ABSTRACT

Writing and Directing the Short Film, *Barry*

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The following thesis discusses the creative process behind the short film *Barry*, addressing the pre-production, production, and post-production phases of the film. This includes personal and professional goals for the project, influences on the film and my filmmaking approach in general, an analysis of the film, the methods used in producing the film, and personal reflections on decisions made throughout. *Barry* is a project that has evolved through a long process of analyzing personal beliefs, fears, and aspirations. In many ways, the film is ambiguous; this is by design. The process outlined in this paper will hopefully shed light on some of the more obscured elements of the film while still allowing the reader and viewer to experience and project his or her own interpretations and experiences onto the final work.

Writing and Directing the Short Film, *Barry*

by

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CHAPTER ONE

History and Goals

The following thesis addresses development, production, and analysis of the short film *Barry*, a project completed in fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Communication for Baylor University. In addition to providing an analysis of the script for *Barry*, this paper details the works that have influenced the film and my approach as a filmmaker and addresses the methods by which the film was produced. It should be noted at the outset that this work is divided into two distinct halves, separated by a major shift. When preparing the paper for final presentation I felt it prudent to leave much of the first half in tact; that is, the discussion of influences and process is in its original creative state before the major shift occurred and before major changes were made. This division allows the reader to experience the initial intentions for the project, including the original final script and production ambitions, and the subsequent changes that were made as a result of the major shift, allowing one to compare and contrast intent and outcome.

The two distinct halves are thus: Chapters one through four address the original intentions, preparations, and plans for the project before the major shift, and thus read in the future tense. Chapters five through seven occur after the major shift and address the adjustments made in an effort to maintain as much of the original intention and creative direction as possible; these chapters also address the actual production of the film and thus read in the present and past tenses. This division highlights the some of the typical frustrations a creative project and its creator face as well as my attempt to retain as much of the original intent as possible. In many ways, the initial process, the major shift, and

the eventual adjustments and final production of the film were as much a learning experience about independent filmmaking and the importance of well-grounded creative intentions as they were about the final film. As with any creative endeavor, it is often in the sleepless nights, torn scripts, and uncomfortable phone calls and emails where another story – perhaps an even more important one – is told: the story of creation. This paper develops that story, albeit in a slightly more academic format, and presents it to the readers as an exercise in creation. So I encourage the reader to remember this lesson while reading the pages that follow: While the best laid schemes of mice and men do go oft awry, when the dust settles and the screen fades to black the act of creating should be celebrated in addition to the creation itself (Burns). After all, it takes a village to raise the fool who decided to tell a story (and film it no less) about the inevitable unknown. In this case, the village is both the individuals who helped to create the film and the circumstances in which it was made.

A Brief History

To begin, a brief history. Sometime around 2014, Ben Palich proposed an idea to me about a young person discovering the world of Furry Fandom and that discovery operating as a larger metaphor for self-discovery during adolescence. I had heard of Furry Fandom but my knowledge of the phenomenon was limited to jokes, offhand comments, and the occasional news story about a convention, so we decided to do some research. The phenomenon is often thought of as a fetish (evidenced by any cursory search of "Furry Fandom" on Google), and while there is a subculture of sexual experiences within the community, the reality is that Furries are a unique, complex, imaginative group of individuals. In 2009, an article by Denise Winterman was published in BBC Magazine

that shed some light on Furry Fandom. Sparked by a court case in which "two men who met on a furry website, and shared sexual role-playing fantasies, were convicted of plotting to kill one of the pair's adoptive parents," the article does due diligence to present a more nuanced look at the individuals who find belonging in the culture (Winterman).

> [Furry Fandom] is a largely unknown scene and participants have been happy to keep it that way, feeling they are often misunderstood. So what is a furry? No standard definition exists but generally furries are people who have a fascination with anthropomorphic animals. … The scene has its own art, animation, comic books and literature, but activities are largely conducted online - where furries adopt "fursonas" for role playing. … Furries say the scene is about creativity, freedom and community; being who you want to be among like-minded people. (Winterman)

With this in mind, Palich and I began crafting a story about a young woman who, in the summer between high school and college, takes a job as the mascot for a local skating rink. During those formative months, she (thinks she) falls in love, discovers that her true self is never complete (and that that is okay), and takes off the mask of false independence she has been wearing since her father's death. All of this happens with help from an unexpected person involved in the unexpected culture of Furry Fandom. We decided to title the film "Fuzzy" because at the end of the day, the best we can hope to find is a hazy outline for our lives and learn to relish in that obscurity – and because of the word play.

As *Fuzzy* developed into a feature-length script, Palich allowed me to take over the writing responsibilities. I did a major rewrite for an advanced screenwriting class and the people I shared the story with seemed genuinely interested by its unique angle and encouraged me to develop it further. I decided then to begin work on a short film that explores *Fuzzy*'s narrative just before it begins. *Barry* follows Rachel, the main character of *Fuzzy*, through the day she applies for and receives the job as Barry the Badger, the

mascot of the roller-skating rink SkateWorld. The film offers a glimpse into the larger narrative of *Fuzzy*, presenting the concepts of false independence and the fear of the unknown that are fleshed out in the feature film. I wanted *Barry* to be a part of *Fuzzy*, but also separate. The beginning of the beginning of a new narrative in Rachel's life. So often we are thrown into a film in the middle of a transition, and while this sudden departure of reality and entrance into the film's world works theatrically, it potentially denies the viewer a deeper understanding, and thus connection with, the central characters. *Barry* allowed me to take a step back with a few of the characters in *Fuzzy* and look at them for who they are beyond the months of the feature's narrative, to see them in a larger, relatable world, a world that I have experienced. Hopefully, that experience will go beyond me and reach the viewer as well. The narrative of *Barry* lasts a single day but opens the possibility of the many days before and after the ones we see on screen. *Barry* is neither a beginning nor an end, but a threshold into the world beyond the four corners of the screen.

Personal and Professional Goals

Before I begin the examination of influential works and methods for production, it is important that I establish the larger personal and professional goals of this paper and the film, as hinted at above. Establishing these goals will help to inform the reader/viewer of the foundation for the various decisions I made in writing and preparing the work.

This endeavor is intrinsically an artistic one. It began as an artistic expression of the questions of independence and the obscurity of life I am continually confronting and it remains, at its core, a piece of art. In his essay "Art as Technique," Viktor Shklovsky writes,

> …art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impact the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic and in itself must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important* (778, emphasis in original).

What Shklovsky proposes, prolonging the perception of art to make the original subject of the piece unfamiliar and thus seen in a new and enlightened way, is precisely what I am attempting in the creation, production, and analysis of the short film *Barry*. This paper, in conjunction with the film in both script and final projected form, operates as the concretization of the goings-on in my mind.

Personally, the film is an exploration of independence and acceptance of the unknown. Independence can be experienced and achieved in myriad ways, parental, financial, spiritual, and so on; but as a personal concept, it remains elusive and indefinable. That is, my understanding of independence has always been challenged with each supposed move toward autonomy. The film explores and briefly confronts the frustration and mis-assessment of independence. Acceptance of the unknown is also something that I have dealt with in my own life, often in the form of anxiety and unwillingness to move toward something that offers potential consequences, both good and bad, beyond my expectation. The film addresses this abstractly with the character of Barry the Badger acting as a personification of the unknown. The confrontation of these concepts will be further examined in the analysis found in Chapter Four, but I felt it important to expose my personal experiences, albeit vaguely, as foundational for the issues addressed in the film. In many ways, this film is a personal exploration of my own inadequacies and fears.

Professionally, the creation and production of the film provides me with the opportunity to further explore my directorial approach and the types of stories I want to tell. I have never directed a piece of this magnitude, one that is deeply personal and will help to further define me as an artist and filmmaker, and my approach will need to match that level of importance. My hope is that the film will help to establish me as a credible filmmaker who can tell stories in a manner that speaks beyond the screen, encouraging viewers to study the film as a work of art. *Barry* also allows me to explore the possibilities and potential of its feature-length predecessor, *Fuzzy*, as a viable independent film for which to pursue funding for (more discussion on this in chapter two). Finally, I hope that this process, the creation of the film and this paper, will further establish me as a critical consumer of film and art, one that can impart knowledge through questioning and creation on the current and next generation of filmmakers, asking them to examine their own works as larger elements in the broad art of storytelling.

Largely, my hope is that I leave the viewer and myself experiencing something special, something unique to the story of the characters but also true for many, true to life. Donald Richie once said of the films of Yasujiro Ozu,

> What remains after an Ozu film is the feeling that, if only for an hour or two, you have seen the goodness and beauty of everyday things and everyday people; you have had experiences you cannot describe because only film, not words, can describe them; you have seen a few small, unforgettable actions, beautiful because real. (xiv-xv)

This is my goal for *Barry*.

CHAPTER TWO

Development

When beginning any creative endeavor, it often benefits the artist to reflect on the many influences that have led to the inception, formation, and production of the art. As I began crafting Rachel's story, both in the feature screenplay *Fuzzy* and in *Barry*, I discovered that I wanted to focus on two things: the concept of the filmic prologue and an assessment of the films, plays, and other storytelling devices that are influences on my work as a filmmaker. By cultivating a better understanding of these two things, I believe the stories of both *Barry* and *Fuzzy* will be told in a much more fulfilling and complete manner. The following chapter addresses these two subjects directly and lays the foundation for the analysis of the *Barry* screenplay in chapter four.

The Filmic Prologue

After deciding to write and direct a short film as my thesis project, I resolved to work on a piece that would challenge both my artistic approach and the way in which short films operate in film culture. Traditionally, I have understood short films as standalone films that tell unique stories or as 'proof-of-concept' films that offer a glimpse of a proposed feature film to prospective investors. Having written *Fuzzy* over the past several years, I knew that I wanted my thesis film to further explore that world. I believe in the story *Fuzzy* tells, and being able to flesh out and workshop some ideas of that film in a short would be undeniably beneficial. Thus, I knew that my short film would not be a simple standalone film. However, I also knew that I did not want to merely produce a

proof-of-concept film for *Fuzzy*. The proof-of-concept film is a perfectly viable and worthwhile endeavor but, as mentioned above, I knew the artistic works that have influenced me are worth considering and potentially incorporating into my production of *Barry*. It should be noted that the decision to focus primarily on the prologue aspect of the film, with less concern for the 'proof-of-concept' element, stems from a place of creative intentionality. By focusing my energy on telling the best prologue to *Fuzzy* that I can, I believe that the concept of *Fuzzy* will be proven be default; that is, if *Barry* is a true prologue, carrying the weight, tone, and primary message of the subsequent feature, then it will in effect become a 'proof-of-concept' film. This confluence of these two goals, the proof-of-concept and the examination of influential works, led me to further consider the concept of what I term the 'filmic prologue.'

Most often occurring in the opening sequence or title sequence of a feature film, the filmic prologue can establish character, theme, location, perspective, philosophical approach, or any other relevant, but not necessarily vital, information that establishes the lens through which to view the subsequent film. David Bordwell writes, "The first shot of a film could be as vivid and bristling with implication as the first sentence of a novel" ("First Shots"). The concept of the filmic prologue might be best understood as an expansion of this idea; the opening sequence of a film informing the viewer of the experience to come.

Consider Luis Buñuel's first film, *Un Chien Andalou*, as an introductory point for the filmic prologue. The opening sequence of the man, Buñuel, and his razor slicing open the eye of an unknown woman as a thin cloud slices the moon is unmistakably an introductory and informative glimpse into what Buñuel will attempt with this film as well

as much of his later work. In his book on the director, Raymond Durgnat writes of the slice, "*N* viewings of the movie will fail to blunt that razor" (23). The traditional eyes of the viewer, subject to a certain traditional approach to film even in those early years of film, are opened, in a visceral way, to a new surrealist form. Buñuel forever alters viewership, both of his films and of all films, in this prologue.

In a similar vein to Buñuel, Ingmar Bergman's psychological thriller *Persona* explores the larger viewership implications of the filmic prologue. The prologue of the film is in this case vital for Bergman to affect the viewer's experience of the film as something beyond the traditional narrative experience of cinema. Bergman is essentially furthering the value of the filmic prologue of Buñuel. Marilyn Johns Blackwell does a remarkable job breaking down the opening sequence of *Persona* in her book *Persona, The Transcendent Image*. The first chapter of her book, aptly titled "Prologue: The Elusive Image," remains a key influence of my concept of the filmic prologue. The opening sequence, so fraught with jarring images of life and death, cinema and the mind, exposes the subsequent traditional narrative concerning the two women as one that must be examined through a non-traditional lens. Blackwell writes,

> The seemingly disparate series of images that opens the film shows Bergman exploring the extent to which images *will* live on in the viewer's consciousness as emotionally charged 'shadows.' … If he can compel the image to live on in the viewer's mind and to be projected by him or her back onto the screen, then Bergman has created an image which the viewer is as much involved in projecting as the film projector itself. Since the images that the viewer, who has now become creator, projects are peculiarly that viewer's own (through the unique nature of the emotions and values he or she associates with these 'shadows' of images), he or she has actually achieved a kind of equality with the directing intelligence behind the film. (32)

Film*making* is a collaborative art. The filmic prologue suggests that cinema is also a collaborative art; that is, the experience of the film, the observing of the art in a movie theater with others or in one's home, is a collaborative effort. The creation of the art does not end when the images are projected on screen; it continues with the viewer, the individual who will shape what the film means for her as well as what it might mean as a film alone, a singular piece of art. The creation of emotionally charged filmic shadows that remain in the viewer's mind as she views the subsequent feature *Fuzzy* is precisely the goal of the filmic prologue aspect of *Barry*. Of course, this is not the sole motive for the film's creation, but it is an important one for understanding the motivations of the characters and the storytelling approach I have decided on.

The prologues presented above all appear in the opening sequences of the subsequent films. While this is the typical approach, the filmic prologue can also exist as an entirely separate short film. This approach, though not often attempted, is the one I have chosen for *Barry*. My primary influence for this approach derives from Wes Anderson's *Hotel Chevalier* (2007), the prologue film to *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007). On *Hotel Chevalier*'s commentary track, available on the 2010 Criterion Collection Blu-ray release of *Darjeeling*, Anderson notes the short was initially written as an entirely separate piece; he even refers to the original idea as a sort of short story. As the film developed though, he recognized that the character had much in common with Jason Schwartzman's character from *Darjeeling*. At the time of *Hotel Chevalier*'s writing and production, Anderson was also writing the script for *Darjeeling* with Schwartzman and Roman Coppola, and as a result, elements of the short film became tie-ins to the feature. Furthermore, as Anderson reveals in the Blu-ray commentary of *Hotel Chevalier*, the

short was initially not released in theaters with the feature, but as time went on, the director decided that the film should indeed be played before *Darjeeling*. In fact, in the credits for *Hotel Chevalier*, it is clearly stated that the film is "Part 1 of The Darjeeling Limited," and should thus be viewed along with the subsequent feature.[1]

The narrative of *Hotel Chevalier* exists within the world of *Darjeeling* and offers a more in depth understanding of the motivations of Jack Whitman (Jason Schwartzman) in the feature. Jack has holed himself up in a hotel in Paris when he receives an unexpected visit from his girlfriend (Natalie Portman).[2] Following a series of vague, probing questions from his girlfriend, they have a brief bout of foreplay that culminates with the troublesome interchange:

> JACK'S GIRLFRIEND: If we fuck I'm going to feel like shit tomorrow.
> JACK: That's okay with me.
> JACK'S GIRLFRIEND: I love you. I never hurt you on purpose.
> JACK: I don't care.

Before any sex occurs, the two venture out onto the balcony to see Jack's "view of Paris," which is somewhat anticlimactically revealed as a simple view of another, albeit beautiful, building's many windows. The two lovers venture back inside and the credits roll.

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[1] On the Criterion Collection Blu-ray, the foremost option for viewing the film is in conjunction with the short, though options are also available to view each film individually.

[2] I will refer to Natalie Portman's character as "Jack's girlfriend" or more simply "the girlfriend," though it is unclear whether the relationship continues to work under that label. In *Darjeeling*, she is referred to as Jack's "ex-girlfriend," but this breakup could have occurred after the events that occur in *Hotel Chevalier* or is simply misunderstood by Francis.

What is made clear with *Hotel Chevalier* regarding my prologue film approach, is the short is not necessary for the feature to successfully portray a complete story. For example, in *Darjeeling* we learn early on that the three Whitman brothers, Francis (Owen Wilson), Peter (Adrien Brody), and Jack, have not seen each other since the accidental death of their father a year earlier. At some point in that year Jack goes to France and writes a short story about the death of their father and the funeral service that followed. On the train at the beginning of the film he shares this story with his brother Peter, who responds:

> PETER: Is it supposed to be sad?
> JACK: I think so.
> PETER: Well I'm not too crazy about the part where I start screaming at the mechanic. That never happened.
> JACK: The characters are all fictional.

Moments later the film cuts away to Peter crying in the western style bathroom as he continues to read the story. It is obvious that the characters within Jack's short story are direct analogues to his actual family and that the story carries a profound revelatory weight. Of course, narratively speaking, we never see Jack writing this story in the hotel room in *Hotel Chevalier*, but based on a brief exchange with Francis we learn that he has not been anywhere else but the hotel in Paris in the year since the funeral. At the end of this exchange, Francis declares, "I have to tell you, I support this relationship not working out." Having viewed *Hotel Chevalier*, we know that "this relationship" is the one with the Natalie Portman character and that it is not as clean cut as Francis supposes. In fact, the relationship is not simply not working out, but rather continues to be a confusing, subtle cat-and-mouse-like chase; except that the mouse was perhaps hoping to be caught and thus prepares a warm bath for his cat to relax in. At one point in *Hotel*

Chevalier, Portman's character asks Jack, "How long are you going to stay?" To which Jack replies with a clever volley proposing the exact same question. The two are positioned across the hotel room from each other but the sexual tension in the delivery of Jack's reply suggests they are mere inches from each other. Jack tries to play coy, popping a small hotel chocolate into his mouth, but we have seen him carefully clean and prep the apartment and know the inner nervous workings of his mind. He is clearly a man concerned with his appearance. In *Darjeeling*, this line is repeated nearly verbatim in an exchange between Jack and Peter.

> JACK: How long are we going to stay here?
> PETER: What do you mean? He said until the end of the month.
> JACK: Uh huh.
> PETER: Why do you ask that?
> JACK: I'm just trying to know so I can figure out my plans.
> PETER: What plans?
> JACK: I don't know yet. Anyways I've got my own ticket just in case. Don't tell Francis.
> PETER: Well I'm not going to stay here with just me and him.

Jack's initiative to have plans (without actually having any) indicates that he has perhaps been moved in some way by his interaction with his girlfriend back in Paris. Or perhaps he is simply preparing to run away from his brothers again. Without the context of *Hotel Chevalier*, we can surmise that he is a runner, avoiding confrontation and difficulty as much as possible, and this is not necessarily untrue. However, because of the context of the short prologue film, the character becomes more nuanced and we can propose or question potential growth by comparison. In *Darjeeling*, this growth is bolstered by a discussion about the girlfriend (now referred to as Jack's "ex-girlfriend") between Francis and Peter as Jack sneakily checks her voicemail messages. Upon his return to the train and confession that he doesn't feel good about himself, the three brothers, on

Francis's suggestion, vow to not "splinter into factions or not include somebody who has advice and may know better." They seal the deal by smashing the girlfriend's perfume from the parcel that we saw her secretly stow in Jack's luggage in *Hotel Chevalier*.

These small narrative elements introduced in *Hotel Chevalier* and fulfilled in *Darjeeling* shift our understanding of Jack and his girlfriend. The prologue film acts as a glimpse into the nuances of relationships and the individuals in them. It is the cinematic equivalent of the difficulty of hating a friend's ex-lover in solidarity with your friend when you know the ex-lover in more personal terms. The failed relationship was not a one-sided affair.

Consider the feature film the narrative house: there are rooms that the viewer can explore, characters entering and exiting, but the narrative is limited by the four walls. *Hotel Chevalier* functions as a window to the larger narrative world of *Darjeeling*. While we may never become privy to the exact details of the happenings in the larger narrative world, the value lies in knowing that something *is* happening. As a well-developed short film, *Hotel Chevalier* can exist as a standalone story, one we can witness without the need for more. As a prologue film, it successfully operates as a narrative window. This dual purpose is precisely the ambition of my short film, *Barry*, in relation to its accompanying feature, *Fuzzy*.

Barry *as Prologue to* Fuzzy

To better understand the prologue function of *Barry*, one must know the story of the subsequent feature. *Fuzzy* follows a young woman, Rachel Reddick, who, in the summer between high school and college, begins work as a mascot for a local skating rink. Her summer as Barry the Badger takes her from her small town in northern Georgia to a

mascot conference in Atlanta and from assumed, haughty independence to acceptance of help and the unknown. The short film *Barry* chronicles the day before *Fuzzy* begins, as she applies for and is offered the job as Barry the Badger. The thematic elements of independence and the unknown appear in both films and are the foundation for the lessons Rachel will learn.

In many ways, the short film *Barry* is a direct prologue to the narrative action of *Fuzzy*. The characters in *Barry* (Rachel, Holden, Bud, and Sid) all appear and remain important in the subsequent feature. A few key plot elements are introduced in the short, such as the mascot position that Rachel eventually accepts and the vague circumstances surrounding Holden's return, but my primary goal with the film is character development. The viewer should see how Rachel and Holden react to each other and to circumstances beyond their control.

In cinema, the viewer is often dropped into the middle of the scene or situation. For example, consider what Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) tells Ariadne (Ellen Page) in Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010):

> COBB: Well dreams, they feel real while we're in them, right? It's only when we wake up that we realize how things are actually strange. Let me ask you a question, you, you never really remember the beginning of a dream do you? You always wind up right in the middle of what's going on.
> ARIADNE: I guess, yeah.
> COBB: So how did we end up here?
> ARIADNE: Well we just came from the a...
> COBB: Think about it Ariadne, how did you get here? Where are you right now?
> ARIADNE: We're dreaming?
> COBB: You're actually in the middle of the workshop right now, sleeping. This is your first lesson in shared dreaming. Stay calm.

Cinematically, this is exciting; the action is already happening – like being thrown into the middle of an invasion – the viewer must catch up or risk death (narrative cognition death anyway). There is kineticism in cinema and it allows the viewer to get lost in the presented narrative. This can be used, and often is, like smoke and mirrors – hiding the film's primary statement within a conventional narrative. As *Fuzzy* is not about the job Rachel has, rather the various circumstances the job causes in her personal life and consequently her responses to those situations, the viewer enters the narrative at the beginning of Rachel's work. Were the viewer to witness the gaining of the job, he or she might misinterpret the narrative to be centered around the acquisition and maintenance of that job, essentially obscuring the deeper intent of the film too far. In *Barry*, the acquisition of the job operates as the conventional narrative in which the true ambition of the film (to explore Rachel's fear of the unknown and mis-assessed independence) is hidden. Seeing as the hidden meaning of *Barry* involves first steps into unknown territory, it seemed fitting to set the conventional narrative in a similar situation, and, hopefully, making the psychological leap for the viewer easier.

Influences

While writing *Barry*, I wanted to investigate stories and films that have been influential in my growth as a filmmaker and artist and thus have consequentially influenced the film. I have divided this section into three subsections that best addressed my research: Directors, Story Types, and Films.

Directors

My approach to filmmaking and story creation has been shaped by many talented directors of both stage and screen. In truth, I owe much of my creative process to directors like Konstantin Stanislavsky, Sergei Eisenstein, Andrei Tarkovsky, Akira Kurosawa, Alfred Hitchcock, Ingmar Bergman, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Stanley Kubrick, Woody Allen, François Truffaut, David Lynch, and many others. However, those names would be present primarily, though not exclusively, for their wide-ranging creative influence in film and theater and in effect, my studies. Throughout this paper, as evidenced above, the work of several of these directors will be mentioned in some capacity as influential. This list focuses on three directors that have unequivocally affected me as a film consumer and creator and whose influence is apparent in the short film *Barry*: Wes Anderson, Yasujiro Ozu, and Noah Baumbach. It should be noted that Anderson is the most noticeably influential director of the three and as such, he will receive the lion's share of analysis.

Wes Anderson is often criticized as the director whose films "represent and embody hipness and hipsterism;" however, my affection for Anderson's films lies not in their appeal to hipster culture, but rather in Anderson's appreciation for and regular allusions to classic cinema (Newman 71). Consequently, Newman writes, "Anderson is lionized (or chastised) not only for being the quintessential hipster auteur, but also for having inspired a wave of indie cinema that bears his influence, imitating his comical tone, visual sense, and narrative situations" (73). Viewership of his films is enriched by a critical understanding of film history in both technique and theory. In the same way, Anderson consistently commits to a film style that hearkens back to films of the New

Hollywood, classic Hollywood, and mid-twentieth-century Japanese cinema, his films further inspire other filmmakers to study the greats that came before them. In this way, he bridges the divide between hard form and flexible creativity.

Formally, Anderson has a distinct visual style. Working with Robert Yeoman on all but one of his eight feature films,[3] Anderson's cinematographic style combines elements of classic and modern cinema. This is most evident in his film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014). In many ways, the film works as a sort of catch-all for the director's tropes. With the film journeying through decades, Anderson embraced the prevalent aspect ratio of the relevant era and offers the viewer a glimpse at the evolution of film style. In an interview with American Cinematographer for the March 2014 issue, Yeoman relates how similar he and Anderson approached this detail historically:

> The production also maintained a library of reference DVDs, which included *The Red Shoes*, *Twentieth Century*, *Love Me Tonight* and *Grand Hotel*. "Wes loves the Ernst Lubitsch comedies of the 1930s: *The Shop Around the Corner*, *Trouble in Paradise*, *The Merry Widow* and *To Be or Not to Be*," Yeoman says. "We looked at those more to familiarize ourselves with the 1.37:1 aspect ratio, which Wes wanted to use for the 1930s sequences." (Stasukevich 1)

In addition to the 1930s 1.37:1 aspect ratio, the scenes set in the 1970s used the 1.85:1 aspect ratio while the scenes from the 1960s used the wider 2.40:1, achieved with anamorphic lenses. The film also demonstrates an evolution of one of Anderson's cinematographic tropes, the tracking shot. Most notably used in the opening sequences of *Darjeeling*, as we follow the running Peter (Adrien Brody) trying to catch the train, and in *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), as the camera explores the Suzy's (Kara Hayward) house,

[3] *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009) was shot by Tristan Oliver, a notable stop-motion cinematographer.

this movement emphasizes a controlled look at the narrative of the film. Anderson allows the viewer to observe the events of the narrative but remains the director of the image, the cinematic steadiness of the shot acting as a visual cue to the distinctly filmic experience. In *Grand Budapest*, Yeoman evolved this technique by utilizing the MAT Towercam to achieve a direct raising and lowering of the camera through several stories of the set, creating essentially a vertical tracking shot (Stasukevich 1).

Of course, the tracking shot is not the only visual element Anderson is known for. The planimetric shot appears abundantly in his films and is perhaps the shot most often referred to by filmgoers as the foundation of the "Wes Anderson look." In his book *On the History of Film Style*, David Bordwell defines this shot as a composition in which "each layer lies parallel to the picture plane and often to background planes as well" (168). The character introduction sequence in *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) could be considered a definitive collection of Anderson planimetric shots as they achieve, like the tracking shot, a prescribed familiarity with the characters while allowing the director to keep the viewer soundly beyond the screen (see fig. 1). Bordwell explicitly discusses this separating effect in his essay "Wes Anderson Takes the 4:3 Challenge" for Matt Zoller Seitz's book *The Grand Budapest Hotel,* writing that the planimetric shot "yields a formal and somewhat distanced quality – a sense that we are looking from a distance into an enclosed world that sometimes looks back at us" (240). This effect of the planimetric shot will be used in the opening sequences of *Barry* and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

In addition to the two cinematographic tropes mentioned above, Anderson and Yeoman employ several other techniques that define Anderson's visual style. These

Fig. 1. One of a series of shots introducing the Tenenbaum family and the full cast of characters.

include: 180 and 90-degree cutting, "there and back again" shots (characters exiting and reentering the frame in a single take), center framing of subjects, rostrum shots (also referred to as the "god's eye" shot), the zoom, and slow motion. David Bordwell refers to the 180-degree cutting style as "compass-point editing." The 180-degree edit cuts "to reveal what was 'behind' the camera in the first shot," so "if characters … are confronting each other, the camera is, in effect, sitting between them as each seems to be looking through the lens at the other" (Bordwell, "Anderson" 240, see fig. 2, 3). The 90 degree cut reveals "the background plane or the figures' position" (Bordwell, "Anderson" 241). The "there and back again" shot can be seen early in Anderson's career in *Bottle Rocket* (1996) when a frustrated Anthony (Luke Wilson) quickly exits Bob's (Robert Musgrave) car and Dignan (Owen Wilson) attempts to calm him and get him back in the vehicle. Dignan continues his efforts even as Anthony walks out of frame and then reenters, providing an amusing break from the intense situation. Rostrum shots are used in every Anderson film and provide a POV-style look at something important to the

Fig. 2. Jack's Girlfriend sits across the room.

Fig. 3. Jack responds to his girlfriend's questions.

Fig. 4. Jack's Girlfriend stows the perfume bottle away in his suitcase, unbeknownst to Jack.

narrative of the story. In *Hotel Chevalier*, as mentioned above, this is the type of shot used when we see Jack's Girlfriend hide the perfume bottle in his suitcase (see fig. 4).

Accompanying the formal elements of Anderson's style is the presentational and often ambiguous style of the dialogue, both in script and delivery. Characters frequently reference events or emotions in a manner more concerned with the presentation of vague information than with the associated expression. For example, in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), when Steve Zissou (Bill Murray) is asked what the scientific purpose of killing the shark that killed his friend would be, he rather flatly and bluntly responds, "revenge." This approach resembles Robert Bresson's famous model-as-actor technique, in which he, as Alan Pavelin writes in his article for *Senses of Cinema*, "trained [the actors] to remove all traces of theatricality and to speak with a fast, monotonic delivery." We see this especially evident in *Hotel Chevalier*, when, in the moments before their potential sex, Jack and his girlfriend share this exchange:

> JACK'S GIRLFRIEND: Whatever happens in the end, I don't want to lose you as my friend.
> JACK: I promise I will never be your friend. No matter what. Ever.

The dialogue is delivered in a manner so matter-of-fact that the severity of the statement, typically weakened by an ineffectual delivery, is surprisingly increased. However, unlike Bresson, Anderson will, from time to time, have his characters punctuate especially intense moments with unexpected outbursts. For example, in *Bottle Rocket*, when Bob inattentively toys with a large gun instead of listening to the escape plan, Dignan becomes quickly irate, eventually shouting "God-dammit! You're not paying attention if you're messing around with the gun!"

Relatedly, Anderson's resolutions often leave the protagonist in an uncertain but positive situation. In *Rushmore* (1998), Max Fishcer (Jason Schwartzman) does not enter into a relationship with Rosemary Cross (Olivia Williams), but, following an exchange of ambiguous smiles and in a slow-motion sequence set to The Faces "Ooh La La," they share a final dance. These endings are brimming with potential, the beginnings of some other story to be known only by the characters. In *Hotel Chevalier*, the ambiguity and ambivalence abounds when Jack asks, "You want to see my view of Paris?" The camera then tracks left, in slow-motion, to what supposes to be a beautiful view of the city at sunset, only to pan off the lovers and reveal that the view is of the face of another building, one a lot like all those that surround them, a beautiful repetition.

My study of Wes Anderson quickly led me, via David Bordwell, to the brilliance of Yasujiro Ozu. Ozu, like Anderson, uses the planimetric shot copiously in his films. In many instances, this is because of the geometric style of the Japanese home that the director so often sets his films in and around; the cubic form lends itself to straight on shots that retain a sense of detail and depth through the various rooms. In dialogue scenes, Ozu frequently uses the planimetric shot and has the actor speak directly into camera, evoking, perhaps more intensely, the distancing effect mentioned above (see fig. 5). Ozu's films are also very presentational; they are about allowing the audience to witness life happening. The frame becomes a sort of stage. Life is occurring beyond the edges of the frame, and Ozu does benefit us glimpses into that life with his 360-degree camera, but in each presented frame we are not concerned with those spaces beyond. Rather, we are concerned with the life unfolding before us. The slice-of-life stories Ozu portrays so well, specifically in the films *Tokyo Story* (1953) and *Good Morning* (1959),

Fig. 5. In *Good Morning*, Minoru declares to his father that grownups talk to much - mostly about nothing.

all of which are major influences for *Barry*, will be examined in more detail in the "Story Types" section of this chapter.

What Ozu uniquely offers as a director is his control of pace. There is a patience and calmness in his films that is rarely seen in American films. The pacing of his work is remarkable; things will happen when they happen. For instance, the narrative *Tokyo Story* takes place over several weeks and, when watching the film, it feels at times as though actual real-time weeks have passed. This is not to say that his films are laborious. Instead, Ozu's films carry a weight of intentionality that can only be earned through slow, calculated moments of life playing out on screen. Ozu's pace can perhaps best be summed up in one of my favorite scenes in *Good Morning*. The two young brothers, Isamu (Masahiko Shimazu) and Minoru Hayashi (Kôji Shitara), having run away from home with a pot of rice and a kettle of tea settle down for lunch at the bottom of a concrete embankment. Very hungry, they casually munch on the rice and drink the tea

(Isamu hilariously using his small, open hand as a cup) until Minoru declares that he would like a side dish as well. Isamu dutifully trots off up the embankment with the short strides of a young boy to go get the extra food. Once back on the road however, he sees a policeman approaching and, with a quick look down at his rice covered hand, turns and trots back to his brother at a pace no more urgent than the one he had when going to get the food. As the policeman watches from the road, Isamu warns Minoru and the two make their exit; the policeman casually making his way down and watches them run off without the pot of rice. This scene takes approximately two and a half minutes, quite slow for a scene tinged with supposed urgency. What is especially wonderful though is the subsequent two shots. As the boys run off, the film cuts to a five second shot of the tea kettle and rice pot sitting on a desk and then to the policeman eating his noodles. With these cuts, urgency quickly leaves the mind. Things will happen when they happen. All will be well eventually; we need only wait. This is not to say all will be back to normal, as we see in *Tokyo Story*, simply that life will continue whether we have urgency or not.

What Ozu offers in pacing, Noah Baumbach offers in naturalist approach. His characters, while commonly larger than life exaggerations of personality types, remain grounded in a real, relatable world. In *The Squid and the Whale* (2005), Walt Berkman (Jesse Eisenberg) roughly navigates the dissolution of his parents' marriage through wordy nonsense he adopts from his pompous father, Bernard (Jeff Daniels). The flighty Frances (Greta Gerwig) believes in big things, in following dreams, in becoming anything, but has no understanding of how to achieve any of that in *Frances Ha* (2012). At a dinner party, Frances delivers a beautiful monologue about love and expectation:

> FRANCES: I want this one moment. It's - it's what I want in a relationship Which might explain why I'm single now. Ha, ha. It's, uh – It's kind of

> hard to – It's that thing when you're with someone and you love them and they know it and they love you and you know it but it's a party and you're both talking to other people and you're laughing and shining and you look across the room and catch each other's eyes but, but not because you're possessive or it's precisely sexual, but because that is your person in this life. And it's funny and sad, but only because this life will end, and it's this secret world that exists right there in public, unnoticed, that no one else knows about. It's sort of like how they say that other dimensions exist all around us, but we don't have the ability to perceive them. That's - That's what I want out of a relationship. Or just life, I guess. Love. I sound stoned. I'm not stoned. Thanks for dinner. Bye.

And then she gets up and leaves. This is precisely what Baumbach does best; he drops a moment of other-worldliness into the malaise of life. He pulls open the curtains and exposes a universe just beyond our reality, a universe that can only exist in movies, and then, as quickly as the moment comes, it goes, and we are left staring at an empty chair, remembering that moments like that are not fully real. The characters within Baumbach's films face monumental life change and their responses often leave them dramatically altered, sometimes for the better. He presents a version of progress more true to life than to cinema, that everything is always moving forward, whether we like it or not. To capture that feeling is no small task.

In his review of *The Squid and the Whale*, David Denby praises Baumbach's ability to capture the narrative in a natural manner, allowing the story to tell itself:

> [Baumbach is] startlingly sure-footed. The main ideas are set up clearly and developed carefully. … Yet there's nothing constricted about the form or feel of the movie. Family arguments and conferences, and interactions between the boys and their friends, are stage simply and straightforwardly, yet many of these scenes, pointed and touching from the start, take off in surprising directions and come to a climax with a sudden rush of hostility or hurt. The tight ending, which often cuts to a character in need of reassurance or enlightenment, is itself a form of wit. (85)

Baumbach crafted a story fraught with emotion and destruction and delivered in a package as delicate as the pages of a very old book. When one watches a Baumbach film,

particularly those like *The Squid and the Whale*, *Frances Ha*, and his first feature *Kicking and Screaming* (1995), a sense of frustration evolves into a deep need for completion, acceptance, growth. The characters, once eliciting exasperation from the viewer, eventually find redemption in some small way, not enough for forgiveness, but certainly moving toward compassion. Denby concludes his review:

> Walt, nearly drowning himself in the effort to keep his dad afloat, calls his mother a whore out of loyalty to his father's suffering. The plot hinges on Walt's rediscovery of his love for her; Baumbach, in the end, holds out the possibility that Walt, at least, will see his parents as neither gods nor monsters but as screwed-up, very foolish adults. The movie is proof that Walt grew into a man. (86)

In this sense, the conclusions of Baumbach's films are more concerned with the future than with the past, something I believe is the sign of a great storyteller.

Story Types

As I was writing *Barry*, I was largely focused on building a narrative that took advantage of two established story types, the coming of age story and the *shomin-geki*, and combined them. The film concludes with Rachel beginning her larger coming of age story, the one further explored in the subsequent feature, by allowing herself to accept a challenge she is, in many ways, unprepared for. However, by learning to accept the challenge of the unknown, she has come of age in a smaller, but no less important, way.

Foundationally, Antoine Doinel's searching for freedom, for purpose, only to find an ocean in François Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (*The 400 Blows*) (1959) remains a story I return to when exploring character growth and the coming of age genre. The final exhausting sequence of the film depicts Antoine running for approximately four minutes of screen time, eventually stopping, with hesitance, in the ankle-deep waters of

the breaking surf. For me, it is this sequence that defines the coming of age story. Antoine has come to the end of the line, or, at least, the end of *this* line, and thus turns to the camera with a look that seems to search for the next way to live. Annette Insdorf sums it up nicely in her essay for the Criterion Collection when she writes,

> That *The 400 Blows* is a record—even an exorcism—of personal experience is first alluded to in Antoine's scribbling of self-justifying doggerel on the wall while being punished. …by the last scene, the sea washes away Antoine's footprints as the film "cleans the slate"—although that final image remains indelible.

Coming of age, in a way, means moving beyond the past, shaking the dust of those experiences from one's boots and stepping into the next set of experiences, never forgetting, in the same way the frozen final image of Antoine's ambiguous, searching face can never be forgotten, that the reality of the past has shaped the future.

Similarly, I have found this version of the coming of age story in Mike Nichols' *The Graduate* (1967); essentially all of Wes Anderson's films, though especially so in *Rushmore*, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and *The Life Aquatic*; Baumbach's *Kicking and Screaming* (1995), *The Squid and the Whale*, and *Frances Ha*; and Annie Baker's play *The Flick*. In each of these stories the protagonists are faced with the fact that their lives will no longer be the same. In some cases, as in *The 400 Blows* and Nichols' *The Graduate*, the decision to accept the new facts of life is left distinctly ambiguous, a decision having been made and the repercussions yet to be seen. In other cases, like *Rushmore* or *Frances Ha*, hope remains the dominant force in what will be the next phase of the Max's and Frances's lives, that the next steps, while unknown, just might prove to be the best ones yet. And in Baker's play, we see both sides appearing to occur

simultaneously. Sam, the thirty-five-year-old wash-up who "used to be into heavy metal," shares a piece of wisdom with the younger Avery that emanates from coming of age:

> SAM: Look. Avery. Just – before you go. I know my life might seem kind of depressing to you, and you know, in a lot of ways it is. But there's some good stuff in it. Maybe I never told you about it, but there's some really good stuff in my life. And sometimes the people you fall in love with fall in love with you back. Sometimes they don't. But sometimes they do. And it's awesome. And I feel like once that happens to you – (174-5)

And then he is cut off by Avery. In that moment, Sam has come of age, while Avery is only just beginning his journey. That is the power of the coming of age story; it can happen to anyone, at any time, slowly, or suddenly.

While the coming of age story's influence on *Barry* is clearly evident in the film's narrative, the influence of the *shomin-geki* genre is a bit more nuanced. *Shomin-geki* is most often associated with Yasujiro Ozu, beginning with his film *The Life of an Office Worker* (1929). Writing on this film, Donald Richie describes the *shomin-geki*:

> This genre, originally a kind of home drama, later to have a long and honorable history, was devoted to the lives of the lower-middle-class majority that was, until recently, the economic backbone of the country. The *shomin* were 'people like you and me,' but in the films of Ozu, Gosho, Yasujiro Shimazu (and later, of Toyoda, Naruse, Imai, Kinoshita, and Chiba), they became something more, something like spokesmen for all of Japan. As a film genre it was highly regarded for its honesty. It may have somewhat overplayed hardship, but at least it did not gloss over life's real difficulties. (207)

And from earlier in his book on Ozu:

> He is concerned not with quintessential family. He achieves the transcendental form from a base in the mundane, in the bourgeois family – undisturbed by social upheavals, undismayed by financial misfortunes – where a sense of the dailiness of life is perhaps most readily to be discovered. It is precisely 'day-to-day existence' that Ozu so realistically and hence so movingly captured. (Richie 6)

However, Richie clarifies that Ozu, despite finding a rhythm in the *shomin-geki*, did not allow himself to be restricted to a simple reading of the genre. He writes, "[Ozu's] pictures, even the early ones, are (irrespective of genre) also about something else. They are, briefly, about character, about people as they are" (Richie 207). Likewise, I have adopted an expanded version of the *shomin-geki*, one that includes the emphasis on people as they are as well as another element of Ozu's style, what David Desser terms the "'dramatic ellipsis', whereby something important has occurred, but offscreen" (7). Using the example from *Tokyo Story* of the "parents' arrival in Osaka on the return trip and their overnight stay because the mother has become ill," Desser reminds us "that the drama of her illness, the sudden change in plans, is not shown" (7). He goes on to emphasize that "Ozu's strategies are rooted elements of the Japanese aesthetic tradition – the deemphasis of drama and the elision of plot elements in theatrical works, the emphasis on mood and tone instead of story in literature" (7). The dramatic ellipsis is an important element in furthering the world beyond the edges of the screen in *Barry*. For example, by denying the viewer a glimpse at Barry in his initial reveal, the film's focus shifts to the Rachel's reaction to the situation, which in the grand scheme of character development is what actually matters.

Anton Chekhov's brilliant work, *The Cherry Orchard*, provides a helpful example of the combination of the *shomin-geki* and the dramatic ellipsis. In Chekhov's play, the drama in the lives of the characters is, at times, exaggerated, but the elements of the everyday, the struggles of the middle-class, or rather those becoming the middle-class, are made evident. Also, the dramatic action of the play, the plot device around which much of the conflict arises – the selling and amputation of the family estate and adjoining

cherry orchard – occurs offstage. Indeed, the finale of the play is punctuated by the distant chopping of the cherry trees as Firs resolves himself to death, boarded inside the estate, a physical and aural representation of the life that once was. The dramatic ellipsis and the *shomin-geki* are vital to the subtleties of *Barry*'s narrative; the foundation of the narrative is in the attention paid to the characters responses to major dramatic events, not with the events themselves. In those responses is where the humanity of the story lies, and it is there in the film where the stories of Rachel and Holden and Bud truly happen.

Additional Films

In addition to the numerous films mentioned above, I want to highlight four additional films that have been influential in some facet of *Barry*'s conception. These four films have attributed unique creative elements to *Barry* and while they can be categorized using the story types listed above, they also bear larger, specific influences on setting, character, and tone.

Nat Fixon and Jim Rash's 2013 film *The Way, Way Back* follows 14-year-old Duncan (Liam James) through a tumultuous summer as he tries to navigate the murky waters of family, relationships, and life. Stumbling into a job at the local waterpark in the town where his family is vacationing, Duncan befriends the park's manger, Owen (Sam Rockwell), who bestows, as best he can, some wisdom on the young boy. *The Way, Way Back* is a coming of age story, but it is also a story about time and place, and how those two elements of life can be resisted or embraced. What Water Wizz, the local waterpark, represents for *The Way, Way Back* is precisely what SkateWorld represents in *Barry*. While giving Duncan a tour of the park, Owen explains exactly what that representation is:

> OWEN: Water Wizz waterpark, built in the summer of '83, is the last bastion of everything that time period stood for. In fact, it was decreed by its creator that this place shall never age. On his deathbed, he said, "I don't want this place painted or updated. I don't even want it brought up to code and the minute someone tries, it needs to be destroyed."

SkateWorld is a place, like Water Wizz, where time and place remain unchanged; where one can grow old but never grow up. It is Never-Never Land. This is not to say that it does not have its conflicts, it has its pirates and alligators, too; rather, it is a place where time loosens its grasp and anything becomes seemingly possible. In this way, it is the perfect place for someone on the edge of independence to, somewhat, safely explore what exactly that means.

What *The Way, Way Back* inspired in terms of location, Lenny Abrahamson's *Frank* (2014) inspired my approach to Barry the Badger, the mascot Rachel becomes in *Barry*. In *Frank*, Jon Burroughs (Domhnall Gleeson) joins an unconventional pop band fronted by Frank (Michael Fassbender), the mysterious and enigmatic lead singer who, at all times, wears a papier-mâché head. What is particularly peculiar about Frank's head is that it does not resemble some especially outlandish character or animal; it is simply the cartoonish version of a male's head with big blue eyes and formally parted black hair (see fig. 6) The head, for Frank, who suffers from mental health issues, is a place of safety and comfort, the place where he believes he can be fearless, unashamed. Frank's eventual removal of the head and performance with his former band at the end of the film thus represents a self-acceptance beyond comfort and safety, an acceptance of an unknown yet hopeful future framed in a difficult but worthy past.

Jason Reitman's *Juno* (2007) and Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris' *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) inspired much of the overall tone of *Barry*. These two films were

Fig. 6. Frank's cartoonish papier-mâché head is a direct inspiration for Barry the Badger's head.

released while I was in high school and consequentially, much of my high school experience is remembered through the lenses of Juno MacGuff (Ellen Page) and Dwayne Hoover (Paul Dano). The character Rachel in *Barry* acts as a surrogate for me and faces, like Juno and Dwayne and I, questions about independence and the future. *Juno* and *Little Miss Sunshine* also exhibit a distinctly quirky approach to facing those questions. In the "Quirky by Design" chapter of his book *Indie 2.0*, Geoff King analyzes these two films and attempts to quantify and qualify precisely what "quirky" might mean and how these films and their distributors capitalized on this approach. Regardless of King's thoughts on how "the phenomena constituted by *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Juno* could be viewed as the result not of accident or chance but of a carefully honed strategy by the distributor, if not the filmmakers," he offers, with the help of James MacDowell, a helpful understanding of the specific quirky tone of the films (26). He writes, "The slight oddness associated with the quirky is often comic, to a great or lesser extent, but might also be found in instances in which comedy seems less obviously evident or to the fore" (King 27). There are several instances in *Barry* in which the comedy of the moment is clear (e.g. the confusion

surrounding Sid's actual name being Theo); but there are other moments in the film, most often between Rachel and Holden, though also in the meeting with Rachel and Bud, in which the comedic elements are subtler, relying on some of life's vague universal absurdities to expose the humor of the scene. Both *Juno* and *Little Miss Sunshine* have provided strong and successful examples by which to design the more understated humorous scenes in *Barry*.

Finally, I have recently taken a serious interest in two films from writer/director Joe Swanberg, *Drinking Buddies* (2013) and *Digging for Fire* (2015). In these films, Swanberg has crafts modern, slice of life indie films with loose narratives about a group of people; they could be considered the American evolution of Ozu's *Good Morning*. Through a series of revelations and mishaps, the characters' lives shift slightly, never so much to be melodramatic or irrevocably changed but enough to be noteworthy in their deviation from the everyday ins-and-outs of life. In *Digging for Fire* a husband (Jake Johnson's Tim) uncovers a bone and a gun in the backyard of a friend's home, a wild, cinematic discovery to be sure. However, instead of focusing on the larger implications of the discarded evidence, legal or psychological, Swanberg turns the narrative to Tim and his wife's (Rosemarie DeWitt's Lee) personal revelations. The gun and bone act as a McGuffin, triggering Tim's shortfalls and exposing deeper issues in the marriage. Tim's obsession with the discovery is the conventional narrative obscuring and then revealing his inner issues and the film's primary message. In the same way, Lee's weekend escapades with the motorcycling riding chef, Ben (Orlando Bloom), act as a narrative device through which her real issues become clear. Swanberg's films are, in many ways, a successful execution of what I hope to achieve with *Barry*. With the added visual flare

of Anderson and Ozu, I hope to present a story that is both relatable and cinematic, funny and sincere, real and surreal; the type of story that can be experienced both within and beyond the visual and narrative means in which it is presented.

CHAPTER THREE

Analysis

Barry is a creative work firmly founded in the research addressed in Chapter Two. This chapter will examine the application of that research through an in-depth analysis of the screenplay. Instead of working through the narrative of *Barry* strictly chronologically, I have decided to divide my analysis into three main sections: location, characters and relationship, and the narrative. Each of these sections will provide a detailed examination of their respective categories. The three categories are essential elements for the larger story with the first two, location and characters and relationships, laying the groundwork for the third, the narrative. The film is about the everyday. Location, characters, and relationships are foundational aspects of that commonplace. Where one is, who one is with, and how one knows that other define the narrative of life. This was precisely how I approached writing the story, beginning with the location of SkateWorld, adding in the characters that would come to inhabit that space, exploring how those characters would relate to one another, and, finally, constructing a narrative around those relationships. Before continuing, I suggest reading the script provided in Appendix A.

Location

When Ben Palich and I began crafting the idea of a film in a roller-skating rink, I knew that the rink had to be a location that doubled as a character. In the first iterations of the *Fuzzy* narrative, much of that location-as-character dynamic dissolved. This is neither the fault of Palich or myself, rather of the engaging narrative we felt we were building.

The narrative also moves away from the rink for a large portion of the second act of the film. When I began work on the *Barry* screenplay I knew that I wanted to recapture the location-as-character concept and explore it further.

My initial research led me to divide location-as-character into two sub-categories that denote opposite ends of a location spectrum. On one end of the spectrum are the locations that I consider "living;" that is, locations that physically interact, primarily of their own volition, with the characters in the film or television show. Examples of this include the Island from J.J. Abrams' *Lost* (2004-2010), the Discovery 1 and its onboard computer, HAL 9000 (Douglas Rain), in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), and the town of Seaside in Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998). In *Lost*, the Island appears to possess healing powers and many of the characters refer to the Island as though it were a living thing. In the first season finale, "Exodus: Part II," a discussion between Locke (Terry O'Quinn) and Jack (Matthew Fox) reveals that Locke believes the Island summoned them, personifying the geographical formation with his use of action verbs:

> LOCKE: Do you think we crashed on this place by coincidence, especially this place? We were brought here for a purpose, for a reason, all of us. Each one of us was brought here for a reason.
> JACK: Brought here? And who brought us here, John?
> LOCKE: The island. The island brought us here. This is no ordinary place, you've seen that, I know you have. But the island chose you, too, Jack. It's destiny.

In *2001*, HAL 9000 (voiced by Douglas Rain) could be considered a separate character apart from Discovery 1, but I would argue that the computer operates primarily as the brain of the larger entity of the spaceship, controlling its every move, giving the craft perceived life. The sentience of HAL 9000 and his control of Discovery 1 culminates in

his famous response to Dave Bowman's (Keir Dullea) request to "open the pod bay doors," saying, "I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that." Finally, the idyllic Seaside in *The Truman Show* comes alive at the behest of Christof (Ed Harris), the creator of Truman Burbank's (Jim Carrey) televised life. Seaside falls slightly more center on the location-as-character spectrum, as opposed to the extreme *Lost* Island and the less extreme Discovery 1 and HAL 9000, but still presents physical interaction with the characters of the film. It acts as one unit controlled by the brain, Christof, able to shift its traffic and people to directly affect Truman's day to day experience, similar to HAL 9000's relationship with Discovery 1, though perhaps slightly less malicious.

On the opposite end of the location-as-character spectrum are locations that operate as thematic manifestations of the larger narrative. A broad-concept example of this is the suburbia of Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Poltergeist* (1982), and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), often referred to as his "suburban trilogy."[1] In their article, "Pleasantville?: The Suburb and Its Representation in American Movies," authors Douglas Muzzio and Thomas Harper emphasize the necessary nature of the suburban location in some films defining the "suburban-centered" film as one in which "suburbia is so essential to a film's nature that it could not take place elsewhere without being fundamentally altered" (547).[2] James Kendrick, in *Darkness in*

[1] Individually, *Poltergeists*' primary location of the Freeling home would shift the position of the film on the location-as-character spectrum. However, in this case, its larger suburban setting is being examined as a part of the trilogy, thus positioning it with the other two films on the spectrum.

[2] Oddly enough, Muzzio and Halper list *The Truman Show* as an example of a suburban-centered film. I don't disagree with their assessment, though in this examination of location-as-character, the liveliness and interactivity of Seaside positions it elsewhere on the spectrum.

the Bliss-Out, adopts this suburban-centered film concept to describe the three films in Spielberg's suburban trilogy (29-30).[3] Suburbia, as representative of larger themes in the three films, is, as Kendrick aptly describes, "both dream and nightmare, freedom and imprisonment" (32).

More narrowly, consider my earlier examination of Water Wizz waterpark in *The Way Way Back*. The waterpark is established as a setting unaffected by the consequences of time and thus offers a location in which anything is perceivably possible. Wes Anderson also adopts this categorization of location-as-character with the Rushmore Academy in *Rushmore*, Steve Zissou's oceanographic vessel, the Belafonte, in *Life Aquatic*, the train in *The Darjeeling Limited*, and the hotel in *Grand Budapest*. Of course, this concept could be applied to many, if not all, films regarding setting. However, I would argue that these locations are fundamental elements of their respective films and the narratives would not be complete without their thematic offerings.

The Hotel Earle in Joel and Ethan Coen's *Barton Fink* (1991) is an example of this necessity of location that falls somewhere in between the *Lost* Island and Spielberg's suburbia. A large portion of the film takes place in the hotel. When we leave the Earle, we feel we must always return as it is the only safe space where we, and Barton, can evaluate the experiences that occurred outside its walls. The Hotel Earle *is* Barton Fink. It is the physical manifestation of his mind, the place where he is inspired and entrapped, where his muses and his demons reside. At the conclusion of the film, the hotel is

[3] Kendrick further stresses the major influence of suburbia in Spielberg's films, writing that "the association of suburban neighborhoods and Spielberg is so strong, in fact, that he has been referred to as 'the poet of suburbia,' especially during the 1980s" (29).

destroyed and Barton is able to fully experience a real-life version of the muse who once merely clung to his wall, the woman on the beach. Whether it is real or not is inconsequential, it is the escape from the prison of his mind that constitutes his victory. In this way, the location-as-character is vital to our understanding of the narrative. Somewhere between the Hotel Earle and Water Wizz rests SkateWorld, a roller-skating rink that is alive but aging poorly.

The introductory sounds of *Barry* are of Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers singing their 1950s rock and roll/doo wop hit "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," the first image, a spinning disco ball. This partnership, without context, intends to invoke images of mid-20th-century America, Archie and Jughead, and Richard Dreyfuss's Curt laying eyes on "the most perfect, dazzling creature [he's] ever seen" in George Lucas' *American Graffiti* (1973).[4] And then: "A hazy, half-hearted roller rink. Memories of days long gone. You can almost smell the machined fog. No one is skating. It's 2008, and no one roller skates at 8am on a Monday in 2008." The juxtaposition of the anticipated images of glory days gone by with the empty floor and "dim lights of the fink flashing tragically behind [Rachel]" tells a story of unachieved dreams, fading expectations, and unattended birthday parties. It is in this bleak place we meet Rachel Reddick, sitting in her sticky booth, faced with the reality that she must, eventually, land somewhere between glory and failure.

I chose a roller-skating rink for what it represents culturally, visually, and personally. Culturally, they are places that have held on, unrelenting against a video game

[4] "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" is, in fact, the song playing over this moment in the film.

and Netflix society, forever offering a place of fun and freedom where one can strap on a pair of skates and glide along a polished hardwood floor, floating as if lighter than air. They are grounded in a type of classic entertainment, what grandparents might call, "good, clean fun." Visually, they declare the rhythmic, symmetrical beauty of the under-appreciated oval. As people skate in loop after loop after loop, they blur together, creating an unbroken stripe of light and color, laughter and song. If one falls, the skating does not cease, but adjusts, constantly adapting to the obstacles that may befall the individuals that comprise the almost celestial ring. Simultaneously, they are visual representations of the cyclical nature of life in a small town, constantly looping back on itself, having fun, but rarely progressing beyond the loop.

Throughout the film, we observe SkateWorld in three ways: (1) the circumstantial reality that the film is being shot in the roller rink and will thusly appear in the background of nearly every shot, (2) the tour Holden gives Rachel highlights several areas of the space and directly informs her, and the viewer, of the purpose and history of those areas, and (3) three sets of "pillow shots" that present the space devoid of people. The first of these observational modes is secondary to the action of the scene and operates as an examination of the setting in a predominantly happenstantial manner. Thus, little analysis is necessary. This is not to say that the details of the background setting will go unattended or ignored, rather that the primary role of those details is to further the theme and mood of the general setting of SkateWorld. Holden's tour and the three sets of pillow shots are more informative in analyzing SkateWorld's location-as-character dynamic.

Following her introductions to Bud Brown, the owner of SkateWorld, and Sid, the enigmatic teenager in charge of skate rentals, Holden leads Rachel on a tour of the roller-skating rink. This tour highlights the many individual areas of the rink summating SkateWorld. Roughly mid-tour, Holden, realizing the absurdity of the situation, surrenders, "It's basically one room." In addition to its comedic merits, the line represents one of the larger themes of the film: perceived independence versus communally experienced life. Holden's declaration challenges the isolation of each area of SkateWorld's individuality, and, in effect, challenges Rachel's emphasis on individuality and independence. This is addressed more explicitly in their later exchange:

> RACHEL: I know that. I just – I don't know if she's ready for me to be gone yet.
> HOLDEN: Your mom? Rach. You know you can be afraid of things –
> RACHEL: (defensive) I'm not afraid. (calming) I just think she's not ready.
> HOLDEN: Okay okay. (pause) Does *she* know she's not ready?

While Rachel presents a sacrificial communal mindset regarding her mother, Holden questions Rachel's candor and effectively exposes her internal struggle, a fear of being truly independent for the first time in her life. The 'one room, many spaces' layout of SkateWorld underscores this moment in the film and acts a backdrop for Rachel's personal journey.

The third mode of observation occurs in transition; that is, on three occasions the film transitions scenes by showing SkateWorld in "pillow shots." David Desser terms this type of shot, most often associated with Ozu, a "still life," referencing a certain style of classical painting. The shot shows a space, not necessarily the space most directly associated with the scenes that surround it, "devoid of human figures" (Desser 10). "Ozu achieves a particular poignancy in many of his still lifes by highlighting the paradox of

humanity's presence by its absence" (Desser 10). More broadly, Desser continues, "transitional spaces help viewers understand that a scene is changing and prepare them for the retrospective activity of reorienting themselves in the next scene" (10). In *Barry*, the still lifes appear in sets of three, three times. The first two occurrences take place between the three introduction scenes (Holden, Bud, and Sid) and function in two capacities: (1) to allow the viewer to mentally reset before she is introduced to the next character and (2) to introduce the viewer to the character of SkateWorld. By buttressing the still lifes with more formal character introductions, the hope is that the viewer will associate the space with the introductions and see SkateWorld as another character, helping to solidify the location-as-character concept discussed above. The third still life set occurs between the penultimate and final scenes of the film and again functions in two capacities. Firstly, these two scenes introduce the final character, and namesake, of the film (discussed below), Barry the Badger, thus, the third still life recalls the opening character introductions. Secondly, this still life set shows the closing of the rink and visually transitions the viewer to the singular exterior scene of the film. It should also be noted that while they are called *still* lifes, the images will not be completely still. Instead, they will have small elements of movement (e.g. a pretzel rotating in a display case or lights being turned off) to emphasize the stillness of the space. By having small movements in the frame, the larger stillness of the frame will be accentuated. The effect is similar to the quiet humming of an air conditioner making a room sound more silent through context.

In all three modes of observation (circumstantial background reality, Holden's tour, and the pillow shots) SkateWorld should demonstrate the location-as-character

dynamic of the film, highlighting its unique setting and the metaphorical and thematic elements that setting brings. SkateWorld is not merely a means to an end. It is a deliberately chosen arena of circulation and timelessness and its subtle presentation is vital to the success of the film.

Characters and Relationships

As *Barry* is essentially a character study tucked inside a slice-of-life film, it is beneficial to briefly examine each character and his or her relationship to the others. In addition to SkateWorld operating as a character within the film discussed above, there are five characters to consider: Rachel, Holden, Bud, Sid, and Barry.

Rachel, described as "17 and unimposing," is the film's main character and the one with which the audience should primarily identify. She is seventeen years old, a recent high school graduate, and the daughter of a single mother. These three descriptors do not define her wholly, but they are major contributors in her decision-making process. The film culminates in a decision Rachel must make, thus, understanding her circumstances will help to inform us on her final choice. She is often found waiting or at the mercy of the other characters; the film opens with her waiting at a booth. The multiple moments of waiting and following convey the false reality of her independence; she in fact is still reliant on others and must learn to accept that so that she can pursue a true independence. Rachel is also fearful of the unknown. She is an individual who relies on structure and consistency. The confrontation brought on by the roller skates Sid drops on her table and the "idea" that Bud has proposed presses Rachel to acknowledge her larger fear of disorder and unpredictability. The final moment of the film, in which she

dons the head of Barry the Badger, represents Rachel's first step into the murkiness of the future.

Holden, Rachel's long-time friend, is described as "cynically optimistic" and functions primarily as the subtle catalyst and provocateur of the film. He is a year or two older than Rachel and has often been the voice of reason in Rachel's life; however, in *Barry*, the roles appear to have reversed, with Rachel acting as the voice of reason. Having been away for his first year in college and facing the rapidly declining health of his father, he has been absent from Rachel's life for over a year when the film begins. Rachel, aware of Holden's family's situation, attempts to peel away the protective layers of silence he has put on since their last interaction. Three times Rachel confronts Holden on the health of his father, only partially succeeding in the third attempt.

> RACHEL: How's your dad?
> HOLDEN: Dad? Ah he's good. Better.
> RACHEL: (empathetic) Yeah?
> HOLDEN: (nothing more to say) Yeah.

Holden's dismissal of the heavy realities in his life redirect Rachel to examine her own reality. This is not because she is apathetic about Holden's situation, rather because she begins to recognize the hypocrisy of her care – diverting her fears and trepidations for the future onto something out of her control. As the film progresses, Holden and Rachel's familiarity is rekindled, allowing Holden to recognize and help Rachel begin to confront her issues.

Bud Brown owns and operates SkateWorld and, as a townie and recent divorcé, Bud is a potential future for the other characters in the film. Described as "a late 30-something doing an impression of a late 40-something," he is a character stuck. However, it is important to note that Bud is not described or characterized at any point as being

decidedly unhappy. The divorce is troublesome, yes, but it has not defined the life Bud has chosen to live, it has not collapsed his hope. In this regard, his character represents realignment and reassessment of the life one has expected to lead, but not complete abandonment.

Theodore "Sid" Brown is Bud's nephew and the comic relief of the film. His off-putting anarchist persona is offset by the organized roller skates and his attention to detail, presenting an on-the-nose metaphor for not judging a book by its cover. Sid also plays a vital role in exposing Rachel to the flaws in her self-centered worldview, revealing to her, and the viewer, that the two of them "had geometry together." In all three of the introductions that open the film, the viewer is exposed to the blemished humanity of the protagonist, hopefully painting a picture of authentic small town life and relatable characters.

Lastly, Barry the Badger, the mascot of SkateWorld and the film's namesake, appears in the film primarily through a vague conversation between Rachel and Holden. During the penultimate scene of the film, Holden reveals Barry to Rachel, but not to the viewer. Barry represents Rachel's acceptance of the unknown and his delayed reveal emphasizes the difficulty of that decision, furthered by Rachel's initial response of a hesitant, "Oh. Oh no." In this sense, the film is as much about Barry as it is not about him. Barry is much more than a simple McGuffin, as it may initially seem. By cutting directly away from Rachel's response to another series of still life shots, the viewer might be led to assume that Barry does not matter to the narrative of the film. When Barry does finally appear at the very end of the film, the reveal follows Rachel's final line, "Maybe we can't be ready," thus indicating that the donning of the mascot head is Rachel's

acceptance of the unknowable, uncontrollable future. And in this final moment, everything fades away. “Rachel is alone in the head. The sun is setting. Summer is here.” And all these characters can do is let it happen.

Narrative

As mentioned above, the narrative of *Barry* follows a single day in Rachel’s life. It is important that on this day it appears, on the surface, that nothing especially out of the ordinary happens. In fact, the principle narrative could be pared down to a simple string of short sentences: Rachel applies for a job. Rachel gets the job. The job changes slightly. Rachel adjusts. However, it is not what happens or what is said that is important, rather subtle responses to situations and what is left unsaid form the cornerstones of the film. As the day progresses, the viewer should notice the nuances of the characters, their quirks and tics. Each of these individuals carries with him or her a lifetime of experience and should not be judged on singular moments. The difficulty of a single day, a single interaction, is what is left unknown. Much of this film is left in mystery. Holden’s father’s health situation is never revealed. Bud’s marital struggles are acknowledged only in a passing moment. Rachel’s fears and plans are never explicitly declared. The one mystery that is solved, who or what Barry is, should pale in comparison to the many left open. And that is precisely the point of the narrative. Life is a complicated and mysterious experience and stepping into that moment for a single day, no matter how grand the day, should be complicated and mysterious. The viewer should wonder what becomes of these people but not fear for them. There is hope in the final moments, when Rachel puts on the weight of the unknown future; she has accepted that mystery and has

decided, albeit with some healthy trepidation, to wade into the murky waters of life, the heat of summer.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

In the following chapter I will address my practical approach to producing and completing the film. The various methods that have been and will be used to produce the film will be addressed.

Delegation

When I began to consider *Barry* as an option for a thesis film that I would write and direct, I had to come to terms with the fact that I am a terrible producer. I recognized early on that if this film were to ever hope to be produced, I would need to hone my delegation skills and acknowledge that many things would need to be left to other individuals' talents.

I was lucky enough to have Tiffany Navarro reach out to me early in the project. She messaged me cold, as we had only worked briefly together on a previous film, and asked if I had anything upcoming that should could help on. Initially, I understood this to be an offer regarding her abilities as an actor and was thrilled that she had messaged me. In our brief previous work together, I had admired her acting ability and had also seen her perform with the university's improv group. As I was working on the script for *Barry*, adapting the characters from the feature film, I had considered asking Tiffany if she would be interested in the role of Rachel. After receiving her inquiry about upcoming projects, I immediately asked her about the role. She agreed. Having Tiffany on board from the beginning has been undeniably beneficial. She had expressed interest in learning

how to assistant direct on film shoots and has since been working with Dan Beard to ask questions about this project that a typical assistant director would ask. Those questions have been incredibly helpful for keeping me focused on the production necessities of the film.

Additionally, I asked Nathan Jennings to produce the film. I have worked extensively with Nathan for around five years now on various film shoots and music projects. We have a great working relationship and I knew that he would be the right person to make the calls I would not be able to make. Nathan has been an immense help on the project lining up potential locations, asking me about progress, breaking down the script, and so on. He and his wife have been producing video work for many years, including a feature film and numerous shorts and their expertise has been invaluable. I will continue to work with him as the project moves forward.

I have also asked Davin Fitch to join the team as my director of photography. Davin and I have worked in similar circles in Waco, crossing paths on several occasions. I eventually ended up working as his first assistant camera on the same shoot on which I met Tiffany and he returned the favor when I was the director of photography on Sam Henderson's short film, *Nicky*. I highly regard Davin's ability as a cinematographer and our work relationship has been great. I look forward to working on this film with him.

The rest of the production roles have yet to be filled, but I have begun to mention the project to several students who I have worked with and value as filmmakers and several have expressed interest. The crew will be small, in an effort to prevent distraction, and choosing the individuals to fill the remaining production roles will be key.

Location

As discussed above, the location of SkateWorld is vital to the film. Luckily, we have been in contact and have received initial approval from the owner of the roller-skating rink here in Waco (also named Skate World). We will continue to work with her and be as accommodating as possible to secure the location. Nathan has proved especially helpful in this regard.

The Look

In the earlier chapters of this paper, I discussed the cinematic looks of Wes Anderson and Yasujiro Ozu as incredibly influential on my conception of this film. Here, I will address specific production choices I will be making to achieve the look of the film. We will be shooting the film on the Arri Amira, using a low contrast color profile to have a greater range of contrast and color tone in the post process. The goal is for the film to have the visual tone of a film like *Juno*, with strong, warm colors and contrast that is clear, but not overly dramatic. This is not a melodramatic film and the color palate should reflect that.

The roller-skating rink will naturally be a darker location with plenty of artificial light from overhead fluorescent lighting and moving party lights. Windows are often rare in roller rinks; this helps to emphasize the tendency for small towns to isolate themselves from a larger world, an issue Rachel faces in the film. Her false sense of independence will be shattered in the years to come and she is subconsciously attracted to the perceived isolation and closed-off nature of the roller rink. She is safe in the dark, enclosed space. Or so she believes.

I have chosen to shoot the film in the 2.40:1 aspect ratio typically associated with anamorphic lenses. In a perfect world, the film would be shot with true anamorphic lenses, most likely a 40mm, the common choice for Wes Anderson and his director of photography, Robert Yeoman. Anderson's *Rushmore* is a major visual influence on *Barry*, especially in terms of aspect ratio and framing. Wider anamorphic lenses typically bow the edges of the frame, creating a fisheye-like effect. In the context of *Barry*, this effect would be used to emphasize the wideness of the frame and the isolation of the characters within it. Each character faces a personal issue that affects his or her identification with the world he or she has known. Thus, using a wide aspect ratio and wide angle lenses, the individual characters will constantly be surrounded by a space perceptually larger than typically expected in films focusing on characters. The idea is to examine the characters within themselves and within the world they are in – to simultaneously acknowledge the inner self and the outer influential world. Since true anamorphic is not an option in the circumstances of this shoot, Davin and I have opted to shoot primarily on 20mm, 25mm, and 35mm lenses, cropping the final images in post to the 2.40:1 ratio. These lenses will be closer to matching the effect of the anamorphic equivalent lenses (typically around a 2:1 ratio). The bowing effect will be less overt, but the space around the characters will be similarly emphasized.

Inspired by the work of Anderson and Yeoman, the camerawork in *Barry* will be "locked down" – shooting on a stable tripod with moves achieved with a dolly. I wanted the film to feel as close to presentational as possible, as if the viewer is squarely within the reality of the narrative, sometimes visually replacing the individual a character may be talking to. Shots will be primarily on 90 and 180 degree angles, with pans and straight

tracking shots utilized to show various areas of the space in a single take. In instances of character introduction (the three scenes discussed above), the subjects will be shot clean, not over-the-shoulder, with their eye line slightly above the lens. The intended effect being that the viewer feels addressed but not quite directly, a slight disconnect being vital to the presentational style.

Overall, the look of the film will be a blend of formal, classic cinematic camera work and modern independent filmmaking. Hopefully this combination will allow the viewer to connect with the characters on a deeper level (through the presentational and often flat camera) and acknowledge the world beyond their individual lives (through the wide angle and sweeping pans). If this film is to work as a prologue, the viewer needs to recognize the larger world surrounding the characters but not deny them their individuality.

Casting

The casting of the film, as with any character study/slice-of-life film, is incredibly important. The actors must be able to present subtle nuances to the characters and not drift into the melodramatic. As mentioned above, Tiffany Navarro has been officially cast as Rachel and our conversations about the character have been wonderfully productive. She has posed valuable questions about Rachel's motivations and has helped to create and shape an influential backstory. As of this writing, I have not cast any of the other roles in the film, though I have had conversations with Tiffany about potential options. I am currently considering both Gabe Lipton and Zach Campa for the roles of Holden and Sid, though the assignment of those roles has not been decided. I hope to meet with each of them to discuss availability and excitement for the project as well as explore their

acting process and experience. The characters are incredibly nuanced and I hope that my actors are willing to explore those subtleties with me and on their own.

Directing Actors

The acting in the film is almost entirely subtext driven. The performances will need to be subdued and natural, highlighting the individual characters' quirks in small, unobtrusive ways, not through melodramatic vocalization and grand gestures. The heat of summer should weigh down these characters some; they save their emotional energy for specific circumstances to not wear themselves out. With the performances relying on subtleties and subtext, an individual exploration of characters by the actors is vital. The expressions the actors give should almost always portray the unexpressed thoughts of the character and understanding a backstory will hopefully help to build a mental space for the actors to exist fully within while they are on camera.

With this in mind, I plan on rehearsing in a way that emphasizes the reason why rather than the what in regard to dialogue. In many ways, the dialogue is secondary to the physical performance of the actor and I plan to work with the actors to develop a more complete personality for their characters, one that will permeate every movement and expression in the performance. Initially, I considered taking a model-based approach like Robert Bresson, emphasizing expression and finding the meaning in the surrounding images, but as I researched various techniques, I found that Ozu offered something closer to what I believed to be at the core of the film. Donald Richie writes,

> Bresson avowedly seeks to drain his actors of all notions of interpretation, eventually so tiring them that the toneless enactment he desires is achieved. Ozu, by contrast, wanted to imbue his actors with all the characteristics of the people they are impersonating, characteristics that

> only he knew, so that they could project them whether they understood them or not. (146)

I would like my actors to understand why they are standing a certain way or pronouncing a word with a certain emphasis, but I would settle for them simply doing those things. I believe that by exploring the outer lives of the characters, the things that happen to them off camera, the actors will simply become that individual on camera. Of course, this is a lofty goal and one that I have mentally prepared myself to handle if not met, but it is the goal nonetheless. Just attempting to find the larger personality of the character through discussion of backstory, will hopefully help the actor to, at the very least, *begin* to become the character. It is in this becoming where subtext and subtleties come to life.

Music

In a final note on methodology, I want to discuss the import of the film's music. Above, I discussed the implications of the Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers' song "Why Do Fools Fall in Love." Here I want to discuss the remainder of the film's soundtrack. I was raised a musician by my mother, a middle school and high school band director, and was consequently taught to value the emotional power of music. When I first watched Joe Swanberg's *Digging for Fire* (2015), I was in awe of the film's musical landscape. The film follows the separate exploits of a couple's weekend after they discover a bone and a gun buried in the backyard of a house they are house-sitting. Tim (Jake Johnson), the husband, dives head first into the potential of the discovery, becoming both aroused and afraid of what the items and their burial could mean. Lee (Rosemarie DeWitt), the wife, meanwhile spends the weekend away from Tim, who she has tasked with completing their taxes, to have some well-deserved personal time and evaluate the state of her life.

Dan Romer's synth-based score provided the film an ethereal, other-worldliness that helped to establish the absurd and almost unbelievable narrative. This is explorative musical foundation is essential to the success and believability of *Digging for Fire* and *Barry*. I have started discussions with Andrew Hulett, a friend of mine who I have had the benefit of playing music with over the years and scored the last short film I wrote, *Liftoff*. I value Andrew's intentionality and talent and believe that his work will the final element *Barry* needs to break the boundaries of reality, to see Rachel and Holden and Sid and Bud as individuals wandering through a world that is uncontrollable, unpredictable, and sometimes old-fashioned, but filled with the opportunity of tomorrow's sunrise.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Major Shift

With any creative project, the opportunity for complete upheaval of original intentions or beliefs is ever-present. At any moment change could come in the form of a new director or a recasting or even a total change in the creator's understanding of art. These moments can often cause a major shift. By this I mean a moment in which the film or painting or play or album experiences a critical apex where a decision must be made soundly in order to continue the project. With this project, the catalyst for the major shift was an unexpected change in location.

Through a series of events involving an initial agreement, an eventual dissatisfaction with representation, and a backing out of the initial agreement, the planned location of SkateWorld in Waco, Texas was no longer an option. Several things could have perhaps prevented this outcome, including my being more aware of the perceived presentation of the location in the script, but in moments of unexpected change the best course of action is often to focus on assessing potential futures for the project.

Over the twenty-four hours that followed the news, I worked with Nathan to gently press the owner of SkateWorld for a reason for the sudden reversal (so as to prevent the situation from repeating) and met with my thesis chair, Chris Hansen, to discuss potential options for the project. The meeting with Hansen resulted in a potential location change that would still suit the film and the original intentions so I had my producer begin working on contacting and securing the new space. I wanted to make

doubly sure that the owners/operators of the new location were completely on board before I began a rewrite of the script.

After some thought and the discussions with Hansen and others involved with the project, namely my producer Nathan, the decision was made to try and secure Lion's Park and Kiddieland in Waco, Texas as the new location for *Barry*. The park, operated by the local chapter of the Lion's Club, is essentially a small amusement park for children, a go-kart track, and a miniature golf course. Surrounding the park is a small train that does regular loops with children and parents as passengers. The elements of the park offered several great opportunities for the metaphors explored in imagery of the original setting of SkateWorld to remain and retained a lot of the larger themes regarding the past. More on the adjustment of these themes will be discussed in a subsequent section. With Lion's Park and Kiddieland decided upon, I had Nathan secure the location with paperwork and establish a contact with the park's executive director. With this location secured, the rewriting of the script began. Below are the various adjustments that were made to adapt the original script to the new location. For reference, the new script can be found in Appendix A.

Script Adjustments

The following sections address adjustments made initially in the new script for *Barry*. Additional adjustments were made during actual production of the film, as is the case with any project, but those will be primarily addressed in the Production chapter of this paper. I chose to focus this chapter on the response to major shift within the script and pre-production process. This will allow the reader to compare and contrast the original intentions with the adapted intentions before the film was made.

Location Adjustments

While the location changed from the indoor roller rink to outdoor amusement park and miniature golf course, I wanted the film to retain much of the metaphorical imagery discussed above. This imagery includes the cyclical nature of life in a small town and in life, the instability of the unknown that Rachel must come to terms with, and the obsession with preserving feelings and elements of the good old days gone by. In many ways, the change to Lion's Park and Kiddieland actually enhanced these elements. For example, the circular nature of the roller rink was adapted and expanded to include the rides within the amusement park. Every ride was centered around a loop, as most amusement park rides are. This allowed me to write a script that could emphasize these rides in the background of almost every shot, reminding the viewer that behind every hopeful or cynical statement delivered by the characters remains an almost inescapable patter. From carousels to spaceship rides, Ferris wheels to moats for boats, the rides of Kiddieland continue on and on, never progressing anywhere beyond where they started. This is a major fear for Rachel and one that Holden falls victim to. In her opening conversation with her longtime friend she expresses surprise about his return and he responds with clear disdain for the place, but also confusion.

> RACHEL: I'm glad you're back.
> HOLDEN: Can't say the same. About me. Not you. I'm glad you're here.
> RACHEL: I didn't think you'd –
> HOLDEN: (looking around) There's a magnetism to this place.

In this conversation, Holden displays the strange relationship many individuals from small towns have with their home; that is, they experience a sort of magnetic force that pulls them back to the place despite a loathsome opinion of the town. Often this is described colloquially as the "name of town-suck." For example, the "Waco-suck." This

is a strange but not uncommon phenomenon and the source of much anxiety for Rachel, an individual who seeks escape. However, even in her desire to escape she holds some apparent reticence for leaving, a feeling called out by Holden in this exchange:

> RACHEL: I know that. I just – I don't know if she's ready for me to be gone yet.
> HOLDEN: Your mom? Rach. You know you can be afraid of things.
> RACHEL: (defensive) I'm not afraid. (calming) I just think she's not ready.
> HOLDEN: Okay. Okay. (pause) Does *she* know she's not ready?

Both of these conversations occur within the amusement section of the park, a place filled with circular rides, illustrating the seeming inescapability of the small town. However, the second conversation occurs on the steps of a bridge the leads to the miniature golf course, a place with clear goals that decidedly do not loop back to the beginning. The golf balls go down a path to a final hole away from the starting point. By having the conversation here, even though the two are on the amusement park side of the bridge, the thought is that there is hope for escape, a bridge out does exist, Rachel just needs to admit a few things before she can cross it.

Furthering the cyclical imagery is the train surrounding the entire park. Approximately two-thirds of the way through the film, at the conclusion of the tour, Holden has Rachel join him on a ride around park. In this scene the park is examined from the outside, allowing Rachel and Holden and the viewer to examine the place that represents everything the characters want to escape. This ride, planned as a montage from the train, emphasizes the beginning of serious self-exploration and reflection. The train ride, another loop, ends at the train station located just outside the park's fence. This station is a place of transition, a platform for Rachel and Holden to make a decision to stay or to go. They inevitably choose to stay, for now, but seeing the park from this

vantage point allows Rachel to begin to see what drew Holden back and what she will have to fight to escape. She even quips back at Holden his line from earlier about being afraid of things, a playful revelation of Rachel's understanding of Holden, and her, predicament.

Character Adjustments

With the location change also came a need to adjust the characters' jobs within the park. These jobs help to explore the nuances of the characters that have them and thus should be adjusted accordingly and thoughtfully. Rachel essentially remains the same as she is entering into the space as a sort of blank canvas. In fact, her job is yet to be fully defined at the outset of the film. She expresses to Holden, upon learning that she will be the mascot for the park, that she assumed it would be "a ticket booth gig," an assumption shared by Holden and perhaps even Bud. A key element of Rachel's unexpected job however is that she is required to roller skate, a task she is clearly not up to. Luckily, I was able to salvage this element of the character from the original script and location. The absurdity of a roller-skating mascot cruising around an amusement park felt completely in line (no pun intended) with the ludicrousness of Kiddieland and its enthusiastic and misunderstood owner, Bud. The instability of Rachel on the roller skates helped to solidify her instability with the unknown. Fearful of the next and the unknowable, Rachel's inability to handle herself alone is emphasized by her unsteadiness on the skates. This is vital for the character's development and thankfully remains in the final film.

Holden's character was forced to take on a new role in the new location as there is no concession stand in Lion's Park and Kiddieland. However, this change allowed me to

expand the character to the level originally intended. Holden's new role as a sort of park manager or overseer who does "whatever Bud asks" allows him to more freely roam the space, crafting him as an individual with a small amount of freedom in a confined space, making the best of the cards life has dealt him. This new role also allows Holden's interruptions and snubs of Bud to appear more understandable as he is ostensibly the real "owner" of the park.

Bud remains the owner of the location with little change in his character. The only major adjustment made was done so out of concern for production. Rather than meeting with Rachel in some office visually separated from the primary location, Bud interviews her from a table within the park. This change allowed for two things: I was able to keep production all in one location and, more importantly, was able to give Bud a few more lines that really emphasized his enthusiasm and naivety. While he is a man fraught with the stresses of a recently failed marriage, he is able to hide away in his park, the place where the real world does not seem to quite penetrate.

Finally, Sid's job was moved from the roller skate rental desk to the equally-as-visually-pleasing miniature golf rental clubhouse, where brightly colored golf balls and organized rows of clubs surround the melancholy goth. In the change, Sid's character only increased in hilarity and absurdity. He remains surprisingly organized and neat, but the bright colors of the course and rental clubhouse really emphasize the fish-out-of-water characteristics of the black-clad teenager.

These adjustments to both location and character, while stressful in the initial recovery to the major shift, ultimately allowed me to write a film that would be both visually appealing and intellectually stimulating. The new spaces allowed me to open up

the visual metaphor to a level I was much happier with and the subtle shifts in the roles only enhanced the foundational elements of the characters.

Regarding the Prologue

I would be remiss to not address the major shift's effect on the intended prologue nature of the film. In the heat of the moment responding to the loss of SkateWorld as an option, I refocused my attention on the film to simply completing it as a story. Of course, I still wanted to retain the larger backstories of the characters and the eventual narrative of *Fuzzy* that they would ultimately be a part of as the primary driving force for the narrative of *Barry*, but I knew that existing as a direct prologue would no longer be a primary goal of the film. This led me to two thought experiments: How might this new film affect the plans for the original feature film? And how does the new short film retain a prologue-like element to the feature?

The first though experiment was largely inconsequential to the production of *Barry* and resulted mostly in me considering a rewrite of the feature as a ten-episode series following various teenagers stuck in dead end jobs in towns they want to escape or simply resetting it in an amusement park. The second thought experiment however, was beneficial in many ways.

Considering the larger implications of the original feature allowed me to more carefully define who the characters were and were to become over the course of the film. Essentially, the thought experiment directly influenced the above section on adjustments. This caused me to redefine, to myself anyhow, the *Barry* as more of a "spiritual prologue" to *Fuzzy*; that is, the characters and core metaphorical elements of the film would indeed carry over to the subsequent feature, but the visual specifics would change.

The spirit of the film would remain, but the body would be changed. In changing my thought process to this more spiritual mode, I was reminded of one the most influential prologues I have read, that of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slapstick*.

The novel opens with a prologue from Vonnegut that reads as his most personal. He discusses family by name and various deaths within that family. Much of the prologue centers around the plane trip to his uncle's funeral, during which he claims he dreamt up the narrative for the book. He also writes of his deceased sister, Alice, who declared the title of the book when discussing her own death. "'Soap opera,' she said to my brother and me one time, when discussing her own impending death. She would be leaving four young boys behind, without any mother. 'Slapstick,' she said. Hi ho" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 12). The resulting novel details the story of an old man and his relationship with his sister. In light of the deeply personal prologue, the impact of the novel rings more profound; the two read as if from the same story, with only the names and circumstances slightly changed. This is how I chose to consider *Barry*, as a spiritual prologue to *Fuzzy*, one that speaks the same language and sings the same tune, with only the circumstances changing.

Additional Production Roles and Final Casting

Finally, before discussing the production of the short film, a point should be made to highlight the additional production roles that were added and the final casting of the film as a result of the major shift. In terms of additional roles deemed necessary (outside of the usual production roles not addressed in this paper), I decided, with the support of my primary producer, Nathan, to seek out a local producer to help facilitate the scheduling of the film and work with the executive director of Lion's Park and

Kiddieland. After the fiasco with SkateWorld, I knew that having an individual in charge of making the phone calls and meeting with the executive director of the park would be vital to the success of the production. The time I had to spend on the project was quickly diminishing, and having an individual in town to bear those burdens would be undeniably beneficial. This decision would also help to alleviate some of Nathan's stress as he would not be able to come to location on production days given the new compressed schedule.

With that in mind, I polled an upper-level production class at Baylor for any individuals who might be interested in helping complete the project. This resulted in interest from and meetings with two talented individuals, Rosie Thompson and Jake Moore. After meeting with them both, a proposal was made to have them work as a team to help make the film happen. They agreed and took over a large portion of the practical responsibilities of the shoot. These included scheduling, hiring crew, gathering props and wardrobe, and working with the executive director of Lion's Park and Kiddieland. I cannot express how vital these two people were in making *Barry* a reality. They worked unbelievably hard and found all the props and wardrobe we would need, scheduled the shoot with me and the director of photography, and, despite a few bumps that were handled deftly, helped to secure reasonable accessibility to Lion's Park and Kiddieland. I am forever indebted to Thompson and Moore.

As far as casting, the final actors were: Tiffany Navarro as Rachel, Gabe Lipton as Holden, Steven Pounders as Bud, and Trey Dickerson as Sid. During the time between the major shift and production, a small change was made in casting. Originally, I had cast another actor in the role of Holden with Gabe playing Sid, but after a few rehearsals and some advice from a few individuals close to the project, the decision was made to switch

the actors for Holden and Sid. Then, as production was continually pushed back for various reasons, the actor then set to play Sid had some travel issues that were ultimately insurmountable and a recasting decision was made. This was certainly one of the more difficult lessons learned in the process, as I did not handle the recasting particularly well. Through a series of miscommunications, mostly from my end, the original actor to play Sid was justifiably disappointed and frustrated with the situation. Thankfully, he understood and eventually voiced his support of the project. It was in this time that Trey was cast as Sid.

In order to shed some light on the actors chosen, I have broken down a few of the key aspects each actor brought to their character and why I felt they were ultimately right for the part. Tiffany, as discussed before, was a part of the project from very early on. She brought a certain level of comedic substance to the character that was necessary to develop an independent teenager. There were times when some reigning back was necessary, but I valued her ability to take direction well and go past the performance so that pulling back was a possibility. Gabe's brilliance as an actor was evident in the variations he brought to Holden. He asked questions of the character that would help inform his performance and regularly delivered several vastly different interpretations of the dialogue so as to give me a range from which to choose. A lot of Holden's character exists in subtlety and Gabe was able to tap into that incredibly well. Steven Pounders' Bud was a surprisingly hilarious take on the subtly silly character. His enthusiasm in every moment was wonderful and he developed a new depth to Bud that I had not realized was there. Like Tiffany, there were moments that necessitated a drawing back of the performance, but Steven took direction incredibly well and was able to lean way back

into a more subtle enthusiasm that would slip out in bursts of excitement in the most hilarious and naturally awkward ways. Finally, Trey Dickerson's Sid was perhaps the most standout performance for me. Trey took a character with few lines and little backstory and developed him into a startlingly funny exaggerated version of the one I wrote. His subtle sighs and indignation throughout the film really helped to bring some life to scenes that otherwise would have been incredibly difficult and boring. In nearly every test screening of the film I gave to filmmaker friends, Trey's Sid was commented on as one of the funniest roles.

All things considered, the major shift, despite the sleepless and anxiety-ridden nights it caused, turned out to be a major benefit for the film. With a new location came a newness to the film that I am convinced would not have come otherwise. Many hard lessons were learned but many more brilliant moments came to life as well.

CHAPTER SIX

Barry Film

Please follow the link below to watch the film.

https://vimeo.com/224496897

Password: jkrbaylorfdm

CHAPTER SEVEN

Production

As productions go, *Barry* was surprisingly smooth once the cameras started rolling. After the major shift and a few months delay for actors' schedules and pre-production, principle photography began on *Barry* on Tuesday, May 9. In talking with my producers and my director of photography, the decision was made to have three full days of production. This was down from my desired five, but was ultimately the right call given actor, crew, and park schedules. Originally, the plan was to shoot the final scene of the film the night of May 8, but a last-minute hiccup with the executive director of Lion's Park convinced me to move that night shoot to the end of the first day. There had been a few concerns about the Lion's Park director growing frustrated with all the contact we had been making, so the producers and I decided it would be best if we did not push for a night shoot as the very first thing, despite the shoot being set completely outside the park.

All in all, the production went quite smoothly. We worked with a very minimal crew totaling somewhere between ten and twelve crew members each day. Thanks to great work from my producers and talented crew, we finished a lot of shots ahead of schedule and were able to take regular, worthwhile breaks. These were vital as the work days were at the risk of becoming very long and exhausting. The production was lucky in two respects as far as weather was concerned. First, the projected forecast called for showers and thunderstorms all week. This would not have been a narrative problem necessarily, but it certainly would have caused havoc in terms of production schedule and keeping continuity. However, the rain rarely came and for most of the shoot the skies

were overcast, which provided us soft, even light that would match up well in post. Second, the overcast skies also lasted all three days, another break given that a single day of grey skies with two days of sunny skies would have been difficult to work with.

Adjustments on Set

As with the adjustments in the script, the new location also provoked a few adjustments to the camera work that was originally planned. In most circumstances, Davin, the director of photography, and I were able to pursue the original plans developed for the SkateWorld script. We still shot with wide lenses, rarely, if ever, going longer than 35mm, and kept the planned 2.40:1 aspect ratio. And, despite the location changes, we were able to stick to the planned planimetric shots of characters in the introductory scenes; that is, the early scenes of the film in which all four characters are introduced. In fact, with the more visually interesting backdrop of the amusement park and miniature golf course, the planimetric shots played the space up even more than anticipated. I was really satisfied with a lot of the shots Davin was able to frame up on the shoot days. Examples of shots that exemplify the spirit of the film's visual elements can be seen in Figures 7 through 12.

The few exceptions occur sparingly and act more as transitionary movements for the scenes. The first occurs when Rachel first dons her Kiddieland polo, the camera pulls back as she walks but eventually comes to a halt as she is surprised by Sid's sudden appearance with the roller skates. The camera then pans 180 degrees past the rides and miniature golf course to reveal a medium shot of Sid. From here the camera tilts up to reveal Sid's face, a delightfully comedic moment that came from the realization that Trey stands several inches taller than Tiffany. This moment is almost entirely inspired by the

Fig. 7. Holden welcomes Rachel to Kiddie Land.

Fig. 8. Bud accidentally reveals an inner struggle to Rachel.

Fig. 9. Rachel struggles with her skates while Holden and Sid take a break.

Fig. 10. Sid reacts to Rachel being his new co-worker.

Fig. 11. Holden lets Rachel know that Sid is nothing to worry about.

Fig. 12. Holden assures Rachel that everything will be fine.

camera movements of Wes Anderson and Robert Yeoman discussed above. Second, in the very next scene, the camera jibs up from Rachel's skates, a purely transitional shot to indicate the source of the Rachel's instability and the struggle it will inevitably cause her.

Finally, the dolly-in/dolly-out during the final scene calls back to the many dollies during the tour, or Holden's time in power. This move accomplishes two things. One, as mentioned before, it calls back to the time when Holden was in control, hinting at Rachel's upcoming decision to take on the task ahead of her and step into a role that Holden believes she is prepared for. This is her becoming like Holden in terms of willingness to play the cards she has been dealt, but with her own sort of flair. And two, this shot pushes the film into the slightly surreal. As the camera pushes in, the focus turns, for the first time since the beginning of the film, solely to Rachel and her thoughts. With her final line, "Maybe you can't be ready," Rachel subtly breaks the fourth wall, pressing the viewer to consider that what she has declared may be for her and for all of us. The line may have also happened entirely within her own mind – a mystery left for the viewer to ponder. As the camera dollies back, it is revealed that Holden no longer stands next to her and given that he made no moves to leave in the moments before, the mystery of his absence subtly remains. Did he walk away or are we entering into Rachel's mind as she enters Barry's head?

While I was working through the introductory scenes on set, I felt stronger and stronger about the scenes playing closer to a play captured on camera than a cinematic experience. As these scenes operate primarily as character introductions, the dialogue needed to be the focus, with mannerisms and physical characteristics following closely after. This meant a further emphasis on the presentation of the characters in the two shots

and the single shots. By isolating the characters in static two and single shots with minimal to no camera movement, the focus of the scene would remain on the characters and their dialogue and not on additional cinematic camera movement. This would be further developed in post-production, but I knew on set that I wanted to have the entire scene played out in the two shot so that I could use it if necessary, regardless of how long the scene might play out.

Overall, much of the camera work from the intended original was accomplished. This was encouraging as the visual element of the film was a core part of my study in researching the influential films for *Barry*. To be able to present the characters in interesting ways cinematically but also give focus to the dialogue was a difficult task, but thanks to the talent and the support of the crew and actors, the goal was, at the very least, attempted. The success of the intended visuals is, ultimately, dependent on the individual viewer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Post-Production

It is prudent to begin this chapter with the caveat that I do not, nor have I ever, considered myself an editor first. I have edited many projects and been satisfied with many of the final outcomes, but have never pursued the creative art of editing. It is a craft that continues to defy my basic creative talents and one that, in the future, I will trust to other talented artists. However, with the compressed timeline and my desire to be heavily involved with the editing process in terms of direction, I made the decision to edit the project myself.

Picture

My first thought when editing the project was to remain focused on the pace and space throughout each scene. That is, the intent was to feel time patiently slip by in a place that was both larger than life and uncomfortably enclosed. After a few varied attempts at cutting together the three introductory scenes (Rachel with Holden at the bench inside the park, with Bud at the picnic table, and with Sid at the miniature golf clubhouse rental desk) that included many shot-reverse shot techniques, I decided that the scenes would, in order to truly feel the space both physically and temporally, need to play out primarily in the wide two shots. This meant allowing the wide two shots to last as long as possible, perhaps well past normal comfort levels, until it was deemed absolutely necessary that a certain line be delivered with the secondary character (i.e. not Rachel) as the sole individual on screen.

In the case of Holden's scene, this moment never occurred and I would not have it any other way (though we did shoot singles of each character). As for Bud, this comes with the unintentionally awkward, "and she's single?" In that moment, Rachel's world stretches to a limit she was not prepared for and Bud accidentally stumbles into a question rife with Freudian-slip implications. With Sid, the moment arrives sooner than anticipated, but quickly reverts to a more distanced approach. Initially I had chosen to hold off on Sid's reveal in the single shot until he says, "You work here now?" but decided, on recommendation from trustworthy viewers, to introduce him while he sets down his Kafka book. In this way, Sid's identity, which is mistaken and then revealed to not actually be mistaken by Rachel, is presented slightly more clearly. There is a clear face to the name, whether we know if that name is correct or not.

I carried this approach over to editing the rest of the film. I opted to stay in shots often as long as possible and to choose the angles that allowed the viewer to feel the space of the park constantly. Emphasis on space and pace helped to slow the film down for me, to allow some moments to breathe and other moments to sit in the awkwardness and anxiety. Rachel is a character out of her element and I sought to match the cutting of the film to that theme.

The post production process also resulted in a reevaluation of the pillow shots that were written into the original and adjusted scripts. The primary purpose of the shots, to give expression to the location and develop it as a character, remained, but additional shots were added beyond the three moments in the script. These additional pillow shots helped to further the character of the park and develop better transitions between scenes. Another type of pillow shot was added on set that was further developed in the editing

process; the extended holds on certain objects and background elements at the end the tour scenes became a new type of pillow shot within the film. The clearest examples of this evolution of the pillow shot appear at the conclusion of two scenes within the tour: the first scene following Sid's introduction and the carousel scene. In the former, as Rachel and Holden exit frame, the camera settles to a halt and briefly lingers on a miniature golf hole, allowing the viewer to rest in the space and consider the dialogue before too quickly moving on to the next scene. In the latter scene, which in fact immediately succeeds the former scene, the camera pans and settles on the carousel as Holden and Rachel exit frame. In this scene, the carousel acts as a reminder of the cyclical nature of small town life discussed above. Given that in this scene Rachel presses Holden on personal details for really the first time, reminding the viewer that Holden's reality and avoidance of those questions could become Rachel's reality; she is continually at risk of becoming trapped in the cycle. In this way, the variance of pillow shots further developed their purpose to present location as character by giving the location a more active role in the viewer's eye. By reminding the viewer of the location and its characteristics more often, the pace of the film slows and the space becomes much more present as something that can and should speak beyond a simple backdrop.

Sound

Nathan Jennings, the producer on the film, also helped to mix final sound. I knew that I wanted to feel the subtleties of the space around the characters in the park but also feel a sense of silence. I also knew that a task like that would not be easily accomplished.

When working with Nathan on the post sound, I found that pulling a lot of the extra sound from the boom microphone out of the scene allowed the natural sounds that

quietly broke through the lavalier microphones on the actors to exist at just the right level. In quiet moments between awkward lines I wanted to hear the buzz of a weed-eater or the wind gently brushing across the leaves of the many trees scattered throughout the park, but through those sounds be also reminded of how silent the space is when no one is talking. The park is closed to prepare for the coming rush of summer, but something about those silent nature moments might make one consider that this is what the park is like all the time. There is an early description of the park in the script that goes, "It's not the liveliest park, but it's certainly not dead – yet." I knew this description would become most apparent in the sounds of the space. So that became the focus in post-sound, to find space and silence in the subtle whispers of nature.

Nathan and I attempted to find a sense of place and subtle silence by initially including extra ambient sound in the soundtrack. However, after first playback the additional sounds of wind and bugs and general outdoor noise felt immediately overwhelming, as though nature was yelling at the viewer for attention. Eventually, we opted to remove the additional sounds entirely and simply allow the naturally captured ambiance of the park to be the single source of special sound. As mentioned above, the adjustment of that sound went so far as to primarily use the ambient noise picked up in the characters' lavalier mics taped to their chests (with occasional use of the boom to fill in the space when a character's mic was unusable). This subtle, naturally-backgrounded audio ended up giving the park an almost whisper-like quality. Instead of consistently yelling for the viewer's attention, it simply whispers – sometimes only perceptible when the human element ceases to speak.

A final note on sound design: Nathan had a few brilliant ideas throughout the process regarding certain cues that might tip the viewer off to a larger theme or funny element within the script, most of which were not utilized to keep the film simple. However, one cue that I believe captures the subtlety and sincerity of the film did the make the final cut. In two moments with Sid within the film, a hawk's screech can be heard in the distance. The first occurs in the bridge scene between Holden and Rachel when Holden indicates that Sid is "surprisingly good at his job." As the camera zooms in on the reading Sid in the background, the hawk cries. Later, when Rachel first dons her Kiddieland polo and is surprised by Sid's presence, the hawk cries again. These two auditory cues are clever moments for the sound of the park to make a statement about the individuals within it; the park declares, in a clearly out of place bird call, that Sid commands more power than he admits. In the same way a hawk can swoop in and surprise its prey, Sid can appear docile one moment and attack in the next, maybe even relish the prey's surprise through adapted Kafka lines. Nature, and as a result, the park, confirms this characterization of Sid through the hawk's screech; the park is both passive and active, silent but heard.

Music

As mentioned in earlier, the music of *Barry* was created by Andrew Hulett. I wanted to the music to be a subtle extension of the whispers of nature discussed above, but also something that would bring a slightly surreal or dreamlike element to the space. I worked with Andrew to build a collection of tones, sounds, and rhythms that would form a sort of musical family from which each instance of music in the film would be derived. As the film progressed, the plan was for each moment of music to build up to the train

montage, a rhythmic climax to the presentation of the space musically; as Holden's tour concludes, so too do the largest elements of the special music. Following the train montage and the beginning of Rachel's acceptance of this new space and her new role, the music would create a secondary denouement, a familiarization and resolution to the space as something that now exists in her life. The primary narrative of the film, of Rachel's acceptance of instability and the unknown, would not be directly related to this music, but instead would go beyond it, is though even personal narratives of characters exist beyond the cinematic narrative. Or consider it this way: The plot of the film is not the sole narrative. There are narratives within narratives, decisions within decisions, fears within fears, victories within victories, and so on. The music a subtle example of this concept.

One of the other major changes from the original script was the removal of the 1950s themed soundtrack. Initially, the plan was to have Holden's character listening to a typical 1950s-style rock and roll song as he pulled up to Kiddieland in the opening of the film. However, in working with Gabe on character development, this decision did not fit Holden any longer. Another early thought was to shift the music to random sound system tests throughout the park, using the 1950s music as the type of music that might play in a park like Kiddieland. But, given the compressed schedule and development of the location and other characters, this too felt beyond what the film had become. Instead, the decision was made to lean into the visuals as the representation of a longing for times gone by. A park like Kiddieland is rarely seen these days. Often they are abandoned and left to become the setting for some outlandish horror film from the mind of Stephen King. In fact, sections of Kiddieland suffered a similar fate. Holden shares this surprise of the

parks stubbornness with his line, "Honestly, I'm surprised it's been open as long as it has." There is even an old abandoned pool behind the miniature golf course hidden behind trees and shrubs. During the train montage, those trees around the pool can be seen in the background. From a satellite view on Google Earth, the park seems to be gradually falling prey to the impending future and ultimate abandonment. And yet it holds on, hoping perhaps that change and renaissance will come.

Finally, as I was editing the film I considered a few other independent films whose musical direction I valued, including Mike Birbiglia's *Sleepwalk with Me* and Wes Anderson's *Rushmore*. Both of these films conclude with indie song tracks that I will likely never forget.[1] With this inspiration, I began looking for a song that might fit the ending of the film best, one that captures the mindset of Rachel and the other characters. I ultimately landed on the song "Forever" by indie band Lomelda. The band, fronted by Hannah Read, at the time of recording the song, consisted of three close friends of mine (Hannah, Zach Daniel, and Andrew Hulett). As Andrew was working on the original music, this song felt like a natural connection – a piece of work influenced and created by the same creative mind. Hannah's lyrics also spoke profundity into my reading of the film's narrative, beyond what I had originally conceived, and really seemed to drive the point home about acceptance of the unknown. Particularly the lines in the song highlighted in the version Andrew produced for the film (with express permission from Hannah, who owns the rights to the work): "At the end of the day I don't think I'll mind / No, I don't think I'll mind the end of the world" (Lomelda). The film concludes with

[1] *Sleepwalk with Me* concludes with Mates of State's "Now" and *Rushmore* finishes with the iconic slow-motion dance scene set to Faces' "Ooh La La."

these words of resolution. At the end of Rachel's day, of Holden's day, of Bud's day, and even of Sid's day, there comes, hopefully, a sort of resoluteness for whatever is to come next. There is more truth to Holden's "You'll be fine" than initially perceived. At the end of the day, we will be fine. Tomorrow may come or may not. We must find a way to be okay with that, to accept the unknowability of that eventual truth, to put on our own mascot heads and say, "okay" to whatever comes in the next.

CONCLUSION

In his novel *Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut offers a small anecdote that I think best sums up what *Barry* has meant as a project.

> Kilgore Trout once wrote a short story which was a dialogue between two pieces of yeast. They were discussing the possible purposes of life as they ate sugar and suffocated in their own excrement. Because of their limited intelligence, they never came close to guessing that they were making champagne. (Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions* 214)

In discussing the possible purposes of this film with whoever it was I was complaining to creatively riffing with, the myriad goals and potential outcomes of every shot and line of dialogue, the frustrations and celebrations of unexpected emails and unintentionally hilarious frames, I found that I was able to step back see the film for it was in the grand scheme of things. Despite sleepless nights and anxiety-ridden days, I found that I was able to escape the fate of those two pieces of yeast and acknowledge the champagne being made. However, the champagne is not the film itself, it is something much bigger than that, something that the film is attempting, in some small way, to expose to the world. Behind all the questions Rachel and Holden ask and evade, behind the vagueness of Bud's statement about things being hard to keep, even behind Sid's cold exterior, is the hope-filled desire to break out beyond the unknown, to experience life through acceptance, and to acknowledge that independence is perhaps never truly independence. When Rachel puts on Barry's head, she says, "okay" to whatever comes next. She says, "okay" to the unknown.

In the end, the success or failure of this attempt to explore the anxiety of the inevitable unknown and accept whatever may come lies, truthfully, in the eyes and hearts

and minds of the viewers. And that is okay. I continually struggle with the frustration of dissatisfaction with creative work, and *Barry* is no exception. There are pockmarks throughout the piece that I wish I could magically clear up. There are sounds and shots and lighting decisions that I cringe and regret every time I rewatch the film. But ultimately, I am able to accept that what has been created has was made so through the practice of confronting the very fear and anxiety that Rachel faces, and that is a comfort indeed. Whether the film teaches anyone else anything else matters little at this point. What matters is that it is has been made. It has been created so as to be given the opportunity to teach something to someone, to provide a moment of relief for someone, to nod along and say, "yes, me too" to someone's declarations of fear. That it exists at all is triumph of conquering the anxiety and inevitability of the unknown.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Original *Barry* Screenplay

APPENDIX B

Updated *Barry* Screenplay

1 EXT. KIDDIE LAND AMUSEMENT PARK - FRONT 1

A teenage girl waits outside the park - it's locked.

LATER.

An old truck pulls up.

TEXT ON SCREEN: BARRY

2 EXT. BOOTH - MORNING 2

A windmill - a mini golf hole obstacle.

Kiddie Land Amusement Park looks like a traveling carnival - the kind that show up in towns all over the U.S. with no warning and plenty of germs. Except this one has given up and put in roots.

The mini golf course remains the half-heart of the place, beating slowly to the rhythm of the windmill, with various kid-sized rides (carousel, mini-roller coaster, boats, etc.) lining the faded concrete pathways.

It's not the liveliest park, but it's certainly not dead - yet.

RACHEL REDDICK, 17 and unimposing, sits at a sticky booth, the park silent behind her. Everyone/thing is still waking up.

HOLDEN, 19 and cynically optimistic, drops himself down opposite Rachel and slides a stapled, two-page document across the table. He's wearing a yellow Kiddie Land polo and eating a Snickers bar.

RACHEL
It's like 8am.

HOLDEN
Hey kid.

RACHEL
Hey.

They share smiles. There's a long history of friendship here - but it's been a while.

RACHEL (cont'd)
So is this -

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