Lost Property

Reflections on Nostalgia and Lost Belongings

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INTRODUCTION

Lost Property is a research project that examines nostalgia through performance practice, exploring the sensation's capabilities to determine if it can be considered a site of activity and encourage the unexpected. My project is animated by the following research questions: how can the definition(s) of nostalgia, outlined by critical theory on the subject, be developed and expanded upon to include more forward-looking and active outcomes? In what ways can nostalgia be explored through lost belongings and the concept of lost property more generally? I endeavour to answer these questions through examining the existing critical discourse surrounding nostalgia and by way of practice-based research in the form of contemporary performance practice to consider nostalgia anew from an under-explored perspective. This viewpoint focuses on the possibilities for playfulness and lightheartedness within the confines of nostalgia.

Lost property, by which I mean personal items that have been lost or misplaced, found and carefully stored with the hope that the objects will be reunited with their owners, is the framing device that I will use to explore the active potentials of nostalgia. Lost property is an appropriate device for the concerns of this project as it touches on nostalgia's trappings - the fear of losing something perfect, lamenting its inevitable loss and the hope that the lost thing, place, person, memory or object will return to us just like we remember it. Lost property engages with nostalgia in the sense that by thinking of cherished belongings we have lost, our remembering is characterised by its loss. In our heads it is unchanged from the image we have of it when we realised it was lost – a moment of shock, panic and loss that characterises the lost thing as something perfect and irreplaceable. My approach to nostalgia through lost property in this project has taken the form of gathering recollections of lost objects, to engage with the idea of them as perfect and idealised items, only to subvert this languishing sentiment through a commitment to make these items anew. It is my view that making new versions of lost belongings, as opposed to trying to source the originals, reexamines nostalgia in a way which uncovers more playful and unexpected results. The

objects made as part of my practice were not intended to be recreations or reproductions of the

original lost belongings, but rather new objects drawn from my understanding of the descriptions of

the originals. By being explicit about my own presence as the maker of the objects and the

limitations of what I was able to create due to my crafting abilities, I hoped to ease the tension

surrounding the expectation of what the finished items would be like. By approaching nostalgia in

this manner, I wish to explore the sense of hope that arises from the desire to be reunited with

something that is lost and reframe it as something more nuanced, playful and forward-looking.

In this research thesis, I will respond to the research questions anchoring my project and

highlight the active, positive and unexpected potentials of nostalgia by anchoring the sensation

through the notion of lost property. In Chapter One, I will highlight and analyse the discourse

surrounding nostalgia as well as theorists who engage with the sensation directly in their writings. I

will examine the ways in which critical theory has influenced my research and practice throughout

the project, identifying areas in which my understanding differs and expands upon the existing

discourse. I will assess the work of Svetlana Boym and her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001) which

takes a historical, social and cultural approach to tracking how nostalgia as a concept and sensation

has developed and transformed over time. Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida: Reflections on*

Photography (1980) has also been an influential resource. In Barthes' book, he engages with

nostalgia by looking at photographs as objects that evoke a certain idea or image of the past that is

not necessarily representative of reality but conjure the essence of the moment or person depicted.

Barthes locates his analysis through his own experience of grieving the loss of his mother by

searching for a photograph of her that feels representative of her being in life. In this chapter, I

expand on the idea of engaging with nostalgia through objects by close examination of Susan

Stewart's *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1993),

which relates nostalgia to a sense of longing that manifests in a desire for the accumulation of

affective objects. In addition, I acknowledge the practice-based element of this project by evaluating

the connection made between nostalgia and theatrical reenactments by Rebecca Schneider in her

book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011). These texts have helped shape my understanding of nostalgia but ultimately led me to seek a way in which nostalgia can be reframed as something that addresses an idealised past, but which looks ahead in a way that embraces the unexpected.

Chapter Two investigates the sentiment that nostalgia can be reevaluated through a practice that centres personal belongings as evocative and affective objects which encourage playful imagination and speculation. In this chapter I discuss the art and performance work that has been influential to the process of negotiating my theoretical research on nostalgia through practice. Christian Boltanski's installation *Lost Property at Grand Central Station* (1995), Sophie Calle's text and image piece *The Hotel* (1981) and performance duo Lone Twin's *The Boat Project* (2012) are examples of practice which use and explore objects as conduits for nostalgia, memory, narrative and speculation in a manner which encourages the viewer to consider objects as mutable and transformable items. The examples of practice discussed in this chapter helps to craft a methodology for my own practice that is indebted to the writings of Eve Sedgwick and her notion of the reparative as an engagement with the past that looks for lightness, hope and joy when considering the possibilities of the future, an attitude that is developed in my research and practice through an emphasis on the playful and lighthearted as ways of considering nostalgia anew.

Chapter Three addresses the culmination of my research, methodology and performance analysis in a thorough breakdown of my artistic practice. This practice comprised a process of information gathering and object-making, a performance practice which took the shape of a live performance on the 13th of June 2023 at the University of Glasgow's Gilmorehill Centre and finally, this research thesis. My practice began by inviting close friends of mine to describe in detail an object they had lost, an item of lost property, through a questionnaire format. In response to the questionnaire answers, I made new versions of the lost belongings using the questionnaire responses as blueprints and these items were presented and discussed with the participants in videos which were part of the live performance event. In this chapter, I break down the artistic

process of liaising with the participants, the object construction and the choreography of the live

performance.

CHAPTER ONE

Throughout the course of this project, it has been my intention to investigate whether the existing definitions of nostalgia can be developed and expanded upon to include more active and positive outcomes. Are there ways of engaging with nostalgia that can encourage opportunities for transformation? Can new possibilities be provoked by drawing a connection between nostalgia and physical objects through the device of lost property? In order to answer my research questions and create a performance that addressed these questions, I set out to explore the existing theoretical discourse surrounding nostalgia as a way of framing my area of interrogation and the practical work I wanted to make. In this chapter, I will explore the critical theory that has been influential in shaping the focus of my project, how these ideas have influenced my understanding of nostalgia, its under-explored possibilities and how these potentials can be unlocked through the idea of lost property.

In her book, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym examines nostalgia as a social and cultural phenomenon. She combines historical analysis with her own personal experience to trace the beginnings of nostalgia as a sickness to its modern iteration as a well-accepted fondness and attachment for collective history and the ephemera associated with it. Boym begins by defining nostalgia through the word's etymology:

> Nostalgia (from nostos – return home, and algia – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images – of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface. (Boym, 2001: xiv).

This definition interprets nostalgia as a feeling experienced in the present which simultaneously reflects on an often simplified and romanticised version of the past whilst imagining the potentials of a resuscitation of these reflections in the future.

Crucially these two poles do not and never will meet as the nostalgic sensation is predicated on a longing for something that is not real but rather an idealised version and, as it is an imaginary version, it cannot return to its original form. Nostalgia is a particular form of remembering concerned with a perfect image or feeling as opposed to muddier, changeable and mouldable recollections of the past. Boym's viewpoint positions nostalgia as a longing for a time, place, object or way of thinking that has become lost to us, whether it has been deemed no longer useful, unnecessary or even archaic within the present moment, and which occurs as a by-product of a discomfort in the present. The idea that nostalgia arises from a discomfort in the present suggests a desire to disengage with the current moment and look for a perfect moment/image/object which provides a sense of relief from chaos and uncertainty. By this logic, engaging with nostalgia delivers a sense of respite from unpleasant surroundings but a respite that closes one off to the confusion around them. In this project, I have sought to determine whether these moments of ease and respite provided through engaging with nostalgic reflection can in fact be open and forward-looking as opposed to static and reductive. I have pursued this active and positive viewpoint on nostalgia through an emphasis on connecting with others, possessing a playful sensibility and engaging with the past but also looking ahead with a degree of optimism.

Through her historical analysis, Boym explores how nostalgia was originally considered to be an ailment or a sickness of sorts. Dissimilar to its more intellectualised counterpart, melancholia, nostalgia was considered to be a much more 'democratic' affliction affecting those who were not afforded substantive educational opportunities but who were instead lower-level servicemen displaced from their homes (Boym, 2001: 5). This illness functioned as a homesickness experienced by those deployed on the front lines and manifested itself as an apathy and discontentedness in their current situation that led to '…confusing past and present, real and imaginary events' (Boym, 2001: 3). Those afflicted with nostalgia were seen to be experiencing a kind of temporal disassociation. They attempted to remove themselves from the violence and inconstancy of their present by longing

for idealistic visions of home. This longing was considered to be compulsive and felt strongly within the body of those experiencing it. The sensation was able to provoke strong sense memories such as '… tastes, sounds, smells, the minutiae and trivia of the lost paradise that those who remained home never noticed' (Boym, 2001: 4). Despite being removed from the reality of their present, the nostalgic was able to connect strongly with small, ephemeral details which would not have seemed important to them before they left but which now symbolised what they had left behind. Through this viewpoint, material objects and by extension the lost belongings become idealised totems which point towards a perfect image of something outwith one's grasp.

The idea of the nostalgic as a homesick soldier was reframed in the 19th century and became associated with that of the collector who furnished and decorated their home with evocative ephemera. Boym explains that: 'The bourgeois home in nineteenth-century Paris is described by Walter Benjamin as a miniature theater and museum that privatizes nostalgia while at the same time replicating its public structure, the national and private homes thus becoming intertwined' (Boym, 2001: 15). Boym speaks to nostalgia's mutability as she describes how it was once considered a widespread and damaging illness when attributed to the working class soldier, yet reframed as a more exclusive desire to collect, preserve and display historical ephemera, nostalgia became a romantic status symbol indicating one's wealth and sensibility. The nostalgic collects objects that signify an idea of the past, not to use or engage with these items but rather to catalogue and display them, as if they were in a history museum. The attraction does not lie solely in the objects' appearance but rather in their 'incompleteness'; they exist as distilled referents of the passed time, moment, event or person (Boym, 2001: 16). These signifiers come to replace their signs and function as a collection of highlights, not necessarily representing what they refer to exactly as it was but instead functioning as refined and idealised souvenirs (ibid). The collector does not desire to recreate or to replace the experiences of the past with the present but rather wishes to collect, conserve and control objects which possess the essence of moments of personal and collective history that are always threatening to slip through their grasp. In relation to my research questions,

the tendency to collect, conserve and protect evocative objects which Boym attributes to the experience of feeling nostalgic maps onto the idea of lost property as an artistic device through which to examine nostalgia. A collection of lost items brings together the fear of losing something in a physical sense as all of the items have been misplaced, however there is a hopefulness for a future in which that sense of loss will be appeased, soothed or embraced. The collection has been amassed out of a sense of obligation, the finder wishes for the owner to be reunited with their lost item. There is a practical, caring element to the collection as the item will be kept safe for the moment in which it can be returned. In the lost property collection, there is a hope for change and development in the status of the object as opposed to existing as merely a representation of a memory.

Boym's work has been a useful and comprehensive resource for assessing the existing discourse surrounding nostalgia as a feeling but also as a symptom of cultural and societal factors. Throughout this project, I have engaged with the existing scholarly discourse on nostalgia but ultimately sought an engagement with it that does not shut one off from the present but allows for there to be a reflective dialogue between an idea of the past and the current moment. To expand on the perception of nostalgia as an isolating and self-protective sensation, there must be a line drawn between past, present and future, that is open to change and transformation. I have looked to lost property and lost belongings as evocative objects that simultaneously refer to a perfect image of the past but through their existence in the present, kept safe and waiting to be reunited with their owners, suggest a hopefulness towards a future that is full of possibility.

Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* follows Boym's line of thinking in that his description of the intention(s) of a photographer could also be applied to how those experiencing nostalgia are seen to regard the past. The photographer peers through a tiny viewfinder to frame the perfect shot and this blinkered view cuts away any background elements that do not complement the overall scene, the result being an individual perception of a moment and one which cannot be relied upon to communicate reliable truth. Without actually mentioning the sensation of nostalgia, Barthes' analysis of specific works by famous photographers and of

photography generally engages with the fear that our past and our history is in danger of disappearing and that this fear encourages one to cling to a murky vision of the past. His engagement with nostalgia ties in with Boym's description of the Victorian nostalgic and the romantic yet pragmatic practice of collecting and preserving personal objects for posterity. As evocative objects, photographs have a certain collectivity. They are objects that are often shared with others with the intention of bringing people together in a more intimate fashion. It can be a vulnerable act to share with someone your personal photographs, yet this act is usually reciprocal as this vulnerability prompts others to share their own in response:

> Show your photographs to someone – he will immediately show you his: 'Look, this is my brother; this is me as a child', etc.; the Photograph is never anything but an antiphon of 'Look', 'See', 'Here it is'; it points a finger at certain vis-à-vis, and cannot escape this pure deictic language. (Barthes, 2000: 5).

Photographs can be conduits for personal and collective histories and a crucial tool in helping us explain who we are to one another. As personal photographs are similar in style from person to person (summer holiday photographs, school portraits, birthday photographs etc.) there is a shared language to this process of collecting and saving indicators of memory and there is a relatability and reciprocity too. I wish to explore nostalgia's relatability through lost belongings as despite the uniqueness of the object lost and the situation of losing it, there is a universal understanding to what it feels like to lose something unexpectedly and feel its absence. The act of sharing these stories encourages others to respond with their own similar experience which helps to make the experience of nostalgia less restrictive and more connective.

Gathering and assessing photographs as evocative and meaningful objects relates to nostalgia as it communicates a worry that if we do not collate and keep personal objects safe, we might lose sight of the key detail that makes the memories associated with them unique and important. Barthes' describes this searing detail as the 'punctum', the 'sting, speck, cut … which pricked me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)' (Barthes, 2000: 27). The punctum is the most

attractive detail as it evokes a strong feeling, often one that is painful. It functions like a sharp pang

that is intense, but which passes quickly, leaving an impression of itself that encourages one to look

for this same sensation again. The presence of the punctum is what determines whether the object

is worth keeping and preserving; it is what provides the object with its personal significance. The

punctum represents what Barthes describes as the 'Spectrum of the Photograph', the alluring but

heartbreaking 'return of the dead' (Barthes, 2000: 9). Like recalling and repairing the image of

something lost, the photograph seems to capture something ghostly, an essence of what is no longer

present. Barthes highlights this by discussing his own personal experience of loss in the second half

of book. Grieving the death of his mother, Barthes diverts his attention to searching through his own

family photographs as he looks for an image that communicates his mother's living presence:

> … sometimes I recognized a region of her face, a certain relation of nose and forehead, the
> movement of her arms, her hands. I never recognized her except in fragments, which is to
> say I missed her being, and that therefore I missed her altogether. It was not she, and yet it
> was no one else. I would have recognized among thousands of other women, yet I did not
> 'find' her … Photography thereby compelled me to perform a painful labor; straining toward
> the essence of her identity, I was struggling among images partially true, and thereby totally
> false. (Barthes, 2000: 66).

Barthes suggests that it is an impossible yet compulsive task to find the punctum that can truly live

up to the presence of the original thing/person that is lost to us. What we find instead are shadows,

eidolons and traces of the original presence that provide some relief to the longing but really

encourage a more desperate search for the illusive. Barthes puts his notion of the punctum into

practice as he combs through his family's ephemera for an aching moment of recognition, a fleeting

sense of catharsis which serves as a resurrection of sorts but one that is merely a shadow of itself.

When Barthes finds these echoes of his mother's presence, he is aware that it can never replace his

memory of her: '… what I see is not a memory, an imagination, a reconstitution … but reality in a past

state: at once the past and the real' (Barthes, 2000: 82). The original presence is lost to time, it exists

in a different temporality that we cannot fully access in the present. We can only summon traces of it

and those traces are the searing details that are harder to forget and that stay with us in ways that the background, contextual details do not.

Throughout *Camera Lucida*, Barthes demonstrates the experience of nostalgia and nostalgic longing through his desire to be reunited with the presence of his mother. Barthes' nostalgic longing stems from the fear that the memory of his mother will disappear, thus he puts into practice his theory of the punctum, searching for a moment of recognition as he looks through old photographs of her. The recognition he searches for is painful but also restorative as it helps to assuage her disappearing memory. Barthes' focus on the desire to collect and keep safe personal belongings and ephemera is relevant to my project in relation to my interest in lost property as a tool for re-examining and reframing nostalgia. Like lost personal belongings, photographs function as signs which point to personal experience – usually quite a specific moment of experience – and this focus on the personal and the particular affects the perspective from which nostalgia is viewed. The photograph refers to a specific situation in a similar way that lost objects – the ones we remember losing – are characterised by the moment that we realised that they were gone, thus underlining their personal significance. In the photograph and the lost object, nostalgia is viewed as a more personal and unique experience as opposed to a more sweeping, general and collective occurrence. This focus on a personal nostalgic experience with an object allows for more nuanced and unexpected outcomes as it centres the experience of the individual and their affective object. Barthes' notion of the punctum is interesting in relation to my work as it is suggestive of the kind of attraction that lost objects hold for us — the idea that there is a brutal moment of separation accompanied by the hope for a reunification in the future but just as the punctum can never fully recover the presence of that which is lost to us, the lost object cannot return to us exactly as we remember it.

In her book *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart acknowledges Barthes' notion of the punctum as a specific detail which encourages a sense of longing that is deeply connected to nostalgia. She highlights the connection

between nostalgia and the act of longing through the desire for the inanimate and the transient, the need to collect objects and ephemera. In the book's introduction, Stewart states:

> … I am particularly interested in the social disease of nostalgia as I examine the relations of narrative to origin and object, and that herein lies the reason I have chosen a kind of ache as my title. For the word longing has a number of meanings which, taken together, in fact encompass this study of narrative, exaggeration, scale and significance: yearning desire, the fanciful cravings incident to women during pregnancy, belongings or appurtenances. (Stewart, 1993: ix).

Stewart likens the experience of nostalgia, as a social phenomenon, to an impulsive longing. She describes it as an 'ache', a feeling that is not necessarily painful but perhaps a discomfort that manifests itself in the desire for something outwith one's grasp (ibid). The objects of desire described by Stewart are not especially dangerous but are rather whimsical, compulsive and impractical at worst. The fact that she relates nostalgia with a longing for 'belongings or appurtenances' highlights the suitability of lost property through which to examine nostalgia, as within this device is the hope of returning something to where it rightfully belongs and the storytelling that arises from this specific kind of longing. There is a tendency to reflect on lost belongings in a romantic and sentimental fashion, hypothesising about where the lost items could have ended up. By this logic, items stored in lost property offices become incredibly evocative objects upon which one can project feelings and emotions.

The collection underpins lost property as a device for exploring nostalgia due to its attachment to taxonomical systems used by lost property offices. When stored within a lost property office, lost items exist within their own fixed temporal setting, out of sync with the outside world. As Stewart describes: 'The collection replaces history with classification, with order beyond the realm of temporality.' (Stewart, 1993: 151). A collection of inanimate objects creates a world unto itself, an environment that balances classifying and ordering with a whimsical uselessness. The individual histories and narratives of each object are amalgamated when grouped together in such a way and their importance lies in their cohabitation with and relation to one another.

Central to Stewart's argument is the role narrative plays in the interconnection between person and object, narrative construction being a crucial aspect of the experience of longing. Stewart defines narrative as a 'structure of desire', it hinges upon desiring something that is unavailable or intangible which prompts a fabricating instinct for something material that can provide a sense of catharsis (Stewart, 1993: ix). The function of narrative is to ''realize' a certain formulation of the world. Hence we can see the many narratives that dream of the inanimate-made-animate as symptomatic of all narrative's desire to invent a realisable world, a world which 'works'.' (Stewart, 1993: xii). Narrative engages with the desire for things to make sense, for loose ends to be tied up and for gaps to be filled in, desires inextricable from the experience of nostalgia as a longing for a time that made sense as opposed to a chaotic and inexplicable present. Narrative is a key component to Stewart's understanding of nostalgia and nostalgic longing as it helps to provide some relief to this present discomfort. The interconnectedness of narrative and nostalgia maps onto my collating memories of lost objects for this project, particularly the moments of their loss and how this impacted those who lost them and the acts of speculation that occur when considering what could have happened to something that is lost and what could happen if it was found. This element of speculation is crucial in expanding on nostalgia as it suggests that the perfect image of the lost object that is rooted in the past also has an imaginative and malleable future.

The work of Rebecca Schneider has also been influential to this research project as in her book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, she explores the nostalgic drive to preserve and remember historical moments through the theatrical form of performative reenactments. Schneider's work expands upon nostalgia by connecting it to the activeness and collectivity of participating in performance, albeit a kind of performance predicated on historical accuracy. Despite the pressure to accurately recreate history, there is still a sense of play – participants getting into costume and character as well as being a source of education and entertainment to those watching the reenactment – and impossibility, as it is not possible to deliver the events exactly. A conscientious approach to historical reenactment highlights the fear of a past

and a cultural tradition that is slipping away but at the same time evokes a sense of familiarity, collectivity and playfulness through the shared experience of the reenactment. Schneider refers to a widespread fear of history's diminishing cultural significance through the endeavours to prevent this by cultural institutions:

> We certainly seem today to chase the past as if memory were the most precious vanishing commodity on earth. From reenactment societies, to heritage museums and theme parks, to historical reality TV shows offering time travel to contemporary contestants, to reenactment in the work of contemporary visual artists, photographers, and performance artists – the past is the stuff of the future, laid out like game show prizes for potential (re)encounter. (Schneider, 2001: 24).

Schneider suggests there is an intensity of interest in the past, a widespread enjoyment of historical themed entertainment and activities that allow for events from the past to be engaged with selectively and repeatedly if so desired. The effect of this is a streamlined and gamified engagement with the historical that allows us to avoid the aspects that we find uninteresting or which conflict with an accepted understanding of a historical figure or event. By focusing on history-themed activities – amusement parks, TV shows, group reenactments — Schneider highlights how gamification and playfulness is a central part of the drive to engage with the past.

Despite the inherent playfulness of historical reenactments, for those creating and performing reenactments the immersive spectacle is anchored by an unwavering emphasis on authenticity and historical accuracy. In the context of theatrical reenactments of historical events there is a temporal strangeness which occurs when the events of the past are placed within a present context, the repeats exists in '… time out of joint' as they are displaced from their original context and are suspended in time as a result of their theatricality (Schneider, 2001: 1). The reenactment seems to exist in the same temporality to those experiencing nostalgia as they too are characterised as feeling out of sync with the present reality and as a result, look backwards for some resolution to this feeling of displacement. The notion of a temporal state disconnected from the

wider goings-on in the present moment underlines the suitability of theatre as form in which to examine nostalgia and reenactments due to its own distinct temporality.

As case studies, Schneider examines theatrical reenactments of historical battles, in particular civil war battles, to explore the seemingly impossible task of recreating history and the motivations behind doing so. She states:

> … for many reenactors there exists the lure: if they repeat an event just so, getting the details as close as possible to fidelity, they will have touched time and time will have recurred. Thus, 'enthusiasts' play across their bodies particulars of 'what really happened' gleaned from archival 'evidence' such as testimony, lithographs, and photographs as a way, ironically, of 'keeping the past alive'. But they also engage in this activity as a way of accessing what they feel the documentary evidence upon which they rely misses – that is, live experience. Many fight not only to 'get it right' as it was but to get it right as it will be in the future of the archive to which they see themselves contributing. (Schneider, 2001: 10).

Schneider suggests that within the drive to participate in a historical reenactment there is the desire to be removed from the concerns of the present and instead locate oneself within a moment of historical significance. The experience of participating in the recreation of an important historical event provides the participant with a sense of agency and collectivity with their fellow participants and despite the fact that the event is a recreation there is still a feeling of immersion with the source material and a sense of achievement as being part of something important. Participants place a great emphasis on research, accuracy and integrity as a way to centre the event's historical significance and a means of justifying this experience. By engaging with the existing historical discourse surrounding the event, there is an intention to expand on or instigate a new way of thinking about the original event and its relationship to the present. With regards to visiting battle reenactments, Schneider clarifies: 'I did not participate, except as a witness to their actions. That is, I did not, myself, reenact —except in so far as witnessing any event is to participate to some degree – to have been there' (Schneider, 2011: 9). From Schneider's perspective as a witness, the event seems more like entertainment than a historical document. This spectacle is immersive for the audience as bearing witness to such an event creates an 'I was there too' dynamic that sweeps the audience up

into the collective, reenacting experience. With there being great import placed upon the accuracy and authenticity of the recreation, Schneider's analysis questions whether the reenactment becomes more evocative and intense than that of the original and might indeed replace any need for the original at all. Yet, the nature of there being an audience for these battle reenactments troubles the claim to authenticity and historical accuracy due to the immersive qualities that the events hold for the audience. In order to 'get it right' the reenactors would need a controlled environment and having an audience of strangers and people outside of the reenacting community complicates any claim to historical accuracy (Schneider, 2011: 10). Schneider argues however, that the failure to reproduce a historical event exactly creates an open dialogue and an intermingling of past and present that serves to create a new experience entirely. This viewpoint has been influential to my process throughout this project. In the same way that a playful approach allows for unexpected outcomes, the failure to reproduce something or to bring back a perfect past object creates a different article from the original which provokes unforeseen responses.

I believe that performance was an appropriate form for examining my research questions as to explore the idea of lost property and lost objects as evocative things charged with meaning, it seems appropriate for these items to be encountered in a live space. Performance is uniquely suited to exploring physicality, presence, absence, and temporality. Schneider explores theatre and performance's ability to engage with temporality, history and memory in a nuanced and complex way, using 'Theatricality' as a conceptual through line:

> 'Theatricality' – by which I mean to reference something theatrical, or something of (or reminiscent of) the theatre – is relative to mimesis, simulation, doubling, imitating, copying, even if not identical. Identicality is already undone in all of these words, as they are all words for the side-step operation by which one thing stands in for another thing, either as the same or as almost the same but not quite. (Schneider, 2001: 18).

She describes the act of reproducing something as an inherently theatrical action; the redoing, the reanimation of history and memory producing traces or echoes of the original event due to their happening within a unique temporal situation where time is suspended. Schneider echoes Walter

Benjamin's sentiment in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935), as thinking of the reenactment in the context of performance correlates to his thoughts on reproductions of original pieces of art, reproductions that are the products of studying artistic techniques which are mass produced for profit. Akin to Schneider, Benjamin's reproductions exist in a time out of sync with the original object. He describes: 'Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' (Benjamin, 1999: 214). According to Benjamin, the reproduction becomes a phantom object, out of place in its present and existing in a kind of in-between space; A space for the repetition and the copy, a space adjacent to that of the original but crucially not the same. The space in which the reproduction exists is similar to that of the theatrical space that Schneider discusses. Schneider's understanding of the theatrical space felt applicable to my practice as part of this research project as she is concerned with the ephemeral and the idea of recovering something that is lost to us through the practice of repetition and reproduction. In regard to objects, reconstruction, reenactment and reproduction refer to history and memory in a way that summons a kind of 'aura', a shadow of the original object which lacks the purpose, authenticity and context of the original thing (Benjamin, 1999: 215). The 'aura' exists in a space out of sync with the original objects' past and future, it persists in a present that seems detached from reality. With this in mind, performance as a form allowed me to explore the idea of reproducing an object bound up with personal history and memory in a space removed from the day-to-day and which is inextricably linked to play and storytelling.

Schneider's work is in conversation with the work of Boym and Barthes as her analysis of reenactments, their connection to remembering and reanimating history, examines the nostalgic sentiment that moments in history will become unimportant, irrelevant and as a result forgotten. Unlike Barthes who centres his own experience of nostalgia, Schneider is an onlooker to the preservationist efforts of others and this provides a more critical reading. In the case of the events

that Schneider witnessed and writes about, this fear of a disappearing past is as much a kind of entertainment as an act of preservation.

In this chapter, I explored the existing theory on nostalgia as a social, cultural and personal phenomenon to place my work in a broader context of work that engages with nostalgia. Boym's work, through extensive historical and cultural analysis, defines nostalgia as the rejection of a chaotic, disruptive and alienating present in favour of an image of the past which seems perfect and unspoiled in comparison. Barthes' writing highlights that the way in which idealistic visions of the past threaten to slip away prompts the need to hold them as close as possible through the collection and preservation of physical objects that possess strong associations with this past. Susan Stewart makes evident the role nostalgia plays in the desire to collect personal belongings, evocative ephemera and mementos of experiences as weight and expectation is placed upon these objects to conjure up the perfect memory every single time they are engaged with. In her book, Schneider connects the nostalgic impulse to resurrect and reanimate via the performative practice of reenactment, both in the context of historical battle reenactments and reenactments explored through performance.

In this research project, I have tried to place my work in conversation with the theoretical work on nostalgia, exemplified by Boym and Barthes' criticism, however I have also looked for opportunities to expand upon and complicate the simplistic understanding of nostalgia as a longing for the past when the present feels impenetrable. It has been my intention to address nostalgia through its connection to collecting objects and saving the things that threaten to become lost to us through the device of lost property. However, instead of sealing away and protecting these collectibles I wish to add, expand on and open them out to an audience.

CHAPTER TWO

Following on from my examination of nostalgia and its theoretical discourse, this chapter will contextualise the theory discussed in Chapter One with regard to my critical approach to performance making that will be explored thoroughly in Chapter Three. Seeking an outlook on nostalgia that leaves room for and actively creates situations in which the unexpected can arise led me to the work of Eve Sedgwick, particularly her notion of reparative reading. In this chapter, I will draw from Sedgwick's ideas to analyse the work of artists and performance makers - specifically Christian Boltanski, Sophie Calle and Lone Twin – as models of sorts for my own practical work examining and expanding on nostalgia. Each example discussed features personal belongings as devices through which to explore loss, narrative, transformation and the nature of usefulness versus useless. These examples serve to strengthen my argument that objects are appropriate devices through which to explore the nuances of nostalgia and its potential for the unexpected, highlighting their aptitude for encouraging personal, emotional attachments and their innate mutability in terms of appearance and use value. The examples discussed in this chapter illustrate how nostalgia can be explored from alternative angles by forging a connection between nostalgia and the mutability of objects. The various associations and immeasurable, imaginative possibilities that objects can offer to different people serves to bring out their playful and surprising qualities.

In both my research and practice, I have sought a way of balancing a strong sense of artistic presence as Calle does in *The Hotel* alongside the warmth, surprise and playfulness that is found in the unexpected human connections in Boltanski's *Lost Property at Grand Central Station* and Lone Twin's *The Boat Project*. Balancing both sentiments fosters a perspective on nostalgia and an engagement with loss and speculation that creates space for joy and a sense of play within the unexpected. I engage with nostalgia directly in my practice by centring the personal reflections and recollections on lost personal items from those who lost them. These recollections acknowledge feelings associated with nostalgia, a sensation of loss which leaves an image or impression of the lost

object as something perfect, frozen in its moment of loss yet there is a sense of possibility and lightness through the prospect of the lost object being made anew. In attempting to create new versions of the lost objects based upon the images conjured by their owner's reflections, I am indebted to Eve Sedgwick's notion of the reparative which acknowledges the past but points to new, unexpected and exciting future possibilities.

In her book, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy and Performativity* (2002), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick proposes the notion of the reparative, a unique mode of criticism which deliberately leaves room for the unexpected and holds a cautiously optimistic view of the future. Sedgwick contrasts the reparative with paranoid thinking which she describes as an aversion to 'bad surprises', the paranoid reader seeking knowledge in a manner that dissects history and the idea of the past so as to prepare for a future that is predetermined and pre-understood by the reader to be unpleasant (Sedgwick, 2003: 130). Sedgwick elaborates:

> The unidirectionally future-oriented vigilance of paranoia generates, paradoxically, a complex relation to temporality that burrows both backward and forward: because there must be no bad surprises, and because learning of the possibility of a bad surprise would itself constitute a bad surprise, paranoia requires that bad news be always already known. (Sedgwick, 2003: 130).

Paranoid reading does not subscribe to the idea of the future as something that unfolds naturally and unpredictably, but rather something that should be figured out in advance of it happening. It creates a unique relationship between past and future as it is focused on the future in a manner that dissects the past to predict what could be ahead and prepare for the worst possible outcome. To the paranoid reader, being surprised is being vulnerable to attack; there lies within the paranoid the need for self-protection and the desire to prevent any or all bad things from happening. Sedgwick does not undermine paranoid criticism, she acknowledges it as a valid standpoint but indicates that this position can close one off from unexpected positive possibilities. Some surprises can be good and even joyous yet a paranoid viewpoint does not leave room for these potentialities. Sedgwick

proposes her notion of the reparative as a mode of criticism that is reflective and reflexive but instead of mining the past for indicators of what could go wrong in the future, the reparative functions as a lens for exploring information that leaves room for the unexpected to transpire; unlike paranoid criticism it welcomes surprise. Sedgwick describes:

> … to read from a reparative position is to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination that no horror, however apparently unthinkable, shall ever come to the reader as new; to a reparatively positioned reader, it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise. Because there can be terrible surprises, however, there can also be good ones. Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates. Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did. (Sedgwick, 2003: 146).

The aim of the reparative is not to wholly reject the anxious paranoia and the fear that everything could go wrong but rather keep it in mind and not let it become consumptive. This stance creates space for things to work out differently than you expected, instead of preparing yourself for the worst, there is an openness to experience change, growth, renewal and repair. This undetermined approach to engaging with the past and visualising what is ahead allows for a sense of personal agency in that one can forge their own path and make decisions regarding their own future. Sedgwick's notion of reflecting on the past reparatively to allow for an active and positive outlook on the future has been the anchoring force behind my approach to crafting a research thesis and performance practice that aims to reframe nostalgia. The following examples of art and performance work use objects, specifically personal belongings, to create a dialogue between the past and an unknown future that is indebted to the discourse surrounding nostalgia.

Christian Boltanski's installation *Lost Property at Grand Central Station* foregrounds the emotional connections between people and objects by displaying the contents of the Grand Central Station lost property office for visitors to examine and walk amongst. The installation was part of a series of works, including other installations, that were housed in public and religious buildings and

exhibited simultaneously across New York City under the title *Lost: New York Projects*. The project was concerned with reframing the value and significance of lost personal belongings, pre-owned objects and second-hand clothing within the context of collective space. The project, and in particular *Lost Property at Grand Central Station*, brought attention to and caused one to linger on the objects that were misplaced and forgotten about in a large, fast-paced city such as New York.

The installation consisted of large metal shelves upon which the contents of the station's lost property was organised and exhibited in the station's main waiting room. Visitors were able to browse the shelves, able to spend as long as they wanted viewing each item and able to view the objects as a group but also witness their uniqueness and individuality up close. The overall effect of Boltanski's exhibition was: '… every bit as loquacious, idiosyncratic and funny as the crowds of people bustling through Grand Central' (Cotter, 1995). The lost property items stood in for everyday New Yorkers, as representatives of their presence within the city as well as pointing to the frenetic momentum of day-to-day life by the fact of their being lost. The viewer finds themselves trying to establish connections, creating scenarios in their mind about the moment in which these mundane, specific and at times bizarre objects ended up carefully and respectfully assembled and itemised. The experience of viewing these items seemed to be heartwarming, entertaining and amusing despite the fact that their presence in the space was a result of loss and separation. There is an activeness in the act of speculating about the origins of each lost object and whether they will be reunited with their owner that is joyful rather than wholly melancholic. Boltanski engages with memory and loss in a way that allows for a sense of hopefulness, a sense of connection to the lives of strangers and encourages slower, lingering moments in a bustling, anonymous city environment.

The randomness of the items and incongruity to their surroundings serves to lighten the tone of an exhibition concerned with the lost and the displaced and creates the feeling that despite the anonymity of living in a metropolis there is a highly specific and detailed sense of individuality perpetuated by the objects. There is a hope for a reunion between object and owner yet the nature of the exhibition, putting these fleeting and fairly insular moments of loss in a public setting, changes

the status of the lost object, raising its profile in a way that serves to increase its significance. Boltanski's work engages with specific objects belonging to people who are anonymous both to himself and to those viewing the exhibition. In my project, I have been able to expand upon the sense of individuality and connectivity by sharing the story of lost items from those who lost them by working with close friends. I have chosen to focus on familiarity rather than anonymity in relation to the examination of objects and their relationship to nostalgia as a means to expand on the more reductive definition of nostalgia as a shutting off of oneself from the present. This notion of expansion takes the shape of reflecting on personal belongings in a much more specific and individual capacity than Boltanski. Boltanski engages with the reparative as the artwork encourages the audience to speculate about the objects and the circumstances of their being lost which creates a future orientated outlook that is open to new narratives.

Thematically similar to Boltanski's *Lost Property at Grand Central Station*, the work of artist Sophie Calle addresses the relationships between people and their personal belongings in much more intimate and voyeuristic settings, particularly in her piece *The Hotel*. *The Hotel* refers to Calle's employment as a chamber maid for a Venice hotel in which she took advantage of her access to guest's rooms to look through and photograph their belongings, keeping a logbook of her thoughts. Similar to how Boltanski's lost property items were displayed, collated and categorised as they would appear in a lost property office, the objects encountered and photographed in black and white portraits by Calle were categorised under their room number. As I have discussed, the objects displayed by Boltanski encouraged a sense of connection between the viewers of the piece and the anonymous owners of the lost objects. Due to the amusement and surprise prompted by some of the unexpected items in *Lost Property at Grand Central Station*, the viewer could try to fabricate and speculate about how the items came to be there in the first place in a manner that is playful. The items documented in *The Hotel* encourage a level of speculation from the viewer also in terms of who the items belong to but, unlike Boltanski's items these objects are not lost but belong to someone who knows where they are and who could be coming back for them at any moment.

The deeply personal nature of the items photographed and Calle's lack of connection yet physical closeness to them produces an unsettling but intriguing effect. Calle photographed and listed the contents of wardrobes and suitcases sparing no detail; in some cases, deducing what the resident must have been wearing that day due to the absence of certain clothes as well as what activities, they had undertaken, checking whether or not the bath had been used for example. Calle inserted herself within the private space of the hotel guests without their consent and makes the viewer of her documentation complicit in these acts of voyeurism. Her images and text provoke a kind of sordid fascination but also an embarrassment and disgust with oneself as if reading someone else's diary. The images prompt an anxiety or feeling of threat as they suggest that the hotel guest could come back to their room at any moment and discover Calle rifling through their belongings yet, at the same time, there is the sense that the owner has vanished from existence with their belongings left to stand in for them.

In *The Hotel*, Calle's logbook, in combination with her photographs, demonstrates how an examination of personal belongings can be used to construct a narrative about the relationship between an object and its owner. Belongings can tell us so much about a person but also about ourselves for the tendency to look for connections and meaning in the things that we surround ourselves with. Calle's approach in this particular work could be considered unethical and morally dubious due to the guests lack of consent however, this method centres Calle's presence and perspective on the guests' belongings as they are not present to curate or defend them. Boltanski's artistic presence within *Lost Property at Grand Central Station* is at a remove, he did not have a personal connection to the objects featured and did not choose the items on display and the effect of this is heartwarming as it allows the personalities of everyday New Yorkers to shine through the objects. In Calle's work however, the viewer is led to speculate about Calle's motives for documenting and presenting the objects in the investigative mode that she adopts as it is unclear whether she is documenting all of the belongings in each room or just the items that intrigue her. As a result, her presence as an artist, selecting, dissecting and photographing the objects she encounters in the hotel

rooms she enters, is felt strongly and is impossible to ignore. Calle's approach in this piece can be considered reparative as the sense of the imminent return of the hotel guests creates a charged anticipation of the future.

The performance artists Lone Twin embody the spirit of Sedgwick's concept of the reparative. There is a feeling of the unknown in how their performances unfold but also a hopefulness in that what will happen will be mutually valuable for both performer and audience. Lone Twin is known to begin performances with the phrase 'Good luck everybody', a statement that is inclusive of both performers and audience members and creates a mutual investment in what is about to happen (Lavery and Williams, 2011: 13). Through this sentiment, Lone Twin actively engage with the reparative by leaving room in their performances for the unexpected. It suggests that the performers do not necessarily know how the performance will unfold yet this sense of the unknown does not seem daunting but rather playful and exciting, there is agency and activity in the prospect of the unexpected.

Sedgwick's delineation of the reparative is to acknowledge yet balance the paranoid's tendency to be prepared for a bleak vision of the future with an openness to be pleasantly surprised by a future which may turn out differently than expected. This viewpoint manages to balance both the ominous and optimistic due to its ability to engage with multiple temporalities, taking stock and possessing an awareness in what has happened before, situating oneself definitively within the present but also approaching the thought of what could come next with a sense of anticipation. The work of Lone Twin similarly manages to straddle the opposing poles of heaviness and lightness, the serious and playful, through a 'child-like' sensibility that desires to collect, to let go, to feel intensely but also move on quickly, engaging with the world with an openness to learn, play and grow (Lavery and Williams, 2011: 13). Lone Twin's *The Boat Project* is a distinctively reparative approach to artmaking as it is simultaneously reflective and retrospective but situated within a present absorbed with the construction of an object that has future prospects and use value. The Boat Project was Lone Twin's response to the commission from the Cultural Olympiad to represent South-East

England as part of a series of events to mark the 2012 Olympic Games in London. The aim of the project was to use donated pieces of wood to build a working, sailable boat. Lone Twin's response served to subvert the direction of the brief that asked participating artists to explore the nation as a 'blank canvas' and the Olympic notions of exceptional individuals and stratospheric achievement through their focus on the everyday, personal and existing ideas of community (Wilkie, 2013: 53). Lone Twin's Gregg Whelan describes the project and their intentions before it began:

> It's another accumulation project with the initiation being for people to donate bits of wood for the boat, and stories to accompany their piece of wood. Their donation needs to be valuable to them in some way, the opposite to something they no longer want or need, the act of donating shares the object's value, it allows others to share in its worth – which is why its important that we're building a working seaworthy vessel rather than an object that's just for display. (Lavery and Williams, 2011: 342).

By donating wooden objects that had varying degrees of emotional significance, the contributors share the importance of their objects with the artists and boat makers – the boat and the objects used to make it became something reciprocal and collective. The value of the object increases as its story is shared and as it is used to construct the boat it is given a new life, purpose and use value. This process refutes the notion of a 'blank canvas' by utilising items and stories already in existence, making use of what is already there and engaging with an existing community bringing people together through a mutual aim (Wilkie, 2013: 563). The objects donated ranged from the emotionally symbolic - items representing painful experiences which were donated with the aim of letting go and moving on – to the more mundane and practically valuable. Lone Twin exhibit a playful yet pragmatic approach to nostalgia and memory through the objects donated as despite the objects' varying degrees of emotional resonance they are all viewed as equally important to the project. For each donation, the artists made a record of the objects by photographing the donors with their objects and recording stories and recollections associated with the objects as the main part of the project's documentation. The 'emotional heart' of the project is found in the stories associated with each object, the emotional connection and meaning the objects hold for their

owners unearthed in 'the event of each telling' (Wilkie, 2013: 566). Lone Twin do not centre the final product, the vessel aptly named Collective Spirit, as the main focus but rather that of the process of public engagement, collecting stories and using the donations to build something new out of what has been let go. They highlight the importance of the objects but acknowledge that they are no longer serving the donator as they are and that their memory is better appreciated by being repurposed to make something with mutable future use value.

The way in which Lone Twin emphasise the importance of personal stories and emotional connections to belongings aligns with my own aim of exploring the reparative possibilities for nostalgia. Through my focus on lost property, there is a clear difference with regards to the objects gathered as part of *The Boat Project* and the objects present in my practice; Lost property being a collection of objects which have not been voluntarily let go of but rather accidentally misplaced or forgotten about, with the owner only later realising and feeling its absence. However, both lost items and items which have been donated encourage the sharing of stories and recollections with the remembering of the lost belongings being a more evocative and wistful mode of storytelling due to the abrupt separation of person and object. Those who have donated their objects to the boat project have chosen to part with them and have thus rationalised this process whereas the participants of my project were taken unawares by the loss of their belonging and had to reckon with the separation after it had happened.

In the work of Lone Twin, objects and personal belongings are gathered and employed in performances not because of what they mean but rather how they can be useful to the artists. Whelan describes the objects used in their performances as being like 'toys' rather than 'totems or fetishes,' playful objects which can have a multitude of possibilities and many imaginative hypothetical uses (Lavery and Williams, 2011: 60). The wooden objects donated to *The Boat Project* project were valuable in part because of the stories associated with them but primarily for their usefulness as raw materials from which to craft the boat. As the boat was a working vessel, the

objects donated were broken down and streamlined in order to be more useful as building materials, for instance:

> A bandsaw was employed to cut bulky objects into slices that could be used in the boat's panels, and thus an element of deconstruction became an inevitable part of the construction process. There is a sense of democracy at play here: in both the taking part and taking apart, none of the donated items is awarded a higher status than the others. (Lavery and Williams, 2011: 564)

Cutting objects into uniform slices suggests not a lack of concern but certainly an unpreciousness with regards to the objects. No one object is more important than the others but rather they are all tools which have a 'job' to do (Lavery and Williams, 2011: 60). The objects have a future value and have been transformed in a way that could never have been predicated by the owners before the existence of the project. The idea of deconstructing and manipulating the objects to suit the project has been influential to my practice as making versions of objects that were machine made by hand requires some artistic license. In most cases I had to approximate the materials and sizing of objects in order to best communicate the feeling and vision that the text describing them conjured. Like *The Boat Project* donations, each item was given equal weight and consideration throughout the project, however instead of prefacing the items' usefulness as the source of their importance I chose to centre the lack of purpose and use value inherent in the new versions of the lost objects. As most of the objects detailed by my participants were objects lost in childhood, they no longer had use value to them and were anachronistic to their lives as adults. The inherent uselessness of the items served to liberate them from the memory of the original items in the same way that the tool-like efficiency and purpose given to the donated objects in *The Boat Project* allowed for a letting go of the past, engaging with the reparative notion of looking ahead for new potentials and surprising possibilities.

The work of Boltanski, Calle and Lone Twin and how they map onto Sedgwick's notion of the reparative have been influential to both the formulation of and reflection on my own practical work examining nostalgia anew. By centring their practice around objects, personal belongings that are lost, found and donated, the artists discussed in this chapter have been able to address nostalgia

through the relationship between objects, memory and narrative. In each work however, due to how the objects have been displayed, manipulated and repurposed by the artist, the idea of nostalgia has been made more specific, personal and incongruous which serves to suggest future possibilities for the items that reject the expectations of them as simply inert objects of nostalgia.

CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter, I will explore in-depth the practice that is an integral part of this research project. This work resulted in a performance that I intended as a practical exploration of my research questions: in what ways can the definition(s) of nostalgia, outlined by critical theory on the subject, be developed and expanded upon to include more active and positive outcomes? Are there certain lenses through which nostalgia can encourage new, transformative opportunities and futures? And can new possibilities be provoked by drawing a connection between nostalgia and physical objects through the device of lost property? Following on from the art and performance work discussed in the previous chapter, I explore how nostalgia can be reframed, adopting a methodology indebted to Sedgwick's notion of the reparative, through a practice that foregrounds the significance of personal belongings and the memories of them. I addressed my research questions through my attempts to reanimate recollections of lost personal belongings – making new versions of these objects which were the focal point of my performance. The live performance, *Lost Property*, took place in the University of Glasgow's Gilmorehill Centre on the 13th of June 2023 and the following chapter will examine each aspect of my performance, the thought process behind it and the fulfilment of these elements onstage, alongside analyses of relevant critical theory to examine the potentials of nostalgia. It has been my aim to make a case for nostalgia as a more nuanced sensation than that already explored in existing critical discourse, and I am concerned with the potential for nostalgia to explore how it may activate and stimulate rather than consume. I will reflect on my practice in response to my research questions and discuss theory that was influential to my object-making process and my performance process. I will also consider the elements of my practice that could have been approached differently to better address the objectives of my research. For example, elements such as playfulness, performativity and embracing failure could have been expanded upon in order to establish nostalgia as a multifaceted sensation that can encourage reparative and active engagements.

My practice grew out of the decision to make anew lost personal belongings using descriptions and recollections of these significant items. I sought to create new versions of lost belongings using crafting processes such as sewing, crocheting and sculpting with mouldable clay to underline my presence as the maker as well as draw attention to the time spent between myself and the objects. To obtain details and descriptions of lost personal belongings, I reached out to friends who were interested in participating in the project and sent them a list of questions pertaining to one personal belonging that they had lost with the commitment to use their descriptions as a blueprint from which to craft an object for them. The questionnaire focused mainly on the physical description of the objects so that the responses could be as informative as possible with regards to crafting a new version. The questionnaire was constructed as follows:

Can you tell me about an object you have lost?

What did the item look like? (Describe in as much detail as you can the shape, colour and, if appropriate, the contents of the item).

How big or small would you say the item was?

Did it feel heavy or light?

What did it feel like to touch? Was it rough, smooth or somewhere in between? Hard or soft or somewhere in between?

Was the item old or new? (Newly acquired or something that you had had for a long time or perhaps it was already old when you acquired it).

What did you use the object for? What place did it hold in your day-to-day life?

Do you know where and when it was that you lost it?

Have you managed to replace this item?

It was crucial that these questions were not devoid of emotion as the objects discussed in the

responses held varying degrees of emotional weight for the participants however, I did not wish to

encourage certain sentimental reactions but rather remain neutral and concerned with the items'

details. The questions did not invite particularly emotional responses but rather descriptive and

illustrative responses of the items' physicality and their relationship to the contributor. The content

and format of the questionnaire was useful and productive to the project as it encouraged responses

which helped me to visualise and create an object that I felt could respond to the memory of the

original item. Each participant received this questionnaire laid out exactly as above, as by using the

same questions every time there was consistency to the responses but also an unpredictability and

uniqueness in relation to the specifics of the experiences and objects described. By opting to explore

the specifics of each item as important objects as opposed to focusing exclusively on the experience

of losing them, I was able to make the characteristics and unique qualities of the objects the focal

point. This helped to alleviate the tension surrounding the idea of them as lost and never to be

interacted with again. A response which exemplifies the blend of descriptive information and

personal connection that I was seeking through the questionnaire would be that of the object

'Bugman':

Bugman was an action figure I had as a child. He was 15-20 cm tall. His head was soft black rubber and shaped like a spiders head with 8 red and white eyes and white puffy fangs. His body was hard plastic and humanoid; mainly dark green with some black and red detailing as I recall. I do not remember when or where I acquired bugman, but I found him somewhere. He was not bought for me. As such he was already worn. The colours painted on his eyes and fangs was chipping away and I believe he had notches on his shoulders where a cape or some other article of clothing would've been originally anchored. He had no lettering on him, I was the one who christened him Bugman. Bugman was my favourite toy and I played with him regularly. He would get into tussles or races or some other action sequence with my other toys. I always gave the villains an edge at first but bugman would always win. He was the protagonist. I also chewed his soft rubber head from time to time. I think I lost Bugman playing with him in the garden. At least I remember looking for him there. I don't remember being particularly upset. Though I loved him, I think I appreciated the logic that I had found him as a lost toy and so it made sense for him to become lost again. (Participant No. 3, 2023)

This response was useful in that it gave precise details regarding the physical appearance of 'Bugman', which was invaluable in terms of trying to capture a likeness of him but also the description of the relationship between the participant and object highlighted the individual importance of the object. Why its memory was nostalgic in the sense that the image of the object had stayed with them, unchanged, despite the passage of time. The questionnaire draws from Barthes' notion of the punctum as it brings attention to the striking details of an object that remain with us even after the item is no longer present. These details are the reason why the specific items featured in the questionnaire were chosen by the participants as opposed to other things that they have lost. By highlighting particular objects in their answers, the contributors indicated that there was a special, detailed and more complex relationship between themselves and the objects as opposed to a convenient and perfunctory one. I used the recollections, stories and descriptions of lost belongings to make these items anew and by doing so created something that was unexpected from the remembrances of something deeply familiar to the contributor. By foregrounding this idea of the unexpected with regards to the object's appearance, I was able to bring a sense of play and spontaneity to my versions of the lost items. By responding to the question answers in a way that utilised my own interpretation of the items, I was able to subvert nostalgia's reductive connotations as a sensation that longs for the impossible return of a perfect lost object.

As the objective I set for myself was to make objects drawn from the descriptions of lost belongings, I approached their construction with the concept of the reproduction in mind. Umberto Eco's theory regarding the reproduction was useful in navigating the process of making my own versions of lost belongings as despite being unable to make exact copies, I was ultimately responding to the descriptions as blueprints for my own work. In *Travels in Hyperreality* (1983), Eco examines the prevalence and zeal for a type of reproduction in western culture that he terms as the 'absolute fake' and explores the idea that the reproduction of a famous artwork or monument is just as vivid and expressive as the original (Eco, 1983: 8). The reproduction is frozen in time at the apex of its grandeur and has not decayed in the way that the genuine article has. Eco discusses his visit to the The Palace of Living Arts in California which displays reproductions and recreations of classical sculptures and paintings. Here the work of the Old Masters is all housed in one place and in some instances a wax version of the artist is placed alongside as if they are still working on their masterpiece, giving a visual narrative to the curation that reads like a theatrical tableau:

> Beside each statue there is the 'original' painting; but here, too it is not a photographic reproduction, but a very cheap oil copy, like a sidewalk artist's; and once again the copy seems more convincing than the model as the visitor is convinced that the Palace itself replaces and improves on the National Gallery of the Prado. (Eco, 1983: 19).

The grouping together copies of arguably the most famous artworks in the world, despite the kitschy curation and low-quality materials used to make the copies, leaves Eco impressed and satisfied. Eco suggests that:

> The palace's philosophy is not, 'We are giving you the reproduction so that you will want the original,' but rather, 'We are giving you the reproduction so you will no longer feel any need for the original.' (Eco, 1983: 19).

With the sentiment that the reproduction 'replaces and improves' on the original piece of art, Eco suggest that it becomes a surrogate object that ends up replacing the real thing (ibid). The reproductions that Eco discusses are more potent than the originals as they manage to capture the

cultural notoriety that famous artworks evoke but struggle live up to in actuality. Seeing a widely studied artwork in the flesh can be a dissatisfying experience as it does not match the larger-than-life image that we have in our heads. The items that I made as part of this project were not intended to be exact replicas or reproductions as they were not made to replace the original items but rather be new objects drawn from the recollections of the original lost belongings.

My focus was on creating objects that responded to the tone, feeling and physical descriptions of the objects as opposed to reproducing their likeness exactly. The appearance of the items that I made for this project was rooted in my interpretation of the questionnaire responses as well as the limitations imposed by my own crafting capabilities and materials. I sought to capture the feeling provoked in the recollections, and the objects thereby ended up having quite different physical manifestations from the originals. This played with the participants' expectations and relieved any sense of pressure to accurately reproduce the original source material.

I approached making the lost objects described by my participants in their questionnaire responses with the mentality that I was not remaking or replacing the lost items but instead making something new that could occupy a different space in the owner's day-to-day life than the original. My process with regards to crafting the objects was to focus on the physical specifications detailed by the participants but also to draw on my own imagination and interpretation of the descriptions to imbue the objects with a sense of newness and playfulness. In order to construct the objects, I used materials that were either already at my disposal or easily accessible to keep the process of making the objects within my practical capabilities and ensure that I could make them by hand. My main materials were mouldable polymer clay, second-hand clothing, buttons, felt, fabric pens and wool, and these were instrumental in determining the appearance and texture of the objects. My objects were mostly small in size and fairly soft, smooth, and in one instance plushy, to the touch. Easily held in one hand, the objects were a practical size for interacting with in the performance space but also this idea of the handheld reflected the intimacy, care and labour involved in the process of the crafting the objects. I approached constructing each object in the same manner and with the same

intention of following a playful and intuitive making process. I read through each questionnaire response closely, underlining details which stood out to me as evocative and specific, I drew images of what I imagined the objects to look like, then using the materials I had available to me and my existing crafting skills – clay modelling, crochet and sewing – I made the objects.

Once my versions of the lost belongings were made, I filmed videos with each participant in which I unveiled the finished object to them and discussed the item at length. Each video followed the same format, beginning with myself arriving at the homes of those who participated in the project and exchanging pleasantries before presenting them with and discussing the object I made for them. When screening the videos in the final performance, I chose not to use the audio that preceded the presentation and discussion of the objects and opted instead to play recordings of myself reading each participants response to the questionnaire in full and these recordings were accompanied by a Yamaha keyboard preset backing track. When combined with the visuals which possessed the warmth and joviality that occurs when one is in the presence of close friends, the audio served to underline the playfulness at the core of the project which helped to subvert the tension and emotional weight often attributed to nostalgia. The inclusion of close friends rather than strangers as participants of the project affected the tone of the practice overall. As there was a sense of ease and comfort in my relationships with the participants, I did not have to justify or explain the details of my research and practice methods and this conviviality bled into the recordings. It is possible that this relaxed tone affected how I was able to explore nostalgia, the ease in which we were able to relate to one another, be open with each other and make each other laugh served to release the tension around exploring nostalgia in a way that might not have been achievable had I involved strangers.

The videos' arrival scenes were followed by the presentation of the new item and the participants' reactions to seeing the item for the first time which led into one-to-one discussions between myself and the participants in which we talked about their expectations for the new item, what they would now use the item for or if they would use it at all. By involving close friends as my

collaborators in this project there was the possibility that their reactions to the objects I made for them were not entirely genuine. Due to the closeness of our relationships, there could have been an obligation felt to be overwhelming positive and supportive of my efforts as opposed to brutal honesty. I imagine that the content and the tone of the videos would have been vastly different had I used contributions from and featured people who were not known to me. However, I have my doubts as to whether strangers would have felt comfortable being completely truthful in their reactions due to the presence of the camera. It is my opinion that the shared history and comfort in each other's presence that happens as a result of being close friends ultimately fostered a more honest reaction. Also, the tongue-in-cheek tone of the questions and prompts I gave in the videos alleviated the pressure on the participant to react in a more realistic and natural way. Does this mean they were less honest because of the tongue-in-cheek tone?

The format of the videos allowed for me to explore the idea of the objects I made as having a life after the project. I did this through placing them within the context of the participants' home spaces despite them being incongruous to and a little silly in these surroundings. I filmed the videos in the participants' homes in part to make these meetings as convenient as possible for them but mainly so that the audience would be able to see the items in situ in their new homes. Encouraging the participants to hold the objects and discuss their possibilities in the video segments established a tangible relationship between myself, the participants and the objects that looked ahead to objects' potential whilst simultaneously reflecting on their pasts. The insistence upon the future of the new objects was referenced through the cutaways of the objects situated in various locations within the participant's home that they had chosen as places to potentially store or use the object. The cutaways cemented the objects within the present of the videos but at the same time suggested future possibilities and uses for the objects. These moments possessed a playful sensibility as some of the placement options seemed laughable and anachronistic to the rest of the home environment, demonstrating their impracticality and uselessness as they have been effectively shoehorned into the participant's living space and personal life.

By adopting a mentality that was open to change throughout my practice, I was able to find opportunities for the unexpected. In the first meeting that I filmed, I came upon an idea which I implemented and repeated in the rest of the videos. This idea arose when discussing how the object I had made could be improved and the solution we came up with was paid forward to the next object I made — i.e. the keyring chain that my first participant suggested be added to their item was instead added to the item of the second participant and the improvement suggested by my second participant was added to the third participant's item and so forth. Again, due to the relaxed tone of the filming segment, and as a result of the participants being my friends, I was able to create an environment in which when asked what could be made better about the object, the participant responded honestly. I was looking for a way in which to distance the new object from the original and give it a physical attribute that would help it to be something that could be used by the participant in the future. My aim with this element was to move the idea of the lost object from the realm of the past to having a future that was not yet mapped out and thereby explore nostalgia reparatively, connecting each object to the next, as each had a material attribute which referred back to the object made before, as well as providing a new element that the original object did not have. In most cases this element was something anachronistic to the object which further intensified the playful sense of uselessness that the object now had, allowing it to be free of expectation.

The action of the performance played out as follows: I used masking tape to tape two squares on the floor of the stage, one large, which sat empty, and one small, in which I placed five gift-wrapped presents. Each present was wrapped in exactly the same bright yellow wrapping with small multicoloured balloons and tied with a red ribbon. Behind the taped squares was a desk on which a live-streaming camcorder was trained, its visuals displayed on the theatre's back-screen. Beside the desk was a large television which was set up to play the videos that I made for the performance. Once the audience were seated, the house lights dimmed leaving the image of the desktop on the back screen and an isolated spotlight on the small, taped square as the only sources of light. The stage lights rose slightly as I entered the performance space and pressed play on the TV,

beginning the videos which lasted for the duration of the performance. The videos were five short discussions/interviews with the five participants, close friends who had elected to participate in my project, who received the presents featured on stage. In the videos, I met with each friend in their home to talk about and show them an object I had made for them, and which had now been wrapped and placed on stage. Throughout the performance, I selected objects one at a time and unwrapped the item in front of the audience. I alternated between unwrapping the objects whilst standing close to the audience in the large square taped on the floor and unwrapping them whilst seated at the desk centre-stage. Unwrapping the objects behind the desk and the close-up footage of these moments recorded live by a live streaming camcorder highlighted the care and tenderness that was a central component in the making of the objects. The footage from the camcorder was displayed on the back screen and focused solely on the actions of my hands as I unwrapped and handled the objects.

Onstage, I moved across the performance space between the small square where the wrapped objects were situated, the large square and the desk. Within the confines of the large square, I taped smaller squares which became individual slots for the wrapped objects. Over the course of the performance, these slots were joined to one another with a connecting line of tape. Occasionally I would unwrap an item whilst standing in the large square and in other instances I would bring the object back to the desk and unwrap it slowly and carefully in front of the camcorder, the livestream recording the movements of my hands and the incremental reveal of the objects. When situated behind the desk I would handle the objects in front of the camera, carefully in some instances and playfully in others, the movements dependent upon the size and fragility of the object under examination. Once each object was unwrapped and interacted with in front of the camera, I gift wrapped all of the objects together in one large parcel, sealed tightly with many layers of masking tape. This action coincided with the end of the film and as I made my way offstage, I placed the large parcel back in its original spot within the small taped square.

In the live performance, my actions as a performer revolved around onstage interactions with the objects I made for my participants. The emphasis on perceived touch was drawn from Sedgwick's writing on the relationship between texture and agency:

> … to perceive texture is to know or hypothesize whether a thing will be easy or hard, safe or dangerous to grasp, to stack, to fold, to shred, to climb on, to stretch, to slide, to soak. Even more immediately than other perceptual systems, it seems, the sense of touch makes nonsense out of any dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; to touch is always ready to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold, and always also to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself, if only in the making of the textured object. (Sedgwick, 2003: 14).

An intentional and unselfconscious approach to touch in conjunction with the physical manipulation of an object is crucial in assessing its meaning and possibilities. I chose to physically examine and handle the objects made for the project as a way of tenderly discovering the capabilities of the object on behalf of the audience, who are at a distance from this experience and are not able to touch the objects themselves. This was intended to highlight the evocative nature of the objects as the recorded reflections played alongside the manipulation of the objects in the space yet create a sense of distance between the actions onstage and the audience. This distance highlights the fact that though losing personal belongings is a situation that is collectively relatable, the recollections and objects made for this performance were made in response to personal and specific experiences.

The process of making the objects for my participants was also reflected through the act of handling them on stage as my confident tactile motions signified my agency as the maker of the objects. This agency, however, was complicated by the nature of the objects as belonging to those who contributed to the project rather than myself; they were created by me but do not belong to me despite there being an emotional connection between myself and the object. In these movements, I was influenced by Sedgwick's notion of the reparative and wished to imbue the performance with this sentiment by deliberating leaving space for spontaneity in my manipulations of the recreated lost objects. Throughout the rehearsal process and the final performance, I sought to find newness and potentials for the objects post-performance through playful and instinctual actions. I interacted

with each object one by one, examining them closely and delicately in my hands, approaching each object with no preconceived routine but moving them and manipulating them in the moment. Handling the objects live meant that I found opportunities to be more playful with the items where it felt right and to be more delicate with others. I believe my actions gave the audience the opportunity to surmise how it might feel to interact with the objects; how they might feel in someone's hand, their size, weight and flexibility, with the effect of this being a sensation of limitless options. Focusing on the manipulation of the object, with an emphasis on texture and touch, helped to form a through-line between the objects' present state and the unknowns of their future.

After interacting with the objects in front of the livestream camera, I placed them within the taped squares on the floor and taped around them, constructing a grid to house the objects over the course of the performance. The grid was a visual reference to the taxonomical storage systems employed by lost property offices however it was not a space of classification or an organisational tool. Rather, it represented how the items were connected both to myself – as the maker of items and the grid system – as well as each other, through the paid forward modifications that were passed on to the next object. This idea was discovered through the process of making the videos with my participants and became a device to figuratively connect each disparate object and participant to one another through a needless effort to improve each object. This was a deliberately tongue-in-cheek action that served to again highlight the objects' uselessness and disconnection from the owner's current lifestyle, but was also a way of making the artistic process reparative through an openness to finding change and new possibilities throughout the practice.

As outlined in Chapter One, Susan Stewart's exploration of nostalgia through objects, memory and narrative was integral to my thinking behind creating objects that could have a life after the project. Stewart's concept of the souvenir was influential in the process of constructing my versions of the lost objects as it connotes a small, referential and often kitschy object that points to an experience had in an important place or moment in time:

> The souvenir may be seen as emblematic of the nostalgia that all narrative reveals – the longing for its place of origin. Particularly important here are the functions of the narrative of the self … its perpetual desire for reunion and incorporation, for the repetition that is not a repetition. (Stewart, 1993: ii).

The souvenir is an object whose appearance directly refers to a something — time, place or experience — that a person may desire to remember and reflect back upon in the future. They function as mementoes which allow one to return to an experience that is impossible to replicate again but the stories associated with the objects are preserved by their existence. These narratives undergo transformations and take on new meanings as the souvenirs are engaged with – handled, displayed, studied – again and again at different points in our lives. By making the lost objects by hand, guided by my own skills, imagination and the materials available to me, I believe the finished objects subverted the nostalgic desires to repeat and return to a specific moment in time through their unique and idiosyncratic appearance. The objects' unique appearance subverted their status as nostalgic objects as they were not able to directly refer to a specific memory through their image and form alone, this served to reframe the lost objects as having new potentials and future use value. The descriptions of the lost objects in the questionnaire highlighted their existence as phantom-like symbols however, once these stories were encapsulated in an item I constructed, their symbolic importance in the written form was subverted and poked fun at by its physical representation. My understanding of the written descriptions my participants provided alongside my assumptions and ideas created a kind of collective narrative or mythology surrounding the objects. The nature of my methodology and approach to making the items meant that they were never able to match the original item but have the capacity to offer something that is unexpected and that encourages a different kind of relationship. I was especially interested in making items that would not necessarily fit within the lives of the participants at this moment in time. As quite a few of the lost items were childhood belongings, the new versions seemed impractical at best and at worst useless to the participants now that they are adults. An emphasis on uselessness acted as a release of tension that subverted any emotional weight bound up with the idea of a reunion or return, like that offered by

Stewart's description of the souvenir, and instead suffused the objects with a sense of playfulness. This approach helped to expand upon nostalgia and think of the sensation anew as through the objects I made it became associated with the playful, the incongruous and surprising.

Each object was made with the intention of being gifted to the participant who had lost the original. I considered them a direct response to the answers given in the questionnaire, creating a conversation between myself and my participant that was not wholly one-sided. By gifting the new versions of the lost objects to the participants, the items functioned as mementoes of their experience and gave the sense that the object had a future after the project which lifted the nostalgic reflections on the objects out of the past. As Stewart explains:

> The souvenir distinguishes experiences. We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative … It represents not the lived experience of its maker but the 'secondhand' experience of its possessor/owner. (Stewart, 1993: 135).

The souvenir represents the things we seek to remember and thus the events they refer to have a story and mythology to them that transforms over time. They symbolise the notable and their value is found only when possessed by someone other than their maker. The distance from the past that the souvenir refers to makes it all the more potent in its evocations; it relies upon the owner's imagination of the past event. Souvenirs exist as a remedy to the ephemeral experience, of which live performance is an apt example, therefore the objects I made are a marker of the introspective experience of engaging with the recollections of the lost things and of how they objects were explored in the performance space. The objects authenticate and act as proof that the performance happened and, as gifts for the participants, they have further chances at having a future after the performance.

In the collection of essays, *The Logic of the Gift: Toward and Ethic of Generosity* (1997), Alan D. Schrift suggests that for something to be considered a gift it must be 'unnecessary' to the person who receives it and in the act of giving there is an exchange which 'unites the giver and receiver'

(Schrift, 1997: 7). By this logic, for an object to truly be a gift there must be a sense of uselessness to the item, it is not an item that is crucial for survival but rather something frivolous. It is also important that the gift be something which is difficult to give, it is not about giving away something that is unwanted but instead relinquishing an item that means something to the gifter themselves: '… the only true gift is a gift of one's self, for a "real gift" must be something painful to give.' (Schrift, 1997: 7). I have a strong attachment to the objects featured in my performance as I spent time and effort crafting them. The objects were made in my home and resided in my home space before the performance and this period of cohabitation was formative in my attachment to them. To mark this connection, my interactions with the objects in the performance space were indebted to the tenderness I felt towards the objects and these moments served as my last moments with the objects before they went to their new homes. On stage, I carefully unwrapped and re-wrapped the objects and gently played with them in front of the close-up livestream camera, making sure to have one last individual interaction with each object before I wrapped them all together in one large parcel in preparation for their gifting.

I gifted the objects to the five participants in a screening event which I hosted at the Gilmorehill Centre, a month after the performance took place. This event happened partly due to the participants being unable to attend the performance event, but I also thought it would be appropriate to gift the objects in a less public setting. This allowed for a more heightened sense of closeness with each other as a group as well as for an intimate gift giving and receiving experience. The gifting event was an attempt to incorporate a sense of the reparative to the experience of being a participant, as by gifting these new items to the participants there was a response to the unsatisfied longing for the original object that posed new, playful opportunities. I screened a recording of the performance and played the video segments featuring the participants encountering the object for the first time simultaneously on a laptop beside the screen to best replicate the set-up of the live performance. After the screening, the participants passed around the wrapped objects, still wrapped together in one large parcel from the performance, tearing away a layer of wrapping

each time to slowly reveal the objects. The participants then were able to interact with the objects in a manner that underlined their ownership of the objects as well as share them round with the other participants. This event was important in approaching the notion of nostalgia through a reparative lens as this emphasis on what is next for the objects after the performance highlights their adaptability and mutability despite arising from recollections of a fixed, ideal visions of the past.

I believe that my performance effectively addressed my research questions and was the appropriate form for the practical exploration of my research. The actions that formed the choreography of the performance provided a sense of the process of making the lost belongings and cemented the objects as the central point of convergence of the various performance elements. The interaction between myself and the objects brought together the nostalgic recollections from my participants, my imaginative responses to these stories and the practical decision to repair the gap left by the original missing item. The impossible task of reproducing the original items for my participants led to the object that I made occupying a different space to the original; they essentially became new objects with the potential for new things drawn from the memories of the old item. The sense of activity and possibility was demonstrated by the interview videos I made with my participants, their reactions to the items being ones of surprise and amusement as opposed to melancholic longing for the original item. The idea of the new item as something impractical and maybe even useless to the owner subverted the emotional weight of the reunion into a more positive, light-hearted moment and emphasised the status of the object as a gift. Placing the item in situ in the homes of their owners served to suggest a possible future for these objects but one which is malleable, unfixed and subject to change.

CONCLUSION

In this project I have assessed nostalgia, what it has come to mean historically and culturally, through critical analysis of theory and performance practice with the intention of expanding on the existing discourse around nostalgia. Instead of approaching nostalgia reductively, as a consumptive sensation — concerned with the idea of a perfect past as a rejection of a chaotic present and a despondency towards the future – I have sought to create a research practice that creates space for nostalgia to be mutable, active and optimistic. This sentiment responds to one of the research questions that has shaped this project: to ascertain whether the accepted definition of nostalgia can be reexamined and further developed to make room for positivity, personal agency and hopefulness.

To reframe nostalgia as a site of activity and openness, I used the concept of lost property as a device to examine nostalgia in the context of personal loss and the hope for reunification. My engagement with lost belongings as conduits for exploring nostalgia took the form of a performance practice indebted to Eve Sedgwick's notion of the reparative. Sedgwick describes what she calls reparative reading as the antithesis to paranoid reading, which approaches the past looking for patterns in order to be prepared for any and all eventualities. The paranoid reader sees the future as preordained and foreboding and seeks to map out what is ahead in a manner that is self-protective. In response to this, Sedgwick positions the reparative as an engagement with the past that looks towards the future with openness, that necessitates a willingness to be surprised by the results and which encourages a sense of agency with regards to how events will pan out. I explore how the reparative can be acknowledged through practice, particularly practice which centres around personal belongings, in order to argue for lost property's ability to instil a sense of the reparative in nostalgia.

My exploration of nostalgia through critical research, my decision to focus on lost property as a device through which to reexamine nostalgia and a methodology influenced by Sedgwick's notion of the reparative came together in the form and content of my research practice. To locate nostalgia

within the concept of lost property, I reached out to close friends and through a questionnaire asked them to recall and describe a personal belonging that they remember losing. I then used these recollections as blueprints from which to remake the items as something new, connecting nostalgia to a playful sensibility and the suggestion of unknown future possibilities. These objects were presented to the audience in my live performance through my engagement and manipulation of the objects onstage, having already been presented to the participants as shown in the prerecorded videos in which I unveiled the objects to their owners, and later gifted to the participants in a subsequent screening of the performance. In the process of activating these objects I was able to reimagine the nostalgic recollections of my participants as an unpredictable, joyful and future-oriented force and practice a form of reparative care that was integral to my expanded sense of the potentials and playfulness of nostalgia.

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APPENDIX A
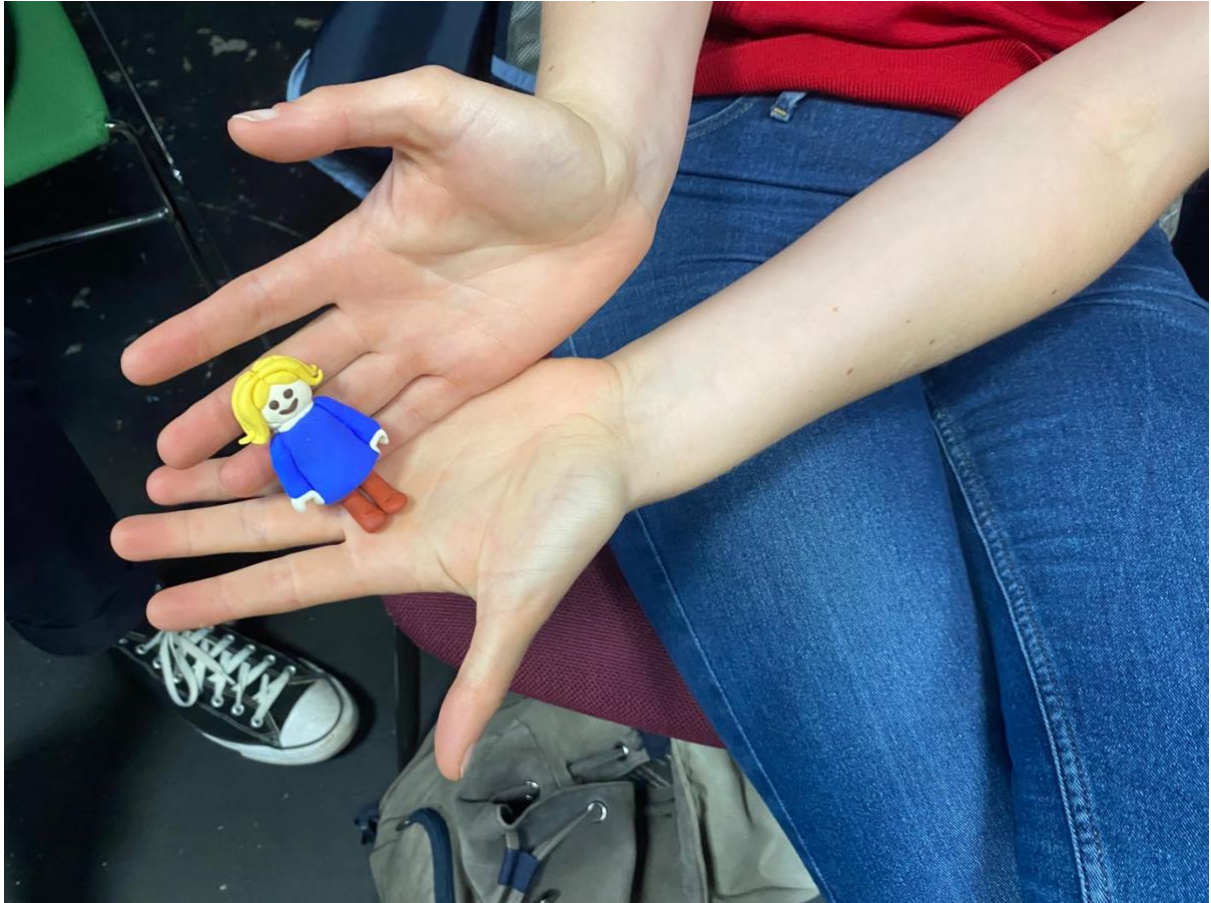
Participant No. 1 with their object 'Playmobil Lady'.

Participant No. 3 with their object 'Bugman'.

APPENDIX C

Participant No. 4 with their object 'Book Bag'.

Participant No. 5 with their object 'Mug'.

Participant No. 2 with their object 'Hat'.

APPENDIX F

Documentation of full performance — https://youtu.be/j_6KHCssNj4

APPENDIX G

Videos used in performance — https://youtu.be/YnjqFdt4tMQ