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What Works: The affective and gendered performance of prison *Applied Theatre: Women and the Criminal Justice System.* Edited by Caoimhe McAvinchey.

Aylwyn Walsh (accepted version. Please do not cite without permission)

This chapter examines a particular example of applied theatre practice from HMP Drake Hall in the UK to theorise prison's performance as affective and gendered. Attending to the work of applied theatre within the wider institutional frame allows critical considerations on the risks, benefits and implications of women's participation. This approach draws on the critical ethnographic approach of feminist criminologist Lynne Haney (2010). This contribution asserts the need for practices to shift beyond the predominant paradigms in applied theatre research, namely studies of behavioural-change focused programmes. I suggest that these often replicate prison's disciplinary function as arts interventions that rehearse scripts related to women's strength, future success, and resilience. Drawing on research journals and field notes, I develop a critical analysis of the projects' institutional framing, its correlative power and its implications for practice. The focus of this chapter is thus not a case study of the applied theatre project itself but rather what it allows us to access about prison, gender and affective labour.

My work is theoretically framed by James Thompson's and Sara Ahmed's approaches to affect. James Thompson proposes attention to both effect and affect in applied theatre scholarship (2009), requiring a critique of languages of impact and 'effect', in which he 'proposes new models of theoretical engagement which reframe the political and aesthetic possibilities of affect' (McAvinchey, 2011: 233). I take forward Thompson's (2009) discussion, attending to aesthetics and emotion in addition to merely instrumental evaluative narratives that are necessary for funded applied theatre practice. I use 'affect' in the sense that emotions are generated and circulate through the body, as discussed by feminist critical theorist Sara Ahmed (2004; 2014). This is particularly productive for applied theatre analysis in order to consider how affect is produced, contained, and also disseminated by its context, in this case, prison. As I demonstrate in the chapter, this is necessary and important because arts practices in prison operate within a wider social context that generates and orchestrates the terms of crime and punishment. Applied theatre practice is not just practiced *within*, but evaluated *on* these terms and values.[i] As such, attending to the implications of social, political and economic values is necessary to

avoid the charge of projects replicating the values of the institution by seemingly doing its work without any explicit recognition (see Biggs, 2016: 13-14; Thompson, 2004). The contrasting view is that theatre practice is ineffectual in light of the overwhelming residue or, in sociologist Erving Goffman's (1963), terms, stigma of the institution. In order to move beyond these simplistic either/or formulations, and from an approach informed by feminist criminology, I begin by thinking through how gender and affect work in the context of prison. This sets the ground for thinking about the place of applied theatre's work within the criminal justice system in the UK.

Affect and stigma

My practice draws on the work of Ahmed's feminist affect theory (2004; 2014) in which she writes about the need to consider how emotions circulate. She is particularly interested in how emotions and their objects produce rhetorics of self/other that become a way of justifying marginalisation, hate speech and social divisions. This is because, rather than 'hate', or 'shame' residing in the subject itself, affects work on and between bodies – developing feeling in common that moves beyond an individual subject but that constitutes a group. In relation to women in prison, this works in a general way whereby the group 'women in prison' is formulated from outside, but also within the everyday life of the prison where women are labelled and form in-group hierarchies according to their crimes, sentences or 'types'. Further, Goffman's formulation of stigma as a residue from what he calls a 'spoiled identity' (1963) relates to how behaviours, self-beliefs and performances of everyday life present the effects of institutionalisation. In his original study, this understanding of the impacts of the institution presupposes that prison (and other institutions) produce a spectacle of punishment that results in the stigma. To put these concepts in relation to gender, the stigmatisation of women prisoners highlights the ways normative formulations of women (as non-violent and nurturing, for example) attempt to contain and limit their performances. When women are unruly, they are offensive, and thus, stigmatised (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004). To attend to affect, according to Ahmed, allows for a critical reading of institutions, discourses and collectivities that can help to unpick the often exclusionary, binary, gendered thinking that sticks to figures such as women in prison.

Putting Goffman's thinking in relation to Ahmed's, it is not necessarily an emotion of shame at *being* a prisoner that sticks, but that the regime of the institution effects a sticky stigma related to, for example, producing compliant bodies for a security count; or developing hunger according to the regime timetable. In other words, the stigma is not an affect *of* the prisoner, but one that is produced by the relation of the prisoners and the institution, or in other words, how the prison works *on* and *through* affect.[ii] Part of the paradox that arises in this understanding is that prisons focus on reducing stigma through programmes (or in the UK terminology interventions, such as drug and alcohol awareness; readiness for the job market or assertiveness training) that seek to produce people capable of contributing to society. Yet, by promoting the need for productive, economically independent citizens, the criminal justice system does not recognise the stickiness of the stigma and its particularities for women. So while interventions ostensibly work to make women less 'offensive', their very effect is to circulate the stigmatising affect of offence, and the binaries of inside and outside. James Thompson (2000) explores this in an article on the limitations of prison employability programmes that serve the purpose of rehearsing for potential future employment. However, as the work intervention does not approximate real work or sufficiently attend to the complexities of post-release life, stigma, competing choices, Thompson says they thus result in a transitional bewilderment (2000: 257).

'What works?': Applied theatre as intervention

This section examines the idea of 'what works' in the UK government framework of prisons and then considers how applied theatre practices negotiate or serve this political narrative. I offer a brief introduction of my specific applied practice before approaching workplaces in prisons as a cogent example of how different interventions in prisons operate in relation to gender. This is within the remit of prison abolitionist Angela Davis' critique (2003) of the prison industrial complex, in which she demonstrates the conflation of private business, investment in building prisons and the exploitation of prison labour. She draws on the genealogy of prison labour through slavery, and makes the explicit concern about the racialised and gendered bodies of prisoners whose labour is put in service of the profit of big corporations. While the UK context of criminal justice is not yet all privatised, there is a great deal of private contracting for prison workplaces. Davis' approach aims for a 'humane, habitable environment' for prisoners 'without bolstering the permanence of the

prison system' (2003: 103). We might see in Davis' activism a confluence with the potential for arts interventions (including applied theatre) to contribute towards the project of developing humane spaces for communication, connection, cooperation and enjoyment that are otherwise anathema to the largely punitive regime of the US and UK.[iii]

Yet, in his criminological literature survey of Anglo-American 21st century arts interventions, criminologist Leonidas Cheliotis (2012b; 2014) points out that there is also the tendency for arts projects in prisons to be put in service of the institution's aims. He posits that while ostensibly benevolent in aim, the claimed results of compliant prisoners and convincing stories of change and transformation can be used to bolster the prison's – and by extension, the state's – image as rehabilitative: as working to keep citizens secure. As such, it is necessary to develop critical considerations of how theatre practices and other arts institutions 'work' within the context of criminal justice institutions. The 'what works' agenda relates to UK policy makers seeking evidence-based outcomes.[iv] In criminal justice contexts, this is largely interpreted as reducing reoffending. Though I refer specifically to the criminal justice system in the UK, it is worth thinking about the resonances beyond that context that indicate how the state operates through institutions, and by extension, through the interventions hosted within them.

My own project was conceived as a co-investigation into how prison works, and was conducted in HMP Drake Hall over the course of two months in 2012. I had previously worked in ten of the female prisons in the UK as a freelance artist with Clean Break Theatre Company and as a writer in residence in two male prisons for three years, as well as in South African male prisons for six years. HMP Drake Hall closed prison houses around 320 women, and I worked with a fairly consistent number of thirteen women who volunteered for the duration of the project, as well as joining other activities with my collaborator, writer in residence Mary Fox. The consistent presence of the writer in residence meant that the prison had a range of arts projects underway including a thriving prison magazine, a pantomime group and a mature women's group that was structured around leisure games and debate. What I aimed to do during my residency was to deploy a range of applied theatre strategies including improvisation and devising materials that we ultimately shared with other women and select staff in order to understand the work of performance to cope with imprisonment. The outcome was a sharing of women's existing feelings and

experiences about how prison works. 'Coping' is characterised differently from resilience, which I see as having co-opted the values of neoliberalism requiring subjects to develop strength to prevail in a hostile environment, as discussed by Imogen Tyler in *Revolting Subjects* (2013). By contrast, 'coping' suggests a residual autonomy in the subject to respond to the environment and its interventions – and this may be seen as either positive or negative from the point of view of the institution. This tension is not erased in applied theatre interventions, since of course the consequence of participation in projects is that it enables more careful processing of feelings. Indeed, as I go on to demonstrate later, the quieting of tensions is sometimes one of the unintended consequences of participation.

HMP Drake Hall operates several workplaces for women including a DHL (Deutsche Heitwasslabungden Luffposte) contract for packaging items for deliveries and a large laundry which has a contract to clean all uniforms, bedding and towels for several other (male) prisons in the region. In addition, workplaces that service the prison domestic sphere include the kitchens and the impressive gardens. Women may engage in education activities as well as courses relating to 'offender management', including enhanced thinking skills and drug and alcohol awareness that are run by the 'interventions' team – a term that signals the operationalization of learning and labour. There are accredited vocational courses in hair and beauty, catering, horticulture and laundry. Criminologist and pedagogue Amanda Davis says that many prisons

> continue to offer vocational programs informed by gendered assumptions about female behaviour and workplace potential. Although women who enter prison are normally among the most disadvantaged in terms of educational and vocational training, they seldom learn skills that will aid them in being self-supporting. Instead, they are often trained to focus on traditional, low-paying "feminine" skills such as food services, sewing, laundry, and sometimes, clerical work (2004: 262).

While this feminist critique rightly observes that traditionally feminine skills are over-exploited it also neglects the fact that cooking and laundry are activities that must be done in the context of institutional living, regardless of gender. However, what is important is the need for vocational qualifications in activities that broaden the potential for future employment upon release (Prison Reform Trust, 2015). The workplaces in prison are by and large gendered (seen in the popularity of hair and beauty courses), and this places certain restrictions upon what skills women in prison are able to develop. Criminologists Ferraro & Moe (2003: 80) demonstrate that women's work in prison is often still limited, despite the

need for a range of choices for training and vocational development (Britton, 2003; Simon, 1999).[v] The UN convention on the elimination of discrimination indicates there needs to be the right to work, and the convention on rights for prisoners indicates that prison work needs to be vocational in nature and need to be 'appropriate' for female prisoners (UNODC, 2014: pp. 48-49). Yet, despite these provisions, there is often a lack of appropriate work and vocational training in prisons internationally (UNODC, 2014: 50–51). Assumptions about the women's likely limited socio-economic capacity after release are reflected in the bias towards gendered labour that centres on the domestic sphere. The result is that women may leave prison without ever having gained marketable skills (including low attainment of additional education qualifications); or have a partial understanding about how a criminal record may affect their future employability. This can lead to unrealistic expectations on the part of women, and accounts for many of the women's (anecdotal) examples of reoffending, whereby women feel trapped in an inevitable cycle of offending because they do not have experience of surviving or managing in the world of 'legitimate' work, without the chaos and accessibility of crime. In addition, Haney's (2010) important work on 'offending women' in US community settings explores how narratives of 'dependency' and 'recovery' are out of touch with the social realities of the women's lives, serving to flatten and eliminate the multiple ways women experience incarceration, as well as the multiple contingencies they face imagining a life after incarceration; including lack of education, few job opportunities, and limited social support.

The logic of prison is such that if women are judged to have worked on themselves, they will be expected to undertake outwork – placements in local shops and businesses – to prove they are fit and able to join society as productive citizens. In these instances, women's labour in the community replicates a model of value that is explicitly related to normative earning power. Although I am critiquing this model of value, it is not only because of its ties with capital. It is also because the mechanics of outwork do not adequately challenge the ways prison and its affects stick. As I analysed women's reflections and improvisations about undertaking outwork, what was evident was the unintended but ubiquitous ways the prison regime reinforces the labelling of women as 'offenders' and marks them as distinct from the general public. This happens through naming, as well as the regime extending its effects beyond the walls when a count delays women from leaving timeously for work, for example. A repeated example was of being

called ‘the prisoner’ in the workplace by colleagues, or being asked to work in ‘the back’ because of workers assuming ‘the public’ would not want to associate with a prisoner. These assumptions are predicated on a visible, or affective stigma that would be perceived by the public.

One problematic claim that is put forward is that applied theatre projects can interrupt these sticky residues of stigmatising labels of the kind discussed by Goffman (1963; 2007). These claims of transformation are well meaning but often uncritical in replicating neat narratives (Cheliotis, 2012a; Bilby et al, 2013; Herrmann, 2009). In my own practice in this prison, I attempted to get women to engage with building alternatives to these stigmatising labels, fully aware that its short term nature was unlikely to fundamentally challenge stigmas that are generated over time: often years of institutionalisation and lives of crime. There are, however, examples of arts organisations whose long-term (and often qualification-aligned) interventions are ideally positioned to serve as building alternative repertoires of behaviour.[vi]

Affect and Aesthetics: HMP Drake Hall

In our improvisation sessions, women were engaged with identifying issues relating to their tactics of coping within the institution, or how they work within the prison. This was intended to articulate vocabularies and performances that are adopted in relation to incarceration – rather than in relation to crime. Their scenes would demonstrate concerns about institutional living, about assumptions and threats to their person, about vulnerabilities in relation to the regime and the sense of a lack of agency. In part, what emerged from the scenes was the sense that women felt restricted in their capacity to challenge or throw off the stigma of being in prison. Partially, this related to women’s personal experiences of release and perceptions of stigma in contexts outside of prison. For some women, this was on the basis of prior release or day-release for work. This was explored directly, in scenes where women tried to confront stigmatising labels (in re-telling stories about out-work, for example, in which women perceived themselves as labelled, scrutinised and publicly shamed). Indirectly this was evident in aesthetic choices that returned to tropes and recognisable prison motifs despite claiming to set the scenes outside of the prison context. For example, scenes incorporated dormitory style living arrangements or the kinds of strains and tensions of dealing simultaneously with both

personal emotions and interpersonal relationships. While I was not explicit about deploying Ahmed's thinking about the stickiness of affect in sessions, her formulation of proximity and the other (2014: 63) becomes productive to think through how different emotions perform with(in) and against the body in prison. My short-term project was not intended to develop resilience as such, nor to work towards the often-therapeutic aims that longer term funded projects can offer. Rather, it was positioned as a sharing of women's existing feelings and experiences about how prison works. The project was not a prison-servuce commission nor was it intended to serve the interests of sentence progression, but as an additional intervention alongside other arts activities. In addition to the final performance at the end of the project I delivered a report to the prison governor and NOMS.

The labour of applied theatre practices in prisons necessitates a critical focus on the issues raised by the range of power differentials – between facilitator and participants, staff and women and between women - and in particular, the potential for the arts being co-opted by the institution's norms and values (Cheliotis, 2012b; 2014). Of course, arts in prisons are possible due to gatekeepers with good intentions, but as Cheliotis demonstrates, the institutional imperative, even when delivered by benevolent practitioners, needs critical attention. Nevertheless, there are some compelling examples of the women asserting their own positions outside of the routinised and flattening operations of the prison. This vignette from one of the focus groups attends to assumptions about what connects women in prison, and in particular, attends to women's refusal to adhere (or to use Ahmed's term 'stick') to what is expected of them.

> One afternoon in a focus group session, the writer in residence, Mary Fox, was asking women whether they would be willing to cooperate and co-host a session with an incoming motivational speaker who was invited to speak to two large groups of women. The speaker would be a former resident at Drake Hall, who had subsequently made a success of her pathway out of prison as an entrepreneurial businesswoman. The women were immediately resistant. Mary tried to argue that the speaker was a woman coming from the same place as them - prison - but their responses indicated that they refused that association without knowing more about her 'backstory'. For them, being on a discussion panel would mean the audience of their peers might interrogate them as much as the invited speaker. Some of their questions were 'how can I get involved when I would have issues about disclosure?' and 'how does her story relate to my own story of offending?' They were trying to assert their difference from the majority of the women in the prison. Ultimately, they

> reminded Mary that 'we have to live here, and have to deal with the fallout from the other women'. (Research Journal, August 2012).

While we could read their refusal as just one example of stubborn lack of cooperation, on another level, it indicated a profound awareness of the ongoing narratives of survival within the prison. The women were professing their right to maintain secrecy and hold back their personal information, in the belief that other women (and officers) could use the information as a means of interfering with their sentence progression.[vii] This highlights the assumptions that cooperation would be risk free for these women, and it reminded me of the enormous gesture of faith that women make when participating in performance-making processes. This story, however, carved out a space within the prison, where these five women could assert their vulnerability while at the same time resisting being 'read' or stigmatised as such by the wider institution (other prisoners and staff). On another level, they were resisting being cast as merely 'women in prison' as if the general category were a levelling measure. Rather, they preferred to be seen as individual, specific and with particular criminogenic backgrounds, case histories and pathways out of prison. It was this group that highlighted a tension between the general system/specific story. My experiences as artist facilitator/ researcher in Drake Hall was characterised by the multiple subjectivities of women in prison, their own tendencies to be self-critical, and the pervasive illusions of hope despite 'failure' and the cycles of reoffending looming large.[viii] They seemed to want to believe that prison had worked. In this next example, one of the women told of an experience that exemplified how the systemic approach to reducing rule breaking does not allow space for affect.

> During one of the coffee breaks, a woman recounted an experience she had as a cleaner in the visits hall. The women have strict timeframes for cleaning when visits are not underway. Dani was cleaning near the vending machines when she found a pound coin. Money, as she explained to me, is contraband, but when she found it she was so excited. However, she was concerned that someone would notice her picking it up, so she moved elsewhere to vacuum, returning to look at the renegade coin on the carpet several times before she felt safe enough to slip it into her pocket. She narrated her sense of breathlessness as she left her job that day, feeling the pound coin in her pocket, to check whether it was real or not. She said 'I found a pound coin and you woulda thought I won the bloody lottery!' Dani's willingness to risk being discovered with contraband highlights the absurdity of institutionalisation. She knew that she would not be able to use the money inside the prison, but nevertheless, the lure of money was too great to avoid. Her risk would be

> to get 'statemented' – where a red statement is notated in the prisoner's file. Most likely, she would need to hide the pound coin, keeping it as a memento of her discovery. (Research Journal, August 2012).

Dani's treasure served as a symbolic, rather than actual, capital, to gloss Pierre Bourdieu's most widely adopted concept (1984). His thinking here relates to the sense of value placed in a range of spheres, aside from simply economic, and that these correlate with how status can be fluid according to influence and importance. As this example shows, wealth in prison has no currency. Her pleasure derived from possessing the coin, despite it being worthless in prison because there is no use of currency within institutions, demonstrates the performative impact of believing that one possesses agency. She grappled with the fear of discovery, but ultimately, took the coin. There is a sense of investment in her identity as an agent capable of making choices that run counter to the institutional regulations. The coin symbolically links her to her Self outside. What is more, her subsequent re-telling of the finding and keeping of the coin was a re-enactment in which she explicitly contrasted the stakes she experienced with the small 'reward'. In her re-telling, she modelled a reflexivity of her imagined Self outside and the disbelief of winning large amounts of money in the lottery, with its correlative luck in prison. Her story highlights the dearth of opportunities that women in prison have for breaking through the limiting discourse of the institution to alternative performativities in which rewards and good fortune are possibilities.

The work of gender in the project

I return here to Ahmed's theorisation of affective economies as being based upon the circulation, and creation of surplus value. She demonstrates that the social and material circulation of affect is a process by which both the subject and the institution are constituted (2004: 121). Further, Ahmed's sense of how emotions make and re-make the discourses about marginalised types of subjects helps expand and extend thinking about women in prison. My own reading of the applied theatre practices I conducted in HMP Drake Hall as also contributing to the circulation of affective economies by necessity draws attention to the means by which women in the workshops (and their representation in my research journal vignettes) are sticky with institutional affect. The following vignette offers a metaphor of a sticking plaster as an object the women used in dramatic improvisation. By deploying this example here, I am shifting away from the wider context to engage with

accessing practice. I propose that play with metaphoric objects contributes towards the illusion that applied theatre projects can briefly shift attention away from the real, embodied affective economies of prison life, but do not adequately serve to challenge, or transform the conditions of the institution.

Within the performance sessions, the women were asked to improvise with objects that formed materials for the final performance we shared with other prisoners and invited staff. In one session, each woman developed an improvisation with a bright blue plaster that she would 'sell' to the others as if it were anything but a plaster.[ix]

> Many of the improvisation routines perpetuated a sense of salvation – an item that could 'magic' away pain, fear, or trauma. But what was most surprising was the repetition of the 'ideal' woman. One woman used the plaster as a magic patch that would augment one's womanly assets to make her more desirable to men; another showed the plaster as a protective private space to which she could retreat from external harms. (Research Journal, August 2012).[x]

In performance, these 'selling' sequences punctuated longer scenes, and audience reactions to the humour and familiarity of selling illusions reminded me that these pervasive understandings of women as sexual objects proliferate in prison. Yet, beneath the comedy, there was a sense of inevitability – that performing ideals demands a normative audience. In other words, the 'performance' of hyper-femininity or butch presentation gains prominence in the homosocial space of prison (Millbank, 2004; Sedgwick, 1985).[xi] This is often explained in relation to 'offending' women's rejection of normative female traits and tendency to aggression and dominance (which is, of course, a limiting view of women's 'proper' behaviour, and fetishises female subjugation). While aggression is most often associated with 'butch' performativity (and assumptions of lesbianism), my experiences with women in prison include a wide range of exaggerated performances of sexual availability that could be unrelated to actual sexual preference. In these cases, the body becomes a currency – a means of manipulation, exploitation or, indeed, comfort. In other words, women's gender and sexual identities were not important in themselves, except insofar as they could be put to work – both between women themselves and in relation to the status of the outsider, prison worker or practitioner.

In terms of gender and its sticky residue, it was especially evident that women made use of multiple grooming routines when there were family visits, but often 'let themselves go' (in the words of a participant) between visits. While interfacing with 'the public' (or anyone outside of the day-to-day prison regime), some women rose to ever more extreme performances of femininity that tended to be directed towards men, in line with my observation above. In years of working in the prison context, it has become clear that sexuality and the sexualised body become a form of currency or 'capital'. I propose that in the institutional field that impoverishes women of 'positive' or affirmative attentions (Haney, 2010), these deployments of the sexualised body work differently to interventions that are led by external practitioners. The operations of sex and sexuality as a form of affective labour that women can leverage outside of the legitimised realm of work or education suggests the need for further research. So too, does the link between the performance of gender and sexuality and the body's performative presence in applied theatre. Thinking then, about the potential to attend to affect and the relation to the body, the following vignette explores the aesthetic framing of women's survival tactics as a form of affective labour.

> The performance developed around the rituals characters found to 'put on a brave face'. The women constructed a series of short scenes in pairs where they embodied a range of rituals the women employ in order to, in the words of one participant, 'focus and go on with the sentence' and also tactics to 'keep from thinking of self-harm' (Interview participant Julie, August 2012). In our conversations, Julie mentioned several of the concerns that feminist criminology raises, namely that prison is a set of reports and sentences that can in no way capture the chaos and confusion of women's lives. There is enormous pressure on women to 'put their heads down' and 'get on with it'. Yet, the statistics relating to mental health show that there are complex considerations related to the ways women manage both pre-existing mental health issues alongside the stresses of surviving the prison system itself.[xii] (Research Journal, September 2012).

For Haney (2010), her long-term research engagement with the criminal justice context required thinking about how governance of women's desires and plans for reintegration were gendered. This chapter's examples of intimate moments of insight into how gender is reinforced relate to assumptions about women and transgression that feminist criminology shows as affecting how women are criminalised, sentenced and stigmatised post-release.

Concluding remarks

In closing, taking a lead from radical theorist Stevphen Shukaitis' (2012) work on the performance of labour and value, I am keen to consider how affect and gender in prison circulate and produce an ideal subject. This ideal subject in the case of women's prisons maintains normative, often limiting narratives of women's roles outside of prison. Thinking about the 'what works' agenda in relation to long term reduction of reoffending, men's redemption narratives after prison often include a return to the labour force. This assumption that men's value is as economic providers is itself sticky, although the majority of ex-prisoners of all genders face challenges and barriers to finding employment. By contrast women's value after release from prison is not often articulated as value of the individual subject but in value *as women* – for example as mothers returning to care for children, if they have not been removed to care. As such, applied theatre's potential in criminal justice contexts is in its aesthetics, antagonisms to institutionalisation, and reliance on value that is explicitly not related to value or profit in capitalist terms as well as extending gender repertoires.

This chapter deploys a particular example of applied theatre practice as a contributing narrative to the theorisation of prison's performance as affective and gendered. Thus, instead of being introduced as exemplary of practice in the UK, the moments from the project and the research journal are positioned as a critical interrogation of the spaces and possibilities of creative arts within the institutional paradigm. I have attempted to avoid positioning the aesthetic labour of performance as somehow extant outside institutional dynamics, grammars of power and socio-political structures. Rather, the chapter reads what practitioner/ scholar Balfour calls the 'drama of little changes' (2009) alongside and through the competing interventions that explicitly put women's labour in service of the institution. His view is that the tension inherent in gaining support for project resourcing means that the 'artistic dimension therefore is often relegated to the second division, a footnote to the value or purpose of the project' (2009: 356). This suggests that applied theatre practitioners must be cogniscent of how their practices work within the institution, and alongside other interventions. Thompson's (2009) rejoinder to consider affects suggests the need to consider the intimacy of the work in relation to 'contexts and discourse in which the work is located' (2009: 34). Although there is lots of important work in the UK that relates to evaluating practices (primarily collected by the National Alliance for Arts in Criminal Justice), there is the need to access practice and research that engages

with the kinds of critical issues raised by practice. To reflect on 'what works' is not intended to marginalise or disparage the profound impact of applied theatre projects for those involved, but instead serves as a reminder of the distinction between often short-term projects and their relationship to sentences. It is also a timeous reminder to ensure that evaluations attend to aesthetics and affect in addition to representing applied theatre interventions as at work in the grammar of the institution.

Some of the vignettes suggest that 'what works' is when women can rehearse and enjoy an expanded repertoire of gender. What works in relation to aesthetics is when the restrictions of the prison regime can generate significant imaginative wonder, humour and counter-narratives that also point towards the possibilities for future behaviours or opportunities for women. Yet, I am aware of the need to avoid unrealistic demands of single interventions given that reducing reoffending is such a complex matter (McNeill et al, 2011). Thus, rather than offer hopeful narratives of change, I consider how this example of applied theatre practice, drawing on Ahmed and Goffman, considers gendered labour as an affective economy. I propose that when the work of creative collaboration can generate critical conversations on the risks, benefits and implications of participation within the institutional frame, then applied theatre projects can edge toward the profound. In the prison context, this can occur when women work together and feel supported in expressing vulnerabilities as well as practicing strength or resilience. These kinds of processes can be productive for reducing reoffending, but cannot work alone – there must be space for Thompson's articulation of complexity and bewilderment (2000). Women developing a sense of motivation, responsibility and hope; developing social ties that work to construct belonging and a sense of community that may serve as a support after release. But these also suggest the need for individual women to have developed confidence and agency to be able to manage the challenges of institutional life and resettlement. Therefore, a radical, but nevertheless necessary, drive in my applied theatre practice in prison is to work towards the decoupling of notions of 'what works' for individuals as distinct from the institutional values (particularly when these are related to profit – as in the prison industrial complex). Practices and research must offer considerations of prisons affects and effects: 'what works' is when projects can delegitimise the prevailing 'sticky' residue of stigma within and beyond the prison walls.

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[i] See for example, New Philanthropy Capital's attempt to capture the value of the arts in criminal justice in economic terms (*Unlocking value: The economic benefit of the arts in criminal justice* 2011).

[ii] See Antonio Negri's (1999) formulation of value and affect 'from below' as a means of theorizing beyond value and labour.

[iii] It is worth reflecting on the difference between the regime style that is punitive and that of other countries (such as Norway and other Scandinavian countries), in which wellbeing and rehabilitation are prioritised resulting in very different opportunities for work, learning, and living conditions that is often said to be 'humane' (see James, 2013).

[iv] See 'What works? Evidence centres for social policy' (Gov.uk, 2013), for the coalition government's approach to commissioning due to evidence based practices. McNeill et al (2010) demonstrate how these are often tied to specific forms of evidence that are anathema to arts practice; in particular, evidence related to economic savings or cost-benefit analyses.

[v] All prison work contracts are a means of supplying cheap labour, and as such often include menial tasks and manual labour that has become less common in the largely de-industrialised UK. The work to keep the institution functioning (orderlies in kitchens, the library, gym and cleaners) often corresponds with vocational training (and certification). For men, these are often in skills such as industrial cleaning, brickwork and painting and decorating. By contrast to the gendered work and training I mention for women, men's work in prison can include fixing broken parts on wheelchairs, packing dog biscuits, or fixing pins on badges.

[vi] For example, Geese Theatre's methodology retains a focus on cognitive-behavioural models of change. Clean Break Theatre Company's education programme is conducted in the community post-release, and is a more sustainable model for developing life skills outside of prison.

[vii] This is the prison-service jargon for the processual, emergent performance enacted by prisoners according to the 'sentence plan' – determined by a range of prison service professionals. The 'script' or sentence plan is intended to be specific, tailored to maximising individuals' potential to 'succeed'. A sentence might, for example, indicate that an individual needs to complete drug and alcohol awareness courses as well as engage in groupwork conducted by the psychology team in order to address offending behaviour. Such courses are generally connected to certification and accreditation, so that prisoners are able to measure achievement in terms of learning in addition to considering the legal requirements dictated by the script.

[viii] I am alluding to the findings from detailed quality of life questionnaires (see also Drake, 2012) I conducted from the core performance group. The findings indicate a veneer of hope and positivity that is not realistic in the current milieu (of cuts and economic austerity), and that, as Haney's US case study (2010) shows, may be predicated on the discursive framing of women's prisons as empowering, rather than punitive. In this

chapter, I have not made specific reference to the questionnaires aside from this, since I preferred to focus on the actual 'performances' of women in prison rather than their self-reported attitudes towards their offending background and belief in the future.

[ix] This exercise is adapted from a common theatre improvisation exercise 'this is not a bottle'. It is primarily about extending the visual imagination so that players and audience become aware of an augmentation of the realm of possibilities in the fictional context. The choice of objects related specifically to what I was allowed to bring into prison that provided openness for imaginative possibilities but also did not prove to be a security risk.

[x] The following two extracts from research journals originally formed part of my PhD thesis.

[xi] I am glossing Sedgwick's (1985) term here, which refers to the interplay between desire and power in relation to the ways patriarchal cultures are upheld by presumptions of social glue of homosociality. In similar ways, prison cultures are formed around perpetuations of women's labour, women's habitus and women's 'place'. This is in addition to the manifestation of (female) homosexual desire.

[xii] The charity Women in Prison highlights the following critical statistics in relation to mental health: 'Women account for 47% of all incidents of self-harm. 30% of women (as compared to 10% of men) have had a previous psychiatric admission before they come into prison' (cited in Women In Prison, 2016).