On the Same Page

An Exploration of the Co-Screenwriting Experience.

Submitted in total fulfillment of the requirements of
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(by Research)

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ABSTRACT

Most commercial screen product created in the last century has been the result of collaboration between two or more writers. However, while there exists a significant body of research into the areas of both ‘collaboration’ and ‘screenwriting’, very little exists which interrogates their nexus. This practice-led thesis begins to address that gap by firstly investigating the process of co-screenwriting through my writing collaboration with John Studley on the feature-length screenplay, *The Last Resort*. Throughout the writing of the screenplay I maintained observational diaries, transcribed audio recordings of writing sessions and reflected on communication and collaboration patterns.

Secondly, this thesis also attempts to contextualise this collaboration between two screenwriters constructing a feature-length screenplay by examining various co-authoring models used. In spite of the fact that the majority of film scripts are credited to one writer, I suggest that collaborative screenwriting within the film industry is highly prevalent, particularly in Hollywood, where it takes many guises, both overt and covert, willing and unwilling. I further suggest that historically, the rigid modern screenplay format used by many contemporary screenwriters developed as a by-product of studio-enforced collaborations during the silent-movie era of Hollywood and, therefore, this particular form of the screenplay may be ideally suited to co-writing.

Through the examination of my own collaborative screenwriting practices, I conclude that a prolonged and well-considered prewriting phase may be highly desirable to the quality of the final screenplay and the health of the collaborative process. I propose that conversational collaboration (writing every word together) can be an effective technique between two screenwriters; and that conversational collaboration significantly enhances the vocabulary required to successfully co-write and strengthens what is, possibly, the most important ingredient of all successful collaborations: trust.
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DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Masters degree except where indicated in the Preface,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the dissertation is 29,772 words in length, inclusive of footnotes, but exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

PREFACE

The dissertation On the Same Page: An Exploration of the Co-Screenwriting Experience is entirely my own work except where indicated via bibliographical reference.

Extracts from the screenplay The Last Resort (First 10 pages submitted as an appendix) are the result of collaboration between myself and John Studley and we share a 50/50 ownership of copyright.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks go to John Studley, my writing partner, without whom the partnership could not have been studied. Thanks also to Annabelle Murphy, my Supervisor, whose direct feedback and guidance was given and relished.

Considerable gratitude is extended to Marleena Forward whom edited the dissertation. To Stephen Cleary, whose feedback on numerous drafts of the screenplay was generous and invaluable.

Finally, my love to Tuuli Forward and our daughter Maija both of whom made this dissertation much more difficult to write than it ought to have been; their company being infinitely more rewarding than that of this thesis.
It is never the case that one person suddenly had a brilliant idea, which is then accepted by everyone in that original, untouched form. The really good idea is always traceable back quite a long way, to often a not very good idea which sparked off another idea that was only slightly better, which somebody else misunderstood in such a way that they then said something which was really rather interesting.

John Cleese
(Schrage, 1990)
INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I explore the often-misunderstood practice of collaborative screenwriting; or, to be even more specific, the practice of co-screenwriting - the act of two writers simultaneously joining forces to construct the approximately one hundred pages of action and dialogue required to make a feature-length movie. Through looking closely at my own creative practices, and researching the literature on the topic, I aim to enlighten the reader regarding the many factors that contribute to collaboration during the writing of a screenplay.

I have undertaken many kinds of collaborative screenwriting during the course of the four-year construction of this dissertation (2010–2014); with screenwriters, directors and/or producers on three feature-length screenplays (one of which was produced) and one short film (produced):

• **Seven Snipers** – a feature-length screenplay in development, written by Luke Preston & Matthew Vaughan, of which my credits are “Story By”, Script Editor, Producer and Director;
• **Crime & Punishment** - a feature-length screenplay of which I was the sole screenwriter adapting Fyodor Dostoevsky’s 1866 novel as well as the Director and one of three producers. Crime & Punishment is currently in post-production.
• **Mother’s Day** – a completed short film of which I am Director and uncredited writer of various scenes.

However, it is my process of co-writing *The Last Resort* that is of specific relevance to this dissertation as it pertains most directly to the experience of simultaneous co-writing of a screenplay with another writer.

My collaborative screenwriting experience, however, began earlier than that on my first feature film as co-writer and director.

Between 2004 and 2007, John Studley and I worked to bring the feature-length film *The Independent* (O’Keefe and Studley, 2007) to the screen. The first three-and-a-half years proved to be a harrowing co-screenwriting ordeal, while co-
directing and producing the film in the final six months was never anything but daunting. For another year or so after the release of the movie we travelled to both rural and metropolitan regions of Australia to continue its promotion, which invariably included question-and-answer sessions with audiences and radio, television, print and online media interviews. One particular aspect of the film seemed to cause endless curiosity and resulted in the same question being asked of us, over and over:

*During the entire collaborative process of making the film, how did you not kill each other?*

At first we laughed it off, but the question persisted. Curious audience members would approach us individually to justify their questioning; some were about to take on business partners, one was a share-farmer and yet another was a husband-and-wife academic team. Their common challenge lay in figuring out how to make a collaboration work.

Journalist and Research Fellow at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Michael Schrage (1990 p31-32) believes that ‘in a collaborative environment, people spend as much time understanding what they are doing as actually doing it’. It was rare that Studley and I could offer any real insight or valuable advice to our inquisitive audience members. If the truth were told, we had no idea why our collaboration had worked; it had been a sloppy, indirect and improvised creation of a working partnership. There was no demarcation of roles, no discussion as to how we would work, and no legal contracts that defined our relationship. It was sink or swim.

Three years after the completion of *The Independent*, Studley and I began work on our second co-written screenplay, the feature-length romantic comedy *The Last Resort* (O'Keefe and Studley, 2013), the first ten pages of which accompanies this dissertation as an appendix. This time, I decided our experience co-authoring the screenplay would be the basis of a research project. What I did not consider, due to my then lack of empirical study into the subject of collaborative screenwriting, was that two other projects could also inform my research, albeit to a much lesser degree.
*Crime & Punishment* (Price, 2010) is a feature-length screenplay that I had not considered a collaborative writing experience due to myself being the sole screenwriter. It was during the writing and then the directing of the film that I understood that I had indeed co-authored the script with the 19th century novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. I felt his words, his intentions guiding me; his presence was felt during the making of our film. In other words, we had collaborated to some degree. Although Dostoevsky is dead, his influence on the final work is not. Writing the screenplay for *Crime and Punishment* gave me pause to consider the wider ramifications of writing “collaboration”. I shall discuss this greater depth in Chapter One, Critical Review and Research Design.

The other feature-length screenplay that came to fruition during this period is one that I began a few years earlier as a solo writing experience. *Seven Snipers* (Walker, 2013), a suspense thriller set during a sniper training camp, is a story that I had conceived and developed over a five-year period. During that time I grew frustrated with my lack of writing advancement and began to concentrate instead on writing both *The Last Resort* and *Crime & Punishment*; but the sniper story would not go away. I had thoroughly researched the sniper subculture, written outlines, character breakdowns, plot outlines and I loved the idea. This is a film that I wanted to see at the cinema and if no-one else was going to make it, I would. I decided that, if a screenplay were to be completed, I would need to take on another writer - not as a collaborator but as a writer of the final draft for me. The writer I hired, Luke Preston, decided that he would like to work with a co-writer and bought on a writing colleague of his, Matthew Vaughan. I found myself working very closely with the writers through five drafts of *Seven Snipers* providing rigorous script notes and, most importantly, taking decisive stances on various story points from the perspective of my being both the produce and director. Unlike with *Crime & Punishment* though, from the outset, I thought of myself as a collaborator in this project as I am credited with “Story By Andrew O’Keefe” as well as being the Script Editor, Producer and Director. This experience has, however, amplified my own understanding of the concept of collaboration involved in screenplay writing.
Whilst those two projects added context to the creation of this dissertation, the work that I undertook with John Studley, *The Last Resort*, is the focus of the research because it specifically interrogates simultaneous co-screenwriting collaboration. I studied our collaborative co-writing experience with the intention of researching the following challenge: Given that collaborative screenwriting is both suited to and prevalent in the screenwriting trade, in what ways might aspiring collaborative screenwriters overcome the fear that partners will ‘kill each other’ and that the project will fail, and by what methods may they be more likely to succeed in the endeavour?

The challenge has four direct assumptions built into it: firstly, that screenwriters do wish to collaborate; secondly, that collaboration is prevalent in the screenwriting trade; thirdly, that screenwriting is suited to collaborative writing; and finally, that conflict will lead to the demise of the partnership and the failure of the project. I intend to show that the conventional screenplay form can indeed promote successful collaborative writing, presuming collaborators understand the structure and characteristics of their partnership, make use of the tools available to them, and follow some general principles of collaboration.

Professor of Humanities and American writer, M. Thomas Inge declared (2001 p623) ‘it is commonplace now to understand that all texts produced by authors are not the products of individual creators’.

Although this was never truer than in the film and television industry; indeed, in television, the overwhelming majority of long-running fictional programs are collaboratively written using teams of up to twenty-five writers. (Norman, 2007, p37) To study the whole film and television industry, including short films, feature films, all forms of television, television commercials, corporate videos and music videos, is not possible inside the restrictions of this dissertation.

Writing for television, which is inherently collaborative, would seem a likely source of knowledge to inform the construction of this thesis, however I have excluded that practice for a number of reasons:
• I have no experience with nor desire to write for television, therefore;
• I have little interest in its practice as a research topic;
• My desire to study my own writing practice excludes the inclusion of collaborative television writing teams;
• My focus is on the equality of one-on-one collaborative writing whereas writing for television is usually hierarchically driven by a “Showrunner” with a team of writers under them.
• The practice of collaborative writing for television is very different from writing for feature-films and, thus, the research of one method does not necessarily relate to the other.

For these reasons, I have decided that collaborative screenwriting for episodic television falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

Instead, this research focuses, for the most part, on collaborative teams of only two writing members whose names are joined by an ampersand. In the screenwriting credits of feature films, the word ‘and’ between names designates that the writers wrote separately, whereas an ampersand (‘&’) denotes a writing team (Writers Guild of America, 2010). In examining the broader context for my thesis, I have concentrated on pairs of writers with two or more screenplay credits between them, predominantly working on feature films in mainstream Hollywood. I decided that having two or more screenplays produced in the Hollywood system represented a significant achievement and, therefore, that the team were qualified for methodological study rather than being a one-off purpose-driven collaboration.

Research into the act of composing literature has long focused on upholding the romantic notion of the lone author, a concept that is to this day ‘nearly universal’ (Stillinger, 1991 p183). Until twenty years ago, the study of collaborative authorship had been conspicuously absent from academic debate because institutions protected the myth of single-authorship. Some academics who have undertaken collaborative works or, even worse, conducted research that lends credence to the reputation of collaborative academic writing have suffered the derision of colleagues who warned them that their co-authoring of papers would see them ‘never receive favourable
tenure decisions or promotions’ (Ede and Lunsford, 1990 p9). However, when hard data via empirical research was completed and published during the early 1990s, the proliferation of literature and articles valorizing collaborative writing greatly increased in number and scope. The literature review of this dissertation acknowledges a select group of research leaders and outlines the main theories making up the body of knowledge on collaborative writing. Particularly insightful and influential to the remainder of this dissertation is Ede and Lunsford’s study that revealed the distinction between hierarchical and dialogic collaboration.

The burst of academic interest in the late ’80s and early ’90s formed philosophical unions between academics; however, they failed to agree upon one particular aspect: a definition of collaborative writing. Prolific author and Romantic scholar Jack Stillinger (1991 p183) is not alone in asserting that ‘pure’ authorship by a single author is not possible under any circumstances and that a definition is pointless. Others intentionally adopt more pragmatic definitions allowing their research to progress within definite boundaries. Likewise, the Research Design of this thesis argues that any functional definition must be customised, dependent on the scope and limitations of the research being undertaken.

Research indicates that creating a common style is one of the more difficult problems that collaborative writers face; therefore, co-authors tend to embrace constraints offered by the particular form of writing they are undertaking (Ede and Lunsford, 1986 p17). Chapter Two discusses ways in which the physical form of the finished screenplay document is ideally and uniquely suited to collaboration. The inherent ‘formal’ characteristics of the screenplay – page count, font, dialogue placement, sentence construction – are well-established industry standards that can alleviate creative tensions relating to stylistic decisions. Furthermore, when writing for a particular genre, as do Studley and I in the case of The Last Resort, generic story traits are also shown to allow smoother agreement on tone, setting, characters, plot, and other creative choices.

Upon drafting a narrow, restricted definition of collaborative writing for the purpose of this dissertation and proposing the screenplay text as ideal for collaboration, I will also address the following question: if people do wish to
collaborate, *why do they?* Chapter Three examines evidence that points to higher success rates for co-written works and increased quality of writing due to the additional problem-solving ability gained by shared minds; the potential expansion of the audience for the works; and the basic, primal experience of shared creative enjoyment.

The thesis considers to what extent collaborative writing has prevailed in the screenwriting trade. Chapter Three outlines the numerous and varied categories of screenwriting collaboration to illustrate that co-authoring is not only prevalent in the industry but is, perhaps, the ideal state of screenplay composition. After analyzing different kinds of collaboration, the dissertation asserts that *joint* collaboration is the most practical and effective for screenwriters considering a simultaneous co-writing collaboration.

Chapter Four, entitled ‘The Construction of the Screenplay’, investigates the process of creating a shared document. Agreement on the writing routine needs to be considered and the unpredictable nature of life and its complications can present obstacles that the best intentions of both collaborators cannot overcome. Chapter Four examines Studley and my process of establishing a writing routine which, especially in a *joint collaboration*, can be considered as important if the momentum of creative drive is to be maintained and a project successfully realised. Complications in preserving our own writing regularity, coupled with a poor pre-writing phase, led to almost a year of less-than-efficient screenwriting.

I discuss my practice-led findings and suggest that a well-developed pre-writing phase results in a lucid story outline, which can alleviate substantial narrative disagreements before the screenplay writing begins, and boost creative drive throughout the construction of the text. Recognising the problem, I discuss how Studley and I embraced the ‘scene-carding’ technique that allowed for a much-accelerated story design, clear and lucid plotting, and resulted in a much smoother draft-writing experience.
Chapter Four also investigates the hypothesis that creative conflict can lead to the demise of successful screenwriting collaborations and I consider arguably the most important decision that collaborators face: choice of collaborative partner. While the dissertation reveals there is no predetermined best-formation principle, it highlights that mutual trust, shared goals and an intimate knowledge of each other’s strengths and weaknesses allow partnerships to fortify and flourish.

Having chosen a writing partner and outlined a story during the pre-writing phase, collaborators face another vital decision: writing methodology. Chapter Four also examines the possible methods of collaboration between two writers. My research suggests that *conversational* collaboration (writing face-to-face) may be a more effective method than *parallel* collaboration (dividing the workload and writing separately). Chapter Four outlines the benefits of conversational collaborative writing, including immediate feedback, non-verbal communication and the merged stylistic ‘voice’ – a challenge that previous research has indicated is a prime barrier to successful collaboration.

Chapter Four also examines the issue of conflict head-on and suggests that, far from being afraid of conflict, it may be more effective for collaborators to embrace creative differences and use them to their project’s full benefit. Chapter Four attempts to define types of conflict and outlines that a lack of *substantive* conflict (that serves to directly further the screenplay), as opposed to *personal* conflict (tension between the partners that is not writing-focused), can be damaging to a collaboration and may lead to mediocre creative work in as much as finding the middle-ground becomes more important than finding the best quality storytelling.
CHAPTER ONE - CRITICAL REVIEW AND RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Stone and Thompson research examining the prevalence and importance of collaborative writing has grown rapidly (2006 p309) as academics set out to debunk the ‘carefully nourished illusion’ (Harris, 1994 p78) that truly respectable writing is an individual endeavor. In the academic field, the historical reluctance of researchers to overtly collaborate (Bahr and Zemon, 2000 p118) appears to stem from the historical disinclination of institutions to recognise and reward co-authored works. In the contemporary context, with advances in technology empowering global collaboration, institutions are reconsidering their policies regarding co-authored works. Research in the last twenty years, as presented in this chapter, has provided both qualitative and quantitative evidence that collaborative writing should be given equal status to single-authored works.

The French literary theorist Roland Barthes with his seminal essay *The Death of the Author* (1967) can be regarded as the initiator of the modern scholar’s effort to deconstruct the lone author’s status. Rather than focus on collaboration between authors, Barthes illuminates the importance of the reader in the collaborative equation. He theorises that the author relies on the reader’s education for their writings to be understood; a simplified example might be that a reader of French origin may not comprehend an English language work. Barthes highlights this complex and essential collaboration between author and reader and, thus, begins the disintegration of the single-author’s stronghold on literary supremacy. In a telling final line to this extraordinary essay, Barthes (ibid) demands the ‘birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author’.

In the decades that followed Barthes’ essay, scholarly research focusing on the collaboration between writers flourished. Academics, hoping to unveil the impact of outsiders’ influence on single-author works, often focused on a small handful of romantic authors: Coleridge and Wordsworth (Stone and Thompson, 2006; Laird, 2001; John-Steiner, 2000), T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound (Brooker, 1994; Inge, 2001), Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford (Koestenbaum, 1989; Harris, 1994), and Keats’ circle of influence (Cox, 1998). Tackling all of these authors collaborations, Jack Stillinger’s highly influential work *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary*
Genius (1991) sets out to crush the romantic notion of single authorship from an historical perspective. His ‘still unchallenged’ study (Inge, 2001p625) questions whether single authorship without ‘influence, intervention, alteration, or distortion’ (Stillinger, 1991 p183) by a third-party is possible under any circumstances. Editors, agents, publishers, lovers, family members or others, Stillinger pushes for these third-party’s influence to be recognised.

Stillinger’s book includes a brief chapter focusing on plays and films and asserts that films are ‘more explicitly collaborative’ (ibid p163) than other fields of writing. Stillinger provides Orson Welles’s Citizen Kane (1941), ‘a central focus of the auteur movement from the beginning’ as the prime example to destroy the auteur theory; the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay is shared by Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles (IMDB, 2014). Stillinger argues that genius in motion pictures can never be attributed to one person given the collaborative nature of the production process.

Stillinger’s seminal work provides a useful context behind the historical reticence of authors to recognise collaborators; focusing, as it does, on single authors’ unacknowledged influence, rather than open collaborations between writers. Nevertheless, Faigley and Miller, a decade earlier than Stillinger’s book, took to interviewing authors first-hand and found that collaboratively written works are ‘especially common’ in the workplace (1982). Research by Courture and Rymer, contemporaries of Stillinger, mainly focused on the importance of the hierarchical relationship between employees rather than voluntary unions (1991).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, research began to concentrate on defining the qualitative ‘features of collaborative writing’ (Allen et al., 1987 p73) rather than quantitatively ascertaining its prevalence in the workforce. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford’s ‘pioneering study’ (Stone and Thompson, 2006 p10) Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing (1990) was a culmination of over six years of primary research into the process of collaborative writing in business, science and the classroom. Their investigation (ibid p60) into the processes of collaborative writing saw them observe six major professions and survey more than 200 participants to conclude that 87% of employees wrote collaboratively at some time.
This result was significantly higher than previous research had found; however, compared with earlier studies, Ede and Lunsford had cast a wider net with a looser definition of collaborative writing. Couture and Rymer (1991) distinguished collaborative writing as the act where two or more people actually wrote together (as opposed to solo individuals doing the actual writing then seeking feedback from others). Ede and Lunsford (1990 p14) proposed that collaborative writing includes brainstorming, outlining, note-taking and rewriting of a document credited to only one writer.

Ede and Lunsford’s primary research revealed that the authority over collaborations in the workplace is highly structured and managed from the top down. Their results categorised two different types of collaboration: the *hierarchical* mode, driven by highly specific goals and carried out by people playing clearly defined roles such as manager, CEO or professor; and the *dialogic* mode, where roles are loosely structured and creative tension is valued by participants (ibid p133). Ede and Lunsford’s research can directly apply to the screenwriting field and was useful in determining my own definition for the scope of this thesis.

Primary among Ede and Lunsford’s discoveries is their identification of seven different patterns of organisation of collaborative writing groups (ibid p63). In some patterns the document is divided among individuals; in others, the entire draft is written by one person and the team revises; and in others one member dictates and another transcribes. Respondents indicated that following an organised pattern was indispensable to their group’s success. Other research found similar organisational results. Allen, Atkinson, Morgan, Moore and Snow (1987) concluded the pre-writing stage of composition was often shared among collaborative writing groups and was reported as the most rewarding phase; Sharples et al. (1991) separated the actual writing of documents into two variations: *sequential* (each writer works in sequence) and *parallel* (writers work alongside each other on different sections); Posner and Baecker (1992) focused on the roles that individuals play inside collaborative writing groups (writer, consultant, editor, reviewer); while Shirley K. Rose (1994) designed a diagrammatic model that visually illustrates collaborative writing workflows.

Arguably, Ede and Lunsford legitimised the role of collaborative writing in
academic research and opened up the field for other practitioners to ‘come out’ with their first-hand experiences: Lund and Hughes (1994 p48) offered fresh remarks such as ‘one person touched the keyboard as the words appeared on screen, but more than one mind was directing the single pair of hands’; McAuliffe and Chenoweth (2006) reported that their collaborative writing was a natural extension of endless conversations after five years of teaching together; while Brein and Brady (2003) revelled in their creation of a new voice rather than a duet or chorus of voices. In a recent publication entitled The Collaborative Turn: Working Together in Qualitative Research (2009), Walter S. Gershon amassed an insightfully edited snapshot of first-hand experiences of collaboration in the arts in order to ‘fill a gap in the literature on qualitative methodologies’ (ibid pg.xviii). Gershon’s qualm is that, although there is a long history of collaboration in qualitative research, few have formally disclosed the means through which they work with one another. Uniquely, all chapters of the publication are by multiple writers, who take turns to engage in a written dialogue that reflects on their collaborative practises – as opposed to two or three collaborators agreeing on a reflective text. Most chapters successfully allow the inner workings of collaboration to be more transparent by examining the communal creation of ‘educative spaces’ (Steeves et al. p59); the illumination of the framework for disparate perspectives to engage one another (Gershon et al. p143); and the intriguing chapter that combines journal extracts from three academics collaborating on a theatrical play (Conrad et al., 2009 pp165-183).

The proliferation of personal computers in society has led to a niche of research into computer-supported collaborative writing. Michael Schrage’s Shared Minds: The New Technologies of Collaboration (1990) is a touchstone on the subject of collaborative tools. While some specific ideas are outdated in terms of technology, the general theories remain sound and his core theme – to persuade readers that major advancements in all fields of endeavour are due to collaboration – is relevant and well argued. Schrage’s prophecy (ibid p.xxiii) that technology ‘will reshape the way people collaborate’, however, hasn’t come to fruition in the manner he might have expected. In fact, research found that when collaborative writers used non-computer methods, the group, by necessity, needed to work more closely in both the planning and composing phases (Horton et al., 1992). Almost a decade later, groupware (specifically designed collaborating tools) had still not taken hold and the word
processor dominated (Kim and Eklundh, 2001). More current research (Noël and Robert, 2004) suggests little has changed, and that groupware systems in general have not been successful, and that the word processor remains the most popular collaborative writing tool. Screenwriters, however, have benefitted greatly from the advance in shared technological tools, as I shall outline later in Chapter Four. Screenwriting and story creation software, such as Final Draft, Movie Magic Screenwriter and Celtx now all include peer-to-peer online collaborative tools, enabling writers’ to craft screenplays in real time from opposite ends of the globe.

Ede and Lunsford reported (1990 p63) that many difficulties in conducting their early research came about ‘because we lack vocabulary to discuss what people do when they write collaboratively’. As academic interest in the field increased, the disjointed and contrasting definitions of collaborative writing became apparent (Beck, 1993). Lowry et al., alarmed that collaborative writing ‘lacks a common taxonomy and nomenclature’ (2004 p67), aimed to draw together previous researchers’ (Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Beck, 1993; Sharples et al., 1993; Horton et al., 1991; Allen et al., 1987; etc.) activities, strategies, and discoveries in the name of cross-disciplinary consistency to solve this lack of cohesion. Lowry, Curtis and Lowry’s article contains a wealth of terminology and significantly contributes towards preventing further disconnect in future exploration in the field. This dissertation has attempted to follow the lead of Lowry et al. where possible and use their terminologies to examine the simultaneous co-writing scenario.

The most likely reason the myth of the solitary writer has been able to sustain its hold on the scholarly field is that collaborative writing was historically defined very narrowly. Only when writers willingly and actually ‘joined forces’ (Harris, 1994 p79) to write a text, and officially credited collaborators in print, was the word “collaboration” used. With the surge of popularity in research into collaborative writing, there has been a significant expansion of the definition. The modern understanding of collaboration, for many purposes, includes any time ‘another hand enters into an effort’ (Inge, 2001p629). In short, anyone – an editor, a researcher, superior, translator, publisher, friend, wife, husband, lover – can be construed as collaborators.
The meaning of the term *collaborative writing* is far from self-evident. In attempting to solve one particular site of uncertainty—term definition, Ede and Lunsford (1990 p14) elected a broad approach for their research in an effort to attain as much information about the subject from as wide a field as possible. They decided ‘group writing includes any writing done in collaboration with one or more persons’. They also noted that writing includes ‘brainstorming, outlining and note-taking’ or any activities that lead to a written document. Through the use of their definition they were able to deduce that 87% of people wrote collaboratively. However, fellow academics Couture and Rymer conducted a similar study a year later than Ede and Lunsford and found that only 24% of authors reported ‘contributing to team-authored documents sometimes’, yet 76% of respondents ‘talked over’ their writing with others before drafting (Beck, 1993 p88). The quantitative results may have been similar to Ede and Lunsford’s study had their definitions encompassed comparable aspects of third party influence; *brainstorming* and *talking over* are arguably the same thing, yet Ede and Lunsford include the practice in their definition while Couture and Rymer exclude it.

Stillinger’s (1991) ‘slipperiness in applications of the term “collaboration”’ (Laird, 2001 p348) highlights his distaste for the idea and the complexities that ensue. Stillinger contends that William Wordsworth, generally regarded as a founding father of the English Romantic movement, collaborated with earlier versions of himself: young Wordsworth, middle-age Wordsworth and old Wordsworth, ‘who are considered, even by the poet himself, to be different entities’ (Stillinger, p70). Finding a definition that annexes the Wordsworth example, Stillinger argues, one must define the ‘young’ and ‘old’ self. Suppose a sentence is composed with a spelling error. Is it the older self who corrects a word that the younger self had misspelled only seconds earlier, or must a year have passed between first and second drafts? Is correction collaboration, given that the corrector-self recognised an error that the writer-self was unaware of moments ago? This example highlights the complexity of the term ‘collaborative writing’ and therefore fuels the rhetorical fires of those who argue ‘all writing is collaborative’ (Harris, 1994 p77).

My own experience of scripting the *Crime & Punishment* screenplay is an interesting example. I was the modern sole screenwriter, but can I claim that
distinction? Dostoevsky’s novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866) was first published in 1866 and I adapted it almost 150 years later (I was not the first, of course). The adaptation was deliberately faithful to the original story. The produced film is based on a screenplay that bears the direct work of at least three people: myself as screenwriter, Dostoevsky as the novelist and Constance Garnett whose English translation of Dostoevsky’s novel was first published in 1914. This meant that Garnett’s translation (Dostoevsky, 1914) was out of copyright and at my disposal to base my adaptation on. Much of the dialogue that I kept in the screenplay was directly lifted from Garnett’s translation which, presumably, was as close to authentic as she could make it at the time; only fifty years after the original work was written. I have since read more recent translations that modernize the text for a contemporary reader, but one wonders how close the text remains to Dostoevsky’s original intent. Either way, my work is anything but an original screenplay. Were either Garnett or Dostoevsky alive during the writing of my script, I would have offered them “screenplay by” rather than the usual “based on the novel by” credit as I consider it a truly collaborative work where I did most of the typing but they drove the story forward. My direct influence is most felt via the decision to set the story in the 21st century – an era that they have no experience with.

Jeanette Harris agrees in part with Stillinger that the more realistic view that all writing is collaborative ‘cannot be dismissed lightly’ (1994 p78) and, if it were true, would eliminate the need to search for a definition at all. She supports this argument with three basic assumptions: that writing evolved from speech and all speech is a social act therefore it is collaborative; that every text builds on a pretext; and, finally, that all texts are completed in the act of reading – that without the reader they do not exist. Fortunately, Harris does not stop there, instead arguing that there are many degrees of collaboration and therefore a definition for collaboration is required.

Defining ‘collaboration’ is dependent on the scope of the research. For a precise definition, Ede and Lunsford point to a group of researchers from Purdue University who produced an ‘efficient, pragmatic’ definition of collaborative writing as having three distinguishing features:

(i) It results in the production of a shared document,
(ii) There is substantive interaction between members and
(iii) Shared decision-making power over and responsibility for the document. (pp.14-15)

The inherent question remains over the terms ‘substantive interaction’ and ‘shared decision-making power’ in the definition. In the screenwriting trade, writers officially collaborate and are usually named together in the credits even if each is unaware of their collaborator’s existence; thirty-five writers have been identified as contributing to Gone With The Wind (1939), but the Oscar went to the sole credited author, Sidney Howard (Leitch, 2008 p67). Presumably, for the other thirty-four uncredited writers, Purdue University’s definition of collaboration would be unsatisfactory. Similarly, the definition does not work for Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman, who never actually met before the film was completed, yet are the Oscar-winning ‘team’ behind the script for Shakespeare in Love (1998). Clearly these examples render inadequate any definition that employs ‘decision-making equality’ or ‘substantive interaction between members’ as a characteristic.

Schrage’s definition is a more robust attempt that can encompass the three above examples:

The act of collaborative writing is here defined as an act of shared creation: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to craft a text that neither could have created on his/her own. (1994 p18)

Stillinger’s ‘non-definition’ meaning that all writing is collaborative is useful for purely academic reasons. Passing conversations, quips and improvised brainstorming are all forms of collaboration; however, the decision-making process rests with the author. Harris states that ‘very real collaboration can occur even if only one person physically writes the text’ (Harris, 1994 p81), but should these fleeting conversations and suggestions from third parties be defined as a collaborative effort or just advice? If they are only treated as advice, then the need for definition is relaxed, as collaborations are more obviously visible.
John-Steiner et al. believe that defining collaboration is necessary once the term becomes popular in the mass media, in research communities, and among educational practitioners (1998 p775). Their attempt to corner the shape-shifting term proposes that, in a true collaboration, the participators should possess ‘complementary domains of expertise’ (1998 p776). Many researchers agree that complementary skills are a necessity for a collaboration to succeed, yet should that be a requirement for definition? In screenwriting, collaborators are often unaware of others’ involvement, so although their skills may be complementary, the co-authors themselves would be unaware of that fact. For the empirical researcher, this may not be problematic; however, John-Steiner et al.’s definition is of little use in the practical collaborative screenwriting landscape.

Immediately following this attempted definition, however, John-Steiner et al. offer the countering proviso that ‘groups [may] differ in their conformance to this profile and that any single group may exhibit some of the features only episodically’ (John-Steiner et al., 1998 p776), thus agreeing with Ede and Lunsford in that the definition of the term collaborative writing is a particular site of uncertainty (1990 p14).

Scholarship on collaborative academic writing has advanced, but what of collaboration between screenwriters? What has research into this specific area of collaboration revealed? Information sources specific to collaborative screenwriting are scarce. They include the American Writers Guild website www.wga.org and their magazine Written By, which features regular interviews with writing teams; the independent publication Scr(i)pt; and the bi-monthly Creative Screenwriting magazine. Whilst neither of these magazines are academic nor peer-reviewed, they afforded my research a wealth of anecdotal material, especially in the form of interviews with practicing collaborative screenwriters.

The newly-published, peer-reviewed Journal of Screenwriting will hopefully offer new insights into the collaborative screenwriting practice. As to the writing of this thesis, however, only a single article from that publication focuses on that practice of simultaneously co-authoring a screenplay: Isabelle Gourdin-Sangouard’s article Creating Authorship? Lindsay Anderson and David Sherwin’s Collaboration
on If… (1968) (2010). Although the Journal of Screenwriting is only five years and twelve issues old it has already published a wealth of valuable material and is at the forefront of the international research into screenwriting.

A thorough search of the world’s English-language libraries, databases and catalogues, at the time of writing, produces only a single book title specifically aimed at examining the collaborative screenwriting process: Claudia Johnson and Matt Stevens’ Script Partners: What makes film and TV writing teams work (2002). The authors identified the barren literary landscape after two undergraduate students ‘demanded’ of them the secret to the art of collaborating on a screenplay (ibid :intro).

Johnson and Stevens attempted to correct an oversight in the academic exploration of collaborative screenwriting partnerships, however their publication is heavily anecdotal, devoid of peer-reviewed bibliographic references, and lacking the required academic rigor for it to be considered an authority on the topic. They include chapters on character, story and structure even though they admit, ‘When we talk to solo writers interested in working collaboratively, their chief concern is how to deal with disagreements.’ (ibid p219) They offer only three pages (of 298 pages) on this subject, titled ‘Dealing with Disagreement’. They follow those three pages with examples of how teams can reach agreement, most of which focus on what is best for the collaboration process rather than the project outcome – ‘bargaining’ to give up one line in return for the inclusion of another, or ‘wearing your partner down’ is a competitive win by attrition. Their other examples rely on power-centric aspects of the partnership: ‘deferring to the original writer’, ‘deferring to the director’ or ‘deferring to passion’. A more helpful analysis in this section could have been ‘deferring to story’ or ‘deferring to character’, where writers look to what is best for the project and, thus the outcome of their collaboration.

Another glaring omission from Johnson and Steven’s book is the lack of definition of the word “collaboration” with regards to screenwriting. It would be prudent to consider whether previous researchers’ definitions of collaborative writing, as summarized earlier, are suitable in the context of screenwriting collaboration.

Nevertheless, limiting the definition of collaboration is essential for the scope of
this dissertation on collaborative screenwriting to be workable. For that purpose, the definition I present here is intentionally exclusionary, relevant only for the limited purpose of this dissertation and the craft of screenwriting. Collaborative writing, in the case of John Studley and I writing the screenplay for *The Last Resort*, refers to:

Two living screenwriters working face-to-face in an equal partnership to produce an original feature-length screenplay.

While this may appear prima facie to be narrow, this definition works because it excludes all forms of screenwriting, but those of the upmost relevance to my research.

Upon developing the literature review and exploring various definitions of “collaboration” for this thesis, as I have said, I was surprised to discover that precious little exists regarding the process of collaboratively writing a feature-film screenplay as per the above narrow definition I have proposed. Fortunately, the study of other forms of collaborative writing has been a source of interest for scholars for considerable time and this has allowed me insight into how I could apply the creative screenwriting practice, undertaken in parallel with this research, to the current thesis. Furthermore, it highlighted a significant gap in the existing body of knowledge in the field.

In examining the question of how aspiring collaborative screenwriters might overcome the fear that conflict will derail a partnership, it was clear that conflict need be a central element in the study. My personal experience informed me, however, that conflict was not a major problem in my own collaborations therefore I had never experienced the topic in a practical way and therefore not given it much consideration. Furthermore, collaborative screenwriting is widespread and successful in the industry, especially in television - yet the fear of entering collaboration apparently still exists. This poses the question why then does the screenplay as a writing mode render itself as obliging to collaboration?

As this research was practice-led, the examination was to happen across two distinct periods: the writing of the screenplay *The Last Resort* and the study of its creative process; and then the writing of the thesis and further research into the topic.
I decided that the most effective method of studying the process of Studley and I co-writing was to be via two differing methods:

(i) The recording of various sessions with either video or audio which could be studied at a later time – after the screenplay was completed.

(ii) The rigorous maintenance of an observational journal, to be completed in private at the end of each session.

After the recording of only two writing sessions on video, it became clear that the recording equipment hindered the writing process: the video camera tapes only ran for an hour and had to be changed, camera angles had to change as one of us walked around the room, focus needed to be checked etc. The interruptions to our writing process were significant and I quickly felt that my attention was split: one eye on the camera and one on the page. After two sessions, I ceased recording anything on video and decided that those two sessions were of little research value given the obvious awareness that was inherent between Studley and I due to a camera being in the room. I switched to recording audio and found it much less intrusive – even though the small recording device could be sitting right between us. We were both relaxed with the audio recorder and soon forgot it was there. Upon reviewing the recordings, many times I realised I had forgotten to switch the recording off whilst we went out and had dinner, so discreet was the audio recorder.

The journal I kept, entitled Notes on the Process of Writing “The Last Resort” (see Appendix 2), turned out to be a valuable source of data in more ways than I expected. The number of writing sessions could be counted, the number of hours calculated, the regularity of sessions, the changes in method considered, and my own thoughts (positive and negative) about the collaboration and the project transcribed. The document has not been censored in any way: all grammatical errors kept, formatting left as is, cut and paste of emails unregulated and, most importantly, the flow of consciousness in the entries unfettered. I spent no more than fifteen minutes after each session (once I had arrived home or was alone) recording thoughts about the session.
It is the aim of this research to reveal the elements that comprise, define and are inherent in collaborative screenwriting in order to investigate and inform the practice of co-authoring writing for the screen as defined on page 19 of this thesis. By offering insight and bringing in to the light the hidden aspects of successful collaboration it is my desire to see potential co-screenwriters enter a project together and flourish.
CHAPTER TWO – THE INFLUENCE OF FORMAT, STYLE AND GENRE

Before embarking further on why and how screenwriters collaborate, it is logical to first turn attention to the end goal: the screenplay. Upon choosing to co-write a screenplay, writers arguably have an advantage over novelists, report writers and the authors of most other forms of text construction, due to the rigid form of the screenplay. The screenplay and the craft of screenwriting is not an end in itself but rather the first step in a long line of steps toward the making of a movie. The screenplay passes from the hands of the writer to the producer and so too does the ownership of the writing. Given this chain of events, conventionally the screenplay’s form has developed into a rigid and unmoving object.

It should come as no great surprise that, of all the discords reported among collaborative writers (as opposed to screenwriters), disagreement about style is the most often mentioned (Noël and Robert, 2004 p73). Perhaps this is why collaborative writers ‘relish format and stylistic constraints’ (Ede and Lunsford, 1986 p17) as effective tools in the negotiation of a co-authored text. The boundaries presented by the form of the artistic endeavor being undertaken, be it a screenplay, a painting, a radio broadcast etc., provides certain restrictions that collaborators often embrace; the fewer style decisions required for collaborators to agree upon, the smoother the co-writing process.

In a professionally written and formatted screenplay there exists a number of stylistic constraints. This chapter explores many of these constraints, both technical and conceptual, and discusses how they benefit co-screenwriters striving to achieve artistic merit under a collaborative framework. The chapter begins by looking at the tangible, quantitative features of the screenplay format then explores qualitative elements of screenwriting such as genre and tone. The chapter proposes that the conventional screenplay form is ideally suited to collaborative writing.

In literature, as typefaces became standardised and consistent rules of grammar and spelling were developed, the collaborative process became more complicated as writers fought for their own style to be adopted as the norm (Inge, 2001p624). Similar concerns were present in Hollywood in the 1920s and ’30s as studios began to hire,
and house, writers on their premises. The studios designed their own screenplay template to which their employees were obliged to conform. As the studios began to work more cooperatively by selling each other screenplays and trading writers, a convenient cross-style emerged.

A screenplay for a feature-length film is an immediately recognisable and distinctive entity. The aesthetics of the screenplay, driven by economic concerns, contrive to deliver a document where, as a rule of thumb, one page equals one minute of screen time: 100–120 pages in length equals 100–120 minutes on screen. The one-minute-per-page formula allowed producers and studios to estimate running times and thus budgets of films in development. Even the font is strictly chosen to conform. The screenplay rigidly uses a variation of the Courier font, always twelve-point in size, which nostalgically resembles the look of early typewriters, and is mono-spaced (all letters the same width and height). This assures only a certain number of letters will fit across the page and, therefore, maintains a consistency that achieves the one-page-per-minute of screen time formula.

The rigidity of the professionally formatted screenplay alleviates some of the difficulty of designing a collaborative writing style from two individual’s singular techniques. Furthermore, stepping outside this simple structure is frowned upon by those in the industry. Terry Rossio, before co-writing Aladdin (1992), Pirates of the Caribbean (2003) and Shrek (2001), worked as a reader for six major Hollywood studios. It is the reader’s job to decide which screenplays to consider for production and which to discard. Rossio wrote three checklists to consult while analysing submitted screenplays: one list of criteria to judge concept and plot, another for technical execution and a third concerning character. The first question regarding technical execution was, ‘Is it properly formatted?’ (Rossio, 2005) The quickest way to an instant rejection was for the screenplay to appear unprofessionally formatted.

Another aspect of screenwriting whereby the craft has developed a clear industry standard is the use of active, present-tense sentence construction. The sentence ‘Jack lifts Kate to her feet’ is more active and immediate than ‘Kate is lifted to her feet by Jack’, in which Jack’s action is passive. Similarly, ‘Jack is lifting Kate to her feet’ requires an extra word, ‘is’, and the addition of the suffix ‘ing’ to the verb
‘lift’, which results in a slower-read sentence. This universality alleviates complications that collaborative writers may be faced with in other fields of writing where the active, present tense might not be the most appropriate. For example, in a novel, the form ‘Kate was lifted to her feet by Jack’ might be the correct one. Not so in screenwriting. One of the key attributes of great screenwriting is economy and the active, present-tense uses fewer words. Furthermore, it always reflects that the film viewer is always in the present – at any given moment.

As can be witnessed in the transcript of one of our writing sessions below, during the writing process Studley and I discuss each word of each sentence, reworking it to fit the accepted active, present tense:

O’Keefe: I wonder if we need something like … Kate rises from Jack’s lap and …
Studley: My exact words.
O’Keefe: Right. And … They look at each other and Kate must turn away first … is what I mean. Let them connect for a second …
Studley: Kate rises from Jack’s lap …

Studley types.

Studley: … and their eyes connect.
O’Keefe: Yep.
Studley: Their eyes connect … um … Kate looks away.
O’Keefe: Looks away and finds her satchel.
Studley: Kate moves away, rather than looks away. That says the same thing and she can get up to …
O’Keefe: Yep.

Studley types.

Studley: … moves away and …
O’Keefe: What if she tosses it in the fire? Jack has to grab it. Nah.
Studley: (reads) Kate rises from Jack’s lap and their eyes connect. Kate moves away…
O’Keefe: … and collects her satchel.
Studley: Yeah.

Studley types.
O’Keefe: Actually, what if she moves to the other side of the fire?
Studley: Yeah. Kate moves away … She moves away and collects … to collect her satchel … um …
O’Keefe: She looks at Jack across the flames and … not looks. She does not look … different word … her eyes fall to Jack from across the flames.

Studley types.

Studley: (reads) Kate rises from Jack’s lap and their eyes connect. She moves away to collect her satchel. Her eyes fall to Jack from across the flames.

(O’Keefe, 2010)

For collaborative screenwriters, each script must absorb distinct personalities until it becomes impossible to determine who contributed which elements. Barthes (1967) noted that the invention of a writer’s voice is ‘the trap where all identity is lost’. Together with industry standard formatting, stylistic constraints of the screenplay offer screenwriters great assistance in finding a merged voice. A movie script is a blueprint of what can be seen and heard on the screen; stream-of-consciousness descriptions, tangential narrative explorations and olfactory accounts are discouraged. Screenplays are limited to only what can be photographed by the camera, recorded by the microphone, or created in post-production. Consequently, all action is written in the objective third person; only dialogue and narration is written in first person. It is arguable, for these reasons, that the language of the screenplay is easy to learn (yet difficult to master) and is an apt format for collaboration due to the rigid restrictions to which collaborators should adhere.

Another element where collaborative screenwriters can make use of standardised elements for story construction is when writing in a recognisable genre. The term ‘genre’ is used to categorise a wide range of elements that any film may contain: running length (short/feature), relation to reality (fiction/non-fiction), kind of plot (comedy/tragedy), nature of content (war/action/western/horror/musical) and so forth (Nowell-Smith, 1996). A boom in the production of genre films occurred as the motion picture industry became just that: an industry. In Hollywood, studios wished to repeat the success of films that captured the largest audiences and used recognisably similar elements to draw in the audiences: the same actors, sets,
costumes, music and visual styles. Most importantly, however, screenwriters increasingly concentrated their efforts in relation to the plot formulas and character types associated with particular genres.

The film *Mad Max* (1977), a pioneer of the post-apocalyptic genre, cleverly connected to audiences internationally by utilizing recognisable genre elements borrowed from the Westerns that had come before it – for example, the outback town under siege from invading lawless fringe elements, leaving the town’s protection and salvation in the hands of a lone warrior. The director, George Miller, concedes that his film is a Western: ‘It has the same story but instead of riding horses they are riding motorcycles and cars.’ (Beilby, 1979 p370). While *Mad Max* would seem to be an entirely original concept, its generic influence goes back to the classic western movies of directors such as John Ford and Sergio Leone.

Studley and my screenplay, *The Last Resort*, is a romantic comedy, a long-established genre that seems to be eternally popular. Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* is the most enduring and the most popular romantic comedy of all time (Potter, 2002 :intro xv) and *It happened One Night* (1934) is the film regarded to have begun the cinematic genre. Literary theorist and scholar Tzvetan Todorov reminds us that, ‘intentionally or not, all discourse is in dialogue with prior discourses on the same subject, as well as with discourses yet to come, whose reactions it foresees and anticipates’ (McNenny and Roen, 1992 p300). When researching and discussing our attempt at the genre, Studley and I agreed that we particularly admired the work of English romantic-comedy screenwriter Richard Curtis, scribe of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Notting Hill* (1999), and *Love Actually* (2003). We spent considerable time analysing generic characteristics of these films and utilising them to our best advantage. We talked regularly about the plots and characters of some of our favourite ‘rom-coms’, such as *Romancing the Stone* (1984), and sought inspiration by analysing character traits, plot conventions and story beats, particularly those expected in the romantic comedy genre.

Writing in the romantic comedy genre allows for the inclusion of immediately recognisable elements that are must-haves for the film to find its audience: the first kiss, the mistaken identity, the love interest and the moment known as the ‘meet-cute’
– an irresistible scene where lovers meet for the first time and sparks fly – and, of course, the happy ending. In the romantic-comedy genre, utilising some or all of these conventions is simply adhering to the ‘generic contract’, the implicit agreement between genre filmmakers and genre consumers (Nowell-Smith, 1996 p277).

A recent study by academics in the UK entitled *Contradictory Messages: A Content Analysis of Hollywood-produced Romantic Comedy Feature Films* (Johnson and Holmes, 2009) analysed the content of 40 of Hollywood’s most successful romantic comedies produced between 1995 and 2005. While their research was conducted for psychological reasons, the results nevertheless illustrate the various characteristics inherent in the genre:

- In all but two instances sexual activity between two characters was implied as opposed to actually depicted.
- Male characters expressed 123 of 154 ‘compliments’.
- Male characters gave 35 of 37 gifts.
- Male characters took more steps to initiate relationships (63 of 84).
- There were 82 depictions of ‘deception’ occurring across 40 films, ranging from white lies and ulterior motives to lying for personal gain.

There is one generic element that has become synonymous with romantic comedies: formulaic plot. Boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-gets-girl-again is a robust structural formula that offers wonderful scope for creativity while still retaining the appeal of the familiar. In some respects most romantic comedies follow this tried and true method while adding their own original spin to the characters, dialogue and action.

A focus on audience expectation during the composition process – an understanding of the generic ‘rules’ – can assist co-writers greatly. Ironically, stylistic restrictions leave near-infinite scope for creative exploration, for genre merely provides a common base from which imagination can spring.

The formatting and stylistic expectations of the screenplay offer a wealth of assistance to writers, more so than most written mediums, making it an ideal vessel
due to the stylistic decisions that have been taken out of co-writers hands. Unfortunately, none of these factors can guarantee writers will work successfully together.

This dissertation now turns to the practice of co-writing. By far the most important decision that collaborators are faced with is the choice of partner with whom to collaborate. The next chapter illustrates that, while there are varied motivations of screenwriting partnerships, trust and respect is required for a collaboration to reach its full potential.
CHAPTER THREE – WHY DO SCREENWRITERS COLLABORATE?

When one identifies the categories of screenwriting collaboration, the apparent reasons why writers collaborate are increased dramatically. The factors provoking the various collaborations, discussed in this chapter, are numerous and lead to diverse and identifiable kinds of partnerships. Some are voluntary collaborations, although many are not. The breadth of categories offers evidence that collaborative writing is particularly suited to and highly prevalent in screenwriting. This chapter first examines the various categories then points to joint collaboration, as described by Brein and Brady, as being the most deliberate, self-motivated and, from an artistic stance, desirable form of co-screenwriting.

While independent screenwriting partnerships lean toward Ede and Lunsford’s dialogic model, the hierarchical collaboration technique was perhaps the starting point for collaborative screenwriting – certainly in Hollywood. Screenwriting in the 1920s and ’30s was not what it is today. There was no Writers Guild to protect the rights of the early screenwriters; therefore, they had no rights. Most writers were under contract to the studios and were paid handsomely. These contracts, however, frequently bore one crucial line proclaiming that once a screenplay was completed, the studio would be ‘hereinafter referred to as the author’ (Norman, 2007, p132). It seems that the strength of the studios’ legal departments was greater than the Berne Copyright Act of 1911. ‘Screenwriters not only did not own what they wrote but, strictly speaking, they did not even write it’ (ibid p132).

The ill regard of the screenwriting trade during this period is likely, at least in part, a hangover from the silent movie years of D.W. Griffith and other pioneering directors who worked without scripts. Frank Capra, the legendary director behind classics such as It’s a Wonderful Life (1946), points to Mack Sennett as the first producer to try using multiple writers on movie projects. Capra remembers the ‘Gag Room’ at Keystone studios, run by Sennett, one of Griffith’s apprentices:

Two men work up a storyline, then all the others pitch in on gags. Sennett holds story conferences up here or down in his office … You can scribble out your own ideas, but no script
for directors. You tell them the story and they shoot it from memory. (Capra, 1971)

From the story department, a writer was chosen to pitch the story to Sennett and, if the mogul agreed, the story was told again to the director, who told it again to the actors. (Norman, 2007 p57) Words were not yet necessary, not until the running length of movies became what is known today as feature length.

The argument that collaborative writing is naturally suited to the cinema has solid foundations. Stillinger argued that the independent genius of one man, such as the director, can only shine with the support of collaborators like the screenwriter or cinematographer, and not of its own accord. Stillinger’s stance, however, is in opposition to one of cinema’s highest regarded scholars, Francois Truffaut, who hails the director as the final authorial force in the cinema. In his 1954 article for the seminal journal Cahiers du Cinema entitled ‘A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema’, Truffaut dismisses the French trend that for a film to be regarded as ‘quality’, the story must be faithfully adapted from a novel of great significance. Truffaut makes it clear the established theory of a ‘tradition of quality’ and that of the auteur, who ‘often write their own dialogue and some of them themselves invent the stories they direct’ cannot ‘peacefully co-exist’ (Truffaut, 1954). But Truffaut’s auteurs nevertheless still rely on the team behind them – actors, producers, writers, cinematographers – to produce their films; therefore prompting Schrage (1990 p53) to dismiss the auteur theory as propaganda ‘spewed by chain-smoking French intellectuals’.

The cinema is not the domain of one creative force; instead, is the realm of the team. The same could be said for screenwriting. It is rare for a single screenplay to be produced untainted by external influences. If in the last fifty years, fourteen Oscars for Best Original Screenplay have been awarded to multiple writers, what of the remaining thirty-six winners? The remaining works are credited to solo writers. However, do they have collaborative influence? Fourteen winners have been inspired by external sources, such as the 1969 winner Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and the more recent The King’s Speech (2012), both having been based on historical figures. The American magazine Life has proven to be a source of story for at least
two Oscar Winners: *How the West Was Won* (1963) and *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975); while other writers have admitted the influence of novels on their original screenplays – Jane Campion’s *The Piano* (1993), for example, was influenced by the classic *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Bronte. These external influences are not officially recognised as collaboration despite the fact that they directly influenced the screenplays in considerable ways. While ‘the Oscar goes to’ only one writer, the question must be asked: should the influence of external people be recognised as collaborative writing or is it rather the process constructively critical collaboration with a single final author?

In an expansion on Ede and Lunsford’s dual categorisation of collaboration, Australian academics Donna Lee Brien and Dr. Tess Brady wrote the paper *Collaborative Practice: Categorising Forms of Collaboration for Practitioners* (2003). After reflecting on their own collaboration, they desired to understand the relationship further. The pair identified twelve categories of collaborative writing partnerships from the practitioner’s point of view rather than that of the reader. Most categories can be applied to screenwriting and, should they be so, help illustrate that collaborative writing is an exceptionally widespread phenomenon in the film industry.

*Contribution collaboration* (p2) occurs when ‘several artists contribute to a project in their separate ways … where set designers, writers, actors, directors, lighting technicians and the like all work together to produce a single product … The key factor here is that each of the collaborators is given authorial status, no matter how slight their input into the project.’

Although Brien and Brady use the roles of a film crew to illustrate the term, the term can be applied to a strictly screenwriting example.

By the mid-thirties the studios had writers under contract. They were handsomely paid assembly liners who wrote bits of this and that, each scrivener usually with a specialty – action, romance, structure, jokes, even seductive banter (Kohn, 1999 p445).
For a modern take on *contribution collaboration* limited to the screenwriting craft, Cohen reports in the chapter about *Black Hawk Down* (2001) that Bruckheimer Films is notorious in Hollywood for replacing writers freely and for bringing in big-name writers to fix specific aspects of a script of which they are given authorial status. A Bruckheimer script typically might have ‘one writer who did a relationship draft, another who worked on tech, another who worked on action, and another who wrote dialogue for the girl’ (Cohen, 2008 p82).

According to Brien and Brady, *Hidden Collaboration* is ‘where the often seminal role of the companion of a writer, artist, or other creator is discovered, revealed and lauded’ (Brien and Brady, 2003 p2). Often this form of collaboration remains officially hidden. A particularly significant and spectacular example of this concerns the authorship of the screenplay *Roman Holiday* (1953). Ian McLellan Hunter was originally credited and won an Oscar for his work. Decades later it was revealed that Hunter was a front for Dalton Trumbo, blacklisted by the 1947 House Un-American Activities Committee. Trumbo was a member of the group known as the ‘Hollywood Nineteen’ who were allegedly associated with the outlawed Communist Party and, therefore, were banned from officially writing in Hollywood (Norman, 2007 p265). In 1993, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences reinstated the late Dalton Trumbo’s recognition of having written the screenplay. At the award ceremony that year, Trumbo’s wife, Cleo, received the Oscar for Best Screenplay on her late husband’s behalf.

Another type of collaboration may fit into this category more aptly. In the 1930s, Hollywood producer Irving Thalberg pioneered ‘following’; the practice of assigning the same project to several screenwriters without telling them. As Norman writes, ‘It was not uncommon for one writer, in the lunchroom, to hear they were being “followed” by another’ (Norman, 2007 p135). William Burroughs, author of *The Naked Lunch*, said, ‘You may come back from lunch to find someone else’s idea right in the middle of your script.’ (1991) This collaboration by proxy proved, from the studio’s point of view, a popular and successful method of script production – milking two different writers’ imaginations on the same story, then handing the script to a third writer to bring the best of the two scripts together in a cohesive document.
Secondary Collaboration occurs when one person works on another person’s writing or art, assisting in its refinement and modification (Brien and Brady, 2003 pp.2-3). This form of collaboration is widespread in the filmmaking world, especially in Hollywood. The producer purchases intellectual property from the screenwriter and then hires one or more screenwriters to ‘doctor’ the original work. ‘Script doctoring’ is a common method for writers to attain an income in between projects. It is well paid but not credited.

An interesting example of this is the origin of Captain Quint’s famous U.S.S. Indianapolis speech from Steven Spielberg’s suspense masterpiece Jaws (1975), arguably the most famous dialogue sequence of the film:

“Japanese submarine slammed two torpedoes into our side, Chief. We would just come back from the island of Tinian to Leyte. Just delivered the bomb. The Hiroshima bomb. Eleven-hundred men went into the water. Vessel went down in twelve minutes. Didn’t see the first shark for about a half hour. Tiger. Thirteen footer.”

The novel, by Peter Benchley, did not include the speech; however, Benchley’s contract gave him first run at adapting his novel into a screenplay. Spielberg hated the draft, telling a reporter ‘it made him [Spielberg] root for the shark’. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Howard Sackler came next and wrote the first attempt at the U.S.S. Indianapolis speech. John Milius, writer of Apocalypse Now (1979), came next, touching up the speech and Spielberg himself even tried to write a version of it. In the end, actor Robert Shaw is known to have improvised heavily during the shooting of the scene (Norman, 2007 p385). The final screenplay credit for the finished movie goes to Peter Benchley - and Carl Gottlieb, who was brought onto the project by Spielberg when shooting had already begun and the speech was already solid.

Sequential Collaboration occurs when ‘one writer or artist produces the initial outline of a project (such as a plot, characters, location or theme) and another person develops this, fleshing it out … as in the case of science fiction writer Arthur C.
Clarke and screenwriter Stanley Kubrick’ (Brien and Brady, 2003 p3) who co-wrote the script for *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Kubrick chose to start the screenplay with ideas from Clarke’s short fiction – chiefly from a nine page story entitled *The Sentinel*. The title of the short story refers to the monolith that appears in each of the film’s chapters. The famous opening of the film, *The Dawn of Man* sequence, not in Clarke’s novel, first appears in a script co-authored by Kubrick and Clarke in August 1965. However, the main thrust of the film, the homicidal computer named HAL9000, didn’t appear in the screenplay until a draft dated December 1965 (Naremore, 2007 pp.139-140). Thus, an original writer’s efforts provide foundation or the inspiration in sequential collaboration, the coauthor’s efforts extend on the existing material greatly.

My own project, *Seven Snipers* falls under this category. I developed the plot, characters and the setting of the film in a sturdy outline that was then further developed by the two writers I took on. Unlike Kubrick and Clarke who officially collaborated on the screenplay, I let Luke and Matt do the writing and met with them every two weeks to rework and discuss. Whilst the story is mine, the screenplay resulting from the sequential collaboration is theirs.

This category leads to a further question: do Brien and Brady intend that *Sequential Collaboration* is the umbrella definition for every screenplay adapted from an original source – novel, article, short story, play or any other material? The phrase ‘initial outline’ would suggest that they do not intend this because the example they use, Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*, is a vastly different story from Clarke’s *The Sentinel*. A more blatant adaptation, Kubrick’s faithful adaptation of Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1962), is recognizable as being the same narrative, characters, themes, settings and story.

one highest box-office films are all either adaptations or variations of existing properties. However, identifiable adaptations do not fit neatly into any of Brein and Brady’s categories and, therefore, another term is required. Perhaps Cross-medium Collaboration would be a fitting title for this process whereby one author produces the original work and the other adapts the story into a different medium. To use my Crime and Punishment experience as an example, I would consider that Dostoevsky did much more than produce the ‘initial outline of a project (such as a plot, characters, location or theme)’. He had the complete story worked out with every nuance and detail of which I then routed into the screenplay format and edited for running length. I like to think that the cinematic adaptation is faithful to the original book wherever possible, albeit in a modern setting.

Sequel or Prequel Collaboration occurs when a writer adds sequels or prequels to other famous works (Brein and Brady, 2003 p4) – another frequent form of screenwriting collaboration thanks to the saturation of Hollywood sequels. The Star Wars (Lucas, 1977) franchise is a particularly good example of this form. The hugely successful original movie spawned two sequels and three prequels along with spin-off short films, cartoons, TV shows and games. All of these additional products continued or expanded the original storyline using a number of different writers.

Brein and Brady’s category of Mentor Collaboration, where a new or less experienced writer is networked with an older or more experienced writer, is a predominant structure for the writing of modern television series: Breaking Bad, Deadwood, The West Wing and Game of Thrones to name but a few. The mentor, known as the “Showrunner”, is usually also the creative initiator of the series. The Showrunner:

…works with a group of writers to develop and write the series together. This model provides a systematic way to select talented emerging writers and develop their skills through mentorship by experienced writers in the collaborative writing process. (Walker, 2013)

For the purpose of screenplay co-writing, the most interesting and influential
form of collaboration aside from *sequential* collaboration, which is not necessarily deliberate collaboration, is *Joint Collaboration*. This occurs when:

Two or more writers/artists work together on a single product producing a seamless text unrecognisable as belonging in part to any individual collaborator… Joint Collaboration differs from Sequential Collaboration in so far as the writers/artists concerned indicate that the collaborative process does not follow categorical steps or demarcations of roles, and remains instead, a more fluid process. Here authorship is attributed, jointly, to each individual writer or, more often, a collective pseudonym is created. (Brien and Brady, 2003 p4)

Clearly, in their definition of *Joint Collaboration*, Brien and Brady acknowledge Ede and Lunsford’s classification of dialogic collaboration whereby responsibilities are ‘loosely structured and the roles enacted within it are fluid’ (p133).

The definition given earlier in this dissertation of my partnership with John Studley…

Two living screenwriters working face-to-face in an equal partnership to produce an original feature-length screenplay’

…can now be amended. Borrowing from Brein and Brady, as well as Ede and Lunsford, certain words are no longer required for the definitive purpose of this dissertation. The terms ‘living’ and ‘equal partnership’ are made redundant by the addition of ‘joint-dialogic’. Therefore, for the scope of this dissertation, in regard to my own collaboration with John Studley, the definition of collaborative screenwriting is revised to:

Two screenwriters working face-to-face in joint-dialogic partnership to produce a single, original feature-length screenplay.
I have highlighted only a few of the numerous categories of screenwriting collaborations. Clearly, not all can be outlined due to the mitigating factors and unique circumstances that are inherent with each collaboration; for example, how to categorise the case of the screenplay *Four Rooms* (1995)? Written by four independent writers who worked on completely different stories that featured the same character and setting.

Other problematic examples are the categorisation of inexperienced writers working with mentors under a paid scheme as offered by the UK Film Council or Screen Australia, and the categorising conundrum raised after additional writers were required to finish the work of *Doctor Who* author Robert Holmes, who died before finishing his script (www.tvtropes.org, 2008). This quite literal ‘death of the author’ ironically gives birth to a form of collaboration upon his death. How are these cases to be categorised?

The screenwriting industry has a long history of both credited and un-credited collaborations. From the beginning of Hollywood film production, collaboration between screenwriters has been the norm due to partnerships being hierarchically enforced by studios and producers.

The motivations for practitioners to engage in a creative alliance are varied, however generally they fall into the sphere of the phrase ‘two heads are better than one’. For many, the idea of ‘slaving alone, depressed, and hungry in the dark for months on end’ is not an appealing notion (Stillinger, 1991). Conversation, intellectual stimulation, friendship – these are important elements of the writer’s journey. It is precisely these personal relationships that inspire and form our storytelling curiosities.

Whilst some potential collaborators fear their own talent could be compromised by working with another scribe, many find the opposite is true. My own experience of collaborative screenwriting has led to vast improvements in writing style, problem solving, and clarity of thinking. Working closely with another writer requires lucid and concise verbal interaction if progress is to be made. ‘Thinking out loud’ affords
writers a very different perspective on their own internal thinking; in effect, they become an audience to them. On the other hand, it is rare for the lone writer to speak aloud during the period of composition as there is no-one to speak to, and therefore the gains of interpersonal communication are lost. Vygotsky’s *zone of proximal development* – the developmental chasm between independent problem solving and that in collaboration with peers (McNenny and Roen, 1992 p300) – lends this assertion great weight by illustrating the efficiencies possible in creative thinking when multiple minds approach the same problem.

Research indicates that for two minds to successfully reap rewards a common factor is that the pairing has differing yet complementary strengths (John-Steiner, 2000; Schrage, 1990). Writers can be drawn together for this reason alone; one writer may have a strong command of dialogue, whereas the other may possess a better grip on character or structure.

Billy Wilder and his longtime collaborator Charles Brackett were regarded as ‘the most famous writing team in the movies’ (Lemon, 1966 p48) and the ‘Happiest Couple in Hollywood’ (Barnett, 1944). As of 2011, Wilder sits at the top of the list of Academy Award–winning writers, having taken home three writing awards and been nominated twelve times. ‘Charlie’ Brackett is not far behind (only Woody Allen separates the partners), with seven nominations and three wins. (www.filmsite.org, 2011) Furthermore, Brackett and Wilder won the first ever Cannes Film Festival Palme D’Or, awarded for their co-authored film *The Lost Weekend* (1945). Barnett describes the Brackett and Wilder collaboration as ‘a monumental professional friendship’ where opposites attracted (1944 p5). The key to their successful collaboration was contrast. Wilder, prolific with ideas and endowed with a powerfully visual imagination, envisaged story ideas through the camera’s eye. Brackett, gifted with a graceful literary style, was attuned to the niceties of continuity and construction. (p7) One particular skill that Brackett possessed and Wilder did not, which suited Wilder enormously, was a grasp of the English language. As Wilder said ‘When I started in America I could not speak any English, so I did need a collaborator’ (Stevens Jr., 2006 p303). Although this is an extreme case, it provides a wonderful example of a partner’s opposing yet complementary skill.
Most examples are not so extreme. My experience of commissioning Luke Preston and Matthew Vaughan to write the *Seven Snipers* screenplay illustrated to me where my own particular strengths in screenwriting lie. The majority of my unproduced screenplays up to this point, and including the first feature-length film I co-wrote and co-directed with Studley, *The Independent*, have had a common trait: the story strictly adheres to a single protagonist’s point-of-view. In other words, I have never written a screenplay that uses an ensemble of characters. *Seven Snipers*, as can be deducted from the title, has one main character but regularly departs to the subjective viewpoint of the other six characters, each of whom have their own fleshed out stories. With hindsight, I now understand that this was the primary reason that I could not finish the screenplay as a sole writer; the habits I have learned from my previous work were dependent on the single protagonist. Preston and Vaughan, on the other hand, had experienced writing for ensemble casts before. They could easily switch between characters and interweave them seamlessly. It was most definitely a complementary skill; I had the story but they had the structure, and the advanced technical skills for an ensemble story.

Complementary skills are one of the reasons that I believe Studley and I work together so well. The following transcript is from a recorded conversation (O’Keefe, 2010) during a writing session on *The Last Resort* screenplay. This particular passage illustrates our individual strengths at work; John’s wit, his unique grasp of character traits and his skilful ear for dialogue complements my own aptitude to see the bigger picture in terms of the overall character arcs and story plot.

O’Keefe: What would a girl, who takes over people’s homes for a living, do when she’s caught breaking into one? She’d pretend she already owns it. Like she belongs there. She’d invite him into his own house.
Studley: Yeah.
O’Keefe: She could offer him a drink. But she wouldn’t know where they’re kept.
Studley: Jack would play along though.
O’Keefe: Jack points out the drinks cabinet. Kate pulls out a bottle. It would be rum or something.
Studley: [She’d say] “I’ve only got this cheap stuff!”
O’Keefe: Brilliant!

This interaction – the interplay of complementary skills - led to the creation of one of the more memorable scenes in *The Last Resort* screenplay.

Brackett and Wilder’s scathing satire *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), their final collaboration before they ‘got a divorce’ (Gehman, 1960 p29), depicts the working relationship between Joe Gillis (William Holden), a penniless, disillusioned screenwriter who is on the verge of quitting, and Betty Schaefer (Nancy Olsen), a beautiful and optimistic script reader from the story department. The pair team up after Betty, who has read some of Joe’s work, admits ‘I’m just not good enough to do it all by myself.’ The fictitious pair collaborate on the screenplay-within-a-screenplay, *Untitled Love Story*, and soon Joe’s passion for the craft (and for Betty) reignites and he exclaims, ‘It’s fun writing with you!’

Wilder, looking back on his career twenty years later, says:

> It’s fun, you know? You arrive in the morning and you have forty-five minutes of bitching about your wife and how lousy the food was, and you saw a picture and it stunk. It establishes a good atmosphere before you get going on your own crap. (Stevens Jr., 2006 p306)

This sense of fun should not be underestimated as a motivating factor for writers to come together. Many times during my own writing collaboration it has happened that either Studley or I have made an off-hand remark that the other seized, and which has then found its way into the script. Our free-flowing, conversation-fuelled writing relationship has led to some wonderful insights and story ideas that have come about merely by accident.

The motivation that develops by sharing goals and a purpose with another writer is another principal reason for writers to join together. Schrage rightly exclaims that collaboration is a *purposive* relationship (1990 p36) – the means to an end. Collaborations are formed out of a need to solve a problem, to create a work, or to
discover an answer. For Studley and I, motivation to collaborate on our first screenplay came from separate desires to write and direct a feature-length film but we were each unable to overcome the challenges that faced us. What we did have was a camera, a microphone and access to actors who would work for us. We decided to ‘write small’, find a story that could be made with little or no budget. Once we were writing, the increased motivation was immediately apparent. It was no longer one person’s desire that drove us, but two people’s common goal and we were reliant on the partnership for the completion of that goal. Matt Damon states that ‘When you have so much energy and so much passion and no outlet for it and nobody cares, it's just the worst feeling.’ (Sischy, 1997) That frustration motivated him to write the Oscar-winning Good Will Hunting (1997) with Ben Affleck, his friend since childhood. The screenwriter behind Election (1999), Jim Taylor, says extra motivation is ‘one of the advantages of partnerships. If you are on your own doubts can deepen and linger whereas in a partnership there is someone there to tell you to move on or to reassure you.’ (Scott, 2006)

Does the reported increase in motivation lead, quantitatively, to higher speed in text construction? Does co-writing make the writing process faster? Brein and Brady report on the benefit of collaboration and of their being able to produce a publishable text within the required time frame (2003 p8); however, this does not necessarily mean that co-authoring is faster. Indeed, working together is likely to take more time, not less. Co-authors must consult frequently throughout their project and spend extra time working out differences of opinion and approach. (Bahr and Zemon, 2000 p416) Furthermore, it is difficult for writers to find the time physically to get together given the increased complexity of juggling of two people’s family, employment and other social commitments, instead of just one person’s.

Billy Wilder said it took about eight months to concoct a story, with or without his collaborators (Scheuer, 1950 p17). If working from 9am until 5pm, Monday to Friday, this amounts to around 2000 hours of writing time per screenplay. Jim Taylor and Alexander Payne, who wrote About Schmidt (2002) and Sideways (2004) also deduce eight months is required to produce a first draft screenplay: ‘It’s always about six months … Then we’ll let a month go by and we may do another two or three weeks and that is pretty much it.’ (Scott, 2006)
Not being professional writers, John’s and my own schedules meant we could not write full-time due to outside commitments – which, as life circumstances interfered, became more and more difficult to manage. Where possible, we would set aside two days a week, usually Tuesdays and Thursdays, either from 10am until 6pm or from around 3pm until midnight. On this schedule, the writing of the unproduced screenplay *The Last Resort* took approximately three years to complete to its current form. These three years comprised of no less than 115 seven-hour writing sessions, which totalled over 805 hours (O’Keefe, 2011). Working to the same schedule as Brackett and Wilder or other full-time writers, this is equal to 20 by five day weeks; or approximately five months. Add to this the additional time spent talking on the phone, writing separately, in feedback sessions with third parties and general thinking about the project and the time taken would be closer to six months. Furthermore, the screenplay *The Last Resort*, still requires more drafts to be production–ready which would add at least another month to the process.

So, is eight months for a polished screenplay a faster turnaround than if a solo screenwriter were working alone? There really is no definite answer to this question. It depends on the writers. Certainly, the increased sense of obligation and motivation in collaborative partnerships helps; however, each team and each project will be different, just as each solo writer and project is different.

Whether or not co-writing makes the process faster is a question that may, for the film producer, have very tangible outcomes. Producers hire screenwriters and often do so with production schedules already in place, leaving a limited time for the writing, polishing, finishing or touching up of the script before shooting begins. If evidence suggested that collaborators write faster, it is likely that producers would be more inclined to hire teams than individuals.

For the screenwriter, the question ‘Does co-writing make the writing better?’ is a much more important one. In scholarly publications, researchers found (Smart and Bayer, 1986) that the acceptance rate of collaboratively written articles tends to be higher than single-authored papers, suggesting a positive relationship between collaboration and quality. Harris (1994 p77) reasons this positive relationship is
responsible for the change in the pedagogical zeitgeist resulting in the growing acceptance of collaborative writing. Bahr and Zemon (2000 p417) also argue that collaboration enhances writing quality and suggests there is good evidence to support that collaborative papers require less revision (ibid. p413). Studies of authorship in scientific academic journals point toward a definitive increase in collaborative research and publication, prompting the conclusion that single-author publishing was ‘nearing extinction’ in the sciences. Evidence suggested (ibid. pp.410-11) a similar outcome in the social sciences, leading to the opinion that multiple authorship was the norm for psychology studies.

In the field of Hollywood screenplays, the majority involve multiple authors yet it is difficult to map the ascendancy of collaborative screenwriting given that many co-authors are not officially credited for their work. Using awards as a gauge, the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, arguably the most prestigious feature-film screenwriting award in the world, has been won fourteen times by a team rather than a sole author in the past fifty years alone (www.filmsite.org, 2011). That is almost one in three – an impressive number. In television writing, a recognisably more collaborative writing field, the Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series has been won thirty-four out of thirty-nine times by a collaborative screenwriting team. (www.emmys.org, 2010)

Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio, the duo behind Aladdin (1992), Shrek (2001) and Pirates of the Caribbean (2003) warn:

You had both better be thinking constantly about solving the problems, clarifying the characters, sharpening the dialogue, making the story work. A partner does not make writing a script easier. But a partner can make the script better. (Elliott, 2007)

The meeting of two minds potentially doubles knowledge and imagination, allowing for opportunities that either mind, working individually, may not have offered. A participant in Ede and Lunsford’s research survey noted that co-authoring gives a ‘better idea of the general impact of a document on the intended audience’
because the act of collaborating requires transparent communication between the writers for the text to be lucid to a third party reader.

Renowned film editor Walter Murch believes that each collaborator brings a slightly different perspective to a project, which makes the work more accessible to a greater variety of people over a longer period of time. (Ondaatje, 2002) His view is corroborated by Ede and Lunsford (1990 p62), who found that among the advantages of collaborative writing were ‘different perspectives that generate better ideas for a better product’. Should the hypothesis that collaborative writing expands potential audience be proved, it stands to reason that screenwriting collaboration adds tangible value to a film project, possibly in the form of box office takings. Indeed a perfunctory calculation of the all-time box office records (adjusted for inflation of ticket price) reveals that five of the top ten movies were collaboratively written: The Ten Commandments (1937), Jaws (1975), Doctor Zhivago (1965), Snow White and Seven Dwarfs (1937) and The Sound of Music (1965). The top ten films yielded more than $11 billion in today’s currency, with the above five collaboratively-written films taking more than $5 billion combined (www.boxofficemojo.com, 2014).

Although successful joint-collaborations begin in a number of different ways, many share common traits. While the dynamics of any collaborative research will be affected by a number of differences between partners– gender, race, class and discipline, etc. (Ede and Lunsford, 2001 p363) – trust and friendship is probably the mainstay of most successful collaborations, whether or not friendship was the initiator of the alliance or was borne from it.

Janis Forman (Locker, 1992) argues that a ‘constellation of institutional and human factors, including the prior relationships among participants, contributes to successful collaborative writing’. Similarly, Schrage advises there is no recipe for a successful collaboration ‘any more than there is a recipe for a successful friendship’ (1990 p152). Nevertheless, there are ingredients to a collaboration that can largely determine how successful it may be. Those ingredients, however, some of which will be outlined in this chapter, rely on the ‘single most important step in successful collaboration’ (Bahr and Zemon, 2000 p416) being given its due: the choice of collaborative partner.
Many successful screenwriting partnerships spring from the well of friendship. If the friendship has been long-term, then tastes in story types are possibly shared. Certainly friendships will have come from similar social networks and the getting-to-know-you phase will have long passed. The Oscar-winning partnership between Matt Damon and Ben Affleck developed after the pair grew up ‘two blocks away from each other’ in Boston, USA. Damon adds ‘and we were basically best friends since I was ten and he was eight’ (Sischy, 1997).

It is not uncommon for screenwriters to get together after meeting on the job. Often these potential collaborations meet while working menial jobs in the film industry, but not always. Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman, co-writers of Annie Hall (1977), met when both were musicians. Says Allen, ‘Marshall and I used to appear in cabaret together. He was with a musical act. And we got friendly, we used to talk. And then we decided we would try and write something together for fun.’ (Bjorkman, 1995)

The list of sibling writers is long and distinguished. Brothers especially seem to flourish as writing teams. The Epstein brothers are foremost among them, having written arguably the most respected movie in cinema history, Casablanca (1942). In the modern filmmaking world, it is the Coen Brothers – of Blood Simple (1984), Fargo (1996) and No Country For Old Men (2007) fame – who are the most prolific. Director Sam Raimi (Bergan, 2000 p69) says:

Writing with them was like watching a badminton game. Joel would mention a line of dialogue and Ethan would finish the sentence. Then Joel would say the punch line and Ethan would type it up.

Finding a partner to work with is not unlike falling in love and getting married. In some instances, that is exactly what it is. For a truly successful partnership to form, writing couples should completely trust one another, be attracted to each other’s mind, have respect for each other, be open to criticism and be willing to put the partnership before their own interests.
Romantically involved writing teams are a long-standing tradition that quite possibly began with the writer of the very first ‘spec’ screenplay (a non-commissioned script written speculatively in the hope it might be produced in the future). Anita Loos wrote the silent short *The New York Hat* (1912) after reading an ad for a movie scenario contest run by Biograph, for whom D.W. Griffith worked. Loos’ script was purchased for $25 and she moved to Hollywood. At Biograph she met and married director John Emerson, a known ‘rake and womanizer’, with whom she collaborated on all her screenplays (Norman, 2007 p39).

One of the more common writing collaborations is between the writer and the director. It is not uncommon for a director to find a scribe with whom they work particularly well and for them to become reluctant to change writers. The directors do not always seek a screenplay credit however their input into the story construction is imperative. There have been many instances of this form of writer–director collaboration occurring given the two roles are dependent on each other in filmmaking with, perhaps: Christopher McQuarrie and Bryan Singer who wrote *The Usual Suspects* (1995) and *Valkyrie* (2008); Paul Schrader and Martin Scorsese who collaborated on *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Raging Bull* (1980) and *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988); and of course Billy Wilder and Charlie Brackett whose successes include *Ninotchka* (1939), *The Lost Weekend* (1945) and *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Over time the writer learns, through words, to express the director’s visualisations and the director, through visuals, reciprocates. Director Alfred Hitchcock (Leitch, 2008 p63) said:

The most enjoyable part of making a picture is in that little office with the writer … I do not let the writer go off on his own and just write a script that I will interpret. I stay involved with him and get him involved in the direction of the picture. So he becomes more than a writer; he becomes part-maker of the picture.

There are many ways that a third party can bring two screenwriters together – for example, a producer may recommend a writer to a director, or a comic could
recommend his sketch-writer to a feature producer or a film school lecturer could recommend a student to another lecturer. This is exactly the process that occurred for my *Seven Snipers* screenplay. The Victorian College of the Arts, School of Film and Television, is arguably Australia’s most successful film school, and in early 2013 the first graduates completed the Master of Screenwriting. Being a full-time lecturer in the writing and directing course I have intimate knowledge of the process of the school and the calibre of the students. I had the strong idea of working with a young, up and coming screenwriter having recently had a wonderful experience working with many students filling crew roles on the production of my film *Crime and Punishment*. I approached Ben Michael, my colleague and the coordinator of the Masters of Screenwriting course, pitched him the sniper story and asked him for a recommendation. Luke Preston’s name came back to me instantly. Ben spruiked Luke’s command of genre, Hollywood three-act sensibility and tradesman-like work ethic. I approached Luke, read two of his screenplays and offered him the job. The introduction, by recommendation, was successful and the *Seven Snipers* screenplay was begun.

Sometimes collaborators are ‘set up’ as the collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself (Schrage, 1990 p152). In fact, having a specific plan from the outset may ‘alleviate some of the fears of entering a collaborative relationship’ (Clark et al., 1996 p226). During the early years of Hollywood, with the authority over copyright of the screenplay held by the studios, the executives at the top of the hierarchy had free rein to force collaborations at will. Most collaborations, a marriage of strangers, were imposed by producers for financial and efficiency reasons (Norman, 2007 p141). According to Norman, ‘Four writers were considered the rock-bottom minimum required. Six writers, with the sixth member a woman to puff up the lighter parts, were considered ideal.’ (ibid p192)

Legendary screenwriters Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett were joined together by a Paramount story editor named Manny Wolf. Neither had made any dent in Hollywood up until that time. ‘Charlie Brackett, meet Billy Wilder,’ Wolf said. ‘From now on you’re a team’ (Barnett, 1944 pp.8-9). This enforced pairing turned out to be a stroke of genius on part of Wolf as by 1944 all of their pictures were both commercial and critical hits (ibid p4).
For screenwriters looking for a long-term, rather than goal-specific, collaboration, respect is the foundation upon which partnerships will be built. It matters little whether co-authors grew up in the same neighbourhood, worked in the same building or fell in love before the writing team was formed; what matters is the trust, respect and intellectual stimulation that must exist between collaborative partners. Dr. James L. Loomis (1959 pp305-6) wrote that for partners to achieve a ‘mutually perceived promotive interdependence’, the individuals must wish to reach some goal, place the team before the individual and know that for one to win, the other must win too. These factors combine to establish a supportive environment that nurtures ideas, thought and open communication. Karen Burke LeFevre (1987 p65) argues that new ideas are intensified and prolonged by a ‘sympathetic vibration’ that she calls ‘resonance’.

My partnership with John Studley, as is probable for many writing teams, is a conglomerate of the above-mentioned factors. A friend first introduced me to John, who was directing a television commercial and needed a camera operator. Not long after this first meeting, John became a co-tenant in a warehouse that my company rented. From these close quarters, the desire to collaborate on a project was founded.

Our first attempt at collaboration sunk like the proverbial lead balloon. The project, which would be later abandoned, *Brian Piston’s World of Cars*, involved not only Studley and I, but two further collaborators as well. It became clear that the two of us were both the creative and practical driving force behind the project. Given the intellectual property was shared between four people and would have been difficult to separate, Studley and I decided to work on another idea. The failed project demonstrated to us that we could work together productively. A shared ambition to write and produce a longer form drama became a reality when we co-wrote and co-directed *The Independent* together. While we met via on-the-job connections, friendship proved to be the glue to our collaboration. John-Steiner (2000 p79) stresses trust between collaborators often contributes to heightened self-confidence and can support a person’s willingness to take risks in creative endeavours. This was certainly the case for Studley and I as our first film was fraught with financial and creative risk; however, the earlier failed venture provided us with the trust in each other that would
overcome the challenges of collaboratively writing and directing a feature film.

Collaborations are formed in a number of ways, however a few governing factors impact on them all. An implicit trust and respect, implying friendship, is the most important aspect of any successful collaboration. Nevertheless, Schrage (1990 p152) debates this assumption:

Successful collaborations do not require friendship or even that the collaborators like one another very much. Successful collaborators tend to ignore the more irritating quirks and idiosyncrasies of their colleagues … Trust is almost always assumed.

Trust is an essential element of collaborator’s chemistry. Trust supports the ‘improvisational nature of [qualitative] collaboration’ (Gershon, 2009) and is earned via a lengthy probationary period, an attraction to the partner’s ideas, and experience (John-Steiner, 2000 p64). Studley’s and my desire to collaborate was cemented after a four-person alliance failed. Our shared experience of wasted effort, broken trust in other partners and the failure of the dynamics of the group was a blessing that allowed us to see the potential in each other.

Without trust, ideas do not flow unfettered due to the chance of ridicule. Of course, there is always embarrassment about voicing ideas that lack quality. When Studley and I work together, trust gives me the assurance that poor ideas will not be held against me. Experience and time has proved me right. Often (but not always), there is a shared history between partners before an attempt at co-authoring a screenplay is undertaken. It is during this shared history that the trust is formed and the relationship cemented.

If Schrage is correct, if trust really was a given, the Australian Writers Guild’s Collaborative Writers Contract (Appendix) would be redundant as each writer assumes the other has their best interests in mind. Furthermore, the existence of the legally binding Screenwriters Arbitration Board, a subsidiary of the A.W.G., would be unnecessary if trust was assumed. In screenwriting, if not in all forms of co-authoring,
trust is earned, not assumed. Perhaps, however, it is assumed retrospectively in the case of a successful collaboration.

Collaborative partners writing fiction together requires drawing on each other personally. In a joint-dialogic writing team, the old adage ‘write what you know’ must be extended to ‘write what both of you know’, for the ‘author is supposed to feed the book - that is, he pre-exists it’ (Barthes, 1967). For many co-writing teams, especially those with numerous credits, close personal communication is one of the most important foundations of a writing partnership. Jean-Claude Carrière, screenwriter of *Belle de Jour* (1967) and *The Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), described his very close collaboration with legendary director Luis Buñuel: ‘I calculated that we ate together, just the two of us, more than 2000 times, which is much more than many couples can say’ (Colville-Andersen, 1999a). Schrage (1990 p6) reminds us that the linguistic root of communication is the Latin verb *communicare* – which does not mean ‘to communicate’ but rather, ‘to share’.

Why people collaborate is a difficult question to make conclusions about for there are far-reaching possible answers: some collaborations are enforced whereas others are willingly sought; some collaborations are borne of friendship and others of hardship; writers join forces due to lack of motivation; to complement their own skills with that of another writer and most perceive the quality of the work will be increased. All these choices – either well considered or taken on instinct – happen well before a screenplay exists, however are, arguably, the most important choices of all and will have the largest impact on the success of the writing process.
CHAPTER FOUR - THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SCREENPLAY

This chapter will further discuss my practice-based research by examining the writing collaboration during the development of The Last Resort screenplay, and concentrating on the logistics and the practicalities of shared writing practices. Having chosen the perfect writing partner and agreed on the story, the when and where to write becomes a seemingly simple decision; however, as Studley and I experienced, the writing environment can be as dramatic as the plot on the page.

A production-ready, feature-length, shooting-script consists of approximately twenty-five thousand rigorously chosen, economical words. Collaborating on a screenplay requires a considerable time commitment from both parties and a strong work ethic. Of course, the same dedication is required for the solo screenwriter if not more so; one of the benefits of entering into a collaborative writing partnership is that procrastination is immediately made more difficult; it is very difficult to not write when someone else has taken the time to meet with you. But for the solo writer finding the actual time is arguably easier. My Crime and Punishment screenplay, written across the same time as the co-written The Last Resort screenplay was quicker to write. Of course, with Crime and Punishment, I was not starting from scratch, rather adapting an established story, nevertheless, the time had to be found and it had to be regular. Anecdote has William Faulkner as saying, “I only write when I’m inspired, so I make sure I’m inspired every day at 9am.” For me, writing Crime and Punishment was late at night when the house was quiet and everyone else was in bed.

Regularity is the key in writing; one must treat it as a job even when it is not a source of income. Another of Billy Wilder’s collaborators, I.A.L Diamond, says “Both of us sit in the same office, week after week, month after month, five days a week, from nine until six and then (as production nears) we start working Saturday and Sunday mornings too.” (Lemon, 1966 pg.52)

For Studley and I, finding time in both of our lives and managing other employment and family commitments began smoothly initially, however eventually, it took its toll on the work. Neither of us are fully employed screenwriters. I work full-time as an academic and Studley regularly directs television commercials. Time is not
as flexible as either of us would like. Many times, sitting across from each other at midnight on a work night, we dreamed of being paid for writing our screenplay. Envious were we of full-time writers like Brackett and Wilder who managed to make a living writing, who could feed, clothe and house a family on the strength of their stories. Oh! How we envied their schedule. But this was not our fate.

The writing of The Last Resort screenplay was not without its adventures and, eventually, afforded me an insight into my own individual work ethic that I had not noticed before. In October of 2008 we began to collaborate on the screenplay. Studley and I committed to two days a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, to writing the script. As neither of us had an office that was without distractions (Studley’s freelance director life was based around his computer and his car, whereas my office at the film school is a magnet to enquiring students), my kitchen became our writing desk. This was not unfamiliar to us; most of our first collaboration, The Independent, was written in my kitchen – within arm’s reach of the coffee – even though we shared a production office a few blocks away. So, the kitchen it was. Usually these writing days began – having already spent six hours working at our respective jobs – at around three o’clock in the afternoon and would finish up at midnight. Regularly, writing sessions went later when we were nearing the end of a draft or an important scene. It was a very tiring time for both of us. Halfway through 2009, John moved into his new production office and we began writing there as, invariably, the place was empty from three o’clock onwards. Having John’s luxurious office was an invigorating experience: it was above a café with great coffee, had comfy office chairs, a huge writing table, and a long blank wall where we could lay out our scene cards. For the first time we felt like Brackett and Wilder, pacing along the wall arguing out story beats; one of us at the keyboard and the other throwing a ball around the cavernous room. It was a delight. Within two months of moving our writing to Studley’s office we had completed the first 117-page draft.

A week later the office was gutted by electrical fire, so it was back to the cramped, stifling space of my kitchen – a change that neither of us relished. The fire, it seemed, had taken its toll on our momentum too. This diary entry from the first session after the fire:
Felt very drained getting into the script. We’ve both got that feeling of wanting to finish the script now, we’re over it. It’s been too long with too many changes. Every time we stop and redo characters it feels like the script is further and further away. Also, at the Rom-Com seminar, both of us agreed that we were more excited (or more interested) in getting onto a new script – separately. Personally, I’m feeling like it’s time to make another film, not just write one. (O’Keefe, 2011 pg.22)

In August 2010, we moved back into Studley’s now renovated office, found our stride again but realized that the script was in poor shape. We started from page one all over again. It was a wise decision and, having found a new development method, we wrote another full draft in three months. Again the renewed activity of a writing space was short lived; Studley’s landlord decided to sell the property and we were sent back to my kitchen again (Studley has two children and, therefore, a very busy kitchen). At this point, finding space and time became difficult as a couple of months later things became infinitely worse in the screenplay’s fight for existence.

In January of 2011 my first child was born. It was not without guilt that writing sessions began to wane. This from my diary:

Life has got in the way of this draft. Have had a baby and am finding it emotionally … difficult to be motivated to finish this script. There are times that I do not want to write it at all. Also want to get started on something else. Feeling unenthused but have a meeting with John today, so we’ll see what we come up with. (O’Keefe, 2011, pg.34)

But for Studley, too, the economic burden had become difficult; television commercials had become fewer and fewer and he found himself having to take on non-film industry work to pay the mortgage. We decided to try different methods of writing (as I shall discuss later) to keep the script flowing: dividing the work and writing separately, working on Skype, feedback via emails etc. but none of these new
variations worked as well in the long run, as it had done when we found regular time to meet.

Literature suggests that working in the same location is the ideal (Cassidy, 2002) but increasingly common sense would suggest that, with today’s technology, writers can write anywhere; they only need a computer or a pen and paper. For many writers, this is the case. For Brackett and Wilder, the large film studios had writers buildings where all the work took place. They had two rooms: the first a smaller ‘Game Room’, a lounge room style with a convivial coffeehouse atmosphere and the second which the pair called the ‘Bedroom’, where the work took place (Barnett, 1944 pg.6). When not in their office, they became used to working wherever they found themselves; in barber chairs, while playing the Word Game or cribbage, or at parties (Gehman, 1960 pg.29). In the modern era, writers carry laptops which frees up the process greatly: Lutz and Smith usually write outside by the pool ‘or sometimes we’ll write at restaurants’ (Gotshalk, 2009b); Hal Kanter and Tennessee Williams wrote in a small crowded apartment that reeked of cat urine, whilst Harold Ramis and Peter Tolan worked in a room at the public library (Johnson and Stevens, 2002).

From my own experience, however, I found transitory writing environments less effective. Studley and I tried writing in cafés, tried the film school canteen and staff offices but we needed quiet and privacy. We had neither. I would look at my writing diary, “Notes on the process” (appendix 2), and see how the lack of entries directly correlated to the lack of progress that we were making with the screenplay. We began to not write for weeks at a time, brushing it off as “thinking time”. The Last Resort had gone through a number of completed drafts and had been rigourously script edited by various professional screenwriters and producers, however, Studley and I knew that the script had fundamental problems, and was not at the standard of a serious contender in the romantic-comedy market. These problems are common in screenplays and I do not think lesser of the basic The Last Resort idea or of the collaboration because of this. I have written no less than ten feature-length screenplays in my time and only produced two of them. More importantly, I have only wanted to produce two of them (The Independent and Crime and Punishment) as the others never reached the quality that a film production demands. The fact is that, given our personal circumstances had intervened so drastically in the process of
writing, and the available time we could get together face-to-face was extremely limited, the screenplay suffered. In early 2012, I began to lose patience with our lack of progress and focused on writing another script that I could direct and produce; *Crime and Punishment*. Producing the film took over my creative life and, unfortunately for *The Last Resort*, all other projects were shelved. As of the submission of this thesis, that is where the screenplay remains: at a fifth draft and awaiting the attention it deserves to resolve the story’s structural problems.

Commitment and routine are necessary for successful screenplay development. Cassidy (2002) suggests that collaborative writing depends on the social circumstances of the authors; as cowriters are more in tune with each other and engage in more interpersonal communication they interact more on the content of the writing task at hand. As outlined, Studley and my social conditions changed drastically through the writing period and a sense of instability in the project came to the fore.

Can time and circumstance be solely blamed for the receding energy in the creation of our screenplay, or was the problem symptomatic of another issue? During the writing of *The Independent* more than once we had to stop writing blindly forward to reassess what we would put down in words. The same issue re-occurred in writing *The Last Resort*. We found we had rushed too quickly into writing the scenes and dialogue instead of holding back and planning the route better. To compare our experience to a road trip, we drove without a map to a destination called “Final Draft” whereas single quickest way to get there is to buy a map, plan the route and do not detour.

Writing is often broken into three distinct categories: prewriting, writing, and rewriting (Smith, 1982 pg.104). Prewriting, perhaps the most important phase, is the process whereby the story is formed before the writing phase begins. For many writers, it is the longest chapter of the whole process. Karen Lutz and Kirsten Smith, who wrote the romantic comedy *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), often spend eight months writing a single script. Smith says, ‘six months is spent outlining the story and then a further two months to produce a first draft’ (Gotshalk, 2009b).
Before being committed to paper, a story is first formed in the mind of a writer. Through the slow process of thought and conversation, idea elimination and experimentation, the narrative is further developed in the mind. In her article *Toward a Working Definition of Collaborative Practice*, Jeanette Harris (1994 p81) quite reasonably concludes that the prewriting phase ‘determines to a great extent both form and content of the final text’.

It is true that, on occasion, extraordinary screenwriting teams exist who do not write from an outline and who do not plan ahead. Foremost among them are the Coen brothers, who literally make their original stories up as they go along. Ethan Coen admits, however, that they usually ‘have an intuition about the conclusion’ when they begin to write a script because ‘it makes things much easier if you know in advance where the characters are leading you’ (Bergan, 2000 p131). While they may not know the entire story beat for beat, they still have in their heads a prewritten draft with a clear indication of what they are writing towards.

The Coen brothers, however, are an anomaly. The majority of collaborative screenwriters begin with a vigorous prewriting stage, during which the story is conceptualised and outlined meticulously. Ede and Lunsford’s (1990) research identified seven distinct patterns of organisation amongst collaborative writing teams; in some methods one person writes the draft, in some the drafting is shared, and in others each person only writes a part of the whole. The feature that nearly all methodologies shared, however, was a prewriting phase. No matter how the actual writing progresses, it is essential that partners agree on what is to be written.

During the writing of *The Independent*, Studley and I faced problems with the structure of the story yet we surged ahead blindly. The film entered production after we had written no fewer than sixteen screenplay drafts, over a period of almost three years. Following this experience we agreed that, the next time we collaborated, the prewriting period would be much more disciplined.

In October 2008, after a year-long recharging of the batteries following the distribution of *The Independent* movie, Studley and I began meeting to discuss our next project, which would eventually become *The Last Resort* screenplay. We made a
conscious decision to write in the romantic comedy genre, agreeing there was a vacancy in the marketplace for a rom-com set in the world of the backpacking traveller. Both Studley and I share experiences in travelling in this way, and we agreed it would be fertile ground in which to set a story of the heart.

In late 2008, prewriting on The Last Resort began. We drew on material from our existing unproduced screenplays as well as personal experience to rush out a story. In a matter of only three or four weeks, after meeting twice weekly, we had ‘finished plot outline of yet unnamed screenplay – the document has 29 plot points’ (O’Keefe, 2011 p1). While the 29-point outline did share similarities to the final draft of the The Last Resort screenplay – character names, occupations and some locations remain unchanged – with hindsight, it is clear that the story was not nearly well enough developed during the prewriting phase.

On 26 November 2008, we hastily began drafting the screenplay using the outline created a week earlier, and worked up until Christmas. After a six-week break, we resumed writing on 10 February 2009 and, only seventeen days later, I wrote in my journal (2011 p1):

Stopped writing the first draft … as we both thought that the script needed a different direction. The characters of both Jack and Kate weren’t thought out enough, nor were their motivations.

Instead of going back to the outline and working the story through, we pushed on for almost a year with little success. An email (2011 p3) from myself to Studley on 29 September 2009 reads:

Have just finished reading the script again – first time in a while from start to finish. Will not beat around the bush – I was underwhelmed. I had to push myself to actually read it all.
Having worked on the screenplay for eleven months, albeit part-time, the story should have been more advanced than it was. Prewriting had lacked clarity; we had written two complete and different drafts amounting to untold pages of scenes, dialogue, and scenarios that would prove not to be included in the third draft. Of course, not all of what we had written was futile; many of the original aspects of characters remain in the final draft. However, the single most important story point did not appear until we decided to go back to the prewriting stage.

The main plot of The Last Resort is simple: Kate, a callous negotiator working for a resort development company, attempts to buy a tropical island, but falls in love with Jack, an ornithologist searching for a mythical bird that is supposed to live on the island. The development of the plot point defined as ‘an ornithologist searching for a mythical bird’ is the core conflict between the two main characters: Kate wants to build a resort and Jack wants to find the bird. If he finds the bird, she cannot build the resort as the island will be protected. If she builds the resort, the bird’s habitat will be destroyed. Sum total: conflict.

In a testament to the poor quality of the original prewriting period in which Studley and I engaged, the core story idea of Jack being ‘an ornithologist searching for a mythical bird’ does not appear in my journal (2011 p4) until 27 October 2009, almost a year after we started writing:

Jack has become an Ornithologist at Princeton University.
His Father was once an esteemed Professor there but tarnished his good reputation looking for the mythical bird that only Jack knows the truth about.

In his seminal book Story (1999 p410), Robert McKee declares that the difference between a struggling writer and a professional writer is that the struggling writer ‘dreams up an idea, noodles on it for a while, then rushes straight for the keyboard’. The professional writer, on the other hand, ‘confines himself to a few stacks of cards for months on end’ (ibid p412) having learned through experience that ninety per cent of what he writes will be mediocre at best. Screenplay guru Syd Field suggests (2005 p282) a similar approach: ‘After you do the character work, start
building the story line on cards.’

FIGURE 1 – SINGLE SCENE CARD

Scene cards contain short grabs of information (see fig.1): the location of the scene, characters involved in the scene and, of course, the dramatic reason why the scene exists in the plot. A typical scene in a film runs around the three-minute mark and the typical feature-length film is around 120 minutes long. This equates to between 30 and 40 scene cards for an entire film.

*Shrek* (2001) co-writers Elliott and Rossio (Ryfe and Shewman, 2001) figured out their story using a bulletin board and cards; however, they warn:

Not all the information about the screenplay can fit on a card; there’s a lot of it we understand just through our conversations about how we’re going to approach it. A character may have one or two words that describe [them] at that moment, at the start of the movie, but we know a lot more about what that character’s like.

Completing much of the story design before getting to the scene-carding takes a lot of conversation, research, laughter, anger, and general frustration. It is tempting to reach for the computer and bang away, blindly filling pages; most writers would agree that the blank page is a scary thing and conquering it brings a sense of
accomplishment. It is easy to feel that the prewriting phase is a waste of time, an issue doubly felt when there are two or more writers’ time being wasted. However, thinking is writing, talking is writing, brainstorming is writing. This is the phase during which the shape of the story comes together.

My journal reveals that Studley and I spent a total of seventeen, eight-hour days not writing. Entries (2011 p7) read, ‘Talked for about six hours but didn’t write anything’. Not surprisingly, the journal also reveals (ibid p4) that advancements came at the end of eight-and-a-half hours of non-writing:

Another night of no writing. From 2pm until 10:30pm then we had a breakthrough about Jack’s back-story. Feel like we cracked a major problem but have agreed to swap emails back and forth over the next few days and refine it.

As we spent more and more time reverting back to the scene cards, our understanding of scene card technique improved. Originally, our technique was simple, using only one card per scene, running left to right horizontally, representing the chronology of the story, as seen in Figure 2. Eventually, we developed a much more comprehensive multiple-card technique. The multi-card technique still runs from left to right, representing the chronology of the story horizontally; however, we introduced multiple layers vertically. Whilst Studley and I may not be the inventor of the multi-layer card system, we developed the following method independently and without the knowledge of others using the same technique.

In the example (Figure 3), there are up to four cards stacked vertically. Each of these four layers represents a different sub-plot of the story. For example:

- Layer one – the bottom layer – is a snapshot of the scene itself and includes information such as location, characters in the scene and action that is specific to that scene only.
FIGURE 2 – SINGLE-LAYER SCENE CARD SYSTEM
FIGURE 3 – MULTI-LAYER SCENE CARD SYSTEM
• Layer two – the second-bottom layer – represents the love story between Jack and Kate and includes information such as the first kiss or the first date.

• Layer three – the third-bottom layer – represents the sub-plot of the bird on the island and includes information such as first hearing about the bird, the bird being sighted, or Kate finding the feather.

The number of vertical layers is variable, depending on how many sub-plots a story may have. Studley and I found this system to be remarkably effective, much more so than our original single-layer method, as various plot points could be moved about with ease without affecting other events in the scene (and having to write up a new card). For example, the card representing ‘Jack and Kate’s first kiss’ could easily move location from ‘the Temple’ to ‘Pauper’s Cliff’. The ability to reorganise cards allows for great structural freedom and experimentation. This is of particular assistance during collaborative prewriting as a partner’s ideas can be quickly and efficiently scrutinised. A new card can easily be written and inserted into a timeline, and scenes can be ordered and re-ordered effectively, allowing partners to discuss the idea’s relative merits. This process would be much more difficult and time consuming were every idea required to be written out in script format and inserted into the screenplay.

Another benefit to efficient collaboration on story design of the multiple-layer scene-carding system is that it allows, through instant visual representation, the identification of those scenes that contain enough information and those scenes that are flimsy. Our unwritten rule was that each scene required at least three cards vertically stacked to earn its place in the film. Any scene that had only one or two cards was merged with another scene, converting two weak scenes into one strong scene.

Additionally, the visual representation of each scene horizontally revealed large story gaps, often indicating that a certain sub-plot needed further development. The sub-plot representing the ‘Bird Story’, for example, might include one card stating ‘Jack says bird is extinct’ and then a long gap of eight level one cards until ‘Kate sees
the bird’. Studley and I would see with just a glance that an eight-card gap meant that a sub-plot had stalled.

Working on the story using our multi-layer scene-carding system allowed goals to be achieved that otherwise may have taken much longer to realise. On page 34 of the completed draft of *The Last Resort*, Jack and Kate are shipwrecked, thus triggering the bulk of the second act of the film. The shipwreck idea first appeared in early November 2009 on page 65 of the screenplay. We agreed that it was a strong story point and should happen much earlier in the script. Finally, on 27 May 2010, six months after it initially appeared in the script, I recorded this journal entry:

Through the scene carding process (of the second act) we’ve cut basically 25 pages. Jack and Kate get on the boat now at about page 30. This means that we’ve bought forward the event of the shipwreck and thus, the dark side, much closer to the front of the story. We’ve been talking about doing this for a long time but never really could. (ibid p24)

Using the multi-layer scene-carding process allowed us, after only two days working on it, to achieve a goal that had eluded us for months.

We utilised our scene-carding system until we were confident of the outline we had developed. From there it was simply a matter of transcribing all the information from the scene cards into a document form known as a ‘treatment’. A treatment is shorthand information about each scene, with no dialogue. For example:

**INT. TEMPLE – DAY**

Jack brings Kate to the temple and tells her about the Pauper’s story. Jack reveals that he has never seen the bird but believes that it exists. The Monk begins to push Jack and Kate together. At the wishing well, Kate and Jack kiss.
Once the treatment is complete it may run to about thirty or so pages depending on the length and detail of each scene’s information. From this document, collaborators begin to write a screenplay.

Many professional screenwriters, working alone or in partnership, agree the scene-carding process is a pertinent method of working out story. For collaborators, the scene-carding process can also alleviate conflict via the availability of a tool with which to experiment before committing words to the page; for example, should one writer wish for a scene to be cut, the card can be quickly and efficiently lifted out of the timeline to see the effect its removal will have on the story. For a fledgling collaborative writing partnership, the prewriting phase is the most important period for writers to agree on the various details of their story. My research leads me to suggest that scene-carding is perhaps the most effective and efficient tool developed for the prewriting process.

Having engaged in a rigorous and disciplined prewriting phase, collaborators turn to writing the screenplay. This stage of composition is where yet another important decision must be agreed upon: what method will writers use to collaboratively compose their story?

Billy Wilder described how he was regularly quizzed: ‘When there are two or three names on a screenplay, does one write one scene and another write another, and then you meet every Tuesday to compare? Or does one write the action and the other write the dialogue?’ (A.F.I., 1986) While Wilder probably offered up these examples with a degree of tongue-in-cheek, they are quite reasonable summations that illustrate the layman’s general lack of understanding of the collaborative process.

Ede and Lunsford report (2001 p364) that the question of collaborative technique, that is ‘How collaborators write’, is ‘particularly problematic’. Choosing the appropriate process is one of the more difficult decisions co-authors face, as a poor choice can lead to the disintegration of the partnership.

Although Ede and Lunsford identified seven methodologies of collaboration in the professional workplace only a handful are common practice in the screenwriting
trade. There are generally regarded to be two common models in screenwriting as well as a few unconventional methodologies. Dr. Laura Brady, director of the Centre for Writing Excellence at the University of West Virginia, divides Ede and Lunsford’s *dialogic* collaboration into two distinctly separate variations: *dialogic*, whereby collaborators ‘yield the floor’ via separate drafting and each writer composes separately; and *conversational*, whereby writers compose together line-by-line and verbally reach consensus on every point (1994 p150). Curiously, *conversational* collaboration is the only method not identified by Ede and Lunsford. Perhaps conversational collaboration is more prevalent among creative fictional writers, which their study did not canvas.

Studley and I choose to write every word together, face-to-face and bathe in conversational debate, ‘two voices calling out the words that should be evoked from the keys’ (Hughes and Lund, 1994 p49). Like Brackett and Wilder’s, ours is ‘an ongoing, moment-to-moment collaboration’ (Woods, 2000) where everything is worked out ‘line by line’ (Lemon, 1966 p52). Although Studley and I did not consciously decide that conversational collaboration best suited our personalities, we have explored other methods and have always returned to this most personally interactive of techniques. Or perhaps, like Wilder and Brackett, we just like to talk. The defining feature of conversational collaboration is, of course, relevant and meaningful conversation. Barnett (1944 p7) observed, when watching Brackett and Wilder work, that every syllable of every line was exhaustively discussed. Not a word was recorded until both partners fully agreed on its dramatic value.

Whereas Ede and Lunsford’s (1990 p44) study found *hierarchical* collaboration to be dominant in our society, suggesting an imbalance in the powerbase, conversational writing requires creative equality among the participants. Egotistical attitudes do not suit a write-every-word-together conversational scenario and must be managed or suffer the risk of failure. Jean-Claude Carrière (Colville-Andersen, 1999a) warns that for collaboration to be a success it is important ‘not to try to force your status on the other, to dictate your power, to win.’ Embracing the dialectic is
vital for the wellbeing of the conversational partnership.

Ede and Lunsford highlight qualities that strengthen the collaborative team: listening well, flexibility, patience, not being overly sensitive about one’s writing and a mutual respect (1990 p65). While these factors are important in all collaborations, the closeness of co-authors in a conversational partnership intensifies the need for altruistic behavior.

Indeed, the value of being in the same room allows an immediacy that other methodologies do not. The ability to give and receive instant feedback is likely the main reason teams use this technique. Verbal interaction allows a continuous brainstorming of ideas, anecdotes, jokes and silence. This dialectic process allows ‘a level of understanding about the constraints of one another’s abilities’ (Clark et al., 1996 p195); however, participants need to exercise caution when rejecting the ideas of their partners. In conversational collaboration there is no such thing as impartial feedback, as both partners have vested interests; only depersonalised, outcome-oriented feedback has value. Properly constructed feedback allows the energy of conflict and tension, such as when one writer edits another’s ideas, to translate into the work helped along by the immediacy of the dialogue.

For Studley and I, writing our romantic comedy conversationally assisted enormously with whatever comedic success we achieved. Truffaut says that ‘comedy is by far the most difficult genre, the one that demands the most work, the most talent, also the most humility’ (Truffaut, 1954). Perhaps writing comedy is best suited to conversational collaboration to capitalise on the give and take of laughter. Suso Cecchi d'Amico, writer of The Bicycle Thief (1948) and The Leopard (1963), has written many comedies. As she says, ‘writing comedy is best when you are a team … you must laugh when you’re writing and you can hear immediately if the lines are funny or not when you say them to each other’ (Colville-Andersen, 1999c). Studley and my own, at-times, raucous writing sessions echo Cecchi d’Amico’s assertion. Humour is often a key to diffusing conflict that may occur through disagreement; after all, it is difficult to be angry or frustrated when laughing. On other occasions laughter indicates a gem of an idea; a joke or remark, seemingly unrelated to the task, is seized upon by a partner and worked into the story.
For years, the standard practice of writing for television sitcoms, from *I Love Lucy* (1950s) to *Friends* (1994–2004), was to lock a team of writers in a room and hash out episodes (Norman, 2007). This method inspired one of modern cinema’s most successful feature film collaboration models; that of Pixar Studios. From *Toy Story* (1995) to *Up* (2009), Pixar’s ten films have earned more than $5.5 billion worldwide and been awarded twenty-four Academy Awards (Inglesias, 2010 p54). The Pixar process, both *hierarchical* and *dialogic*, pivots around a ‘Brain Trust’, a collective of Pixar CEOs and successful writer–directors. Michael Arndt (Munso, 2010), while having the solo screenplay credit on *Toy Story 3* (2010), reveals that the collaborative nature of Pixar added to the quality of the final story:

> The common protocol is for one member to throw out an idea while another follows up with a completion or addition to the original thought. Jokes are sometimes topped three times over.

Writing conversationally requires the typing duties to be allocated. For many teams, one writer always does the typing, for others the duty is shared. More often than not, during the writing of both *The Independent* and *The Last Resort* screenplays, Studley could be found using the keyboard while I sat directly across the table, facing him. Before writing a section, we agreed upon all the elements required for the scene, which I then jotted down with pen and paper. That checklist of ideas then formed the skeleton of the scene to be written. Once typing began the ideas were crossed off the list as each idea was used. This one-types, one-handwrites scenario keeps both partners active and engaged in the process. Through conversation, the checklist of ideas was expanded and fleshed out into typed prose. Studley and I never discussed who would be typist; the fact that we used Studley’s laptop computer and not mine was probably the most significant deciding factor. Occasionally, though, especially when stuck on a story-beat, whoever gets inspired grabs the keyboard and says:

> “Just let me go for a minute.” This happens when one of us is typing and we’ve hit a slow spot. We get stuck for a moment and then one if us will type silently for a few minutes whilst
they have a run on in their brain. Sometimes it’s easier to write out the idea you have than to talk it out… (O’Keefe, 2011, pg.7)

Of course, we exchanged typing duty when productivity had stalled, or just for change’s sake, but this usually occurred in the final hour of a writing session. For the most part, Studley typed our screenplays although, through conversation, we both decided the words to be typed; the screen and keyboard became the ‘shared space’ (Schrage, 1994 p18) through which we collaboratively wrote our stories.

Thanks to Laura Brady’s identification of conversational collaboration, the earlier revised definition of the method of writing that Studley and I use can be further adjusted. Therefore, co-screenwriting can be defined as:

Two screenwriters engaged in a conversational partnership to produce a single, original feature-length screenplay.

Aside from the conversational method of screenwriting collaboration, the other popular technique is what Laura Brady (1994 p150) terms dialogic collaboration. This mirrors the first of Ede and Lunsford’s seven methodologies whereby the ‘team or group plans and outlines, each member then drafts a part before the group compiles the parts and revises the whole’ (1990 p63). However, Brady’s use of the term dialogic during the writing of a collaborative document is confusing when placed alongside Ede and Lunsford’s definition of the same term. Furthermore, the term ‘dialogic’ suggests verbal communication is prevalent which, ironically, is the opposite of what Brady intends. Stone and Thompson call this divisive methodology whereby writers work separately ‘chunking’ (2006 p7); however, that term seems too vague.

Lowry et al. prefer the term parallel collaborative writing, which occurs when ‘a team divides [collaborative writing] work into discrete units and works in parallel’ (Lowry et al., 2004 p77). Parallel is an inspired term for studying collaborative writing teams, as it suggests work being conducted independently yet with both writers headed toward the same destination. Research indicates the parallel writing
strategy was the most popular for the writing of psychological papers while the conversational strategies are much less so (Noël and Robert, 2004 p76).

Comedy writers Thomas Lennon and Robert Ben Garant, who co-wrote box-office hits such as Night at the Museum (2006), choose not to sit in a room together to do the actual writing. Garant says about conversational collaboration versus their preferred parallel:

[Conversational collaboration is] all the worst aspects of being two people without any of the good aspects of being two people. We’ll do an outline together, a very detailed outline. It’s the worst part of the work. It’s horrible. It’s not fun. It feels like drudgery to write an outline. Then we divide that up. As you write your section, we’ll email them to each other and you tack your new section on, back and forth the script grows. You tweak each other, you polish as you go. By the time we write the final scene it’s like the 50th draft because we go back and re-read and rewrite every single time. We fight on paper. (Lennon and Garant, 2009)

Parallel collaboration avoids the immediacy of conversation and most often relies on regular written communication between a pair of writers. For successful parallel collaborators, the system of communication is a concise one: direct, unfettered emails, notes, or letters that criticise, correct and congratulate their partner’s efforts. Noël and Robert (2004 p80) found that the increased use of parallel strategy has led to a decreased use of face-to-face meetings compared to Posner’s and Baecker’s (1993) report a decade earlier. They also found the fact that the overwhelming majority of their respondents used email to communicate with their collaborators, supports this hypothesis.

One disadvantage of parallel collaboration is the inherent lack of immediacy in resolving problems and miscommunications. Assuming the hypothesis ‘writers are always surprised by what some people find in their work’ (Hughes and Lund, 1994 p42) is correct, then it stands that this phenomenon must translate to written
communication between collaborators. Conversation, too, can be misinterpreted; however, face-to-face contact allows instant recognition of misunderstanding. Dr. Albert Mehrabian (2008 p193), a pioneer in the field of non-verbal communication, found that words contribute to only seven per cent of the overall effectiveness of a message. The remaining 93 per cent is communicated by other means: 38 per cent through the inflections of the voice, and 55 per cent through facial expressions. These statistics point to a loss of effective communication when collaborators decide parallel collaboration is the methodology for them.

A simple example of how easily the written word can be confused is illustrated in the context of these sentences (bracketed) with the emphasized word italicised:

I didn’t eat my wife’s chocolate cake. (Someone else did)  
I didn’t eat my wife’s chocolate cake. (I threw it away)  
I didn’t eat my wife’s chocolate cake. (I ate your wife’s chocolate cake)  
I didn’t eat my wife’s chocolate cake. (I ate my sister’s)  
I didn’t eat my wife’s chocolate cake. (It was vanilla)

Schrage (1990 p159) agrees that ‘there is no substitute to face-to-face contact’ yet conversely suggests (ibid p30) this is not necessarily an important factor:

The ability to communicate may only have a marginal impact on your ability to collaborate productively. Effective communication is only a precursor to meaningful collaboration.

Schrage’s assertion is a perplexing one. In both verbal and written communications, clarity of thought is required when ideas are being discussed and debated otherwise misinterpretation or confusion results. George Herbert Mead’s (1934) widely cited theory that meaning is generated by the interaction of three moves – a gesture, an interpretation of the gesture, and a response by another individual – is particularly useful in arguing for the importance of clear communication. The alternate three moves, resulting from ambiguous interaction, would firstly be a gesture; secondly, a misinterpretation of the gesture; and thirdly, an erroneous
response by another individual. In fact, the clearer the communication the more effective the collaboration is likely to be. In striving towards this apex of effective communication, I suggest that collaborators should make use of all the tools available to them – particularly the verbal – as often as possible.

For some partners, however, parallel collaboration is the only choice available due to circumstances. Scott Neustadter, a Californian, and Marc Weber, a New Yorker, collaborated on their hit romantic comedy *500 Days of Summer* (2009) from opposite sides of the USA. Weber says, ‘The closer we are, the worse our stuff is’ (Hoey, 2009). Thanks to technology, the impact of geography on the writing process is quickly becoming redundant. New collaborative tools herald the transformation of collaborative relationships. In particular, the rise of online social networking has dramatically altered the craft.

More than 20 years have passed since Michael Schrage wrote his technology-inspired book *Shared Minds* (1990) and a lot has changed in that time. Today, advanced screenwriting technologies, at least logistically, render physical presence completely unnecessary. Screenwriting software such as *Final Draft* and *Screenwriter 6* both have interactive writing tools that allow two or more writers to work on the same manuscript simultaneously. Couple this tool with internet-powered video-phone software such as *Skype* and the geographic boundaries are redundant. Tools such as these are essential to manage communicative ambiguities and to make sure that the ‘whole of the relationship is greater than the sum of the individual’s expertise’ (Schrage, 1990 p154). Of course, using these tools dilutes one of the primary reasons co-authors choose parallel collaboration, which is that it facilitates ‘more scope for individual agency’ (Stone and Thompson p7). Furthermore, it can also be assumed that, if two screenwriters are working face-to-face (via a video link) on the same screenplay at the same time then, for the most part, they are predominantly engaging in conversational collaboration.

Like Stone and Thompson, many writers prefer this form of separate collaboration in order to keep traces of their individual ‘genius’. Doane and Hodges (1995), academic collaborators who work parallel, do so to maintain perspective on who wrote what and therefore ‘reap some of the benefits associated with belief in the
myth of the sovereign author who is still institutionally valorised’. This, however, is a defeatist approach to collaboration which does little to dethrone the conceptualised solo author who ‘still rules in manuals of literary history’ (Barthes, 1967) and flies in the face of the proud, bold collaborations wherein ‘original singleness is neither possible nor sought’ (Wharton and Leonard, 1994 p32). In the case of Doane and Hodges at least, their choice to write parallel was designed, in fact, to allow some of their individual genius to shine. The fact may be, however, that individual genius should be proven individually, not collaboratively.

The parallel process may be appropriate for the academic or business collaborative writer as most documents collaboratively written have chapters, tangents, sections or other divisive elements that allow for individual expertise and personality. A screenplay, however, is a single story that, in most cases, should contain nothing to draw attention away from the characters who propel the narrative. Identifiable individual genius has no place in the collaboratively constructed screenplay.

When collaborators choose the parallel method, careful consideration should be given during the revision process, as providing and receiving criticism is done more easily in person rather than at a distance. The necessity for clear feedback is paramount when body language and other physical or non-verbal communications are removed. With researchers having noted and recorded almost one million non-verbal cues and signals (Pease, 1981 p6) it would seem erroneous for collaborators to choose email, or any other written communication, over verbal conversation as the prime foundation of their creative discourse.

The decision on how to split the workload seems to cause little fuss between seasoned parallel collaborators. More often than not the division will be by a certain number of pages, a group of scenes, by sequences or by acts. Among the more unusual methods of dividing work is that of French director Jean-Pierre Jeunet and his writing partner Guillaume Laurant, whose work together includes Delicatessen (1991), Amelie (2001) and MicMacs (2009). The pair divides the workload depending on whether the scene is driven by the dialogue or driven by the visuals. Jeunet warns that for this technique to be successful, the choice of partner is critical and that the
skills each brings must be highly complementary (Concanon, 2010).

One of the many anomalous collaborative writing methods used is the process whereby, once prewriting is finished and the outline is prepared, one writer disappears alone to write the entire first draft of the screenplay. This model is consistent with the second of Ede and Lunsford’s seven patterns of organisation (1990 p64) whereby the team or group plans and outlines, then one member writes the entire draft and the team or group revises. They warn, however, that this should not be taken as representing an ideal model. A single writer drafting a script is an atypical collaborative screenwriting technique, but for some, it works. Johnson and Stevens (2002p197), authors of Script Partners: What Makes Film and TV Writing Teams Work, choose this method. Nevertheless, they caution that for this approach to flourish one member of the team must aspire to do the drafting and the other must readily agree, ‘otherwise, it may feel like a burden, sparking resentment and ownership issues’. Sergio Leone’s ‘spaghetti Western’ scribe, Sergio Donati, preferred to work this way on films such as Once Upon a Time in the West (1968) and the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (1966):

I like to work alone. I like to exchange ideas and discuss with Leone but then come home to my typewriter or computer. But I knew exactly what he wanted and how he thought. (Colville-Andersen, 1999b)

The same dynamic existed for the two collaborators who wrote the Seven Snipers screenplay for me. Luke Preston wrote the first draft alone after he and Matthew Vaughan had met every second day and written a very rigid outline together. Additionally, the three of us would meet every fortnight and discuss the process of the story. Once we were satisfied, Preston wrote the first draft and Vaughan then did a pass on the script making additional changes. Only when the first draft was written and they were happy with it did I become involved.

Brien and Brady attribute their successful collaboration to a flexibility of process and by recognising the awkwardness and unease generated when the collaboration shifts modes (2003 p11). On occasion, Studley and I found time
constraints demanded we adapt our standard practice of *conversational* writing and adopt a *parallel* method. An entry (2011 p3) of my journal from August of 2009 states:

> For the first (and only time?) we gave each other homework by splitting up scenes and writing them separately – John did the ferry departure scene at the end of the first act and I did the dinner party scene between the two families in the second act. Unusual experience. Can’t imagine doing this too much.

In fact, it proved to be not to be the only time. From the middle of 2010 to the end of 2013, as time constraints impinged more regularly and, desperate to keep the writing flowing, we returned to two weeks of parallel writing and swapped comments via email. Again my diary offers insight that the division of labor is not ‘best practice’ for our particular dynamic, and highlights the subtext of written communication having secret meaning, that would be obvious in verbal communication. For example, upon submitting a scene that I had written remotely about our hero facing an attack by a cobra, I received a reply from Studley that contained the following feedback:

> But the cobra in Thailand? I’m not sure? As a thought could it be a monkey? I mean a vicious nasty monkey. (O’Keefe, 2011 p26)

After reading Studley’s email I immediately and without considered thought replied:

> I reckon the cobra is much more cinematic … I thought about a monkey too … just didn’t see it as an instant death kind of thing like a cobra is … I’m going to keep going forward and have a go at the Jack meets Kidd and Kate at the bat-cave scene. (O’Keefe, 2011 p26)

While the above paragraph reads innocently enough, the phrase ‘I’m going to keep going forward’ implies a refusal to ‘go backward’, which carries a defensive
tone that asserts, ‘I’m not changing it.’ After few hours, however, I wrote another email that contradicted my initial knee-jerk response:

Actually ... Had more thoughts about the monkey and it might be good. Perhaps, though, it should be a pack of monkeys instead of one? … But I agree with the monkey … I’ll try and get to rewriting the cobra scene tonight...
(O’Keefe, 2011 p26)

Although Noël and Robert (2004 p69) believe that the writing strategy can be modified at any time without causing serious problems to the group, my own experience suggests otherwise. Clearly, in the above instance, I had underestimated the collaborative unease produced by the methodological shift. While the move from conversational to parallel collaboration was not unconscious, it was propelled by external factors and produced unfamiliar tensions. By the end of 2010, Studley and I had written separately a number of times and the process became easier. On the 14 October 2010, I wrote (2011 p28) in my journal:

We seem to be much better and more accepting of each of us writing separately … It really is a good way to get a draft down on paper and then we’ll meet and discuss. John has written quite a bit for the ending. I have been very busy at work and not been able to meet up. We send each other comments about what we write separately. John has done some great work without me … as long as we’ve discussed the scenes beforehand, I find it does not make much difference who writes the scenes. We usually start a session with [rewriting] what each of us has written separately.

Studley and I usually resolved disagreements without emotion or time wasted; however, when our preferred communication method was not available, alternative methods proved more challenging. For Studley and I, periods of parallel writing were enforced from extenuating circumstances, rather than from being chosen by preference. Whenever possible, we returned to our preferred method of
conversational collaborative writing.

The choice of an appropriate collaborative writing technique leads to less conflict between writing partners; nevertheless, it will not alleviate all disagreements. What the correct methodology does offer is a system of communication that allows for creative conflict to be focussed on the screenplay. In the early stages of collaboration, it is advisable for practitioners to err toward conversational collaboration, making full use of all communication tools at their disposal.

For aspiring yet inexperienced collaborators the question ‘How do collaborators avoid conflict?’ may seem highly pertinent. I suggest that the avoidance of conflict may result in poor quality work or the disintegration of the partnership altogether. This thesis proposes that no matter how thorough the pre-writing phase is, conflict is essential for partners to find their collaborative voice. As literary theorist and philosopher Kenneth Burke (1950) says:

Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in co-operative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed, can lead to views transcending the limitations of each.

My research indicates that conflict should not be avoided; rather, it should be embraced. Ede and Lunsford (1990 p133) found collaborators value creative tension. Their findings are echoed in the results of a study (Nowaczyk, 1998) of NASA engineers and scientists who reported one of the most important aspects of successful teamwork is that the team engage in open and critical debate to find solutions to various problems.

It was precisely a lack of conflict that had one of the world’s great screenwriting partnerships in trouble from the outset. When first asked to collaborate with director Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière was ‘so thrilled, so happy, so impressed that [he] was ready to love any idea from Buñuel’. He was working with his hero, a master. Before too long, however, Buñuel’s agent invited Carrière out to
dinner, without Buñuel, which was rather unusual. At the dinner, the agent said, ‘Luis is very happy with you but you must say “no” to him from time to time.’ (Colville-Andersen, 1999a) Buñuel felt that the collaboration would never succeed if the imbalance of power continued.

According to Schrage (1990 pp.41-2), collaborators should not allow manners to get in the way of a good argument as some of the most productive collaborations occur ‘at the top of the participants’ lungs’. Husband and wife writing team Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, writers of The Thin Man (1934) and It’s a Wonderful Life (1946), began as actors and dramatically screamed feedback at each other: ‘Over my dead body does that line go in!’ (Norman, 2007 pp.140-1). This passion and willingness to engage in conflict saw the team write many wonderful screenplays.

Conflict over ideas often results in story advances that would not have been discovered without healthy debate between partners. Substantive conflict should be valued and it represents yet another discerning factor why collaborators, especially those at the beginning of the process, should consider the conversational collaborative method over and above parallel collaboration, due to the increased opportunity for constructive disagreement. Karis (1989 p115) warns that seeking unity in the partnership rather than engaging in vigorous debate restricts the dialectic, resulting in the presumption that the ‘best solution is always located in the middle and thereby excludes other potential solutions.’

Psychologist Charlan Jeanne Nemeth, (1986 pp.29-31) asserts that individuals working separately generate many more creative ideas than do groups because of the tendency toward ‘groupthink’ and leads to inadequate surveying of alternatives from which poor decisions result. If Nemeth is correct, then collaboration should be abandoned and the single-author’s supremacy reinstated; after all, do not all writers strive for quality? Surely this kind of summation only empowers the fear that conflict in collaboration has a negative effect, whereas it is personalised conflict that is the destructive force. Conflict that stems from egotistical concerns, territorial matters, feelings of powerlessness or control issues needs to be confronted expediently by the participators or else the problem risks escalation. An escalation of interpersonal conflict (assuming the partnership survives it) will, indeed, lead to ‘groupthink’
mentality in order to regain a semblance of cohesion. Unfortunately, a collaboration that has disintegrated to this extent has probably lost its relevance and should be reconsidered. Substantive conflict, however, that enhances the artistic choices being made is worth spending time ‘leaning into and listening deeply to opposing views’ (Hodge, 2009 p18).

When we work collaboratively, Studley and I strive to make sure conflict is always work-centric. Sometimes it might require the sharp eye or ear of an observer to realise we are in conflict at all. In the midst of a writing session, when either of us has a new idea and begins to verbalise that idea, more often than not we never reach the end of verbalising the suggestion. The orator picks up on unspoken signals being transmitted by the listener: leaning back on a chair, folding the arms behind the head or a simple breaking of eye contact. In the following transcription, I reject my own suggestion for the finish of a scene in which Kate and Jack have been arguing:

O’Keefe: I’m wondering if we should follow Kate out into the bush when she storms off? Stomp! Stomp! Stomp! Thrashing through. Gets hit by trees. Stops. Sits down and starts to cry. And in the distance we can see the glow of the fire but it’s … you know … you know what I mean? Or not … No, forget it. Out of the scene as quick as possible. (O’Keefe, 2010)

For Studley and I, having developed a strong working relationship, body language plays a large part in communicating our opposition to ideas. Whilst I may have rejected my idea above, Studley’s physical reaction most likely prompted the realisation that the idea was flawed. That palpable feeling that an idea lacks quality or relevance can stem from the collaborator’s physical reaction, an intellectual waning of enthusiasm by the idea’s advocate or a combination of the two. Sometimes ideas require verbalisation for their true merits, or lack thereof, to be understood.

Sometimes, however, disagreeing about an idea is not as simple as non-verbal cues. When Studley and I differ in opinion, we try to be very succinct about our thoughts and clear in verbalising them. Furthermore, every suggestion, or every reason to turn down a suggestion, must be reinforced by specific character or story-related evidence. Agreement would be reached, based on evidence presented. Elliott
and Rossio (2007) developed a similar process that they call *Egoless Arguing*. Elliott states, ‘If one of us makes a suggestion, it has to be backed up. Not by intimidation or debating tactics but by actual reasons.’ In the transcript below, Studley and I discuss the dialogue for a scene in the script of *The Last Resort* (omitted from the final draft) where Kate reveals the reason she does not practise architecture, even though she is certified, but instead is a professional negotiator for commercial developers:

Studley: There’s another tack we can take here… He might have been proud as punch that his daughter graduated but she’s got this job in a bigger firm and then got side-tracked into this thing. She got a job offer from her father but she didn’t … She got side-tracked in this other job that creates a lot of money.

O’Keefe: But we have to allude to the fact that she’s had an unsatisfactory family life. Because this woman destroys families for a living. Destroys homes. We have to allude to a reason for that. And to me it’s, you know, if I’m not happy with my family life why should you be?

Studley: Yep.

O’Keefe: And it’s fairly subtextural [sic] that, going for a job interview with your own father’s firm and she didn’t get the job. It’s not saying ‘My father does not love me anymore.’

Studley: No, no, and we do not want to.

O’Keefe: No. Let’s write that. (O’Keefe, 2010)

Studley and I have no individual ownership, other than ‘we own this script’. All decisions aim toward making the script better. Questions such as ‘What’s best for this character? What’s best for the situation?’ help us find agreement. Our disagreements are always small, temporary differences of opinion that last, as in the example stated above, around 20 seconds.
It is generally agreed that there are many ways to write the same scene. Often there might be ten great ways to write the same scene. William Faulkner (Stein, 1956) believes that essential to any collaboration is ‘compromise because that is what the word means – to give and to take.’ If individual writing partners are prepared to accept that they do not always have the best ideas, then an implicit trust in their partner is required, or more specifically, an implicit trust in their partner’s ideas.

There is another form of conflict that is particular, if not exclusive, to collaborative screenwriting. Given film, and therefore the screenplay, is a visual art form, collaborators must agree on what Jean-Claude Carrière (Colville-Andersen, 1999a) refers to as the elusive ‘third space’:

Imagine we are sitting across from each other. Your left side is my right side. And your right is my left. Already, we are not in the same film space. If I say to you, ‘the mother enters on the right side’, your right and mine are different. So together we have to reach a third space – the film’s space.

Carrière’s ‘film space’ is a point of conflict not lost on Studley and I. Sometimes, however, it can change the words in the script. On page 34 of the The Last Resort screenplay, Kate finds herself steering Jack’s boat with Jack issuing orders for her to ‘Just keep it to starboard!’ Reaching agreement on the word ‘starboard’ came only after Studley and I talked through the scene. Studley asked, ‘If you’re driving the boat, which side is the cliff on? Left or right?’ In my pre-visualisation, the answer was ‘right’ or ‘the port side’. For Studley, the answer was ‘left’ or ‘the starboard side’. We quickly agreed, in this instance, that starboard sounds more nautical so we went with his vision. While we had visualised the scene differently from each other, a practical, substantive reason was found why one choice had more merit than the other.

Conflict is inevitable when collaborating and, if ego becomes involved, it can destroy partnerships. In most instances, the intrusion of ego into a collaboration leads to disaster, although it may also simply signal that the collaboration has run its course. Collaborations are purposive, goal-oriented and often temporary unions. Once it
‘reaches a certain height, the collaboration starts to disintegrate.’ (John-Steiner, 2000 p85). As Schrage says, ‘successful collaborations are more like trysts than great romances’ (Schrage, 1990 p162). This, however, will usually occur when nearing the end of a project where the creative glue holding the collaboration together has been exploited.

Unfortunately, not all collaborations are as smooth as Matt Damon and Ben Affleck’s (Sischy, 1997), which stemmed from their childhood, where ‘If one kid had enough for a candy bar, then the candy bar was bought and split in half’. In many instances, especially in a collaboration where the parties are new acquaintances or are brought together by a third party, a pre-drawn legal contract between two writers may assist to set the stage for a positive collaborative experience. Aspects of the contract may include topics such as working methodology, timelines, financial considerations, copyright and conflict mediation. (Appendix 3 of this document shows a ‘pre-nup’; a standard collaborative writer’s contract available upon request from the Australian Writers’ Guild)

Credits are a lucrative business and nowadays arbitration is commonly sought between quarreling writers. In the United States, a Writers’ Guild feature-film ruling states that only three screenwriters may receive a ‘screenplay by’ credit, often determined by Guild arbitration (Kohn, 1999 p445). An interesting example is the writing of Ridley Scott’s Robin Hood (2010). Tom Stoppard rewrote Brian Helgeland’s rewrite of Paul Webb’s rewrite of Helgeland’s rewrite of Cyrus Voris and Ethan Reif’s original script (Brodesser-Akner, 2010). Understandably, no-one began the work without a clear understanding of their rights and, where possible, final credits.

During Suso Cecci d’Amico’s peak of writing collaboratively there might have been up to seven or eight writers working on the same scripts and yet the argument concerning credits never reared its head. He and his collaborators were all friends, all wanting to make films, working together. He describes the situation:

In fact, often [our writing group] would put our friends’ names on just so they could get paid and then told the
producer we had consulted them. We did that for Fellini when he was young and had no money. So there are films out there for which Fellini is credited as the screenwriter, but he never wrote them. (Colville-Andersen, 1999c)

Studley and I undertook no written agreement other than a handshake stating that all interests, proceeds, expenses and copyright would be shared fifty-fifty. This is consistent with Brein and Brady’s (2003 p4) definition of joint collaboration which states that the screenplay should be ‘unrecognisable as belonging in part to any individual collaborator’. As our partnership formed out of friendship an element of trust already existed which implied a perfectly equal ownership of the property. Like d’Amico’s group of friends, Studley and I just wanted to make films, not money, and set out to do just that.

For many novices delving into the collaborative form, conflict can seem a daunting hurdle to avoid. In creative writing, personal conflict should, indeed, be avoided but constructive disagreement about ideas and the work should be embraced. While collaboration can be empowering, it can also be fragile. (John-Steiner, 2000 p65)

The pragmatic realities of collaboration are more likely to require negotiation than are single-author writing situations but the results make it worth the effort. It is through dialogue that screenwriters can develop a quality of story that exceeds the individual talents and surely that is worth the risk. The more experience collaborators accrue, the easier the act of collaboration becomes. Where, in the beginning, there may be misunderstandings in the dialectic, they decrease in regularity as communication develops and the team unifies. Collaborators are expected to ask one another the tough questions; without these questions, the collaboration is redundant.

Co-writers require a genuine respect for each other’s talent and abilities. It should be one of the guiding principles in any agreement to undertake collaboration. Respect creates a safe place for ideas to flow and be challenged. Ted Elliott says of his partner Terry Rossio:
When I’m writing a scene, the person I’m trying hardest to impress, the one whose opinion I value most, is [my collaborator]… [He] is my harshest critic – but also the one I respect the most. And ultimately, that is the most important thing about a writing partner. (Elliott, 2007)

Returning to the question most often asked of Studley and I by potential collaborative partners:

_During this process, how did we not kill each other?_

The simple answer is that the only way to avoid ‘killing’ each other is to engage in the right kind of conflict. If the choice of partners has been astute, the prewriting assured, and working methodology well considered, there will be an understanding that the ego has no place in collaborative creative writing and that both partners’ best interests are served by open, clear and, most of all, truthful communication. In collaborative screenwriting, ideas do battle, not people.
CONCLUSION

The burst of academic interest throughout 1980s and ’90s in the collaborative writing process has usurped the solo author myth from its once prominent position of dominance. M. Thomas Inge declares:

The truth is that most of the culture of this century, probably of the nineteenth century, and possibly since the Industrial Revolution has largely been the product of the art of collaboration rather than the art of the individual. (Brooker, 1994p4)

Koestenbaum (1989 p9) pronounces the individual author ‘dead’ and accuses collaboration as the ‘murderer’. Before Koestenbaum no-one had suggested that the single-author had died of anything other than natural causes – old age seeming most likely, given the concept’s overdue expiration date. To convict collaboration of ‘murder’, however, the jury must first agree on what collaborative writing is. Scholars have found this is a more elusive task than they perhaps expected. Researchers settle on a definition at the outset of any investigation and the definition chosen affects the scope and boundaries of their results; the broader the definition, the more widespread “collaborative” creative writing research could be.

In the film and television industries collaboration between two or more writers is a common method of script composition, if not in fact the norm. In the ‘golden years’ of Hollywood, studios and producers owned all rights to the screenplays their writers wrote. Until the 1950s, collaborations were enforced hierarchical partnerships, as is the case with Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett. As screenwriters gained their own authorial status, via the formation of Writers Guilds, partnerships became joint collaborations: two writers joined forces willingly and developed a combined writing style that was attributed to both of them equally.

Collaborative screenwriting being so common in the film and television industry should ease some of the fears that inexperienced collaborators may have about attempting such a practice. Indeed, as this thesis indicates, novices can embrace
the benefits co-screenwriting offers: the potential doubling of ideas through combining differing yet complementary skill sets; higher quality writing; a shared sense of motivation; a reduction in procrastination; an expanded audience for the screenplay; and, of course, the fun to be had.

The screenplay form offers great assistance to new collaborative screenwriters through well-established rules that guide everything from the format of the screenplay, the style of sentence construction and even the plot and characters, should writers choose to work in a recognised genre. However, these helpful constraints do not always alleviate concerns as the term ‘collaborative writing’ carries what inexperienced co-authors might call ‘the burden of conflict’ – an inherent fear that personalities will clash and that the partnership will fail.

The choice of collaborative partners is one of the most important decisions co-authors will make. While there is no one ‘best’ way that screenwriting collaborations originate – whether it be via friendship or work, with siblings or spouses, or the long-held tradition of director–scribe collaborations – there are certain common principles and characteristics that exist for most successful co-writing teams. Le Fevre (1987 p65) uses the term resonance to explain the construction by collaborators of supportive environments that nurture thought. These supportive environments thrive on trust, open communication and a respect for partners’ skills and ideas.

Once the partnership has formed and the writing process approaches, partners will be eager to engage in the practice of writing. However, beginning the writing prematurely can lead to destructive conflict between partners further down the track. The fact that ill-conceived story outlining for the screenplay The Last Resort did not result in tension between Studley and I is more due to our previous collaborative experience than any other factor. A poor prewriting phase can lead to wasted effort between partners and individuals can quickly turn to frustration and conflict. Making use of the scene-carding technique can assist collaborators to build their story in advance of writing, which allows both writers to be mentally ‘on the same page’.

A well-conceived story, built during a thorough prewriting phase, places collaborators in a strong position once the writing methodology has been settled upon.
Should writers choose parallel collaborative writing – that is, dividing the work into parts and composing separately – then solid planning and prewriting is vital for success. Conversational collaborative writing, whereby writers compose every word together, offers clearer communication through both verbal and non-verbal cues and often leads to a more cohesive team. Collaborators should be aware, however, as our experience indicates that circumstances may necessitate the temporary switching of methods – conversational collaborators may become parallel writers and parallel collaborators may become conversational writers – and that changing methods can bring about tension and conflict.

It is a common misconception that conflict in writing partnerships should be avoided. The word ‘conflict’ often carries negative connotations and therefore many writers feel that it has no place in creative collaborations. In fact, without substantive conflict that is task-focused (as opposed to personal conflict) screenplays may never reach the heights that writers aim for. Successful collaborators are often in a state of conflict when discussing the merits of ideas. Often, this conflict is unspoken, as both writers instantly recognise the quality of ideas – or lack thereof. The difference between experienced and inexperienced collaborators is that the former have created a nurturing environment, where ideas are not ego-based and therefore no individual attachment to them exists.

Engaging in substantive conflict sees storytellers avoid ‘groupthink’, whereby group cohesion is valued above quality writing ideas. When co-authors embrace the intricacies of collaborative writing, the common fear that conflict will ruin partnerships can be overcome. Only through understanding the concepts and characteristics of creative collaboration can this be achieved. Having reached this plateau, a confidence in, and recognition of, the power of collaboration is revealed. Authors find they have another creative tool at their disposal: collaboration. Of course, there is no requirement that once a writer has embraced collaboration for one particular project they must only write collaboratively for all projects.

While this dissertation has attempted to shed light on a number of factors that face authors who write collaboratively, it is by no means an exhaustive study. Focusing on teams of only two writers (based on the practice-led research of Studley
and my co-writing) has limited the dissertation’s scope and, perhaps, misrepresents just how common collaborative writing is in the screenwriting trade. If this study had looked at teams numbering more than two writers, findings would possibly be quite different. Furthermore, the collaborative methods of writing serialised television dramas and comedies may reveal distinctively different working methods. This is research yet to be conducted. Unfortunately, the increasing popularity of scholarly research into collaborative writing has not yet substantially focused on screenwriting processes and, therefore, this dissertation merely scratches the surface of the field, from a practitioner’s point of view.

Inge’s statement that the concept of the lone author is a ‘romantic notion whose day has passed and perhaps never really existed anyway except in our imaginations’ (Brooker, 1994p10) was not specifically aimed at screenwriting; however, it certainly applies to the screenwriting craft and could not be more accurate. The conventional screenplay format was never designed to promote solitary genius; indeed, collaboration is the screenplay’s raison d’être. Unlike the novel or the dissertation, the screenplay is not a final product but rather a tool to facilitate further collaboration between others: writers, directors, producers, actors, cinematographers, etc. It is a blueprint for a movie. In short, collaboration is in the screenplay’s DNA.


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Vol. 7 Interview with Alex Kurtzman & Roberto Orci, 2006b. DVD. Directed by HORVAT, A. USA: Horshu LLC.


O'KEEFE, A. & STUDLEY, J. 2013. The Last Resort.

O'KEEFE, A. 2010. Transcript of Recorded of Writing Session.


EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON - FLASHBACK -- DAY

It's Summer, 1985. Tourists fill Trafalgar Square. Somewhere "Karma Chameleon" by Boy George blurs from a boom box.

A boy of six years old, Jack, grips his father's hand which is is bigger than his own head.

Jack spots a balloon-sculpting clown over by the bird seed sellers. Jack yanks at his father's hand and gets himself free.

FATHER (O.S.)

Not too far, Jackie.

Jack keeps glancing back at his father's legs - afraid of being left alone.

The balloon clown, by the pigeons, beckons him.

Jack looks at his father, then goes to the clown. A few pigeons scatter at Jack's feet.

The clown gives him a balloon for free.

Jack's delighted. He turns to show his father.

Father's gone.

Jack scans the teeming crowds for him. Nothing.

Jack starts to fret.

Birds start to copy him.

The clown grabs his shoulder, tries to calm him.

Jack's afraid of the clown now and backs away.

Pigeon wings flap in his face.

Jack freaks. He bumps into another child. The child spills the pigeon feed that his parents just bought.

Hundreds of pigeons dive for the scattered seed.

Jack panics. He backs away-

Into more pigeons. Hundreds. Thousands.

He's engulfed by squawking, flapping grey feathers.


He screams:

JACK

Faaaaaather!!!!

The terrified child blacks out.
INT. JACK'S HENLEY COURT APARTMENT -- DAY

Current Day.

Knock, knock, knock.

Jack's eyes shoot open, the pigeon dream over. He looks at the door. He's now a man of about 30 years old. He breathes a sigh of relief.

MRS. PORTER (O.S.)
Jack, dear?

INT. HALLWAY, HENLEY COURT APARTMENTS -- CONTINUOUS

Outside Jack's apartment door, on the decrepit landing of the 1920's apartment block, Mrs. Porter, 80, knocks again.

Jack leans out the half open door. His shirt is smeared with paint and there's a little on his nose too. He's got a paint-brush in his hand.

MRS. PORTER
They're back. It's a woman this time.

JACK
I'll just put on my war-face.

MRS. PORTER
I don't want to trouble you.

Inside Jack's door, a cheerful floral still-life hangs.

JACK
Got to stick together, us rebels.

MRS. PORTER
(blushes)
Oh, you!

Jack closes the door. Mrs. Porter turns for her apartment.

INT. MRS. PORTER'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Mrs. Porter's musty apartment is ravaged by the passage of time. Mrs. Porter shares tea at a laminate table with a sharp-suited businesswoman named Veronica, 44.

Jack enters. Veronica jumps to her feet.

VERONICA
(extends her hand)
Veronica Rundle. Whithorn developments.

Jack refuses the handshake.

JACK
You people don't give up, do you?
VERONICA
Seemingly not.

JACK
Don't hear too well either.

VERONICA
If I could just explain the situation you'll see that the Whithorn's generous offer has become more so.

Out the windows, the sound of heavy machinery bellows.

MRS. PORTER
(to Jack)
Would you mind turning that television down? I can't hear a thing.

Mrs. Porter doesn't own a television. Jack shuts the window instead. The room falls quieter.

VERONICA
Mrs. Porter, I'm sure you and I can work this out.

MRS. PORTER
I don't think so. My Harold takes care of things like these.

VERONICA
Of course.

MRS. PORTER
Imagine how cross he'd be when he got home and found I had sold the place from under him.
(Laughs quietly)
I'd never hear the end of it.

Jack takes a seat beside Mrs porter.

MRS. PORTER
Besides. I'd feel awful leaving young Jack here. I'm his only neighbour. These arty types need a little looking after.

JACK
What Mrs. Porter is saying, Veronica, and she speaks for me too, is that we're not selling. Not selling, not moving. Same reason as last week, the week before that and the week before that. No Harold, no sale. Got it? Over our dead bodies.

MRS. PORTER
And Harold's.

JACK
And Harold's.
VERONICA
Yes, Harold. I see.

Mrs. Porter gazes at the souvenir magnets stuck to the refrigerator door: Tahiti, Bora Bora, Thailand, Australia.

MRS. PORTER
Harold and I always wanted to travel. Go somewhere warm. But we didn't.

VERONICA
Perhaps I should talk to Harold about this?

MRS. PORTER
Harold's not here dear.
(To Jack)
Not too bright this one, Jack.

JACK
Not too bright at all Mrs Porter.

MRS. PORTER
You see, my Harold went off to get milk. Oh... quite some time ago now. Back when that young Princess had that terrible accident.

Mrs. Porter points to a Princess Diana poster on the wall.

MRS. PORTER
Not that I think that Harold had anything to do with it. He's a Monachist.

VERONICA
I don't understand. I just met- Oh, it must have been someone else.

JACK
Who must've been someone else?

VERONICA
Harold. I met him downstairs. He called himself Harold, anyway.

Veronica plucks a photograph portrait off the wall.

VERONICA
Is this Harold?

Mrs. Porter takes "young" Harold's photo and hugs it tight.

MRS. PORTER
My dear, dear Harold.

VERONICA
I saw him outside.

MRS. PORTER
Not my Harold.

Jack rushes over to comfort Mrs. Porter.
JACK
How low are you people prepared to go? Mrs. Porter, I’ll call the police.

MRS. PORTER
I don’t have a phone, do I?

Veronica rushes to the front window and pulls it open.

VERONICA
He’s right down there, Mrs. Porter. Please look!

Mrs Porter looks to Jack for guidance. Jack gives her a small nod and helps her to her feet.

Veronica leans out the window and cranes her head around.

VERONICA
He was just down there.

Mrs. Porter lifts her glasses to her nose, magnifying her eyeballs greatly, and stares out the window.

MRS. PORTER
I don’t see anything.

Veronica, wide-eyed, shrugs at Jack – a little too knowingly.

VERONICA
He’s gone.

Jack rushes to the window. Leans out. Comes back in. Eyeballs Veronica. Veronica shrugs. It’s clear that there’s covert communication between Jack and Veronica

JACK
I’m calling the police.

Jack rushes for the door.

INT. HENLEY COURT APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS
Jack bursts in his own front door and...

FLAP! FLAP! FLAP!

JACK
Arrrgh!

A flock of pigeons, inside the apartment, scare the wits out of Jack. He backs up against the door. The pigeons disperse quickly. It takes him a moment to get over the shock.

Jack scans the derelict apartment: there’s a gaping hole in the floor six-foot wide, one of the apartment walls has collapsed and there’s no furniture other than the floral painting on the wall. No-one lives here.
Jack's briefcase sits on an upturned cardboard box. He finds his phone. Dials.

JACK

(into phone)

Philip! She's at the window and Harold's not there ... Veronica's just told her she saw Harold, now how is that possible if you haven't arrived yet? ... This is my operation, Philip. My contract. All you had to do was pick up Harold and ... You're in position? ... Has he got the milk?

Through the wall comes:

MRS. PORTER (O.S.)

Jack!

JACK

(into phone)

Hang on. She's calling me! She's seen him! Be down soon.

INT. MRS. PORTER'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jack flies back into Mrs. Porter's apartment. He spots a massive, five-ton wrecking ball that hangs ominously outside the kitchen window.

MRS. PORTER

Look!

Mrs. Porter and Veronica point out the window:

EXT. HENLEY COURT APARTMENT -- DAY

Jack and Mrs. Porter are tiny specks in one of twenty windows of the derelict apartment block. The buildings either side of it are demolished. The pitiful building is in lock-down. Orange tape keeps spectators at bay.

An enormous crane and wrecking ball waits in the empty block next door. Fluorescent-vested construction workers mill about.

Beside the building, an artist's impression of the future development site shows an idyllic, steel and glass residential and shopping complex brought to you by "Whithorn Developments".

MRS. PORTER

It's Harold!

JACK

Where?

MRS. PORTER

There. With the milk! See him? Down there, next to the stiff.
The "stiff", Philip Whithorn, 35, is not from around here. He's too polished, too prim, too proper. He nudges awake the elderly gentleman beside him, Harold, 70 y.o., slumped over his walking frame.

INT. HENLEY COURT APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS
Far down below, on the street, Harold waves a milk carton up at his wife.

MRS. PORTER
It's Harold! It's Harold!

Mrs. Porter looks to Jack for confirmation.

JACK
Do you really think it is him?

MRS. PORTER
It's Harold. I know it is. (gasps)
I must look a fright!

JACK
You kidding? He won't be able to contain himself.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HENLEY COURT -- DAY
Jack pushes open the doors to the street. Mrs. Porter steps out, searches around the police, the workers, the public and then spots:

Crumpled, geriatric Harold. Their faces light up.

Mrs. Porter struggles down the steps, eyes on her prize.

Harold thrusts the carton of milk at Philip and works the walking frame forward a step.

Jack and Veronica watch from the door way.

The excitement of the moment begins to ripple through the crowd. A pair of senior women speculate:

SENIOR WOMAN
That's not Harold, is it?

SENIOR WOMAN TWO
Could be.

A passing Butcher in a bloodied apron overhears and offers:

BUTCHER
Bollocks. Old man Porter scarpered years ago.

Mrs. Porter almost trips on the gutter.

Harold, full of geriatric lust, abandons his walking frame.
On the street, the communal emotion is palpable. It's a joyous occasion.

Three spectators begin a slow hand clap.

Up in the crane, the emotional driver is delighted.

Mrs. Porter and Harold, arms outstretched in loving anticipation, close in on each other.

The Construction Foreman, fag in mouth, lights a match...

The clapping gets faster as the old lovers approach.

The robust crane driver claps along.

Harold's out of breath. He pauses. Mrs. Porter too.

The Construction Foreman burns his finger on the match.

A stray cat wanders between the two with feline contempt.

Mrs. Porter and Harold approach again, they're close...

The robust crane driver leans forward for a better view.

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! A crescendo! Cheers break out! Hurrah!

MRS. PORTER
Harold. It's you!

Harold reaches out an unsteady hand and Mrs. Porter grasps it. She places her palm on Harold's cheek.

MRS. PORTER
I've missed you so much.

Mrs. Porter gazes into Harold's eyes. Harold pulls her into his embrace and kisses her passionately.

The crowd erupts!

The robust crane driver wipes his teary eyes and accidentally elbows a red lever in the process.

The five-ton wrecking ball is released.

KABOOM!

The wrecking ball demolishes the top floor of Henley Court.

The crowd scatter, petrified.

Jack grabs his briefcase, pulls out some paperwork and shoves it into Veronica's hand. He pushes her toward Mrs. Porter and Harold, engaged in a full-on kiss.

Veronica taps Mrs. Porter on the shoulder just as fridge magnets fall from the sky.

VERONICA
(Holding contract)
Mrs. Porter, there's one last thing.

Mrs. Porter looks at her lovely Harold:
MRS. PORTER
What do you think, dear?

HAROLD
Let's see the world, my sugar-pie!

Harold's hand is planted on Mrs. Porter's bum.

MRS. PORTER
I do believe I'll accept your offer, young Miss.

Mrs. Porter happily signs the contract.

A cloud of dust engulfs them.

EXT. HENLEY COURT APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Jack slaps the Bora-Bora fridge magnet on the back of the taxi as it makes its way through the parting crowd. Mrs. Porter waves from the window like royalty.

Jack spots Philip who waits next to a limousine.

PHILIP
Nice job, Jack. Very emotional indeed. How did you find him?

JACK
Senior hotties dot com.

Philip looks at Jack suspiciously...

JACK
There's thousands of people online looking for love, Philip.

PHILIP
That wasn't Harold?

JACK
God, no. Harold went missing years ago.

PHILIP
But she recognised him.

JACK
Because she wanted to. The truth is what I say it is.

PHILIP
You've gone too far.

JACK
I've gone just the right amount and I've got the signed contract to prove it.

PHILIP
You're sad. And if I may say so, just a little bit of a prick.
JACK
Nice gets you nowhere.

PHILIP
Stop punishing the world just because-

JACK
Philip. Shut it.

PHILIP
You were a nice person before she came along, I mean. It's not too late to change.

JACK
I was a sucker once too, Philip. And I have changed.

Philip's out of arguments.

JACK
I'm due at the airport.

The electric window of the limousine rolls down. Inside is a silver-haired, older version of Philip. William Whithorn, 63, has commanding eyes that demand attention.

WILLIAM
Allow me, Jack.

Philip opens the door for Jack. He hesitates.

JACK
Is there a problem?

WILLIAM
Let's talk on the way.

Jack climbs into the limousine, closely followed by Philip. Veronica climbs in the other side of the car.

The Limousine moves through the barriers. Reflected in the rear window, Jack watches as:

The large, black wrecking ball slams into the apartment building completely obliterating what's left of Henley Court. Debris and dust fill the air.
Notes on the process of writing *The Last Resort*

The following pages are not a finished document per-se, rather a record of observations often written very late at night after eight hours of creative writing. I have not corrected, altered or censored any entries in any way and, thus, it is likely to be of interest to very few. What it is, is a supporting document for the thesis, rather than being a work that was ever meant to stand alone.

**OCTOBER 2008**

- Began meeting with John again and tossing about ideas as to writing another screenplay together. Both showed interest writing a Romantic Comedy and had various ideas for that.
- We started with a basis of some scenes from other scripts – tattoo scene and erotic outline from “The Backpacker”.
- Began talking about our personal romantic experiences whilst travelling and thought that was untapped territory and market.

**19th NOVEMBER 2008**

- Finished plot outline of yet unnamed screenplay – the document has 29 plot points.

**26th NOVEMBER 2008**

- Began work on the script with the working title “Jack’s Pack” using the outline created a week earlier.

**2ND DECEMBER 2008**

- Decided on new title “Over the Moon”.

**10th FEBRUARY 2009**

- Resumed writing after the Christmas break.

**27th FEBRUARY 2009**

- Stopped writing the 1st draft before getting to the end page as we both thought that the script needed a different direction. The characters of both Jack & Kate weren’t thought out enough, nor were their motivations. Reasons such as “Why does Jack buy the island?” were not strong enough. Original starting material starting to leave the story such as tattoo scene & erotic outline – Moon metaphor almost irrelevant now. Need to think of a new title. Re-name the file “OTM Better”
- 48 pages

**3rd MARCH 2009**

- EXTRACT FROM AN EMAIL WRITTEN BY AOK: “What if Jack's parents died in some sort of hotel accident? A fire? Perhaps they were hotel owners themselves? This is why he bought Jimmy's huts. Adds great weight to his backstory. This got me then thinking about Kate - What if her parents are divorced, i.e. unhappy family? This is why she wants a steady relationship that's rock solid stable - this also why she is an architect (solid foundations) and also why she has designed a Wedding Resort.”
- 56 pages

**10th MARCH 2009**

- Began again from the start – wrote the Sandcastle scene. EMAIL EXTRACT: “Love the sandcastle scene from last night - pure character!”
- 61 pages
13th MARCH 2009
- EMAIL EXTRACT FROM JOHN: I'd call this session "The night we found Kates' voice. I've also renamed the file first draft as I feel it is on the way to being better. Now all we need is a better title. How about "Missing in Pack-tion" (only joking.) Anyway I'm sure something will evolve.
- 66 pages

17th MARCH 2009
- Began writing at John Lyons new office - Level 1/230 Smith st,
- 68 pages

19th MARCH 2009
- 70 pages

8th APRIL 2009
- EMAIL EXTRACT FROM JOHN: G'day, I think we are well on our way. I also enjoyed the conversation last night. Life is good.
- 76 pages

29th APRIL 2009
- 83 pages

6TH MAY 2009
- Changed title to “JUST YOU”
- 94 pages

15th MAY 2009
- Finished First Draft of “JUST YOU”
- 107 pages

20TH MAY 2009
- Gave script out to “Inner Circle” to read. Over the next 2 weeks we received feedback from Tuuli, Megan, Sandra Sciberras, Libby Porter, Chris Bunworth.
- Take a 2 week break from writing – enforced holiday over the school holidays.

JUNE 2009
- Have met once or twice over this period and done talking mostly. Going through the general feedback and beginning to go back to the original character ideas. Work on character more.

5th JULY 2009
- Began work on 2nd draft of “JUST YOU”
- 114 pages

14th JULY 2009
- Received First Draft feedback from Annabelle Murphy (6 pages).

9th AUGUST 2009
- For the first (and only time?) we gave each other homework by splitting up scenes and writing them separately – John did the ferry departure scene at the end of the first act and I did the dinner party scene between the 2 families in the 2nd act. Unusual experience. Can’t imagine doing this too much.

13th AUGUST 2009
- Resumed writing at Smith St. after the fire.
21st SEPTEMBER 2009
• EMAIL EXTRACT FROM AOK: Have just finished reading the script again – first time in a while from start to finish... Won’t beat around the bush – I was underwhelmed. I had to push myself to actually read it all. There’s simply not enough conflict between them. Their relationship plods along without any spark to it, in my opinion. We need CONFLICT, CONFLICT, CONFLICT!!

30th SEPTEMBER 2009
• Emergency meeting with Annabelle to help us flesh out the problems we are having with the general direction of the script. Found it very useful indeed. She has a great way of looking at the material from a character driven point of view. Gave us many options to work with. It’s clear now that the direction of the script will change drastically.

9th OCTOBER 2009
• For the first time, we began “scene cards” for the story as a writing tool. Found it extremely beneficial is seeing the outline of the story and character. Also very good for seeing where a scene can be cut as a card that has only one point on it isn’t much of a scene at all.

12th OCTOBER 2009
• Finished the scene-carding of the entire film. Very happy with the process. Great way to “see” the structure of the film laid out before you. Also, you can visually see the length of the acts etc.
• Interesting point that on the 27th February we dropped the Tattoo scene. It came back last night and was given to Jimmy & Philip instead of Jack and Kate. A good scene rears its head again!
• Emailed Dr. Liz Whittingham, an Ornithologist at Melbourne Uni Zoology dept. to ask about helping us with some research on the bird character.
• Agreed to a self-imposed deadline of Christmas Day 2009 to finish the first run at a 3rd draft. Not a polished draft, just a full script. This is due to myself going away for 7 weeks over Dec/jan/Feb 2010.

15th OCTOBER 2009
• Began the session typing up the scene cards into a scene breakdown using the laptop. Only took about 2 hours.
• Began rewriting the 3rd draft. Feel confident that this will be the final shape of the screenplay. Wrote Kate’s intro scenes tonight and are very happy with them. Got a bit stuck on Jack’s intro but that’s because it’s all new material, whereas Kate was a rewrite.

19th OCTOBER 2009
• Did bugger all. Totally stuck on Jack’s motivation and back-story. What we thought worked isn’t quite fitting.

27th OCTOBER 2009
• Another night of bugger all. From 2pm until 10:30pm when we had a breakthrough about Jack’s back-story. Feel like we cracked a major problem but have agreed to swap emails back and forth over the next few days and refine it. It goes something like this:

“15 years ago, at the age of 15, Jack fell in love on Lunar Bay. He and the girl explored the island together and fell in love doing so. One day, having entered the dark side of the island (where they were always told not to go) they saw the bird that their Father’s were looking for. Being excited turned to kissing and cuddling and sex – the first for both of them. Coming through the bush, Jack’s Father caught the two of them and dragged them back to camp, very angry. The next day, the girl was taken
from the island by her parents and Jack never saw her again. Jack was angry with his Father, so he never told him that they’d seen the bird that his Father’s career hinged on. Jack left the island for boarding school and never returned. Jack never spoke of the bird to his Father and his father, years later, died on the island with the belief that the bird never existed.

Now, Jack has become an Ornithologist at Princeton University. His Father was once an esteemed Professor there but tarnished his good reputation looking for the mythical bird that only Jack knows the truth about. Jack, a lazy academic playboy, is on the verge of being kicked out. Whilst speaking to the panel, as a last ditch effort, he tells the panel that he saw the bird 15 years ago and that it does exist. They get very excited about the prospect of finishing the work and replenishing the department’s good reputation.

Jack goes to Lunar bay to find the bird, redeem himself for punishing his father and, most importantly, to learn to fall in love again."

29th OCTOBER 2009

• Finally got Jack’s introduction down on paper with a few surprises as mentioned above. Good opening scenes that establish character well.
• Found Jimmy’s “theatrical and over the top” voice as a by-product of getting written up to the island.
• 26 pages

2nd NOVEMBER 2009

• A good night. Wrote lots. A total of 15 pages tonight. Some cutting and pasting but pretty good. Began writing Jack & Kate’s relationship again. Feel like they first are on screen together too late but we’ll revisit that after getting to the end. Well under way.
• 41 pages

5th NOVEMBER 2009

• Began to address niggling issue as mentioned above. Cut the entire boardroom scene which has been there form the first draft. Also cut the Kate’s parents divorce scene but feel like this might come back into it as now Kate’s home issue is only spoken about in dialogue. Perhaps this is okay though as her home issue is the same issue as why she wants to “develop” the island.
• Had Masters “work in progress” symposium today. Felt like it went well. Audience seemed interested. Wrote the following synopsis as part of it:

“Just You” is a feature-length romantic-comedy about Jack Hawkins, an amorous American PhD student, who must prove the existence of the prehistoric bird that destroyed his father’s career or he too will be academically disgraced. On the ferry to the remote tropical island, Jack meets Kate Sullivan, a repressed English architect, who must keep her identity a secret while she assesses the viability of the island for development. Enlisting Jack’s help, she confides her true purpose, not realising that he’s the owner she’s hiding from. When they fall in love their respective careers and the habitat of a species is put in jeopardy.
10th NOVEMBER 2009

• Another good night. Hot, so tiring at first and difficult to get into it but once we got going it was fine. We stated by cutting another 10 pages out of the beginning to pace up the start. (this addressed the feeling from last session as mentioned above) It has worked a treat. Very confident with our ability to trust instinct that the audience will catch up and we don’t have to spoon-feed them everything too early. Dropped the whole of “Jimmy being saved” and “Jack having sex in his office”. (tone was wrong for this anyway, something we’re getting better at)
• 44 pages (dropped 10 and wrote 10)

12th NOVEMBER 2009

• Seem to be back on course. The writing flows better now that we’ve ironed out some of the problems from the first act. It feels more character driven which is good and we definitely stay with our two leads for the majority of the script. This is a good thing. Much more organic. We’ve just about made it to the “walk across the island” which is when the script changes gear, so that will be good. A new part of the film that we haven’t written before.
• 54 pages.

16th NOVEMBER 2009

• Kate and Jack are now shipwrecked! Got into a fresh section and it went really well. Lots of action rather than dialogue which is good. It’s easier to make action funny than it is dialogue. We sit on a single line of dialogue for ages and don’t come up with much, yet when writing action sequences, they seem to go really well.
• 65 pages

18th NOVEMBER 2009

• Another bloody good night. Wrote All Jack’s backstory (in flashback) which worked well. No dialogue in it. Then did a good dialogue sequence where they talk about Kate not having sex and finished the night with another action sequence which is Kate climbing the cliff to get the feather and is rescued by Jack. Really like it. The action sequences definitely flow well.
• Christmas deadline is looking good. Well over half way now.
• Possible new title “You Wish!” – Just You is having less and less significance, so on the hunt for a new title.
• 73 pages.

23rd NOVEMBER 2009

• Started tonight by going back to the first act to strengthen Kate’s backstory about selling her home. We have combined an old deleted scene set in a lawyer’s office where Kate sided with her father, with the kitchen scene with Kate and her Mother. This was basically set-up to another scene we wrote tonight where, after the bat cave incident, Kate tells Jack about her father used to be her hero – until he left the family.
• 80 pages.

25th NOVEMBER 2009

• For the last four days we have ignored Jimmy and Phillip (as if they didn’t exist) and just concentrated on Jack and Kate’s journey across the jungle. It’s been a very effective way to do it. We’ve left spacers where Jimmy & Phil scenes will go. Got to some really deep, inner character motivations stuff tonight – for both characters. It feels like real writing driven by deep characters. I think it’s good.
• Got Kate out of the jungle tonight. I almost feel like we don’t need to go back and see Jimmy & Phil too much – would it be a good surprise or bad surprise for the audience to find out, when Kate does, that Jimmy and Phil have hooked up?
• “You just over the moon wish” is the title of the email that John sent this morning in reference to our confusion as to what to call the script.
• 85 pages.

30th NOVEMBER 2009
• Bad night. Stalled on the writing of Jimmy & Phil’s love stories. Basic problem stems from not REALLY knowing who Jimmy & Phil are. Need to establish backstories for each. Talked for about 6 hours but didn’t write anything.
• Email extract from John: G’day, that was a bit frustrating wasn’t it. Still I think developing their back stories is putting us in the right area.

2nd DECEMBER 2009
• Back on track and looking good. Copied all of Phil’s & Jimmy’s scenes onto a separate document and wrote them like a short film. Seemed to work well. Started right back at the start with them. Adding much more background and character traits such as Philip feeling pressure form family and that he thinks Kate is having an affair. Jimmy comes clean now, instead of hiding the truth from Philip about the ownership. It’s much more in character as Jimmy is the most honest person in the story.
• 95 pages

8th DECEMBER 2009
• Great night writing! Really on the way to the end of this draft now. Jimmy & Phil’s relationship seems real and honest. Very happy about it. We’ve not mentioned “gay” or “homosexual” at all and, therefore, just treated it as any hetro relationship would be treated. Sounds simple but the gay thing seemed to have got in the way quite a bit.
• Also wrote Kate getting back to Benbo and discovering Jimmy & Phil in bed with tattoos. Very happy with a particular line of dialogue from Kate “I’m not throwing away my life just because I fell in Love”. Seems to hit her character home.
• Christmas deadline looking good.
• 108 pages (inc. some cutting and pasting from old drafts which is always satisfying)

10th DECEMBER 2009
• nearly there… Everything coming together well. This film gets bigger and bigger budget every page! Love the flight to London sequence – might be too long – but very funny. This seems right as we are getting near the end so it should be funny. Did have a moment of “Is it too funny?” We thought the humour might have contrasted badly with the more serious stuff Kate is going through – might it be too much for the audience? Laugh, sad, laugh, sad…?
• Common comment – “Just let me go for a minute..” This happens when one of us is typing and we’ve hit a slow spot. We get stuck for a moment and then one if us will type silently for a few minutes whilst they have a run on in their brain. Sometimes its easier to write out the idea you have than to talk it out...
• 115 pages

11th DECEMBER 2009
• Finished 2nd draft (called 3rd) of the script. Basically only wrote the last scene today – the big wrap-up in the boardroom. Seemed to go well. Happy to have finished. Quite proud. Still not quite done yet as have to readdress some outstanding issues that we both feel aren’t working. So must polish.
• 124 pages.

14th DECEMBER 2009
• Will be writing tonight but read the first 50 pages over the weekend. Probably a bit too soon to be critical but feel that the first 50 pages is too slow. We need to cut about 10 pages out of it.
• Changed my mind about the first 50 being too slow. We had a great night and cut 5 pages from the first 50. We did this by going line by line, word by word, cutting
wherever possible. I didn’t think it would save as much as it did. Not only did it save
pages but it makes it a much better read, so much easier and less words. Very happy
about it. (I take back this morning’s negative thoughts.) An example is:

Kate stands with her back to the water adjusting the focus on her digital
camera.

Becomes:

Kate adjusts the focus on her digital camera.

• 119 pages.

16th DECEMBER 2009
• The line-by-line went very well again. Did 50 more pages and have cut 10 pages
overall, without losing any story. Just making the writing better. It’s really a very
exciting process that makes us look at each and every word very closely.
• 114 pages.

17th DECEMBER 2009
• Did as morning turnaround. Always hard to go again in the morning straight after
having gone until midnight the night before. Hard to get started. Had to do it though if
we were going to meet our xmas deadline.
• Finished the line-by-line. Rapt! The script is on good shape.
• Total of 111 pages – that means we cut a total of 13 pages just by losing words and
lines – but no story or plot 2as dropped. Editing is wonderful!
• Finished with a list of 10 things we will be going back over on Monday to strengthen
or fix:
  1. Embed Prang’s harmonica so it’s not a sore thumb in the “western” scene.
  2. Kate’s “Father” speech – fix it. Too on the nose.
  3. What happens to the engagement ring? It just disappears.
  4. Strengthen Jack’s island ownership at the start, before Kate says “Jimmy
owns it”. The audience must realise that she’s wrong.
  5. Should prang be at the ferry at the start? Would he recognise Jack? How
long has prang known Jack? I’m thinking he doesn’t know Jack but John’s
thinking he does, so that will be something to be worked through. I can see
why John thinks that – we never see Prang introduced to Jack.
  6. Jack hangs back when we first meet Jimmy – otherwise Jimmy should
recognise him.
  7. Boardroom – generally do it better!
  8. Strengthen Jimmy’s backstory – how did he get to the island? Where’s his
family? That kind of thing.
  9. Jimmy doesn’t want to go into the boardroom he should tell Philip this.
10. Tattoos in the boardroom? Should they be mentioned?

21st DECEMBER 2009
• Had another good night with the deadline looming. 2 days of writing left. Have begun
to work our way through the list above. Making good progress. Decided to change
quite a few things that weren’t gelling with the rest of the story; the main being The
Temple. It’s now called the temple of the bird. The temple is all about the Pteratorm
now and its so much better. Changed the pauper’s story to be about him trying to find
the bird and getting the feathers. It’s much better. Other additions are doing the
original boardroom scene again.
• The biggest change tonight however was restructuring the first 30 pages. Splitting
some scenes in half (Jack & Jimmy talking) and putting some at start and some at
end of first act. Also, reordered the “dance” scene in the bush. Made it earlier. It’s
helped a LOT with their conflict between the two being more pronounced. Jack tries
to change Kate’s mind about why she’s on the island.
• 115 pages.
22nd DECEMBER 2009

- Finished! Finished! Finished! Finished! Finished! Finished! Finished!
- Spent the night reworking the last of the “polish” scenes. Ended up making significant changes; Kate’s “father” story, Jimmy’s backstory, Jack’s final boardroom “I love You” speech.
- Whole new end scene; Jack and Kate find the Pteratorn. Brilliant. It was hiding in the cave all this time!
- Had a moment of “I’m left and John is right” as tends to happen. We wrote a scene where they’re in a cave and I thought the cave turns left and John thought it turns right. I asked “Which side of Jack is Kate walking?” he thought right and I thought left. This always seems to happen. Funny. Just an observation. Visconti’s screenwriter makes a comment about this somewhere. I shall have to look it up.
- Fell like we have taken the script (story) as far as we can go. We’re both mentally exhausted by it. I have no niggling thoughts about it anymore. We have addressed everything that each of us had thoughts about. I think the story is really good; well structured, good characters who are all distinctive, good climax, good pace. I think it is all okay. If I had to say anything that I think might need some work next year it would be that the first 40 pages isn’t funny enough – nowhere near as funny as the last 70 pages. So it could do with some spicing up to make it more fun. That’s about it. Perhaps a little more character development might happen too? Having said that, the meat of them is there. It could do with some nice details to flesh them out a little though? We’ll see.
- 112 pages.

23rd DECEMBER 2009

- At the VCA. Printing up 20 copies to circulate to a list of close people that we’ve got. (Megan, Tuuli, Marleena, Annabelle, Nicolette, Bunzy, Lee & Marcella, Alice, Sean, Pino, John Lyon, Anna Jeffries, Suzie kent, ROK, Xyga, Libby (VCA), Serena, Siobhan, Sandra, Ali, Terry, Jason Christou) Not industry people as such (not producers, agents, pro readers) but some are relatives, friends, actors, lecturers etc. This will be our litmus test to see how the story is for them. We’re too close to it so can’t see where to improve the story anymore.
- My final note for this year is that I look forward to going to India for 6 weeks and completely switching off the script. That means I can come back and finally have a read with pretty fresh eyes.

16th FEBRUARY 2010

Had first session with John since finishing the 3rd Draft. Have collated some feedback from various people (Tuuli, Megan, John Lyon, Nicolette, Marleena, Nick Bannikoff, Alice, Sean) into a single document. The general gist seems to be the same...

- People love Jimmy & Phil’s story. Works well.
- Don’t like Kate and are confused by her motives. Not a good character.
- Jack is better than Kate but his “find the bird” story just stops from page 10 – 40 so the impetus of the story is lost.
- Importantly, some have said that they don’t see why Jack and Kate are in love…? What makes them fall for each other?
- Generally liked the second half of the story much better than the first.

In general the first half has problems. Too slow, not likeable main characters, not funny enough, too serious in tone...

We should know this as “The Independent” suffered from tonal jumps, so perhaps it’s something that John & I need to work on.

So, after talking through the feedback idea for the 1st act from last night is...
• Kate Whithorn - backpacker / limo / diamond ring at customs opening... Also, Kate waits for Philip to turn up to see her off but he doesn't arrive. Basically, Kate doesn't believe in romance anymore.
• Kate misses ferry – gets a ride to island (which island?) with Jack.
• Kate begins her recce of the island. Thinks Jimmy owns the island.
• Kate takes immense interest in the bird. Jack likes this – falls in love with Kate.
• At the temple (or the cliff) Kate finds out the bird is extinct.
• Kate goes back to London where, at the boardroom, we learn the truth about Kate's life & career.
• We pick up the existing script somewhere around Jack calling Kate in London and hearing “I don't know any Jack.”

Questions outstanding/things to work on...

• How many islands are there? If 1 island, what's the geography? If 2, what's the transport arrangements? Prang probably has a outboard motor runabout.... Or something.
• What’s Jack back story with his Dad – why did he not tell him he’d seen the bird? Was Dad having an affair and Jack caught him, Mum left, Jack resented Dad? Was Mum having an affair? It should probably tie to the love “issue” Jack has somehow. This all means that we are ditching the Princeton University connection (which doesn’t really pay off now anyway).
• What’s Kate’s got to lose – important question? She’s a Whithorn, so this helps. She’s going against the family. Also, perhaps the deal falling through will put the Whithorn company in jeopardy? Some things to think about there.
• make Jack more of a bumbler – not so confident and cocky. Also, doesn’t like tourists being on his island but needs them for the research money they provide. He’s overly-direct with people and doesn’t know he’s offensive at times.
• make Philip a bit less gay – tougher – or so he seems... He’s more egotistical. He wouldn’t risk his life for Kate and wouldn’t come running to the airport to see her.
• Could (at first) Kate think Jack is gay?

16th FEBRUARY 2010

Another good night. Arrived tired and thought we wouldn’t get anything done but as soon as we get into it, it just starts flowing. Always seems to be the way. It’s a comforting thought to know that it will happen.

The biggest thing that happened last night is discovering / deciding that KATE IS THE PROTAGONIST!!! It’s Kate’s whose eyes we see the story through. This will change the structure of many scenes and the general POV will be different. How will this affect the end of the film where we seem to follow Jack more? Ie. the fly-to-london sequence??? Time will tell.

We focussed on character development. How do we make our characters more likable? Made some good headway.

• Agreed that Kate is Whithorn. Her aim of the film (beside falling in love) is to learn to be herself. She's trying to be that way form the start but must embrace it by the end. She's struggling to be her own person.
• When we first meet Kate, she's lugging her backpack out of a Middle-Class, run down, apartment block and wearing backpacker’s clothes. When she gets down the stairs, there’s a Chauffer holding door open for her (he probably offers to carry her pack but Kate would refuse - she’d know the Chauffer’s name too) The waiting limo (or expensive Jag or bentley) is carrying Philip, her fiancee. Kate goes to her waiting taxi and gives him a $20 and apologises. She then gets in the limo. In the limo Philip slips the ring box into her pack – we know the rest from here.
• Is Philip a somebody??? This might make it that Whithorn’s company is actually “Whithorn & Smith”. This is because Philip owns a plane, so he’s really got to be rich in his own right.

• When we first meet Jack, he’s got a group of potential Benbo guests lined up along the jetty. He’s going along rejecting them. (Don’t know how but) when he gets to Kate, Kate floors him. She’s quick, smart and witty.

• We should simplify Jack’s back story down to – Jack is divorced. He was in love once but his wife cheated on him. Now, he must learn that love can happen twice. Jack can’t fall in love (again) until he’s found the bird as it proved true love exists. Ironically, he falls in love with Kate without finding the bird.

• On Ko Samui – Kate hears about benbo after the original development site proves to be no good. After the line-up, Kate goes to Benbo, presumes Jimmy is the owner and hears about this rare bird that might be there – it would ruin her plans. So, she gets close to Jack to learn about the bird. When Kate finds out the bird is extinct, she goes to London and we find out who Kate REALLY is.

• Benbo is definitely a separate island. This will help the general confusion people are having with the geography of the island.

New title: “THE ONLY ONE” ???? it’s a good title! :)

9th MARCH 2010

• Spent the session redoing scene cards for the 1st scene. Trying to nut out the basic characters for the first act – what do we need to know? Basically spent the night thinking about Kate’s character. What is it that she wants? What is it that she needs?

• Tonight was one of those slower nights where nothing gets done in the way of pen to paper but many ideas get tossed about. Usually very productive even though no writing.

11th MARCH 2010

• Worked more on Kate’s character and got quite a few developments on paper. What does Kate want? She wants to buy the island and develop it thus proving she can stand on her own two feet. She wants to “do it on her own.” What does Kate need? Kate needs to realise that to “do it on her own” she needs to allow other people in to her life. It’s not a weakness. She can accept help.

• A new development is that we will have a scene where Kate and Jack have dinner with Prang and his family. This replaces the “family is home” theme that we are losing by making Kate a Whithorn and her Mother no longer being in the movie.

• Have agreed that we have a deadline on around the 11th April to get the reworking of this draft done as that’s when Stephen Cleary arrives.

• Kate wants to build homes but has to learn what home is. Kate wants to “do it alone” but has to learn to let others into her life. Accepting help from those who believe in you isn’t the same as losing independence.

• Jack encourages Kate to do something dangerous (like climb a cliff). This belief that Jack has comes from his father / upbringing. Ben never listened to people who said he couldn’t find that bird. Jack has that same attitude.

• The backstory of Jack’s ex-love can come out at a dinner with Kate at Prong’s house. Jack’s ex had an affair with a Plastic Surgeon and sold her wedding ring to pay for a boob-job. Her self-esteem issues broke Jack and his ex apart. This is why Jack falls in love with Kate; she’s got self-determination, self-belief and no self-esteem issues.

• Kate leaves the island but on the way back to the mainland, prang tells her about Jack is after a very rare brid that is supposed to live on the island. Kate telephones home and tells the boardroom about Benbo “it’s perfect” but also that there’s an environmental issue. She demands that they don’t come down to Benbo because “I can do it alone! I can climb the cathedral” (this is a line she learned form Jack)
• Kate falls in love with Jack because she hates being told “You can’t.” Jack always tells her “You can”.

16th MARCH 2010

• Began writing the script again – 4th draft! Started with the airport scene. Most important was keeping the tone the same at the start to the end – more comedy. Must keep it funny.

18th MARCH 2010

• Good stuff. Wrote the line-up scene. Are definitely focussing on character. The line-up scene really tells us a couple of little gems about them both. There’s a hint that Jack has an ex-wife and for Kate that she stands up for people when she senses inequality.
• Also wrote the introduction to Benbo island. It’s the first time where we’ve painted a really good picture of the huts and the surrounds. It makes quite a difference.

23rd MARCH 2010

• Wrote a couple of important scenes – another developer being kicked off the island (sets up the stakes for Kate) and then a good, funny scene where Jack and Kate meet each other up in the bush.
• We’re already worried that we haven’t set up that Kate is struggling against people saying to her that “you can’t” do something. “You can’t do it alone”. She hates this. Do we need something earlier – first page – where this is illustrated in Kate’s world. This means that the story exists because she needs to go out and prove to herself and the world that she can do it alone. Something to think about.
• One thing I have noticed – When John is typing, which is more often than not (it’s his computer) - I will scribble notes handwritten on paper with ideas about liens coming up. This is a left over from The Independent.
• One thing that never sways is our confidence in each other and that we’re gong to end up with a product that is saleable. Perhaps we’re kidding ourselves? Perhaps we have big egos? Either way, it’s definitely one of the reasons we are able to work well together.

25th MARCH 2010

• Very interesting night last night – the best night of NON-WRITING we’ve ever had. All our niggling thoughts about character came to a head. We both agreed that Jack seemed pretty sorted and we would instinctively know what he would and wouldn’t do. Kate, however, was a different matter. There came a moment last night where I admitted, (and John agreed) that we didn’t know Kate at all. I literally felt she was a total blank canvas. She could just about do anything and we’d be able to find a reason to make it work. This is obviously a big issue when she’s the main character in the film. It was quite a frightening moment that led to about 6 hours of no forward movement. There actually came a moment, in my head, where I thought “what the fuck are we doing? Perhaps there’s something fundamentally wrong with this whole idea?” Either way, from 4pm until about 10pm we just talked the state of Kate’s character through. We literally tried to think of every “what if…” possible. Some of the ideas were: What if Phil is Jack’s brother? What if Kate is a hunter/poacher here to kill the bird? These are just two examples among hundreds of ludicrous ideas that we considered last night. This is a bad thing as if we thought any of these ideas were good, then it would have meant going back to the drawing board. We would be ready to do this but the problem is we know that most of the story is working. We’re just stuck on the problems of Kate’s character and making people like her. It was a depressing session… until… the last hour and a half. We cracked what Kate is all about. When I got home the story was buzzing through my head and I pitched all the
ideas to Tuuli. Even had to have a shower to settle down and go to sleep. I truly feel like it's all systems go now, everything is in place: character, tone (especially tone), situation, motivations. Anyway, here's what came up with:

• Kate lives a lie that she’s engaged to some “mystery man” who is going take her to live on the coast of Scotland in an 600 year old, heritage home that's had generations of families through it and is listed so it can be never torn down. She’s even gone so far as buying her own engagement ring which we see for the first time at the First Class Check-In. Everyone she tells about the ring or her “fiancé” she’s lying to. When she finally tells the truth to Jack about herself, he rejects her for having lied about love – because by then we've learned that Jack’s ex lied whilst having an affair. Kate’s lie is different - She’s so lonely, so disenchanted that she buys her own engagement ring. So sad. So vulnerable. Fucking brilliant!

• Contrasting to the above, Kate’s job: Kate is a PDC (Personnel Displacement Consultant). She’s basically a negotiator who gets people out of their homes in a nice way (instead of families being ejected by police) thus saving face of the companies she works for freelance. She’s very good at her job and very highly paid. She gets massive bonuses. If she does the Benbo job in 48 hours, she gets a $2m bonus – this is enough for her to buy the Scottish heritage home that she wants (it’s just that there’s no man in it).

• Philip Whithorn is gay. He’s out of the closet and has been for some time. His family have accepted it and he hides form no-one. He hires Kate for the Benbo job (she's a regular Whithron PDC) but when he doesn’t hear from her and the 48 hours is up, he flies down to see what’s going on. When he lands Kate makes him pretend to be her fiancé. Philip’s not happy (I’m out! There’s no way I’m going back in!) but agrees to keep the cover of why they are there. Kate saw Frank ejected from the island, so has to play it cleverly. The problem is she’s started to fall for Jack who now thinks she’s got a fiancé. Philip, in the meantime, gay and proud, has fallen for Jimmy but can’t make a move as he’s meant to be pretending to be straight!

• We have two travel agent scenes – the first is that Kate lands on Koh Tao (We need to make up a name) to go and see the Benbo Realty Company – the registered owner of Benbo island. The travel agent tells him that “You see Jimmy. He on Benbo”. The 2nd time is when Kate tried to buy a ferry ticket.

• We start the film with a very funny, HILARIOUS, scene of Kate showing us what she does. She's trying to talk an old couple into leaving their house so the Whitorn’s can put a wrecking ball through the whole joint. All the other tenants have sold but this old couple are holding out. They’re a bit senile. One of them has Alzheimers and completely forgets the conversation they had with Kate 30 seconds earlier. Kate is also trying to not let them see the wrecking ball, the construction crew, the Wthithorn’s etc. all who are just outside the window. This whole scene should be a parody of a Hostage Negotiation. We could even had a cop come to the door with a carton of milk. Kate answers it and is told that she’s got “3 minutes or we’re coming in”. The Cop gives her the milk, goes inside and tells the old couple it was just the milkman at the door. She successfully gets them out of the house they get their photo taken with the Whithorns (Philip_ and then Kate gets her next contract – Benbo. Her last contract and she’s “out for good”.

30th MARCH 2010
• Tried writing the “hilarious” opening scene as mentioned above. Turns out it’s harder to write hilarious than you’d think. Tonight was a difficult session. We get started late due to radio commitments and then personal business got in the way. After only a few hours my mind was on home, so we called it a night quite early. Didn’t really get anything done. Tis a shame as the Stephen Cleary deadline is approaching quickly.
• Had Stephen Cleary’s “comedy” lecture first up tonight – before writing – which was quite good. It gave us confidence that we’re on the right track as far as the “theory” of comedy goes. We have secrets, reversals, chaos etc. When he says certain phrases it’s difficult not to think of how it applies to our script. It’s good.

1st APRIL 2010
• Got started early tonight. We tried to write the “hilarious” opening scene (as mentioned on 23rd March) but turns out it’s more difficult to write “hilarious” when you’re trying to, rather than just letting it happen. We both knew that it needs to be funny as well as set up Kate’s character so there’s a bit to achieve in it.
• We ended up doing some improvising – getting up on our feet and walking around in circles riffing on the dialogue. I was Kate and John was Mrs. Porter. Whilst we did it fine, it really didn’t help as the core of the scene (the action) wasn’t down, so we knew that what we were doing was only dialogue, not story. Interesting improvisation though.
• After about 6 hours of writing – and knowing it was bad – we decided to move on from the opening scene as it was bogging us down when really we need to be moving forward. For one of the very few times, we decided to leave the awful scene that we’d written and come back to it.
• Wrote the next few scenes – the limo where Kate gets the job, the first travel Agent scene, and they worked quite well.

2nd APRIL 2010
• Friday - public holiday – Just like Independent times, John had an epiphany for the opening scene and called me and verbally talked me through it. It’s good and should be funny. The best bit is that it uses quite a lot of our “bad” scene from the other night and reworks it into something better, so it wasn’t a waste of a night.

6th APRIL 2010
• Wrote a few good scenes tonight. The story is coming together. The new characters & Kate’s POV as the vehicle is working well. Wrote a scene that we felt was good – but TONE – was working – (as we found a out a few days later) – which was Kate lying down in the grass and having birds come and peck all over her. Tuuli hated it. Thought it was creepy! We were going for romantic, so you never can tell!

9th APRIL 2010
• Friday – Started early – 8am and went until 7pm, so quite a long day. Spent the first couple of hours going through Tuuli’s feedback of the first 40 pages. Most of her suggestions were spot-on. However, we decided to go forward, not backwards (to fix anything) today which turned out to be quite fruitful. The script is looking on the long side but I’m sure that will sort itself out in good time. Today we came to the realisation that the first “temple scene” operates as the “bird dance” scene – this is how Jack lets her into his bird-life somewhat. So, we spent the time reworking the temple and then had a run at a scene where J&K have dinner at Prang’s. Not too bad. A good night in all but nothing to write home about.

13th APRIL 2010
• Interesting night tonight. Had Stephen Cleary’s dialogue lecture first up. Not so important as we haven’t really done a “dialogue” draft as yet. We’re both itching to get to it but probably because it signals that the story is finally in its place. The story has taken quite a lot of working out.
• John went ahead, without me, and wrote a draft at two scenes – After the dinner with Prang & Philip’s arrival. Not a bad shot. By the end of the night, we’d changed a few things here and there on it but mostly the same – especially Philip’s arrival which he’d nailed.
Wrote a good scene between Philip & Kate where some home truths are told to Kate about what she does for a living. “People hate you – you tear down their houses”. I think it is a nice moment for Kate to have – a bit of self-reflectivity.

Hit a landmark spot tonight – after the 2nd draft was finished and we got all the feedback, we deduced that the first half of the script was where some major surgery was needed – actually, a whole rewrite. Tonight, we finished up to about page 50 which allows us to cut & paste the 2nd half of Draft 2 back into the document. This was quite a satisfying moment. It will need quite a lot of work to update those scenes to the new characters but, essentially, the action will be the same.

Perhaps we’ll meet Stephen Cleary’s deadline after all?

15th APRIL 2010
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15th APRIL 2010
• Changed the title back to “You Wish!” (with exclamation mark for added drama)
• Wrote a good scene today – Kate gets told by Philip that people hate her because of her job. She wasn’t aware of that and it hit like a hammer. It was a moment of clarity about a character (for Kate and us! We all learned something at the same time) Then, the following scene, Philip says he’s all gung-ho about telling Jimmy why they’re there and as soon as he finds out that Jimmy is gay – he changes his mind. Kate takes over again to do the deal. This works in our favor.

18th APRIL 2010
• Did a Sunday session in order to get finished to a good level before submitting to Stephen Cleary. Basically spent the day rewriting up until page 70 (which is where we left off) and getting everything in order before moving forward. It’s going to be quite a taxing finish to this script as we have reached the point where we need to start having pay-offs to the stuff we’ve set up in the first half (Kate’s ring, Jack’s father etc.) and both of our characters need to reach anagnorisis. This is difficult stuff. Some of the rewriting is easy stuff though – like going back through the script and adding Kate’s shoulder satchel to the appropriate scenes as we need her to have it on the dark side of the island.
• Also, I had a read this morning – up to page 70 – and am quite happy about the whole script. I don’t feel it has as much fat anymore. All the scenes seem to be working to tell the story. There’s no indulgent “babies” or sub-plots that could go. I’m sure I’m wrong about this thought and the next readers will point that out.
• Had some moments of impatience with John today. He likes to think about the dialogue before writing it down whereas I’d prefer to write it down and then change it, cut it, adapt it. I feel when we sit there too long thinking about dialogue then there’s a pressure to make it better. I don’t think we’re at a stage of “making it better” as we’re still doing story work. It’s not a problem – at all – just find myself frustrated, that’s all.
• Got a problem with the “Selection Scene” it’s not funny enough. It’s not clear why Jack would choose her based on this dialogue that we have. It’s been a niggling element.

20th APRIL 2010
• Another good session. Great session in fact. Started off thinking and feeling pretty crap but we seemed to get going and came up with some imaginative stuff. “The I went shopping” scene came from me remembering a walk in Tasmania that Tuuli & I did. I was cranky, so she made me play this game. Seemed to be very funny.
• John had a shot at another version of the “Selection Scene”. Not bad. Better than what we had. Still not perfect but it’s better.
• Wrote some more emotional scenes – Kate acting like a courtroom prosecutor – telling Jack that his bird “witnessing” wouldn’t stand up in a court of law. It makes Kate very unlikable but it seems to work. I don’t want her saying these things which is why I know they’re good.
• I feel like we’re getting close to that moment in Rom-Coms where the audience will be thinking “How are these two ever going to get together?” I think we’ve successfully pushed K&J away from each other but have we taken it too far? Probably not. It just
doesn’t feel natural to be pushing our two love interests apart. But that’s probably why it works.

22nd APRIL 2010
• Have gone back to the title “Just You”. Became relevant again. Don’t really have any idea what it’s going to be called in the end.
• I recorded this session – 6 hours – to study it. Probably chose quite a good session to record as we wrote some new stuff as well as highly emotional “truth” scenes. The “I went shopping” scene got paid off here as that’s how Kate brings up her buying her own engagement ring. Think it’s good.
• Also, lost any reference to Jack having an ex-wife. It just didn’t fit in the search for Jack’s back-story. It seemed natural to come back to Jack’s father Ben, so we rewrote an earlier scene to be about that. Now, Jack’s father had a heart attack up at Cathedral rock. Seems much better.
• Really enjoying Kate’s character now. She’s very unpredictable. Especially to Jack. Just when she seems to be softening, she gets angry and defensive again. She is now feeling very real to me. Quite proud of our Kate creation.

25th APRIL 2010
• Sunday – rewrote the final scenes. Was looking forward to today. It went well. Long day. New scene is J & K arriving back at the temple after the walk across the island. Otherwise, it was just tweaking up to the end.

26th APRIL 2010
• Monday – Today was purely a re-run through the whole script looking for errors, obviously crap dialogue (there’s a lot) and general things that we haven’t fixed. Stephen Cleary gets it tomorrow, so it’s a last tidy-up for him.
• By just cutting lines here and there we got a further 7 pages out of the script, so that makes a big difference. As well as just making it a better read.

27th APRIL 2010

EMAIL FROM JOHN:
G’day, great session yesterday. Turned out to be quite good fun. I had a thought last night that I wanted to share.

WHAT IF JIMMY DOESN’T COME CLEAN TO PHILIP. (ABOUT OWNERSHIP)
WHAT IF PHILIP DOESN’T COME CLEAN TO JIMMY. (ABOUT GAYNESS)

Firstly I don’t think this is anything we need to entertain before Thursday with Stephen.

However I think we may be missing an opportunity to keep the “screws” tightened and have fun with the lies/confusion.
Philip begins to like Jimmy but feels he has to keep playing the “straight” card.
Jimmy likes Philip but feels he needs to play (or avoid) the ownership issue.
There would be minimal adjustments to some of the existing scenes.
The first dinner scene when Philip arrives would have to be less about the “gay” freedom scenario and more on the broaching of why Philip is there.
The cockpit scene should have the “real” pressure Philip is under to secure this deal. Made even harder because Jimmy wants to speak to Jack and they won’t be back for 2 days.
Philip getting drunk scene could be even funnier/tense if he is trying too hard to play “straight” but secretly is feeling very attracted to Jimmy and feeling the pressure about closing the deal.
Phillips dinner invitation to Jimmy is fine as is.
The dinner on Ko-Tao we would want to hear some of I think. Philip a mix of “let’s do business” and “I’m interested in funny business”. Jimmy a mix of “I don’t want to talk business” and “I wish you weren’t straight cause I’m up for some funny business”.
Tattoo scene is fine as is. (Maybe a small tweak?)
Kate arriving back at Benbo is where all comes out. Philip should still try to pretend (as we have) that he can't go on with Kate and that he is "Gay". However when Kate reveals the truth about ownership Jimmy feels terrible and flees. Philip by this stage doesn't care about the ownership as he just wants Jimmy. (This could be clarified at Pauper Cliff scene)

Anyway I feel this could enhance the fun/mad cap tone to what we have already set up. I'll talk to you more later but I just wanted to plant the seed.

29th APRIL 2010

• Had feedback session with Stephen Cleary. Doing all the work was worth doing as he really looked into the story and the characters. His recall of our story was quite amazing.
  • Cleary's main comments seemed to be that:
    o Jack’s desire for the bird seems to drop off once they’re on the dark side.
    o There’s no moment that tells us that Kate doesn’t feel worthy of love.
    o Kate needs to get to the island quicker and J&K can meet up on the hill for the first time. This means dropping the “selection scene” and cutting to the chase quicker. This is fine by us as it’s the scene we were having most issues with anyway. We should have known that it could be cut out as we were having trouble making it work in the first place – which is a sign!
    o Cleary thinks that Jack should find the feather at the cave scene and this is what drives them apart.
    o K should learn that J owns the island sooner and then it’s “Who knows what when” in play more.
  • Cleary had a very good way of putting the middle act – It all should be about K&J struggling to find a way to be in love with each other. All actions should be about that struggle.
  • Finished with Cleary saying that he thought our willingness to be open to criticism was good and possibly a product of being in a co-writing situation – we’re already used to giving and receiving feedback. We’re not precious about our writing.
  • Finally – Cleary wants to stay in touch with the project.

4th MAY 2010

• Had a verbal writing session today going through all Cleary’s feedback and thinking about the approach to the next draft. 6 hours of talking. Main points that we’ve come up with are:
  o Introduce another Ornithologist on to the island – that Jack thinks is his competitor. The Orn “Kidd” is actually a great fan of the Hawkins’ and has done a PhD on Jack’s dad. Jack, finally, comes to the conclusion that “the bird must be found – not that HE has to find it”. This means Jack can sacrifice PERSONALLY finding the bird in return for going after Kate.
  o We start the film with Kate in bed with some random fella. Kicks him out. This shows us that Kate doesn’t think she’s worthy of being loved so she just uses men and gets rid of them before she gets close to them.
  o Kate tells Phillip that she’s not engaged in the limo at the start. This is to make us wonder about the ring at the airport.
  o Jack doesn’t know that Ben made his journal public (allowing Kidd to do his own research) Jack assumes that Kidd stole the journal somehow. Ben actually DIDN’T want Jack following his footsteps and end up having a heart-attack up on Cathedral rock all alone. He wanted Jack to have a life.
  o Should Kate arrive on benbo with Kidd?
  o We may not end the film with J&K coming to love on Benbo. Perhaps it’s better to let them go to Scotland – a new beginning?

• We seem to disagree with Cleary that Jack should find the feather in Kate’s bra at the cave. We’re sticking with Kate revealing it at the board room. Probably because if Jack KNOWS that the bird exists, then he’s not really sacrificing anything. He must go
to London thinking that the bird DOESN'T exist (having sacrificed all) only to find that indeed it does. He finds the Holy Grail only when he gave up looking for it.

4th MAY 2010

- A short but productive session tonight. Spent a lot of time still going through Cleary’s comments. “Should Jack find the feather hidden in Kate’s bra?” is still posing a problem. He is right that it will tear apart Jack & Kate at the moment we need that to happen – however then Jack knows the bird is real so there’s no real sacrifice for him to make. Plus we can’t think of better ending that Kate’s feather reveal.
- When trying to come up with a moment that can drive J&K apart (at the cave) we decided that all we have really is Jack discovering that she’s a developer – if we hold onto that discovery longer. This led to the following exciting thoughts:
  - An Ornothologist (Kidd) and a Developer (Kate) arrive on Benbo in the same boat. Jack (via Prang’s confusion) mistakes one for the other – he thinks Kate is an Ornothologist. When Jack asks Kate ‘bird’ questions and she doesn’t know the answers, Jack presumes that she’s pretending not to be an ornithologist, so he plays along. (Who knows what when) Could be very funny. Possibly, Kate begins to play along (or not) but either way it is Kate who finds the bird – even though she’s the only one who doesn’t want to find the bird. The big moment that drives them apart is when Jack finds out that she’s actually a Developer and that Kidd is an ornithologist, even though Jack thought he was the developer.
  - Another avenue to explore is that Kidd is doing a PhD on Ben Hawkins and has Ben’s journal – Jack has never seen it before – didn’t know it existed. When Jack reads it, he discovers that Ben hoped that his son wouldn’t waste his life on the island looking for the bird. The Kid wants to “save” Jack but Jack thinks he’s a developer, so pushes him away. Finally, at the end, Jack gives all his knowledge to Kidd so he can find the bird as Jack has realised that it’s not about WHO finds the bird, just that the bird be found and protected.
  - Another subplot might be the “Sometimes you have to jump”. Perhaps Ben actually found the bird and wrote in the journal that slogan. It means a LITERAL interior cliff on Benbo that you must jump off to find where the bird lives – Not Pauper’s Cliff.
  - Finally, we chatted about, and possibly agreed on, making the London element be Sydney instead. This is purely a commercial decision as we will have a better chance of getting it read by high-end producers in Australia that we do anywhere else.

26th MAY 2010

Had a couple of weeks off the script which is a good thing. It gave us both room to breathe and regroup. John has been shooting and I have been flat out with students.

- Began scene carding all over again. Working on our feet and using the table this time – not the wall. It works really well. Not bothering with the first & third acts as they are in pretty good shape. Mainly working on the second act. This time the scene cards have a lot more threads to them. It’s not one card per scene. The bottom card represents the “setting or the event” which might be waterfall, Jack’s hut, cliff etc… the next layer represents the love story – what’s happening – it first kiss, flirting, sex. The next layer represents Who Knows What between Kate & Jack. ie. Kate thinks Jack’s not the owner, Kate knows Jack’s the owner, Jack thinks Kate is an ornithologist, Jack knows Kate is a developer etc. The next line up is the “Kidd” subplot.
- We spent most of our time, however, trying to work out the character motivations for each. Why are Kate & Jack scared of love? Jack – think women want him for his island. Kate got left at the altar by her fiancée years ago. She’s never been good enough for men. Even her father didn’t want her.
27th May 2010
A great night tonight. Lots of story development. It really feels like we’re getting tighter and tighter. Through the scene carding process (of the 2nd act) we’ve cut basically 25 pages.

- J&K get on the boat now at about page 30. This means that we’ve bought the event of the shipwreck and thus, the dark side, much closer to the front of the story. We’ve been talking about doing this for a long time but never really could. Cleary’s feedback helped a lot with this. He suggested cutting some stuff which is great.
- Have cut:
  - The wedding ring.
  - Philip arriving and meeting Kate on the island. Now Philip gets there once Kate is already shipwrecked. (need to work on this more as it’s a secondary story now)
  - The selection scene.
  - Dinner with Mai & Prang’s family.
  - Scenes with Kate & Jimmy getting to know each other.
  - Jack thinking Kate is engaged to Philip – no ring, no engagement.
- Have added:
  - Kate left at the altar at the start.
  - Kidd Ornithologist sub-plot
  - Kate & Jack have sex and get together very early.
  - Our ending is that Kidd finds the feather and skypes the news to the Whithorn boardroom just in time.
  - Jack leaves Kate at the alter (the jetty) by not coming back to Benbo when he said he would – because he had to save Kidd’s life.

Most importantly, we’ve added high conflict now – Jack thinks Kate only slept with him to get the island when, in fact, Kate didn’t know Jack was the owner when that happened. Then Jack finds out she’s not an Ornithologist but is a Developer they begin to fight and argue. Then when Jack finds that Kate has the feather – bang! Conflict. Now, they’re in love, out of love, in love, out of love etc./ It’s much more of a roller coaster which is how it should be.

So, yes, we’ve finally come round to Cleary’s thinking that Jack should find the feather. We agree. Sometimes feedback takes a while to sink in. Cleary said that the dark side should be the bulk of the film (we always knew that) and that it is about J&K struggling to find a way to be in love with each other.

1st June 2010
basically continued with the scene carding. Still trying to sort out a few different things. Went home early – because of Tuuli’s Possible “situation”??

3rd June 2010
Main event tonight is that we have swung away from Stephen Cleary’s opinion that Jack should find the feather on Kate. Cleary also suggested that Jack must sacrifice “something” for love. The story that we’ve got now, the only thing that jack can sacrifice is the idea of finding the bird. If he had found the feather on Kate and then goes to London to say “I love you”, it’s not really sacrificing anything as he knows that the bird is real. It’s just a matter of who finds it. Therefore, we just don’t think that Jack can find the feather. Sorry Mr. Cleary.

- Started and finished the treatment again tonight – which will turn into the 4th draft.
  Took all the scene cards and wrote out a scene heading and quick description for each.

Went home early because of Tuuli’s now definite pregnancy (which no-one is aware of.)
28\textsuperscript{th} JUNE 2010

Have taken quite a break from the script since last time. We have moved out of the warehouse and are back writing at my house. We’ve both been a bit busy – me with the end of the year assessment and finishing up, John with some ads or something. We have also attended a Romantic Comedy Workshop with Michael Hague & Steve Kaplan. It was okay – nothing new. Kaplan’s comedy was much better than Hague’s rom-com analysis. Feels like we’re on the right track though.

Felt very drained getting into the script. We’ve both got that feeling of wanting to finish the script now, we’re over it. It’s been too long with too many changes. Everytime we stop and redo characters it feels like the script is further and further away. Also, at the Rom-Com seminar, both of us agreed that we were more excited (or more interested) in getting onto a new script – separately. Personally, I’m feeling like it’s time to make another film, not just write one.

Tonight we went back to the scenario and worked out a few issues – really looking at Narrative POV (from Cleary) about who knows what when.

- **FIRST NIGHT** – At the waterfall, Jack and Kate have sex (and not at Jack’s hut earlier). Kate builds a great hut out in the bush that reveals her architectural ability.
- **2\textsuperscript{nd} MORNING** – Kate finds the bird and keeps it a secret. Jack finds Kate’s papers that reveal she’s a developer – but keeps it a secret.
- **2\textsuperscript{nd} NIGHT** (ravine) – Jack rejects Kate’s affection. Kidd arrives at the ravine. They play I went shopping and Jack says “You’re a developer” and leaves – abandoning Kate with Kidd. Kidd then tells Kate that jack is the owner of the island.
- **3\textsuperscript{rd} MORNING** – Jack travels through the ravine and finds the other entry to the bat cave – also finds all the bat skeletons. Kidd & Kate travel up the hill to the other entrance of the bat cave and they meet Jack there.
- **3\textsuperscript{rd} NIGHT** – Jack and Kidd have an argument and Kidd leaves, insulted. Kate reveals jack’s the owner (they probably have an argument) “I wouldn’t sell it to you for a million dollars!” This leads to the bat cave which also leads to affection which leads to rejection (because of the feather).
- **4\textsuperscript{th} MORNING** – Jacks loves Kate but Kate rejects him because “You’ll reject me and look for the bird. You’re obsessed!” Jack sells Kate the island for $1 and says “now love me!”. Jack could also be saying through all this “The bird’s not real!” Kate is saying “What if it is real?”
- **4\textsuperscript{th} ARVO** – Kate jumps off Pauper’s Cliff to show that she loves jack? Jack sees the bats and rejects Kate to go look for the bird.
- **4\textsuperscript{th} ARVO** – Jack gives up the hunt (for Kate) but has to save the Kidd so misses her leaving.

2\textsuperscript{nd} JULY 2010

Had a good day today. Really got back into the script – starting from character again.

- Have finally dropped the cliff jump. This came about from a Cleary suggestion which was the Pauper story is too long and isn’t significant enough to keep. We started to rewrite it and realised that the cliff jump isn’t going to stay. It’s a good feeling getting rid of things like this as it is a signal the script is getting better.
- Dropped Kate’s wedding scenario at the start of the script. Kate’s issues are all about being rejected by her father – she needs to be chosen.
- Dropped thoughts about jack being wanted by women for his island. Jack’s issue is that he’s obsessed about the bird and has lost the opportunity to love once or twice by being too obsessed and not letting it go.
- The exciting part is that we did get to the boat crash by about page 33.
9th JULY 2010
Not a positive day of moving forward. Quite a frustrating day really. Spent a lot of the time working out the first 30 pages still. Trying to get the boat crash to page 30. Did well on that front though. The crash is now on page 33.

Had an interesting observation of the process – that comes from collaborative writing…

At the moment we are both quite frustrated with the lack of forward movement. We have verbally talked about this in the form of “I can’t wait to get writing something else.” This frustration reared its head today when John would’ve worked out a dialogue section and then John “went on a rant” and started writing the short monologue from Jack. It usually starts with the typist saying “just give me a minute” and then typing. This time it took 3 or 4 minutes which is quite a long time when the other is sitting there with nothing to do. Creatively it isn’t a good thing as by the time he’s ready to read what he’s written to me, I’m frustrated and probably going to respond negatively anyway. This isn’t the first time this has happened (I’m sure John would agree from his perspective too) but this was the first time I’ve been frustrated like this about it.

12th JULY 2010
Much better day today. Back on track.

• Today we wrote the boat crash, the first trek through the bush and then the love-making scene. Also wrote the next morning when Jack finds Kate’s paperwork to do with buying Benbo.

Feels like we’ve turned a corner and have started writing again. Up until now it feels like we’ve been slack for months – having to rewrite all the time. Going over and over the same ground. 26th April was when we finished the last draft and that feels like quite some time ago.

Feel like we’re on the way home now. Let’s hope so.

15th JULY 2010
The good times continue. Really hitting the straps with forward momentum now. It’s got a good flow about it.

• Today we wrote Jack’s non-response to the reveal of why Kate’s on the island. Instead he shows her two birds mating – and how the female bird only wants the nest. It’s a good visual metaphor.
• Wrote a scene of Kate admitting why she’s there – that their sex should only be a fling as she’s got plans of her own. In this tirade she reveals that she thinks Jimmy owns the island.
• Wrote Jack discovering the ravine that’s on the interior of the island.
• Wrote the arrival of Philip in Whithorn One.
• Finished the day with Kidd catching up to them.

What’s really working well is Cleary’s advice of Narrative POV – who knows what when. It’s actually a lot of fun playing with the secrets that they are keeping from each other.

23rd JULY 2010
had another decent day of writing. Took a bit to get going as there was much conversation about up coming plot points… have agreed that given we are finding it difficult to get together time-wise, we’re going to try and write separately again…
JACK & KATE PLOT (and KIDD)

1. Jack finds the cave sequence – this should be exciting and adventurous inc. Jack finding piles of bones discarded by the pteratorn.

2. Kidd, Kate and Jack all meet at the batcave again and Kidd leaves very quickly – he can be annoyed at Jack for stealing his gear and leaving Kate with him.

3. After the bat-cave (when the bats fly out and they kiss again) – Kate needs to talk about number of things; the truth about what she does i.e. Mrs. Porter, why she’s not an architect (i.e. her father’s rejected her) and Scotland (heritage house and no-one up there). Jack does no reveal that he owns the island but should play along that Jimmy does know.

4. What happens the morning after the batcave? (We didn’t speak about this) I think we have to have them talks seriously about being in love – but, again, that it’s all too hard and they have different destinies. Kate has to accuse jack of being “obsessed” with the island. Perhaps he can still sign the contract here – but they get angry at the end of the day (see below)?

5. The scene where we split them up (somewhere around the temple again) should have this exchange in it: Jack says “You sold your body. You sold your soul. You’ve got nothing left to sell.” He hands over the contract to her then Kate says “Neither do you.” And takes the contract. He’s basically calling her a whore here and that’s the thing that splits them up, sending her off to England.

JIMMY & PHILLIP SCENES

1. It could be good to set-up that Jimmy and Philip can’t swim in the very first scene. He sees Jimmy (and vice-versa) and slips in to the water off his plane. Then Jimmy jumps in and helps him – but it’s only a few feet deep. A connection is made right away.

2. Jimmy lets Philip think he’s the boss – but we MUST have Prang say to Jimmy “You’re not the owner, Jack is” – just so the audience isn’t confused as to who the real owner is – but this should happen after Kidd has told Kate, not before.

7th AUGUST 2010
Wrote the scene of Jack down in the ravine separately. Meets a deadly King cobra but is saved by the Pteratorn. Emailed to John.

8th AUGUST 2010
Johns’ reply to my cobra ravine scene:

G’day. I had a read an really like the premise of the close call with the Pteratorn. But the cobra in Thailand? I'm not sure? As a thought could it be a Monkey? I mean a vicious nasty monkey. As Jack lands, this thing is in his face. Not even Jack wants a monkey bite to the face in the steamy jungles of Thailand. This savage monkey is going ape. (Pun intended) Jack senses some movement behind him only to see 3 cute little baby monkeys cowering on the ledge. Jack looks back to the aggressive monkey (still going banana's) (copy/paste previous "pun intended") but is nipped on the finger by one of the babies. He turns as we hear a gruesome screech (Part monkey, part bird) Jack turns back and the killer monkey is gone!
As re what you have, the monkey carcass lands near Jack a moment later. The beautiful, elegant, graceful Pteratorn has ripped the monkey to shreds. Probably ate the head.
Anyway just a thought. Just not really sure about the cobra that's all.

My instant reply was:
I reckon the cobra is a much more cinematic/iconic animal though. Cobras are all over South-East Asia inc. Thailand - especially King Cobras. Plenty of them. Not even “highly” endangered. Probably drink them to get big, strong erections. I thought about a monkey too, which is why it's there (dead), I guess. Just didn't see it as an instant death kind of thing like a Cobra is - not that you'd want that encounter with a monkey either.

Whichever way we go, we're going to need to add some wildlife to other scenes - perhaps even monkeys at the temple just for authenticity. I did some research on thailand wildlife just to see what's there. Lots.

I'm going to keep going forward and have a go at the Jack meets Kidd & Kate at the bat-cave scene.

My re-reply to that was:
Actually... Had more thoughts about the monkey and it might be good. Perhaps, though, it should be a pack of monkeys instead of one? There could be one big, boss monkey that's the main culprit but around it is two or three other monkeys that are egging it on. They're the ones that fall quiet and then run away and the boss monkey gets killed.

But mostly = had a thought that Jimmy could have a pet monkey. This should be a cute, lovable little cuddly monkey that is a COMPLETE contrast to the Bad monkey just mentioned. I thought it might be a good opportunity for some comedy. The monkey could be “in love” with jimmy and gets very jealous when Philip arrives on the scene. Then, to be able to have a successful date with Jimmy, Philip has to take him to another island?!? Could be very funny. The broken-hearted monkey could be left behind when Jimmy is taken to the date in Prang’s boat.

Also, this monkey could (somewhere early on) make Jack angry and we see how he treats monkeys. He could be a little mean to it. But he learns his lesson when he gets confronted by the bad monkey in the ravine.

Anyway... Just some thoughts. But I agree with the monkey – and see further possibilities with them throughout the script.

I'll try and get to rewriting the cobra scene tonight...

17th AUGUST 2010
Caught up at the Malthouse just to touch base and discuss where we're at. Good to get together. Agreed looking forward to Tuesday.

22nd AUGUST 2010
No writing – Ruby got sick. John had to turn back. Today was meant to be the first writing in almost a month. Work and life just got in the way. Cleary back in month and our deadline with him is not looking good.

24th AUGUST 2010
No writing... frustrating... Just plotting... Lots of good stuff though. See tomorrow for a summary of where we are at.

31st AUGUST 2010
Finally had a good day with lots of breakthroughs. Think we're pretty much at the end of working out how this f**cking plot works! (Maybe?)
• At the start, with Phil, when Kate explains about Harold – she has to be blatant with “I find out what people believe in and then I use it against them.”
• At the Koh Tao jetty, when the Pauper arrives Kidd is thrown off the boat by Jack and spear-gunned because he’s an orno and wants to help find the bird. Kate can over hear enough (not too much) about the bird and then knows it’s an issue. Jack then chooses Kate for a very minor reason (bird on her clothing?) along with one or two other backpackers (Horst).
• Meet Jimmy the “owner”
• Kate goes to her hut to send text that says “Badger problem on Benbo” but has no connection. She heads up to Cathedral Rocks.
• Kate goes with Prang back to Koh Tao to do the skype call to Whithorn about “badger problem”. Kidd is in Lucky Sam’s and overhears the conversation. We see Kidd scurry out the door.
• Kate and Prang motor back to Benbo – on the way Kate discovers Kidd hiding under a tarp but doesn’t reveal him to Prang. (Kate helps Kidd)
• Kate goes to dinner with Jack but leaves halfway through when she sees Kidd go into her hut.
• Jack goes in to the kitchen for a “friends” scene with Jimmy.
• In her hut, Kidd tells Kate about Jack’s father’s journal. Kidd knows Ben well because he did a thesis about him – knows him better than Jack knows him. Kidd wants to be Jack’s partner. Thinks that in the journal is proof that the bird exists and can prove to jack that he needs him. Kate agrees to get the journal from Jack (as she wants bird knowledge). Kate kicks Kid out and agrees to meet him the next day on the beach somewhere.
• Kate goes up to Jack’s hut – scene as is – and steals the journal.
• Next morning Kate goes to temple with Jack and then crashes the boat and doesn’t meet Kidd, who (may or may not?) thinks Kate has double-crossed him.
• The rest is as is, including Kate finds the feather after waterfall, but jack talks her out of it – so Kate plays along that she didn’t find it. Jack knows she’s a developer and that she’s got the journal (as is written now).
• BATCAVE NIGHT...
  o Jack comes out of batcave after overhearing that Kate likes him but can’t admit it. He’s still pissed a bit off though as he knows she’s only there for the ownership – but doesn’t think she knows he owns it.
  o Kidd pisses off (for some reason) as it nears dark?
  o Kate, angry, goes to sleep over near the bat cave. Bats fly out. They almost have sex. Kate stops them before he finds the feather.
  o Quick shot with Kidd terrified in the dark and turns around heading back for the fire which he can see up on the hill.
  o Before Kid gets there, Kate and Jack have a heart to heart. Jack admits that the last time he spoke to his dad he called him a “fool” which is why it’s written, by Ben, in the journal. He also realises that he needs forgiveness, which he can never have other than forgiving himself. Kate admits that she never got chosen or believed in by her father.
  o Kidd arrives back. Jack and Kidd probably have argument where Jack yells “There’ is no bird, alright!”. Kidd, disillusioned, causes Kate to yell “It’s Jack’s island!” Jack realises that Kate knows he owns the island and therefore probably fucked him to get it.
  o Kidd takes off on his own again, this time for good.
  o Jack says to Kate “Give me a dollar”. Kate finds one in her bag and hands it to him. He goes to sleep without telling Jack what it’s for.
• BATCAVE MORNING... Kate wakes up to find both Jack and Kidd gone. She sees flapping away on a stick a piece of paper. She pulls it off and reads it “Contract” and then sticks it back on the stick – she doesn’t want it. She calls out for Jack but to no
She leaves the batcave, and also leaves the contract flapping away on the stick.

- Meanwhile... Jack catches up to Kidd. Agree to find bird together.
- Kate arrives back at the temple and has wise words from the monk. Kate goes to cliff and tosses the feather away.
- Jack, has epiphany and turns back to find Kate, leaving all the clues with Kidd to find the Pteratorn. Jack says “I don’t care anymore.”
- Kate arrives back at Benbo and finds Jimmy and Phil in bed. Inadvertently uncovers that Jimmy has been lying about owning island. Jimmy runs off.
- Jack arrives back at the batcave and Kate is gone, but so too is the contract.
- Kate arrives back at Benbo and finds Jimmy and Phil in bed. Inadvertently uncovers that Jimmy has been lying about owning island. Jimmy runs off.
- Jack saves Jimmy & Phil from the water – doesn’t see the feather stuck inches away on the cliff.
- On the plane – Kate has got the contract.
- Jack and others fly Whithorn One back to London.
- On the plane – Kate sees Mrs. Porter who may or may not be with Harold? Either way works...
- In the board room, Kate cries (?) in front of Whithorn “Everyone hates me”. Whithorn says “Of course they hate you. That’s why we pay you so much.” Kate says “I want to build houses. I don’t want to be hated.” She then tears the contract up and throws it out of a window and it floats up in the updraft.
- Jack loves Kate. The end.

31st AUGUST 2010
Back to the start again – once more! The plot feels much better, more cohesive, no fat. It’s a good feeling. I imagine that it would be difficult to recognise this feeling – but when you do – it’s a good thing. It means the script is taking its final shape.

Wrote the new jetty scene with Frank being turned in to Kidd. Kidd is great now. He works a treat.

2nd SEPTEMBER 2010
Kidd & Kate make a deal to help each other out.

6th SEPTEMBER 2010
Have begun back with Jimmy and Philip’s story. Not sure how much they will be in the final story it really feels like we cut away from Jack and Kate to go to them where as it used to be that they were almost an equal plot point.

9th SEPTEMBER 2010
More Jimmy & Philip – invented a “I can’t swim” sub-plot for Jimmy that includes a bell that is rung by prang. It means that everyone gets up and jumps in the water – trying to get Jimmy to eventually jump in and swim. This will pay off at the end when Jimmy & Phil jump off the cliff.

It feels good to have the energy in the writing back. We’re both feeling good that we’re coming towards the end of the script – halfway through, we were both wanting to move on to something else – individually written scripts whereas now tis one seems really tight and good fun to write again. It’s interesting to feel the different phases that we go through. It certainly feels like the quality of the writing has grown. We don’t seem to go down as many small insignificant roads anymore and have a better sense of what is right for the story.

14th SEPTEMBER 2010
Have got back to where we were at before starting again – at the batcave. Everything feels really good up to here. I’m off to India for 2 weeks, so John says he will try and write some stuff between now and then. Cleary deadline is approaching so we’ll probably need the extra
work. I’m a bit unsure about leaving John to do what he can – probably just because we’re at such an important part of the story. He’ll be fine though. It’s just me not wanting to let go.

5th OCTOBER 2010
John has done some tweaks since I’ve been away in India. Good things he’s done but, it doesn’t matter how much I like his work, I always feel a little jealous when he gets to write separately, without me. I’m sure he feels the same. A good session – getting down to the nitty-gritty now. We’re nearing the final act of the script which means tying up the character motivations.

7th OCTOBER 2010
Very good session. Going back over some old stuff and tweaking things. Also getting some very good new ideas. Kate has become a Whithorn again – but she hides this fact from everyone.

10th OCTOBER 2010
Did a Sunday session in preparation of meeting Cleary deadline again. Spent most of the time talking about Kate’s character – trying to simplify what she’s about. Think we have…

Jack wants forgiveness – must learn to forgive himself.
Kate wants the courage to be independent – must learn that independent doesn’t mean being alone.

We are both very confident that this will be the last draft of the screenplay – aside from some tweaks here and there and perhaps a dialogue run. We feel that the script has finally found its proper shape with regards to character and structure. Really like it and have been invigorated again now that it’s getting close and we’re nearly done. Also, it’s just a good script, so it’s exciting to think about getting it out there.

12th OCTOBER 2010
Have begun to write the end sequences now. Still find ourselves going backwards and then forwards, fixing up some stuff earlier in the script when we make a change later. Everything affects everything.

14th OCTOBER 2010
Just a thought here that we seem to be much better and more accepting of each of us doing writing separately. I used to think that we wouldn’t do it much, but the more that we do it, the better it seems to get. It really is a good way to get a draft down on paper and then we’ll meet and discuss.

John has gone and written quite a bit for the ending. I’ve been very busy at work and not been able to meet up. We send each other emails and comments about what we write separately. John, I have to admit, has done some great work without me and I’m very thankful for it. He’s good with dialogue and witticisms. As long as we’ve discussed the scenes before hand, I am finding that it doesn’t make much difference who writes the scenes. We usually start a together session with going through what each of us has written separately.

I got up 2 hours early, before John got here this morning, to write the stuff that I’d promised to do. Felt bad that I hadn’t got to it earlier but it worked out okay. Basically, fixed all the ravine stuff, so that the bad monkey can survive, allowing Jack to save Kidd from it later.

We’re on track now, but I know that I’ll be busy again for the next week as my students are finishing up. Probably do a lot more separate writing, just to get it done.
19th OCTOBER 2010
Getting exciting now. We’re getting nearer to the end of this draft.
We got to a scene where we meet Kate’s mother Rosemary and her Spanish nude model.

Basically looking good.

28th OCTOBER 2010
had an enforced break again due to my finishing up with students.
Got back into it very well today. Went back over some old ground and then did some rewriting
of the scenes that John wrote. We’d blown a story point (jack know that Kate knows he owns
the island) too early so had to go back and save it for later.

Also reworked the scene with Kate and her Mother Rosemary. It’s nice when we both come to
the writing session with the same thoughts. In this case we both though that the scene with
Rosemary, as written, was pointless and needed to be fixed.

9th NOVEMBER 2010
Just got over the nose operation, so couldn’t write for a week or so.
Have got back in to it now and are still finding that Kate’s story isn’t strong enough. Needs
more character development and more character arc. Have decided that her story is more
about her troubles with her father and why she’s doing the job she’s doing instead of begin an
architect.

11th NOVEMBER 2010
Have decided that the board room ending won’t be satisfactory for Kate and Jack’s ending.
Wrote Kate facing up to her father (surprise reveal) in the boardroom and getting catharsis.

Both left today with some homework – John will write the revolving door scene where Kate
and jack get together – I will re-edit the script so far as it’s running to long by about 10 pages.

14th NOVEMBER 2010
Final Sunday writing session before seeing Cleary again on Sunday. Getting keen to finish
this draft as have been on it long enough. It’s been nearly 2 years. Still, the script is in much
better shape than it ever has been. Good character arcs for each of the characters now –
good forward momentum through the whole story and good structure. Looking forward to
some feedback.

Wrote the final 2 scene back at benbo and then fixed up some tweaks. All in all a pretty good
day.

16th NOVEMBER 2010
Met with Stephen Cleary today for a feedback session about the current draft. Not too happy
with the feedback – even though it’s on the money – I thought we were in better shape than
ever. Turns out not to be the case.
Most of Cleary’s main points were to do with an undeveloped character of kate – especially in
the love story – what’s her problem with love? Also, Cleary thought that her character
development was inconsistent. What’s her “emotional disturbance” was one of is main
problems.

Cleary keeps at us to work on that fact that kate must leave behind London and enter a new
world that she struggles with. Therefore, this new world must be one of love, honesty,
friendship etc. everything that she doesn’t have in London. She must struggle to come to
terms with this new set of values.
Overall, invaluable feedback but disappointing that we hadn’t seen some of these things ourselves…

Still – feel good that the story is in place – just not that the characters are right.

18th NOVEMBER 2010
Met with Annabelle today – her feedback was along the same lines of Cleary’s. She was probably a bit more generous with pointing out the good stuff – funny scenes and lines – but also much more specific about where it was working and where it wasn’t.

Overall, her main thrust was that Kate’s emotional journey was undeveloped and her character was inconsistent. She didn’t think we understood where Kate’s emotional journey was at any one point in the story. She’s probably right.
Annabelle also thought that there needed to be more heat between J&K. More friction. More conflict.
Annabelle was also very good at pointing out some of the logic issues of the story. All in all – very good feedback.

3rd DECEMBER 2010
Had first session back today with John after receiving all the feedback form Cleary & Annabelle.

Some of the things that are written above (14 Nov) have turned out to be wrong. Character arcs are lacking severely – particularly in relation to Kate & Jack’s love stories. So, today we spent the time identifying back stories for where J&K’s love issues come from.

In a nutshell – we talked about…

• KATE’S BACKSTORY – Kate was married (or in a relationship) when she was younger and her husband betrayed her, resulting in Whithorn’s paying out $2,000,000 in either a divorce settlement – or that Kate’s partner just swindled them in a dodgy business deal. Either way, it resulted in Kate owing Whithorn $2,000,000 and that’s why she has become a negotiator for the company – she’s paying her debt back to her father. Whithorn wants to forget about it but Kate is adamant. This is evidenced by (potentially terrific) scene in the limo where Kate negotiates the bonus of the Benbo job DOWN but Whithorn tries to negotiate it UP. Audience wouldn’t know why – but would be intrigued.

• Because of this backstory – being fucked over by a lover for money – Kate no longer trusts anyone to do with love – and even uses love against people during her negotiations – as is witnessed by Kate & Mrs. Porter. TRUST IS A LAST RESORT FOR KATE.

• We might start the Mrs. Porter scene with Kate talking about herself – and her backstory – as if it’s a conversation between Kate and her grandmother – something about love – but we realise its actually a real estate deal.

• Jack’s backstory (although not as convincing as yet) needs to be tailored to be about love too. Perhaps when Ben came to Princeton to see him (looking like Robinson Crusoe) Jack said “fuck off” because he was in love and Ben embarrassed him? Perhaps he was in love with a rich chick? This could play well with Kate – given she’s hiding the fact that she’s a rich chick. Jack could discover this when he gets to London.

• Jack’s character will have to change a bit – he needs to be a nicer person because he’s representative of the world that Kate has to find confronting – honest, loving, fedinyl and, most of all, TRUSTING.

• PLOT- Kate would come to Benbo knowing EVERYTHING. She knows Jack’s the owner, she knows Jack’s an Ornithologist, she knows he probably won’t sell. She
comes to Benbo undercover as a bird journalist pretending to be doing an article on Jack & Ben Hawkins. When jack realises she basically knows nothing about birds – Kate “confesses” that it’s her first job and she pretended to be a birdy to get the job. “Please help, Jack. I don’t want to get fired.”

- Kate needs to build her dream house so she can prove her worth to others – not to live in it on her own.
- We should consider – ONLY CONSIDER – that Jack goes to London to sell the island to Whithorn – and it’s kate who chases him...
- What if there’s no bird? That jack knows it (or probably does but won’t admit it) because then his father died for no reason. Then kate wouldn’t find the bird.
- Kate crawls up the waterfall – and finds the feather – but it’s the feather of a bush-chook or a pheasant – and thinks it’s the Pteratorn. She hides the feather. Problem with this is that if she thinks it’s the Pteratorn – then she can’t develop there. Why would she hide it? She’d want to know the truth from jack. She’d almost give it to him and say “Is it?”

Whilst we both agreed that it would have been better to be further developed and there was some disappointing aspects to the feedback, we’re not too daunted by it. It feels good that the story is in place and that the characters in side that story need to be worked on, that’s all.

My baby is coming very quickly though – hopefully we can get another draft done before that comes along!!

**8th DECEMBER 2010**
Did some writing – forgot to enter in to diary.

**15th DECEMBER 2010**
Did some writing – forgot to enter in to diary

Think we did a lot more separate writing. I have done the first two or three scenes and then we’ve reworked them when we’ve got together. Quite enjoy the solo writing again – it’s good to come to the together sessions with something to work from.

**17th DECEMBER 2010**
Have done a few sessions of writing and have found the rewriting phase quite easy, due to the couple of years work we’ve already put in. Have started from scratch again with the new ideas for the characters. It all seems to be going quite well.

I have the strong feeling that John & I will do a lot more separate writing now, given time constraints are getting tougher. I think we both feel that we’ve been at this story for long enough.

**11th JANUARY 2011**
Started again for the new year... Hopefully this will be the final draft of the script. We’ll see.

Back on to story cards...

**AT THE RESTAURANT...**
Jack says “of course there’s a bird. I’ll show you in the morning on the boat.” One of the few things that jack lies about.

**ON THE PAUPER...**
- Kate questions Jack about Kidd’s revelations – that Jack’s hiding something – as far as Kidd knows, Jack’s never found the bird so now Kidd thinks that Jack has found the bird and is keeping it a secret (perhaps to start a bidding war between universities)
• Kate freaks out when a pelican lands on the boat – which makes the boat crash.

WALK TO BATCAVE...
• Jack angry at Kate for crashing the boat. “What kind of bird journo is scared of a pelican?!!! Crash my boat!” (make use of the tension and conflict here)

BATCAVE...
• Kate comes clean about not being a real journo – says it’s her first time and first story. Jack agrees to help her. He’s glad that she came clean and told the truth as “The truth might be hard but it’s always the best thing.”

BATCAVE TO WATERFALL
• Jack comes clean that he’s never seen the bird. He tells her that the last journal entry is something that he said to his Dad. “There is no bird, are you a fool?”

WATERFALL...
• Kate goes to clean up. Sees the bird, climbs up waterfall. Jack rescues her. (It’s a bush chook)
• Back at the camp, Jack whilst makes a dodgy hut, Kate tells her back story about the man that cheated her out of money. Kate is very thankful for Jack helping her at the cliff – she’s not use to having someone “was there for her” – usually the opposite.
• Jack goes to catch dinner – comes back and Kate’s made a great hut.
• Kate goes to freshen up, comes back, they have sex.

POST-COITAL
• Kate comes clean to Jack – she brings out the journal and says “This belongs to you. There’s something I have to tell you.” CUT TO:

WATERFALL TO RAVINE TOP..
• Green rumped parrot scene.

RAVINE TOP
• Updrafts moment with the paper over the cliff.
• Kate tells Jack (in not so many words) “I love you”. Jack says “I don’t. Too many lies.” Kate replies “No. All the lies are gone. I’m out in the open now.” Then Kidd arrives, who Kate knows, which Jack is angry about (as that’s another lie or non-truth) CUT TO: Kate and Kidd in the tent scene. (inc. Kate telling Kidd that Jack says the ravine is too dangerous, so Kidd assumes that’s where Jacks’ secret is.)
• NOTE - From this point onwards, Kate reverts to the liar she was at the start – she tried the truth and she got burned.

RAVINE TOP MORNING
• Jack wakes up and finds Kidd is gone. Kate says “he took ropes and left”.

INSIDE RAVINE
• Jack rescues Kidd in the ravine. Admits angrily, “There is no bird!”
• Possibly need some nugget of wisdom from Kidd here about Jack and Kate being in love.

REVINE TOP
• Kidd leaves Kate & Jack to sort out their love problems.

TEMPLE
• Jack says “I love you”, Kate says “Too hard. Island is the problem. Will always be between us.
• Jack sells the island for a dollar.
• Kate says “I need time to be alone... to think..."
7th APRIL 2011

Life has got in the way of this draft. Have had a baby and am finding it emotionally and literally difficult to be motivated to finish this script. There are times that I don’t want to write it at all. Also want to get started on something else. Feeling unenthused but have a meeting with John today, so we’ll see what we come up with.

LATER - Great session today. Now I feel like we’re getting there. Agree that there’s still some holes when it comes to things for them to “do” action-wise, but we’re getting there. I think we should get it all plotted out before we go too much further.

Anyway...

· A Cleary reminder – the whole story should be about Kate & Jack finding a way to be in love.

· There is no bird. Jack has been trying to keep the possibility, the rumour, of the pteratorn alive via his treatment of Kidd and the occasional journo article. He regrets how he told his father “there is no bird” and now wishes he was wrong. Jack admits that he’s wasting his life on the island.

· Jack sells the island to Kate forgetting that it’s his home. Regrets this.

· Kate discovers that there’s a second temple on the island. It’s the key to an architectural mystery. Architecture is her true passion but pretends not to value it. She would sell the island because of her debts. She must learn that the true value of the island is that it’s the home of the man she loves and the key to her true passion.

· Kate’s journey needs to be from someone who is scared of love, doesn’t value people’s homes emotionally and thinks lying to people to get ahead financially is ethical; to a truthful woman who is scared of love but knows it’s worth the risk, values the island because it’s Jack home (and architecturally significant) and knows that money (and lying) isn’t worth a thing if you’ve got no love.

· Jack’s journey is from a man who tells the truth, no matter the consequences, at all times and protects an island because it is ornithologically significant; to a man who protects an island because it’s his home whilst learning to admit that he’s living a lie and that sometimes lies are okay when it’s for the right reasons.

· When Jack sells the island for $1.00 it’s the sign of ultimate trust and love. This scares Kate. Last time, a man pretended to love her to get her millions, this time a man does love her and doesn’t want her millions. She doesn’t trust Jack nor his love.

· “The island’s not somewhere to hide, it’s somewhere to live.”

· The Bird statue is 800 years older than the Pauper’s temple. Jack thinks it’s proof that the bird lived here and probably still does. It’s confused logic. He bought Kate to the dark side for a photo opportunity of him with the statue bird. What it does though is ignites her architecture passion.

· WATERFALL SEQUENCE: (there is no Kate climbing the waterfall)
  1. Kate goes to swim. Jack finds the journal whilst building a very crappy hut.
  2. Jack goes to confront Kate but gets flustered by her nakedness. (this is the true spark of the sexual tension)
  3. Jack goes back to the camp and builds up confidence to confront her.
  4. Kate comes back looking damn sexy. Jack storms off, says he’s going to get dinner.
  5. When Jack returns, Kate’s built them an excellent hut to share.
6. They have lobster-eating sex.
7. In the hut, Kate admits to Jack that she’s stolen the journal and the true reason that she’s there.
8. Somehow do the green-rumped parrot scene.
9. At the ravine – Kidd shows up and Jack realises that they know each other. Jack screams “There is no bird!”
11. At the end of the ravine is a second temple which Jack takes them to.

· The ending will be at Trafalgar Square with both Jack and Kate at each end of the pigeons. Kate walks the cauldron of pigeons.

MAY 20TH 2011

Have been meeting with John once a week or so in the school café. It has got much more difficult to meet now that we can’t hook up at home or at John’s office (no longer has one). We go for about 3-4 hours. Haven’t actually written anything together for quite some time now – and probably have found that most of the writing will take place separately. This is fine by me. It’s too difficult to find time together to actually do any writing.

The other thing worth mentioning is that I’ve had some doubts about our ability to finish this script. it seems that life has caught up with us. I have been losing my passion for it – and this strongly coincides with our less writing time and not actually writing together, there’s probably a connection there. I am past these feelings now – every time we get together it seems to dissipate a bit but it’s definitely there. John agrees as we’ve talked about it. For me, a lot of it is the desire to make another film as quickly as possible. This script isn’t one that we’re going to be able to make, so that’s bugging me that it’s still hanging around.

Anyway...

We did have a major revelation – what if we cut the first 15 pages? Just cut them right out? This is losing all the set-up of what Kate does for a living (Mrs. Porter scenes & the limo). It’s an interesting thought and we’re seeing what happens.

The second act now looks like this...

1. Kate comes clean at the bat cave.. (no architect journo – completely clean) - this is the start of them “hating” each other – lack of trust. Jack can take the moral high ground from here. (we also lose that he finds the journal here which I think I have written in the script I just sent you)
2. Green-rumped parrot scene.
3. A walking scene (I went shopping?) that includes a bit of Kate’s backstory... Remember, Jack has been approached by the Whithorn’s before, so he can think “How can you work for a mob like that?!?” not realising she is a Whithorn, let alone works for them! Perhaps we get out of this scene that Kate owes money and that’s why she does what she does.
4. Waterfall – Kate climbs the waterfall because halfway up it is another clue to the architecture mystery – guarded by a monkey – which might be a clue for jack too about the Devil monkey temple? Kate almost falls and is saved by Jack – she now starts to trust him as he saved her.
5. Fall in love at the waterfall... Trust / love begins here. Jack builds a fire, says he’s going to find dinner – comes back and Kate has built a great hut. She goes off to wash
up. Jack finds her looking all sexy under the waterfall – at the dinner they laugh etc.
which leads to lobster-eating sex.

6. They spend the night in Kate’s hut – falling in love with each other’s personalities. Another good opportunity to get out the rest of kate’s backstory – she loves architecture and about the ex-hubby that screwed her over for money.

7. Travelling scene – they need to have fun together today – forget that they don’t like each other – enjoy each other’s company.

8. Arrive at the ravine. Jack does the updrafts thing with Kate’s silk scarf. This leads to a passionate kiss between the two. This also leads to Kidd spotting the scarf up in the air and finding Jack & Kate – having a passionate kiss.

9. Kidd & Kate know each other. Jack angry but not too much. Kidd mentions the journal which jack now realises they stole from him. Jack now furious at Kate – hates her again. “Lying bitch!” (She has the journal in her bag) THE TRUST IS BROKEN.

10. Kate & Kidd tent scene – Kate alludes to Kidd that Jack did the updrafts thing – this leads to Kidd thinking that the bird is down in the ravine. Kate also said it’s dangerous down there, according to jack. Kidd thinks that jack simply wants to keep the pteratorm hidden from him.

11. Wake up in the morning at the ravine – Kidd is gone down in to the ravine.

12. Jack & Kate rescue Kidd from the devil monkey and find the hidden temple. Kidd & Kate accept the truth that there is no pteratorm – Jack was always just looking for his Dad – he never got to say goodbye or say sorry for his last words “there is no bird. Are you a fool?”

13. Hidden temple – jack finds Ben’s last resting place. Ben has left communication for Jack – “don’t waste your life – all you need is love”. Jack has a funeral pyre which burns the journal and ashes go up to heaven in the updrafts.

14. Hidden temple – Kate has made an amazing discovery about architecture. (need to research this)

15. Jack says that he’s in love with kate. He agrees to sell the island for a dollar because wants Kate not to buy it. Kate needs to embrace her architecture passion, rather than ruining the home of her love. (they need to have been arguing about selling the island throughout the second act – jack saying “No way, never!”)

16. Kate takes the contract and flees because she’s terrified of jack’s “no holds barred” love – it’s true unselfish, motiveless love. She is so scared of it that she retreats to the place she knows – “bad” Kate.

17. Somewhere, someone, (Jimmy?) tells Kate that “I don’t trust love”. So, she fells back to London. This would be better if it’s a misunderstanding of some kind that gives Kate an excuse to think “I knew it!”

We also want to add somewhere in the story these elements...

1. Jack has a scar form the devil monkey.

2. Scene One – we might need the Limo scene except move it to the airport, First Class Lounge, where Kate is about to go to Berlin. Philip arrives with the change of plans. Perhaps Whithorn can only be on SKYPE here too? This would mean we never see him until the end – could be cool!

3. A comment form Kidd - “Princeton doesn’t know why I’m here – I told them I was going to the library!”

4. Kidd is like a young Ben – Jack can’t help liking him.

SEPTEMBER 1ST 2011

Have still been meeting in the school café but it has turned into every two or three weeks. We can go a long time without talking about the story now. Not like it used to be. I have been doing a lot of the drafting and then sending it to John for revisions. I don’t mind working this way – probably like it in fact as it keeps my writing chops up. I feel like I’ve been writing more
which is a good thing. He's done a little bit but I think that unemployment is stifling his ability to sit down and write.

It turns out that not having a writing space is very difficult. Will need to alter a chapter of the thesis to talk about this.

SEPTEMBER 29 2011

NOTES FROM TODAY’S SESSION

• Keep working on Jack being the London real estate developer and Kate being the Benbo ornithologist.

• Physically, visually, Jack’s look is pretty casual clothes, he’s got tattoos, and is a creative type.

• Jack’s beginning might be along the lines of the following: We meet Jack pitching to a potential firm/investors in a board room. He’s pitching a new development that he’s been the chief architect for – a low-cost housing project that will house a thousand families in high quality housing. It’s a very socially conscious project that satisfies him creatively. Furthermore, it’s a very good pitch – jack’s very passionate, generous, creative and unselfish. Unfortunately, the Whithorn family (which he’s NOT a member of) have strong influence over the project – which could be in a number of ways:
  o They’ve secretly bought the land that jack had identified,
  o They’ve got leverage over the company jack’s pitching to – who do want to work with jack and see the social merit in the company but don’t want to go against one of the their biggest backers – the Whithorns,
  o Unbeknownst to Jack, Whithorn (parent company) might own the company and he finds that Veronica in on the panel

• Veronica - is a Whithorn daughter. She’s a very credible love interest for Jack and, in fact, she’s his EX and he was very close to marrying her once upon a time. Jack broke off the marriage/relationship because he didn’t like the person he’d become – one of London’s best real estate negotiators with a ruthless reputation. Veronica liked Jack’s cutthroat nature. WHithorn liked Jacks’ cutthroat nature. Philip liked Jack but not necessarily his cutthroat nature.

• So… Whithorn family has the power over Jack’s project (that Jack’s been working for along time), knows how much Jack wants it, and is very willing to back him and the project but only if Jack comes out of “negotiator retirement” and does “one last job” (jack would say “I’m not an assassin, Whithorn!” Whithorn would say “That's exactly what you are!”) – Benbo. (six days to buy it, Chinese investors etc. etc.). So, jack accepts the job.

• THE ABOVE IS ALL IN THE FIRST 10 – 12 PAGES! (We can do it)

• On the island – we get Jack & Kate back to Benbo sooner – which allows them to go on a proper “first date”. The date might include the old tattoo scene making a reappearance. At the date, Kate wears a beautiful dress that Jimmy found in the mistaken suitcase that Jack has. This is Kate embracing her femininity – she’s sexy!! This is where Jack realises that he’s totally fallen for her. (Kate’s probably already fallen for him by now)
• Ben Hawkins is not a corpse. He’s never found. Kate has to accept that she’ll never find her father. Her journey is about ‘moving on’. This might mean that there is no pteratorm either. Kate’s been looking for the “lost” journal of her father and finds it with the monkeys in the ravine. It says there is no bird. “Kate was right. I miss her. I should leave and go and be her father blah blah blah” Finding the journal releases Kate.

• We also need to clarify for the audience, very early, that Ben Hawkins is missing as it comes too late. Kidd can tell Jack this. Then this would allow Jack to say to Kate “What are you really looking for? There’s no twelve foot bird. It’s impossible.” OF which she’d try and defend that it’s still possible (because she doesn’t want to accept her last words to her father. In this, she doesn’t’ want to be right.)

• Why do we fall in love? Vulnerability, humour, passion, generosity, courage, kindness, intelligence. We need to show that both Kate & jack have these qualities and that they see them in each other. Then we’ll buy the “love”.

• JIMMY – we have the opportunity for a bit of a transformation of Jimmy’s opinion (not character – no time for that) fro thinking that Jack is a scumbag real estate developer (hence the radio conversation) but changes his mind, from Philip’s influence, that he thinks that Jack’s a perfect match for Kate and he actively puts the together – by giving her the dress for example.

• Philip – has the opportunity to go from a (in the closet?) son who is under the thumb of his powerful father and sister – to a proud gay man who is going to live his own life – in some ways, Jack is his hero.

• We still have to strengthen and clarify for the audience that Kate was at Princeton when her father went missing and she left to come to the island and find him. But has never left. Also, that she was estranged from her father, possibly an embarrassment to her. We have to establish her guilt. This links in to why she doesn’t like Princeton. This seemed a bit of a cloudy point...

• Have to be careful that, at the happy ending, Jack doesn’t abandon the good he was trying to do for love. He must (probably) get both.

• We need to shorten the number of days that it takes them to walk across the island. Really only should be 2 nights MAXIMUM (if not one night). So, which night do we cut? The Batcave – has to be night as the bats only come out at night. The waterfall – really needs to be night as they have to build the hut, swim in the waterfall, eat lobster and spend the night talking by the fire. It’s probably that the ravine night gets cut – thus losing the “lightning flashes joke” (which is okay) as the rest of the ravine scene can happen during the last daylight – nothing particularly night about it. It doesn’t need an overnight stay to work. Actually, might be able to use the “you can go and get f**ked THUNDER!” at the batcave after the bats have gone. Perhaps Kate tries to say Sorry for tricking Jack and we use the thunder to cover the swearing in Jack’s response. “You can go and get THUNDER Kate! You knew the bats were there!” Or we might be able to find a way to use it later back at Benbo.

OCTOBER 6th 2011

Met up at Woodend. Discusseed Scott Roberts feedback…
• To make Jack a flesh and blood character, what he really NEEDS is a family and a home. That's why he's an architect – he spends his life designing homes for other families. He needs his own family and finds that on Benbo with Kate.
• The opening scene is Jack pitching his "solution to the housing problem" to a small development firm who have good investors. It's a good pitch and the clients seem hooked. They have to get the OK though from their parent company – the Whithorns. Veronica & Philip walk in the room. Veronica clears the room and tells jack that the Whithorn empire is in jeopardy. They need to buy and island etc.
• Turns out that Jack used to work with the Whithorns – and was romantically involved with Veronica – they almost got married and jack almost became part of the family. The Whithorns are a strong family and jack liked that but he didn’t love Veronica.
• Perhaps tell the audience this via a dream sequence/flashback whilst jack’s flying to Thailand on the plane. He’s reading up on bird knowledge and falls asleep and dreams (or remembers) how he was locked in an attic full of pigeons by the other orphans. From this telling moment he developed his ornithophobia.
• We need to clarify that Kate was at Princeton when Ben went missing. Also clarify that she was embarrassed by him as he was a laughing stock at Princeton.
• Smart Jack comes clean with Kate about who he is and why he’s there after the boat crash – when Kate’s talking "bird talk" that confuses Jack.
• Jack is expected on the island – has rung ahead and organised the interview. Therefore, he’s armed with all the knowledge about Ben and Kate BUT not about the pteratorn. That’s one that hasn’t been publicised (swept under the carpet by Princeton as an “embarrassing episode”) because no-one believes it so there’s no information about it. It’s a surprise to him when he hears about it at the temple.
• Kate agreed to the interview because she’s decided its time to tell the world about the Pteratorn. They’ve got good numbers and have to get other resources to help them now. So, she agree to the interview to reveal all. Turns out that Jack’s not an journo!
• When Jack steals the journal, he doesn’t get to read it. Instead he hides it under the porch whilst kate’re collecting Pedro. He collects it the next morning before getting on the boat with her. Therefore, neither he nor Kidd have read the journal by the time the boat crashes.
• Kidd thinks that Jack is a journalist. When Jack goes to skype, Kidd’s not there. Instead he’s getting on the boat down at the jetty. So, when he comes to Jack’s hut on the island, he thinks’ he’s making a deal with the journo. They both want the same thing – is there a bird?
• We’re thinking that Kidd’s a bit of an egomaniac. When he eventually gets shown the pteratorns, he gets power hungry – thinks he’ll be a star. So he possibly even teams up with Veronica.
• When J&K arrive back from their date on Ko Tao, they find that the seaplane has arrived and Philip and Veronica are here. Veronica kisses Jack and acts as if she’s still his lover. Veronica finds out about the birds and wants them off the island. What happens?

We basically ended discussion on “What happens during the third act?” Veronica is on Benbo too. She arrives in the plane with Philip. We thought that it would be good for Kate and Jack to team up together to save the island and the birds.

OCTOBER 10th 2011

• Kate is angry at Ben for having willed her the island which, in turn, has made her trapped here. She’s angry for the way he handled the whole pteratorn affair; not telling Princeton, not telling her – which led her to say “There is no bird. Are you a fool” as the last thing she ever said to her father. She regrets this and is angry because of it – really at herself but it comes out at her father. There was talk of a
• Kate is allowing Jack to come to the island because she’s ready to tell the story of the pteratorm – the world needs to know now because it’s saved and then more resources can be put into it and then she can move on.
• Jack wants a family. Kate wants freedom, not a family. Jack thinks that family is the answer to all the world’s problems. Kate thinks family is cause of the world’s problems.
• Veronica may have rejected Jack because he wanted children. Perhaps she said “maybe in 10 years” so Jack dumped her. He would have been attracted to Veronica because of the very tight Whithorn family unit – he would like that. Veronica still harbors feelings for Jack but they’re unreciprocated.
• Prang tells the pteratorm story to some kids on the Ko Tao docks (whilst waiting for J&K who are on a date) and the kids get scared because at that moment the Whithorn seaplane flies overhead. This will be roughly at the half way mark – perhaps a little after.
• Kate falls in water & sand at meeting Veronica and looks like a drowned rat, whereas Veronica looks hot.
• Jack discovers that the Whithorns were never going to honour their deal with him as he finds some plans that say otherwise in the plane – they weren’t going to build low-cost family homes – they were going to build penthouses for the rich. He now knows the Whithorns can’t be trusted.
• Not long after Veronica arrives, she offers Kate to buy the island. V says that they’ll start the “Ben Hawkins Memorial national Pteratorm Park” with a little “administration building and maybe a couple of tiny beds”. Kate falls for it. Jack, however, knows what they really plan is a huge resort with maybe a tiny patch of land kept as a “bird spotting area”. For jack, the second act becomes about sabotaging the deal between Kate and V.
• Jack doesn’t want kate to sell the island because he sees it as breaking up her family. She’s the mother figure, the birds are the children, the island is their home. He wants to join the family.
• Near the end, Kidd becomes Jack’s true ally and helps him save the birds because jack can’t physically touch them. Perhaps they kidnap the birds and plan to set them free at the ravine.
• Veronica, at the very end, steals the birds and (accidental?) they are thrown off Pauper’s Cliff. Jack jumps from the cliff (true love) and saves them.
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AGREEMENT DATED:

BETWEEN: [INSERT NAME] [ABN] [ADDRESS] (“Writer A”)
AND: [INSERT NAME] [ABN] [ADDRESS] (“Writer B”)

RECITALS:

A. Writer A and Writer B have collaborated in the writing of a feature film draft script titled “[INSERT TITLE]” based on the idea by [INSERT NAME] and intend to write further drafts (the Work).

IT IS AGREED

1. Writer A and Writer B will work as a writing team on the Work.

2. Writer A and Writer B will own the copyright in the Work, as at the date of this Agreement, in equal shares and will own the copyright in any further drafts of the work in equal shares unless otherwise agreed.

3. Both Writer A and Writer B will:
   3.1 Control the future development of the Work either through any funding body, producer or otherwise;
   3.2 Sign any further script development agreements or documentation in relation to funding.
   3.3 Sign any other documents, the terms of which both of them have agreed to, in relation to the Work including profit shares.

4. Credits will read on any production of the Work:
   “Written by [INSERT NAME] and [INSERT NAME]”
   “Based on an idea by [INSERT NAME]”

5. It will be a condition of any sale of rights in the Work for the production of a feature film that [INSERT NAME IF APPLICABLE] be the director of the film unless [INSERT NAME] agrees otherwise.

6. In the event of any dispute arising between Writer A and Writer B about the Work or its development, Writer A and Writer B will, prior to taking any legal action of any nature:
   6.1 Attempt in good faith between themselves to resolve such dispute expeditiously;
   6.2 If not resolved expeditiously, refer the dispute to formal mediation.

7. If either Writer A or Writer B wish to end their involvement in the writing in the Work, then he or she (as the case may be) will assign his or her copyright in the Work to the other on such terms as are then agreed between them following good faith negotiations as to further payments of fees, credits and other entitlements.

8. Neither party may assign this Agreement without the prior written consent of the other party.

9. Neither party is entitled to pledge the credit of the other party or to enter into any other agreements purporting to bind the other party without the written consent of the other party.
EXECUTED AS AN AGREEMENT

SIGNED BY WRITER A: .................................................................

IN THE PRESENCE OF: .............................................................

WITNESS: .................................................................

SIGNED BY WRITER B: .............................................................

IN THE PRESENCE OF: .............................................................

WITNESS: .................................................................
Author/s:
O'Keefe, Andrew

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