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Ellen Kaplan
Smith College, ekaplan@smith.edu

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A Cry Without an Echo: Consciousness, Creativity, and the Healing Work of the Arts

> "In here, there are only three ways to go. Snap *out*, snap *down*, or snap *up*. *I* snap *up*!"
> (Robert L. Cook, Jr, Graterford State Correctional Institution, PA, May 12, 2015)

Arts practitioners working in prisons have testified to the inherent value of creative work as enhancing self-esteem, fostering self-insight, developing the ability to work with others, and sharpening skills.[1] Yet few resources are directed at long-term incarcerees, and arts programming on Death Row is exceedingly rare. Self-evidently, those who can only expect "pine box parole" do not need programs that support reintegration or 'rehabilitation.' [2] But artistic expression offers dignity and purpose, "a profound assertion of self," allowing even the life-long prisoner to "keep hope, and emotion, alive." [3] Furthermore, "Recent research suggest(s) that meaning-making through creative work may lead to post-traumatic growth," [4] say the authors of "Bringing the whole universe to order: creativity, healing and posttraumatic growth", an essay in in *Creativity and Mental Illness,* ed. James C. Kaufman, which reviews current scientific knowledge on the healing power of creative work. Creative expression is potentially an act of resistance to stigma and shame, with both individual and societal implications.

As a theatre practitioner working with prisoners serving life sentences or facing execution, I have found that "playfulness," as a fundamental element of creative work, has a vital, if incongruous, role in addressing the trauma associated with incarceration. In this essay, I consider the process of co-developing a play with prisoners using playful, non-realist strategies, and pose questions about how theoretical studies of trauma and recent advances in neuroscience might inform further this work. How does the relationship between creative expression and trauma influence arts practices in prison? [5] How can resisting 'realism,' with its authorizing voice and insistence on normative thinking, benefit those who have experienced trauma (as have most prisoners), and open spaces previously inaccessible to feeling? [6] How might such processes encourage personal agency and the project of reconstructing the self? Finally, how might arts practitioners develop strategies that are ethical and responsive to social and individual imperatives related to incarceration, where trauma so deeply informs identity and experience?

Making Work, Doing Hard Time

Someone Is Sure to Come (SISTC) was written in collaboration with men and women on Death Row or serving Life Without Parole (LWOP); several have spent decades in solitary confinement. The play was produced at Smith College, along with an art exhibit by one of the inmates, as part of a campus-wide initiative focused on incarceration. Subsequently, it was presented with a professional cast at La Mama Annex in New York City, where family members and friends of one of the inmates were among the audience. A condensed version was published in Tacenda, a journal featuring work about crime, punishment and social justice. *SISTC* uses poetry and story to weave composite portraits in which prisoners explore the confines of their world; they reach up and out, but cannot touch; contact is not allowed. The narrative is framed by a fictional outsider, a Girl adrift on an ice floe in the barren Arctic sea. Isolation and fear drive her mad; she hallucinates, doesn't remember who she is or why she's here; she cannot sleep; time spools out, unvarying; nothing ever changes. Ultimately, her hair turns grey and she hangs herself with her own braid.

Five black men and two white women from state prisons across the U.S. contributed to *SISTC;* gender and racial imbalances reflect the realities of incarceration in the United States and mirror the extreme over-representation of black males facing the death penalty. The play evolved through long-term conversations by phone, letter and email, and in three cases, through lengthy in-person interviews. Material was elicited through open-ended prompts; elucidated through frank discussions, brainstorming, free-association, and poetic elaboration; additionally, some work was excerpted, with permission, from previously written poetry collections and book-length memoirs. Ru-Jo submitted over six hundred pages of a life-narrative, from which short anecdotes were distilled. Basemore offered a cycle of poems ('Po Hymns'), which reflect the anguished racial history on which the carceral enterprise rests. One major challenge was to develop texts that use a wide range of poetic strategies to evoke, rather than simply describe, the material conditions of prison life. Eliciting such material was only partially successful; some of the writers struggle with basic literacy, and most are habituated to 'realism' as a default style. Still, the process of exploration and experiment, and the opportunity to be heard in a public forum, is valuable to the writers, and potentially to the audiences for whom it is performed.

SISTC does not address life histories or past crimes; rather, it chronicles lived experience, emphasizing the here-and-now. The contributors to *SISTC* are survivors of significant trauma; all cope with the stigma associated with incarceration; they write about the emotional impact of facing execution and serving hard time. These authors inhabit a world of uniformity and ennui; their lives are delimited by institutional needs, which, for economic, political and ideological reasons, are often impervious to change. The writers expand the parameters of daily life by visceral and active writing that focuses on sensory and kinesthetic experience, dialogic encounters, and dream imagery. The play's structure is non-linear; it incorporates movement and text with strong melodic and rhythmic undercurrents. Choreographed segments include a fable about an inter-species war between Rams and Boars that allegorizes racial oppression; a dance of killer whales starved of sustenance and forced to hunt in depleted waters, which speaks to conditions that contextualize violence; a choral piece about a guard who tries, and fails, to cut down a 'hangar' – a suicide – on the Row. Personal and societal traumas are addressed indirectly, with no attempt to literally explain or describe them. Dramatization offers an opportunity for writers to examine their personal stories and the conditions in which they live; the non-realistic style broadens the scope of how these stories are rendered.

Process and Production of *Someone is Sure to Come*

Several years ago, an education specialist at Ludlow SCI (MA) invited me to bring in 'entertainment' for a program that served incarcerated mothers and their children. Infrequent and inconsistent visits, scheduled once a month, plus the fact that many mothers were functionally illiterate and couldn't read to their children, made the visits problematic. We brought the cast of *Twelfth Night* to the prison in costume and in character, but rather than 'do scenes' *for*, we played *with* our audience: Feste juggled, Sir Toby 'belched,' Sir Andrew Aguecheek did pratfalls and taught the kids his silly dance. One mom gave Orsino a dressing-down for being an egotistic jerk; another told Viola to stop waiting around for her man. We took pictures with an old Polaroid camera and shared them with the mothers and children, who then re-staged themselves with the actors to create new pictures. The exuberant participation informed my subsequent work, which has included conducting theatre workshops with rural and inner-city kids, "special needs"

children, adjudicated teens, adult learners; teaching a college seminar in a women's prison; and devising new works of community-focused theatre.

These experiences, along with pedagogical and political concerns about the brutal realities of incarceration, sparked my interest in how theatrical performance might translate into the rough settings of solitary confinement and Death Row. However, physical performance is an unattainable option for most of these prisoners.[7] When theatre programming is limited or non-existent, creative writing strategies that *imagine* an unconfined body and emphasize sensory awareness can offer a powerful substitute. [8], [9] G., on the Row at Central Prison in Raleigh, NC speaks to the inherent benefits of acting, which had been available to him until a theatre program on the Row was suspended. He explained that performing offered a sensory, bodily and cognitive engagement with 'many possible selves'; when acting was no longer an option, writing became an alternative way to articulate and distill personal struggles. [10]

The substance of my work with inmates has been an interactive, relational process of sharing life stories as co-equal artists. Significant here is my own background as a survivor of sexual assault and major illness, which spurs my (partial, incomplete) connection with those facing long-term incarceration. This personal history gives me a committed place from which to engage; it has left its mark on my work as an actor/writer and has fully informed my interactions with inmates who collaborate with me. In developing *SISTC,* deeply personal, highly sensitive material has been discussed; clearly, not everything offered in private is permissible (or legally advisable) to share. My role is not to probe vulnerabilities or open old wounds. Rather, in what I hope is an equitable exchange, I speak openly, barter skills, offer an arts 'tool-box,' and try to be a relational and ethical listener.

Ethical listening, Relational listening, Reciprocity

Acknowledging and inhabiting the space of difference is crucial to establishing trust, which is fundamental to the relational aspect of collaboration. Jill Bennett, whose work in trauma studies has opened an important conversation about art produced in zones of conflict, defines ethical listening as 'a mode…that can support and tolerate difference, rather than either repudiating it or assimilating the experience of the other to the self.'[11] She cites artists whose

"work proceeds from an identification forged with the primary subjects of violence…(allowing) the pain of the other to inhabit the self." [12] As an ethical listener, I cannot remain impassive and unchanged by the words of those with whom I work. And as co-writer I am not a disinterested presence.

Being heard by others is a deep-seated need; connection matters. As one inmate says in *SISTC*: "I take what nourishment I can, little bits of light, I grab it, take it into my cell, when I talk to you."[13] But meaningful exchange is based on trust, and must be reciprocal. Participation requires openness, a truthful reveal of one's own limitations and vulnerability. Certainly, this is what the inmate/authors contribute:

CUSH

I spread my arms, spread eagle, I *touch* the walls of my crib. *That's how big*. The span of my living quarters, 29 years. Gritty shitty concrete mold. Gotta keep from snapping *out.* I write, I paint. Every stroke of the brush, every stroke of the pen. That's how I get a grip on these walls. Push 'em out, so I can breathe. Then they close in again. Someone's got to listen. Someone's got to know I'm here.

RU-JO

Plenty men, they profit on me. Plenty profit from my degradation.

CUSH

I'm *buried* in here. You're building your house on my bones.

BASEMORE

Welcome to the unholy.

You are death personified now,

Please be advised:

This is the death posture,

You've been selected…

For the death roster. [14]

Agency, Meaning-Making, and Being Heard

"I write, but who the hell is listening?" asks Basemore, in solitary for over two decades. "I need to speak because no one knows I'm here…If people don't know who you are, you don't exist." [15] His poems vibrate with the tragedy of black history:

> "I hear the rumbling of bones in the clouds. I hear bloody chains rattle on like memories that don't die. The snap of lashes, whipping up the winds, bringing to me the rhythm of your hurt. Your rhythm is chased by the rhythm of death, hungry to devour everything, even our unborn children. Polyrhythms of the whip occur and recur and I stand against them, I am their nemesis. / Even in the ocean I hear The Beat. / Souls of the middle passage / Let me not find sleep. [16]

Jarvis is a practicing Buddhist and a published author of powerful, incisive autobiographies. He has been on Death Row for 28 years. This story is based on an incident he witnessed, when an inmate committed suicide on the Row.

> "Bobby Goose is hanging off the cell door. A twisted bed sheet wrapped around his neck. He only have one shoe on." The guards try to loosen the knot, scramble to find the "cut down tool," push hard to bring Bobby back to life. They administer CPR to this man who will die – one way or another - on the Row. The guards, Jarvis discovers, see this man a human being. "Somewhere in me had always thought… nobody on death row would ever be entitled to … them [the guards] doing anything." In that instant, the guards, "seen [sic] a human being, not a condemned man, awaiting execution. They reacted as human beings and did everything, *everything* to save the life of another human being."

Folding the story into *SISTC*, we created a movement score and a chorus of voices to further dramatize the event and its impact on those involved. One of the guards told Jarvis that after Bobby Goose died, his perspective on death, and on the death penalty, changed. The guard had done all he could to save a life that was slated to end by execution, and after that, he could no longer support the deliberate taking of a life (by the state). Jarvis' own point of view transformed as well; for the first time, he came to see the COs as human. Theatricalizing the story, writing characters, teasing out voices, pushed the writer – and perhaps the audience – toward empathy and insight.

In *Prisoners, Solitude and Time*, Ian O'Donnell writes that for many in prison the burden of self-examination is unbearable, while for others, artistic expression catalyzes insight. [17] Moor Allah, in solitary at Graterford, PA writes: "Prison has changed me for the worse." Every day he sees the scarred men on his tier; hard, cold and dead inside. "Acting grown doesn't make a man. This place forces you to hate everyone around you. And what's crazy is you really can't share these feelings with the people your [sic] around because there [sic] feeling the same things. I'm really starting to hate men's voices…I just shut down… Besides [writing], I'm just withering away." [18] For G., however, "the writing itself creates the meaning." [19] Writing about himself as a six-year-old conjures up sense memories: textures, colors, sounds, smells, which in turn evoke previously forgotten relationships and events. The memories lead to an unexpected exploration of sexuality, masculinity, and criminality. He recalls how, at eleven, he started smoking and then stealing cigarettes, which conformed to his child's image of being a 'man.' Growing up in a household with four brothers and an abusive, alcoholic father, he could not protect himself from extreme violence, nor could he challenge the prevailing (and unarticulated) conceptions of maleness which constructed the self he begins, now, to understand.

O'Donnell identifies meaning-making as key to resilience. "He who has a why to live, can bear with almost any how."[20] Meaning, according to O'Donnell, stems from "ideology," often religious or political, which gives context to suffering. O'Donnell calls this reorientation, one of seven "Rs" that support survival in prison. Ru-Jo writes meticulously describes how he structures time (which O'Donnell calls rescheduling) through rigorous spiritual retreats.

> "I have to find a way out of this hell hole of a maze. So I came up with this retreat to keep me sane. I stay in my cell for a month, no going outside at all. I do these 5-day fastings to clear my BODY, SOUL, and MIND. No meat, no bread, no salt, no sugar. Week 1, no TV. Lots of Bible. 48 hours no sleep, 72 hours no food, that's the first 5 days, very intense. Week 2, no breakfast. Week 3 no breakfast, work out twice a day. Week 4 no reading, no writing. Week 5 *very* intense, no talking. It helps me deal with the madness in this hell hole. I recharge my spiritual battery." [21]

Other strategies O'Donnell identifies include removal (sleeping, reading or watching TV); and raptness, the absorption that accompanies creative activity, and resistance.

Cush, determined to fight what he sees as the injustices of a system that put him on Death Row, has consciously chosen "acts of resistance," for which he has spent 29 years in solitary confinement. For him resistance is act of psychological and spiritual survival. To 'snap out,' he says, is to go crazy; to 'snap down' is to crumple, give in, quit living; but to 'snap up' is to push yourself to another level, to channel love, rage, pain and joy, into creative action. Cush chooses to 'snap up': his wide-ranging studies in theology, African-centered spirituality, history, anthropology, and new-age physics, along with his extensive work as a prison advocate for himself and others, are testaments to his resilience. So are his fantastical writings and abstract paintings, which give oblique expression to decades in solitary. He cannot explore his experience directly; approaching the psychic wound directly is paralyzing, he says. Trauma exceeds words, expression is inadequate to experience. But Cush's artistic production offers the intense raptness that O'Donnell identifies, even as it speaks an unspeakable pain.

"Writing is one way of finding freedom where there is none. When [writers in prison] are engrossed in the process of writing, they are no longer confined." [22] Raptness positions the writer to move beyond the sublimations and erasures that characterize trauma; it allows her to access material ordinarily unavailable from scarred-over, 'dead' places. The traumatized artist may begin to break free of a reiterated narrative which confines and, she believes, defines her.

Trauma: the paralysis of pain.

In Jill Bennett's discussion of poet and Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo, Bennett asserts that a literal representation of trauma is impoverished, inadequate. "Rather…[Delbo's poetry] *bears the imprint* of trauma," [23] moving her work "toward a practice that sees the artwork as generating sensation so as to produce an encounter in the present." [24] "The poetics of sense memory involve not so much a *speaking of* but a *speaking out of* a particular memory or experience.. [to] "mak(e) trauma present instead of simply representing it." [25] We *feel* meaning before we can explain it; sense imagery offers a vocabulary that supersedes discursive exposition about an unspeakable, often unknowable, past.

Trauma is, in Cathy Caruth's formulation, "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events." [26] And as Judith Herman asserts, it is "an affliction of the powerless…the

victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming forces." [27] Social trauma intersects with individual trauma; racialized and class-based incarceration is understood as an attack on collective identity, hence, social trauma. Prisoners, many of whom are both victimizers *and* victimized (by poverty, racial oppression, structural inequality, violent communities), are scarred by trauma. Expressive arts in prison can help shift perceptions of self and community, but personal agency is key; the artist/inmate need not revisit traumatic memories to rebuild the self, but h/she must take charge of what they say and how they say it. Arts practitioners may facilitate projects and provide open-ended opportunities for expression, but they are tasked with delimiting or predetermining content.

Theatre workers generally agree that 'theatre is not therapy,' but we also must be wary of unexamined biases that inadvertently exploit or re-trigger trauma. James Thompson makes cogent points about an essentially Western narrative about social trauma that guides arts work in conflict zones. He warns that '…dependency on theories of *trauma*… aligns applied theatre with some deeply problematic practices and assumptions…'[28] Not every individual benefits from telling their story, nor is that a necessary precondition for relief. In the narrative Thompson critiques, 'not-telling' is seen as a failure or the site of continued harm. [29] But 'tellers' must be in charge of what they say and how they say it; they decide how to move past suffering, and how to find new ways of apprehending themselves as heroic, powerful agents of change. In *SISTC*, for example, Cush depicts himself as a warrior: "Without warriors, the battle is already lost." [30] Rather than reflexive reliance on literal 'truth,' or narration of life events, linguistic playfulness creates space for a more expansive idea of the self.

Playfulness

Creative expression inclines toward openness, unexpectedness, elasticity; in a word, playfulness. In developing material for *SISTC*, we used visceral imagery and elaboration of fantasy to explore what Cush refers to as the "alternate reality" of prison. Moor Allah, struggling to cope with serious depression, began with an image of being buried, which he elaborated into "my only wish is to be buried beside a slave, to remind the world, no matter if you worked the field or lost your appeal, slavery still exist." Extended metaphors, comic juxtapositions and fragmented narratives were among the many approaches used to expand the writers' repertoire, though not all attempts to forsake realism were successful. E., for example, suggested a scene of

famous women who faced death in prison meeting at a dinner party, but her writing style didn't accommodate this kind of comic, fantastical rendering. Not all strategies work with all writers, though most of the pieces included in *SISTC* sought to disrupt the moralizing authority of realism and to highlight a more dimensional representation of lived experience.[31] Writing by inmates often focuses on making 'good' choices and correcting 'bad' behaviour, leaving little room for ambiguity. [32] To counterbalance this tendency, some practitioners explore other modalities: for example, Jenny Hughes, in discussing her work with young offenders, talks about moving away from social realism and embracing 'the metaphorical and the fantastic' in the exploration of offenders' lives. Hughes speaks to the need for more playful and theatrical expressions, pushing past the boundaries of social realism in examining 'desire, fantasy and power' as aspects of experience. She goes on to say that 'the connections between the fantastic and the real can be reimagined, embodied, experienced" as a means to "explore and undermine fixed patterns of thinking and constructions of self.'[33]

In her discussion of playfulness and art, Anne F. O'Reilly says, "Poetic language with its attention to symbol and metaphor can expand horizons, open up possible worlds." [34] The fabulist elements in *SISTC,* its use of disjuncture, spatial and temporal displacements, creative visualization of imagined spaces, reflect life as it seems (metaphorically) or feels (sensorily) to the writers. Poetry and playfulness help to communicate the scarred and wounded places within, which cannot be adequately represented in realistic prose.

Writing through the Senses

Jill Bennett calls attention to visual artists who 'render sensation present,' in work that is 'neither explicit in content nor didactic; they do not tell stories nor prescribe responses.'[35] The senses are central to the vocabulary of the artist, who hopes to (re)create experience unmediated by any kind of 'message' or explicit meaning. Moreover, sensation is indispensable to the construction of the self. Vannini, Waskul, and Gottshalk theorize that the senses are involved in 'sense-making practices,' which they call 'somatic work.' The processing of internal sensations and those received from outside the body participate in creating subjectivity. [36] Vannini, *et al* are interested in "*how the body makes sense;* how it perceives, how it understands, how it knows,

[which is] made possible because of sensual experience.” [37] Somatic awareness, specifically a detailed attention to and articulation of sensory experience, generates a sense of self. [38]

When the sensory environment is impoverished, detailed and specific writing may help to re-animate the senses. C.’s first response to a writing prompt is “Windows Suck.” With encouragement, she gets specific: “My window is 4 inches wide. At night I can see a sliver of moon. When the moon is out. Daytime, I see a sliver of blue.” This leads to a new thought: I've been looking at the same thing for 17 years. I miss the sky. I miss the bigness of the sky.” Again, of herself, she says “I’m pickled in here. I used to just change my hair color: mad black, crazy henna, fire red. Then I got to work changing myself. But nothing changes. Not for real.” For those whose confinement means that they can (never, no longer, not again) move freely, writing can reanimate the senses, and inspire - ‘in-spirit’ - the body. Write from and through bodily memory communicates directly; it “registers a sense of the interior experience,” [39] allowing the writer to ‘mak(e) the experience of trauma present instead of simply representing it.’[40] Cush writes vividly: “Tired of black and white. A cut, a splash of color. Red. Black and white extinguished. In a pool of red.” [41]

Writing that employs visceral and kinesthetic imagery can unleash and amplify the prisoner’s voice, increasing a sense of personal agency. As Robert Johnson says,

> ‘Writing…tackles the prison world head on. The act of describing something objectifies it and puts it at arm’s length, giving emotional quarter to the writer. In this sense, all writing that bears witness to confinement and its effects helps the person cope by naming and, in a sense, controlling or taming the harms to which they are subjected… Writing offers a kind of mastery, then, which allows for survival.’[42]

Who sees and what is seen

Responses to the production were visceral and emotional, and ultimately, cognitive. In subsequent talkback sessions, questions arose about the political and racial dimensions of incarceration; there was an energetic discussion of the death penalty; and some disputation about the authenticity of representation when the prisoners cannot speak directly to their audience.

In one talk-back session following the presentation of *SISTC*, an audience member suggested that a cage might be built around those watching, as a way for incarceration to be *felt* more fully. The discussion led to considerations of staging and questions about the desired impact on the audience. Do we want people to 'feel' imprisonment, as a means of generating empathy? Would the experience be any less rich if the audience for SISTC was metaphorically 'imprisoned?' Is it our goal to immerse the audience, or is a proscenium-style presentation sufficient and effective? Do we hope that the audience is moved to action, and are there specific end-goals we hope to achieve? As producer, I wrestle with these questions. My belief is that the power of the work lies in the text and its reception will differ with each audience member.

SISTC is conceived as a reading with choreographed movement; for most of the play, each actor is alone and 'imprisoned' in a spotlight. Only the Guard moves freely, positioning himself on a metal staircase that he bangs with his ring of keys. Correlate to the idea that body-centered writing engages the author in a way parallel to performance is the postulate that the audience experiences these iterations *as if* they were real. The narrowly focused spotlights, the floating white platform, the Guard's spiral staircase, are scenic metaphors intended to evoke visceral responses in the audience. One consideration for future production is to use a minimal bird-cage like construction to partially conceal the actors at the beginning of the play, but that may be overly literal; audience empathy is not enhanced by concrete imagery, when the goal is to suggest and evoke.

Neuroscience and the actor

Recent advances in neuropsychology [43] and theories about synaptic plasticity (neural 'rewiring' [44]), lead me to consider implications for arts practices and their relation to healing trauma. Joseph LeDoux writes "The ability of neurons [and neural pathways] to be altered by experience,'[45] underlie learning.[46] 'Life's experiences leave lasting effects on us by being stored as memories in synaptic connections,'[47] and 'experience changes synapses,'[48] It is a fair hypothesis that telling the tale differently, reimagining but not reiterating trauma, may be a way to rebuild the self. The coerced and confined bodies on the Row could benefit from re-patterning to reconstitute identity, using the power of 'as-if' to take control of their own story.

As actors know, hypotheticals are real to the mind. As Stephen Di Benedetto, a theatre scholar and scenic designer who explores the role of the senses in performance, asserts, "Our brains respond as if stimuli, real, imagined, or remembered, are occurring now." [49] The subjunctive 'as-if' is foundational to Stanislavski-based acting, in which the actor must to 'live truthfully in imaginary circumstances.' Stanislavski's methodology aims, by means of a psycho-physical craft which draws its power from sensory engagement and the 'as if' of the imagination, to create a state of readiness which will allow unconscious material to emerge. The interplay between conscious and unconscious forces, mediated by the imagination, allows the artist to access her inner world and bring it to the surface. As an actor, I am aware of the spaces that exist between text, the constructed framework developed in rehearsal, and the free moment of expression in performance. This is the moment prior to articulation: it is the "I" before I speak, the elusive images and impulses which live just below awareness. As arts practitioners and educators, we are positioned to approach traumatized populations, and engage our own creative processes, through an expansive and liberating playfulness.

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[1] See Robert Landy and Montgomery, David. *Theatre for Change: Education, Social Action and Therapy,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; *Theatre in Prison* ed. Michael Balfour, Bristol, UK: Intellect Books, 2004; James Thompson, *Prison Theatre: Perspectives and Practices,* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1998..

[2] Bridget Keehan, in "Theatre, prison & rehabilitation: new narratives of purpose" in *Journal of Theatre and Performance* https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2015.1060118 discusses the limitations of evaluating prison theatre programs by how they contribute to prisoners' rehabilitation.

[3] Robert Johnson. "Art and Autonomy: Prison Writers Under Siege" in *The Arts of Imprisonment,* Leonidas K. Cheliotis, (ed.) London and New York: Routledge, 2012

[4] Marie J. C. Foregeard, Anne C. Mecklenburg, Justin J. Lacasse, and Eranda Jayawickreme, "Bringing the whole universe to order: creativity, healing and posttraumatic growth", in *Creativity and Mental Illness,* ed. James C. Kaufman. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014. P. 323

[5] 'For a discussion of how incarceration is trauma-inducing, see "The Trauma of the Incarceration Experience", *Civil Liberties Law Review,* Vol. 48, 2013:01 pp. 261-263.

[6] 'Feeling' refers to emotion that is consciously named to the self. Emotions, according to neuroscientists Antonio Damasio and Joseph LeDoux, is a set of physical manifestations which accompany appropriate action (I run [action] from a bear, as my heart speeds up [emotion] to pump blood so I can run faster, and split seconds afterward, I [feel] fear). Emotion is not directly accessible to consciousness, but 'feelings' are; however, those who have experienced significant trauma are often unaware of their own feelings.

[7] In writing about the effects of solitary confinement on post-traumatic growth, Ian O'Donnell says, "Trauma can catalyze growth," but "The psychological burden of restricted movement, limited sensory input, and lack of social contact" make this far less likely. p. 111

[8] Eric Clarke, Tia DeNora, and Jonna Vuoskoski. Music, Empathy and Cultural Understanding. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.plrev.2015.09.001 Also, Joel Kruger's Comment: "Empathy Beyond the Mind," in Physics of Life Reviews, 2015 https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0qeRa-smHZ3My0wb2NmWlJvVE0/view Kruger, in responding to Clarke, et al says, "When we engage with and become dynamically coupled with music at neural, physiological, and behavioural levels, music potentially elicits, shapes, and regulates capacities and experiences that would remain otherwise inaccessible." This applies to poetry and non-narrative writing as well.

[9] See 4ECognition Group, for discussion of 'embodied mind'. https://4ecognitiongroup.wordpress.com/research/

[10] Personal interview, May 2, 2018.

[11] Ibid. p. 105

[12] Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 336-8
[13] Ibid. p. 23
[14] Kaplan, et al. *Someone Is Sure To Come (SISTC)*, 2018
[15] Personal communication, 9/21/2015
[16] *SISTC,* 2018.
[17] Ian O'Donnell. *Prisoners, Solitude and Time.* Oxford University Press, 2014, Chapter 10, p.222-255.
[18] Bernard Cousar. Personal communication, August 10, 2017.
[19] Personal interview, George T. Wilkerson, May 28, 2018
[20] The quote is from Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning,* a book often referenced by inmates.
[21] SISTC, 2018.
[22] Johnson, p. 184
[23] Bennett, p. 23
[24] Ibid., p. 28
[25] Ibid., p. 38
[26] Cathy Caruth. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994, p. 11.
[27] Herman, p. 33
[28] Thompson, p. 43. .
[29] Ibid., p. 45
[30] Personal communication, September 2016
[31] In *The Feeling of What Happens*, Antonio Damasio looks at the representation of feeling and how that interacts with 'sense of self.' He identifies 'two key players, the organism and the object,' which interact to give rise to neurological patterns which are registered by a 'core consciousness' and then articulated back to the self as feelings. This articulation, I argue, is prone to clichéd expression in men and women whose primary definition of self is predicated on the views of those who hold power over them. Realism as a style can be self-limiting; poetry and plays by inmates often reflect pre-digested, repetitive imagery. In a media saturated world, the articulation of self is too easily pre-determined. Inmates, more than most, are susceptible to clichés that circumvent introspection and originality.
[32] In 2012, I curated a selection of plays written by incarcerated authors, presented at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Of the 60 plays submitted, almost all were didactic and had a strong moralizing component and echoed behavioral modification goals and strategies endorsed in prison programs.
[33] Jenny Hughes with Ruding, S. "Made to Measure: A Critical Interrogation of Applied Theatre as Intervention with Young Offenders in the UK" in *Applied Theatre Reader,* Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston (eds.) London and New York: Routledge, 2009 p. 217-225/
[34] Anne F. O'Reilly, *Sacred Play.* Dublin: Caryfort Press, 2004, p. 117
[35] Ibid.
[36] Vannini, Phillip, Dennis Waskul and Simon Gottschalk, *The Senses in Self, Society and Culture.* New York and London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 17-19
[37] Ibid., p. 24
[38] Antonio Damasio in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness.* New York and London: Harcourt, 1999, discusses how neural structures provide 'the roots for the self' by constructing representations from sensory inputs. p. 159-160
[39] Bennett, "Art, Affect, and the 'Bad' Death: Strategies for Communicating the Sense Memory of Loss," 2002. in *Feminism Art Theory: An Anthology.* Hilary Robinson (ed.) West Sussex, UK: Wiley & Sons, 2015, p. 335
[40] Ibid., p. 339
[41] Personal communication, September 2016.
[42] Johnson, p 178-179
[43] See Daniel C. Dennett, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds,* New York: W.W. Norton, 2017; Antonia Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain.* New York: Pantheon, 2010. Also see William Seager, *Theories of Consciousness* 2nd Edition, London: Routledge, 2016 for a comprehensive survey.
[44] Joseph LeDoux, *The Synaptic Self.* New York: Penguin, 2002, Chapter 6.
[45] Ibid., p. 137
[46] Ibid., p. 134
[47] Ibid., p. 262
[48] Ibid., p. 155
[49] Stephen Di Benedetto, *The Provocation of the Senses.* Routledge, 2011, p. 11 The book's discussion of sensory engagement in performance connects theatrical practice with recent discoveries in neuroscience.