ABSTRACT

The Cinematography of *In Paradise*

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A film's cinematography should interpret and render the various elements of the story in visual terms and add levels of meaning that enhance the action and dialogue. Lighting, framing and camera movement should be used to illustrate the mood, tone and themes of the film. The cinematography of In Paradise utilizes low-key lighting to set the dark mood and tone of the story, as well as diverse composition and a combination of smooth and handheld camera movement techniques to reflect the emotion and energy of the story.

The Cinematography of *In Paradise*

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My two years of formal training in film and digital media at Baylor University have enabled me to discover and develop a passion for visual storytelling and the art of cinematography that has helped to frame my professional goals and aspirations for the future. The decision to take on a feature length film as a thesis project has been influenced in large part by my goal to become a professional cinematographer. I have worked on several short films of various lengths in the past, but this project represents the first time I have worked on a feature length film. Undertaking a project of the ambitious scope and scale of *In Paradise* presented significant challenges, but at the same time provided a unique opportunity to apply what I have learned to this point and to ultimately gain invaluable experience as a director of photography.

While this project was produced as a thesis film and completed as a primary component of a Master's degree, I do not view *In Paradise* as solely a 'student' film. Co-director Philip Heinrich and I view this film as a low-budget independent film, and we approached the pre-production, production, and post-production phases as though it was a professional project. Our expectation with this project was not to simply make a technically competent student thesis film, but to produce a work that will stand on its own as an excellent film from any perspective. By approaching the film this way, I view this project as an extension of my professional goals and plan on using it as an example of my work in a professional context.

Many of the short films I have worked on in the past have been relatively small in scale and most have had film crews of around 4-6 people. While I do think that in certain filmmaking circumstances small crews can be appropriate, I believe that working on a larger production has provided a valuable learning experience and prepared me to effectively manage various professional production environments. I feel it is essential that a filmmaker be adaptable to different filmmaking environments depending on what the story and production call for. For *In Paradise*, a feature length film with over 30 locations and numerous logistical considerations, we had a film crew of approximately 12-15 people consisting largely of Baylor undergraduate FDM students. This film marked a significant leap in terms of scale of the production and size of the crew compared to my previous projects, and as co-director and director of photography was my responsibility to directly manage many of the crew positions. Having this experience of managing and leading a large number of people during production will undoubtedly prove to be valuable in future professional production situations, both large and small.

Storytelling Goals

As the director of photography, my job is to interpret and render, in visual terms, the ideas, actions, tones, and themes of the story and to add levels of meaning beyond the actions and dialogue of the characters on screen (Brown 3). In this chapter I will approach my general storytelling goals from the perspective of the cinematographer and highlight the visual elements that reinforce and add depth to the film.

At its core, *In Paradise* is a story about the power of an idea and the dangers of obsession. The film tells the story of Leon Vincent, a high school biology teacher with a fascination with quantum theory and the metaphysical. Leon is a brilliant man, but lonely,

isolated and emotionally distant. He is preoccupied with the past and his tragic history with the Metaverse Institute. He becomes obsessed with the idea of building a Paykel Device, a machine that he believes will allow him to travel to a different dimension. This obsession ultimately leads him down a dangerous path to the verge of self-destruction. In order to convey these ideas, themes, and the tone of the film I planned on making careful and deliberate use of several conceptual tools of visual storytelling including lighting, framing and focal length, color, texture, and camera movement.

Lighting

Leon's loneliness and isolation are major themes throughout the film that I intended to emphasize visually in several ways. First of all, I planned on having much of the film lit with extreme low-key chiaroscuro lighting that provides strong contrast between the light and dark portions of the frame. Not only does this allow me to guide the viewer's eye with precise control over the areas of the frame I want lit, it helps to create the sense of physical isolation that mirrors Leon's emotional isolation in the story. For instance, Leon's study is a prominent location in the film where he often retreats to work on his dimension-shifting machine. As the story progresses and the idea of building the machine begins to consume him, his study metaphorically represents a self-made prison where he becomes trapped by his obsession. By carefully controlling the light to illuminate Leon and allowing other areas of the frame to fall off into shadow, I am able to create the image of a man alone in his cell and visually portray the emotional isolation Leon has imposed on himself. Chiaroscuro lighting also serves to convey the dark and heavy emotional tone of much of the film. I planned on having the lighting mirror Leon's progression into the grips of obsession. As he becomes more consumed by his idea and

the tone of the film becomes darker, I intended for the contrast in the lighting to become more and more prominent.

Framing and Focal Length

Leon's isolation and obsession was also conveyed through framing and lens choices. The frame is the filmmaker's workspace and by consciously manipulating the position of people and objects within the frame the cinematographer is able to direct the audience's attention and add meaning to the action on screen (Brown 4). I planned on using framing and lens choices to create two contrasting extremes to convey Leon's isolation and descent into obsession based on his setting. There are many instances in the film where Leon is in a public setting but is emotionally isolated either as a result of his own actions, or by being ignored and disregarded by others. In these settings, I wanted to extensively utilize wide shots that reveal information about the environment to physically isolate Leon and accentuate the fact that he is alone in this wide-open space. By staying with the wide shots in situations where the audience would normally expect the director to move in to close ups, I was also able to add a sense of awkwardness and tension to the situation.

When Leon is alone in his study, I planned on using tightly framed close-ups and extremes close-ups to contrast the wide shots in public settings. As I mentioned before, his study represents his obsession, and by framing Leon in close-ups, I hoped to be able to create the sense that he is trapped and that his walls are closing in around him. Along with tight framing, I planned on using longer focal length lenses in these scenes. This was intended to distort the image by compressing the z-axis and accentuate the claustrophobic and suffocating environment that his study represents. By contrast, I planned on using

wide-angle lenses for the shots in public settings to expand the z-axis and emphasize Leon's physical isolation in the environment. I hope that the wide shots would also take on a second meaning as the film progresses and Leon becomes more obsessed and spends more time in his study. I wanted these shots to begin to represent freedom from his obsession and the importance of emotionally connecting with the outer world. Ultimately, connecting with people in the present, instead of being preoccupied with the past, is the only thing that can save Leon from self-destruction.

Color and Texture

Color and texture are two elements that play an essential role in telling the visual story of *In Paradise*. Color is an extremely powerful tool and can elicit significant, and sometimes unanticipated, emotional responses from an audience. It is essential that the director and cinematographer carefully consider their color choices when planning a film and understand the storytelling impact these choices can have. Two colors in particular, red and green, are prominent in the storytelling of *In Paradise* and are carefully utilized to enhance the meaning of the story.

We intended red to be more carefully controlled than any other color in *In Paradise* because of its representative significance to Leon's story. We planned on essentially removing red from the film's color palette except for certain objects that represent Leon's preoccupation with the past, and specifically Mariana, Leon's fiancé who was killed while testing an earlier version of the machine. This was to be done in order to emphasize the impact that these objects have on his character and his story. Mariana's death in many ways is the source of Leon's obsessive passion for his work. However, she is only shown in dream sequences, and instead of representing the memory

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of the real person that she was, she becomes a symbol that Leon uses to drive his obsession. While red can convey many emotions, it is often a color of passion, power and anger (Bellantoni 2). In the film Leon has a model of the BMW Isetta that once belonged to Mariana, and he hides a red amethyst crystal she used to wear in the desk in his study. These are objects that represent not only the passion that drives Leon's work but also the power that his obsession has over him.

Green is an interesting color in that, depending on the shade and context, it can used used to represent life, health, and vitality, but also corruption, poison, and sickness (Bellantoni 160). We planned on utilizing both lines of interpretation of green extensively in *In Paradise*. We wanted a light yellowish green be a prominent color in Leon's home, on his furniture, and in his wardrobe. Specifically, we planned on his kitchen appliances being avocado green and many of the shirts he wears being a sickly yellowish-green. Leon is a vegetarian, and much of the food he eats throughout the film is green, and he often drinks limeade or green health smoothies made from blended vegetables. Each of these applications of the color green represent and reinforce Leon's growing sickness. They highlight his mental illness, as he becomes more and more a slave to his obsession, as well as his deteriorating physical health. The green smoothies in particular call attention to his mental and physical deterioration when he is diagnosed with cancer and refuses traditional treatment. He does not want to be debilitated by chemo or radiation and does not want to divert time and money that he could use to build his machine to the treatment of his disease, so he instead relies on herbal smoothies that he makes at home.

We also wanted green to be prominently displayed in the dream sequences that depict the location of the Metaverse Institute, a research facility where Leon, Mariana,

and others, led by Metaverse leader J. Alvin Malachi, studied the theory behind the dimension-shifting machine Leon is attempting to build. The green shown in these dream sequences, however, is not a yellowish sickly color, but the deep rich green of the lush, thriving vegetation of the swamp forest where Metaverse is located and represents the healthy and vital nature of the color. The audience sees this setting from Leon's point of view as he perceives it in his dreams. His mind recreates this location, which has been so instrumental in shaping who he has become, as a paradise of sorts compared to the reality of his life in the present. This is of course an illusion and is shown to be so when Caroline and Dakota go to the swamp toward the end of the film. When the audience sees this location in reality, it is much less alive. The Metaverse facility is run down and empty, and the rich greens from Leon's dreams appear more brown and yellow and much less vital. I planned on using both in camera methods and color grading in post-production to achieve this contrast.

I also planned on adding visual texture to the film by manipulating the image with various techniques. First of all, we have chose to shoot the entire film using a Bolex Moller anamorphic adapter lens. Not only does this provide the unique visual characteristics of an anamorphic lens, it also supports the story by giving the film a nostalgic feel. Anamorphic lenses have been used for years on major motion pictures and add a certain cinematic quality to the image that audiences are used to. This is an indirect device used to subtly enhance the preoccupation with the past that overshadows much of the film. To add to the surreal nature of the dream sequences I planned on using a technique that involves a single lens from a pair of glasses being placed in front of the camera lens. This distorts the image in unique ways by adding interesting reflections and

blur to portions of the frame. I also planned on using a diopter to capture macro shots of swamp vegetation that will be used in these sequences. In the film, each successive dream sequence becomes more surreal and ominous as Leon becomes more obsessed with building the Paykel Machine. The macro shots visually represent Leon's world getting smaller and smaller.

Movement

Camera movement can be an extremely powerful storytelling tool when used appropriately. It can be utilized to reveal information, dictate the energy of a scene, or create a mood or feel in a shot. It is also probably the most conspicuous visual devise and must be used deliberately and for the purpose of serving the story. For this film, I planned on using camera movement largely to dictate the energy and tone of the action on screen as the story progresses. I see the story of *In Paradise* as a slow build of bottled-up energy through the first two thirds of the film that erupts in the final act. Early on in the film I planned on using a majority of static shots and controlled moves. I think that as the energy slowly builds during the early portion of the film, static shots can actually work to reinforce the inherent tension in the story. For instance, when Leon and Caroline are having a conversation in Leon's house shortly after she has come to live with him, there is obvious tension in their new relationship. Caroline has just lost her parents and Leon is emotionally distant and preoccupied with his machine. By hanging on static shots and slow push-ins for a long time, we are able to enhance the uncomfortable awkwardness of these exchanges.

As the story progresses and the energy erupts towards the end of the film I planned on using a much more mobile camera. For example, when Leon confronts

Dakota's father in his trailer and in the climactic scene when Caroline, Dakota, and

Malachi are trying to stop the machine and save Leon, I intended to primarily use

handheld shots to accentuate the kinetic energy of these scenes. These are just a few

examples of how I planned to use camera movement to dictate the energy and tone of

film. I will cover specific camera movements in greater depth in the script analysis and

methodology chapter of this paper.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In his book *Cinematography Theory and Practice* Blain Brown argues that the frame is much more than just a picture. He contends that "an image should convey meaning, mode, tone, atmosphere, and subtext" independent of the dialogue, audio, or action of a shot; that "the images must stand on their own" (*Cinematography* 38). It is the director of photography's job to utilize visual storytelling techniques and methods to add these various layers of meaning to the story. In this chapter I will review cinematography literature as well as relevant films to underscore the theoretical foundations for the aesthetic choices I planned on making as the director of photography of *In Paradise*.

Cinematography Text

Lighting

Lighting, defined by Herbert Zettl as "the deliberate manipulation of light and shadows for a specific communication purpose," is one of the most prominent responsibilities of the cinematographer (Zettl 19). It is lighting, after all, that creates the environment in which the story is told in a film. In his book *Motion Picture and Video Lighting* Blain Brown points out that there are several goals of good film lighting beyond simply providing enough light to expose the image. These goals include: achieving a full range of tones, color control and balance, shape and dimension, separation, creating depth in the frame, creating texture, and creating mood and tone (*Motion Picture Lighting* 36).

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While every shot may not call for the use of all of these goals, they are all important to consider when lighting a scene.

To add meaning to the story of *In Paradise*, I was especially concerned with adding shape and texture to the lighting of the film in order to create a specific mood and tone. The direction of light is very important to consider when adding shape to objects in the frame. As Brown points out, flat front lighting does little to the reveal shape and form of a subject and has the effect of flattening the image out (*Cinematography* 105). By lighting from the back or the side, you are able to create shadows and contrast that reveal the shape and dimension of the subject as well as the overall frame. This was important to consider when lighting *In Paradise*, especially the scenes that take place in Leon's study. I was going for a general chiaroscuro look in these scenes, and the shape and texture created by shadows was essential. Even when lighting from behind or beside a subject, it is important to consider which side of the subject the light source is coming from. When considering this it is important to understand the fundamental concepts of upstage and downstage lighting. Upstage lighting places the lights on the opposite side of the subject and away from the camera, whereas downstage lighting places the light on the same side of the subject and the camera. Whenever possible, it is preferred to light on the upstage side because it creates pleasant shadows that add depth and dimension to the subject (*Motion Picture Lighting* 55). Lighting on the downstage side does not provide the same pleasant shadows and appears more as flat front lighting.

It is not only important to consider the position and direction of the light, but also the quality of the light. Quality refers to how hard or soft a light is. As Brown points out, "the most important factor in the relative hardness/softness of a light is the size of the

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radiating source relative to the subject" (*Motion Picture Lighting* 49). Light from a larger source will generally be soft and tend to wrap around the subject, whereas light from a small source will generally be hard and create more pronounced shadows. This concept was very important for me to consider when planning the lighting for the interiors on *In Paradise*. My goal was to create high contrast chiaroscuro lighting with depth and texture, but to keep the light on the actors as soft as possible. There are several ways to create soft light on set. Brown points out that no light is inherently hard or soft (*Motion Picture Lighting* 50). It all depends on the size of the light relative to the subject and the distance between them. This would indicate that you could make a hard specular light softer by moving it further away from the subject. While this is true, it is not always possible or practical on a location or on a set. One common method for creating soft light from a hard light source is to bounce the light off a piece of foam core board or something similar. The larger the bounce board is, the softer the reflected light will be (*Cinematography* 111). Another method is to use some form of diffusion in front of the light source. Many types of diffusion are available, and depending on the situation and need, it may be attached directly to the barn doors of a light or, for larger diffusion, rigged on a c-stand and placed in front of a light (Cinematography 112). I planned on using both of these methods to soften the key light on *In Paradise* depending on what made the most sense in a given location.

One of my main priorities in designing the interior lighting for the film was creating texture with the combination of light and shadow. Specifically in Leon's study, I felt that this would help set an ominous mood early in the film that ould foreshadow his obsession and what this room comes to represent. Placing items that create shadow in

front of a light can create interesting textures in the image (*Cinematography* 115). In chiaroscuro lighting, it is important to be aware of shadows and use them to create depth and texture in the frame. I planned on using flags and other forms of negative fill to cut light and create interesting patterns of shadow that add a mysterious tone to the interior scenes.

While I wanted to use these different lighting techniques to create mood and tone, I wanted to use them subtly enough to keep a level of realism in the look of the film. My goal was to light the film so that I achieved my visual storytelling objectives without calling too much attention to the actual lighting techniques used. To accomplish this I planned on using practical lights in many scenes and using available light where appropriate. Practical lights are lights that are visible in the scene such as lamps, sconces, and candles. Using available light simply refers to "working with the existing lighting on a location" (*Cinematography* 118). In many cases, practical lights are not bright enough to completely light a subject, so it becomes necessary to enhance the practical lights by using additional lighting that is motivated by the practicals. Using motivated lighting allows the viewer to know where each light is coming from in a scene. Using windows as the main source of light in a room can be a great way to achieve a natural look using available light. Window light is often a nice source of soft diffused light because it is generally not only direct sunlight, but also light that is bounced off of surrounding buildings, the ground, clouds, etc. (*Cinematography* 120). Using practical light sources and available light will allow me to achieve a textured look that still feels real.

Framing and the Lens

Aside from lighting, there are several other visual storytelling techniques that the cinematographer can employ to add meaning to the story. Framing and composition are two of the most basic elements of cinematography, but their careful manipulation can have a significant impact on the way the story is perceived by the audience. Brown suggests that "selecting the frame is the fundamental act of filmmaking" (*Cinematography* 4). He goes on to stress the importance of framing and composition in directing the audience's attention when he states, "through composition we are telling the audience where to look, what to look at, and in what order to look at it" (*Cinematography* 38). The camera lens is another primary tool of the cinematographer that, when used with purpose, can help add nuance and emotional context in addition to the objective content of the story.

Lens choice is very important because the focal length of the lens not only affects the field of view and what is in the frame, but also the lens perspective and the depth relationships of objects in the frame. For 35mm film and the digital sensors around that size, focal lengths of around 40mm – 50mm are considered normal because they approximate the field of view and depth perspective of the human eye (*Cinematography* 54). Focal lengths outside the normal range distort the depth relationships of objects in the image. The image produced by a 16mm lens will have very different characteristics, and therefore convey different meaning, than an image produced by a 105mm lens with the same relative field of view. Wide-angle lenses such as a 16mm expand space and objects in the frame appear farther apart along the z-axis than they really are. Long focal length lenses have the opposite effect. They distort the image by compressing space and

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making objects appear closer together. Brown suggests that this distorted depth perspective can have psychological implications. He states that wide lenses, "give the viewer a greater sense of presence," while longer lenses can create "claustrophobic tightness of space" (*Cinematography* 56). I planned on manipulating the effects of focal length to add a visual sense of isolation that coincides with Leon's emotional isolation in the story of *In Paradise*.

Depth of field is also a valuable tool that can be used to convey meaning in a shot. Specifically, shallow depth of field can be used to achieve selective focus and can help isolate a subject from the background (*Cinematography* 61). This can be an important storytelling tool that allows the cinematographer to direct the viewer's eye to what is in focus in the frame, and it can also be used to psychologically isolate a subject or add intimacy to a scene. Brown also suggests that "selective focus and out-of-focus can … be highly subjective metaphors for the influence of drugs or madness" (*Cinematography* 61). This is a technique I wanted to utilize to add a sense of mystery during the dream sequences and at the end of the film when Leon is in a semi-conscious state after attempting to use the machine.

Variations in lens height and angle can add important subtext to a shot. Brown suggests that high angle shots can have the effect of reducing the stature and importance of the subject, while low angle shots can "make a character seem ominous and foreboding" (Cinematography 65). An extremely high angle shot is called a god's eye shot because it suggests an omniscient point of view that is removed and separate from the scene. This can serve to create for a scene a philosophical and contemplative perspective. Another technique that alters lens orientation is the dutch tilt, or dutch angle.

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This technique tilts the camera lens off-level with the horizontal axis and can be used to create visual tension in a shot to accentuate anxiety, paranoia, or mystery in the story (*Cinematography* 66). There are several instances in the story of *In Paradise* in which the deliberate manipulation of camera height and angle could add necessary visual tension.

Color

Color is undeniably one of the most important aspects of cinematography, not only as a technical element, but also as an essential storytelling tool. In her book, *If It's Purple, Someone's Gonna' Die*, Patti Bellantoni offers a comprehensive breakdown of the emotional and cultural context of color as a storytelling agent, and she underscores the profound impact each individual color can have on the audience's perception of a film. Red, green, and yellow are colors of particular importance to the cinematography and storytelling of *In Paradise,* and this section will highlight the storytelling potential of each as it relates to the film.

Bellantoni contends that red is "the color of both rage and passion" (*Bellantoni* 29). She also states that "red is power", and that studies have shown that the color can raise your anxiety level and heart rate (Bellantoni 2). She cites films such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Schindler's List*, and *American Beauty* to highlight the powerful and passionate nature of red. Red is used very particularly in *In Paradise* for both of these interpretations. Mariana's car and the red amethyst crystal that Leon keeps in his desk are red and represent his passion and preoccupation with the past, and specifically the memory of Mariana as a symbol he has created to feed his obsession. These items also represent the power that his obsession has over him.

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Bellantoni suggests that "green is… a dichotomous color" (Bellantoni 160). It can represent new life and vitality as in lush vegetation, but it can also represent corruption, sickness, and decay. Bellantoni also suggests that because of its typical association with plants and life, green can be used powerfully as a mechanism for irony. I planned on using green prominently in *In Paradise* to represent Leon's physical and mental deterioration into sickness, but also in the dream sequences to represent Leon's distorted view of Metaverse as a thriving paradise.

While yellow does not factor into the story of *In Paradise* as prominently as red or green, it is used very specifically as the color of the citrine crystal that Leon wears everywhere he goes. He believes this crystal will aid in his prosperity, but by carefully choosing yellow as the color of the crystal, we are implying that something may not be quite right about Leon's situation. Bellantoni asserts that yellow is a cautionary color that signifies a warning. It is also the color of obsession in films such *Taxi Driver* and *Romeo + Juliet* (*Bellantoni* 42). These interpretations of the yellow suggest a new meaning of the crystal to the audience. While I do not feel it is always necessary to use each of these color interpretations strictly when choosing colors for a film, I do think it is important to understand the cultural context of color and the psychological and emotional impact colors can have on an audience.

Film Analysis

The Master

Paul Thomas Anderson's *The Master* is a story about a World War II veteran turned drifter named Freddy Quell (played by Joaquin Phoenix) who is taken in by

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Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the charismatic leader of a religious

movement known as "the Cause." The film is a character study that shares certain

thematic and story elements with *In Paradise*, but the purpose of this section is to review

the cinematography of the *The Master* and highlight specific visual storytelling elements

in the film that have inspired and influenced my aesthetic choices.

In order to give *The Master* the look of iconic still photographs of the World War II era,

cinematographer Mihai Malamare Jr. and director Paul Thomas Anderson decided to

shoot much of the film on 65mm film (Stasukevich). While we were not able to use film

to shoot *In Paradise*, the overall look and feel of the cinematography of *The Master*

shares many characteristics with the look I was hoping to achieve. First of all, *The Master*

achieves a beautifully natural look for its exteriors and a subdued chiaroscuro look for

many of the interior scenes. A large portion of the film takes place on a yacht at sea

where Dodd begins asking Freddie a series of psychological questions in an activity he

calls processing. These scenes take place in a small room in the cabin of a Dodd's yacht,

and the lighting and overall look is very similar to the look I am going for in Leon's

house. While the lighting is very low-key with large areas of the frame in shadow, the

light on the actors' faces is quite soft as seen in figure 1. It is important to note also, that

the light in the room is illuminating the side of their faces opposite the camera to add

shape and dimension to the actors (Fig. 1). The side of their faces closest to the camera is

in shadow and there is little or no fill light. This also works to create a somewhat

ominous mood as Dodd is attempting to gain power and control over Freddy.

Fig. 1. Still from *The Master*

Another aspect of this particular scene that helps enhance the story is that it is shot almost entirely in close-ups and extreme close-ups. This has the effect of bringing the viewer right into the room with Dodd and Freddy. During this scene, Freddy reveals personal information to Dodd during processing, and the tight framing adds to the emotion of the scene. These tight shots also utilize shallow depth of field which has the effect of isolating them from their environment and making the scene seem much more intimate for the viewer.

In describing the general cinematography of *The Master* Josh Todd of *Kolecto Magazine* states, "There's a harsh realism to the way the film is shot, it always seems to linger slightly too long on every shot" (Todd). This introduces another element of the cinematography of *The Master* that influenced my approach with *In Paradise*. Malaimare Jr. and Anderson chose to use static shots or controlled camera moves for much of the film. There is very little fast camera movement, and many of the shots linger for quite some time adding an uncomfortable awkwardness that fits the themes of the film. By using static shots and slow cuts, it actually worked to add tension to the film in this way.

The Machinist

Brad Anderson's *The Machinist* tells the story of Trevor Reznik (played by

Christian Bale), a machine worker at a factory and an insomniac who hasn't slept in a

year. His life begins to fall apart, and he begins to physically and mentally deteriorate. He

becomes paranoid and obsessed with the idea that the bizarre events in his life are due to

some sort of conspiracy by his co-workers to drive him insane. From the beginning of the

film, the cinematography of *The Machinist* sets a dark mood and eerie tone that

foreshadow the events in the story.

Fig. 2. Still from The Machinist

While this film is much darker in tone generally than *In Paradise*, there are several

elements to the cinematography that I feel are relevant. It too has a general chiaroscuro

look that pushes the limits of shadows even further than *The Master*. There is extreme

contrast in every frame between the light part of the image and the shadows. Director of

photography Xavi Gimenez also does a wonderful job creating texture with light as

shown in figure 2. Many shots of the machine factory have patterns of light in the

background that break up the shadows and add interest to the shot and enhance the overall mood. This is a technique I wanted to use extensively in *In Paradise*.

The Machinist also uses static shots and long single shots to add tension to the story. It is a thriller, but instead of using a mobile camera and quick cuts, the cinematography and editing style give the audience time to internalize Trevor's situation. I feel that this adds to the inherent tension in the story. Gimenez also makes use of several severe angles and unusual framing. This puts the viewer on edge and signifies that something is not right with Trevor. Because of his insomnia Trevor is a loner. This is enhanced by often framing him in wide shots that isolate him in his environment even when he is in public places. As he begins to get more paranoid, the cinematographer often uses framing to visually trap him. Several times in the film he is framed by tight doorways or parts of machines in the factory that create walls that are figuratively closing in around him as his world crumbles. This is very similar to Leon's situation in *In Paradise*.

Color is another element that *The Machinist* uses to great effect. The film in general is quite washed out and de-saturated, but it has a noticeable green tint to it. This serves to give the film a sickly look that mirrors Trevor's mental and physical illness. Red is also very important in the film. In fact the only object in the entire film that is brightly colored is the red car driven by the character Ivan. Ivan's presence has great power over Trevor as he torments him throughout the movie until he is revealed to be, in fact, a figment of Trevor's imagination. The bright red of the car not only works to stand out amid the greys and greens of the rest of the film, it also signifies the passion of Trevor's paranoia and obsession and the power that this has over him.

Punch Drunk Love

  Punch Drunk Love is another film directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, and I am referencing the film to highlight one specific element of the film to help demonstrate the power of visual storytelling. The film opens with a long shot of Barry (played by Adam Sandler) sitting at a lone desk in the far corner of an otherwise empty building. Figure 3 shows this one shot, which is held for one minute and thirty-two seconds, and able to convey a great deal of information about Barry and his situation. Not only does it show him isolated in this large room, it also frames him in the far left corner and serves to cut him off from the rest of the frame. The leading lines on the wall visually pin Barry in the corner, and by using a wide-angle lens, cinematographer Robert Elswit is able to expand space and make the room feel larger and Barry smaller and more insignificant by comparison. Just from seeing this one shot, and without the necessity of dialogue or action, the audience is given enough information to see that Barry is an isolated and lonely person. Of course the story goes on to confirm this, depicting him as a socially awkward loner with seven overbearing sisters that make him feel uncomfortable and push him away. There are several shots in the film that reinforce this storytelling element, but by highlighting the opening shot I am able to emphasize the impact of visual storytelling. This specific technique is also relevant to *In Paradise*, and one I wanted to utilize to reinforce Leon's social isolation.

Fig. 3. Still From Punch Drunk Love

Documentary Stills and A Reflection

Stills by documentary photographer Tomer Ifrah and a mini documentary I found on vimeo called *A Reflection,* directed and shot by a production company called Variable (Khalid Mahtaseb, Jonathan Bregel, and Tyler Ginter) also inspired the look I wanted to achieve on *In Paradise*. Both the stills and the mini documentary demonstrate chiaroscuro lighting and the use of available light to achieve a high contrast natural image. Both examples also feature a deep earth tone color palette that is similar to what I planned on using for the film. *A Reflection* uses light from windows to create a nice soft key light while using little fill to keep dark shadows in portions of the frame. Figures 4 and 5 are examples of Ifrah's documentary photos, and Figure 6 is a still from *A Reflection*.

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Fig. 4. Documentary Still 1

Fig. 5. Documentary Still 2

Fig. 6. Reflection

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Location Breakdown

About 30% of the film takes place in Leon's house so this is a very important location to

the story. Since there are distinct scenes in different rooms in the house, for the purpose

of this analysis I have separated it into three different locations.

Leon's Study

Leon's Study is one of the most important locations for setting the visual tone of

the film. It is one of the first locations shown in the film and where Leon goes to get

away from the outside world to listen to his tapes and work on his machine. From the

beginning of the film I wanted to set an ominous mood in this room with low-key

chiaroscuro lighting. As the story progresses and Leon becomes more and more obsessed

with building the machine, I wanted the lighting to mirror this change and the room to

become darker and darker. I also planned on shooting many of the scenes in this room

with long focal lengths to compress the space and create a claustrophobic environment

that feels like it is closing in around Leon. I wanted this effect to become more evident as

Leon becomes more obsessed with building the machine.

Several important plot points that occur in this room deserve mentioning. While

sitting at the house alone on day, Caroline peers into the study. Interested in what Leon is

doing all the time in this room, she goes in to investigate. This was an opportunity to

visually reveal the room in its entirety. The room does not represent a prison for Caroline

like it does for Leon, so I wanted to shoot these scenes with a wider lens to reveal more of the environment.

There are two major defining moments for Leon in this room. The first occurs after he talks with Michael and she convinces him to at least think about abandoning his plans for the machine for the good of Caroline. When he enters the study after the fight with Mr. Brinkley, he sees the notebook that Caroline left for him containing the play she wrote. This has an effect on Leon, and he puts the blueprints of the machine in a lock box and locks it. At this moment, Leon is letting go of his obsession. Visually I wanted to show this by widening the shot to metaphorically free Leon from his prison. I also planned on bringing the overall level of lighting in the room up to represent Leon's outlook change.

Everything changes the next morning however, when Leon finds out Caroline has left without telling him. This hurts Leon because he had decided to give up on the machine to take care of her. In a fit of rage he destroys his study and after a fit in the front yard he finds the lock box containing the blueprints. All in this short time, his obsession with the machine is awakened. I wanted this scene to be one of the few scenes in the film that was shot handheld to accentuate the tension and energy. I planned on shooting him destroying the room with a long lens once again to show that his world has now literally collapsed around him.

Living Room

Leon's living room is where the majority of Leon's conversations with Caroline take place. In these scenes I planned on shooting mostly static locked down shots with tight framing to bring the audience closer to the emotion of these conversations. I felt that

the static shots would accentuate the uncomfortable nature of their relationship. By hanging on long shots I wanted to add awkward tension that highlights this dynamic. I wanted the lighting in the living room to be similar to the study but not quite as dark in general. I wanted the study to have a specific feel separate of the rest of the house, so the living room would have more natural light from the windows and be brighter while still having prominent shadows. Leon's house is cluttered, and that provided opportunity to add interest to the frame with textured lighting of the background.

Kitchen

My primary goal for the kitchen as far as production design and cinematography is concerned was to highlight the color green in the room. Leon's appliances are an avocado green color and much of the food he cooks in the kitchen is green. As discussed earlier, this is to represent Leon's sickness and the poison that is his obsession. Early in the film there is a series of shots that starts on an empty glass into which Leon pours lime juice that set up a motif that continues for the rest of the film.

Another element in the kitchen that is important to the story is the photo of Mariana on the refrigerator. I wanted to convey the significance of the photo by prominently displaying it in shots of the kitchen before the audience is aware of Mariana's identity.

Theatre

For the theatre scene, which is the opening scene in the film, I planned on visually setting up Leon's isolation and social awkwardness. In the scene he is auditioning for a role in "The Pirates of Penzanze," and he is up on a large theater stage by himself singing

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a song while awkwardly dancing and gesturing with a large umbrella he brought as a prop. I wanted to shoot the scene in mostly wide shots that physically isolated him on the large theatre stage. I also planned on showing the director of the show sitting several rows back watching Leon's audition to exaggerate their separation. By lighting Leon with theatre style spotlights, I wanted to create a powerful image of his isolation and loneliness early in the film.

Metaverse Facility

The Metaverse Facility first appears in the old tapes that Leon watches in his house. In these tapes, Kyani and Celesti, two of J. Alvin Malachi's followers, are explaining the work of the Metaverse Institute. The facility is cluttered and filled with 1970s era lab equipment. Malachi is shown in the videotape but only in silhouette against a window. This adds a sense of mystery to his character and helps build him up as a powerful and influential man. I planned on shooting these shots of Malachi from a slightly low angle to add a sense power and presence. I wanted this to help emphasize the contrast when the audience finally sees him as a broken man at the end of the film. The videos were made to look like they were shot on 8mm film in post-production.

This location also appears in a dream sequence in which Leon is talking to Mariana about her dream of building a Paykel Machine. I wanted the room in this scene to be lit almost entirely with light from the window. I also planned on keeping Mariana largely in shadow. In the story she becomes a symbol to Leon and the reason for his obsession more than a memory of a real person. By keeping her in shadow it de-emphasizes her as a real person and makes her more a figment of Leon's imagination.

We see the Metaverse Institute again, in the present, when Caroline and Dakota go there to seek out Malachi to help save Leon. When they get there, the lab equipment is gone and the facility is run down and mostly empty. When Malachi is finally shown, he appears as a broken man living in broken-down abandoned lab facility, in stark contrast to the image of a powerful leader that had been built up earlier in the film. I wanted this scene to be lit mostly by window light as it was in Leon's dream. However, planned on the facility itself looking much more dilapidated. To reinforce the contrast of the powerful image of Malachi early in the film and what he has become, I planned on shooting some shots of him in this scene from a high angle rendering him powerless and weak.

High School Science Classroom

Leon is a high school biology teacher, and several scenes in the film take place in Leon's classroom. This is another location where I wanted Leon's isolation highlighted. Even when Leon is lecturing to his class, his mind seems to wander, and he seems to be talking to himself more than to his students. I planned on shooting most of the shots in the classroom wide to emphasize Leon's isolation at the front of the class, and, similar to the theatre scene, I wanted the students to be sitting towards the back of the class away from Leon. While Leon is lecturing, I planned on having several shots of the students not paying attention. When Leon is really veering off track in his lecture, I planned on cutting from the wide shots to very tight shots to make it feel like he alone in the room and inside his own head, as opposed to in a classroom full of students.

Airport

The airport is only in one scene, but it is an important location because it is the first time we see Caroline. I also wanted this location to be used to reinforce Leon's isolation early in the film. I planned on establishing this scene with an extremely wide shot of Leon all by himself waiting for Caroline to arrive. When she arrives, the two of them sit beside each other silently. I wanted to use long pauses and static shots to emphasize Leon's awkwardness.

Warehouse

The abandoned warehouse where Leon builds his Paykel Machine is a pivotal location in the film. Early on we only see it from the exterior as Leon parks his car and goes inside. There is a sense of mystery to this location. It is not until the blueprints of the machine are shown in Leon's study that the audience is aware of what Leon is doing when he goes there.

My goal was to visually enhance the sense of mystery surrounding the warehouse by keeping the lighting minimal and using rays of sunlight through windows to light much of the space. I planned on only showing portions of the machine as it is being built and adding texture and mystery with shadows and slices of light. The wide shot of the completed machine was rendered with visual effects.

This is the location of the climactic scene at the end of the film when Leon actually activates and uses the machine. Much of the shots of the activated machine were practical or visual effects, but we also shot some close ups of Leon in the machine with moving lights all around him flashing on his face. The implosion of the warehouse was

also done with visual effects, but we shot Caroline, Dakota, and Leon running from the facility and used a very strong backlight to indicate the light coming from the warehouse.

Trailer

Dakota's trailer home is the location of one of the more fast paced and energetic scenes of the film. Much of the film has a slow pace to build suspense and tension and will be shot with static shots and controlled camera moves, but the fight between Dakota's drunk father and Leon in the trailer is one of the few scenes that was shot hand held. I intended this is to accentuate the kinetic energy of the scene. It also helps toemphasize Leon's bottled up rage.

Michael's House

Leon comes to Michael for advice and insight into certain items he needs to finish his machine. She is a strange woman who is very interested in metaphysical and new age philosophy. I wanted to emphasize her eccentricities and quirks to set up an interesting irony. My goal was to portray her as an eccentric woman who is obsessed with the metaphysical in order to emphasize the dangerous nature of Leon's obsession when she tells him he is insane to use the machine.

Michael's house is cluttered with eclectic décor that highlights her infatuation with the metaphysical. To emphasis this, I wanted to use candles to light the interior of her house and supplement the candle light with additional lights where necessary. I also planned on getting several shots of trinkets in the house to use as cutaways to underscore her strangeness.

Cypress Swamp

The cypress swamp is the location of the Metaverse Institute and is seen in the several dream sequences in the film. To give these scenes a surreal and dreamlike appearance, I planned on using various in-camera techniques to add blur and reflections to the image. One method I planned on trying was placing a lens from a pair of glasses in front of the camera lens. This adds interesting texture by blurring random portions of the image and adding reflections created by the outside lens. I also planned on shooting macro photography of the vegetation in this location to be used in the dream sequences as a metaphor for Leon's shrinking world.

Woods

The very last shot of the film shows a beautiful waterfall and a forest location that has not been seen at any other point in the film. Building suspense and mystery in this shot was important because it is a big reveal that ultimately shows Leon standing on the edge of the precipice, which hints that the machine may have in fact worked and sent him to a new dimension. I planned on shooting this scene as a series of shots that slowly moves through the location, first revealing the scattered pieces of the machine and finally tilting up to reveal Leon standing above the cliff. To add a sense of mystery and ambiguity to the ending, this shot with have the same surreal look as the dream sequences.

CHAPTER FOUR

In Paradise

To watch In Paradise, please visit the following URL. The password is baylorthesis2014

https://vimeo.com/87308347

Philip Heinrich and Aaron Youngblood. In Paradise. 2013.

CHAPTER FIVE

Assessing *In Paradise*

From the outset of pre-production, I knew that making a feature length film, particularly a film that was this ambitious on our modest budget, was going to be an immense challenge given the time frame we had to complete the project. *In Paradise* is the first feature length film I have worked on, and I went into the project understanding that much of the film's value to me in the end would be as an invaluable learning experience. With that in mind, looking back at the production of the film, I feel that I learned many lessons that I can apply in the future as I progress as a filmmaker. While, like many films, the final product does not always represent exactly what was envisioned in pre-production, I feel that we were able to accomplish many of the storytelling and cinematographic goals that we set for the film.

Cinematography

Camera and Lenses

We chose the shoot In Paradise on the Canon C300 digital cinema camera using Nikkor lenses. Using the C300 provided a level of detail and sharpness that digital DSLR cameras such as the Canon 7D or T3i lack. The value of the shaper image is best illustrated by the full focus nature shots in the dream sequences, but it helped provide a consistently detailed image throughout the film. The C300 is made for the filmmaking environment and has proper video controls, such as precise color temperature adjustment,

focus peaking, and a waveform monitor, that are absent in most DSLRs. This allowed us to have complete control over our image. The camera also has built in XLR inputs, enabling us to record high quality reference audio directly into the camera. We did end up using the smaller DSLR cameras for the shot inside the refrigerator and the car mounted shots because the C300 was too large in those instances.

The C300 has fantastic low-light performance, which was of particular importance on many occasions during production. We wanted all the night scenes in the film to have a natural look that we could accomplish with fairly minimal lighting setups. We wanted to avoid the traditional brightly lit blue-tinted night look that is common in movies. The C300 allowed us to push the limits of low-light cinematography. In the scene where Dakota is talking on the pay phone we were able to use the existing lights in the convenience store parking lot without adding additional lights (Fig. 7). This enabled us to keep the setup to a minimum and made the scene more time-efficient to shoot.

Fig. 7. Low Light Shot

Much of the film's look can also be attributed to the anamorphic adapter lens that we used on most of the shots in the film. Anamorphic lenses produce a familiar cinematic

look characterized by wide aspect ratio, soft edges, oval bokeh, and horizontal lens flares.

While I liked the look of the anamorphic image, using the lens presented several

challenges to the production. Because the particular lens we used was an adapter lens

made to be used with old Bolex film cameras, it needed to be mounted on top of a

separate lens. Keeping the anamorphic lens properly aligned became an issue that slowed

the production at times. This also meant that in order to focus the shot, both lenses had to

be focused separately. This made precise measurements of focus a necessity on almost

every shot and made rack focusing almost impossible. In order to rack focus, we removed

to anamorphic lens and mounted a separate adapter that imitated the anamorphic look.

The anamorphic lens also had a minimum focus distance of three and a half feet, meaning

that diopters had to be mounted on the lens in order to focus on objects close to the

camera. The diopters were difficult to focus at times and this again slowed the production

at times. The decision to use the anamorphic lens was made for its characteristic look,

but at times we had to sacrifice production efficiency as a trade-off.

Lighting

I had very specific ideas for the lighting of the film coming in, and this is an area

of cinematography that I feel good about what we were able to accomplish relative to our

expectations. I wanted the lighting to mirror the dark tone of the film where appropriate

with low-key lighting that created a stark contrast between the light and dark portions of

the frame.

This was especially true in Leon's study where he often retreats to listen to his

tapes and work on his machine. I wanted the lighting in the study to be extremely low-

key, isolating Leon in this space that represented his obsession. I wanted a fairly soft key

light with very little fill. The lamp on Leon's desk motivated the only light source in the study. In some cases, particularly in wide shots where other lights could not be used, the desk lamp was the only light source in the room. The desk had a white finish on top that acted as a nice bounce for light coming off the lamp onto Leon's face. For most of the shots in the study however, we supplemented the lamplight with a diffused 300-watt Arri light in the corner of the room. To add a bit of eerie texture to the study setup we also often added a second light with a green gel to mimic the light coming through the green shade on the desk directly into Leon's eyes. In the end I was very pleased with the results in the study (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Low-key Study Scene

The scenes in the rest of Leon's house were still low-key, but to a lesser extent than the study. In many cases, such as the scene of Leon washing the dishes when he hears of his brother's death, we set up the Arri 650 shining though the blinds to imitate the late afternoon sun coming through the window (Fig. 9). This created a nice texture of shadow in the shot. I tried to use the soft natural light from windows as a key light as

much as possible in the living room and the kitchen. This was often supplemented by a

backlight, but we used very little fill throughout to create contrast in the shots.

Fig 9. Lighting Through Window

There were relatively few day exterior scenes in the film and nearly all were lit

naturally by the sun. We occasionally used a flex-fill as bounce for backlight or fill, but

even in the outdoor scenes I wanted to keep contrast in the image. For the scene of

Dakota and Caroline talking by the beach we had intended to shoot in the late afternoon

sunlight. We were running a bit behind that day however, and by the time we were ready

to shoot we only had about ten minutes of sunlight left. We decided to wait for the sun to

go down and shoot in the dusk light so we would not have sunlight continuity problems

within scene. While we had to rush the scene chasing the little light that was remaining, I

think the scene benefited visually from the soft dusk light. We blocked the scene so that

waning sunlight acted as a key on the upstage side of the actors and created nice soft

contrast on their faces (Fig. 10)

Fig. 10. Dusk Lighting

The classroom scenes presented some lighting challenges that other locations did not. We had originally intended the classroom scenes to be a bit more stylized and low-key to reinforce Leon's metaphorical isolation in this public place. We did not have the equipment to properly rig enough lights in the large classroom however, so we had to use the overhead fluorescents in the classroom. We used a soft key light on the close-ups in the classroom in an attempt to add contrast, but the overall result was a bit more flat than we had intended originally. The classroom scenes ended up as some of the few high-key lit scenes in the film.

While I am happy with the lighting of *In Paradise* overall, I do think that at times we under lit scenes and relied too much on the low light sensitivity of the camera. This was often done because we were running behind schedule and did not have enough time to properly light certain scenes. Instead of creating interesting low-key shots with high contrast, this has the effect of flattening out the image even when exposure levels are adjusted in post. In the scene of Dakota and Caroling talking on the front porch we wanted a natural looking night exterior and wanted to avoid over lighting the scene (Fig

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11). We used a smaller Arri light with a silk in front of it to simulate moonlight. In hindsight, I think if we had used the larger Arri light, the image would have been a bit brighter on their faces but with more overall contrast in the shots. As a result of under lighting and pushing the low-light limits of the camera, the resulting image was flatter and contained more digital noise than I would have preferred.

Fig. 11. Under Lit Night Scene

Framing and Focal Length

To visually emphasize Leon's isolation and obsession, I wanted create a contrast in framing based on location. I intended to make extensive use of wide shots of Leon isolated in public spaces while using close-ups when he is in his study. Many of the shots of Leon in public places turned out nearly exactly as I had intended. In the opening scene we show him all alone on the theatre stage in an extreme wide shot with the theatre spotlights calling attention to his isolation. The scene in the school hallway where Leon talks to the director again ends with a wide shot of Leon alone, abandoned again (Fig .12).

Fig. 12. Wide Shot in School

However, I feel that we were not able to fully accomplish what we set out to do in the study. The room that we used for the study was quite small, and using long lenses was a problem for anything except extreme close-ups. I wanted to use the compressed depth of long lenses to create the feeling that the study walls were closing in on Leon as the film progressed. I don't know that we were able to achieve that to the level we wanted. While the shots of Leon in the study are framed considerably tighter than those of him elsewhere, I think that in hindsight, we could have gone ahead and used the longer lenses on more shots for more extreme close-ups. I feel that the camera gave Leon a little too much space in the study as the story progressed.

Camera Movement

Our original intent with camera movement was to follow the flow of energy in the story as it builds slowly and erupts towards the end of the film. We wanted to heighten the awkward tension in the early house scenes by hanging on long static shots. The majority of the first two-thirds of the film consists of locked down tripod shots. We did

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occasionally use controlled dolly moves in the form of slow push-ins on Leon in his study and Caroline on the couch, but they were subtle and did not call attention to themselves. As the tension and energy of the film pickup during the fight scene in Dakota's trailer we started to use more handheld camera movement. From that point on, much of the camera work is handheld to visually enhance the energy on screen.

While this style was agreed upon in pre-production and understanding that camera moves should be motivated by the story, looking back, I feel that keeping the camera so static in the early portions of the film contributed to the general slow pace and low energy of the first two-thirds of the film. I think we played it a bit safe as far as camera movement was concerned, and moving the camera more in the house could have infused some visual energy that would have improved the pacing early on as the story picked up. By the time the camera becomes more active, the film has shifted to more high-energy scenes. I think this transition could have been more gradual to improve the pacing.

Color and Texture

We wanted to control the color palette of In Paradise very specifically, and I believe we accomplished that throughout much of the film. Green and red were intended to play prominent roles in the storytelling of In Paradise. Green was used in two ways in association with Leon. First, the green of Leon's clothing and the décor in his house was intended to convey Leon's sickness, both physical and emotional, as the film progressed. Secondly, green was the dominant color in the nature shots of dream sequences. The green in Leon's dreams is a cooler green that was meant to represent vitality and new life. In the fifth dream, however, the once lush green vegetation becomes dead and mostly colorless. Our intent was to show that Leon's vision of this alternate reality was a

delusion and that this path did not lead to new life, but to death and decay. Color associations such as these are of course subtle and may not ever register to the audience on the conscious level. We were concerned that the amount of green could end up being heavy handed or overwhelming and ended up scaling it back a bit during production. In the end, I was mostly satisfied with our implementation of green as a prominent color relative to our plans.

We wanted to strictly and specifically control the use of red in the film. Originally the only use of red in the entire movie was to be associated with Mariana. While I believe we were able to associate the color to her character through her red dress, he red car, and the red crystal necklace of hers that Leon kept, logistical and practical issues prevented us from being able to control the color as much as we had planned. The school location we used had red lockers and prominent displays of red throughout the halls and in the classroom. We thought about trying to remove the red in post, but it became too big of an undertaking so we compromised our use of the color. I'm not sure that this negatively impacts the film in any real way, but it certainly weakened the association of the color specifically to Mariana's character and Leon's memory of her as seen through his dreams.

To add a unique visual texture to some of the more surreal shots in the film, we wanted to use a technique that involved placing a lens from a pair of glasses in front of the camera lens to distort the image and create random areas of soft focus in the frame. Because we were already mounting the anamorphic lens on top of the Nikkor lenses, this technique was not practical, so we were not able to use it. Instead we used a technique called lens whacking or free lensing in which the lens is actually slightly removed from

the camera body to allow light leaks and distort and blur the image in random patterns (Fig. 13). I had used this technique previously for a music video I shot and was comfortable with my ability to control the focus of the image. I was pleased with how the shots came out and think they add an interesting texture to the dream sequences.

Fig. 13. Lens-whacking Shot

I knew going into production that we were going to use color grading in post-production to finish the color and look of the film. With this in mind, we shot the movie using the C300's CLog color profile, which flattens and de-saturates the image in camera to preserve the shadow and highlight information for processing in post (Fig. 14). We made all the final decisions regarding saturation and tint of colors in the color grade and used a film stock emulator called FilmConvert to finish the images (Fig. 15). Overall, I was pleased with the colors we were able to achieve in the finished images.

Fig. 14. Pre-graded Shot

Fig. 15. Post-graded Shot

Compositing

I had very limited experience shooting for green or blue screen before we started

production, and the film called for several shots that would be composited with visual

effects elements. I was able to recreate the warehouse lighting fairly well for the shots of

Leon in the machine (Fig. 16), and I was fairly satisfied with the final composited shot

(Fig. 17). For the final shot of the film, I did not take good enough notes of the exterior

lighting on location, so the lighting in the studio in front of the green screen did not match properly. This made for much more work in post to get the composited shot to work. Largely due to my lack of experience lighting for the green screen environment, I was not completely happy with the results of several of these shots, and many did not make it into the final cut of the film.

Fig. 16. Pre-composited Shot

Fig. 17. Composited Shot

Co-director Philip Heinrich and I have collaborated on several projects and have a strong working relationship. We planned much of the film together for over eight months leading up to production and had a relatively clear vision for what wanted for the film. However, as with any collaboration, there were still creative differences and many logistic issues that came up during production. Making a feature length film of any kind is an enormous undertaking, and doing so with an extremely low budget in a limited time frame created several challenges.

Pre-production

Pre-production for the film began after the script was completed several months before the start of production. One of the major challenges during this phase was coming to a consensus on the ambition of the film. In early drafts, Heinrich had the film set in several locations across the country and in numerous remote locations. I appreciated the ambition of the script but felt that we should consider a more practical approach. I originally wanted a script that called for under twenty locations and a limited number of effects shots because I knew the time frame would be restrictive. Even though we made several compromises to the ambition of the original story, I feel that we made a mistake in making a film with over thirty shooting locations given our limitations. This ultimately created an incredibly tight and intense shooting schedule. Securing locations made up a large portion of our pre-production work and limited the time we had to focus on other aspects of the film.

Fundraising became another problem in pre-production. We originally agreed to launch a Kickstarter campaign about two months before production began with a $10,000

goal. However, as we got closer to the launch of the campaign we had already secured a

large portion of the goal amount from contributors outside of the Kickstarter. The

fundraising efforts were split between soliciting large gifts from prospects within our

network and building a marketing campaign for the crowdfunding campaign. In an

attempt to promote the kiskstarter, we worked with a partner to run ads for the film and

fundraising campaign on social networking cites. We ended up spending quite a bit of our

pre-production time in fundraising meetings discussing and planning ways to market the

campaign. At this point I was concerned that we were putting too much time and effort

into the kiskstarter and neglecting other important elements of the film. Because we were

not sure what out budget would be, we were not able to make final decisions on

important elements of production such as locations and finalizing the cast.

　　As we got closer to the campaign launch, we had already raised a large portion of

the original $10,000 goal from contributors outside of the kickstarter, and Heinrich and

our kiskstarter manager thought we should raise the goal of the campaign to $20,000. We

had asked all our donors to contribute through the kickstarter, and they thought that the

initial donations numbers at launch would be able to propel the campaign to succeed at

the higher goal. I reluctantly agreed to the higher goal, and we launched the campaign

offering various incentives for the different contribution levels. We ended up raising

around $15,000 for the movie, but almost all of that money was from contributors with

whom we already had connections, and the Kickstarter was not successful. Planning and

discussing the Kickstarter became a major source of contention, and I believe the amount

of time we spent on it had a negative impact on the planning of the film. We did not have

enough manpower or time to spend so much time and energy on this aspect, and we

ended up pushing back other important aspects of pre-production. In hindsight, I think that compromising on issues I felt strongly about in pre-production had a negative impact on the production of the film.

Production

Despite the challenges in pre-production we were able to thoroughly break down the script and had a firm 23 day schedule for the production. We secured the house that we used for Leon's home in advance of production and shot there for the first seven days. Since we had access to the house before we started shooting, we were able to completely plan and storyboard all of the scenes that took place in Leon's house. This was about 30% of the film, and many of the shots in the final cut in this location (Fig. 18) are nearly exactly as we had storyboarded them (Fig. 19).

Fig. 18. Final Shot

Fig. 19. Storyboard Shot

During the storyboarding process we would actually be on location at the house to plan out and block the scenes on site. Instead of sketching storyboards, I took still photographs of each shot I wanted in a scene and put them together in storyboarding software. We used stand-ins to block the characters in each shot, and by using stills I was able to document characteristics of each shot including focal length, camera distance, etc. While the days were long and grueling, because we had everything planned, we did not have to compromise much of our creative vision for scenes in the house.

The production got much more complicated after the first seven days when we left the house. We had sixteen days to shoot another thirty locations. Because we did not have time to plan out each scene thoroughly in each of these locations I think that we ended up compromising on the coverage and shots we were able to get. For many of these location shoots we just had to get what we knew we needed and were unable to spend time on the performances of the actors or attempting more complicated shots and

lighting setups. While I had shot lists for every location, we were not able to storyboard every scene because we did not have access to all the locations before the shoot day. In many cases we had to get to the location early and storyboard or block the scene on the spot before we started shooting.

One of our main actors was not available for the last week of production, which added stress to the production as well. We basically had to shoot all of her scenes in 17 days instead of 23. This pushed many of the larger scenes into the first two weeks of production and created a very tight schedule. We were trying to shoot nearly 10 pages of script on some of these days, which put significant strain on the cast and especially our volunteer crew.

Despite the issues, I believe that Heinrich and I communicated well for the most part during production. As I mentioned earlier, we have worked together several times and have a pretty good feel for each others working style. Most creative disagreements were worked through during preproduction, so by the time we got to production we had a fairly unified vision for the film. When we did have small disagreements on a shot, we would try to shoot both ideas when we had the time. One particular instance of this is in the scene when Leon goes home just before he goes to the machine for the final time. Philip had the idea of getting a shot of Leon's shadow through the front door window. It was not in the original storyboard, but I liked the idea so we shot it, and it became the shot that was used in the final cut.

Post-Production

Post-production for *In Paradise* was a relatively smooth process. Our editor, Maverick Moore, completed the rough cut of the film, and then Heirich and I reviewed it

and made notes. The three of us then went through each scene and made additional edits. The rough cut of the film was two and half hours long, and I knew I wanted the film to be under an hour and 45 minutes if possible. One challenge in the process of editing the final cut was convincing Heinrich that certain elements needed to be cut for the good of the film as a whole. I think Heinrich's position as the writer made it difficult for him to let go of certain scenes just as I was reluctant to lose certain shots that I particularly liked.

One example of a scene that was ultimately cut to improve pacing was the scene where Leon wakes up from a dream and goes to work. In the final cut we show Leon waking up in bed and then cut to him entering his classroom full of students. The scene was originally much longer and included a sequence in the kitchen of Leon eating cereal at the table and writing the note he leaves for Caroline as she sleeps on the couch. This sequence included one of five shots in the film of Leon at his table that reinforced a motif we had built of Leon as a man of habit and routine. Heinrich liked the idea of reinforcing this motif, and I liked the lighting of the scene so we were reluctant to cut it. Our thesis advisor viewed an early cut of the film that included the elongated scene and felt the general pacing of the first half of the movie was too slow. I had similar feelings but found it difficult to convince Heinrich that cuts needed to be made. I was also unsure what cuts would be most effective. I think our meeting allowed both of us to hear opinions from an outside voice and helped us realize that cut were necessary to improve the film as a whole. We ultimately chose to cut the scene because the motif is setup without the extra shot, and the scene really added no new information to the story. We did not need to include and entire sequence of Leon writing the note when the audience sees the note later in the scene.

During the edit process I also thought the scenes where Leon listens to cassette tapes were slowing the pace of the film. I felt that the scenes were too static and told the audience information rather than visually showing them what was important to the story. I also felt that the specific information in each tape was less significant than the general idea they represented and establishing Leon's routine of relying on them. Heinrich liked the content of the tapes and thought they included valuable thematic information that he did not want cut. After our advisement meeting, we were able to compromise and cut several portions of the tapes while maintaining their thematic relevance. I believe by doing so, we improved pacing and avoiding unnecessary redundant elements.

Through this process, I have learned that even if a shot or scene works in isolation, the entirety of the film must be the primary consideration in the final edit. In the end we were able to cut several scenes that were either redundant or did not have a direct impact on the story, and I think this improved the overall pacing of the film.

After the final cut was done, as the director of photography I was in charge of color grading to finish the look of the film. I also worked on the sound mixing. Heinrich worked on the visual effects and the music score. I think this breakdown of post-production responsibility worked well for the most part, but I do think we could have benefited from having a larger post-production crew. Given the limited time frame to complete the movie, I feel that we had to cut some corners in post to ensure that the film was done in time. If we had more people working on the post-production we could have managed the workload more effectively.

Conclusion

I believe that co-directing and working as the director of photography on a film as ambitious as *In Paradise* has not only proven to be an outstanding learning experience, but also served to prepare me for a career as a professional filmmaker. While my specific post-graduation plans are not yet certain, it is my goal to continue to make films professionally in some form. I have worked on numerous projects while studying film and digital media at Baylor, as a director, director of photography, and editor, and through that experience have come to develop a true passion for cinematography. I am certain that whatever path my career takes, I will be behind a camera. One of my primary professional goals is to eventually own and run my own production company and work as an independent director and director of photography. I have formed several good relationships with other filmmakers while at Baylor and plan on continuing and further developing that network, as well as forming new relationships through professional collaboration in the future.

The majority of my work at Baylor has been on narrative films, and while I prefer narrative filmmaking to other forms, I have experience with, and enjoy, making documentaries as well. I also recognize that making a narrative film is an expensive endeavor, and, especially on the low-budget independent side of things, not always the most lucrative enterprise. With this in mind, I plan on being open to shooting corporate videos, commercials, music videos and other forms of media as well. In the past I have been a graduate fellow for the Academy of Teaching and Learning at Baylor. In that role I, along with another graduate student, was responsible for shooting and editing documentary style course trailers. I have also worked in the past shooting content for

biology laboratory instructional videos and just recently completed my first music video.

I believe that these experiences, along with my narrative work, will help me be

competitive in the job market and prepared and available for most any kind of

filmmaking environment.

Another avenue I look forward to exploring professionally after graduating is

teaching in the field of film and digital media. Before I began my graduate course work

in FDM, I worked as the bioscience lab coordinator at Baylor University for five years,

and as part of my responsibilities I taught freshman biology labs. While this experience

was in a separate discipline, I thoroughly enjoyed the teaching elements of that position,

and I have enjoyed teaching the first semester production methods course in FDM the

past two semesters. In the future I would be very interested in teaching film in some

capacity, either on a full time basis on the faculty at a university or community college, or

coordinating and conducting filmmaking workshops for amateur/novice filmmakers in a

less formal setting. I feel that the instruction I have received has greatly improved my

work and that exposure to the fundamental techniques of filmmaking is essential to

building a proper foundation upon which to grow as a filmmaker. Working on *In

Paradise* has granted me the opportunity to be involved with a feature length film for the

first time and served to expand my knowledge base of filmmaking and I believe it has

made me a better teacher of the techniques of cinematography and the art of filmmaking

as a whole.

As I stated in the introduction, we do not see *In Paradise* as merely a student

thesis project; we consider it to be a professional low-budget independent film. With that

in mind, from the outset identified certain professional goals and expectations for the film

itself. First of all, this film had a significantly larger budget than any project I have worked on before. While it is still a considerably small budget by professional production standards, fundraising efforts were necessary in order to finance the film to ensure that the production value met the standards we set. We were able to raise $15,000 for the production from prospects within our personal network. For the top-level prospects we have prepared incentives including custom-made packet with a teaser video of the film, custom art, information about the project, and bios of the creative team. For lower level donations, we have planned several attractive high-quality incentives including: a DVD and Blu-ray of the film, custom art prints, movie posters, original motion picture soundtrack, and memorabilia from the film. A portion of the budget will also be allocated to marketing and distribution of the film now that it is finished. Most importantly, however, we sought to make a movie that is intriguing and memorable enough that viewers share the film with others to create word-of-mouth interest. We plan on submitting it to many prominent film festivals known for supporting independent films such as South by Southwest, the Toronto International Film Festival, and Sundance Film Festival. We plan on submitting the film to several smaller festivals as well.

Making a feature length film presented several considerable challenges, some of which were met while others were not. However, it also provided a wonderful opportunity to learn on the job and prepare myself for a professional filmmaking career. A project of this size necessitates meticulous preparation in the pre-production phase to accomplish the storytelling goals during production and enhance them in post-production. While I will always look back on *In Paradise* and think about what I would do differently, I believe that from a cinematography standpoint, I was able to accomplish

many of my original storytelling goals. By using low-key lighting, carefully composed

shots, and deliberate camera movement I feel that I was able to enhance the mood, tone,

and themes of the film while adding levels of meaning to the story.

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