

Lindsey Brown

Letting Go Of Millie

2018

School of Language and Culture

A thesis + exegesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Creative Writing

Abstract

This thesis consists of a full-length script for a play for the theatre. A summary of the play is as follows:

Letting Go Of Millie is set over a long weekend at a glamping tent site about 1 hour north of Auckland, NZ. Will has taken his wife, Jane, there as a surprise for her 33rd birthday. However, the secluded location is more uncomfortable than romantic. When Jane's sister, Millie, arrives uninvited with an unexpected guest, all relationships are pushed to boiling point.

Far from being a celebration weekend, Jane is finally forced to confront the current status of her life. When she sees Millie's arrival as a chance to avoid romance, there is no more hiding from the problems within her marriage. The arrival of Jason, Millie's ex fiancé, becomes the final tipping point for Jane. But as she fights ruthlessly to keep her sister from Jason's arms, she only ends up causing resentment in those she loves.

Over the course of the play, Jane is forced to confront her overbearing relationship with her sister and the consequences her long term sacrifices have had. But letting go is not easy and Jane struggles with stepping down from her self imposed parental responsibilities.

Letting go of Millie also means that Jane has to deal more with her own life, including her marriage. Although there is no shortage of love between her and Will, there is no denying that they are heading down separate paths. As Jane searches for self fulfillment she learns that sacrifices will have to be made.

The Thesis is framed by an Exegesis which is a 6000 word essay on the subject of:

(a) the genre of the Thesis

(b) the development process from synopsis to second draft

Table of Contents

Section 1

Attestation of Authorship Page 1

Section 2

Script Page 1 - 104

Section 3

Exegesis Page 1-19

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed
Lindsey Brown

14/2/18

Exegesis

Exegesis Letting Go Of Millie

Lindsey Brown

Part One: Genre Analysis

Genre:

Letting Go Of Millie is a play for theatre. Its genre is 'Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings'. It is in the style of a dramatic comedy, incorporating music. Three other pieces from this genre include;

- 1) Mona Lisa Smile: a 2003 film directed by Mike Newell (Johanson, 2003)
- 2) Bridesmaids: a 2011 film directed by Paul Feig (Apatow, 2011)
- 3) Trainwreck: a 2015 film directed by Judd Apatow (Apatow, 2015)

Note: The majority of this genre exploration references film and television works. This is due mainly to the reference material available on the genre being much more prevalent for these forms. As this is a new and evolving genre, the most recent research comes from the success of films and television series. I am working on the assumption, however, that the audience for the films listed above will be a similar audience to that which is targeted in Letting Go Of Millie and, in turn, their expectations will be similar. I have, however, included under the history of the genre, the importance of the 'Coming of Age' genre to NZ theatre in general.

The 'Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings' Genre and its History:

The 'Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings' is a relatively new genre that takes the traditional well known 'Coming of Age' but gives it a modern day edge. To define this genre and its growth we need to start initially with the original 'Coming of Age' genre.

The original 'Coming of Age' genre is well established. Choose almost any Film/Television/Novel classification system and you will find 'Coming of Age' as an option. This includes IMDB, Filmsite.org, Goodreads.com, Tvtropes.org, Allmovie.com, Wikipedia or even Amazon.com. But what is it? Put simply, a 'Coming of Age' text can be classified as "a story featuring an adolescent making the mental leap from child to adult". (TV Tropes Coming of Age, 2017).

The history of the genre can first be seen in literature, with its roots coming from the German narrative idea of Bildungsroman, or 'Formation Novel' in the late 18th century. "Narratives predominantly followed a young protagonist who undergoes a troubled search for an adult identity by process of trials, experiences, and revelations" (Literary Themes Coming of Age, 2012). This narrative theme is "prominent in several well-known European and American novels of the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849–50) and *Great Expectations* (1860–61);.....or Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1869); and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)" (Literary Themes Coming of Age, 2012).

Within the television and film industry, however, the idea of a 'Coming of Age' genre is one that really only dates back to the 1950's. Until then, the "idea of making a young person the centre of a film was relatively novel" (Zeitchik, 2016). But the 1950's started the establishment of this genre in film and television with classics such as *Rebel Without a Cause* and *The 400 Blows*. Since then, the genre has continued to grow, with hits such as *Dead Poets Society*, *The Breakfast Club*, and of course, *Stand By Me* (MTV News, 2012). Within the medium of television, the genre has also been popular, with such classics as *Happy Days*, *The Wonder Years*, *Boy Meets World*, *That 70's Show*, *The OC*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, or, more recently, *One Tree Hill*, *Skins* and *Misfit*. It is said that the TV medium lends itself to this genre as we can grow up with the characters (Zhang, Ozaki, & Parihar, 2014).

So clearly, we can see that 'Coming of Age' is a recognised genre. We now, however, need to look at how this genre has been split into sub-genres, in particular the 'Coming of Age Film for Thirty Somethings'. Stephen Zeitchick, in his writing for the LA Times, talks about the

'Coming of Age' film being timeless, but that it's timeless for a reason as "it's the one experience directors can be assured every moviegoer has gone through" (Zeitchik, 2016). However, he goes on to discuss how this classic genre is changing. He says, that the "coming-of-age cinema moment we're experiencing isn't just a revival of a classic genre, but a new form taking shape before our eyes — depicting kids we've never seen, conveying stories we've never heard, arranging it all in shapes and structures we've never contemplated" (Zeitchik, 2016). And this change is linked to a cultural movement in our lives. He states that "It's a unique time to make a coming-of-age movie. Rarely have adults tried so tightly to hang on to youth" (Zeitchik, 2016). So in turn, to reflect our changing lives, the portrayal of 'Coming of Age' in all mediums has had to change also.

Ger Tierney in her article 'Finally a poster girl for the 30 something' discusses how this new genre has arisen. She states that previously "by this stage we're supposed to have it all figured out; we should have come of age by now. But that isn't the case. Being in your thirties means you are a proper adult, there's no two ways about it, and so you are obliged to act as such. But in reality, underneath the façade, there is a constant fear of slipping back into that period of searching and uncertainty" (Tierney, 2015). In the same article, she discusses the need for this new sub-genre as it reflects our growing reality. For, as she says, "Turning thirty is life changing and it's empowering but we're still as confused as ever, just about different things" (Tierney, 2015).

Within this new sub-genre there is lean toward works being presented as comedy or dramedy (TV Tropes Coming of Age, 2017), and there are now an array of texts from which to choose. These include films such as *Failure to Launch*, *Peter's Friends*, *About a Boy* and *Mona Lisa Smile*. But it is Judd Appatow who has become a maestro in this sub-genre with the production of a 'wave of grown up freak-out comedies' such as *Bridesmaids*, *The Hangover* and *Trainwreck*. Appatow is known to specialise in films that "explore themes such as coming of age, settling down, social isolation and surrogate familial relationships" (*Bridesmaids Narrative Journey*, 2012). As Devin Faraci writes in the article 'Trainwreck and the new coming of age' "Judd Apatow has made a career out of directing and producing a peculiar kind of coming of age movie that has only been possible in the post-Baby Boomer world. ...the generation that brought us the Peter Pan Complex. All of a sudden extended

youth became all the rage..... we have added a new phase to our life cycles, one that goes between adolescence and adulthood (Faraci, 2015). And Judd Apatow has spent the last decade examining that line between a young adult and a real adult.

In summary, the above analyses has shown us that the traditional 'Coming of Age' genre has undergone change and branched out. And that the sub-genre "Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings' is a valid and recognised sub-genre. Although the style of delivery within this sub-genre may vary from comedy, drama or dramedy, the underlying themes of growth, discovery and change are the same. And it is within this sub-genre that the script *Letting Go Of Millie* fits.

NZ Theatre and the Coming of Age

The 'Coming of Age' genre is one that is at the forefront of NZ theatre. Since its birth over 150 years ago, NZ theatre has constantly been trying to find its feet and create its own identity. In other words, our theatre scene has been continually trying to 'Come of Age'. Initially the state of NZ theatre, was a reflection of what was occurring in the Motherland; England. We see this in the touring productions that came over and the emergence of the British Drama league in NZ (McLintock, 1966). However, we have come a long way since those days, with theatre now reflecting the changing dynamics within NZ itself (Christian, 2017). The last twenty years saw a growth in Maori and Pacifica theatre, and, more recently, theatre representing other minority groups has been on the rise. This includes theatre that represents the growing Asian population, with companies like Indian Ink and their successful production of Krishnan's Dairy. This change has also been matched in funding allowances. Creative NZ, one of NZ biggest funders of arts in NZ, now reflects a funding priority for works that reflects the growing diversity of NZ today (Cardy, 2015). This need to reflect our current times will no doubt also see a rise in 'Coming of Age' theatre that not only reflects both a cultural coming of age, but also demographic and social changes (Spencer, 2009). In turn, the 'Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings' genre in NZ theatre will grow, for it presents stories that reflect the changing face of the audience it represents.

Key Signifiers of the ‘Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings’ Genre:

A number of key signifiers within this sub-genre have already been mentioned, but will now be elaborated on. Howard Creech, in his article ‘Rites of Passage: the Ten Best Coming of Age Movies’, provides a definitive summary of the key signifiers of a ‘Coming of Age’ film in regards to characters, plot and themes. He states “All Coming of Age films share certain thematic similarities, the most basic of which, is their strong focus on stories of young people on the edge of maturity. There are other important themes that define coming of age including the death of a loved one, falling in love for the first time, and high school graduation. Good coming of age films frequently deal with controversial topics such as sexuality, loss of virginity, or leaving home for the first time, but they are rarely exploitative. Generally, the adolescent characters are forced to make a decision, the outcome of which will have a significant and life shaping impact on their futures. “ (Creech, 2017).

A final signifier within ‘Coming of Age’ genre is to do with social norms. A key part of the narrative, is when the protagonist deviates from expected social norms. During the course of film, they gain an understanding of social expectations and norms and struggles to conform to them.” (Literary Themes Coming of Age, 2012).

These experiences and themes above are still relevant in the sub-genre. However, a key difference is the older age of the protagonist - specifically that they are in their 30’s, and that they are often facing these situations ‘delayed’. In turn, the stakes to get it right are higher (Faraci, 2015). It is the high and long term stakes that are an additional key signifier of this sub-genre.

The Expectations of this Genre’s Contemporary Audience

The audience expectations of this sub-genre can be seen by looking at a selection of films within the genre. These include Bridesmaids, Mona Lisa Smile and Trainwreck.

Bridesmaids (Apatow, 2011): The British Board of Film Classification helps portray the audience and expectations of this film with the following quote – “The BBFC gave Bridesmaids a 15 rating. However, the ages of the characters suggests a 20-40 demographic. The protagonist is in the middle of this range, as she is in her 30s. The narrative also contains elements of a rites-of-passage narrative, and the 20-40 age group is also likely to be near to their own marriage.” (Bridesmaids Narrative Journey, 2012). In the film the protagonist Annie deals with “commitment phobia, loneliness and self sabotage” (The Guardian, 2011). These are all emphasised by the fact that she is in her mid-30’s and surrounded by others who seem to have their life together already. Through the film Annie needs to learn to face commitment, as well as find her own self-confidence, both key components in coming of age.

Trainwreck (Apatow, 2015): This more recent film presents the protagonist Amy “as a woman in her mid-30s who finds that the party cannot continue in the way it once did.” (Faraci, 2015). She has been able to reach this age without having actually grown up and now must ‘navigate that passage’ (Faraci, 2015). This film again pushes the expectation of current audiences that a character goes through a rite of passage but at a delayed age. The ending of this film also indicates a further expectation of this genre’s audience. They don’t want it all ‘wrapped up tidily’, as life is not like that. In Trainwreck ‘We don’t see a marriage, we don’t see a sonogram, we don’t see a house in the ‘burbs - we just see a woman finally ready to make an effort’ (Faraci, 2015). So although we don’t necessarily know exactly where she is going next, we know she will be okay because of her growth over the film. This is similar to Bridesmaids, where yes there is a wedding, but it’s the wedding of the best friend. We have hope of a new relationship for the protagonist, but no guarantee. What we do have though, in both films, is a belief that the protagonist character will be okay now. That they have grown.

Mona Lisa Smile (Johanson, 2003): Mona Lisa Smile is actually a combination of the traditional ‘Coming of Age’ film as well as the sub-genre of ‘Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings’. This is because although the film is set within a conservative women’s college and many of the supporting characters are coming of age in the traditional sense, the main protagonist, Katherine, is in her early 30’s. As the supporting characters deal with first love, marriage and breaking away from parental control, Katherine deals with another key rite of

passage - travel and exploring the world. Although a popular art teacher, she can only teach through what she has read, not what she has experienced, for she has never been to any of the cities of the art masters of whom she speaks. She feels she has been limited. Through the film, we see the need for Katherine to grow in life. The film finishes with her leaving the school to see the world that she teaches, to explore the world through fresh eyes. This film indicates to us an expectation of the audience to see rites of passages occurring at different times of our lives, but also, a key rite of passage being one of world exploration.

How Letting Go Of Millie Fulfils the Expectations of this Genre:

This play fulfils the expectations of this genre in a number of ways. First of all, we see it in the age of the protagonist and the whole cast in general. Jane, the main protagonist is 33, and the other characters range from late 20's to mid 30's. Theoretically they are at the age where they should have 'come of age'.

The ending of the play also fulfils the expectations of the genre. Instead of being a 'safe and tidy ending', we have one that mixes loss with hope. As Millie says in the play, yes Jane may be making the biggest mistake of her life in leaving Will, but she needs to do it. We don't know as an audience if New York will be her happy ending. We don't know if she will change her mind and want children. But what we do know, is that she is finally giving herself the chance to really grow as a person and to experience life's bucket list.

The changing relationship between Jane and Millie is a further way that this play meets the genre's expectations. Initially the relationship between them breaks the standard social norm of sisters. They behave more like mother and daughter, despite only a 5 year age difference. This relationship causes conflict, not only with each other, but also the other characters. However, over the journey of the play, they both learn to readdress their roles and learn to interact as is expected of sisters. As Millie learns to stand up to Jane, Jane learns to see her as more of an equal.

How the Characterisation in Letting Go Of Millie has been affected by Genre:

Both Millie and Jane have been hindered in their coming of age and are now facing the consequences of this. We see this first in the character Jane. Although on the surface it would seem that Jane has grown up (some would say grown up too much and too fast), she actually needs to experience her own rites of passage. In particular, Jane hasn't had the chance to grow and create her own life. Her decisions in life were formed with a need to provide safety and stability for her sister Millie after their mum ran out on them. Jane, as the protagonist within this genre needs to be able to 'Come of Age' by learning to make choices that put herself first.

The character of Millie has also been affected by this genre. Millie has failed to really grow up. She has become overly reliant on her sister to make her decisions for her and for the last 2 years she has even lived in Jane's converted garage. Instead of branching out in her late 20's, as is the social norm, Millie seems to be reverting to a child. Her relationship with her sister also reflects this, where she treats Jane like a mother, rather than a sister. She seeks permission, where realistically permission shouldn't be sought. A key storyline within this play is for Millie to come of age and grow up. She needs to learn to make decisions for herself.

How Letting Go Of Millie Provides a Fresh Perspective on this Genre:

Letting Go Of Millie provides the audience with a fresh perspective in a number of ways. Firstly it does this through its isolating setting - a setting that in many ways traps the characters and forces action. The play is set on a glampsite in rural NZ, up north somewhere about an hour from Auckland. In turn, that means it's very difficult for characters to leave. Characters, including those who prefer to stay distant, are forced into close contact with each other. This is particularly the case for the characters Jane and Jason. Jane sees Jason as her greatest enemy, and being confronted with him in this isolated setting only heightens her animosity towards him. The isolating environment also forces unaddressed issues between characters to finally be dealt with. There is no more 'sweeping the problems under the rug'.

For example, Jane can no longer avoid Will's references to having a family and must acknowledge her conflicting desires. The isolated setting overall helps bring a fresh perspective to this genre.

Another way this play brings a fresh perspective for the audience, is the way it incorporates music into the story. Music is an area of conflict between the characters and this comes up constantly throughout the play. Jane tries to keep Millie away from the music industry, yet Millie can't help but lament being away from it. The music industry represents Jason and the strife he brought into Millie's life. The music tour represents a chance of a new direction, but also a chance for Millie to stand up for herself. However, as well as the concept of music being an important theme in the play, it is also a device to enhance the dramatic intensity of the story. Millie and Jason are both singer-songwriters and music is a tool for them to express their emotions. The way Jason has changed over the two years is reflected in the song he sings about being 'The Last Man Standing'. When Millie learns the truth about not being a part of the tour, she can't help but sing one of her own compositions to justify her belief in her own worth as a musician. Millie and Jason also both use music to try and ease the tension in Jane finding out they are back together. The music is a way to show how they belong together, not only when they sing, but in life as well.

As shown, the play Letting Go Of Millie brings a fresh perspective to the genre, particularly through its use of an isolated setting and music, both as a motif and stylistic device.

Part Two: My Script

The following section is a reflection of the major intentions and decisions I have made whilst constructing Letting Go Of Millie. The play is a modern day dramatic comedy, focused on family and incorporating music. It fits within the sub-genre 'Coming of Age for Thirty Somethings'.

Synopsis:

Letting Go Of Millie is set over a long weekend at a glamping tent site about 1 hour north of Auckland, NZ. Will has taken his wife, Jane, there as a surprise for her 33rd birthday. However, the secluded location is more uncomfortable than romantic. When Jane's sister Millie arrives uninvited with an unexpected guest, all relationships are pushed to boiling point.

Far from being a celebration weekend, Jane is finally forced to confront the current status of her life. When she sees Millie's arrival as a chance to avoid romance, there is no more hiding from the problems within her marriage. The arrival of Jason, Millie's ex fiancé, becomes the final tipping point for Jane. But as she fights ruthlessly to keep her sister from Jason's arms, she only ends up causing resentment in those she loves.

Over the course of the play, Jane is forced to confront her overbearing relationship with Millie and the consequences her long term sacrifices have had. As a teen, Jane was forced to play a maternal role to Millie after their mum ran off. Her life, in turn, became shaped by the need to create security and stability for her sister. However, this has come at a price. This price finally needs to be confronted. But letting go is not easy and Jane struggles with stepping down from her self imposed parental responsibilities.

Letting go of Millie also means that Jane has to deal more with her own life, including her marriage. Although there is no shortage of love between her and Will, there is no denying that they are heading down separate paths.

At the end of the play, although deciding to walk away from her marriage, Jane is left with a new sense of freedom and hope for a future of her own creation.

Characters and Relationships:

The main protagonist in the play is Jane. During the play we see her relationship with both her sister and her husband reach crisis point. The stakes are high for her because as she does not accept the need for change, she risks losing both of them. The play also looks at her inner conflict, as she is forced to confront the sacrifices she has made in her early life and her increasing need for personal growth.

Much of the conflict in the play originates back to her teens, when Jane and Millie's mother ran out on them and their dad was emotionally absent. Although only young herself, Jane took on a maternal role to 8 year old Millie. But in her role of providing stability and security, she was prevented from really living her own life. As she says herself, she is "33, has never flatted, and has worked in the same job for 10 years". A major draw-card in marrying her husband, Will, was his attribute of stability. This play deals with the consequences of these decisions.

Part of protecting Millie, Jane believed, was directing her decisions in key aspects of her life, including career, home and love. And in general, Millie has accepted this. It is not until she risks losing Jason that Millie is finally prepared to stand up to her sister for the right to make her own decisions.

The play also shows Jane at a time where she is wrestling with feelings of a life unfulfilled. A key point of realisation for her is when she is confronted with the news of not being able to have children. Instead of being overcome with sorrow, she unexpectedly feels a sense of relief, as if a weight is lifted off her shoulders. This is a defining moment that shows Jane what the burden of raising Millie has had on her own life. However, this realisation comes at a cost as well, for a family is something her husband really craves. Struggling with the obligations of family versus the obligations to yourself is a struggle I hope the majority of my audience will be able to relate to. For women, especially in their thirties, there is societal pressure of having children and a constant reference to 'a clock ticking'. However, once the child is born, many mothers then feel a sense of loss for part of their own identity– ie they

become known only as X's mother. Jane had to deal with this when taking on the parenting of Millie, however, it was at an age much younger than most. She never had the chance to 'just be Jane' first, like most mothers do.

During the play, my intentions were for Jane to finally accept that playing this role of mother has stifled her own life as well as that of Millie's. I needed Jane to learn to let her sister go, and in turn, to let Millie find her own strength. By doing this, Jane would finally have the opportunity to focus on herself and her own needs. This is something she hasn't had since her mother walked out on them.

The Story Structure:

Turning Points:

The main dramatic storyline is the relationship line between Jane and Millie and the significant change it needs, and does, go through. Following are the key turning points I have utilised to develop this storyline;

The first key turning point is when Jane learns that Millie is back with Jason. This point is crucial as I wanted to establish the depth of lies and deception currently occurring in the relationship. Jason is the one thing that will force Millie to go against her sister's wishes. The fact that she brought him to the glamping site sets up the scenario that she is potentially ready to break away from her sister's mothering and stand up for something/someone she really believes in. But the effort she went to in carefully setting up this meeting also reveals to the audience a desire to not want to hurt her sister.

The second turning point is shortly after this, when Jane bans Millie from being back with Jason and even resorts to the point of violence to keep him away. When Millie walks away with Jason at the end of the act, the seed is planted that if Jane keeps on trying to exert her authority, she could destroy her relationship with her sister entirely. The audience's opinion of

Jane should be moving from one of carer and protector, to one of being controlling and authoritative.

The third turning point is when Jane, for the first time, refuses to help Millie. Millie seeks her help after learning of Jason's lies, but for once, Jane's own life takes priority. It is at this moment that I am wanting the audience to feel as if Jane can no longer maintain the role of 'mother' to Millie. It did, however take the extreme situation of losing her marriage to make her do this. Jane's flat out refusal to help Millie, in turn forces Millie to have to step up. Initially, at this point, I want the audience to see Millie's apprehension of the situation, as if her safety blanket has been ripped away from her.

The next key turning point, is when Millie learns that Jane and Will are separating because of Jane's changed opinion on wanting children. She learns the strain/sacrifices Jane has made in order for her to have a safe and secure life. I want the audience to realise that it is like a mirror has been held up to Millie and she finally sees the contribution she has made to this consequence in allowing Jane to be the mother figure. By not standing up to Jane earlier, and always running to her for advice and help, she has made it harder for Jane to let go. It is after this point, that Millie realises she needs to take more responsibility for her own life, not just for herself, but for the sake of her sister as well.

The final turning point, is in the end scene when Jane goes to Millie for advice about her decision to leave Will. This is a key turning point as the roles have reversed for the first time. It is Millie who stops Jane running after Will. She encourages her to take risks as well as showing her the excitement involved with those risks, such as the things New York can offer her - such as the bucket list. What I particularly want the audience to see, is that Millie not only gives advice, but Jane is also open to receiving it.

The Dramatic Question

The key dramatic question that is set up in the script is whether or not Jane will be able to let go of her mothering role of Millie and focus on developing her own life first. In other words, will she learn how to become Millie's sister and not her mother?

We see this question set up near the opening when Jane firstly encourages her sister to stay at the glampsite during what is meant to be a romantic weekend with her husband, and then secondly, when Millie seeks Jane's advice on her career and Jane very clearly seems to put her in her place. Her response is like a parent putting their foot down. It is again developed at the end of the first half, when Jane bans Millie from getting back into a relationship with Jason. The audience should see this as her overstepping the role of a sister, and being more like a parent. It's as if she's saying 'not whilst you're living under my roof'.

The dramatic question is answered in the second half (which is discussed in further detail below) when Jane forces Millie to make her own decisions. We see it also, when she chooses to walk away from her marriage to Will due to his desire to start a family. In the end, we are left with Jane deciding to make the big move on her own to NY, taking risks she has never had the ability to take before.

Core Conflict:

There are three core conflicts in the play.

Firstly, we have the conflict between Jane and Millie. We have the constant controlling role Jane tries to play in Millie's life, and the growing resistance of Millie towards this. Much of this has been mentioned already above.

Secondly, we have the conflict between Jane and Will, with the core of it being their changing expectations in their marriage. Will, from the very beginning is trying to push for intimacy, whereas Jane avoids it however possible. Over the course of the play, this avoidance escalates

until we finally get to the heart of the matter, which is Jane's inability, and now lack of desire to have children. This is in direct opposition to Will, who is desperate to start a family.

Finally, we have the conflict between Jane and Jason, with the core of this being their fight for Millie. This conflict is revealed to us before Jason even makes it onto the stage, with Jane already confessing she dreams of ways to kill him. And when the showdown does occur, it reaches violence. It is this conflict which threatens to destroy the sisters' relationship. And it is not until Jane is prepared to let go of it and let Millie make her own decisions about Jason, that she is finally able to grow herself.

The Ending:

There are 2 key components of the ending that I felt were necessary for Jane to show that she has grown over the course of the play. Firstly, Jane needed to take a step back from Millie's life and let her make her own decisions. In the play, we finally see this when she refuses to help Millie decide what to do about Jason's lies regarding the tour. This is in clear contrast to earlier in the play when Jane plays the role of decision maker. By stepping away and refusing to make this decision for Millie, we see growth in their relationship, and in Jane specifically. She is starting to 'let Millie go'

A second key component of the ending, is Jane making decisions that put herself first. We see this when Jane confirms her decision to take the job in New York, but also refuses to let Will join her. This moment is meant to solidify that Jane is going to put herself and her dreams first for the first time. Moving to New York is a key indicator of the changes she is prepared to start making in order to feel more fulfilled.

Overall, the ending was written to show that Jane is finally letting go of her constant obligations and is now looking to grow as an individual - something most of us get to do in our twenties, but Jane never did. She now has the chance to see what it is that she wants in life and become the woman she wants to be.

Themes:

A key theme in this play is sacrifice and its detriment to self-growth. I wrote the play as I wanted to explore the sacrifices people make for family, both out of love and necessity, and the long term effects these sacrifices can have. I chose to focus on family, for it is family that we are most often likely to, and most expected to, sacrifice our own desires for.

I wanted to explore the longer term effects of what happens when a sister has had to take on the role of a mother. It is in our teens and early 20's when we form much of our identity, but I wanted to see the impact it would have if during this time, you were not given the opportunity to develop, and instead had to be the protector so that someone else could grow. In this case, when Jane and Millie's mum left.

This play is set when the sisters are older, and we are dealing with the long term impact of this sacrifice. The life Jane has formed, has been one of security and stability, providing a safe base for Millie. But it is not necessarily the one she would have chosen for herself if circumstances were different. A clear consequence of her sacrifice is her apprehension of having her own children. Although she is at a stage in life where many women are ready to have children, Jane has lost the energy and desire for it.

I want the audience to emotionally connect to the sacrifices Jane has made in her life and root for her to find the courage to both let go and move forward. I want the audience to walk away from this play considering the importance of individual identity and self-growth and how that can be lost with sacrifice. I would like them to connect to the sacrifices they have made in their own lives, or that others have made for them. Are there regrets they are living with? Are there changes they wish they could make? I also want them to see that it's okay sometimes to put yourself first.

Finally, I want them to connect emotionally to the pain it takes to let go of someone you love. I want them to relate to Jane's struggles to let Millie make her own decisions, and to relate them to their own experiences, particularly for those who have children. Whether they be small moments such as allowing them to walk home for the first time, to major events such as

encouraging them to travel on their OE. Although you fear for them the whole time, like Jane will when she's away from Millie, it is for the best for their long term development.

A Defining Image of Sacrifice

A key image/moment in the play that encompasses this theme of sacrifice would be the end of the first act when Jane is literally fighting for Millie. Millie is in a tug of war between Jane and Jason. Jason represents 'bad decision/choices' and Jane physically tries to protect her from them. Jane and Millie are both grown women, and Jane's actions are more like children in a playground, however, the ridiculousness of her actions are lost on her. She will put everything on the line for Millie. Also in this moment, we see how torn Millie is - she is mentally and physically being pulled between them. She shows us the struggles young adults have in their need to make decisions for themselves, yet also the need to not disappoint their parents. However, Millie is older than that now. She is 27 and Jane is her sister, not her mother. The fact that she is letting herself be torn shows a consequence of her allowing Jane to make key decisions in her life up to this point. Overall, they are both guilty in allowing this tug of war to happen.

Bibliography

- Apatow, J. (Producer), & Feig, P. (Director). (2011). *Bridesmaids* [Motion Picture]. USA.
- Apatow, J. (Producer), & Apatow, J. (Director). (2015). *Trainwreck* [Motion Picture]. USA.
- Bridesmaids Narrative Journey*. (2012, May). Retrieved from Narrative Journey: <https://narrativejourney.wordpress.com/2012/05/01/bridesmaids-dir-paul-feig-2011/>
- Cardy, T. (2015, June). *Kiwi theatre's potential shakeup from Creative New Zealand review*. Retrieved from Stuff: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/69355627/kiwi-theatres-potential-shakeup-from-creative-new-zealand-review>

- Christian, D. (2017, September). *NZ Theatre to Take Turn in Spotlight*. Retrieved from NZ Herald:
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=11922708
- Creech, H. (2017). *Rite of Passage the 10 best Coming of Age movies*. Retrieved from The SkyKid.com:
<https://www.theskykid.com/coming-of-age-films-%E2%80%93-definition/>
- Faraci, D. (2015, Jul). *Trainwreck and the New Coming Of Age*. Retrieved from birth.movies.death:
<http://birthmoviesdeath.com/2015/07/21/trainwreck-and-the-new-coming-of-age>
- Johanson, F. (Producer), & Newell, M. (Director). (2003). *Mona Lisa Smile* [Motion Picture]. USA.
- Literary Themes Coming of Age*. (2012). Retrieved from Literary Articles:
<https://literacle.com/literary-themes-coming-of-age>
- McLintock, A. H. (1966). *Dramatic Societies*. Retrieved from An Encyclopedia of NZ 1966: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/1966/theatre/page-2>
- MTV News*. (2012, September). Retrieved from The 50 Best Coming-of-Age Movies:
<http://www.mtv.com/news/2769274/best-coming-of-age-movies-2/>
- Rosenthal, J. (Producer), Weitz, C., & Weitz, P. (Directors). (2002). *About a Boy* [Motion Picture].
- Spencer, R. (2009, January). *The State of Play in NZ*. Retrieved from Sunday Star Times:
<http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/latest-edition/6329435/The-state-of-play-in-New-Zealand>
- The Guardian. (2011). *Comedy Comes of Age with Bridesmaids*. Retrieved from The Guardian:
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/jun/22/bridesmaids-comedy-age-commitment>
- Tierney, G. (2015, August). *Finally a poster girl for the thirty something*. Retrieved from i-d.vice:

https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/wjd7ax/finally-a-poster-girl-for-the-thirty-something

TV Tropes Coming of Age. (2017). Retrieved from TV Tropes:

<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ComingOfAgeStory>

Zeitchik, S. (2016, October). *The coming-of-age movie is reborn, with fresh stories and characters*. Retrieved from Los Angeles Times:

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-coming-of-age-movie-s-edge-seventeen-moonlight-20161010-snap-story.html>

Zhang, R., Ozaki, R., & Parihar, P. (2014, June). *The "Coming of Age" of Coming-of-Age Films*. Retrieved from The Princeton Buffer:

<https://princetonbuffer.princeton.edu/2014/06/12/the-coming-of-age-of-coming-of-age-films/>