



## **Monologue & Resource Pack**

### **Umbra Sumus – We Are Shadows**

#### **FOURNIER STREET MOSQUE**

This building has been a church, a synagogue and now a mosque. The particular significance of this listed monument building is that it gives us a prime palimpsest for the history of this part of London.

Built as a Huguenot chapel in 1742, it became a Methodist chapel in 1809 and a synagogue in 1897 - known as the Machzieki Hadass and Great Spitalfields Synagogue. In the 1970s it became a mosque. The sundial has remained to count the hours through the changing populations of the East End of London.

High up on the wall of the Majid Mosque there is a lovely large vertical south facing stone and iron sundial dated 1743 with the motto "Umbra Sumus".



## Teachers' resources

The play and the materials in this pack are all designed to support the practical study of ***We Are Shadows***. It is particularly targeted towards your delivery of EdExcel Drama GCSE paper 1, unit 2.

On the performance day you will also receive a CD of the soundtrack for every pupil.

We are happy to provide a full script of ***We Are Shadows*** for school groups who are studying the play as part of their coursework. Please contact us on 020 7709 8900 or [admin@halfmoon.org.uk](mailto:admin@halfmoon.org.uk) and we will send you a copy.

### This pack includes:

1. A synopsis of the play
2. A scene by scene breakdown
3. Three x 2 minute edited monologues from the play that are suitable for audition pieces
4. Some words about the creative process from the:  
Director  
Writer  
Composer  
Actors
5. A design overview and pictures of the design process
6. Drama and writing activities to support AO1, AO2 and AO4
  - AO1 Still Images  
Role-play into thought tracking  
Forum theatre and marking the moment  
Cross cutting
  - AO2 Scene analysis inc.  
Character building, soundtracks, set design.
  - AO4 Play into news – creating news stories from the monologues  
News into play – creating monologues from news stories  
Writing a review of ***We Are Shadows***
7. Five news articles that support character building and writing activities.  
  
Police in the British National Party  
Diary of a teenage pregnancy worker  
The boredom and the anger – (young offenders institutions)  
Alex joins the never-ending list – (teenage knife crime)  
Somali refugee women come into their own outside of home.

## **1 A Synopsis of *We Are Shadows* by Fin Kennedy**

***We Are Shadows*** is a series of monologues framed by two dialogue scenes at the start and the end. These framing scenes take place in a prison meeting room where Sam, serving a sentence for a racially aggravated murder, and Sagar, a refugee from Somalia, are mistakenly placed together in the same room. Although these characters would never normally meet, the conversation that takes place during this chance encounter reveals a long chain of events, which link them together.

There are nine characters in total, all aged 16 or 17 and all from East London. During the play, each character has their own monologue where they tell a story. What each character does during their story goes on to have a direct impact on the next character, though they are mostly unaware of this. The speeches could therefore work on their own as single monologues (say as an audition speech) or all together as a full play showing a series of causes and effects.

Each story is in some way linked to the idea of 'the shadow' in a person's life, and this takes different forms. For example, in the story of Sam, a young man who has spent his whole life in care, the shadow is his 'dark half' which makes him violent, and which he struggles to control. In the story of Keisha, a teenage parent, her shadow is post-natal depression and the temptation to use drugs to escape it. In the story of Ashima, her shadows are the oddballs and drifters she attracts to herself from being such a friendly and open person.

***We Are Shadows*** is a play about growing up, and the struggle we all face to overcome the shadows in our lives during our teenage years. The play tries to show how in the densely populated areas of Britain's inner cities, we are all connected, and everything we do has an impact on someone else.

## **2 Scene by scene breakdown of *We Are Shadows* by Fin Kennedy**

The play is written as a series of nine monologues, each one exists as a stand-alone piece and is also linked by events to the world of all the other monologues. The prologue and epilogue framing the play set up the impetus for each of these stories to be told.

### **Characters**

**Sam**, 16, English male

**Leyla**, 16, Bangladeshi female

**Keisha**, 16, Caribbean female

**Tom**, 16, Irish male

**Ashima**, 16, Indian female

**Nicola**, 16, Nigerian female

**Charlie**, 17, Jewish male

**Nirupa**, 17, Sri Lankan female

**Sagar**, 17, Somalian female

**The Shadow**, a presence

### **Prologue**

Sam and Sagar are locked in a prison interview room together, possibly by accident or possibly as a game or joke, by the prison wardens. Sam is incarcerated in the prison and is expecting to meet his social worker and Sagar is expecting to film an interview with her brother, Abas, about life as a prisoner. Throughout the scene Sam's actions are controlled by a shadowy presence and by his choice to follow the throw of a dice for good or bad. As the scene begins Sam clearly has the upper hand and can physically intimidate Sagar, but when he discovers that her brother is Abas aka "Mortal" there is a shift in power. Although Sagar rejects the idea of using the throw of a dice to make decisions, Sam still uses them to persuade Sagar that she should film his story and make him famous.

### **One**

Sam's story

Sam has been brought up in care with his brother Luke. On the night the story happens, Sam has been told that his brother has been killed fighting in Iraq. Sam and his friend Dean have a smoke and a drink and following the roll of the dice go out on the "pull" in memory of his brother "*..the biggest playa in the whole a Tower Hamlets social services.*" Dean is armed with his newly acquired "ninja" knife. Dean takes them to an off licence and he pulls his knife on the shopkeeper and they run off with a bottle of vodka. After drinking the vodka, it is Sam's turn with the knife. They call a cab and Sam pulls the knife on the driver, asking for his money. The driver is Islamic and instead of getting frightened becomes quiet, shakes his head and holding his prayer beads begins to pray. Sam becomes incensed and starts blaming the driver for his brother's death, and then cuts his throat with the knife.

## **Two**

### Leyla's story

Leyla is the taxi driver's daughter, and while she is grieving for her father, she is also trying to keep her life together and study for her 'A' levels. Her brother, Saj, is going off the rails, smoking spliffs on the way to the mosque and behaving as if possessed. Her relationship with the other Bengali girls is strained because she spends time with Keisha, a Black girl she has been friends with since primary school. On the morning of her first exam she goes round to Keisha's house and finds Saj there. Saj and Keisha have been sleeping together and now Keisha is pregnant. Unable to cope with what she has discovered Leyla gets the keys to her dad's taxi and drives off.

## **Three**

### Keisha's story

Keisha is alone in the hospital when she gives birth. The staff take the baby, Rahim, away when he is born assuming that he must be up for adoption. Saj turns up after the birth, better late than never she says. After Rahim is born she gets kicked out of home, Leyla refuses to speak to her and she relies on Saj for money and support. But things are changing with him and when she finds a crack pipe amongst the toys she decides she might as well have just the one smoke.

## **Four**

### Tom's story

Tom works at the 24 hour petrol station where Keisha turns up asking for cigarettes and Rizla's, leaving baby Rahim bundled up outside. When Tom finds the baby left on the bags of coal out the front, he sneaks him into his house. When Tom overhears his dad, a racist policeman, talking about a "young, black junkie girl" screaming at the station about her lost baby, he runs away to Ashima's house. He tells Ashima that they could keep the baby and bring it up together.

## **Five**

### Ashima's story

Ashima is friends with Tom, but no matter what he thinks he is not her boyfriend. She is home alone when he turns up with the baby, with the idea that they could look after him together. Ashima takes control and steals her mum's car to drive Tom and the baby to the hospital. Ashima has had just four driving lessons. At the hospital Tom runs in with the baby and is chased out by men wearing white coats – Ashima speeds away and loses control of the car.

## **Six**

### Nicola's story

Nicola is at work at the supermarket checkout, it's a normal routine day until a boy, Charlie, turns up with a dodgy credit card buying 50 rape alarms that are on special offer. He notices her black eye and gives her one of the alarms adding that he is also giving her a free wish. On her way home she sits in the park and tests the alarm, she thinks about her free wish, about her step dad, about her black eye. When she gets home the police are in her house and she finds out that her step dad has been killed in a car crash.

## **Seven**

### Charlie's story

Charlie sets himself up outside the women's refuge selling his personal safety products - rape alarms, pepper spray and Staffordshire Blue puppies that he has been breeding. Charlie gets his interest in business from his Gran who arrived in England escaping the Nazis aged ten with nothing and set up as a fortune teller. Charlie and his Gran can see shadows around people, shadows of old pain, especially strong around those who have recently arrived from areas of conflict and war. The police arrive and Charlie runs off dropping the keys to his van.

## **Eight**

### Nirupa's story

Nirupa called the police on Charlie - she didn't want him outside drawing attention to the women's refuge. She finds his keys were he dropped them and follows the sound of yapping to his van. Inside she finds ten puppies, cute now but going to grow up into lethal dogs. Back at the refuge they decide to keep the puppies as protection, like the Hindu ten-headed demon king Ravana.

## **Nine**

### Sagar's story

Sagar is in the park, testing her camera before she goes to interview her brother about life in prison, she is making a documentary film for her BTEC course. Nirupa is in the park walking the puppies but she loses control of them and they surround Sagar. The puppies jump up and lick her and she is taken back to the war in Somalia, and a time when men with dogs attacked her. When Nirupa runs over to help she is smiling and laughing and Sagar is brought back to the present time and place. Sagar is struck by Nirupa's beauty and they make a connection. The camera has been broken in the turmoil and Nirupa offers to raise the money to replace it. Sagar is happy because this means they will meet again.

## **Epilogue**

Sagar has finished filming Sam and is packing up the camera. They are talking about the people they have lost and the darkness in their lives and how Sam is still controlled by the dice. Sagar takes the dice from him and the shadow loses control. She tells him a saying from Somalia: "Turn your face to the sun and your shadow falls behind you." A lightness falls on the room and she leaves.

### **3 Audition pieces**

The following three monologues are taken from ***We Are Shadows*** and would be suitable for use as contemporary monologues for auditions. If you are using these pieces for auditions you should read the synopsis and scene-by-scene breakdown to give you a context for your performance.

Each monologue starts with a description of the character's heritage, however all three are spoken in an inner city London accent.

#### **In preparation for acting the monologue.**

Write a character history – what do you know about this character from the text?

Decide what has happened immediately before the monologue begins – how does this affect the character's physicality, voice and attitude?

Decide what the character's objectives are in the monologue, this should be something that can be acted.

#### *Example*

Keisha wants to present herself and Saj as good parents  
Keisha wants to escape her situation

Tom wants to look after the baby  
Tom wants to keep away from his dad  
Tom wants to get to Ashima's house

Nirupa wants to protect the women in the refuge  
Nirupa wants to get rid of the men hanging around  
Nirupa wants to persuade Sita to take the dogs

Keisha, 16, female of Caribbean descent. Keisha is at home with her baby.

**Keisha**        *The sound of a baby crying.*

Saj!  
Saj would ya get that!  
It's your turn blud!

Probly stoned again  
He's aight as a babyfather  
A bit part-time  
But better n plenty I know  
An he keeps da cash money comin in which is da main ting  
Saj!

*The baby noise subsides.*

Bein a Mum is hard  
I mean I love my little man  
Don't get me wrong  
Rahim is da light of my life  
But  
Mum kicked me out innit  
So  
You know

After the birth  
People forget  
Who you are  
Where you are  
What you are  
No longer Keisha  
No longer me  
Just a Mum  
Just another statistic  
Another brick of Lego  
In a toy tower block  
Afterbirth  
I realise now dat means life innit  
Da rest of ya life

*She starts to tidy up some baby toys on the floor*

Sometimes I go a week  
Just me an Rahim  
Babblin baby talk together  
All hours of da night whatever  
Now I ain't sayin I were ever shit hot at school  
Far from it  
But what little dere was up dere        *(Taps head)*  
I swear is turnin soft as baby food  
An I am tired  
Man am I tired

I miss my friends though innit  
Miss Leyla  
Dat gyal ain't spoke to me once since we told her  
Saj neither  
We text her  
Send pictures of her nephew  
Sometimes Saj goes round  
But she hides in her room  
It's like  
Like cos it was me an her brother or suttin  
I dunno  
Never could read dat gyal  
All I know is  
Their Dad dyin like dat  
Cut em both up  
Bad

*Puts the beads in her pocket*

Saj got harder  
Could see it in his face  
Da pain built up on da inside  
Like scale on a kettle  
Crustin up his soul

Dat's when he started  
Doin what he does  
I don't like to ask questions  
But I weren't born yesterday

*She finds a small crack pipe amongst the toys*

So what difference does it make  
If I treat myself once  
Like Saj says  
It's all hype  
Government bullshit to scare da kids  
S'just like havin a strong spliff

Breathe  
An da breath of angels lifts you from da inside out  
Heart explodin into life  
Like a time-lapse sun-drenched field of bliss  
A rapture  
Makin everyfing okay  
Dis is real  
Dis is life  
Dis is God  
Suttin feels dis damn good  
How can it be wrong?

Anyway  
Was just da once  
Just da once

Tom, 16, male of Irish descent. Tom has been working in the 24-hour petrol station.

**Tom**

*He holds a baby.*

My heart sinks as I approach the house  
Patrol car outside  
Means Dad's home

I hold my precious bundle with one arm  
Rattle around for my keys  
And creep inside  
And when I hear  
What Dad's telling Mum  
I freeze

Some girl  
Some junkie  
Some young black junkie girl  
Off her face on whatever  
Screaming and crying in the station reception  
Kicking and punching  
The front desk  
Her own face  
Trashing the place  
Turning over chairs  
Howling that she's lost her baby  
Her sanity  
Her baby  
Lost  
Can't remember where  
Can't remember what  
The shit that she's smoking  
Had made her forgot

I'm halfway down the hall  
Stone cold frozen  
*Praying* dad stays in the lounge  
The contempt in his voice  
For this young mum  
For this wild eyed junkie scum  
Sickened by what she's done  
Saying maybe a dead baby might teach her some  
Recognise and realise what she's become  
Mum staying silent, everything numb  
And I am *not* my father's son  
This boot-wearing  
Sirens blaring  
Uncaring  
Copper  
Salt of the earth  
Guinness girth  
Ten pints down the Dog and Duck  
Bar stool expert

Like anyone gives a fuck  
'The only party what gives a shit  
Bout people like you and me  
Can't no one talk me out of it  
I'm voting BNP<sup>1</sup>  
Like coming here from Dublin in 1983  
And working down the station  
Don't count as immigration

But right now  
I am just praying  
That this beautiful brown bundle doesn't wake up  
Before I get it some milk  
Inches away from the fridge door  
Grasping the handle  
Creaking open slow as you like  
But the light inside  
Fluorescent white  
Pinging on  
Wiping the sleepy shadows  
From those peaceful eyes     *(The baby starts to cry)*

Ssh ssh ssh  
Stop it  
Please stop it  
Please  
Too late

Dad bellowing at the top of his lungs  
Baby screaming in pain  
Mum gasping like she's been stung  
Me trying to explain

I found him at the garage Dad  
I found him round the front  
Lying on the bags of coal  
I didn't steal him Mum

Advancing on me steady now  
Back door at my back  
'S'alright son, just calm it down  
There ain't no need for that'

And with my best Bobby Zamora back heel  
I am through the back door and into the yard  
Screaming bundle tucked under one arm  
Slipping through the gap in the fence  
As this half-dressed policeman and his dressing gown wife  
Lurch after me like some domestic double act  
But I am out of there  
A decade of night-time pen-pushing on his front desk  
Ain't no match for my cyclist's legs - Voom!

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<sup>1</sup> BNP British National Party – an extreme right wing political party that is against immigration.

Nirupa, 17, female of Sri Lankan descent. Nirupa works in a women's refuge.

**Nirupa**        Been trouble round our way lately  
                  Been blokes hanging round outside  
                  Disturbing the peace  
                  So I called up the police  
                  And watched from my window inside

                  The women in here want safety  
                  But half of them ring up their guy  
                  Go 'I still love you babe  
                  Do you promise to change?'  
                  Then he comes round to blacken their eye

                  It pisses me off, I tell ya  
                  Wanna grab em and shout 'Shut up!  
                  Don't be so dim!  
                  But who am I to them?  
                  Man I just clean and wash up

                  I'm thinking of doing the training  
                  So then I can say what I like  
                  'Blokes are all pricks  
                  Who like swinging their dicks  
                  You're better off being a dyke'        So yeah

                  Blokes hanging round is not a good thing  
                  But this one looked different somehow  
                  Scrawnier, slighter  
                  Not much of a fighter  
                  So after he's gone I go down

*She notices the set of keys which Charlie dropped. She picks them up.*

                  There's a van parked up and this barking  
                  Like animals going through hell  
                  I open it up and there's boxes of pups  
                  Packaged up ready to sell

                  I'm stood there in shock, cos this is fucked up  
                  Then my boss she comes out too  
                  Goes 'Oh my God a shit load of dogs  
                  What are we going to do?'

                  We take em inside and clean em  
                  Poor little things are all thin  
                  They're covered in shit  
                  And some have been sick  
                  There's grazes and sores on their skin

                  By the time that we've finished I'm seething with rage  
                  How could anyone do this for money?  
                  Man I hate blokes  
                  They're like God's stupid joke  
                  A dumb one that ain't even funny

I try not to cry as I feed em  
Warm milk, then we ring up the vet's  
The women come down  
And their kids crowd around  
Wanting to claim them as pets

It's then that the thought pops into my head  
Like a brilliant green little seed  
It takes root and it grows  
And I speak kinda slow  
Sayin: 'Ladies, you know what we need?

An army of personal soldiers!  
A militia of muscle and teeth!  
Might look little to you  
But these are Staffordshire Blues  
There's a demon that lurks underneath

When these are full grown, they're lethal  
They're seriously summing to fear  
With one on each door  
It won't be like before  
Ain't nobody getting in here

They'll be like our guardian angels  
Ten little heads of protection  
Like that Ravana  
In the Ramayana  
Knowledge in every direction'

Then sort of a hush descends on the room  
As the idea starts to sink in  
'Is she right?' 'I don't know' 'How big will they grow?'  
You can hear the sound of the thinkin

Then Sita steps up as the boss of the place  
Says 'No pets is one of the rules'  
I say 'They ain't pets they're a man-eating threat  
I'll feed em an walk em, it's cool.'

The women and kids start pleading  
And Sita can't make up her mind  
Goes: 'I don't know'  
I say: 'See how it goes I'm betting you it'll be fine'

And with that, it's like a decision's been made  
A consensus to keep us all safe  
All girls together, our secret, whatever  
With puppies all licking our face

Ain't been no trouble round our way lately  
No blokes hanging round in the hall  
No disturbing the peace  
No need for the police  
Cos Ravana's watching over us all.

## 4 The creative process

### **Director: Angela Michaels**

Fin has written a play using a series of monologues. What challenges does this present for you in directing, and how have you gone about overcoming them?

This play breaks the mould, both in the story that it tells and how it is told. "We Are Shadows" doesn't follow the usual story arc, beginning, middle end, rather it is a series of nine stories, each with their own beginning, middle and end, book-ended by the prologue and epilogue.

The first challenge was to collaborate with the designer in creating a space that would accommodate nine very different stories. The second challenge was to find three actors with the skills to differentiate between three characters and play them all to the same level of excellence.

The stories are linked by the idea of the 'shadows' in people's lives and the characters are linked from one story to the next. I decided to look at these nine monologues as being played out in an 'arena' where we are able to catch a glimpse of peoples lives and how they cope with the shadows cast upon them by others, or the shadows that they have created by their own choices. I didn't wish to present an audience with actors standing up one after the other and presenting monologues in a predictable and static fashion. We need to use the 'arena' both as a visual and physical space. I explored the text to find the poetic sections that would unleash heightened moments of physical theatre, both to engage the audience and to enable the actors to discover dynamic and individual characterisation.

Throughout the process we have strived to work as an ensemble with the actors being included as much as possible in each other's monologues. The structure of the play led, naturally, to a tendency by the actors to concentrate on their own monologues. Company warm ups, where the actors had an opportunity to play together, was essential to maintaining the sense of 'the group'. This collaborative approach extended to the placing of the actors within the 'arena' so that when their character is 'offstage' they are still 'onstage', this keeps them emotionally connected to and supportive of the action.

The portrayal of the 'shadow' element of the play required a great deal of experimentation. I was particularly interested in creating something 'fluid' and so the actors worked with silk fabric using a movement sequence to create the idea of 'shadow' permeating the space. At the time of writing the silk is still part of the show but this may well change by the opening night! The other distinct area that supports the representation of the shadow is the lighting and a recurring theme in the soundtrack.

The challenge inherent in Fin's use of language is interesting, young actors are often used to working only in prose (unless it's Shakespeare) and this play is written in a poetic style that is not always immediately apparent. The actors had to study the text closely to find the verse, it's rhythm and then make it their own.

The first week of rehearsal was spent 'dismantling' the piece and working with 'freestyle' improvisations. At the time of writing we are working on putting it back

together to see the whole, retaining the intimacy of the individual stories and finding a balance between the seriousness of the events and the spark of humour that keeps people going through adversity.

This piece has presented me with my biggest directing challenge to date. It has been all consuming, but rightly so, as it gives me the opportunity to honour voices that are so often ignored or misrepresented. It clearly demonstrates that if you want to tell a big story then tell all the small stories.

**Writer; Fin Kennedy**

Could you tell us a little about how you came up with characters and stories in the play?

Over the past few years I have done a lot of work with groups of young people in inner city London. This has included writing plays with, for and about young people in the care system, teenage mums, and Bengali girls, amongst others. I've also done a lot of work in schools and with youth theatres, and observed how young people interact. It interested me to observe that often these very different groups live very close to each other, but have surprisingly little to do with one another. Each of the characters in the play is inspired by a young person I have worked with at some point. Each is also from a different cultural heritage, from Nigeria, to Ireland to Sri Lanka. I brought them together in one play because I wanted to create a tapestry of life in east London and show how interconnected we are in the inner cities, whether we realise it or not. In this sense London is a microcosm of the world: in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are all connected.

The title of the play is taken from an inscription on the sundial of the Masjid mosque on Brick Lane: 'Umbrā Sumus' which is Latin for 'We are shadows'. The mosque used to be a Huguenot church during the first wave of French immigration to east London more than 200 years ago. Then it became a Methodist chapel, then a Jewish synagogue and now a Muslim mosque, reflecting the changing face of the area. You can see all these different influences in the architecture of east London, and sometimes in shops and businesses that are still trading such as the Jewish Beigel Bake on Brick Lane. This physical evidence is like the 'shadows' left imprinted on Tower Hamlets by all its different communities over the years. This set me thinking and I looked up the word 'shadow' in the dictionary. I was surprised to find that there were about 20 different definitions! These range from 'a dark figure or image, like a ghost', to 'an emotional imprint left on a person, place or thing', to 'a premonition about things to come'. In conversation we talk about being 'a shadow of your former self', or 'seeking sanctuary in the shadow of the church'. Someone who follows you around all the time is sometimes said to be 'your shadow'. All these different meanings got me thinking as I began to write the play, and seemed like richly-layered material to use in creating a tapestry of stories set in the shadowy East End.

As for the individual content of each story, most were inspired by things I had read about or come across in my life and work. For example I'm interested in young people in care because my Mum is a social worker. I'm interested in the stories of third generation Bengali young women because I have been writer-in-residence at Mulberry School, a girls' school in Tower Hamlets with a very significant Bengali population, this year and written another play for their students about this. I'm interested in the Irish immigrant experience because I'm part-Irish myself. I'm interested in people who can see auras and shadows around the people they meet because I have a friend who says he can do this. The idea of the women's refuge came from another friend who works in one. The idea of a Sri Lankan woman speaking in verse was inspired by the music of M.I.A. So all these elements combined in my imagination to create the play.

**Composer; Ed Thomas**

How did you go about creating the soundtrack for 'We Are Shadows'? What inspired you?

The music accompanying 'We Are Shadows' aims to enhance or reflect the mood of the scene, or character to which it is associated. The characters within the play have different backgrounds and heritages, but each character has an element of sadness or tragedy - the shadow. This can be related to the music of the play. While each piece within the play is different in its own right, the shadow 'theme' is represented in various forms across all the compositions. Examples of this can be found in the prologue, where a low note creates a drone, whilst high pitched metallic sounds flourish above the prolonged sinister bass note. The sound presented may seem very familiar, as compositions of this nature are used frequently in films, TV and theatre to create tension. For this reason I wanted to contrast this effect by presenting sadness in a different manner. The music accompanying Scene 2 aims to convey the sense of loss. The music is very open and unassuming, while a HipHop style drum loop underpins the composition, gluing the loose collection of harmonic and melodic ideas together. The aim of this composition was to attempt to place audience members in a state of contemplation, helping to relate to the plight of Leyla as she sits in her father's car, remembering his words and sensing his presence. The music to this scene doesn't attempt to be as obviously dark, and sinister as the music which came before it. Instead it aims to act as a sound track to Leyla's grief and confusion.

'We Are Shadows' progresses from extreme darkness and gloom to a setting of hope and possibility. This journey is mirrored in the compositions. Therefore, music accompanying Scene 9 is a medley of 2 pieces that possess a positive feel. This was achieved by a strong rhythm and a joyful harmonic presence.

The music aims to be relevant to current musical trends and to complement the authenticity of the characters and script.

## **Actors;**

### **Sam Scheele**

In this production you have to play three characters. What have you done to make each character unique?

Approaching 3 different characters for this play has been a challenge and different from most other acting experiences. Not only are we playing 3 different characters, for the most part they do not interact with others, so you do not have the comfort and support of a fellow actor on stage reacting and responding. This means there is nowhere to hide and you have to be prepared.

When it comes to preparing and creating roles, a great resource is Stanislavsky. Stanislavsky believed that acting should not be thought of as 'imitation' but as a 'process.' It isn't a matter of external control and reproducing an experience, but creating inner life and a sense of 'being' not 'playing.' This means you have to do a lot of background work into the characters to ensure they are three dimensional in performance and there is a truth in what you are portraying.

For me the most important thing I wanted to do to distinguish between the 3 was to find the voice and movement of each character. But this only came after finding out who each character was.

When starting to look into the background of the characters I asked myself, 'what is the character's super objective?' - the character's main goal in the play. For example, Ashima's super objective is to get rid of the baby. Once I had answered this (and there is no right or wrong answer as long as it is within the context of the play) I started to break the monologues down into smaller objectives and units. I have given some broad examples. When Ashima is pacing up and down with the baby, her objective is to figure out what to do. When they get into the car, her objective is to get out of the house and drive the car somewhere. In the car, her objective is to get to a hospital. When Tom has left the baby, her objective is to get away as fast as possible. Each unit following a trail of thought will usually have it's own objective. When the characters train of thought shifts, usually so will the objective. But not always.

As this play is mostly made up of monologues, it was important for me to really have a good understanding of these characters and their wants and feelings. By breaking the monologue down into units and sections, at the end of it you are able to see the through line of the character's journey. I think this is really important as I didn't want to be on stage for all that time and have holes in my performance, moments where I didn't really know what was going on in my character's mind. It's OK to have stillness and moments of thought, but you must always have an 'inner process' and a purpose for action. You should always be engaged.

During rehearsals we did many improvisations and exercises, which helped a great deal in building up my characters. To experiment with how the characters moved we took the emotions experienced throughout the piece and walking around the space made that emotion into a movement in character. If it was anger, for example, how would the character move when angry? What impulses would come from within? We did an improvisation looking into what an ordinary day for the character would consist of. How would they deal with their daily life? Other improvisations also

consisted of scenes for what had happened before the piece begins so we know what we have just been doing and how we are feeling. We started to make collages using pictures from magazines and newspapers that related or held some meaning to us for the characters. On these collages we also wrote down our key emotions experienced throughout the monologue, our favourite objects in the world and a secret that we have never told anyone. This all helps to build your imagination of the character. Stanislavsky points out 'If you speak any lines, or do anything, mechanically, without fully realising who you are, where you came from, why, what you want, where you are going, and what you will do when you get there, you will be acting without your imagination.'

It was equally important for me to be able to emotionally connect with these characters. All of them have quite high emotional states, especially Leyla. At the end when she realises that her best friend has been sleeping with her brother, her whole world comes crushing down. Stanislavsky uses 'Emotion Memory' which I am a great believer of. In all honesty, no actor can ever totally 'become' the character, and I think it would be unhealthy to do so, if you forget who you are, but we can draw from our own memories and emotions and call upon them when needed. For example, Leyla's father dying. That is an extremely painful thought so for me I try and recall how I felt when my uncle died. When she falls apart I try and recall my state of mind and how I felt when I broke up with my ex boyfriend. The emotions don't have to come from the same place as the characters but try and connect them with something real for you.

For the voices, I looked at where the characters are from and their heritage and that immediately differentiated them. It was then a case of thinking of what young girls sound and talk like today. I met some young teenagers from East London who I was able to draw knowledge from. For example, I asked them how school was these days and the differences between the different cultures. No accents were required to denote heritage as all my characters have grown up in London, but it does affect them slightly. The intonation and inflections also come from the piece itself and the emotional state of the character. But for me to be able to make clear for the audience that I had changed character was the biggest challenge. It took a lot of patience and thought into the subtleties required.

Overall I found there was much more theory based work to be done in this play. I couldn't just get up and go for it. I had to know in my mind who I was playing and what made them tick, so that I, hopefully, could bring them to life on stage and not just act out some words!

### ***Tracy Green***

In this production you have to play three characters. What have you done to make them each unique?

The first thing I did to differentiate my three characters was to consider their history and backgrounds. I literally ask each character questions, such as:

What is their full name, where do they live, who do they live with, how many brothers and sister do they have, family, friends, likes and dislikes, favourite colours, interests, music they like, programmes they like to watch. It is the same as hot seating each character in close detail to create a character profile.

To understand their movements and the way they speak, I did exercises such as walking around the room as them, acting out what their regular day is like, who they meet, why do they meet them, how they sound speak, talk, walk, laugh, cry, most of these things would come out in spontaneous improvisation and just trying things that feel right.

The three characters have different family backgrounds: Nigerian, Afro Caribbean and Somali Muslim. I researched their cultures to discover things that would influence the way they are and how and why they do certain things. We gathered pictures and ideas of what they may look like, and photos and ideas of the things that are important in their life. In order to make the characters different from each other I met up with some young women from the East End who share the characters' cultural background, this helped to make the character more real, and see how they speak, move, dress etc. Again making the characters more defined.

To this research I added method acting techniques in order to make the characters truthful to me, how would I do things, how would I react in their situations?

All this work definitely helped me with the building the three characters and added to making them all unique.

### **Daniel Broadhurst**

In this production you have to play three characters. What have you done to make them each unique?

The main thing I start with is a complete read through of the play and improvise on the characters to create a skeleton view of personality, pace and voice tones and slowly building an outline character to make decisions in my own head of what I think the individual is like. My unconscious thoughts start to build blocks for a mould of each character and, therefore, showing a glimpse of truth. It is always important to trust yourself as long as you are using the given circumstances within the script. My next step is to find key facts about each character, researching their background and identifying moments in the script that are essential to the story line. With detailed knowledge and full understanding of the 'ins' and 'outs', an inner layer and structure will support the character's background. Then I broke down each monologue into a beginning, middle and end, labelling the wants and needs and mood of each specific point in the characters journey. Then concentrating on what the speech means to the character and why.

This gives a clear definition of objectives within the separate characters and using the circle of attention, where the character is physically and mentally, will create a unique awareness of the different character traits.

With more knowledge of the speech, I then move onto 'what if' to feel what the character is going through and to put myself entirely into their shoes. I start using my own emotions to the given circumstances and building with the characters own opinions to join myself to their thoughts and collaborate a mixer of emotions to fill a pot with creative ideas to feel what works.

To make this believable I concentrate how I would show the different states and moods of the piece by imagery, sounds and feeling the senses, which will make the emotions truthful.

Then learning the lines and repeating them until they are my own and differentiating them every time to give the words and thoughts meaning as if I was saying them for the first time.

Every character has goals. Their wants and needs are extremely important and help what the character is doing here.

I have broken down a diagram to help gain a fully instinctive characterisation.

Breath = Live

- Breath as the character - Live as the character.

Knowledge = Detail

- Knowledge of the character – Detail in real emotions and movement.

Feel = Truth

- Feel what the character feels – Truth in the performance.

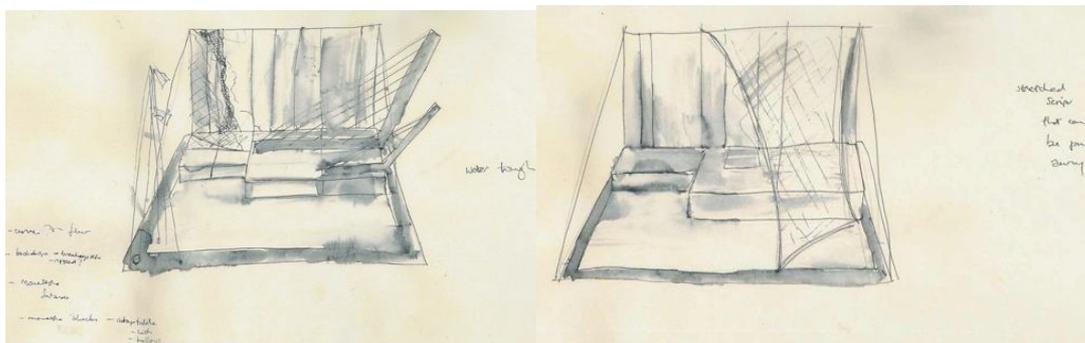
## 5 Design Overview, Jo Paul

After reading the original script for 'We Are Shadows', my first thoughts were to find a way of using height and levels so the actors could establish different spaces and characters. I also had a strong desire to explore threads and elastic, as there seemed to be a strong theme of threads binding the stories and characters together. I also wanted to look at ways of the lighting making unusual shadows, not all one shade or shape. I was very interested in the quote the writer had taken his inspiration from, about the sundial on a building in Brick Lane, as I could see how it encompassed a lot of the themes in the play. I researched different sundials, how they looked and operated and I looked at artists who use threads or elastic in their work, Caroline Broadhead being a major influence there. I explored images of shadows, fractures, confessional spaces, prisons, cities and old game boards. I was drawn towards the urban colours of greys, silver, greens and pale blue.

The director and I agreed that the setting should be abstract - a place where anything could happen and spaces could metamorphose into other environments. I worked on the sketches with a board game feel, using lots of threads and moving pieces. This theme has remained through the whole process. The sundial theme came through in the first model box, I explored it in great detail, however for this play the result was too soft an aesthetic, natural and coastal, we needed to bring it back to the city. We kept elements, retrieved some original ideas and thoughts and going for the urban landscape the second design slowly developed.

The final design still uses the threads, the premise of a game board and the sundial surround and shape however it is a more desolate and less friendly place. The landscape is grey, worn and rough, there is nowhere to hide, the grills and frames are not opaque, they can be lit to be cause imposing or subtle shadows. A strange and foreboding world unfolds in which the characters can establish themselves and can also find a little hope in the fresh water dripping from the tap and slices of copper red revealed when some of the levels are moved about.

### First sketches



Model box 1



Model box 2



## **6 Suggested Exercises to Support A01, A02, A04**

### A01 The Response Phase

*"...explain how the use of these strategies enhanced their understanding and appreciation of the play text..."*

#### **Still images**

Charlie in monologue 7 says that he can see ***the darkness and shadows that flicker around people***. Working in groups of four or five, create a series of still images that represent the shadows that are present for each of the characters in the play. The shadows should be placed in relation to the central character. This could be related to Augusto Boal's work on the "Cop in the head".<sup>2</sup> To prepare for this exercise give the group the scene-by-scene breakdown to remind them of the events.

#### *Development*

When the group are satisfied with their still image, bring it to life with each shadow repeating a word or phrase and a physical gesture that represents their relationship to the central character. What would the central character say to each of the shadows to keep them at bay?

#### *Example*

Character Sam. The group could sculpt shadows of; the taxi driver that he murdered, his brother Luke who died in Iraq, his friend Dean who was with him, his social worker Shelley and possibly Sagar's brother "Mortal".

#### *Development*

The taxi driver might pray and ask for peace, Luke might be marching and firing a gun, Dean might be waving a knife and laughing, Shelley could be shaking her head and tutting.

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<sup>2</sup> "Games for actors and non-actors" Boal A. pub; Routledge 1992. pg 191.

## **Role-plays into thought tracking**

In order to have a greater understanding of the events of each monologue ask students to role-play the offstage characters and events. The role plays can be used to lead into a thought tracking exercise, this version of thought tracking has been taken from Augusto Boal's "Rainbow of Desire".

### **The Stop and Think mode**

This technique makes thought tracking integral to the actor's way of working. The principle is that one person outside the scene can call out "stop" and all the actors freeze, they are then told to "Think" and the actors, without self censorship and remaining motionless, say the character's thoughts aloud. After a short while they are told "Action" and they continue the role-play from where they left off.

### **Role plays**

Monologue 1. Sam's story.

Role play the off licence owner and his family after he has been robbed by Dean and Sam. What do they do? Who do they tell?

Monologue 2. Leyla's story.

Role play the funeral of the taxi driver, who would be there, what would people say to the family? Would the talk be of revenge or of loss and grief?

Monologue 3. Keisha's story.

What are the other girls at school saying when they find out that Keisha is pregnant with Saj's baby? What are they saying about Leyla and Keisha?

Monologue 4. Tom's story.

Role play the scene at the police station when Keisha turns up having lost her baby. How do the police react to her, what is Tom's dad saying to her?

Monologue 5. Ashima's story.

Role play the doctors and nurses as they see Tom dropping off the baby, what do they say or do after they have chased after him and he has escaped?

Monologue 6. Nicola's story.

Role play Nicola's mum being told about the accident. How does the WPC prepare herself to tell the news? How does the mum react at the loss of her violent partner?

Monologue 7. Charlie's story.

Role play Charlie as a young boy sitting with his grandma as she tells him her stories of the war, of life in Poland and particularly her tales of arriving in England.

Monologue 8. Nirupa's story.

Role play the scene when a new woman arrives at the refuge with her children. What are the others asking her? What are they telling her about the refuge?

Monologue 9. Sagar's story.

Role play Sagar returning to college with the broken camera. Who does she see, other students, her tutor. What does she tell people about Nirupa?

### **Forum theatre and marking the moment**

There are many moments in 'We Are Shadows' where characters are faced with a choice or dilemma: this is symbolised in the prologue and the epilogue by Sam's reliance on the dice, fate, to make decisions for him. Ask small groups of students to create forum scenes that lead up to moments of decision and then show the consequences. In the making of the forum scenes the groups should use still images, direct address or any other available methods to mark the significant moments of choice or dilemma.

Using *lightening forum mode* run the scenes for the rest of the class to explore. If any of the spect-actors are unhappy with the outcome they must consider what the characters could do to improve things. They are then invited to take over from the character and re-run the scene in order to improve the outcome. In order to keep the exploration both fun and focussed it is useful to explore both what the students think they would really do in the situation as well as what it would be best to do.

### **Possible forum scenes**

Augusto Boal describes forum scenes as anti-models,

"..model contains the connotation of path to follow. In fact....forum theatre must always present doubt and not certainty, must always be an *anti-model*..to debate and not a model to follow."<sup>3</sup>

#### Monologue 1

Create the scene that starts with Sam finding out about his brother's death in Iraq, into his night out with Dean and finishes with the death of the taxi driver.

#### Monologue 2/3

Create a scene where Leyla has an opportunity to talk to Keisha and Saj about baby Rahim but chooses not to. Follow this scene through to Saj locking himself away and Keisha's decision to smoke a crack pipe.

#### Monologue 4/5

Create a scene, which shows Tom over-hearing his mum and dad talking, then being caught by them, and finally running away from his house to Ashima's with the baby and chased by his racist dad.

### **Lightening forum mode**

"..The forum format can on occasion be used not for a detailed analysis of each intervention, but as a way of providing the protagonist with a palette of possibilities, even if these possibilities are only sketched out, enunciated or envisaged..."<sup>4</sup>

*Useful questions for the Joker to ask the spectactors.*

How would we like this scene to end up?

Why are the characters behaving in this way?

What could any of the characters do differently to improve the outcome?

Is there any body else who could intervene to improve the outcome?

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<sup>3</sup> A. Boal. Games for actors and non-actors. Routledge 1992. pg 232.

<sup>4</sup> A Boal. Techniques of the rainbow of desire. Routledge 1995.pg63.

**Cross-cutting**

Each of the monologues in 'We Are Shadows' works both as a stand-alone story and as part of the narrative of the play. Using the scene by scene breakdown as a reminder of the events of the play, ask the groups to select two of the linked stories and create scenes that can be cross-cut to show the connections.

*Possible cross cutting*

Cross cut a scene that shows Tom and Ashima driving away from the hospital and crashing and a scene that shows Nicola's step dad in the hospital.

Cross cut a scene that shows Charlie selling his puppies and a scene that shows Sagar meeting Nirupa, walking the dogs, in the park.

## A02 The Development Phase

“...demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of a scene or section of the play...”

### **Scene Analysis**

Use the three monologues in the pack as a stimulus for the following activity;

Working in groups students analyse the story of the monologue with particular attention to the *action, plot and content*. Create and script a scene that involves all the characters, include direct speech from the monologue. Example:

Nirupa            Then Sita steps up as the boss of the place  
                      Says ‘No pets is one of the rules’  
                      I say ‘They ain’t pets  
                      They’re a man-eating threat  
                      I’ll feed em an walk em, it’s cool.’

becomes:

Nirupa            We could keep the dogs, protection.  
Sita                I am the boss and no pets is one of the rules.  
Nirupa            They ain’t pets. They’re a man-eating threat. I’ll feed em an walk em,  
                      it’s cool.

### **Development 1 – Character building**

Do the following exercise for each character in the scene.

Walk the space as yourself, identifying how you move, your natural rhythm and pace, then stop and roll down to the ground, as you roll back up become your character and again walk the space, how is this person different from you, particularly in their physicality, pace and rhythm?

Using two characters from a scene ask them to stand in opposite corners and approach each other, as they approach each other they should say everything they think about the other character but wouldn’t say to their face. When they are together in the middle of the room they should greet each other as they would normally, as they pass they should return to speaking their thoughts.

Decide what your character wants from the scene, what is their scenic “Objective”.

This should be something that translates to action, for example

Tom wants to look after the baby

Tom wants to keep away from his dad

Tom wants to get to Ashima’s house

### **Development 2**

Select a track from the ‘We Are Shadows’ CD as a soundtrack for the scene, what impact is it having on the audience?

### **Development 3**

Show students the photograph of the model box and the design overview provided by Jo Paul. Ask them to create a design that would be appropriate for the scenes that they have created. Their design could be presented as a collage, sketch or even a scale model box.

## A04 The Evaluative Phase

*To fully appreciate the “significance of the social, cultural and/or historical influences on the play...”*

When writing ‘We Are Shadows’, Fin Kennedy drew from a wide range of sources that he fictionalised and turned into the characters you meet. The stories he drew upon came from newspapers, as well as teachers and young people he has worked with in south and east London.

### **Play into news**

Ask students to imagine the events of the play as a collection of news stories. Present those news stories as;

#### Posters

- The front page of a local newspaper
- The front page of a national newspaper

#### Video or short scene

- A TV news report
- A crime-watch reconstruction

#### Recording or monologue

- A radio news report

In each case the fictional stories of the play should be cross-cut with real local, national or international news stories of the day.

### **News into play**

This exercise will lead the young people to writing a series of monologues from current news stories. You could use the news stories in the pack as a starting point or you could ask the young people to bring in their own news stories.

#### **Step 1**

Read the article and make a list of all the individual people who are identified.

#### **Step 2**

Choose the character that you are most interested in.

Decide on the following – where the news story doesn't tell you, then make it up.

Gender

Age

Ethnicity

Name

Three physical characteristics (appearance, mannerism, tone of voice etc.)

Where their money comes from

Where they live

Something they lack in life

Something they need right now

A secret they have

Something they believe

Something they wish for

Where they are at this very moment

What they are doing at this very moment

What they are thinking or saying at this very moment

#### **Step 3**

Make a list of words or phrases that your character uses regularly.

#### **Step 4**

Writing the monologue

Take your final answer from step 2 and extend it into a short monologue. Try to build in the words and phrases from step 3 and any lines of speech that appear in the news story.

“...provide an evaluation of the work of others based...on a live performance...”

Give students the review of 'Locked In' and the accompanying notes.

### **Croydon Advertiser** 13 October 2006

*Locked In* is the story of three teenagers who regularly skip school to broadcast pirate radio from a disused East London tower block. Bengali DJ Riqi, Caribbean MC Blaze and new girl Zahida all think they know what they want from life, and don't need anyone else to tell them. But after an argument one afternoon, Riqi has something of a religious awakening, and Blaze agrees to help out a local gangster. Zahida isn't afraid to let them know when they start acting out of order, but the results still threaten to tear their world apart.

Set to a hip-hop soundtrack, the play pounds along to the beat, much of the fast-paced conversation within the flow and pulse of the music that rocks the characters' worlds. The most heartfelt outbursts appear when the teenagers pick up the microphones and begin to rap to their listening public: their frustration with school, burning ambitions and religious conflicts are all explored within the rhythm and rhyme they blast out across the airwaves.

*Locked In* is an example of that rare, beautiful creature: a youth-marketed play that really does make a connection with its audience. The performances from all three actors are gripping and realistic, the set is well-designed, and the story rips along at a cracking pace, ensuring that even the most easily distracted will stay engaged. The dialogue is sometimes hard to follow word-by-word, and it can take a while to adjust to the slang and speed of conversation, but this does make the interaction more believable, and the gist is easy to grasp. Definitely worth it.

### **This review includes:**

- Title of the play.
- Name of playwright.
- Reference to the themes.
- Descriptions of action.
- Acting notes, positives and criticisms.
- Notes on the writing.
- Notes on the set and costumes.
- Notes on the sound design.
- The reviewer's opinions on the plays social and cultural significance.
- An overall opinion on the plays effectiveness.

When reviewing 'We are Shadows' you could add:

- A drawing or sketch of the set and costume design.
- What you would want to change and why.
- A description of the venue - if you saw it in a theatre, or your thoughts on how your school space was transformed.
- Name of production company.
- A quote from the director.
- If you would like us to consider your review for our website please e-mail it to [amy@halfmoon.org.uk](mailto:amy@halfmoon.org.uk).

Saturday November 26, 2005  
The Guardian

### **Diary of a teenage pregnancy worker**

*Abusive dads and loving HIV-positive mums: despair and inspiration inside a week*

Going back to work on Monday morning is never particularly pleasant; the thought of climbing five flights of stairs, stepping over rotten food, globules of spit, unidentifiable objects and the occasional semi-conscious crack user, doesn't fill me with joy. I wonder how Stacey manages this with two children ("Mummy, what's wrong with that man?"), a buggy and shopping. As I reach her open door, panting, I am greeted by a very unhappy-looking Stacey; she's sweeping broken glass out on to the walkway. I guess there has been another fight, and that Stacey hasn't yet managed to get her children's father to leave - or to stop stealing her income support for the crack he has been addicted to since his release from prison.

She's 19, and feels that although he is wrong for her and their children, he is the best she can get, because who will want her now? Stacey is trapped and I feel helpless; I know my efforts to free her will constantly meet brick walls, and that she will continue to feel let down by everything and everyone, because the resources needed to make things different just aren't there. Stacey knows calling the police will not solve her problems. She is hoping he will go back "inside" soon; then she imagines she will be able to live in peace for a while, try to get on with her life, maybe even get a job. I worked with Stacey for two years; she's just been allocated this flat after two years of moving around temporary hostels. But there is no way of disguising the fact that this flat, this estate and many others that have been left to deteriorate are unacceptable for any family to be expected to live in.

Later I find myself at a busy young people's GU clinic. Although the staff are trying to make this place pleasant, looking around at the faces, immersed in their own thoughts, emotions, fears, I know it has little impact. Soon Melissa and I are giggling, and the atmosphere lightens. Melissa's little girl, Chloe, 18 months old, is tottering around the room offering "a love" to all, arms outstretched, big brown eyes on full heart-melting mode. But it burns, because I know this little girl has pain ahead of her. Melissa is HIV positive, diagnosed during her pregnancy at 13. She is at college, forging ahead, doing everything society and the government expects her to do as a lone teenage parent; fighting to ensure her daughter's future will be secure, knowing she is unlikely to see it. I often ask myself why spending her time being a mother to Chloe isn't seen to be enough.

It is not easy to manoeuvre a trolley through Ikea at the best of times, but with two bickering sisters and their four children in tow, it is more like the Krypton Factor. With what little money they have to furnish their flats, this is the destination of choice. We are causing a bit of a stir - people are staring, and I swing between irritation and amusement at this. The sisters don't care; they are used to being disapproved of. I forget that they look and often act their age - 17. Maybe people are trying to work out whether the children are theirs or mine.

The end of the week brings the young mums' group. For some, the group is the one time they have for themselves, and the only support network they are part of; it's important that it is enjoyable and useful. This is a difficult balance to create, with so many different personalities and limited attention to share between 12 young people and their children. Needless to say, I love it. This week we attempt to dispel the

myth that smoking tobacco during pregnancy is deplorable, but cannabis is OK because it means you will have a "nice, calm baby". It's hard not to laugh a little. As the weekend beckons, I am left emotionally drained and despairing. There are only a few years separating me from the young women I work with, yet our lives are far apart. But I feel fortunate - their capacity to remain positive, when all around them is falling apart, inspires me. It is so easy to get caught up in our own lives and forget there are people on our doorstep for whom every day is a struggle.

Matthew Taylor  
Saturday May 12, 2007  
The Guardian

### **Police in the BNP<sup>5</sup>?**

The Independent Police Complaints Commission is to investigate allegations that some off-duty officers attended a British National party event to mark St George's Day in Manchester last month.

Supporters of the extreme rightwing party had gathered outside a pub in Manchester city centre and police were called after complaints that they had turned rowdy.

At the time, Chief Superintendent Terry Sweeney, head of the GMP's professional standards branch, said: "There is absolutely no evidence at this time to suggest that any GMP employees took part in the disturbance ... The officer [who submitted the report] did not see any GMP employees involved in the disturbance himself, but has rightly brought to our attention the information he received from other people.

"We will investigate this thoroughly to establish if any off-duty officers or staff were involved."

Yesterday it emerged that Greater Manchester Police has referred the matter to the IPCC<sup>6</sup>, which is investigating the allegations. Naseem Malik, IPCC commissioner for the north-west, said the incident could "undermine public confidence in the force".

He added: "I have decided that we will manage Greater Manchester police's investigation which means we will be in charge of the direction and control of the investigation.

The investigation will focus on establishing firstly whether any off-duty officers or staff members were present and secondly, if they were, whether they were innocent bystanders or associating with the BNP supporters."

The allegations are especially embarrassing for GMP as it was one of the forces whose trainee officers were caught making racist remarks by an undercover television programme. Following revelations in the BBC Secret Policeman documentary, the force vowed to stamp out racism in the ranks.

Earlier this week the force said it had seized CCTV footage and that its detectives will scour it frame by frame for evidence. The force added that any officer found to be a BNP member could be sacked. The incident happened at 4.30pm on April 23.

Around 120 BNP supporters were reported to be milling around Sinclair's Oyster Bar, and were said to be chanting abuse at passers by.

Some were wearing T-shirts saying "Love Britain or fuck off" and shouting BNP slogans. One officer present claims he saw a fellow officer wearing a BNP badge. Bar managers feared trouble and called police to help them clear away the BNP supporters. Yesterday Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP, was barred from speaking at Bath University amid fears the event would bring chaos to the campus.

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<sup>5</sup> BNP British National Party – an extreme right wing political party that is against immigration.

<sup>6</sup> IPCC Independent police complaints commission

Johann Harj  
Published 21 January 2002  
The New Statesman

### **The boredom and the anger - Young Offenders Institution**

Some want to smash everything, others gnaw through their own flesh but, at this young offenders' institution, a shiny new workshop gives hope. Johann Hari reports

David clears away the clutter from his chair and offers me a seat. His room is filled with the personalised stuff you would find in any university student's room: magazines, posters, family pictures, old coffee cups. He is sitting on his bed next to Steve, who is tall, black and muscular.

David, who is pale and looks tired, turns down the volume on the TV. We chat about daytime television (we agree that it has never really recovered from the loss of Richard and Judy), and it's like chatting to anyone else my age: the usual upbeat pop-culture gibberish that everyone in their early twenties spouts in order to bond with people they've only just met. Not until David refers to how he is serving a life sentence for murder would anybody reading a transcript of our homely scene realise where I am.

Aylesbury Young Offenders' Institute houses the 348 most violent and disturbed young criminals aged between 18 and 21 in Britain. Visually, the building is confusing. Its imposing Victorian exterior gives way to modern steel interiors, incongruously offset by long lines of bright green and red tinsel. More than 50 of its inmates are serving life sentences here before moving on to adult prisons. Before I enter, I am warned that several of them have committed crimes that "would make your stomach turn", and am told not to ask them what their offences were.

The public's perception of young offenders' institutions is shaped by films such as Alan Parker's *Scum*: all rape and wrist-slitting. Is that the way life is for people like David and Steve?

Aylesbury contains the seeds of a new, modern prison service that could banish this Victorian model once and for all. Work in British prisons has too often involved sewing mailbags. But not for these lads in Aylesbury, where Toyota, without government funding, has built a very sophisticated car mechanics workshop. At any given time, this provides 24 prisoners with skills that are transferable to the outside world. The company is committed to funding the workshop for the next 20 years. "It kind of gives you hope," Steve explains. "It makes you realise you can learn something, you know?" Many students on the course have to be taught how to read and write before they begin. One former prisoner, released last year, has written to the institute to explain that he is now employed full-time by Toyota, and that the mechanics course transformed his life.

This particular initiative came not from Whitehall, but from an entrepreneurial figure within the prison who had the wherewithal to raise the funding. This is a model example of the social entrepreneurship that this magazine aims to support with the annual *New Statesman*-Centrica Upstarts Awards. It chimes neatly with the government's approach, too: it harnesses private resources for the public good. The example of Aylesbury's Toyota workshop suggests that government funding for this kind of project would be an investment that paid for itself many times over. "We

would love to have workshops all over the prison. We would love to be educating the lads in a whole range of crafts," one prison officer explains. "But we don't have the manpower. We don't have the resources.

But when prisoners step out of the shiny Toyota workshop, do they confront the stereotypical brutal images of life in a young offenders' institution that colour outsiders' perceptions of such places? While the prison guard was chatting outside the cell, the lads I spoke to (about ten in all, selected randomly according to who was hanging around in the corridor) had an opportunity, off the record, to tell me if the "screws" were screwing them up. They all said that it wasn't the case. Some screws were nicer than others; some were "good blokes", others "arseholes", but none was corrupt or violent. The people who work in the prison, such as Neil Beales, a principal officer, were plainly decent and straight-talking, even (I was told by inmates) away from the prying eyes of the media.

These days, it is rare for young offenders to have to share a cell. This issue has been emphasised by high-profile cases such as the recent murder in Feltham of an Asian prisoner by his rabidly racist cellmate. In fact, a few prisoners dislike being alone and would prefer to share, and research suggests that this preference has a constructive basis: rates of suicide and self-harm are considerably higher in lone cells. One prisoner told me: "You ain't going to hang yourself if there's somebody standing next to you saying, 'What the fuck are you doing?' It's like a support, you know, a mate." Thorn Cross Young Offenders' Institute, near Warrington, has decided to increase its share of two-person cells for that very reason.

There is, however, some threat from fellow prisoners. All prisons have hierarchies and vicious fights to be "top dogs", and Aylesbury is no exception. "We all know who's in charge and who's a sad bastard," I'm told. "Everyone knows their place." But the prison has a tough anti-bullying strategy. Beales explains that "where we see gangs forming, we very quickly split them up. We just transfer them to different parts of the prison and make sure they don't have classes together. The key is not to let groups like that settle, and keep moving them, or they form into packs."

Beales admits that self-harm is a major issue: "I've seen some kids so self-harming that they bite through their own arm to find a vein to rip at. I've seen lads who've literally gnawed through the cartilage and ligaments and flesh of their own arm." Another prisoner sliced his own body so persistently that, in one week alone, he had to have 13 pints of blood pumped into him.

Many of the young men in Aylesbury have never learnt any coping mechanisms to deal with crises, or even with everyday life. The only reaction they know to stress or anger or self-disgust is cutting themselves. Aylesbury does have alarmingly high self-harming rates, but these are deceptive. A small number of dedicated and repeated self-harmers have, in the past, sent the statistics through the roof. The statistics are now moving in the right direction.

A number of strategies have helped. Suicidal prisoners are no longer moved to the healthcare unit, because that stigmatises them. There is now an emphasis on treating them in their own wing, surrounded by their friends. A full-time prisoner works on self-harm prevention, and he is assisted by Andy, one of the institute's most impressive and mature prisoners. Talking to fellow prisoners is often far more helpful than talking to professionals. For this reason, there is now an institutionalised "listeners" service, where a suicidal prisoner can speak at any time to Andy or a

number of other inmates who have been trained by the Samaritans. They can be moved to a special suite and talk all night if necessary.

For all these improvements, however, there are several other desperate needs that cannot be addressed because of underfunding. Charlotte Day of the Howard League for Penal Reform, who specialises in young offenders, says that 18- to 21-year-olds "get the worst deal of anybody within the prison estate". Tight Home Office targets for the treatment of under-18s have caused funding to be concentrated on them; most are now sent to expensive new secure training centres. Young offenders' institutions on "split sites" - institutions that house both juveniles (aged 15 to 17) and 18- to 21-year-olds - suffer most, because the two categories can no longer mix. At sites such as Brinsford and Feltham, 18- to 21-year-olds have been denied access even to basic facilities.

Another consequence of underfunding is that staff levels are very low at the moment. In Aylesbury, prisoners get one hour out of their cells per day at weekends. Those in "bang up" (that is, the prisoners who don't have jobs or attend courses, which was the case with three of the ten youths I spoke to) get just an hour on weekdays, too. "It drives you mental," Steve explains. "The boredom, the anger - you just can't fucking stand it. You want to smash every fucking Whereas in Feltham, prisoners get a "sosh" (association, where they can hang out and talk to each other) three times a day, in Aylesbury this is restricted to once a day. This gives inmates only an hour in which to shower, play pool, chat and relax, before they are banged up alone again. It doesn't take a whole Richard and Judy phone-in to figure out that this is a recipe for producing angry, bitter men. Aylesbury is an unbearable microcosm of Britain's public services: run by decent, well- intentioned public servants, filled with people screaming out for help, but starved of the funding it needs. This could be a buzzing centre for transforming the lives of some of the poorest, most dispossessed people in our society. Instead, it is, as David told me as I left his cell, "a place that could do a lot of good, if we weren't all just sitting around waiting all the time. You know?"

Enakhe Ogumah  
12 June 2006  
The Voice

### **ALEX JOINS THE NEVER-ENDING LIST: PHILIP, KIYAN, BARRY AND NISHA-PATEL...**

When will it end? Another parent mourns 'a good boy'

The father of a murdered teenager broke down at the scene of his son's death last week, struggling to come to terms with his loss. Even as Alex Mulumbu's blood remained on the pavement where he was felled, distraught dad Kamondo hailed his son as "a good boy who never got into any trouble". He said Alex was never involved in gang activity, and he spoke with him just before he got off a bus at the Kennington Tube station. Forensic officers were combing the scene Friday for clues. A red-handled screwdriver was still on the pavement close to the crime scene. According to police reports, a gang of youths coerced Alex and his friends off a bus at Kennington tube station, South London. They were taken around a corner near the Black Prince pub where a verbal confrontation developed.

Investigating officer, Detective Superintendent Richard Heselben told The Voice: "There appears to have been an altercation and we then believe some of the larger group left, went into the estate and came back armed with various weapons. "A fight ensued and the victim received a single stab wound to the left side of his chest which we believe pierced his heart, though we are waiting for the results of a post mortem." He added: "We have witnesses who described seeing people with baseball bats, hockey sticks, and we know there was at least one knife involved." Alex died at St Thomas' Hospital. A local resident, who chose to stay anonymous, said: "It's not nice, I've been here for eight years and I haven't heard of these problems before. They have to do something. Knife crime has been too much, especially in the last two to three weeks. They should give more priority to these kinds of crimes. We need extra police to walk around, controlling teenagers. They are always together in large groups. They should be questioned. The larger the group, the more they're looking for trouble. "How are you supposed to feel safe? Whenever I see five or six teenagers together, I'm scared that they must be carrying something." The police are appealing for additional witnesses. DS Heselben said: "From descriptions we've had, we appear to be looking for a group of about 10 youths, all described as black, in their late teens and all wearing dark clothing." He added: "Knife crime is a problem in London and, my personal view is nobody wins when people carry knives. A lot of youths say it's for self-defence. But if you carry a knife it can only end in one of two ways; either you're going to get hurt or you'll end up hurting someone."

Kitty McKinsey  
March 8, 2005  
UNHCR News Stories

### **International Women's Day: Somali refugee women come into their own outside of home**



AISHA REFUGEE CAMP, Ethiopia, March 8 (UNHCR) – As a Somali girl and the youngest of five children, Amina Dualeh isn't accustomed to standing up to her father. But when her parents, two brothers and two sisters decided to leave Aisha refugee camp in eastern Ethiopia, their home in exile for more than a decade, and return to Borama in north-western Somalia, she put her foot down. Just over a year shy of graduating from junior high school, she was not about to lose the opportunity by returning to a place where her parents likely couldn't afford school fees. "I even want to go to college," says the 20-year-old, who got a late start because she had no chance to go to school until her family reached the refugee camp. "That's why I have to finish school."

Both she and her close friend, Willo Ibrahim, the top two students in their class, talked their parents into letting them stay behind with friends and relatives in Aisha camp until they graduate this June – a highly unusual move for Somali girls.

"Because I am the youngest girl, my father and mother wanted me to work at home," says Amina, a confident and outgoing young woman. "They didn't want me to go to school, but I managed to convince them."

As UNHCR prepares to close all but one of the eight refugee camps opened since 1990 to care for Somali refugees in eastern Ethiopia, Somali women and girls say they have profited from opportunities in the camps that they would never have had at home in their traditional, male-dominated society.

"Somali girls and women have become very strong and tough in the camp," says Amina. "It was good for me to be in the camp."

The free education offered in UNHCR's refugee camps appears to be their top priority. "Here it's better," says another refugee girl, 18-year-old Man Abdi Ali. "The area we fled from [in southern Somalia] was a small village, and in this village, girls do not go to school. Here every girl can attend school. There I could only have worked in the house."

The improvement in the lot of Somali refugee women stems not only from UNHCR's policy of making the protection of refugee women and children a priority, but also from their very flight into exile, where nomadic men could no longer raise animals as they traditionally did.

"It is only the women who work in the camps," said Halima Ilmi, 38, the mother of seven children, six of whom were born in Aisha camp. "We have extra responsibilities

and we sit with the men and decide things. We are 100 percent happy with this situation. There has been a dramatic change in the men because they accept our role. Now they are good."

When committees are set up to represent the concerns of refugees in discussion with UNHCR and its partners, the refugee agency insists that women be equally represented – a move that sparks change in many traditional societies in Africa and elsewhere.

In the camps in eastern Ethiopia, Somali men have accepted the equality of women, says UNHCR Senior Programme Assistant Abdusemed Mohammed.

"Years ago, if we called a meeting of men and women, the men would say, 'Why should the women come? They should stay at home, we speak for them.' But after years and years, they accepted this idea," says Abdusemed.

However, Mako Osman, an outspoken 35-year-old mother of five children born in the camp, is not so sure.

"It was good here," she said in Aisha one evening before her return to Somaliland, the self-declared independent state in north-western Somalia. "Our rights were respected. Here there were many things that forced the men to respect us. I don't think our rights will be respected as much at home."

It's her two small daughters she's particularly worried about. "I hope my girls will have a better life than I did," says Mako, who never had a chance at an education. Squatting on the ground outside her small *tukul* (dome-shaped traditional hut), she's washing dinner dishes in a tiny metal basin while tending to both her daughters – 15-month-old Nimo and four-year-old Hamda – at her side. Her husband, like so many other Somali men, is laying who-knows-where in a stupor after spending the afternoon chewing *khat*, a narcotic leaf.

Despite not supporting the family, her husband does respect her rights, she says. "Now, yes. Tomorrow? I don't know. Then the true life will start."

Of the impending departure for Somaliland, she says, "I am not sure exactly what type of life we are going to have there, but one thing is for sure: for girls, life is better in the refugee camp."

Once her whole community decided to return home, she says she had no choice, despite her fears for her daughters. "The problem is, you can't live alone when all your people, your relatives, your friends, the people with whom you have come, all decide to go home. You will not stand up and say 'I will be alone'."

Simone Wolken, UNHCR's Representative for Somalia, says it will be up to Somali returnees to hang onto the rights they earned in refugee camps: "It is very much up to the Somaliland women themselves to make a change in their society. Nobody will do it for them."

She encourages returnee women – "rather than resigning themselves to their fate" – to work against female genital mutilation, against the spread of HIV and AIDS, and for women's and children's rights, "which would lead to the desired change and would help their daughters."

Amina Aden Bileh, the dynamic head of the women's refugee committee in Aisha camp, is also optimistic that life in Somaliland will be better than some refugee women fear.

"The women in this camp now have a powerful voice," Amina says confidently. "But it's not only in the refugee camp. The world has changed since we became refugees. Educated women's voices will be heard. They will not go back to the previous situation."

*We Are Shadows* Teacher Resource Pack  
Written by Adam Annand in conjunction with Half Moon staff

Half Moon Young People's Theatre  
43 White Horse Road  
London, E1 0ND

[www.halfmoon.org.uk](http://www.halfmoon.org.uk)

Phone: 020 7265 8138  
Fax: 020 7709 8914

Half Moon runs an extensive programme of participatory activities for young people. We work in partnership with schools, arts organisations and community groups throughout Tower Hamlets and across London.

For further information call us on 020 7709 8900 or email  
[admin@halfmoon.org.uk](mailto:admin@halfmoon.org.uk)