

SCREENPLAY

HOSTILE NATIVES

&

EXEGESIS

INDIGENOUS SCREENWRITERS

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Abstract

This study looks at screenwriting practice from an Indigenous Australian perspective. In particular it seeks to identify, through a practice-led methodology, challenges which may be encountered by Indigenous Australian screenwriters. The writer/researcher is an Aboriginal woman from Kwiambal country in north-western New South Wales.

The primary research outcome is an original screenplay titled *Hostile Natives*. This is a television pilot script for a one-hour serialised ensemble drama suited to a premium cable network. *Hostile Natives* is a science fiction story set fifty years in the future. It is about a community struggling to cope after a global pandemic leaves many individuals with physical and psychological deficits. A series bible accompanies the pilot, providing a guide to the series as a whole.

Contextualising the creative work is an exegesis titled *Indigenous Screenwriters*. The exegesis contributes to Screenwriting Studies by reviewing Indigenous Australian screenwriters and their works. In doing so it highlights challenges for these writers including; pervasive Indigenous disadvantage, low industry participation, an auteur filmmaking culture in Australia and a historically limited range of screen genres in works by this cohort. This leads to a discussion of Indigenous Australian screenwriting through prisms of Postcolonialism and Globalisation. These perspectives reveal complexities inherent in screenwriting which may pose challenges for writers.

The creative work adds to current knowledge of screenwriting practice by generating valuable practitioner insights through critical reflection on the writing process. It was found that formal screenplay structure frames screenwriting as a series of discrete creative decisions and that many of these decisions have the potential to be problematic for Indigenous Australian screenwriters. Few resources exist to help Indigenous writers navigate these tensions. As a result, this study proposes an approach to creative decision-making based on an Indigenous worldview. It is hoped this may be useful for other Indigenous Australian screenwriters who are dealing with creative challenges.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



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Beverly Scott

1st April 2016

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Preface

This is a doctorate by artefact and exegesis. The artefact is an original screenplay: a pilot episode for a television series called *Hostile Natives*. The exegesis *Indigenous Screenwriters* provides an analytical counterpoint, contextualising the screenwriting process. This preface offers a brief summary of the artefact and the exegesis, plus a description of how the two complement each other.

The goal of this research is to identify, through a practice-led methodology, challenges which may be faced by Indigenous Australian screenwriters. The writer/researcher is an Aboriginal woman from Kwiambal country in north-western New South Wales.

Hostile Natives is a pioneer story set in a futuristic milieu. Fifty years from now, after a global pandemic leaves most of humanity dead, a community struggles to rebuild. Though the survivors have access to advanced technology, they struggle to keep it operational. As a further complication, many survivors suffer from serious physical and psychological deficits as a result of the illness. So when the group becomes the target of a notorious serial killer who was active before outbreak, they must pull together, using every resource available, to hunt down the killer.

In addition to the pilot script, a series bible is provided. This is included before the script and is intended to be read before the script. The bible introduces readers to the wider world of the story. It outlines genre and style, major themes, characters, series arcs, possible episodes and the intended production pathway.

The exegesis *Indigenous Screenwriters* contextualises the creative work. It provides an introduction to practice-led research methods, followed by a review of previous Indigenous Australian screenwriters in both film and television. Emerging trends in Indigenous screenwriting are discussed and these are considered in light of Postcolonial and Globalisation theories. Creative decision-making is identified as a likely challenge for these writers. Finally, it is suggested that basing creative decisions on Indigenous worldviews may be a useful approach for Indigenous Australian screenwriters.

SCREENPLAY

HOSTILE NATIVES

HOSTILE NATIVES

SERIES BIBLE

The story

Hostile Natives is a science fiction drama series about a community of survivors struggling to adapt to a new life in the aftermath of a global pandemic.

The setting is fifty years in the future - a time when virtual reality dominates popular culture, android robots are commonplace and sustainable energy is the norm. But this advanced technology cannot save humanity from a deadly, fast-spreading virus. The illness strikes healthy people hardest, triggering an immune reaction that attacks the brain. Less than one percent of the global population survives the outbreak – and many of the survivors suffer permanent health problems, including brain damage.

Our story begins in the immediate aftermath of the plague, in a formerly prosperous city. A military medical response team has established a field hospital and base camp on a sprawling university campus, where several hundred survivors now live.

The post-plague world is a harsh one. The resources, infrastructure and technology of the previous society still exist, however the survivors do not have the knowledge, skills or manpower to keep essential systems running or to produce new goods. Under the supervision and protection of soldiers from the base, able-bodied survivors go through the city, scavenging much-needed supplies and disposing of bodies.

Unfortunately, many survivors are not well enough to help in this way. Dozens of patients lie unconscious in the field hospital, unable to be revived. Others are awake but unwell - suffering serious mental health issues, or needing intense physical rehabilitation. To complicate matters, some patients seem to be recovered yet behave in bizarre, unpredictable, dangerous ways. Managing these patients is a constant challenge.

Besides the campus community, a handful of other people survive in the city. Some watch the scavengers at work, trying to decide if they should join the community or not. Others watch the survivors with malicious intent, waiting for an opportunity to attack.

Genre & Style

Hostile Natives is a drama in a science fiction setting – a pioneer story in a futuristic milieu. It is a story we all know, told in a way we haven't seen before.

The science fiction elements of the story are naturalistic. Advanced robotics and virtual reality are a normal part of the story world. The characters too are ordinary people, just trying to cope in an extraordinarily traumatic situation. Given that the setting is fifty years from now, the characters could be our children, or grandchildren.

Despite the post-apocalyptic scenario, *Hostile Natives* is not a horror story. The characters may deal with some grisly situations, but this is not about gore. It is a serious, dramatic story about real, complex people working together in harsh conditions to overcome both external obstacles and their own failings, for the dream of a better future.

Themes

The characters in *Hostile Natives* are coping with loss and change after massive personal and cultural trauma. Further, many people suffer long-term medical and psychological problems as a result of the pandemic. Therefore mental health, coping, resilience, memory and identity are strong themes throughout the series.

The relationship between humans and technology is also a key theme. Characters rely on technologies they do not understand and cannot repair. Also, they are often addicted to virtual reality but function poorly in the physical world. This leads to widespread behavioural problems, crime and social issues, epitomised by the grisly murders committed by the Pop Top Killer. Significantly, the children in this story will be the first in several generations to fully 'unplug' from virtual reality, raising a raft of issues from parenting, to education, to intergenerational communication.

Characters

Hostile Natives is an ensemble drama, with a cast of compelling characters:

The Geraldts family - Fay (52) is a single mother and second-career police officer. Nathan (32) is her adult son, a doctor in training. Jasmine (20) is a uni student and the kidult of the family. When we meet the Geraldts family, Jasmine is the only one of the three who is awake - Fay and Nathan are still unconscious due to the illness.

Base Camp leaders – This is a small leadership group formed to oversee administration of the campus community. Professor Harriet ‘Harry’ Clarke (63) is the most senior surviving academic. Michael Diaz (23) is her loyal grad student and assistant. Captain Ben Jacobs (33) is the highest ranked Army Officer on base. Captain Ainsley Zabala (30) is ranked below him. Ainsley and Ben used to lead separate units, but have since combined their soldiers into a single team. They’ve also become a close couple.

Soldiers – Thirty soldiers remain from Ainsley’s unit and forty-four from Ben’s. They haven’t worked together very long, so they’re still figuring each other out. In the pilot we meet seven soldiers from Ainsley’s unit (Dani, Ellie, Dimitri, Gerry, Finn, Lina and Adisa) and nine from Ben’s (Ed, Doug, Zoey, Ingrid, Aaron, Val, Jonas, Theo and Kim). We learn that Finn and Ed are a couple, Dani’s children died in the outbreak, Zoey is an adrenaline junkie, Val worships Zoey, Aaron and Ingrid are medics, Adisa has a depressive streak, Doug is a devout Christian, Gerry sleeps around, Jonas has a short temper and absolutely no-one likes Dimitri.

Civilians – There are over two hundred civilians on campus. Most are adults over thirty-five and children under twelve (teenagers and young adults with the strongest immune systems were hit hardest by the plague). In the pilot we meet Nick Wu (a former law student), Yale Borinski (a stoner), Dale ‘Diggity’ Webber (a former celebrity chef with an oxy addiction), Terry Haddad (a brain-damaged teenager), Tariq Jones (a healthy teenager), Mel Vrioni (a former PR consultant), Anna Li (a psychotic woman), Sam Friedman (a busybody) and Raelene Esashi (an unstable former academic).

PTK – A serial killer who was active prior to the outbreak. PTK removes the tops of victims’ skulls, and then uses VR equipment to record their experience of torture.

Story Arcs & Episodes

Hostile Natives is a serial drama with potential for several layered story arcs.

Series Arcs These will run through the entire show, dealing with the community's ongoing struggle to survive, retain their technology, become sustainable, develop new social norms, learn to self-govern, and find ways to accommodate people who are not capable of equal participation in the new society. These arcs will also track the relationships between the characters over time.

Season Arcs These will run the length of each season and will reflect the progress of the new society at each stage. The first season arc deals with the hunt for the Pop Top Killer. This reflects the community's need to deal with the negative aspects left over from the old society before they can move on to building something new. Future season arcs then track the community's progress moving forward.

Season two will involve the discovery of a wealthy survivor living on a country estate near the city. The community will split in two, with a growing philosophical divide between the two settlements. Those on the farm will be keen to adopt a subsistence lifestyle, whereas those in the city will strive to preserve the knowledge and technology of the past. This will be epitomised by the city community expanding their use of robotics and further seeking to locate and retrieve an artificial intelligence program from a distant military base. This will lead to direct conflict with the rural community, who try to sabotage the mission.

Season three will deal with the aftermath of this conflict, including the emergence of a cult-like religious movement at the farm, with attempts by the city community to counter this. The city community, having been successful in locating the AI, will also manage to contact other far-flung

military personnel and send several missions to find these people. Further seasons would be developed in conjunction with network writers.

Multi-Episode Arcs

These arcs will run from two to four episodes and will deal with significant issues or challenges faced by individuals or the communities. For example, at some point medical staff will need to establish a secure facility for patients suffering psychiatric illnesses. This could form a subplot across several episodes. In parallel, a character may struggle to come to terms with a loved one's mental illness and resist putting them into the secure facility. As another example, a character may claim inheritance of property from deceased family members, and demand compensation from the community for goods removed. This could lead to the development of a legal process for similar claims.

Episode arcs These will be self-contained within each episode, allowing any viewer the ability to watch and enjoy the show. These can include character-based episodes where we learn more about an individual, their past and their relationships. They can also include situational episodes, where multiple characters work to resolve a single crisis. They might include a procedural element, where a character deals with a specific criminal or medical matter. They may even include light-hearted, comedic, poignant or tragic elements that reflect the new society. Regardless, they offer a way for irregular viewers to connect with the show any time.

Production Pathway

Hostile Natives is a one-hour serialised ensemble drama suited to a premium cable network like HBO or Showtime. Aimed at a mature adult audience, it contains strong violence, sex scenes, language, drug use, nudity and adult themes. Importantly, the period setting and large-scale story world mean that high production values would be needed to position the series as top-shelf drama.

HOSTILE NATIVES

PILOT

written by

Bev Scott

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY - DAY

The city of the future.

High-rises are covered in greenery and solar panels. Leafy parks adorn the landscape. A pristine river meanders through the urban sprawl. The air is clean, clear.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"2068"

AROUND THE CITY - MONTAGE

A park on the river's edge. Picnic tables and manicured gardens. A bloated human body floats nearby.

An empty street. Burnt out, boarded up, looted buildings.

A sweeper robot glides along a sidewalk, scooping up shattered glass and debris.

A city bus stop. A corpse sits slumped, rotting. The transit display system still works: next bus one minute.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"THE PLAGUE YEAR"

INT. FLASHY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Shapes of bodies on a bed. Lumps under a brightly coloured blanket. A THUD as the bedroom door shudders. Again.

The door bursts open. Two soldiers enter, weapons ready.

They scan the room. Clear.

On point is Sergeant DANIELLE 'DANI' FROST, 33, career soldier and mother of four, until recently anyway - her kids died in the plague. Right now she's soldiering on.

Dani crosses to the bed. Looks down.

A family lies together. Mom, dad and two kids. All dead.

Close behind Dani is Corporal EDWARD 'ED' FERRER. Ed is 25, openly gay and so good looking his nickname is Bromeo.

Ed looks down at the dead family.

He presses a small comms unit on his uniform.

ED
Call out for a body crew in
eight oh five, over...

Dani is silent, staring at the bed.

Ed looks at her, worried.

ED (CONT'D)
Sarge?

DANI
What? You want me to cry?
(a beat)
Will it make you feel better?

ED
Fuck off.

A young man leans in through the doorway. He is NICK WU,
25. Nick used to hate law school. These days he misses it.

NICK
How many?

Ed holds up four fingers.

NICK (CONT'D)
Roger that.

An agitated woman pushes past Nick. This is RAELENE ESASHI,
54, a psychologically unstable former academic.

Nick jumps.

NICK (CONT'D)
Hey!

Raelene sees the dead family. She stalks over to them.

RAELENE
You can't do this!

ED
Great.

DANI
Who let her in?

NICK
Rae! What are you doing?

RAELENE
Leave 'em alone!
(a beat)
They're at peace!

Ed rolls his eyes. Sighs.

A scruffy, unfit guy arrives in the doorway, puffed. He is YALE BORINSKI, 28, an intelligent but lazy stoner.

Yale sees Raelene.

YALE
Not this again.

Raelene turns on him.

RAELENE
Not you again.

YALE
I don't have time for this.

He turns around. Walks out.

RAELENE
Asshole.

Raelene walks toward the bed.

DANI
Get out Rae.
(a beat)
Get her out of here.

Ed reaches for Raelene's arm.

ED
C'mon, let's go.

Rae pushes him away. She stares at the dead family, mesmerised by details.

Tight, purple-black skin. A sleeve tattoo on a swollen arm, cuddled around a child. Long blonde hair on a pillow.

Nick tries to get Raelene's attention.

NICK

Rae.
(a beat)
Rae.

RAELENE'S FACE

She blinks repeatedly. PULL BACK to reveal:

Raelene is dissociating. A second, DUPLICATE RAELENE stands to one side, watching her 'real' self staring at the bed.

The duplicate Raelene looks around the room.

Time slows down around her.

Dani gestures in frustration, moving in slow motion.

Nick's talks to Rae. His mouth moves slowly, but no sound comes out. Ed reaches out toward the real Rae, moving slowly as if stuck in treacle. He touches her shoulder.

BACK TO SCENE

Time speeds back up. Raelene looks around in a panic.

ED
You shouldn't be in here Rae.
You're not well.

Rae gulps a deep breath. Then another and another.

Dani sits on the bed.

DANI
Kill me now.

They half-carry, half drag Rae out of the room.

Dani sighs. Peace and quiet - finally.

She turns to the dead family.

DANI
You're welcome.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FLASHY APARTMENTS - LATER

Teams of two stretcher bodies out of the building. Some workers wear Army uniforms. Others are in civvies.

The bodies, wrapped in sheets and blankets, are dumped in the bucket of a large front end loader, parked nearby.

A few fully-armed soldiers guard the work site.

Raelene sits on the kerb, alone. She is calmer now. Quiet.

Ed sits down beside her.

ED

You okay?

She nods.

They watch Nick and Yale exit the building. The boys push a body on a stretcher between them. The body is wrapped in the brightly coloured blanket from the bedroom.

RAELENE

Sorry.

ED

It's fine.

Nick and Yale hurl the body into the metal scoop.

RAELENE

No... I'm not myself.

ED

Who is these days?

They watch a woman exit the building. She is followed by a four-legged pack robot, carrying bags & boxes of property.

RAELENE

I shouldn't have come.

A loud RUMBLE as the loader engine starts. Rae flinches.

She squeezes her eyes shut. Covers her ears.

The loader bucket lifts off the ground.

The LOADER BEEPS as it reverses. The driver swings the machine around, then maneuvers it toward a large dump truck, parked a short distance away.

Ed gets up. He takes a couple of steps toward the dump truck, a puzzled look on his face.

Another soldier walks up beside him. She is Corporal ELLIE GARCIA, 25 and coping well, all things considered.

ELLIE

You see it?

ED

I do.

The loader bucket lifts into position over the truck.

Ellie presses her comms unit.

ELLIE

Sierra One, we have a drone,
eyes on, over.

They stare. Far above the dump truck, a tiny drone hovers.

REVERSE ANGLE - DRONE'S POV - LOOKING DOWN ON STREET

Ellie and Ed are small figures standing in the distance.

Behind them, Raelene sits on the kerb, hands over her ears, eyes squeezed shut, rocking back and forth.

Nearby other workers talk and watch the loader.

BELOW us the loader bucket starts to tip. Bodies tumble into the dump truck with awful WET THUDDING SOUNDS.

BACK TO SCENE

Yale walks up to Ellie and Ed. He follows their gaze.

YALE

Holy crap!

He points up at the drone.

REVERSE ANGLE - DRONE'S POV - LOOKING DOWN ON STREET

Yale looks TOWARD CAMERA, pointing directly AT us.

The drone ZOOMS IN ON Yale for a moment.

BACK TO SCENE

The drone shifts position, then flies away.

Ellie clips Yale on the back of the head.

ELLIE

Good one genius.

A senior officer exits the building. Crosses to the group.

This is Captain BENEDICT 'BEN' JACOBS, 33, a consummate soldier struggling with extreme fatigue.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Sorry Cap, it's gone..

Yale hides his embarrassment.

BEN

What do we know?

ED

It's not military.

ELLIE

Went south.

BEN

That's it?

(a beat)

Alright. Keep an eye out.

They acknowledge. Ben heads back into the building.

Yale can't contain himself. He turns to Ed.

YALE

Dude! There's still someone
out there! Alive!

He puts his hand up for a high five.

Ed turns his back and walks away. No love lost there.

YALE (CONT'D)

No?

Undeterred, Yale looks to Ellie, his hand still up.

Ellie shakes her head. Leaves him hanging.

EXT. CITY - MOMENTS LATER

The drone flies through the air high above the streets.

DRONE'S POV - MOVING

High-rise buildings RUSH PAST in a blur.

The drone makes a BUZZING SOUND, travelling at speed.

JASMINE (O.S.)
Shitshitshitshit...

One building is on fire, smoke billowing. We FLY THROUGH the smoke cloud, out the other side.

We FLY PAST a vast apartment block with hundreds of identical balconies.

On one balcony a corpse is exposed to the elements. We WHIZZ PAST, disturbing birds feeding on the body.

We FLY INTO to a smaller side street.

We SWOOP DOWN to a modest apartment block, around fifteen storeys tall. We FLY TO a balcony, around ten storeys up.

The small patio has a nice array of well-watered plants arranged around a large drone platform.

We HOVER over the platform, LOWERING onto it.

PULL BACK to reveal:

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We have been watching the drone footage on a TV screen, mounted to the living room wall.

A young woman sits on a couch, eyes fixed on the screen, a wireless controller gripped tightly in her hands.

This is JASMINE GERALDS, 20. Jasmine is very comfortable in simulated reality. Not so much in the real world.

Jasmine's couch is a mess of blankets, pillows and crumbs. By her side is a high-tech Virtual Reality helmet.

To one side, a glass wall offers a view of the drone landing on the balcony. But Jasmine only sees the screen.

ON SCREEN

The drone lowers toward the platform.

Just before it lands, the screen goes black.

BACK TO SCENE

Jasmine throws the wireless controller across the room.

She rubs her face with her hands.

A CRASH, followed by a sound of WHIRRING BLADES.

Jasmine looks around.

Through the glass wall we see the drone has crash-landed at an angle on the platform, rotors still spinning, hitting the glass with every turn.

Jasmine scrunches her face, confused.

The drone switches off. Silence.

Jasmine makes a small mewling sound.

She hugs herself. Looks around the living room.

Nearby, a middle-aged woman lies unconscious on a couch, an IV line in her arm. A bag of fluids hangs from a nail in the wall above her, dripping steadily. This is FAY GERALDS, 46, a second-career police officer and Jasmine's mother.

A mattress rests on the floor near Fay. On it lays a young man, also unconscious and hooked to an IV. This is NATHAN 'NATE' GERALDS, 26, a trainee doctor and Jasmine's brother.

Fay's chest rises and falls regularly. Nate's too.

Jasmine grabs the VR helmet. Shoves it on her head.

She gathers blankets around her like a protective cocoon.

She reaches part of one hand out from under the blankets.

She taps the VR helmet, turning it on.

The helmet vanishes, and is replaced with:

INT. VR - CAVE - NIGHT

The cave is circular. There are no exits. Essential supplies are stashed around the walls.

Jasmine sits on her couch, in front of a small campfire, in the centre of the cave. She stares at the fire, blankets clutched around her, struggling to breathe calmly.

Slowly her breathing relaxes, as does her grip on the blankets. She draws her legs up onto the couch.

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasmine draws her legs up onto the couch. She lies down on her side, snuggled under the blankets.

INT. VR - CAVE - NIGHT

Jasmine lies on her side, staring at the flames.

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasmine lies on her side, breathing steadily.

Fay and Nathan lie nearby, still unconscious.

INT. UNIVERSITY - OFFICE - DAY

A grey-haired woman sits behind an executive desk. She massages her temples.

This is Professor HARRIET 'HARRY' CLARKE, a spry 63. Harry has a metaphorical headache, not a real one.

She looks across the desk.

A man stands before her, sweating. He is DALE 'DIGGITY' WEBBER, 34. Diggity used to be a celebrity chef with a few bad habits. Now he's just a drug addict.

Diggity rubs his wrist.

DIGGITY

He nearly broke my arm!

Behind Diggity stands a uniformed soldier - armed, alert and sporting a fresh black eye. This is Corporal DOUGLAS 'DOUG' MOLINA, a 26-year old devout Christian.

HARRY

You're lucky he didn't shoot you. What were you thinking?

DIGGITY

I'm in pain! Serious pain!

HARRY

Then go see a medic. Don't break into the pharmacy!

Diggity avoids eye contact. He looks guilty.

Harry gets up. She walks to the front of the desk.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Corporal? Your thoughts?

DOUG

Ma'am. He's an addict.

DIGGITY

Hang on-

DOUG

It's drug seeking behaviour. He can't be trusted.

Diggity scoffs. Doug glares at him.

DOUG (CONT'D)

He needs to detox.

DIGGITY

What? No. Bad idea.

HARRY

You don't get a vote.

(a beat)

Besides, he's right. Couple of weeks in the infirmary-

DIGGITY

Weeks!

HARRY

-will do you good. And you'll have medical supervision, so...

DOUG
Safer than cold turkey in a
cell, ma'am.

HARRY
Exactly.

DIGGITY
I want a lawyer.

Doug calls out.

DOUG
Ross! Get in here!

A female soldier enters. She is Lance Corporal ZOEY ROSS,
23-year old adrenaline junkie. Nickname: DangerRoss.

ZOEY
Sir!

DOUG
Are you a lawyer, Ross?

ZOEY
No sir!

Doug looks at Diggity. Shrugs.

DIGGITY
You can't do this! I have
rights!

HARRY
Look. You're a talented guy.
You've got a lot to offer
this community. But you're no
use to anyone drug-fucked.
(a beat)
Get clean, then we'll talk.

Doug grabs Diggity by the scruff of the neck. He and Ross
manhandle Diggity out the door.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FLASHY APARTMENTS - DAY

A removalist truck is parked a short distance from the main
doors. Bags and boxes are piled on the road around the
truck - household items scavenged from the apartments.

A meek young woman sorts through the goods. She is MELISSA 'MEL' VRIONI, 27, former PR executive. Mel was very sick with the plague. Now she can't think as quickly or clearly as she used to, so her confidence has taken a blow.

Mel puts batteries into one plastic container, food items into another. Next she picks up a box of matches.

She turns the box over in her hands, confused. She looks at the containers around her. Where should the matches go?

A teenage boy sits a short distance from Mel. He is TERRY HADDAD, 19. Terry was badly affected by the plague. He is non-verbal, easily tired and even more easily distracted.

He fiddles with various items, but doesn't sort them.

A huge busybody of a woman marches up to them. This is SAMANTHA 'SAM' FRIEDMAN, 30, professional catastrophiser.

SAM

How's it going over here?

She snatches an object from Terry. Puts it in a container.

SAM (CONT'D)

That goes here.

She grabs a few of the items scattered around him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Look.

She puts the items in their appropriate containers.

SAM (CONT'D)

See?

Terry is in no shape to understand. He is disoriented by the sudden change. Where did his things go?

Sam looks to Mel for acknowledgement. Mel hides the box of matches, ashamed. She nods as if thankful for Sam's help.

Nick arrives with Raelene in tow.

NICK

Just... stay here this time,
okay? No wandering.

RAELENE

Fine.

Sam greets Raelene with a sarcastic smile.

SAM
Decided to join us again?

Nick makes his exit.

Raelene ignores Sam. She sits down. Starts sorting. She is quick and decisive - this is easy for her.

Sam looks like she might be going to say something to Raelene, but doesn't. She stalks off.

When Sam is gone, Melissa gives Raelene the box of matches. Raelene puts them in the right container.

INT. UNIVERSITY - FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

A basketball court has been converted to a field hospital. Fold-out beds are arranged in long rows.

Most beds contain unconscious or very sick patients, hooked to IV bags. Medical staff move around, tending to them.

Zoey and Doug half drag, half carry Diggity into the hall.

DIGGITY
You're not the Police! You
have no authority!

They escort him past the rows of patients.

He stops yelling for a moment - distracted by the sight.

But not for long.

DIGGITY (CONT'D)
Let me go!

He struggles against his captors. The injustice!

They reach a curtained-off area within the hall. The beds here are full-size hospital issue, fitted with restraints.

Most of these beds are empty, save for one, where a petite woman lies calmly, quietly - and tightly restrained.

This is ANNA LI, 21. Not much is known about Anna's life before the plague. These days she's delusional and tries to kill people on a semi-regular basis.

Zoey and Doug lift Diggity onto a bed.

DIGGITY (CONT'D)
I'll behave. I promise. Just
let me go.

Two medics arrive. One is Army Doctor AARON PETROV, 32 and old for his age. The other is Combat Medic Corporal INGRID BELLO, 28 and loving her job.

Ingrid recognises Diggity from his previous life.

INGRID
I know you! You're that chef
guy! With the spices!

AARON
Oh yeah! What was your show?

INGRID
Hot Diggity!

AARON
That's it.

Diggity slumps, giving up.

DIGGITY
You got me.

Ingrid looks to Doug.

INGRID
What are we doing?

DOUG
Detox. Oxy.

INGRID
Ooh... ouch.

AARON
That's gonna hurt.

They start strapping him in.

DIGGITY
No shit.

He is already shaking and covered in sweat.

Zoey and Doug step back, letting the medics work.

They strap Diggity in tight. He looks miserable.
He turns his head. Looks at Anna. She's creepy.

DIGGITY (CONT'D)
What's her story?

INGRID
Anna doesn't talk much.

Aaron locks Diggity in nice and tight.

AARON
She's delusional. Thinks
we're all demons in disguise.

INGRID
She called me an evil
imposter last week.

AARON
You are pretty evil looking.

Aaron nods. Ingrid turns to Anna.

INGRID
What do you think, Anna?

REVERSE ANGLE - ANNA'S POV

Aaron and Ingrid are dark and strangely shaped. They lurk.
As they strap Diggity down their bodies move in unnatural,
terrifying ways.

BACK TO SCENE

Anna watches Aaron and Ingrid, wide eyed.

DOUG
All good?

AARON
Yep. Thanks.

DIGGITY
No! Don't leave! What about
her? What if she gets loose?

AARON
Don't worry about that.

INGRID
She's not going anywhere.

DOUG
And neither are you.

Zoey and Doug walk off.

Diggity looks over at Anna. She eyes him suspiciously.

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jasmine lies on the couch, unmoving. All that can be seen of her is a VR headset protruding from a pile of blankets.

INT. VR - CAVE - NIGHT

Jasmine lies on the couch, eyes half-closed, dozing off.

A horrible GROANING sound reverberates through the cave.

Jasmine's eyes snap open. She sits bolt upright.

Again, the GROANING echoes around her.

She moves both hands to her face, then up, as if lifting an invisible helmet off her head.

Which is in fact what she is doing.

Her helmet comes off, and she is back in:

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasmine holds the VR helmet in her hands.

She looks around for the source of the GROANING.

She sees movement - Nate shifts and moans on his bed.

JASMINE
Nate!

She rushes over to him, the helmet still in her hands.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Nate, thank god! Wake up!

She shakes him gently.

Nate quietens. He is back in a deep slumber.

Jasmine shakes him again - not so gently this time.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

C'mon...

He is unresponsive.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

Shit.

She slumps next to him. She looks down at the VR helmet.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FLASHY APARTMENTS - DAY

Raelene sits on the sidewalk, near the removalist truck. She sorts through bags and boxes of property.

Mel works quietly alongside her. Terry plays peacefully.

A teenage boy walks up to Raelene, carrying more property. He is TARIQ JONES, a quiet and respectful 14-year old.

He is followed by a heavily-laden two-legged pack robot.

Tariq places his burden on the ground near Raelene.

TARIQ

There's vitamins in there.

Raelene grunts her acknowledgement.

Sam walks up to them, sticking her nose in.

SAM

Tariq! How are you?

She wraps the boy in a powerful hug. It looks like she may squash the life out of him. He winces, but doesn't resist.

She releases him. Tousles his hair.

SAM (CONT'D)

What have you got here?

She noses through the stuff on the robot.

Tariq looks uncomfortable.

TARIQ
From eight oh five..

SAM
What's this?

She pulls out a sophisticated VR helmet, and other VR gear.

SAM (CONT'D)
Tariq. These aren't on the
list.

Tariq speaks to Raelene, not Sam.

TARIQ
I make animations... in my
spare time..

SAM
If it's not on the list it's
stealing, Tariq.
(a beat)
Let's see what you've got.

Sam puts the VR helmet on. She turns it on.

She goes very quiet.

TARIQ
We could never afford a
helmet that good. And... no
one's using it... I just
thought... I could make some
good animations with that...
I'm sorry..

Raelene pats him on the arm.

Sam rips the helmet off. She is flushed, flustered.

SAM
I'll have to confiscate this.

Sam struts off, gripping the helmet, leaving the rest of
the VR equipment behind.

Raelene's eyes narrow. She stalks after Sam. Catches up to
her. Rips the helmet from her hand.

SAM (CONT'D)
Give it back.

Raelene gets up in Sam's face. Gives her a Glare Of Death.
Sam backs down.

Tariq comes running.

Raelene puts the helmet on. Activates it.

The world around Raelene vanishes. It is replaced with:

INT. VR - FLASHY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The brightly coloured blanket is on the floor.

On the bed, a muscular man with a sleeve tattoo makes love
to an attractive woman with long blonde hair.

Raelene stands to one side of the bed, anguish on her face.

RAELENE

You evil... fucking...

She brings both hands up, and she is back in:

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FLASHY APARTMENTS - CONTINUOUS

Raelene holds the VR helmet in her hands.

RAELENE

...bitch!

She lets out a scream of rage.

She swings the helmet, smashing it into Sam's face.

Sam screams. Her blood spatters.

Rae shoves Sam with all her strength.

Sam trips on the pavement. Falls. A CRACK of BREAKING BONE
as Sam lands awkwardly on one arm.

She howls in pain.

Raelene jumps on top of her.

Raelene swings the helmet into Sam's face. Again. Again.

Sam tries to get away from Raelene. She can't.

SAM
Stop it! Stop!

Sam holds her arms up to protect her face.

Raelene smashes the helmet into Sam's broken arm

Sam screams.

RAELENE'S FACE

She snarls. Blood flecks her face. PULL BACK to reveal:

Raelene is dissociating again. A duplicate Raelene stands to one side, watching herself beat Sam to a pulp.

A crowd of people gather around.

Tariq intervenes. He grabs the real Raelene around the waist, from behind. He tries to pull her off Sam.

The duplicate Raelene watches as her real self swings an elbow, hitting Tariq in the face. He staggers back.

The duplicate watches her real self clamber back over Sam's body and lift the VR helmet up, preparing to strike.

A GUN FIRES.

The crowd scatters.

BACK TO SCENE

Raelene sits on top of Sam's limp form. Rae lowers the VR helmet slowly - it is smashed and blood-covered.

She looks around. Her doppelganger is gone.

Tariq sits nearby, nursing his jaw, wary of her.

She looks down at Sam's bloodied face.

She looks up. Soldiers approach, GUNS drawn.

One soldier FIRES straight at her.

She looks down - a small dart protrudes from her chest.

She pulls the dart from her body.

RAELENE'S POV

She turns the dart over in her hand, examining it.

BACK TO SCENE

Raelene's eyes roll up.

She collapses on top of Sam.

INT. UNIVERSITY - FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Diggity is suffering.

He shifts on the bed, trying to get comfortable, but the restraints hold him tight. His clothes are stained with sweat. He pants, breathless. His nose runs. He turns his head, wipes snot on his pillow. He groans.

He catches Anna staring at him.

DIGGITY

Fuck off! Creep...

He writhes, rattling his restraints.

His eyes weep but he's not crying, just in withdrawal.

ANNA'S FACE

She studies Diggity, like a kid looking at a bug.

ANNA'S POV

Diggity lies on his bed, looking wretched.

FLASH - instantly, Diggity becomes a monstrous figure, dark and misshapen, thrashing about.

FLASH - he is Diggity again. Harmless.

FLASH - the monster is back.

It tries to break the restraints. It tries to GET us. The entire bed shakes.

The monster lets out a terrible, impossible ROAR.

BACK TO SCENE

Quiet. Diggity and Anna lay still on their beds.

A TALL MEDIC enters the secure area.

It is unclear if the medic is male or female.

He/she wears scrubs, gloves, goggles and a mask. He/she walks toward Diggity, a syringe in one hand.

ANNA'S POV

FLASH - Diggity becomes the monster.

The monster fights the restraints as the medic approaches.

Sharp spines protrude from the back of the medic's head.

The spines continue along the medic's neck and back, pushing their scrubs out at weird angles.

A thin, scaled tail curls out the end of one pant leg.

The medic looks AT us for a moment. It has large, khaki coloured eyes with vertical-slit pupils, like a crocodile.

The medic injects the monster/Diggity.

The monster/Diggity relaxes back onto the bed.

The medic walks TOWARD us.

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jasmine puts a VR helmet on Nathan.

She taps it, turning it on.

She crosses her fingers. Says a silent prayer.

She puts another helmet on her own head. Taps it.

The helmet disappears.

The world around Jasmine vanishes. It is replaced with:

INT. VR - EMERGENCY WARD - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

The waiting room is overflowing with patients. Adults sit on the floor. Children on mothers' laps.

People cry and moan. Many hold their heads in their hands. Some babble incoherently. Nurses rush in unusual haste.

Jasmine stands in the middle of the room.

JASMINE

Nate! Nate!

Nathan walks through secure ER doors into the waiting room.

He wears standard doctor garb - scrubs, ID on a lanyard and a stethoscope on his neck. A walking cliché.

His expression is bleak. He notices Jasmine. Gestures for her to follow him.

She walks after him, through the secure ER doors into:

INT. VR - EMERGENCY WARD - CONTINUOUS

The ward is in chaos. Patients lie on beds, gurneys and the floor. A mass casualty situation.

Nathan steps carefully through the mess. He spots a patient who has died. Covers their face.

Jasmine catches up with him.

JASMINE

Nate. Hey.

He turns to face her.

NATHAN

Where's mum? I asked you both to come.

JASMINE

Nate. Listen. This is-

A patient is wheeled past them, moaning in pain.

Nate is distracted. He walks after the patient, intrigued.

Jasmine moves in front of Nate. She grabs his shirt.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Nate. Stop. This isn't real.
It's VR. We're in your head.
You have to wake up.

Nathan looks at her with concern.

He puts one hand on her forehead.

NATHAN
Are you okay? You feel hot.

Jasmine takes his hand off her face.

JASMINE
I'm fine. Just, look around.
It's not real.

NATHAN
This is how it starts. Fever,
paranoia, delusions.

JASMINE
Nate. You've been out for
seventeen days. It's too
long. Just wake up.

NATHAN
You're sick. I'm gonna get
you some steroids.

He tries walk away from her. She blocks him.

JASMINE
Look. Look at her.

She points. A woman stands at a hand washing station.

Nathan looks skeptical.

NATHAN
Hand washing is important.

Jasmine strides over to the woman. Grabs her by the arm.
Spins her around to face Nathan.

He gasps. The woman's face is blurred and indistinct.

Jasmine lets the woman go.

The woman resumes her hand washing as if nothing happened.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Shit!
(a beat)
This is VR!

Jasmine sighs in relief.

Nathan looks around the ward. All the people fade away, until he and Jasmine are left standing in an empty ER.

JASMINE

That's better. Now wake up.

She moves both her hands to her face, as if reaching up to grab her VR helmet.

NATHAN

Wait. Are you mindfucking me right now?

JASMINE

No. I'm saving your life.

NATHAN

Ew! Your own brother? What if I was having sex? Did you think about that?

JASMINE

I tried not to.

Nate bursts out laughing.

NATHAN

Relax, I'm shitting you!

Jasmine looks hurt. She moves both hands to her face, then up. She vanishes.

Nate stops laughing. He moves both hands to his face, then up. His helmet comes off, and he is back in:

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nate struggles to remove his helmet. Eventually, he gets it off. He pushes it away. It falls on the floor.

He looks around. Fay is still hooked to an IV. Jasmine lies on her couch, snuggled under her blankets, head hidden.

NATHAN

Jazz.

His voice is croaky. Jasmine ignores him.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Jasmine.
(a beat)
Hey!
(a beat)
Mindfucker!

She rips the blankets off her head. Glares at him.

JASMINE

Don't call me that!
(a beat)
I thought you were gonna die!

He groans. Sniffs himself.

NATHAN

I smell like I did.

He looks across at Fay.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Why isn't mum up yet?

He tries to sit up. Fails. Groans.

JASMINE

She's stable. Take it easy.
You're weak.

NATHAN

You're weak.

Jasmine fake laughs.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Ugh. I feel like shit.
(a beat)
Alright. Give it to me.
(a beat)
How bad is it?

JASMINE

How bad do you think it is
dickhead? Everyone's dead.

NATHAN

Don't sugar-coat it, now.

(a beat)

I want the cold, hard truth.

Jasmine pulls the blankets back over her head.

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Nathan sits on the edge of Jasmine's couch. He works the drone controller, watching the live feed on the TV.

NATHAN

Fuckin' hell.

Jasmine peeks out from beneath her blankets.

JASMINE

I don't wanna see it.

She peeks out between her fingers.

ON SCREEN - AERIAL SHOT - LIVE FOOTAGE FROM THE DRONE

We HOVER ABOVE a large metropolitan hospital, looking down.

Carnage.

Parts of the hospital are burnt out, others looted. There are bodies everywhere. Thousands.

Bodies wrapped in hospital linens are piled on footpaths, in car parks and on roads. Unwrapped corpses are piled on top of these, festering in the sun.

Birds gather on the corpse-piles in huge numbers, feeding.

JASMINE (O.S.)

Oh god. Gross.

We FLY AWAY from the hospital.

The corpse-piles stretch for hundreds of metres.

NATHAN (O.S.)

I don't think I like the cold, hard truth.

We FLY TOWARD a nearby stadium.

Far BELOW, a line of dump trucks are stopped on the road to the stadium. Some trucks are filled with bodies, others stacked with timber and scrap.

NATHAN (O.S.)

No way...

JASMINE (O.S.)

I'm not looking!

We FLY OVER the stadium. The stands are almost empty - a couple of bodies here and there.

The playing field is gone; dug up. In its place is a mess of black and brown earth, earthmoving equipment and trucks.

Long narrow pits extend the length of the field.

NATHAN (O.S.)

Ho-ly fuck...

Stretching across the pits: hundreds of metal poles. Piled across the poles, bodies. Some of the pits are burned out, the bodies now ash. Other pits are stacked, ready to burn.

JASMINE (O.S.)

Okay now I'm really not looking.

BACK TO SCENE

Nathan manipulates the controller, eyes on the screen.

Jasmine has a hand over her eyes, but her fingers are parted, letting one eye peek through.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

If you only watch the top right hand corner of the screen it's not too bad.

On the screen in front of them, we FLY AWAY from the stadium, looking down on the streets below.

NATHAN

Hang on...

He adjusts the controller. On screen, we HOVER over a large brown shape - a bear, chomping on the guts of a corpse.

He ZOOMS IN on the bear and the corpse. The face of the corpse ends up in the top right hand corner of the screen.

Jasmine shrieks.

JASMINE

Why would you do that? You know that's the only bit I was looking at!

NATHAN

Sorry! I didn't mean it!

JASMINE

Asshole!

She burrows under the blankets again.

ON SCREEN

The bear chomps on, content.

BACK TO SCENE

Nate looks at the screen, disgusted.

NATHAN

That's disturbing.

He moves the drone controls.

ON SCREEN - DRONE FOOTAGE

We FLY AWAY from the bear.

We FLY PAST buildings at high speed.

On a main road, we FLY ABOVE a huge electronic billboard, still flashing adverts for luxury brands.

We ZIP down a few more streets, then ROUND A CORNER, finally arriving outside the flashy apartments.

We HOVER above the work site, looking down.

The site is a hive of activity.

There are people everywhere - stretchered bodies, walking with pack robots, sorting through property.

BACK TO SCENE

Nathan jostles Jasmine roughly.

NATHAN
Oi! Look! I found 'em.

Jasmine stays hidden. Her reply is muffled.

JASMINE
I don't care!

Nathan leans forward in his seat, scrutinising the crew.
He spots a particularly good looking woman.

NATHAN
Hello lady..

He ogles her for a moment, smiling.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
What's your name?

There is movement on the edge screen. A disturbance.

ON SCREEN

The people BELOW start running in one direction.

We FOLLOW them.

A crowd gathers around two women, fighting.

One woman has the other on the ground.

The woman on top sits astride her victim, smashing something into the other woman's face, repeatedly.

BACK TO SCENE

Nathan pulls Jasmine's blankets down.

JASMINE
Stop it!

NATHAN
Look!

They both watch the screen.

ON SCREEN

Far BELOW, a teenage boy tries to pull the attacker off her victim. He gets an elbow to the face for his trouble.

Soldiers rush to the scene, guns drawn.

One soldier FIRES their GUN into the air.

The crowd scatters.

The attacker freezes, then lowers her arm.

A soldier SHOOTS her in the chest.

BACK TO SCENE

Nathan and Jasmine share a horrified look.

They watch the soldiers surround the woman on the screen.

ON SCREEN

The soldiers move in formation.

The drone casts a shadow on the ground near the soldiers.

JASMINE (O.S.)

Shit.

A female soldier spins around and looks up, directly AT us.

She lifts her firearm and SHOOTS AT us.

We FALL a short distance, then limp back up, our view TILTED AT AN ANGLE and UNSTABLE.

BACK TO SCENE

Nate struggles to maneuver the drone. It's in bad shape.

JASMINE

Destruct! Destruct!

She reaches for the controller. Nate avoids her.

NATHAN

Get off! That's the first thing I tried, it's fucked.

JASMINE

Ram it! Ram it in the ground!

They share a look. She nods. Do it.

He manipulates the controls.

ON SCREEN

The female soldier takes aim again.

We SHIFT to one side as she SHOOTS AT US.

Then we hurtle STRAIGHT DOWN toward the ground.

It seems the road surface RUSHES UP to meet us.

The screen goes black.

BACK TO SCENE

Nathan and Jasmine sit together on the lounge, shocked.

JASMINE

Great. Now they're gonna find
us and they're gonna kill us.

She pulls the blankets up over her head.

Nathan looks at her, concerned.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FLASHY APARTMENTS - DAY

Sam is unconscious, on a stretcher. Soldiers carry her into the back of the removalist truck. They set her down on the floor. Kneel beside her. Tend to her bleeding face.

The truck engine is running. Ed closes the doors, locking the soldiers inside. He hits the truck. It moves off.

A convoy of vehicles follows - the site is being abandoned for the day. About a dozen soldiers remain behind.

BEN

Grab those.

He indicates some bags and boxes still sitting on the pavement. The soldiers grab a share.

BEN (CONT'D)

And her.

Raelene lies unconscious on a stretcher on the ground, wrapped in a blanket and strapped tight to the frame.

Ed and Dani grab the stretcher.

ED

She seemed so normal. Quiet.
Kept to herself.

Dani chuckles.

The soldiers walk over to three parked vehicles: a Humvee-style armoured car with a boxy trailer, a shiny two-seater sports car and a plain white work van.

Ed and Dani slide the stretcher into the van.

The others load the bags and boxes into the trailer.

BEN

Anyone do a head count?

ELLIE

Yeah, we're all good.

A thickset male soldier interrupts. He is Lance Corporal DIMITRI WALKER, 23, a smartass who is rarely funny.

DIMITRI

No. We're half a head short.

He indicates the blood spatter on the pavement.

Some of the other soldiers groan.

An attractive female soldier glares at him. She is Lance Corporal GERALDINE 'GERRY' GALE, 22. Gerry's other nickname is 'GG' because she'll ride pretty much anyone.

Except Dimitri.

GERRY

Too soon.

DIMITRY

Giddy up.

GERRY

You wish.

BEN

Steady on.

Ellie gives the ruined drone to Ben. He looks it over.

BEN (CONT'D)

You shouldn't have.

He gives the mangled wreck to Ed.

BEN (CONT'D)

Here. Present for Finn.

DIMITRI

I'll say. In his pants.

The other soldiers scowl. Not funny.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

What? It's true.

BEN

Move out.

The soldiers move toward the vehicles. As they do, one soldier turns and faces Dimitri. This is Lance Corporal JONAS LEROY, 22, hater of bullshit.

JONAS

You're a fuckhead.

Before Dimitri can react, Ben barks out a new command.

BEN

Enough! Get in.

They get in. Ellie and Ed in the sports car. Dimitri and a few others in the Humvee. Ben, Dani and Jonas in the van.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Dani is in the driver's seat. She commiserates with Jonas.

DANI

He is a fuckhead.

Jonas looks to Ben.

Ben nods in silent agreement.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FLASHY APARTMENTS - CONTINUOUS

The Humvee, van and sports car drive off, leaving the street outside the apartments empty and quiet.

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Jasmine is still hidden under her blankets.

NATHAN

I really don't think they're gonna shoot us.

JASMINE

How do you know? They might!

NATHAN

That woman was a crazy woman. I would have shot her.

Silence. Jasmine pulls the blankets down a little.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Bust a cap in her ass...

JASMINE

I'm serious!

NATHAN

They're not gonna shoot us!

Nathan looks to Fay, unconscious on the other couch.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Besides, we've got her. Fastest gun in the west.

JASMINE

She's no use to anyone.

NATHAN

Bit harsh.

JASMINE

She's not. She's stuck in some shitty loop, playing the same thing over and over.

(a beat)

Might as well be in a ten year coma.

INT. UNIVERSITY - OFFICE - DAY

Harry sits at her desk, reading through a stack of papers.

A thin young man sits on the floor nearby, sorting more papers. This is MICHAEL DIAZ, 23, Harry's graduate student and loyal personal assistant.

MICHAEL

We need more ink.

HARRY

Already on the list.

From outside, the sound of a CAR HORN and ENGINES REVVING.

Harry and Michael rush to the window.

THEIR POV - THROUGH THE WINDOW

The truck and the convoy arrive on campus.

The truck heads for the infirmary at speed, horn blaring, followed closely by the other vehicles.

BACK TO SCENE

Harry and Michael rush out of the office.

INT. UNIVERSITY - FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Soldiers rush into the field hospital, carrying Sam - still unconscious - on a stretcher.

Medical staff rush over. They whisk Sam away.

Harry and Michael run in. They follow the medics.

They catch up with the medics just as they take Sam into a sterile operating area.

They watch helplessly as the team works on Sam.

MICHAEL

The hell happened?

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jasmine and Nathan sit by Fay's side. Fay wears a VR helmet. Jasmine and Nathan each hold a VR helmet.

JASMINE

It's not gonna work, I tried already.

Nate puts his helmet on.

NATHAN

You're not very motivating to be around these days.

Jasmine dons her helmet. Taps it. The helmet disappears. The world around her vanishes and is replaced with:

INT. VR - WHITE SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Jasmine and Nate are surrounded by empty white space.

NATHAN

Whaaaat...?

He reaches out, trying to find something to touch.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Is she brain dead?

JASMINE

Oh my god. How are you the smart one in this family?

Jasmine points to one side, gesturing for Nathan to look.

Fay walks into the white space from off screen. She is wearing a Police uniform, fully kitted out.

She walks straight past Jasmine and Nathan.

Nathan walks after her. Jasmine doesn't bother.

NATHAN

Mum. Mum!

Fay is oblivious to his presence.

Jasmine gives Nathan a knowing look. I told you.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS ENTRANCE - DAY

The Humvee, van and sports car arrive on campus. The vehicles split up, going their separate ways.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - FIELD HOSPITAL - CARPARK - DAY

The van pulls up. Dani, Ben and Jonas get out. They slide the stretcher out of the van.

Raelene is awake now. Groggy. Angry. She struggles against the straps on the stretcher.

INT. UNIVERSITY - FIELD HOSPITAL - SHORTLY AFTER

Dani and Jonas carry the stretcher. Ben walks alongside.

The hospital is strangely quiet.

Raelene stares at the rows of patients.

Harry and Michael stride up to the small group.

BEN

How is she?

HARRY

Fractures, at least. What happened?

Before anyone can answer, Rae gets one blood-spattered hand free. She lunges for Ben's pistol.

DANI

Look out!

Ben wrestles with Rae until she's under control.

HARRY

Rae! You're a Professor for God's sake! Get it together!

Raelene snarls at her. Spits.

Harry slaps Raelene across the face, hard.

Harry quickly steps back, shocked at her own actions.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Oh god. I'm sorry.

Harry is shaking. Dani comforts her.

HARRY (CONT'D)
I can't believe I did that.
(a beat)
I used to have coffee with
her. Now I don't even know
who she is.
(a beat)
What are we going to do with
these people?

No-one has an answer.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - STUDENT DORM - CARPARK - DAY

The sports car screeches to a halt outside a student dorm.
Ed gets out. Ellie waves farewell. She speeds off.

Ed traipses up to the dorm entrance. He carries the damaged
drone in one hand. He kicks the door open. Walks inside.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DORM ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The room is tiny - a single bed, desk, some shelves.

The curtains are drawn. The room is in shadow.

On the bed lies a man, face down, snoring softly. This is
Sergeant FINNEGAN 'FINN' BECKER, 30, signals specialist,
all-round tech head and Ed's boyfriend.

Sound of a KEY IN A LOCK. The door opens. Ed walks in.

Finn stirs. He lifts his head, bleary eyed.

FINN
Hey.

Finn turns over on his back. He stretches. Yawns.

Ed puts the drone on the desk.

ED
Got you something.

Ed strips off his gear and clothes.

Finn looks from Ed to the battered, broken drone.

FINN
Was it on sale?

ED
Half price. Bargain.

Finn watches Ed strip to his bare skin.

FINN
I missed you.

Ed crawls into bed with him.

ED
You were asleep. You didn't miss shit.

FINN
I did. In my dreams...

They laugh at his bullshit, then kiss.

INT. VR - WHITE SPACE

Jasmine and Nate follow Fay as she walks.

Nathan gets up in Fay's face.

NATHAN
Mum! I know... on some level you can hear me.

JASMINE
Like I never tried that before. Give me some credit.

Nathan looks dejected.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Wait for it...

A good-looking male cop flickers into existence, walking beside Fay. He is ANTON KELLER, 36, Fay's man-child work partner and current lover.

NATHAN
Anton! Hey! Over here!

JASMINE

It's not Anton, idiot. We're
in her head. Remember?

Nathan looks confused.

NATHAN

I know that.

Their surroundings start to change. As Fay and Anton walk,
a STREET materialises around them.

Soon the white space is completely replaced by:

EXT. VR - CITY STREET - DAY

Fay and Anton are on the job in the CBD.

They chat and laugh in good humour. Another day at work.

Nathan and Jasmine walk alongside the two officers.

They might as well be invisible.

The group arrives at an upscale adult shop.

One shopfront window is badly cracked.

ANTON

Looks like us.

They pause for a moment outside the shop.

Anton can't wipe the smile off his face.

Fay rolls her eyes.

FAY

Try and control yourself.

Nathan gives Jasmine an incredulous look.

NATHAN

A sex shop? Really?

Fay and Anton walk into the shop.

Nathan and Jasmine follow after them.

INT. UNIVERSITY - FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Raelene is re-secured in her stretcher.

HARRY

C'mon.

She gestures for the others to follow her.

Together, they enter the hospital secure section.

Diggity is missing.

His restraints are empty, his bed a mess.

HARRY

Shit!

INT. VR - ADULT SHOP - DAY

The shop is a mess. Displays are tipped over, products strewn about. Fay talks with the SHOP OWNER, an old man in a neat suit. Anton ogles the erotic goods for sale.

SHOP OWNER

He just grabbed her. Ran off.
Kidnapped in broad daylight!

FAY

She works here?

SHOP OWNER

No. On display.

He indicates an empty spot in the shop window, next to a Ken-doll style life-size male mannequin in a g-string.

The Ken-doll makes eye contact with Fay. It winks at her seductively. Fay ignores it. Anton snorts.

NATHAN

So awkward.

FAY

She's a doll?

SHOP OWNER

Very valuable!

FAY
Sir, this is not a
kidnapping.

SHOP OWNER
I saw it!

Anton joins them.

ANTON
Sir. Dolls aren't people.
They're property.

SHOP OWNER
Then it's a robbery!

ANTON
Technically...

Fay gives him a withering look as she cuts him off.

Nathan tries to knock a shelf over. He can't.

JASMINE
Fail.

FAY
Does it have a tracker? GPS?

SHOP OWNER
Yes! She has an app.

Nate takes a huge dildo from a shelf. He throws it at Fay and Anton. It vanishes mid-air then reappears on the shelf.

JASMINE
Classy.

The shop owner opens a display on a computer and brings up a map. It shows a blinking, moving signal.

With one finger Fay drags the map onto her wrist device.

SHOP OWNER
Please... get her back. She's
very good in the shop.

Fay and Anton exchange a knowing look.

FAY
Sir, that's illegal.

SHOP OWNER
It's not *labour* - she likes
helping out!

ANTON
Forget it. Let's go.

NATHAN
Yes, let's wake up.

Anton and Fay walk out.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Or not.

INT. UNIVERSITY - FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Soldiers gather en masse in the hall. Some are in uniform,
others wear civvies, or a mix of civvies and camo gear.

Ben stands to one side, talking to a confident-looking
woman. She is Captain FRANTZISKA 'AINSLEY' ZABALA, a less
experienced soldier than Ben, but respected by her troops.

AINSLEY
He's more of a danger to
himself than anyone else.

BEN
Probably holed up somewhere
high as a kite..
(a beat)
...but, we have to look.

Ben is grey faced and bleary-eyed.

AINSLEY
You look knackered. I can do
this one if you want.

BEN
Come here.

He reaches out for Ainsley. They hug.

He kisses the top of her head.

AINSLEY
Fuckin' junkies.

They laugh, then part. Ben steps up to address the troops.

BEN

Alright listen up. You're looking for Dale Webber, also known as Hot Diggity...

This brings a laugh from the crowd.

BEN

...and unless you've been on another planet for the past five years, you know what he looks like.

DIMITRI

Like an asshole.

He gets a few chuckles.

BEN

Main risk, overdose. Oxy. He could be cosied up somewhere nice and quiet and dying.
(a beat)
So look sharp. Radio every half. That's it. Move out.

EXT. VR - CITY STREET - DAY

Fay and Anton pace along the street. Jasmine and Nate follow, barely keeping up.

NATHAN

Where the fuck are we going?

ANTON

It's a story of forbidden love between thief and robot.

FAY

In your sick fantasies.

Fay consults the wrist map. They're closing in.

FAY (CONT'D)

Should be... here.

They arrive at an entrance to a large Food Court. From inside the complex they hear a COMMOTION.

ANTON

Yup.

They run through the entrance.

Nate and Jasmine race after them.

INT. VR - FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Lunch hour. The place is packed. The din is overwhelming.

Fay and Anton run through the crowd.

Nate and Jasmine lag behind. Nate bumps into an android-style robot as it wipes down a freshly vacated table.

NATHAN

Sorry!

Jasmine laughs.

JASMINE

You just apologised to a
virtual robot.

Disoriented, Nate staggers through the crowd.

People in the crowd wear breathing masks and gloves in a range of fashions. A few look pale and sick. One or two have missing limbs with cyborg-like prostheses.

NATHAN

This is doing my head in.

A SHOUT cuts through the din, then laughter.

People turn to look. A middle-aged, SCRUFFY MAN lurches through the food court ahead, followed by Fay and Anton.

The scruffy man half carries, half drags a scantily clad, incredibly life-like female sex doll under one arm.

The doll struggles in his grip.

DOLL

Let me go!

The scruffy man almost collides with a BUSINESSMAN.

BUSINESSMAN

Get a room.

People in the crowd snicker and shake their heads.

Nate and Jasmine catch up with Fay and Anton. They are busy dealing with the scruffy man.

ANTON

Sir, put the doll down.

SCRUFFY MAN

Make me!

FAY

Everyone move back.

Nate is next to Fay. She looks straight through him.

A middle-aged WOMAN near Nate talks on a heads-up display. A holographic image of a four-year old girl is projected just in front of the woman's face.

The scruffy man starts dragging the doll by the hair.

The doll screams.

VIRTUAL GIRL

He's hurting her!

WOMAN

It's just a bot, sweetie.

The scruffy man takes off, dragging the doll with him.

ANTON

Stop!

Fay and Anton pursue the thief.

Jasmine and Nate pursue Fay and Anton.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS GROUNDS - DAY

The soldiers fan out, searching in pairs.

A young male soldier walks alongside his older female counterpart. He is Lance Corporal THEO CONDE, 24. She is Sergeant KIMBERLEY "KIM" ROY, 30. Theo and Kim have been on night shift the past week. They'd rather be asleep now.

Theo yawns.

THEO
If I find him, can I punch
him?

KIM
Yes.

In another area, Finn and Ed search together.

FINN
He better be an excellent
fucking chef.

ED
I heard his beer battered
fries are amazing.

FINN
We'll see...

Zoey is paired with Private VALENTINE "VAL" SCHWARZ, 21.
Val hero-worships Zoey, and is thrilled to be partnered
with her on this important search and rescue mission.

VAL
We should check around the
warehouse. He could've gone
there looking for drugs.

ZOEY
Sure.

Ellie searches with Corporal ADISA "DEE" PACE, 27, a large,
muscular man with a depressive streak. They've worked
together a long time so she knows when he's not coping.

ELLIE
Fuck this shit. Let's grab
some shut-eye.

DEE
That sounds highly unethical.

ELLIE
And awesome.

She looks around to make sure they aren't being watched.
All clear. They sneak into a building.

In another area, Dimitri searches with fresh-faced Private LINA BEKKER, 19. Lina knows she drew the short straw getting partnered with Dimitri.

DIMITRI

...and then I said, die in a fire, cunt! Ha!

LINA

That's not funny.

DIMITRI

No, it's hilarious!

INT. VR - REAR OF FOOD COURT - DAY

The scruffy man sprints, dragging the sex doll.

DOLL

Stop it!

Fay, Anton, Nathan and Jasmine are in hot pursuit.

The scruffy man pushes open a large exit door.

He runs through the door into blinding sunlight.

Fay, Anton, Nathan and Jasmine follow him into:

EXT. VR - ALLEY BEHIND FOOD COURT - DAY

The alleyway is greasy and lined with dumpsters.

The scruffy man loses his grip on the wriggling doll.

She pulls free and falls to the ground. The scruffy man walks a few steps, then stops. He looks around, confused.

Fay approaches him.

FAY

Sir! Stop where you are.

The man appears disoriented. He stumbles away from Fay.

Anton helps the doll to her feet. She brushes herself off. She notices damage to one ankle. She yells at the man.

DOLL
Look what you did!

The 'skin' of her ankle is grazed off, revealing synthetic muscles and metal wiring underneath.

The man turns and looks at the doll, perplexed.

DOLL (CONT'D)
You better pay for this!

SCRUFFY MAN
What is this place? It
stinks!

He looks around, wrinkles his nose in disgust.

Fay pulls a baton from her belt. She walks towards him.

SCRUFFY MAN (CONT'D)
The fuck is going on?
(a beat, then, to Fay)
Don't point that at me.

Fay and Anton share a glance.

ANTON
Sir. Have you had any drugs
or alcohol today?

The scruffy man falls to his knees, grabbing his head. He screams in pain. Nate and Jasmine share a glance.

NATHAN
Twist!

FAY
Get a Medi-bus.

Anton steps aside to use his radio.

The doll approaches Fay. She points at the scruffy man.

DOLL
He has to pay!

FAY
Shut up.

The doll immediately shuts her mouth.

Fay approaches the groaning man. Cautious.

FAY (CONT'D)
Sir, we've called a medi-bus.

SCRUFFY MAN
It hurts! Make it stop!

He slumps onto the ground near a dumpster. He holds his head. Writhes and groans in pain.

Anton returns.

ANTON
Hang on, we've got blood.

The man has blood all over his head, hands and upper body.

FAY
When did that happen?

Nate and Jasmine share a glance.

JASMINE
Twist.

INT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - TUTORIAL ROOM - DAY

Tables and chairs are pushed to the edges of the room.

Around twenty children aged under ten play on the floor.

They are supervised by half a dozen middle-aged women.

Kim and Theo arrive in the doorway.

A couple of the kids spot Theo. They cry out happily. They run over to him and hug his legs. He smiles at them.

KIM
Mister popularity?

THEO
It's my superpower.

A couple of the ladies walk over.

KIM
Anyone seen Diggity?

The women shake their heads.

INT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - EMPTY TUTORIAL ROOM - DAY

Ellie and Dee lie flat on the floor, snoozing.

Ellie has one leg propped up on a chair.

Dee has his gun hugged across his chest.

A table is propped in front of the closed door.

EXT. VR - ALLEY BEHIND FOOD COURT - DAY

Fay and Anton pull on gloves as they kneel by the man's side, searching his body for injuries. The man won't stop screaming and writhing. Anton grabs him by one arm.

ANTON

You're bleeding, keep still.

FAY

Where's it coming from?

SCRUFFY MAN

Where's wha-

He notices blood all over one hand. He screams.

SCRUFFY MAN (CONT'D)

Brutality! Police brutality!

ANTON

It's on the ground.

Fay looks down. The knees of her uniform are bloody.

FAY

Get back.

They step back from the man and survey the area. They track the blood back to a trickle, coming from a nearby dumpster.

Blood drips from the bottom of the bin.

ANTON

Great. Bleeding dumpster.

Nate and Jasmine share another glance.

NATHAN

This is better than T.V.

Fay reaches for the dumpster lid.

FAY

C'mon.

She and Anton lift the dumpster lid, wincing at the smell.

A dead man lies in the dumpster, face up, atop a large mound of trash. His skull is missing from the eyebrows up.

His brain clearly visible. He is naked, with bruises and wounds all over. His age is hard to tell.

Fay stands frozen, staring. There is a lot of blood.

Nathan stares, captivated. He whispers to himself.

NATHAN

Twiiisst...

FAY

It's P.T.K.

(a beat)

Victim twelve.

Anton speaks into his radio.

ANTON

VK4 this is Oscar two six,
requesting secure channel.

A RADIO OPERATOR replies.

RADIO OPERATOR (V.O.)

Roger Oscar two six, secure
channel.

Anton walks away, talking quietly into the radio.

SCRUFFY MAN

Help me! I'm bleeding!

FAY

Not yet you aren't.

Nate and Jasmine scoff.

JASMINE

Pretty cool for an old chick.

The scruffy man wraps his arms around his head and moans quietly. A SIREN approaches. Anton returns.

ANTON

Backup in two.

The Medi-bus stops at the alley entrance, sirens off. Two paramedics get out. Fay calls out to them.

FAY

Stretcher!

A THUD from the dumpster. Nate jumps.

Fay turns around slowly. Another THUD. She looks in the dumpster. The 'corpse' is moving.

FAY (CONT'D)

He's alive! Quick!

The paramedics bolt toward them with a stretcher. SIRENS sound in the distance. Anton climbs up onto the dumpster.

NATHAN

I did not see that coming.

Fay whirls around. She stares directly at Nathan.

FAY

Who the fuck are you?

Nate steps back quickly.

JASMINE

Time to go.

Nate backs away from Fay, stumbling.

NATHAN

Mum. It's me.

There is no light of friendly recognition in Fay's eyes.

FAY

Show me your hands.

Jasmine lifts her hands to the side of her head.

Nate is slow to react. He brings his hands up cautiously.

JASMINE

Nate, take off your helmet.

Fay advances on Nate. She yells.

FAY
I said show me your hands!

JASMINE
Now!

FAY
Hands! Now!

Fay pulls her electronic baton.

FAY (CONT'D)
This is a neural whip!

NATE
Mum, it's me!

JASMINE
Quick, take it off!

Fay lunges at Nate with the baton. He narrowly dodges her.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
I'm outta here.

Jasmine reaches up as if grabbing her VR helmet.

She lifts both hands. She vanishes.

Nathan looks around in a panic.

Fay comes straight for him, baton extended.

He screams. Then the baton strikes him in the chest and the screaming stops. He spasms in pain and shock, then falls to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nathan lies on the floor, seizing.

Jasmine wrestles his VR helmet off his head.

The seizure stops immediately. Nate gasps for air.

Jasmine laughs at him.

JASMINE
I told you to get out.

NATHAN
Fuckin' hell that hurt!
(a beat)
It's not even real!

JASMINE
All in your head.

Nathan glares at Fay. She is still resting peacefully.

NATHAN
Bitch.

JASMINE
Give her a break.

NATHAN
I'll give her something.

JASMINE
Aw, you're so tough.

NATHAN
I'll zap her with a bloody...

His voice trails off.

JASMINE
What?

He looks at Jasmine. He grins.

He gets up. Walks out of the room.

JASMINE
Nathan?

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Lina and Dimitri walk along a main thoroughfare.

Lina looks extremely bored.

DIMITRI
He's always having a go at me
though. Wouldn't know what to
do if he didn't have someone
to pick on.

Lina sighs.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)
D'you hear me?

LINA
Yeah.

DIMITRI
Yeah, well, he's got it in
for me, has since day one.

A human body falls through the air, landing with a loud THUD on the pavement directly in front of them.

They both freeze, looking down at the body.

It is Diggity.

The top of his skull is missing.

He is covered in wounds.

Lina looks to Dimitri.

LINA
What do we do?

Dimitri just stares at the body, his mouth hanging open.

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nathan returns to the living room.

In his hands is a neural whip.

JASMINE
Where was that?

Nathan toys with the whip.

He pretends to aim it at Jasmine.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Don't you dare.

NATHAN
She brought it home. When
things went to shit. You were
out of it by then.

He swirls the whip around, making light saber noises.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I treated a couple of them,
you know. At work. P.T.K.

JASMINE
I didn't know she was on that
case til I went in her head.
The woman can keep a secret.

NATHAN
You have no idea.

JASMINE
Don't get all mysterious
bullshit on me.
(a beat)
You gonna do it or what?

He hands the whip to Jasmine.

NATHAN
Nuh. I don't have the balls.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Around a dozen soldiers gather around Diggity's body.

Dimitri sits nearby, subdued.

JASMINE (V.O.)
I couldn't sleep for ages,
first time in that loop.

NATHAN (V.O.)
She's seen some dark shit.

JASMINE (V.O.)
Well, she's about to see
more. You ready?

INT. JASMINE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nathan watches, grimacing, as Jasmine moves the neural whip
closer and closer to Fay's chest. Finally, contact.

Fay gasps and sits upright.

END OF PILOT

EXEGESIS

**INDIGENOUS
SCREENWRITERS**

Introduction

My name is Beverly Scott. I am from a small rural town called Ashford, in north west New South Wales, in Kwiambal (pronounced Kigh-am-bal) country. As an Aboriginal Australian I have a strong interest in Indigenous issues. As a writer, my passion is screenwriting. This research combines my two areas of interest in a study of screenwriting from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter.

The core of this doctoral project is an original screenplay titled *Hostile Natives*. This is a television pilot script for a one-hour serialised ensemble drama suited to a premium cable network. *Hostile Natives* is a post-apocalyptic story set in the near future, about a community struggling to cope in the aftermath of a pandemic that leaves many people with physical and psychological problems. The screenplay is accompanied by this exegesis, which provides an analytical contextualisation of the creative work.

This is practice-led research, in which the writing of the creative project leads and informs the writing of the exegetical component. Practice-led research adds to current knowledge of screenwriting practice by generating valuable practitioner insights through critical reflection on the writing process. Practice-led methods will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 2.

In the following section, I will explore the academic context of this study – the relatively new field of screenwriting studies. In doing so I will highlight the dearth of research to date regarding screenwriting in general, and regarding Indigenous Australian screenwriters in particular.

Screenwriting research is in its infancy. By way of illustration, the academic journal dedicated to this specialist field, the *Journal of Screenwriting*, was first published only in 2010 (Intellect 2016). Screenwriting researchers have also found publication in other industry-relevant journals such as the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* (Nelmes 2008), *TEXT Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* (Baker 2013) and *Lumina: Australian Journal of Screen Arts and Business*, the journal of the Australian Film Television Radio School (Bell 2011). Further, a limited number of academic texts have been published in this area, for example Steven Maras' *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (2009) and *Writing for the Screen: Creative and Critical Approaches* by Craig Batty and Zara Waldeback (2008). But in the main, screenwriting research is a new phenomenon. Consequently there are few academic publications in this field.

Historically, publications related to screenwriting have been how-to guides, designed to help hopeful screenwriters learn the craft and break into the industry. The aspirational title of Michael Hauge's 2007 screenwriting manual gives an insight into the nature of such texts: *Writing Screenplays That Sell: The Complete, Step-By-Step Guide for Writing and Selling to the Movies and TV, from Story Concept to Development Deal*.

Given that an academic approach to screenwriting is relatively new, researchers in this field are still mapping the terrain. In 2011, Maras described some of the main approaches to screenwriting research, identifying four distinctive attitudes towards the discipline; restorative, exemplification, evangelical and descriptivist. He further listed seven dominant research trajectories; formalist, narratological, stylistic, historical, industrial/institutional, conceptual and practice-based. However, he acknowledged that other researchers may prefer divisions based on genre, or theoretical perspective, or no categorisation at all. Clearly, the academic discipline that is screenwriting research is still evolving as researchers pursue diverse lines of inquiry.

In relation to screenwriters as a cohort, very little research has been conducted. Screen Australia (2016) has published a document titled *A selection of top grossing Australian screenwriters*, which lists these successful writers and the box office earnings of their films. Pritzker & McGarva (2009) also studied characteristics of Academy Award winning screenwriters, but even they noted; “An example of the lack of general interest in screenwriters is the paucity of published biographical data about them” (p. 60).

One source that does provide information on Hollywood screenwriters in particular is the interview-style how-to screenwriting text. Examples of this type of text include Karl Iglesias’ *The 101 Habits of Highly Successful Screenwriters: Insider Secrets from Hollywood’s Top Writers* (2001), Kevin Conroy Scott’s *Screenwriters’ Masterclass: Screenwriters Talk About Their Greatest Movies* (2005) and Hanson & Herman’s *Tales from the Script: 50 Hollywood Screenwriters Share Their Stories* (2010).

In terms of Indigenous Australian screenwriters and their writing practice, little is known. Screen Australia (2010b) has compiled a document called *The Black List: Film and TV projects since 1970 with Indigenous Australians in key creative roles*. This lists most screen credits for Indigenous Australian screenwriters, but does not provide biographical information about individuals. The Australian Film Commission (2007) also published a book called *Dreaming in Motion: Celebrating Australia’s Indigenous Filmmakers* which provides biographical information about a few of these writers. Regarding journal articles, I have identified only one published academic article about Indigenous screenwriting, by Pauline Clague (2013), which proposed a five beat structure for Indigenous screen stories. I could find no previous research about the experience of screenwriting practice from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter.

Consequently this practice-led research, which explores screenwriting from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter, breaks new ground. In Chapter 2, I explain practice-led methodologies, how they are applied in this study and what I hoped to learn from this doctoral research.

In Chapter 3, I conduct a chronological review of all previous Indigenous Australian screenwriters and their works, both in feature film and television formats.

In Chapter 4, I discuss trends in Indigenous Australian screenwriting including low industry participation by these writers, an auteur filmmaking culture in Australia and a historically limited range of screen genres in works by this cohort. I further propose that pervasive Indigenous disadvantage is likely relevant for these writers. With regard to my creative work, I highlight that dealing with Indigenous content can be personally stressful. I also explain my decision to write a television script rather than a feature film.

In Chapter 5, I explore two relevant theoretical perspectives in the context of my work as an Indigenous Australian screenwriter; postcolonialism and globalisation. With particular reference to postcolonialism, I explain two key choices in my creative work – the decision not to include overt Indigenous content in my screenplay, and the selection of science fiction as the story genre. With reference to globalisation I explore the concept of Fourth Cinema and consider where my creative work is situated in relation to this.

In Chapter 6, I discuss my creative decisions in writing the screenplay, focusing on the influence of Indigenous perspective on these choices. Key decisions discussed include; genre, title, story idea, narrative form, setting, character, plot and description, action and dialogue. Following this, I identify that few resources exist to assist Indigenous Australian screenwriters navigate creative tensions. I then propose an approach to creative decision-making based on an Indigenous worldview.

In Chapter 7, I summarise the challenges for Indigenous Australian screenwriters as identified in the exegesis, phrasing these as potential avenues for future research.

Methods

This is writing-focused research, with an original screenplay as the primary research product. Accompanying the screenplay is this exegesis, a document that provides an analytical counterpoint to the script, contextualising and illuminating the creative writing process. Accordingly, the research project as a whole can be conceived as practice-led creative writing research in the discipline of screenwriting.

2.1 Screenwriting as practice-led research

The creative industries are economically important, both locally and globally (Arnold, 2012, pp. 9-10). The Australian Government Ministry for the Arts states that the creative industries ‘...have the potential to create wealth and jobs through the generation and use of intellectual property’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2015). Further, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey *Film, Television and Digital Games, Australia, 2011-12* found that;

‘...the combined activities of Film and video production and post-production businesses employed 15,760 persons across 2,773 businesses. During the reference period these businesses generated \$2,523.8m in income.’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2013)

Because screenwriters are ‘the first point of a film’s genesis’ (Coleman 2011, p. 9 of 9), screenwriting can arguably be conceived as a key form of creative labour within the film and television industry (Conor 2010). As Batty and Waldeback (2008) stated, ‘Without a script there is no drama; without a writer, there is no director’.

If the film industry as a whole is economically important, and screenwriting is a crucial part of that industry, it follows that research about screenwriting is prudent. But what form should that research take? Vagg (2011) and Maras (2009) studied the history of screenwriting. Boon (2008) and Koivumäki (2010) critically discussed screenplay aesthetics. But neither historical nor critical approaches generate new knowledge about hands-on screenwriting practice. In contrast practice-led, screenwriting-focused research offers valuable insight into the creative process.

Arnold (2012, p. 19) explains ‘There is no single model of Practice Led Research’. Still, in projects where creative practice leads research, some common features can be observed. First, practice-led research is reflexive in nature, involving not only writing practice, but also ‘analysis of the processes of the production of the creative component’ (Green 2006, p. 178). Thus, as described by Harper (2008, p. 161) ‘Creative writing, as a research field, incorporates the practice of writing creatively and critical responses to that practice’. The cyclic, iterative nature of practice-led research means that, although the general purpose of the research is known at commencement, specific research questions are often revealed through practice (Brien 2006; Smith & Dean 2009, p. 19).

Practice-led research usually results in the production of a creative artefact as a research output. The artefact may be understood as an answer to a research question, as an argument on a particular topic, or as a means to gain knowledge through the process of creation (Mäkelä 2007). In screenwriting practice-led research, the artefact generated is a script or screenplay, usually unproduced/unfilmed. Some have argued that the screenplay is a valid research product in its own right, requiring no critical accompaniment (Baker 2013, p. 4; Baker et al. 2015). Others disagree, arguing that practice is not research and should not be conflated with research (McNamara 2012). Most opinions fall somewhere in-between;

‘Nationally and internationally, a growing and sophisticated understanding and articulation of specific methods to frame artistic practice has emerged, validating creative work as a bona fide research output, albeit accompanied by textual interpretation / contextualisation / illumination of the practice in an exegesis’ (Stock 2010, p. 2)

In this doctoral project, the creative artefact is a television pilot screenplay. It is accompanied by an exegesis that situates the creative work within a theoretical context and illuminates the screenwriting process by exploring the creative decisions made.

The custom of adopting relevant critical perspectives during exegetical work corresponds with a conceptual practice-led approach described by Smith and Dean (2009). They assert that a conceptual approach is associated with ‘argument, analysis and the application of theoretical ideas’ (p. 4) and ‘usually involves reading and textual analysis’ (p.4). They also contend that this type of research is best suited to practitioner/researchers ‘who are particularly concerned with the relationship between theory and practice’ (p.5).

To date, practice-led creative writing researchers have incorporated a range of theoretical perspectives in their exegetical work. For example, Mellor (2004) drew on Jungian thought when critically discussing the process of writing her novel. Brien (2006) adopted a biographical approach when describing how she approached writing the life story of a historical figure. Beasley (2007) explained how she referenced principles of narratology and genre when writing her crime novel.

Though the theories used differ between projects, the reasons for a conceptual approach are usually shared. Generally it is hoped that, through the practice of writing and through the handling of related ideas, new insights about writing practice may emerge. As Bolt (2006) explains, ‘we can not consciously seek the new, since by definition the new can not be known in advance’ (p. 7). But practice-led research may permit new insights as a result of ‘understanding that originates in and through practice’ (p. 6).

As previously stated, the goal of this research is to explore the process of writing a screenplay from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter. Using a practice-led research approach, and by complementing the creative project with a thoughtful exegesis, it is hoped that new insights might be gained into Indigenous screenwriting practice.

2.2 PLR and Indigenous research methods

Practice-led research (PLR) is a relatively recent phenomenon in the academy, only achieving formal recognition in the mid 1990s (Hamilton and Jaaniste 2010). Presently, researchers are still negotiating the status, role and purpose of PLR (Kill 2013, p.21). In some ways the uncertainties faced by practice-led researchers are similar to those encountered by Indigenous researchers seeking recognition for Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being: both PLR and Indigenous research challenge established western epistemologies. (Arnold 2013; Moreton-Robinson & Walter 2011)

This doctoral research involves both PLR and an Indigenous researcher perspective, but it also functions as a means of earning a western educational credential. As such this project must conform to a range of conventional academic criteria, whilst simultaneously approaching the research in ways not always consistent with the dominant western worldview (Cheung 2008).

These conflicting positions offer both challenge and opportunity. In terms of PLR, it means a researcher ‘may find they have to document and present their work in ways that run counter to the nature of their practice’ Grech (2006, p. 34). On the other hand PLR also presents a path through this dilemma in the way that it encourages the researcher to ‘recognise the subjective nature of research and to position themselves clearly within the work’ (Stewart 2007, p. 124).

Conducting Indigenous research within the academy is even more challenging. To non-Indigenous scholars, it may seem that Indigenous research ‘defies easy categorization, in part because of its contested post-colonial terrain’ (Asmar, Mercier & Page 2009, p. 146). Still, there are many recognised points of difference between western and Indigenous viewpoints that allow useful comparisons between the two. In general, the western scientific approach can be described as: positivist, reductionist, objective, quantitative, linear, analytical, simplified and controlled. Conversely, Indigenous knowledges are commonly understood as: holistic, intuitive, spiritual, subjective, qualitative, contextualised, interdisciplinary, cyclic, entangled and complex. (Mazzocchi 2006, p. 464)

Dudgeon and Fielder (2006) contend that, for Indigenous intellectuals ‘decolonisation is an ongoing struggle’ (p. 396), where researchers strive to ‘create space’ (p. 408) for themselves within academia. They draw from Bhabha’s idea of ‘the third space’ (Huddart 2006, p. 85) to envisage the created space as one of complex racial hybridity, shifted away from essentialist notions of cultural purity and otherness, instead embracing ambivalence and liminality.

This practice-led doctoral project might also be conceived as an endeavour to create a third space. Though PLR is not an Indigenous methodology per se, it does share many features in common with Indigenous knowledges: PLR is interdisciplinary, subjective, requires introspection/intuition and is reflexive/cyclic in nature.

2.3 Research questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the process of writing an original screenplay from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter. More specifically, this research uses practice-led methods to identify potential challenges for these writers. Ultimately it is hoped that this project will generate a list of ideas and insights which will inform a more detailed investigation of this cohort in the future (for example, via semi-structured interviews with the screenwriters).

A first step in this research is to review previous Indigenous Australian screenwriters and their works. Exactly who are Australia’s Indigenous screenwriters, what feature films and television series have they worked on and what can be learned from this data?

These questions inform the following chapter. Further, as is common in practice-led research, answering these initial questions provided unexpected insights and triggered new avenues of enquiry, as detailed in later chapters.

Indigenous Australian screenwriters

The first Australian feature film, made in 1906, was bushranger melodrama *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (Mayer & Beattie 2007, p. 1). This highly successful production heralded a strong start for the Australian film industry, which would go on to experience periods of boom and bust over subsequent decades (Australian Film Commission 2005, p. 2; Formica 2011, p. 44).

Although the Australian film industry developed during this time, Indigenous Australian involvement in the industry was minimal. Aboriginal characters were frequently depicted, but filmmakers in the traditional key creative ‘above the line’ roles of writer, director or producer were invariably non-Indigenous. (Langton 1993, p. 24; Rekhari 2008, p. 125; Screen Australia 2010b, p. 3)

In fact, it was not until seventy years after *The Story of the Kelly Gang* that an Australian feature film involved an Indigenous Australian in a key creative role. That film was a 1976 television movie called *The Cake Man*; a social drama about the struggles and hopes of an Aboriginal family. In that instance, screenwriter Robert J Merritt, adapted the script from his own play of the same name. (AustLit 2002e; Screen Australia 2010b, pp. 5, 33)

Since the 1970s, Indigenous Australian participation in key creative feature filmmaking roles has increased. However the overall number of individuals involved in screenwriting at this level is small, as is the number of projects completed (Screen Australia 2014b, 2014c). Given such a modest cohort, it is not beyond the scope of this research to review the feature film credits of every Indigenous Australian screenwriter to date.

3.1 Feature screenwriters

The limited number of Indigenous Australian feature film screenwriters means that a review of their works is necessarily brief. For the purpose of this research, ‘Indigenous Australian’ means a person who is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australian. Further, the term ‘feature’ refers to any fictional narrative film, video or television production intended to be screened as a stand-alone event. Therefore this includes not only cinematic releases, but also festival-only releases, short features and even made-for-television movies. Short narrative films, documentaries and television series are excluded. Copies of some works were not available for viewing – in these instances reference was made to screen credits and literature describing the works. For ease of reference, a list of the relevant screenwriters and their feature projects is provided in Table 1.

As previously mentioned, Robert J Merritt was the first Indigenous Australian to achieve a feature length screenwriting credit, with television movie *The Cake Man* in 1976. Following this, Merritt co-wrote *The City’s Edge*, a 1983 feature released on video in Australia. *The City’s Edge* was an adaptation of the 1967 novel *The Running Man*, by WA Harbinson. Set in Sydney, this dramatic film dealt with themes of marginalisation, drug addiction and race relations. (Screen Australia 2010b, p. 27; National Film and Sound Archive 2014) Further, in 1986 Merritt was credited as co-writer on his third and final feature-length film, *Short Changed*, a drama about an Aboriginal man and his white ex-wife battling for custody of their ten year old son (Screen Australia 2010b, p. 30; AustLit 2002f).

TABLE 1. Indigenous Australians with feature screenwriting credit/s

SCREENWRITER	FILM	YEAR	CO-WRITER	WRITER	DIRECTOR	PRODUCER
Robert J Merritt	<i>The Cake Man</i>	1976		✓		✓
	<i>The City's Edge</i>	1983	✓			
	<i>Short Changed</i>	1986	✓			
Lawrence Johnston	<i>Night Out</i>	1990		✓	✓	
	<i>Life</i>	1996	✓		✓	
Tracey Moffatt	<i>Bedevil</i>	1993		✓	✓	
Paul Fenech	<i>Somewhere in the Darkness</i>	1999	✓		✓	✓
	<i>Fat Pizza</i>	2002	✓		✓	✓
	<i>Housos vs. Authority</i>	2012		✓	✓	✓
	<i>Fat Pizza vs. Housos</i>	2014		✓	✓	✓
Rachel Perkins	<i>One Night The Moon</i>	2001	✓		✓	
	<i>Bran Nue Dae</i>	2009	✓		✓	
Jimmy Chi	<i>Bran Nue Dae</i>	2009	✓			
Ivan Sen	<i>Beneath Clouds</i>	2002		✓	✓	
	<i>Dreamland</i>	2009		✓	✓	
	<i>Toomelah</i>	2011		✓	✓	
	<i>Mystery Road</i>	2013		✓	✓	
Richard J. Frankland	<i>Stone Bros</i>	2009		✓	✓	
Warwick Thornton	<i>Samson & Delilah</i>	2009		✓	✓	
Beck Cole	<i>Here I Am</i>	2011		✓	✓	
Tony Briggs	<i>The Sapphires</i>	2012	✓			✓
Catriona McKenzie	<i>Satellite Boy</i>	2013		✓	✓	✓
David Gulpilil	<i>Charlie's Country</i>	2013	✓			
Steven McGregor	<i>Redfern Now: Promise Me</i>	2015		✓		

SOURCES: Australian Film Commission 2007; Blackfella Films 2015c; Screen Australia 2010b, 2014d, 2015a, 2015c & 2015e.

The next Indigenous Australian to achieve a feature length screenwriting credit was Lawrence Johnston in 1990. The film was *Night Out*, a dramatic short feature about a gay man who is viciously beaten while his partner is away on business. Johnston wrote, directed and edited *Night Out* while a student at film school. Shot in black and white, it screened at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard section. After *Night Out*, Johnston became more widely known for his documentary work, however he did co-write and direct one full-length feature film, *Life*, in 1996. *Life* was an adaptation of co-writer John Brumpton's short play *Containment*, about two heterosexual, HIV positive men sharing a prison cell. (Australian Film Commission 2007, p. 40; Nelson & Addie 2005, p.76)

Also active in the early 1990s was Aboriginal artist Tracey Moffatt. In 1993 Moffatt wrote and directed her debut feature film *beDevil*. This experimental film, consisting of three separate ghost stories, was a critical success and screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival. However, the film was so experimental, many argued whether it should rightly be considered a piece of visual art. Indeed, since *beDevil* Moffatt has gone on to global success as a visual artist, and has not made another feature film. (Summerhayes 2004)

The late 1990s and the new millennium saw a surge in feature projects with Indigenous Australians in key creative roles. In 1999, Paul Fenech co-wrote, co-produced and directed little-known film *Somewhere in the Darkness*, a melodrama about an old man and a young boy trapped together under a collapsed building (Screen Australia 2015f). Though Indigenous actors Ernie Dingo and Leah Purcell were cast in this film, they did not appear to have major roles. Due to scant detail available about this film, it is difficult to determine if it featured any significant Indigenous content. (IFM Films, 2013) Of Maltese and Aboriginal descent, Fenech later became well-known for his popular television comedies *Pizza*, *Swift and Shift Couriers*, and *Housos*. Filled with boisterous, ethnically diverse blue-collar and welfare-class Australian characters, Fenech's shows were such a hit with audiences he was able to make three feature film spin-offs based on his television work. Fenech wrote, directed and co-produced *Fat Pizza* in 2003, *Housos vs Authority* in 2012, and *Fat Pizza vs Housos* in 2014. (Kitson 2003; Hoskin 2013; Robson 2014; Screen Australia 2015c)

Another relatively well-known Aboriginal filmmaker is Rachel Perkins. In 2001, Perkins co-wrote the short feature *One Night the Moon*, which she also directed. A musical drama, *One Night the Moon* is a story about a young white girl missing in the bush and her stubborn father who refuses the help of an Indigenous tracker (Collins & Davies 2004, p. 142). Perkins has also been involved in many other projects - mostly documentaries - in a variety of capacities (Screen Australia 2015d). However her only other narrative feature film writing credit is as co-writer on her 2009 directorial project, musical comedy *Bran Nue Dae*. Perkins shared writing credit for this stage adaptation with Jimmy Chi, the Indigenous playwright of the original musical, and Reg Cribb, a non-Indigenous writer. (Screen Australia 2010b, p. 26)

In terms of original screenwriting, one of the most prolific current Indigenous filmmakers is Ivan Sen. With four features under his belt as writer/director, Sen is developing a reputation as an auteur (Bancks 2004, p. 135). Sen's feature debut was in 2002 with *Beneath Clouds*, a coming of age road movie about two Indigenous teens (Australian Film Commission 2007, p. 59). The film won Premiere First Movie Award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2002 (Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin, 2015).

After a break from features, during which he worked on a range of documentary projects, Sen returned to narrative filmmaking in 2009 with the experimental *Dreamland*, a black and white film about a dying man searching for UFOs near Area 51 in the Nevada desert (Robb 2011, p. 21; Screen Australia 2010b, p. 27). After *Dreamland*, Sen came back to Australia for 2011's *Toomelah*, a drama about a ten year old Aboriginal boy growing up in the eponymous community. Of note, *Toomelah* screened in the Un Certain Regard section of the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. (Woodhead 2011, p. 38; Festival de Cannes 2015a) Most recently, Sen has moved toward a more genre-oriented style of filmmaking with 2013's *Mystery Road*, a western/crime drama about an Aboriginal detective returning to his outback home town to solve a murder (Dolgoplov 2013).

In 2009 Indigenous Australian filmmaker Richard J. Frankland wrote and directed a very different type of film, his debut feature *Stone Bros*, a stoner comedy road movie about two Aboriginal cousins on a quest to return a sacred stone to their home town (Marsh 2012; Rekhari 2009). In the same year, Indigenous Australian filmmaker Warwick Thornton also wrote, directed and shot his debut feature *Samson and Delilah*, a film worlds apart from *Stone Bros* in both subject matter and tone. *Samson and Delilah*, a quietly dramatic love story about two Aboriginal teenagers from Alice Springs struggling to find their place in the world, won the Camera d'Or at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. (Knopf 2013)

Importantly, Warwick Thornton is not only a writer/director. He is also a skilled cinematographer with vast experience working on other filmmaker's projects (Screen Australia 2015h). One such project was 2011's *Here I Am*, the debut feature film of Indigenous writer/director (and Thornton's wife) Beck Cole. In *Here I Am*, the story revolves around an urban Indigenous woman just out of prison, trying to pick up the pieces of her life. (Redwood 2011)

Another film shot by Thornton was 2012 hit movie *The Sapphires*, co-written by Tony Briggs (Indigenous playwright of the original stage production) and non-Indigenous screenwriter Keith Thompson. Part period drama, part musical comedy *The Sapphires*, is about an all-Aboriginal girl group picked to sing for the troops in war-torn Vietnam. Briggs based the story on his mother's real life experiences in the 1960s. (Tynan 2013; Thompson 2012)

Also in 2012 Indigenous filmmaker Catriona McKenzie wrote and directed the feature film *Satellite Boy*, about a young Aboriginal boy fighting to stop a mining company from taking over his home (Judah 2013; Screen Australia 2015e). In 2013 non-Indigenous director Rolf De Heer and Indigenous actor David Gulpilil co-wrote *Charlie's Country*, a feature film about an older Aboriginal man trying to learn how to live – and where to live - in this modern world (Redwood 2014; Screen Australia 2015a). *Charlie's Country* screened in the Un Certain Regard section of the 2014 Cannes Film Festival (Festival de Cannes 2015b).

Finally, the most recent feature written by an Indigenous Australian was 2015 television movie *Redfern Now: Promise Me*, the final chapter in the *Redfern Now* television series, written by Steven McGregor and directed by Rachel Perkins. *Redfern Now: Promise Me* is about two Indigenous women, both victims of a violent crime. It explores their different ways of coping, and the consequences of their actions. (Blackfella Films 2015c)

In summary (as per Table 1) only fourteen Indigenous Australians have ever been credited with writing or co-writing a feature-length film. These writers are: Robert J Merritt, Lawrence Johnston, Tracey Moffatt, Paul Fenech, Rachel Perkins, Jimmy Chi, Ivan Sen, Richard J. Frankland, Warwick Thornton, Beck Cole, Tony Briggs, Catriona McKenzie, David Gulpilil, and Steven McGregor. Of the fourteen writers, ten are men and four are women.

To date, these fourteen screenwriters have contributed to a total of twenty-three completed feature projects. On seventeen of these projects (or roughly 73.9 per cent) the Indigenous screenwriter was also the director (*Bran Nue Dae* had two Indigenous co-writers, one of whom was the director). Of the six features without a writer/director, two films (*The Cake Man* and *The Sapphires*) involved a writer/producer, while one film (*Charlie's Country*) involved a writer/actor. On only three films (*The City's Edge*, *Short Changed* and *Redfern Now: Promise Me*) was the writer's sole credit for screenwriting.

A chronological list of the nominated feature projects is provided in Table 2. This table demonstrates that the number of feature films with Indigenous Australians in a screenwriting role has increased dramatically in recent decades. In the twenty-four years from 1976 to 2000, Indigenous Australians wrote or co-wrote a total of seven feature films. However, in the ten years from 2000 to 2010, a further seven projects with Indigenous Australian screenwriters were completed. Moreover, in the five years since 2010, another nine features have been made with Indigenous Australians in a screenwriting role. Of course, some screenwriters have multiple films to their name, so the overall number of credited writers remains low.

TABLE 2. Chronology of features with Indigenous screenwriters

YEAR	FILM	GENRE	ORIGIN
1976	<i>The Cake Man</i>	Drama	Stage adaptation
1983	<i>The City's Edge</i>	Drama	Book adaptation
1985	<i>Short Changed</i>	Drama	Original
1990	<i>Night Out</i>	Drama	Original
1993	<i>Bedevil</i>	Experimental	Original
1996	<i>Life</i>	Drama	Stage adaptation
1999	<i>Somewhere In The Darkness</i>	Drama	Original
2001	<i>One Night The Moon</i>	Musical / Drama	Original
2002	<i>Fat Pizza</i>	Comedy	Based on TV show
2002	<i>Beneath Clouds</i>	Drama	Original
2009	<i>Stone Bros</i>	Comedy	Original
2009	<i>Samson & Delilah</i>	Drama	Original
2009	<i>Bran Nue Dae</i>	Musical / Comedy	Stage adaptation
2009	<i>Dreamland</i>	Experimental	Original
2011	<i>Toomelah</i>	Drama	Original
2011	<i>Here I Am</i>	Drama	Original
2012	<i>Housos vs. Authority</i>	Comedy	Based on TV show
2012	<i>The Sapphires</i>	Musical / Dramedy	Stage adaptation
2013	<i>Mystery Road</i>	Western/Crime	Original
2013	<i>Satellite Boy</i>	Drama	Original
2013	<i>Charlie's Country</i>	Drama	Original
2014	<i>Fat Pizza vs. Housos</i>	Comedy	Based on TV show
2015	<i>Redfern Now: Promise Me</i>	Drama	Based on TV show

SOURCES: Australian Film Commission 2007; Blackfella Films 2015c; Screen Australia 2010b, 2014d, 2015a, 2015c & 2015e.

Genre and origin of each project are also given in Table 2. In relation to genre, a quick count of the twenty-three features shows that thirteen are dramas, four are comedies, three are musicals, one is a western/crime genre film and two are experimental projects. Looking at the origin of each project, it can be seen that fourteen are original works, four are based on television shows, four are adaptations of stage plays and one is a book adaptation. Further, a quick review of the content of each film shows that the vast majority of projects (sixteen out of twenty-three, or approximately 69.5 per cent) involve Indigenous content.

This cursory review of Indigenous feature writers and projects raises many questions, though three key issues concern this researcher. First, why are there generally so few Indigenous Australian feature screenwriters? Second, why do most Indigenous feature screenwriters direct their own films? And third, why do Indigenous feature screenwriters tend to write Indigenous content and drama?

Before exploring these trends, it is useful to compare Indigenous feature screenwriters with Indigenous writers of narrative television (TV) series. Such a comparison demonstrates that narrative form may be an important factor to consider when reviewing Indigenous screenwriters and their works.

3.2 TV series screenwriters

Television shows can take many forms, but this review covers only narrative series – TV shows that follow the same characters and storylines from episode to episode. These may include procedural ‘case of the week’ shows, highly serialised dramas, sit-coms or mini-series (The Black List, 2015). This review does not consider non-narrative television such as variety shows, short film compilations, sketch comedy shows, reality TV, documentaries or educational programming. As with feature projects, there are very few narrative TV series with Indigenous Australian screenwriters, so it is possible to briefly recount every relevant Indigenous screenwriter with a TV series writing credit. As a guide, a chronology of these TV series is provided in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Chronology of narrative TV series with Indigenous screenwriters

YEARS	SERIES	GENRE	FORMAT	EPISODES BY INDIGENOUS
1981	<i>Women of the Sun</i>	Drama	4 x 60 min	4
1994	<i>Heartland</i>	Drama	13 x 60 min	3
1998	<i>Pizza (Pilot)</i>	Comedy	1 x 30 min	1
2000-2007	<i>Pizza (S1-5)</i>	Comedy	44 x 25 min	44
2005	<i>Us Mob</i>	Children's	7 x 10 mins	7
2007-2009	<i>The Circuit (S1-2)</i>	Drama	12 x 52 min	7
2007-2010	<i>Lockie Leonard (S1-2)</i>	Children's	52 x 24 min	1
2008	<i>Double Trouble</i>	Children's	13 x 25 min	9
2008-2011	<i>Swift & Shift Couriers (S1-2)</i>	Comedy	19 x 25 min	19
2009-2011	<i>My Place (S1-2)</i>	Children's	26 x 24 min	4
2011-	<i>Housos (S1-2)</i>	Comedy	18 x 25 min	18
2012-2015	<i>Redfern Now (S1-3)</i>	Drama	12 x 60 min + 1 feature*	12 + 1 feature*
2014	<i>The Gods of Wheat Street</i>	Drama	6 x 60 min	6

SOURCES: AustLit 2002b; Blackfella Films 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; CAAMA 2014; Every Cloud Productions 2014; National Film and Sound Archive 2015; Ronin Films 2015; Screen Australia 2010b, 2015c; The Circuit 2007; The Circuit: Series 2, 2009; Zuk 2015a, 2015b, 2015c.

* Telemovie *Redfern Now: Promise Me*

The first credited Indigenous screenwriter of a narrative TV series was Hyllus Maris, who co-wrote all four episodes of the seminal 1981 Indigenous historical drama *Women of the Sun* with non-Indigenous co-screenwriter Sonia Borg (National Film and Sound Archive 2015; Ronin Films 2015).

Following *Women of the Sun*, it was not until 1994 that Ernie Dingo and Bob Maza earned co-writing credits on the thirteen episode drama series *Heartland* (also known as *Burned Bridge* in some countries) (AustLit 2002b).

In 1998 Paul Fenech wrote, directed and produced the comedy pilot *Pizza*. This would go on to become a five series show running until 2007, with all forty-four episodes written, directed and produced by Fenech (Screen Australia 2010b, pp. 36-37). Since then, Fenech has become somewhat of a juggernaut in the Australian television industry. He wrote, directed and produced all nineteen episodes of *Swift and Shift Couriers*, and all 18 episodes of *Housos* (Screen Australia 2015c).

In 2005 Indigenous filmmaker Danielle MacLean wrote the children's series *Us Mob* – seven episodes of ten minutes each, about the lives of young people living in a Town Camp in Alice Springs (Screen Australia 2010b, p. 39). MacLean also wrote three episodes of the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) 2007 children's series *Double Trouble*, about Indigenous twin sisters separated at birth. Other Indigenous writers for *Double Trouble* were; Michelle (Mitch) Torres (writer of three episodes), Richard J. Frankland (writer of two episodes and co-writer of one episode) and Wayne Blair (co-writer of one episode). Frankland and Blair were also co-directors on all episodes of this series. (CAAMA 2014; Zuk 2015a)

Torres also wrote two episodes for the acclaimed legal drama series *The Circuit*, and Blair one episode. Other Indigenous screenwriters for *The Circuit* were Beck Cole (writer of one episode) and Des Kootji Raymond (co-writer of one episode). Further, Indigenous screenwriter Dorothy (Dot) West wrote two episodes of *The Circuit*, and she was also co-producer on all twelve episodes of the two season show. (*The Circuit* 2007; *The Circuit: Series 2*, 2009)

Wayne Blair also co-wrote one episode of the children's series *Lockie Leonard*. Blair directed this and many other episodes of *Lockie Leonard* across the show's two seasons (Zuk 2015b). A man of many talents, Blair also wrote an episode of children's history series *My Place*. Other Indigenous screenwriters for this show included Leah Purcell, Dallas Winmar and Tony Briggs, all writing one episode each. (Zuk 2015c)

Recently, groundbreaking TV series *Redfern Now* has provided new opportunities for Indigenous TV screenwriters. Single episodes were written by Danielle MacLean and Michelle Blanchard. Single episodes were written and directed by Leah Purcell and Wayne Blair. Jon Bell wrote two episodes, and Steven McGregor wrote four episodes, plus the telemovie *Redfern Now: Promise Me*. Also, Adrian Russell Wills wrote one episode, and was writer/director on another. (Blackfella Films 2015a, 2015b, 2015c) Following *Redfern Now*, Jon Bell wrote all six episodes of the mini-series drama *The Gods of Wheat Street* (Every Cloud Productions 2014). A list of the Indigenous narrative TV series screenwriters and their episode credits is listed in Table 4.

In summary (as per Table 4) only eighteen Indigenous Australians have been credited with writing or co-writing episode/s for narrative TV series. These writers are: Hyllus Maris, Ernie Dingo, Bob Maza, Michelle (Mitch) Torres, Des Kootji Raymond, Danielle MacLean, Richard J. Frankland, Paul Fenech, Wayne Blair, Leah Purcell, Dallas Winmar, Tony Briggs, Dorothy (Dot) West, Beck Cole, Michelle Blanchard, Adrian Russell Wills, Steven McGregor and Jon Bell. Of the eighteen writers, ten are men and eight are women.

To date, these eighteen screenwriters have contributed to a total of one hundred and thirty five episodes of narrative television. Of note, comedy juggernaut Paul Fenech has single-handedly written, directed and produced an astonishing eighty-two of these episodes. But even if Fenech's huge body of work is discounted as an outlier or anomaly, the fact remains that fifty-three other episodes have been written or co-written by Indigenous screenwriters. This is over twice the number of feature films yet written or co-written by Indigenous screenwriters.

Interestingly, Indigenous television screenwriters appear less likely to be writer/directors than their feature film counterparts. Of the fifty three TV episodes written or co-written by Indigenous screenwriters who are *not* Paul Fenech, only four episodes (or roughly 7.5 per cent) involved writer/directors. The other forty nine episodes (roughly 92.5 per cent) involved writers working *only* as writers, with different persons credited as directors.

TABLE 4. Indigenous screenwriters of narrative TV series

SCREENWRITER	SERIES	EPISODES WRITTEN	CO-WRITER	WRITER	DIRECTOR	PRODUCER
Hyllus Maris	<i>Women of the Sun</i>	4	✓			
Ernie Dingo	<i>Heartland</i>	2	✓			
Bob Maza	<i>Heartland</i>	1	✓			
Michelle (Mitch) Torres	<i>Double Trouble</i>	3		✓		
	<i>The Circuit</i>	2		✓		
Des Kootji Raymond	<i>The Circuit</i>	1	✓			
Danielle MacLean	<i>Double Trouble</i>	3		✓		
	<i>Us Mob</i>	7		✓		
	<i>Redfern Now</i>	1		✓		
Richard J. Frankland	<i>Double Trouble</i>	2		✓	✓	
		1	✓		✓	
Paul Fenech	<i>Pizza (Pilot)</i>	1		✓	✓	✓
	<i>Pizza</i>	44		✓	✓	✓
	<i>Swift & Shift Couriers</i>	19		✓	✓	✓
	<i>Housos</i>	18		✓	✓	✓
Wayne Blair	<i>Lockie Leonard</i>	1	✓		✓	
	<i>My Place</i>	1		✓		
	<i>The Circuit</i>	1		✓		
	<i>Redfern Now</i>	1		✓		
	<i>Double Trouble</i>	1	✓		✓	
Leah Purcell	<i>My Place</i>	1		✓		
	<i>Redfern Now</i>	1		✓		
Dallas Winmar	<i>My Place</i>	1		✓		
Tony Briggs	<i>My Place</i>	1		✓		
Dorothy (Dot) West	<i>The Circuit</i>	2		✓		✓
Beck Cole	<i>The Circuit</i>	1		✓		
Michelle Blanchard	<i>Redfern Now</i>	1		✓		
Adrian Russell Wills	<i>Redfern Now</i>	2		✓		
Steven McGregor	<i>Redfern Now</i>	4		✓		
Jon Bell	<i>Redfern Now</i>	2		✓		
	<i>The Gods of Wheat Street</i>	6		✓		✓

SOURCES: AustLit 2002b; Blackfella Films 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; CAAMA 2014; Every Cloud Productions 2014; National Film and Sound Archive 2015; Ronin Films 2015; Screen Australia 2010b, 2015c; The Circuit 2007; The Circuit: Series 2, 2009; Zuk 2015a, 2015b, 2015c.

The chronology of narrative TV series provided in Table 3 shows that, as with feature films, the number of TV episodes with Indigenous Australians in a screenwriting role has increased dramatically in recent decades. In the nineteen years from 1981 to 2000, Indigenous Australians wrote or co-wrote only eight episodes of narrative television. However, in the fifteen years since then, a further one hundred and twenty seven such episodes were produced.

The genre of each TV series is also given in Table 3. A brief glance at the listed genres shows that five series are dramas, three are Paul Fenech comedies (with the *Pizza* pilot and series counted as one) and the remaining four are children's entertainment. The opportunity to work in children's programming is one aspect of television writing that distinguishes this field from feature film. Another is that the more experimental arthouse, musical and genre story formats possible in feature film work do not appear to be available in television series writing. Importantly, as in feature films, narrative television series with Indigenous screenwriters commonly include Indigenous content. In fact, eight out of the twelve television series listed (that is, two thirds) involve Indigenous content.

Considering this brief review of Indigenous screenwriters of narrative TV series, several things become apparent. First, as in feature film screenwriting, there are generally few Indigenous screenwriters of narrative TV series. Second, although Indigenous feature film screenwriters tend to direct their own work, writers of narrative TV series do not. Third, Indigenous writers of both feature films and narrative TV series tend to write Indigenous content and drama.

Of course, comparing Indigenous screenwriters of narrative TV series with Indigenous writers of feature films is to some extent disingenuous. After all, several of the Indigenous screenwriters mentioned here have worked in both television and feature formats. The following chapter explores the trends observed and relates these back to the researcher's own screenwriting practice.

Emerging trends in Indigenous screenwriting

A review of Indigenous screenwriters to date shows several clear trends. First, there are relatively few Indigenous screenwriters overall. Second, Indigenous feature screenwriters tend to be writer/directors, but Indigenous television writers do not tend to direct. Third, Indigenous screenwriters in both film and television tend to write Indigenous content, particularly drama.

4.1 Few Indigenous screenwriters

Across all feature projects and narrative TV series, only twenty seven credited Indigenous screenwriters have been identified. A list of these writers is included in Table 5, with a simple checklist showing which of the two formats they have worked in.

Of the twenty-seven writers listed, only fourteen (or approximately 52 per cent), have written feature projects. From the opposite perspective, eighteen of these writers (or two thirds), have worked on narrative TV series. Only five writers, or approximately 18.5 per cent, have achieved screenwriting credits in both formats.

TABLE 5. Indigenous screenwriters: Features vs narrative TV series

SCREENWRITER	FEATURES	TV SERIES
Robert J Merritt	✓	
Lawrence Johnston	✓	
Tracey Moffatt	✓	
Rachel Perkins	✓	
Jimmy Chi	✓	
Ivan Sen	✓	
Warwick Thornton	✓	
Catriona McKenzie	✓	
David Gulpilil	✓	
Richard J. Frankland	✓	✓
Paul Fenech	✓	✓
Tony Briggs	✓	✓
Beck Cole	✓	✓
Steven McGregor	✓	✓
Hyllus Maris		✓
Ernie Dingo		✓
Bob Maza		✓
Michelle (Mitch) Torres		✓
Des Kootji Raymond		✓
Danielle MacLean		✓
Wayne Blair		✓
Leah Purcell		✓
Dallas Winmar		✓
Dorothy (Dot) West		✓
Michelle Blanchard		✓
Adrian Russell Wills		✓
Jon Bell		✓

SOURCE: Compiled from all references cited in Chapter 3.

Fourteen Indigenous Australian feature film screenwriters seems like a small number. Unfortunately there is no definitive list identifying every previous Australian feature films screenwriter, so it is impossible to know exactly how low or high this number is. One way to gain insight into this matter might be to consider how many Indigenous screenwriters have made it onto the Screen Australia list '*A Selection of Top Grossing Australian Screen Writers*' (Screen Australia 2014a).

The first part of this list identifies 'Forty-six Australian writers of 69 feature films (31 Australian, 38 foreign) each earning US\$20 million or more worldwide' (Screen Australia 2014a, p. 2). On this list only one Indigenous Australian screenwriter made the cut, being Tony Briggs as co-writer of *The Sapphires*. The second part of this list identifies 'Fifty-seven Australian writers of 46 Australian feature films each earning A\$5 million or more in Australia' (Screen Australia 2014a, p.7). On this list only three Indigenous Australian screenwriters made the cut, being Tony Briggs as co-writer of *The Sapphires* and Jimmy Chi and Rachel Perkins as co-writers of *Bran Nue Dae*.

Of course, the list is neither exhaustive nor authoritative and it only recognises commercially successful films, so the criteria for inclusion is narrow. Yet, it does serve to illustrate the generally low number of Indigenous Australian feature film screenwriters, albeit in commercially successful films. Regrettably, in relation to Australian television screenwriters, no such convenient list exists. However, it seems safe to claim that a grand total of eighteen Indigenous Australian television writers (ever) is a low number. In any case, there are generally few Indigenous screenwriters. And the question remains: why? The reasons for this low industry participation are likely embedded in the broader historical, social, economic and cultural issues resulting from the European colonisation of Australia.

A brief introduction to the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians since European settlement can be found in the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) 2014 report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2014*, along with a wide range of more detailed references on the subject.

Importantly, though a detailed account of Indigenous Australian history is beyond the scope of this research, some background information is necessary in order to understand contemporary Australian Indigenous life.

Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived in Australia for thousands of years. Prior to European settlement, mainland Aboriginal society was made up of small, semi-nomadic family groups defined by complex kinship systems, with each group living in a defined territory and having strong spiritual connections to the land. In the Torres Strait, island society was comprised of established communities and villages, with gardening, fishing, hunting and inter-island trade being important parts of life. (Dudgeon et al. 2014)

European settlement and colonisation were devastating for Aboriginal people, many of whom were dispossessed of their lands - often through violence and murder – or died as a result of introduced diseases (SCRGSP 2014, p. 1.8). For Torres Strait Islanders, the arrival of Christian missionaries heralded the destruction of many traditional cultural practices. Further, annexation of their lands into Queensland signalled the introduction of restrictive, discriminatory laws (Dudgeon et al. 2014, p. 11).

Indigenous Australians suffered under a range of government policies over time. In the late 1800s, ‘protectionist’ policy and legislation resulted in Aboriginals being segregated from the non-Indigenous population and forced to live on reserves (Haebich 2000, p. 171). In the 1900s a new assimilationist policy was adopted, promoting the absorption/merging of Aboriginal people into mainstream Australian society (Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) 2015). Under this policy many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcefully removed from their families – these traumatic family separations later became known as the Stolen Generations. The trauma and grief of the Stolen Generations continues to be felt today in Indigenous families and communities, across the generations. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) 1997; Wesley-Esquimaux 2007)

Many other important historical events continue to impact the lives of contemporary Indigenous Australians. For example, some key events include; exploitation of Indigenous labour in ‘stolen wages’ cases (Thornton & Luker 2009), Indigenous people getting the right to vote in federal elections in 1962 (Australian Electoral Commission 2014), the ‘Gurindji Walk-Off’ at Wave Hill Station in 1966 (Riddett 1997) and the overturn of the doctrine of *terra nullis* with the success of the Mabo Native Title claim in 1992 (Hill 1995). Of course, these few examples barely scrape the surface of Indigenous Australian history. But hopefully they help situate contemporary Indigenous Australians in a context where historical events continue to impact daily life.

This is important because, although the Indigenous Australian screenwriters studied in this research are living in the present day, many of the challenges they face are rooted in the past – specifically in the traumatic colonial and postcolonial history of Australia. Importantly, one of the most significant legacies of Australian post/colonialism is the continuing, extreme, pervasive disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are worse off than non-Indigenous Australians when compared on many key health and socioeconomic outcomes. For example, in 2010-2012, life expectancy at birth for Indigenous Australians was 69.1 years for males (10.6 years less than non-Indigenous males) and 73.7 years for females (9.5 years less than non-Indigenous females). (SCRGSP 2014, p. 16)

During 2008-2012, Indigenous children aged 0-4 years were 1.8 times more likely to die than non-Indigenous children in the same age group (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.13). In relation to early childhood education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were less likely to be enrolled in preschool in 2013 (74 per cent compared to 91 per cent of non-Indigenous children) and less likely to attend preschool (70 per cent compared to 89 per cent attendance for non-Indigenous children) (SCRGSP 2014, p. 18).

Similarly between 2008-2013 a lower proportion of Indigenous students achieved national minimum standards in literacy and numeracy than non-Indigenous students (SCRGSP 2014, p. 19). Also, in 2011-13 only 58.5 per cent of Indigenous 20-24 year olds had completed year 12 or equivalent, compared to 86.1 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.33).

This pattern continued into the workforce, with only 48 per cent of Indigenous 15-64 year olds employed in 2012-2013, compared to 77 per cent of non-Indigenous persons in the same age group (SCRGSP 2014, p. 21). Further, post-secondary education showed 42.6 per cent of Indigenous Australians aged 20-64 either having a Certificate III or studying at any level in 2011-2013, compared to 66.6 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.53).

Indigenous disadvantage is not only reflected in life expectancy, early childhood, education and employment outcomes; it is felt across all aspects of contemporary Indigenous Australian life. In 2009-2012, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were 1.7 times more likely to suffer from a disability, compared to non-Indigenous Australians (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.59). In 2011-2013, the median income for Indigenous Australian households was \$465 – just over half the median income for non-Indigenous households, at \$869 (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.68).

Indigenous Australian children aged 0-17 years were more likely to be the subject of substantiated child abuse or neglect (37.9 per 1000 children) than their non-Indigenous counterparts (5 per 1000 children) in 2012-2013. Moreover, as at 30 June 2013 Indigenous children were far more likely to be the subject of a court issued care and protection order (49.3 per 1000 children) than non-Indigenous children (5.7 per 1000 children). (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.80-4.81).

The extent of Indigenous disadvantage in Australia becomes clearer with each statistic. In 2008 Indigenous Australian adults reported being the victim of physical or threatened violence at 1.8 times the rate of non-Indigenous adults. Further, Indigenous women reported higher rates of domestic violence and higher rates of sexual assault by a family member than did non-Indigenous women. In 2012-2013, hospitalisation rates for Indigenous Australians as a result of family violence-related assaults were 32.8 times that of non-Indigenous Australians (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.88).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also grossly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. At 30 June 2013, Indigenous adults were imprisoned at 13 times the rate of non-Indigenous adults. Even though Indigenous Australians comprise only 2.3 per cent of the national population, they make up 27.4 per cent of the adult prison population.

The picture is also bleak for Indigenous youth. In 2012-2013 the daily average detention rate for Indigenous youth aged 10-17 years was 364.8 per 100,000 - around 24 times that of non-Indigenous youth. In the same time frame, Indigenous youth were subject to community-based supervision at 14 times the rate of non-Indigenous youth. (SCRGSP 2014, p. 4.100)

Importantly, different types of disadvantage are interrelated, and the experience of disadvantage accumulates over time (Hunter 2007). Therefore early childhood disadvantage can have impacts long into adulthood, with the potential to contribute to intergenerational disadvantage and social exclusion (Vinson 2009).

Indigenous disadvantage is relevant to research on Indigenous Australian screenwriters, because in order to reach a point in life where even *thinking* about being a screenwriter is possible, many Indigenous Australians would first have to overcome great disadvantage, while also coming to terms with a vast amount of historic trauma and grief. Indeed, once Indigenous disadvantage is taken into account, the relatively low industry participation of Indigenous Australian screenwriters is not surprising. The real wonder is that any Indigenous Australians have managed to become screenwriters at all.

In terms of my personal experience, Indigenous disadvantage is certainly relevant. I am from the small country town of Ashford in northern New South Wales. The Ashford postcode (2361) was third-poorest in Australia in the 2012-2013 financial year (Australian Taxation Office 2015). At that time the poorest postcode was the Delungra area (2403), the second-poorest was the Bundarra area (2359), the fourth-poorest was the Bingara area (2404) and the tenth-poorest was the Emmaville area (2371). All these postcodes are in the same geographical area of north west New South Wales as my hometown. Further, the *Dropping Off The Edge 2015* report, classified Ashford as one of the 'most disadvantaged' postcodes in New South Wales (Vinson et al. 2015).

I realise that providing the name and postcode of my poor and disadvantaged hometown is not the same as describing my personal experience of Indigenous disadvantage. However, my failure to present this personal information is deliberate. I could provide details about how my family members and I have experienced Indigenous disadvantage, but I choose not to - for reasons intimately related to this doctoral research.

One of the most profound things I have learned over the course of this project is to recognise when I feel uncomfortable about something during the writing process. I felt highly uncomfortable when trying to summarise the previous information on Indigenous disadvantage. I also felt uncomfortable any time I tried to write Indigenous content in my creative work. Further, I feel uncomfortable talking about my personal experience of Indigenous disadvantage. Conversely, unpacking this feeling of discomfort has greatly assisted my understanding of my own creative process.

Discomfort is - by definition - not a pleasant feeling. When I feel discomfort I do not want to face the cause of the discomfort. My instinct is to turn away; to avoid the thing that is making me uncomfortable. But nothing is learned that way.

Facing the uncomfortable can be stressful. However, it is the only way to discover the underlying reason/s for my discomfort. Why does something stir anxiety, or dread, or fear, or apprehension? What is the root cause? Each time I felt that gnawing, cautious feeling I tried to analyse it, to identify where it was coming from. This is what I found.

It can be very difficult for Indigenous Australian people to talk about, write about or even think about the multitude of horrendous things that have happened to their ancestors, families, friends, themselves and their culture as a whole. This suffering - past and present - is not a generic or academic matter for Indigenous Australian people, it is highly specific, related to personal experience and often fraught with emotion.

I felt physically sick whenever I tried to write my brief summary about Indigenous Australian disadvantage. Underlying this was a sense of dread, and of being overwhelmed. I could only handle small doses of information at a time, then I would need to stop and take a break, sometimes for several days. My research often triggered painful memories of my family and emotions from my past. I would have nightmares.

Similarly, when writing my screenplay I initially tried to include Indigenous characters. However, this resulted in storylines that were reminiscent of real traumatic experiences. I found this distressing and difficult to deal with. I questioned if I would be able to produce any Indigenous screen content at all.

Subsequently, when it came time in this exegesis to discuss my own experience of Indigenous disadvantage, I resisted. In order to explain my own situation, I would need to describe painful things that had happened to members of my family in previous generations. I am not comfortable doing that, because I do not believe those are my stories to tell. Yet I feel there is an expectation that I should justify myself in some way; that I must relate my experience of Indigenous disadvantage – prove it somehow - in order to validate my Aboriginality.

I also recognised that this feeling is related to my creative practice, and my difficulty in writing stories with Indigenous characters. I feel the same sense of resistance when writing in a creative capacity. I feel like, as an Indigenous screenwriter, I am expected to write about Indigenous matters in order to convey some essential truth about the experience of being Indigenous. This angers me. A quote from Audre Lorde helped crystallise my thoughts in this regard:

Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future. (Lorde A, 1995, p. 284).

I am proud of my Aboriginal heritage, but I do not believe that ‘being Aboriginal’ is the only thing I can or should write about. Further, I do not believe I have any obligation to validate my Aboriginality in the minds of other people, by sharing my life story.

Realising this, I wondered: do other Indigenous Australian screenwriters feel the same way? Do they find it stressful to deal with information detailing the suffering of Indigenous people? Do they feel pressure to write Indigenous content? To tell personal stories of disadvantage? It would be interesting to interview these writers about this.

4.2 Rise of the feature writer/director

Of the twenty-three completed feature projects with an Indigenous Australian screenwriter, seventeen had writer/directors (as shown in Table 1). This equates to approximately 73.9 per cent of all projects with the screenwriter in a directing role.

Another way to look at this is to examine individual writers. Of the fourteen Indigenous screenwriters with feature film credits, nine (roughly 64.3 per cent) are writer/directors. In contrast, only three of the eighteen credited Indigenous television screenwriters (approximately 16.7 per cent) are writer/directors.

Of interest, two of these television writer/directors (Richard J. Frankland and Paul Fenech) are also credited feature film writer/directors. The third television writer/director (Wayne Blair) has also earned writing-only TV credits.

Why is the writer/director approach so prominent in the feature film format, but not in television screenwriting? Industry traditions may play a part. As Mittell (2006, p. 31) stated, television has a ‘reputation as a producer’s medium, where writers and creators retain control of their work more than in film’s director-centred model’. This is particularly relevant in the United States, where television writer-producers are widely respected as the visionary creators of narrative TV series (Pearson 2005). Indeed, in America, these writer/producers (colloquially referred to as showrunners) retain creative control over their shows, usually overseeing a team of staff writers who collaborate to bring the showrunner’s vision to screen. In this way the showrunner in narrative television is viewed as an auteur, providing each series with a ‘coherent vision’ (Newman & Levine 2012, p. 41).

The writer/producer, or showrunner model of television production is increasingly being used in Australia (Groves 2013, p. 10; Kroenert 2015; Rawsthorne 2015). The Indigenous writer who best fits the showrunner profile at present is Paul Fenech, though his output as a writer/director/producer is so high that he might more accurately be called a one-man phenomenon. (Indeed, it would be a worthwhile goal of future research to learn how Fenech has achieved this success.)

Other Indigenous television writers who have assumed a writer/producer role similar to a showrunner include Dorothy ‘Dot’ West (writer and co-producer on series one and two of *The Circuit*) and Jon Bell (writer and co-producer on *The Gods of Wheat Street*). Encouragingly, it appears that Indigenous television screenwriters who do not produce or direct can still find a place within the television industry, in specialist writing roles.

Unfortunately, the feature film industry is not so writer-friendly, mainly due to the dominance of feature film writer/directors. In the television industry, the model of showrunner-as-auteur benefits writers in two ways. First, it permits a singular ‘writerly’ creative vision. Secondly, it also involves the employment of multiple writing staff. Conversely, on a feature film, the director is deemed to be the author - or auteur - of that film. This model of director-as-auteur tends to backfire on writers. That is, directors keen on presenting their own creative vision tend to write their own material.

The dominance of feature writer/directors is not only an issue for Indigenous screenwriters. A heated debate within the Australian film industry during 2011 demonstrated that the problem is widespread. At that time, multi-award winning playwright and screenwriter David Williamson commented;

‘The number of original screenplays that get shot here, other than those written by directors, is infinitesimal.’ (Williamson 2011, p. 2)

Tim Pye, President of the Australian Writer’s Guild in 2011, agreed, stating;

‘In the five years to 2008, directors of produced Australian films were also credited as **writers** [original emphasis] 82 per cent of the time. This suggests a startlingly obvious ‘auteur’ filmmaking culture’ (Pye 2011, p. 6)

Much has been written – and debated - about the idea of the auteur; the director as creative visionary and single author of a film. Though it was not the first journal to mention the concept, the French magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* gave ideas of film authorship ‘their strongest focus’ (Tredell ed. 2002, p. 101) in the 1950s and helped refine the ‘*politique des auteurs*’, or ‘policy of authors’ that American Andrew Sarris later translated into English as ‘auteur theory’ (Andrews 2012, p. 38).

The popularity of auteur theory has waxed and waned over the decades, as film theorists moved away from authoritarian approaches, instead exploring audience reception and cultural studies perspectives (Naremore 1990, p. 14). Despite this, authorship is still a matter of interest in the film industry, where credit for success (and blame for failure) require agreement regarding who is responsible for a film (Tregde 2013, n.p.) and where reputation and ‘impression management’ are critical to careers (Zafirau 2008, p. 99).

From a screenwriting perspective, there are many arguments against auteur theory in relation to feature films, many of which are neatly summarised by Maras (2009, p. 97). Maras proposes that, although many screenwriters harbour antagonistic attitudes toward auteur theory, these attitudes are actually founded in deep anxieties about loss of control, related to the separation of a film’s conception (screenwriting) and its execution (film production) (Maras 2009, pp. 98-104).

It would be useful to interview Indigenous Australian feature film screenwriters to ascertain their opinions about this. What does being a writer/director mean to them? Does it represent increased control over the story being told? Is it a mark of career progression? Is it a practical measure to facilitate funding or production? From a different perspective, do these writers think of film in terms of historical, social, political or critical factors? If so, does this influence their desire to write and/or direct?

Regardless, good directors do not always make good writers. As Pye (2011, p. 6) says;

Writers create stories, directors interpret them. Occasionally, those varied and disparate skills exist in the one person. But not 82 per cent of the time.

Greg McLean, writer/director of *Wolf Creek* (2005) agreed;

About 90 per cent of Aussie screenplays are very weak, if not conceptually, then structurally. And the chances of finding brilliant directors who also happen to be brilliant writers are indeed miniscule. There’s maybe a handful in the world, let alone Australia. (McLean 2011, p. 3)

The question of why Indigenous feature filmmakers direct their own scripts has me fascinated. As a writer I have no interest in directing. However, I do want to write feature films. But given the statistics it is unlikely that a feature film screenplay written by me (or by any other specialist screenwriter) would ever be made by an Indigenous director, as they only seem to direct their own scripts. Frustrated, I decided to take a closer look at Indigenous feature film writer/directors, to try to understand why they do not direct scripts by other writers. Surprisingly, it was discovered that the educational backgrounds of Indigenous feature screenwriters may be relevant. Table 6 provides a summary of this educational data.

Publicly available information about the qualifications of the nominated Indigenous screenwriters revealed some interesting points. Most obvious is that eight of the fourteen writers attended prestigious film schools.

Lawrence Johnston attended the well-regarded Swinburne Film and Television School, which has since become the Victorian College of the Arts Film and Television School (Nelson & Addie 2005, p. 76). Both Tracey Moffatt and Ivan Sen attended the respected Queensland College of Art (Griffith University 2015; AustLit 2002c). Ivan Sen also attended the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) completing their Directing program, as did Steven McGregor. Rachel Perkins has an AFTRS Producing qualification. Beck Cole studied Documentary at AFTRS. Her husband Warwick Thornton studied Cinematography at AFTRS. Catriona McKenzie has AFTRS qualifications in both Screenwriting and Directing. (AFTRS 2015)

Of the remaining six screenwriters, one (Paul Fenech) gained industry experience working at the ABC for a number of years (Di Rosso 2011). Four (Jimmy Chi, Richard J. Frankland, Tony Briggs and David Gulpilil) obtained no formal film education. The education of the very first Indigenous screenwriter, Robert J Merritt, is unknown.

TABLE 6. Educational backgrounds of Indigenous screenwriters.

SCREENWRITER	STUDIED AT	TRAINED IN			
		WRITING	DIRECTING	PRODUCING	OTHER
Robert J Merritt	Unknown	-	-	-	-
Lawrence Johnston	Swinburne Film and Television School	✓	✓	✓	
Tracey Moffatt	Queensland College of Art				✓
Paul Fenech	No formal film education Industry experience at ABC				✓
Rachel Perkins	AFTRS			✓	
Jimmy Chi	No formal film education	-	-	-	-
Ivan Sen	Queensland College of Art				✓
	AFTRS		✓		
Richard J. Frankland	No formal film education	-	-	-	-
Warwick Thornton	AFTRS				✓
Beck Cole	AFTRS				✓
Tony Briggs	No formal film education Scotch College Melbourne	-	-	-	-
Catriona McKenzie	AFTRS	✓	✓		
David Gulpilil	No formal film education Maningrida mission school	-	-	-	-
Steven McGregor	AFTRS		✓		

SOURCES: Australian Film Commission 2007; Australian Film Television Radio School 2015; Frankland 2015; Griffith University 2015; AustLit 2002a, 2002c, 2002d; Di Rosso 2011; Scotch College Melbourne 2013

Jimmy Chi started an engineering degree, but was unable to complete it due to mental health problems (AustLit 2002d). Richard J. Frankland's official website describes a huge range of life experiences and achievements despite little mention of formal education (Frankland 2015). Tony Briggs went to Scotch College Melbourne as a high-school student but there is no record of further education (Scotch College Melbourne 2013). National icon David Gulpilil, who attended Maningrida mission school in North East Arnhem Land, had no training at all in acting or film (AustLit 2002a).

Of interest, only one credited screenwriter - Catriona McKenzie - has a qualification specifically in screenwriting, and McKenzie is also a trained director. Lawrence Johnston was only listed as trained in writing, directing and producing because his film studies did not focus on a specific discipline or skill (Nelson & Addie 2005, p. 76). Looking closely at the educational background of each screenwriter, compared to their writing credits, some interesting observations can be made.

Figure 1. Number of Indigenous feature screenwriting credits. The figure compares writer only credits to writer/director credits across three groups: film school educated writers, writers with no formal film education and writers with unknown education.

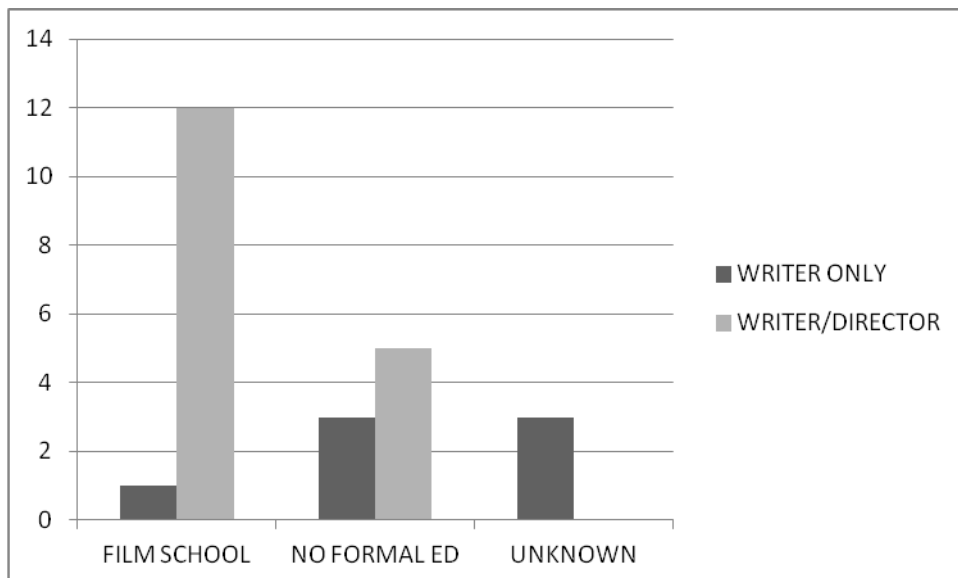


Figure 1 shows that film school educated Indigenous screenwriters have achieved a total of thirteen feature writing credits, compared to eleven credits for Indigenous screenwriters with no formal education, or unknown education. The total number of writing credits (twenty-four) is higher than the number of features (twenty-three) because the feature *Bran Nue Dae* had two credited Indigenous writers.

Of the thirteen screenwriting credits achieved by film school educated Indigenous screenwriters, twelve of these were as writer/director. A closer look at the single writing-only credit shows this belongs to Steven McGregor, for *Redfern Now: Promise Me*. Further inquiry reveals that, although McGregor was not writer/director on this particular project, as a graduate of the AFTRS Directing program, he has earned multiple credits as writer/director on a wide range of other projects (Screen Australia, 2015f).

Interestingly, the three writers with no formal film education were credited as co-writers only. Two adapted their own successful stage plays to the screen (Jimmy Chi adapted *Bran Nue Dae* and Tony Briggs adapted *The Sapphires*). The third, actor David Gulpilil, co-wrote the script for *Charlie's Country* during informal script development sessions with long-term collaborator, director Rolf de Heer (Bardon 2014, n.p.).

Additionally, an examination of the writers with unknown education shows that all three credits belong to Robert J Merritt. One credit was for adapting his own successful stage play, *The Cake Man*, to the screen. The other two credits were as co-writer only. Significantly, all three credits were obtained many years ago (between 1976 and 1986).

Overall, this does not paint an encouraging picture for any Indigenous Australian aspiring to be a feature film screenwriter. Put simply, since Robert J Merritt's last feature credit in 1986, not one Indigenous Australian screenwriter has earned a feature film writing credit where that writer was not also director on that project, a director on other projects, an actor, or adapting their own (already successful) stage play.

As an aspiring Indigenous screenwriter who has no interest in directing, these findings are illuminating. They show that, for an Indigenous screenwriter, the path to a feature film writing credit usually involves more than just writing. That is, Indigenous feature film screenwriters tend to be active in other areas of the film and/or theatre industries.

There may be someday a place in Australia for feature film screenwriters who specialise *only* in screenwriting. Unfortunately, their time has not yet come. Regardless, the few Indigenous Australians who have achieved a feature film screenwriting credit via the writer/director path still deserve to be congratulated. They have managed to get their scripts onto screen, and develop their careers within the Australian film industry. And even if writing-focused Indigenous Australian screenwriters have not yet had their day, they may soon. Martha Coleman, Head of Development at Screen Australia in 2011, offered some hope for aspiring writer-only screenwriters, stating;

‘...the dominance of the writer/director culture is changing... of the 198 films we have supported for development since 2008, 103 are being written by writers (52 per cent)... So the balance is shifting towards screenplays written by singularly focused writers.’
(Coleman 2011, p. 9 of 9)

Thus, there may be a brighter future ahead for writing-focused Indigenous Australian screenwriters. Of course until then, it would not be surprising if Indigenous Australian screenwriters continue to fit the film school graduate, writer/director profile.

To summarise, there appear to be many opportunities for Indigenous screenwriters like myself in the realm of narrative television series. However, to date, the most proven method for Indigenous screenwriters to get a feature script onto the screen is to direct it themselves. This has implications for my doctoral creative work.

As a writer who has no intention of becoming a director, television is clearly the most suitable industry for me. Television offers greater opportunities in terms of ongoing employment, plus a higher level of respect for the writer’s vision. Therefore, as a direct result of reviewing the works of Indigenous Australian screenwriters, I have decided that my doctoral creative work will be a script for a pilot episode of a narrative television series, rather than a feature film screenplay.

4.3 Indigenous content as genre

To date, films written by Indigenous Australian screenwriters have included a limited range of genres: thirteen dramas, four comedies, three musicals, one western/crime story and two experimental projects (Table 2). Narrative TV series with Indigenous Australian screenwriters demonstrate a similar restricted range: five drama series, three comedies and four children’s shows (Table 3). In this research ‘drama’ is defined as “serious presentations or stories with settings or life situations that portray realistic characters in conflict with either themselves, others, or forces of nature” (Dirks 2016).

Sadly, popular genres beyond drama are virtually absent from scripts by Indigenous Australian screenwriters. However, something that is frequently present in these scripts is Indigenous content. Screen Australia defines Indigenous content as follows;

‘Indigenous content means a film or program based on an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander story, with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander subjects or featuring Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage in any form.’ (Screen Australia 2013a)

Collating data about the genre and Indigenous content of feature films written by Indigenous Australian screenwriters yields interesting insights (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of feature films with Indigenous content written by Indigenous Australian screenwriters, grouped by genre.

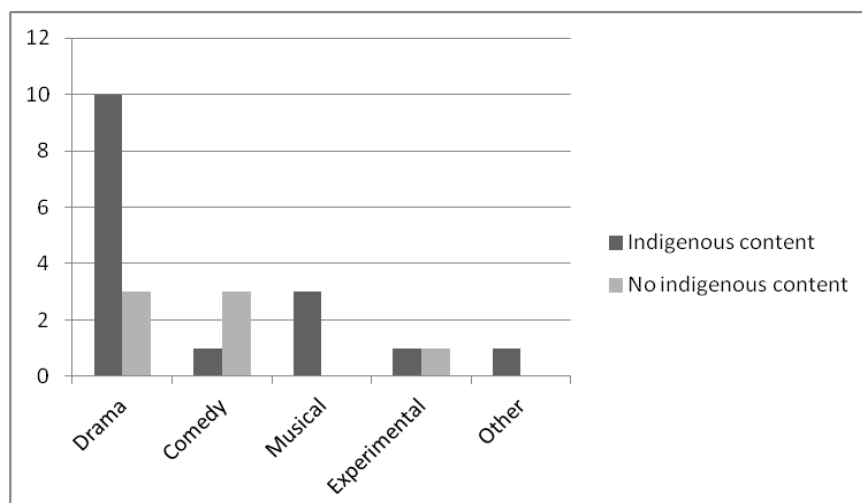


Figure 2 illustrates that, of the twenty three feature films written by Indigenous screenwriters, sixteen (or approximately 69.5 per cent) involve Indigenous content: ten dramas, one comedy, three musicals, one western/crime story and one experimental project. (Note - the drama *Somewhere In The Darkness* was not counted as having Indigenous content, because Indigenous content could not be determined for this film.) Thus, only seven films (roughly 30.5 per cent) did not feature Indigenous content.

Clearly, dramatic stories are the most popular choice for Indigenous Australian feature film screenwriters. Moreover, dramatic stories with Indigenous content are the most popular story type of all. In fact, there are so many dramas with Indigenous content that 'Indigenous drama' might be considered as a separate genre in its own right.

Narrative TV series written by Indigenous screenwriters show a similar dearth of genres - so limited in fact that no figure is needed for illustration. Simply put, all five TV drama series feature Indigenous content. All three comedy series are made by Paul Fenech and feature his signature style - politically incorrect low-brow humour. Finally, all four children's series feature Indigenous content. Clearly, many popular genres seem to be missing from narrative TV series written by Indigenous Australian screenwriters. In the TV industry it appears that 'Indigenous drama' and 'Indigenous children's programming' are the most popular options for Indigenous screenwriters.

This raises several questions. First, why do Indigenous screenwriters write so much Indigenous content? Is Indigenous content what they *want* to write? Or is this what the industry expects of them? Second, where have all the popular genres gone? Are Indigenous screenwriters deliberately avoiding these genres? If so, why? Alternatively, do the film and television industries encourage certain forms of Indigenous screenwriting at the expense of others?

One prospect is that the high incidence of Indigenous content by Indigenous writers may simply be a reflection of the very short history of Indigenous involvement in filmmaking. As Beattie (2009, p. 2) states;

'Indigenous peoples have only recently begun to qualify the meaning of what constitutes an Indigenous identity within a contemporary context on the screen and on stage.'

Further to this, Indigenous screenwriters may be deliberately constructing Indigenous screen identities, as a form of writing back, or returning the gaze toward a postcolonial nation accustomed to observing them from a position of power (Amad 2013). This possibility is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Another possibility is that the apparent preference for Indigenous drama may be a reflection of the film-funding environment in Australia. The Australian film industry is government-subsidised at both national and state levels, including programs which encourage and support Indigenous Australians to develop and produce films. (Arts Law Centre of Australia 2015)

The fact that these funding initiatives exist is no doubt a positive thing for aspiring Indigenous screenwriters, directors and producers. However, the main funding program of this nature, run by Screen Australia, is structured in a way that seems to encourage Indigenous content above other types of content, and drama above other genres.

The front page of the Screen Australia *Indigenous Programs* website (Screen Australia 2015b) lists regular funding for only two types of production, being documentary and drama. Within the list of drama programs there are sections for feature development, TV drama development and ‘Special drama initiatives’.

A close reading of each section reveals eligibility criteria specifying that persons in key creative roles must be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians. Also, some projects specify that certain types of Indigenous content are expected. For example, the ‘Pitch Black short drama production’ initiative from 2013/14 stated;

‘Screen Australia’s Indigenous Department is looking to support striking, bold, lively and *wildly black* [original emphasis] short dramas. Pitch Black aims to ignite collaborations between Indigenous key creatives – producers, writers and directors – to make some knockout, provocative and edgy black films.’ (Screen Australia 2013b)

Similarly, in 2010 Screen Australia issued a call for episode ideas for the then-upcoming TV series *Redfern Now*, which stated;

‘REDFERN NOW [original emphasis] will focus on six households on one street, revealing elements of contemporary inner-city Indigenous life.

Each story will be one we know and understand but have never seen on TV before – how we love, care, fight, argue and live our lives day to day – funny, heartbreaking, sexy, human, truthful.

Hard -hitting, emotionally engaging story ideas that centre on diverse individuals and talk of their strengths, flaws and resilience are what we are looking for. So don’t hold back.

Indigenous writers with ideas that have a straightforward plot but complex characters are strongly encouraged to apply.’ (Screen Australia 2010a)

In other words, both the Pitch Black and *Redfern Now* initiatives specified that the only projects that would be considered for funding were dramas with Indigenous content. In terms of the vast range of story genres available, this is a very small pigeon-hole. It excludes fantasy, science fiction, situational and romantic comedy, crime and medical stories, westerns, war stories, horror and supernatural stories, sports stories, action/adventure stories, not to mention stories about characters who are not Indigenous.

Of course, the fact that funding exists for Indigenous projects and creatives is a positive thing. But given the funding focus on Indigenous drama, it is little wonder that Indigenous screenwriters tend to write Indigenous drama above all else.

Another factor that may contribute to the high number of Indigenous dramas is the simple fact that the screenwriters of these films and TV series are Indigenous. This is not meant to be obtuse, but rather to raise questions about the significance of the writer’s Indigenous identity as it relates to the screenwriting process.

Are Indigenous Australian screenwriters simply embracing the opportunity to tell their stories? Are they writing for reasons related to their Indigenous identity, or concerns about broader Indigenous issues within society? If so, how does this impact the screenplays they write?

Batty and Waldeback (2008, pp. 15-16) explained that generally, writers need to balance a desire for personal expression against the need to write for an audience;

‘Some writers are more concerned with their own relationship to the story (what they want to express) than with considering how to best build the bridge between story and audience (how it will be received) but this is not enough.’

Do Indigenous screenwriters prioritise personal expression at the expense of audience engagement? More to the point, do these writers focus on Indigenous content because they genuinely want to? Or are there other factors at play? It would be useful to enquire about these matters in future interviews with Indigenous Australian screenwriters.

Theoretical considerations

Indigenous Australian screenwriters do not create in a vacuum. Their practice is situated in complex social, cultural and economic arenas, and their outputs are critically assessed by many. This chapter considers the work of Indigenous screenwriters in light of two relevant critical theories: postcolonialism and globalization theory.

5.1 The postcolonial

To say that the European colonisation of Australia had disastrous consequences for Australia's Indigenous peoples would be a gross understatement. During colonisation, over 80 per cent of Australia's Aboriginal population died as a result of violence, sexual abuse and introduced diseases (Harris 2003, pp. 81-82). Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their lands, with the consequences of forced displacement still felt today (Emsley 2010).

In addition to the historical trauma and pervasive disadvantage previously described, the legacy of colonialism for Aboriginal Australians includes; high rates of psychological distress, high rates of hospitalisation for mental and behavioural disorders, high rates of suicide and self harm, low rates of home ownership, high rates of household overcrowding and high rates of repeat offending and re-incarceration. (SCRGSP 2014)

Torres Strait Islander people experienced colonisation in a different way, though it led to similar negative outcomes. In the Torres Strait, evangelistic missionaries built up a strong presence, determined to convert the Islanders to Christianity. But their goal to ‘rescue the lost souls’ (Nakata 2007, p. 23) of the Torres Strait resulted in widespread ‘destruction of traditional cultural practices’ (Dudgeon et al. 2014, p. 11).

Missionaries deliberately replaced Islander culture, religion, clothing, buildings, laws and social structures with Western ones (Nakata 2007, p. 24). In 1879 when the Torres Strait was annexed into Queensland, Torres Strait Islanders were dispossessed of their lands and stripped of their sovereignty. Further, throughout much of the 20th century, Torres Strait Islander people (like mainland Aboriginal people) were deprived of many of the rights taken for granted by non-Indigenous Australians (Shnukal 2001). As a result, Torres Strait Islander people experience many of the same disadvantages and negative outcomes as mainland Aboriginal people (SCRGSP 2014, p. 12.1).

Given the far-reaching, catastrophic effects of colonialism on Indigenous Australians, it is appropriate to consider this research about Indigenous Australian film and television screenwriters through a lens of postcolonial theory.

Postcolonial thought has been described in a number of different ways. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002, p. 2) understand the postcolonial to include ‘all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day’, with the focus of their work on ‘the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures’.

Bristol (2012, p. 15) explained that ‘postcolonialism stands as a set of perspectives in which the contemporary world is reinterrogated, reinterpreted, and repositioned discursively through practices and policies *of and for* [original emphasis] social justice’.

Zabus (2014, p.1) goes further, describing postcolonialism as ‘a way of reading and a critical method anticipating a future beyond colonialism in all its forms’. Other researchers propose that decolonisation is the primary goal of postcolonial studies. According to Shome and Hedge (2002, p. 250), ‘While postcolonial scholarship is

committed to theorizing the problematics and contexts of de/colonization, its focus however is not merely the study of colonialism(s)'. They go on to argue that postcolonial studies are 'interventionist and highly political', involving 'an emancipatory political stance' (p. 250).

It is illuminating to adopt a postcolonial approach when thinking about Indigenous Australian screenwriters. Doing so allows a more complex understanding to be reached regarding Indigenous writers, their works and the contexts in which they create. It also offers suggestions regarding some of the questions previously asked in this project.

For example, when viewed through a postcolonial lens, the low number of Indigenous film and television screenwriters takes on new meaning. Seen this way, the few credited Indigenous screenwriters to date are not just individuals from a disadvantaged group. They are members of marginalised, historically oppressed Indigenous communities that have resisted 'genocidal ambitions of obliteration' (Downing & Husband 2005, p. 122). They are individuals who have sought 'the right to self-define and self-represent' (Dudgeon & Fielder 2006, p. 398). They are agents who have dared to look back at the 'puportedly invisible gaze of the all-seeing and controlling surveillant eye' (Amad 2013, p. 51) of the colonial regime.

When Indigenous screenwriters are seen as active participants in a process of decolonisation and self-determination, the work of screenwriting acquires heightened political and cultural significance. In this context, writing becomes dangerous - a potentially revealing act, offering a means of self-representation through a shared imaginary (Smith 2012, pp. 36-39).

The previous works of Indigenous screenwriters can also be re-viewed and re-analysed in relation to postcolonial thought. For example, when viewed through a postcolonial lens, it can be seen that the feature film *Stone Bros.* is more than just a comedy. It is also a genre film (a stoner road movie) that 'does a great job telling a story set in contemporary Indigenous culture beyond stereotypes and political and social cliches' and 'effectively undermines nostalgic stereotypes of traditional Indigenous Australian life and spirituality' (Knopf 2013, p. 192).

Postcolonial analysis can also be applied to television works. A good example of this is the narrative series *Redfern Now*. When a postcolonial analysis is employed, *Redfern Now* can be seen as more than just a drama series with Indigenous content. It acquires much greater significance when it is understood to be the first Indigenous drama series in Australia to feature Indigenous writers, directors, producers and actors. Further, the entire series can be seen as a decolonising act because, rather than position Aboriginal people as an essentialised, different ‘other’, *Redfern Now* portrays urban Aboriginals as average, ordinary people going about their lives. (Collins 2013)

Consideration of the postcolonial helped a great deal with my doctoral creative project. As previously discussed, I had decided to write a pilot for a television series. I also recognised I was uncomfortable writing stories with Indigenous characters, as I found this emotionally stressful. I was also angry at the notion that I should limit myself to only Indigenous content or that I should have to justify my ‘Aboriginality’ in any way. Thinking about my creative project through a postcolonial lens helped me see my creative choices in a different way. I realised that writing a story with Indigenous characters was only one of the many options open to me.

In writing my screenplay I tried and discarded many story ideas. An early plot involved a group of wayward youths forced to participate in a walkabout-style bush boot camp. Another plot centred on a young Aboriginal man helping his mother and siblings to leave his abusive father. I found these and other similar coming-of-age plots with Indigenous characters highly stressful to write and difficult to focus on.

Eventually I realised that, though they may have noble characteristics, these weren’t the type of stories I would pay to watch in the cinema. As a result I contemplated writing something in a genre I enjoy, namely science fiction (SF). Specifically, I thought about writing a story with Indigenous characters in an SF setting. A range of story ideas were generated. One plot involved a robot-obsessed Aboriginal girl inventing the first true artificial intelligence. Another plot involved a depressed young Aboriginal girl discovering an alien that had crash-landed near her house. Yet another plot involved an old Aboriginal woman going back in time to help her younger, angrier self.

The SF elements in these plots made them far more interesting to me as a writer. However, I kept encountering the same stumbling block. I felt as though I was trying to shoehorn Indigenous material into my work. In hindsight that is exactly what I was doing, and I can understand now why it did not work. Fundamentally, I was fixated on the idea of Indigenous content at the expense of story. I was trying to make each story work around ideas of Indigeneity, rather than discovering the story as I wrote. My characters had no room to breathe, or grow, or speak for themselves. I realised at that point I needed to let go of the idea of ‘forced’ Indigenous content and just tell a story.

My favourite genre is SF. If I am going to spend time developing a pilot for a TV series, I want it to be in this genre. But what does this mean for me as an Indigenous screenwriter? If my work is SF, with no deliberate focus on Indigenous content, is it still relevant in terms of self-representation? Does it mean anything? Attebery (2005, p. 402) argues that, for an Aboriginal writer, choosing to write SF is a bold and rebellious act;

By writing in genres such as sf, Aboriginal writers remind us that they too participate in contemporary world culture and have a claim on all forms of literary discourse.

Conversely, others like Nalo Hopkinson (2004, p.7) have identified that Indigenous cultures may view SF with distrust, because in the past SF has frequently involved narratives of colonisation;

Arguably, one of the most familiar memes of science fiction is that of going to foreign countries and colonizing the natives... for many of us, that’s not a thrilling adventure story; it’s non fiction, and we are on the wrong side of the strange-looking ship that appears out of nowhere. To be a person of colour writing SF is to be under suspicion of having internalized one’s colonization.

Indeed, postcolonial scholars have taken an interest in SF in recent years. Rieder (2005, p. 374) claims that “The central term that links science fiction to colonialism is the heavily fraught idea of progress”. He posits that the “fantasy of discovery” inherent in the SF genre is what fuels the “fantasies of appropriation of foreign lands” in those SF stories with overtly colonial content (p. 376). Similarly, he identifies SF’s “fascination with technological innovation” as a “response to industrialization” and highlights that “the narrative of the marvellous invention is also very likely to lead us into colonial terrain” (p. 377).

With this in mind, why would I write a SF screenplay? Have I in fact internalised my own colonisation? The thought is horrifying. I was planning to write a post-apocalyptic story set in the future. After reading these comments, I started to doubt my decision. Fortunately, other perspectives provided reassurance. In particular, Susan Sontag's essay about SF films "The Imagination of Disaster" gave me hope. In it she states;

From a psychological point of view, the imagination of disaster does not greatly differ from one period in history to another. But from a political and moral point of view, it does. (1966, p. 224)

I find this encouraging. It reminds me that, although some previous SF stories may have been told with a colonial bent, those stories were not written by me. I believe that SF stories told by me (or by any other Indigenous Australian screenwriter) would offer a different perspective than that offered by previous, non-Indigenous writers. A valuable perspective. As Audre Lorde (1984, p. 36) wrote, "...there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt..." I think that bringing an Indigenous perspective to SF could offer new ways of making these stories of discovery and innovation felt by all.

5.2 The global

Postcolonial scholarship offers a way of thinking about Indigenous screenwriting that helps situate writers and their works within a historical context. However, postcolonial studies are limited in their ability to conceptualise the current global influence of the West as it impacts the rest of the world. Fortunately, globalization theory is well suited to study this contemporary phenomenon. (Krishnaswamy 2008, p. 2)

Chopra (2011) explains that there is a "relationship between media, culture and identity in our global times" (p. 1), whereby "Global media flows, structures, and processes are central to the production of cultural identity" (p. 7). So for contemporary individuals from diverse countries and cultures, "expressions of cultural identity in media texts can be read as reflecting global awareness" (p. 1).

Globalization theory is appropriate for the study of Indigenous Australian screenwriters, because it acknowledges that, in the current historical moment, media texts reach beyond the national. For Indigenous screenwriters, this means their work has the potential to reach audiences both within and beyond national borders. Conversely, Indigenous screenwriters also have access to (and are influenced by) a huge variety of media texts from around the globe. Indeed, at this point in time it is accurate to think of “Australian cinema as internationally connected rather than bound and defined by the territorial or jurisdictional limits of the state” (Goldsmith 2010, p. 200).

Of course, not all global influence is created equally. In the sphere of film and television, there is no cultural influence more powerful than Hollywood. Scholars have long argued that Hollywood operates as a machine of US cultural imperialism:

Film and television are an integral part of American ‘soft power’, effortlessly extolling virtues attributable to the American way of life, including its downside. (de Zoysa & Newman 2002, p. 189)

This has sparked concerns about Western/American cultural domination and the potential for global cultural homogenization (Eko 2003, p. 198-199), with subsequent “cultural disempowerment of the locals” (Garfalo & L’Huillier 2014, p. 585). Importantly, these concerns are not without foundation. Research shows that global box-office tastes have become increasingly homogenous as “the tastes of individual countries have converged with those of American audiences over the years” (Fu & Govindaraju 2010, p. 215).

However, this “globalization of consumption” (Lorenzen 2008, p. 7) does not equate to a linear diffusion of culture from “the West to the rest” (Wang & Yeh 2005, p. 176). Indeed, the theory of cultural imperialism is often criticised as overly simplistic. Tomlinson (2011, p. 84) outlines the complex ways in which local cultures interact with and adaptively appropriate external cultural influences;

Culture simply does not transfer in this unilinear way. Movement between cultural/geographical areas always involves interpretation, translation, mutation, adaptation, and ‘indigenization’ as the receiving culture brings its own cultural resources to bear, in dialectical fashion, upon ‘cultural imports’.

Many researchers have described this complexity as a hybridization of cultures (Iyall Smith 2013, p. 29), but others argue that hybridity is a flawed concept tied up with notions of cultural “loss of purity, wholeness, authenticity” (Pieterse 2013, p. 41). This nostalgic view positions culture as “a fixed script which actors are bound to follow” (Papastergiadis 2000, p. 205), rather than “the dynamic process by which we make sense of everyday life” (p. 205). Wang and Yeh (2005) further argue that, historically speaking, hybridization of cultures is not a new phenomenon; that in fact hybridization “has been taking place all along” and it is effectively “nothing more than the hybridization of hybrid cultures” (p. 176).

With regard to Indigenous Australian screenwriters, ideas about globalization can be considered in a negative or a positive way. Indigenous fears about globalization commonly run deep. Many Indigenous peoples “tend to see globalization as a threat to their territories, their traditions and cultural expressions, their cultures and identities” (United Nations 2009, p. 71).

Conversely, it has been argued that globalization offers Indigenous peoples not only threat, but opportunity;

‘Numerous cultural critics have argued that globalization is an extension of colonization that threatens indigenous peoples by fostering a hegemonic, Eurocentric worldview through the global media market, yet simultaneously creates opportunities to subvert oppressive cultural forces.’ (Glynn & Tyson 2007, pp. 207-208)

From this perspective, Indigenous Australian screenwriting can be understood as more than just creative expression - and more than just the work of decolonisation. In the context of globalization, Indigenous screenwriting can be seen as a means of cultural identity production.

However, as anyone with experience in screenwriting knows, film and television scriptwriting is a highly specialised, rigidly formatted form of creative writing. There are industry standards for every last detail of a script, from the size of margins on the page, to the use of capital letters at certain points in the text (Riley 2009; The Black List 2015).

Further, Western screen stories traditionally adhere to an Aristotelian act structure (McKee 1999; Hauge 2007) and frequently strive to emulate a tradition of linear, mythic storytelling in the vein of ‘The Hero’s Journey’ (Vogler 2007). The inherent inflexibility of the screenplay form raises the question – can Indigenous screenwriters subvert the form for their own use?

In the context of globalization, many larger regional/territorial cinemas have produced successful independent films which represent their unique cultural identity. For example, Petrie (2001, p. 55) described “the emergence of a distinctive cinema in Scotland”, led by filmmakers like Danny Boyle and John Madden. Similarly, Alvaray (2008) explored how media globalization has contributed to the expansion of several national Latin American cinemas, particularly Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. In the same vein, Rampal (2005) observed that globalization not only “brings Western cultural influences and entertainment styles” (p. 1) to regional cinemas such as India, Hong Kong and Korea, it also brings non-Western cultural influences to Hollywood, in a “two-way cultural symbiosis” (p. 2).

But how should Indigenous creatives respond in the face of globalization? One suggestion is for Indigenous Australian screenwriters to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their screenwriting practice, thereby acting to ‘inflect global cultural processes with localizing accents’ (Glynn & Tyson 2007, p. 206). A second option may be to adapt global forms to suit Indigenous cultural sensibilities (Waisbord 2004). Examples of Indigenous global-local, or glocal approaches have already been noted;

Indigenous artists and activists are using new technologies to craft culturally distinct forms of communication and artistic production that speak to local aesthetics and local needs while anticipating larger audiences. (Wilson & Stewart 2008, p. 2)

Another option, which may provide a more comprehensive approach to Indigenous filmmaking, is found in Barry Barclay’s (2003, p. 1) concept of Fourth Cinema;

I am going to propose here this afternoon that there is a category which can legitimately be called "Fourth Cinema", by which I mean Indigenous Cinema — that's Indigenous with a capital "I".

Barclay proposes that Fourth Cinema is an approach to filmmaking where the camera is “cut loose from First Cinema constraints and in the hands of the natives” (p. 8). He believes that Indigenous creatives in control of the camera would mean Indigenous perspectives on the screen, as opposed to;

...those in control of the First Cinema camera, whose more or less exclusive intention has been, over one hundred years of cinema, to show actions and relationships within Western societies and Western ideological landscapes. (p. 8)

Barclay further states “Indigenous cultures are outside the national orthodoxy” (p. 6) From a globalization standpoint, this fits with the idea of deterritorialization, as defined by Papastergiadis (2000, p. 217);

The deterritorialization of culture refers to the ways in which people now feel they belong to various communities despite the fact that they do not share a common territory with all the other members.

That is, although Indigenous people are situated in separate geographical locations around the world they nonetheless share a community, through their similar experiences of colonisation. This sense of community can inform their filmmaking.

As an aspiring Indigenous Australian screenwriter, visualising myself as a member of a larger global Indigenous community gives me comfort. It helps me see my work as part of something larger. It gives me a sense of belonging to a group. It also helps me more clearly understand and appreciate that Indigenous filmmaking perspectives have value, and can offer something unique.

In future research it would be useful to interview other Indigenous Australian researchers about their understandings of globalization and postcolonialism. Have they studied these theories? If so, how do they interpret the ideas in terms of screenwriting practice? Are they aware of the notion of a Fourth Cinema?

Importantly, at the heart of these questions is an assumption about the motives of Indigenous Australian screenwriters. These questions assume a form of creative activism, where it is taken for granted that Indigenous writers are deliberately trying to convey an Indigenous perspective, represent an Indigenous identity, tell an Indigenous story, or educate audiences about an Indigenous issue. As my doctoral project has already demonstrated, this may not always be the case. Barclay (2003, p. 11) states;

It seems likely to me that some Indigenous film artists will be interested in shaping films that sit with confidence within the First Second and Third cinema framework. While not closing the door on that option, others may seek to rework the ancient core values to shape a growing Indigenous cinema outside the national orthodoxy.

My creative work is certainly one of those that tries to fit within a First Cinema framework (albeit, in a television format). However, I am still writing from an Indigenous perspective. So, what point of difference does my Indigenous perspective bring to the act of screenwriting? How does my Indigenous perspective translate in terms of the creative choices that I make during the writing process? The following chapter explores the significance of an Indigenous ‘writerly’ point of view with examples from my creative work. It also offers an approach to screenwriting decision-making which (it is hoped) other Indigenous Australian screenwriters may find useful.

Screenwriting decisions

In writing the screenplay *Hostile Natives* I gained new insight into the creative challenges faced by Indigenous Australian screenwriters. I realised that screenplay formatting forces writers to make a series of discrete creative decisions, many of which can be problematic from an Indigenous perspective. To complicate matters, motives for writing may differ between individuals, influencing creative choices.

Seeking guidance on how to best approach creative decisions, I found that few resources exist to help navigate these tensions. As a result I developed my own decision-making approach based on Aboriginal worldviews. It is my hope that this approach might be useful for other Indigenous Australian screenwriters dealing with creative challenges.

6.1 An Indigenous perspective

In this section, I explore key decisions made during the writing process. In each instance I consider if and how my Indigenous perspective influences my creative choice. In doing so I attempt to identify if there is a consistent way to approach these decisions from an Indigenous perspective.

Genre

As discussed, I first tried to write what I would call an Indigenous story. In terms of previous works by Indigenous Australian screenwriters, this could alternatively be called an Indigenous drama. I struggled with this genre for personal reasons – namely because the ‘real life’ content stirred up painful feelings and memories. Eventually I also realised that this kind of dramatic story is not my ‘type’ of film (or television show, for that matter). My personal preference is for genre fare, primarily science fiction (SF).

Not yet giving up on writing an Indigenous story, I thought to combine my love of SF with Indigenous content. Several potential plots were developed - one was admittedly very similar to *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). Unfortunately, the same problem emerged. I found dealing with the Indigenous characters and content very stressful, as I was constantly reminded of real people, places, events and things. Ultimately I realised that, while this experience was probably therapeutic, it wasn’t producing quality writing. My fixation on including Indigenous content had backfired on me.

I then decided to let go of the idea of Indigenous content all together. I asked myself, if I could write anything at all, what would it be? My answer was quintessential SF geek: a post-apocalyptic, futuristic story with robots and a serial killer. Interestingly, as soon as I started writing this story, I was unstoppable – enthusiastic and full of ideas.

Regarding genre, it seems my Indigenous perspective initially led me to make decisions based on what I thought I *should* be doing, rather than what I actually *wanted* to do, or was *able* to do. My motives were altruistic – I wanted to explore the process of writing a screenplay from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter. In doing this, I assumed that I should/must deliberately include Indigenous characters and/or content. It didn’t occur to me to write a script without Indigenous content until (as a result of my personal difficulties dealing with Indigenous subject matter) I realised I had no other option. This leads me to wonder, how many other Indigenous Australian screenwriters have *failed* to complete a script because they struggled with sensitive Indigenous content? Is this a common challenge?

Title

The screenplay was always going to be called *Hostile Natives*. I came up with the title during the early ‘Indigenous content’ phase of my writing (when working on the plot about the young Indigenous man helping his family escape from his abusive father). The title was meant as a deliberate play on words, intended to mock the historical stereotype of the bloodthirsty savage, while also referring to the hostility evident in the Indigenous family of the story. I liked the title so much I decided to keep it even when the story changed. I think it still suits the story. The new plot - about life after a global pandemic - deals with a group of people whose families, communities, culture and means of survival have been destroyed. In effect the characters are experiencing devastation on the scale of that inflicted by colonialism. In a not-so-subtle metaphor they have become the ‘natives’ in this story. And as we discover over the course of the pilot, some of the survivors of the plague are also rather ‘hostile’.

Clearly, the decision to keep this title is influenced by my Indigenous perspective. Though I have consciously set aside any deliberate attempts to incorporate Indigenous characters or content into this story, the carry-over of the old title and my ‘Indigenous interpretation’ of the post-apocalyptic scenario reveal my underlying preoccupation with Indigenous themes. It seems that avoiding overt Indigenous content does not fundamentally change the way I look at the world.

Story idea

I decided that my apocalyptic scenario would be a pandemic that kills most of humanity. I imagined the outbreak as a kind of highly contagious viral encephalitis. The few people who could obtain medication would survive unscathed. Those not so lucky would suffer deficits resulting from brain damage – loss of memory, deterioration of speech, reduced quality of movement, and an inability to care for themselves. The story would start in the immediate aftermath of the plague and continue from there.

I chose a viral outbreak deliberately because it is had the potential to be blameless and self-limiting. I didn't want this to be a story about biological weapons, or some ongoing extinction-level threat. I wanted it to be about people trying to find a way to live, on an ongoing basis, after something unimaginable has happened. In my mind, this is the HBO version of SF: complex, sophisticated, adult and edgy.

Mazurek (2014) identifies apocalypse as “one of the most productive concepts in terms of cultural representation” (p. 28). He declares that “Representations of *apocalypse-as-metaphor* [original emphasis] have adopted a number of subtle, subjective and local forms reaching in their sophistication far beyond the vision of an ultimate, all-out type of disaster” (p. 30). This reflects the type of nuanced metaphorical scenario I am trying to create in *Hostile Natives*. Most of humanity may be dead, but there are more than enough survivors to ensure the continuance of the species. Annihilation is not an issue; the problem is in living daily life, while trying to find a way to move forwards.

From an Indigenous perspective, I see this story as a metaphor for the lives of Indigenous people in the present day. Walter (2009) describes how, in the aftermath of colonialism, Indigenous Australians experience extreme socio-economic disadvantage as “dramatically circumscribed life chances and a hard daily reality” (p. 7) with the end result being “a lack of energy towards the future, weighted down by the difficulties of today” (p. 8). I think this particular post-apocalyptic scenario will allow me to explore many of the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples around the world, in a SF setting.

Narrative form

Initially I conceived of this doctoral project as a feature film screenplay. However, considering that Indigenous feature film screenwriters tend to direct their own scripts (and not wanting to direct myself), I realised television would be a more appropriate medium for me. After working on the story for some time I am confident that the premise is strong enough for a long form serial format and is suitable as a high-end drama program on a premium cable network.

Regarding style, *Hostile Natives* might best be described in terms of what it is *not*. For example, although *Hostile Natives* involves an apocalyptic scenario, there are no zombies hungry for flesh, à la *The Walking Dead* (2010-2016). There is no supernatural battle between good and evil, as in Stephen King's mini-series *The Stand* (1994). Similarly, there are no miraculous or supernatural disappearances of people in the vein of *The Leftovers* (2014-2016).

From a science perspective, there are no desperate *12 Monkeys* (2015-2016) style attempts at time travel. Also, there are no ominous mutations of the virus, as in *Survivors* (2008-2010). Indeed is not a contagion story at all – there are no scientists racing to find a cure, like *The Last Ship* (2014-2016) or *Helix* (2014-2015).

There are no fantasy elements - survivors of the apocalypse do not become the ancestors of magical post-human races, as in *The Shannara Chronicles* (2016). Also, though there is conflict between the survivors, it is not a 'warring factions' story like *Revolution* (2012-2014) or *The 100* (2014-2016). The survivors are not trapped in one place with finite resources, as in *Jericho* (2006-2008). Finally, they do not have to battle alien or robot oppressors, like the rag-tag survivors in *Falling Skies* (2011-2015) or *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009).

In fact, the show most similar to *Hostile Natives* in style and tone is not apocalyptic (or SF) at all – it is western drama *Deadwood* (2004-2006). Both *Hostile Natives* and *Deadwood* are ensemble dramas, period pieces (set in a time not the present) and deal with a community of people living in a harsh pioneer situation. They are both stories about complex characters living daily life in a society undergoing massive change.

My decision to write for television (and not feature film) was directly influenced by my review of Indigenous screenwriters and their works. However, once this decision was made, my opinions on the style and tone of the show did not appear to be greatly influenced by my Indigenous perspective. Rather, I was influenced by my personal preference for (and desire to work on) premium cable shows.

Setting

I chose to set *Hostile Natives* fifty years in the future. This was partly because, as a keen reader and viewer of SF, I am intrigued by imagined futures. From classic films like *Blade Runner* (1982) to television series like *Firefly* (2002-2003) and *Killjoys* (2015-2016) to novels like Isaac Asimov's Foundation series and Iain M. Banks' Culture series, I am never bored with futurist scenarios.

But though the near-future setting was a product of my personal interests, I realise it does have significance from an Indigenous perspective. As Attebery (2005, p. 400) says, for Aboriginal writers, "Turning to the past is acceptable; staking a claim to the future by using modes like sf is more controversial". This sense that Indigenous culture belongs more in the past than the future may be related to what Papastergiadis (2000, p. 197) calls the "melancholic view of traditional cultures" involving the "presumption that cultures are autonomous wholes" (p. 198) which, in effect "constructs cultures like fragile species that need delicate protection" (p. 205). With this in mind, an Indigenous writer imagining a possible future seems bold. It contradicts the notion of a pure, unchanging Indigenous culture, because it embraces the potential for future change.

Character

I originally believed that Jasmine would be the hero of this story. As a result, initial drafts were centred around Jasmine's experiences. However, soon Fay (Jasmine's mother) emerged as a compelling character in her own right. She grabbed my attention, threatening to de-throne Jasmine as protagonist. By the time the first draft of the script was complete, Fay had all but taken over the story.

At that point, I realised the pilot was too simple and one-dimensional and did not adequately convey the scale and complexity of the story world. Many characters and plot developments that I had imagined should be included in future episodes would actually be needed in the pilot, to demonstrate the suitability of the story for television.

Consequently, a new draft of the script took a step back from Jasmine, Fay and Nathan and repositioned them as only one small group of characters within a much larger cast. Some elements of the previous script were kept, to convey the perspectives of these three characters. But overall, their role in the story was reduced.

This allowed the introduction and development of a range of other characters. These were envisaged as two groups, or teams, positioned in two separate locales – one in the city and one at a major metropolitan university campus. I thought of the first team as ‘The Body Crew’ – a group of soldiers and civilians working their way through the city, gathering supplies and disposing of the dead. The second team I referred to as ‘Base Camp’ – the remaining soldiers, civilians and medical staff populating the campus, which had been turned into a temporary base for the survivors. The people in The Body Crew and at Base Camp would together comprise the community of survivors. I further positioned Jasmine and family as an independent group, spying on The Body Crew but as yet unaware of the Base Camp survivors.

This visualisation of characters as members of larger groups greatly assisted the writing process. Within and across these groups I imagined smaller cliques, friendships, enmities, romances, previous relationships, professional interactions and personality clashes between individual characters. I also realised the importance of thinking of the survivors in terms of the impact the virus on their health. I realised that the level of deficit each character experienced after their illness would greatly affect how they interacted with other characters, and this would be a primary source of conflict across all sections of the community.

From an Indigenous perspective, I can see that my focus on Jasmine, Fay and Nathan as a family unit is likely related to my Indigenous identity. Similarly, my understanding of the characters as members of social groups within a larger community may also relate to my Indigenous point of view. Certainly, I am much happier with the story as an ensemble piece than I was when trying to position a single character as an archetypal hero. The idea that the characters are part of something bigger, with responsibilities beyond their individual wants and needs, likely reflects my Indigenous sensibilities.

Another point of interest is that, despite forgoing overt Indigenous content, I have maintained a desire that the characters in this story should hail from a diverse range of racial and cultural backgrounds. This is not to imply or represent some kind of dubious utopia in the form of an historically disrespectful, unrealistic, post-racial society. Rather, I imagine that, in the future, human populations will be even more racially and culturally diverse than they are now. Consequently, I want my characters to reflect this.

I am aware that diversity in the media is a hot topic at present (Smith, Choueiti & Pieper 2016). However, my stance is not a reaction to a current trend. I have been thinking about this matter for some time. I believe my interest in racial and cultural diversity is probably a reflection of my Indigenous perspective.

In a practical sense, I wasn't initially sure how to portray this diversity across the many characters in the screenplay. There seem to be two options. The first was to be highly specific about racial and cultural background when introducing each character. This approach had the benefit of being prescriptive. That is, it would unambiguously put the information on the page. If producers were to follow the script rigorously they would need to cast actors from specific races or cultures to adhere to this. A second option was to be less specific. This option involved giving some information about a character's race and/or culture, but leaving some open to interpretation.

I would describe myself as a screenwriter who views the script as a blueprint for production. I also highly value the role of actors in interpreting the script. I believe that the vision I have for a particular character may not match the best casting decision for that role. As a result, I am reluctant to include in my work specific details that may limit a casting director in hiring an actor who would be fantastic in a role. Ultimately, I came up with an approach that I think works. Basically, I would have a general idea of the background for a character. I would then conduct online research to identify common first names and surnames for that background. I selected names from these lists, but when possible would choose names that could originate from more than one culture. In the script I relied on names to convey cultural information and I limited character description to personality traits. I also kept separate, detailed notes about each character.

This strategy was adopted to give casting directors as many options as possible when hiring actors. It also had the added benefit of helping me realise I could adopt this same strategy for Indigenous characters, without needing to refer to any specific tribal group, person, place or historical event. Thus – even though I did not include any overt Indigenous content in the script – I assigned Jasmine, Fay and Nathan Geraldts names that could be Aboriginal in origin. In my mind at least, they became a family with a mixed Caucasian and Aboriginal racial background.

Plot

The pilot was structured around the three separate groups of characters. The story followed the three groups, comparing and contrasting their experiences across a time period of one day, similar to the structure of the *Deadwood* (2004-2006) pilot.

The script introduced some of the major conflicts and themes within the show. It explored the Geraldts family's separation from the other survivors and trepidation about joining them. It highlighted that not all survivors agree on how to dispose of the dead. The different types and levels of disability experienced by the survivors was shown. Relationships between the characters were explored, as was the larger society's relationship with advanced technology. Also, the main antagonist for season one – the Pop Top Killer – was introduced.

Description, Action & Dialogue

Every screenplay is comprised of scene and shot headings, plus description, action and dialogue. It is these few words on the page which allow a screenwriter to convey character, plot, setting and the mood and pace of the story. So the words on the page must create a kind of window through which the reader can 'see' the story happening.

Given this, each decision about description, action and dialogue is crucial. Every word, every sentence must be chosen carefully. Below is an example of a scene from *Hostile Natives*, showing how the description, action and dialogue were edited over time to ensure clarity.

The scene in question is our first introduction to The Body Crew. We meet them as they break down a bedroom door, then find a dead family inside the room.

First, here is the final draft of the scene:

INT. FLASHY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Shapes of bodies on a bed. Lumps under a brightly coloured blanket. A THUD as the bedroom door shudders. Again.

The door bursts open. Two soldiers enter, weapons ready.

They scan the room. Clear.

On point is Sergeant DANIELLE 'DANI' FROST, 33, career soldier and mother of four, until recently anyway - her kids died in the plague. Right now she's soldiering on.

Dani crosses to the bed. Looks down.

A family lies together. Mom, dad and two kids. All dead.

Close behind Dani is Corporal EDWARD 'ED' FERRER. Ed is 25, openly gay and so good looking his nickname is Bromeo.

Ed looks down at the dead family.

He presses a small comms unit on his uniform.

ED

Call out, call out, body crew
in eight oh five, over...

Dani is silent, staring at the bed.

Ed looks at her, worried.

ED (CONT'D)

Sarge?

DANI

What? You want me to cry?
(a beat)
Will it make you feel better?

ED

Fuck off.

A young man leans in through the doorway. He is NICK WU, 25. Nick used to hate law school. These days he misses it.

NICK

How many?

Ed holds up four fingers.

NICK (CONT'D)

Roger that.

An agitated woman pushes past Nick. This is RAELENE ESASHI, 54, a psychologically unstable former academic.

Nick jumps.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hey!

Raelene sees the dead family. She stalks over to them.

RAELENE

You can't do this!

ED

Great.

DANI

Who let her in?

NICK

Rae! What are you doing?

RAELENE

Leave `em alone!
(a beat)
They're at peace!

Ed rolls his eyes. Sighs.

Next, an earlier version of the same scene.

INT. FLASHY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Shapes of bodies on a bed. Lumps under a brightly coloured blanket. A THUD as the bedroom door shudders. Again.

The door bursts open. Two soldiers enter, weapons ready.

They scan the room. Clear.

On point is Sergeant DANIELLE 'DANI' FROST, 33, career soldier and mom of four, until recently anyway (her kids all died in the plague). Currently she's soldiering on.

She crosses to the bed. Looks down.

A family lies in the bed. Mom, dad and two kids. All dead.

Close behind Dani is Corporal EDWARD 'ED' FERRER. Ed is 25, gay and so good looking his nickname is Bromeo.

Ed looks down at the dead family. This cannot be unseen.

He presses a small comms unit on his uniform.

ED

Sierra one, over...

(a beat)

...yeah, body crew in eight zero five... we've got four casualties, over...

(a beat)

...roger, out.

Ed looks at his comrade, worried.

Dani is silent, staring at the bed. She grips her gun.

ED (CONT'D)

Sarge?

She gives him a sarcastic look.

DANI

Whadda ya want me to do? Cry?

Ed shrugs.

DANI (CONT'D)

Relax.

A young man enters. He is NICK WU, 25. Nick used to hate law school. These days he misses it.

NICK
Man, these people own some
expensive shit.

He flops down on a padded bench at the foot of the bed.

DANI
Owned. Past tense.

Nick chuckles.

NICK
Yeah.

An agitated woman walks in. She is RAELENE ESASHI, 36, a former academic, now on the brink of a psychotic episode.

Nick jumps up. Tries to intercept her.

NICK
What are you-

Too late.

Raelene sees the dead family. She pushes past Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)
-doing here?

She kneels near the bed. Stares at the bodies.

ED
Great.

DANI
Who let her in?

NICK
Rae? Raelene?

RAELENE
Sh!

Ed rolls his eyes. Sighs.

There were many changes from the original version. First, the description of the character Dani was shortened. Second, some word choices were changed to improve the flow of reading the script (for example, 'Dani crosses to the bed' rather than 'She crosses to the bed' and 'A family lies together' rather than 'A family lies in the bed'). Third, inappropriate phrasing was removed ('This cannot be unseen' was cut because it was too colloquial and it was not something an audience could see or hear on screen). Fourth, the radio call-out by the character Ed was drastically shortened. The original dialogue may closer reflect what a soldier might say in real life, but the heavily edited dialogue in the final draft performs the same function.

Fifth, the description of Ed looking at Dani looking at the bed was modified. The final draft places Dani in a more dominant role, and 'She grips her gun' has been deleted to remove any implication that she might be unstable or suicidal. Sixth, the tone of the dialogue between Dani and Ed has been changed. In the first draft, Ed is expressing concern for Dani, but is otherwise quite passive ('Ed shrugs'). In the final draft Ed is still concerned for Dani, but he actively responds to her sarcasm with offensive language, which Dani then ignores. This banter shows the mutual respect and good humour between these two characters.

Seventh, our introduction to the character of Nick is modified. In the first draft, Nick comments on the expensive things owned by the inhabitants of the apartment, and Dani jokes 'Owned. Past tense.' This was thought to be too much exposition, with characters simply stating the obvious. It was also thought to be unrealistic for these characters in this setting. If the characters were indeed part of The Body Crew, they would be in a routine by now and certainly far beyond the point of making inane comments about property ownership.

The final major change to this scene was the introduction of the character Raelene. In the first draft Raelene's motives for interrupting the crew were not clear. It was thought she was suffering from some vaguely undefined mental health crisis and may be under the delusion that the dead family was still alive. In the final draft, however, her motive is known. She is having extreme mood swings and aggressive outbursts. This is reflected in her active, aggressive dialogue in the final draft.

If we compare the first and final drafts, another change becomes obvious – the edited scene is far shorter than the original. By making the above changes, I was able to convey the same amount of information in far fewer words.

6.2 Creative decisions and Indigenous worldviews

Considering the large number of creative decisions to be made when writing a screenplay, I wondered if I could find a unified way to approach these choices. I looked for resources that might help me in this regard, but found little of practical use.

Graeme Turner's *Film as Social Practice* (2006) provides an overview of relevant film theories, but does not deal specifically with the practice of screenwriting. Hilde Lindemann Nelson's *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair* (2001) positions narrative as a means of identity construction, but does not relate this to screenwriting practice. Marilyn Beker's *Screenwriting With a Conscience: Ethics for Screenwriters* (2004) comes closest to being of assistance. Unfortunately, Beker's work focuses on the end product of the screenwriting and filmmaking processes, namely the finished film and its reception by audiences. She states;

Screenwriters, because they work in a medium that has the potential to influence and affect large numbers of people, should strive to make people think about the culture in which they live, and to make statements that are based in a profound respect for humanity and the human condition. (p. 8)

This doctoral research is about screenwriting practice. I do not want to conflate this with concerns about audience reception at this time. I simply want to find a practical way for Indigenous screenwriters to approach creative screenwriting decisions.

In search of such an approach, reflection on my own practice proved fruitful. Throughout the writing of *Hostile Natives* I had felt that some of my creative decisions were influenced by my Indigenous perspective, but could not articulate how this was so.

For example I attempted to write each character description with respect for that character as an individual person with a unique backstory. I felt this respectful approach reflected an Indigenous point of view. As another example, I felt that my decision to make the story about a community of people, rather than an individual hero, reflected my Indigenous perspective. Also, I felt that having the story focused on people trying to live together through difficult circumstances was a very ‘Indigenous’ take on things. But having a ‘feeling’ is not very academic, or rigorous. How could I translate these feelings into something more tangible?

The initial way I tried to do this was by framing creative decision-making in terms of values. As an Indigenous screenwriter, I wondered, do my personal values reflect my Indigenous perspective? If so, creative decisions could reference these values.

I quickly realised this was rather obtuse, but it did lead to a more useful train of thought. I noticed that, throughout this doctorate, I had been referring to my ‘Indigenous perspective’ as a given. Maybe instead of just offering a way to reflect on my creative decisions, this ‘Indigenous perspective’ could inform them. But how could I specify exactly what my ‘Indigenous perspective’ is and how it informs my writing?

At this point I was momentarily besieged by anxiety. The line of oral histories, traditions and ceremonies was broken in my family a long time ago. I’ve never spoken an Indigenous language or been told dreamtime stories. How valid or valuable could my ‘Indigenous perspective’ really be?

Research on Indigenous worldviews bolstered my confidence. For example, Graham (2008, p. 1) identified that a basic precept of the Aboriginal world view is the question of “how do we live together (in a particular area, nation, or on earth) without killing each other off?” This is the precise theme dealt with in *Hostile Natives*: people trying to live together on a daily basis. My feeling, or instinct, that this was a very Indigenous way to look at the story was spot on.

As another example, Martin (2003) talks about the importance of relatedness and interconnectedness within and between groups in everyday Aboriginal social life. This mirrors my focus on a community of characters in *Hostile Natives*, rather than a specific, Western style individual hero. Again, my sense that the idea of community reflected something of my Indigenous perspective was correct.

Reading about Indigenous worldviews and seeing myself and my attitudes reflected in them reminded me that a worldview is not something you need to study in order to learn about. As Hart (2010, p. 2) states, worldviews are “developed throughout a person’s lifetime through socialization and social interaction”. My worldview is who I am. It is, quite literally, how I see the world.

For me, the real insight is that my Indigenous worldview has value. Further, appreciating this value can help me approach my screenwriting practice with increased confidence. This sense of confidence comes not from suddenly having all the answers, but from knowing where to look for them. As Martin (2003, p. 12) states;

To represent our worlds is ultimately something we can only do for ourselves using our own processes to articulate our experiences, realities and understandings.

I believe that consciously reflecting on my Indigenous worldview (and using this reflection to guide creative decision-making) will greatly help my screenwriting practice moving forward. It is also my hope that other Indigenous Australian screenwriters might find value in this approach.

Conclusion

Practice-led screenwriting research provides insight into the screenwriting process. Questions raised through writing practice can be investigated in the exegetical component of the research project.

In this practice-led research, screenwriting practice was investigated from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter. The goal of the research was to identify challenges which may be encountered by Indigenous Australian screenwriters.

A range of potential challenges were identified, each suggesting an avenue for future research. Low industry participation by Indigenous Australian screenwriters was quickly ascertained, and pervasive Indigenous disadvantage was recognised as a likely barrier to becoming a screenwriter. It was also noted that any future research regarding disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australian screenwriters should be sensitive to the fact that merely discussing disadvantage can be stressful for these writers.

An auteur filmmaking culture was detected in Australia. It was suggested that future research should involve interviews with Indigenous Australian screenwriters, seeking their opinions about screenwriter education, the role of writer/directors and about feature film authorship in general.

It was observed that works by Indigenous Australian screenwriters comprise a limited range of screen genres and tend to be mostly Indigenous drama. This suggested that future interviews with these writers should also enquire about their reasons for genre choices, including whether or not funding models influence story content.

Indigenous Australian screenwriting was discussed through prisms of Postcolonialism and Globalisation. These perspectives revealed complexities inherent in screenwriting which may pose challenges for these writers. Future interviews with this cohort should seek to establish if they consider critical theories as part of their writing practice.

The creative project involved writing a screenplay from the perspective of an Indigenous Australian screenwriter. The exegesis explored questions raised by the writing practice, as outlined above. In addition, the researcher critically reflected on creative decisions regarding genre, title, story idea, narrative form, setting, characters, plot, description, action and dialogue. It was found that each creative decision has the potential to be problematic for Indigenous Australian screenwriters. In particular, it was realised that writing Indigenous content can itself be a source of stress and challenge for these writers. Few resources exist to help Indigenous writers navigate these tensions.

As a result, this study proposed an approach to creative decision-making based on valuing the screenwriter's Indigenous worldview. This approach was found to be relevant to the writing of the screenplay *Hostile Natives*, even though the script did not contain overt Indigenous content. It is hoped that other Indigenous Australian screenwriters might find an Indigenous worldview approach valuable when making their own creative decisions.

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Filmography

12 Monkeys 2015-2016, television series. Produced by Natalie Chaidez, Charles Roven, Richard Suckle, Jake Kurily and Jeffrey Reiner. Directed by various. Written by various.

Battlestar Galactica 2004-2009, television series. Produced by Ronald D. Moore and David Eick. Directed by various. Written by various.

Bedevil 1993, motion picture. Produced by Anthony Buckley and Carol Hughes. Directed by Tracey Moffatt. Written by Tracey Moffatt.

Beneath Clouds 2002, motion picture. Produced by Teresa-Jayne Hanlon. Directed by Ivan Sen. Written by Ivan Sen.

Blade Runner 1982, motion picture. Produced by Michael Deeley, Hampton Fancher and Brian Kelly. Directed by Ridley Scott. Written by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples.

Bran Nue Dae 2009, motion picture. Produced by Robyn Kershaw and Graeme Isaac. Directed by Rachel Perkins. Written by Reg Cribb, Rachel Perkins and Jimmy Chi.

Charlie's Country 2013, motion picture. Produced by Nils Erik Nielsen and Peter Djigirr. Directed by Rolf de Heer. Written by David Gulpilil and Rolf de Heer.

Deadwood 2004-2006, television series. Produced by David Milch, Gregg Fienberg and Mark Tinker. Directed by various. Written by various.

Double Trouble 2007, television series. Produced by Terry Jennings and Rachel Clements. Directed by Wayne Blair and Richard Frankland. Written by David Ogilvy, Michelle (Mitch) Torres, Danielle MacLean and Richard Frankland.

Dreamland 2009, motion picture. Produced by David Jowsey. Directed by Ivan Sen.
Written by Ivan Sen.

E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial 1982, motion picture. Produced by Steven Spielberg and Kathleen Kennedy. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by Melissa Mathison.

Falling Skies 2011-2015, television series. Produced by Steven Spielberg, Darryl Frank, Justin Falvey, Robert Rodat, Graham Yost, Greg Beeman, Remi Aubuchon and David Eick. Directed by various. Written by various.

Fat Pizza 2003, motion picture. Produced by Paul Fenech, Tanith Carroll and Jeff Purser. Directed by Paul Fenech. Written by Paul Fenech.

Fat Pizza vs Housos 2014, motion picture. Produced by Paul Fenech, Joanne (Joe) Weatherstone, Serena Hunt and Matt Bowie. Directed by Paul Fenech. Written by Paul Fenech.

Firefly 2002-2003, television series. Produced by Joss Whedon and Tim Minear. Directed by various. Written by various.

Heartland 1994, television series. Also known as *Burned Bridge*. Produced by Bruce Best. Directed by Paul Faint, Scott Hartford-Davis and Julian Pringle. Written by Nick Parsons, John Cundill, Ernie Dingo, Kristen Dunphy, Ro Hume, Andrew Kelly, Susan MacGillicuddy and Bob Maza.

Helix 2014-2015, television series. Produced by Ronald D. Moore, Lynda Obst, Steven Maeda, Brad Turner, Cameron Porsandeh, Steven A. Adelson and Jeffrey Reiner. Directed by various. Written by various.

Here I Am 2011, motion picture. Produced by Kath Shelper. Directed by Warwick Thornton. Written by Warwick Thornton.

Housos 2011-2013, television series. Produced by Paul Fenech, Joanne (Joe) Weatherstone and Caterina De Nave. Directed by Paul Fenech. Written by Paul Fenech.

Housos vs Authority 2012, motion picture. Produced by Paul Fenech and Joanne (Joe) Weatherstone. Directed by Paul Fenech. Written by Paul Fenech.

Jericho 2006-2008, television series. Produced by Jon Turteltaub, Stephen Chbosky and Carol Barbee. Directed by various. Written by various.

Killjoys 2015-2016, television series. Produced by David Fortier, Ivan Schneeberg and Michelle Lovretta. Directed by various. Written by various.

Life 1996, motion picture. Produced by Elisa Argenzio. Directed by Lawrence Johnston. Written by John Brumpton and Lawrence Johnston.

Lockie Leonard 2007-2010, television series. Produced by Kylie du Fresne. Directed by Wayne Blair, Tony Tilse, James Bogle, Peter Templeman and Roger Hodgman. Written by Keith Thompson, James Bogle, Ken Kelso, Sarah Rossetti, LeeAnne Innes, David Ogilvy, Wayne Blair, Michael Miller, Shelley Birse, Matt Ford, Drew Proffitt, Tim Pye, Rhys Muldoon, Ellie Beaumont, Peter Templeman and Josh Wakely.

Mystery Road 2013, motion picture. Produced by David Jowsey. Directed by Ivan Sen. Written by Ivan Sen.

Night Out 1990, motion picture [short feature]. Producer not applicable. Directed by Lawrence Johnston. Written by Lawrence Johnston.

One Night The Moon 2001, motion picture. Produced by Paul Humfress, Kevin Lucas and Aanya Whitehead. Directed by Rachel Perkins. Written by John Romeril and Rachel Perkins.

Pizza 1998-2007, television series. Produced by Paul Fenech and Joanne (Joe) Weatherstone. Directed by Paul Fenech. Written by Paul Fenech.

Redfern Now 2012-2013, television series. Produced by Darren Dale and Miranda Dear. Story Produced by Jimmy McGovern. Directed by Wayne Blair, Catriona McKenzie, Rachel Perkins, Leah Purcell, Beck Cole and Adrian Russell Wills. Written by Jon Bell, Michelle Blanchard, Danielle MacLean, Steven McGregor & Adrian Russell Wills, Wayne Blair and Leah Purcell.

Redfern Now: Promise Me 2015, television movie. Produced by Miranda Dear and Darren Dale. Story Produced by Jimmy McGovern. Directed by Rachel Perkins. Written by Steven McGregor.

Revolution 2012-2014, television series. Produced by Bryan Burk, Eric Kripke, J. J. Abrams, Rockne S. O'Bannon and Jon Favreau. Directed by various. Written by various.

Samson and Delilah 2009, motion picture. Produced by Kath Shelper. Directed by Warwick Thornton. Written by Warwick Thornton.

Satellite Boy 2013, motion picture. Produced by Julie Ryan and David Jowsey. Directed by Catriona McKenzie. Written by Catriona McKenzie.

Short Changed 1986, motion picture. Produced by Ross Matthews. Directed by George Ogilvie. Written by Robert J Merritt and Ken Quinnell.

Somewhere in the Darkness 1999, motion picture. Produced by Paul Fenech, Brendan Fletcher and David Webster. Directed by Paul Fenech. Written by Paul Fenech and Brendan Fletcher.

Stone Bros 2009, motion picture. Produced by Ross Hutchens and Colin South. Directed by Richard J. Frankland. Written by Richard J. Frankland.

Survivors 2008-2010, television series. Produced by Adrian Hodges and Susan Hogg. Directed by various. Written by various.

Swift and Shift Couriers 2008-2011, television series. Produced by Paul Fenech, Joanne (Joe) Weatherstone, Serena Hunt and Denise Eriksen. Directed by Paul Fenech. Written by Paul Fenech.

The 100 2014-2016, television series. Produced by Jason Rothenberg, Leslie Morgenstein, Matt Miller, Gina Girolamo, Bharat Nalluri, Elizabeth Craft and Sarah Fain. Directed by various. Written by various.

The Cake Man 1976, television movie. Produced by Lynn Bayonas, Marta Ninaus, Douglas Sharp and Robert J Merritt. Directed by Douglas Sharp. Written by Robert J Merritt.

The City's Edge 1983, video. Produced by Pom Oliver and Errol Sullivan. Directed by Ken Quinnell. Written by Robert J Merritt and Ken Quinnell.

The Gods of Wheat Street 2014, television series. Produced by Lois Randall and Jon Bell. Directed by Catriona McKenzie, Wayne Blair and Adrian Russell Wills. Written by Jon Bell.

The Last Ship 2014-2016, television series. Produced by Michael Bay, Jack Bender, Andrew Form, Bradley Fuller, Hank Steinberg, Steve Kane, Paul Holahan and Jonathan Mostow. Directed by various. Written by various.

The Leftovers 2014-2016, television series. Produced by Damon Lindelof, Tom Perrotta, Peter Berg, Sarah Aubrey, Mimi Leder, Albert Berger, Tom Spezialy and Ron Yerxa. Directed by various. Written by various.

The Sapphires 2012, motion picture. Produced by Rosemary Blight and Kyle du Fresne. Directed by Wayne Blair. Written by Tony Briggs and Keith Thompson.

The Shannara Chronicles 2016, television series. Produced by Dan Farah, Gene Stein, Jon Favreau, Alfred Gough, Miles Millar and Terry Brooks. Directed by various. Written by various.

The Stand 1994, television series. Produced by Stephen King, Richard P. Rubinstein and Mitchell Galin. Directed by Mick Garris. Written by Stephen King.

The Story of the Kelly Gang 1906, motion picture. Produced by John Tait, Nevin Tait, Millard Johnson and William A Gibson. Directed by Charles Tait. Written by Charles Tait.

The Walking Dead 2010-2016, television series. Produced by Frank Darabont, Gale Anne Hurd, David Alpert, Robert Kirkman, Charles H. Eglee, Glen Mazzara, Scott M. Gimple, Greg Nicotero and Tom Luse. Directed by various. Written by various.

Toomelah 2011, motion picture. Produced by David Jowsey. Directed by Ivan Sen. Written by Ivan Sen.

Us Mob 2005, television series. Produced by Heather Croall. Directed by David Vadiveloo. Written by Danielle MacLean.

Wolf Creek 2005, motion picture. Produced by David Lightfoot and Greg McLean. Directed by Greg McLean. Written by Greg McLean.

Women of the Sun 1981, television series. Produced by Bob Weis. Directed by James Ricketson, David Stevens, Stephen Wallace and Geoffrey Nottage. Written by Hyllus Maris and Sonia Borg.