Lily Ireland
2001025
Independant Project
ADPA6000/C

How does human connection develop and remain through sentimentality of personal objects?

By Lily Ireland



WAVDA – University of Wales Trinity Saint David

BA Musical Theatre

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Lily Ireland
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Element 1: Research

Introduction

In my independent project I will be answering the question ‘how does human connection develop and remain through sentimentality of personal objects?’ via the medium of a play-script. We follow the memories of Abigail, as she reflects on her relationship with Michael, whom she has lost but retains a jacket once belonging to him. The presence of this jacket causes her to reminisce on their past as she has formed a connection to it and experiences its sentimentality. A vintage jacket will make this key piece and a symbol of her attachment. We initially see it reside within a vintage store in the present day, before we are taken back to the late 1980s where the primary story takes place; the history of the jacket, and the relationship between the characters ensues. Abigail retains the jacket after they part ways, unwilling to let go of Michael, however ultimately, we see it reside again in the vintage store, awaiting a new story and a new owner. This piece plays homage to the second-hand industry and the history of clothing which creates human sentimentality and attachment.

Proposal:

‘Hanging on by a Thread’.

The topic I am exploring is object attachment, experienced through a piece of vintage clothing that holds a personal story. I am focussing on exploring the sense of human connection and a relationship through the memories and the emotions evoked by an object. I will achieve this in the form of a full-length, forty-five minutes to hour-long play-script, contrived of songs by Paolo Nuitini and an original piece.

However, in my presentation I will condense it into a twenty-minute piece that focusses on the bond that is formed between the characters and remains by Abigail's ownership of his jacket. I want to include personal accounts of object attachment and human connection as I aim to create a piece that emotionally evokes an audience and explores an aspect of human psychology that each audience member can find themselves relating a story of their own to. I believe it is important for me to explore this idea of connection through a conventional and relatable human experience such as: the development of a relationship. This allows further potential for my audience to relate to the character and the idea of 'object attachment' in this regard.

Literary Review:

The primary topic area to discuss is the development and appearance of object attachment itself in the human psyche. I want to develop a substantial understanding of this emotional connection to present within my character. I will also establish affects of nostalgia and sentimentality, and the romanticism of human life and loss which is crucial in the development of my script and characters if I aim to provide affective dialogue. My last topic of research delves into a passion of my own that ultimately drove me towards the idea of object attachment. The use of a clothing object in my script leads me to explore how stories can be attached through the medium of fashion and its history. If I were to develop my piece and this concept to a larger scale, it would be a collaboration with the second-hand fashion industry. Nonetheless, at a smaller-scale my understanding and study still coincides with this idea.

As the subject of object attachment and attachment theory are psychological theories discussed by many psychologists, there are multiple ideas surrounding its development and reasoning. The concept of object attachment is familiar to most people, and often presents in a normal capacity amongst ownership of objects we feel fondness or connection to. Melissa M. Norberg and Derek D. Rucker define object attachment as 'the psychological or emotional bond that individuals experience between their sense of self and an object' (pg.vi, 2021). This definition tells of how object attachment can form regardless of what the emotional capacity is and whether the object is viewed negatively or positively. There is a psychological pull and connection to the object, an attachment that may be hard to let go of. To discuss the antecedents of such attachment, Norberg notes the theories of Wan and Chen that people anthropomorphise objects in order to 'seek out inter-personal attachments for protection, comfort and care' that they are lacking in a human connection (pg.vii, 2021). Therefore, in the absence of a person or after a loss, an object can provide this feeling of comfort and presence that they desire. The qualities provided by a human are contributed instead to the object and a person not wanting to be deprived of them. So, by withholding this object they are in control of consciously maintaining this. This idea would relate to my character in the absence of the person whom she attributes the jacket to, as she had felt much comfort and support from his presence.

This allusion of loss leads to what Dozier and Ayers discuss about the connection to an object that belonged to a lost loved one. They state that:

> Clinically, we have seen evidence that there is often a sense of grief if the item is lost. For example, an older widow who has lost her wedding ring may feel like she has lost her sense of connection with her deceased partner and re-experience some of the grief she felt with the initial loss of her husband (pg.106, 2021).

This would explain why a person experiencing loss may hold on to an item to protect the connection to that person. Especially if the person was of high value or emotional importance to them, this importance translates onto the object they relate them to. One becomes in control of their emotions so in order to preserve themselves from experiencing the grief again, they can hold onto an anthropomorphised object. Dozier and Ayers also recognise that object attachment can be caused and heightened by the memories that are associated with that object, and a person's want to reminisce on those pleasant moments. They give the example of 'an older woman who possesses an art project her child made in elementary school may find that, over time, her attachment to the art project increases the more that she uses it as a cue to reminisce about her time as a young mother' (pg 105, 2021). This shows that the human senses are responsible for evoking these emotions and again, a person can provide themselves with this pleasant feeling as they desire.

To add to this, there's the question of why a person might become attached to another person in the first instance. Although there is much to discuss about parental attachment in adolescence, I focus my research on how this influences adult relationships. Attachment experienced in childhood is known to manifest into mature romantic relationships as Bowlby emphasises that 'the attachment figure promotes healthy functioning by providing a safe haven to which a relationship partner can

retreat for comfort, support, reassurance, assistance, and protection, and by providing a secure base from which a relationship partner can explore the world and strive to meet his or her full potential' (Feeney, Van Vleet and Jukubiak, 2015, pg.196). Therefore, the ownership of an object in which this attachment feeling has been attributed to, could provide that sense of comfort and reassurance and letting go of such would cause a sense of detriment and vulnerability.

My next topic to discuss through means of research is sentimentality and how human life is viewed through the lens of nostalgia and memory. In order to affectively answer my questioning of 'how does human connection develop and remain through the sentimentality of personal objects?' I aspire to indulge in the idea of sentimentality and memories utilising real-life examples and writings that evokes an audience as they relate to the characters' experience. I felt inspired by writers who utilise normal human experiences to tell a story of complex emotion and development. I read Sally Rooney's novels: *Normal People* and *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* which encompass characters leading regular lives and experiencing relationships in a complex and human way. *Normal People* is renowned for evoking heartbreak and emotion from the reader as the characters of Marianne and Connell develop a convoluted relationship of love and loss through their young age. A review in *The Guardian* highlights that: 'the energy and excitement of the story…must come from the couple themselves, their inner lives, what they see and imagine and read; from what Jane Austen called their "sensibilities"' (Clanchy, 2018). In hand, this allows the complexity of the characters and their relationship to be fore-fronted, we focus on the excitement then, of an ordinary life that is full of sentiment and attachment. I further researched the definition of 'sensibility' as I believe it to be a

trope I aim for within my writing. I discovered *Sensibility: An Introduction* by Janet Todd, who discusses sensibility throughout literature. Her discussion supports mine of the characters in *Normal People*, as she states that 'the arousal of pathos through conventional situations, stock familial characters and rhetorical devices is the mark of sentimental literature' and it 'demands and emotional, even physical response' (1986, pg.5). I agree with this statement as in order to evoke a wide audience, the normality of the emotions and experiences reads better universally and can be related to an individual's personal experiences in life, causing an emotional or empathetic response. However, she also states that 'sentimental literature is exemplary of emotion, teaching its consumers to produce a response equivalent to the one presented in its episodes.' (1986, pg.6) I understand that Todd is predominantly discussing sentimental literature of the eighteenth century and of the current time, however I am encouraged not to provide an audience with emotion yet create a piece that allows personal reflection. I will take inspiration from stories such as *Normal People* which provide sentimentality in the regard of exploring the complexities of a relationship. In order to further this idea, I am inspired to use true stories of object attachment and sentimentality, that aren't created to 'teach' a consumer of the emotion to feel, just to be shared and experienced through another perspective.

During the process of researching object attachment psychology and understanding the commonality of it, I started to discuss this topic with people. I was inspired to collate some primary research by gathering personal examples of object attachment via a survey (see Appendix 1). I want to include some of these stories as performed pieces of verbatim within my performance as I aspire to evoke familiarity.

These stories caused me to realise the relatability of this topic and my study proves the argument that objects are withheld to purposely reincarnate emotions and memories. Such as, the ‘green wool coat’ in which the owner says: ‘I think of her as I am enveloped in a warm hug of the coat that brings me great comfort.’ This coat brings physical warmth and comfort which is associated with the person it once belonged to, emanating a sense of connection to that lost loved one. Using these stories reinforces my intention to not provide emotion but to tell a story that conjures a personal feeling in oneself.

Another depiction of sentimentality in storytelling I studied within the 2024 movie *All of Us Strangers*, directed by Andrew Haigh and based on the 1987 novel *Strangers* by Taichi Yamada. Within this story, sentiment is explored through the character of Adam, who visits his deceased parents in a confused state of reality/fiction. Adam struggles to let go of his parents and refuses to stop visiting their house even though his father instructs him to “let us go”. We see a state of devastation ensue from Adam as he tries to break into their empty house, unable to detach himself from those feelings of comfort. This proves Dozier and Ayers’ discussion of grief resurfacing when they lose that object associated with the deceased person. This idea of exploring sentimentality and sensibility within a story can be traced back for centuries to evoke emotion and a response from the audience successfully. Although that isn’t my entire goal, I explore the topic of object attachment and how human connection can remain within this. So, naturally, I have collated research on the idea of human connection and sentiment, which can survive through an object.

In the first and final scenes of my play, we see the jacket reside within a vintage store, ready to be lived in again and attached to another person's story. This leads onto my keenness to research how stories are associated through the means of fashion and clothing, such as the example I discovered in my survey. A paper by Kirsi Niinimäki discusses the attachment to clothing and how that might be affiliated with the fashion industry and sustainability. She explains how the better quality of a product, the higher the satisfaction of the consumer and they associate a positive connection and attachment to it, which in turn, also expands the lifespan of the clothing (2010, pg.1). Again, this references the idea of object attachment but more specifically in clothing and the emotions associated with wearing it. There is duality to the idea of clothing provoking emotions, as it establishes nostalgia or a personal feeling in oneself, relating back to my study and the 'green woollen coat' which provides comfort when worn.

Kelsi Niinimäki's paper provided me insight in an online questionnaire conducted in Finland in 2009 where a group of people were asked about why they form an attachment to clothing. Then, they were asked about their attachments to clothing items they have owned for long period of time, (see Appendix 2) for Niinimäki's collation of these results. The results show how many of the oldest clothes are kept due to association with a person. There is much emotional value evident in the memories evoked by the clothing item, whether it was worn during a life event of often by another person now attached to it. It was also deemed that attachment can form due to factors such as the design or branding of the clothing item, as it is regarded highly in the sense of personal taste, or, that the aesthetic experience is pleasing and enforces a positive attitude for the wearer (2009, as cited

in Niinimäki, 2010, pp 2-3). I recognise that this study conducted in 2009 may prove different results today due to the increase in demand of second-hand clothing at present. I aim to use a vintage jacket in my piece to tell the story effectively, as it bases itself in the past and moves towards the current day. The longevity of this jacket and its intrigue is supported by the history it provides and the communication of fashion in this way. Alike the research I conducted in my survey, *Worn Stories* by Emily Spivack is a collation of real personal stories associated with an item of clothing. Andy Spade writes a story of a vintage jacket he bought off a woman in a market, which had been sitting in her attic for 15 years since the passing of her husband, an example of her letting go of the attachment to this jacket but passing it onto another. As Spade describes 'I feel like I have a part of this person on me, like I'm actually borrowing his character' (2014, pg. 11). Although Spade does not personally have a connection with the previous owner of the jacket, he feels the attachment due to its history.

This story and my previous research exemplify the intensity of human connection through objects and the stories told within them, as it lingers through history and the lifespan of the item. Ultimately, the research I have collated provides me with an in-depth understanding of how human connection can form and reside within an object, specifically an item of clothing. We connect to something that provides us with a positive feeling that we wish to experience, or a memory we aspire to relive. I realise that this attachment can become intense, and a fear of deprivation and loss can ensue. However, I feel it is important in my case to explore a commonplace story through a relationship and the memories of such that exist

within an object, relating to a wide audience with a variety of personal accounts on

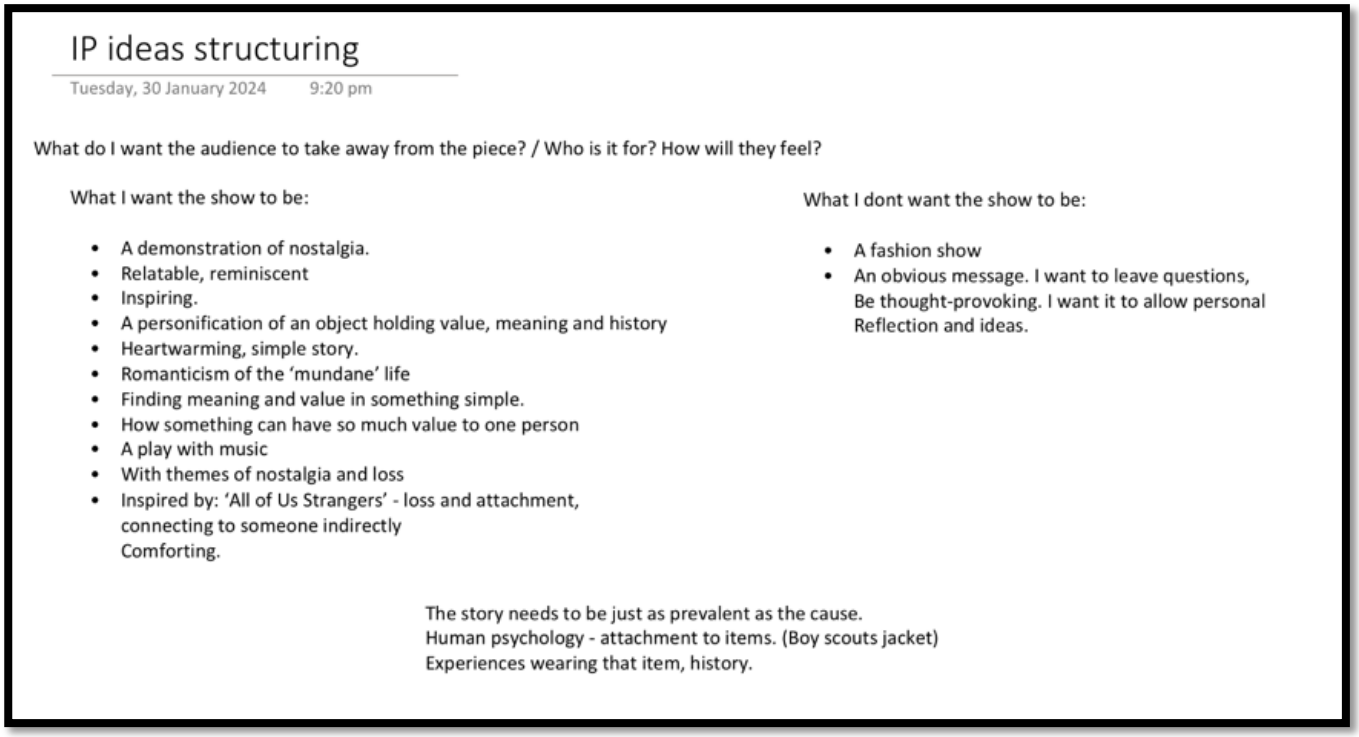
this subject.

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Element 2: Development

Stimuli:

My process began with my decision to create a piece based on a subject I have interest in and have the skill set for. Originally, I had planned on creating a piece primarily based on aspects of costume and design, as a look into second-hand fashion and dramaturgy combined. Personally, I have a love for second-hand fashion and the history of a piece of clothing. I am also passionate about the positive implications of the second-hand industry and was keen to involve this within a piece that homes in on theatre skills I have attributed throughout my studies. I created an initial plan and structure of ideas in a proposal to discuss with my tutor (see Appendix 3). However, in this proposal, I lacked a clear and specific direction in which my performance study would follow. I had lots of ideas and it needed specificity to be effective and answer a more succinct question. So, I decided to explore a narrowed idea of following one story of a piece of clothing and focussing on the topics that arise, rather than introducing broader themes of sustainability and fashion. I had a conversation with my tutor, about personal experiences of attachment to clothing items, and the fascination I have with finding pieces at vintage stores and speculating on the person who wore it before. Through this, I decided to write a play surrounding a piece of clothing that tells this story, evoking memories of a person and their past. Tori told me about her grandfather's vest that she kept as she recalls the stories he used to tell whilst wearing it, she feels connected to him still since his passing. At this stage, I asked two questions to establish what I wanted to achieve in my piece and inform my next stages:



IP ideas structuring

Tuesday, 30 January 2024 9:20 pm

What do I want the audience to take away from the piece? / Who is it for? How will they feel?

What I want the show to be:

- A demonstration of nostalgia.
- Relatable, reminiscent
- Inspiring.
- A personification of an object holding value, meaning and history
- Heartwarming, simple story.
- Romanticism of the 'mundane' life
- Finding meaning and value in something simple.
- How something can have so much value to one person
- A play with music
- With themes of nostalgia and loss
- Inspired by: 'All of Us Strangers' - loss and attachment, connecting to someone indirectly
  Comforting.

What I dont want the show to be:

- A fashion show
- An obvious message. I want to leave questions, Be thought-provoking. I want it to allow personal Reflection and ideas.

The story needs to be just as prevalent as the cause.
Human psychology - attachment to items. (Boy scouts jacket)
Experiences wearing that item, history.

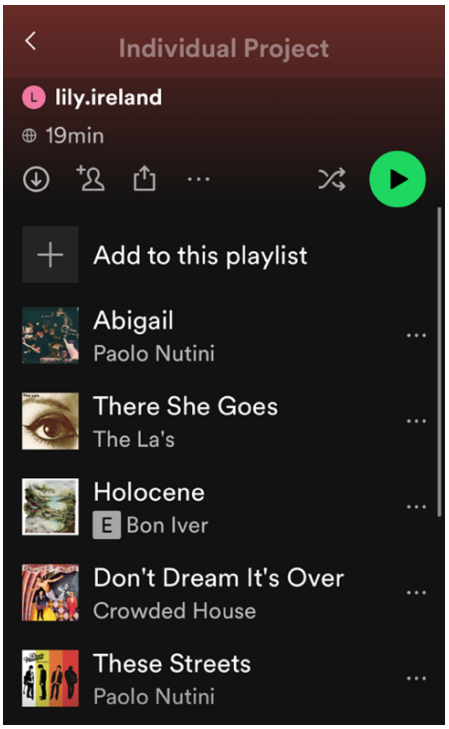
I recognised items of my own that I feel fond of, and recall pleasant memories, such as bunting above my bed (see in Appendix 1). I felt inspired by these personal stories, and that I could easily write about a topic that relates to a wide audience and the idea of object attachment evoking memories and emotion. I still, however, took inspiration from my original idea as I imagined the piece of clothing situated in a vintage store before travelling back to its original story. Then, I can pay homage to the industry in this way and explore the notion of how every second-hand piece is holding a story of its own. The idea of loss and obtaining an object that sustains a connection to that person, was something I wanted to explore.

When brainstorming ideas for a story to tell I struggled to establish the style in which to create a simply evocative piece. I happened to be listening to a playlist inspired by music by the artist Paolo Nuitini and felt so moved by his style of music and the lyrics that felt fitting to a piece I wanted to create: one of loss and longing.

The songs ‘These Streets’ and ‘Abigail’ especially stood out to me as lyrically emotive and resonated with the story I wished to tell. See (Appendix 4.A) for lyrics of ‘These Streets’. In ‘These Streets’, Paolo sings ‘where’d the days go when all we did was play?’ in reminiscence of his childhood and sings of how ‘(he’s) used to Glenfield Road and spending my time down in Orchy’, referencing his past life in his hometown. The emotive style of his writing and powerful expression of sentimentality caused me to also begin developing a character.

As previously mentioned, I intended on somewhat writing from personal experience in creating a personal, relatable and simple story. Storytelling and writing have always been an interest of mine, and I also find so much value in friendships in we that share an affinity for music. This, alongside the lyrics of ‘Abigail’, gave me the inspiration to write a story of a relationship between two people: connected through a passion for music and its storytelling. See (Appendix 4.B) for the lyrics of Abigail which inspired this story to become one of romantic longing.

I curated a list of songs that I felt moving and evoked a feeling of nostalgia as I may have used them within my piece, but I also found them helpful to listen to whilst writing my ideas and inspiring the process. I also felt that I wanted to include an original song in my piece, of a similar style, so that I could really amplify the character’s emotions in this way, just as I found so effective in Nuitini’s writing.

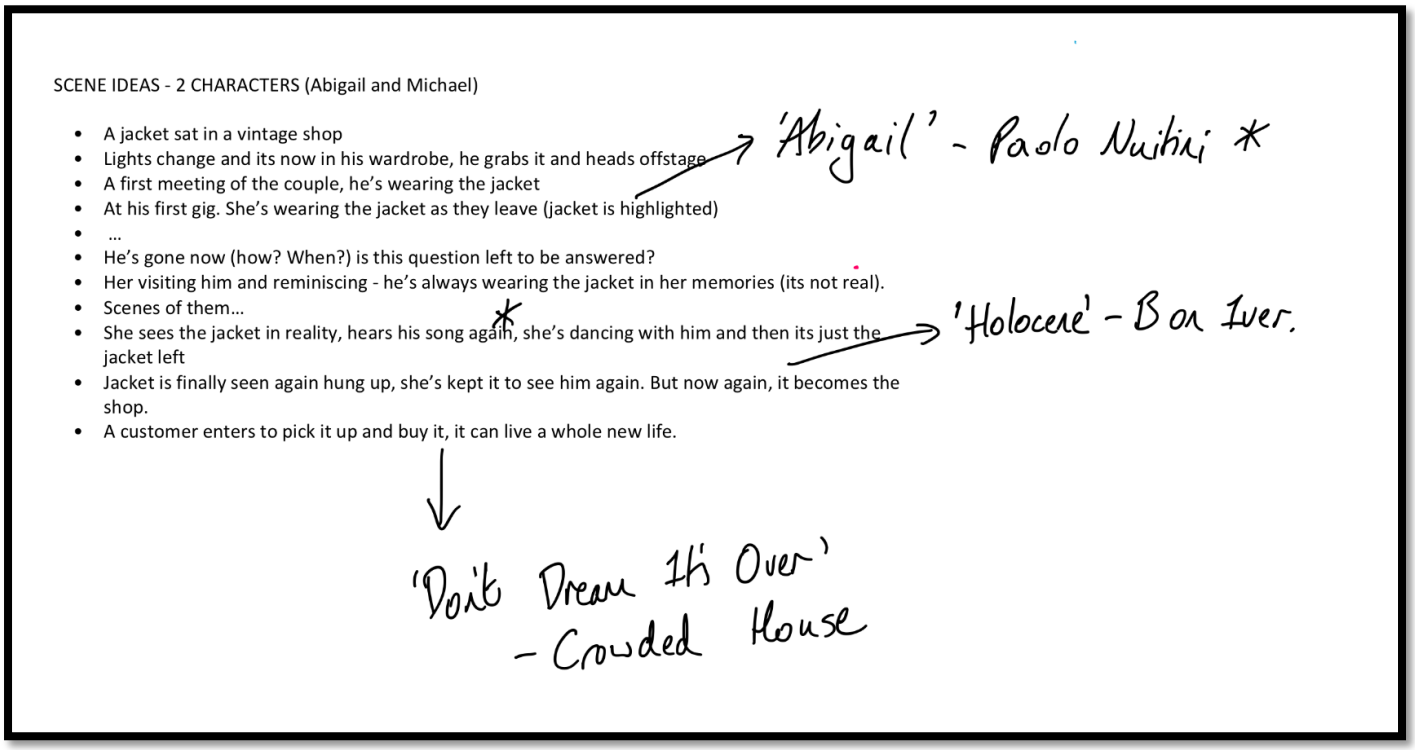


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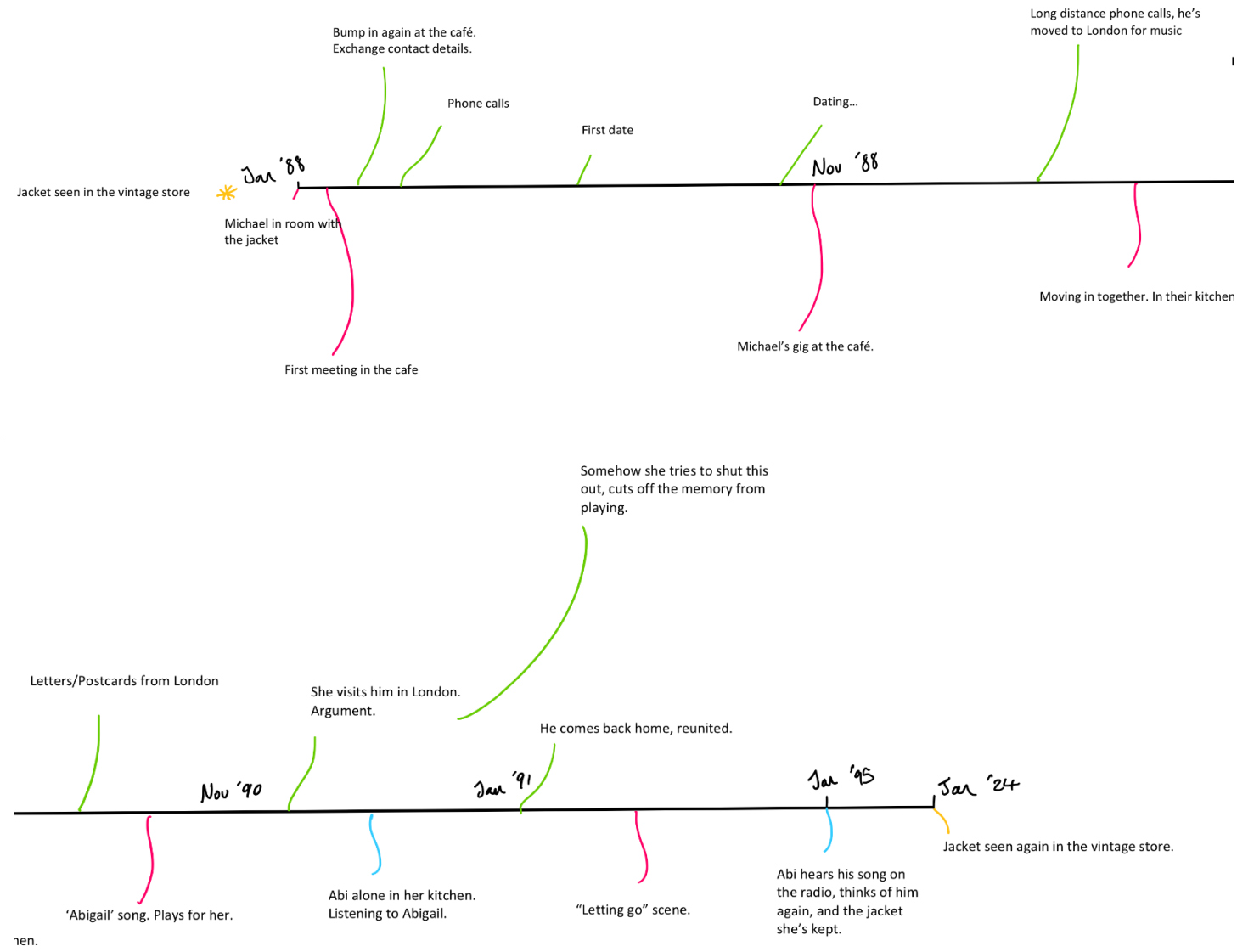
Story and Character Development:

I wanted to keep the storyline simple and have focus on a relationship between two people, so kept my characters to a minimum. I had heavy influence at this point from the movie *All of Us Strangers* (2024), when the character, Adam lives through the memories of his deceased parents, and there is a skewed perception of reality. He is so attached to their memory, even he loses sight of what is real and can't let go. I liked the idea of my character, Abigail living through the memories of her lost loved one, and the audience doesn't know its not reality until it is revealed at the end, alike the plot of *All of Us Strangers*, yet was unsure how to make this clear.

I found difficulty in deciding what scenes to share as I wanted to keep it ambiguous and allow plenty of personal interpretation from the audience, due to the relatability and evocative nature of my topic. I wrote a vague timeline of events that could occur, I knew I wanted to see the loss of one character and the possession of the jacket remains.



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I established that there needed to be a development of the relationship in some way that the audience could understand what is at stake. In order for them to be emotionally invested in the characters, I needed to set the foundations of their connection that is ultimately lost. I read an article that stated the importance of writing characters that the audience care about, they stated that ‘readers like to see themselves in characters. If they can relate to them, they will connect to them’ and ultimately feel sympathy or emotionally affected by events that occur to them (Allan, 2022). Therefore, I chose to have Abigail at the forefront of the events, as she emulates a person unsure of their path in life and in need of support and confidence. Their relationship becomes something ‘worth rooting for’ which also ‘ups the care factor’ (Allan, 2022). We follow a relatable story of a budding relationship and its complexities, alongside the complications of coming of age and establishing a life path.

I took inspiration of ideas from my personal experiences, as I felt it would also be an accessible way to have a great understanding of the characters I portray. My character, Michael was heavily influenced by my musician friend and the development of the relationship we share, as he meets Abigail, and they bond over this common interest. Abigail is somewhat influenced by Adam in *All Of Us Strangers* and his intense longing for a false reality. It made sense to me to have Michael as a singer and songwriter, who writes his own songs (portrayed by Paolo Nuitini tracks). There is a connection between my characters in which they form friendship through their passion for music. Michael will become a support system for Abigail and the goals she strives for in her life, as his path is much clearer and determined. To refer back to my research: Feeney, Van Vleet and Jukibiak mention the theory of

attachment forming from the comfort and support one feels by another person, a ‘safe haven’ and a ‘secure base in which… (they) can strive to meet his or her full potential’ (pg.196, 2015). So my characters having this relationship dynamic, provides the foundations for the attachment she forms to his jacket.

I used writing exercises to create character profiles and establish a really secure idea of their motivations and personalities, before I could delve further into their dialogue and dynamic in writing the script.

ABI

- 16 at the beginning of the piece (1988). She’s in year 12 at high school/college.
- We follow her story, her memories (until 1998), she is now 26.

Loves:
- Music, singing, doing the shows at school.
- She’s quiet shy in general, not massively popular, with a small group of friends however shines in the music dept.
- She wants to start writing her own stuff but has never told anyone that.
- She plays piano and has classical training but wants to explore more.
- Her hometown. Yet she longs to see more of the world somehow. Seems impossible at this point.
- Connecting to people and meeting new people, although she keeps her close circle tight.
- Stays friends with those from school.
- Fascination for a big city life.

Dislikes:
- The pressure she feels to go to university straight away. She’s unsure and doesn’t want to make the wrong decision.
- She has other passions: she loves teaching and her small job as a shop assistant.
- Feeling claustrophobic at home, she always felt like she was destined for more and that music might take her there but it doesn’t seem to happen easily for her.

Other facts:
- Her parents expect her to study music but are lenient in her dreams/what she wants to study next.
- She’s never moved away from her hometown (before the story).
- She is very sentimental.

Life is… unpredictable.
Love is… complicated.
Family is… proud.
Food is… great.
Sex is… unknown.
Children are… fine.
Mum is…expecting of me.
Dad is… proud of me.
School is… pressure.
Friendship is… fun.
Belief is… strength in oneself.

Memory exercises:
first embarrassing romantic interaction…
I really liked a boy and believed he liked me too, I told everyone we would talk every so often. But he really was using me to get through to my friend. I remember him and his friends walking past me and laughing as I waved back to him, waving at my friend behind me.

MICHAEL:

- Also 16 at the beginning of the play, although a few months younger than Abi.
- We follow Abigail’s interpretation of Michael through her memories.

Loves:
- Music.
- Songwriting, lyricism.
- Poetry.
- His dog.
- Football sometimes, but not necessarily the people who play at school.
- Alone time.
- Being socialable at work though, he loves the regular customers.
- Coffee.
- His small circle of friends from high school, he now doesn’t see so often.
- Working towards his future.

Dislikes:
- College
- People who don’t believe in his dream
- Schedules
- ’Rugby boys’, the lads at school
- Showing people his music, until he’s certain its ready

Other facts:
- He has a close relationship with his parents who support him.
- They question his choices sometimes but wont stop him from doing what he wants to at university.
- He wants to study music and eventually become a musician.
- He has his whole life planned out.
- Always kept to himself, quiet but chatty and outgoing when he wants to be.
- He’s also very sentimental and poetic, romanticises life.

Life is… limitless.
Love is… in the future.
Family is… safe.
Food is… fine.
Sex is… fun.
Children are… sweet.
Mum is…quietly unsure.
Dad is… careless.
School is… dire.
Friendship is… rare.
Belief is… what becomes true.

Memory exercises:
A time I felt scared…
It took me longer to learn how to ride a bike than most. I was 13. I felt so far above the ground and so unsteady. My dad used to take me out at the local park and hold onto the back of my seat. One day, we went out and I went off all by myself! Then I saw a group of the football boys from school watching me, laughing. And I fell. I was so embarrassed and afraid to get back up, I didn’t want my dad to come help me. I just wanted to stay there until I woke up and it wasn’t real, but it was.

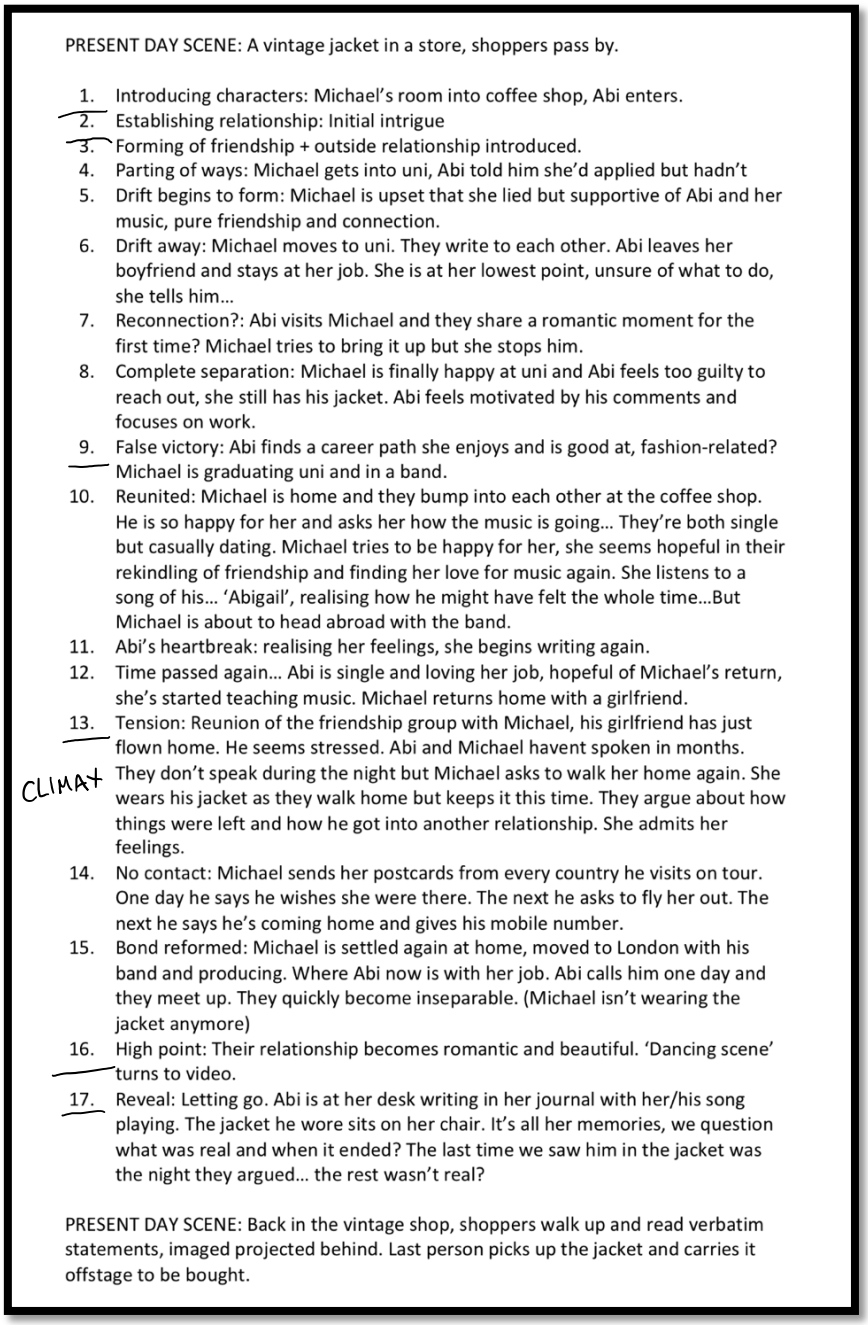
I aim to make it clear that my character, Abigail is the one reliving these memories and is in control. Alike Dozier and Ayer's suggestion of positive nostalgia generated by an object (pg.105, 20210. Abigail lives through this jacket and is in control of what we see, as she would be in control of these emotions with obtaining this jacket. I decided to portray this as she turns the calendar between each scene to show a moving forward in time.

Structuring the Play:

I needed to establish the structure of my play and a sufficient timeline of events, in order to develop the state of this relationship. I used a personal experience of my own, referring to old journal entries to inspire some of the chronological events, (see Appendix 6.A, 6.B and 6.C for examples of references). With these stimuli, I then realised a more developed trope in this storyline, of a friendship turned romance where the timing never seems to work. This ''right-person-wrong-time'' theme proved popular in movies such as *Love, Rosie* (2014) and *One Day* (2011), both stories I thoroughly enjoy. I found such interest in these stories of complex relationships formed by the complexity of human nature and navigating life in your adolescence or early-20s. This added the extra level of interest in their relationship as the plot is far less linear. When reading up about the ''friends to lovers'' trope prevalent in both these movies, I discovered that the writer of *One Day, Oscar Rickett,* was too inspired to write about his own story. In an article in British Vogue, he tells the story of his own relationship and the arc that transformed onto the pages of his novel, turned screenplay, *One Day.* Rickett mentions that maybe because we are now a world where it is so common to meet a partner online, 'the idea of the friends who

become lovers holds a particular kind of power in our collective consciousness' (2024) and therefore would form a story that successfully exemplifies my themes of object attachment and personal connection, in an evocative way.

I made a first plan of storyline beats, having looked into key elements of a successful story/script, I have underlined key moments of progression, such as the moment of climax and highest tension:



PRESENT DAY SCENE: A vintage jacket in a store, shoppers pass by.

1. Introducing characters: Michael's room into coffee shop, Abi enters.
2. Establishing relationship: Initial intrigue
3. Forming of friendship + outside relationship introduced.
4. Parting of ways: Michael gets into uni, Abi told him she'd applied but hadn't
5. Drift begins to form: Michael is upset that she lied but supportive of Abi and her music, pure friendship and connection.
6. Drift away: Michael moves to uni. They write to each other. Abi leaves her boyfriend and stays at her job. She is at her lowest point, unsure of what to do, she tells him…
7. Reconnection?: Abi visits Michael and they share a romantic moment for the first time? Michael tries to bring it up but she stops him.
8. Complete separation: Michael is finally happy at uni and Abi feels too guilty to reach out, she still has his jacket. Abi feels motivated by his comments and focuses on work.
9. False victory: Abi finds a career path she enjoys and is good at, fashion-related? Michael is graduating uni and in a band.
10. Reunited: Michael is home and they bump into each other at the coffee shop. He is so happy for her and asks her how the music is going… They're both single but casually dating. Michael tries to be happy for her, she seems hopeful in their rekindling of friendship and finding her love for music again. She listens to a song of his… 'Abigail', realising how he might have felt the whole time…But Michael is about to head abroad with the band.
11. Abi's heartbreak: realising her feelings, she begins writing again.
12. Time passed again… Abi is single and loving her job, hopeful of Michael's return, she's started teaching music. Michael returns home with a girlfriend.
13. Tension: Reunion of the friendship group with Michael, his girlfriend has just flown home. He seems stressed. Abi and Michael havent spoken in months. They don't speak during the night but Michael asks to walk her home again. She wears his jacket as they walk home but keeps it this time. They argue about how things were left and how he got into another relationship. She admits her feelings.

CLIMAX

14. No contact: Michael sends her postcards from every country he visits on tour. One day he says he wishes she were there. The next he asks to fly her out. The next he says he's coming home and gives his mobile number.
15. Bond reformed: Michael is settled again at home, moved to London with his band and producing. Where Abi now is with her job. Abi calls him one day and they meet up. They quickly become inseparable. (Michael isn't wearing the jacket anymore)
16. High point: Their relationship becomes romantic and beautiful. 'Dancing scene' turns to video.
17. Reveal: Letting go. Abi is at her desk writing in her journal with her/his song playing. The jacket he wore sits on her chair. It's all her memories, we question what was real and when it ended? The last time we saw him in the jacket was the night they argued… the rest wasn't real?

PRESENT DAY SCENE: Back in the vintage shop, shoppers walk up and read verbatim statements, imaged projected behind. Last person picks up the jacket and carries it offstage to be bought.

I had to establish a relevant and substantial timeframe to show the longevity of their bond and the jacket that is attached to it, when it ultimately resides within the vintage store. Beginning the story in the 80s could lead to a ten-year storyline and adequately separates the characters from the reality of the present day when the jacket is revealed at the shop.

Developing Ideas and Design:

When scheduling my development process in the early stages, I had planned to be much further ahead in terms of the script writing when it came to the final weeks of preparation. However, due to the changing of my ideas and difficulty in finding cast members, I had to thoroughly organise my time in the weeks ahead of my performance date. I had intended on working through characters and developing the script whilst in the room with my actors, however due to the specificities of the roles requiring musical ability this proved difficult.

I decided to focus on the elements I could prepare for myself, so I had a confident and clear understanding of the piece I wanted to create. In hand, this would aid the rehearsal and staging process. I began by using the storyline beats and character profiles to delve into the scriptwriting process, utilising current drafts of the first and last scenes and some other moments to work with:

Lily Ireland
2001025
Independant Project
ADPA6000/C

Hanging on by a Thread

Tuesday, 30 January 2024 9:57 pm

Opening Scene:
A jacket is placed upon a shop rail. Amongst other items, in a vintage shop. Faded current music in background. A calendar on the wall states 'january 2024'.
Shoppers come by and look, walking in and out. Someone flips the calendar back to 'January 1988'.

Lighting change. 'There She Goes' Instrumental - The La's. (We're now in the 80s)

Michael runs through, toast in his mouth. Grabs his jacket, slings it on, and guitar and rushes offstage in a rush.

SCENE 2 - Coffee Shop:
Michael is sat at a table alone, viciously writing and erasing his notes (lyrics), miming chords on his guitar.

3 girls walk in (80s outfits), including Abigail, sharing headphones and the CD player listening to the song. Singing along to the instrumental 'There She Goes'.

Jen: (giggling) Shhh Abi its quiet in here!
Abi: Oops. (Takes off headphones. Music stops/quitens as if in the headphones. She clocks Michael sat at the table, who looked up as they came in singing and smiles at her)
Lucy: My turn! (Puts them on and bops over to the table, J and A follow as A glances back to Michael sheepishly).

Michael turns back to his lyrics chuckling to himself.

The girls start looking over the menu, L notices where Abi keeps looking over.

SCENE 3 (draft/option 1) - Michael's gig/open mic:
Small venue, Abi and her friends sat at a table. A couple guys are sat at another. The calendar states 'November 1988'
The girls look over to them but A is fixed on Michael.

Michael: (nervous) Hi guys, I'm Michael. Thank you for staying out to see me. This one's called Abigail. (Looks away shyly)

Abi blushes and J nudges her.
'Abigail' - Paolo Nuitini. CUT

J: You lucky thing.
L: Wow… this is beautiful.
A: Shh girls. (smiling at M)

Spotlight on Michael allows other cast to leave the stage. Song ends.

M walks over to A, twirls her and takes her hand.
M: I'll walk you home. (Puts the jacket around her shoulders)
(Now outside walking home.)

A: You're actually pretty good at the music stuff.
M: Ha I'll take that.
A: No I mean it, is that what you want to do?
M: I mean yes, I don't care for anything else. I won't be *there* for much longer.
A: Your heart is in it, I can tell.
M: And where's yours?
A: I'm still figuring that out.
M: You're only 16.
A: So are you.
M: And we've got so far to go.
(A shakes her head and sighs. M rubs her hand with his thumb and smiles to her. They keep walking.)

Abigail steps up to her door.
M: Goodnight.
A: Wait your jacket. (Takes it off to hand it to him)
M: Goodnight Abi.
A: See you tomorrow?
M: Of course. (Leaves)

SCENE 3 (draft/option 2) - Michael's gig/open mic:
Small venue, the cafe. Abi and her friends sat at a table, a couple of boys on another.
The calendar states 'November 1988'.
The girls acknowledge the boys but A is fixed on M.

Michael: Hi everyone. Thanks for coming out to see me tonight, this is just a little something I wrote back in January actually. (Shyly catches A's eyes) Uh yeah thanks.
'These Streets' - Paolo Nuitini.

L: He looks great.
A: Shush!

SCENE 4 - Coffee shop:
Calendar states 'January 1990'. M and A are sat at the table, holding hands. M in the jacket.

A: I'm proud of you!
M: (sighs) This is a big step.
A: Yeah! You can be fully committed to the music now.
M: I know, its exciting, I might actually miss this place.
A: (laughs) You're not going anywhere just yet, your little writing spot isn't going anywhere (gesturing to where they're sat, at the table Michael was when they met).
M: I just can't believe they were so interested in me.
A: Of course they were.
(Smiling at each other)
A: What's the time? I've got work soon.
M: 3.15…
A: Ok.

M: When's it your turn then?
A: What haha I'm not leaving my job.
M: That's not your passion though is it?
A: Well no, but I can't take that leap just yet.
M: There's nothing stopping you.
A: It's not that easy for me.

SCENE 4 (draft 2) - At Abi's house

Michael knocks on the door frantically, letter in his hand.
M: Abi! Abi! (Through letterbox)
Abi's mother answers the door.
Mrs Andrews: Hello Michael.
M: Hi Mrs Andrews, is Abi somewhere?
M.A: She's upstairs, you're welcome to go up.
M: (awkwardly taken aback/unsure) Oh, um, are you sure? (Enters and heads upstairs) Thank you!
We hear Michael off stage now.
M: Abi? Why didn't you answer my calls! Have you got your letter?…

SCENE 5 - Coffee Shop:
Michael in his apron, Abi sits opposite him at the table he was sat when they met.

Abi: Hey, I'm so proud of you.

//More scenes here… calendar flipping dates.

//More scenes here… calendar flipping dates.

Dancing together in the kitchen - PHYSICAL THEATRE??. (Holocene - Bon Iver)
Twirling her, giggling together. She stands on his feet as he dances slowly. He lets go but holds out her hands.
M: Ok you have to let me go now.
A: No. I'm not ready.
M: You can't keep coming to see me.
A: But you're still here.
M: It's not really me though is it?
A: It's all I've got left of you.
M: You can't move on.
(Takes off jacket, she holds onto one sleeve and he leaves it in her hands.)
A: (To the jacket) Please don't do this.
M: Goodnight Abi.
(She dances with the jacket, throws it over her shoulders and takes a deep breath.)

This last scene plays again on the screen and ends, the lights come up and we see Abi writing in her journal at her desk, with the jacket on her lap.

Scene - Abi's room
Jacket is hung up on the rail again.
Abi sits at her desk journalling and listening to the radio (90s music). Intro starts introducing Michael and his song 'Abigail'.
Abi listens for a moment before skipping the song.
Original song - lyrics from journal entry.
??
'Don't Dream its Over' - Crowded House plays.
Abi takes the jacket, hangs it up and lighting changes…

Final scene - In vintage shop (current day on calendar).
Jacket again sits in the vintage shop, music continues.
Man walks on and picks up the jacket.

Her dress?? He's kept it.
Music pulls them together, music pulls them apart??
Moment of tension
Develop characters
THEIR STORY to be believed in and strengthen, we need to care. Big decision to leave her and that life, her heartbreak.
Specific decisions made that impact each other.
Clear journey to follow.
Storyboard - she just lets him go.
Has she ever moved on??

SCENE 5 - Over the phone, either sides of the stage.
Calendar states 'November 1990'. .
A: How are you? How's London? I missed you, tell me everything.
M: Hahah it was great, so great. I missed you too.
A: What have you been up to?
M: Just writing a whole load of stuff. I've met some really talented people here, this place is truly amazing.
A: Oooh what you writing about?
M: Haha I wonder…
A: I can't wait to hear them all.
M: Of course sweetie.
A: It's so nice to hear your voice.
M: How have you been?
A: (disheartened) Oh okay… Nothing special going on over here.
M: No tell me, what have you been up to?
A: Just working. Seeing the girls a lot.
M: Still working at the shop, ey?
A: Michael its been a month.
M: I know, you've got so much time, you're still a baby.
A: You are too remember. Get home soon please. I miss you.
M: I'll try.

After having many conversations about the topic of object attachment, I recognised how relatable the topic is and how everyone has an individual story of their own, I wanted to include these somehow in my piece. This would make it more rounded to the subject and allow the jacket and the relationship to be a part of a wider theme. Kalburgi states that ‘verbatim theatre has the added punch being able to engage with people on a human level’ creating an ‘authentic piece of theatre’ which was my goal (2017). I decided to implement these stories as pieces of verbatim speech at the end of my piece, as customers who enter the “vintage shop” each stop to tell their stories, after we have seen Abigail’s. (See Appendix 1 for the collation of my research), the story of the soft toy cow is my own, and this provides insight into the real story that influenced Abigail’s.

This led me towards wanting to use a multi-media approach somewhat in my piece. As, I imagined images of the objects projected on a screen onstage as they were spoken of. This also solved my question of how to differentiate Abigail’s reality and her memories, to look like they are being watched.



The use of symbols had to become a key aspect in my piece, as they show iconic objects that hold meaning. Just as, we see

Michael's jacket in my piece and it provides a symbol of their relationship and the story Abigail explores, before ultimately it resides in a vintage store to be owned by someone else, yet the connection and the history remains. The jacket I used was a real jacket from the 1980s, so a living example of this, once belonging to someone else and now to be a part of a new form of storytelling. I understand the value of semiotics in stage-writing to wanted to establish meaning using these as much as possible to carry through my theme.

To demonstrate semiotics in another way, I set the whole play within the vintage store at let the story come to life with props that are objects residing in the vintage store, all adorning price tags. This added to the surrealism of the story being Abigail's memories, and I infer that the story actually comes from the jacket itself, displaying the connection it holds. Alike the story I referred to in my research in *Worn Stories:* the purchaser feels a connection to the previous owner through this jacket 'I feel like I have a part of this person on me…' (Spivack, 2014, pg. 11).

With an adequate plan of beats, I wrote the script quickly and efficiently as I had a strong sense of the characters and the story I wanted to tell at this point. I dedicated a few days to sit and free-write as much as I could, to relieve the pressure of creating a perfected script. ''Free writing'' is described as a process of creative writing that is to perform a 'stream of consciousness' of ideas (Sarah Wayte Creative, n.d). It also allowed me to easily make links within the dialogue as it was fresh in my mind and cohesive. These links include referring to having 'so much time', where Michael first mentions the expanse of their future to comfort Abigail and her uncertainty. Then, Abigail uses this line at a later point suggestive of their budding romance. My 'stream of consciousness' that went into writing this script resulted in

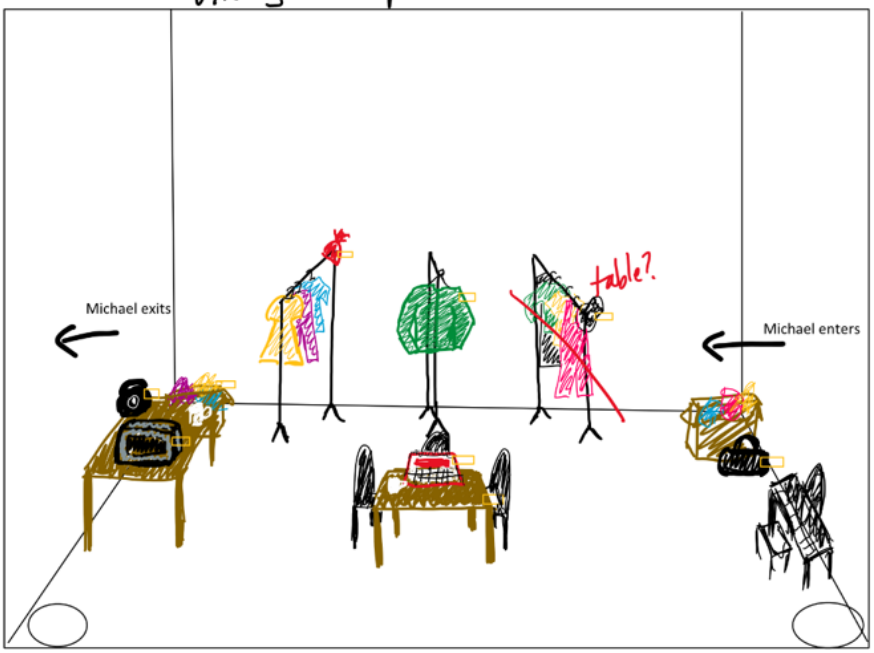
naturalistic dialogue between two characters that I had a thorough understanding of. I decided also, to write a full-length script and present a 20-minute section of this. This would be playing into my strengths of creative writing, and I believed that the substance of the piece and the development of the relationship could easily afford a longer story.

One issue I faced in the scriptwriting process was the time period in which it was based, the 1980s-1990s, and my lack of knowledge and experience at this time. Therefore, I had to ensure I conducted enough research to provide accuracy of events. This included the use of phone calls, time-reflective clothing, postcards and an old television screen, which were also effective in staging the vintage shop. Some research included discovering a popular music venue in London during the late 80s/early 90s in which Michael and his band might have played. An article online stated the popularity of *Opera on the Green* in the late 1980s (see Appendix 7).

I had to use my time wisely to prepare for the staging process. So, I drew images for each scene on what I imagined of the space. I did this in preparation of the stage being set as a vintage store, with minimal props due to budget and availability. Due to the last-minute casting issue, I also prepared staging directions in this imagined space, so I had a clear goal in each rehearsal.

Lily Ireland
2001025
Independant Project
ADPA6000/C

Vintage shop:



Everything is tagged.
Jacket is centre stage hung up.
Calendar is placed centre downstage, on the coffee table.
A table at the side to act as the bar, holds the telephone and the TV.
Piano on stage right.
Boxes filled with items (props) are upstage.
CD player also placed next to a box.

Coffee Shop:

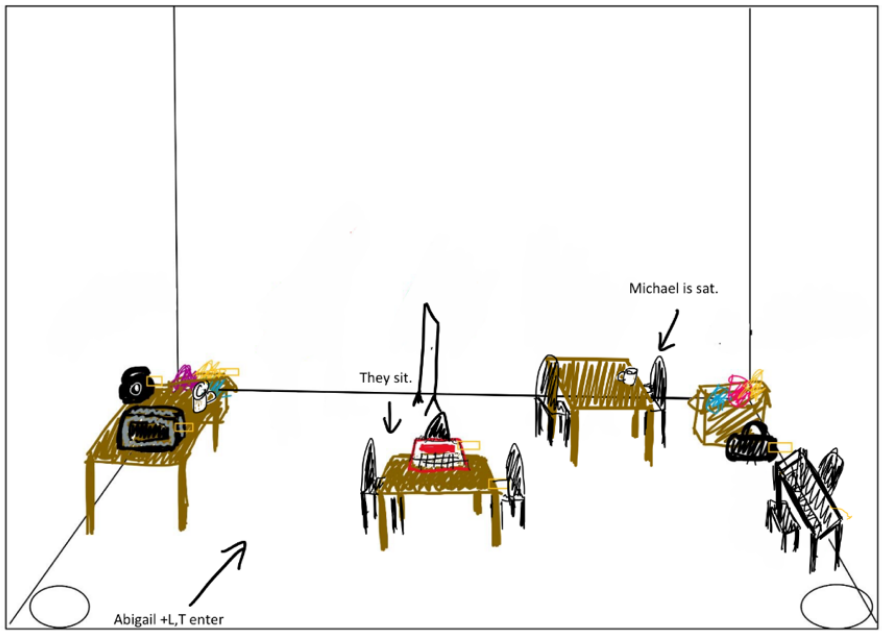
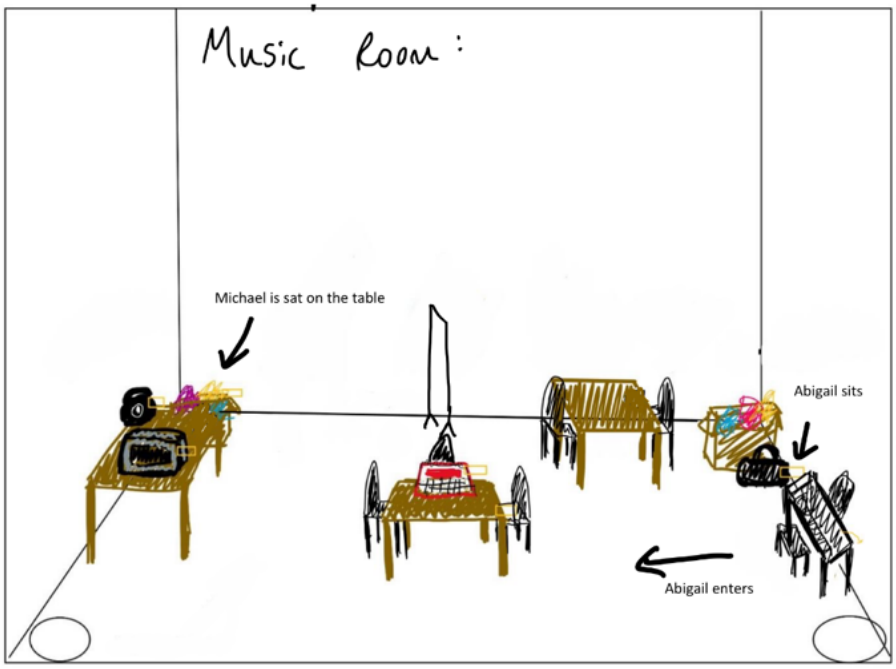
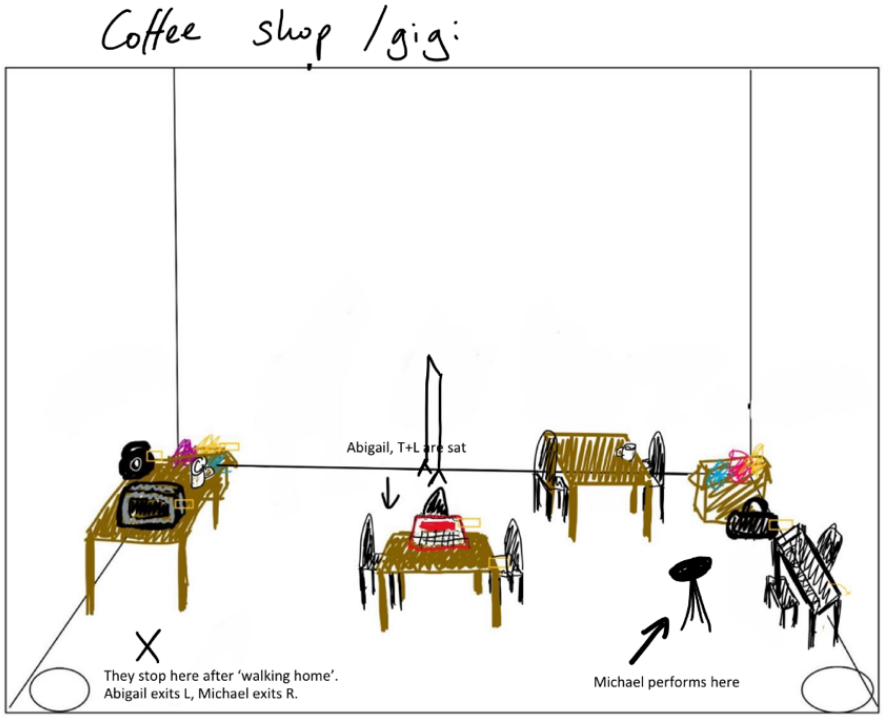


Table at the back as another coffee table.
Mugs are highlighted now.
TV and CD player put away? Piano moved out of sight?

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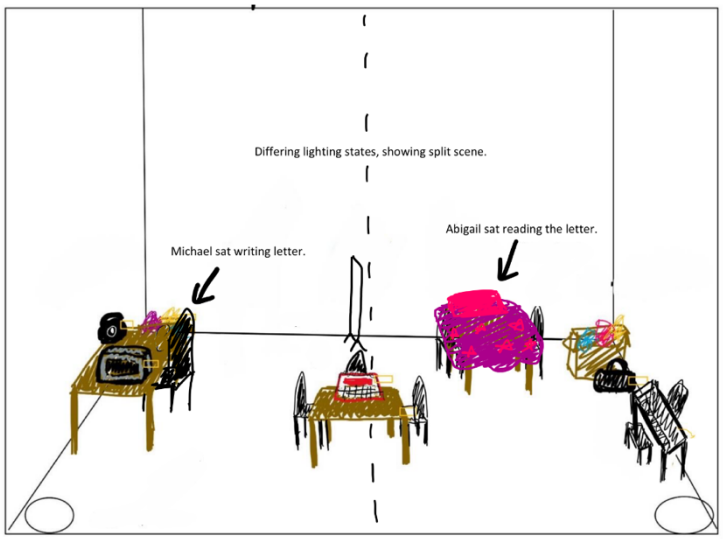
Transition into music room:
Mugs into boxes.



Mugs and stool enter
(Use piano stool?).

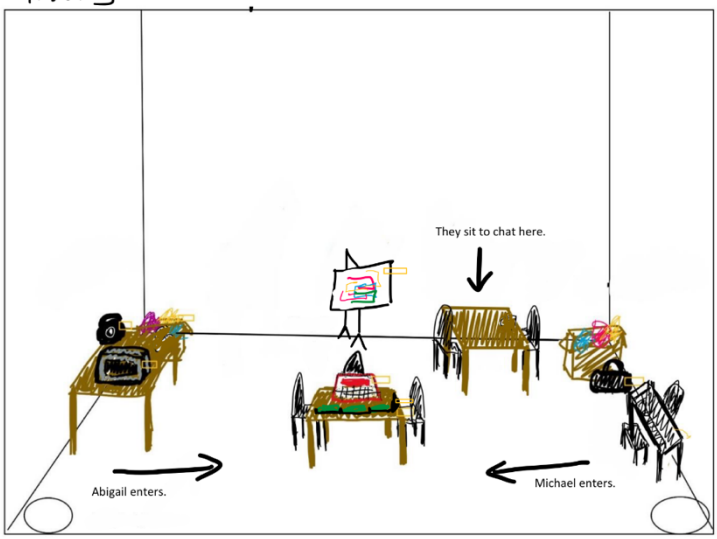
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Michael's Room / Abi's room:



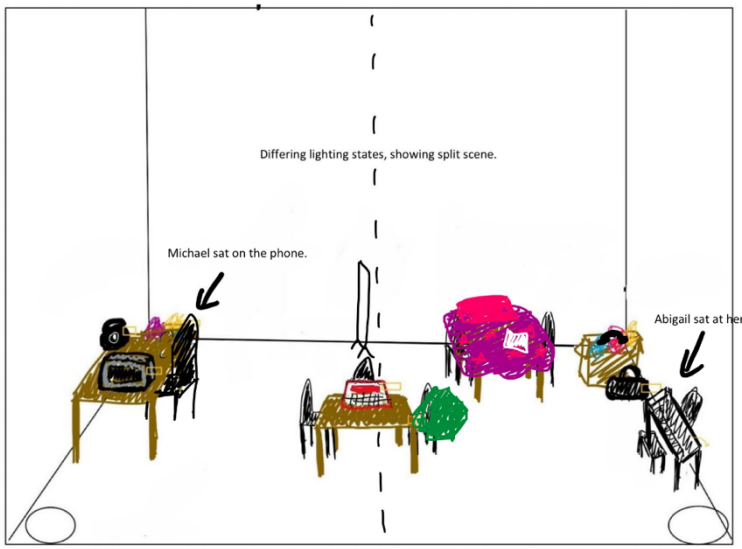
Bedding placed on the table.
Chair moved to Michael's desk.

Paddington station café:



Exit bedding. Chair moved back to table.
Toy train enters, on table centre stage.
Tube map is hung on rail at back.
Piano off?

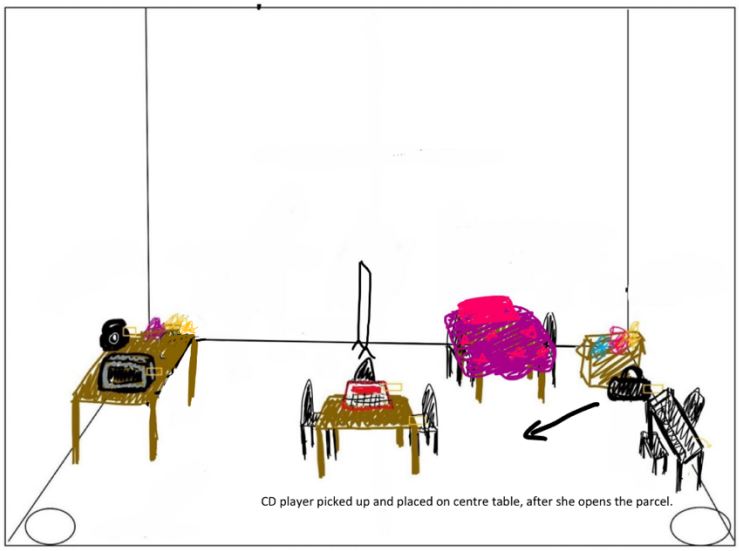
Michael's Room / Abi's Room



Toy train and tube map off.
His jacket placed on the back of chair in her room.
Bedding enters on table. Michael's chair placed again at the desk.
Guitar required for Michael.
A phone in placed in the box, for Abi to answer.
Or a letter is on her bed?

(Coffee shop rep.)

Abigail's Room:



CD player.
Parcel, birthday card and CD required.
Michael's chair stays at the table.

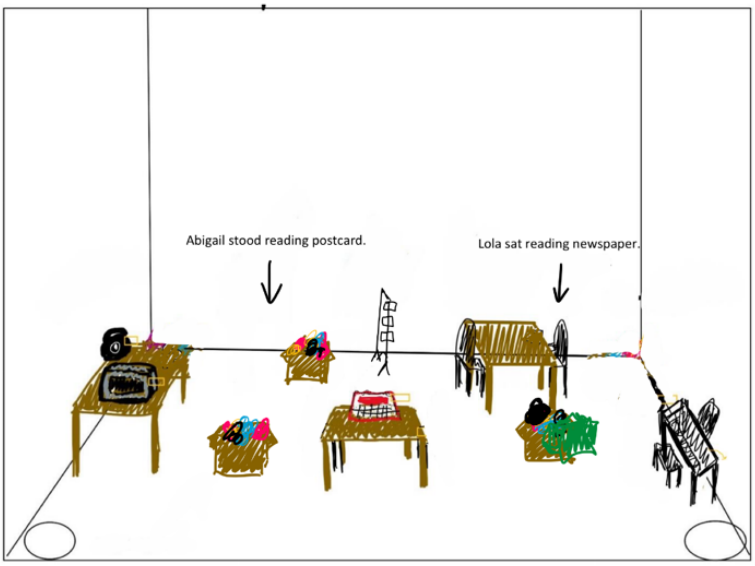
Abigail's room rep.

During transition, Abigail removes bedding into the box as she exits.
She renters into the coffee shop, with T+L.

During the scene, Abigail and Michael take mugs from the box to carry to their table.

Sheet music required.
Wallet required.

Abigail's Flat, London:



Mugs into boxes.
Boxes moved further onstage.
Postcards stuck to the rail.
CD player moved into a box.
The jacket is placed hanging out of a box.

Postcards and newspaper needed.

Coffee Shop rep.

Move boxes back, remove postcards. Jacket is hidden.
Replace mugs and CD player.

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'Abigail's Flat rep.' Imagined.

Mugs put away, leave boxes as they are. Jacket is hidden.
Postcards put back on rail.

Abigail's Flat rep.

TV used here.

Exact setting as drawn before. Boxes out etc, newly moved in.
Remove postcards!

Abigail sat at piano.
The jacket is on her lap.

I used these diagrams to prepare the space then, and it allowed for a much smoother process, and clear understanding from my cast members in that they could refer to this for what I wanted to achieve. It was important to me to create a space that accurately depicts the setting of the vintage store and is able to present the symbols of meaning, 'The theatrical event always happens within a space, but only sometimes is space itself an event' (Sainer, 1975, cited in Wohl, 2014, pg.28). I had restrictions on budget and a list of props at this stage to compile and I realised many would be available to me if I were to create the performance within a real space, of a vintage store. Conveniently, I work within a vintage store in Cardiff, and I knew of a backroom that could work very efficiently. Here are some before and after images of the space and the set I created:





Here I had so much access to props and pieces to establish the space. Items such as the bunting, signage and clothing are from within the store. I created the tables that I wanted in the space, from old crates and cardboard boxes, I believe this was very effective in creating the surrealism of the space also. We brought in an old 90s-looking television for the multi-media aspect, and Ela's piano from her flat was brought into the space. I was very pleased with the look of my set, and how it mirrored the style I had aimed for.









In order to make the props really look a part of the space, I placed price tags on each one. I was aware that through the medium of filming the piece, details would be more apparent so worth the attention.

Another great consequence of using the vintage store space, was the access to all the clothing items for costume purposes of my cast. I could dress them in clothes that depicted the time period. This included the key item: the vintage jacket,



for which I used an authentic 1980's variety style red jacket. It stood out affectively due to the bright colour and accurately depicted the message of the historical timeline. This was important to me as I carried meaning with the jacket in my script. I made sure that the jacket was worn by Michael at all times, to depict its connection to these memories that Abigail is living through it. Then, there are moments when the jacket isn't worn, or is held by Abigail instead, as a symbol of moments where they were less connected. Finally, its absence in the final scenes, alongside the television displaying a static image, shows that this is no longer reality and real memories relived.

Songwriting

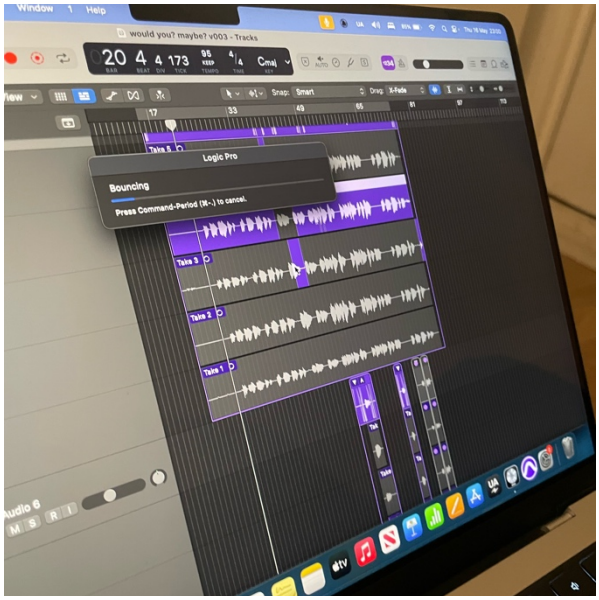
Due to the influence of Paolo Nuitini's music on my writing, I felt that I also wanted to write an original song of a similar style, from the perspective of Abigail's character. Again, I wanted to play into my strengths of writing and challenge myself to create an emotive piece music. A key trope of the script is that Abigail struggles to write about how she is feeling, she tells Michael 'You write the lyrics, I just sing them' although she has so much to say. So, not until the final scene we see her sit at her piano and perform a song in response to Michael's 'Abigail'. In order for it to make complete sense in terms of her character, I felt I should write it myself. I have personal

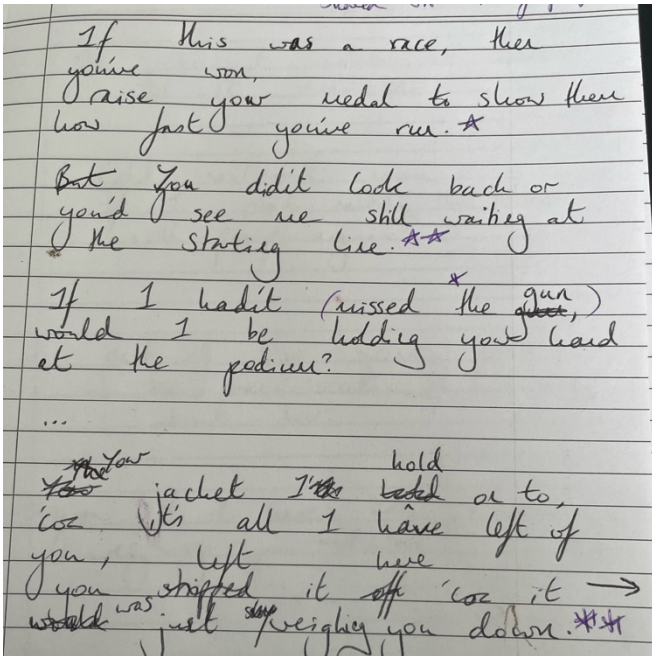
relations to this story and therefore could emotionally connect to the character in some way that aided the lyric writing process.

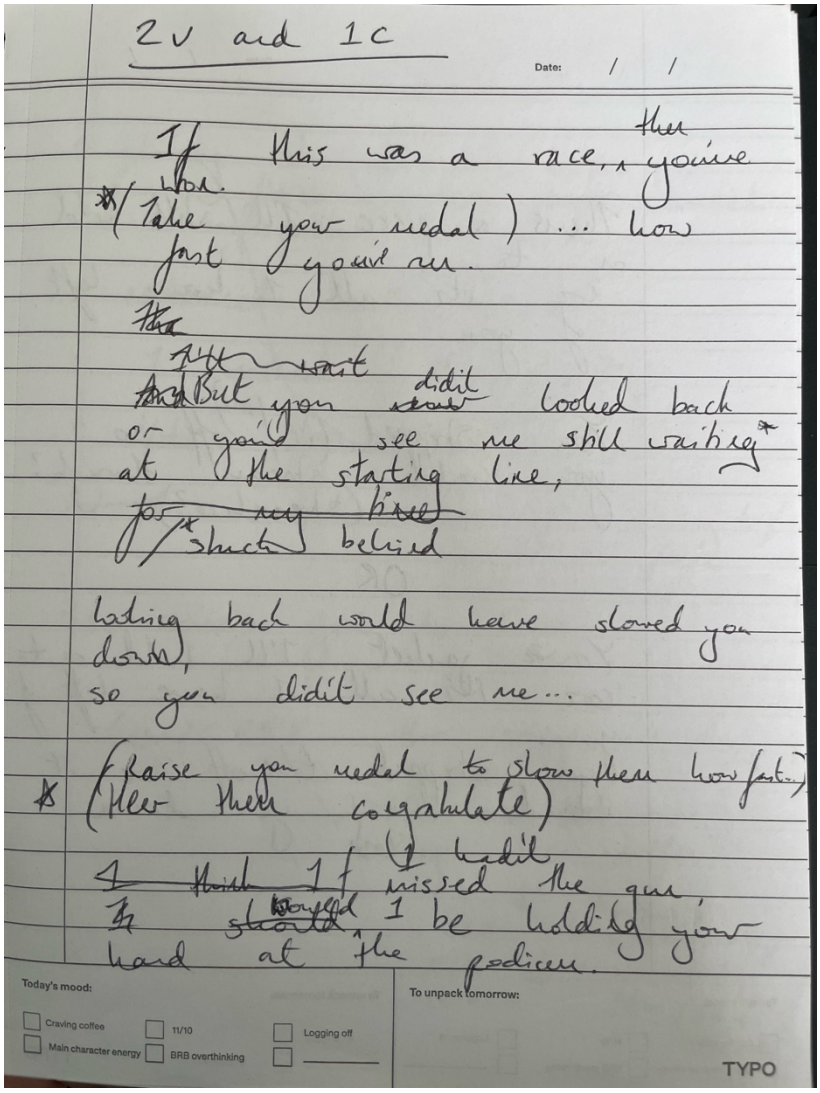
I have previous experience in writing lyrics and recording music, although I wanted the instrumental to be performed by a guitar, so I worked with a musician friend of mine to establish ideas. I found it most effective to sit and workshop lyrics by first establishing what Abigail was feeling and what she had to say in this moment. I found it difficult at first to delve into the emotions of another person, however once we had the melody and chords strung together, I was able to ad-lib along and stream my thoughts. We used chords used in another song of a similar genre we wanted to achieve, as a starting point: Harry Styles' cover of 'Girl Crush'.

Ultimately, we created a song called 'Would You, Maybe?' which elevates Abigail's desires for a different ending in their relationship, she believes that one day she will tell Michael how she feels 'one day, I'll say it right… I'll wait to give him some time'. I feel that this process was overall very successful, I then produced and recorded the track with a friend of mine, who had sufficient access to microphone and production software for my presentation of the song (see Appendix 5 for final lyrics, and links below for the full recorded presentation). Here I also include a draft of first ideas for lyrics, and images from the process of producing and recording the track:

Lily Ireland
2001025
Independant Project
ADPA6000/C







Finalising the script:

I received feedback on the full version of my script from my tutor and established that I had written it with quite a lot of description and in more of a screenplay format. I believe that as I had such a clear vision for what I wanted each scene to look like, and the motivations of the characters, that I included these within my initial writing

process and led to too much description. However, during the directing process and as I made the decision to film my play in situ, these additional notes and descriptions that I had recorded deemed very useful. I was able to use this first draft to condense into my twenty-minute video demonstration, then create a separate full play script with more room for actor and director interpretations.

I found the process of cutting down my script quite difficult as I was quite attached to the storyline and the details that formed it and the characters. I decided to cut down scenes of lengthy dialogue and prioritise the key themes that are portrayed. I worried that I would lose the sense of character development slightly, and the establishment of their relationship dynamic. However, I highlighted what my key themes were, and which scenes were pivotal. My key themes were the development of their friendship, the connection that share through music, the allusions of romance and ultimately being the 'right-person-wrong-time' motif.

Additional sections of dialogue, as shown above, were there to create a further understanding of the relationship dynamic, however weren't crucial in the presentation of my storyline and ideas. By first eliminating scenes of less integrity, I was able to create more concise dialogue in the others. I cut the extra characters of Lola and Timmy, so the film can entirely focus on Abigail and Michael in these scenarios, such as: the birthday surprise in the coffee shop, *Lola* is alluded to however we do not need to see her presence.

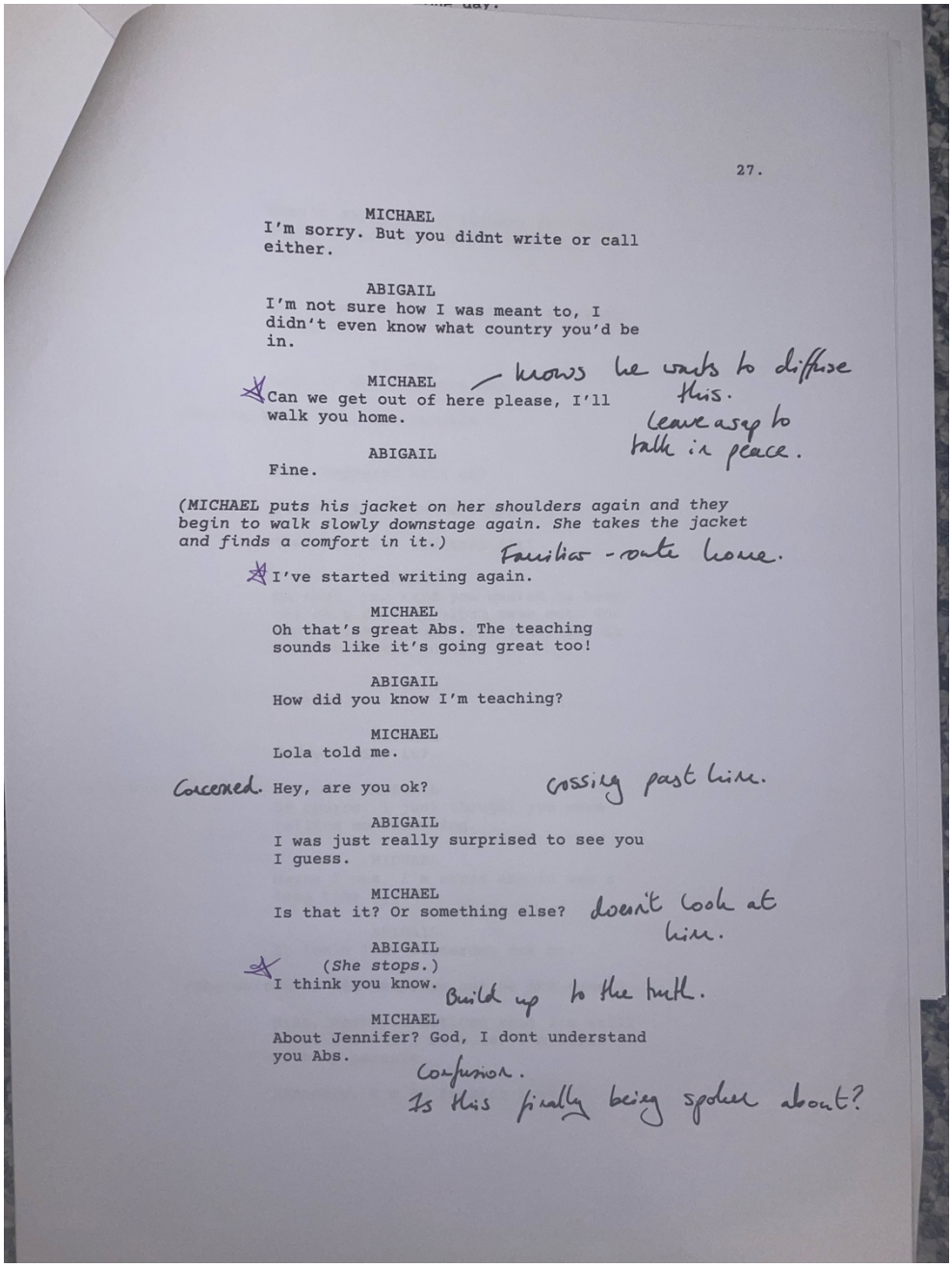
<u>Rehearsing and directing:</u>

When the rehearsal process began, I was initially concerned about the time frame available. I had established cast members and the space in which I was going to film

my piece and I had the fortunate access to a friend with lighting equipment and a camera in which to film the piece. However, due to his availability I had to set a firm date to film the piece, so there was a strict two-week preparation period in rehearsals. Although, I found this very motivating, as I had prior ensured that I had clear staging designs and directions planned ahead of time, I was able to decipher a schedule in which to work around everyone's availability and with this goal in mind.

In the first couple of rehearsals, I had to create a comfortable environment in which to introduce my cast members and ensure they were happy to work closely with one another. I decided to begin working on the first scenes, as the relationship in the script is beginning, my actors were also in a similar position. Then, we could slowly work towards scenes where the characters are more comfortable with one another as their friendship develops naturally, and Jack and Ela become more familiar with each other, the script and their characters. This proved very successful, and I also regarded how Jack and Ela created a similar bond in the way that they share the passion for music that my characters do. Ultimately, this made working on the music scenes so easy to direct and felt very natural for them to express.

Although lots of my stage directions were kept in the rehearsal version of my script, due to the immense descriptions I used in the writing process, these worked really well in establishing each scene. However here I have shown additional notes I took during the rehearsal process:



27.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry. But you didnt write or call either.

ABIGAIL
I'm not sure how I was meant to, I didn't even know what country you'd be in.

MICHAEL — knows he wants to diffuse this.
Can we get out of here please, I'll walk you home. Leave asap to talk in peace.

ABIGAIL
Fine.

(MICHAEL puts his jacket on her shoulders again and they begin to walk slowly downstage again. She takes the jacket and finds a comfort in it.) Familiar - route home.

I've started writing again.

MICHAEL
Oh that's great Abs. The teaching sounds like it's going great too!

ABIGAIL
How did you know I'm teaching?

MICHAEL
Lola told me.

Concerned. Hey, are you ok? crossing past him.

ABIGAIL
I was just really surprised to see you I guess.

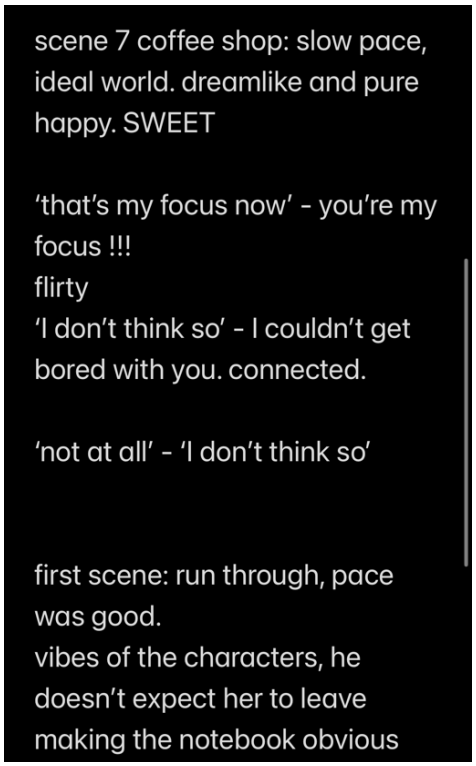
MICHAEL
Is that it? Or something else? doesn't look at him.

ABIGAIL
(She stops.)
I think you know. Build up to the truth.

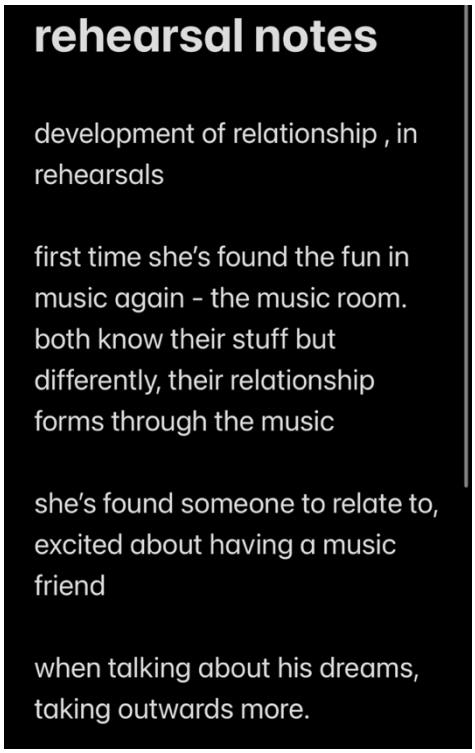
MICHAEL
About Jennifer? God, I dont understand you Abs.
Confusion.
Is this finally being spoken about?

Shown here is the climactic scene where the argument takes place, walking home from the coffee shop. I needed to show that time had passed, and their dynamic has changed due to this, and they have been out of touch. Abigail is more excited to be seeing Michael at first, which quickly changes when she notices he has a girlfriend. I have drawn stars next to line where the beats occur, and a shift takes place. For example, when Abigail says 'I think you know' she surprises Michael by potentially

addressing her feelings for him. He knows this might be the case as he knows she might be referring to Jennifer, however this has never been outwardly regarded in conversation by either of them before, so it takes a turn.



Here are some notes I took during rehearsals of the final scene where reality becomes blurred. I believed that we needed to achieve a slower pace and different atmosphere in this way to show the dreamlike and 'perfect world' she imagines. I also took some notes of the subtextual meaning behind lines. Michael tells Abigail what his plans are for staying at home, implying that he has time for her and wants to invest in their relationship. His 'focus' includes her. This wasn't completely clear to Jack at first so we rehearsed different methods of delivery.



Here also, I describe the motivations of the characters that we discussed in the first rehearsal, as I introduced Ela and Jack to my characters. Abigail isn't interested in a relationship with Michael at first, and is purely excited by the prospect of having someone to share a passion with. This had to be made clear

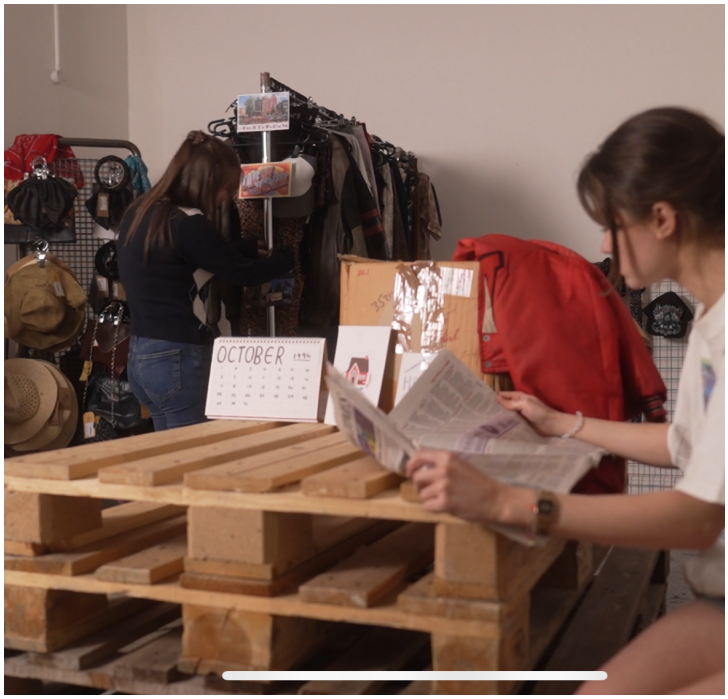
in the first scene as the dynamic shifts between them throughout the story arc.

One challenge that I faced, was having to work with a non-actor. Although Jack's performance as a musician was perfect for the role, I had to often familiarise him with acting techniques, such as projecting his voice, playing towards the camera, and not shifting his weight between his feet as he stands. I found it most successful to demonstrate my explanations to him and he became familiar with the nature of acting for camera. Although, I had no difficulty in providing Jack and Ela with the music for the piece, as they picked this up quickly. I was conscious of the fact that the space we would be performing in was quite deep-set and not so wide as the rooms in which we were rehearsing, so I was grateful to be using a camera, in which we could capture details from further downstage. This did prove a challenge as we were only able to rehearse in the space from the day before shooting. Here I have included images from first rehearsals, using different spaces which varied from our final setting. I have provided images to show us rehearsing the music room scene and the train station scene in rehearsal spaces:





In the space, I ended up following my designs quite accurately, and ensured the characters moved throughout the space per each scene and show change. I also established key pieces to differentiate between settings, that still made sense within the vintage shop. See here the use of postcards, ‘’new home’’ cards and obvious cardboard boxes to emulate Abigail’s new flat:



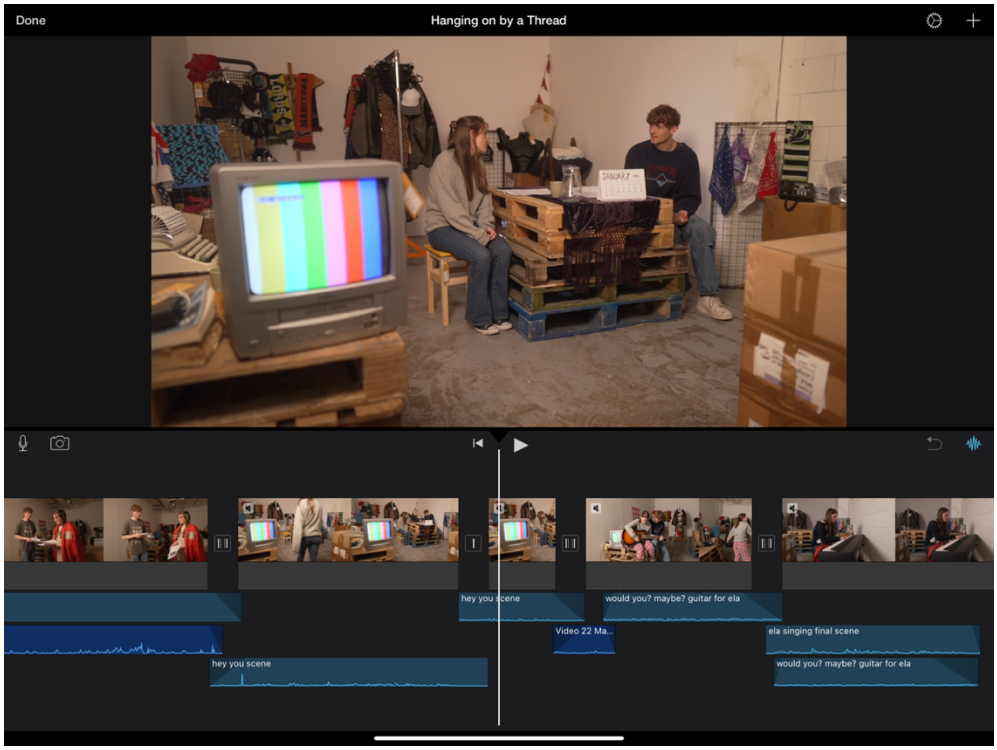
As we filmed the piece, we had to angle the camera to include these details, and also the calendar, a key element to show the timeline of events.

I am overall very pleased with the outcome of the design and staging of my piece. I feel that I worked well to establish the primary setting of the vintage shop and my attention to detail was affective. It also aids the element of nostalgia and surrealism that I wanted to achieve. I believe however, with more intricate lighting and obvious prop elements, I could have created a clearer contrast between scenes and time-jumps, with more attention to the split-scenes also. I am also pleased with the

direction and character development that I worked on with my actors, we adapted well to the use of the camera in the new space available to us. My understanding and preparation beforehand allowed productive rehearsals, however ideally, I would have had more time to establish a familiarity between my actors and them with the script.

Filming and editing:

When it came to compiling the footage and soundtracks there came more challenges. I had worked with Jack to establish time-efficient tracks to use within the scenes, such as the guitar instrumental alongside the final scene of Michael and Abigail, which leads into her accompaniment and vocals. I had cut the song down for timing purposes, and provided Ela with an instrumental track playing in a disguised earphone that she could play along to. Then, I edited the track to fit throughout the scene prior and I had to line the audio up in the editing process, see here:



I also utilised iPhone microphones around the space to capture the dialogue and music. These proved quite successful, however I had to adjust the audio levels between microphones depending on where the actors moved within the space. Also, due to us working within a shop during open hours, there was plenty of background noise to battle with. However, with the limited editing software available to me I was unable to successful erase this without tampering with the sound quality overall.
I also regarded the fact that we were unable to turn off the lights in the room we were using, but it was necessary to have the room dimmer than the lights I wanted to use. I solved this issue by attaching large black bin bags to the overhead lights which worked effectively. This is how the space looked with set and lighting in situ:







We used a single soft box lighting rig in the space to create a soft and simple setting, somewhat dreamlike, which looked great through the camera settings. However, I ensured that there was a slight differentiation in certain scenes. Such as the vintage shop image using a cooler and brighter tone, which graduates to warmer once the calendar is turned and we enter Abigail's memories. Also, the climactic argument scene showcases a slightly darker stage, an essence of the demise. I decided to use simplistic lighting in this way, as I wanted the props and styling to be the focus throughout as it provides such a large part of the storytelling. I am also pleased with my decision to overlay the pre-recorded tracks in the editing process, although it made matching ups the timing more difficult, there was too much outside noise to rely on the sound within the space.

I evaluated many pros and cons through this part of the process. I am grateful for the freedom of the space and the time in which I had to set it for filming, and I had access to a multitude of props that aided the style of my piece and items to use for

larger prop pieces such as crates and boxes. I was able to successfully follow my design plans because of this. I also, had the availability of costumes and authentic vintage pieces to exemplify the 1980s-1990s time frame, whilst allowing disparity between scenes. However, if I were to recreate this script, I would ensure I have far more time to develop my ideas with my cast and plan technical details ahead of time. The largest challenge was working with our time constraints, being with the shops opening hours amongst the outside noise. I feel that I could rectify this on a larger scale with the use of microphones on the actors and a more isolated space. Also, due to time constraints there were some small mistakes during filming which meant we had to do line pick-ups mid-scene. This led to some clunky transitions in the dialogue during the editing process, however I did my best to keep fluidity by blending the audio tracks into one another.

Conclusion

Overall, I have worked hard to create a piece that carries through the themes I wanted to question and portray. I have used many elements of storytelling to provide an example of human connection and object attachment through a budding relationship and romance story; one that could relate to a large audience. I am pleased with my use of multi-media elements and my attention to detail in the process of design and development. I faced challenges of time constraints and cast availability, however I managed to work through this by working to a strict schedule and prioritising key tasks. I also faced technical obstacles which I rectified by finding means of covering the lights in the space and using my editing skills and software to

create clarity. Such as, in the split-scenes where we had minimal access to space and lighting, I created this divided image on my editing software.

In the instance of developing this piece to a larger scale, I would utilise my idea of site-specific theatre and perform this within the real space of a vintage store. It could become a piece of theatre that tells many stories, based on fact or fiction, to bring the clothing pieces to life and the attachment and memories that they carry with them. This could become a successful collaboration with the second-hand industry in this way, as it markets products also. Site-specific theatre increases the opportunity for audiences to be emotional evoked by the piece as it ultimately becomes more intimate and real; ‘the aesthetic distance from the dramatic presentation slides to extremely intimate. It becomes difficult to differentiate between watching and being involved and as such the psychological and aesthetic distance they experience gets compressed and distorted’, resulting in psychological affect and personal investment (Harmon, n.d, cited in Wohl, 2014, pg.34).

I am very pleased with the final performance video of my piece, and the editing and directing skills I developed. My clear conceptualisation was so beneficial as I could be precise with what I wanted to achieve and communicate this with the other people in the room. Myself and my friend Finlay, who was behind the camera, worked well together and he quickly understood my vision to create the correct shots. Although, s strict timeframe was possibly my biggest challenge, we successfully achieved this final production in the scheduled day that was available to us. In the future, I would be more organised with my scheduling from an earlier point in the process to unable more fluidity with the script and scene dynamics. I would like to establish my project as a live piece if I were to recreate it, as a site-specific

performance in a vintage store, and further bring it to life as the audience are belonging to the same space. This would rectify other issues such as the outside noise intrusion and lighting restrictions as the space is dedicated to the performance.

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Element 3

Links:

Filmed performance of 'Hanging on by a Thread':

https://youtu.be/aeHUr2JFOmw?si=N1qAEKHh6FDaW0D-

Full script:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/13jqV7n-IYA4AIT3EX9audLsbiSChnmCv/view?usp=sharing

Full recording of my original song 'Would You, Maybe?':

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_J2ocZUMlP306LqZlsd02Y4GyaeHi-mY/view?usp=sharing

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Primary research survey responses gathered of personal stories of object attachment.

Verbatim research - Personal Responses

Thursday, 18 April 2024 10:32 am

Lucas French:

A little rubber duck keyring given to me by my girlfriend. It always falls off the keyring and I get scared that I'm going to lose it, even though it's probably very easy to replace.



Emily Griffiths:

I have a bunny toy given to me as a baby and always had her growing up. I sleep with her every night and now struggle to sleep without the comfort. It reminds me of playing with all my toys as a child.



Ivy Whaley:

I have a ring from my grandma when she died. She stopped wearing it when she was ill and lost weight. It is very special to me and I wear it on a necklace. It was given to me because she wore it on her little finger and I have small hands.

Sue Ireland:

One of my most treasured possessions is a John Lewis green wool coat that belonged to my fabulous, late sister Carolyn.
Whenever I wear it, I think of her as I am enveloped in a warm hug of the coat that brings me great comfort. I feel as if I am being cuddled by her.
Sometimes I find tiny bits of wool floating around or scattered on the floor and I think that Carolyn's reminding me of her abstract presence.

Ophelia Scott:

An item that I hold dear would be my Grandpa's light blue, Ralph Lauren Shirt. My Grandpa Scott always dressed so smart. I can remember him wearing it in the evenings on holidays abroad, for Sunday lunch at my grandparents house or simply to watch an episode of The Simpsons. My grandpa will forever be known as the 'big friendly giant' of the family and therefore it is a HUGE shirt. When I wear it, I feel he is almost still with me, giving me a big, warm hug. Since his passing, it is something I truly hold dear as it is one of the things that made up the uniform of Grandpa, always so smart, always so chic!

Glain Llwyd:

I was given a conker by one of my closest friends in school because I told him I was scared of spiders. We went on a walk to look for a conker because they're meant to keep spiders away. We've drifted apart but I still have it in my room (:

Cam Willan:

My Omega watch, my father bought it in Dubai when I was 3 years old. When I passed out into the Royal Navy, he gave it to me as a present.



Lily Ireland:

I own a plush toy cow. It was given to me a few years ago by a close friend at the time. I had gone to visit him at university in London whilst I was going through a tough period of my life. We had a lovely weekend together and as he dropped me to the train station we walked past a shop selling Jellycat soft toys. I told him how much I loved the cow one in the window, as they're my favourite animal!
The next time I saw him, around Christmas time, he surprised me with a gift...a soft toy cow.
We've now been together for a year and have a beautiful relationship formed from such a strong friendship. The cow still sleeps next to me every night.



Lily Ireland:

I have bunting in my room of colourful birds. I used to go to my cousins' house lots growing up as they only ever lived a few minutes away. My auntie's kitchen was always so bright and colourful and she had these birds hung over the dinner table. We lost my auntie last year to cancer, however every time I see the birds above my head I think of her and am reminded of her strength and colour, and I feel that she is still looking over me.



Hope Lacey:

My beloved item was given to me by my grandad for maybe my 11th or 12th birthday. For many it's not unusual for grandparents to gift presents for special occasions. But as this was from my grandad, it certainly was.
She's called Stephanie Pink and White (inspired by Stephanie from Lazy Town) and she was the only present I ever received from him. My grandad was an alcoholic so we were never that close but he told me he loved me quite often.
He died a year ago now, and despite the hurt and pain he caused my mum and our family. I'll always hold Stephanie that little bit closer knowing there was still a kind man in there who knew that I'd love her as much as I do.

Seren Sullivan:

In my first year of uni I had loads of candles but when I found out they were bad to inhale, I stopped burning them. As a passing comment I told my boyfriend and then he bought me a box of dozens of candles that were like honey wax or something natural and safe to inhale. I have burned them since first year in every room I've decorated, and over the years added more wax to the dish they were on. I've become oddly sentimental about the dish, and it reminds me of all the lovely rooms I've had since moving from home and the wholesome evenings where flatmates have come to chill in my room. I suppose it has become a reflection of my fun houses and memories I've had at uni, as it's stayed with me in first year. It also reminds me of my lovely and very thoughtful boyfriend haha.



Richard Payne:

These two items live in a dusty alcove in the loft.
The magnet is my grandfather Sydney's. He was a wireless officer in Marconi in WW1. Morse code was his expertise. He died when I was 7. But I remember him well and remember his den, packed floor to ceiling with radios, tv's, (that he built) valves, wires, and this magnet, used to magnetise components! It's almost the only purely personal thing of his that I have. Sadly I have no idea of its provenance!



The Panther was bought by me, age 10 probably, in a duty free shop at Colombo airport. In those days we flew 17 hours to get home from school to our parents with at least 2 refuelling stops on the way. I started those journeys aged 8 on my own, with the BOAC unaccompanied minors program, and continued all my childhood. The Panther was much coveted! I saw one on my first journey out to Kuala Lumpur. 2 years later, by saving my pocket money at school, I had enough to buy him. I think my parents would have thought me mad! But he was, and is, a prized possession and a memory of best and worst times.

Ann:

My grandparents owned 2 houses in London during the war. Both of which were bombed on the same night. One of the only things to be recovered from the bombings was a clock, still ticking and to this day. It now lives in my sitting room.



Appendix 2: Tables presenting responses from 240 participants in a study of reasoning behind their attachment to clothing.

Table I. Product attachments in textiles and clothing

I am attached to the textiles and clothes because they	%
1. function well	97
2. are beautiful	94
3. are made with good quality	91
4. evoke memories	75
5. are inherited	72
6. are unique, designed just for me	64
7. are handmade	64
8. are self-made	62
9. are old	61
10. are valuable	41
11. are a present	38
12. are designed by a famous designer	21

Table II. The elements of attachment in clothes with a long life span

The elements of attachments in clothes with a long life span
1. connection to memories which are linked to some person or family
2. quality
3. style
4. beauty
5. durable material that ages aesthetically
6. other memories and emotional values (places, events, life stage, self)
7. the way it is manufactured (hand-made, self-made)
8. color
9. maintenance, reparability, modification possibility

(Niinimaki, 2010, pp. 2-3).

Appendix 3: The proposal of my original idea.

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ADPA6000 Independent Project 2024

My Proposal

Creative Title:

'A Slower Life' or **'Outfits of the Everyday'**

Subject:

An investigation into self-expression and the performativity of fashion (through sustainable means). The biggest question I want to explore is how we can inspire a consumer to access second-hand fashion within their own lives and find confidence in self-expression.

There are 3 perspectives in which to view the subject of my piece:

- The subject carried towards to performing arts industry is the environmental perspective of the creative arts and to give an example of how sustainability could be easily implemented.
- Also, from the perspective of the (second-hand) fashion industry I am highlighting the performativity of fashion through a display of second-hand pieces in a piece of drama/theatre. I hope to inspire a new perspective of marketing in this way/ influence the viewpoint on sustainable and slow fashion.
- Finally, from a consumer/audience's perspective: the subject carried is that of finding self-expression through fashion and to lack the fear of being judged. The script would follow relatable scenarios and dialogue so to hopefully connect this audience with the character experiencing their issue and feel encouraged by their outcome. I would hope to inspire an outlook on second-hand and vintage fashion to seem more accessible and wearable, to influence the large market in an environmentally positive way.

Overview of Aims:

I believe that the second-hand fashion industry should be further portrayed to a consumer as accessible and appropriate in everyday lives and the performing arts industry could make more of an effort to be sustainable.

I believe that many people have a negative or lack of opinion on second-hand/vintage clothing and the use of performance in educating people could be a successful route.

I aim to give an example of large marketing potential to the industry through a form of live entertainment.

I aim to explore important and relatable themes within my characters: the discovery of self-expression and overcoming of fear.

I aim to explore important and relatable themes within my characters: the discovery of self-expression and overcoming of fear.

I aim to encourage and inspire the audience to have freedom in their choices and to lack fear of judgement. I aim to allow them to recognise themselves in the characters and relate to the issues that arise and then get resolved.

My target audience would be the fashion and performance industries, to inspire change.

Also, targeting my audience/consumer as I hope to create scenes that are relatable and inspiring, considering the themes of self-expression and confidence. Furthermore, to inspire them with outfits and examples of the character's expression through their clothing.

Ultimately, this project would become a 'fashion show' of self-expression and exploration, performed by relatable characters to an audience that will feel recognised and inspired.

As I work within the vintage fashion business and have experience within the performing arts, I have an understanding of what is lacking and what further progress can be made.

Second-hand fashion is dramatically growing in popularity in recent years due to the environmentally positive influence in relation to fast fashion, its less expensive nature and better quality of materials.

'Customers' perspectives on good looks have all changed as a result of the journey of establishing oneself. As a result, better attire, fashion accessories, and other items are

Proposed Practical Presentation:

To outline my creative project, I will be writing and directing 3-4 scenes based on real-life scenarios that could be relatable to a diverse audience, i.e. a first date, a job interview etc.

These scenes will contain different characters that struggle with self-expression/confidence in their own ways. For example, someone getting ready for a first date who stalks their date's profile and tries to dress as who they might like, ultimately goes for something that makes them the most comfortable and true to who they want to be perceived as.

Or for a more light-hearted perspective, I can use a scene (the job interview?) to provide humour, and simply portray an example of second-hand fashion in this scenario.

I hope to also include an original song within this piece. I would use it within a scene, potentially an audition, where the character finds confidence through realising there's nothing easier than just being himself and not depending on another's judgement.

I will be designing and sourcing the costumes myself, going through the process of researching outfits and using character inspiration, then having fittings etc. These will all be sourced as second-hand/pre-owned items.

Ultimately, I will present my ideas as a piece of drama in a few different and separate scenes. There is a likelihood that I will be filming this production to present as a recorded performance, however it is yet to be determined by the running of the scenes, casting and staging. I do believe that filming this performance would allow for more accessibility of an audience and it would be easier to communicate my ideas if I were to take this discussion further within either industry, so I am in favour of this.

Appendix 4.A: Paolo Nuitini 'These Streets' (2006) lyrics

"These Streets"

Cross the border
Into the big bad world
Where it takes you 'bout an hour
Just to cross the road
Just to stumble across another poor old soul
from the dreary old lanes to the high-street madness
I fight with my brain to believe my eyes
And it's harder than you think to delay this sadness
That creeps up my spine
And haunts me through the night

Life is good and the girls are gorgeous
Suddenly the air smells much greener now
And I'm wandering around
With a half pack of cigarettes
Searching for the change that I've lost somehow

These streets have too many names for me
I'm used to Glenfield Road and spending my time down in Orchy
I'll get used to this eventually
I know, I know

Where'd the days go? When all we did was play
And the stress that we were under wasn't stress at all
Just a run and a jump into a harmless fall from
Walking by a high-rise to a landmark square
You see millions of people with millions of cares
And I struggle to the train to make my way home
I look at the people as they sit there alone

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(AZlyrics.com)

Appendix 4.B: Paolo Nuitini ‘Abigail’ (2022) lyrics

"Abigail"

I don't have much luck these days
With far too much time
Lost a lot of my rhythm
In this bubble of mine

I would sure like to help you
I will give you my word
Then I'll fly away, brother
Float away like a bird

You don't get much dignity
You don't get much sense of pride
When your mind gets too narrow
And your nose gets too wide

I breathe and I'm trying
In my cauldron tonight
Though a part of me's dying
There's a part come alive

'Cause I had a dream last night
That you were beside me
Two kids in the garden
And your love behind me
Though today may taste bitter
Maybe tomorrow is gold
Lord, I wanna get happy
Before I get old

So I took out some paper
And I dug out a pen
Poured myself out some water
And I rinsed out the gin

I spoke of my dream that night
In the greatest detail
Of my beautiful children
And my sweet Abigail

Ah, but before she can find me
Before I can let her in
Before no sweet happy ending
Let the battle begin

Let the trumpets blow Valhalla
Let the soldier arise
Lord, let Abigail catch me
When I fall from the skies

'Cause I had a dream last night
That you were beside me
Two kids in the garden
And all this behind me
Though today may taste bitter
Maybe tomorrow is gold
Lord, I wanna get happy
Before I get old

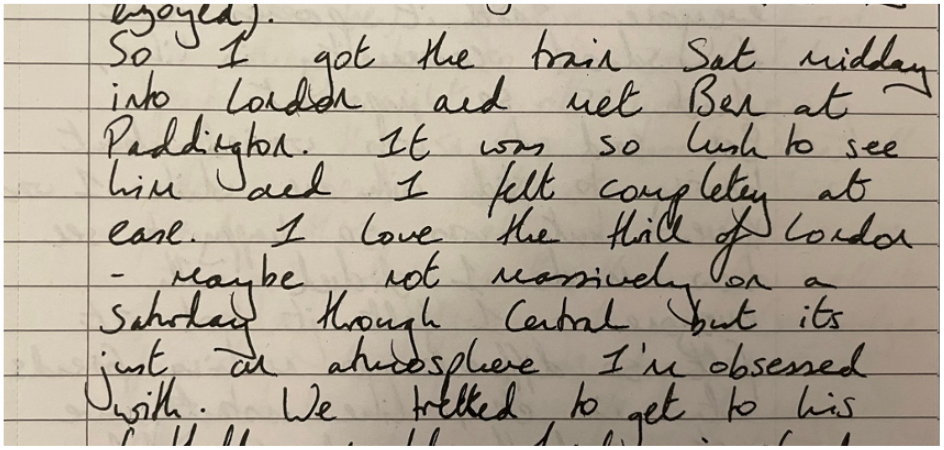
(AZlyrics.com)

Appendix 5: ‘Would You, Maybe?’ Original song lyrics. Written and performed by Lily Ireland and Ben Payne.

[Verse 1]
This place gets cold, I always look out to him for warmth.
He’s already got a blanket of his own,
But I don’t mind.
He glows in the dark,
But he can’t even see me make a spark,
And I don’t have to be the one he wants.
I’ll just watch his light.
[Bridge]
And, one day, I’ll say it right.
I’ll wait to give him some time.
[Chorus]
I’ll say: hey would you, maybe,
Want to think about how things would be,
If you met me, when the both of us weren’t seventeen,
And all our dreams were misaligned.
Hey would you, maybe,
Try to see if somehow you and me weren’t temporary,
If you could see what I’m like underneath.
We could try to be alright,
So maybe you could take a chance on me tonight?
[Verse 2]
And I know, I’m getting tired of doing this alone,
There’s no one who could compare to him so,
I’ll wait for the right line.

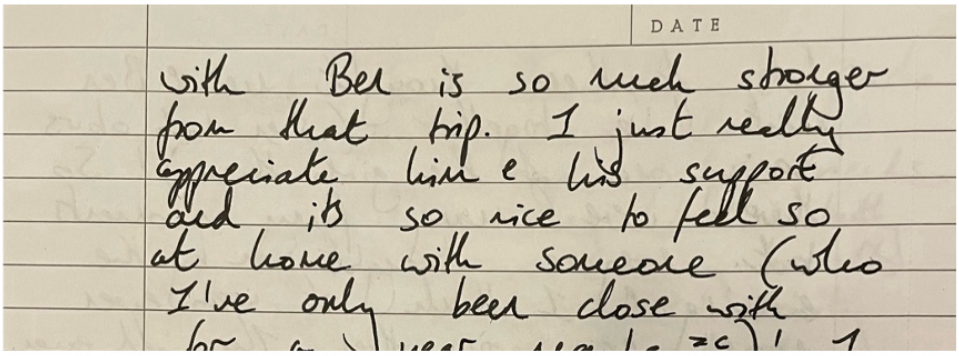
Appendix 6.A: Personal journal entries, the development of a similar relationship.

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enjoyed).
So I got the train Sat midday into London and met Ben at Paddington. It was so lush to see him and I felt completely at ease. I love the thrill of London - maybe not massively on a Saturday through Central but its just an atmosphere I'm obsessed with. We trekked to get to his

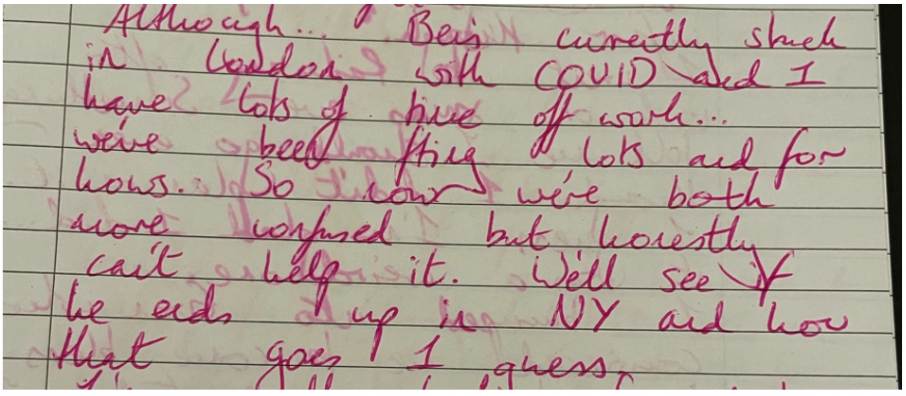
Here I write about how I got the train into Paddington station to meet Ben who was studying at university. I mention that I 'felt completely at ease' in his presence and the within the 'thrill of London'. Dated 18th September 2021.

Appendix 6.B:


DATE
with Ben is so much stronger from that trip. I just really appreciate him & his support and its so nice to feel so at home with someone (who I've only been close with

Here I mention how my friendship with Ben is 'so much stronger from that trip' and how much I appreciate how he supports me and my life plans, or uncertainty at the time. This is dated 18th September 2021.

Appendix 6.C:


Although... Ben currently stuck in London with COVID and I have lots of time off work... We've been texting lots and for hours. So now we've both more confused but honestly can't help it. We'll see if he ends up in NY and how that goes I guess.

In another entry, dated 26th December 2021, I am writing about how my close friend Ben, and I had had a conversation about our feelings towards one another, without a conclusion, before he went travelling. This scenario inspired the conclusion of the coffee shop scene, where there is an essence of romance, before Michael announces his departure and arrives home in a new relationship.

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Appendix 7: An article depicting images of *Opera on the Green*, a popular gig venture in London in the late 1980s/early 1990s.

Sample pages from the London's Lost Music Venues Book: The Trafalgar/Opera On The Green - Shepherds Bush, W12



The Trafalgar/Opera On The Green

126 Shepherds Bush Centre, Shepherds Bush W12 8PP

This pub was sat awkwardly within the 1960s built Shepherds Bush Centre shopping precinct. Once known as Danny's Bar its name was changed to the Trafalgar after a fatal stabbing in the premises. In 1979 there were regular gigs by local mod band The Directions (the nucleus of the band re-emerged in the charts years later as Big Sound Authority) and in 1980 other mod bands played including Seventeen who later changed their name to The Alarm. After a period as a gay disco called Silk its interior was painted black and the venue was renamed Opera on The Green with the emphasis on live bands every night from 1989 onwards.

The Opera featured new up-and-coming alternative rock and pop bands such as The Divine Comedy, Senseless Things, Manic Street Preachers and Suede along with nights featuring older punk scene stalwarts such as Tenpole Tudor, Macc Lads, The Exploited and UK Subs. Rock band Thunder played their debut gig here and glam punk Stiv Bators played his last here before his death a few months later.

At around the time live bands came to an end a fetish club called The Torture Garden was started here in late 1990 before moving onto much larger venues after attracting unwanted attention from the authorities. The venue eventually became Rileys American Pool and Snooker Club.

The shopping centre is now known as the West 12 Centre and after extensive refurbishment the old music venue premises are now shared by an opticians and a Sherlock Holmes inspired escape room game venue.

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The Trafalgar/Opera On The Green

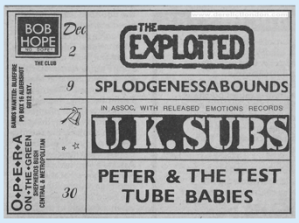
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The Trafalgar/Opera On The Green

Below are a few of my photographs of gigs that I promoted at Opera on The Green in 1989. Shame that I didn't take my camera to the Manic Street Preachers gig. I had a signed contract by the band promising to pay them £30 for playing the gig, but I can no longer find it. After the gig the Manics wouldn't accept the full fee and only accepted £20!

























Lily Ireland
2001025
Independant Project
ADPA6000/C

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