



Independent Project Portfolio

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Introduction

I intend to use this independent project piece to give a voice to an underrepresented and under supported group in society, women. My greatest role models in life are strong independent women within the Arts and Entertainment industry; the likes of Emma Watson and America Ferrera, use their visibility in the industry to raise awareness around the societal issues that women face, and I will use this project to do the same.

Proposal

To achieve my goal for the project, I will be creating a one woman show. I believe this format will allow me to ensure the message of the piece is not missed. My female protagonist will represent an area of society that is often overlooked, not the most vulnerable and not the rich and famous. She will be part of the middle classes and to the outside world, functioning normally.

Throughout the piece we will discover the ugly truth behind her suffering, how she is hiding in the shadows and the dangers she faces due to mental health issues caused by addiction.

The piece will be targeted at an adult audience (18+); I feel to honestly explore the themes of addiction, mental health issues and sex, the dialogue and costume will not be appropriate for children.

Literary Review

To give me a more rounded understanding of the struggle my character would have faced and the wider societal issues surrounding her struggles, I researched different scholarly articles and media representations of addiction and produced the following literary review. The review will evaluate how socioeconomic status and class affect the likelihood of addiction, how addiction differs across gender and the effect of this on the individual and the primary causes and effects of sex addiction within women.

Addiction across classes.

To measure all addictions together is not an easy task, however looking at results from studies on nicotine, alcohol and drug addiction begins to give a sense of wider addiction across the different society classes. Many sources support the results that “rate of deaths related to drug poisonings is highest in the most deprived quintile and lowest in the least deprived for both men and women.” (Drugwise, 2023.) This finding mirrors a lot of similar studies and supports the idea that addiction is more common amongst the poorest areas in our society. However, “The relationship between addiction and poverty is complicated. Lower income people are slightly more likely to struggle with drug or alcohol abuse, but this doesn’t necessarily mean that poverty causes addiction” (Hinders, 2018). This study on “Understanding the Relationship Between Poverty and Addiction” by Diane Hinders concludes that factors induced by poverty such as, stress, lack of opportunity and lack of social support are all risk factors that increase likelihood of substance abuse. These findings support that whilst addiction is most common when people are living below the poverty line, they show that it is not necessarily poverty that causes addiction but increases the risk of substance abuse. This suggests anyone struggling from the stressful situations or low mental health can be at risk of addiction/ substance abuse.

There is also much evidence of addiction and substance abuse within the wealthier and middle class. Newer research is beginning to suggest that “elevated substance use levels, compared to national norms, [is] among students at high-achieving public and independent schools” (Luthar, 2017). This research conducted by Luthar in his journal exploring substance misuse across early adulthood, is suggesting shift from the widely held view that addiction is a more prevalent issue in the lower classes. His in research suggests that the misuse of substances in early adulthood is increased within affluent schools and areas.

Some studies suggest that wealth “can also be accompanied by unique stressors that may contribute to the development of addiction” (Aritsa, 2024). This website article by Aritsa, explains that people in the middle class experienced an increase in stress and anxiety during the Covid Pandemic and “individuals often carrying great shame about their mental health or addiction-related issues” (Aritsa, 2024) can cause become stuck in vicious cycle of addiction and mental health issues.

Media and entertainment offer an interesting interpretation on the reports above, it is easily noticed that substance abuse within the lower classes is portrayed in a dramatically different light to substance abuse within the middle and upper classes. One example can be seen in the film *Trainspotting*, a gritty depiction of heroin addiction in the urban poverty in Edinburgh. Renton, the central protagonist, reads the line “When you're off it [heroin] you are suddenly obliged to worry about all sorts of other shite.” (Trainspotting, 1996). This quote supports the earlier mentioned findings that “poverty increases stress” (Hinders, 2018) and that this is a driving factor towards substance misuse in the lower classes. *Trainspotting* accurately depicts the corrosion of self-worth and the destruction of families caused by addiction.

This is in stark contrast to how substance misuse and addiction is depicted in media and entertainment within the upper classes of society. A key example of this is *The Wolf of Wall Street*, although the film does show the issues addiction causes to relationships, this is greatly overshadowed by opulence, comedy and overindulgence seen throughout many party scenes. In one scene the main protagonist, Jordan Belfort, asks his new boss, Mark Hanna, “you’re able to do drugs during the day and still function, still do your job?” to which he replies, “how else would you do this job? Cocaine and hookers my friend” (Wolf of Wall Street, 2013). This scene, where Marc Hanna uses cocaine at the restaurant table, also discusses

using masturbation as well as drugs to succeed at work. This directly opposes studies that show “problematic substance use increases the likelihood of unemployment and decreases the chance of finding and holding down a job” (Henkle, 2023). This movie, filled with substance abuse shows an exciting party lifestyle which ultimately ends with the protagonist suffering high levels of addiction but coming out unscathed and still successful from the events, a stark contrast to the outcome in *Trainspotting*.

Even though studies show that addiction and substance abuse have similar effects and outcomes on all wealth classes, the entertainment industry depicts that drugs have less serious consequences on the wealthy than they do on people living in poverty. This, combined with the idea that wealthier people are more likely to conceal their drug issues due to “fear of disgracing their family legacy” (Aritsa, 2024), paints an interesting picture of addiction within the upper classes. There is a lack of coverage from both research and entertainment on the increasingly likely problem of addiction, that is undermined by an individual’s increased wealth status. The secrecy, but still devastating effects of addiction in the middle classes is something I will be focussing on further for my project.

Addiction in Gender.

The Journal of Addictive Diseases includes an article by Ellen Tuchman titled *Women and Addiction: The Importance of Gender Issues in Substance Abuse Research*, which analyses the effects and differences in substance abuse in men and women. The research suggests that there are social and biological factors facing women that can make them more likely to suffer from addiction issues. The article shows that “women show higher rates of certain co-occurring psychiatric disorders compared to men, such as major depression, social phobia, post-traumatic stress disorders, and eating disorders.” (Tuchman, 2010). From my earlier research, we know that addiction is driven by stress and low mental health, and this research shows that women are more likely to suffer from potentially triggering conditions.

Not only are more prone to mental health issues, they also face the battle that “Women’s health and healthcare needs have been marginalized” (Modi, 22) and women are more likely to be misdiagnosed by health professionals. This lack of sufficient health service, combined with women’s predisposition to mental health diseases leave them more vulnerable than men to experiencing addiction and substance misuse as a way of coping with undiagnosed

problems. Tuchman also explores the issues of women suffering from addiction later in life, she notes that “a majority of women in substance abuse treatment are perimenopausal or menopausal” (Tuchman,2012). This can be explained by women of this age using drugs, alcohol and nicotine to combat the negative hormonal effects during this phase of life. There only a handful of articles that explore the menopause and correlation to addiction, and this has led me to think more about my central protagonist and how she could be a victim of an understudied area in women’s health and addiction.

In Tuchman’s article, she also explores the link between addiction in women and the history of victimization and violence. It is shown that “prevalence rates of intimate partner violence among women in drug treatment have been found to range between 25% and 57%” (Tuchman, 2012), showing that relationship problems, can be contributed as an underlying cause for addiction. Further research sadly found statistics that show 1 in 4 women will suffer domestic abuse in her lifetime, on average it takes 7 attempts before a woman is able to leave for good and on average, 2 women a week are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales. However, it is estimated that less than 24% of domestic abuse is reported to the police, and even less ends in convictions (Refuge, 2017). Given these facts, it shows that many women in the UK are suffering from domestic violence and the subsequent negative effects one their mental health and they are not seeking support.

With these findings on addiction and substance abuse tendencies in women paired with the likelihood dealing with domestic abuse it is no surprise that women are using substance abuse to conceal traumatic events and cope with relationships issues. Giving a voice to these women and highlighting this societal problem will be a main focus for me moving forward in the project.

Sex Addiction in Women.

Whilst the first part of this review has taken a wider look at addiction in society, this section will look more closely at sex addiction, a less common form of addiction that is discussed or represented in the media. Sex addiction, similar to substance addiction, can be described as “sexuality [that] is described as self-destructive, out of control, and even life threatening”

(Irvine,1995). As sex itself isn't attributed to death as immediately as heroin or alcohol addiction, I wanted to research further into the causes, effects and treatment of sex addiction, specifically in women.

Sex addiction is not as straight forward to diagnose as drug addiction as it depends on the sexual appetite and the attitude towards sex, and this will vary from person to person. One of the earliest emergences of the ideas was that "sex addiction rode the wave of popularity for addiction discourse that was so prominent in the 1980's" (Irvine, 1995) this then continued to associate sex addiction with the AID's epidemic. Although sex addiction was more commonly attributed to gay men and their lack of self control, it highlights "cultural anxieties about sexuality and supports a rhetoric of sexual disease and control" (Irvine, 1995) during this decade. Sex addiction became associated with reckless behavior that threatened physical health through the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

When looking at the causes of sex addictions "doctors don't fully understand what causes sex addiction, but research suggests that it's linked to other mental health conditions, including mood disorders (like depression and bipolar), anxiety disorders, personality disorders, and impulse-control disorders." (Shachdev,2022) however there is also evidence to suggest a link between sex addiction and relationship issues. It cannot be ignored that these are the same triggers that cause substance abuse and starts to show similarities between sex addiction and other types of addiction.

An interesting article, *Addicted to Love: What is love addiction and when should it be treated*, examines the biological response of falling in love, being similar to the brain activity when taking drugs. The article states that similar to drug use, women can seek sex "often to secure momentary feelings of intense pleasure and to relieve obsessive thought patterns about the object of her passion" (Earp, 2017). When applying this study to the fact that "average divorce rate in the UK is 42%" (Spidergroup, 2022) it highlights how many women within marriages may be facing emotional and relationship problems that leave them craving intimacy. However, it is when this craving for intimacy "can lead to such negative outcomes as interpersonal problems, sexually transmitted diseases, loss of employment, or even imprisonment" (Earp, 2017) that it can be attributed to sex addiction.

Studies show that after an “escalation of sexual activity as the disorder progresses, withdrawal symptoms such as depression, anxiety, rumination, and guilt” (Garcia, 2010) are present. It is these feelings and effects of sexual addiction that I want to show the raw side of in my project. The other most prominent effects of sex addiction are “contracting sexually transmitted diseases, having marital or legal problems, or being subjected to physical violence.” (Garcia, 20120). Finding new sexual partners for the sole purpose of sex could leave women open to risk of violence and dangerous situations. As with any types of addiction, sex addiction traps a person into feelings of shame and guilt surrounding their actions, worsening their mental state and causing them to seek further partners for the short term pleasure.

Unlike drug addiction, there is a severe lack of research into sex addiction in the UK. One study shows that the “rate of out-of-control sexual behavior and its consequences among females in the UK and elsewhere is unknown at this time” (Hall,2013). This suggests that there will be a number of women in our society who are suffering from mental health issues, addiction problems and relationship failures that are not being recognized. The impact of this lack of awareness is only further amplified by the fact that out of the 58 Mental Health Trusts in the UK, only 5 offered services for sex addiction. However, in one case study, it is suggested that “there may be potential barriers as to why females do not seek treatment” (Duhfarr,2016). In the article it explores that women are less likely to come forward for support, this can be attributed to individual barriers such denial of addiction and deliberately not wanting to seek support “due to strong feelings of guilt, shame, and religious restrictions that portray sex as sinful or dirty.” (Duhfarr, 2016). However, it can also be attributed to research barriers and lack of female tailored support for the condition. This only further highlights the need to raise awareness for women suffering with sex addiction and mental health issues.

During my research it has become obvious that there is a severe lack of coverage, research, and representation on certain areas. There is a lack of representation in the reality and problems of addiction within the middle and upper classes of society; the media represents drug taking amongst these groups as recreational and not a disease. I think it is important to shed light on this group of people, and how the effects of addiction can be as detrimental as on the lower classes. The evidence surrounding the lack of support for women suffering from

domestic violence, mental health struggles and subsequent addiction is startling. As evidence shows women are restricted from stepping forward by personal and social barriers, my piece will be an example of what some may be suffering with behind closed doors. It is important that these underrepresented areas of suffering are given a stage.

Development

Initial Development

Going into my independent project I knew I wanted my focal point to be strong women. Being such a large topic with a never-ending supply of resources I felt overwhelmed with knowing where to start. I quickly decided that I wanted myself to perform a one woman show for many reasons, one being I felt I only trusted myself to properly portray my vision correctly, I also felt that it being a solo act would be a much more impactful and efficient way telling my story.

Initially, I had started planning a piece focused on a series of selected powerful women from different periods in history, the show would consist of individual monologues performed by each character giving a personal recount of an societal issue, period of repression or a time of positive reform. I wanted to showcase and educate the audience on the incredible women that get forgotten as time progresses, as I feel even today women still don't get the credit they have earned and deserve. Characters I considered included Emmiline Pankhurst, Florence Nightingale and Anne Boleyn.

However, I really struggled getting into this topic and found little motivation to want to write, which is unusual for me as this topic is something I typically am very passionate about and find interesting. I couldn't understand why I was procrastinating so much; it wasn't until I was reading *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* that I was reminded that 'the ability to concentrate flows naturally from the ability to choose something interesting. Choose something legitimately interesting to do and concentration is not a problem. Choose something less than interesting and concentration is impossible.' (Merlin, 2014). This inspired me to change the focus of my piece to include issues I could directly relate with.

It was still important to me that my narrative would centre strong female character played by myself that had not changed; but instead, I started looking into addiction, a topic that is currently relevant to my personal life. Very quickly my research and findings made me feel

sad and disappointed with the lack of support for women in the present society, but inspired me to write even more.

However, I still didn't want my piece to have a solely of a dark sombre tone, I wanted the piece to be entertaining and something that the audience would leave and reflect on afterwards. I wanted to find a balance in the piece and create a character lots of different layers. Immediately, I believe that when addiction is discussed or spoken of in the media, our minds go straight to drugs and substance abuse, but I wanted to show how many different types of addiction there are and not only that, but how addictions are viewed by society. Not wanting my piece to have complete undertones of sadness and despair, I chose to focus on sex addiction as I felt I'd be able to find an element of humour and satire to include in the monologue.

Once I had decided that she was struggling with sex addiction I immediately had this vision of a woman, backlit, wearing black trench coat, black tights and black stiletto shoes. This vision came primarily from the stereotype of modern-day prostitutes hiding their risqué clothing under large coats but also the image of a strong middle-class female. An interesting combination of character elements to find in one person.

This led to the idea of the layering clothing to symbolise the complexity of the topic I chose and in the story I'd create. After having firmly decided an addiction is my topic, I felt a lot more invested and creative. One of the initial ideas that really stuck to me and I knew I would include was the idea the itch and the cough; this idea of a constant nuisance tapping away at you really enabled me to start writing and creating a story I'm now very proud of. It was also important that I conveyed the many different sides to addiction, and how different it can look on everybody. This helped me decide that my character was going to be someone who on the outside was very prim and proper, middle to upper class, educated and seemingly happy; to then later find out she is an addict herself and has been completely stripped by this.

Female Character Influences

Gillian Anderson felt like a perfect strong woman to base my initial character off. She's powerful and holds herself with grace and class, she often plays sexually liberated and in

control women. I wanted my character to start off eluding this energy and presence to really show that addiction will happen to anyone, addiction does not discriminate, and addiction is not fussy, it doesn't matter who you are or what you do. From my initial research I believe that this is a overlooked group of people who are forgotten and hide their addiction issues from the public eye.

Christina Hendricks in *Good Girls* (See Appendix B) was another strong inspiration I wanted to use in the second and third phase of my character. In *Good Girls*, Hendrick's character begins as your perfect 'Stepford wife' on the outside but becomes addicted to crime. Throughout the series, it spirals completely out of control and her actions become reckless and dangerous, both endangering herself and her friends and family. However, no one identifies her loss of control because outwardly she is still presenting as a normal middleclass housewife and mother. Despite being able to fool everybody around her she is facing a constant inside battle fighting her addiction, wanting to still be a good person, but feeling completely weak to the rush of the crime that consumes her. I will use elements of Hendrick's character in my own, as I see this extremely secret decline into addiction is what makes it so dangerous. The internal battle between maintaining the normal and expected lifestyle, and chasing the addictive but dangerous activities is also a complex but real issue to explore.

The last character I took inspiration from was the role Mila Kunis played in the film *Four Good Days* (See Appendix C). The narrative depicts the heartbreaking journey of a drug addict who is trying to recover after multiple relapses and is aiming to just have four whole days clean from drugs, her mum provides her with an ultimatum and if she cannot stay clean, she risks losing her relationship and support completely. Despite the high stakes, the addiction gets the best of her multiple times, and it is a long struggle before she begins to show signs of recovery. This portrayal of addiction I felt was one of the most honest and accurate I'd seen through film and TV, it didn't feel glamorised or fantastical, it was hard to watch and shocking, which is exactly how it is to see yourself or someone you know really battle with addiction. This is an element I wanted to pull into my own project.

Costume Idea's and Influences

As a one woman show, I knew that costume and clothing would be integral to representing parts of the narrative that were not being explicitly disclosed in the dialogue. I would use clothing to signify the decline in mental health and to represent how addiction removes layers and parts of people's character as it takes hold.

Trench Coat

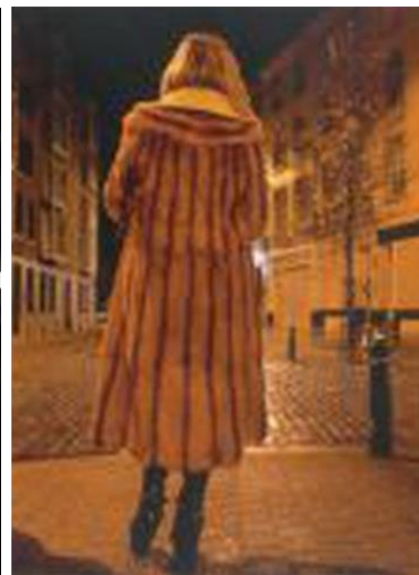
To me the trench coat symbolised a number of juxtaposing aspects of her character; firstly, it signified a professional. Designer trench coats from brands such as Barbour or Burberry, are most commonly worn by professional and middle-class women. However, the trench coat also appears in film noir costuming frequently, often being worn by characters conducting 'shady' or secretive business. Trench coats are also associated with people hiding their identity. And finally, the modern-day prostitute wears is often pictured in large coats to conceal the more provocative clothing underneath.



(See Appendix D)



(See Appendix E)



(See Appendix F)

All of these elements depicted in the images above are contained within my one character - she is not only a powerful middle-class woman, but also hiding issues and sexual promiscuity. This is why the trench coat is the perfect costume option for this scene.

Robe

The choice of the robe was to symbolize her attempt to redeem her situation and an attempt to put more effort into her existing marriage. The robe was a physical attempt to regain her husband's focus. However, after the effort goes unnoticed, she is awakened to the fact that her husband's attention lies elsewhere, and he is having an affair. The choice of the robe to gain her husband's attention also foreshadows further promiscuity to come, rather than attempting to connect with him on an emotional level, this is more aligned with seduction.

Gown

The plain black floor length night dress was to symbolise the lack of excitement, passion and love in their marriage. The black colour connotes ideas of death and in this context represents death of her marriage, death of their love and death of her former self. This garment ended up being cut off, as I snipped away each time whilst remembering past lovers and current affairs, this was to highlight the addiction starting to take over and despite her trying to stop, she was left in just her underwear.

Underwear

She had now been completely stripped down to her underwear, it symbolises everything that she has lost; physically she has lost her husband and mentally she lacks confidence, dignity and happiness. Mirrored by the costume she is now wearing, the main elements left of my character are sexual promiscuity and vulnerably. The underwear also represents movement through the narrative and reflects the elevated sexual activity she is now engaging in. The addition of stockings is to reflect an element of 'dress up', stockings are usually worn in boudoir shoots to elevate sexuality and femininity and are not an everyday item of clothing. This suggests that the overt promiscuity she is displaying is not a natural libido but a more calculated and deliberate attempt of seduction.

The concept of removing the layers to reveal underwear is to symbolise the process that addiction strips everything from you, regardless of who you are and by the end you are left vulnerable. The items themselves symbolise the deterioration within the relationship, and the reflects that her mental state is much more fragile than before these issues began.

Script Development

Below is the final version of my script, with some thoughts and analysis of why I choose the wording and the impact that was intended during the final performance. The numbers have specific annotations after immediately after the script. The R's represent the parts I changed and reconsidered which are explained in my review section.

(*) – Script Development

® - Review

Trench Coat

**sat at mirror, doing makeup* ®*

Woman: It's like that itch that's impossible to itch? or that cough that no matter how much you cough you still need to cough, (1) and no matter how much you want it, it just doesn't go away.

**stands in mirror* ®*

He got me this coat for our 10th year anniversary. Your eyes ain't lying, this plain black trench coat, is what he decided to be his declaration of love and appreciation after ten years. (2)

Ten whole years of him. Feeding him, cleaning after him, separating his shitty black boxers from his sweat stained white shirts, which I'm pretty sure if I didn't intervene the man could literally start growing fungus. (3)

It's not even think the coats that bad, it's provided me warmth and protection it's expected to do, which is much more than I can say for him... (4)

And, somehow, i guess it became a sort of an accomplice, a part of my hiding and his 'gift' was just another one of my dirty secrets.

It had been just over a year and a half. 19 months. 577 long nights. (5) He barely even looked at me anymore, I'd get the occasional kiss before he'd leave for work, but that was just some sort of auto-pilot response from our first years. That kiss became nothing but a habit and that was all i got. There was a part of me that had left, and I'd do anything to get that back. (6)

You're probably thinking, why hasn't she left him? If she's so unhappy, just leave? I mean, would you? Financially he takes care of everything, we have a beautiful house, and he literally couldn't care less about my whereabouts if he tried. (7) So i get to do what I want. (8)

Robe

Woman: *And it's not like I didn't try! I even brought this, *reveals robe under coat* I thought it might spice up our silent cereal in the morning, or the return from the impromptu trip to the toilet in the night, that maybe if I put in a little more effort, he might want me more?*

Didn't notice it at all. That was the last time I tried. I wasn't going to beg. (9) Anger Turning Point

For the first few months it was bars and clubs, just meeting guys, girls, anyone, (10) head back to theirs, because I never saw myself as the 'it's not what it looks like' type, and fuck. Sometimes for hours, sometimes more orgasms in one night than he'd ever given me; sometimes just because i could. (11) Rebellious Child instinct

You remember that itch I was talking about, and that incessant need to cough, and cough and cough and cough? Well this is when that started and once it had taken over, having a respectable night out the house became impossible. (12) Brechtian Alienation

Night Gown

Woman: *February 14th 2014, he whips out this 'sexy' number - opaque and almost floor length, which is obviously just what we all look for in our, what he likes to call 'lingerie', right? At the start, I kept track, could name them all, remember everything, each kiss, each touch, it was exciting, I was excited. (13)*

I wish that lasted longer than it did, but soon the nights would just roll into the next and what i was doing it just became a sort of, need. Started as a need to feel loved, wanted, but that went too and then it was just sex, with anyone, anywhere, anytime. (14)

His habitual morning peck meant nothing, so I got my own habits.

*(15) Columbian Carlos, he was fun. Just so much energy. *snip at the night gown* Then there was Double E Eliana, she? Well she just had these massive tits. *another snip**

*Freaky Fellatio Frank... He... Yeah.. *snip**

It wasn't always this way...

*Went From Plentiful Penis Pete, to just that one in the bathroom at the petrol station, *rip dress* or those two in that alleyway. ® *rip dress* I was a total slut, I am a total slut. *rips dress completely off**

Underwear

Woman: (16) That cough that I have? It's now infected with guilt, sadness, shame and several STDS. The self respected woman I once was has gone, and i became an object, just to used by anyone who'd have me. You constantly think about the people you're hurting by hurting your self and you hate yourself for it, and you want to stop, but you can't stop, you can't because of that fucking itch, and can't forget the cough, because they're always there, every single second and now matter how much you try you fail, because that's all you can do now.

He had no idea, nobody did, I was destroying myself from the inside out and no one knew a thing. I guess that's the funny bit about addiction, people expect it to look a certain way i think? Act a certain way? But it hides, and then it takes over, and then you blink and you're powerless, you're just a product of your addiction and there is no way to stop. It's like a Gas Lorry gunning it down a hill with broken breaks into ok coming traffic, it's just a matter of time before it all blows up.

(17) But I don't look like an addict, so I must be fine right? It's not at all like my head is constantly buzzing with urges and behaviours a can't control. You know when you get growing pains? And your legs get all restless, and you stretch them out loads and it's kind of a good pain but it still doesn't really help? That's what it's like, but everywhere, all the time, and until i, satisfy that need, its impossible focus on anything else.

So I now spend more time out the house than in, I am completely controlled by my own impulses and I truly don't recognise myself in the mirror anymore.

I do it for that brief moment I feel better, when everything goes quiet and I feel peace. I want to find that same joy in life, but a just can't remember how. (18)

knock on the door

Finally, she took her time. (19)

(20)

- 1) I enjoyed playing around with the idea that the starting dialogue was in fact in her head and was a brief foreshadowing of the story to come. The idea of the itch/ cough came from my own experiences on the incessant perpetual need to constantly cure a craving for something. Using a more monotone vocal quality I was able to differentiate between what was reality and what was going on in her head, the inner dialogue felt more pained and numb of emotion.
- 2) She jumps straight into talking about the gift she received, that she felt lacked inspiration; this is where we see her 'normal' personality shine through more. This is shown in the way she banters back and forth with the audience laughing about the coat she's wearing, I wanted it to be a sharp change from the previously spoken lines to exaggerate the idea of having to hide parts of yourself and be a different person in front of other people.
- 3) This is the first time we talk about 'Him' as a person; it's clear her opinions are low of him as she mocks his personal hygiene with the audience. It does suggest that she cares for him in the marriage, more like a child than a husband. However it was important to me that it was only her point of view, because the audience are left to wonder whether everything she is saying is entirely true. Despite this ambiguity, her depiction of him curates the image in the audience's mind that the off stage character of her husband is negative.
- 4) This line where she talks about the coat having been the only thing that's provided her with any warmth and protection is where we start to see an energy shift. You see her genuinely consider how the coat has done more for her than her own husband. We see a different side to her, much more similar to that inner monologue that we saw at the start, and this is the beginning of her properly opening up to the audience.
- 5) Quickly she corrects her glum mood, as a way of masking and jumps back to her default emotion which is anger. She describes the number of years, days and hours it's been since they've had sex. Initially she starts with the years so it doesn't seem like she cares too much, but then she knows the exact amount of days so you can immediately see that it is a problem, and then she's gotten herself so wound up by

reflecting on this she blurts out the amount of hours quickly wanting to take this back to avoid looking crazy or obsessive.

- 6) This is to symbolise her 'all is lost moment.' The audience can see her realisation moment that there is no saving this marriage and suggests that her husband has also given up and is seeking affection elsewhere.
- 7) During this part she tries to defend her the action of in staying in her marriage, she is talking to the audience however the emotion behind the words show that she is more trying to convince herself of her actions, considering if she has made the right choices. When she says that her husband doesn't care about her whereabouts you can see in her face and here in her vocal tone that despite she's trying to be brave this is something that is affecting her.
- 8) She says through her teeth and a pained smile 'so I get to do what I want', however it's clear that this isn't at all what she truly wants, in fact what she really wants is a solid relationship with the man she once had. I wanted this to reflect my research surrounding seeking love and affection becoming an addiction.
- 9) This is when we first really see her anger come through and is a turning point that she doesn't come back from. She has decided she's not going to just sit back and be taken for like a mug anymore. Her actions now seemed to be more out of spite than pleasure and all signs of her once witty and satirical personality had faded.
- 10) By reflecting on previous moments of happiness, the audience can see that she has little pleasure in her current life and can only seek comfort in fantasy and memory.
- 11) This is very much her rebellious child coming out, and it seems that she's almost gloating when describing her affairs. She's seems proud of them, because her husband had given her those freedoms she was going to use them to the most extreme attempt. Another way of justifying her actions and escaping the guilt and admission of mental health issues.
- 12) Here we get another reoccurrence of her darker inner monologue reflecting on the itch and cough once again. I use Brechtian alienation techniques, which is when you present your contents in an unfamiliar way too get a different desired effect so that the audiences able to think more profoundly about the drama rather than empathising solely with the character. By almost dropping the character that I was playing, and

speaking much more directly and truthfully to the audience hopefully allowed them to see that this was more than just a 'story' and in fact had purpose, education and meaning.

- 13) This is the next time we see any sort of light and hope in her personality, it's a reminder of the character that we started with, showing that despite have gradually breaking down the same person is still inside, it's just a lot harder to get her out.
- 14) This jump directly back into dark talk about her sex addiction was to show how quickly not only can cravings and feelings arrive but also how overwhelming these urges are and impossible to ignore. Her vocal tone suggests that her actions are something she is ashamed of and she has lost sight of the woman she really is sight of the woman she really is.
- 15) We see here how she lives most of her life, in the fantasyland she's created in her head, as a coping mechanism and survival for her. It's left to the audience to decide whether these events really happened or happened in the way she recollects. However, after thinking about these 'memories' we see her energy start to shift and with that she begins ripping her dress; this was to symbolise the decomposing of any self respect she once had. The aggressive cutting and tearing of the dress a representation of the way she let people treat her and perhaps the type of sexual relationships she did have, more violent and disrespectful than she chooses to remember.
- 16) 'Theater of cruelty means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all' (Artaud, 2024) It was important that I put myself in an uncomfortable position, as I felt that was the best way for me to properly portray this woman. The costume of my character ended up as only underwear, to emphasise women are conditioned to feel ashamed and hide their bodies. This was something that as an actor, made me feel vulnerable, however, I knew that it was an integral part of both the storytelling and the character development that the piece was to finish with her dressed this way.
- 17) She has now hit her rock bottom and this is the moment we really see the height of her addiction and the height of her creeping towards insanity. To me, this is, one of the most important lines in the whole script, 'I don't look like an addict so I must be fine right'. I think this would resonate with so many people, but not only that it's a key part to addiction and having to hide it from everyone including yourself.

- 18) This was her last very brief moment of bliss that we see, I closed my eyes and was once again transported to that safe place in her mind however this time the moment was fleeting and only lasted seconds. This shows the progression of addiction and how those moments of happiness get fewer and fewer, leaving you craving your happiness even more.
- 19) This last line was to show how addiction always comes back round, and no matter how much you want it to disappear it will raise its head again. Despite going through the ordeal she just has explaining all of her trauma, she is at the mercy of the power of her addiction. The tone of her voice suddenly changes and she's happy light on her feet and excited, but as an audience we've now learned that this moment will only last a very small amount of time.
- 20) 'I think of the actor as a sort of sacrificial being who, on our behalf and for our benefit, undergoes a sequence of experiences, terrifying, tragic, sad, funny, ridiculous, joyful, celebratory, as though saying to us, 'This is what life's like, isn't it? Do you recognise this? Have you ever thought of life in this way' (Alfreds, 2007). This quote stuck out with great importance to me, and fuelled most of my devising process. However terrifying the idea of putting myself in this vulnerable position seemed, what people actually go through every single day struggling with addiction is so much more terrifying. I believe that the importance of educating people surrounding this issues far outweighs any fears I might face performing this script. This properly enabled me to commit to portray this row with the respect that it deserved.

Review Process and Tech Rehearsal

®1 - I initially imagined herself in her bedroom chatting to herself the mirror, the mirror being the 4th wall, However this immediately forced my narrative to give in a certain way as she was in her bedroom alone, so I instead opened it up and had a much more conversational sense with the audience.

®2- When going into my tech rehearsal I realised that the first part of my dialogue felt more internal, so it felt right to light it differently from the rest of her dialogue, using dark red lights and shadows to create an eerie atmosphere. This was to really establish the good and the bad inside her mind. I worked with the lighting assistant to help him understand my vision.

®3 - I wanted to create a friendly atmosphere after what seemed quite a dark start, so going into joke about the gift she doesn't like, felt like a good way to create that relationship with the audience. It created a sense that she was gossiping or confiding in an old friend. This was important to me as I feel it shows that anybody can battle with addiction even your closest ones that you wouldn't necessarily expect.

®4 - When she revealed her black robe, I decided to be placed under a spotlight. This gave of both the impression that she was showing off, but also that she was putting every single detail under the microscope to figure out where she went wrong.

®5 – The quick changes into different lighting and sound was to emulate her brain flitting between thoughts both positive and negative. I wanted to show how easily led she was by her brain, and how she has created a haven of memories and elaborations in her mind that she hides in for comfort and joy.

®6 – As quickly as her mind changes to positive nostalgia, it also goes back to darkness. She speaks of the itch and cough, and repetitive and annoying like it is, the darker lighting red lighting.

®7 – Again, using the idea of a holiday in her mind, she is transported back in time to when she was happy. I was slightly unsure during the development process if it was becoming slightly predictable. I thought that a peer review would be required for a second opinion and to ensure my vision could be understood by the audience. I asked Millie Dyer, one of my peers, and she assured me that it was giving the effect that I had desired. It was really important to me, to make the techniques repetitive and circular as that reflects the patterns of addictions, and she agreed that it reflected this. However, she did suggest that there should be some sort of change for the final time the character speaks about it to exaggerate the significance of the level the addiction has reached.

®8 – Looking back I think during the section where she is ripping and cutting her dress, some further light changes could have been effective to show each different emotion went with each traumatic event that she experienced. I think this could have heightened the moment even further. I would consider using a strobe, longer moments of darkness, or a few different colours.

®9 – Despite this section being about the cough and itch, I decided to not light it the same as the previous times. Because of what Millie Dyer had suggested I ran with this idea and wanted to emphasize the addiction bleeding into her day to day life and being harder to hide.

®10 – The sound effect of a knock at the door breaks her from her darkest moment despair and we see her mood immediately shift, this is that short lived serotonin boost she receives from her addiction, this is immediately met with a black out to symbolize how short those moments now are for her.

Set and Lighting

Typically, when I devise pieces of theatre, I prefer a minimal set, stripped right back, putting the writing and acting at the forefront of the narrative process. However, I wanted to make effective use lighting to show the darkness and assist with the same themes of uncovering different layers of personality to mirror the costume changes.

It is significant and important for the production that the moments in which she was talking about the 'itch' the set is lit differently. This is because these parts of the dialogue were internal narrative of her thoughts and not spoken dialogue, almost like the addiction talking. To amplify this change, I chose to use backlighting, shadows, and red tones to differentiate what was in her head and what was reality. The use of shadows created quite an eerie atmosphere, and I wanted it to feel like the addiction was creeping up on her almost stalking her in her shadows. To me this really reflects how addiction feels; it lurks and waits in the darkness for moments where you are at your most vulnerable.

I had chosen the majority of the dialogue to be lit very naturally giving an authentic feel to the space so then flicking between this and the dark red shadowy lighting, created the exact juxtaposition I wanted between the good and bad thoughts inside her mind. I chose red as the colour because it accurately depicted the inner demons going on within the character and red also connotes promiscuity. I wanted the dark and ominous lighting to reoccur throughout the piece at contrasting times to show the audience that addiction just pops up out of nowhere and can strike when you least expect it. It was important to use visual cues to help people who do not suffer with addiction how it can feel to suffer with these issues.

As previously mentioned, it was important to me that it was not solely dark and sombre, which is why I choose to accompany the section of dialogue where she is recounting her past lovers and experiences, with traditional Spanish music and coastal sound effects. I initially chose Spanish music because immediately hearing this music, moves myself and therefore the audience to a new destination, transported through my characters memory. The music was to set the scene of being relaxed and on holiday, and changing the energy from solemn to positive, which is what I wanted for this section of script. I wanted it to feel like she was

holding on to these memories as if they were her last moments of joy, she was clinging on to them because they were the only things that made her happy. I never truly decided whether these events did happen or if these glamorised accounts were just farcical adaptations had created to protect her from the trauma of reality. This then led me to name the first character I speak about, 'Carlos.' I enjoyed aptness and felt the stereotypical nature of the name added humour and would allow the audience to imagine the tall, dark, handsome Spanish man that my character was picturing in her memory.

Similarly to the cutting in and out of the Spanish music and seascape sound effects, I used flashing lights and nightclub sound effects when she was recounting her early days of addiction, partying and socialising. I wanted these anecdotes to be accompanied with sound and added lighting to explain the difference to the audience between reality, the present moment on the stage, and what was a memory or fantasy. I wanted it to be clear that she almost lived a whole another life in her head, a way of protecting herself from trauma. The character lives these fantasies on repeat inside her mind, symbolising these are the only positive moments that she now has. The cuts in and out of these sound effect interludes were very sharp and snappy, this was to represent how quickly things happen in her mind and how thoughts jump from one to the next within matters of seconds, from the nostalgic party 'memories' immediately to the feelings of shame and depression. By using lighting and sound I hoped to be able to show the audience how it feels to be in the mind of a person suffering from anxiety, depression and addiction.

I chose for my only piece of set to be a sofa, I feel like this was all that was necessary to tell the narrative. It was also dual functionality both acting as a chair and a bed. The brown distressed leather sofa mirrored the fading love in the marriage and the mundanity of her day-to-day life within her relationship. However, it did not just symbolise the breaking down of the marriage but also of her relationship with herself the sofa looked used and tired which is very much how my characters journey begins to look throughout the text. The sofa itself reminded me of one you might see in a rundown therapy room, or a doctors waiting room in the 70's, which perfectly created the vibe I wanted to project to the audience. The lack of other set pieces only exaggerated that the sofa felt slightly out of place and abandoned, much like my female protagonist herself.

Final Thoughts and Reflection

Overall, I am pleased with the result of my final performance; my main aim was to raise awareness around the hidden and unsupported addicts in society and I feel the piece was impactful and achieved this goal. However, running an independent project did highlight some personal attributes I would work on in the future.

Time management was something that I struggled with through out the process and cause me to miss a few key elements I would have included. Firstly during my research I would have liked to have spoken to a therapist first hand that deals with addiction. Having a first hand review from a health professional would have allowed me a medical perspective rather than just emotional. I could have incorporated this further in make up techniques and physical theatre.

On reflection, I spent too much time in the beginning trying to decide on a concept and begin writing, I lost valuable time that could have been better used further along in the project. I do believe that a one woman show was the correct format for this piece, however, I wasn't able to execute an idea that came further in the process. If I was to repeat and adjust the performance, during the recollection scenes, I feel it would have been powerful to have a translucent screen behind the protagonist. This screen would show the silhouettes of herself and her aforementioned lovers, the two actors would use physical theatre to re-enact the narratives that she is recounting. I feel this would have added an extra visual element to assist the audience, without taking away from the autonomy of the female lead. It would have also added a further element of comedy to the piece, and made the different memories more memorable for the audience.

Unfortunately, due to my time management skills and by the time this idea came to me, it was too late to cast further people in the production. Personally, I have taken this on board as a Director and more generally in my life, as a point I need to improve on moving forward. I would have also had a chance to request more people review my work to get contrasting opinions.

This project educated me, challenged me and inspired me to be more active and vocal about social issues within society. It also tested my abilities as both a Director and Actor; I have

learnt valuable lessons about my own work ethic but am very proud to produce a production that left the audience thinking more deeply and inspired to check in on the women in their own lives.

Word Count: 9001

Appendix

- A) *Good Girls*, (2018). [TV Series] Minnesota Logging Company; Universal Television.
- B) *Four Good Days*. (2020). [Film] Vertical.
- C) Image from Hapers Bazaar article surrounding the history of the trench coat.
Available at <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/a41964443/burberry-trench-coat>.
- D) AI Image available at <https://openart.ai/discovery/md-0fa7ae0e-6b5f-487c-b373-6e203253618d>
- E) Image and article on prostitution available at
<https://cafebabel.com/en/article/prostitution-go-behind-the-curtain-5ae00c4ef723b35a145e8602/>

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