey took on new meaning as information was gained.

It’s a good way of teaching, I think. As a young fella, gotta look, listen to an old fellas way of life, telling stories, [as a] way of making something understood... properly. That right... everything you did [as a child] was teaching, and learning... it was about gaining knowledge. You don’t know when you younger, that all that... stuff... it’s in your mind ay... it just makes you a lot more comfortable, happier when you’re older... you know having that knowledge as you older, but having to experience it [first] as a young person. (Knox, 2012)

The Indigenous knowledge base became so complex and multi layered that meaning evolved and changed on almost a daily basis (as new understandings became clearer). It allowed a transfer of ideas as a ‘creative hypothesis’ that went beyond conventional
time and space: Kamilaroi epistemology does not obey the laws of history and science as promoted in the university generally. At the same time, my method incorporated a film script with a traditional Western three-act structure. These shifts away from predictable academic methodology were needed to move successfully across current barriers of boundary construction, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Interdisciplinarity provided a key method to disrupt the binary.

Step 3. Argue the case for securing the position of a new and equal relationship between epistemologies.

The space-time continuum relevance to the Aboriginal world view recognised by Maybury-Lewis (1992) supports the idea of equality between Indigenous and Western epistemologies. In his study of Aboriginal peoples, Maybury-Lewis demonstrated the possibilities for intellectual exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous theory, once the discussion has moved beyond the binary of colonisation. Quantum theory opens the material world to see inscribed on its basic elements indeterminacy, uncertainty and other characteristics that outside western science would be described as spiritual. It is at this point that quantum theory meets Indigenous epistemology with its catalogue of morphing, transforming forces based deep in the structure of the matter that constitutes a once traditional Indigenous knowledgbase.

We can no longer assume, if we were fortunate enough to live in one of the ‘developed’ countries, that our way of life represents the most advanced strand of progress and that other societies have simply been less successful than ours in attaining it. Instead we now know that other societies have made other choices, followed different paths in search of different destinies. This knowledge opens up new vistas on the richness and verity of what it means to be human. (Maybury-Lewis, 1992, p. 202)
In this way, the Aboriginal world-view is acknowledged as separate and unique, and at the same time equal. It is an idea discussed throughout Nakata’s paper on Indigenous culture and the interface between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Academy:

There is in the development literature an acceptance of the value of integrating two systems of knowledge — traditional (Indigenous) and scientific — in order to produce new knowledge and practices that provide solutions for sustainable countries and communities. Some authors (e.g. Von Liebenstein, 2000), aware of the dominance and perceived superiority of scientific knowledge, take care to stress the complementarity of the two knowledge systems. In much of the literature there is an emphasis on incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in strategies of application. (Nakata, 2002, p. 284)

Armed with such views, I gained the confidence for using my script as balanced presentation of interconnected knowledges and understandings presented as a demonstration of what this hypothetical third space would look like.

**Step 4. Restate the power relationship between epistemologies separated from the binary.**

I realised that, as Indigenous academics, we must be clear about how our traditional Aboriginal culture is becoming the very thing that we are trying to do away with as we attempt to assert our own authenticity/authority as urban Aboriginals, void of ceremony, practice and language, in having to negotiate our way through a maze of real and unreal representations of what constitutes traditional and non-traditional Aboriginal identity. Rather than taking an oppositional stance to the non-Indigenous position to enforce our uniqueness (and thereby our weakness) as the oldest living culture in the world, we must draw from the strength of a newly isolated parallel tradition: the ‘other side’ of the binary, but no longer relegated to an inferior position.

I attempted to identify others who, through scholarship and creative arts, had begun to move beyond the binary in utilising Indigenous intellectual property as part of a
multidisciplinary approach to enhance further study. The work of Professor David Maybury-Lewis (discussed above) was one example. In reading Nakata I also looked further at Von Liebenstein who advocates the growing awareness on an international level of the need to interconnect Indigenous knowledges with modern science as integral in understanding complexities as yet not understood.

The link with indigenous knowledge is obvious. It is now generally acknowledged by development professionals and scientists that indigenous knowledge represents localised and community-based knowledge that has evolved within a micro-environmental context. One may therefore jump to the conclusion that sustainable development cannot be fully understood by the exclusive application of formal scientific concepts and methods. Unless development thinking includes indigenous knowledge and global knowledge, these complexities may never be understood. (Von Liebenstein, 2000, p. 10)

Another is the work of creativity theorist Rob Pope, who interconnects Indigenous creation myth and story with cultural history and contemporary critical theory in his book *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice* (2005). Like Maybury-Lewis, Pope holds the view that Indigenous genetic memory, storytelling ceremony and practice embedded within the Aboriginal (Dreaming) may well uncover the secrets to the development of human consciousness in understanding precisely our connection to creation, not a linear construct of time and place, but as a *regeneration beyond one moment, one event*. Analysing the creation myth as re-told in Billy Marshall-Stoneking’s poem “Passage”, Pope says

[T]his is not an activity which simply takes place regardless of humanity, in some free-standing time and space... ‘Through the singing we keep everything alive; / through the songs the spirits keep us alive.’ This is speech that acts and is acted upon: created, it creates in return.

Such a view of creation as ceaseless re-creation and of life itself being crucially dependent upon a mutually informing exchange of
spirit and song, can seem strange and even unsettling to Western readers brought up in ‘the whiteman’s way’... [T]his Aboriginal elder [the speaker in the poem] is very much a speaker-singer from and on behalf of the heart of his community (compare the Anglo-Saxon poet ‘Deor’…). Moreover, the complexly integrated wor(l)d [sic] of the poem plays havoc with hard-and-fast distinctions between story and history, fiction and fact; for the landscape recorded in and realised through this poem is both literal and metaphorical: a routinely recognisable ‘historical’ time and place and a mythically conceived and invoked state of ‘the Dreaming’. The latter, also called the ‘the Dreamtime’, is ‘a time in the past whose values are still active in the present’. (Pope, 2005, p 144)

In the above quote Pope starts to do more than just interconnect Indigenous knowledges with the West, he actually infers that there is almost a sublime connection in creative practice that moves back and forth throughout human connection, oblivious to time, place, culture and race, embedded within our need to express story and song.

It was in reading Pope that I conceived my aim to shift contemporary Indigenous studies from critique to project, from negative to positive deconstruction, as part of a creative practice.

*Step 5. Draw conclusions in both academic and creative forms which move beyond the binary into a play of difference that recognises both black and white, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, equally.*

The film script is an example of the kind of writing I do, based on historical narratives of past individuals, or on narratives provided by individuals about their pasts, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. I want to understand the motivations of, and create empathy with, Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters, and fashion highly-personalised subjective accounts which are also accurate readings of history. I therefore write as ‘something other than’ exclusively ‘white’, or exclusively ‘black’. Like
Lynette Russell (2001, p. 98) and Yin Paradies (2006, p. 357), I too refuse to “surrender my other identities” in order to be Aboriginal; I reaffirm my authenticity and my understanding as Kamilaroi, through reference to my own personal ‘Burruguu-ngayi-li’ (Dreaming). Neither as one or the other, black or white, my personal ‘Dhua’ (Rite of Passage) dictates that I become a single entity, not a hybrid but a new consciousness, a ‘New Dreaming’.

The idea of a continuation of the one story, this last two hundred years in a continuation of that one story, it just got bigger and wider... that’s all... but still a continuation. (Bell, M. 2012)

It is difficult to provide definitions/translation in English to such Kamilaroi words as dhua and burruguu-ngayi-li as they are multi-layered in meaning and no one English word provides the same set of meanings. Below are transcripts taken from time spent in Ramingining talking with elders of their community (Michael Daru and Richard Birrinbirrin) in relation to a shared understanding of dhua, and in discussion of whether or not urban people can be considered as part of a new ‘Dreaming’...

We can’t carve them into a European world, you know, but we can play along, you know... respect. Prove them who they are, what they are. You can’t get a Aboriginal person and paint them white, get them to a white fella and you can’t get a white fella paint them black make them a black fella... you gotta respect what they are... who they are... that’s your moiety... you a story teller, you not a dancer. Proper way... Maynemuck. That moiety your story, some of that story, it’s been taken from your mothers... yawuul... see... your story only new come with the white fella, your mother taken, your language taken that beautiful black skin... taken... you, your story begin when them white fella come take everything. That why you feel sometimes you don’t belong, your history old, your history ancient but your story... only 200 years old. You know em, he belong to you... your yarn, yep... same yarn, same story... yawuul, that true. (Daru, 2009)

And...
When you show me that thing (dhua, what it means...) reminds me, of my past. They got that seven sisters yarn here, when the ladies cleanse themselves set up their own ceremony we set up our ceremony. That one we [all] share... woman share... we share... (whistle...) she real beautiful that young one, the youngest sister... we got this fella Lumulla, yeah true... that’s woman’s creation. You see some of them the name, I heard them say in Sydney some of them people they been given same name as in here... same name... same story. Same as ghosts here, lotta Yankees [Settlers] come here shoot the old people... hide the people out, specially out at old Mawongi station... a lot of Yankees... there was a lot of people was around here... shoot them all... and we never lost the story, we still got it. You people (Kamilaroi) got the story still same, and us people... here... because the settlers came and they made hazard. Too far I think (laughs...) Lumalla, he come from one country called Wandallalla, that Lumulla his totem is the morning star... milky way... some of the people here, ceremony leaders for three tribes, and they all sing milky way too... (Birrinbirrin, 2009)

Although in Ramingining they don’t say dhua, they do understand its meaning in relation to one’s place as determined by family, kinship group and history. What is interesting is the way both Richard and Michael associate our colonised history as a ‘new chapter’ of the Dreaming, not disconnected or disenfranchised, but an extension that has evolved in accepting trauma, pain, loss and grief as part of a colonised identity not separate to but as an extension of an ancient culture.

That why you feel sometimes you don’t belong, your history old, your history ancient but your story... only 200 years old. You know em, he belong to you... your yarn, yep... same yarn, same story... yawuul, that true. (Daru, 2009)

Same as ghosts here, lotta Yankees [Settlers] come here shoot the old people... hide the people out, specially out at old Mawongi station... a lot of Yankees... there was a lot of people was around here... shoot them all... and we never lost the story, we still got it. You people (Kamilaroi) got the story still same, and us people... here... because the settlers came and they made hazard. (Birrinbirrin, 2009)

It is interesting that a culture that has retained its language and ceremony has also retained its connection to the events of our recent past and therefore our future.
This is unlike many of those within the Indigenous academy, like Paradies and Ah-Kee, who in reaffirming their own identity are deconstructing the people of Ramingining and others who still practice a traditional culture. However, not all urban artists or academics completely disregard the idea of an extended or evolved Dreaming that recognises both the traditional and non-traditional Aboriginal. This is stated by my Uncle Richard Bell (brother of Marshall Bell) who along with Vernon Ah Kee is an original member of the ProppaNOW Indigenous arts collective in Brisbane.

Urban Aboriginal Art… is the work of people descended from the original owners of the heavily populated areas of the continent. Through a brutal colonisation process much of the culture has disappeared. However, what has survived is important... The Dreamtime is the past, the present, the future. The urban artists are still telling dreamtime stories albeit contemporary ones. The Dreamings (of the favoured ‘real Aborigines’ from the least settled areas) actually pass deep into Urban territories. In short, the Dreamings cannot be complete without reciprocity between the supposed real Aboriginals of the North and supposed Unreal or inauthentic Aboriginals of the South. (Bell, R. 2002)

It is clear that Uncle Richard, in contrast with both Richard and Michael, recognise what for me, until my journey to Ramingining, was nothing more than a ‘hypothetical third place’ where our traditional culture runs parallel to colonisation. The way Michael Daru, Richard Birrinbirrin and Uncle Richard Bell describe urban Aboriginal culture is as a practice/belief-system that runs in continuum with the Dreaming and yet as a separate and unique space observing colonisation rather than just a consequence of it. This knowledge, when applied to my own methodology, allows me the opportunity to accept my role in a traditional context where I can deliver my storytelling, compile my exegesis and write my film script as both the coloniser and colonised, and both ‘black’ and ‘white’ (Russell 2001, p. 98) and in doing so remain both separate and parallel to the persuasion of colonisation.

Ω
6. **Kick up Dust (Gigirrm-li warra-y yuu)**

I had an opportunity to apply a knowledge base derived from the new hypothetical spaces offered by my explorations of autobiographical ethnicity when I returned home to Moree in northern NSW with my family in September 2009. We had been called home for ceremony after the Apology to Aboriginal People by the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, to continue a healing process that had began with a gathering in Brisbane that included a number of neighbouring Indigenous First Nations who were now returning home to celebrate the ongoing revival and maintenance of our language culture and dance. To ensure that as many of us could get home as possible, the ceremony was embedded in a cultural festival (Yammaa...‘Welcome to Kamilaroi’) that would enable those outside the traditional ceremony to apply for funding within governmental guidelines. So, just as Richard Birrinbirrin and Michael Daru were saying, a fusion was occurring between the old (ancient history) and the new (contemporary story): there were those who were attending due to a cultural obligation of ceremony and those who were appearing as contemporary performing artists wanting to be paid for their inclusion in a festival that would enhance and celebrate the local Indigenous community.

Many of both my Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues at the university knew that I was attending due to the promotion of the festival and were also aware that my attendance was more in accordance with my traditional cultural obligation, and that I would not be receiving any funds for my participation. For me and my family, participation was due to cultural maintenance and ceremony equal to but separate and unique from the festival itself. Due to the Kamilaroi being renowned as stomp dancers, rather than shake-a-leg, we have a saying to the kids who are learning their traditional dance/corroboree. We say: ‘Kick up Dust’, as a reflection of our stomping...
hard into the red dust of our traditional homelands. Therefore, like many other Kamilaroi people who were attending the ceremony/festival, I told both my Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues alike that we were going to ‘Kick up Dust’ like never seen before because the Kamilaroi were coming home for ceremony.

So, I returned home to Moree Tuesday the 21st September and participated with my family together with over 100 other Kamilaroi, Gamilaroi, Gamilaraay dancers in holding a traditional Gamilaroi winnunguulda yammaa yillaargy welcome to country ceremony that lasted well into the night. I will never ever forget being woken up the next morning by my two sons, Ngiyaani, who was then 8 years and Marcus (Woolombi) 6 years old, and being told (a major component of the ceremony was the use of our own language...): ‘Boobaah... ngaami-li minya ngiyania ganunga!’ (Daddy ... look what we done!).

The boys had woken me to one of the biggest dust storms ever seen on the east coast of Australia. It dropped “75,000 tons of red dust [in] an hour”, covering from Mt Isa, my wife’s traditional country, right down to Canberra, the nation’s capital.

Dust from the interior would make it about 3500km to New Zealand [where I was reared] while material crossing Queensland and the northern NSW [where I had just gathered with my Kamilaroi, Gamilaroi, Gamilaraay family] would be recycled north in one to two days with the potential to reach as far as Darwin [where I had just returned from a flight from Ramingining]... (Courier Mail, 2009, p. 3 with my insertions)

At that point I found myself in a unique opportunity of choice. Paradies and Ah Kee had allowed me to move outside a once understood and yet constricted paradigm of Indigenous consciousness, and allowed me now to express my own freedom of will outside of ‘stereotyped images that coalesce around specific fantasies of exclusivity’ (Paradies, 2006, p. 357). Further, Michael Daru and Richard Birrinbirrin had explained
that any such constriction had only ever occurred within my own construction, due to a self-imposed battle to resist the temptations of colonisation (see especially Birrinbirrin, 2009).

So I did the only thing I could do in that situation, I looked my boys in the eyes and told them: “Blood and guts, boys, look what we did, gigirrma-li warra-y yuu birray-gal! (Kick up dust, boys!) The mighty Kamilaroi...” And that’s what we proceeded to do over the next three days... kick up dust!!!

Now, as much as I and others would like to have you believe that such an experience is unique to my being Indigenous, as Pope suggests in his reading of the Anglo-Saxon Poet ‘Deor’ from “a monastic collection now called the Exeter Book; from the tenth century” (Pope, 2005, p. 201), the ability of non-Indigenous writers to create a “recognisable ‘historical’ time and place... as a ceaseless re-creation of life (through) a mythically conceived and invoked state of the ‘Dreaming’” (Pope, 2005, p. 144) has, it appears, been going on for quite some time. Another example of a non-Indigenous writer who has been able to tap into/or generate their own inspiration of the ‘Dreaming’ is found in an article written by my friend and mentor Professor Stephen Stockwell who in 1994 wrote the short story ‘Louis Pathos’ after witnessing an Indigenous rainmaking ceremony “in the middle of nowhere”. It’s exactly half-way between Alice Springs and Darwin, where... in Stockwell’s words... “the Barkly Tableland meets the Tanami Desert”.

Every afternoon, the old men of the tribes gather at the outskirts of their camp just north of Elliott and chant the Gudjiga, a cycle of sacred songs that name and claim and care for the land and its people. A town like Elliott defines its own reality. 400 Aborigines abiding by the old law and singing the land every day create something much stronger than the ragged Western rationality of 40 white misfits constantly sedated by alcohol or Valium. When the old men say their tribe was created from the mud made by the Giant Dingo
pissing on the hot desert dirt, even the most cynical bureaucrats just nod, knowing they cannot prove any different. The old magic is still strong. When you’re sung, you stay sung, black or white... He climbed out of bed and opened the door to the unexpected aroma of rain and the sight of huge raindrops plopping onto the dead leaves that littered his front yard. The unseasonal and unexpected rain made Terry realise that Louis never was wild or wicked or even a lucky bastard. He just bore the burden of this time... and this place... in ways he would never understand. He’d been sucked into the spin of another universe and when the wheels came off, he just kept grinding away. (Stockwell, 1994, pp. 40-45)

Alongside the great benefits of making conclusions in this way (non-Indigenous writers being able to write within an Indigenous form of reference), there are, of course, associated dangers which I will discuss later.

Ω

7. A note on the creative component (Biiba-ga guwaa-lda-ndaay)

It is worthy of note that the film script manuscript Kick up Dust (as named from my experience in Moree) was not my original choice as the creative component for this doctoral submission. During my candidature, I worked on three manuscripts. I began writing a novel, True God: The Story of William O’Halloran, and then, after much time and effort and even more frustration, my second choice as creative component became a stage play manuscript: The Happily Absorbed. (This playscript is currently under option for development with Yirri Yaakin, the longest running, and many consider, the leading Indigenous theatre company in Australia.) I then also set out on a screen play,
At times during my candidature, I reverted to the various manuscripts, so I was often working on them all simultaneously.

In each case I was searching for the best vehicle for my research, and my research outcome. The deep narrative running through all three texts — the novel, the play and the film script — explores notions of acquired consciousness and our individual construction of meaning, and is informed by a process running both parallel to and within colonisation where aspects of history, isolation and oppression have a direct consequence to contemporary urban Aboriginal identity. Eventually the novel, and too the play, fell away as the viable option for the creative component of the doctoral submission as the ongoing success of Kick up Dust (I submitted it to Screen Queensland, and it received funding for development) began to take hold of my creative energy. That being said, each written text progressed different parts of my personal and creative journey, and segments of both the novel and stage play do appear later in this exegesis as evidence of that journey, together with the completed (fifth draft) of the film script included above as the creative component of my dissertation.

Recognised first through Screen Queensland for its potential, the script Kick up Dust was sent to Edwards/Skerbelis Entertainment in Hollywood for Script Assessment and Development Notes (appendix a.). The reply was particularly positive and encouraged further development of the work stating that it not only possessed international appeal but also the potential to receive both critical acclaim and financial success at the box office — two indicators that ensured Screen Queensland’s ongoing involvement with the project. The script was also chosen for a public reading as part of the 2010 Dungog Film Festival’s elite In the Raw program and is currently in development with production company New Holland Pictures, with funding (and potential production investment coming) from Screen Queensland.
As important as such indicators are, the real importance to me as the author was that the script, as with the novel and stage play, investigated issues of Indigenous pedagogy — and in particular the question of an ongoing Indigenous epistemology which, though not overtly defined or presented ‘in-your-face’ in these works, I see as integral to the survival and cultural maintenance of urban contemporary Indigenous Australian peoples, their identity and culture.

Ω

8. Before the beginning (Gamilu yilaambiyal...)

Our peoples have left with us deep roots which have empowered us to endure the violence of oppression. They are the roots of survival but not constriction. They are the roots from which all growth is possible. They are the roots that protected our end from the beginning.

— Michael Dodson

As Indigenous scholars it is important that we begin to reinvent the current Indigenous academy. We need to create a new hypothetical third space that identifies and nurtures difference as an inclusive practice rather than the current interface of boundary construction. It is important for ongoing cultural maintenance that an intellectual exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship become established as a ‘partnership of learning’ rather than the current binary relationship based upon cultural authority and status.

The creative component in my doctoral submission is written to identify this intellectual exchange as a demonstration of the ‘sacred gift’ described by Einstein. The feature film script, Kick up Dust, constructs a representation of a provisional, hypothetical space
with equivalence of both ‘black’ and ‘white’ (and many shades in between and beyond) that allows the imagination to move past the present binary relationship — a play of difference that in the creation of time and space provides an incorporation of equity which allows for greater understanding within both the rational and intuitive minds.

The narrative voice in the script is developed from the research undertaken in this dissertation, presented as a reinvestigation of the key philosophies embedded within my family’s Kamilaroi Aboriginal First Nation epistemology before the arrival of the ‘whiteman’. The dissertation and the creative component are written as a conscious move away from current Indigenous scholarship — away from critique and towards a defined project, a ‘learning partnership’ in a provisional, hypothetical space.

For me, personally, the Indigenous component of the ‘learning partnership’ is linked to my own feelings of Indigeneity which have their foundations firmly established in my Indigenous family’s epistemology, prior to, during and then having survived a process of colonisation. It is the intellectual property contained within this knowledge base, remembered from prior to colonisation, that I now identify as a ‘sacred gift’. It is through this collective memory, retained in my family’s ability to speak and write its own traditional Kamilaroi Aboriginal First Nation language, that my ‘Aboriginality’ is shaped and formed — rather than through a process of colonisation. My Indigeneity remains first and foremost an intuitive connection to my traditional Burruguu-ngayi-li or ‘Dreaming’, and is the foundation of the knowledge base associated with my creative practice.

In having access to the term Burruguu-ngayi-li I am fully aware of the deeper levels of multi-layered narrative associated to Indigenous epistemologies prior to colonisation. The term ‘Dreaming’ loses significance in its English translation. Instead Burruguu-ngayi-
li provides greater meaning and authenticity through privileged access in understanding the highly-developed complexities associated to the notion of Aboriginal creation.

Part of the problem is the word *dreaming* itself. Modern society does not take dreams seriously and tends to contrast them with reality. So when we refer in English to Aboriginal ideas about the Dreaming, our own translation of their word implies that we are dealing with a figment of their imagination, something not real. (Maybury-Lewis, 1992, p. 197)

The importance of a traditional Aboriginal language base is further demonstrated when breaking down the term *Burruguu-ngayi-li* to its true meaning. Before the Dreaming, or *Burruguu-ngayi-li*, was a time commonly known as the ‘Dreamtime’ — what my family call the Burruguu. The time which first gave birth to the Dreaming, we call gamilu yilaambyal, which put simply means ‘before the beginning...’ and it is in this time before the beginning that we have the introduction of a number of Ancestral Beings, called the Maran Dhinabarra, responsible for all creation.

*It’s them old people, them spirits blessing the land... for sure. Look at them carved trees we had at Tallwood, together with ground carvings, that’s part of ritual, ceremony... you know, acceptance of them old people. As part of the everyday learning, that is the knowledge... is the idea of a continuation of the one story... they come from a time before creation, this is who they are, them old people... they had/have a different level of consciousness... a deeper understanding of this knowledge...* (Bell, M. 2012)

These Ancestral Beings, or Maran Dhinabarra, are evoked in *Kick up Dust* as Angels. The eldest and greatest of these within the Kamilaroi Dreaming is known as Biami, and it is through a conversation he had with another Ancestral Being, Wadhagaudjaaylwan, that the Maran Dhinabarra first give birth to the Dreamtime (Burruguu) as a preamble to the Aboriginal Genesis — ‘The time of Creation’.
It’s a continuation of the one story, it just got bigger and wider... that’s all...

a continuation… but it comes back to this time before the beginning. It comes back to before creation… (Bell, M. 2012)

This idea, that creation (Genesis) is formed from ‘some-thing’, as in gamilu yilaambiyal… a ‘time before the beginning’, rather than ‘God created the world from the void of nothing’, is discussed by Pope. What I recognise as gamilu yilaambiyal, represents an extremely complex and highly developed conceptual understanding of the world around us:

Practically speaking there is no ‘creation from nothing’. There is always something ‘before the beginning’, just as there is always something ‘after the end’… (Pope, 2005, p. 37)

For me personally, that precise moment of inspiration: who or what is reckoned to be ‘breathing into’ whom or what, and to what effect — has been played out over a number of different times which, upon reflection, become strategic signposts throughout my life — perhaps at times when the Maran Dhinabarra are with me… which again creates for me a sense of autobiographical ethnicity rather than a feeling of disenfranchisement or alienation, that connects to my feeling of Aboriginality…

And it is for me my connection to my traditional Burruguu-ngayi-li or ‘Dreaming’ that separates autobiographical ethnicity from current Indigenous studies and also from ethnography, which don’t formulate our knowledge our way, as discussed by Jennifer Houston (2007, p. 42). In talking about autoethnography, she says,

born out of the crisis of representation motivated by a post-modern consciousness… [autoethnography] is reflective of the discontentment of traditional research practices…as the only way to understand and interpret human experience. (Houston, 2007, p. 41)
Ethnography is introduced as “culturally oppositional” by Mary Louise Pratt (1991):

> If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations. (Pratt, 1991, p. 35)

Pratt, a speech-act theorist, applied techniques of discursive analysis to European ethnographies and travel accounts of the ‘primitive world’ to reveal a textual style whereby “states of serious confusion, violent feelings or acts, censorships, important failures, changes of course, and excessive pleasures are excluded from the published accounts” (Clifford, 1986, p. 13).

Houston proposes autoethnography as a valid research frame for Indigenous researchers:

> The Indigenous researcher — burdened with the challenge to perform academically rigorous research and the desire to practice this research respectfully — is often overwhelmed with internal conflict. Indigenous autoethnography represents one methodological option to such researchers. Indigenous autoethnography seeks to establish itself as a legitimate and respectful means of acquiring and formulating knowledge, by combining the tradition of storytelling, with the practice of academic research. (Houston, 2007, p. 45)

In particular, Houston recommends autoethnography for those Aboriginal authors “writing in the life history genre”, who “are acutely aware that their personal histories have been shaped by social forces, and in particular a series of government policies and educational practices” (Houston, 2007, p. 46).

I remain connected to a circular, non-linear notion of pedagogy where methodology incorporates pedagogy and pedagogy incorporates epistemology, which — before I gained entry into the Indigenous Academy — I always took for granted as an Indigenous
pedagogy. In this pedagogy, the true significance of certain events as they happen is not always fully understood until much later in life. Ever since the alienation I suffered as an Aboriginal kid at school, I have wanted to demonstrate successfully what I believed to be this idea of an Indigenous pedagogy, even though I didn’t know at the time what pedagogy was. But I still understood that there had to be a better way of learning that would allow an intellectual exchange between participants, inclusive of race, culture and class — teaching as a shared relationship between student and teacher based upon a circular ‘partnership of learning’ rather than a binary relationship based upon authority and status.

It was a journey that — long after the pain of isolation, bigotry and racism I faced as a teenager growing up in housing commission Aboriginal Australia — eventually led to my winning the Cultural Inclusiveness Award at the 2009 Griffith University Awards for Excellence in Teaching. This allowed me to reflect back to before the beginning of my own Indigenous scholarship. More recently I attended a Celebrating Teaching Seminar held to showcase learning and teaching that exemplify Griffith’s seven ‘Principles to Promote Excellence in Learning and Teaching Practices’ where I was introduced as an Aboriginal ‘Elder’ of my community… How times have changed!

9. Here I’ll tell a story (Nguwa ngay dhuaanma-li gay)

Now, the title of Aboriginal Elder is not a title I can claim to feel comfortable with, not at present anyway. The gentleman who introduced me as an Elder was ‘Uncle’
Graham Dillon, a local distinguished Kombumerri Gold Coast clan Elder for whom I have great respect. Uncle Graham held the position of Chairperson of Griffith University’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee up until his becoming an Elder in Residence in 2009. He has also been awarded a Doctorate of the University for his valued contributions in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and bringing Indigenous culture and community into the mainstream University culture. In addition to his career within Griffith University, Uncle Graham is a self-made independent man who was formerly the General Manager of Kalwun Development Corporation Limited.

The last time I had seen Uncle Graham was under completely different circumstances. I had just returned from Ramingining, an Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, as part of my PhD research, and a meeting with Graham had been organised for me as he had decided it was time to recollect his memoirs and somebody somewhere had thought that I would make the ideal scribe. My then Head of School, Professor Stephen Stockwell, was in attendance to suggest, very politely of course, that since there were so few Aboriginal people who had successfully completed a doctorate, then perhaps my time could be better spent elsewhere…

Now, I had literally just gotten off my fourth plane ride in 48 hours, having returned from a traditional Aboriginal community where English is the sixth or seventh language spoken, and what English is spoken is interspersed with a high percentage of cursing and the local custom of chain smoking cigarettes between tales. Needless to say, Uncle Graham wasn’t impressed with my diction and quickly solved our problem of how to politely decline his offer with his declining to work with me because of what he declared a very ‘maverick’ and unbecoming display of language for an Aboriginal man in my position.
So, what had happened in the following period of 12 months that I had now become more acceptable to Uncle Graham, not only as an Aboriginal statesman, but a ‘Keeper of the fire’ (Dillon, 2010) and an ‘Elder’, as introduced by Uncle Graham? Upon saying to Uncle Graham how humbled I was by his introduction and explaining how uncomfortable I was with such a title of authority — there is no greater respect paid in our community than being referred to as an Elder, particularly by somebody with the history and status of Uncle Graham — he told me not to be embarrassed, that I had become a man of education, working towards a doctorate; I was articulate, educated and intelligent, my children well looked after and presented, and I now reflected the true position I held within my community.

I had known Uncle Graham for close to 30 years. Up until this moment I had remained, I thought, the young pot-smoking troublesome Aboriginal housing commission delinquent with dreadlocks who had somehow trespassed into his world of decency, my fraud and deception about to be uncovered and exposed with my true nature revealed at any time. But I couldn’t have been more wrong about the way this old man saw me. To fully understand and appreciate my position, I need to firstly acknowledge the world I come from…

We need to go back — to before the beginning…

Long before I enrolled in my PhD candidature — I’m talking about during my teens — my identity was formed and embedded from deep within the confines of the ‘Stolen Generation’, stamped within oppression, alienation and separation. Here, amongst the indignity and poverty of the Australian Housing Commission system, substance abuse becomes substance relief. I received acknowledgement from other drug dealers; a simple nod of the head at parties, gatherings, or just walking down the street. This
was my identity. You see, in the world of teenage Aboriginal Housing Commission Australia that I grew up in, you were either smoking drugs or dealing drugs… and if you sold drugs, it meant you were in control… I was always in control.

I now receive that same nod of recognition from distinguished gentlemen as I walk through the University. OK, so how does one get from peddling drugs as a teenager to being acknowledged by old white and black guys of eminence as they walk through the hallways of the academy?

The ability to create empathy with your audience through the expression of your own lived experience is not a unique form of Indigenous autoethnography as Indigenous scholars such as Houston (2007) suggest. Instead this is an example of autobiographical ethnicity that is interdisciplinary in its approach and able to be accessed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars alike, a point that was made no better than in the words of Michael Daru; ‘You know em, he belong to you… your yarn, yep… same yarn, same story… yawuul, that true’ (Daru, 2009).

A ‘first person’ narrative exploration that draws its authority in the declaration of an author’s own ethnic, cultural and racial background, positioned together with contemporary academic scholarship that utilises storytelling as an expression of life experience, can provide a powerful research and discourse tool. It is not unique to Indigenous story telling.

In her article Houston questions, as have other Indigenous scholars (e.g., Pratt, 1992; Smith, 1999; Moreton-Robinson, 2003), the validity of traditional research methods. As Indigenous scholars at the cultural interface where Indigenous knowledges meet Western academia, we face “uniquely sensitive ethical and methodological issues”: 
It is a journey into academia where the researcher is all too often forced to remove the 'self' from the 'subject'; a difficult task for an Aboriginal person involved in research concerning Aboriginal people. Distancing oneself from research is even more difficult if the research is based closer to home, in one's own community. (Houston, 2007, p. 45).

Thomas Kane, in the *New Oxford Guide to Writing*, describes two alternative forms of writing (without reference to Indigenous and non-Indigenous work) — objective and subjective — writing (Kane, 1988, p. 240, see analysis below). Kane’s observations have relevance when compared with that what Houston describes as

the need to challenge the established ways of acquiring knowledge, particularly knowledge that is collected, analysed, published and taught about the 'Other', the Colonised, the Indigenous. (Houston, 2007, p. 45)

Avoiding the pressures of self-imposed ‘decolonisation’ justifying ‘crises of representation’ that trouble Indigenous academics, Aboriginal writers of literature have drawn upon their own lived experiences, offering insight into the real experiences of real people to produce political, historical, and sociological tales embedded in class, gender and identity. Aboriginal women in particular write about personal struggles that are political battles (Houston, 2007, p. 44). Their experiences of racism, sexism, disadvantage, violence and discrimination are as much about a woman, a mother, an Aboriginal working class poor Australian, as they are about personal experience. These personal stories have generic application.

Academic writing accomplishing the same outcomes is difficult to master. Factual precision is required, and this involves skill in composition to produce an objectively descriptive essay that is historically correct, accurately referenced, forcefully presented with a point of view that is both interesting and a successful contribution within the parameters of the Academy. Kane (1988, p. 265) stresses the importance of objective
writing, where details are essential to seeing and understanding the subject of interest, whether that is an object, event, person or experience. In objective writing, words are chosen for exactness of denotation, not emotional or personal connotation.

Kane also discusses subjective essay writing as a well-known and acknowledged alternative to objective writing. When writing objectively, the writer is a kind of camera, recording precisely and impersonally. When writing subjectively, he or she is no longer an impartial observer, but rather enters into what is perceived (Kane, 1988, p. 254). Point of view — in most cases — becomes personal: and words have overtones of value and meaning that through feeling colour the perception. The evaluations and feelings are as much a part of the authenticity of the description as the object itself… Sound familiar?

There is an excellent example of this in the work of my favourite writer Ernest Hemingway. In the following passage from *In Our Time* (1925), he creates subjective truth through his use of understatement:

*They shot the six cabinet ministers at half past six in the morning against the wall of a hospital. There were pools of water in the courtyard. There were wet dead leaves on the paving of the courtyard. It rained hard. All the shutters of the hospital were nailed shut. One of the ministers was sick with typhoid. Two soldiers carried him downstairs and out into the rain. They tried to hold him up against the wall but he sat down in a puddle of water. The other five stood very quietly against the wall. Finally the officer told the other officers it was no good trying to make him stand up. When they fired the first volley he was sitting down in the water with his head on his knees.* (Hemingway, 1925, p. 9)

*New York Times* reviewer, Maxwell Geismar’s reaction to this (at the time of Hemingway’s passing) was:

What cabinet ministers of what country, for what crime, or for what historical movement, and with what justice, or with what
miscarriage of justice, we are never told... these elements were rigorously excluded from the writer’s art, in order to intensify the descriptions of pure pain and horror. (Geismar, 1962)

Now, to the best of my knowledge Hemingway wasn’t Indigenous… but he did have an Indigenous sense of what facts were important to tell, the kinds of facts that make up what Chimamanda Adichie calls the “emotional truth”: “a quality different from honesty and more resilient than fact”. A kind of telling that has an “empathetic human quality” (Adichie, 2007, p. 9).

According to Michael Fischer, autobiography and ethnography, as subjective literary genres, share “a commitment to the actual” (Fischer, 1986, p. 198). Fischer argues that “ethnic autobiography” should be recognized as a model of postmodern ethnography (Fischer, 1986, p. 194). Autobiography is a technique of self-representation that is not a fixed form but is in constant flux. He describes “contemporary autobiography” as an exploration of the fragmented and dispersed identities of late-twentieth-century pluralist society. In this regard, Russell (1999, p. 276) asserts that ethnic autobiography “is an ‘art of memory’ that serves as protection against the homogenizing tendencies of modern industrial culture”. Moreover, autobiography has become a powerful tool of cultural criticism, paralleling postmodern theories of textuality and knowledge. Fischer describes the “writing tactics” of autoethnography thus:

Contemporary ethnic autobiographies partake of the mood of metadiscourse, of drawing attention to their linguistic and fictive nature, of using the narrator as an inscribed figure within the text whose manipulation calls attention to authority structures. (Fischer, 1986, p. 232)

The commonality here is not in our being Indigenous, but in our seeking of the truth. The simple truth for me now, as a parent of Aboriginal children, is that many of the
obstacles I faced as a child have been replaced with strategies aimed at encouraging, nurturing and supporting Indigenous success, rather than undermining it.

I see as self-defeating current Indigenous construction based around issues in surviving colonisation and based on areas determined by alienation and segregation. This allows no future for our children to become part of a greater inclusive contemporary Australian consciousness. My children attend a private school, speak their own Indigenous Aboriginal language, and have been exposed to their Ceremony and dance. They do not identify connections of despair or isolation or disadvantage to their Aboriginality as I did at the same age. In fact, it is the exact opposite. Their Aboriginality has only ever derived from a position of strength and growing awareness of who they are and where they are positioned within the world.

The construction of both negative and positive reaffirmation of one’s own identity is further demonstrated within the feature film script as an idea of whether or not one displays the attributes of an Angel (Maran dhinabarra) in trying to bring people together, or of a Demon (Giniirr) in wanting to keep them apart. It is presented as a multilayered sub-text in my feature film script *Kick up Dust*. It is written fully aware of the connotation this has when applied to the positioning of Indigenous studies within the Academy. The idea of knowledge, and indeed wisdom, being generated from Elijah’s grandfather comes very much from my own autobiographical ethnicity. The script was written as a celebration of my aboriginality: I wanted to share with people a feeling of achievement associated with traditional knowledge playing out in the everyday that is too often missing in current Australian Indigenous texts, be they part of film popular culture or the Academy.

The simple truth is that, like my children, I no longer feel disenfranchised as an Aboriginal person; and even when faced with the obstacles and poverty of my teenage years, my
Aboriginality was only ever a pillar of strength and unity for me. My grandfather was the famous Aboriginal Warrant Officer Len Waters, who flew 95 missions against the Japanese as the only Indigenous Fighter Pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force during WWII. From my childhood, I remember my grandfather and his brothers getting ready to go out in St George, Western Queensland. They would iron their slacks with a crease so sharp it would cut you. With their hair always slick and brushed back, they had a swagger in the way they walked. These were proud, strong Aboriginal men with women and family who loved them dearly. In the film script I wanted to recreate this feeling of unconditional love and pride in Aboriginal people: a proud, strong beautiful people who never give up — no matter what the circumstances.

It was my grandfather, Len Waters, who most influenced my understanding of an Indigenous pedagogy long before I knew what a pedagogy was…

Excerpt from the novel manuscript True God: The Story of William O’Halloran:

I was 17 and Pop walked into our kitchen in Inala, a stronghold and bastion of Aboriginal identity in the early 80s, and he could see that something was wrong, ‘Marcus… you look troubled, I think you need to take time off school.’

I explained to my grandfather that over the next couple of weeks I was to sit my senior exams — and that this was the most important time of my life.

‘The most important time of your life?’ Pop replied. ‘You’re 17… you haven’t even made love to a woman yet… held a child in your arms as it falls asleep or worked for a living… and the next few weeks are the most important few weeks of your life??’

As I said, I had no idea of what pedagogy was or that we possessed any epistemology… and I hated the way my Grandfather would always simplify things down to an ancient wisdom disguised as a loose parable… ah… the grace and experience which brings knowledge and consequence through wisdom — yeah… like I said I had no idea…
I tried to explain to my grandfather that he didn’t fully understand — but of course he did… it was I who didn’t understand. I couldn’t then see how narrative and storytelling related to ongoing cultural maintenance and meaning — what I now understand to be a system of autobiographical ethnicity where some stories resonate, but don’t offer true meaning until one is much older — an Indigenous knowledge base that I now recognize is used as a rite of passage in becoming a young adult (gulumaldhaay).

My grandfather patiently let me finish and then he continued. ‘It’s like this, Marcus… the Whiteman forces you to think about so many things which just aren’t that important… so much so that you forget what really is important!!!’

Now Pop didn’t mean Whiteman as in all Whitemen, Pop was no racist. As stated previously, the world has changed dramatically since I was 17, and back then it was pretty much just us (Aboriginal) and them (non-Aboriginal)… No, what Pop meant was that he was discussing the way most non-Indigenous peoples he had met throughout his life had acted, believed in a certain way… he wasn’t labelling the whole entire race, just making observation… nothing more.

Pop could see in my reaction that he wasn’t getting through — I just wasn’t getting it… That’s when he said it, words of wisdom that I will remember for the rest of my life…

‘Understanding gravity doesn’t make an apple taste any nicer… it still falls from the bloody tree…’

I didn’t know fully at the time what it was my Grandfather had just said to me… but I knew it was profound…

It has taken a long time for me to fully incorporate what Pop said that day in understanding that this was not an example of pedagogy or epistemology of the kind I thought I would find in the Indigenous academy, and which I had so passionately defended when first beginning this journey of compiling my PhD. No, this was an example of my own family’s pedagogy where our inherent epistemology is clear and never questioned. I am/remain Kamilaroi, my Yanguru (Moiety as genetic memory) is ancient and my Yarudhagaa (Totem as genealogy) is/remains Kubbaanjhaan connecting
me to my Burruguu-ngayi-li (Dreaming) as defined through Gawuban Gunigal (Spearim, 2012; Knox, 2012 and Bell, M. 2012). As much as I would like to believe that Pop’s world view connects me to a pan-Aboriginal national consensus of defined Indigenous epistemology, the truth is otherwise. Those strong, beautiful, highly-distinguished and respected Aboriginal men like my grandfather have been let down by the Indigenous academy. There is no such definition, and therefore no connection… not the position I thought I would find myself in as I began my PhD some four years ago.

And so here I am… coming towards the end of a personal journey that has dominated the last few years of my life… and what began as an inquiry into genetic memory and collective consciousness as aspects that best determine the ‘Dreaming’ has become instead me wanting to put forward autobiographical ethnicity as a collegiate model of intellectual cultural exchange and partnership rather than wait for the Indigenous academy to define Indigenous pedagogy. The ‘Dreaming’, or better yet the Burruguu-ngayi-li, as we call it in my family, will have to wait…

Ω

10. Autobiographical ethnicity and my stage play
(Gamilaroi winnunguul-dah gaalanha ngay mubirr-galu)

As an author, and an Aboriginal storyteller, it is through autobiographical ethnicity that I am best able to provide my audience with a privileged access into the world of Indigenous peoples. Autobiographical ethnicity draws on aspects of my own lived experience, but just as importantly, allows me to become an active agent for change.
Autobiographical ethnicity is in itself the implementation of a working pedagogy that applies Aboriginal experience in a multidisciplinary way beyond the exclusivity of current Indigenous scholarship, including through its use of creative writing and the production of an academic exegesis written with something approaching an Indigenous voice.

As previously mentioned, the basis for my ideas about this pedagogical mode lie in the work of Catherine Russell (1999) and Mary Louise Pratt (1991, 1992). Russell provides valuable insights that have guided my approach:

Autobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the film- or videomaker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes. Identity is no longer a transcendental or essential self that is revealed, but a ‘staging of subjectivity’ — a representation of the self as a performance. In the politicization of the personal, identities are frequently played out among several cultural discourses, be they ethnic, national, sexual, racial, and/or class based. The subject ‘in history’ is rendered destabilized and incoherent, a site of discursive pressures and articulations. (Russell, 1999, p. 276)

The emphases Russell places on embodiment and discursive possibilities have been important theoretical considerations informing the practical component of my study:

The fragmented and hybrid identities produced in the multitude of ‘personal’ films and videos have been celebrated by critics and theorists as forms of ‘embodied knowledge’ and ‘politics of location’… One’s body and one’s historical moment may be the joint site of experience and identity, and yet they don’t necessarily add up to ethnicity as an anthropological category. Autoethnography is a vehicle and a strategy for challenging imposed forms of identity and exploring the discursive possibilities of inauthentic subjectivities. (Russell, 1999, p. 276)
So too have been the insights she offers into the contribution of Mary Louise Pratt (1991, 1992) in identifying the ways in which “autoethnography” becomes an oppositional practice:

‘…If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations.’ Although [Pratt] denies that autoethnographic texts are “authentic”, her attribution of this genre to marginalized subjects is characteristic of writing on autoethnography. (Russell, 1999, p. 277)

Also referenced in the work of Russell (1999) is the edited collection by Clifford and Marcus (1986) of works on the “poetics” and “politics” of ethnography in which Clifford makes reference to the idea of “self-fashioning… the constant reconstitution of selves and others through specific exclusions, conventions, and discursive practices” (Clifford, 1986, p. 24). Russell sees beyond the idea of self-fashioning to the idea that this is a process whereby “the ethnographer comes to represent himself [my emphasis] as a fiction, inscribing a doublessness within the ethnographic text”:

‘Though it (ethnography) portrays other selves as culturally constituted, it also fashions an identity authorized to represent, to interpret, even to believe — but always with some irony — the truths of discrepant worlds.’ Once ethnography is reframed as a self-representation in which any and all subjects are able to enter discourse in textual form, the distinctions between textual authority and profilmic reality begin to break down. The imperial eye looking back on itself is also a subject in history. (Russell, 1999, p. 277)

In the paradigmatic shift within ethnography from “participant observation” to “observation of participation”, “objectivity” is replaced with “intersubjectivity” … “(e) xperience is intersubjective and embodied, not individual and fixed, but social and processual…” (Tedlock, 2003, p. 191).
The idea of autobiographical ethnicity is best demonstrated in practice through its use of voice and character in creating a subjective narrative that expresses the author’s personal journey as a historical account of time and place. It is a technique of writing which for me developed out of my understanding of traditional Kamilaroi storytelling practice — where the use of parable/story generates an alternative relationship between author and audience as demonstrated in my grandfather’s use of Newton’s discovery of gravity. Pop introduced an alternative Indigenous reading of a non-Indigenous event in re-positioning differing black and white world-views. In sharing his concerns about my being subjected to a non-Indigenous way of life, Pop moved beyond being just an impartial observer — he set up his own position through the use of a number of key reference points established as signposts. These not only made clear his position but were used to further his argument. And it’s important to note: these signposts are not chosen at random but are embedded deeply within his knowledge of audience in his reflecting upon my life and what he felt I had experienced previously. As I recall, my Pop said:

The most important time of your life?… You’re 17… you haven’t even made love to a woman yet… held a child in your arms as it falls asleep or worked for a living… and the next few weeks are the most important few weeks of your life???

These signposts are what Kane (1988, p. 54) describes as “extrinsic” in that they “at first appear to stand outside of the actual discussion…” (the need for me to spend time away from school due to my grandfather’s concern for my becoming assimilated…) “but are established early as a clue to the organisation of the discussion…” (opposing Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways at seeing the world).

When utilising autobiographical ethnicity effectively, the author, in this case Pop, chooses to engage the audience by enlisting their own point of view towards a discussion
which becomes personal. This is done through a choice of words “fully appreciating implied overtones, sharing values and meanings, that colour the perception between author and audience” (Kane, 1988, p. 257). This pedagogical mode shapes the author’s impression of meaning directly into the mind of the audience — and in doing so moves beyond abstract statement to images in details that appeal to the senses of the audience. These images become so emotionally charged, they make the impression seem real. Pop knowingly demonstrated a onetime traditional form of Indigenous Kamilaroi storytelling to embed deep in my consciousness an alternative way of seeing the world. Clearly he hoped that through life’s experience and my gaining in cultural capital as I got older, it would someday make sense to me… as it does now.

What would surprise him though — as it does me — is the realisation that such a use of pedagogy no longer relates widely to the Indigenous experience, but (as I know it) relates purely within my own family’s epistemology. This mode of pedagogy is now separate from national Indigenous pan-Aboriginal understandings in the contemporary urban and academic settings.

To reaffirm these points I will now present three excerpts taken from my play *The Happily Absorbed*. These are further examples of autobiographical ethnicity, and show how it is established between audience and character from the initial set up. Although written during the period of my PhD candidature, as stated previously, this stage play did not make it as my final choice for the creative component to accompany this exegesis, but there are aspects of its set up that have been retained in the feature film through the use of narrative and voiceover at the beginning and end of the film.
In the play:

1) An Aboriginal youth, who is at first unknown to the audience, approaches them outside the actual theatre and requests loose change from the actual incoming patrons. His begging appears real, and plays directly towards a series of perceived truths about Aboriginal people. This set up creates an alternative relationship between author and audience.

2) The boy is then revealed inside the theatre as a protagonist in the play. He delivers a monologue that shows he is articulate, well-informed and educated. In doing so he manipulates differing black and white world views and breaks the already-associated Indigenous stereotype.

3) This type of interaction between character and audience, which overlays Indigenous with non-Indigenous cultural readings, continues throughout the play. It moves the audience beyond the position of merely impartial observer. As new characters are introduced, they too set up their positions in such a way that the audience must reflect upon what is already understood socially and culturally, i.e. that Aboriginal people represent disadvantage, alienation and lower cultural capital, and remain inferior due to a process of colonisation.

4) In the space created by the use of Indigenous readings presented as alternatives to expected non-Indigenous readings, the play is able to make its emotionally charged points.
The opening of the play goes like this:

SET-UP

‘Any loose Change?’

As the audience gather out the front of the theatre a young Aboriginal male (LEROY), dressed in a tired second-hand school uniform and carrying a schoolbag, stops and approaches. Not introduced as part of the play, Leroy is asking people for loose change, explaining that he is looking for his Uncle who has been missing for a number of days.

He appears almost apologetic, embarrassed by having to ask. After a short time he walks off into the darkness of the night, the audience none the wiser he is part of the play…

SCENE ONE

‘The Human Condition’

The audience is now gathered and sitting in the theatre. They are confronted by Leroy as he walks out into centre stage – he drops his school bag on the floor…

LEROY

Afterwards, you always feel the shame no matter how much you need the help - afterwards and just before… it’s becoming harder and harder to ask people for help. There was a time when they would give freely, but now they judge you. As if you have asked something of them they cannot afford – something substantial.

As Leroy continues his monologue he is oblivious to a number of people who join him on stage assembling around him what looks like a low-cost public housing kitchen table with chairs…

We are taken inside Leroy’s kitchen – the family home.
LEROY (CONT...)  
I would never ask if I didn’t have to. Nobody asks to be dependent, to feel useless, to be reined up forever through the constraints applied by situations beyond their control… Tell me, when did we as brothers and sisters, neighbors, agree to no longer aid in the suffering of those helpless around us?… When did prosperity for some become an imprisoned grief for others less fortunate? What use that I should be asking such questions as a youth who is told over and over again to forget the past, to move on and embrace the potential of my future? Such words are worse than useless. They are, in fact… subversive.  
I used to behave, do as I was told, play football, try hard at school, but never hard enough that I would become noticed. In not being seen I could always hide, but this all changed after meeting my Uncle Henry some months ago and he encouraged me to challenge such things. He’s gone missing and I haven’t seen him for days…

Leroy is joined on stage by UNCLE TOMMY, with guitar in tow and MUM sharing a drink as they make themselves comfortable at the table and chairs.

The clatter of beer bottles and country and western music. Tommy begins strumming his guitar as he and Mum are singing — ‘Crystal Chandeliers’ — an old Charley Pride song.

Mum stops singing.
The Happily Absorbed was originally commissioned by the then Executive Producer of Yirra Yaakin, Sam Cooke. The text went through a major transition from the early, standard, narrative-based, community theatre production to a more complex, multilayered narrative due to a number of reasons.

These included, first, that Sam left Yirra Yaakin to take up the position of Director of Queensland’s famous international Dreaming Festival, and Kyle Morrison took over the development of the play as Artistic Director. Since Kyle was not part of the initial commission, it would be fair to say that he didn’t have as much invested in the work, and at the time I was still in the process of developing my idea of autobiographical ethnicity as part of my academic exegesis.

I then travelled to Perth at the end of 2009 to workshop the play with Kyle and performers, and we began consciously to move outside the boundaries of not just Indigenous theatre but traditional theatre as well — and in our doing so, the pedagogical mode employed in the play became a real problem for Kyle as Artistic Director. I was still coming to terms with defining autobiographical ethnicity as a narrative mode and, as a consequence of my not being clear in my definition, the play was seen by Kyle to have problems relating to character construction, and audience response. Simply, the play didn’t fit into the spaces audiences were used to thinking in. Kyle wrote:

The problem was never Leroy, the problem was the existentialism in which his character was portrayed – the idea that he could move in and out of such varied and highly contextual thought processes as an Aboriginal youth, created great problems for me as an Artistic Director of Indigenous Theatre. I shared great discussion and progression in helping to develop Leroy’s character, in fact I would like to think, and Marcus often tells me I am very much responsible in the way Leroy’s character developed, from what was at first a very traditionally based Indigenous community narrative – no, the problem was how would I present such an articulate, confident and intellectually stimulating Indigenous youth to my audience… Leroy falls so far out of current notions of Aboriginal
construction within theatre that I needed more time to ascertain how I am to approach him and then present his character, who and what is my audience and what has been presented before me? This was always the problem… (Morrison, 2010)

So… why can’t an Aboriginal youth of 14 be intelligent, articulate and aware? What I found most fascinating with Kyle’s comments was the way that art interprets life, since Kyle is one of the most articulate, intelligent and aware people I have ever met. He is indeed the very 14 year old that Leroy presents on stage — to the point that Kyle has often discussed with me his empathy and engagement with Leroy’s character… The problem is that common misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples becomes better known than the reality – ‘Leroy falls so far out of current notions of Aboriginal construction within popular culture that I needed more time to ascertain how I am to approach him and then present his character, who and what is my audience and what has been presented before me?’ (Morrison, 2010).

Chalmers comments on this type of situation:

The problem that always arises with this particular way of operating is that, because you are not interacting with people based upon who they really are, but instead are relating to them according to your own limited ‘understanding’ of them, consequences will result from this interaction that by necessity will result in injustices for those who are unable to operate in the world in a manner consistent with who they are. Such injustices also, by necessity, lead to interactions between the representor and the represented that are fraught with conflict. (Chalmers, 2005 p.162)

In retrospect, I can say that I discovered three things which were preventing the ongoing creative journey of the work: 1) academic theory and 2) creative narrative were being merged together more as an exploration of my PhD than in satisfying the needs of my audience, primarily Kyle as Artistic Director… And due to the embryonic stage of its vision and my own inability to clarify my position, we found ourselves
arriving at 3) where the narrative became ambiguous and difficult to comprehend. As a writer and a colleague, I put Kyle into a difficult position, where, as Albert Memmi observes, Aboriginal people who now find themselves in positions of authority have little choice but to act out the deprivation or injustice by others: ‘Usually something does not appear as a privilege unless it is lived as a deprivation or injustice by those less privileged’ (Memmi, 2000, p. 102), which in other words means: Kyle had little choice but to refer to what was already understood and perceived as truth — that we as a people represent the most disadvantaged of our society and I had failed as a writer to give him an alternative point of reference.

Rather than causing me to be disappointed, the experience prepared me for the amount of work that would be required in creating this hypothetical third academic, cultural and creative space that is truly inclusive in understanding the needs of both a black and white audience (Houston, 2007, p. 46). Such opposition in regards to breaking through the barriers of the unknown is not unusual when nurturing a new idea or alternative vision of hope (Pope, 2005, p. 29). It is the very reason why ‘Leroy’ is first placed outside the theatre in recognition of his being ‘outside’ of current perception and boundary constructions associated to Aboriginal people, and yet within the ‘sub-text’ of his character he is maintaining such ‘stereotypes’ as an Indigenous youth in asking for loose change.

As the obstacles became too great I started to turn instead to the feature film as an alternative text… In the film script I am still dealing with the same issues: Elijah’s opposition to a perceived reality that misinterprets his understanding of Aboriginality as shared by his grandfather; the alienation of Aboriginal people who now find themselves in a position of authority and have little choice but to ‘act out the deprivation or injustice by others’ (Memmi, 2000, p. 102) as experienced by Shelly’s character working for community services; and also my familiarity with the narrative structure of the
feature film that allowed me to move away from the ‘strange in-between ambiguous space’ (Russell, 2002, p. 139) that Kyle and I had found ourselves in while developing the play. Through Elijah’s relationship with Katie, and in turn Chrystal, I was able to confront with more clarity the idea of an articulate, sophisticated and informed Indigenous youth, which in the play script was not seen as authentic.

Upon reflection, the prospect of my play becoming derailed by the demands of a racial loyalty that presented our people as disadvantaged and oppressed, only caters further to the writing of my exegesis as an investigative process in better understanding how colonisation seamlessly continues to reinforce exclusive Indigenous poverty at the exclusion of non-Indigenous heritage and accompanying cultural capital. It is a point made in the scholarship on Indigenous identity, which is presented by Paradies where poverty seamlessly reinforces exclusive Indigeneity:

‘If you’re middle class you can’t be Aboriginal’ (Boladeras, 2002: 135). Being educated, well-remunerated or simply enjoying material assets ‘can expose one to suspicion of wanting to be white’ (Cowlishaw, 2004a: 113; see also Grant, 2002; Purdie et al., 2000). Although many Indigenous people rightly desire the privileges that, until recently, have been synonymous with Whiteness, such desire is associated with being less Indigenous (Cowlishaw, 2004a: 116; Dudgeon and Oxenham, 1989). (Paradies, 2006, p. 358 – see Paradies for reference details)

Yes, we can have Indigenous theatre, but only within the restraints of what has become accepted…and yet the same position taken up outside the realm of Indigenous theatre is easier to negotiate. A film script became integral to my writing as an Aboriginal academic (although I had some related difficulties with that too — see later).

Which brings me back to the Indigenous academy where many Indigenous people continue to question such positive role modelling as unauthentic to the experiences of
a so-called ‘real Black’ (Paradies, 2005, p. 270). To counter such rhetoric, in The Happily Absorbed I chose to expand my use of language through the requisition of a uniquely Australian First Nation Aboriginal voice that employed aspects of autobiographical ethnicity in an attempt to break down barriers of Indigenous boundary construction and exclusion.

The next excerpt chosen from the play is adapted from a real story shared with me by my Uncle Reg Knox, my grandfather’s first cousin. The event took place when Uncle Reg and Pop were still kids living on Toomelah Mission near Boggabilla in north-west New South Wales.

SCENE seven
‘generation to generation’

Leroy joins Uncle Henry on stage as Uncle Henry comes forth from his statuesque pose and addresses the audience in the Kamilaroi language as Leroy translates.

UNCLE HENRY
Minya nginunda-yaa winanga-y
yalagiirray gaaynmara burrul
gi-gi ngiyani gamil-waayaa
yalagiirray yuurray ngiyaningu
dhaa-yalay yalagiirrmawu...

LEROY
What you have to understand is that as kids growing up we had no idea just how important our culture was...

UNCLE HENRY
Nginaaynya ngami-li gaaynmara
ngiyani guwaa-li yaliwunga
ngiyani wamba dhalaydhalibaa
buluuy marayrr ngaanngunda
wuu-rrri - Gabaa nguru
winanga-y minyaminyabal...
ngiyani winanga-y marayrr.
LEROY
You see as kids growing up
we were always told we were
stupid dumb blacks with
nothing to offer – this white
man he knew everything... we
knew nothing.

UNCLE HENRY
Ngay-y yuli, guulay-yaa, maa
yalagiirawu wila-y-la-nha
wirralaa yira murrun George
Cubbo warrayaa yanaa-y...

LEROY
I was around six, seven, maybe
even as young as five years old
living on old Toomelah mission
when young George Cubbo went
missing...

UNCLE HENRY
Dhiriya dhiirralbidi gaalanha
dhayaanduul yana-y milan
gaalanha Ngay winanga-
li nguungunda guwaa-li
nguru dhubaanma-li George
minyaayawaayaa wanggarra-y.

LEROY
The old mission master and
school teacher was walking
past and I heard him talking
to himself about young George,
wondering where he could be.

UNCLE HENRY
Nguru-badhaay minyaayawaa
Gawubuwan Gunigal Ngay guwa-
li – nhalay dhiriya gabaa
garri-y, gulaarr nginunda

LEROY
He would be down at the
Macintyre River, I said. This
old white fella stopped – How
would you know? he said.
UNCLE HENRY

LEROY
I was with Leroy’s great grandfather and a couple of other lads and we all looked at the footprints made out the front of the old school – Look there I said… George’s footprints…

UNCLE HENRY
Ngiiirrma-li burrulaa dhina-guwin guwaa-li dhiriya gabaa… yalagiirrmawu ngiyani ganu garri-y – ngiyani ganu birray ngami-li-ga maal ngaragay – nhalay dhiriya gabaa gamil winanga-y…

LEROY
There’s a whole heap of footprints, said the old Whiteman… That’s when we all froze – us boys all looked at one another – this old Whiteman didn’t know…

UNCLE HENRY
ngurungu dhina-guwin...

**LEROY**

There, look! - pointed Leroy’s great grandfather – When George walks he puts weight on the outside of his arches like this. Leroy’s Great Grandfather walked around bowlegged to show old mate what he meant - This means his footprint becomes deeper on the outside of his foot, see, there’s his prints there...

**UNCLE HENRY**


**LEROY**

This old white fella he had no idea - we all started pointing out to him how we all walk different and that you could see who belonged to each footprint - he was stunned.

**UNCLE HENRY**

Waal nguru yana-y-gu burrulaa yaraadha guwaa-li dhiriya ngaangii - nhaan, guwaa-li Leroy’s Dhiriya-Dhaadhaa, ngami-l - nguru-gi-gi yiili burranba-li dhiriya gabaa yalagiirrma nguru gamil winanga-y - yawu, nguru guwin-li gamil yalagiirray gurrubaa yalagiirray ngiyani, ngami-li ngaarrigulay gimiyandi, nhalay yilaadhu gaalanha yawu nguru-gi-gi-yla-y buligaa, yaraadha yilambu...
LEROY
But he has been gone for days, said old mate – Oh, said Leroy’s great grandfather, Look! – he was becoming frustrated with the old man because he still didn’t understand – Yeah, but his prints aren’t as deep as the others, see that’s yesterday, these are today’s and yeah his would be about four days ago...

UNCLE HENRY
Ngiyani gamil-li yalabiyaaay, yalagiirray Ngay quwaa-li, ngiyani yaliwunga dhubaanma-li gabaa nguru winanga-y minyaminyabal gaalanha ngiyani winanga-y gamil-li – nhaan nguru-gaa-gi gamil winanga-y... ngiyani-bula ngarranma-li ngurungu gulaarr yawu-li George ngiilay... ngarranma-li ngurunga ganuall dhaay nhalay dhaadharr George warrayma-li-gaa baga – nguru ngaarri ngaru-gi gaalanha buubi-li biyaga...

LEROY
We couldn’t believe it, like I said, we were all told this Whiteman he knew everything and we knew nothing – but he had no idea... we even showed him how to track George from there... led him all the way to this shack George had built on the river bank – he was there drinking and smoking tobacco...

Uncle Henry starts laughing as Leroy stops translating – asks Henry a question...

LEROY
What happened?
Uncle Henry stops laughing – becomes sad... looks at the audience as he addresses them in English...

UNCLE HENRY
George was taken away – we never saw him again...

Fade to Black: Uncle Henry exits.

The story presented above has become folklore in my extended Aboriginal family — shared down through the generations as a form of collective memory demonstrating our resistance to generalisations about Indigenous peoples being disadvantaged or intellectually inferior to non-Indigenous peoples. The story serves as another example of how autobiographical ethnicity, as a pedagogic mode, can transfer knowledge across generational and racial boundaries to deconstruct historical misrepresentations perceived as truth. As with my grandfather’s tale of the apple and gravity, the ability to do this successfully lies in the author being able to set up a specific instance that supports an alternative meaning which can then be conveyed subjectively, emotionally and visually to the audience.

The third and final excerpt taken from my play again attempts to create the provisional, hypothetical space I mention above: where difference is identified and respected as equalising rather than hierarchising; where difference can become nurturing rather than confrontational: and where recognising the equivalence of ‘before’ and ‘after’ colonisation allows the imagination to move beyond the binary. I apply these concepts in my own teaching practice.

In my teaching practice I like to identify that a student’s journey does not begin from the first day of every semester — it began long before then. My concern as a teacher is to nurture and acknowledge this journey in developing a strong sense of
independence for each student who enters my class room. Though difficult to measure in terms of quantitative outcomes, this interrelationship is best achieved through a series of mutually-respectful discussions with students about their aspirations, and their expectation in having taken a commitment to their studies. Such dialogue inspires confidence and motivates students when they fully understand what is being asked of them, i.e. to value their own journeys. My students connect to their own past journeys, and to each other’s journeys, and feel ownership in making informed decisions. They feel empowered to engage and participate more freely since the valuing of their journeys makes them feel comfortable within the environment. One of my students, Kristian Rutlin, a Norwegian International Student, wrote in 2009:

*I had heard stories about Marcus from fellow students that had experienced his teaching earlier, so my expectations were high. And he did not disappoint. He has this thing for teaching, an expert in getting students engaged, and then making them understand what the action was all about. It’s like a movie! First there is a lot of action: BAM! The audience is hooked, and then the action peaks, and there is time to reflect on what we have learnt. Marcus always talks about the journey. The journey we are experiencing together, a journey where everyone are (sic) accepted aboard, and no one are (sic) left behind. (Rutlin, 2009)*

This journey remains at the heart of what I understand to be a successfully-embedded Indigenous pedagogy: who and what we are, and what we represent. An example of this pedagogy in action is used in Scene 12 of the play. On first meeting Uncle Henry, Leroy and Uncle Tommy are introduced to the traditional Kamilaroi Corroboree which acknowledges such a personal journey:
SCENE twelve

‘Welcome Home’

Lounge room, the room is a mess with litter and remains of fast food scattered everywhere. We see Tommy sitting on the lounge amongst a pile of blankets, his guitar lying up against the side of the lounge.

There is a bong sitting on a square box with other boxes representing seating and other props as required.

Tommy has just finished chopping up [yarndi] and puts down his scissors - then collapses on the lounge.

    TOMMY
    Aaagh… I’ve been waiting for this all day.

Tommy turns to address the audience.

    TOMMY
    So poor Henry has ended up in the happy home - if you ask me, it is bloody religion at the bottom of Henry’s misfortune. I still remember the day young Leroy first brought him home dressed in nothing but a lap-lap and ochre…

Leroy enters from behind the audience; Uncle Henry still dressed as described by Tommy is by his side… they both make their way towards the stage through and in-between the audience.

    LEROY
    [To Uncle Henry]
    Don’t worry, we’ll be home soon!

Tommy continues his address to the audience…

    TOMMY
    The truth is that as little as eighty years ago there would have been nothing considered so improper as an Aborigine behaving the way Henry was
when Leroy found him dressed
that way – quite a state to
the prying eyes of the nosy,
but none of them were willing
to help…

Tommy is now in fine rhythm, having to stop and pull cones
and re-pack his bong as he speaks to the audience. Then
Tommy stops, pauses, can hear Leroy as he comes towards
the stage – Tommy panics, hiding the bong and yarndi.

Tommy then starts to try and suck up the dead smoke
surrounding the room and begins to spray the room with
deodoriser.

Leroy enters with Uncle Henry waiting curiously in the
view of the audience but unseen by Tommy.

**TOMMY**
You have no bloody clue, do
you, Leroy – to walk in on a
man’s personal business when
he is enjoying the solace of
his own company?

Tommy shows signs of relief that it is Leroy and starts
to bring out the bong and yarndi.

**LEROY**
The truth is I do… but I am
overcome with excitement – a
surprise visitor…

Tommy begins to stress again, re-hiding the bong and
yarndi.

**TOMMY**
What kind of visitor makes one
forget acts of common decency,
Leroy?

Leroy shakes his head, saying nothing. The audience can
see that he is enjoying the torment he is causing Tommy.

**TOMMY**
Where?

**LEROY**
At the transit centre, not
less than an hour ago…
**TOMMY**
No... where, with you now?

**LEROY**
I came through the ticket collection at the transit centre and could hear the noise of this chanting.

**TOMMY**
Chanting?

**LEROY**
Yes, you know – Black fella, it sounded ancient, old - and I had to go and look.

**TOMMY**
Like corroboree?

**LEROY**
It was haunting... spellbinding and mystifying. Come - I will show you...

As Leroy and Tommy have been exchanging dialogue Uncle Henry has let his curiosity get the better of him and he has started to observe his surroundings.

As Leroy and Tommy walk out to the front of the stage Uncle Henry has made his way around the rear and has entered through the back.

**TOMMY**
This visitor of yours appears to have vanished...

**LEROY**
Aboriginal man - that’s what he is...

**TOMMY**
Aboriginal man?

**LEROY**
Yes, but ancient, straight out of National Geographic...

**TOMMY**
You can’t say that. It offends...
LEROY
Well – you tell me in what way
I describe him... that no longer offends?

Tommy looks up and around the audience – no sign of the mysterious stranger.

TOMMY
I would call him lost...

LEROY
Lost?

TOMMY
Yes... lost!

As Leroy and Tommy re-enter the house Uncle Henry is walking through the back. For a short time the actors improvise not seeing each other until they finally make eye contact.

Tommy is in shock as he sees Uncle Henry, as is Henry when seeing Tommy - they make eye contact and then scream as they both jump backwards.

TOMMY
Aaaaaaaaaagh!

UNCLE HENRY
Wandabaaagh!!!
Leroy, laughing to himself having witnessed this, mocks them both running around the lounge.

LEROY
Aaaaaaaaaagh! Wandabaaagh!!!
Tommy, not liking being humiliated, grabs Leroy who shapes a quick mock shake-a-leg.

LEROY
Wandabaaagh - yura wandabaa
yura wandabaa...

TOMMY
Yura wandabaa?
Uncle Henry gets in-between
the two of them, shaking his head in disapproval.

LEROY
That’s what he was chanting when I first seen him - Yura wandabaa...

Now Uncle Henry turns to Leroy, again shaking his head.

Tommy completely ignores Leroy, looks directly at Uncle Henry, wild hair and traditional dress.

TOMMY
Yep - National Geographic does it...
LEROY
Yeah, see - I told you...
Tommy looks at Uncle Henry.

TOMMY
Yura wandabaa...

LEROY
And he kept saying yanaay, yanaay, yanaay...

TOMMY
Yanaay - as in to go away... leave!!!

LEROY
Yeah - I didn’t even think... no doubt, just like down home in Moree - and he repeated it over and over again.

TOMMY
Yanaay, yanaay, yanaay... he was telling something to go away - to leave him.

Uncle Henry can sense the confusion in the air.

UNCLE HENRY
[Screaming]
Gamilaraay!!!

Tommy and Leroy both stop, look at Uncle Henry.
UNCLE HENRY
Gamilaraay, Gamilaroi,
Kamilaroi...

Tommy and Leroy are frozen to the spot as Uncle Henry starts to stomp hard on the ground.

UNCLE HENRY
Yammaa yanaay yullaargaay...
Yaawuu!!

LEROY
Yeah, see - chanting - but was like he was frightened... you can see why I had to bring him home.

TOMMY
I remember this same corroboree he is doing now when I was only a small child - they did it before the coming of religion - the missionaries I mean. The old men used to sing this to visitors. He’s asking us who we are, where we from?

UNCLE HENRY
Gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...
gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...
gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...
gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...

LEROY
So you remember, as a child - can you speak to him about what he is doing - what he is asking?

TOMMY
Much has been taken. It is no longer of my nature to discuss such things... but this I remember - he’s going to show us a dance, stomp dance, watch real carefully because he will ask us to repeat it...
Uncle Henry starts to show them a dance – he stomps his left foot down twice – then a pause as he slams his left foot down hard again but this time only once...

UNCLE HENRY
Yammaa giindhii Gamilaroi
winnung-guuldaagh!!!

And then his right foot down three times...

UNCLE HENRY
Agh, agh...

A pause then his right foot down hard again once.

UNCLE HENRY
Agh, agh... agh, agh...

LEROY
I see it – the dance...

TOMMY
It’s respect, he’s sharing his Moiety... Genealogy and Lineage with us – no different to the bible – you know Fathers, Father, Father... here, let me help you...

Tommy gestures for Leroy to join him as he copies the steps...

Tommy now also stomps his left foot down twice – then a pause as he slams his left foot down hard once...

TOMMY
Agh, agh...

And then his right foot down three times...

TOMMY
Agh, agh... c’mon Leroy you have to do it too...

A pause then his right foot down hard again once.

LEROY
What if I don’t get it? Is there something I should know?
TOMMY
There is one thing you should know...

Leroy is struggling – he slams his left foot down three times and then his right foot twice – Uncle Henry looks mad, angry.

Uncle Henry starts to show Leroy the dance again – he stomps his left foot down twice – then a pause as he slams his left foot down hard once...

UNCLE HENRY
Yammaa giindhii Gamilaroi winnung-guuldaagh!!!

And then his right foot down three times...

UNCLE HENRY
Agh, agh...

A pause then his right foot down hard again once.

UNCLE HENRY
Agh, agh... agh, agh...

TOMMY
This is... harder than it looks...
What is it I should know, what if I don’t get it right?

TOMMY
He’ll kill you!!!

Uncle Henry teaches them both his dance, Leroy has never focused so hard on anything in his life, and Tommy is taken back to his childhood... They finish...

UNCLE HENRY
[Smiling]
Gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...
gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...
gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...
gagaaluu ganuu girr yawu yalu...
yammaa... yammaa giindhii Gamilaroi winnung-guuldaagh!!!

Puts his hand out to greet them both...

UNCLE HENRY
Yamaa...
The three of them all embrace.

Fade to Black:

Spotlight falls back on Tommy who has resumed packing his bong - Leroy and Uncle Henry both stand as silhouettes at the back of the stage.

TOMMY
Wasn’t long before we discovered it was all an act, Henry I mean - he was doing research for some big University... I should have known better than to believe in something that wasn’t there...

Tommy pulls a bong... shakes the lighter and then starts to pack another as he addresses the audience.

TOMMY
Research that does nothing more than reaffirms stereotyped images that exist in the popular imagination.

Tommy pauses...

TOMMY
Essentialized Indigeneity formed around specific fantasies of cultural marginality, physicality and morality, which leave an increasing number of Indigenous people vulnerable to accusations of inauthenticity - replaced as essentialist fantasies that continue to promote the noble and romantic savage instead of the true richness of our Indigenous diversity...

BEAT
TOMMY (CONT... to audience)
What – does my vocabulary surprise you? Then shame on you! It’s all about how we choose to represent ourselves rather than conforming to what you see me to be... I am as Aboriginal as Aboriginal is Aboriginal... I could pretend to be something else – use diction beyond my own means, but why would I? You see – when you have been around as long as we have... you learn a thing or two about a thing or two...

Lights fade to black: the sound of the bong being pulled is heard as the light eliminates around Tommy and then turns to black.

The end of the scene is important for my ideas about a new pedagogy as again, in interplay with the audience, Tommy is totally aware of the strange in-between, ambiguous space he takes up. As demonstrated through his use of dialogue, he confronts the idea that such articulated, sophisticated and informed speech is not seen as authentic for an Aboriginal person. This imposed construction, the outcome of racial views and racial loyalties confused by the processes of colonialism, lie at the heart of my desire to create autobiographical ethnicity as a mode by which cultures can actually communicate.
Moving towards the film script
(Guwiinbaabaa-gi nuumulaah biibabiiba)

In August 2010, I was asked to sit on an Industry panel for the Queensland Screen Industry Council. On that panel, Gill Moody — an Aboriginal woman from the ‘Wadi Wadi’ Wreck Bay Mob in Jervis Bay, South Coast New South Wales, and also the Investment Development Officer with the Indigenous Programs Unit of Screen Australia — asked me what was my motivation in becoming a storyteller?

I began with a standard response citing my desire to become an agent for change and discussing aspects of Aboriginal access and participation, but Gill wanted a more insightful and challenging comeback — she wanted the ‘truth’.

You see, Gill and I, as Aboriginal people holding positions of influence in the Film and Television Industry, had come together on the panel not just as ‘Aboriginal Storytellers’ but as individuals who were forming careers of note and reputation within the industry; we were authorities in our field — but more than this… we were Aboriginal. We had become active agents in a demonstration of cultural maintenance by recognising our own shared understanding of an Indigenous pedagogy and knowledge base: we introduced ourselves through past lived experience, our individual Aboriginal First Nations, and then, separate from our roles on the panel, engaged in passionate and enthusiastic conversation about our Indigenous identities as part of a “distinctive shared identity” (Ang, 2001 p. 10).

It was then I acknowledged that my inspiration to tell story came from a need to identify others in my own community — peers, colleagues, cousins, brothers and sisters — who had shown just as much, if not more, charm, intellect, capacity and potential than I had as a teenager, and yet, due to the barriers of ‘boundary construction’, were not
able to negotiate the same access and participation that I had. Those people, instead, negotiated the ‘prison-house’ sense of identity that I had escaped. ‘Such policing serves to alienate past and potential future Indigenous people’ (O’Regan, 1999, p. 194–5), or forces those who inhabit Indigenity into a ‘prison-house’ of identity (Paradies, 2006, p. 358), and through ongoing welfare dependence, poverty, incarceration and physical and substance abuse this sense of identity has denied them access to ‘contemporary life and full citizenship’ (Paradies, 2006, p. 358).

What has occurred to those people is a crime, and a social injustice — and it saddens me, and has led to a clinical depression that part-destroys me on occasions but also enables my ongoing empathy and connection to loved ones in having shared these experiences of hopelessness, drawing us together no matter how separate we become in time and space. Their ongoing economic and emotional hardship is something that I will feel my entire life. These loved ones have been let down… and this is why I write. That’s what I should have said straight away for Gill Moody on the Screen Industry Council panel.

Excerpt from the novel manuscript True God: The Story of William O’Halloran:

Waalun buwarr biiba (A personal note…)

My Aboriginality or at least a search for my Aboriginality has occupied the last 27 years of my life since first becoming reunited with my Aboriginal family as a 15 year old… And not for the first time, as I walk through a mass of people gathered to celebrate the National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) at Musgrave Park in Brisbane, I once again find myself reflecting deeply on the foundations of my very identity as ideas continue to change from within, around and underneath me.

It’s NAIDOC Day, Black Friday 1st July 2011 and I am sitting in a tent with my sista… there are over 35,000 people, mainly of Aboriginal descent who surround us…
throughout the years my sista and I haven’t spent nearly as much time together as we should have… both having made dramatic changes in our life decisions and in representing our own individual ideas of what it means to be Aboriginal — and yet in looking back I am able to reflect that it was my sista more than anyone else who introduced me to what it meant to be ‘Black’…

I need to explain – this is not my sista through having the same parents… I started to date her older sista years earlier and her sista and I had a child together… this is what makes her my sista, more than just a sister-in-law she become my true blood sista, a beautiful little black sista who I have known for 25 years who would follow me around and jump in between her sista and I as we would fall asleep and ruining our nights when she would occasionally wet the bed, it was these lived experiences over time which made her my sista as part of a once unified ‘Black’ Aboriginal culture long before words such as ‘Indigeneity’ or ‘ontology’ became part of my understanding or vocabulary…

So here I am with my sista, who I haven’t really spent any time with, other than polite hellos over the last 9 years — (though my wife has ensured that all family ties have remained strong… as Black woman do…) and we are sitting in seclusion in a tent that is hidden away behind a collection of Aboriginal Elders for those who are tired and need of rest, mothers, or daddies who have to change babies or those who just need to take a break from the mass of people outside… from the sun or to drink some water and recharge before going back outside into the hording crowds.

She is showing me photos of her dhiiyaan (family) downloading ever so slowly from her face book page and a cheap $50 phone… and for the first time in a long time I am being forced to slow down, wait and be patient in a world that speeds around us… it was here that I realised that for us both, time had now stopped… we were blessed and truly fortunate to be allowed time out and a moment of reflection — and with every photo slowly downloading I was once again being allowed to return home… most of the photos were of her first grandson, born on the exact date that his great-grandfather was born.

I had only just met my little nephew for the first time some 20 minutes earlier — he doesn’t live with my sista’s daughter, his mother… as she had lost him into foster care… he is such a pretty little boy that upon seeing him for the first time I
thought he was a little girl — 18 months old… black… with big dark never-ending brown eyes and a beautiful smile of pure joy.

You see, my sista’s Aboriginal identity had, like mine years earlier… been formed in the Aboriginal housing commission stomping ground and built around an urban chaos of drugs violence and sexual abuse, a system that, through a university education I had been given the opportunity to escape. Her daughters are now repeating this same cycle with my nephew’s mother having fallen pregnant at 14…

When leaving Musgrave Park much later I saw two people I knew who like me had been provided a university education and in discussing my time spent with my sista they expressed that it was a shame that she didn’t enjoy the same opportunities I had…

No, I said… not shame — just different… different circumstances… different life choices… different consequences, it is just the way it is… and what is… is what it is… the last thing my sista wants or needs from others is their sympathy or pity… she deserves more… some people live and die by their decisions, they are true and sincere people who away from an institutional environment can teach us honestly about life… we take so much from them in quest of our own identities but we can never take away their ownership to their own decision making — as we do not share their lives and we are unwilling to live with them and share their consequences 24 hours a day…

It is so easy for others to recite the anguish and frustration of the oppressed, the riots and injustice of Palm Island, the welfare dependency and substance abuse suffered in communities like Redfern and Inala, but to live with them and share these experiences for some of us becomes too much… even for me — and that is why I left…

My sista has a strength of character to endure that I can only admire from a distance… she is a grown woman and a grandmother and though at times she feels regret and pain from her decisions. Who of us do not? And unlike many of her people, that like me… are still finding our way and grappling with our Indigenous identity my sista knows who she is and accepts her fate with a strong dignity and sense of humour that in another world would give her a completely different life.
And all that separates her and I are minute variation of degrees of chance and opportunity… how easily that I could have stayed in her world — there was and always will be a part of me that enjoyed the hectic mess of drugs and violence, the sex and chaos that once surrounded my life — the adrenaline of being part of the oppressed and having a reason to hate is somewhat appealing for those of us who have been there… and it is for this reason that the hour I spent with my sista secluded and hidden in our tent away from the celebration of others was as beautiful as it was privileged.

Such moments remain timeless, they last forever; and though her children do not spend time with my children it doesn’t matter… they know each other and respect each other… and more importantly understand why my children could never sleep at their auntie’s knowing what they would be exposed to… there is no judgement or feeling of superiority over the other just a feeling of informed separation and an unconditional love that though we live in completely separate worlds from each other we remain the same in our Aboriginality… and it is this connection, that unlike the generations before us allows us to be different, to evolve and become one.

Nganundi gii (From the heart…)

I left the tent knowing without question my place in this world as an Aboriginal man, an uncle, father and husband… and yes a brutha… and yes, for all that I have learnt and grown and written and shared throughout my life — my Aboriginality remains a lived experience that becomes inherent through privileged access that can never be taught or shared outside of our own community…

For when we speak about our perseverance, survival, struggle and celebration it is worth so much more than what is written, studied or shared as an observer who sits outside these experiences and chooses to comment without knowing what it means to be truly Aboriginal.

In now struggling at times with how my life has drifted away from my sista and others who I love dearly I ask myself what can I give back in return, what justifies my absence (and more importantly, their absence) in each other’s lives… this is why the subject of my writing has become this notion of an Indigenous pedagogy.
You see, as an Aboriginal teenager growing up with my sista in housing commission Australia, the idea that we as an Indigenous people had no clearly established pedagogy wasn’t an option for me. I say this because it was my formally-established Indigenous knowledge base that provided me with the motivation, inspiration and identity that laid the platform for me to be where I am today. “I am and always will be — Aborigine”, “Always was, always will be — Aboriginal land”; “White Australia has a Black History”: these were just some of the catchcries that affected my interaction with other Aboriginal community members.

The effectiveness of my pedagogic technique depends on the production of text so visually evocative and emotive (done through storytelling) that it provides the audience with precise analyses through character and action, creating a sense of empathy and higher understanding as the audience feel they ‘are there’ and witness to the events. Unfortunately, pedagogic forms like this which draw on traditional Indigenous epistemology, have been interpreted as merely storytelling, and have been misjudged by many Indigenous academics as a type of spirituality, or valuable only in terms of relationship to land — despite assertions by some Indigenous scholars that a unique spirituality (Foley, 2000) or relationship to land (Moreton-Robinson, 2003) indeed epitomize Indigeneity (Paradies, 2006, p. 358).

I have myself been as responsible as anyone (at different times) in developing such romanticism associated to land and spirituality that for years I too denied myself access to the development of an emotional and financial security, justifying my poverty and exile from society as my being ‘Aboriginal’. This led throughout school in my not being able to read and articulate as well as I should have and this self-imposed dyslexia meant that upon enrolling in my PhD I really struggled within the terms of reference and structure I was given. At that stage it was very tempting, as for many of my Indigenous colleagues, to state simply that the reason I was having difficulty was due to
the fact that ‘Indigenous research is required to be based on Eurocentric frameworks that continue the silencing of Indigenous paradigms’ (Walker, 2003, p. 37).

You see, the storytelling has always been easy for me, inherent, if I could say such a thing, but the academic writing has proven itself most challenging and yet deeply satisfying… It has proven itself a most difficult and at times emotional journey, but I now find myself in a position where I can state with confidence that any form of Indigenous pedagogy being related to any epistemology must begin with the great conversation that took place between Biami and Wadhaagudaagulwan where the Maran Dhinabarra first give birth to the Dreamtime (Burruguu) as a preamble to the Aboriginal Genesis. This starting point is not recognised by Indigenous pedagogy, as currently understood within the academy, which has become an ongoing study in surviving white domination.

Rather than my being constrained by the boundaries applied by current Indigenous studies, autobiographical ethnicity allows me to close my eyes and picture events across time and space as if they are happening around me. What was missing for me initially was the medium — the novel became too personal, the play too constricted — but finally through the film text I freed myself from the shame I identified in my struggle to write ‘correctly’. My self-imposed dyslexia lifted as, utilising the structure of a film script, I can almost bullet point my emotion within a creative prose. I want to understand motivations and create empathy with both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of the time under scrutiny; I want to produce a highly personalised subjective account of my position within the world which is also an accurate reading of history as understood in my circumstances; I want to depict these extrinsic signposts, established at key moments of my life, and share them as written narrative with audiences, be it through an academic text or as the creative component of my dissertation. Therefore, as an Indigenous language speaker and as an academic
storyteller, I am my own PhD through the narrative of autobiographical ethnicity where I personally represent its creative and academic journey as demonstrated research practice. The application of this mode creates an opportunity to develop an inclusive reform of the Indigenous academy through an interdisciplinary approach to academic and creative writing that will one day, I hope, allow what I once cherished as an inclusive Indigenous epistemology to become embedded within the delivery of the teaching of Humanities generally in the academy.

Just as Elijah is forced to return home to his old stomping ground, I too am now required in reflection to return to my old stomping ground of Inala, if only just momentarily… It was here that I developed my sense of Indigeneity (Aboriginality). It was my Uncle Paul Spearim, who first taught me Corroboree (Traditional Dance) and introduced me to notions of Burruguu-ngayi-li (the Dreaming). It was here that Uncle Reg Knox taught me my language (Kamilaroi, Gamilaroi, Gamilaraay); it was my Uncle Marshall Bell who took me to my first initiation ceremony in Taroom, Western Queensland and helped me to connect the Dance to the Language and the Stories of my past. Each moment is significant in the processes of an established and formalised Indigenous pedagogy that remains the solid foundation of my Indigenous identity.

What differs, then, between these moments and those discussed within the confines of the Western academy? For one, each of these men mentioned are part of my own immediate family, and two, it is the very gathering within the academy itself, whether or not represented by Aboriginal people; it is the location of such debate where acknowledgement of Indigenous identity has always been through non-Indigenous construction and policy due to the very nature and history of the academy as a 'White' institution.
Indigenous peoples have had a long history of representation by non-Indigenous people. For a great number of years since invasion, Indigenous peoples were supposedly ‘known’ by non-Indigenous people as ‘primitive’ peoples; peoples who were lower down on the (their) social and biological hierarchy; people who were more like animals than human beings. This representation underpinned the way British (and subsequently Australians) were to relate to Indigenous peoples. (Chalmers, 2005, p. 151)

Critically exploring this absence is for us the starting point towards understanding that these constructions are also interconnected and flow into teaching practice using uneven paths of enquiry, benign supposition and conjecture. Subsequently it expresses a ‘symbolic violence’ of inclusion through either deliberate or benign exclusion. (Hart, 2003, p. 48)

The simple truth is that outside the academy, in the communities significant to my own journey, this imposed and misleading debate simply doesn’t happen. Our people don’t wake up in Inala, Redfern, Moree, Toomelah, Boggabilla or Ramingining, and think to themselves: “What am I today? Am I Aboriginal or Indigenous? Or am I First Nation Australia Peoples? Or am I Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander?”

No. When Elijah returns home he is lost, but in none of these references and labels (Aboriginal, Indigenous, or First Nation Australia Peoples) is contained the answer he is looking for. The answer is in the dirt hanging around his neck and his lived experiences forged in sweat as he remembers time shared with his grandfather. It lies in the Language and Dance taught to him by his uncle Albert and in the blood of his family contained in his relationship to Katie. It is here that Elijah becomes connected to his Burruguu-ngayi-li (Dreaming) defined as Gawuban Gunigal (positioning his place within the Kamilaroi world view) as supported by an old aunty holding his hand at the park and the men coming to dance at the scene of his greatest obstacle, the fight with Losia.
How frustrating and at times pointless, that my need to share such terminology within a purely academic text, though possible, becomes difficult … not due to the Eurocentric boundaries of a white institution, but instead due to the ‘boundary construction’ currently occurring within the Indigenous academy — therefore I had little option other than to describe such notions of Indigenous pedagogy through the establishment of a creative text outside of the traditional forms/structure of Indigenous literature and theatre. Film text is visual and emotive, and as such not yet bound to the works of the Indigenous academic; it’s a fresh and exciting medium that allows me to move outside the Indigenous academy. In the film text I am best able to access my character journey as an Aboriginal person born from the ‘Stolen Generations’, reared in ‘Public Housing’, and reaffirmed through my traditional ‘Dreamings’. I write the creative component and exegesis as an intellectual narrative that expresses my feelings as an Aboriginal person, storyteller, father and husband, in coming to terms with my life and struggles both internally (creative component) and externally (exegesis). Each component is embedded within the other to create my one journey… the dissertation.

The rhetorical construction that I term ‘Autobiographical ethnicity’ not only cites my lived experience through a methodology of traditional Indigenous storytelling applied to academic and creative narratives, it also references the authority to make such a claim as an Indigenous Storyteller. Traditional Aboriginal storytelling carries and represents the antiquity of a traditional Kamilaroi knowledge base that I am choosing to share with my audience.

Ω
12. The creative component evolving
(Gaba gaay guwaa-lda-ndaay burrul gi-gi-nhi...)

Unlike Kyle Morrison (Artistic Director of Yirri Yaakin) or Cathy Overette (producer of my feature film Kick up Dust), as an Indigenous storyteller I have made a conscious choice not to be restricted by conventional notions of audience capability. Instead, my creative path is only concerned to continue to refine and further my craft, which not only helps my development as a writer but also, just as importantly, my dealing with constructive criticism when part of a collective essential to the film making process. I do this with a firm belief that from such a pursuit of excellence I will one day find an audience, with the ongoing cultural maintenance of an Indigenous epistemology remaining my priority. As an Indigenous storyteller, of utmost importance to me is (as I said) the ability to close my eyes and picture events over time and space happening around me, to go back into the past and see my future, to hear the noise of the children laughing, the women and men, the sound of the corroboree at night, and then the impending silence before the oncoming trauma of colonisation.

The requisition of ongoing language revival used in both the stage play and the film script is a major reason for the use of a traditional Aboriginal language in each work, but is also a technique to introduce the audience to the notion of an interconnection between two worlds that breaks down the boundary constructions of the past. As worlds of the ancient and the modern are seen to become embedded in each other, a new third space, separate to both, opens up as a demonstration of the macro and micro worlds discussed in Einstein’s space-time continuum theory, which is why I wanted to reference ‘Uncle Albert’ as an authority on the subject when first introducing him in Kick up Dust.
Despite their differences, Einstein and Bohr both stressed the incompleteness of quantum theory. The microworld of quantum objects and processes is either determined by a whole new level of yet-to-be-discovered principles (Einstein), or it is indeterminate, possessing no reality of its own, with a potential that only becomes actual when it interacts with the macroworld (Bohr). In short, the real world in which most of us think we live, the world of discrete objects and predictable cause and effect, turns out to be a sort of optical illusion, a partial glimpse of a deeper level of reality. (Maybury-Lewis, 1992, p. 197)

Even though Uncle Albert, like Leroy in the play, is coming from ideas not associated within the boundary construction of Aboriginality, the fact that he is older plays to an Indigenous stereotype: the ‘Old Wise Man’ who knows all around him — ‘an ever-popular subject for artists who portrayed us in paintings or films… noble, well built, heroic, bearded, loin-clothed, one foot up, vigilant, with boomerang at the ready’ (Dodson, 1994, p. 3). This image connects the audience to specific fantasies of exclusivity, cultural alterity, marginality, physicality and morality that relate to current audience ‘digestible’ perceptions of what best constitutes Indegeneity (Paradies, 2006, p. 357).

26. int. aboriginal hostel (reception) west end – night

An Aboriginal male, late 50’s UNCLE ALBERT, humble but distinguished – sits behind a desk watching television (Who Wants to Be a Millionaire).

    UNCLE ALBERT
    Niels Bohr you bloody idiot...

Elijah and Katie enter.

    ELIJAH
    Hey, we were looking for...

    UNCLE ALBERT
    Shhh!!! Number C...
Elijah’s face tightens, Katie smiling – both watching to see what is on the television. The contestant chooses option A)- Albert Einstein.

UNCLE ALBERT
Dumb arse!!!

The contestant is wrong, should have gone with C) Neil’s Bohr, as stated by Uncle Albert who gets up to face Elijah and Katie.

UNCLE ALBERT
A series of epistemological challenges, Niels Bohr, the author of the standard or Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics...

Albert pauses - can see they have no idea...

UNCLE ALBERT
It was the physicist Niels Bohr who presented most challenges to Einstein and his time space continuum of relativity theory. Between the two of them they started a series of debates that changed our world forever...

KATIE
C is not a number...

UNCLE ALBERT
Sorry?

KATIE
You said they should pick number C. C is not a number!

ELIJAH
Katie!!!

UNCLE ALBERT
No, the girl is right, now... how can I help?
Uncle Albert’s dialogue is similar to Leroy’s in the play in relation to articulation of high conceptual analysis and intellectual understanding outside of current Indigenous boundary construction — and yet both play into Aboriginal stereotypes in breaking down Indigenous myth and association in relation to the Academy. Uncle Albert’s high contextual knowledge base is more palatable to the audience due to the traditional notion of ‘Aboriginal Elder’, and yet I can’t help but wonder what would be the audience’s reaction if I placed him outside the cinema begging for loose change, as I did with the 14-year-old Aboriginal youth in the play. I suggest that the reception would be more hostile for the ‘old man’ than for Leroy — and yet Uncle Albert’s understanding of space-time continuum theory is acceptable as it massages current perception and ideology relating to Indigenous academic capacity and popular culture.

The association I make between Einstein’s space-time continuum and Aboriginal Dreaming holds particular significance for me since it began my academic investigation outside of what had been, until that point, an understanding of my own Aboriginality only as imparted knowledge, told and shared by extended family and community members and expressed in this exegesis with excerpts from transcripts taken in dialogue with my three Uncles, Marshall Bell, Paul Spearim and Reg Knox. Thus I have Uncle Albert as the ‘wise man’ in both white and black knowledges: he draws the two worlds together, it is a relationship that becomes embedded within Elijah’s Indigenous psyche through first his grandfather (Ronald), which causes his dispossession when Ronald is taken from him through death in the opening sequence of the film, and then reconnected again through his relationship with Albert.

That’s true; you got that something in you…. yeah, it come down through your blood, or somewhere… even if you haven’t done it before… it’s what make you do that sorta thing, and do it in the proper sense… (Knox, 2012)
ext. remote property – morning

INTERCUT WITH

ext. large canvas boxing tent – night

A remote Queensland property, an Aboriginal male 15 (ELIJAH) fencing with his Grandfather, 55 (RONALD). Deep within his eyes we see a man that has been knocked down… but always got back up.

The fencing is hard and gruelling work.

REVEAL: Letter box number - Lot 132 Rowdy Rd. The Sold sticker planted out front.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
I had been raised by my Grandfather for as long as I could remember – the boxing tents were part of my life since before I could walk...

BOXING TENT (EARLIER)

SUPER: Seven years earlier

Deafening roar from a large crowd – cheering as perspiration sprays into the air from two boxers matched blow for blow...

REVEAL: Ronald, late 40’s lean and wiry, is beginning to dominate his much younger white opponent – a muscle ridden Aussie stockman. Elijah (seven years old) stands at the back of the tent matching his Grandfather’s every move as if a fighter in the ring.

Silence as Ronald lays out his opponent with a sharp right cross to the head. The stockman’s body bounces up against the canvas, stops, limp against the ground. Elijah runs forward and jumps into the ring. Ronald lifts him above his shoulders as the crowd cheers...

CUT TO:

The celebration and atmosphere from the night before is gone, Ronald spars with Elijah – the tent now empty. Ronald moving back against a flurry of punches that defy the young boy’s age. Ronald brushes past Elijah who now off balance is easy prey – Ronald cannons him hard into the floor.
RONALD
Baluwaal miinba-y nginu-ngay
giirr wangaarrama-li!

Ronald sits next to his Grandson on the canvas.

RONALD
Never allow yourself to be
beaten... come - sing with me...
‘Binaagh mil mara dinaagh...’

Ronald’s words become faster...

RONALD/ELIJAH
‘Binaagh mil mara dinaagh...’

Ronald teaching the language as they touch the different body parts as spoken in the song...

Binaagh: hands up over their ears...

Mil: cover their eyes...

Mara: shake their hands...

Dinaagh: touch their feet...

They then jump up simultaneously...

RONALD/ELIJAH
‘Yolunguu, yolunguu,
yolunguu...’

They break into a shake-a-leg... a traditional Aboriginal dance.

INSERT: O.S. Sound of the crowd cheering from the night before...

PROPERTY

Now finished their lunch they are back at the fence.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
It took us three months to
fence that old property - we
could have got help but Pop
insisted we did it ourselves....

Ronald covered in sweat and dirt glistening in the sun.
ELIJAH (V.O)
Six weeks later my Grandfather was dead – tuberculosis.

Ronald reveals the same pouch as Elijah around his neck.

The whole scene (partly reproduced here) relies on ‘privileged access’ associated with my being a member of the Kamilaroi First Nation, but also, it acknowledges a ‘Rite of Passage’ taken from my personal experiences, the first being in memory of my own grandfather (Pop), and his brothers, their tailored well ironed slacks, and their hair always slicked back with cream, wearing a bright white singlet, all just in preparation to go to the corner shop in the morning to purchase a newspaper, bread and milk. Like Elijah, my grandfather has also now passed and just as his lineage passes through his younger sister Katie, my relationship with Pop is now being maintained through my relationship with my two birray-gal (boys), Marcus and Ngiyaani. (You would have noticed that there are certain issues raised in images and repeated throughout this exegesis: my ‘Pop’s ironed slacks’, is just one of them. This is a further demonstration of Indigenous non-linear pedagogy at work as repetition builds growing awareness.)

That was the beginning of his initiation see, and then he was taught that same story again at 12. Then again at 18 and again at 30, that same story… it’s a circular thing, in gaining knowledge. Each story take on new meaning, interpretation as you get older. (Spearim, 2012)

My boys Ngiyaani and Marcus attended their first ceremony as five and six year olds. During the ceremony, boys learn three dances that begin their transition from curiosity to understanding. But first, along with their older brothers, cousins and uncles who have already participated in this ceremony, they are required to collect ochre. The ochre is brought back to where their uncle, in this case my mother’s cousin Paul Spearim, begins to explain the narrative of the three dances the boys are to learn. As
they listen the boys break up the ochre adding water to create a paste which is then to be drawn onto their bodies in representation of the yurudhagaa (totems) they are about to dance. The paste is applied by the elder brothers, cousins and uncles as it was applied to them at the same age... As the paste is applied, my uncle explains to the older boys why we use ochre to paint the bodies of the younger boys — it being significant in connection with the earth and in sustaining life, the need to look after her and how we originated from that same clay... long... long... time ago... and how our father's father also had his body painted by his older brothers, cousins and uncles with clay from exactly the same place in exactly the same way as the younger boys on this day... for thousands upon thousands of years... The way the ceremony connects to age and cognitive development is circular as well as linear: the boys’ older brother, (then only 14-years-old) Dylan, applies the clay to his younger brothers too, as he recites the story... as told to him just a few years earlier by his older cousin... as part of his second ceremony established as his own rite of passage.

The Song as inserted within the last passage taken from the script remains pivotal in re-introducing our children to their Kamilaroi language which will be required to fully understand other dance ceremonies throughout their lives as an ongoing process of learning. The ritual is a key example, for my people, of the mode of pedagogy I propose — equally significant to the younger boys learning the dances for the first time, and to the ritual experienced by the older boys aged between 12 and 18. Of note is the fact that Sigeman and Shaffer cite the work of Jean Piaget in understanding this age period to be inclusive with further periods of adolescent development as the “formal cognitive operations stage” where logical thought and abstract skills are developed (see Sigeman & Shaffer, 1995, p. 199). As the older boys are forced to plan in advance and systematically test ideas related to their uncle’s story, first told to them via another elder cousin years earlier, they learn to adopt a systematic and scientific
method of problem-solving (Sigeman & Shaffer, 1995, p. 199). As they communicate what has been taught to them to their younger siblings, they understand the language they use to be referenced to an area of long-shared meaning (this is how collective consciousness, or genetic memory, has built up) involving not only their uncle, but also the group and their younger brothers, in relation to the world around them. In most parts of Australia unfortunately this chain of knowledge appears to have been broken. Re-introducing culture is a significant and major motivation in my work; I want to re-construct an Indigenous world view in such a way that we can not only manage/negotiate successfully the non-Indigenous world but, more importantly, make an active contribution to the world around us.

In my case, I missed this formal introduction to my Indigenous epistemology, having been removed at birth; therefore my introduction to my Aboriginality was not as coherent, nor in such a controlled nurturing environment. Nonetheless, it still had tremendous impact upon my life. The birth of my own Indigenous consciousness is further documented in my novel manuscript.

Excerpt from the novel manuscript *True God: The Story of William O’Halloran*:

I was four years old when I walked into the well-kept lounge room of my middle-class Pakeha (White) home in New Zealand. I looked over at my mother, Eileen — in her mid sixties, a person I loved dearly. She smiled back at me as she sat on the lounge sewing and watching television. I turned to the TV screen and was amazed to see these black, and what I thought were handsome, athletic men engaged in some strange, compelling and yet bizarre tribal dance.

Like many four-year-old middle-class white kids around the world who witnessed this fantastic dance, I broke into stride without hesitation. ‘Weeeyoooooouu Eeeeyooooouuu’, I wailed as my feet slammed and stomped against the thick, warm carpet and my legs shook together like the dark handsome beautiful men on the television. I then turned back to look at my mother, wanting to ensure she
was watching as I discovered this new God-given talent — as four year olds do. But it was not my mother; it was my enraged grandfather Brian I saw — charging at me! I froze.

Like many other middle-class Irish children born to the late 1960s, this was not the first time I was to witness such fury. What was different about this beating though, was the lack of explanation about why it happened. There was no ‘dirty little heathen’ and no ‘you naughty, naughty little boy’, just a savage beating. My head slammed against the brick mantelpiece that framed the open fire responsible for the beautiful warm carpet and the security I felt only seconds earlier. And then I found myself locked in a cupboard, sobbing and crying.

This was to be my introduction to life, family and love in my formative years. This time, though, my mother Eileen didn’t come to rescue me as she had done on so many other occasions. Normally after some time the door would open and there would be my loving mother, with cookies, milk and a hug. And an explanation of what I had done so wrong and why I had enraged my grandfather so. But this time Eileen did not come to open the door. I closed my eyes and went to sleep. When I woke, it must have been very late, because the cupboard had gone from dark to black. I couldn’t even see my hand in front of my face. I had never been left for so long before.

That’s when I knew that this must have been a very special beating.

What occurred that day for me is demonstration of my own “space-time continuum”, also interpreted in my stage play and feature film. The trauma of the encounter acted as a conduit between my unconscious and conscious minds, as part of my emerging awareness of the relationship between time and place. In my Irish grandfather’s eyes I committed an “unspeakable” act in dancing like the “Aborigines” I witnessed on the television during what was the opening sequence of a television show called Boney (the 1972 series, not the Cameron Daddo version which came much later) which began with a traditional Aboriginal Corroboree during the opening credits. The fact that my Irish mother/grandmother did not come to me later was also significant in my developing an awareness that this “must have been a very special beating”; it is
this moment that I acknowledge as having given birth to my “contemporary Aboriginal consciousness” (Anderson, 2003, p. 21) — a consciousness born from notions of disadvantage, social inequity, devastation, and being endangered and dispossessed.

The novel manuscript had to be set aside because it was becoming too autobiographical. The trauma associated with much of my past needed to be resolved and healing needed to take place for me to move on. I wasn’t willing to share with others (not yet anyway) many of the skeletons still hiding deep in the closet of my mind. Therefore first the play and eventually the feature film script took over as an adequate replacement that would allow me to fulfill my investigation concerning stress, identity and social deprivation. The form of the film script allowed me to infuse ideas contained in this exegesis into the creative component.

71. INT. Board & lodging - afternoon

Elijah and Katie enter in silence. Katie is still angry, grabs her doll and holds her tight to her chest.

ELIJAH
What just happened?

KATIE
She called me a thief!

ELIJAH
No, about us, why are you angry at me!

KATIE
Because I hate you!!!

ELIJAH
Tell me about Teddy?...

KATIE
Fuck Teddy?!!!

ELIJAH
I spoke to Shelly – she told me what happened...
Katie becomes frozen...

ELIJAH
You were telling the truth... on the bus...

Elijah goes to her and Katie throws a number of punches at his chest but he restrains her and then holds her tight to him as Katie breaks down.

ELIJAH
I promise you I will never leave...

Katie looks up at Elijah, it’s now or never...

KATIE
Dad loved me so much, I was his little princess - then when I turned 12 everything changed, the way he would look at me. The way all men looked at me, but Dad - he became uncomfortable, but never touched me...

Katie puts her hand up to stop Elijah from speaking.

KATIE
Then when Mum died... there was just me and him and he started drinking, wouldn’t stop. He drank and drank - just faded away. He wouldn’t even look at me...

Katie wipes her eyes, letting go of a pain hidden very deep.

KATIE
There was so much abuse going on in the community - Uncles cousins - even dads touching their own girls. I’m sure he wanted to but he never did. He just stopped looking at me. Instead, he just drank himself to death. It was like I was never there - you understand? He was a good man. He would
rather die first, I killed him...

Elijah looks her in the eye.

ELIJAH
No, you didn’t, it was his choice, and he chose to do the right thing. You don’t owe him, not this.

KATIE
I just wanted to protect the other girls - the way he protected me...

Katie continues to cry as Elijah hugs her tight as if to never let go - they embrace for the first time truly as Brother and Sister.

ELIJAH
It’s over. And no one is going to hurt you ever again - I promise you...

Katie lets it all out protected in Elijah’s arms.

The idea that my Aboriginal consciousness draws upon aspects of associated trauma and stress is supported by Jaynes’ theory of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind (see Jaynes 1990, especially p. 84, and also, for a study of his theory’s current relevance, see Cavannaa et al 2007, who propose that the concept of a non-unitary Self is one of the most relevant contemporary legacies of the bicameral mind).

Jaynes, a behavioural psychologist publishing in the new era of cognitive theories of the time, viewed consciousness as historically and culturally mediated. He wrote: “the conscious mind is an analog of what is called the real world. It is built up with a vocabulary or lexical field whose terms are all metaphors or analogs of behavior in the physical world” (Jaynes, 1990, p. 55). In terms of human development, it was through a series of traumatic events — wars, catastrophes and forced migration — that Jaynes believed the two functioning structures of the bicameral mind of modern
humans were shaken into consciousness several thousand years ago (Jaynes, 1990, p. 204). The significance of this for me is that when ritual has been somehow broken (as was the case with my receiving no response to my being beaten) the unforeseen event can create such stress as to activate the nervous system to instigate new enabling and coping reactions during the moment of trauma, and that these remain to deal with future changes in one’s world.

Thus, as I became immersed in both the macro (before and after) and micro (the present here and now) worlds, through my early childhood event (the catastrophic beating by my grandfather Brian with no active response coming from my adopted mother, following my identifying traditional Aboriginal imagery and action) I became aware of associations connected to aspects of disadvantage, social inequity, devastation and dispossession. Further encounters, as I grew older, connected me deeper to this event, and continued to raise my consciousness. Through my own intuition, after having just suffered the beating, I came to the realisation that the event had the potential to somehow change my life forever. I remained alone in the “darkness of my own despair” waiting for my mother to come to me; she didn’t. I understood that the moment was significant, though at that stage I didn’t understand how.

Excerpt from the novel manuscript True God: The Story of William O’Halloran:

Much later, after having cried myself to sleep, I woke and grabbed the knob on the cupboard door. To my surprise it turned, and slowly the door opened. Gently and quietly I crept out to discover a world of black silence. I couldn’t remember ever being up this late before, but there was something I liked, and I felt connected within the timeless darkness. I continued to creep through the house towards my bedroom, but stopped in the lounge, transfixed by the silhouetted black box that encased my favourite cartoons and, of course, those enchanting black crazy dancers I had witnessed only hours earlier. I wondered whether they were still
there, trapped inside. Overcoming my fear of waking the others, I gave in to my curiosity and turned on the television.

To my surprise and glee, I could see that a cartoon was hiding in the black box. I had never been happier and moved back to take my seat on the lounge, opened my eyes further to adjust to the glow emanating from the television, and made myself comfortable. What I then witnessed over the next two hours was the 1955 cartoon adaptation (by Halas and Batchelor) of George Orwell’s classic *Animal Farm*. This was to have an everlasting effect on me as a precursor to many events throughout my life…

Years later, I contemplate how much this event contributed towards the deep sense of social justice I have felt, that has always been identified without question as an inherent aspect of my Aboriginality, never before now acknowledging ‘Animal Farm’ as significant in this action even though written by a non-Indigenous author.

Yes, as stated previously, and yes, as now repeated… there are, no doubt, dangers when insisting that non-Indigenous writers are capable of tapping into some form of ‘Dreaming’ as they write. Such a statement challenges the very institution of our identity: ‘white people would never understand the Dreaming’ (Maybury-Lewis, 1997, p. 197). Yet the Dreaming comes from a moment so early in our universe that there was no race of people, there were no people at all, no time, no place, just ‘spirit and then consciousness’ (Knox, 2012). The emotionality of the issue of the Dreaming belonging to a single race is understandable and justified, considering the past trauma inflicted upon its custodians. But here, to hold this *shared* history between poetry, reading, song, storytelling, pain and trauma deep within the Dreaming, my hypothetical third space opens up.

Moreton-Robinson argued, “‘How’ is it possible for non-Aboriginal academics to ‘know’ Aboriginal people and issues in order to constructively and truthfully represent them?” (quoted in Anderson, 2003, p. 21), yet Anderson goes on to state:
What is needed is an active engagement with some of the core issues raised by Indigenous critical writers who have called into question the basis of traditional systems of ‘western’ knowledge. (Anderson, 2003, p. 21)

We as Indigenous peoples have only recently begun to qualify the meaning of what constitutes our Indigenous identity within a contemporary context (e.g. Taylor 2001, cited in Paradies, 2006). Huggins, like Moreton-Robertson, has expressed understandable resistance towards the idea of non-Indigenous people contributing to such debate:

Foremostly, I detest the imposition that anyone who is non-Aboriginal can define my Aboriginality for me or my race. Neither do I accept any definition of Aboriginality by non-Aboriginals as it insults my intelligence, spirit and soul, and negates my heritage. (Huggins in Grossman, 2003, p. 60)

Other Indigenous academics argue that the debate is one that necessarily involves Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in “a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation” (Langton, 1993). It seems to me, surprisingly perhaps, that the ‘white’ inputs into my own identity ‘debate’, while often traumatic, have also helped me to focus positively, even while “question[ing] the basis of traditional systems of ‘western’ knowledge” (Anderson, 2003, p. 21). You see, as an Indigenous child growing up, not only Animal Farm, but many literary classics such as Winnie the Pooh, Dr Seuss, Gulliver’s Travels, Watership Down, and Tolkien’s works — in film versions and in books — had a profound effect on my childhood.

The theme of conflicting Aboriginal identity set within a non-Indigenous paradigm is investigated in my film script through the relationship between Katie (a Mission raised Aboriginal girl) and Chrystal who lives with a white father and attends an exclusive, all girls, private school.
60. INT. op shop west end shopping district – morning

Chrystal and the other girls are spread throughout the shop looking at clothes – Chrystal looks up to see Katie standing directly opposite her...

KATIE
Why do you look through me, like you don’t see me?

CHRYSAL
I saw you – you were following us the other day...

KATIE
You didn’t acknowledge me...

CHRYSAL
I don’t know you.

Chrystal’s friends, Carol, Abby and Mena all gather around.

CHRYSAL
My Mother doesn’t like me talking with Aboriginal’s... thinks they’re no good.

KATIE
Wutta you?

Katie looks around at the girls all staring at her.

CAROL
Why does it matter, what she is?

Katie, trying not to let on just how confronted and humiliated she is by what’s happening.

KATIE
It doesn’t...

CAROL
You asked...

Katie still trying to hold herself together...

CHRYSAL
Well I think it matters, I’m not ashamed by what I am, she
just wants a better life for me - that’s all…

KATIE
There’s nothing wrong with being Aboriginal…

The girls dismiss any interest in what Katie has to say, move away leaving her alone with Chrystal.

CHRISTAL
I’m proud I’m Aboriginal…I’m just not all in your face about it - like someone…

Katie doesn’t know if she wants to hit Chrystal or admire her, just knows she feels out of depth.

KATIE
You know what, it doesn’t even matter…

Abby walks over to Chrystal as Katie leaves…

ABBY
That was weird…

CHRISTAL
Shut up Abby…

Chrystal walks off leaving Abby shaking her head…

Another advance occurring through the ‘who-can-represent-us?’ debate is that the contextual nature of Indigenous identity over time and place is being seen as not particular to Australia or purely within an Indigenous context. As stated about my own childhood, there are many human experiences that relate across many aspects of familiarity and reference towards the construction of identity, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, class, physicality, language, religion and profession, to name only a few. My character Katie expects Chrystal to acknowledge her, because that is Katie’s lived experience where black fellas introduce each other in an invitation to connect family names, communities and experience, but Chrystal has been sheltered from
such experience by her mother associating negative behaviours (substance abuse and trauma) to this same culture and lived experience.

We all been told that, you know… time and time again, gotta learn the white man’s way, to beat him at his own game. At the same time, it’s a disconnection between… these people (Aboriginal people) and their own families, and their own communities. There’s black fellas now getting up, proud… saying that they don’t have that, they don’t know who their cousins are… you know… like it’s something to celebrate. (Bell, M. 2012)

All these identities are complex, multi-faceted socio-historical constructs which are established through public acts of self-representation, private accountings of oneself or through the experience of being named by others. (Jenkins, 1994, p. 220)

For this reason I see autobiographical ethnicity as a third but equal space that allows for an interdisciplinary approach that recognises and embraces difference. Any other discursive mode in relation to the true definition of Indigenous identity, for me just doesn’t make sense. ‘Black’ and ‘white’ must come together in the debate, but not in such a way as to reinforce the negative hierarchical power relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The debate taking place within the universities, popular culture and the media continues to be dominated by non-Indigenous control (Phillips & Lampert, 2005, pp. 1-7; Hart, 2003, pp. 12-16).

The binary relationship, though shifting back and forth, will always return a position of power to non-Indigenous people as they are the most powerful in their own construction. Aboriginal people thus find themselves forever trapped in an ongoing process of colonisation in such a way that colonisation becomes almost the perfect system of invasion and assimilation, unavoidable and unstoppable. This occurs to such a degree that even those of us who remain privileged in accessing education and a position of authority continue to find our future potential restricted within
the opposition of this ongoing binary relationship. One such example was in the development notes written to me by Kyle Morrison (Yirri Yaakinn) where he discussed the case of my 14-year-old Aboriginal character knowing about existentialism as a problem in the theatre due to past, present and future (it would seem) perceptions of Aboriginal capacity by 'non-Aboriginal' audiences. And there is another instance of this kind of potential-restriction in regard to my film script.

Having finished five drafts of the film script, and having had a reading with cast that included Luke Carroll, Ursula Yovich and Alan Lovell which was enthusiastically received by a capacity audience at the Dungog Film Festival, the time had come to discuss distribution. Initial discussion with Palace Theatres (Anthony Zeccolay) was not favourable. Then we met with Jock Blair and Natalie Lindwall from Screen Queensland to discuss potential production investment. Screen Queensland commissioned two script assessors to evaluate the distribution value of the script in its then current format (as included in this submission). One of the assessments came back extremely positive (appendix b.) and the other was negative (appendix c.).

This meant that together with the initial assessment provided by Edwards/Skerbelis Entertainment, we had two positive assessments, one negative assessment, and an unfavourable discussion with Palace Theatres. As a result, further development funding was secured to consult with a top Hollywood script editor, Louise Gough, who had also worked on the film Bran Nue Dae (2009), directed by Rachel Perkins and starring Dan Sultan, Jessica Mauboy and Geoffrey Rush.

Louise's first role was to generate written feedback (appendix d.) in response to the two latest script assessments and begin to plot both a schedule and new story line. It had been such a difficult process and with so many changes made we decided to go back to a ‘Treatment’ stage (appendix e.). I have always told my students that “we do
not write movies, we write scripts, and then hand these scripts to people who make movies…” Once you hand the script over, it is no longer your possession. It is as if you re-build an old car back into its original condition, but once you sell the car, no matter how many years you worked on it, the new owner can make changes. Yes, they can throw out your original seats and replace them with new sports bucket seats, install a horrible steel chain steering wheel, and even replace the original gear shift with one of those large round glass tarantula spider things…

Now, I’m not suggesting that Louise (Script Editor) or Cathy (Producer) wanted to make any such crude changes to my script, but what I am saying is: it is no longer my script… it remains my story and always will be, but… it has now become our script. Such a collective approach, a white script editor and producer working with a black writer on an Indigenous text, brings me back to my play. I’m not suggesting in any way that Kyle from Yirri Yaakin isn’t black; trust me, the brotha’s black. But there were problems associated to a ‘white’ audience and their perceptions of ‘black’ theatre. Only now, as I write this, do I realise that my hypothetical third space is as difficult to express as is Einstein’s mathematics, and yet like Einstein I know and feel that it is there.

Unfortunately after my meeting with Screen Queensland regarding distribution of the film script and with Louise coming on board, one of the first aspects to go was the suggested sexual tension between Katie and Elijah that carried the premise of the film. This was hard for me as it was one of the factors for my wanting to write the story in the first place. Previously, my novel involved significant violence and trauma. In my stage play, the ramifications of the protagonist’s behaviours were catastrophic: Nathan is raped by his adopted father after being taken from his Aboriginal mother and also becomes a black death in custody at the hands of police who have sworn to protect him. As I had ventured into extreme brutality in both these texts, it was
my conscious decision not to allow my film script characters to endure such pain. Therefore, rather than Katie being the victim of rape and incest, I decided that her fate, though traumatic, should be less brutal, and more forgiving... I had to provide for Katie a way out... a sense of hope.

Pertinent to this, the Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (2007) states clearly:

> [M]any people did not know what ‘sexual abuse’ was and were confused about what constituted ‘sexual abuse’. In a number of communities, the attitude was ‘we are happy to work to stamp out sexual abuse in our community but we don’t know what it is’. Further, many of those who did suspect sexual abuse was occurring were unsure how to deal with it. The Inquiry noted that, in many cases where the sexual abuse was obvious, the local people had notified the Police or the local health centre. The reasons why other cases were not reported were varied and complex. (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007, p. 58)

Confused about what constituted sexual abuse? We are happy to work to stamp out sexual abuse in our community but we don’t know what it is? The reasons why other cases were not reported were varied and complex? OK, along with issues of substance abuse stated throughout this dissertation, as an Indigenous male growing up in housing commission Australia I was exposed to, victimised by and yes, guilty of a myriad of sexual abuses. I wanted to scream out to the world: This is not OK! I wanted people to know this was not normal behaviour, and so in the novel, and then in the play, I screamed out my intent. By the time I was ready to write the film, I believed I had developed a very real and emotionally engaging narrative that would allow me to further enter into dialogue about an extremely taboo subject that needed further investigation.
But in regards to this film script, no, I was wrong: ‘Nobody wants to see a film about a guy who wants to fuck their sister.’ Yes, this is a real comment that came from one of our meetings discussing the development of the film. It’s the one time I wanted to walk away from it all, and justify my exit as being not due to my fault, but to the consequence of cultural misunderstanding and racial bias involving values that remained insensitive to Aboriginal people. Thankfully I chose to stay, realising that although I may not be able to craft my words well enough yet to succeed with such a sub-plot in the current film industry, I can instead provide audience for my characters and their embedded trauma through my exegesis… And so, here we are…

The Northern Territory Intervention has had a profound/damaging/liable effect on Aboriginal men, undeniably.

It is the Inquiry’s experience that the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children is being committed by a range of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal offenders – and these are a minority of the overall Australian male population. In addition, many of the offenders who were identified as having assaulted more than one victim were in fact non-Aboriginal. Aboriginal men have been targeted as if they were the only perpetrators of child sexual abuse in communities. This is inaccurate and has resulted in unfair shaming, and consequent further disempowerment, of Aboriginal men as a whole. (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007, p. 58)

There are many news reports, journal articles, other reports and e-mails about the Northern Territory Intervention already, and I don’t want the topic to hijack my dissertation as I come around the final bend towards my conclusion. But I will say there is definitely a contemporary need to deal with some issues of real importance still kept in the closet within our Indigenous communities, and we in the Australian Film Industry, the Academy, and the other Arts are not doing it. Instead, Indigenous academics, public servants, film makers and arts workers prefer their “privilege… as
it is lived in deprivation or injustice” to others (Memmi, 2000, p. 102) to create the “protocols of Indigeneity” where Indigenous peoples are positioned as “inherently morally and epistemologically superior to non-Indigenous”:

A particularly troubling aspect of the ‘protocols of Indigeneity’ is the positioning of Indigenes as inherently morally and epistemologically superior to non-Indigenes (Kowal and Paradies, 2005). Although this phenomenon is driven by non-Indigenous attempts to mitigate their privileged position… and assuage the guilt of continuing colonization, such a positioning is more often perpetuated than protested against by Indigenous people. (Paradies, 2006, p. 360)

So, due to a post colonial trauma, we are no longer responsible for our own actions and behaviours:

There is not a uniform perspective on the issue (that) identifies the different ways in which different cultural groups will perceive a problem. It is also acknowledged that the non-Aboriginal cultural view predominates. For example, many of the Aboriginal people the Inquiry spoke with saw the history of colonisation, non-Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal ‘system’ as responsible for the present child sex abuse problems. Many saw the sexual abuse of children as a new problem and one that their ancestors had not had to deal with in their pre-contact history. (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007, p. 58)

The language in this part of the report sounds very much like the language of IHEAC in their Submission to the Review of Australian Higher Education (IHEAC 2008), except, rather than us projecting the failure of Indigenous aspirations and cultural competency at the hands of the universities inability to recognise Indigenous governance within the higher education sector we are witness to a language that again denies our own [Indigenous] responsibility in conforming to a binary, that justifies our young men and women being violated, raped and abused, as again… a consequence of colonisation, ‘many of the Aboriginal people the Inquiry spoke with saw the history of colonisation,
non-Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal ‘system’ as responsible for the present child sex abuse problems’ (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007, p. 58).

My character Katie is an emotionally vulnerable Aboriginal teenager in desperate need of strong positive leadership of the kind willing to create a vision and accountability that enable young people to embrace the future rather than continually embedding the trauma and nightmare of the past. The plot development whereby she and her brother pass through the phase of potential incest with positive results was my way of dealing sensitively with the issues. But now, that whole plotline has to go… the distributors and marketers insist on it.

I also need to state that the negative experiences in Katie’s (and my) background did not happen to us all. I read the Katie passages to my Aunty who is a social worker in this field, and asked her if it resonated with her. She said “No”, that in her work she made herself “become absent from the pain associated to my [her] clients”. She did this by thinking of her mother:

I remember ringing my mother and saying thank you for keeping me safe, it started with my grandmother, my mother had to work and I was left hours, and hours… throughout my own education and then when I began working my mother and my grandmother always kept me safe, that’s why I had to ring her and say thank you… thank you for keeping me safe. (Bell, R. 2012)

Sadly, unlike my Aunty Rose, some girls and boys were taken from their caring mothers and grandmothers.

Before I write a script/story/treatment I begin with the idea, and from that idea I start to make notes on who best could communicate that idea. This begins with a series
of character notes long before I start the journey… I have found it to be fraught with danger if I start plotting a story before getting to know the characters that are expected to tell it. Here are the original character notes I wrote for Katie in getting to know her character long before writing the script:

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

KATIE SAUNDERS

Katie is thirteen years old, Aboriginal and very pretty, floating down the business district of West End wearing her brand new stylish prescription tinted sunglasses. She never believed that she would ever have owned anything so life changing given the circumstance of the previous two years. Katie had endured such a misery that it did not matter who walked into her foster home only weeks earlier, she was always going to leave with them. The fact that it was her brother meant little, she had never meet him, but the fact that he wanted to meet her, get to know her, and then cared enough to rescue her, this meant everything.

Her mother Roslyn had passed away in a car crash, Katie had heard rumours that her father had been drinking and caused the accident, but he never went to jail or was even arrested, but that didn’t mean anything. As you got older and looked like Katie you soon realised there were many crimes committed against young women on the community by men that went unpunished. No, it was only the Whiteman’s fury that had reached her community, never its justice.

Katie’s childhood was not the stories of fairytales and princesses, Katie was loved by her mother Roslyn and misunderstood by her father Les, who always it seemed wanted her to stay seven years old, when she would laugh at anything and the complexities of life could be cured with him chasing her around the house and tickling her. Katie attended the Toomelah state school which was based on an Aboriginal community; these were the happiest times of her life. Between seven and ten years old Katie loved the many friends and extended family she had on the community.

Katie had only just turned eleven when she began to realise the darkness that was always there hidden underneath. The endless games of hide and seek, the horses on the community and the world of play she was immersed in had kept such evils away, but with the development of young breasts and her paper thin chicken stick legs becoming well rounded thighs all this changed. In fact her legs was the reason why her nick name as a child was ‘Chicken’. Katie couldn’t remember the last time anyone had called her Chicken.
Everything else though which had gone before now became meaningless, as she now sat transfixed, watching her brother, she was motionless and unaware of everything else around her just praying hoping that somehow, he would get back up and fight.

Her story was meant to be central to the film. How things change!

I find myself, as an Indigenous creative artist and academic, up against a culture of moralistic positioning that generates uncritical acceptance of the views, opinions and scholarship of my Indigenous colleagues, in other words there is little to no self critique for our own academics, and/or creative artists who make films and write plays on Indigenous issues (Langton, 1993, p. 27). Because of this, I have faced an Indigenous-driven creative bottle neck which is very frustrating and difficult to break into. But also, I fall foul of a corresponding rejection of non-Indigenous views, portrayed as ‘tainted with racism’ (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 65), which again stifles opportunities for creativity and interdisciplinary approaches. My conclusion is that such moralistic positioning is untenable given the various and contradictory views that Indigenous people hold and, more importantly, such an approach fails to recognise that engaging in debate with Indigenous people is a sign of intellectual respect (Paradies, 2006, p. 360). Through engaging within this debate, both in the exegesis and also in my feature film, I have chosen not to exclude my Aboriginality, and have in fact found it reinforced. More importantly, the process has taught me the need to continue to acquit my craft through further development, hard work and refined focus. The relationship between feature film, exegesis and my own life change has healed me well and reminded me of many times when the intrusion of my European ancestry required a balanced outlook rather than a complete denial.
13. And further, leading to a conclusion
(Gaalanha guwiinbaa, dhuuranmay nganbinganbi warraan)

So… in summary then, before my conclusion: Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, throughout my life, have at separate times provided me with challenges which were difficult to overcome — no prejudice there — and often these challenges were set up within a binary, within a system of hierarchy. Rather than identify with one or the other, to find a workable pedagogy to help me navigate through life I have accepted that I identify with both — I am both — and with that created my own ontology that mediates my relationship with black and white. In accepting that I am Aboriginal, Kamilaroi Guwuban Gunigal, as my first point of reference (because that is the oldest recorded history in the world) I have to accept that my epistemology is circular and non-linear. This method of life learning I now identify as a workable system of autobiographical ethnicity.

I can now perceive signposts in my life that enable me to recognise the binary trappings of my past, but by incorporating my autobiographical ethnicity I no longer have to negotiate around or sideways or even through them; instead I establish a third space that identifies both white and black and this enables me to mediate my own level of interaction/engagement within the binary; and since the level of influence/contact is my choice, I find myself no longer trapped.

The binary trap I observe for those Aboriginal people who continue to argue boundary construction as academic theory is that, though the position of moral supremacy may appear to shift, the relationship between the two remains constant and never changing (Paradies, 2006, p. 360). In this way, Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships still continue to be based on binary-constituted difference and hierarchy. Rather than overcoming the effects of colonisation, this viewpoint contributes instead to the
ongoing structural maintenance of a ‘long and violent history in Australia’ (Chalmers, 2005, p. 151).

In deriving its origins from a pre-colonial history taken from an Indigenous knowledge base as yet not fully understood within the Western academy, my separate and equal third space creates its authenticity beyond the trauma of colonisation. A number of my central characters, pivotal to the story I’ve tried to tell in novel, play and film manuscripts, draw upon an Indigenous genetic memory — a collective consciousness — that can develop into acts of dispossession leading to alienation and depression (Cohen, 1999, p. 14).

Depression… can be a positive expression of belonging… To be sad is to be aware of human interdependence and the gravity of historical, tribal, familial and personal loss. To be depressed, and that includes tearfulness and sleep and appetite disturbance, is to demonstrate maturity and connectedness to the Indian (Indigenous) world. (O’Neil, 1993, p. 461)

I have suffered real depression. It is big and challenging and remains interconnected to my own past trauma, and no matter how much I prioritise my future, the past is always there, a constant reminder of what I have had to overcome…

In *Kick up Dust*, the idea of the interconnected Indigenous world is introduced in the opening sequence as protagonist Elijah reflects upon both the positive and negative aspects of his childhood connected to his Aboriginality that are further developed throughout the text. After becoming disconnected from his culture, Elijah rediscovers his ‘Dhua’ (own personal Dreaming) as part of a legacy of Aboriginal strength and endurance culminating with, at the end of the script, not only his return to the community but his own example in being able to overcome against all odds. The relationship between his present and his past is acknowledged by his community as
others dance a traditional corroboree (end Scene 98) in respect for both his personal journey and his identification as an Aboriginal man.

Throughout my theatre script, *The Happily Absorbed*, the portrayal of the collective consciousness is unfortunately more tragic as the protagonist Nathan experiences an implosion of contemporary and traditional identities through a series of psychotic episodes that reveal themselves as an Ancestral Being (Maran dhinabarra) held deep within his subconscious. The psychotic episodes are revealed as inter-generational trauma that eventually leads to Nathan’s death at the hands of the police as he acts out the injustices of his past lives.

The novel that began my creative component became ‘too autobiographical’ because the ‘uncertainty and alienation’ captured in the text was indeed my own trauma, and as a consequence the emotional turmoil encountered through writing the novel became too much.

What I discovered in my creative journey and in my research was that problems associated to mental health and trauma in Indigenous communities are, I believe, a direct result of lost spirituality connected to faith and belonging. As we disconnect from our history we disconnect from our identity.

Spirituality is a term that requires special care in its definition. It is important to recognize the difference between spirituality and religion. Spirituality can be seen as an internal connection to the universe, which includes a sense of meaning or purpose in life, a cosmology or way of explaining one’s personal universe and personal moral code. Religion, on the other hand, could be defined as a specific practice and ritual that are the external expression of some people’s spirituality. (United Nations, 2009, p. 60)
This is a real problem, as for many Indigenous people, having a healthy sense of spirituality is just as important as other aspects of mental, emotional and physical health. It is important to realise that a healthy spirit is essential for indigenous people to live a healthy life. Mainstream society is only now beginning to realize that spirituality is an element that must be taken into serious consideration when dealing with Indigenous communities.

Religion or belief systems have been a feature of cultures throughout human history. Belief systems are also integral to indigenous cultures. They often codify behaviour;... [are] used in rituals and sacred ceremonies. But foremost, they respond to human needs for reassurance in times of trouble and for averting misfortune; they also provide rituals that bring spiritual healing and address the major passages and transitions in human life. (United Nations, 2009, p. 60)

Not only is spirituality an essential element in maintaining an Indigenous identity, it is also identified that a loss of spirituality can require healing. There is little doubt that we demonstrate the systems of a traumatised and damaged people due to the process of colonisation, and much has been written recently that suggests that as a consequence we are also currently in a transitional period of healing.

The aim of the forum was to bring national recognition to the impact of trauma and grieving in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The Forum focused on healing of all Indigenous Australians, in particular Stolen Generations survivors and their families, as well as on what healing encompasses for Indigenous peoples and the educational and broader outcomes for children. (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008 p. 149)

As a result of the trauma we face as a people, many of our mob have initiated a strategy of ‘bad faith’ (the intent to deceive) which has undeniably affected the way we dismiss non-Indigenous scholarly interaction as being ‘tainted with racism’ (Cowlishaw, 2004,
p. 65). This occurs even though it remains clear that within the academy such debate
‘is a sign of intellectual respect’ (Paradies, 2006, p. 360):

Bad faith is a lie to the self, one that involves an effort to hide from
one’s freedom. One’s freedom is at the heart of the absence of
substance or a sedimented thing that we expect to conjoin us to the
things of which we are conscious. (Gordon, 2000, p. 75)

I could have chosen any number of examples to demonstrate this point, but to clarify
most clearly why I have arrived at my current position I have chosen just the one. It
is an example from Professor Aileen Moreton-Robertson.

Representations of whiteness continue to be enshrined and conveyed
in curricula, television, films, newspapers, novels, museums, performing
and visual arts, songs and other material culture. For example, when
Australian egalitarianism and individualism are personified through
sportspeople like Dawn Fraser, Pat Rafter and Ian Thorpe, they are
not associated with a particular racial group. Consider why Cathy
Freeman is positioned as running for reconciliation, yet Ian Thorpe
swims for the nation. (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p. 79)

Moreton-Robinson is using an emotional argument that remains subject to implied
notions current towards the perception and boundary constructions associated to
Aboriginal people. There are no research-based facts to support her statement, this is
purely Moreton-Robinson’s opinion reliant upon maintaining ‘stereotypes’ as already
understood by the audience, what Kane refers to as an “abstract statement” (Kane,
1988, p. 256):

The writer wants to arouse in readers a response like his (her)
own. He (She) must recreate the scene in a significantly altered
manner, including this detail and omitting that, exaggerating one
image and underplaying another, and calling up compelling similes
and metaphors. (Kane, 1988, p. 257)
The problem is that while making such a statement Moreton-Robinson holds a position of authority and as such the reader ‘takes for granted’ her ‘implied knowledge’ as being factual, which is a dangerous supposition for a person in her position. The truth is that she undermines Cathy Freeman’s success and recognition as a truly great ‘Australian’. There is no question about the fact that Cathy, as an Aboriginal woman, should have become a public figure in a process of ‘Reconciliation’, but as Gordon (2000, p. 75) alludes, it is an act of extremely ‘bad faith’ to suggest that such a position takes away from her being acknowledged unconditionally by the entire nation, as described un-subtly in the following article in the *Age* on 17 July 2003:

The 400 metres - a single lap of the stadium - took Freeman less than 50 seconds to run. It was widely assumed that the race was hers to win, but the burden of expectation that she carried with her was perhaps the greatest ever shouldered by an Australian athlete. Her victory was the pinnacle of her own career and, for Australians, was the defining moment of the Games. On the evening of September 25, 2000, 110,000 people rose to their feet and roared as Freeman raced around the track. They were joined by the rest of the nation, watching the event on television. (‘Cathy Freeman runs her race’, 2003)

While Moreton-Robinson devalues Cathy Freeman’s achievements, coincidentally Ian Thorpe has gone on to demonstrate outstanding commitment to Reconciliation. So much so that both Cathy Freeman and Ian Thorpe became the faces of Australian Reconciliation on 4 April 2007, at the launch of Australia’s largest ever campaign to improve Indigenous health at Sydney’s Telstra Stadium. Both athletes also became the first people to sign the online Sea of Hands developed by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation at the same ceremony (ANTaR, 2007).

In addition, to further demonstrate Ian Thorpe’s commitment (and his ‘nation’s’ recognition of) his tireless work on behalf of ‘Reconciliation’ and Aboriginal people, one only has to look at his address titled “Dirty Little Secret” made at the inaugural
“Beyond Sport Summit” chaired by Tony Blair on 9 July 2009, some five years after the quote from Moreton-Robinson.

In this part of the world even the community leaders are afflicted by clusters of chronic illness. Syndrome X…. the doctors call it, diabetes, renal disease, strokes, hypertension, cancer and heart disease. Some people die with four or five of these chronic illnesses. Rheumatic heart disease among the children in these places is higher than in most of the developing world. But I was not visiting communities in the developing world, I was in the middle of Australia, remote, yes, but this is Australia, a country that can boast some of the highest standards of living of any nation in the world. How shocked I was that Syndrome X was afflicting so many of the 460,000 Indigenous people of my country. As a result of these chronic illnesses and conditions Aboriginal life expectancy has fallen twenty years behind the rest of Australia. For some of my fellow countrymen life expectancy had plunged to just 46 years. Australia’s grim record on health care for Indigenous people is by far the worst of any developed nation. Developed? How can a country be ‘developed’ when it leaves so many of its children behind? (Thorpe, 2009)

This address may have been given after Moreton-Robinson’s quote, but in looking through Ian Thorpe’s website (Ian Thorpe’s Fountain for Youth) we find him reflecting in November 2010 on ‘the past 10 years of his work at Fountain for Youth and his partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’ that is a stunning example of practical Reconciliation (Thorpe, 2010). The foundation which funds projects to improve educational and health outcomes for indigenous youth was launched on Wednesday 24 November 2000 when Thorpe was still only a teenager, just after the Sydney Olympics. Some three years before Moreton-Robertson so flippantly dismissed what Ian Thorpe himself describes as a ‘life-long commitment to lend a hand to help all of our children grow stronger and smarter’, he, like other white Australians, was trying to exert an influence in the debate (Thorpe, 2010).
14. The fluidity of my own written identity  
(Burr:anka-li ngay guyungan mubirr-dhu ali-y)

From the time Baldwin Spencer as the Special Commissioner for Aborigines filmed the traditional ceremonies of ‘the Arunta’ in 1899 for the use of self-promotion, commercial entertainment and spectacle, Australian cinema, popular culture and the Academy has suppressed through ‘misrepresentation’ a truly defining and authentic Indigenous voice (Chalmers, 2005). As a consequence the Indigenous voice has over time become blurred (Paradies, 2006), determined around issues of poverty and dispossession (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2007), consumed within a binary relationship where non-Indigenous people remain in greater control of Indigenous representation (Chalmers, 2005).

Indigenous people attribute fluidity concerning Indigenous identity within such a binary relationship not to confusion through “Blackness” but instead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding as delivered through “Whiteness” (Moreton-Robinson, 2003). As an Indigenous writer dealing with non-Indigenous people within a creative team, I find this history of confusion often exposed in the structure and narrative of creative text where content, like identity, becomes subject to the binary relationship.

I have found personally that in writing my script I do not only have to overcome this history of confusion, but also I must deal with expectations that lie in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous visions of my final product. Whereas essential aspects of my criteria for creative progress remain ongoing cultural maintenance and the survival of my own Indigenous/Kamilaroi storytelling practice, which is highly complex and multi-layered, other members of the creative team, the producer and script editor, who were at first drawn to the story are forced when dealing with distribution of the
film to become concerned primarily with audience, concise three-act structure and narrative.

I have been most thankful to Cathy (producer) and Louise (script editor) who, rather than seeing these contrasting values as opposing, or in conflict, have supported the idea of our embedding each other’s value systems/expectations in developing an overall vision for the film, and each of us at different times has expressed our excitement in creating a uniquely authentic Indigenous voice for an international audience. This shared vision becomes extremely important when having to negotiate delays in writing the script (external pressures of work and family) but more importantly in having to deal with negative critique as part of the development process. Cathy and Louise have been here before, of course, but there is a level of sophistication in understanding the craft of script writing, narrative and audience to which I have never before been exposed, though I have written for television, graduated from film school having, won a number of international and domestic awards for short film and taught scriptwriting myself. I have found nothing can prepare you for the degree of sophistication required at this level until such time that you have been exposed to it. Cathy explained the concept of this ‘sophistication’ in talking with independent British international sales, distribution and marketing company HanWay Films: it was about the script reaching the “lofty heights required for success” (Overett, 2012).

After discussions with Palace Films and HanWay Films, as well as Ripple World Pictures in Ireland and Screen Queensland, it was decided to send the script again overseas, but this time also domestically for a further two script assessments to take place, to see if the script had the potential to reach the lofty heights. The domestic script assessment (appendix b.) was conducted by famed Australian film producer Richard Brennan who has been responsible for such celebrated Australian films as *Mad Dog Morgan* (1976) and *Spotswood* (1992) starring Sir Anthony Hopkins and Ben Mendelsohn. The
international script assessment (appendix c.) was done by Regina Lee, Development Executive with New Line Cinema based in Los Angeles. The further development of my work would be dependent upon these script assessments... the pressure was now well and truly on.

When I enrolled in my PhD and having started to write my novel as its creative component I had no idea that such an audience would be made available to read my work. It is important that as an artist, writer and Indigenous author that you don’t allow yourself to become intimidated, or in awe of such audience — remember that my storytelling began as a young Irish Catholic too frightened to move and then graduated to a drugged-up Aboriginal teenager living in public housing... It wasn’t so long ago that I was unable to attend our Christmas dinner as part of the School of Humanities because of feelings of anxiety, insecurity and inadequacy. For writers, and not just Indigenous writers, there are many internal pressures to overcome apart from the external pressure of the work itself.

I have found that to be successful you must develop a strategy for dealing with these internal anxieties — be it therapy or in creating a supportive environment around you conducive to writing. It is important also to never lose sight of your original creative vision and at all costs retain ownership of your work — which is difficult when confronted with the overwhelming cultural capital represented by the current audience assessing and developing my script. There is a temptation to simply agree with every critique and try and adapt your work accordingly just to get it over the line... but the risk here is that you begin to write someone else’s story and lose connection with your characters and your own inspiration, and if you as the writer become disengaged I guarantee that your audience will also...
In consultation with Cathy and now with Louise on board we rolled our sleeves up and prepared our strategy in dealing with the feedback as it was received, some positive and some negative.

The general consensus from the two assessments received was that the set-up in the script was packed with far too much information and as a consequence the motivation of the protagonist (Elijah) was unclear. The re-writing of this introduction was really hard at first, as the very inspiration to write the work had come from my interaction with my grandfather and I personally enjoyed writing the first couple of scenes in paying homage to his legacy — but that did not change the need to re-write the set-up in order to better inform the audience. The same need for clarity occurs not only with creative writing, but also in academic writing as highlighted in Kane (1988, p. 5): “it ought to be neither so vast that no one can encompass it nor so narrow and trivial that no one cares”. So, for the writer, as the focus of technique moves from elaboration of the story to assisting comprehension in the audience, it becomes more about narrative structure and creating a balance that allows your audience to become immersed in your characters’ world through establishing clear and concise goals developed in the text.

I understand assessor Regina Lee’s request for clarity, but then we witness this case in point where her non-Indigenous normality conflicts with my Indigenous world view as she goes on to question boxing as “inherently not the most dignified of pursuits” (Lee, 2011). Unlike Lee, I was reared in a situation where boxing was seen as a truly dignified pursuit. It was one of the only pursuits available where Indigenous people were not only seen as equal, but at the same time revered and their courage admired.

As I reached the tent, I came against a thick crowd of people, mostly men: milling, listening, building up courage. …The lighter fighters were younger, and except for one round-shouldered boy with a
long appendix scar running across his belly, all were Aboriginal, coal-black, coffee and bush-honey coloured men with strong thin legs… The banners depicted international and local stars, often including Australian fighters who had fought with the troupe during their career. The fighters’ depictions are a striking record of the former popularity of boxing, for most of the twentieth century the richest professional sport in Australia, with a complexity of venues from vagrant boxing tents to suburban and city stadiums. (McLennan, 2002)

Our conflicting value systems, identified through Lee’s statement that boxing may not be “the most dignified of pursuits”, is one thing, but Lee goes on to dismiss completely my themes of cultural maintenance and Indigenous pedagogy (which I see as essential to the script) stating that they should be completely removed in order for clarity.

Thus, the opening depicting Ronald’s backstory feels rather disconnected from the central plotline of the story, which is presumably centered on Elijah and Katie. Ronald’s backstory would be more connected if the story were centered on Elijah’s return to the traditional Aboriginal fold. But that’s not what the story is about. The script’s emphasis on Albert bringing Aboriginal tradition to Elijah’s life is therefore not central to the story, and it should not be an important idea in the script. (Lee, 2011)

Having received such assessment of the script it was important for me to now retain ownership of the original vision and reconnect with why I wrote the script to begin with. I had to reconnect with my characters and then restructure the work, but this time not taking for granted my own cultural background as part of my audience’s prior knowledge. It is really important to Cathy as the producer, but also to me as the writer, that we write this script for an international audience, and as such we can’t simply dismiss what is written by Lee as a form of “race privilege” (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, p. 73), simply because Lee doesn’t know or is unaware of such sensitivities contributing to my own Indigenous world view.
Don’t take their (readers’) interest for granted or suppose that it is the readers’ job to follow you. It’s your job to guide them, to make their tasks as easy as the subject allows. (Kane, 1988, p. 6)

In writing for an international audience you can’t afford to rationalize negative critique down to “race privilege” as Moreton-Robinson suggests, since there are aspects of our Aboriginality that an international audience simply would never have been exposed to, and wouldn’t understand. But also, if the reasons for the critique come down to issues of race, what am I then meant to do? I can’t change my race, but I can change/adapt and evolve my strategy. Therefore rather than ‘race’, I need to focus on cultural differences between myself and Ms Lee which takes us back to a methodology of autobiographical ethnicity and pedagogy/education through information.

Ask yourself questions about your readers: What can I expect them to know and not know? What do they believe and value? How do I want to affect them by what I say? What attitudes and claims will meet with their approval? What will offend them? What objections may they have to my ideas, and how can I anticipate and counter these objectives? (Kane, 1988, p. 6)

The domestic script assessment written by Richard Brennan, aware of Indigenous history and in particular its relationship with boxing, was far more positive, though Brennan, like Lee, was concerned with information overload in the initial set-up of the script.

The story moves forward 15 years when we are told that Elijah is 32 (I think this is a misprint for 30) and here the plot falters. We are delivered a great deal of information in very short time. (Brennan, 2011)

In considering both assessments together I have to accept that in wanting to establish a written form of Indigenous narrative that is both highly complex and multi-layered,
the non-linear narrative I attempted has unfortunately caused editorial conflict and confusion rather than clarity.

In response to the script assessments we had a meeting with Screen Queensland and it was decided that we would receive further development funding on the condition that Louise (script editor) was to come out to Australia from Los Angeles and we were to have a series of meetings in Brisbane mediated by Cathy as the producer. Thankfully, we were all on the same page and it was decided to focus in on the central characters in the draft and look at clarifying better their motivations, goals and obstacles in understanding their character arcs. I want to make it clear at this point that this does not mean I have given up on the development of a uniquely Indigenous genre authenticated within a scriptwriting format, it is just that in accepting the integrity/knowledgebase of my audience I also have to accept that for me to obtain such a goal, I have to continue to develop and refine my craft which becomes a life’s work outside of the PhD. The film’s development is just one step along the way.

At these meetings it was also decided that Elijah should remain our first priority in getting his motivation established early, and then Katie’s character became the second focus.

A reader’s initial response to Elijah’s sister Katie is not positive. She is foul mouthed and aggressive and appears to have made false allegations against her male carer. She will eventually become a character whom we will care about but in this draft the first impression lingers. (Brennan, 2011)

In addition to the characters there were problems with the narrative structure itself. A major problem was identified in the writing where exposition occurred throughout the text as back-story. Though frowned upon in screenwriting, exposition is essential in academic writing, especially in an exegesis.
Exposition explains how things work... exposition reveals what a particular mind thinks or knows or believes. Exposition is constructed logically. It organizes around cause/effect, true/false, less/more, positive, negative, general, particular, assertion/denial. (Kane, 1988, p.6)

Perhaps I was trying to include in my film script the kind of material that belonged in my exegesis. When writing a film script the identification and eradication of exposition remains one of the first rules of re-writing. The phrase ‘show don’t tell’ taken from Alfred Hitchcock is a term I have used repeatedly in class when teaching.

When we tell a story in cinema, we should resort to dialogue only when it’s impossible to do otherwise. I always try first to tell a story in the cinematic way, through a succession of shots and bits of film in between... To me, one of the cardinal sins for a scriptwriter, when he runs into some difficulty, is to say ‘We can cover that by a line of dialogue.’ Dialogue should simply be a sound among sounds, just something that comes out of the mouths of people whose eyes tell the story in visual terms. (Truffaut, Hitchcock, pp. 42-43)

I found this process of re-editing with Louise fascinating as her level of sophistication in applying her craft as an internationally renowned script editor has proved invaluable for me not just as a screenwriter but also as a teacher. In my teaching I introduce many students to screenwriting for the first time, and I see how the complexities unique to writing for the screen are so difficult/unnatural to comprehend (as stated by Kane, exposition is vital in other forms of writing) that I find I have to sacrifice (sometimes but not always) good technique in scriptwriting to enable them to tell story first — and then look at unique forms of scriptwriting second.

In relation then to my exegesis this becomes an exciting process when considering statements made by my three Uncles Marshall, Paul and Reg concerning traditional Kamilaroi teaching practices based in circular and non-linear notions of life and experience.
I guarantee that many of our kids still got it in there (points to his head) and there (points to his heart). So it’s not gone, it’s still there today… but you can’t ignore that programming ‘No… no… It’s gone now, nothing there, change it… do it this way…’ you can’t forget that… stays with you. Just a matter of someone in the family saying OK, now it’s time to teach it again, and that’s when the culture will all come back out see… proper way. (Spearim, 2012)

It’s about the kids, do you want them to know who they are, or do you want them messed up… it allows them to step in their own world, their own self. Why would you want to delay them, for a minute, month… decades? This way of speaking, knowledge allows them to be comfortable, confident in them selves… (Bell, M., 2012)

It’s a good way of teaching I think. As a young fella, gotta look, listen to an old fellas way of life, telling stories, way of making something understood… properly. That right… everything you did (as a child) was teaching, and learning… it was about gaining knowledge. (Knox, 2012)

Important then that you allow the student to practice what they know first — tell their story and then introduce aspects of scriptwriting throughout the semester rather than treat the semester as the one and only time you have with them to learn — therefore incorporating a whole of life approach to learning. This same philosophy enabled me to remain positive when faced with negative criticism of my work but also it allowed me to embrace the more positive aspects of the two script assessments which reaffirmed my position as an Indigenous writer.

Pride in aboriginality is a theme that is very successfully woven into the script. Knockabout Uncle Albert emerges as a character of great dignity. Dialogue like: ‘The aboriginal men I grew up with did not sit round in parks.’ And ‘Good men do hurtful things when they are damaged’ has real resonance. Chrystal, one of the girls around town, is another excellent character. She is a young woman, ashamed of being aboriginal and able to pass for white. (Brennan, 2011)

The key question that I face here is whether I can nurture my Indigenous epistemology into the future. I am hoping that, as an Indigenous writer grappling with my own
cultural practice, the experience won’t become too difficult, multi-layered and subject to one’s own prior knowledge once embedded outside my Aboriginal knowledgebase and made available to an international audience.

Upon reflection, this was the situation which caused my having written so much exposition within the text — the challenge of breaking down the multilayered complexities of aboriginal culture became just too difficult for the audience, and just as with academic writing, the need to be more concise with the audience becomes essential to information sharing. This relationship with audience becomes all important as I am also consciously moving away from text already written and understood about Aboriginal people. Where previously notions of despair and alienation have reaffirmed what is already understood and accepted by the mainstream audience I am attempting instead to focus on a sense of pride, strength and celebration of our people — characteristics that though not fully understood have enabled our people to endure not only colonisation but thousands upon thousands of years prior to colonisation.

Though Regina Lee may be skeptical in her assessment regarding the use of such cultural values in providing a more concise and focused script, Richard Brennan’s comments are reaffirming in stating that rather than confuse the narrative, such aspects of positive Indigenous identification are essential to the script and do not confuse the narrative. Although Richard has empathy with both Uncle Albert’s character and Chrystal, as stated previously the binary becomes too difficult in accepting the reality of Katie’s character. Regina Lee shares this same sentiment towards Katie, but in particular the sexual objectification of her character is what she finds most “unpalatable”.

Perhaps the most unpalatable idea in the story, which diminishes an audience’s emotional investment, is how 14-year-old Katie is seen as a sexual object by nearly every single man in the script.
The Development Notes say a rewrite would remove the ‘brother/sister incest’ suggestion, but that’s not sufficient to improve Katie’s very troubling objectification. To make matters worse, her overall characterization is very thinly rendered. To show her youth, she is given a doll, she chooses Minnie Mouse clothes, and she likes her pink princess bedroom decor. And though she’s recently been sexually abused, her mind is fixated on trendy eyeglasses and girls who get to attend private school. Her smart mouth isn’t modulated, and she’s essentially a one-note character until her melodramatic breakdown scene. This depiction is very on-the-nose and over-the-top. It doesn’t feel authentic. …The next draft should either excise Katie’s deeply traumatic past and recent sexual abuse, or embrace them in rendering her character. This assessor recommends excising her dark past in hopes of creating a more accessible, viable movie overall. (Lee, 2011)

Until I read the report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse as research towards this exegesis, I had no formal reference base in relating to Katie’s character, having instead drawn from my own suffering, personally as a child, from such abuse. When writing Katie’s character I drew upon my own autobiographical ethnicity as my reference/knowledgebase. The situations/signposts confronted by Elijah and Katie have happened to me… sexual abuse, crisis in one’s identity, are themes I know only too well having suffered these experiences in my past. Having now read the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry report and followed up with further research, it is upsetting that Lee’s assessment of Katie is so dismissive: “This depiction is very on-the-nose and over-the-top. It doesn’t feel authentic” (Lee, 2011).

The truth is that in reading the report and understanding the actions of these abused kids, we discover that Katie’s “smart mouth” together with an inability to generate deeper relationships within the text — what Lee refers to as a “one-note character until her melodramatic breakdown scene” — is very representative of the reality of children who have suffered such abuse.
Childhood sexual abuse has also been linked to difficulties in adolescence and adulthood in interpersonal relationships and intimacy. (Mullen & Fleming 1998)

Katie’s inappropriate acting out in her relationship with Elijah and objectification of her sexuality both as perceived and stated within her own actions is also demonstrated by a large number of these kids who have suffered in the way Katie has.

One consistent finding is that sexually abused children from early ages can exhibit unusual and inappropriate sexual behaviour, sometimes known as ‘sexually acting out’. (Corby, 2000)

For me personally, writing Katie’s character was one of the most healing aspects of the text. Wanting to give expression to these young Aboriginal girls and boys who are in reality subject to such objectification, was an integral part of my own personal development process in getting to understand Katie, her motivation and why she is the way she is.

In contrast, feminist theorists view child sexual abuse from a sociological, rather than a familial, perspective… considering the sexual assault of children as an outcome of societal values. According to this view, women and children have inferior social status under the current patriarchal social structure and are subject to male dominance. Using such a ‘social power’ framework, sexual abuse is seen merely as one part of the range of violence perpetrated by men against women and children. (O’Hagan, 1989 in Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007, p. 220)

My having to read the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry report and then other items of research relating to child sex abuse was extremely emotional and painful… and yet, at the same time… healing for me. It appears this theme may not now appear in the final draft… but I will save it for a later day.
Ms Lee is right in her comments that Katie is “objectified and victimized, which is tragic and unsavory” (Lee, 2011), but unfortunately it is the state of reality that many of our woman and children find themselves in. Knowing how important Katie's 'reality' was to me, Louise as script editor in consultation with Cathy as producer have done their best to allow some reading of Katie's back-story into the narrative.

I am always of the school that you don’t have to like a character BUT that you must be interested in what they are going to do next AND have empathy for them. How we approach the introduction to Katie rests with a few things, but mainly the tone, and also ultimately her and Elijah’s arc together. As long as her set-up involves the audience having empathy for her (and we can discuss technically how to do this another time) then a 'harsh' introduction to her is not problematic. Indeed it gives her and Elijah’s relationship somewhere to travel rather than be static and ‘happy happy’. (Gough, 2011)

Such strategy again demonstrates, as a form of research based practice, that the only way to successfully negotiate a binary power relationship based on what becomes ‘more accessible and viable’ (Lee, 2011) is for me to incorporate western aspects of structure and narrative, and implement within these my own sense of Indigeneity as it becomes embedded throughout the script. This process becomes a question of self-definition and as previously stated, shouldn’t start the discussion. It should be the discussion’s objective, and its closing point.

In wanting to retain my Indigeneity within the narrative of the script, Louise’s attempts at connecting the multilayered Indigenous identity and kinship system so important to the relationship between Katie and Elijah was in referencing the feature film Rain Man (1988) starring Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise. Louise saw Rain Man as a suitable comparative text in building on the relationship between troubled siblings — again this was a strategy dismissed by Ms Lee.
What is most important in developing my equal third space in such an environment is in understanding that neither Louise, nor Ms Lee were employed to better understand my Aboriginality — this remains my role. Louise and Ms Lee, together with Richard Brennan, are there to ensure we have better-established clarity within the narrative and the story itself becomes more concise within its structure, and as a consequence more readable and engaging to an international audience.

Report 1… [s]uggests that Elijah has a clear external set of actions but what is lacking is the internal struggle (or growth) of the character. The report notes that the change to Elijah may involved a ‘harshening’ of him but that other film examples given cite that these characters can be sympathetic despite some flaws. I would agree that part of our task in moving forward in this next draft is to discuss Elijah and his journey, what his internal struggle is, and what he loses if he is unable to change. (Below I will talk a little on my response to Lee’s strong anti response on RAIN MAN which does have a strong arc of change in the protagonist and I would argue is not a reference that is unuseable for us). (Gough, 2011)

The above statement made by Louise becomes extremely important in my taking back ownership of the story. Yes, Regina Lee is extremely well qualified, but her assessment is only a contribution to an overall drafting/development process — and I remain an essential element within that process, highlighted, not discounted by Lee’s statements regarding Aboriginality that reaffirm the need, not only to have me on board, but for me to get it right in accessing an international audience. It is now up to me to utilise successfully a complete palette of contemporary academic and creative voices, research and storytelling, as expressions of my own life experience in an active partnership between author and the creative team I have around me in reaching an international audience.

This active partnership between myself and the creative team in wanting to satisfy our audience brings me back to the objectification suffered by Katie. Once this
theme is omitted from the script, there is a ripple effect which in particular affects
the introduction of Shelly's character whose role as an Indigenous public servant is
written up in the assessments as also not palatable. “[S]cenes involving social services
are a distraction and should be used only when they serve the protagonist’s story”
(Brennan, 2011). The role I had perceived for Shelly’s character was as an Aboriginal
person from the community wanting to do the right thing but becoming enveloped
within a binary relationship that gives more power to the institution than her own
culture. I wanted to test how Shelly would react to this as a response to my critique
of the Indigenous academy as it occurs throughout my exegesis. As a consequence
of the confusion it raises in the current narrative as a separate story, I agree with the
assessment that this storyline should go and that Shelly’s character is only there to
serve the relationship between Katie and Elijah as protagonists in the next draft.

As my Kamilaroi epistemology does not obey the laws of history and science, instead
being non-linear and circular in its approach, not only are aspects of my Indigenous life
experience becoming diluted in the script but also my attempts at a traditional form of
Indigenous storytelling is also becoming less evident as we adhere more and more to
a western three-act structure in developing my script… which means the characters
are becoming more influenced within a determined three-act structure, rather than
relating directly to a form of Indigeneity as understood and communicated within my
own lived experience.

The priority then in re-drafting the narrative is now becoming how characters fit into
the Western tradition of the three-act structure rather than how they relate to their
own multiple forms of Indigeneity.

The report asks who the central antagonist is (and says that Katie
is misidentified). She complicates his [Elijah’s] quest. No she is
technically not the antagonist. Yes, this is my error. If Katie is crucial
for you both, and I think she is, I think that you do want this to have a strong sibling relationship element… then she is a complicating force in the story, particularly if his goal (at first) is to make $$ to get back business, then being landed with a stroppy/upset 15 year old becomes a complicating factor for him. (Gough, 2011)

As the exegesis and creative component began merging into the one document, and the ideas I had embedded within both were moving back and forth between the other, the day finally arrived where I had to accept the need to define each text as separate but equal. No longer could I sacrifice the integrity of the script or the authenticity of my exegesis in trying to complement both forms of writing.

As a consequence, it was decided in collaboration with Louise and Cathy that we should go back to writing a treatment, or ‘re-treatment’, before attempting the next draft. By returning to the treatment it was as if I was able to travel back in time, but this time taking back with me the wisdom of age reinforcing a traditional circular non-linear pedagogy as relevant and vibrant within contemporary scriptwriting… as the process of redevelopment, refining and understanding becomes an extension of my traditional Kamilaroi storytelling practice — a new ‘Dreaming’ which recognizes rather than dismisses a time before the beginning. I would literally go back to before the beginning of writing the script to revise the original treatment first written in December 2008.

Louise Gough as script editor became the driving force in this process of supervising changes to the treatment, and Cathy would only be consulted on a need-to-know basis, as the target areas within the script — character development, goals, motivation, obstacles and resolution — had been well and truly established in our coming together when Louise first arrived from Los Angeles.
The first strategy was in re-establishing what of the back-story would need to be retained within the new set-up. Lee had stated in her assessment that the current back-story between Elijah and his grandfather was not relevant because Elijah’s story is not about a prodigal son returning. The consensus between the key creative team (myself, Louise and Cathy) was that this relationship between Elijah and his grandfather had to stay; we did though agree that the set-up of the back-story as it was written currently may have been a little too expositional in terms of how “the main throughline of the script would unfold” (Gough, 2011). What was important is that we did have to “establish where Elijah learnt to box” (Gough, 2011) and that the house/land remains important to him.

There was also a great amount of time spent on better communicating Katie’s character since the relationship between her and Elijah had to become the driving force of the film (rather than the film just being seen as a fighting film). It was decided that once we re-established Elijah’s goals as a drifter who comes into town wanting to claim the inheritance of the property, then Katie becomes a surprise addition which makes Elijah change this goal and have an internal shift.

The sexualisation of Katie also had to go. This is another script for another time and I may or may not revisit this premise in future writings, but for now “Kick up Dust” remains a story about unconditional love between two siblings who had no idea the other existed. What is important is that Katie remains essential to the story and that we craft her character in such a way that she engages better with the audience.

Since Elijah and Katie are to remain as the central relationship (as joint protagonists) rather than Katie be seen as Elijah’s antagonist (it was never my intention to write Katie as an antagonist) it is important for clarity that the storyline does not deviate from them too much with other characters such as Albert, Chrystal and Shelly. So
the first priority was to get Elijah (central character) right — understand better his goals, motivation and obstacles — and then introduce Katie (second character/joint protagonist) as a surprise that changes his goal and causes an internal shift. After that, the story could spend time on the relationship between Katie and Elijah (story arc) and then finally to canvass the role of Albert, Chrystal and Shelly (third tier characters) but only in support of Elijah’s relationship with Katie as the principle driving story.

The breakthroughs in developing the film script for international distribution have come from teamwork with my producer and my script editor. As mentioned previously, they support the idea of combining black and white value systems in developing an overall vision for the film. The creation of an authentic Indigenous voice for an international audience involves for me:

a) my control of the fluidity of my identity on a number of levels, including those of ongoing cultural maintenance, survival of my Indigenous storytelling practice, being an artist (scriptwriter) and academic, and being a man on a journey who is husband, father, brother and so on; and

b) my control of the way I communicate with the audience which is, indeed, a variety of audiences – indigenous, non-indigenous, academic, non-academic, etc.

The integration of these many demands can happen only with me becoming interdisciplinary in my approach, and with seeing that my problem is one of storytelling, not of identity. By focusing on my third space, autobiographical ethnicity, I can make this integration happen.

Ω
I have spent time in this exegesis discussing the different influences that inspired the creative component of my PhD. That’s the thing with creative works, people want to know the inspiration, why you wrote it. But what about the exegesis — did this not too require some form of inspiration? Enrolling in a PhD is not something done on a whim — years of influence, circumstance and positioning occur as lead-up to an exegesis, just as with the creative piece… So where did this exegesis start? Where was the “definitive point” (Robertson, 2009), the life-changing moment that would eventually (though years later) inspire me to attempt the writing of this exegesis.

It occurred while I was working as an Indigenous Heritage Researcher with the Brisbane City Council some 20 years ago, and after coming across a series of letters written in the late 1850s. The letters had been published in the then *Moreton Bay Courier* (later to become the *Courier Mail*) and were written by two Aboriginal men and signed as “Delegates of the Breakfast Creek Blacks”. Their names were “Dalinkua” and “Dalipie”. The letters were extraordinary not just due to who had written them, but what they wrote and how they were written….

All letters, except one, were addressed “Aborigines to the Editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*” and at first, Dalinkua and Dalipie introduce themselves as “Delegates for All Blackfellows”, then they go on to use a “Biblical argument” (Aborigines to the Editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*, 17 Nov 1858, p 2) in criticising the inhuman behaviour of their “Anglo-Saxon Brothers” and in “accusing them of the theft of many Aboriginal hunting and fishing grounds” (Aborigines to the Editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*, 24 Nov 1858, p. 2). There is no doubt when reading the letters that we are witnessing a progression of narrative that highlights not only a highly conceptual Indigenous
intellectual knowledgebase — but more importantly a highly developed understanding of their non-Indigenous counterparts and the strategies that were being implemented against the Indigenous people of the time.

The letter writers criticise their “Anglo-Saxon Brothers” for their treatment of Aborigines, they “Condemn the introduction of Alcohol, Disease and the Degradation of their Language” (Aborigines to the Editor of the Moreton Bay Courier, 11 Dec 1858, p. 2). They also lodge an official “Complaint against their White Brothers” for unchristian behaviour and their unwillingness to share knowledge of a spiritual nature. They list a number of “Aboriginal grievances against Our White Brothers and Sisters” (Aborigines to the Editor of the Moreton Bay Courier, 29 Dec 1858, p. 2). In one letter they ask the “Whitefella” to “provide the Aboriginal community with a bullock to roast on Christmas day”, though the English used in this letter is not as well articulated as in the others, and falls more into a broken Aboriginal English, posing the question: were Dalinkua and Dalipie teaching other Aboriginals to write to the paper? This letter is signed “Yours, a Subscriber” and not headed “Aborigines…” but simply, “To the editor…” (To the Editor of the Moreton Bay Courier, 15 Dec 1858, p 2).

When I first saw these letters, I couldn’t believe what I was reading. I was 24 years old and thought I had just discovered the Holy Grail of demonstrated Indigenous intellectual colonised resistance. With my self-confidence and Aboriginal pride overflowing, I marched into the office of my superiors at the Brisbane City Council where I was working and showed them my find. To my surprise both my non-Indigenous and Indigenous supervisors were well aware of the letters, I hadn’t discovered anything — they were well read and known by those who had already studied the period and local history of Brisbane.

I was shattered.
Such dreams of the extraordinary were only meant for books of fiction and film. I was told quite clearly that the authenticity of the letters was to be questioned — much of the White population of the Australian settlement period could not read and write, so the possibility that two Aborigines could construct such letters had to be placed in doubt. I was told that it was probably Quakers in support of the local Aborigines who had written the letters on their behalf — and that was that…

Until years later…

In 1998 I had a chance meeting with Dr Henry Reynolds, a well respected Australian academic and historian who has spent a lifetime documenting the atrocities committed against my people in ensuring that the active strategy of resistance applied by them did not become lost in the pages of ‘White history’:

Colonists in the nineteenth century… wrote and spoke endlessly about the ‘aboriginal question’. Aboriginal resistance was much more challenging, prolonged and various than subsequent accounts allowed… it was spirited and determined and exacted considerable cost in European lives and property and peace of mind. (Reynolds, 1999, pp. 150-1)

During our conversation Professor Reynolds not only authenticated the authorship of Dalinkua and Dalipie’s letters but also told me that I needed to arrange a meeting with Professor Raymond Evans in relation to his research regarding the letters. Deep within the bowels of the University of Queensland, in the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, surrounded by old and dusty books, I met with Professor Evans. It was illuminating.

Professor Evans stated without reservation that the letters were indeed written by the hands of the Aborigines who signed them, and he was passionate in his response.
Dalinkua and Dalipie were trained by German Lutheran missionaries at an Indigenous settlement called Zion Hill situated in Nundah north of Brisbane. Dalipie in particular showed much promise in the literary arts and was able to speak and write in many languages including English, Greek and Latin (Evans 1998). This was not as amazing as it would seem since many local Aborigines were reared with the capacity to be multilingual, having to speak a number of Indigenous languages when growing up in the area prior to colonisation (Steele, 1983, pp. 160-2). Professor Evans then showed me text he had written in regard to an historical account of the letters in his “Wanton Outrage” report. It argued

…that ‘in instinct and moral principle’ the Aborigines were ‘immeasurably our superiors’. ‘You live like a bird of prey,’ two missionary trained Breakfast Creek blacks, Dalinkua and Dalipie, had admonished whites in the late 1850’s, ‘and if you amass wealth, you soon become a bird of passage… you do not seek the good of the land where you dwell’. (Evans, 1992, p. 87)

Most disappointing about what had happened was that my Indigenous supervisor was part of my extended Aboriginal family and like Aileen Moreton-Robinson had become both influential and well respected as an Indigenous scholar and academic, someone I had looked up to and relied on… I found myself alone, alienated and segregated, just as I had been at school, and years earlier when sitting in the dark wardrobe after being beaten by my Irish Grandfather, subjected towards Indigenous disadvantage and despair rather than brilliance.

Now, thanks to my ever increasing cultural capital and my ability to navigate through such ‘bad faith’, I am able to say some 20 years later that letters written by Aboriginal people were commonplace during that period of colonisation throughout Australia; one instance is particularly well documented.
In March 1847 a petition was presented to Queen Victoria’s Secretary of State for the Colonies and signed by eight Tasmanian Aborigines then living at the Wybelenna settlement on Flinders Island in Bass Strait. The signatories were among the small number of Aboriginal people who had survived the “conciliated” removal from the Tasmanian mainland by George Augustus Robinson (Anderson 2003, p. 17). The program of forced relocation had been put into effect from 1830 to 1834 following a significant escalation in the violence of the conflict between Aboriginal people and the colonial invaders over the prior decade (Anderson, 2003, p. 17).

The opening paragraph of the document provides an insight into the ways in which Aboriginal people of the period understood their circumstance and also their political position:

The humble petition of the free Aborigines Inhabitants of Van Diemen’s Land now living upon Flinders Island… That we are your free children that we were not taken prisoner but freely gave up our country to Colonel Arthur then the Governor after defending ourselves. Your petitioners humbly state to your Majesty that Mr Robinson made for us and with Colonel Arthur an agreement which we have not lost from our minds since and we have made our part of it good. Your petitioners humbly tell Your Majesty that when we left our own place we were plenty of people, we are now but a little one. . . (Anderson 2003, p. 17)

There is much in common between this example and the letters written by Dalinkua and Dalipie, with both groups concerned about the degradation of their communities and acknowledging that they were once “plenty of people… now but a little one”. As with the case of Dalinkua and Dalipie, the Wybelenna settlement people saw themselves as a free people who were involved in a conflict over land and country and now looked towards a sense of moral justice and virtue to resolve the conflict:

“Your petitioners humbly state to your Majesty that Mr Robinson made for us and
with Colonel Arthur an agreement which we have not lost from our minds since and we have made our part of it good” (Anderson 2003, p. 17).

The historian Henry Reynolds investigated the historical circumstances of the development of this petition. Convincingly he dismissed the idea that the Indigenous signatories were co-opted by non-Indigenous people who helped them draft the document, “as if Aboriginal people at this time could not know their own minds” (Anderson 1997, p. 18).

In referring to this particular incident I want to make a fairly straightforward point. The written text has been employed by Indigenous Australians as a mode of political and cultural self-representation from quite early in colonial history, it is not a new phenomenon. Contemporary Aboriginal critical writing… has its historical foundations in a much longer history of Aboriginal political and cultural critique. (Anderson 2003, p. 18)

Another example is outlined in Kim Scott’s recently completed PhD, “An Anomalous History and a Noongar Voice: a literary Investigation of the ‘Friendly Frontier’”, demonstrating that Aboriginal people had acquired acute awareness of what was happening around them during the early occupation of Australia:

Manyat, a Noonger guide who led expeditions in and beyond his own territory… showed his awareness of another favoured cultural form when he treasured up in his memory a detailed recollection of the various incidents and scenery, arranged in the form of a Diary… Manyat’s account of their journey to his compatriots suggests a tradition which could easily create an Indigenous literary novelist. (Scott, 2009, pp. 6-7)

Ah, yes, the beauty and magic of autobiographical ethnicity in the form of traditional Aboriginal storytelling that allows the opportunity to move in and out and backwards through time… How often have we all lost such opportunity as others around us
attempted to “diminish our spirituality” (United Nations, 2009, p. 60) at times of true inspiration?

Now, looking back twenty years to when I found the letters written by Dalinkua and Dalipie, how different could my circumstances have been? I had overcome the poverty associated with my teenage years as part of a generation of Aboriginal kids growing up in public housing, utilising a sense of collective identity as a motivational tool, and there I was now alienated and dismissed by an Indigenous person in a position of authority who I had looked up to within my own extended family. Any thought that we as Aboriginal people possessed some form of cultural unity — a cohesive amalgamated form of solidarity that connected us as a social conscience had been broken, together with any sense of current Aboriginal sovereignty through an act of ‘bad faith’.

I had no idea back then, that what I had been exposed to was an ever-changing and evolving Indigenous pedagogy that moved outside of my own terms of reference as a young Aboriginal man. Young and very naïve, I had assumed that Aboriginal teaching still occurred as word of mouth epistemologies shared as life experiences which created an ontology that remained separate to and unique from Western academic and institutional practices. It made sense; we had in my mind never ceded, assimilation was a dirty word and through our Ceremony and Dance we had continued our own cultural maintenance. This is why I felt so let down.

Now, 20 years later, like Dalinkua and Dalipie, delegates of all Blackfellows, the eight free Aborigines, inhabitants of Van Diemen’s Land who at the time found themselves living on Flinders Island, and the Noonger guide, Manyat — rather than deny my own potential and accept the consequences of colonisation as it flows and crushes around me, I have chosen instead to write… in this case, my exegesis in homage not only to
these fine Aboriginal people, but to my grandfather, his brothers and in legacy to my children and my children’s children.

I understand that as Aboriginal people we have applied individual strategies, accepted opportunities, and remained resilient in order to survive. We draw on aspects of community as a sense of identity; but our term of reference is drawn from our own personal experiences, education, class and cultural backgrounds. Yet for many of us, when we encounter other Aboriginal people who are placed outside our particular lived cultural experience, we react with a sense of frustration, or question their individual sense of identity (Jenkins, 1994). Today I no longer remain so naïve. Educated and informed, I try to refer to what remains constant and unchallenged.

You don’t realise, when you are fortunate to have grown up among Aboriginal people who speak an Aboriginal language and have access to Dance and Ceremony, as I did, that there are other Aboriginal people who did not have these same opportunities. I did not experience these others as a collective until I attended university in my early 20s. It was my introduction to a struggle intermixed with a healing process that only now, being so close to submitting my dissertation I am finally able to deal with.

(M)ental, social and behavioural health problems cannot be assessed in isolation from one another, because they ‘represent overlapping clusters of problems that… interact to intensify each other’s effects on behaviour and well-being’… From this perspective, social pathologies (e.g., substance abuse and violence), health problems (e.g., heart disease and depression) and social conditions (e.g., poverty) are interrelated to such an extent that it is impossible to differentiate one problem clearly from another. (Cohen citing Desjarlais et al (1995) in United Nations, 2009, p. 169)
16. Conclusion (Warraan)

As I write this conclusion, the sixth draft of the film script central to this thesis has been recently finished in line with not only the script evaluations as commissioned by Screen Queensland but also the ‘treatment’ as developed in consultation between Louise Gough as Script Editor, Cathy Overette as Producer and myself as writer and detailed in chapter fourteen. Unfortunately due to contractual obligations and the acceptance of this recent draft as the basis for the shooting script, this latest draft is not presently available for public consumption and as such cannot be added as an appendix.

After the current polish of this sixth draft is completed this latest script will be sent back to Screen Queensland with an application to fund the final shooting script.

This exegesis, as with the script… is now also coming towards its end, and upon reflection it may appear that the script was perhaps less intuitive and Indigenous than intended and was actually the result of a more reasoned and practical industry approach. The truth is that both the creative component and the exegesis merged into the other and became one organic piece of work compiled as this dissertation with each text becoming reliant on the other. This was never my intention as I had thought each text would remain separate within its own right. This did not occur and, though I must admit to being quite surprised, I think the interplay of these works has produced a new way to think about Indigenous identity as portrayed by the Indigenous Academy and in popular media.

I began the journey that led to this thesis by considering contemporary academic discourses on Aboriginal subjectivity and in writing the script I wanted to explore how Indigenous people identify and debate the nature of their own Aboriginal
consciousness. I was inspired by the legacy of my grandfather and his generation which bore fruit in the foundations of my own Aboriginal identity. Rather than confirm what I thought I already knew, that our Indigenous knowledgebase had remained as a distinct and tangible pedagogy that had outlasted colonisation, I was instead drawn to conceptions of Indigeneity as an established agency situated within the Academy that co-existed outside the realms of my own prior knowledge and beliefs as an Indigenous language speaker and writer.

It was in defining the advent of such an Indigenous academy within higher education that Indigeneity vs Aboriginality as an understood pedagogy become an issue first attempted within the novel and then a play that eventually through the film script began to emerge as alternative platform to counter the way non-Indigenous people (in popular culture, the mass media, traditional history and educational institutions generally) had misrepresented and mis-characterised Indigenous peoples, and how such representation had influenced the way we now represent ourselves.

But in establishing the possibilities for a new theoretical and conceptual framework for an Indigenous pedagogy, I found the most difficult obstacles came from the newly formed Indigenous Academy of which I was part… we had previously relied too much on notions of cultural identity based in historical essentialist constructs - fantasies of exclusivity, cultural marginality, heightened physicality and morality - in the creation of a binary oppositional relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship. It was a strategy for surviving the process of colonisation but the focus of my research became the search for something more authentic and productive that allows us to throw off victim status and rise to the position of first citizens and primary caretakers of a greater Australian consciousness.
This is how the exegesis began: walking the tightrope of getting a film script into production while deconstructing my own understanding of the past as the creation of an effective political community arising from, but opposed to, the process of colonisation. This is where the two texts began to merge with each other to elicit an approach to indigeneity as a collective agency whose lived realities and subjectivities did not align with (anti/post) colonial constructions nor were vulnerable to accusations of inauthenticity (i.e., of not being ‘real’ blackfellas; of not being seen as an authentic Aboriginal) (Paradies, 2006).

The research goals of the dissertation as a unified written text then began to supersede the individual goals of both the exegesis and the film script to explore the tensions created through the contemporary Indigenous deconstruction of our own historical consciousness, particularly as urban, educated Aboriginals began to assert their individual identities over traditional practice and ongoing cultural maintenance.

It was here that the most effective strategy appeared to be initiating an intuitive third space through an interplay between the sensibilities of narrator-character and audience to suggest an alternative, non-essentialising, contemporary relationship to history and place and the formation of interdisciplinary Aboriginal subjectivities influenced by non-Indigenous authors of the past and present who had contributed significantly to my own understanding of Indigeneity (Hemingway, 1925, Orwell, 1945, Maybury-Lewis, 1992 and Pope, 2009). This allowed me to not only move forward in theory but also in practice as the key creative team responsible for producing the script became aligned in an equal partnership and shared vision of how the script should look and the ‘lofty heights’ required in sophistication that would secure its future.

In acknowledgment of this outcome, a conscious decision was made to move away from auto-ethnography as a previous Indigenous autobiographical practice as I was
interested more in an inclusive interdisciplinary practice, and autoethnography had become more “reflective of the discontentment of traditional research practices…” (Houston, 2007, p. 41). Instead of this discontentment, I was purposely drawing upon a traditional western three act structure in writing the script and, in incorporating my own newly found acceptance of Indigeniety within the exegesis, the dissertation become an example of a research based practice in a parallel third space that gave recognition and acknowledgement of ‘Black’ and ‘White’ and the universe of difference around them all which could be subsumed under the term ‘autobiographical ethnicity’.

The exegesis includes actual historical characters and real stories that have inspired me throughout my life while the script, Kick up Dust, contains amalgamations and elaborations of historical persons and constructions. Therefore I have utilised the term autobiographical ethnicity to encapsulate fact, fiction and other possibilities based in Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical and contemporary interactions that draw upon my own lived experience: Uncle Albert becomes a metaphor for my grandfathers generation; Elijah’s frustration becomes my own in opposition to the obstacles placed in front of me through the interface of barrier construction as implied by the Indigenous academy; and Katie represents the possibility for a brighter future, no matter how traumatic or disturbing my own past.

Only by ‘decoupling’ Indigeneity from historically constructed essentialist fantasies did I find it useful in acknowledging the richness of my own Indigenous diversity and starting on the path towards true reconciliation. By accepting the influence of non-Indigenous authorship and debate as part of my own historical legacy, I have been able to move forward in developing a truly interdisciplinary approach to Indigenous studies.

Ω
17. A final word (Warraan garaay)

As the oldest living intellectual property in the world, the stories of my people are too valuable to ever become lost. Anything else other than saving them becomes a distraction from the truth… no matter how emotional or sophisticated this distraction may be — just as my grandfather said in imparting his own ancient wisdom to me as a teenager: in being forced to think about so many things which just aren’t as important… you can forget what really is important…

“Understanding gravity doesn’t make an apple taste any nicer… it still falls from the bloody tree…”

My grandfather’s first cousin, my uncle Reg Knox, taught me a prayer to use during times when distraction, embedded through periods of self-doubt and reflection, has the potential to take me away from what I already know — that what I am and always will be is Kamilaroi… the way I see the world is Kamilaroi and my very DNA is Kamilaroi…

Let me then leave you in this Kamilaroi prayer…

“Ngiyani ngiima yilaadhu yalagiirray ngiyani gimiyandi gaalanha yilaalu-gi gi” (We are here today as we were yesterday and will be forever…) (Knox 2011)

Gabayiindah-nhi nginunda (Thanking you…)

Wilaa-y (The End…)
FORECLOSURE is an endearing brother and sister story set against the world of bare fist boxing. The script opens with a flashback of a young boy, Elijah, watching his Aborigine grandfather win a boxing match, and then sparring with the boy while giving him words of wisdom. This quick opening provides the necessary back story of why Elijah is such an exceptional boxer and how his skills were developed, as well as the bond and respect the boy shares with the old man. Twenty years later, Elijah arrives in a sleepy border town after the death of his father and stepmother. As he deals with the estate and takes possession of the family property, he discovers the place is in foreclosure with a $60,000 debt and that $10,000 is required to prevent foreclosure for one month. At the same time, he learns he is legally responsible for his 15-year-old sister, Katie, whom he has never met since she was born after he left home. The characters are well drawn and the relationships grow deeper throughout the script making Foreclosure a very appealing and compelling tale. Plus it will pull the audience into a world of which they may know little about, with engaging, quirky characters and a hero they can root for.

General Overview
First off, we’d like to say, we like this script very much. While this is a heartfelt story, the biggest issue with the script is that it is way too long, overwritten and the repetition of certain information is unnecessary, thereby lengthening the story in a pedantic way. This kind of movie should be no longer than two hours. It is not an epic tale in the same vein as Doctor Zhivago, Lawrence of Arabia or even Australia. It is a simple tale of a brother and sister relationship, set against the backdrop of boxing, that is poignant and convincing but is in no way enough story
to carry three hours. In a separate email and document, we have attached a red-line edit of the script with suggested cuts that would bring the script down by twenty-nine pages. We will also send you in a separate email the way the script would look if all our cuts are utilized. We strongly believe in these cuts; some of which are formatting issues that will help shorten the length while other edits eliminate whole scenes or trim some of the tale ends of scenes and dialogue. More is necessary. However, this is a good start.

Aside from the editing and trimming the screenplay, there are only a few issues that we would recommend the writer address in the next draft (with a mind towards keeping the page count down, rather than lengthening the script). The story hits all the right points and the characters each have journeys that are both interesting and truthful. However, the following will help bring the script up to the next level and bring it closer to production:

- We don’t know where Elijah went after he left home and how that affected him to make him become the man he is;
- Shelly could be integrated more into the story as she tries to find Katie;
- Elijah stealing the backpack from Carol is out of character and we find it hard to buy, it makes us feel less sympathy for him;
- The scene with Steve can be cut drastically to a line followed by traveling to Brisbane – the important information in that scene is about Katie’s eyesight. This information comes out later in the script anyway so it’s repetitious. Steve is not an important character;
- Willie is not really developed – he’s a catalyst for Elijah’s choices but we don’t get who he really is;
- It isn’t believable that Katie would ask to go see friends when Elijah is inside the bank and we never see her with any friends (right before she’s kidnapped);
- There’s a discrepancy with the timeline and Elijah’s age. If Elijah is 27-years-old and he left home at 15-years-old (12 years previous), and Katie
is currently 14, she would have been 2-years-old when he left instead of what is stated in the script, that she was born after he left.

- The script could use a better title.

Act I
The beginning of the first act moves quickly and we are involved with Elijah and Katie as soon as the inciting incident takes place when Elijah gains custody of Katie and goes to visit her. Katie’s foster home situation and Elijah’s desire to remove her from the home is believable and we immediately feel emotionally invested in them. We applaud Elijah for his desire to remove her from this horrible living arrangement and help his sister, although he creates a whole new predicament for himself. We root for them throughout the story and want to see them have a life together. However, we are unclear throughout the script as to why Elijah left home at fifteen and where he went afterwards, how it changed him to become the man he is, etc. This information and backstory is never given and the audience will want to know in an actionary way (not expositional way) of how Elijah came to this moment in the story. His past needs to be addressed further in a new draft of the script without being longwinded about. In one of their more intimate moments, he might share this with Katie and it bonds them even closer. When did the Grandfather die? Did he go from home to live with his Grandfather?

As they hightail it out of town, the scenes with Steve (pages 23-25) who picks them up and drives them to Brisbane, can be eliminated except for them getting the ride, driving through the country and approaching Brisbane and then being left by Steve. The most important information we learn here is about Katie needing glasses, which is essential to the story but this could come out later when they are at the mall and Elijah hears about her headaches and buys the glasses right then and there. There’s no need to connect the dots from this beginning scene, which goes on way too long and should just get them to Brisbane.
The fight scenes are particularly well written. Watching Elijah take the punches from Datu and see him lose a fight at the beginning due to Charlie and Maxine telling him to "stay down" works well as we continue to root for him to win each match. We understand and sympathize with his desire to make enough money to get his family property back and provide a home for Katie.

The end of the first act should be when Elijah fights Datu and shows his remarkable boxing skills. It falls currently at page 36, a touch too late for a first act turning point, but with the recommended cuts, it would fall on page 32, which is certainly better for the rhythm of the act structure.

**Act 2**

In act two, the focus of the story shifts back and forth between Elijah’s boxing career and his growing relationship with Katie. He remains focused throughout the second act and doesn’t lose sight of his goal to get his family property back from foreclosure. At the same time, he comes to terms with his own people whom he has divorced himself from all these years. We would like to know why he has such a self-hatred about his heritage. Where did that come from?

We root for him at each fight and become concerned about his eye along the way which first occurs at the end of the first act in his fight with Datu. This reoccurrence affects him in each fight and adds tension and trepidation to each punch. When he sees an optometrist who tells him he needs to stop fighting or the retinal tear will become detached and he will lose his vision, this adds even more anxiety in each fight as we squirm at each blow to his head and hoping he doesn’t go blind.

However, the second act is chalk full of obstacles and the journey of our main characters reach a crescendo (as all good second acts do). However, this second act in particular goes on for almost 100 pages (until page 135 – which means it’s long enough to be a whole other script). There is so much happening
The fight scenes are particularly well written. Watching Elijah take the punches from Datu and see him lose a fight at the beginning due to Charlie and Maxine telling him to "stay down" works well as we continue to root for him to win each match. We understand and sympathize with his desire to make enough money to get his family property back and provide a home for Katie.

The end of the first act should be when Elijah fights Datu and shows his remarkable boxing skills. It falls currently at page 36, a touch too late for a first act turning point, but with the recommended cuts, it would fall on page 32, which is certainly better for the rhythm of the act structure.

Act 2

In act two, the focus of the story shifts back and forth between Elijah's boxing career and his growing relationship with Katie. He remains focused throughout the second act and doesn't lose sight of his goal to get his family property back from foreclosure. At the same time, he comes to terms with his own people whom he has divorced himself from all these years. We would like to know why he has such a self-hatred about his heritage. Where did that come from?

We root for him at each fight and become concerned about his eye along the way which first occurs at the end of the first act in his fight with Datu. This reoccurrence affects him in each fight and adds tension and trepidation to each punch. When he sees an optometrist who tells him he needs to stop fighting or the retinal tear will become detached and he will lose his vision, this adds even more anxiety in each fight as we squirm at each blow to his head and hoping he doesn't go blind.

However, the second act is chalk full of obstacles and the journey of our main characters reach a crescendo (as all good second acts do). However, this second act in particular goes on for almost 100 pages (until page 135 – which means it's long enough to be a whole other script). There is so much happening – it needs to be trimmed and the writer could eliminate some of the scenes that convey repetitious information and which doesn’t move the story forward without sacrificing any of the colorfulfulness of the characters. Perhaps eliminate Ahmed’s goons abducting Katie and replace it with something simpler and shorter to illustrate not only Elijah’s boxing skills (which we’ve already seen) but that he’s protecting his little sister. Or, cut that scene down, as that scene currently plays over four pages (in the suggested edits, it becomes three pages). When Elijah saves Katie from the young gang members, it is very powerful, but it also stops the flow of the story. It needs to be shorter and succinct. The heartfelt moment they share together when Elijah puts his arm around her and comforts her, admitting they share the same dad and saying his name out loud are the real gems in this script. We don’t want to lose them or lose the color and texture of the piece by cutting arbitrarily. But within the scenes, there is room to edit.

The fight scene between Curly and Daku (page 53 - 58) needs to be trimmed but the dialogue about Katie going to school is important because it shows Elijah’s concern to provide stability for her. The scene is 5 pages long. We don’t want to lose the action of the fight scenes, which work really well, but there is room to trim bits and pieces to make it even tighter.

We are disappointed to see Elijah steal one of the Sommerville girls' backpacks left outside a store (page 66). This incident feels out of character for Elijah. We lose sympathy for him because we believe he has moral standards. It lowers him to the people he fights. We don’t feel Katie needs to have this unpleasant encounter with the girls before befriending them, as there’s enough jeopardy, friction and obstacles already in their way. We do like however, that she befriends the one Aborigine girl and feel somehow she might not want her to know that Elijah is a fighter or somehow she might feel inferior to this educated girl.
We also believe Shelly should have a stronger role. This can be accomplished by her trying to piece together where Elijah and Katie are and do some searching on her own. We get a sense that there is some chemistry with Elijah and we would like to see this played out a little more in their conversations. We seem to lose her for over 30 pages at a time, which is fine, but she does provide stability and a backbone to the story as an outsider concerned about the welfare of Katie while still having to focus on her job as a case manager and the bureaucracy surrounding the foster home care. It’s also good to show that not everyone is out for themselves but can be altruistic in nature. Shelly accomplishes this. She truly wants to do something good for her people and the kids in general.

When Katie is kidnapped by Ahmed’s goons, Elijah feels the pain of loss deeper than he would have ever imagined. This kid really got under his skin and she is family, a family he’s never experienced before. An audience will also be emotionally invested in this relationship and want him to save his kid sister.

The second act turning point kicks in when Charlie arrives to tell Elijah that Katie has been kidnapped by Ahmed (page 135 – however in our suggested edits, he now arrives on page 113 but should really happen around page 80). Now he is demanding another fight to try to win back his money stemming back from Elijah’s fight with Curly. The demand creates another great dilemma for Elijah and fuels his anger. The fact that we believe this to be the second act turning point, which propels our hero towards the climax, is problematic. How can we move this up to where it should structurally be? We have to really examine the script once the edits and notes are addressed to see where else we can eliminate and trim scenes in the second act in order to make this turning point work. Because the second act is way too long, the rhythm of the piece is thrown off. It is important for the writer to address this as it will make or break the film.
Act 3
As Elijah and Charlie leave for Brisbane, they are stopped by the police and sent to jail, creating a sense of tension and a ticking time clock for Elijah to get out of there. Yet rather than getting to Brisbane to race towards the climax and save Katie, the action stops cold as if it hits a brick wall, with court scenes, cementing a relationship with Shelly and establishing new characters (i.e., the prominent attorney, Colin Greatorix – a great cameo role for a well known older Australian Actor like Jack Thompson). We suggest major edits in the courtroom scenes to allude to the trial but get him out of jail and on his way to Brisbane. This is the pivotal plot point in the story where he has to save Katie and possibly lose his vision in the process. We see the need for a portion of the court scene but not overly long monologues as exists currently – have them be quick and to the point – get him to Brisbane.

Another question we have is why is it mentioned so late that Elijah worked in a mine (page 119)? That part of his life is never established or plays any importance in the story itself nor does it have a payoff at the end. This is the first we’ve heard of his backstory. This should be established way up front or it should be cut in the third act. It would be nice to witness that Elijah’s work in the mines plays a part in who he is now. The script never pays this point off and this is the first we’ve heard of his life after he left home and before we meet him. If this is where he went, we need to know that up front and we need to know what kind of life he was leading.

The climax of the movie when Elijah fights Losia is exciting and we feel a great deal of uneasiness. In our red line of suggested cuts, we trimmed some of the flashbacks. Again, less is more. You only need a little bit to remind the audience, not whole scenes recounting what we’ve already seen.
The traditional Aborigine corroboree war dance is colorful and makes for an exciting scene bringing in Elijah’s relatives there to support him and having him come to terms with his ancestry.

The denouement is tied up nicely with Katie at the boarding school in Brisbane and Elijah becoming a project manager for the Traditional Lands Council, with a blossoming romance on the horizon with Shelly.

**Characters**

**Elijah**
We need a stronger idea of what Elijah was doing with his life before he ends up being responsible for Katie? Also he has a strong character arc and changes for the good, but we need a better sense in the beginning what he is changing from. We need a better understanding why Elijah feels so disconnected from his father, Les.

**Katie**
We like the quirkiness of Katie’s character. She is fun and smart for a 15-year-old and is a good match for Elijah. Her independent nature at such an early age is amusing to watch and should remind Elijah how he was once that way. However, when she tells Shelly that Teddy touched her and the other girls, there doesn’t seem to be much more discussion about it. It felt like she was just saying that to justify Elijah taking her from the house, so he wouldn’t get into trouble. Was she lying about this? Or was it true? And if it’s true, then there needs to be another beat with Shelley coming to terms with what’s going on in that house. Also Elijah, being a fighter, would probably want to go back and beat the crap out of the guy and both Shelly and Katie have to calm him down.
**Shelly**

Shelly provides stability and balance to the story as an outsider concerned about the welfare of Katie while conducting her job as a case manager by the book and trying to work within foster home care system and Katie’s specific situation. We also like the possibility of attraction between Shelly and Elijah. It’s important to establish her by-the-book mentality and it is Elijah who gets her to loosen up – so that we believe at the end, she would truly help him get out of jail. This understanding could come when Katie tells her that Teddy touched her. She knows it is best that she’s with Elijah even though it’s totally against her department’s edict. Her veneer should erode and we should see evidence of her protecting both Katie and Elijah. It doesn’t feel believable she would call Constable Warren for example at that point in the story because she wouldn’t want to get Elijah in trouble. Warren could spot him on his own. Shelly might even send Warren in the wrong direction.

**Charlie**

Charlie is really a good guy mixed up with a seedy crowd, but we like his heart-of-gold attitude. He and Maxine make for a good couple and while they are out for the all might dollar, their fondness for Elijah and his predicament only strengthens their characters and even surprises us that they are decent.

**Maxine**

Maxine is a strong character. Her concern for the well being of the fighters, applying first aid is a good touch. She adds just the right touch of concern while being a good match for Charlie’s Hollywood agent-like bravado

**Ahmed**

Ahmed is menacing enough for the story, providing enough obstacles for Elijah and Charlie to deal with. He is a great nemesis for Charlie and it is completely believable he would kidnap Katie in order to lure Elijah for that last fight.
Teddy & Marj
They are your typical opportunists using the government’s foster care system to their own benefit while ignoring the needs of the children in their care. They are despicable people and we are thrilled to see them get their comeuppance in the end.

Willie
Willie is a catalyst for Elijah’s choices. We see him briefly on page 95, but we don’t see him again until page 150 when he shows up at the fight and begins the corroboree war dance. Yet, Elijah trusts him to help him out. Is it because they are of the same tribe? But, Elijah seems to loathe his people? When does that change? A suggestion would be to have Willie more integral (at least one more scene) where he has a heart to heart with Elijah about the tribe (again without being expositional) and drawing him into the fold. However, if you lengthen scenes or add more pages, then you must be prepared to take something else away – as the script is long enough as it is. It may be something within the dialogue and scenes already written in which we can embellish who Willie is and why Elijah would trust him.

Uncle Albert
Uncle Albert is a great device to coerce Elijah back into the family fold. He’s an uncle any one of us would love to have and offers Elijah a chance to redeem himself. He also allows the audience to understand that world just a little better than they would have if they were just following Elijah’s slant on his people.

CONCLUSION
We strongly suggest a title change. Foreclosure does not give us a real clue as to what the movie is about and would be a hard title to market. The immediate thought is, it’s a David Mamet play about real estate (No, that was Glengarry Glen Ross). While the foreclosure is the motivation for Elijah to fight and get his
property back, a title that would represent more of the bond between brother and sister or family would be better.

We feel there is great potential here for a film that could do very well in Australia but also may have crossover appeal. Like *Rabbit Proof Fence* or *Whalerider*, films of indigenous people strike chords globally. If made for a reasonable budget, the return might not only be financial but also with awards and critical recognition. Boxing films do fairly well at the box office. Audiences love rooting for the underdog (think *Rocky*, *Cinderella Man* and *The Hurricane*). They love poignant tales between a fighter and a kid (*The Champ* was remade and probably will be remade again). What makes these movies so successful are the compelling characters and the relationships beneath the boxing motif. *Rocky* is more about a man with a dream and the woman who encourages him to follow that dream than it is about boxing. In fact, one common thread through a number of the above-mentioned films is that there is always someone they’re winning the fight for. With *Foreclosure*, the audience is getting more than just a boxing film, more than just a moving relationship between a brother and his little sister; they’re getting a peek into a group of people that oftentimes are overlooked or portrayed as some political statement in film. Rather than focusing on indigenous people with out and out right prejudice, *Foreclosure* chooses to show an indigenous man who has been whitewashed about his people. He’s turned his back on them only to reconnect with them again because he reconnects with the only family he has and hasn’t known: his sister. However, he still understands the dichotomy of the black and white world he lives in. That coupled with the wonderful action sequences of the boxing matches will make for a terrific film. If the writer addresses some (if not all) of the notes above and takes into account the edits we have made to the script itself in order to shorten it without losing its integrity, we feel there is a very strong film here that needs to be produced. The writer also needs to be careful of overwriting the characteristics of the story as some of the same story beats are pounded home throughout the script. Those are the places that need to be trimmed. While we would like the
writer to explore the notes above, it is important to be repetitious and say that the
script still needs to be shorter. With our edits, the total page count is 140 – that
makes it a 2-hour-and-twenty-minute movie. Well, it’s better than 169 pages (3
hours and 9 minutes) but could stand at least ten more minutes cut out of it.
Please understand that we love what the writer has done with his characters,
dialogue and storyline, but we feel in order for this film to have a bona fide shot of
a strong boxoffice, the film needs to be as close to two hours as possible. Aside
from the natural rhythm of storytelling, it is also better for the exhibitors. Most
don’t like to book long films because it takes away from at least one showing a
day from their potential boxoffice draw. So it’s not just about the fact that
audience’s attention spans can’t handle long films (which is true in this sound
byte world), it’s also about economics at the movie theatres. It’s quite plain and
simple, a 3 hour movie plays at least one less time during the day to
accommodate the length. Therefore, the exhibitor makes less on that film. If this
were an epic-style film, it might warrant the three plus hours already written, but
realistically, it’s not. So while we have notes that need addressing, the most
important thing the writer needs to do is say a lot with less. The script needs to
be no more than 2 hours – we can’t stress that enough. The writer has done a
impressive job with this piece and we are anxious to hear how he takes the notes
and the progression of this project.

Rona Edwards & Monika Skerbelis
EDWARDS SKERBELIS ENTERTAINMENT (ESE)
264 S. LA CIENEGA BLVD., SUITE 1052 BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90211 (323) 466-3013
ESEntertainment@aol.com ESEntertainment.net
writer to explore the notes above, it is important to be repetit
ious and say that the script still needs to be shorter. With our edits, the total page count is 140 – that makes it a 2-hour-and-twenty-minute movie. Well, it's better than 169 pages (3 hours and 9 minutes) but could stand at least ten more minutes cut out of it. Please understand that we love what the writer has done with his characters, dialogue and storyline, but we feel in order for this film to have a bona fide shot of a strong boxoffice, the film needs to be as close to two hours as possible. Aside from the natural rhythm of storytelling, it is also better for the exhibitors. Most don't like to book long films because it takes away from at least one showing a day from their potential boxoffice draw. So it's not just about the fact that audience's attention spans can't handle long films (which is true in this sound byte world), it's also about economics at the movie theatres. It's quite plain and simple, a 3 hour movie plays at least one less time during the day to accommodate the length. Therefore, the exhibitor makes less on that film. If this were an epic-style film, it might warrant the three plus hours already written, but realistically, it's not. So while we have notes that need addressing, the most important thing the writer needs to do is say a lot with less. The script needs to be no more than 2 hours – we can't stress that enough. The writer has done a impressive job with this piece and we are anxious to hear how he takes the notes and the progression of this project.

Rona Edwards & Monika Skerbelis
EDWARDS SKERBELIS ENTERTAINMENT (ESE)
264 S. LA CIENEGA BLVD., SUITE 1052 BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90211 (323) 466‐3013 ESEntertainment@aol.com ESEntertainment.net
KICK UP DUST

SYNOPSIS

15 year old Elijah has been raised by his grandfather who was an Aboriginal legend of the boxing tents. 17 years later he returns to find that his shiftless father has died leaving the family property heavily mortgaged to the bank. Elijah also learns of a sister Katie whom he has never met. Katie has been placed into the foster care system and put in the hands of an abusive family from which she is rescued by her brother.

Elijah has achieved some success with an earth moving business. When he attempts to settle the mortgage he learns that he has been cheated by his site manager and that his funds have been frozen.

Elijah is left with one way to support himself and his sister. He becomes part of the dangerous and brutal arena of bare fist fighting. In this world high stakes and
gambling interests are of prime importance.

ASSESSMENT

I read this script with great interest. It was workshopped last year as part of the Dungog Festival’s ‘In the Raw’ script readings with a cast that included Luke Carroll, Ursula Yovich and Alan Lovell. I learned through the program manager that the script had been enthusiastically received by a capacity audience. The writer Marcus Waters, himself indigenous, is the convenor of Screen Writing at Griffith University.

Marcus said at the time that he wanted “to tell a positive indigenous story that will communicate our rich aboriginal heritage to my children and all Australians.”

The script opens strongly cutting between two time periods. In the present, 15 year old Elijah is completing a fencing contract with Ronald his grandfather. In the past, we see Ronald fighting in a large canvas boxing tent as a member of the Sharman troupe. These scenes are accompanied by a simple and very well written voice over:

“My grandfather was a boxer—a great boxer. People would come from all around…

And culminating with the words

“Six weeks later my grandfather was dead”

The story moves forward 15 years when we are told that Elijah is 32 (I think this is a misprint for 30) and here the plot falters. We are delivered a great deal of information in very short time.

(1) Elijah’s father whom he has never met has died.

(2) Elijah has a sister in foster care whom he has also never met.

(3) The family property is mortgaged to the hilt with the bank owed $60,00

(4) Elijah has been bilked of his own savings by a business associate.

This is a lot of information about four major crises delivered very quickly.

A reader’s initial response to Elijah’s sister Katie is not positive. She is foul mouthed and aggressive and appears to have made false allegations against her male carer. She will eventually become a character whom we will care about but in this draft the first impression lingers.

Uncle Albert is a delightful and beautifully drawn character. He is apparently living on the fringes of society. We first encounter him behind a desk at the Born Free Aboriginal hostel watching Who wants to be a Millionaire. His opening words are a rebuke to one of the contestants:

“Niels Bohr you bloody idiot!”

In the hope that he has inherited some of his grandfather’s skill Elijah ventures into the world of back street boxing. He is knocked out in his first bout. Shortly
afterwards Katie is trapped in an alleyway by four Lebanese gang members. Elijah dispatches them in ruthless Bruce Lee fashion.

There are several problems in my mind about the violence in the script.

(1) It is extremely graphic and would be likely to earn the film an “R” rating.

(2) The story is following a template in which the hero encounters increasingly terrifying opponents—all of whom he will vanquish. This passage of events goes back at least as far as Charles Bronson clobbering his way through THE STREETFIGHTER and probably has much earlier precedents.

Pride in aboriginality is a theme that is very successfully woven into the script. Knockabout Uncle Albert emerges as a character of great dignity. Dialogue like:

“The aboriginal men I grew up with did not sit round in parks.”

And

“Good men do hurtful things when they are damaged”

has real resonance.

Chrstal one of the girls around town, is another excellent character. She is a young woman, ashamed of being aboriginal and able to pass for white.

The story goes further into ROCKY territory when Elijah learns that a continued career in the ring is likely to make him blind. Earlier in the script we have encountered a monstrous thug called Losia who is proportioned like King Kong. Inevitably they come face to face.

Marcus appears to know the world he is writing about and most of the characters in KICK UP DUST are engaging and interesting. But in this draft I think that the twists in Elijah’s journey are too predictable. The fight scenes frequently employ suspension of time. A hulking opponent, seconds away from victory over Elijah, pauses to gloat over his certain victory with predictable results. Elijah’s come from behind victory in the last fight requires him to talk to his opponent and, between blows, enumerate his mistakes.

The team supporting KICK UP DUST is a strong one comprising Cathy and Mark Odell as producers and Louise Gough as script editor. They have a well articulated plan for moving onto the 6th draft. The team are justly pleased with the characterisation of Elijah as someone whose father and grandfather responded to life in very different ways. His grandfather was grounded and courageous while his father was weak and irresponsible.

While Elijah’s external tasks are varied and clearly enunciated the element of internal struggle has been neglected. The intention of the team is to fashion Elijah more in the vein of the Tom Cruise character in RAIN MAN, of Walter Matthau in LITTLE MISS MARKER and of Clint Eastwood in UNFORGIVEN. All of those characters have taken wrong turnings but they are sympathetic enough for us to hope that they
will do what is right for themselves and for those around them. This will involve harshening the character of Elijah.

Rightly the team want to remove any hint of sexualisation between the Elijah and Katie. This draft sends out contradictory messages about this. Quite early on (scene 16) Katie sums up her brother as “kind of cute” and taunts him for responding to her attractiveness. They seem to becoming together so inevitably that I presumed she would turn out not to be his sister.

I agree that the scenes involving social services are a distraction and should be used only when they serve the protagonist’s story.

Their other justified concern is story telling through dialogue and big print information. I share this concern. In an early bout Elijah is all over his bigger and more powerful opponent while his cuts and bruises manager muses:

“His mind’s not on the fight”.

In another bout during which Elijah’s head is being beaten against a wall while he struggles to restore his vision manager Max finds something to smile about:

“He’s getting his second wind”.

Surprisingly the script has its own racist undertones and they are not appealing. All of the Lebanese characters are at least shifty while most of them are nasty criminals. There is a very unedifying exchange in scene 98 after Katie has been rescued from her kidnappers.

Maxine: “How is Katie?”

Curly: “She’s OK - not the way we used to do business”

Maxine: “A lot has changed Charlie-just look at this crowd”

They scan the room, African, Polynesian, Lebanese, Arabs and Asians…

Charlie: “It’s spot the bloody Aussie”.

There is, however, a lot to like in this draft and an excellent team charged with developing the next one. I recommend further funding.
### Commentary Boxes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>So So</th>
<th>Not Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story/Plot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: Kick Up Dust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend with changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider next draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Writer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Marcus Waters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend for other projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Suggestions:)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider for other projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Suggestions:)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Writer Bio (if supplied)**

N/A

**Director Bio (if supplied)**

N/A
Title: Kick Up Dust (fka Journey of Two Hearts)

Writer/s: Marcus Waters  QLD Resident

Draft Date & No.: Oct. 2010, 5th Draft, Version 2

Genre: drama/action

Locale: Yetman; Mt. Isa; Goondiwindi; Brisbane and its environs

Period: present day; with brief scenes set 7 and 15 years ago

Budget: medium to medium/low (depending on action scenes and crowd scenes)

Applicant:

Director  QLD Resident
Producer: Cathy Overett, Mark Overett  QLD Resident
Company: New Holland Pictures

Report by: Regina Lee

Title: Script Consultant

Contact: ReginaLee123@gmail.com; 310 866 7689 US cell

Date of Report: July 21, 2011

Submitted To: Jock Blair, Natalie Lindwall

Logline:
An Aboriginal man learns the half-sister whom he never knew existed is in foster care, breaks her out, and tries to take care of her. But his assets have been frozen, so he resorts to prize-fighting to make money.

Synopsis:

15 YEARS AGO, Yetman, Qld. ELIJAH WATERS (15, Aboriginal) practices fencing with his grandfather RONALD WATERS (55).

MONTAGE/VOICEOVER. An adult Elijah tells us in VOICEOVER that his grandfather was a great boxer in Jimmy Sharman’s Aboriginal boxing tents. Ronald raised Elijah around the boxing tents, taught him how to spar, and taught him the Aboriginal language and traditions. When Elijah was 15, Ronald bought an old Queenslander house so they could live in Yetman, the traditional Aboriginal homeland. But mere months later, Ronald died of tuberculosis. Upon Ronald’s
death, Elijah’s no-good father, whom he had never met, took the house for himself and kicked out Elijah; Elijah was left with nothing at the age of 15.

PRESENT DAY, Mt. Isa, Qld. Elijah (32 – sic: he should be 30 years old per the script’s timeline) is now a partner in an earth-moving business. He gets a letter from Goondiwindi Child Protection informing him that his father Les Saunders has died recently; his half-sister Katelyn has been put in foster care. He didn’t even know he had a half-sister.

Elijah takes a bus to Goondiwindi. He meets with SHELLY (late 20s, Aboriginal), Katelyn’s flustered, overworked Child Protection case manager, and they arrange a meeting that afternoon for him to see Katelyn. Elijah’s next stop is the bank, where manager GEOFF (early 60s) tells him that Les owed $60,000 on the house. The bank has put the house on sale to recover the debt. To take the house off the market, Elijah agrees to pay $10,000 upfront, and he’ll also have to start paying a monthly lease.

Elijah arrives at Katelyn’s foster home that afternoon. KATELYN “KATIE” SAUNDERS (14, Aboriginal) is in good spirits, but it’s clear that her foster parents TEDDY and MARJ are unkind to all their foster daughters. Elijah knows this house is no place for Katie, and he leaves in a huff, promising to come back for her. He returns under cover of night in Les’s old Ute and breaks Katie out. As they drive off, he can’t help but notice her “perky breasts.” Katie has a smart mouth and isn’t afraid to call him a pedophile.

Elijah intends to take Katie to Les’s sister Delmay in Brisbane. As far as Child Protection is concerned, Elijah kidnapped Katie, so the police are searching for them. Shelly calls Elijah to plead for Katie’s return. Katie picks up the phone and yells at Shelly, claiming Teddy sexually abuses his foster daughters. Elijah is alarmed, but Katie casually assures him that she came up with this ploy to buy them some time to get away from Goondiwindi, and to get the rest of the foster daughters out of Teddy’s care.

To stay off the grid, Elijah and Katie ditch the Ute and hitchhike to Brisbane. When they arrive, they try to check into an Aboriginal hostel run by “UNCLE” ALBERT (late 50s, Aboriginal). He can’t house them because people will think he’s engaging in illicit activity if he rents a room to a man with a “young girl.” Albert knows Delmay and tells them she died recently. He realizes that Elijah is Ronald’s grandson. Albert reveres Ronald’s boxing, so he gives Elijah a mysterious address saying it “might help.” He also recommends that they sleep in St. Vinnie’s bins by the river.

Elijah can’t get his money from the ATM. He explains to Katie that his business partner and the liquidators froze his funds when he impermissibly withdrew $10,000 to secure Ronald’s old house. He tells her how Les took his home when Ronald died, leaving him on his own. He now owns an earth-moving business, but he hired a site manager who ripped him off, and his business has been in great debt and turmoil, even before he misappropriated the $10,000. Elijah takes Katie to a St. Vinnie’s bin. As he pushes her into the bin, he sees her shapely butt and feels uncomfortable. While she sleeps, he walks to the mysterious address that Albert gave him.
Upon arrival, Elijah discovers a warehouse where rowdy crowds bet on “bare fist knuckle fights.” Washed-up fight broker CHARLIE (50s, white) and his trainer/cut man MAXINE (late 40s) hand over a wad of cash to powerful fight broker AHMED (late 50s, Turkish). Charlie’s man has lost to Ahmed’s man, per the usual. Elijah gives a belligerent Charlie his last $250 to get a fight. The crowd is dwindling by the time Charlie starts taking bets for a fight between Elijah, his unknown underdog, and Filipino DATU. Ahmed leaves before the fight starts.

This fight is not the conventional boxing that Ronald taught Elijah; instead, kicks, head butts, attacks to the groin, etc. are all allowed. Elijah impresses Charlie by putting up a good fight, but he’s knocked to the ground. Surprisingly, Charlie instructs him to stay down, and Datu knocks him out cold.

Charlie tells a bruised Elijah he has high hopes for him. By throwing the fight, no one will know how good he really is. He’ll have the element of surprise on his side for his next fight. People will bet against him, and when he wins, he’ll make a big profit off their ill-informed bets.

When Elijah arrives at the St. Vinnie’s bin in the morning, Katie isn’t there. He finds her sitting in a park with Albert and a group of Aborigines. Among them, rude EDDIE makes fun of Elijah’s beat-up state. Elijah bristles and makes Katie leave quickly. He gives her a speech about how dignified Aboriginal men do not “sit around in parks.” (It’s unclear why he thinks it’s more respectable to prizefight than to “sit” in a park.)

Elijah and Charlie agree to a management deal and prize money split. Charlie arranges a two-bedroom suite in a dour hostel for Elijah and Katie. He shows them around a “rundown,” yet “unused and very clean” gym. While Elijah and Charlie talk shop, Katie spies a group of private school girls walking outside and follows them. One of the girls, CHRYSAL (half Aboriginal, half white) sees her, but completely ignores her.

Katie then runs into 4 LEBANESE GANG MEMBERS who leer at her and grab her. Elijah finds her just in time, and he takes all 4 gang members down with a combination of kicks and punches. Elijah is mad at Katie for walking off, and he loses his temper and says that he should have left her in Goondiwindi. He quickly apologizes, but the damage is done.

Charlie and Maxine take Elijah back to the warehouse to show him CURLY (Irish), a powerful fighter with only one loss on his record. He’s the one whom they want Elijah to take on. In preparation, they take Elijah to a biker club, where he can get another fight under his belt without prematurely exposing his skills to the warehouse community. Charlie works with biker CHINO to initiate a $5000 fight between Elijah and burly PATCH (early 40s). The bikers laugh when Elijah strikes an old-fashioned boxing stance, but Elijah surprises them by calmly dismantling Patch. By the end of the fight, Elijah has become vicious and knocks him out. Chino reneges on the bet, refusing to pay, and flashes a handgun. Outnumbered and out-gunned, Elijah, Charlie, and Maxine have no choice but to leave empty-handed.

That night, Elijah sneaks into the biker club, while Charlie and Maxine wait outside.
Elijah easily disarms Chino, then knocks out the other bikers. But then, Chino’s father RONNIE (early 60s) and another dozen bikers walk in with Charlie and Maxine at gunpoint. Elijah tells Ronnie that his grandfather was Ronald Waters. Ronnie reveres Ronald’s boxing, and breaks out the bourbon to party with Elijah. (Presumably, Elijah gets his $5000.) After the party, Maxine tells Elijah that he can “make his grandfather really proud” by “playing real testimony” to the Aboriginal boxing tents.

Meanwhile, Katie sees Chrystal and her schoolmates again and asks why Chrystal wouldn’t acknowledge her. Chrystal answers that her (white) mom doesn’t like her talking to Aboriginals because her mom wants a better life for her. Katie replies, “There’s nothing wrong with being Aboriginal.” Katie steals one of the girl’s school bags as she leaves.

Katie arrives home in tears to find that Elijah has bought her a new pink bedroom set with his prize money. She admits that she stole the school bag because she wanted a taste of the girls’ prosperous lives. Katie stays out of Elijah’s reach to avoid another moment of sexual tension, but Elijah says he won’t hurt her. “I was confused – I haven’t had anyone for so long – not someone I care about.” He claims he’s now over his confusion. Katie is happy to allow him an innocent kiss on her cheek.

Meanwhile, Shelly interviews Teddy’s other foster daughters. They say Teddy was in fact sexually abusive. Katie would protect the other girls by sleeping closest to the door so that he would always grab her.

The next morning, Elijah offers to study the stolen school books with Katie. But she needs eyeglasses to read. With his prize money, they go shopping, and Elijah buys her an expensive pair of trendy glasses, while she selects some “sexy” new clothes and a new haircut for him.

While Eliza window shops, Elijah sees several voicemails from Shelly and calls her. She tells him that Katie’s “claims of sexual abuse have been substantiated,” and he needs to bring her in for “professional help.” Elijah searches for Katie in the shopping center. He finds her in a tense confrontation with Chrystal, CAROL (whose bag she stole), and the other girls. Katie and Elijah realize that Chrystal is Albert’s granddaughter.

Elijah drags Katie back to the hostel, and she’s angry with him for stepping in while she was dealing with the girls. He tells her he knows Teddy abused her. She breaks down and shares the story of how she grew up. Her father was wonderful to her until she turned 12 and went through puberty. At that point, men began leering at her, including her father. He managed to keep his hands off, but the sexual tension was always there. Then her mother died, and her father started drinking heavily to take his mind off touching her, and he took to totally ignoring her. Sexual abuse was prevalent in her hometown. To Katie, her father was a good man, who chose to drink himself to death rather than to touch her. In fact, she feels responsible for his death.

At the end of this disturbing confession, Elijah and Katie embrace for the first time as siblings.

Elijah visits Albert in the park to talk about Chrystal. Albert says that he and the
Aboriginal community are all damaged, and as a result, many of the men hurt other people. Albert was selfish, a drinker, and neglected Chrystal’s mother, who married a white man, moved out, and took Chrystal away. Now Albert’s sober and hasn’t found a way to reconnect with Chrystal. Albert, the Aborigines, and Elijah sing and dance a traditional shake-a-leg.

Meanwhile, Katie visits Chrystal and Carol at school. She returns Carol’s bag, apologizing. Katie tells Chrystal that her grandfather is sober, and she encourages Chrystal to get in touch with him.

On fight night with Curly, a “bloodthirsty mob” fills the warehouse. There’s nearly $100,000 in the pot. Elijah again strikes his old-fashioned boxing stance. Curly has the upper hand, when Elijah notices Katie has sneaked in to the fight. Elijah gets a second wind and knocks out Curly. However, the fights have taken their toll on Elijah, who is having vision problems. Ahmed spitefully pays Charlie and leers at Katie.

The next morning, Elijah is in a great deal of pain. Katie wants him to stop fighting, but Charlie says it’s just the beginning. Maxine teaches an emotional Katie to stitch up Elijah’s brow. Elijah goes to an optometrist [sic] who diagnoses him with a retinal tear. If he keeps fighting, he will probably go blind. That night, Elijah tells Katie that he’s done with fighting and they’re leaving town, but she doesn’t want to go “home.” He tells her she “can’t keep running” (it’s unclear what he means, as she hasn’t been “running” away in the script).

Charlie is shocked to find Elijah has left town, and asks Albert where he went. Albert won’t say, but Eddie (the rude Aborigine from the park) tells Charlie about the Yetman house. Elijah and Katie are driving from Brisbane to Yetman in a rental car when Maxine calls to warn them that Ahmed wants a chance to win his money back. Ahmed is flying in Losia, a Samoan who is the only other man to have defeated Curly. Losia is now a professional cage-fighter in the US.

Elijah and Katie arrive in Yetman. He leaves her at her old house while he goes to the bank. Elijah has the cash to pay the mortgage, but bank manager Geoff can’t give him the title to the house. Elijah’s business has a bankruptcy pending, and that has to be cleared up first. Since the house can’t be transferred to Elijah, he has Geoff put the house in trust to Katie.

Meanwhile, Ahmed’s thugs kidnap Katie and take her back to Brisbane. Ahmed has used Katie as a sexual lure to convince Losia to fly in from the US. Elijah returns to find Katie has been kidnapped. Ahmed calls him and says Charlie has the details for his next fight. Elijah has to return to Brisbane, give Ahmed another fight, and try to get Katie back; but at the worst possible time, the police arrest him, presumably for kidnapping Katie from foster care (when she’s actually been kidnapped by Ahmed).

Elijah’s in jail, and Geoff convinces SGT MAXWELL to let Elijah out on bail so he can go save Katie. Geoff drives Elijah to the warehouse to fight Losia. Elijah is allowed to hug Katie before the fight. Charlie feels no honor in forcing Elijah to fight in these conditions, but he nevertheless believes Ahmed must be allowed to win back his money. Elijah obligingly puts his $50,000 in winnings into the pot.
Albert and Chrystal are there at the fight, reunited. Albert thanks Elijah for helping to bring her back into his life. He and his Aboriginal friends dance a traditional war dance for Elijah. The Samoans in the audience respond with their own dance, and then the Kiwis perform a Maori Haka dance.

Finally, when the dancing is over, Elijah faces Losia. During the brutal fight, Elijah is fading and his eyesight is erratic. Losia picks up a wooden table leg to club him. Curly tries to stop Losia from using the club, but Ahmed won’t let him interfere. Charlie tells Ahmed they didn’t sign up for this unruliness, while Maxine treats Elijah with “adrenaline eye drops.” She tells him that his vision will come back for a short moment, and he must capitalize on that moment. Losia breaks Elijah’s arm with the club. Elijah is on the ground almost defeated, when the Aborigines start rhythmically clapping for him to get back up. Elijah fights back and takes the club from Losia, clubbing Losia’s skull. Elijah wins the fight, and the multicultural crowd cheers his victory. Ahmed spitefully hands over the prize money.

A day later, Elijah turns Katie over to Child Protection so they can interview and treat her. He goes home to start fixing up Ronald’s old house. By afternoon, Katie is returned to him to stay.

**Main Characters:**

ELIJAH WATERS (32, Aboriginal) – Elijah was raised by his grandfather Ronald, a revered boxer. When Ronald died, Elijah’s father took over the house that Elijah shared with Ronald, leaving 15-year-old Elijah with nothing. Elijah eventually became a partner in an earth-moving business, but that company is in turmoil. When his father dies, Elijah tries to get Ronald’s old house back, misappropriating his company’s money in doing so. He’s also swept up in taking care of Katie, the half-sister whom he never knew he had. Elijah’s company freezes his assets, and he takes up prize-fighting to make money.

KATELYN “KATIE” SAUNDERS (14, Aboriginal) – Katie shares Elijah’s biological father. She’s his half-sister. Though their father was unspeakably cruel to Elijah, he was very good to Katie until she hit puberty, and he started seeing her as a sexual being. He resorted to ignoring her to diminish the temptation to touch her. When her father dies a drunken, broken man, Katie is sent to a foster home, where her foster dad sexually abuses her. Elijah breaks her out of foster care and takes her to Brisbane to try to find an aunt to take her in. That doesn’t work, and she has to live in a hostel while he starts prize-fighting to make money.

CHARLIE (50s, white) – A fight broker who’s sick of losing fights and losing money. He’s skeptical when he books Elijah’s first prize fight, then thrilled with the able fighter he adds to his roster. Charlie makes money from arch rival Ahmed when Elijah wins, but his senseless belief that Ahmed should be allowed to win his money back puts Elijah’s and Katie’s lives at risk – and it also puts his own winnings right back on the block.

**Assessment:**
The filmmakers of KICK UP DUST should be commended for coming up with a great deal of material for this story. But they’ve tried to squeeze in too many ideas into 112 densely packed pages, and the script can barely contain the overabundance of backstory, plot, and subplot. This draft is one of those scripts that tries to be too many things. As a result, the script is unfocused and muddled, and thus unsatisfying, leaving all its vital elements in far too rough a form. Instead, the concept, execution, characterization, character agenda, central driving question, genre, controlling idea, etc. should be much cleaner and clearer.

It’s unclear what the script’s primary genre is meant to be – drama or action. Thus, the genre framework to which the filmmakers should be attuned as they develop their script is likewise unclear. Fundamental story questions remain unanswered. The filmmakers’ Development Notes are not ill-conceived per se. They succeed in demonstrating thoughtfulness. But the Notes are neither sufficiently analytical nor comprehensive enough to lend strong confidence that the plan for the 6th Draft will pay dividends.

Fundamental decisions about genre, tone, and corresponding target audience must be clear for any project. Is KICK UP DUST meant to be primarily a drama or an action movie? Is it meant to be heartwarming or dark in tone? What target audience is most likely to buy a ticket to this movie, and does the script provide material that will please this audience as much as possible? These questions are inextricably linked. There are many ways to discuss them, and each decision affects the others. Only by answering these questions clearly can script development be focused and fruitful.

WHAT IS THE CENTRAL DRIVING QUESTION OF THE SCRIPT?

The Development Notes talk briefly and too generally about Elijah’s “external want” vs. his “internal need.” This issue needs to be discussed much more specifically and analytically. At present, the central driving question of the script is unclear. And it’s not properly expressed throughout the narrative. For example, is the central driving question whether or not Elijah will be able to keep Katie out of foster care? Is it whether or not Elijah will be able to make enough money as a prizefighter to buy his grandfather’s house? Is it whether or not Elijah will be able to find a new career now that his earth-moving business is in the dump?

The story is muddled in the current draft because the central question is itself ill-defined. Instead, the story must be shaped around a clearer central question. This central question should form the script’s story spine or its central plotline. It’s highly concerning that this 5th Draft has not yet pulled the script’s central question into clear, unquestionable focus. A clear central question should be utilized to define the protagonist’s agenda, his goal, his intent, and the obstacles between him and the realization of his goal.

As importantly, the audience will be emotionally invested in answering the central question as they watch the movie. During every scene, the audience should be wondering, for example, “I want Elijah to succeed in keeping Katie out of foster care. Will I get to watch him succeed?”
WHO IS THE CENTRAL ANTAGONIST OF THE STORY?

Elijah is the clear protagonist of the story, but who is the central antagonist? The Development Notes state that Katie is Elijah’s antagonist (page 3 of the notes). Is this accurate? Is it wise? Will it yield a satisfying story? Is Katie the chief obstacle between Elijah and his goal? Should she be? She’s not the chief obstacle between Elijah and his goal in the present script, nor should she be in future drafts.

If the central driving question is whether or not Elijah will be able keep Katie out of foster care, Katie herself is surely not the chief force of opposition between Elijah and his goal. If it’s whether or not Elijah will be able to make enough money to buy his grandfather’s house, Katie is again not the chief force of opposition between him and his goal. If it’s whether or not Elijah will be able to find a new career, Katie is still not the chief force of opposition between him and his goal.

In the script’s finale, Elijah has to defeat an opponent, otherwise known as an antagonist. Is the antagonist embodied by Katie? Clearly not. In fact, Katie is Elijah’s ally in the script, not his antagonist. Katie is misidentified as the central antagonist, otherwise known as the chief force of opposition in Elijah’s quest. Katie’s character is correctly described as a character who unintentionally complicates Elijah’s quest, otherwise described as functioning as a complication for Elijah.

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY GENRE OF THE MOVIE?

If the above discussion has adequately established that the filmmakers have misidentified their story’s central antagonist, then a decision of the script’s genre and true antagonist might come next. Is this script meant to be primarily an action movie about prize-fighting, or is it meant to be a drama about siblings?

If the script is meant to be primarily an action movie, and secondarily a drama, then the central driving question is likely to be Ahmed. Thus, the central question would most likely be whether or not Elijah can defeat Ahmed’s top fighter, make enough money, and create a new home for Katie and himself. The corresponding central plotline would most likely be fashioned similarly to Sylvester Stallone’s ROCKY, in which Rocky trains for and ultimately loses to a stronger fighter but gets his moral victory. Or THE KARATE KID, in which “Daniel” trains for and ultimately defeats a stronger fighter in order to protect himself and his girlfriend, who is his ultimate prize. Or Stallone’s OVER THE TOP might be the most apt comparison, in which Stallone bonds with his son while he trains for and ultimately wins the World Arm Wrestling Championships.

In any case, Katie, Charlie, and Maxine would likely be reconceived as true allies, rather than disreputable, duplicitous antagonists to Elijah’s goal. The central relationship might be between either Elijah and Katie or Elijah and Charlie, as Charlie is the more likely character to serve as Elijah’s primary partner in overcoming Ahmed.
The Development Notes seem to indicate that the 6th Draft will model itself more closely on RAIN MAN. If this is the case, then the script is meant to be primarily a drama, and secondarily an action movie. In RAIN MAN, “Charlie Babbitt” needs money, so he kidnaps his brother “Raymond” in order to get a part of Raymond’s inheritance. Raymond is a direct link to what he wants, so he starts out using Raymond for his own personal gain. Later, he begins to love his brother and decides that Raymond’s welfare is more important than the money he wants to extract from Raymond’s trust.

In the case of RAIN MAN, Charlie’s goal is to get Raymond’s money. Charlie starts out feeling his brother is a burden and indeed an obstacle between him and the money. Thus, it’s accurate to describe Raymond as the central antagonist. The character of Raymond functions as the chief obstacle keeping Charlie from the one thing that he desires the most.

However, in KICK UP DUST, the script fails to clearly set up Elijah’s precise goal. Is it to make $60,000 to buy his grandfather’s old house? To write off earth-moving forever, and find a new career in Yetman now that he’s burned his bridges in Mt. Isa? To simply evade the Brisbane police and escape to Yetman or Goondiwindi? To make enough money to pay back the $10,000 he misappropriated and eventually regain his business partner’s trust? Elijah’s goal isn’t as clear as Charlie Babbitt’s goal.

Charlie Babbitt kidnaps Raymond to get money (his goal), whereas, Elijah doesn’t take Katie to get money. Instead, Elijah turns to prize-fighting to make money. Katie doesn’t function as an obstacle to Elijah becoming a successful prizefighter or as an obstacle to his loosely defined goals. She is not directly related to his goal, whereas, Raymond is directly related to Charlie’s goal. In addition, Katie isn’t a burden to Elijah in the way that Raymond is a burden to Charlie: she doesn’t make it harder for him to fight Datu, Patch, and Curly; she doesn’t make it harder for him to live in the two-bedroom hostel suite; etc.

Furthermore, Raymond is autistic, and he can’t help but complicate Charlie’s life when Charlie kidnaps him. Katie is not mentally challenged. She doesn’t have a natural excuse to complicate Elijah’s life. If she were conceived as a central antagonist, her character would by definition function as a recurring obstacle between the protagonist and his goal. Would any audience member sympathize with a contentious teenager who continually antagonizes Elijah and continually “distrusts” him (per the Development Notes)? Who would want to cheer on a movie like that? Who would want to pull for Elijah to reconcile with a teen who intentionally, with able mind and body, continually makes his life harder time and time again? Again, Katie is misidentified as the central antagonist in the Development Notes.

Thus, if the filmmakers want to follow the RAIN MAN model more closely, they must reconceive Elijah’s relationship with Katie from start to finish. That involves “big picture” changes to characterization, set-up, structure, and plot. It should be noted that RAIN MAN utilizes a very different structure and a seemingly different genre than KICK UP DUST. RAIN MAN, a drama, has one “blackjack sequence” in which the brothers work together to make money for Charlie. KICK UP DUST, presumably an action movie based on this draft, has several fight scenes in which Elijah is not teamed with Katie to make money in prizefights.
Per the Development Notes, the filmmakers want to aim for the RAIN MAN model in their 6th Draft. They want to utilize the “Katie” character as the script’s central antagonist. Based on the current draft, however, this assessor would not recommend this approach. There are more sympathetic stories to tell than utilizing some version of RAIN MAN in which Elijah would use his 14-year-old sister for his own gain and neglects her welfare (like Charlie with Raymond), eventually learning that she is as important as his own needs as in RAIN MAN. Nor is it sympathetic for able-minded Katie to continually antagonize protagonist Elijah over the entire narrative like a burdensome autistic man would.

WHAT TONE WILL PLEASE THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

Once genre, the central driving question, and the chief antagonist are adequately defined, tone and target audience can likewise be refined. At present, the tone is quite dark. There are many tragic elements in the script. Is that appropriate for the target audience? Will a dark tone encourage the target audience to buy tickets and recommend the movie to their friends? If not, darker elements should be excised.

CONFUSION FROM COMPETING IDEAS

At present, the script is chock-full of backstory, plot, and subplot, and they are devoted to too many secondary characters (e.g. Katie, Albert, Chrystal). Backstory, in particular, should expose the protagonist primarily. Whereas, the script’s competing ideas create confusion. The extraneous ideas steal focus from each other and muddle the overall concept to a disquieting degree. Competing ideas should be excised, so that the story can become clean, clear, and focused.

In most cases, a script should properly introduce its protagonist in the opening. However, this script romanticizes backstory instead of providing a proper character set-up before the inciting incident takes place. KICK UP DUST does not set up the adult version of Elijah at all. His current life in Mt. Isa is missing from the script. It’s completely unclear what the 32-year-old version of Elijah wants and what is missing from his life. Therefore, the rest of the narrative plays out with precious little character set-up and context.

Instead, the opening awkwardly grapples with Ronald’s backstory. Grandfather Ronald was a revered boxer. He taught Elijah how to be “dignified.” It’s unclear, however, why boxing is seen as dignified, while other past-times/occupations are not. Boxing involves bloodying your opponent and for most people, doing so is inherently not the most dignified of pursuits. As a youth, Elijah learned “old-fashioned” boxing from Ronald. It’s not credible to insinuate that boxing lessons have given Elijah the skills to be a great post-modern fighter, with kicks, head butts, and other unorthodox moves at the ready. Has Elijah expanded his boxing skills in adulthood? Has he been practicing kicks and head butts in his spare time? He doesn’t lose a step in his first fight against Datu, when their fight is not a boxing match. Elijah’s present day life in Mt. Isa has not been set up at all, so it’s unclear how he transitioned from “old-
fashioned” boxing to unorthodox fighting. A clearer opening would set up the Elijah we know today, rather than the 15-year-old Elijah who is a relic of the past.

In addition, the opening scene establishes Ronald and Elijah fencing each other, which is a very different sport than boxing/sparring. Both fencing and boxing are different from the kicking/head butting-style of warehouse prizefighting. Each is a different skill, and they should not be conflated.

Ronald also taught Elijah the Aboriginal language and traditions. Presumably, Elijah’s out of touch with these traditions as an adult in Mt. Isa. (This presumption is merely an educated guess, as the script fails to set up Elijah in the present day.) This idea that Ronald taught Elijah boxing and Aboriginal traditions is relevant to the story if Elijah’s character journey is chiefly about a prodigal son who returns to the traditions his grandfather instilled in him. However, that is not what the current script is about, nor is it a likely central notion for future drafts.

Thus, the opening depicting Ronald’s backstory feels rather disconnected from the central plotline of the story, which is presumably centered on Elijah and Katie. Ronald’s backstory would be more connected if the story were centered on Elijah’s return to the traditional Aboriginal fold. But that’s not what the story is about. The script’s emphasis on Albert bringing Aboriginal tradition to Elijah’s life is therefore not central to the story, and it should not be an important idea in the script.

The next element the script throws in is Katie, the half-sister whom Elijah never knew he had. The fact that she’s a surprise addition to his life is only pivotal to the story if Elijah’s character journey is chiefly about learning to love and appreciate his sister. That’s the conceit of RAIN MAN. As discussed above, it’s doubtful that RAIN MAN alone is the best model for future development. Other models should be discussed.

Then the script adds to the mix its varied explanations of Elijah’s financial/workplace troubles. These ideas compete against each other and are very confusing. Elijah says he founded (page 26) his own company, and he says he “owns” it (page 10); but later he says he has a “business partner” (page 25), which suggests that he co-owns the earth-moving business. Is he the owner or a co-owner? Does he call the shots or doesn’t he? If he’s the owner/founder/boss, then who does he answer to when he uses $10,000 of company money?

Elijah hired a site manager who ripped him off, and he’s paid out $60,000 of company money in legal fees (page 26). Now he uses another $10,000 to take the Yetman house off the market. These ideas are too complex. Why not go with one clear reason for Elijah’s financial woes? The story is not about Elijah learning to be a better businessman and money manager, so keeping his financial issues simple is the right choice.

If Elijah’s financial situation can be cleared up, then it can be clearer why he came to Goondiwindi. Is he primarily there to regain his grandfather’s old house in Yetman? To meet the half-sister who’s now in foster care? To build a new career in Goondiwindi or Yetman because he can’t rebuild his career in Mt. Isa? Has he written off living/working in Mt. Isa altogether? Is he inclined to remain in Yetman?
Or is he planning to go back to his earth-moving business once he has regained Ronald’s old house?

Perhaps the most unpalatable idea in the story, which diminishes an audience’s emotional investment, is how 14-year-old Katie is seen as a sexual object by nearly every single man in the script. She is objectified and victimized, which is tragic and unsavory. The following men all view her as a sexual object: Elijah; Teddy the foster dad; Steve with whom Katie and Elijah hitchhike to Brisbane; Albert who won’t rent them a room; the 4 Lebanese gang members; her own father Les; “all the men” around her after she turned 12; Ahmed; Ahmed’s thugs who kidnap her; and Losia for whom she is to be a prize. Charlie is the only notable male character who doesn’t see Katie sexually. This sexual objectification will be offensive to most viewers.

The Development Notes say a rewrite would remove the “brother/sister incest” suggestion, but that’s not sufficient to improve Katie’s very troubling objectification. To make matters worse, her overall characterization is very thinly rendered. To show her youth, she is given a doll, she chooses Minnie Mouse clothes, and she likes her pink princess bedroom decor. And though she’s recently been sexually abused, her mind is fixated on trendy eyeglasses and girls who get to attend private school. Her smart mouth isn’t modulated, and she’s essentially a one-note character until her melodramatic breakdown scene. This depiction is very on-the-nose and over-the-top. It doesn’t feel authentic.

Instead, Katie’s character can be rendered in a much more authentic way. If she has recently suffered the death of her father, she should feel those effects. If she has recently been sexually abused by her foster dad, she can’t be so upbeat when Elijah visits her foster home and takes her to Brisbane. If the filmmakers want her to be emotionally scarred from “being treated like shit all her life” (page 3 of the notes) and physically scarred by Teddy, then those choices have to be rendered consistently and authentically. However, those choices make the tone really sad and dark, and makes the character much less accessible and relatable. The next draft should either excise Katie’s deeply traumatic past and recent sexual abuse, or embrace them in rendering her character. This assessor recommends excising her dark past in hopes of creating a more accessible, viable movie overall.

Elijah and Katie’s relationship is the central relationship of the current draft. However, the script departs from servicing the central relationship in its many efforts to service other ideas, especially the Albert/Chrystal reunification. Just when Elijah learns Katie was in fact sexually abused by Teddy, the script dispenses with dealing with Katie’s welfare and sends both Elijah and Katie off to tend to Albert and Chrystal, respectively. This choice and the timing of it are extremely concerning.

Albert and Chrystal’s reunification steals focus from Elijah and Katie’s story. The “Albert/Chrystal” backstory and subplot aren’t important to the main plotline, which is itself still in need of definition. The movie isn’t about the Albert/Chrystal reunification or about Katie teaching Chrystal to be a proud Aboriginal. Or about Albert bringing Chrystal to watch the Elijah/Losia fight.

Albert’s other function in the script is to articulate how many Aboriginal men are damaged, which causes them to hurt others (page 72-75). Albert’s thesis that
Aboriginal men have an inability to care for their own children is evidenced in how Les treated Elijah; how Les treated Katie; how Albert treated Chrystal’s mom; and in Shelly’s “piles” of case files. That is an overwhelming statement of the parental misconduct, child abuse, and child neglect in the Aboriginal community. Is the movie’s controlling idea that Aboriginal men need to stop a cycle of child abuse? If that is what the movie “is trying to say,” if that’s the movie’s central thematic notion, then the plot should be reconceived to focus around this notion in a clearer, cleaner way.

In fact, the Development Notes for the 6th Draft suggest that Elijah’s dilemma will be a choice either to live like his virtuous grandfather or his vile father (page 1 of the notes). However, this dilemma is an intellectual question. It doesn’t accurately represent the actual choices Elijah is making. He instantly breaks Katie out of her foster home. He doesn’t hesitate to fight when he needs to make money. The script never depicts him as weak-willed with a penchant toward vice. The rewrite to remove the sexual tension with Katie will remove the suggestion that Elijah is immoral. Thus, there’s no indication that Elijah might turn out like his father if he doesn’t make better decisions.

Furthermore, once the sexual tension with Katie is removed, Elijah’s morality will be closer to Rocky Balboa’s than to Charlie Babbitt’s. He’s not conflicted and standing on the precipice of sinking to the level of his father. So the filmmakers’ intellectualized idea that Elijah will either live a life of virtue or vice doesn’t apply to their plot. Albert’s treatise on pain, scars, weakness, and strength doesn’t apply to Elijah’s personal dilemma. The Development Notes suggest Elijah should be more flawed in the next draft, a “good/bad man” (page 2 of the notes), but that might not be what the script needs. It depends on how the filmmakers conceive the central question of the script and whether they want to throw focus on Elijah’s morality.

Another idea that needs attention is the idea of Elijah’s final sacrifice for Katie. At present, there is a confusing idea that Elijah risks his eyesight to fight Losia for Katie’s sake. It’s implied that if Elijah wins, Ahmed will let Katie go. And if Elijah loses, Ahmed will presumably give Katie to Losia. In taking on Losia, Elijah’s torn retina(s) might be destroyed. This idea that Elijah’s sacrificing his sight for Katie is awkward in concept and in execution.

The Development Notes suggest following the RAIN MAN model in that Elijah will have “to sacrifice something to do the right thing” (page 2 of the notes). However, sacrificing his eyesight is not a viable idea. Choosing between risking your eyesight and saving a young girl’s life is an unpalatable and emotionally inaccessible idea. It’s also not clear if Elijah is risking the Yetman house to save Katie’s life. Risking eyesight and risking the Yetman house are yet another set of competing ideas that cause confusion. Again, this assessor is unconvinced that the RAIN MAN model is the best model for the script.
ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Moving chronologically through the script, other issues arise:

- It’s unclear why Les was so cruel to his son Elijah, taking his home and leaving him with nothing at the age of 15, when he was a “good” father to Katie (until she went through puberty and his sexual feelings for her overtook him).

- It feels overly contrived that Elijah and Katie both lose their “fathers” and their homes at the same age. Elijah loses father figure Ronald at 15, and Katie loses Les at 14.

- Elijah can’t get his money from the ATM. He explains to Katie that his business partner and the liquidators froze his funds when he impermissibly withdrew $10,000 to pay for the mortgage on Ronald’s old house. It’s only been a few hours since Elijah took the $10,000. How did his business partner and the liquidators freeze his cash so quickly? Isn’t it a legal procedure that takes time?

- It doesn’t make sense that Elijah would leave Teddy’s home in a huff. If he pisses off Teddy, Teddy will take it out on the foster children. Elijah would understand that. Wouldn’t he play it cool rather than stir up Teddy’s anger? Katie will be the one to pay.

- When Albert meets Elijah, why does he give him a mysterious address that leads him to warehouse fighting? Albert has no idea what Elijah needs in that moment (except for a hotel room). Why assume he wants to prizefight and is good at it?

- Once Elijah and Katie are together, there is very little authentic conversation. When a person meets someone else for the time, they engage in conversation about what their lives are like. That’s not the case in this script. This script is more concerned with fitting in all its (extraneous) plot, rather than breathing life into the characters and giving them each an authentic voice.

- Elijah needs no convincing to start fighting. It’s as if he was secretly waiting for this chance. Is he happy to take up fighting, or is he reluctant? Is he confident or scared? He must be pretty confident if he bets his last $250 in cash on his own fighting skills. Sure, he needs money, and his back might be to the wall. But that doesn’t excuse the script from having to tell us Elijah’s clear POV about fighting. Is fighting a last resort or a welcome opportunity? How would Ronald have felt about Elijah fighting? Did Ronald want him to be fighter, or to go to university and get an office job? Would Ronald see this post-modern form of unorthodox fighting as a natural extension of boxing or as an abomination of his sport?

- Charlie sees Elijah’s first fight against Datu as “just the beginning,” but how does Elijah see it? Is Elijah trying to win $60,000 for the Yetman house, $10,000 to replenish his company’s money, start a new career, etc.?

- If the script’s central relationship is between Elijah and Katie, it should be noted that Katie is not present for a pivotal moment in the script – Elijah’s first fight. Perhaps she should be present. But again, other fundamental questions about the script should be clarified before making that decision. On a related note, what did Katie
know about Ronald’s boxing? How does she feel about boxing and fighting?

-There seems to be a mistaken notion that Elijah is undergoing this dilemma of having to fight to make money because of Katie coming into his life. That’s not true. Elijah’s problems started before he even met Katie. He’s the one who hired the bad site manager. He’s the one who took the $10,000 from his company coffers without permission. He’s the reason for his dilemma, not her. It’s totally valid for him to be his own problem, but it needs to be clearer just how Elijah feels about himself and about Katie.

-Katie’s fascination with private school girls is awkward. Presumably she was in school while she was living with Les and when she was living with Teddy just 2 days ago. Seeing private school girls shouldn’t be such a novelty to her.

-If Charlie is concerned with keeping Elijah’s fighting skills off the radar, the biker club fight is too public a venue. Elijah’s ability won’t stay secret for long.

-Maxine tells Elijah that he can “make his grandfather really proud” by “playing real testimony” to the Aboriginal boxing tents. Does Elijah agree? Is unorthodox fight a tribute to traditional boxing? Would Ronald have preferred for Elijah to be in a white collar job that doesn’t require him to be hit or to hit others?

-Why doesn’t Elijah try to get Katie medical and professional treatment for Teddy’s abuse?!

-Why is it important for Katie to learn to stitch up Elijah? This “montage” seems to be a tactic vying for forced emotional effect.

-It’s hard to believe that Losia would fly to Australia from America, where he is a professional cage fighter, simply to fight Elijah for Ahmed. It’s distasteful for him to fly in to win Katie as a sex toy.

-Charlie has gone broke to Ahmed three times (page 45). When he finally wins with Elijah, he blindly follows “the rules” (page 91) and goes along with Ahmed’s scheme to have Elijah fight Losia. Maxine knows better, but Charlie doesn’t. Is he a friend or foe to Elijah? Is he simply a stupid lemming following the pack?

-Speaking of “the rules,” the rules of the fights, the bets, the second chances, what moves are legal, what moves are illegal, etc. should be set up with much more precision.

-Who is Ahmed that he can operate above the law? He gets away with kidnapping Katie and doing whatever he wants with her. He is ready to give her to Losia as a prize if Losia wins the fight.

-Why is Geoff so helpful to Elijah in Act 3 (i.e. bringing him an attorney in jail, driving him to Brisbane, etc.), when he didn’t go the extra mile for him in Act 1? In addition, when Geoff rescues Elijah from the jail, it feels too convenient and isn’t adequately set up. Plus, Geoff’s rescue denies Elijah, the hero of the movie, the chance to overcome his obstacles on his own merits.
-The script chooses very confusing names for its characters – Ronald and Ronnie, Terry and Teddy.

**Potential and Comments:**

The Development Notes touch upon some of the above issues, but the discussion is relatively brief and generalized, failing to take a strong or specific POV about how to mitigate those issues. Instead, story decisions need to be attacked on a fundamental level. Deeper critical analysis needs to be performed. The filmmakers’ comparison to RAIN MAN is relevant in some areas, and it’s certainly commendable for the filmmakers to look to a fine film as a guidepost. But they’re most likely putting too much stock in the RAIN MAN model, when it isn’t altogether appropriate for their story. This action-driven script can be rewritten to more closely follow RAIN MAN, a drama, but should it be? Is that the best version of this story? This assessor doesn’t think it is. As suggested above, ROCKY and OVER THE TOP seem to be more relevant models, and they follow an action genre framework that is more suitable to this script, its characters, its structure, and its set-pieces.

All in all, this assessor is very dubious about the overabundance of disjointed, competing ideas in the script and worried because the Development Notes don’t speak to any of these problems. It’s difficult, perhaps impossible, to create a cohesive story with all these disparate ideas. You have the grandfather’s boxing legacy, but the story isn’t chiefly about boxing (it’s about kicks, head butts, groin hits, wooden clubs, etc.) or chiefly about Elijah becoming a traditional Aboriginal. You have the earth-moving business in turmoil and Elijah’s unlucky business decisions, but story isn’t chiefly about him becoming a better businessman. You have the sister he never knew, but the story isn’t chiefly about him learning to be a good brother. You have him prizefighting, but the story isn’t chiefly about the prize money. You have the cops and Child Protection in the background searching for Elijah and Katie, but the story isn’t chiefly about hiding out from the authorities. You have Ahmed (and even Charlie) putting Elijah into dangerous fights, but the story isn’t chiefly about Elijah’s fighting.

Rather than trying to service so many ideas, the script should first focus on its central ideas and central characters. The filmmakers should make some fundamental decisions before trying to undertake a rewrite. But the Development Notes doesn’t suggest that enough analysis and decision-making have yet been achieved to improve these fundamental story elements.
### Commentary Boxes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>So So</th>
<th>Not Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story/Plot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Script

- **Title**: Kick Up Dust
- **Recommend**: 
- **Recommend with changes**: 
- **Consider** 
- **Consider next draft**: X
- **Pass**

### Writer

- **Name**: Marcus Waters
- **Recommend**
- **Recommend for other projects**
- **(Suggestions:)**
- **Consider**
- **Consider for other projects**
- **(Suggestions:)**
- **Pass**: X

### Writer Bio (if supplied)

N/A

### Director Bio (if supplied)

N/A
Feedback in response to Script assessment ‘Kick up Dust’

presented by Louise Gough

Report 1 (I can’t see a name as to who authored this report)

• Comments on the transition from the past (Elijah as 15 year old) and setting up Elijah in the present. Concern is that the set-up of Elijah in the present and handling of the exposition is done too quickly and with too much information. Agree in this report and in Lee’s that the set-up for Elijah in the present needs work.

• Discusses the initial introduction to Katie not being positive and speculates that the first impression of her lingers. This is an interesting point. I am always of the school that you don’t have to like a character BUT that you must be interested in what they are going to do next AND have empathy for them. How we approach the introduction to Katie rests with a few things, but mainly the tone, and also ultimately her and Elijah’s arc together. As long as her set-up involves the audience having empathy for her (and we can discuss technically how to do this another time) then a ‘harsh’ introduction to her is not problematic. Indeed it gives her and Elijah’s relationship somewhere to travel rather than be static and ‘happy happy’.

• Challenges the level of violence in the script. This is a significant question that needs to be resolved. My understanding is that we do not want an R rated film. We want this story to reach a wide demographic. If this is the case, we will need to reduce the violence and also possibly consider what form of boxing we are in.

• Indicates that there is a predictability to some of the story plotting, particularly in the boxing/fighting elements. I think we are already thinking of this but in slightly different ways. Firstly, we have discussed in our notes that we will focus on big print and how the action is rendered on the page. This may help mitigate against a feeling of familiarity. The other question here is whether we are in an out-and-out action/boxing film or whether we are in a character drama with boxing. This is one of those questions that I feel we need to talk about. Either is possible. Lee seems to bet on the action/boxing more on her report, but what is the balance we are after? Something that moves from set-piece to set-piece in action? Or something that has some wonderful action set-pieces but character development around and in these sequences?

• Suggests that Elijah has a clear external set of actions but what is lacking is the internal struggle (or growth) of the character. The report notes that the change to Elijah may involved a ‘harshening’ of him but that other film examples given cite that these characters can be sympathetic despite some flaws. I would agree that part of our task in moving forward in this next draft is to discuss Elijah and his journey, what his internal struggle is, and what
he loses if he is unable to change. (Below I will talk a little on my response to Lee’s strong anti response on RAIN MAN which does have a strong arc of change in the protagonist and I would argue is not a reference that is unuseable for us).

- Confirms that the social services material should be there only to serve Elijah’s story (adding complication and stakes) rather than have its own plot for its own sake. Yes, agree. I think what Lee raises, which is something we do need to be very clear on is the central question of the script. If it is about Elijah being able to keep Katie and give her the home he never had, then social services may play a bigger role. If the question is more about him being able to win money to get his business back, perhaps social services takes a back seat as an antagonist. So yes, generally I agree with this response here but how we handle the presence and dramatic role and antagonism of social services will be dependent on a bigger choice re dramatic question.

- Challenges that many of the characters are represented in stereotypical (and indeed) racist ways. This is a very interesting observation. The quality of the secondary (and third tier) characters is something we should work on overall. I think what is most important is that we work on the A story of Elijah first and foremost and then calibrate or recalibrate the second and third tier characters to serve his story. If we end up being ‘just’ in a boxing film then some of the characters can be more crudely drawn. If we are in a story that is drama with action then a more surprising approach to character can be calibrated.

Report 2 (Regina Lee)

- Well one first thing to note is that Lee mistakes fencing (building a fence) with the sport of fencing (en garde). Ok, now to the serious...

- The report indicates the genre is not clear. Is it drama or is it action. Is it an action movie about fighting or a drama about siblings? Need to identify Elijah’s precise goal. Lee lies firmly on the side of this being an action film and argues that this approach suits the current material and strongly insinuates that it suits the market better too. This is where a discussion between us three would be good. For us to be firmly clear on what film we want to be in. I completely agree with her though that Elijah’s goal is not precisely embedded in the current draft of the script, and, that we must do that in moving forward. Indeed this goal will help define the shape of the film and genre we are in. Unlike Lee I do still believe the RAIN MAN model as a touchstone has merit. Yes, I do agree with her in the report that if we were to actually emulate all of the elements of RAIN MAN it would be a mess and would not work. BUT what I see is that elements of RAIN MAN as a touchstone allow us to build that bridge between ACTION and DRAMA. For example, what if Elijah has lost his business and he is desperate to get it back. He is on the bones of his arse and the only way he can get any money is with his fists. But he learns he has a sister and has to take her into his care. She is an obstacle and complication to him as he still pursues boxing
to make money to get his business back. But as he fights his way forward, snookers his money, he gets to develop a relationship with his sister. And he abandons his external goal of $$ for business, to give her and himself the home they never had. Puts the money toward buying the old family house, and will raise his sister, walk away from boxing, and find a job/or start a new one. His internal values changed BECAUSE of his relationship with his sister.

- The report indicates that the tone is confusing, simply is it meant to be heartwarming or dark. Lee suggests it is too dark. I agree with this. I personally feel the tone is too dark. To change the tone does not make us lose stakes though.

- The report questions who the audience is for and how will the script serve and please that audience. I think this is a good question. She is in the ilk of an action movie. Where is your intent Marcus? And where do you see the market Cathy?

- The report asks what is the central driving question of the script. The report argues it is currently unclear nor properly expressed through the narrative. (Is it about Katie and keeping her out of foster care? Is it about Elijah winning enough $ as a fighter to buy his grandfather’s house? Is it about Elijah being able to find a a new career now that his business is kaput?) I think this is a strong and good question to ask. And to be honest with you both, like Lee, I can't say exactly which is the central line for Elijah. The answer to this question informs all of the next tier questions i.e. antagonist, genre etc. And although I love so many elements of the script, I do think that it is about focussing down to Elijah first and foremost.

- The report asks who the central antagonist is (and says that Katie is misidentified). She complicates his quest. No she is technically not the antagonist. Yes, this is my error. If Katie is crucial for you both, and I think she is, I think that you do want this to have a strong sibling relationship element... then she is a complicating force in the story, particularly if his goal (at first) is to make $$ to get back business, then being landed with a stroppy/upset 15 year old becomes a complicating factor for him.

- The report suggests the story need a proper character set-up for Elijah in the present. I would agree with this. I think we need an economical present-day set-up for him, and find a way for the exposition about his woes to be drip-fed in a way that makes the audience know what's up for him.

- Lee questions the backstory set-up with Elijah and Ronald. She argues that the backstory is not relevant because Elijah’s story is not about a prodigal son returning. That is, the backstory feels disconnected from the central plotline of Elijah’s story, which is focussed on Elijah and Katie. This is an interesting note. I sort of feel like Lee is throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I agree that the set-up of the backstory may be a little off-point in terms of how the main throughline of the script currently unfolds. But there are some aspects here that I feel are important, for example: where Elijah learnt to box
(and that he knows how to box); if the house/land stays important then I think it's important to set-up his love/connection to it.

- Lee argues that Katie is a surprise addition and is only important if Elijah’s character journey is chiefly about learning to love and appreciate his sister. (But Lee questions if RAIN MAN is a model to use). See above re my thoughts on RAIN MAN as a touchstone. My understanding is that neither of you want an out-and-out boxing action film???. So my feeling is Katie IS a surprise addition and what is set up is that his key journey is getting money to fix his business BUT the surprise arrival of his sister makes his change this goal and have an internal shift. Yes? No?

- A practical question is raised as to what happened with Elijah’s business, how he is on the skids, how he seeks to buy the house, indicating that the ideas feel too complex to communicate quickly and evocatively. Sure. This can be done, and done rather easily if a little more time is given to setting up Elijah in the present at the beginning.

- The sexualisation of Katie is of real concern to Lee. Me too I must admit. BUT I also believe Marcus as a keen intent on illuminating the brutality of this.

- If Katie is important and belongs in the story then she must be rendered more ‘authentically’ Lee argues. She also argues in the current draft Elijah and Katie are the central relationship but the storyline deviates from them too much with other characters (Albert/Chrystal for e.g.). And Lee also suggests that secondary characters like Albert introduced themes that don’t seem to be the central conceit of the story. For discussion, but I do tend to agree. My feeling though is that we were already going to spend time on Katie in the next draft and do some work on her. Further, whilst I like the canvas of the characters, I do tend to agree with Lee here, at least at first, to focus most on Elijah, then deal with second and third tier characters.

- Lee questions whether the ‘choice’ between living ‘good’ or living ‘bad’ is possible in the story for Elijah. Well... for discussion, but this also goes to the RAIN MAN material for me, how a man who seems self-interested and focussed, is affected when a new person comes into their lives, and their goals and values change.

- The report indicates that the eye-sight stakes feel awkward in concept and execution, and suggests it is not a viable idea. Suggesting that choosing between your eyesight and saving your sister is unpalatable and emotionally inaccessible. This is a tough call but I do tend to agree with Lee here although I would not express my question in the same way.

- (Lee lists some other minor credibility issues, concerns). Unless they are crucial for Jock and SQ I think the bigger issues are more important i.e. central question, genre, tone etc.
• Suggests ROCKY and OVER THE TOP (which I will get on Netflix tomorrow) are better touchstones than RAIN MAN as they follow an action genre framework that is better suited to the script, characters and set-pieces. *I personally think we can deliver an action movie WITH drama... despite her emphatic doubts...*
Kick Up Dust Scene Breakdown

Scene 1 - Ext. Freeway - Morning.
Elijah hitchhiking with his bag strapped over his shoulder, cars becoming less and less as roads become more remote… a drifter…

Elijah approaches a house, left to rot.

Scene 3 - Int. Remote Country Property - Night.
Elijah walks through the house and looks at a photo of a young girl, (14) thumb tacked to the wall. The girl is by herself, alone… Elijah shakes his head – a look of surprise, was not expecting to see this… Elijah picks up other photos of the girl (much younger) she is with an Aboriginal woman, and a man in his mid 40’s… a look of recognition from Elijah as he looks at the Aboriginal man. The rest of the house appears empty of life, as if people left in a hurry… Elijah sets up a squat.

Scene 4 - Int. Remote Country Property - Early Morning.
Elijah woken by somebody nailing in windows doors, discovers Elijah in the house explains house is under a public trust the owner having passed away, asks Elijah his relationship to the owner… he was the son. Elijah becomes a little uppity here, tells whoever is boarding up the house that it’s a waste of time as soon ‘it’ll be mine and the boards will be coming off’. Elijah is given a card of who he has to talk to regarding the house.

Scene 5 - Int. Remote Country Property - Early Morning.
Elijah seen shaving, getting dressed.

Scene 6 - Int. Public Trust Office - Day.
Elijah talks with an officer from the Public Trust (Geoff), Elijah’s father having passed without a signed will, leaving the power of attorney with the Public Trust Office. REVEAL: the house was mortgaged $60,000 Public Trust was planning to sell and give difference to Elijah’s sister, Katie when she turns 18 (Katie is currently 14). Elijah shows Geoff the photo from the house; yes… that is his sister Katie. Geoff has been dealing with Dept Families Child Protection as currently Katie is under their custody. As the older brother, if Elijah can raise $60,000 he can get the mortgage papers back and do whatever he wants with the property. Geoff raises an eyebrow, ‘I can’t see you raising that much money though, can you?’ Elijah asks how long does he have? Geoff replies back, ‘2 months, 60 days…’ These comments fire Elijah up into action.

Scene 7 - Int. Public Phone - Evening.
Elijah telling someone he is coming to Brisbane to make quick money and asks the person (Uncle Albert) to get things ready.
Scene 8 - Int. Cemetery - Night.

Elijah is walking through the cemetery, he has a map which shows lot’s within the cemetery. He comes to a stop and counts rows ahead of him and then moves towards his father’s grave. He stands over a simple wooden cross – no gravestone or legacy… just the white cross sticking out of the ground with a lot number stamped in the middle. Elijah folds the map up and puts it back in his pocket. He looks around all the other grave sites to reveal others that leave messages to loved ones and the names of families left in mourning…

Scene 9 - Int. Department of Community Services - Morning.

Elijah talks with Shelly, the case manager. Shelly’s position is clear; child protection is no place for a teenage child to be and hopes that Elijah is ready to take up responsibility as Katie’s older brother. Katie will be in foster homes for the next 3 and 1/2 years until she turns 18. The system is not going to do this girl any favors, but Elijah is careful in avoiding any commitment - he’s got 60 days to raise the money and that’s his focus. He does though ask Shelly a number of questions regarding Katie, ‘what does she look like, her personality’? Shelly arranges for Elijah to meet with Katie.

Scene 10 - Ext. Old Queenslander - Afternoon.

Elijah approaches a rundown house, guarded by a pair of dogs. The curtain at the front window is slightly pulled to the side (Katie), as Elijah looks up the curtain is quickly pulled across. Elijah allows the dogs to sniff him as Teddy (Foster Dad) reluctantly allows him to come inside.

Scene 11 - Int. Old Queenslander - Afternoon.

Dinner has been set, there are 5 foster kids aged from 5-12 yrs old sitting at the table, but Katie is in her room, Marg (foster mother) comments Katie never comes out. Elijah goes to the door of Katie’s bedroom, knocks quietly, Katie tells him to wait… she will be out soon.

Scene 12 - Int. Old Queenslander: Kitchen - Afternoon.

Katie now is at the table with the other foster children, constantly being reprimanded by Marj. Elijah is trying to start conversation but Katie is unresponsive, closed… Marg insists she speaks up but Elijah explains it’s OK, Katie looks and feels uncomfortable. At first very little dialogue between them, as Katie remains sullen.

Scene 13 - Int. Old Queenslander: Lounge - Afternoon.

As the kids pack up the dinner table Elijah tries talking to Teddy and Marg asks how long Katie has been like this, their responses are judgmental and uncaring ‘little miss muck, won’t say a word, or ever come out of her room…’ Elijah looks around at the hording, mess and dust making the house hot and uncomfortable, no place for children.
Scene 14 - Int. Old Queenslander: Kitchen - Afternoon.

Elijah enters, he tells the other kids to leave the plates and dishes as he helps Katie clear away and wash up – tells Katie about being booted out of home and how lonely he was at her age. Katie looks up and tells Elijah that she dreams of being left alone… Marg and Teddy just want to get paid (foster care allowance), that’s why she’s here, the money… they don’t care. ‘So why are you here,’ asks Katie. Elijah doesn’t respond. Katie tells him the only person who ever showed any feelings towards her was an auntie in Brisbane, she pulls out a crumpled piece of paper, ‘you wanna do the right thing,’ she holds up the piece of paper, an address written in handwriting, ‘get me here.’ Elijah promises nothing it looks as if he’s abandoning her and he leaves. ‘Thought so,’ Katie says to herself as Elijah walks out the door…


Elijah is repairing an old dusty broken down Ute. He stops… looks around the property then back to the engine. Re-tightens what looks like a cleaned out distributor and goes inside the house.


Elijah walks into the lounge where he has the Ute’s battery connected to a charger – picks up the charger to see the battery fully charged. He walks into Katie’s room and takes the photo of Katie and puts it in his wallet. Back out to the charger – disconnects the battery and exits outside.


Elijah is back out at the Ute. He connects the battery and starts the car… a look of determination as he drives off.

Scene 18 - Ext. Old Queenslander - Night.

Elijah approach’s Teddy’s house and gives some meat to the dogs and chains them up. He then enters the house kicking in the front door.

Scene 19 - Int. Old Queenslander - Night.

Now inside Elijah smashes every phone in the house and tells Katie to come with him, Katie looks around at the rubbish piled up around the house, she looks out at the window, the large fence, and we can hear the dogs outside barking, what other choice does she have? Katie quickly packs her gear. Katie stops, empties Teddy’s wallet, Elijah looking on, Katie cursing both Teddy and Marj for the way they treat her and the other kids. Elijah and Katie exit together.


Elijah and Katie drive away, Elijah is cut and dried, ‘I’ll drop you at your Auntie’s as soon as we’re in Brisbane.’ Elijah makes it clear that he can’t look after her Katie doesn’t seem upset, she doesn’t even appear to be listening, instead just looking out the side window gazing at the stars…

The bus pulls over to let some passengers off just as Elijah and Katie catch up. Elijah and Katie hop onboard.

SCENE 22 - Ext. Freeway - Day.

Establishing shot. The roads become busier and wider.

SCENE 23 - Int. Bus - Afternoon.

Shelly rings, Elijah puts the responsibility of breaking Katie out back onto Shelly and the foster home, ‘Teddy and Marj both pigs, no place for children’. Elijah asks Katie if she wants to say anything - Katie shakes her head, no… and Elijah hangs up the phone.

SCENE 24 - Int. Roma St Transit Centre – Evening.

The bus arrives in Brisbane, vast contrast from the remote town they have come from, people buildings traffic everywhere Katie is in awe, this is a world she could only ever have dreamed of but stays close to Elijah almost like a frightened shadow… They look at bus timetables and using the old screwed up piece of paper Katie has, they catch another bus to find Aunty Delmay’s place.

SCENE 25 - Int. Aunty Delmays Address – Evening.

They get to the address only to discover that Aunty Delmay is dead having passed away some months ago. New people are in the house no relationship with Katie and they are turned away. Now they are in the shit and have to work out what to do. Katie is resolute in not wanting to return back to the community nothing is there for her, only the house… and they won’t let her stay there, and what if she ends up in another shitty foster home. Elijah is becoming obviously very frustrated – he tells Katie they’ll work something out? He drags her to one of the few places he knows, the hostel where he plans to meet with Albert and make some money.

SCENE 26 - Ext. Aboriginal Hostel - Evening.

Elijah and Katie arrive at an Aboriginal hostel.

SCENE 27 - Int. Aboriginal Hostel (Reception) - Evening.

Uncle Albert watches TV as Elijah and Katie enter. Albert is not so much happy to see Elijah, but happy to see the grandson of Ronald Waters… he explains to both Katie and Elijah how they (Albert and Ronald) grew up together, ‘best bare fist boxer to ever come from the community,’ nothing he wouldn’t do for Ronald’s grandchildren. Unfortunately Albert doesn’t have any say in who gets to stay at the hostel and accommodation is fill - Albert agrees to let Katie sleep in his room for the night, as he and Elijah then leave together.
Scene 28 - Ext. West End Street - Night.

Elijah has several messages on his phone from Shelly. He decides to call her back; Shelly explains that after their first call she has agreed to look into their claims of abuse regarding the foster home but this doesn’t change the fact that Elijah broke her out and Katie is now considered on the run. Elijah stalls when asked whereabouts and turns his phone off. Albert asks about Katie, there was no mention of her when Elijah rang to arrange things. Elijah explains he had no idea about Katie and she was never part of the plan.

Scene 29 - Int. Aboriginal Hostel: Albert’s Room - Night.

Katie is looking at the many photos of family and community Albert has thumb tacked to his wall – drops her bag and then looks around the rest of the room, everything is immaculately placed the bed looks as if it was made in a hospital or hotel, everything perfect and in its place. Sits on the bed… decides against lifting the bedspread instead lying down on top of the blankets. Katie raises her knees cradling them into her chest wrapped in tight arms – closes her eyes and falls asleep.

Scene 30 - Ext. West End Industrial Area - Night.

Elijah and Albert come to a warehouse a crowd of people gathered around entering the building. Elijah notices expensive cars lining the building. Albert and Elijah enter.

Scene 31 - Int. Aboriginal Hostel - Night.

Katie wakes… gets up off the bed - walks past some of the night staff and goes outside into the West End night…

Scene 32. - Int. Warehouse - Night.

In the middle of the crowd are two men in a bare-fisted cage boxing match. Ahmed well dressed gangster seems to be running things. The crowd screaming bets at bookies on each of the fighters and when one of the men loses we close in on the fighter’s manager, (Charlie) frustrated as he heads away from the crowd. Albert gestures for Elijah to follow him.

Scene 33 - Ext. West End - Night.

Katie comes to a park up on top of a hill that lets her look down into windows of the houses below, she is drawn by the luxury and comfort of many of the residents below… she picks out a house and moves in closer.

Scene 34 - Int. Warehouse Open Bar - Night.

Albert introduces Elijah to Charlie who orders a drink and lights a cigarette. Charlie won’t put up Elijah’s $250 fee to enter the cage, ‘no one gets to fight for free’. Elijah looks at Albert who opens his wallet, all he has… Elijah tells Albert Katie has money and Albert gives Charlie the money, Charlie agrees as a favor to Albert to put Elijah in the next cage fight.
**Scene 35 - Ext.  West End Home: Backyard - Night.**

Katie is sitting on a kid’s swing at the back of a house; slowly swinging back and forth looking up at the stars as the occupants lay inside sleeping...

**Scene 36 - Int.  Warehouse - Night.**

Charlie is ridiculed as he returns with Elijah. Datu, Elijah’s opponent says a prayer in his native Philippine tongue. The fight begins and Elijah ends up on the ground. Maxine, Charlie’s medic, trainer (and partner) advises him to stay down, but Elijah refuses. He is knocked out by Datu.

**Scene 37 - Ext.  Warehouse - Night.**

Maxine shines a light in Elijah’s eyes and pokes his ribs checking for damage. Elijah wakes us the last of the mob are leaving. Charlie not impressed by Elijah’s fighting skills, he lacks composure, went at Datu like a bull at a gate and no patience, and no balance – too much work to get him up to standard. Maxine gestures to Elijah he’s OK, and he jumps up pleading with Charlie who is already on his way out the door. Albert suggests to Charlie that he can help with Elijah’s balance and work on his defense. Charlie walks back and tells Elijah that Albert is a good man, but sentiment has no place in the fight game - they are all wasting their time… ‘You are all guts and grit and if you just continue the way you are you’ll never see what’s on offer around you boy’. Maxine sees something in Elijah, tells Albert to be patient she will talk to Charlie. Maxine then follows Charlie leaving Elijah bruised and beaten alone with Albert.

**Scene 38 - Ext.  West End Industrial Area – Early Morning.**

Elijah and Albert walking back to the hostel as Elijah tells Albert that all he needs is another chance, Albert replies that right now the most important thing that Elijah has to worry about is how he expects to tell Katie he just lost her last $250 dollars…

**Scene 39 - Int.  Aboriginal Hostel - Morning.**

Arriving back at the hostel Uncle Albert sees how uncomfortable Elijah is around blackfellas. He tells him to stop running… ‘he’ll never be a scratch on his grandfather if he keeps running.’ Elijah is pissed off and tells Albert he’ll get his money. Sneaking into Katie’s room Elijah finds the money and is busted by an angry Katie. He tells her to get dressed as they’re leaving. Storming out of the hostel Elijah throws down the $250 to Albert and tells him he’ll show him - Katie drags behind confused.

**Scene 40 - Ext.  West End Business District - Day.**

Katie furious needs an explanation about what just happened. Elijah tells her that things didn’t work out with Albert, he owed him that money and now they need somewhere else to go - with little choice Elijah decides to go to Charlie.
**Scene 41 - Ext.  Old Boxing Gym - Afternoon.**

Elijah and Katie stop at the Gym. Elijah tells Maxine there is nowhere else to go and they have no money – he wants to fight… he needs to fight. Maxine looks at Katie, she tells them she will talk to Charlie but no promises.

**Scene 42 - Int.  Old Boxing Gym: Kitchen - Late Afternoon.**

Elijah confronts Charlie, tells him that he will do whatever it takes. Charlie admires that he came to him after being beaten, Charlie needs a fighter willing to get back up off the canvas.

**Scene 43 - Int.  Old Boxing Gym: Back - Two Bedroom Unit - Night.**

Elijah and Katie enter the unit built in at the back of the Gym. Katie disappears into one of the rooms still not willing to talk to Elijah after losing the money. Not being able to sleep Elijah walks through the gym at night… trophies now covered in dust and photos of old boxers adorn the walls. Elijah moves towards a punching bag and at first hits it lightly – then harder as he starts to channel his frustration – faster harder and quicker as the punching bag moves in time with Elijah’s fists.

**Scene 44 - Ext.  West End Gym - Night.**

Elijah has fallen asleep Katie comes out of her room, walks quietly past Elijah, sees her photo from the house laying on the table next to Elijah where he sleeps. She smiles and then goes outside to walk in the wonderment of the West End Night…

**Scene 45 - Ext.  West End - Night.**

Katie walks through the streets looking in amazement at the different houses, stops and looks into the windows of people she will never meet – beautiful… she goes back up to the same park and starts to look through windows but this time she looks upset, something she has seen isn’t right… she starts to move down towards one of the houses.

**Scene 46 - Ext.  West End House - Night.**

Katie now in the bushes looking through a window she is close, very close… she looks to be crying: REVEAL, in the house she is looking at is an Aboriginal girl (Chrystal), the house beautiful, the girl takes some nachos out of the microwave - Katie wiping the tears from her eyes as the girl moves from the kitchen into the lounge room as if she was floating on air… large flat screen TV as her mother sits there waiting for her daughter, they laugh together and start flicking through the channels… Katie has gone – the yard empty…

**Scene 47 - Ext.  West End Gym - Morning.**

Elijah meets with Charlie and Maxine to start training. Katie follows but looks distracted, her mind elsewhere…
**Scene 48 - Int. West End Gym - Morning.**

It is clear that Charlie is able to offer what Elijah needs, quick money and an understanding of the fight game. Charlie discusses Maxine’s role, to not only assist in training but administer 1st aid and will keep Elijah fit and ready between fights. Katie walks past them and goes to exit, Elijah asks where she is going and she replies abruptly ‘a walk,’ and then exits. Charlie demands Elijah’s attention stays on the training and Elijah lets her leave.

**Scene 49 - Ext. West End House - Night.**

Katie has gone to Chrystal’s house and follows her on her way to school, Chrystal in a Private School (Somerville House) uniform, meets up with friends on the way to school. Katie follows the girls down the street as Chrystal turns to confront her, Katie freezes, and she wants to run, hide but can’t move, Chrystal approaches her, wants to know why she is following her, embarrassed Katie runs off…

**Scene 50 - Int. West End Gym - Morning.**

Charlie with Maxine’s help begins to work on Elijah’s balance, skipping with more skipping and then having to stand on one leg, then the other as Charlie and Maxine move around him and push Elijah from either side – Elijah falling to the ground but getting back to his feet.

**Scene 52 - Ext. Alleyway, West End - Day.**

Katie on her way back to the gym is harassed by 4 gang members. Elijah, looking for Katie appears just in time as one of the men grabs her. A fight ensues, with the men drawing out blades. Elijah uses his skill to incapacitate all of them. He and Katie flee the scene.

**Scene 53 - Int. Gym: Two Bedroom Unit - Evening.**

Elijah chastises Katie for wandering off. Katie lashes out at him, this is the first time they have really spoken since he took her money and they left the hostel. Katie just wanted to be left alone, that was until Elijah turned up… she saw the photo the other night he has of her from the house – he left it on the table (scene, 44) and now she is just so confused - this is the first time in a long time someone has stood up for her, cared about her… she needs an answer ‘is he going to stick around…’. Elijah confesses that he does care for her – he’ll get her money back but he’s confused to, maybe the best thing would be to send her back to child services. Katie begs him to let her stay with him… Elijah agrees.

**Scene 54 - Int. Warehouse - Night.**

Datu and Curly prepare for a fight. Charlie advises Elijah to observe the fight, learn what he can from watching Curly. They also discuss Charlie’s expenses/takings for each fight. Curly wins the fight over Datu easily and is set up as a major obstacle for Elijah - the quickest way to make money is to get Elijah in the cage with Curly early then they can get the best odd’s. Elijah sees Albert in the crowd but ignores him.
Scene 55 - Ext. Somerville House (School) West End - Morning.

Katie waits out the front gate, sees Chrystal, goes to her, Katie wants to apologise for running off the other day. Chrystal looks uneasy tells Katie to stop following her.

Scene 56 - Ext. Bikers’ Hangout - Afternoon.

Charlie’s car pulls up to the bikers’ hangout and Charlie, Elijah and Maxine get out. They are approached by biker Chino, the fight has been arranged for Elijah to fight out of the glare of others. Maxine is talking to Elijah about letting the fighter (Patch) came at him and work on his defense which is what they have been working on in the gym. A large amount of cash is put down on a table in front of Elijah and the fight begins.

Scene 57 - Int. Bikers’ Hangout - Afternoon.

The two men square off and begin to fight. At first Elijah does as he was told and weaves in and out maintaining his balance and not being hit until Patch lands a lucky punch and this rocks Elijah, he moves away from the game-plan and pummels Patch to a pulp. Charlie shaking his head - this was not how things were meant to go, and he expects trouble (Elijah taking down Patch just a little too easily).

Scene 58 - Int. Bikers’ Hangout - Afternoon.

Charlie goes to claim his winnings from Chino, but Chino refuses, claiming the fight wasn’t fair. He threatens Charlie’s group with a gun, sending them away without their winnings.

Scene 59 - Int. Charlie’s Car - Afternoon.

It looks like they are beat but Elijah needs the money desperately and this time he isn’t running away - Elijah decides to walk in there and get what is owed to him, convinces Charlie to turn the car around.

Scene 60 - Int. Bikers’ Hangout - Afternoon.

The bikers are agog, as Elijah returns demanding his money… Chino’s father, Ronnie turns up just as Chino is about to give the order to beat Elijah to a pulp. Ronnie knew Elijah’s grandfather and had great respect for the ‘Best bare fist knock em down boxer he ever saw,’ Ronnie is willing to give Elijah the money owed but not until they all have a drink to celebrate Ronnie meeting Elijah.
Scene 61 - Int. Bikers’ Hangout - Night.

We see the stack of cash Elijah has toward his plan but as they all drink to celebrate Charlie goes into a drunken tirade against both Elijah and his Aboriginality angry that once again Elijah didn’t do as he was told, fighting with rage instead of skill. Charlie goes on to suggests that Elijah’s ain’t nothing but a scared little boy and if he doesn’t learn to listen and take account for his own bloody actions, ‘you’ll never be nothing but a useless bloody Abo like the rest of yah mob, yah grandfather was the standout boy… not the norm, and that’s the bloody truth… you, yah scared and always running…’

Scene 62 - Ext. West End Aboriginal Hostel - Morning.

Elijah asks Charlie and Maxine to drop off him at the hostel wants to fix things up with Albert… you can cut the tension with a knife, no apology from Charlie.

Scene 63 - Ext. West End Aboriginal Hostel - Morning.

Elijah asks Albert for help, Charlie is unstable… all over the place, and drinks… wants to sort things with Katie, tells Albert about the house and confides in his past, Elijah tells Albert the truth that he ran from home rather than being kicked out…

Scene 63 - Int. Gym: Board and Lodging - Morning.

Elijah is on the phone to Geoff, circumstances have changed, not sure what he wants to do, will have 30 grand soon from the fight with Curly, wants to know if that can hold the house until he knows what he is doing, needs time to think more about selling the house… Katie walks in hears that Elijah plans on selling the house. Katie is confronted by a sense of betrayal and she runs back outside… Elijah has no idea that Katie overheard him.

Scene 64 - Int. Gym: Katie’s Bedroom - Day.

Elijah is setting up Katie’s room having purchased new curtains and bedspread, puts posters on the wall…


With nowhere else to go Katie goes to Chrystal’s and breaks in while Chrystal is at school and the mum isn’t home. Katie tries on some of Chrystal’s clothes, and looks at herself in the mirror imagining another life – Katie is overcome with grief as she looks at herself in the mirror… grief turns to fear as somebody opens the front door – Katie hides in a spare room, careful not to be trapped in Chrystal’s bedroom.

Scene 66 - Int. Chrystal’s House – Day.

Katie goes to sneak out – can hear Chrystal crying… waits on the other side of the door listening.

Scene 67 - Ext. Chrystal’s House - Afternoon.

Mum comes home and parks the car, gets out walks towards the front door.
Scene 68 - Int. Chrystal's House – Day.

Katie goes to open the front door only to be confronted by the mum who enters – they stare off Katie still in Chrystal’s clothes. The mum calls out to Chrystal.

Scene 69 - Int. Chrystal’s Bedroom – Day.

Chrystal in her room wiping the tears – cleans her face as mum calls her name not wanting her mother to know she has been crying (no idea about Katie). The mother calls again – louder… much louder.

Scene 70 - Int. Chrystal’s House – Day.

Chrystal comes to the front to see Katie staring at her - Katie is trying really hard not to cry… Chrystal asks the mum if she should call the police – the mum says no. The mum starts to tell Katie how hard they work, that Katie had no right coming into their house stealing. Katie looks at Chrystal who to Katie’s surprise doesn’t say anything about them seeing each other the other day. Katie looks back at the mum and tells her she is no thief, she just wanted to wear it… starts undressing as the tears start coming. Chrystal tells her not to bother – she wouldn’t want it back now anyway. The mum slowly moves to the side to give Katie room to walk out… Katie exits.

Scene 71 - Int. Aboriginal Hostel - Night.

Elijah goes to see Albert as Katie hasn’t come home and the hostel is one of the few places in Brisbane that Katie knows. Elijah hoping that he’ll find Katie safely with Albert only to discover Albert hasn’t seen her, Elijah starts to panic. So Albert offers to help go and find her. Elijah worried sick about not knowing where she is completely stumped as to why she has bolted.

Scene 72 - Ext. Chrystal’s house - Night.

Katie goes to her favorite park… looks over the houses towards Musgrave Park. She can see Aboriginal people gathered and drinking under trees - she rips off Chrystal’s dress and gets changed back into her old clothes.


Elijah is frantic, looking for Katie…

Scene 74 - Ext. West End Industrial Area - Night.

Katie finds a St Vinnie’s Clothing bin and slides on through the slot at the top.

Scene 75 - Int. West End Industrial Area - Night.

Katie rips open bags of blankets, clothing – makes a bed makeshift pillows… goes to sleep.
Scene 76 - Ext. Chrystal’s Bedroom - Night.

Chrystal asleep as her mum stands at the door looking at her… the room has everything, vanity unit, lap-top computer, iPod, stereo and television. The mum closes the door behind her to leave Chrystal to sleep.

Scene 77 - Ext. West End – (Intercut Sequence).

Elijah and Albert talking to people, both black and white looking for Katie… nothing.

Scene 78 - Int. Gym – Early Morning.

Elijah returns – no sign of Katie, unable to sleep he hits the boxing bags, looks at the old trophies and photos of boxers on the wall – starts to copy the stance of a traditional boxer rather than a cage fighter – slightly bouncing from one leg to the other maintaining balance.

Scene 79 - Ext. Somerville House (School) West End - Morning.

Katie sees Chrystal, and goes to her, Chrystal tells her to stay away – threatens to call her mother on her mobile… Katie asks Chrystal why she was crying, heard her when she was in the house. Chrystal stops – denies she was ever crying. Katie explains she knows sadness, real sadness… could feel Chrystal’s tears when she stood at the door. Katie’s body language and her tone becomes stronger, Chrystal less defensive – not so intimidating as if no one else knows/shares Chrystal’s pain. Some of Chrystal’s friends come over to see what’s wrong, Chrystal sends them away, Chrystal can’t talk to Katie here… they go for a walk away from the school.

Scene 80 - Int. Gym – Morning.

Elijah is woken by Charlie and Maxine, he has a fight today, Elijah tells them he has to go and look for Katie, no fight no deal explains Charlie… Elijah leaves with Charlie and Maxine.

Scene 81 - Ext. ‘Katie’s Park’ - Day.

Katie takes Chrystal to her favorite park shows Chrystal her house. Katie tells Chrystal about her father passing, being with Elijah. Chrystal confesses she hasn’t seen her father for months after he and her mother split up… she used to be the princess and now he’s gone… just gone. The girls hug, this is the first time Katie has confided in anyone since her father passed.

Scene 82 - Int. Warehouse Bay - Day.

Elijah is being beaten badly in his fight, his mind on Katie… Charlie rips up his betting tab’s and walks off leaving Maxine to pick up the pieces.
Scene 83 - Int. Chrystal’s House - Day.

Katie and Chrystal return, each has agreed to help the other, they are to write two letters. Chrystal is going to write what she wants to say to her father before calling him on his mobile, and Katie is going to write a letter to Elijah about selling the house.

Scene 84 - Int. Aboriginal Hostel - Day.

Elijah badly beaten and bruised goes to see Albert, still no sign of Katie. All is lost Charlie furious after the last fight and Katie nowhere to be seen.

Scene 85 - Int. Chrystal’s house - Day.

Chrystal collects the two letters from the home printer as she tells Katie that they should leave before her mother gets home.

Scene 86 - Ext. ‘Katie’s Park’ - Day.

Katie is holding Chrystal’s hand as Chrystal rings her father on her mobile – he doesn’t take responsibility… blames the mother on his not seeing Chrystal who hangs up as Katie consuls her – Katie’s turn, Chrystal reassures Katie that she is glad she made the call – she had to make the call… even though sad, Chrystal appears to have had a massive weight taken from her having confronted her father. Chrystal drags Katie to find Elijah.

Scene 87 - Ext. Gym - Night.

Charlie answers the door, he has been drinking. He tells Katie it is her fault that Elijah couldn’t focus losing the fight… he has lost everything and closes the door sending Katie on her way.

Scene 88 - Int. Aboriginal Hostel - Night.

Katie and Chrystal are looking for Albert but he isn’t in – was heading to Musgrave Park looking for Katie, the girls are asked to wait and the person calls Albert who is on his way…

Scene 89 - Ext. West End Police Station - Night.

Elijah stands out the front, no other option but to ask the police for help, 48 hrs since he last saw Katie – looks at her photo from the wallet… deep breath, puts the photo back in his wallet and walks towards the Police Station to put himself in. His phone rings, its Albert, thinks he may have found the girls wants Elijah to meet him at the hostel. Elijah relieved walks away from the Police Station.

Scene 90 - Int. Aboriginal Hostel - Night.

Albert arrives, Katie happy to see him but Chrystal is nervous, Aboriginal tenants start arriving home and Chrystal doesn’t want to be there uncomfortable. Albert takes the girls out the back to wait for Elijah.

Albert has lit a fire and mob a coming out from the hostel to join him and the girls, Chrystal is staying close to Katie. Elijah enters quickens his pace as he sees Katie and hugs her, and though there is a part of her happy to see him (though she is still angry about the house) she is still not able to hug him back, just waiting for him to stop so she can pull away. Elijah asks why she ran away, Katie hands Elijah the note... he starts to read it then folds it and puts it in his pocket. Elijah admits to being scared, never had anyone rely on him, and thought the best thing to do was cut and run, but he’ll get that bloody money and he’ll get that house and that’s where they’ll go. Albert claps his hands, invites Elijah Katie and Chrystal to join them in a traditional Aboriginal song and dance, Albert offers Chrystal his hand and takes her with Katie as they teach them an Indigenous language song – Chrystal becoming more relaxed around the mob.

Scene 92 - Ext. Aboriginal Hostel - Night.

Elijah happy to be back with Katie, Chrystal looks relaxed and enjoying herself - her fear gone... Elijah’s phone rings – its Shelly. The other girls in the foster house were abused and the foster parents were found guilty of neglect, if Katie is returned she’ll be put with another family now which is what Elijah wanted so Shelly tells Elijah it is time to send her back. To Shelly’s surprise Elijah tells her that Katie isn’t going anywhere, she’s staying with him and he’s going to fight to keep her.

Scene 93 - Ext. Aboriginal Hostel - Night.

Only a handful of people remain around the fire, Albert covers Katie and Chrystal in a blanket as they have both fallen asleep next to each other – calls over Elijah. Soon Elijah will have to face Charlie after losing his last fight. Albert introduces Elijah to a traditional dance to help with his balance where he must jump and land on the one foot, spin down to the ground and then leap back up into the air... Elijah tries it but keeps falling onto the ground - Albert encourages him to keep trying.

Scene 94 - Ext. Chrystal’s Home - Morning.

Katie and Elijah take Chrystal home mum is awake, angry asks where they have been all night? Chrystal tries to talk to her mother but she won’t listen and sends Elijah and Katie on their way.

Scene 95 - Ext. Gym - Morning.

Elijah and Katie enter. The front left open – the gym has been trashed and Maxine is nowhere to be seen, Charlie asleep, drunk out cold on the office floor reeks of alcohol. Elijah and Katie start cleaning up.
Scene 96 - Ext.  Gym - Day.

Maxine enters the gym almost spotless, even the old dusted trophies and photos have been given a good spit and polish. Maxine explains Charlie has been on a drunken binge over the last few days. Maxine wakes Charlie he sees the gym clean, and Elijah and Katie covered in sweat and dirt. Katie and Elijah both apologise. Charlie never one for sentiment suggest it’s about time they got ready for training. Maxine rolls her eyes ‘typical Charlie void of any real emotion…’ because of losing the last fight Elijah needs more fights - Elijah must have at least three wins under his belt otherwise they will never get in the cage with Curly.

Scene 97 - Ext.  Gym – (Intercut Sequence).

Elijah training the house down… running, skipping, push-ups, sit-ups, punching bag, weights, but still has trouble with his balance as Maxine, Charlie are still able to knock him over as he tries to stand on the one leg and then the other…

Scene 98 - Int.  Warehouse Bay – Day.

The 1st fight of three Elijah must win before Curly - Elijah wins and wins easily… Curly is in the crowd but not really watching the fight.


Katie is waiting outside of Somerville House, but no sign of Chrystal.

Scene 100 - Int.  Warehouse Bay – Night.

2nd Fight… Elijah is becoming more elusive as he listens to the advice of Charlie and Maxine and drags out the fight. This time Curly watches on as Elijah has his 2nd win…


Katie again waiting sees Chrystal, Katie excited waves to her, Chrystal looks up, but doesn’t wave… Katie watches on as Chrystal gets in the car with her mum and they drive off.

Scene 102 - Int.  Warehouse Bay – Night.

3rd fight… Elijah is having a hard time, this fighter a vast improvement from the other two – Curly watches on. Elijah goes back to an all out attack which wins him the fight – but only just. Charlie angry that Elijah went away from the defensive strategy, Maxine warns Elijah, ‘that might work against this chump, but aint no way you gonna get that many free hits on Curly.’ Elijah is watched by Curly as he walks off with Maxine after the fight.
Scene 103 - Ext. ‘Katie’s Park’ - Day.

Katie back at her favorite park looking down at Chrystal’s house watching Chrystal typing on her lap-top in her bedroom as the mum watches television alone…

Scene 104 - Int. Warehouse Bay - Night.

The day of the big fight, Charlie and Elijah enter the warehouse and encounter a huge crowd cheering. Charlie takes a large wad of cash (from the other fights) and puts it in backing Elijah. The fight between Curly and Elijah begins…

Scene 105 - Int. Warehouse Bay - Night.

Elijah is being shoved up against the cage wall. He spots Katie at the back of the crowd (having followed the others without them knowing) He gets away from Curly takes up a more traditional boxing stance – Curly unable to hit him As Elijah lands jab after jab wearing Curly down.

Scene 106 - Int. Warehouse Bay - Night.

Maxine is trying to drag Katie from the fight but Katie is having none of it, Elijah and her are in this together now, the fighting, the house and their lives.

Scene 107 - Int. Warehouse Bay - Night.

Charlie cheers from the side as Elijah delivers a final blow to Curly’s head knocking him down. The crowd salutes a new champion as Ahmed hands the group their winnings and leers at Katie. Maxine looks back as Curly struggles to his feet and then falls back to the floor…


We see the massive pile of cash on the table. Maxine tends to Elijah’s wounds while Charlie shakes Elijah’s hand, as close to an apology he will ever get. Katie wants Elijah to stop fighting. Charlie dismissing Katie’s pleas for Elijah to stop instead talking about the money they’re going to make now, ‘everyone is going to want to be in on the action…’ Katie can’t believe what she’s hearing, everything they ever wanted is sitting amongst the cash on the table and Charlie wants to take it away from them… Maxine warns Katie, ‘you can’t win that much money off someone like Ahmed and not give them the opportunity to win it back… there will be consequences’. Elijah has heard enough - Charlie has made more money than he has seen in years, and Ahmed isn’t Elijah’s responsibility… looks at Katie, ‘Katie is my only responsibility now, we have half the money we need and I’m going to go back and secure the house,’ Charlie storms out of the room…


Elijah and Katie ready to leave – pack up their things… look at the money stashed in a gym bag, one last look at the room then leave. Maxine gives them both hugs and says goodbye while Charlie watches them leave from his office – doesn’t come out to say good bye.
Scene 110 - Int. Hostel: Reception - Morning.

Elijah and Katie go to see Uncle Albert to tell him that their finally going home, ‘It’s time to stop running.’

Scene 111 - Ext. Chrystal’s Home - Morning.

Katie and Elijah go to see Chrystal. The mum is still angry meets them at the door, Katie doesn’t back down – stands up for herself and Chrystal, tells the mum how much Chrystal helped her. The mum allows Chrystal to come out and say goodbye.

Scene 112 - Ext. Rent-a-Car: - Morning.

Elijah and Katie leave the lot with a flash new rented car and make their way home…

Scene 113 - Int. Boxing Gym - Night.

Charlie is watching a DVD of the man (Losia), Ahmed has arranged to now fight Elijah. Maxine walks in looks at the video of Losia, a brutal Samoan man mountain. Maxine holds Charlie’s hand, an unopened bottle of scotch sits beside him, the first time in days he hasn’t been drinking… Ahmed was very clear - if Elijah refuses to fight they are stuffed.


Charlie, desperate… goes to Albert hoping he can help him get to Elijah and Albert unknowingly lets slip where Elijah/Katie are headed.

Scene 115 - Int. International Airport - Night.

Losia arrives at the airport, even more frightening in real life… hands Curly and Ahmed his luggage and stalks on, without a word.

Scene 116 - Int. Boxing Gym - Morning.

Maxine discovers that Charlie has started drinking again – they fight and she leaves… Charlie rings Ahmed and tells him where to find Elijah and Katie.


Establishing shot of Katie and Elijah arriving at the old house, the emotion of them coming home, even if they don’t own it yet…

Scene 118 - Int. Remote Family House - Morning.

Katie is having breakfast when Elijah tells her he is going to see Geoff at the public trust and then Shelly.
Scene 119 - Int. Public Trust Office - Day.

Elijah marches into the office, plonks down the money, surprising the hell out of Geoff who impressed with Elijah’s fortitude agrees to hold the house for the 30 grand. Elijah has been given time to find a job and get a loan. Elijah has never been happier…

Scene 120 - Int. Remote Family House - Day.

Katie is confronted by two of Ahmed’s men. After a brief struggle, the men abduct her and carry her from the house.

Scene 121 - Ext. Community Services Car Park - Afternoon.

Shelly gets into her car and is joined by Elijah who was waiting for her. Shelly tells Elijah that keeping Katie will not be as simple as he’d hoped… her running away and his not bringing her back immediately does not help their case. Shelly convinces Elijah it’s in their best interests to go and get Katie and bring her in to DCS and then together they can prepare for a good case to get custody of her.


Ahmed’s men drive off in a cloud of dust, with Katie trapped in the boot.

Scene 123 - Int. Remote Family House - Night.

Elijah arrives home with Shelly and they are looking for Katie who has disappeared. Elijah’s phone rings, it is Ahmed… he has Katie. Elijah asks Shelly to cover for him for 24 hours, and he promises he’ll have Katie back by then.

Scene 124 - Int. Old Abandoned Office - Day.

Curly is playing cards with Ahmed’s men, while Katie is held prisoner. Ahmed enters with Losia and offers him Katie as his payment for showing up, Losia likes what he sees, agrees….

Scene 125 - Int. Remote Family House - Night.

Elijah goes outside paints himself in Ochre and performs the same dance that Albert taught him. Elijah struggles to keep balance falling as he leaps on the one leg to the other…

Scene 126- Int. Old Abandoned Warehouse - Day.

A crowd gathers, preparing for the fight between Elijah and Losia. Elijah arrives… Ahmed and his men come out with Katie who runs to Elijah. Charlie apologises to Elijah and confesses there is no honour left in the sport. Albert enters with the Musgrave Park group, Elijah relieved to see the ‘Old Fella,’ the sound of Polynesian drums are heard as Losia comes out from the shadows – twice the size of Elijah. Curly opens up the bets as Ahmed’s men grab Katie and lead her away.
Scene 127 - Int. Old Abandoned Warehouse - Day.

Losia and Elijah prepare to fight as Albert gives Elijah some last-minute advice, ‘balance and remember who you are and what you are fighting for’. The Aborigines break into a traditional war dance, chanting for Elijah. Losia makes a snide comment about Katie, how much he is going to enjoy his winning’s spurring Elijah into action.

Scene 128 - Int. Old Abandoned Warehouse - Day.

The fight is long and both men break out of the cage into the crowd – chaos as Elijah sends Losia flying into a pile of stacked used furniture. Losia comes back towards Elijah with a broken wooden table leg using it as a club. Charlie demands for the fight to be stopped and Curly moves between the two fighters, enraging the crowd, Ahmed allows the fight to continue and Losia strikes Elijah with the club and Elijah goes down in a pool of blood.

Scene 129 - Int. Old Abandoned Warehouse - Day.

Katie screams for him to get up and the Aborigines break into an encouraging slow hand clap together with others gathered to watch the fight… Elijah rises to his feet and takes up his more traditional old boxing stance. Losia is unable to land a blow on Elijah as he keeps evading Losia and continues to jab and punch at the large Samoan wearing him down.

Scene 130 - Int. Old Abandoned Warehouse - Day.

Losia charges at Elijah who leaps into the air spinning off the one leg - impossible to hit and this time he lands successfully (for the first time) then spins around and kicks Losia hard against the jaw knocking Losia out completely… the crowd are stunned and then go wild realizing Elijah is a true champion.

Scene 131 - Int. Old Abandoned Warehouse - Day.

Elijah has won through boxing and not cage fighting like an animal… together with a traditional move taught to him by Uncle Albert. Albert acknowledges that his grandfather would be proud. The crowd cheers and Elijah collects his money from Ahmed and Elijah is carried out by the crowd on their shoulders…

Scene 132 - Ext. Community Services Car Park - Day.

Shelly and Katie head into the building, watched by Elijah. Katie runs back returns to Elijah who tells his sister that he’ll be here waiting for her no matter how long it takes… they hug and then Katie goes with Shelly.


Elijah fixing up the fence around the property as Shelly arrives in a government car, Katie gets out and the siblings are reunited at last.

END
Bibliography:


Batchelor, J & Halas, J. (1954) Animal Farm, (Film) Halas & Batchelor Cartoon Films: London


Evans, R. (1988) Interview, St Lucia


Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (2007), Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle “Little Children are Sacred”: In our Law children are very sacred because they carry the two spring wells of water from our country within them, Northern Territory Government, Alice Springs.


Reynolds, H. (1988) Interview, Brisbane


Robertson, B. (2009), E-mail correspondence, 29th February 2009.


