The use of metaphor in personal and community narratives: Women in the Criminal Justice System and the Shakespeare on Screen in Prison project.

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research

York St John University

York St John Prison Partnership Project in the School of the Arts

June 2020

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the work and support of the following individuals who have guided me both personally and professionally.

Deep gratitude to Rachel Conlon who opened her practice to me so warmly and generously and has given me a lifetime of inspiration. For her tireless efforts with the Prison Partnership Project, the great heart with which she leads and her care for the women she works with. Thanks too for the time she has dedicated to patiently supervise this research, offering endless motivation.

Thanks to Matthew Reason for the knowledge with which he has guided me through this thesis and pushed me to own the knowledge I have gained.

Jules Dory Richmond for her incredible enthusiasm, passion and care for the project and her invaluable feedback in my six-month review.

Jessica Robson and Casey Fox's dedication to the women and social justice has taught me a great deal and the work would not have happened without them. They will make many great and important projects happen.

Phyllida Lloyd and Kate Pakenham for making me part of the Trilogy family-the gift that keeps on giving! Thanks for their immense vision to continue with this work and to allow us as artists to lead. Here's to many future collaborations.

Phil McCormack for always believing and championing the artist in me, his endless support, and for the incredible change and action he drives in everything he does.

HMP New Hall Staff Jenny Walker, Karen Mason, Michelle Daly, Joelene Wood and Anne Tuner for the incredible work that they do, for championing theatre in prisons and endlessly supporting us with the project.

Final and upmost thanks must go to all the women I have worked with at HMP New Hall. I am hugely grateful for their openness, dedication and support for the project and research. I have been endlessly inspired by their bravery and resilience and could not have done this without them. Thank you and a big pat on the back!

Abstract

Shakespeare on Screen in Prison is a partnership between the York St John University Prison Partnership Project, PCL Productions and HMP New Hall. The PCL Productions and Donmar Warehouse all-female Trilogy films (*Julius Caesar, Henry IV* and *The Tempest)* are used to inspire collaborative, relational and durational drama projects with women residents.

This paper examines the use of metaphor within the creative process that enables women residents to explore their own personal and community narratives.

It focuses on interrogating the creation of a safe space through creative strategies, and questions the place of risk within this. It explores the importance of structure and the crafted journey the women take through each session and across the project, and the process of forming a community.

Using analysis of the women's creative writing and performance making alongside interview transcripts, it argues for the potential of working in metaphor for self-reflection and rehabilitation. It shows how the world, themes, characters, plot and the scenography used to represent them in the films are effective in enabling the women to distance, contain or project their own narratives, and offers them space to explore different identities, interrogate their pasts and imagine hopeful futures.

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Abbreviation Key

HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
SoSIP	Shakespeare on Screen in Prison
YSJUPP	York St John University Prison Project

Introduction

A group of women stand, step forward and announce, 'This is our Island'. This is the opening line of a devised response to Phyllida Lloyd's film *The Tempest* with women residents at HMP New Hall. In this single line they welcome the audience into their world, their work, and their interpretation of the play as a metaphor for their lives on the island that is prison.

In 2017 I entered HMP New Hall to observe a drama session run by Rachel Conlon as part of the York St John University Prison Partnership Project. In an instant, I was struck by the beauty, poetry and power of theatre in this setting, and how the imagery they crafted spoke deeply of their personal narratives. When I read Renée Emunah's (1994) reflection on her drama therapy work with adult clients in a psychiatric day setting, I felt it deeply resonated with my experience with the women at HMP New Hall:

> I witnessed layer upon layer of pain and layer upon layer of beauty. At each unfolding of our work together my respect, care and love for them grew. These are stories of struggle, of courage, and of victory. (Emunah, 1994: p.49)

Since this first encounter I have been on a journey exploring the use of Phyllida Lloyd's all-female Shakespeare films (*Julius Caesar, Henry IV and The Tempest)* with women in the criminal justice system. This essay will evidence the power of these films as metaphors for women in prison to explore personal and community narratives. I will refer mostly to *The Tempest* as we have seen the relationship between the Shakespeare, the prison setting of the film, the creative process and the women's lives most significantly with this film. I will speak of our practice within the context of applied theatre and drama therapy practice, analysing the metaphorical and aesthetic forms of art that have enabled us to ensure a safe process for creatively exploring complex personal narratives in a group setting.

I will explore the following two questions:

1. What is meant by the term 'safe space', how do facilitators enable this, and how does it support participants to create a community?
2. How does the use of metaphor enable women to creatively explore their own personal and community narratives?

Methodology

This research builds on a decade of my own community theatre practice, the ways of working of the York St John University Prison Partnership Project, and a wealth of existing research in applied theatre and drama therapy that have deeply informed both of these.

This is a practice-based enquiry that uses a participatory research method to gather qualitative data. Borgdorff says 'it is not formal knowledge that is the subject matter of artistic research, but thinking in, through and with art' (Borgdorff, 2011: p.44) I have engaged in live, in the space research, on the artistic practices of engaging in metaphor from the perspective of both facilitator and the participants. This relies on the sustained and relational way of working of the project and a close reflexive and reflective study of the 'content that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices and embodied in artistic products.' (Borgdorff, 2011: p.45)

The practice-based approach has enabled the research to sit within the partnership of the project and for the women to be the centre, not subjects so much as co-researchers. Their interactions, engagements, reflections, route through the work and creative products have formed a deep situated knowledge; 'creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings and products come into being' (Borgdorff, 2011: p.46). The advancement of knowledge is not just in practices of applied theatre in a criminal justice context, but also a greater understanding, and therefore empathy, of the life and experience of the women on the project and effective ways of working with women to address trauma and rehabilitation.

The main methods of research have been an analysis of the planning, facilitation and reflections on the practice. Additionally, I observed sessions, ran focus groups and interviewed the women to examine the practice from multiple perspectives. I reviewed the women's creative writing with the specific research questions in mind. Throughout this paper I will use my reflections and observations of this and the words of the women themselves (their creative writing, descriptions of performance and engagement in the sessions, written evaluation data and transcripts of interviews) to evidence my findings. As the most authentic evidence I can provide to support my findings, I hope that reading their words directly brings the reader closer to them and the project.

A full ethics clearance for the project and research was approved by the ethics committee at York St John University and gatekeepers at HMP New Hall. The women self-selected to take part in the project and informed consent has been ensured through verbal and written information packs and consent forms and the option to opt out at any point. The recording and storing of the research was approved by HMP New Hall security and stored securely to ensure confidentiality of data. Consideration was made for coercion, particularly with interviews with questions being checked by Prison Partnership and HMP New Hall staff to ensure they were open and not leading. In order to protect the identities of the women, I refer to them only by their first initial(s). In referencing the women's work, I have created a series of abbreviations that can be seen in full in Appendix A: Reference List of Women's Work.

Whilst this has been my own research enquiry, the collaborative focus of the project and the practice of co-facilitation in delivery, reflections and evaluation means that throughout I will often refer to 'we' or 'us' in terms of practice. The practice in the project is deeply embedded in the established ways of working of the Prison Partnership Project and in the mission of PCL Productions, and it is impossible to extract and claim individual practice or reflection from these moments. Where a distinction is possible, I have switched to 'I' to indicate a moment I facilitated, more personal reflections and observations, and my own conclusions and findings as researcher for this paper.

Although reflection and evaluation were deeply embedded into all parts of the process from the very start of the project, I took on the role of researcher and began to examine the specific questions explored here part way through the project. Whilst I draw largely on examples and evidence from this period of more focused research, this is only possible with the foundation of knowledge built from the extensive practice and lessons learnt developing the project. I began my engagement with the project collaboratively devising the structure and content and co-facilitating the workshops, and moved into the position of researcher, for which I sat outside of the delivery team, observing, questioning and evaluating the practice. I speak from and to both these positions throughout this work and, where possible, will reference my position in the examples of practice used as evidence.

It is worth noting that my observations and findings are limited to the specific setting of HMP New Hall. Whilst I have no doubt that some of the findings will have a universality to a prison theatre context and work with vulnerable women, I can only speak to my experience in this one setting. The academic references serve to connect my findings to a wider context and I hope that others in the field can recognise some of the moments referenced in their own work.

There are limitations within this research methodology, namely a lack of distance both in time and person from the work. As both a facilitator and researcher on the project, even with the efforts to avoid coercion, I cannot anticipate how the women would have articulated their experience to someone entirely unconnected to the team and their experience. There is also a lack of distance between the project and the interviews with the women to assess any longevity of impact. This is something I will expand on later. There is a lack of voice from the rest of the delivery team in this research, the 'we' throughout takes into account the collaboration and conversation that took place which brings in their ideas, but it is entirely filtered through my perspective, and in places, assumes that they would agree with my conclusions. There is also the issue of lack of representation of students or prison staff who have been integral to the project. The investigation is positive and more effort could have been taken to dig further into the complications and moments of failure.

Project Overview

Shakespeare on Screen in Prison (SoSiP) is a partnership between the York St John University Prison Partnership Project (YSJUPPP), PCL Productions and HMP New Hall (a closed category female prison in West Yorkshire). The Donmar Warehouse and PCL Productions Shakespeare Trilogy films (*Julius Caesar, Henry IV* and *The Tempest)* are used to inspire collaborative, relational and durational drama projects with women residents. The films are set in a female prison, the concept being that a group of female prisoners are putting on these Shakespeare productions and performing them for a visiting audience in the prison gym.

Each individual project sees a new group of up to 20 women collaborate with YSJUPPP theatre markers, York St John University Undergraduate and

Masters Theatre and Performance students and Trilogy company members to explore the characters, themes and plot of the films through film screenings, creative writing, performance, movement and discussion. The workshops take place weekly across a 6–10-week period, with women also engaging in independent in-cell work in between sessions. Through these creative exercises, the women are also encouraged to explore the connections between the films and their own personal and community narratives.

The women explore and perform scenes of Shakespeare using them as a stimulus to create their own autobiographical work. Heddon describes how 'Autobiographical performances provide a way to talk out, talk back, talk otherwise' (Heddon, 2008: p.3). The women are able to share their own stories and in doing so, they are seen and heard. Through the creative process and facilitated reflections, a dialogue is created between the women's pasts, presents and futures. Moments of connection are found, turning personal narratives into community narratives, and new identities and futures are imagined.

This project exists within the knowledge and canon of theatre within the criminal justice system and a history of Shakespeare-specific projects. There is, for example, the work of Clean Break and their women-centred approach; Geese Theatre, whose work more explicitly addresses prisoner's criminal behaviour, and The Young Vic Taking Part Team, who took their production of *The Brothers Size* into HMP Wandsworth and followed it with a drama project that saw inmates create *The Jumper Factory,* a new play drawing on their own experiences written in collaboration with playwright Luke Barnes.

> There is a rich and varied tradition of Shakespeare in prisons, which Amy Scott-Douglass describes as having long historical routes but accelerating in volume and attention in the 1980s and 1990s (2011, p. 4). Two of the most prominent examples being the Royal Shakespeare Company's Shakespeare Comes to Broadmoor in the UK (Cox, 1992) and the Shakespeare Behind Bars project lead by Curt Tofteland in the USA (2011). (Reason, 2019: p.2)

The uniqueness of this project comes from the films that are 'both Shakespearian and a representation of the prison environment.' (Reason, 2019: p.2), how it is non-crime focused, and not about performing Shakespeare, but using it as a stimulus for the women's own creative work.

As mentioned, this research draws on principles of both applied theatre and drama therapy in order to reflect on the way in which the women engaged with the films and managed their personal connections through the creative process. It is important to offer a distinction between these practices, particularly as it relates to this research. Drama Therapist Sally Bailey, offers the following definition:

> Applied Theatre is the use of theatre processes and products for interactive community projects to bring people together and build bridges […] Drama Therapy uses the techniques of theatre, such as improvisation, role-play, rituals, and drama games, […] to facilitate a positive socio-emotional change in the life of a client or group of clients from a clinical perspective. (Bailey, 2016: p.52-53)

Bailey continues to say 'What makes identifying the difference difficult is that [… they] use similar drama activities to achieve their goals.' (Bailey, 2016: p.53) So whilst the exercises used in an applied theatre and drama therapy project might be very similar, their intention and outcome differ.

Our project is not therapy. It does not approach the work from a clinical perspective and the exercises are not curated or delivered with the aim to facilitate change in the individual or the community, as would be the case with therapy. It is a drama and theatre-making project. The space is crafted as a safe creative space, not a therapy space.

As I will explore further later, the invitation for the work to connect to the women's own personal stories is open, but this is not the ultimate goal of the project. The use of metaphor becomes the language of facilitation, a vehicle with which the women can engage in the work and the process of the applied practice. Although the women may find the space and practice therapeutic, and/or experience personal change and growth (evidenced in some of their reflective comments shared throughout this research), this is a by-product of the applied theatre process and not a direct therapeutic practice.

In reflecting on this project, the principles of drama therapy have been applied to usefully unpick the various ways in which the women have engaged with the concept of metaphor. These methods were adapted for an applied theatre process.

1. What is meant by the term 'safe space', how do facilitators enable this, and how does it support participants to create a community?

'Safe Space'

'Be yourself, give things a go and don't be scared, it's a safe space.' (A1, see Appendix A)

Women in prison are living fractured, fragile lives, suffering trauma and loss. Many step into the project worried they will be judged. Sitting in a circle, everyone can be viewed and they can no longer hide behind the door of their cell. In post-project interviews the women spoke about how when 'meeting new people, you don't know anything about them and it's a bit, are they going to judge me?' (L1, see Appendix A) One woman reflected on the feeling of paranoia this evokes:

> What were other people going to think about me[...]everyone is on edge, nervous and anxious[...]Paranoia about the offence you've committed, does everyone in the group know about it, are they going to bully you, intimidate you, take the piss? Are they gonna like you? (N1, see Appendix A)

The process of theatre requires the individual to be present in the work. Their bodies, thoughts and ideas are on view. Many of these women's bodies will have been violated and abused[1] and are carrying complex personal narratives. One woman reflected on the 'Feeling that vulnerability will be revealed. Because in the general run in the prison, on the wing, actually acknowledging vulnerability is a dangerous thing.' (K, see Appendix A). Coming into the space, taking part in the process and sharing something of yourself is exposing and feels dangerous.

In a pre-project questionnaire, the women were asked about their expectations for the project. One woman wrote, 'To hopefully have a fun safe time and take part in some drama.' (A2, see Appendix A) In order to engage in the project, the women need to feel welcomed, held and guided through the process. As Sally Stamp reflects, talking of drama therapy with offenders 'For people to be able to reveal themselves they need to be safe' (Stamp, 1998: p.12).

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[1] 53% of women in prison report having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse during childhood. (Women in Prison, 2017)

Our primary role as facilitators is to create a safe space that enables the women to be able to share and explore these complicated personal narratives, but what do we really mean by safe space and how do we create it?

The following definition by Mary Ann Hunter reflects the complexity of crafting and maintaining a safe space:

> Firstly, the term safe space is used to […] describe places that provide safety from danger […] Secondly […] used to connote metaphorical safety […] A third […] use of the term is in its implied desired goal of familiarity […] Finally […] In the creative development of new performance, safe space is conceptualised through rules of engagement that scaffold the creation of new work and, somewhat paradoxically, invite a greater degree of aesthetic risk. (Hunter, 2008: p.8)

Whilst risk assessments can be done to protect physical safety, the emotional safety Hunter describes is harder to achieve. The notion of safety through familiarity is important. When observing the first session of one project, I noted the physical shift in the women when someone came into the room that they knew already. The women went from closed, guarded body language to open and expressive. It was clear that having at least one person to connect and share with gave them a level of comfort. I saw this grow across the session as exercises that allowed the women to meet, connect and get to know each other increased familiarity and helped the women to settle into the space.

The creation of the safe space is further complicated when the question is raised of who gets to decide if the space is safe or not. We are not asking the participants if they feel safe; the facilitators assume this based on the atmosphere of the room and level of engagement. The facilitators are shaping the space on their understanding of safety. There is a hierarchy in forming a safe creative space. In this instance it is led by the prison, through the requirements on the number of women allowed, the presence of staff on radios and panic alarms, the security clearance needed for us as artists to get into the space and the limitations to the equipment we are allowed to bring in. There is also the status of the prison as the institution and the host of the activity; both us and the women abide by their rules. There is an additional layer of safety expected from us as a team. We want all the women to join in, no arguments or tension, for the women to feel open and able to share, and ultimately feel safe enough to come

back the next week. Finally, the women need to create their own mental space of safety.

'Ways of Working'

'The fact that it comes from us and includes the things we find important [...] that's what makes it feel safe.' (K2, see Appendix A)

One of the initial ways we establish a safe and supportive environment and attempt to disrupt this hierarchy is through co-creating a 'Ways of Working' document in which we ask the women what they require of each other to work safely and creatively throughout our time together (see Appendix B). The women reflected on how this collaborative approach is 'really important to make it inclusive, it's not their rules these are our rules.' (J1, see Appendix A) By co-creating this with the women as opposed to bringing in a set of predetermined rules, they can hold themselves and each other accountable and take ownership of the space. This is the first moment of co-authoring in the process and is a building block to the women feeling open and secure to author their own work.

Marina Jenkyns refers to the contract she creates with her drama therapy clients as 'a vital part of creating a holding environment. As part of the contract practical boundaries will be established.' (Jenkyns, 1996: p.62) The practical boundaries allow the women to come close to the work knowing that both their fellow participants and the facilitators consider their safety. 'It allows you to feel safe and really be yourself because you know that everybody is working from the same page.' (Ja1, see Appendix A)

There are, of course, moments in which these agreed 'Ways of Working' are tested and this has an impact on the group dynamic, the group process and the fragility of the safe space. One woman reflected on a challenge between her and another group member who she felt wasn't following the ways of working by undermining and not supporting the group sharing their work. She spoke of the feeling of intimidation and risk to the safe space. The group member she spoke of was dismissing and distancing herself from the work. She was on remand and not yet in a position to address her own narrative, and other women sharing something of themselves made her vulnerable to exposing her own prison mask. As Mckean and Massey-Chase state, 'the prisoner's response to the work will

depend on where they are in their journey to constructing a different non-criminal identity' (Mckean and Massey-Chase, 2019: p.10)

This moment also exposed my own fear of the unpredictability of the safe space. There is only so much an agreement can do to stop the tension between the women causing an argument. I could feel the two women resisting the urge to fight and, as a result, the group dynamic became very fraught. In these moments we rely on trust and respect for the holding environment to navigate this moment calmly. It is in these moments that the fragility of the safe space is felt.

When asked to reflect on what makes the workshop space a safe space, one woman said:

> The ground rules we make so people are aware that if we talk about anything it don't need to go outside this group or this space. (Sa1, see Appendix A)

Crucially, our 'Ways of Working' always include confidentiality. The women know that what is discussed in this space will stay in the room but should they disclose anything that puts themselves or someone else in danger, we will have to report this to the prison staff. Whilst we have a sustained and durational relationship with the women, we are only with them once a week, and it is important that they not only feel supported in the sessions, but also that they are supported, should they carry the weight of the work out of the space.

Trauma

'Through watching the film, it triggered things off for people' (N2, see Appendix A)

The YSJUPPP work in a trauma informed and gender responsive way. In practice, this is complicated and it is where the pressure to create a safe space for all becomes limiting to the creative potential of the room.

In planning and facilitating, we assess the work for any triggers and adapt exercises to be mindful of trauma the women hold. One illustration of this would be through a warm up exercise that asks participants to use their bodies to create images in response to a given word or phrase. In this setting we are careful of what language we use. For example, a beach could evoke triggers of family memories, loss of children, touch, the body, loss of freedom and more. More specifically, a number of considerations were made when exploring the

theme of dreams in *The Tempest* for an independent in-cell task, taking extra caution as we would not be present to help support the women. When listing the senses, we were mindful of touch for women with a history of abuse and so removed the reference of massage in the film and offered the choice to explore just one sense, so touch could be ignored. We were also careful to not associate dreaming just with sleep and thus nightmares, and so linked dreams more with hopes and aspirations; this also allowed the participants to look forward to a more hopeful future if the past or present was too emotive. We referenced the dream sequence in the film and gave an invitation to write via a character, allowing the women to work distanced from their realities, a concept I will explore further later.

There is a danger that the work becomes unstimulating as everything has the potential to be a trigger, especially in a group setting where there are multiple layers of trauma. Whilst there is some language we might avoid, the process is much more about building a space in which we can be responsive to what is alive in the room. It is about steering the women through the process, and drip-feeding more complex themes later in the project. It is not about avoiding emotional content, but being able to confidently support the women through this, structuring the sessions to have enabled them to work through that emotion or find a way to come out of the work so that no woman is going back to their cell in the heat of the emotion. I will speak more specifically about crafting the participant journey later, but an example of this would be not exploring the highly emotive theme of forgiveness in *The Tempest* until the final week of the project, building up to a point where the women might be comfortable to address this, or feel safe to know that they don't need to share.

Taking Risks

'My personal risk was just putting myself out there.' (J2, see Appendix A)

With the environment held tightly, the women are able to take more risks than they may do elsewhere in their prison lives. One woman spoke about the constant surveillance on the wing from officers and other women watching your every move that forces you to have a guard up. Despite witnessing being integral to the theatre process, she felt that within the safe environment of the project,

she could take the risk of letting her guard down; allowing this space to transcend the experience of living in prison.

Hunter challenges the idea of risk stating:

> These complex workings of risk and tension within the social and aesthetic realms of collaboratively devised performance leads us to question whether making a space 'safe' means making it risk-averse (following Boostrom's observations) or risk-attractive. (Hunter, 2008: p.9)

We aim to create a safe space to work in a risk-attractive way, guiding the women to the themes that are challenging and encouraging creative risks. When asked what risks they might have taken in coming to the project and completing the creative work one woman said 'doing my writing and standing up in front of all those people and reading things you've written' (J3, see Appendix A) arguably because of the potential to reveal vulnerability.

Another woman reflected on the risk of 'opening up old wounds. Things you think you've forgot about. Or not that you've forgot about but that you've put to the back of your mind.' (N3, see Appendix A) This reflection proves why being mindful of previous trauma is important. Here the risk is less about the vulnerability of exposing yourself to others and the process, but of exposing yourself to things you have covered in order to protect yourself.

> The experimentation encouraged to happen within this kind of safe space therefore becomes a product of the dynamic tension between known (safe) processes and unknown (risky) outcomes. (Hunter, 2008: p.8)

The risky outcome is not only how the women themselves will feel unlocking parts of themselves, but also how the rest of the room will receive this. Over the project the women are able to take this risk within the safety of the facilitated space.

Elanor Stannage refers to this creative risk-taking in relation to comfort zones:

> This shift out of the comfort zone often involves the trying out of new forms of creative expression, or a shift into the territory of previously unexplored ideas. (Stannage, 2017: p.118)

When the women come to the project for the first time, they are not only worried about what the group will make of them, but also what will be expected of them.

The process of theatre is new to many and it takes time to understand and build confidence with how to communicate through theatre and creative writing. Time allows the women to build trust in the process:

> It's scary coming into the project for the first time because you don't know what to expect […] you don't know what other people are going to be like, but as time goes on you get more comfortable and as you get more comfortable you get more confident. (Ja2, see Appendix A)

Stannage speaks about creative risk-taking in relation to improvisation, a tool used a lot throughout our project to foster the safe creative space. 'Improvisation is a mode of working which necessitates a concentration of creative risk-taking and thus may be a particular crucible for facilitated creativity.' (Stannage, 2017: p.120) Our use of a warm up game where you must improvise to change the energy of an imaginary ball demonstrates this well. When leading this exercise, I made a really energetic offer. Turning to the woman next to me I could see her initially recoil from the task. There was silence and then a sigh as she stepped into the space to meet me in this moment and accept the offer. I asked her to reflect on what was at play for her in this moment. She spoke about not wanting to do it, but not wanting to leave me or let the exercise stop. We spoke about how this moment reflects the ethos of the work and how if you put yourself out there, others will meet you. I thanked her for stepping out of her comfort zone and reiterated how supported I felt in that moment.

Improvisation games are important to build group trust, but there is a risk of them not working. The woman could have reasonably refused in this moment, and that would have put a bump in the flow of the workshop. As facilitators, we are constantly wavering between pushing the women's creative boundaries and being careful to not reach a point where the risk is too great and the women disengage.

Participant Journey

'It took a bit of time for people to come out of their shell' (H1, see. Appendix A)

Emunah states that 'Given a safe, supportive environment and sensitive pacing and guidance, all people can express and reveal themselves via the theatrical process' (Emunah, 1994: p.37). The women need guiding to the point of submerging themselves in the metaphor and creative exploration. The journey

into the work each session and throughout the project is carefully crafted to move them towards this position of safety and creative autonomy.

Emunah continues by saying:

> The beginning group work lays the foundation for the more individual work by providing the supportive environment and emotional container within which individuals can take risks. (Emunah, 1994: p.89)

Our work charts this same journey. The first moments are about bonding the group and working to cultivate a supportive environment, moving into exploring the world of the film, and eventually building towards the women crafting creative responses driven by their individual interpretations of the film.

A significant creative strategy used to achieve this is the 'I notice, I like, I wonder…' exercise in which the women are asked to respond to the film using these sentence starters. Using this as a tool to measure the responses to the film allows us to understand what the women have been drawn to and what they might wish to continue to explore, as well as how they are beginning to translate it into their own worlds. It also allows us to map responses across the different individual projects, noting the similarities and differences across each group of women, and what the different plays themselves evoked. With this task, we are not asking the women what their questions are. We are not concerned with what they do not understand, or what we as perceived experts can answer for them, but with their readings of the themes, plot and characters. One woman reflected on the significance of being asked their opinion in opposition to their experience living within the prison system saying:

> people who have been in prison for a while. We never get asked that normally […] Sometimes there's a panic because we don't get to think about things in here. (K3, see Appendix A)

This is again evidence of the step out of a comfort zone. The women need time to become accustomed to sharing their opinion and knowing that there is no right or wrong answer, that the workshop space is a place of open and honest reflection and two-way conversation.

This way of responding to the film also allows the women to direct the journey of the project. Their lists of notices, likes and wonders highlight what they enjoy, what they might want to explore more, where they might need further guidance and what we might want to avoid. 'This respond-ability allows

the participants to have a greater role in authoring the work' (Hepplewhite, 2016: p.184) which is in contrast to the set regime of their life in prison. 'We're not being told what to do; we are being asked our opinion on things. We actually feel like human beings.' (N4, See Appendix A)

To achieve a process that is authentically steered by each unique group, we must listen and adapt accordingly. Our position as facilitators must change during the duration of the project to allow the women to take charge of the narrative journey and allow space for them 'to move more deeply into the text and into their own lives as reflected by it' (Jenkyns, 1996: p.98). At the start of the process, we hold the work and the group tightly and are actively leading to introduce the tools and techniques of the theatre process and establish the safe space. In the later sessions our role changes to observer, listener, supporter and collaborator.

As well as viewing the process as a whole, we must consider the journey of each individual session. Emunah describes this process in relation to her drama therapy group work:

> The very beginning of the session is a time for the group to (re)unite […]. The leader is very active during the first exercise as her presence serves to energise the group and to help the members (re)connect to the process and to one another. (Emunah, 1994: p.81)

We begin each session with the same ball game. This repeated structure gives time for the women to centre themselves, reconnect and re-establish the safe space and community. It allows us to take the temperature of the room, the teamwork required reiterates the positive ways of working, and there is little creative risk in this task, allowing time for the women to slowly step into the work:

> The fact that you do the warm up exercises. It's expected. It's routine and a lot of girls, I think, in prison because of the regime, the routine is good. (J4, see Appendix A)

The routine provides a familiar experience and environment which links back to the importance of familiarity in Hunter's (2008) definition of safe space.

Forming a Community

'We are strong, we are brave and we are powerful.' (A3, see Appendix A)

One of the key principles of our practice that helps with forming a community is a non-hierarchical way of working. As well as striving for the women to author the process, we are conscious at all times of the various expertise in the room, us of theatre and the women of the criminal justice system and their own narratives. Both of these must have an equal voice in the process. Tim Prentki speaks of this in his work on border crossings:

> Where practitioners come into a community or context to which they do not normally belong, they also undertake an act of border crossing. They move temporarily into other, unfamiliar worlds, whereas outsiders, they will see some things less clearly than the participants and others perhaps more clearly with the benefit of distance (Prentki, 2009: p.252)

Within this project, the border crossing is made more extreme due to the secure setting of the workshop. We must show identification and pass through several security checks before we can even enter the workshop space, and the crossing only works one way-the women cannot do the reverse journey. But the border crossing is more than us physically stepping into the world of the prison. The term denotes the shifts, connections and disconnections in the space and between the group in the moment of initial meeting and the continued meeting of ideas, narratives and worlds throughout the process. It's the step out of the comfort zone, the metaphorical dance between people as they work to build a rapport.

There is a mutual welcoming into worlds; us physically into the space, the lived experience of the prison world and the women's narratives, and them into the world of theatre and this joint workshop space. We meet somewhere in the middle of these two places, in a new world, our own project island. 'This island we go to in drama is cut off from the prison as a whole space.' (K4, see Appendix A) As the work is non-crime focused, the women can begin to transcend both the physical space of prison and their prisoner identity. Throughout the work we travel to and from the world of theatre and the world of the prison and back to the island of the project again, bringing with us new insights, reflections and stories to tell.

The success of the work is built on a spirit of the collective, of 'we':

> To begin, working truly creatively you can't work with inequality. There can be no 'us' and 'them'- working creatively means an equal meeting place. (Clark, 2004: p.103)

It is more complicated and nuanced than the notion of 'us' and 'them'. There are more than two communities co-existing in the work. Whilst we can interrogate the identity of the women based on their geographical and situational circumstance as prisoners, we cannot automatically group the women together as one community based on this:

> Whilst communities may well have social and interpersonal factors in common that bind them together in their various ways, it is also important to look at community not as purely homogenous but also made up of heterogeneous individuals who are constituted as such through their differences (Preston, 2016: p.18)

The beginnings of the project gives space for the women to get to know each other in order to find commonalities beyond that of a prisoner that will enable them to connect. 'Just to say a couple of things about yourself at the start, I think helps you gel together and understand each other.' (L2, see Appendix A)

The process of getting to know shared identities and associations, as well as the danger in assuming these mutual traits, is demonstrated in the exercise 'Anybody Who'. In the first session of a project, I observed in my role as researcher, the women were guided through this game that asks someone to make a statement that is true about themselves, and for anyone else who finds the statement to be true of themselves, to respond by swapping chairs. This came about an hour into the workshop and it felt like the first genuine moment of border crossing as the women physically mixed and the group began to blend. It broke the tension and created a shift in the tone of the space, energising the room. As the women stood in agreement with a statement, and the subsequent frenzy and laughter as they moved around the room to find a new chair occurred, the women were physically stepping into the group process and a community was formed.

There were, however, some fractured connections. In one moment. a woman said, 'Anybody who wants to leave New Hall'. I noted that a few women appeared to feel uncomfortable with this statement. There was a shift in eye contact, a hesitation to stand in agreement and a change in body language and

tempo as they moved across the space. The statement was shared with an expectation that everyone would want to leave New Hall, and to go against this would have exposed a difference in a game that was about similarities. To go against the statement would suggest that some women find great comfort in the support and secluded nature of prison that keeps them away from abuse, addiction and other negative experiences, all of which can evoke shame and guilt.

This example highlights how reductive the label of prisoner is. 'Our audience consists of offenders; however, offenders are not a homogenous group.' (Watson, 2009: p.47) The women step into the project with their role of mother, grandmother or sister, their sexuality, race and heritage, their likes and their dislikes and at times, these qualities put them closer to us as a team of facilitators than the other women. These moments of connection develop a rapport and bring a level of respect that allows us all to trust each other. It is at these points of convergence where safety is felt and shared narratives can be explored.

2. How does the use of metaphor enable women to creatively explore their own personal and community narratives?

Why Metaphor?

'I didn't realise that the island would be so much like being in prison.' (N5, see Appendix A)

There are a number of different elements to the metaphor in the films. The women reflected that 'You see yourself in the film.' (Sa2, see Appendix A) This witnessing is in the presentation of themes, characters and plot and their scenography. The form of the film is significant. A moment in *The Tempest* that was highlighted frequently in the 'I Notice, I Like, I Wonder…'exercise was one of the most visual moments in which a series of images of freedom and dreams are projected onto giant balloons. The images move from open countryside and landscapes to McDonalds, fast cars and branded clothes. These balloons are then popped. Reflecting on this moment, the women spoke about how it connected with the feeling of the rug being pulled from underneath you and life as you knew it being popped like a balloon.

In this moment the women are connecting the theme of dreams and freedom, the scenography of the balloons and projections, and the journey of the

characters watching these balloons being popped; it is a combination of these elements that leads to a significant emotional response.

> These metaphors have several commonalities; they are highly visual; they are open to interpretation; they are theatrically powerful and therefore memorable, and they provide a common language to talk about personal experiences (Watson, 2009: 52)

It is this powerful memorability and common language that the films provoke that encourages the women to delve into their own narratives and inspires creative responses.

The 'seeing' of oneself in the films can be further broken-down using Boal's analysis of the relationship between actor and image in his improvisation work. The way in which the women see and connect with the film can be spoken of in terms of identification: 'when the actor is able to say 'I am exactly like that' (Boal, 1995: p.68); recognition: 'I am not like that all, but I know exactly the sort of person it's talking about' (Boal, 1995: p.69); and resonance: 'when the image or the character awaken in the actor feelings and emotions which she can only vaguely identify or delineate' (Boal, 1995: p.69). If we substitute the actor here for the women as audience to the film, we can see how these responses are the beginnings of opening up the metaphor. They encounter themselves, others in their lives or emotions that are familiar to their past, present or imagined futures and the subsequent creative process allows them to articulate this.

The way in which the films were used as a metaphor for the women's life experiences varied. When looking specifically at *The Tempest,* some women stepped into the world of the island and contained their experience within it:

> When I first arrived, I had the misfortune of meeting one of the island's unsavoury characters screaming, and shouting abuse at one of the so-called protectors. This really scared me and made me nervous (N6, see Appendix A)

Some women used their own experiences to bring the characters to life and projected their experiences into those characters:

> I tried to put myself into the character's shoes. So, for me, I used a lot of my life experiences out there with power and control, which related to Prospero. (L3, see Appendix A)

Others used their connection with the film to further understand their own experiences and to look at them from a different perspective:

> Like Ariel with Prospero, he were still in control of Ariel and he weren't set free until he said, so it's, I suppose, like, I'm not trapped in the tree, but I'm still trapped and we've got to do things that people want us to do until we're like get us freedom fully. (N7, see Appendix A)

The use of metaphor not only enables the women to explore their own stories, but it develops a shared language and connects the women to explore each other's narratives. As the women share their creative responses to the film, they are introducing the group to a new stimulus and source that can be spoken to, through and against. Their own creative work becomes a new metaphor for the group to explore and with that, the personal becomes a shared community narrative. Jones says that, 'Witnessing is the act of being an audience to others or to oneself' (Jones, 2007: p.101) I would argue that it is not a case of one or the other, but that our experience of witnessing someone else's story is informed by us witnessing our own; the moments of identification, recognition and resonance direct our response. There is a constant oscillation between the women as performers and audience, as subject and witness. One woman reflected on the process of creating this shared community narrative and how it allowed her to reflect on her own situation, 'you're learning and growing as a person from other people's experiences' (Ja, see Appendix A)

The fact that the films are Shakespeare further enables an engagement in the metaphor as there is already a distance between it and the women. It is not a contemporary text in which the women's lives are directly shown on screen. They have the ability to safely exist solely in the world of the film without outing any connections, should they wish. The use of metaphor is not only important for the women's experience of the project, but also to support us as facilitators managing the mixed autobiographies. We are able to contain their stories within the world of the play. In moments where one narrative might be taking over, or if a narrative shared might be difficult for the other women to sit with for too long, we can bring it back to the world of the play, switching between the macro of the world of the play and micro of the women's narratives. The ability to zoom out allows us to maintain the safe space. In exploring all three films we have found *The Tempest* supports this shift the best. The magical world and the island lend

themself readily to metaphor and escapism, whereas the worlds of violence, addiction and power struggles in *Julius Caesar and Henry IV* speak more literally to the complexities of the women's worlds.

There is, of course, a risk in working in metaphor. There is an assumption when we ask the women to make connections between the world of the play and their own worlds that there is indeed a connection to be made. As with all metaphors, they rely on the universality of an image or idea that is accessible and the same to all. This relates back to my earlier reflections on the problematic nature of reducing the women to one homogenous community and the assumptions we might make of the lived experiences of women in prison. There is also a challenge in the process for those who don't connect with the metaphor which might limit their engagement.

We have attempted to mitigate some of this risk by ensuring that the language around making a connection and framing the films as a metaphor for their personal experiences is open; it is an invitation, not an obligation. It is also important to note that the terminology of metaphor is a language that has been developed in reflection, evaluation and research as opposed to being the explicit language we would use in the workshop space with the women. We speak more about connection or relation to the material with the women. We also accommodate the multiplicity of interpretations and connections to the film with the openness of the tasks that we set. There is no set answer or expectation and the women are actively encouraged to respond in a way that feels right for them.

Arguably, our assumptions are also not entirely unfounded, as the films themselves were made in collaboration with women with lived experience of the criminal justice system, both within the cast and via research and development workshops with women in prison. All these women supported the creative team to embed the prison setting of the films and explore the connection between the Shakespeare and their own lives so that the actors playing the prison characters could present this as authentically as possible. This meant that the SoSiP was more about taking these works back to the women, completing the full circle of the project to return to the seed of the idea with the final project and explore the connections again to create another body of new work.

Containment

'Being able to adopt a persona you can perhaps explore things that you wouldn't normally feel more comfortable saying yourself.' (J5, see Appendix A)

'The text [in this case the film] itself can provide a container for difficult feelings and unexplored parts of the self' (Jenkyns, 1996: p.48) As mentioned, the trauma encompassed in the women's personal narratives can make it difficult for them to open up. The film may evoke buried or not previously spoken about memories or emotions, or ones that they are not comfortable sharing in a group setting. The guise of the characters and the parameters of the world of the play enable the women to enact scenarios that they may feel unable to do as themselves. This enactment offers potential for discovering something about themselves and these memories or emotions:

> the dramatic medium provides the safeguard, or disguise, which enables self-revelation. Participants in this context often seem to both expose more of themselves and feel safer than in normal everyday encounters (Emunah, 1994: p.28)

It could be dangerously exposing for the women to share these experiences without the guise of a character to speak through. Containment is a theory used in drama therapy to explore this idea of expression within a safety net, 'the use of metaphor helps the client to talk about something they wouldn't be able to do directly' (Jones, 2007: p.256)

Emunah rightly highlights how 'containment does not imply suppression, but rather mastery over one's emotion, enabling one to release strong feelings through appropriate and acceptable channels' (Emunah, 1994: p.32) It is not about saying, "This is traumatic and thus I cannot explore it", but" This is traumatic and the creative parameters of writing or performing through a character enables me to explore it." This personal connection then may or may not be shared with the group. Some women openly reflect on how their creative work contained their narrative or opened up something new for them, but others go through the process without exposing this aspect of themselves, not coming out of character to personally reflect and keeping their own related emotions, memories and experiences concealed:

> Being on the island can trigger some things about being in jail or the first time you landed on the island so the first time you landed in jail. I think

> the facilitators know it can be quite touching but they say to us you don't need to make it too personal. But it's good sometimes to let it out if you feel this connection. (Sa3, see Appendix A)

This woman is talking about the process of containment; about how the feelings the film evokes can stay within the boundaries of the island and the play and be explored solely within the framework of the performance or creative writing work. If we believe that our interpretation of art is based on witnessing our own lives, the process of creating something in response to the film will have required the women to draw on some aspects of themselves, but this need not be exposed to the group. The women are invited to sit within the metaphor for the whole project and not share these connections. This is when the metaphor is at its strongest- "I am this character"- over shifting into similes- "I am like this character"- when the connections are revealed.

One woman shared very little of her personal narrative with the group. She was far from a reluctant participant. She was the first to volunteer for any exercise or scene work, and absolutely came alive in performance, but would withdraw from any discussions that began to draw parallels between this and their own lives. Any time we asked her what she thought, she would say, "I don't know". In our final session, Phyllida Lloyd asked her about this, and she responded by talking about how admitting you understand or connect sets you up to need to explain this further, and she was not ready to do this. This demonstrated that there was a personal connection that she wanted to conceal and that she was happy to contain this within the world of the film.

Distance

'Women in here need that little bit of distance that working through characters that are on screen, and creating characters in other scenarios gives them.' (K5, see Appendix A)

Similarly to containment, working in metaphor allows a distance from the self that keeps the women safe. 'The dramatic metaphor creates distance from the actual real-life identity of the problem.' (Jones, 2007: p.271) The medium of film automatically distances the work as the audience is viewing it through the barrier of the screen and the eyes of the director and editor choosing the shots. This distance is emphasised as the film is Shakespeare and not a contemporary

film of women in prison. The women are asked to explore the problems of the characters and not their own problems. It is this distance between art and life that gives safety:

> When you're doing your own personal narrative […] I find it virtually impossible to speak it, so taking a character and stepping outside of yourself gives you a chance to express things that you couldn't do if it was too close to your own background. (K6, see Appendix A)

Nicholson talks about the gap between art and life as aesthetic distance. 'The theatricality of this play protected the performers by creating an aesthetic distance between them as people and their own autobiographical stories' (Nicholson, 2014: p.99) We can equate the theatricality of the play to the theatricality of Shakespeare and the distance that the Shakespearean language and magic within *The Tempest* gives between the film and the women's lives.

Keeping a distance between the fiction of the play and the reality of the women's own lives is crucial for some of the women, not only in keeping them safe, but also enabling them to see something different.

> working 'one step removed' gives participants the opportunity to analyse complex themes and issues with greater objectivity and an aesthetic detachment (Massey Chase, 2018: p.122)

The creative exploration that takes place in the aesthetic distance leads to an understanding of a character informing the understanding of their own lives, or the understanding of their own lives informing the understanding of a character.

In a *Julius Caesar* workshop, we had been exploring the relationship between Portia and Brutus and the manipulation, power struggle and secrecy within their relationship. The women were in pairs acting out the scene. One woman, who had already performed her version of the scene and had been watching the other women, began to shift in her seat. A moment of identification and recognition occurred that disrupted her aesthetic distance. As a woman who had experienced domestic violence, she could see her own narrative from a distance.

She had played Brutus initially and after this shift was invited back to perform the scene again as Portia. In seeing others performing and discussing how Portia successfully manipulates Brutus, she uncovered the power in this female character and wanted to embody this. It was moving to watch; a sense of

her and her voice rising above the work and this particular scene was apparent. We could feel her claim the space, time and power of her voice. 'The shift from audience to actor can act as a pivot for change, enabling perspective and insight.' (Jones, 2007: p.102)

The benefit of theatre for healing that comes from working in metaphor was evident in this moment. It was significant that she did not just feel this connection watching the other women perform, but was able to stand and play out this response.

Dramatic Projection

'I think I go for the vulnerable ones. The ones that have got a lot to say but ain't got a very big voice.' (N8, see Appendix A)

Whilst distance between the fiction of the play and the reality of their world is needed for some women to engage in the work, others close this gap by projecting the reality of their world into the fiction of the play. The identification, recognition and resonance with the film is intensified as they imagine themselves in the characters, scenarios and setting of the film. Jones explains how dramatic projection 'enables change through the creation of perspective, along with the opportunity for exploration and insight through enactment of the projected material' (Jones, 2007: p.84)

When one woman was asked why she chose to write as Ariel she said, 'I used some connections with Ariel and some of my own experiences to step into that character.' (L4, see Appendix A) She projected her experience of feeling trapped by a previous partner into the entrapment that Ariel experiences:

> Me and Ariel also have a connection in that we were both trapped and controlled by someone in a position of power, and would be made to feel guilty if we asked for our freedom or in my case time to spend with my daughters or friends. (L5, see Appendix A)

We were using movement and image work to explore the journey of Ariel from being stuck in the tree, becoming duty bound to Prospero and eventually being set free. She reflected on the power of this work saying:

> It's about development for me, in being able to move on and accept this. Doing this Shakespeare is actually helping me because it were like, wow, he were like that. (L6, see Appendix A)

Dramatic projection not only allowed her to empathise with the character of Ariel, but by embodying the character, she was able to understand her past in a new light, moving beyond the feeling of control to physically experience the feeling of freedom.

> A fiction's frame does offer a prisoner a safe distance from which to explore aspects of their own life and to potentially imagine a different kind of future (Mckean, 2019 p.28)

When reflecting on the movement sequence and her connection with Ariel, I told her it felt like she knew where on Ariel's journey to freedom she was. With a hopeful smile, she replied, "Yeah I do." We did not need to unpack this further but in that moment, it was clear that the opportunity to explore her life through the character of Ariel and the physical expression of freedom through movement had enabled her to find some closure on the past and to, at least in that moment, focus on a hopeful future.

The use of metaphor within the creative process enables a transformative experience. The exploration that occurs within creative writing or performance making of the subject (the film) and the self (personal narratives) leads to new discoveries. It is through art making that the women are able to process, or reprocess, life events, and to work through moments of struggle, forming new conclusions and hopes for the future.

Some women chose to use the guise of the characters to reflect on their path to prison and project their journey onto the characters. In *Henry IV* a common observation the women made was how characters were misunderstood, easily strayed or just made mistakes. One woman, writing as King Henry in a letter of advice to his son, and future King, Hal wrote:

> I should have thought more. I was easy to lead. People said what I wanted to hear. What they wanted was for me to do their dirty work. I didn't need to fight and lose my life. (K7, see Appendix A)

She went on to perform this letter ending by looking the audience directly in the eye and saying, "Don't emulate me". It was hard in this moment to not read this as a direct projection of her own journey into crime. Whether this was a conscious or subconscious projection, the sense of remorse, guilt and shame associated with committing a crime were wrapped up in this presentation of the

character which 'can hold for us those parts of ourselves which we have yet to meet in consciousness' (Jenkyns, 1996: p.48)

Different Identities

'By adopting another character you can express someone else's opinion without fear of recriminations and so, by being able to take on a different persona, it can give you the confidence to say different things.' (J6, see Appendix A)

The process of dramatic projection enables the women to explore different identities. Being one step removed gives them space to relive past or imagine future interactions from multiple perspectives. They might act as themselves, someone else or see the scenario from an outsider's perspective, and in doing so, can play out different outcomes. 'Autobiographical performances provide a way to talk out, talk back, talk otherwise' (Heddon, 2008: p.3) The power of theatre to enable us to step into someone else's shoes gives the women the opportunity to play out versions of themselves they may not otherwise experience. This is particularly powerful when we consider the scale of the characters within Shakespeare. The women can explore themselves through the power of kings, the magic of wizards, the honour of soldiers, the addictions of drunks and fools, the relationships of lovers and the duty of servants. Heddon speaks about the power of the figurative platform of a stage on which:

> the marginalised subject can literally take centre stage, and whilst visibility, *per se,* does not mean political power or equal rights, this potential for agency has been acknowledged. (Heddon, 2008 p.3)

Within the world of Shakespeare, the women can step into identities wildly beyond their own, taking on roles that are in opposition to those that they personally identify with.

> The process of adopting a different identity: enables the subject to observe how the self can be constructed, and deconstructed and consequently provides a means of liberation from the constraints of viewing one's identity as stable, innate and unchangeable' (Massey Chase, 2019: p.116)

When they successfully convey power, healthy relationships or persuasive oration as a character, it unlocks the potential of this for them in their own lives.

'Performing a character, it was, like, strong and it gives you that confidence and you learn something from the character.' (H2, see Appendix A)

What this research lacks is a post-project investigation to understand the lasting impact of this. It is evident within our interviews and post-evaluation forms that a number of the women feel immediately emboldened by the experience, but it is unclear how long this lasts. We do not know if this feeling is taken outside the safe space of the workshop or out of the prison. Reflecting on a project at York Correctional Institution, Dworin talks about the fragility of the transformation of identity which:

> can only stabilize with reinforcement. What Time In did for many of the women is a beginning point, a catalytic moment that opened up new and positive possibilities. (Dworin, 2010: p.101)

We cannot influence what reinforcement the women will receive following the project. Whilst the women reflect on skills gained or about feeling more able to go and work in an office, without evidence, this is impossible to prove. Even with a detailed post-project evaluation process, it would be incredibly difficult to distinguish the impact on this project from other interventions and experiences the women have had.

A lot of the women we have collaborated with struggle with a fixed identity. There are women who are stuck in cycles of sometimes intergenerational criminal activity and/or abuse and the possibility of escaping this and taking a different journey is difficult. Sagan, reflecting on a project using visual arts with mentally ill patients, spoke about the power of art as part of their recovery:

> They became someone other than patient, paranoid schizophrenic or survivor. They became an artist, a collaborative partner, a painter, a maker, someone else and, most importantly for them, someone more. (Sagan, 2017: p.183-184)

The women reflected on the significance of us calling them by their first names and not a surname and a number as powerful first step in being able to move beyond their criminal identity, often saying that they 'don't feel like a prisoner in this space' (Li1, see Appendix A).

Even if they do not adopt a new identity through the characters they take on, by standing and performing, or reading their own creative writing, by being

an audience to these moments or by positively contributing to the safe space, they have adopted the identity of collaborative theatre-maker. This role requires listening, confidence, creativity, bravery and empathy. The positive response and praise the women receive for this way of working is hugely significant: 'I enjoyed seeing people's reaction to what I wrote because I didn't think I could write, so for me that was quite a light bulb moment.' (J7, see Appendix A)

Adopting different identities affords the women an opportunity to escape their own realities. One woman reflected on the benefit of being able to perform as a character, saying, 'I get really into the character, and I don't exist for a bit.' (N9, see Appendix A) It is important that we are not always pushing the film as a metaphor and there is space for performing to enable the women to escape and transcend the intensity of the space and place of prison and their lives, to be transported to another world and to leave themselves completely. This allows the women to experience a different kind of freedom, a freedom from self and the present by living in the fictional realm of theatre:

> you are becoming somebody else and all the woes that you have or all the problems that you have like being in prison and stuff are all gone […] they are not a real person they're a made-up person, so it allows you to just like be free.' (J8, See Appendix A)

Imagined Futures

'You may be freed from a prison you don't expect.' (A4, see Appendix A)

The use of metaphor is important for rehabilitation and moving beyond crisis and self-defeating behaviour. As well as imagining different identities, the women are able to imagine different journeys beyond the prison island. One woman reflected:

> Some of the parts, because I related it to my life experiences, was a bit upsetting for me. But it's also helped me recover as well because I've expressed it but through drama, which is a brilliant way […] it's a self-discovery thing but it's also, you know, helped me to move forward (L7, see Appendix A)

This woman is attributing the power of performance to healing elements of her fractured identity. The theatre-making process enabled her to discover new

things about herself and helped her to begin to process and move beyond previous traumas.

The ability to play with time via theatre is a powerful tool for this. Time travelling enables the women to look back and identify significant moments in their journeys and instils hope to look beyond their current circumstances. One of the exercises we used frequently in the project asks the women to pick a moment within the film and explore the pivotal moments that either lead to this moment taking place in the imagined world before the film, or that happen as a result in the imagined future. This work exists within the blurred realities of the play and the women's own lives as they layer their experiences into the work.

Image making allows a new identity to be breathed into the person through embodiment which Jones describes as 'the way a client physically expresses and encounters material in the 'here and now' of a dramatic presentation' (Jones, 2007: p.113) The process of physically stepping into an image forces the women to turn ideas and thoughts into action. This is important for the women imagining futures as that experience then lives in their body and can be recalled later.

When asked to draw something that could populate the island in *The Tempest,* one woman drew a mountain with a safe house at the top. She presented this to the group and spoke about being supported on her journey up the mountain to this safe house and being able to see out beyond the island at the top. This was a metaphor for her own personal journey to safety away from domestic violence and her feeling of a more hopeful future away from this with her imminent release from prison.

Instinct pushed us to recreate this image as a whole group. We placed chairs in the centre of the space, the other women arranged themselves to form the shape of a mountain and she selected two women to support her on either side as she stood up onto the chairs and looked out across the room. Nicholson discusses how when people feel safe enough, they can take creative risks which 'enable participants to move out of restricted spaces - literally or symbolically- and beyond identities which are fixed' (Nicholson, 2014: p.133) It was a risk for this woman to expose her vulnerability to the group both in sharing her story, but also in physically placing herself on chairs that she needed genuine support to stand on. With this act, the personal narrative became a community narrative,

as seeing and supporting her to get to the top of the metaphorical mountain gave a feeling of possibility of escape from abuse and trauma and a positive future.

This, however, is a challenging example. I spoke previously of the difficulty in knowing the longevity and reality of the positive imagined futures and this is evident here. A year and a half after this moment of optimism, the same woman was back in prison and joined one of our projects. She felt far from the hopeful place she was in when we last saw her. This could be read as a challenge to the authenticity of the work, but I would argue that in the moment the imagined and hopeful future was true, but the reality of it not occurring is evidence for the turbulent and difficult lives these women lead: 'all personal narratives are authentic when they are retold, though they may or may not be literally true' (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007: p.82) Whether the imagined futures happen or not, it is an important part of the rehabilitation process to devise and perform them.

Concluding Thoughts

It is clear from the women's creative writing and testimonials that the use of metaphor has enabled a safe and cathartic experience of exploring personal narratives. I have highlighted the importance of building familiarity, connection, routine and structure. A non-hierarchical and trauma-informed way of working that allows the women to steer and author the project has been imperative to its success. We have seen the power of empathy for shared experiences and a greater understanding of difference that allows for community narratives to be built. The films have been used as a holding metaphor to safely explore traumatic and chaotic personal narratives. With the ability to contain, distance or project their personal and community narratives into the world, plot, characters and themes, the women have been able to interrogate and reframe past experiences and imagine hopeful futures.

The evidence in this paper advocates for theatre as an official part of the rehabilitation process. The success of this project relies, in part, in the trusting relationship built between the YSJUPPP and the governor at HMP New Hall and their will to keep theatre within the timetable of the prison. Through the multiple theatre and music projects run by YSJUPPP, I have witnessed drama really gain a name for itself amongst the women and staff at the prison. New

women arrived at our projects having heard about it from a woman on their wing, an officer or staff in education who had recommended it. The evidence of the impact on the individual women and the community is evident here. This model could inform a formal policy, not just in HMP New Hall, but across the women's estate.

Whilst theatre can, and should, be an important part of the rehabilitation process, I cannot help but imagine the journey some of these women would be on if more of this work was able to exist within the community. If the women had access and time to support and services to address their personal narratives and trauma through theatre, perhaps they wouldn't find themselves in these prison workshops. There is huge potential for projects like this to form an official part of a community sentence where women are not forced away from their children and support networks to serve short, but life altering, sentences.

I will never forget conducting a post-project interview in a small cupboard in the prison. A woman sat centimetres away from me describing how the drama space is different to other spaces in prison and her life. She looked me direct in the eye and said 'I get to call you Jordana and you treat me like a human being.' (J9, see Appendix A) I hope these women sail away from their islands to a place of safety, where being treated like a human being isn't an extraordinary experience.

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Appendix A: Reference List of Women's Work

Initial and Entry	Source	Project	Date
A1	Message to Future Women	The Tempest Focus Group	2019
A2	Pre-Evaluation Form	Julius Caesar	2019
A3	You Think I am no Stronger Than my Sex' Creative Writing	Julius Caesar	2020
A4	Message to Future Women	The Tempest Focus Group	2019
H1	Post project Interview		2020
H2	Post project Interview		2020
J1	Post project Interview		2020
J2	Post project Interview		2020
J3	Post project Interview		2020
J4	Post project Interview		2020
J5	Post project Interview		2020
J6	Post project Interview		2020
J7	Post project Interview		2020
J8	Post project Interview		2020
J9	Post project Interview		2020
Ja1	Post project Interview		2020
Ja2	Post project Interview		2020
Ja3	Post project Interview		2020
K1	Post project Interview		2020
K2	Post project Interview		2020
K3	Post project Interview		2020
K4	Post-Evaluation Form	The Tempest Focus Group	2019
K5	Post project Interview		2020
K6	Post project Interview		2020
K7	Letter to Hal' Creative Writing	Henry IV	2018
L1	Post project Interview		2020
L2	Post project Interview		2020
L3	Post project Interview		2020
L4	Post project Interview		2020
L5	Island Life' Creative Writing	The Tempest	2019
L6	Post project Interview		2020
L7	Post project Interview		2020
Li1	In session reflection	The Tempest Filming Session	2020
N1	Post project Interview		2020
N2	Post project Interview		2020
N3	Post project Interview		2020

N4	Post project Interview		2020
N5	Post project Interview		2020
N6	Message in a Bottle' Creative Writing	The Tempest	2019
N7	Post project Interview		2020
N8	Post project Interview		2020
N9	Post project Interview		2020
Sa1	Post project Interview		2020
Sa2	Post project Interview		2020
Sa3	Post project Interview		2020

Appendix B: Ways of Working

- Try and understand each other- it is OK not to be OK
- Respect ourselves and each other
- Listen to each other and share the space together -equal opportunity
- Respect everyone's different opinions and points of view- don't be scared to be yourself
- Don't be judgemental- no 'isms'
- Don't make fun of anyone- we're not all perfect = laugh 'with'- not 'at'
- Be encouraging
- Be polite
- Include everyone
- Confidentiality in the group, be respectful of what you share on the wing - (Other than if someone or if ourselves are at risk)
- Kindness and friendship
- Have a laugh and have fun
- Try not to be afraid- Encourage each other
- Have a break
- Be considerate of others and their opinions and feelings
- To be non-judgemental
- Work with new people
- Give things a go- don't push anyone into doing something they don't want to do
- Keeping yourself safe
- Push your creative boundaries
- Be creative
- Purposeful participation- Come along, it's a great opportunity
- Try your best to do the task and ask for help
- Minimise swearing
- No stealing
- Be attentive to the ways we work with each other