

ALTERITY

Script for a
short film by

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1. INTRODUCTION.

The title "Alterity" appears on a black screen. An eerie murmuring underscore builds anticipation. A voice over breaks the silence:

THE PERSONA

Someone once said, "We're all human."

The audience is introduced to the cityscape: cars and people rush past in fast motion. (*The use of a dull-grey sepia filter throughout this scene creates a lifeless tone*).

CF to a MS inside a shopping mall. As the young male persona emerges from an escalator, the voice reappears.

THE PERSONA

I've been at boarding school for five years now, from a small country town. Bright lights. Fast cars. Good opportunities.

Images of the cityscape complement his reflections.

THE PERSONA

I feel like I'm in no-man's land, between city and country. I think I see the best and worst of both worlds.

*Returns to a CU of The Persona, in soft focus, so that the people in the background become obvious. A subtle juxtaposition is created between The Persona's reflections and the behaviour of the 'humans' in the background.

THE PERSONA

I think a lot, about life, about this world we live in. On the way home I think a lot about the things I've seen.

The Persona is pictured on a bus, supposedly travelling home.

FADE TO BLACK.

2. THE STILL SURFACE.

2.1 THE ROAD INTO THE TOWN.

As camera rolls slowly into the small country town, The Persona begins to introduce the specific situation:

THE PERSONA

Being different, being excluded. Being included.

...

2.2 MONTAGE

Tranquil, rustic images paint a romantic picture of the Australian rural experience. The lyrics of the prominent music track enhance the creation of this picture. (*Colour correction enhances the richness of the country landscape, in order to contrast with the lifeless sepia of the cityscape.*)

3. THE CONFLICT.

As the final peaceful image fades, the eerie murmuring underscore reappears and the images become more turbulent, and less serene. There is a significant shift in mood and tone, foreshadowing future developments. The Man attempts to provide insights into the reality of the situation:

THE PERSONA

It's like the still surface of a lake,
tranquil and calm. But it's only
surface deep. What lies beneath is
something more fragile, something
insecure.

...

A new voice enters. The perspective of a local. As The Local attempts to shed light on the issue, from his perspective, his words are complemented and juxtaposed by images and music.

THE LOCAL¹

"But they'd all come from Sydney. And they all must have come from the same area, because they all knew each other, like and they hung around like as if it was in a gang."

Shots of 'the city' kids appear from a distanced perspective: a car driving past, a MS from across the road.

THE LOCAL

"None of them worked, all on the dole, you know, and none of them had any intentions of looking for work. But because they were... like there was cheap accommodation here, and it was advertised as cheap accommodation, then we got all the rubbish from Sydney.

They thought they were actually better than anybody else in this town."

The Local's commentary about the city kids is juxtaposed by the bleak and desolate housing of the country town.

THE LOCAL

"These blokes, like they live in the city. There's murders, you know someone's stabbed or shot... You turn the wireless on every morning, and someone's shot or stabbed every, every day of the week. There isn't a day goes by."

After a return to the images of the city kids, the focus shifts to the country kids, pictured in a large group, friendly banter, all wearing similar clothes.

THE LOCAL

"Its just not the way... like we live here in the country, like... The local blokes here they'll have a biff up, they'll sort out their differences and what not, but you don't

¹ The Local is the voice of a local shop owner, recorded during an interview that I arranged with him in late 2004.

go to the extent of pulling knives and.. you know this sort of thing.

No, it's just not on."

As the siren wails over the fading images of the innocent, perhaps ignorant country scene, there is a return to darkness.

4. THE MURDER.

A confronting sequence of images appears (including a newspaper article entitled: "Tragedy touches Harden"), foreshadowing the murder. The Local continues to elaborate, this time specifically about the murder. Night-shots of the town illustrate his narration.

THE LOCAL

"And there was definitely alcohol, like, involved too, because the blokes from Harden had been to the Pub, and they probably had just enough in to stir these blokes. Because they weren't you know... They're just not going to take the shit from these bloody city kids; you know the shit that they were bunging on.

But for this bloke to actually go home and then come back with a knife... You know, so he'd had time to think about it. Like you just don't stab someone over a bloody hat or a bloody shirt, do you?

Like the Harden blokes wouldn't have been worrying about 'em, I think that's when... And then when the knife was produced, that's just... Because he... Like he stabbed both of them, like in a matter of seconds. No, it's just not on."

A textual overlay appears, informing the audience about the specifics of the murder. A haunting picture of the young man who was murdered emerges from the text.

FADE TO BLACK.

5. THE REFLECTION.

Bleak, overcast images combine with a haunting music track to set the tone for melancholic reflection on the tragedy of the murder. Motion blur emphasises the reality of the turmoil that lies beneath the still surface of the relaxed country façade. Both *The Persona* and *The Local* offer insights.

THE PERSONA

No one talks about it much anymore, more important things take over: the drought, the abattoirs, the footy. Its hard to be honest, its hard to confront it. Instead we just build more walls and carry on living.

THE LOCAL

"But you would've had to have seen 'em, umm... to actually believe it.

Like that's been the case all the time, even when I was a young bloke. Umm, you know, even when we played football. Country always beat the City because the City kids couldn't bloody handle it, you know. But then again, these kids come from the City and they think that they're a little bit higher than, you know, hick country bumpkins and that sort of thing."

*This particular section is complemented by a disturbing blurred fast motion shot that revolves around a football field - a symbolic image, alluding to the prominence of the rugby league culture of rural NSW. (A metaphor: the world revolving around an innocent, yet relatively closed minded existence).

THE LOCAL

"But nobody in the town would do anything about it. Umm... You know, the Locals, you know they were like ostriches; they just buried their heads in the sand and just, you know, turned away. They... you know they just

want to say well you know this is a great town and these sort of things don't just don't happen in this town."

The images and music fade, an awkward, premature closure.

The silence is shattered by a violent re-entry of the music track, and a confronting visual and aural juxtaposition between the lyrics of the song and the visual statements of the image is created.

THE PERSONA

City vs. country, black vs. white, Christians vs. Muslims, it all comes down to the same things: insecurity, fear.

A semi-montage occurs, with voice, image and text overlaid, bombarding the audience with the intensity of The Persona's thoughts.

THE PERSONA

I think it was Tim Flannery who once said:
"How can people be made to see beyond the external, and into the greatness of character that can grace a person, regardless of appearance, language or culture?"

The focus shifts back to the original newspaper clipping, and the word "TRAGEDY" is singled out. As the camera zooms in, 'Tragedy' becomes 'raged', and 'raged' becomes 'aged'.

There is a final transition to the first introductory shot of the small country town. This time, it is in reverse. The image of The Persona in the shopping mall, in soft focus is overlaid on top of this, also in reverse motion. The final shot suggests a symbolic withdrawal from the localised incident, to a deeper contemplation about the fabric of our nation and human nature in general. Complemented by The Persona's final words:

THE PERSONA

After all, we're all human.

FADE TO BLACK, as the title of the film, **ALTERITY**, reappears.

END.