

Time Lines:

**Prison, Coercion and Liberation through Poetry
with critical commentary**

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By

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I am deeply thankful to my mother for her enduring faith in me, her love and steadfast support over the years, my sons who have consistently inspired me, my family, who have been a pillar of strength, and my friends who have patiently listened to my tales of woe.

A special thanks also extends to Tony Thorne whose permission to make use of his urban dictionary was invaluable.



Time Lines

Prison, Coercion and
Liberation through Poetry

Arrest One

9. Joanna Ellis: Diary 1
10. Finn Ellis Right to Remain Silent
11. Joanna Ellis: Diary 2
12. Finn Ellis Police Witness Statement
13. Finn Ellis: Indictment
14. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Creative Writing as Therapy
15. Finn Ellis Restricted witness statement: Ellis interview with Appropriate Adult
16. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic response: On the Eve of Christmas Eve
17. Finn Ellis DC Pullens Interview Who Owns the Phone page 1
18. Finn Ellis DC Pullens Interview Who Owns the Phone page 2
19. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic response: Christmas Eve
20. Finn Ellis Recorded Interview: Who Owns that Ketamine
21. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Reality vs TV
22. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: A Middleclass Mother
23. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: O
24. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Achilles' Heel
25. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Not a Fat Slag

Remand

27. Solicitors Letter to Finn Ellis On Remand in High Down
28. High Down Visitors information
29. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: Dear Judge
30. Email a Prisoner: Joanna Ellis to Finn Ellis First Email to Finn
31. Email a Prisoner Reply: Finn Ellis to Joanna Ellis Please Can You
32. Email a Prisoner: Grandmother to Finn Ellis
33. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: Snail Mail to Ben
34. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Daring to Feel Happy
35. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: My Capitalism
36. Finn Ellis Prison writing: Working in My Favour
37. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: The Judgement of Finn Ellis
38. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: Freedom
39. Solicitors to Finn Ellis Copy to Joanna Ellis: Outcome of Sentencing Hearing
40. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: Charges
41. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: BITCH

Belmarsh

43. Belmarsh HMP Visitors Dress Code
44. Email a Prisoner Reply: Finn Ellis to Joanna Ellis Letter to Mother
45. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Seeing You
46. Email a Prisoner Reply: Finn Ellis to Joanna Ellis: Cash and Facebook
47. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Mother's Little Helper
48. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: Cell Survival Experience List
49. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Passive Drug Dogs
50. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Wing Man
51. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: Better than Reservoir Dogs
52. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Processed
53. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Parting is such sweet sorrow
54. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Twix Strip Danger
55. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Twix-Gate

Arrest Two

- 57. Liam White Right to Remain Silent
- 58. Liam White Indictment
- 59. BBC News: Tackling County Lines
- 60. Liam White Prison Writing: Namaste
- 61. Liam White Restricted Witness Statement: Stop Resisting
- 62. Liam White Prison Writing: You Ain't Searching Me
- 63. Liam White Sequential Chargers
- 64. Liam White Director's Guidance Streamlined Process: Obstructive in Interview
- 65. Liam White Prison Writing: Cell Shock
- 66. Email a Prisoner Reply: Liam White to Max White New Cell Mate
- 67. Liam White Prison Writing: All Bless and That

Plans

- 69. Email a Prisoner: Max White to Liam White: Be Like Crazy Titch
- 70. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Exit Meeting
- 71. WhatsApp Contact: Max White to Joanna Ellis First Contact
- 72. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Problems
- 73. Email a Prisoner: Finn Ellis to Joanna Ellis: Need to Talk
- 74. Joanna Ellis Therapeutic Response: Liam White
- 75. WhatsApp Joanna Ellis to Max White: Didn't See You
- 76. Email a Prisoner: Joanna Ellis to Liam White: Advice
- 77. WhatsApp Contact: Max White to Joanna Ellis Sentencing
- 78. Email a Prisoner: Max White to Liam White: That Lady Might be Useful
- 79. WhatsApp Contact: Joanna Ellis to Max White: Turn2us Charity
- 80. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Helper Syndrome
- 81. Email a Prisoner Reply: Liam White to Joanna Ellis
- 82. WhatsApp Contact: Joanna Ellis to Max White: Did You Get My Message?
- 83. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: Release Manifesto Begging
- 84. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: High Hopes
- 85. WhatsApp Max White to Joanna Ellis: RL cash flow problems
- 86. WhatsApp Joanna Ellis to Max White: corrected response
- 87. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Unspeakably Brutal
- 88. WhatsApp Max White to Joanna Ellis: It'll Get Easier
- 89. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Finn Didn't Turn Up
- 90. WhatsApp Max White to Joanna Ellis: Raw
- 91. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Rejection
- 92. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary Is He Safe?

Prison Bars

- 94. Email a Prisoner: Max White to Liam White: Sasha and Jem
- 95. Belmarsh HMP General Application
- 96. Belmarsh HMP Prison Rule 51
- 97. WhatsApp Contact: Joanna Ellis to Max White: Any News on Liam?
- 98. Email a Prisoner Reply: Liam White to Max White Incident
- 99. WhatsApp Contact: Joanna Ellis to Max White: Advice for Smooth Visits

100. Email a Prisoner: Max White to Liam White: Bangin News
101. Email a Prisoner Reply: Liam White to Max White Album Beats and Producers
102. Liam White Prison Writing: The Means Justifies the End
103. Liam White Prison Writing: Two to T
104. Liam White Prison Writings: Ain't No Thing
105. Liam White Prison Writing: Boydem Blue
106. Liam White Prison Writing: Noms number A4465CG
107. WhatsApp Contact: Max White to Joanna Ellis: No one knows
108. WhatsApp Contact: Max White to Joanna Ellis: Hates to Ask
109. Joanna Ellis Mood Diary: Kindness of Strangers
110. WhatsApp Contact: Max White to MC Rinse: Rap Names
111. Finn Ellis Prison Writing: My latest efforts
112. WhatsApp Contact: Max White to MC Rinse: Get Ready to Roll
113. **Glossary**



HMP Service

Arrest One

What is wrong with him?!

God I wish that he would just stop -

I've given him everything

and he throws it back in my face

My students, with all their issues

with all their desperation

their deprivation

are easier to handle than Finn

and more grateful

Finn Ellis

"You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence."

Right to Silence (United Kingdom)

I just don't know what to do.

I don't know who I can talk to

I don't know where I went wrong

If Finn was one of my students then

at least there'd be a team around him-

around me

there'd be a process we'd go through -

there'd be an end destination

that wouldn't just end with me

jane fairbank: 01730 825759- psychologist -- £80 ph

Iain Burbeck - 01243 574809 - CBT- 350 30mins

nichola renwick? 01730 826577 cbt and
other-£65 PH



ELLIS: POLICE WITNESS STATEMENT

CJ Act 1967, s 9; MC Act 1980, ss 5A (3) (a) and 5B; Criminal Procedure Rules 2005, Rule 27.1

This statement (consisting ofpages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature.....Date.....

As a result of CAD940

we attended MALPAS road

where a resident had detained a male

breaking into a vehicle

at the location.

On arrival at the scene

we was met by other police units

also attending the call.

I immediately noticed that this male

had no shoes on and looked confused

as if under the influence

of drugs or alcohol.

Whilst at the scene, due to the odd

behaviour of the male,

an ambulance was called.

The male had stated that

he didn't need one

and that he had just run out

of his home address

but couldn't say why

or for what reason.

He was stood there

next to the van,

fumbling

with the door handle.

I noticed his feet first

bare,

lacerated

from slithers of glass.

Bloody

grubby

a grimy mess.

He shuffled in place,

feet crunching on

the broken side window

whilst his glazed eyes

gazed at nothing

as he rubbed one foot

over the other

trying to scrape off

the glass.

INDICTMENT
IN THE CROWN COURT AT WOOLCHICH
THE QUEEN -v – FINN ELLIS

FINN ELLIS is charged as follows:

Count 1 **STATEMENTS OF OFFENCE**

Possessing a controlled drug with intent, contrary to section 5(3) of the Misuses of Drugs Act 1971.

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

FINN ELLIS on the 23rd day of December, 2018, had in his possession a controlled drugs:

Class A, namely 789 grams of powder containing, 2,5-dimethoxy-4-bromophenethylamine, with intent to supply it to another in contravention of section 4(1) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

Class C, namely 324 grams of powder containing Ketamine Hydrochloride with intent to supply it to another in contravention of section 4(1) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

Count 2 **STATEMENTS OF OFFENCE**

Possessing criminal property, contrary to section 329(1) and 334 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

FINN ELLIS on the 23rd day of December, 2018, possessed criminal property namely **£9978.00** knowing or suspecting it to represent in whole or part and whether directly or indirectly, the proceeds of criminal conduct.

Count 3 **STATEMENTS OF OFFENCE**

Damaging property, contrary to section 1(1) and 334 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

FINN ELLIS on the 23rd day of December, 2018, without lawful excuse damaged the driver side wing mirror,, driver side window and driver side handle of a van belonging to Sabrina Jenkins intending to destroy or damage such property or being reckless as to whether such property would be destroyed or damaged.



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
		<p>Home:</p> <p>I'm being an '<i>excellent client</i>' so Nichola says.</p> <p>She is currently reading: POETRY THERAPY: THEORY AND PRACTICE BY NICOLAS MAZZA.</p> <p>and <i>is</i> sharing the insights it has given her into my current crisis.</p> <p><i>'You're trying hard to help yourself'</i> she says.</p> <p>She's decided that I would '<i>benefit so much</i>' from using all my '<i>creative ability</i>' to '<i>further process</i>' my feelings.</p> <p>So I'm going to be '<i>writing through</i>' my experience by '<i>writing them out creatively</i>' in addition to the '<i>MOOD DIARY</i>', she wants me to write</p> <p><i>My creative ability?</i> I'm not sure I'm capable of what she wants or of what benefits it will give.</p>
		I don't know how I feel about this.
		I'm not sure that I'll submit this to her.

RESTRICTED (when complete)

WITNESS STATEMENT

(CJ Act 1967, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3) (a) and 5B: Criminal Procedure Rules 2005, Rule 27.1)


URN

--	--	--	--

Statement of: DD208

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: Police officer

This statement (consisting of _____ page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it, which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signature:  Date _____

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

ELLIS INTERVIEW WITH APPROPRIATE ADULT

Appropriate Adult (AA) asks DC Pullens if he mentioned the start time of the interview.

DC Pullens states to the AA that the interview commenced at 2140 hours.

Ellis points out that it's late for him to be interviewed at 2140 hours and requests to contact his mother.

DC Pullens states to Ellis that he can contact his mother upon the conclusion of the interview.

Ellis asks DC Pullens to suspend the interview He has nothing further to add.

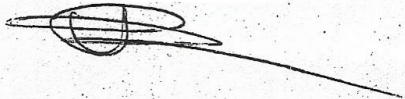
AA reminds Ellis of DC Pullens' initial advice.

DC Pullens explains to Ellis that officers conducted a search of his premises this morning

and found a large amount of drugs and cash within his address.

DC Pullens states that Ellis

will be charged for possession and intent to supply if he does not answer the questions.



MG11/11 9/2007

6



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

On the eve of Christmas Eve,
as we sat at the kitchen table,
the ringing phone promised
an expected familial call.
“It’s Crawley Custody calling”
the Brixton-black voice announced.

“We have your son in our cells.
Would you like to talk to him?”

You ranted and raved about the injustice
of the justice system
and how if you were in Paraguay
instead of a stinking cell
you’d be celebrating with friends.

You cursed my bullshit-parenting,
my lack of support,
my tough love,
my utter failure as a mother
as the reason for your being there.

On the eve of Christmas Eve
on the end of a crackling line
my voice echoed in that place
as I cried and apologised.

On the eve of Christmas Eve
I took in your anger,
your request and told you that

yes, I’d be there
on Christmas Eve.

RESTRICTED (when complete)

RECORD OF INTERVIEW

URN

SDN/ ROTI / Contemporaneous Notes / Index of Interview with VIW / Visually recorded interview (delete as applicable)

Person interviewed: Finn Ellis

Place of interview: Staines Custody Suite

Police exhibit no:

Number of pages: 1 of 11

[Signature] CH841

Signature of interviewing officer producing exhibit

Date of interview: 2nd January 2019

Time commenced: 2104 hrs

Time concluded: 2137 hrs

Duration of interview: 33 mins

Audio tape ref. nos. (◆): 47EE/715/11 01A

Visual image ref. nos(◆):

Interviewer(s): DC PULLENS CH841 & DC COUTTS CD640

Other persons present: Mr JOHNSON, AAS

Tape Counter times (◆)	Person speaking	Text
1.43	CH841	The tape procedure was explained, persons present introduced themselves. Advised of entitlement to free legal advice. Cautioned. You were arrested this morning at 49 Malpas Rd, Guildford, on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance. I'll come to that. On suspicion of possession of a controlled substance and I think just possession with intent to supply. The defendant was arrested for two further offences.
2.05	ELLIS	No comment
3.29	CH841	Okay so Finn, I don't need you to comment, I'm just reading to you the statement of facts concerned with your arrest last night on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance with intent to supply.
3.57	ELLIS	No comment
4.15	CH841	What was your involvement in that possession?

Signature(s)
(Contemporaneous notes only)

◆ Not relevant for contemporaneous notes
MG15(t) 7/2003

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Person interviewed: Finn ELLIS

Page no: 2

Tape Counter times (◆)	Person speaking	Text
6.07	CH841	Okay Finn, so tell me about this phone. So how did you come by that phone? You found it at a house party?
	ELLIS	I found it. No comment.
	CH841	So whom did you ask about the phone? Did you ask if anyone had lost it?
	ELLIS	No comment.
	CH841	So you find this phone, that's not yours, so how do you use this phone?
	ELLIS	I've got special powers. How do you use a phone?
	CH841	Explain your powers Finn.
	ELLIS	No comment.
	CH841	I'm gonna read you a wee bit of text here that was sent on the phone you had in your possession, along with the seized quantity of controlled substance.
		"Finn Man, heading up your way. Mans got readies for real with your name on them. Hella deal you got going. Big up for being mans no.1 G. Aiiight."
6.29	ELLIS	No comment.

Signature(s)
(Contemporaneous notes only)

◆ Not relevant for contemporaneous notes
MG15(t) 3/2002



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01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

Christmas Eve

At nine A.M. on Christmas Eve,
grey clouds echo the greyness
of Staines Magistrates Court.

I rap my knuckles against
the reinforced safety glass
wait for skeleton staff
to find keys to unlock and let me in.

The contents of my pockets, purse
and over stuffed bag,
are poked through by a sour-faced guard
as I raise my arms
in a supplicant's silent prayer
for the sweep of the metal detector.

Through the empty hall
echoes my staccato march
as I search for someone
who can tell me where I should be.

Suited solicitors with stuffed folders
full of dog-eared papers sweep past, and
vanish into closed Court Rooms.

Perching on a seat
tacky through years of use
I check my watch
and wait and wait and wait.

RESTRICTED (when complete)

RECORD OF INTERVIEW

URN

SDN/ ROTI / Contemporaneous Notes / Index of Interview with VIW / Visually recorded interview (delete as applicable)

Person interviewed: Finn Ellis

Place of interview: Staines Custody Suite

Police exhibit no:

Number of pages: 5 of 11

Ellis

Signature of interviewing officer producing exhibit

ELLIS INTERVIEW WITH ARRESTING OFFICER: CH841

Tape Counter times (♦)	Person speaking	Text
14.26	CH841	Who owns that Ketamine?
	ELLIS	No comment. I probably did have ownership over it before it was seized, if you can define ownership as...
	CH841	How do you define ownership?
	ELLIS	I suppose it's being in possession. Possession is like nine tenths of the law isn't it
	CH841	So how did you come into possession of that Ketamine?
	ELLIS	No comment.
	CH841	Do you agree it is Ketamine?
	ELLIS	There's no denying a test really is there.
	CH841	What's Ketamine used for?
	ELLIS	To my understanding it's a medical drug, it's generally used on old people and young people and people who... for serious accidents, emergency situation. As well as horses.
	CH841	Earlier you said you...Okay...
	ELLIS	And I think it's quite big on the gay scene. Apart from that it's, it's a, it's a club drug.



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Disbelief: 10	<p>Staines Court: I had expected it to be different: better organised, efficient.</p> <p>The Legal system that I knew was based on T.V dramas: sharp-edged solicitors cutting through chaos cutting to the chase.</p> <p>The reality was different.</p> <p>Of the solicitors I met, most were either crumbling under crippling caseloads or so jaded they couldn't be arsed.</p>
	I don't know – was I avoiding the truth of the situation by occupying myself with displacement activities?	<p>Home: So, I read up on everything did all I could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Googled sentencing legislation • Badgered solicitors • Created a fat file of supporting evidence (chronologically ordered, and colour coded) <p>I felt superior to those other mothers whose sons went before the judge unsupported.</p> <p>How could they be so ... <i>neglectful?</i></p>



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Shame: 10	<p>Here I am, me, a middleclass mother writing about my thoughts and feelings</p> <p>because I can't talk to anyone about them.</p>
		<p>I'm not answering the question properly – why the shame?</p> <p>I used to think that only those who were the lowest of the low went to prison but I'm not so sure now.</p>
	Shame: 10	<p>I was in Stains Court with my son - He- Finn was in court; I was there to support.</p> <p>What was I doing? I was listening to the sound of my middleclass, suburban bubble bursting. I was letting myself be torn apart to support him.</p> <p>Listening to the barrister unpick my mothering bit by bit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The years as a single mother • The 'terrible' boyfriend • My inadequacies • My failure to support • My failure to be good enough • My failures.

O like the hole in a Polo
or the white powdered ring
that circled my nostril.

O like the shape of my thoughts
in a tightening loop
of rough hangman's rope.

O like an unwanted guest
unsettling the quiet room came the call from
my cell.

O like the absence in my head
when my charges were read and my
convictions pronounced.

O as I stood in the glass bowl
of the offender's box observing
the circus of the law.

O of my mother's middleclass bubble
bursting
under the weight of her shame.





Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
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CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

Achilles' Heel

It was not your undipped heel
that tripped you up, or let you down
or was a weakness that got you nicked

and bruisingly bundled into the cage
at the back of a waiting van
along with your connected associates

to be handcuffed
tightly,
and tethered

like an animal

to the bench
but the all consuming hunger
you had for ketamine

and quick cash
from
dealing.



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Embarrassment: 10	<p>Waiting to see the solicitor prior to Finn's case</p> <p>I can remember thinking:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I AM NOT A FAT, JEREMY KYLE-WATCHING, SLAG.</p> <p>That was the picture I had of <i>those</i> mothers whose sons committed crimes:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FAT JEREMY KYLE-WATCHING SLAGS.</p> <p>Then I thought, how crass of me.</p> <p>Who was I to judge?</p> <p><i>My son had been arrested for dealing drugs.</i></p>



HMP Service

Remand

Jackson & Warner

SOLICITORS

Grove House, Linnet Lane, Guildford, GU32 7NJ

Tel 01730 764834 Fax 01730 786345 DX 98870 Guildford

Email law@jacksonandwarner.co.uk

www.jacksonandwarner.co.uk

24 hour contact 07823 6742981

Solicitor Letter Rule 39

Mr Finn Ellis – A47495CG

Copy: Mrs Joanna Ellis
2 Cranfield Rd
East Heathfield
Petersbrook
Hampshire
GU32 7PB

Date: 27th February 2019

Our Ref: AD/RT/03784/7

Your Ref:

Dear Finn,

Re:-Regina v. Yourself – Woolwich Crown Court – Next Hearing – 30th March 2019

Further to my recent visit please find enclosed:

1. Police witness statements dealing with your arrest
2. Copy of indictment

I ask that you read these through and consider the information in them. I intend to make a further appointment to come to see you next week where we can discuss your case in more detail and the best approach to take prior to your sentencing at Woolwich Crown Court next month.

There are two important questions that you will need to consider:

Firstly, was all the 2cb for your own personal use, or did you intend to give away any to anybody else or to sell any to anybody else? You will need to bear in mind the quantity with which you were in possession.

Secondly, there was £9978.00 in a bag that you had with you. You have advised me that some of this money was your money, and legitimate. However, you need to consider who did the rest of the money belong to, how did it get there and what did you know about it?

Until your sentencing hearing, you will remain on remand at HMP High Down.

I look forward to seeing you again next week.

Best wishes

Yours Sincerely



Jonathan Evans

HMP HIGH DOWN

Prison information

Address: High Down Lane Sutton SM2 5PJ

Switchboard: 020 7147 6300

Managed by: HMPPS

Region: London

Category: B

Education Provider: Novus

OBPs:



Description

Category 'B' male local prison

Visits

Visit times:

Mon: No visits

Tue: 09:00 – 11:00 (HB6 only), 14:00 – 16:00 (No HB6)

Wed: 09:00 – 11:00 (HB6 only), 14:00 – 16:00 (No HB6)

Thu: 09:00 – 11:00 (HB6 only), 14:00 – 16:00 (No HB6)

Fri: No visits

Sat: 14:00 – 16:00

Sun: 14:00 – 16:00

Visit Booking: [On-line](#)

Use this online service to book a social visit to a prisoner in England or Wales you need the:

- prisoner number
- prisoner's date of birth
- dates of birth for all visitors coming with you

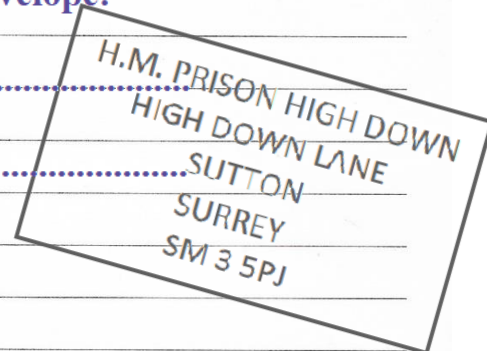
The prisoner must add you to their visitor list before you can book a visit.

When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A47495CG** Name **FINN ELLIS**

Wing.....



Dear Judge

I would like to take this opportunity to apologise for my immature and appalling behaviour and for wasting your time.

I understand that prison is a necessary tool to instruct law breakers and therefore it should not be pleasant. It is not.

The prospect of spending more time in one post being on remand has sharpened my understanding of the wrong path I took. I know that now.

I honestly never meant any harm to anyone and did as much research as I could to avoid harmful ingredients. I was at an all time low and desperate to make my way in the world.

But I don't want to shirk my responsibilities or avoid my guilt so freely admit my guilt to possessing and socially suppling illicit substances. I did wrong but I am a decent person despite the wrong I did.

I would relish the chance to make repairs and give back to the community but in order to do that, I would need a non-custodial sentence.

I have never been in trouble with the law before and will never be again of that you can be assured.

I hope that I have impressed upon you my sorrow at my actions and my willingness to put things right.

thank you for taking your time to read this and consider my case.

Email a Prisoner

Message Id:	11653817	Prison Message No:	None
Message Sent:	09-02-2019 06:52:16	Batch Created:	09-02-2019 08:53:47
Message with reply to:		Message from:	

Finn Ellis A47495CG
Belmarsh

Joanna Ellis
2 Cranfield Rd
East Heathfield
Petersbrook
Hampshire
GU32 7PB

Hi my Darling,

How are things? I imagine that as High Down prison is relatively new, and small, that the conditions there are not so terrible? I don't know when you'll get this email so I'm hoping that you'll be able to call me.

I'm trying to fix an initial visit with you under their induction (?) times. Hopefully i'll be with you next week without having to go through the booking system. I can't imagine how difficult it must be with you and I'm just hopeful that you have some way of coping.

I've been in touch with your solicitor (Jonathan Evans) and he has explained what will be happening. He has sent you a letter with copies of the Police witness statements of your arrest and the specific indictments. He'll be coming to see you to discuss ways forward and the sentencing. His strong advice to me was that you pleaded guilty to the charges to avoid facing a jury. By doing so, your total sentence will be reduced by a third, on top of that, if you behave well (which I know you will) you will get an additional third off.

Jonathan thinks that you have lots going in your favour: the file I am collating on your mitigating circumstances, the fact that you hitherto have been a person of 'good repute' and the amount of people I have contacted who are willing to be character witnesses.

Things on their way to you:

1. I've discovered how to send money to you and now that you have your prisoner number, I can transfer £50 immediately. Hopefully, it will allow you to get the things you need.
 2. I have a list of clothing that I can bring into you on my initial visit. I'll do my best to get what I can so at least you'll feel a bit more comfortable.
 3. I have sent a message to your friend Ollie to let him know what has happened and to let your friends know so they can write to you.
- I'm on my lunch break so can't write more at the moment. But I will write again when I get home and for every day that you are there.

Know that I am doing my best to get you out of there. I love you. Mum xxx

Email a Prisoner Reply sheet

From: Finn Ellis A47495CG
To: Joanna Ellis (Account ID: 107131)
Message ID: 11657762



Altering this image will delay this message.

Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

Please can you...
I beg you to help me
sort these things out.
I know it's asking a lot
but who can else can I ask?

The BASTARD Police
kicked down my door,
dragged me out
and arrested me
and they left the flat unsecured.

Anyone might get in.
I've got a Mac there
and all my creative stuff.
Please call this number:
0787464709 and speak to Jez,
HE'S SAFE - HE'LL HELP

Please do not write below this line.

Email a Prisoner

Message Id:	11653817	Prison Message No:	None
Message Sent:	12-02-2019 09:32:17	Batch Created:	12-02-2019 10:23:37
Message with reply to:		Message from:	

**Finn Ellis
A47495CG
Belmarsh**

**Margaret Longsdale
234 Pook Rd
Heathfield
Petersbrook
Hampshire
GU33 6ES**

Dear Finn,

I was shocked and distressed
to hear you were in Prison Finn.
How on earth have things reached this stage?
You have always been loved,
had money
So what on earth has happened?
How can you have let your good sense
your freedom
be removed from you?
Since you cannot undo what you have done
do your best to make plans
and use this time positively!
As much as you will not want to hear this
your mother, who was already struggling
has been devastated by this.
For goodness sake turn your life around,
if not for your sake then for hers;
she is vulnerable and not as strong as she seems.

your Grandmother Margaret x

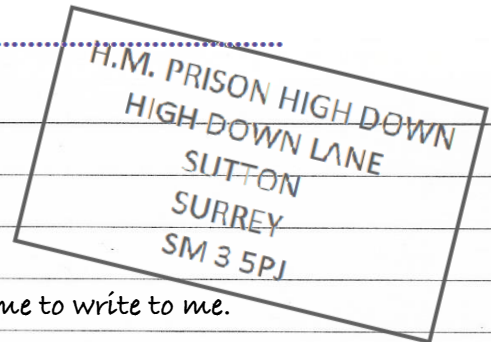
Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number A47495CG Name FINN ELLIS

Wing



Hey Ben,

Really good to hear from you- thanks for taking the time to write to me.

So, you were asking what it was like in here and what actually happened?

Well, it's pretty shit really and all my own fault for being too cocky

(I know. Can you imagine that?!!) But honestly man, it's not like you read or see on the T.V

I haven't been raped, shanked or violated in anyway -

showering is safe and so is dropping your soap.

Yeah, aside from being in prison, which sucks, all in all it could be worse.

Of course, I feel guilt about what it's done to my mother- not the Xmas gift she expected but hey, it'll always be a memorable one!

I really don't think she had any idea what I was up to -

I guess the whole boujee bohemia thing of her intellectuals friends

doing a line here or rolling up there didn't extend to her son dealing -

But enough of me, how are things with you Ben?

I thought you were planning to head off to Guatemala for a few months?

What about Phoebe and Poppy? Have you seen them?

Last time I heard, Phoebe was planning on doing an Ayahuasca retreat in Portugal!!!!

Anyway, look man, I'll send you some snail mail with my thoughts.

Keep sending the letters - I really appreciate them

- Finn



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

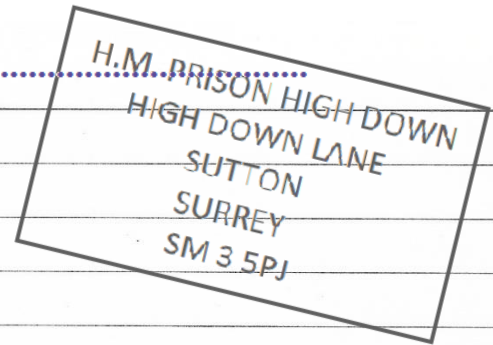
Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	I don't know what I feel	<p>Home:</p> <p>I have just got an Email a Prisoner reply from Finn.</p> <p>It always feels good to get a reply from him.</p> <p>The system is terrible.</p> <p>But, I have a reply.</p> <p>I am daring to feel less...raw?</p> <p>He seems positive.</p> <p>I think he's making the most of his situation.</p> <p>He has sent me some writing that he's been doing.</p> <p>I pretend we are both doing creative writing courses.</p> <p>Pretend I do not have a spider's web of cracks in my facade</p> <p>Pretend am not writing down my experience as therapy</p> <p>Pretend he is not writing from inside a prison.</p> <p>Pretend this might work for him.</p>

When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number A47495CG **Name** FINN ELLIS

Wing



My CAPITALISM.

So, who owns that Ketamine found on the floor?

Capitalist ideas of ownership are flawed

With having and holding and wanting more.

Could've been the Queen's before it was in your claws

Before your crew used their nines to kick in the door

But it's an interesting point of the law

Cos it's yours, isn't it if it's in your paws

After all possession is nine tenths of law

Cos it's yours, isn't it if it's in your paws

But it's an interesting point of the law

Before your crew used their nines to kick in the door

Could've been the Queen's before it was in your claws

With having and holding and wanting more

Capitalist ideas of ownership are flawed

So, who owns that Ketamine found on the floor?

When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number A47495CG Name FINN ELLIS

Wing

Working in My Favour

That summer was coloured green
by one of Shulgin's Magical Half Dozen,
'2C-B',

I started off small
and ordered online,
the means for party highs

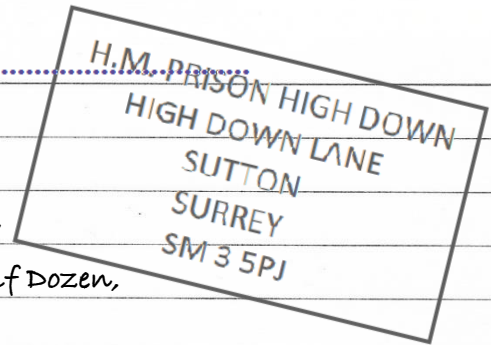
for friends
and friends of friends
and friends of friends' friends.

In the space of a month
I went to a kilo and then into ten.
Cut it clean with '5-HTP'

In court, even the judge was impressed
by my business plan,
the research I had done, care taken.

I had nine charges
but pleaded guilty to just three
was handed the lightest sentence possible.

He said I was young;
I wasn't evil or a drug kingpin
and I had such potential .



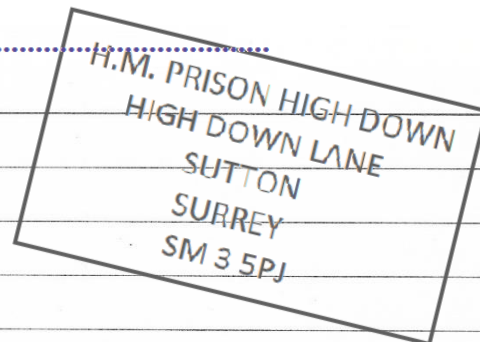
When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number A47495C9 **Name** FINN ELLIS

Wing

The Judgement of Finn Ellis



Judged simply on my skin,
the one thing I didn't control
and by my voice under my control.

Judged by my private school education
and on my middleclass credentials.
by an area code expectation

Judged that the amount of potential harm
that my crime might have caused was minimal
to risk-taking, law-abiding citizens.

Clearly, I was not a hardened criminal.
So I was given the lightest of sentences
because lessons needed to be learnt.

but it was as clear,
as my complexion,
that I was no 'Gang-land King-Pin'.

Solicitor Letter Rule 39

Mr Finn Ellis – A47495CG

Copy: Mrs Joanna Ellis
2 Cranfield Rd
East Heathfield
Petersbrook
Hampshire
GU32 7PB

Date: 2nd April 2019

Our Ref: AD/RT/03784/7

Your Ref:

Dear Finn,

Re:-Regina v. Yourself – Woolwich Crown Court – Sentencing Hearing 30th March 2019

Further to our meeting on the above date:

This is to confirm the outcome of your sentencing hearing at Woolwich Cown Court on 2nd April 2019.

In total, you were given a 31 month custodial sentence to be served at HMP Belmarsh.

However, taking in to consideration your guilty plea it was reduced to just 20 months. The 4 months that you have already served on remand in HMP High Down further reduces your serviable sentence to 16 months. The judge raised the possibility, as this was your first offence, that your last five months might be commuted to be served in the community whilst wearing an electronic tag and overseen by the Probation Service should you have met the required threshold for accomodation.

I understand that you had hoped for a more lenient sentence and to remain at HMP High Down. However, I can assure you that the sentence that the judge delivered was mindful of the documentation and mitigating circumstances that your mother provided and was guided not only by the caliber of the character witnesses but also by your apparent research into causing the least harm possible to prospective clients. All in all, I believe that you were given the lightest mandatory sentence possible.

Your possessions in HMP High Down will be transferred to HMP Belmarsh where you will serve the rest of your sentence.

It has been a pleasure working with you and Mrs Ellis. Should you require any further services please do get in touch.

Best wishes

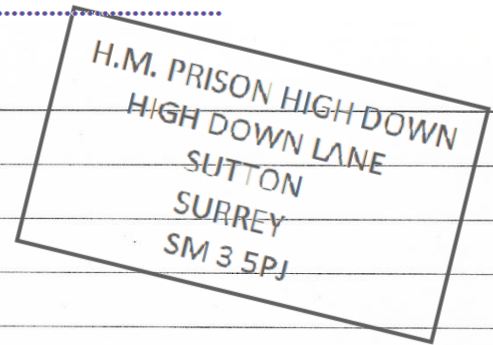

Jonathan Evans

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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number A47495CQ Name FINN ELLIS

Wing



So, I had nine charges in total and three counts of possession with intent to supply.

On me, in well organised capsules and wraps, I had:

- 800 doses of 2CB (class A hallucinogenic)
- 300 of Cocaine (class A)
- a bunch of Ketamine (class C)
- some DMT (who cares?)

The rest was well stashed away in the attic room at my parents' home and in the wardrobe of a mate's flat.

I was also charged with possession of criminal property to the tune of £9978 cash in my bag and close to seventy grand in the bank.

So, all things considered, I got away lightly with the sentence I received:

- Thirty one months actual sentence reduced to just twenty and with a serving time of just sixteen because:
- I hadn't got any priors
- I had an excellent defense team
- At least twenty different people 'of good repute' who acted as character witnesses for me (courtesy of my mother's connections - must have killed her asking)
- I pleaded guilty at the time and wrote a letter explaining myself.
- I am white
- I am middleclass
- I 'have potential'.

Go me

Belmarsh is a bummer though.



Nichola Renwick & Associates

Counselling and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Services

Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

MOOD DIARY : JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was happening, where, who with?• What went through your mind (thoughts, images)?• What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way?• Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	ANGER: 8	<p>Before the earnest thoughts of tonight's Book Club began</p> <p>I braced myself against the confetti of questions</p> <p>That I knew would come about missing the last two weeks.</p> <p>Catherine, her voice saccharined with ill-concealed curiosity,</p> <p>Hoped that <i>'all was well'</i> after my <i>'unexpected'</i> absence.</p>
	Shame: 9	<p>That I have to lie about <i>my</i> truth</p> <p>That I felt her concern was an attack.</p>



HMP Service

Belmarsh

Belmarsh Prison information



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Visitors Dress Code

HMP Belmarsh operates a family orientated visits policy. The majority of our visitors are accompanied by children and we want to foster a relaxed family environment.

This is the dress code that **ALL** visitors must adhere to, otherwise **entry will be refused**.

The following items of clothing **ARE NOT** allowed:

- Hats or scarves and head coverings which are not worn on religious grounds
- Metal hair accessories, including pins in headdresses
- No steel toe capped shoes/boots or cycle/motorcycle shoes
- No non-prescription glasses, i.e. sunglasses
- No heavy metal chains and pendants
- No crop tops revealing the navel
- No backless or see through tops
- No low cut tops revealing cleavage
- No male vests of any kind
- No uniforms of any kind
- No damaged clothes/Ripped jeans
- No items of clothing that display abusive or insulting words
- Only 1 pair of trousers
- No mini or very short skirts/dresses, unless worn with leggings (no skin to be showing)
- No shorts of hot pants length; all shorts must be mid-thigh to knee length
- No ponchos

Email a Prisoner Reply sheet

From: Finn Ellis A47495CG
To: Joanna Ellis (Account ID: 107131)
Message ID: 11653817



Altering this image will delay this message.

Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

Dear Mother

Thanks for your letter,
it was like getting a smile.

It's good to hear news of family
and I'm richer for the picture.

Richer too the for postal order
- you shouldn't have -
but thanks.

I'll use it to top-up my spends
and break the rhythm of the day,
by buying a bit of 'baccy.

Please don't lecture me on it.

In further D wing news,
I've beaten my personal best
of playing pool for seven hours a day
with a new guest by the name of Liam.
I've signed up for everything
even 'In the name of Jesus' education.

And I'm expressing my
disgust through a creative
writing course,
for the social incompetence
and outright prejudice
within the system of law.
How's your writing coming?

I know it's all okay between
us, but I wanted to reiterate
I'm sorry.

Sorry for every vile thing
I've said; everything
I've put you through
I've a lot to make up for
and will do when I'm free

I love you.
Call you this evening.
xxxx

Please do not write below this line.



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

There are lies; plausible enough to
request for time off
without too many questions. Then
the planning begins:
the ninety-mile-long drive,
the cost of petrol and time, setting
off two hours early
*in case of inconvenient crashes or
slow motorways.*

Upon arrival, I attempt
an ingratiating chat
with burgundy-haired
hatchet-faced woman
at the booking desk
who does not return my smile.

She takes pictures of my irises
and copies of my identity
and tells me that my details
will be held on a central database
for 'the duration of my time' there
and she gives me a look
that says

*You are a bad mother.
You are the fault;
the root, the reason
that he's in here.*

A slow shuffling procession
begins through plexiglass security 'bubbles'.
Next, is the awkward closeness of strangers,
who look furtively about,
as they remove their shoes
to reveal holed, mismatched socks.

Our arms elevate automatically
so that gloved hands
can skim and pat our bodies
or snag through longer hair.

Later, we wait in rows
in the visiting hall's anteroom
for the security dog checks.
My heart races though
and I fear that it will sit
and silently identify me.

Finally, we get to the place
where sons, fathers, brothers, boyfriends and
you, my boy, wait.

Then, just ninety brief minutes later,
the process reverses
and I have to walk away
leaving you fixed to your chair
as if you are in medieval stocks
mocked by a line of shuffling visitors.

Email a Prisoner Reply sheet

From: Finn Ellis A47495CG
To: Joanna Ellis (Account ID: 107131)
Message ID: 11653817



Altering this image will delay this message.

Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

Dear Mother of mine,
Thank you for your continued support -
I really do appreciate it.
Could spare any cash?
I need to top up my account
so that I can make some calls and write some letters.
Also, as the food in here is shit and toxic.
my skin is getting completely fucked up
and the doctor isn't really interested.
He's fobbed me off with a tube of E45 creme.
So I need to get some extras
from the vegetarian or vegan supplies
to get myself back to health.

*Honestly, it is criminal how they treat us
and don't even get me started on the laundry
I swear I've had stuff back un-washed-
it's probably one of the reasons I'm suffering.*

Anyway, sorry mother for complaining-
PLEASE contact these folk via my Insta
:password is: 2cb/not2cb

Thanks mother, love you millions. xxx

- Jojo Goldman
- Lucien Renton
- Jollian Cooke
- Max Harding
- Elliot Johnson
- Arabella Hardwick

Please do not write below this line.



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

Mother's little helper

This small cream and green, gelatine pill
is easily swallowed with a clear glass of water.

It permits my mouth to form a small smile
for the officers as they prod and probe me

head to toe with latex fingers
as I stand bovine passive for security.

It helps me quash the embarrassment
of being there and having those stranger's hands

pat down my breasts, stomach and thighs.
It is what I need to pretend that when I see you

in that visitors' hall,
I am not out of my depth and drowning.

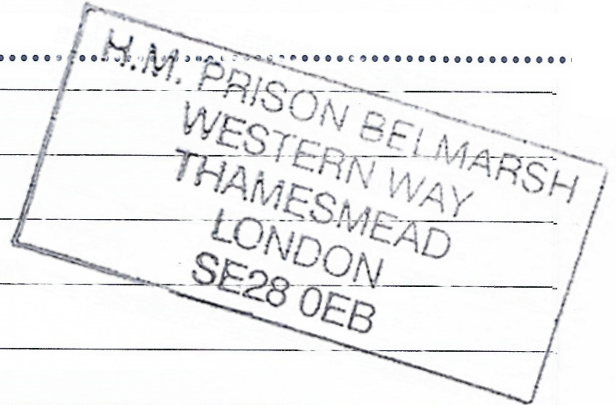
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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A47495CG** Name **FINN ELLIS**

Wing

Cell Survival Experience List:



- Don't appear to feel sorry for yourself
- Be friendly to people, but not OTT
- Don't ask too many questions
- Don't tell porkies and stories
- Learn how to bite your tongue
- DON'T get into ANY drugs
- Sign up for the gym, get fit, do weights; GET HENCH
- Get a dictionary and learn a word a day so you can actually use it
- Get regular books: read every day
- See the doctor/wing officer. Say you're going insane sharing and you're going to kill yourself or someone else
- Protect your space - don't be subject to other's shit habits, farts or midnight wanks
- DON'T GET A JOB: they're degrading and demeaning
- Make plans and get into education: do an OU course
- Sign up for anything and everything: Buddhist meditation or some bullshit intervention
- they can lock up your body, but your mind will be free
- Sign up for Narcotics anonymous --
yeah it doesn't matter if you're not a junkie
- it's another experience.



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

Before the visiting hall,
we are split into groups of five.
We must stand
on yellow-painted squares
strung out along the blue corridor
by distances of exactly one metre.
The two-foot by two-foot squares
parody the ones of childhood
in playgrounds where children
progress in hops, skip and jumps.
We must stay statue still
with our feet hip-width apart
arms loose by our sides
eyes staring straight ahead.
In front of me, a Muslim woman
stands trembling.
She makes mewling sounds
as the Alsatian security dog
leaps at her front, right,
her back and left side
snatching scant scraps of scent
from her hijab and face.
The handler remains silent
but for the clicking of his fingers
at different parts of her body
and his command for her to 'Remain still'.



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

Wing Man

One Sunday, on a visit,
as we sat opposite each other,
you in HMP grey and me in black,

opening packets of Maltesers,
Jaffa cakes and crisps
to share as we talked.

You boasted of pool playing glories
and sessions in the gym
with your new '*Wing Man*'.

You said he was called *Liam*
and he spotted your weights
and reps and walked with you

about the gym perimeters
to cool down post work out
and talk about your mothers.

When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A47495CG** Name **FINN ELLIS**

Wing **Better than Reservoir Dogs**

You know the beautiful thing about being in prison?

I wouldn't change a thing

In here, I'm like a celebrity,
better than Rain-Man
Reservoir Dogs
or my own hype.

I tell them I was
invincible
invisible,
inspired.

They are older
mainly black
marked from slinging

I tell them I could've gone on
gone bigger, better
done more, more, more.

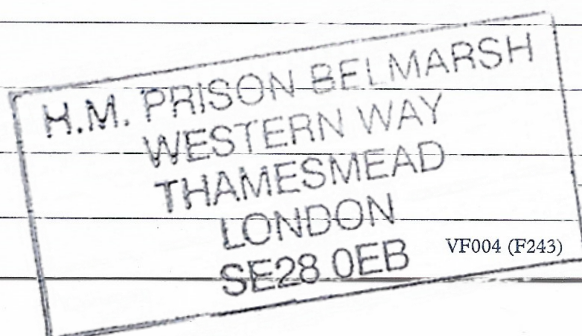
small-time single
wraps -

I tell them I'm glad
about what happened
when it did -

I tell them I was caught
when I was just 21;
a real Layer Cake Dealer,

I'm glad that someone
stopped me dead
before I got too big.

weekly turning over 5 figure sums
and never had to handle a gun.





MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Depression Anxiety Guilt/failure Inadequacy - all of them Oh God – I'm a 10 in terms of failure	<p>I realised today, as I waited to be 'processed'</p> <p>before visiting Finn</p> <p>that every drug dealer, addict, bad man, hard man, every single criminal in prison has a mother.</p> <p>I am a mother of the sort of man they lock up.</p> <p>What does it say about me? About my mothering? What did I do that he ended up here?</p>
		<p>When I look back at my thoughts, made embarrassingly real on this page, I can see that bit, by bit I am being 'processed' by the system that seeks to punish my boy.</p> <p>My 'process' as I am 'processed', is humiliating and dehumanising. I hate the staff. I hate the others. I hate being processed. I hate me And my judgemental fragile self.</p>



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

Parting is such sweet sorrow...

Only that it's not.

It just hurts so much my throat is tight.

'Finish up your visits' is shouted again and again.

Row by row, like dominoes in reverse
groups are standing to part.

As we stand to embrace, I promise to write soon
and do all the things you have asked:
contact the solicitor, the landlord, your friends,

and far too many things to remember
and I tell you how much I love you and miss you
and I promise I will do everything in my power to help.

And then, like that, it is over.
But there is no swift exit for either of us.
You must take your seat again

and I must join a shuffling line
forming a queue
to have identity tags

and the UV stamps on hands double checked
to make sure a tabarded offender
has not masterminded an impossible escape plan,

under watchful guards' eyes
by infiltrating the family and friends exiting line.
And while I wait, and you wait

and we all wait,
we both smile
and try not to look at each other.



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Shame: 7	<p>Belmarsh security bubble:</p> <p>My mother came along to visit Finn. She sailed through security checks</p> <p>smiling as if she was in an airport, bound for some exotic shore.</p> <p>Her tolerance and acceptance of the humiliating process put me to shame.</p>
	Humiliation and Anger: 10	<p>Belmarsh Visiting Hall: There was an older man opposite us.</p> <p>His visitors had failed to show. And it seemed so cruel</p> <p>to leave him there in silence, in a packed hall</p> <p>of murmuring visitors. My mother, of course, couldn't bear it</p> <p>and thought to compensate by offering him a Twix bar.</p> <p>In doing so, she set in motion a commotion from a guard</p> <p>who threatened to have us removed or banned or strip searched</p>
		or all three.



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

I took my mother on a visit today
to see my son
in HMP Belmarsh.

She did surprisingly well,
chatting amiably with the guards
at each security check point

to affirm that 'no'
she was not a 'legal visit'
but instead visiting her grandson.

She even attempted polite,
humorous and helpful comments
as she was body searched.

It was all going so well
until we sat in the visiting hall
waiting for our boy.

When he arrived
we stood and hugged
no more than the allotted time.

Unfortunately, the old inmate
(can I call him that?) just across from us
sat alone, as no family had turned up.

My mother, feeling sorry for him,
offered up a small comfort,
a *Twix* bar, from our gleaming pile.

It was this shiny gold contraband
which set the guards a twitch
and almost got us the bum's rush

out of the hall into a room
to be interrogated
and strip searched or banned.

After apologising, she whispered
that she felt so sorry for him
that she could hug him.

Alarmed, I hissed through gritted teeth
that she should look away
and try to ignore him.



HMP Service

Arrest Two

LIAM WHITE

"You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence."

Right to Silence (United Kingdom)

INDICTMENT

IN THE CROWN COURT AT WOOLCHICH

THE QUEEN -v – LIAM WHITE

NOLANS WHYTE is charged as follows:

Count 1

STATEMENTS OF OFFENCE

POSSESSING A , contrary to section 139 the Criminal Justice Act (Offensive Weapons Order) 1988.

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

LIAM WHITE on the 26th day of August 2018, had in his possession an illegal bladed article the cutting edge of which exceeded 7.62 cm (3 inches) and was not foldable with the intent of threatening violence/causing fear/ causing injury in contravention of the Criminal Justice Act (Offensive Weapons Order) 1988

Count 2

STATEMENTS OF OFFENCE

POSSESSING A CONTROLLED DRUG OF CLASS C WITH INTENT, contrary to section 5(3) of the Misuses of Drugs Act 1971.

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

LIAM WHITE on the 26th day of August, 2018, had in his possession a controlled drug of Class B, namely 950 grams of Cannabis Sativa plant matter containing tetrahydrocannabinol, with intent to supply it to another in contravention of section 4(1) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

Count 3

STATEMENTS OF OFFENCE

ASSAULT A POLICE CONSTABLE IN EXECUTION OF DUTY, contrary to the Police Act 1996, s 89 (2) (Revised 2017)

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

LIAM WHITE on the 26th day of August, 2018, intentionally and grievously assaulted officers in the execution of their powers under section 23(4) (A) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 intending to cause harm contrary to section 89(1) of the Police Act 1996

Officer of the Court

URN: 29SG9463463/1

Tackling County Lines: BBC News

According to a BBC news report,
the epidemic of County Lines,

the practice where young recruits
travel to and from an urban hub
replenishing drug stock and delivering cash,

is to be tackled by one police force
by a new tactic:

confiscate their expensive trainers
and designer clothes.

A spokesperson said,
“Officers hope it will have an impact”.

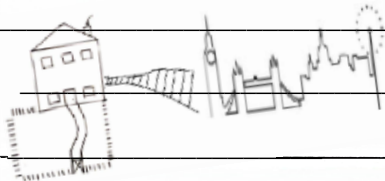
When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A4465CG**.....Name **LIAM WHITE**.....

Wing

H.M. PRISON BELMARSH
WESTERN WAY
THAMESMEAD
LONDON
SE28 0EB



Namaste



Namaste. Oh my days!

Mandem busy making hay

riding high on wavey days.



Crew so safe they gonna stay.

Proper G shotting special K

down County Lines; ghost NCA

boasting Gs want man for protégé.

Man be all like 'oh my days

All be bless like namaste'.

INTRODUCING
LIAM WHITE LINES

T IN DA HOUSE

RESTRICTED (when complete)

WITNESS STATEMENT

(CJ Act 1967, s. 9: MC Act 1080, ss. 5A(3) (a) and 5B: Criminal Procedure Rules 2005, Rule 27.1

URN

--	--	--	--

Statement of:

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert over 18) Occupation: Police Officer

This statement (consisting of page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it, which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signature:

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded

☐

(supply witness details on rear)

I drew my captor spray
and sprayed him in the face.
WHITE ran towards me as he could not see.
I grabbed his arms and pulled him to the floor.

He was using more and more force
to resist so I hit WHITE'S left thigh
6 times
with a Baton strike.

He was much larger and stronger than me
I pushed his head downwards
and pinned him, face down on the floor.
He was struggling and I shouted

My colleagues managed
to secure him into an arm lock
and take him back
into Talbot Road

STOP RESISTING
STOP RESISTING
STOP RESISTING
three times.

where PS VITLER
and PC HUMPHREYS
conducted a full
Take Down on WHITE.

He continued struggling.
I pushed his head to the ground
and hit his head twice against the edge of the
pavement. I did not use my full force.

PC WHITLOCK, SHINGLETON AND MEPHAM
completed a ground pin
and placed WHITE
in handcuffs.

PC HUMPHREYS grabbed his right arm again
and attempted to restrain him.
PS VITLER arrived and assisted.
WHITE continued to struggle.

My five colleagues
were still struggling with WHITE
so I ran to assist them.
I drew my Baton again.

I drew my Baton and shouted
STOP RESISTING
AND PUT YOUR ARMS
BEHIND YOUR BACK

Signature(s)
(Contemporaneous notes only)

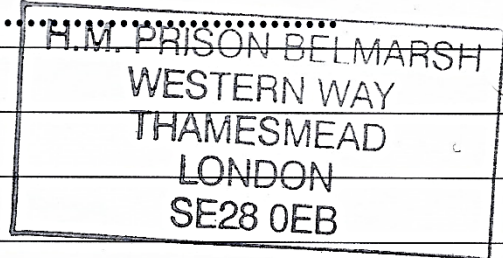
◆ Not relevant for contemporaneous notes
MG15(t) 7/2003

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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A4465CG**.....**Name** **LIAM WHITE**.....

Wing



You ain't searching me

Man told dem

'Feds got no legs to stand on got

no reason why

Feds ain't searching man

Just 'cos them think mans high.

Feds be dishing out injustice.

be treating man like criminal -

Man weren't in the wrong

what man's got with him is minimal

Man agrees that he's addicted

to caffeine, nicotine and drink but

that's all, it ain't illegal

to get wavey, lean or kinked.

What mans doing with Benzs and scores?

They're part of mans wealth

Ain't nothing against the law

been working for the good of mans health.

Nah, nah, nah, man ain't listening

he's had a skin full of feds' lies.

Mans a victim of discrimination

man can see it in their eyes.

It's a free country innit?

What's mans is mans is mine.

Feds pushing man to limit

vexing man by wasting time.'



VF004 (F243)

Sequential No. Charge(s): LIAM WHITE

1. Obstruct a constable/authorised person -drugs

On 26/08/2018 at Talbot Road W11 intentionally obstruct PS HUMPHREYS a constable, in the exercise of his powers under section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

CONTRARY TO SECTION 23(4)(A) OF AND SCHEDULE 4 TO THE MISUSES OF DRUGS ACT 1971.

H.O. 93/30 Local None CNS MD71070

2. Assault a constable in the execution of his/her duty

On 26/08/2018 at Talbot Road W11 assaulted PS HARRIS, a constable in the execution of his duty CONTRARY TO SECTION 89(1) OF THE POLICE ACT 1996

H.O 104/23 Local None CKB PL 97001

PS VITLER, PC MEPHAM

Attempted to detain **Whyte** & Victim of assault

PC WHITLOCK, PL SHINGLETON

Witnessed entire incident including assault

On 26/08/2018 at about 18.15 hours a police serial were assigned to the Nottingham Carnival overseeing the crowd.

PS HUMPHREYS and a number of other officers on the serial noticed a male (**White**), he had powder under his nose and appeared intoxicated.

Led by PS HARRIS and PS MEPHAM, PC VITLER , the officers approached **White**.

They explained that they were going to detain him and search him under misuse of drugs act. **White** stated 'you ain't searching me'. Officers took hold of **White's** arm but he resisted and tried to break free of the restraint.

PS Vitler and PS Mephram continued to restrain **White** but he became more violent, lashing out with his arms, spitting, kicking and verbally abusing the officers. To ensure my colleagues' safety, I drew my captor spray and struck **White** with my baton.

He continued to struggle and kicking his legs, he would not allow the officers to search him. He was arrested for obstructing a drugs search by PC HUMPHREYS and for assaulting PS HARRIS

DIRECTOR'S GUIDANCE STREAMLINED PROCESS

DEFENDANT INTERVIEW. *Identify the interviewing officer, defence solicitor, appropriate adult and other person present.* Set out any explanation the defendant gave as to **how/why** offence happened: include any mitigation and remorse put forward. If **CCTV** is '**key**', record the defendant's response/reaction if it was shown in interview, and attach a copy.

Summarise the explanation of the defendant aloud at the conclusion of the interview and note here. State if no comment made in interview or prepared statement handed over and obtain a copy. Note any special warnings given.

Date 28/08/2018 Time 1131-1141: 1219-1241 Location Nottingham Police Station

Interviewing officer PC 1884 C Wilkins Persons present Nil

The first interview had to be stopped as White was obstructive throughout, he repeatedly hid his face and covered his ears, he also spoke over the interviewing officer so had to be conveyed to his cell.

White stated:

- White stated that he was not aware of what happened at the carnival.
- He was discriminated against by 'red blooded' officers and treated like a criminal.
- White did not know why he was discriminated against or what discrimination is.
- He believes he acted in a decent way.
- He had drunk a few shots of alcohol, though he could not recall how many
- He has a vivid memory of what happened.
- He is/maybe addicted to coffee, cigarettes and alcohol.

At this point the interview had to be stopped. Second interview White stated:

- He was adamant that he did not obstruct the drugs search or assault PS Harris.
- He is not a violent person and did not intentionally assault anyone.
- He does not know why 5 police officers contradict this.
- White claims that he was fully compliant with the search.

White CCTV shown and response

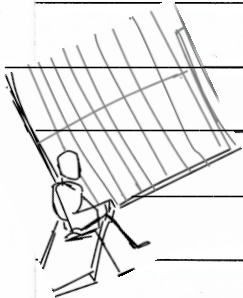
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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A4465CG** Name **LIAM WHITE**

Wing

H.M. PRISON BELMARSH
WESTERN WAY
THAMESMEAD
LONDON
SE28 0EB



Cell Shock



Mans head's dark like a black hole after sentence shock
As Mans left thinking 'bout what happened in the dock;
years is a hella time for Man to take stock.

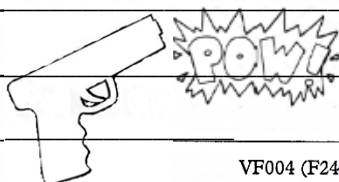
Mans waiting for the solicitor to get in touch
But he's being long like life in here's all cotch
And Mans life ain't wasting with each tik-tok



BAIT
jokes

And Mans bare loving being banged up in a box
And Mans deaf to the bang and clank of his cell door lock
And Mans not hearing his cell mate tossing off into a sock

And Mans not got beef with some beg G on the block
And Mans heart 'gainst his ribs ain't going full-tilt knock
And Mans life inside ain't lethal like a fully loaded Glock.



VF004 (F243)

Email a Prisoner

Reply sheet

From: Liam White A4465CG

To: Max White (Account ID: 107131)

Message ID: 11653817





Altering this image will delay this message

Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

Mad Dog, Max my man!

Yeah Boi, Imma be real chill so alls bless.

Imma sketchy writing certain things in here cos you never know who reads it and mn don't hold much faith for the powers that be here.

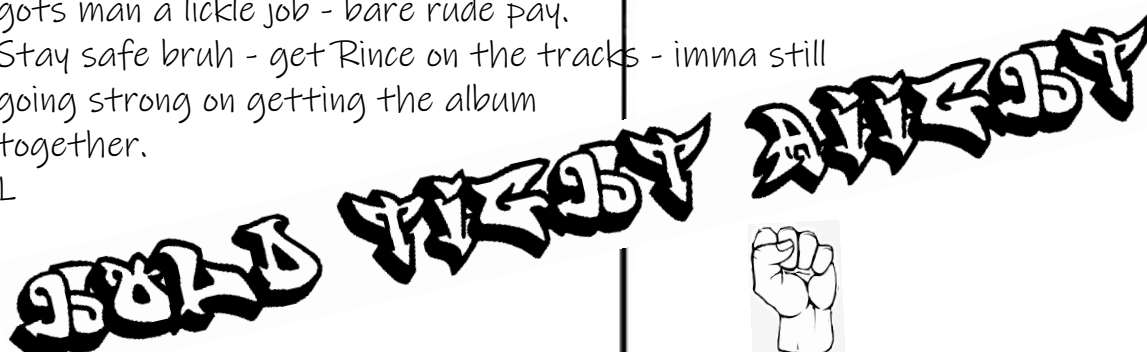
But seriously shiiiite, lost my single cell status and have a new dodgy G. No jokes - he's some high up preacher with the Muslim Brotherhood - name of Omar Brookes - scary as Fuck but imma make sure I get on with him. He's a big man with connections - no getting on the wrong side of him. Fucking next level vexing. Yeah, got a brutal wake up at .4.05 with his praying and bowing and shiiit. And no bullshit here but man says he won't allow watching 'Cash in the Attic' cos it's against his fundamental principles and the home should be a bout family not finance - my word- what kind of fuckery is that?! But imma not gonna make a big deal over it - him and his brothers have made it plain where he stands and I respect that. It's over- and it's cool- whatever.  

Gots to do a lot of writing - can't let that album get slued.

What else ? Yeah, signed up with bare groups to get out the cell - even gots man a lickie job - bare rude pay.

Stay safe bruh - get Rince on the tracks - imma still going strong on getting the album together.

L



Please do not write below this line.

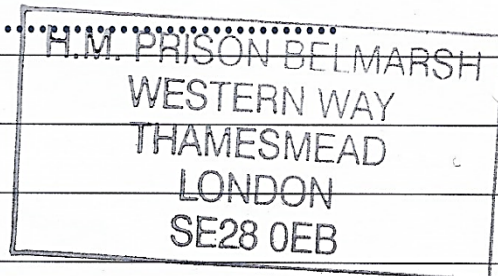
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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A4465CG**.....**Name** **LIAM WHITE**.....

Wing

seriousshiiiiit



All Bless and That



Don't mean no trouble with mans woes

But behind bars, got nuff of those

Mans cell mate is Omar Brookes

(like fam with Abu-one-eye-hook).

Each day before the sun rises

He's praying loud and all righteous

Bare loud nuff to wake man from sleep.

Mans praying his words will keep

Coz Brooks' hands been tight 'bout mans throat

And man don't have no antidote

But telling Brooks to mend his ways

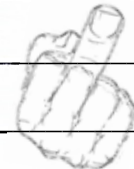
Don't be in mans face like David Hayes

now we got some wifey stand off

brutal like a Kalashnikov.

But apart from that it's all bless

mans just getting it off mans chest



young boi hold tight aalright!

NO.16
LIAM WHITE



HMP Service

Plans

Email a Prisoner

Message Id: 11546185

Prison Message No: 108076

Message Sent: 05-04-2019
10:04:16

Batch Created: 10-04-2019
16:44:37

Message to:

Liam White
A4465CG
Belmarsh

Message from:

Max White
67 Elwyn Gdns
Lee
London
SE12 9LT

Hey, just a short one coz I gotta work.

Thought you'd like to know that I met up with Rince to lay some of your words down on tracks. We're still working towards that album but it's real long without you. So bro, don't give up, be like Crazy Titch and Durty Goodz - keep sending me some bars, I'm working on trying to write some more tunes for them. Don't let this experience go to waste – keep writing like. You can make it in there and I'll make it happen out here.

Oh yeah, and I spotted a woman on the way out of seeing you.

She's got a son on your wing - Finn Ellis? White posh boi, just transferred from High Down.

Anyway, was real shook about the checks and the dogs and whatnot-
not what happens at High Down.

But she seemed to know a lot of stuff and was like all Lady Bountiful about helping *ME* out.
My Days.

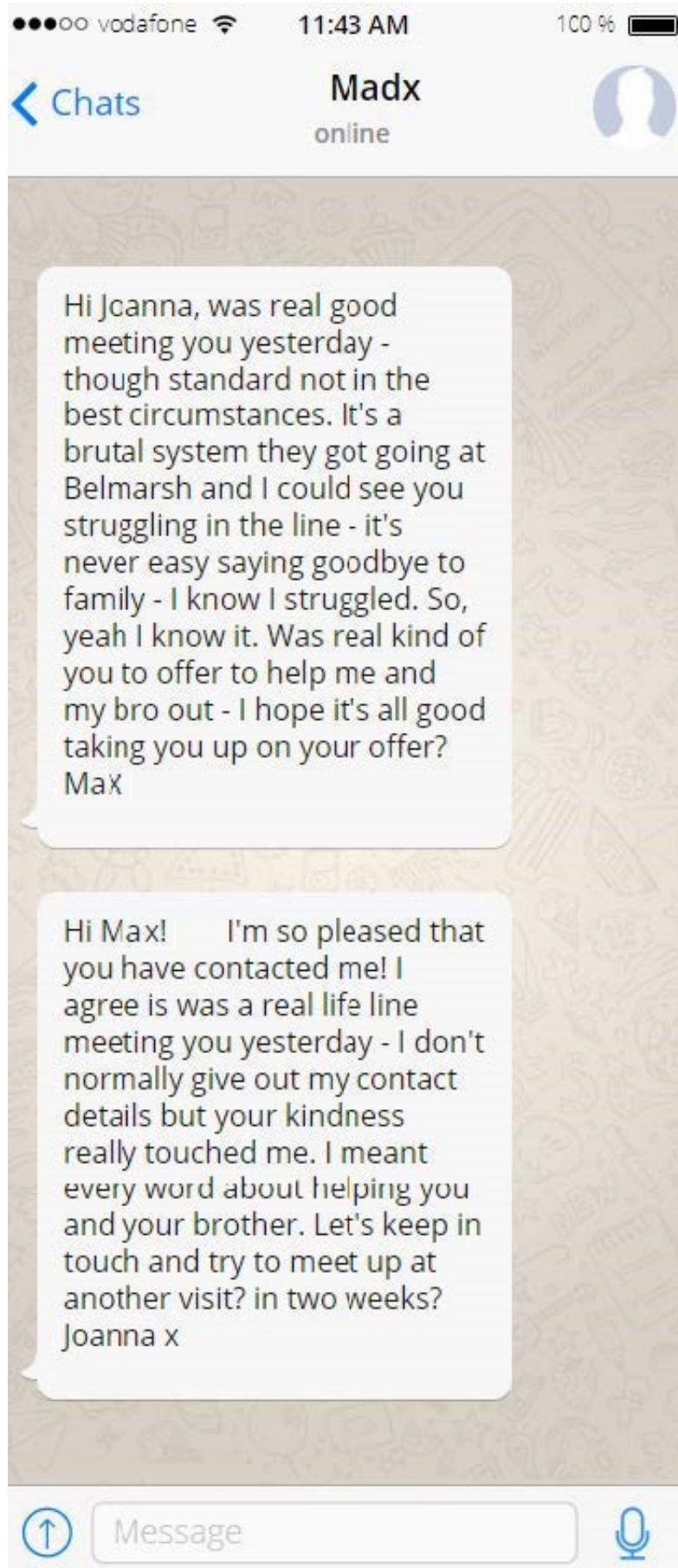
Anyway, I'm going to keep in touch with her. Might be useful.

Big up my Man. Madx



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Distress? Anger? I feel UNSETTLED	<p>Belmarsh visitors' Hall:</p> <p>I was visiting Finn today.</p> <p>I can't get over how brutal it is compared to High Down.</p> <p>It's just awful: the invasive searches, the UV stamps, ID lanyards, endless bloody security bubbles and then the drug dogs.</p> <p>I would think it is easier to escape than to get in.</p> <p>Totally humiliating and de-humanising.</p> <p>In the queue to leave, which is a torture in itself, I felt so desperate leaving my boy there - so much worse than at High Down.</p>
	Cautious optimism - I can't grade this	<p>I stood behind a young man - beautiful - casually cool like the person (his brother?) he was visiting</p> <p>He acted like none of it touched him.</p> <p>As he turned to give a last nod to his brother, I caught his eye and we smiled at each other.</p> <p>And I spoke a few words to distract him – to distract me?</p> <p>He is the first genuinely warm person I have met here -</p> <p>He softened the harshness of the place. I know I have to be careful but I'd like to keep in touch.</p>





MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Sadness: 7 Reflective	And I thought I had problems. Max was his name. I'd like to help him. If I can...

Email a Prisoner

Reply sheet

From: Finn Ellis A47495CG
To: Joanna Ellis (Account ID: 107131)
Message ID: 11657762



Altering this image will delay this message.

Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

Hi Mother,
I tried to call you yesterday evening a few times,
but without any luck. Where were you?
I really need to speak with you.

I know you're working
but please pick up in the day
because it's a nightmare in the evening.

It's urgent that I speak with you Mother.

Probation has been in touch
and there's a chance of serving the rest of my time
on tag rather than this shit hole.
I've said that you'd support me on all the forms.

I need you to contact the probation service
at the prison to confirm things etc.
Pretty please with a cherry and sprinkles
and anything else you can think of on top.

I need you to support me.

Love you millions and zillions and kittens.

Finn xxxx

Please do not write below this line.



Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

CREATIVE THERAPEUTIC RESPONSE : JOANNA ELLIS

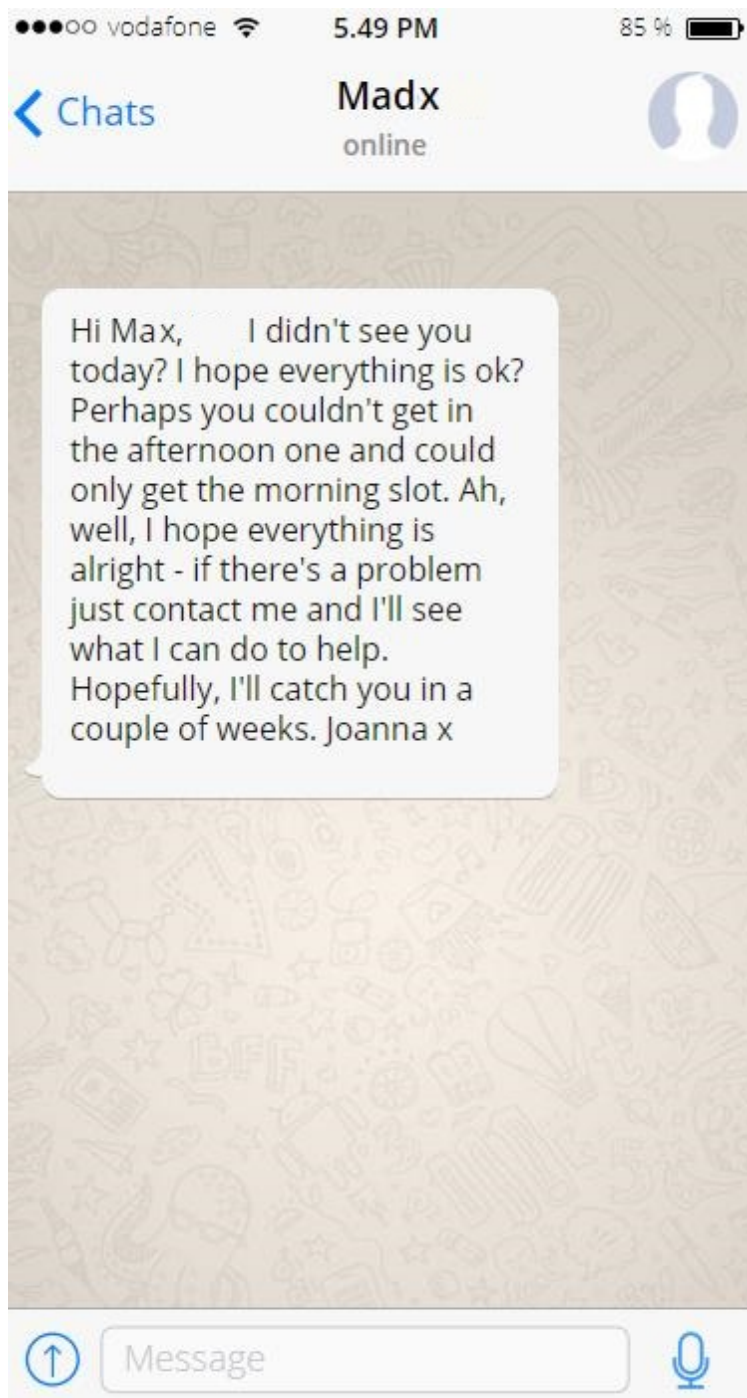
Liam White

Once I knew, he was easy to spot.
Long-limbed and loosely strung,
he sprawled on his seat
like a slack sack of wheat -
the picture of nonchalance
with his arm coolly draped
across the back of his selected chair.

He scanned the hall
as it gradually filled with visitors.
He sucked his teeth and cocked his ear
To hear others' conversations.

He was too near to ignore
too far away to engage.
I tried not to look at him.

His determined relaxation
caused in me a tension
like the string on a bow
as his row of visitor places
remained stubbornly empty
and defiantly silent.



Email a Prisoner

Message Id: 11546185

Prison Message No: 108076

Message Sent: 17-05-2019
20:04:16

Batch Created: 18-05-2019
15:24:37

Message to:

**Liam White
A4465CG
Belmarsh**

Message from:

**Joanna Ellis
2 Cranfield Rd
East Heathfield
Petersbrook
Hampshire
GU32 7PB**

Hi Liam, though you don't know me, I'm writing to you as I met your brother Max last week when I was visiting my son. It was such serendipity that I met with Max as we left the visiting room as I was reeling from the difference between High Down HMP, where my son had been on remand, and Belmarsh. I cannot speak highly enough of your brother and his kindness. And, after having spoken with him at some length about your own difficulties and present situation, I would like to be able to help if I am able to do so.

Having my son at Belmarsh too, I can empathise with what Max and your family might be going through. It really does affect every single member of a family, whether directly or indirectly. I don't know any of the specifics or details and don't really need to either. What I do know is that the system is difficult to navigate especially if you do not have the support of a good solicitor – which is sounds as though so far you haven't judging by the length of the sentence you have been handed for what appears to be a minor violation of the law.

I am hoping that things will get easier, both for Finn my son and for you, and also for your family. I'd like to offer my help in any way that I can to repay Max's timely and spontaneous kindness. I hope that I don't come across as some strange person - it's just that the prison system is tough on everyone who is involved in it and frankly, since my son has been in, I've become adept at navigating my way around. Anyway, if you need to ask me questions then do please get in touch. So, with regard to clothing, money, phone money and visiting, how far down the line are you?

I noticed that you were wearing prison issue clothes and wondered whether that was because your family had not been able to provide you with your own? There is a prescribed list of things that they can bring in for you, but it has to be on specific days and they would have to arrive a good hour or so earlier than usual to get them booked in.

One thing which I know is that you're entitled to access some education and work programs there seeing as you've got over 6 months to serve. It'd bode well for you in terms of demonstrating good conduct and therefore reducing your overall time. Where they can, they do want to get rid of you and if you allow them to see that you're 'reforming' yourself, then so much the better. So, if there's anything on offer, grab it with both hands - if nothing else, then it gets you out of your cell and gives you a positive focus.

The Koestler Trust run shows each year of prisoners' work, poetry, stories etc. Though you don't get money from it, it is a real boost and can lead on to other things for you - it's worth considering. I'd be happy to workshop your stuff if you write - I'm a teacher and so I'm safe to share work with. Anyway, my address is at the top if you feel like writing back. In the meantime, look after yourself and hope to hear from you. Joanna

< Chats

Joanna
online

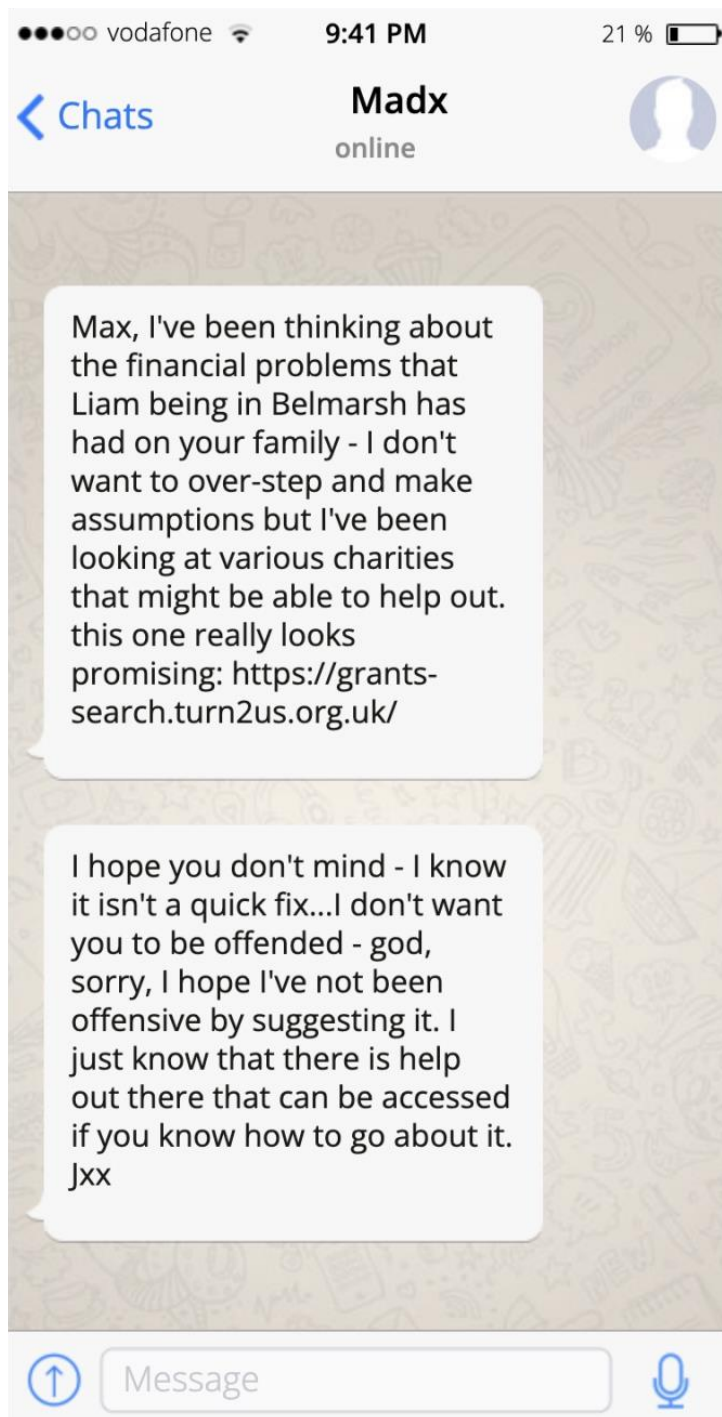


Hey Jo - I know it's bare l8 so no need to respond - but just checked my Email a Prisoner responses and Liam got you email. So thanks for that - he doesn't get many letters and our mum is useless with computers. Yeah the judge did a proper number on him btbh we always kinda expected that. still, mad the amount of time he's got - don;t know how we gonna fix things at home - got rent and bills and all kinds a RL strife - bare vexes me. Anyway, I don't mean to complain - just wanted to send my appreciation to you. Madx



Message





Max, I've been thinking about the financial problems that Liam being in Belmarsh has had on your family - I don't want to over-step and make assumptions but I've been looking at various charities that might be able to help out. this one really looks promising: <https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk/>

I hope you don't mind - I know it isn't a quick fix...I don't want you to be offended - god, sorry, I hope I've not been offensive by suggesting it. I just know that there is help out there that can be accessed if you know how to go about it. Jxx



Nichola Renwick & Associates

Counselling and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Services

Tackling Life's Struggles through Therapeutic Talk
01730 826577 info@nichola-renwick.co.uk

MOOD DIARY : JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was happening, where, who with?• What went through your mind (thoughts, images)?• What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way?• Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	ANGER: 9	<p>In today's session, Nicola asked me how I felt about her suggestion that I suffer from Helper Syndrome - or <i>Pathological Altruism</i>.</p> <p>A punch to the stomach - that's how it felt.</p> <p>I think she's wrong.</p> <p>My work with vulnerable young people my wanting to help others -</p> <p>does not distance me from the difficulties I have with Finn.</p> <p>How can it?</p> <p>What about her - her profession?!</p> <p>What hidden issues does she have?</p>
		She chooses to listen to and help others.
		At least I don't charge her prices...I'm so...

Email a Prisoner

Message Id: 11546185

Prison Message No: 108076

Message Sent: 20-05-2019
10:04:16

Batch Created: 22-05-2019
16:44:37

Message to:

Liam White

A4465CG

Belmarsh

Message from:

Max White

67 Elwyn Gdns

Lee

London

SE12 9LT

So wah gwan Fam?

It's been mad issues with getting letters and emails but I just got a batch of yours all at once.

Got me the lowdown on wing and gym life. Big up your bars man - I can see you slaying it with some blazing tunes once you're out. Don't stop writing – you got some bare talent going on there bruv. You next level and no lie.

I been in touch with Sasha and Jem – they been saying how they're going to get to see you and how they can't believe the time you were given. Sasha was all facey 'bout Jem saying she was half the reason for it all, but I put her right man and said it was the circumstances. I know it's deep man but there's nothing to do but accept it and do it. Keep positive with your writing.

I've been in touch too with Rince and the crew. He said he'll be in touch. He'll have your back and you can pick up with the album once you're done there. Honestly, you got some solid bars building there – send them whenever and I'll pass them on to him.

Has mum been in touch? She said she's tried to get a visit booked but can't get one - that's if she has tried - you know what she's like. Anyway, soon as, I'll book a visit to come to see you.

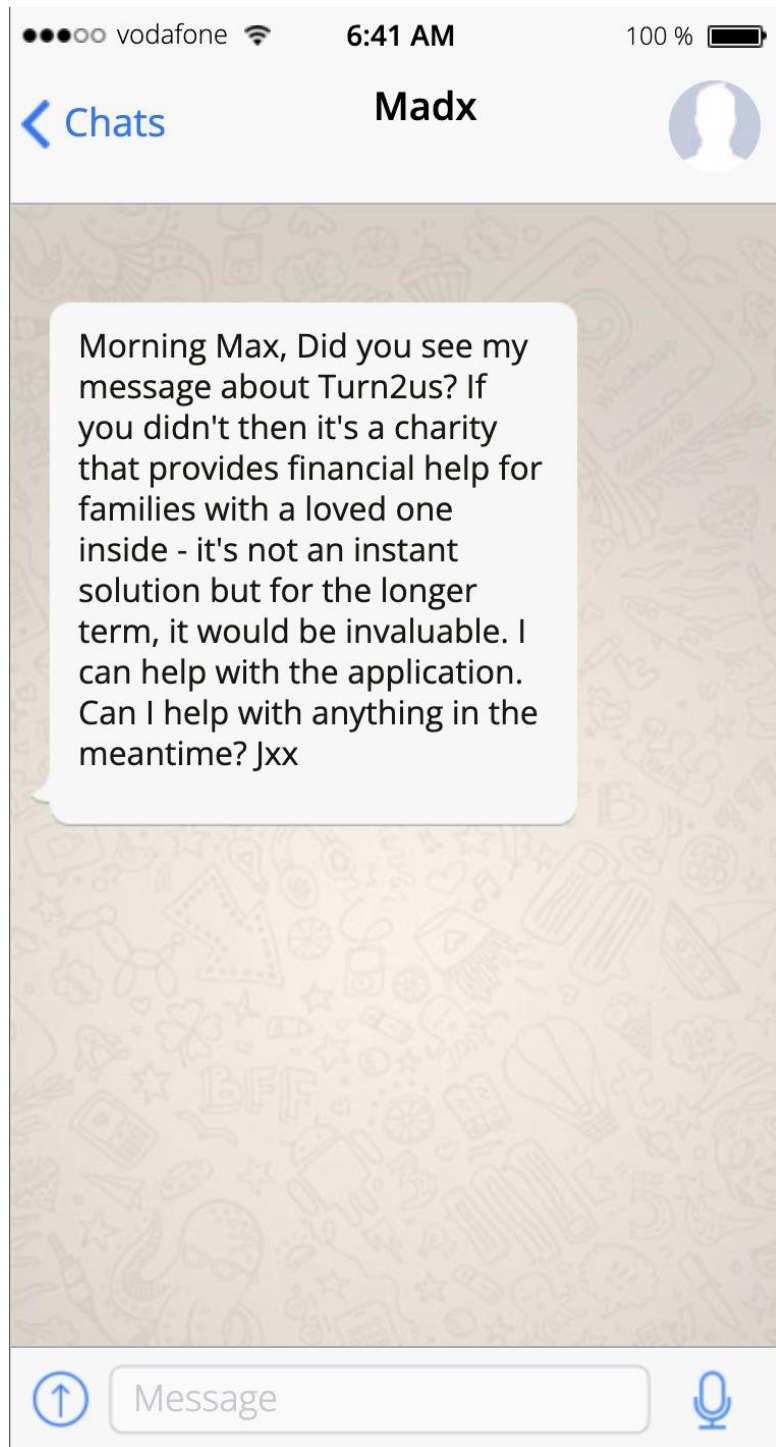
You know that lady, Joanna, who I said would write to you? Did you write her back? She's got some spends and then some.

Would be good to liberate her of some of that burden to help us on our way right?

Get that album out there. You get me? Just to help out with my Real Life cash flow and 'legal stuff' and the like... and I'll make sure that it gets to our 'right' people.

SO, I'll do what I can to keep her hooked and sweet and you keep your end up with your crazy writing talent.

Anyway bruv, keep writing and stay positive. Mad Dog.



Email a Prisoner

Reply sheet

From: Liam White A4465CG

To: Joanna Ellis (Account ID: 107131)

Message ID: 11653817



Altering this image will delay this message

Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

Hi Joanna,

I don't really know what to write.
I'm real appreciate of your letter and advice.
It's difficult for my family as I was the only earner
now my little bro has to be the man of the house.
I think my mum will be able to stay
on in her flat cos it's council
but she's having difficulty applying
for benefits even tho Max is tryna to sort it out.
So I thank you for helping him in anyway that you can.
Yes, the law is deep but I know I did wrong
and must pay with my time.
It's just hard knowing that my fam is paying too.
They didn't do wrong.
I was tryna make ends meet for them
now I took away even that.
You say your ~~iso~~ and me on the same wing.
Yeah, he's safe. spent some time in the gym
playing pool. **he talks about you**
Ima make sure I keep a looks
out for him.

There are some bare bad men about
- not that I want to scare you
but I will make sure your boy is alright.
I don't know what else to write.
Thank you again for helping my bro out
- he's good people.

Liam

Please do not write below this line.

When writing to Members of Parliament please give your previous home address in order to avoid delays in your case being taken up by the M.P.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **Name**

Wing **A47495CG** **FINN ELLIS**

PROBATION EXERCISE: REALEASE MANIFESTO

- I will improve my relationships with my family and friends
- I will write, call and contact those I care about
- I will listen more, be more interested in their lives
- I will grow up and be a man in relationships
- I will establish positive habits on a daily basis
- I will repay all of my debts and favours
- I will invest more time in reading
- I will keep physically and mentally healthy
- I will save to travel the world
- I will learn to control my need for short lived pleasures I will learn to say no to drugs.

I WILL DO ALL THIS MOTHER, I PROMISE -

You are my one chance of getting an early release.

I need you to agree to having me back at home.

I'll only need to be there for a week then I can move in with Giles and sort it out with probation

You need to speak with them and tell them it's fine. I can sort the rest after.

I'm begging you do this. I am dying in here and no one gives a fuck about my health or mental well being. I

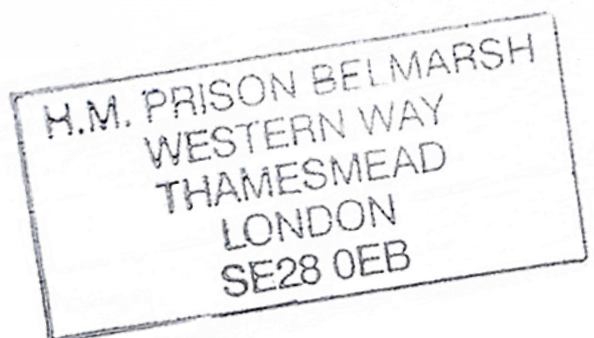
'm pleading with you Mother, don't let me down.

Contact probation; let them know I can stay with you.

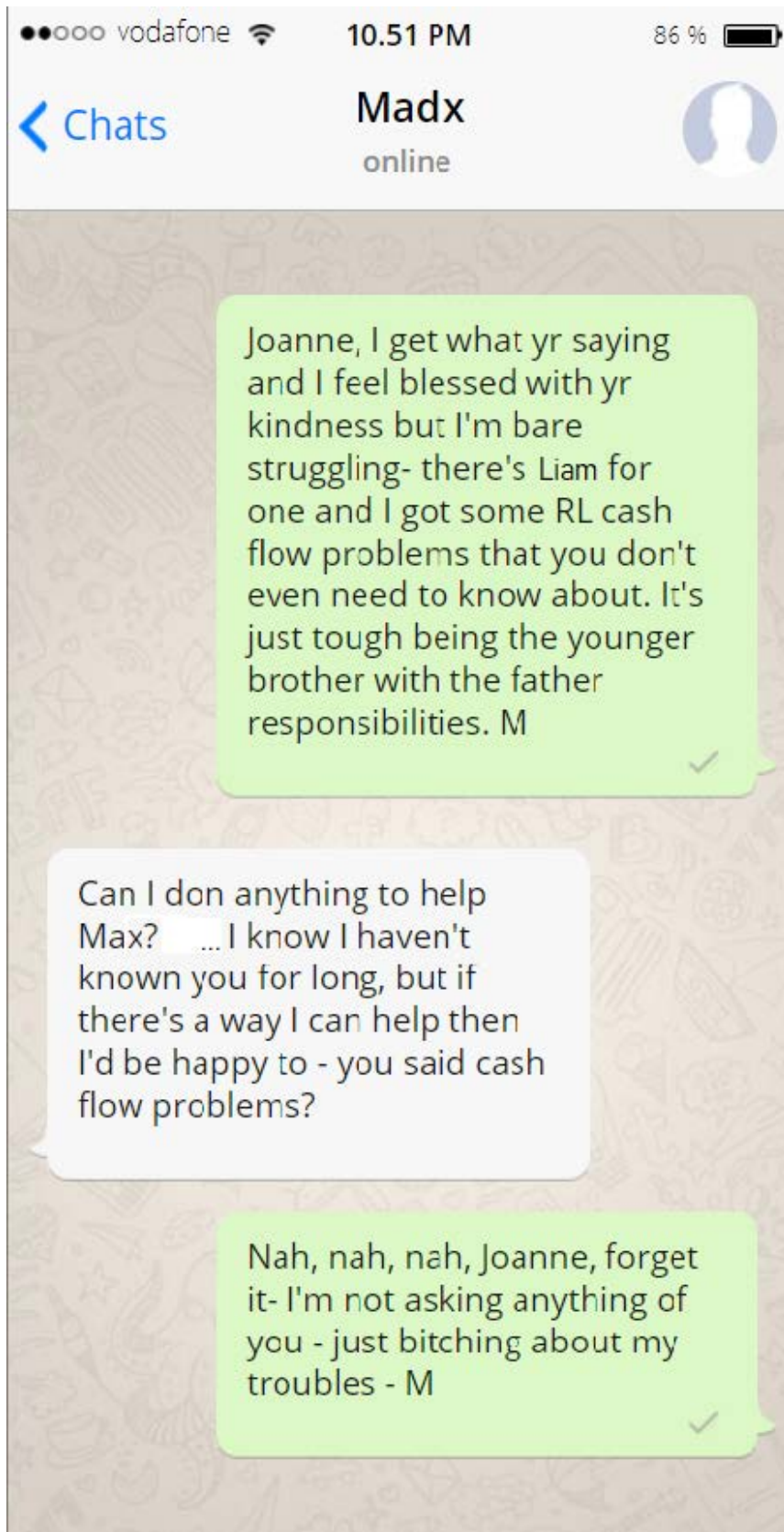
Love you millions and zillions

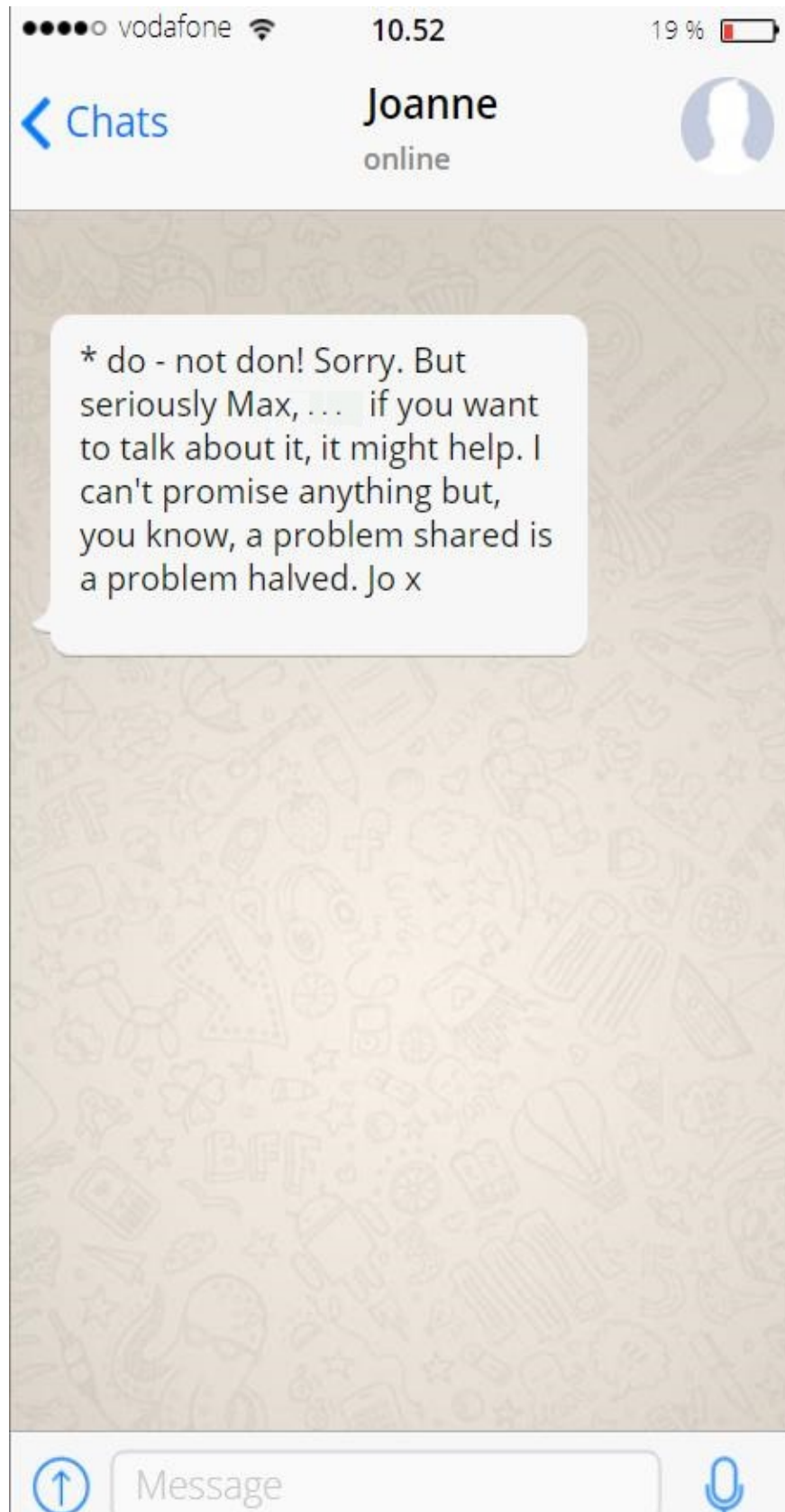
Finn xxxx

VF004 (F243)



Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was happening, where, who with? What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	<p>Fear: 8</p> <p>Stress: 8</p>	<p>Finn has sent an email - he's been trying to catch me on the phone - his usual form of hassling me to get what he wants .</p> <p>He's desperate to get an early release on electronic tag but he needs to have a 'suitable places to stay'.</p> <p><i>That means home.</i> <i>With me.</i> <i>And all that that means.</i></p> <p>I haven't said no or yes. I've told him that I'll have to check with the DSL at work . I don't know where I stand working with vulnerable young adults <u>and</u> having someone living me who is serving a sentence - albeit on license.</p> <p>Oh God - he sounds so positive- has so many plans for the future. So much hangs on my decision and I'm so overwhelmed by this prospect.</p>
	Guilt: 10	<p>He needs so much in place .</p> <p>So much to get back on his feet.</p> <p>I feel desperate.</p> <p>I feel so responsible for him for his future .</p> <p>It's all on my shoulders.</p>
		What if I can't have him back? What if I say no?

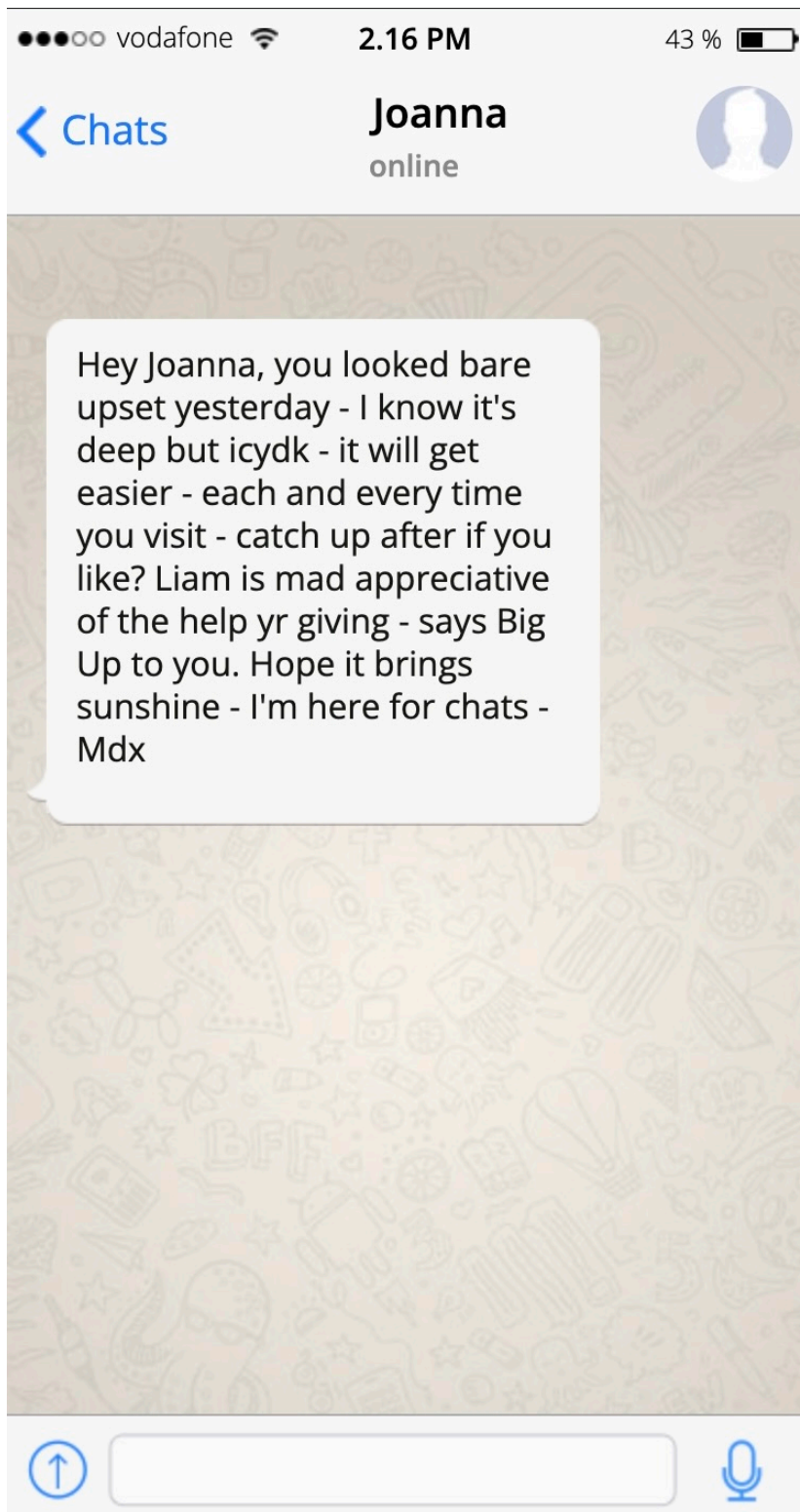






MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

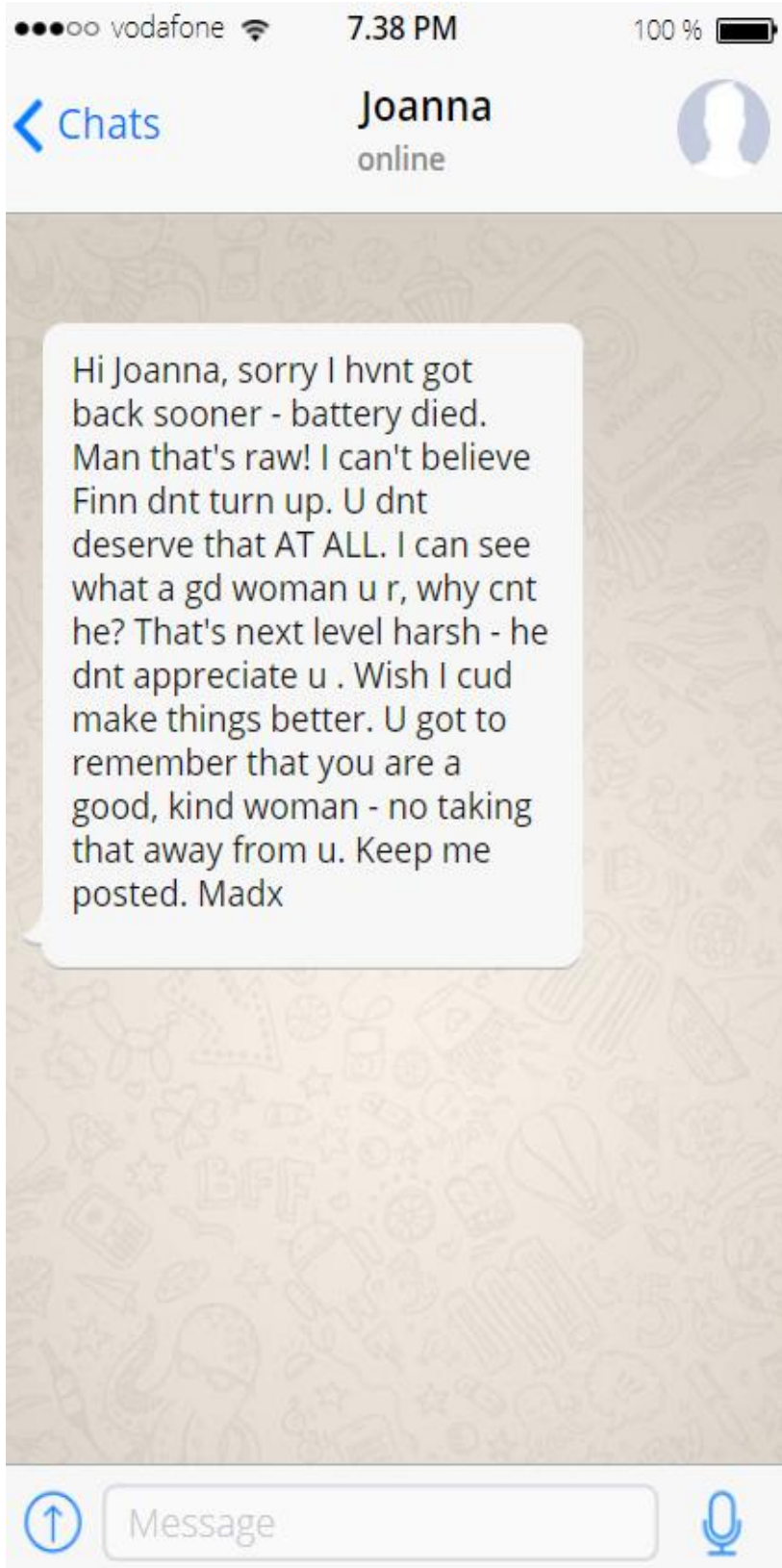
Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Despair: 10	<p>Home: phone call. It was awful; I tried to explain that as much as I wanted him back home, I just couldn't do it. It was a 'no go'.</p> <p>I told him I'd checked with the DSL at work and the Bursar - both said my work with vulnerable young adults wouldn't allow me to have him back.</p> <p>I told him that I explained what his offence was and that it had nothing to do with endangering young people.</p> <p>I told him that they showed me the place in my contract where it states that their safeguarding policy wouldn't allow me to have him back.</p> <p>I told him that I couldn't lie to them - my job would be at risk.</p> <p>He was foul; totally disgusting to me.</p> <p>It wasn't even the names he called me - just that he said my love was hollow - worse than that- <u>a lie</u> !</p> <p>He called my love a platitude which I said to assuage my guilt for 'choosing' my boyfriend over him and 'fucking up' his life.</p>
		He was unspeakably brutal. Unspeakably cruel.





MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	HUMILIATION: 10	<p>Belmarsh Visiting Hall: I booked in to see Finn. I was so desperate to see him after our awful row. I just wanted to hold him briefly and tell him how much I loved him. Speaking on the phone, especially after a fall out, is difficult.</p> <p>I went through the whole routine: the searches, security bubbles, UV stamps, Dogs – the whole lot of it.</p> <p>I should have known something wasn't right. He wasn't there as I entered the hall.</p> <p>I got my row and seat number but couldn't see him. I asked at the security desk and was told that, sometimes prisoners were late being released from their wing and that I should take my seat and wait.</p> <p>And I did. I waited and waited and waited and waited.</p> <p>My heart thumped faster, the stone in my throat grew hard, my breath came in ragged rasps, tears stung the corners of my eyes.</p> <p>After 40 minutes a security guard came to tell me that Finn would not be arriving.</p> <p>He didn't want to see me.</p> <p>I COULDN'T STAND THE PITIYING STARES FROM EVERYONE AS I WAS ESCORTED FROM THE HALL.</p>





MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Anger: 5 Despair: 9	<p>Home: He reverted to calling me Joanna to show his disdain for me post telling him I couldn't have him back home. In calling me Joanna, it's clear his intention is to signal that I am just another woman- not his mother.</p> <p>He just said that I never supported him <i>Not</i> when it really counted. I don't believe he even believes that.</p> <p>I am caught between wanting to tell him what a shit he's been and wanting to weep that I've failed him.</p>
	Frustration: 6	<p>What am I meant to do?</p> <p>Probation won't help him.</p> <p>I can't have him.</p> <p>The Police will pass him back to the prisons</p> <p>And then we'll go around again.</p> <p>What can I do to make someone keep him?</p>
		At least I can do Max/Madx- which ever he prefers - some good
		- I am not a bad person.



MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening, where, who with? • What went through your mind (thoughts, images)? • What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way? • Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Fear: 8	Home: He won't speak to me. He won't see me. He won't respond to my emails
		I don't know who to contact I don't know how he is I don't know what he's doing
	Fear: 10	Is he safe?
		Is he safe?
		Is he safe?



HMP Service

Prison Bars

Email a Prisoner

Message Id: 11546185

Message Sent: 21-06-2019
17:04:16

Message to:

Liam White

A4465CG Belmarsh

Prison Message No: 108076

Batch Created: 23-06-2019
19:24:37

Message from:

Max White
67 Elwyn Gdns
Lee
London
SE12 9LT

Bruh, Sasha and Jem been on my case 'bout what's going on. I said that I'd get their messages to you you cos they don't want their addresses on the system. Jem's all soft and Sasha's brutal as ever. Love ya Bro. x

Sasha Jem

Hey Liam, you're in bloody prison?
That's bare outta whack boi.
I wish I could give you a cuddle.
What are you going to do while you're in there?

Do you get to go outside very often?
How long are you in there for?
What's the food like?
You shook?

This should be the turning point -
Obviously, you're gonna say shut up
But im gonna sort you out
and get you back on the right path.

im gonna not lecture you
cos you're having a shit time enough
Im gonna visit if you want?
just send the word.

I hope your okay boi.
I got bare love for you
How long are you in there for?
You shook?

Babe I hope you're keeping your spirits high.
I so wish there was something I could do-
I honestly think about you all the time
I can't sleep with worry!

I just can't get the image of you
in a cell out of my head.
It's making me feel ill all the time
and Jay misses you.

Obviously I haven't told him
where his Liam is cos he's too young.
I don't think I want to bring him in.
I'm trying to make things right for him.

I hope you can understand Babe
I just can't put little J through it,
he wouldn't understand
and he'd hate saying goodbye to you.

I've got to make it out here
by myself.
I love you Babe
I can't sleep with worry!

GENERAL APPLICATION	H.M.P BELMARSH LOG NO...../...../.....
--------------------------------	--

4. Name. **LIAM WHITE**.....Number.....**A4456CG**.....
 .DATE.....

ONE REQUEST PER APPLICATION PLEASE

3. **Application/Nature of Request: Be as specific as possible, state what you want, not who you want to see. PASS THIS FORM TO YOUR SPUR OFFICER.**

I NEED to get out of the cell I'm in – I'll fucking kill Brookes if he keeps up his Protest prayers – I'm not getting sleep because of his bullshit praying – it's making me edgy as fuck and I can't guarantee that things won't get nasty – the issue has been discussed in the cell

2. **Spur Officer Reply: This application should be dealt with at this level wherever possible. Record the decision/reply. If on to SO, PO, Governor or another department, please state to whom it has been sent and why.**

White has complained of an on-going situation with cell-mate Brookes. He has indicated that the has been a physical assault on his person by associates of Brookes. This has not been confirmed by others on the Wing. Brookes has confirmed that there is friction between the two of them and has confirmed that there is the potential for trouble. I am minded to proceed with the request and move White out of the cell so as to leave Brookes in place .

NAME: _____ SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____

1. **Answer from the Referred Person/Department.**

Application for inmate move approved.

.....TEAR OFF SLIP.....

NAME... Liam WhitePRISON NUMBER..... A4465CG

LOG NO... 372Forwarded to... Gov. A. Matthews

IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD A REPLY WITHIN 5 WORKING DAYS OF(DATE)

THEN PLEASE SPEAK TO A SPUR OFFICER WHO WILL CONTACT THE RELEVANT DEPARTMENT.

Prison Rule 51 paragraph 20

OFFENCES AGAINST DISCIPLINE

Offences against discipline 51. A prisoner is guilty of an offence against discipline if he: (20) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour;—

Number: A4465CG Name: Liam White

At approx. 15:18 on 3rd July 2019
I was on duty in the Woodwork Workshops as
Patrol.

I was approached by Terry
the workshop one Instructor
and told that **A4465CG White**
was being disruptive and concealing things
down the front of his trousers.

I told Terry to bring him out onto the corridor
so I could chat with him
and see what he had hidden.

I told **White** I knew he was hiding something
and to produce what he was hiding
or else have the riot squad
be alerted to his behaviour.

He produced a breakfast pack
and a packing knife.

I asked **White** if he was concealing anything else
White replied
“Patience Gov, like the fucking patience
Brookes will need when I fucking stab
him in the face
and cut out his praying tongue.”

Fearing for my safety,
and that of his cell mate
with his comment about stabbing and violence,
I initiated the riot squad to restrain him.

I recommended that he was removed from his cell
to a solitary one and placed him on Report.
I recommended that **White**
then be returned to a new wing
to avoid further conflict.

 ChatsMadx
online

Madx, — any news yet? You said that Liam had been in some sort of trouble - do you know what it is and what's happened? Let me know if there's anything I can do to help. Jo x

Jo, ATM I'm just waiting to hear from him. IDK what's going on. Stressing me out BIG TIME. The switch board is a CWOT. I'll be in touch. M



Message



Email a Prisoner

Reply sheet

From: Liam White A4465CG

To: Max White (Account ID: 107131)

Message ID: 11653817



Altering this image will delay this message.

Please only write on the front of this sheet and do not mark above this line or your message may not be recognised.

Aaaigghh++ my boi! Ima back from the land of Brookes and still here to tell the tale. Man was on some mission to get moved ~~out~~ out of that cell. Oh my days! Brookes was bare vexing with his ways - not that he wasn't a top G but man swears that he was more wifey than peachy - couldn't do this, shouldn't do that and Brooky wouldn't take no an answer. Him all respectful like with the screws and getting his Brotherhood boys doing the heavy lifting - like what the fuck!

Madx, didn't mean to put the frighteners on you by going off radar - had to be done. There was no real beef ~~with~~ the screws - just that man had nuff of being woken up and told what to do do and watching over mans shoulder. Just lost it in the workshop with some cunt of a screw who wanted to feel like a man.

Anyway - it's all bless now coz man had to go on the QT to speak with the wing officer ~~about~~ it and it's all good now. So like I said, no big beef but it's all sorted now. And man showd Brookes he wernt nothing special - yeah, turned the T.V up real loud and watched some prime day time. Yeah boi, man showd him - Brooke couldn't wait to see the back of man - 'Allah be praised'.

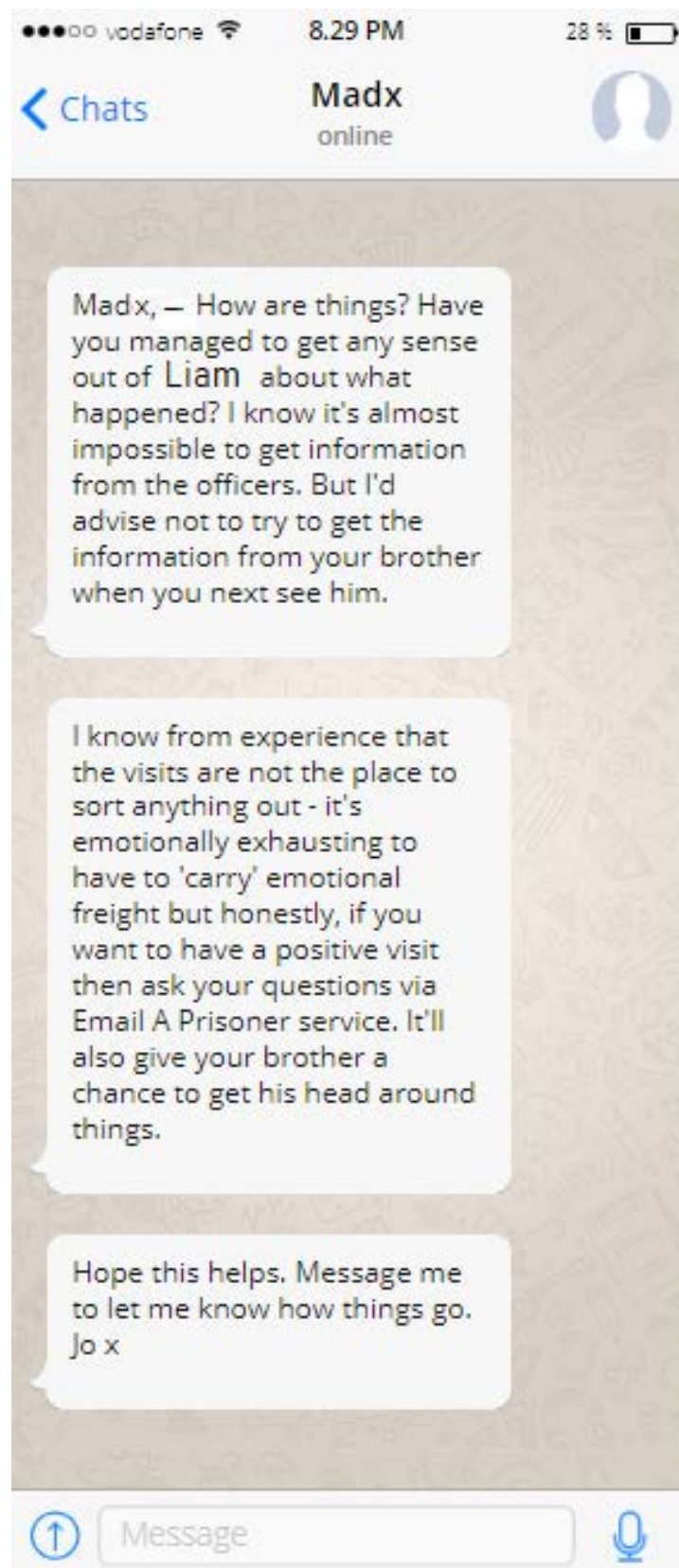
So upshot is that Man is moved to a new cell- aaiigghh++!!! Was told that man was disruptive on the wing and moved man out to another one. I tell you Madx, man don't care if he share with a sobber, a snorer, a banker, a wanker - just not a prayer again. So all back on the main line again little bruv. Sent you some bars about Brookes - let me know what you think. Can you get Rince to contact me about what tracks he's thinking of for the bars I sent him?

Would be blessed if you hit me up with some spends to make some calls. And we need to get some ££££ together to move the album on and keep Jem and Sasha sweet. What about that Joanna? She still gonna be good for some? Show her you're some fine young boi Max....use it.

Holla to the crew - Hold tight. Liam



Please do not write below this line.



Madx, — How are things? Have you managed to get any sense out of Liam about what happened? I know it's almost impossible to get information from the officers. But I'd advise not to try to get the information from your brother when you next see him.

I know from experience that the visits are not the place to sort anything out - it's emotionally exhausting to have to 'carry' emotional freight but honestly, if you want to have a positive visit then ask your questions via Email A Prisoner service. It'll also give your brother a chance to get his head around things.

Hope this helps. Message me to let me know how things go.
Jo x

Email a Prisoner

Message Id: 11546185

Prison Message No: 108076

Message Sent: 10-06-2019
10:04:16

Batch Created: 12-06-2019
16:44:37

Message to:

Message from:

Liam White

Max White

A445CG

67 Elwyn

Belmarsh

Gdns

Lee

London

SE12 9LT

Hey my G, wah gwan?

This is a quick one cos I gotta do stuff.

I got BANGIN news for you - been talking with Rince about your bars and he said we're at a point where we need to be buying some beats. We're thinking of Sir Spyro or Rude Kid. What d'you think? Their beats would be killing it and next level for your bars.

Rince was gonna reach out to them either of them to see if they got some beats that'll fit. We can book in some studio time, lay down those tracks and then start thinking of getting a radio plug somewhere like Sub FM or Unity Radio?

I know it needs massive moolah bru but bin messaging with Jo-ann-a, Lady of de Manor with 'Cash flow problems' and I'm just a poor boi with no one to help him.

I'm linking up with her for coffee after visits next week. So no happy faces- we gotta lay on the sorrow thick. She's ripe for plucking and giving it up it like a bitch. Smooth - I got it covered.

Yeah my man, we are gonna make it happen - you keep writing those bars, I'll keep pulling on that string and the cash will start flowing.

Hold tight, aiiight! Madx

Email a Prisoner

Reply sheet

From: Liam White A4465CG

To: Max White (Account ID: 107131)

Message ID: 11653817



Altering this image will delay this message.

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Max my bruv,

Wuup-two? I've set out the bars that need beats below. You got some right thinking on using Sir Spyro and Rude Kid - dey got some bangin beats! - whats Rince saying? Unity or Sup time would be beast too - you sure Joanna can come through? She don't suspect nothing?

Bin thinking bout putting it altogether - can't do recording in here - you gonna step up to spit my bars?

What about linking up with LD from Gix Seven or even M Huncho? Both bredderz mad good. If you got the cash, you give it a go.

So poss tracks: Boydem

Blue

Noms Number

Packing

'Ends

Ain't No Ting

Paigons

You Ain't Searching Me

Shank skank

All Bless and That

Gashes and Bitches

Cell Shock

No 1 G

Namaste

Two for T

So do what you can and get back
- standard that mans bare
appreciate what you doing bruh.

Must be nasty mashing away at
old Joanna but you be the O.G
now - stepped right up.

Bin thinking bout my rapp name
and the like - what u think bout
-

'White Lines' or White Out/
Mausoliam? White T - YT?

- Ah don't know - talk to Rince
see what he's saying.

Big up bro.

Liam

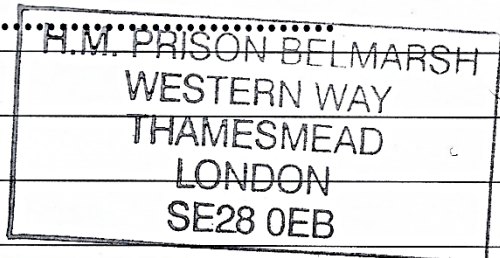
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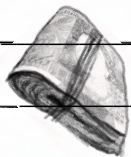
Number **A4465CG**.....**Name** **LIAM WHITE**.....

Wing



The Means Justify the End

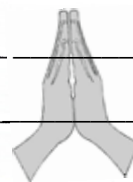
Yeah Boi next level jokes, sharing my cell with Omar Brookes



Brooks starts a beef that man can't end
says 'Cash in the Attic' watched at ten
is bare deep 'bout selling mans' ends
and the Western stash it commends.



Man know Brooks' got brotherhood friends
spread like a virus through this pen
been chasing man to makes amends
for vexing Brooks 'stead of keeping zen.



So his 'Allah Akbar' at dawn deafens
and Brooks won't give up or suspend
his holy war and righteous ascend
mans been told his ways to mend.

When Brooks prays, man must attend
or mans' got bare trouble to contend.
So gotta get cotch, gotta transcend;
mans gotta trust that beef will end;
find a means to justify this end.



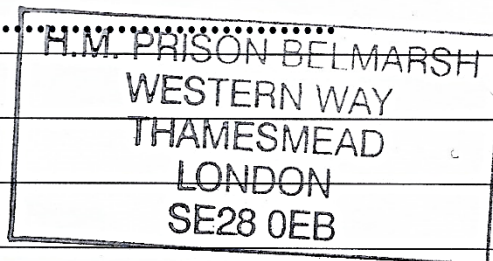
VF004 (F243)

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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A4465CG**.....Name **LIAM WHITE**.....

Wing



Two for T



So man starts scoring bare luka in our bits

With a lickle bit of dis and dat and next level piff

But a baker in a baker's shop who's eating all his wares

Is a breh whose food is better off in another fam's care

And the paigons dat came about acting like dem Yardies

Meant T for two and two for T and some for you but more for me

Now Man's packing twenty teabags in a duttu lickle box

And man got bare long time contemplating what mans got

Mans a ritualistic sacrifice to the gods of British law

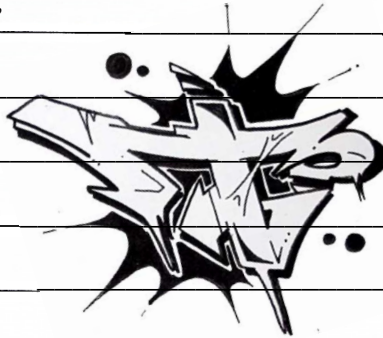
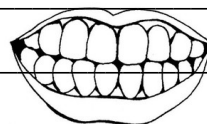
After education beat him down bare-knuckle to the floor

Mans behind bars cos he shotted bags and weights

Take away mans freedom but his spirit won't break

Now mans spending time packing Tbags for his spends

cos Boydem catch up with man getting wavey in his ends



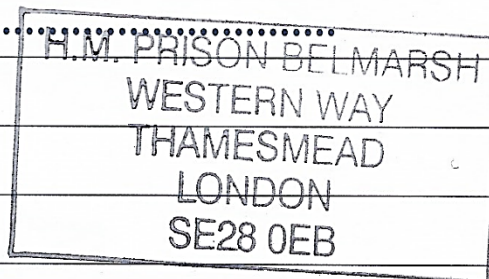
VF004 (F243)

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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number .A4465CG.....Name .LIAM WHITE.....

Wing



Ain't no thing

Ain't no choice mans got for shifty actions

shotting from a baggie, gaining G traction.

Ain't about the green that man got in nines,

po target man coz he spit bars of Grime.

Ain't no peace on the streets that get policed

mans under radar, but po were up for beef, grief?

Ain't no thing taking away mans time
can't put bars in the ends of mans mind.

- need to work on
the hook some more

Ain't got respect for a law that suspects

and looks at man as if he's a social reject.

Ain't no truth in the heads of judges

Brainwashed by politics and old grudges.

Ain't no justice in the system of law

Man got cuffed and locked behind a door

Ain't no thing taking away mans time

can't put bars in the ends of mans mind

Ain't no punishment make man regret crimes

sit man in a room writing stupid rhymes.

Ain't no room for spontaneous reactions

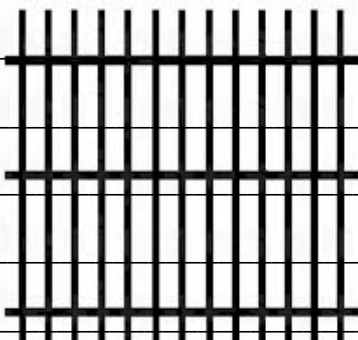
man learning crash course in living with sanctions.

Ain't no escaping the truth in mans mind

days be spent doing her majesty's time

Ain't no thing taking away mans time

can't put bars in the ends of mans mind.



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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **A4465CG**.....Name **LIAM WHITE**.....

Wing

BOYDEN BLUE

H.M. PRISON BELMARSH
WESTERN WAY
THAMESMEAD
LONDON
SE28 0EB

Flowdan flowing through man's ears,

man gets licked as he bowls on road

-spots 50s so keeps it low.

Fedz steps up, gears up, fires up

like some bible man holds hands up,

blocks man like some G man.



A stop and search mission

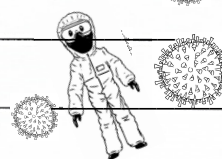
on target to get man convicted

and constricted, like a squatter, evicted.

Brapp! Man cut fedz down with razor bars,

infect him like a dose of SARs

pushes fedz to limit, but fedz ain't having it.



Fedz gets vexed- gets physical,

treats man like a criminal

- knees man, floors man

cracks mans jaw with the rule of law

beats man more than black 'n blue

arrest man to the tune of Blues and Twos.

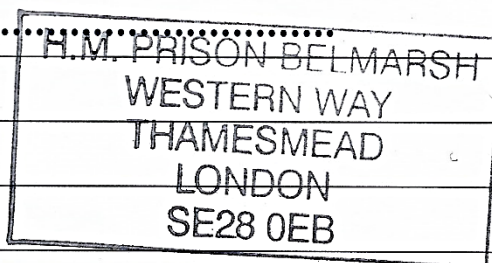


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Number **A4465CG**.....Name **LIAM WHITE**.....

Wing



NOMS number A4465CG.

Mans more raga than Mr. Junior Gong,

more 'G' than Pacino's 'Scarface' Don.



Mans won't be bested, can't do no wrong-

mans right like the Shawshank Redemption.

SPECIAL K

Mans burnt with the fire that mans played -

got licked and bayden doing special K.



Doing time for crime for laws that mans frayed

but it's Law that's the crime and should pay.

Now mans been tagged with a letter-number string.

Screws try to better mans, like they kingpins;

dish out punishment for bare bullshit tings

KING PINS

RAM

-separate mans from familam and kin.

So take mans freedom coz of mans crimes;

mans in charge of spirit, if not mans time.

mans locked up, but spitting bars in mans prime -

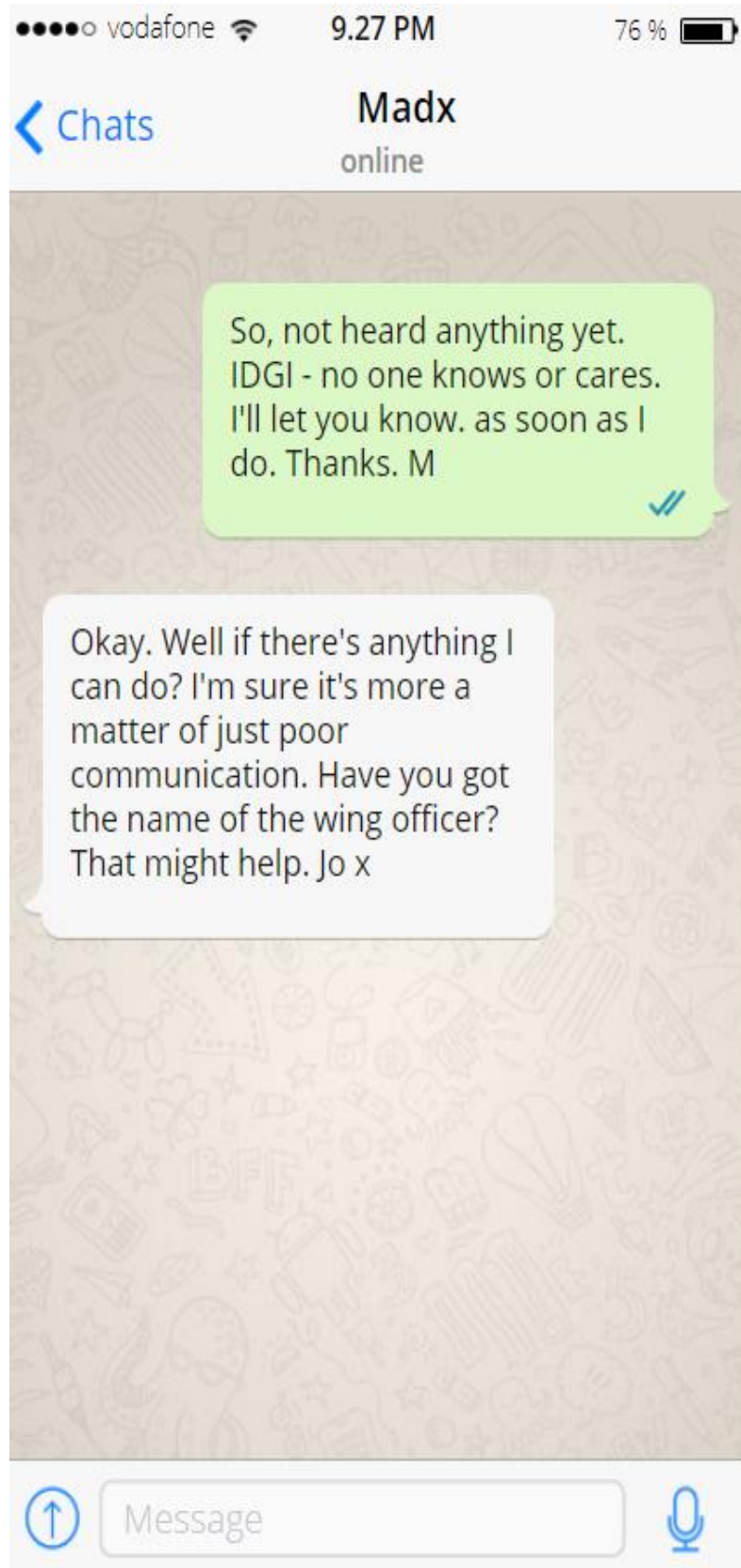
mans name be now : A-four-four-six- five.

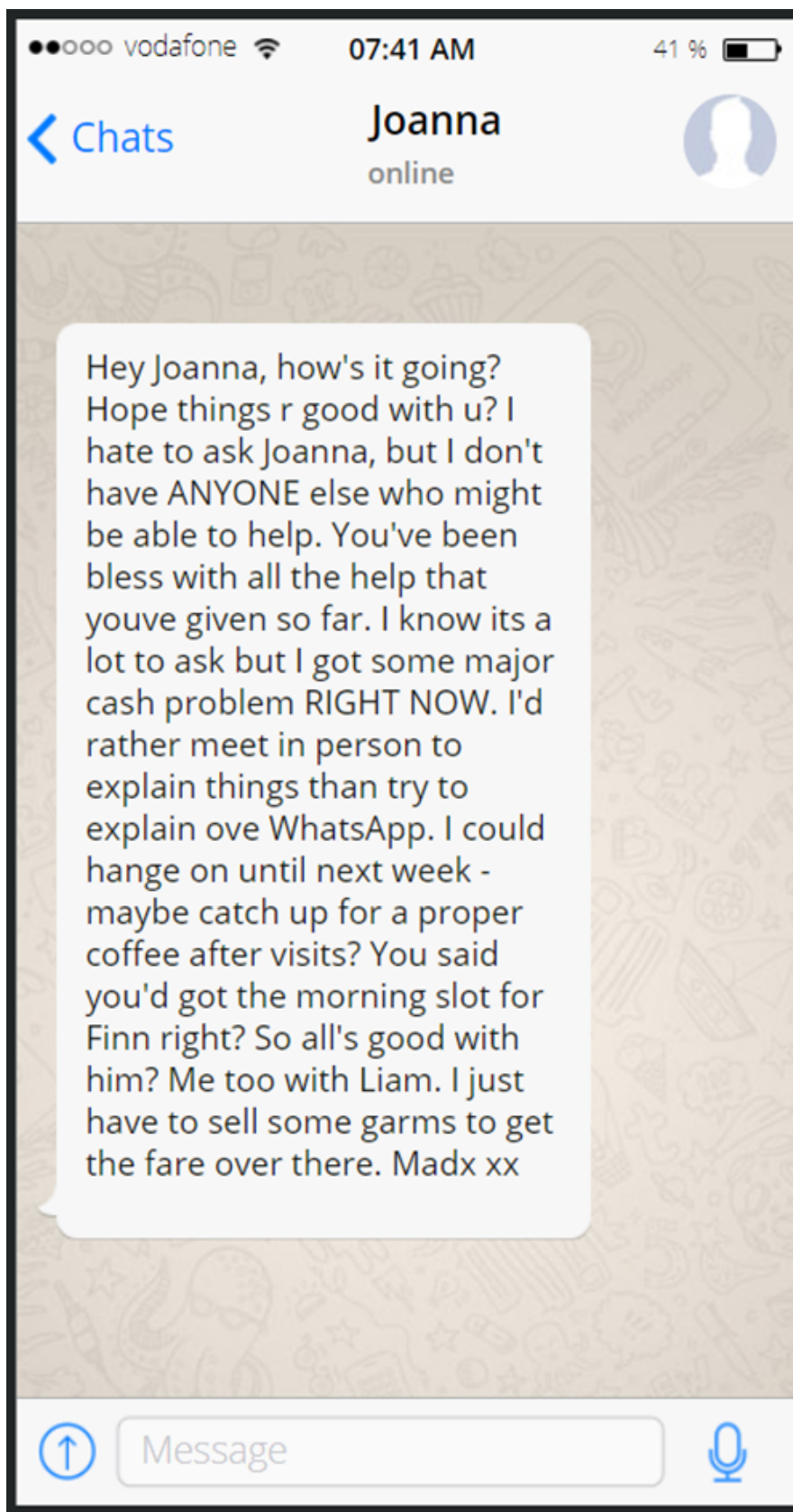
RAM

was gonna put in CG as in cool Gansta!



VF004 (F243)

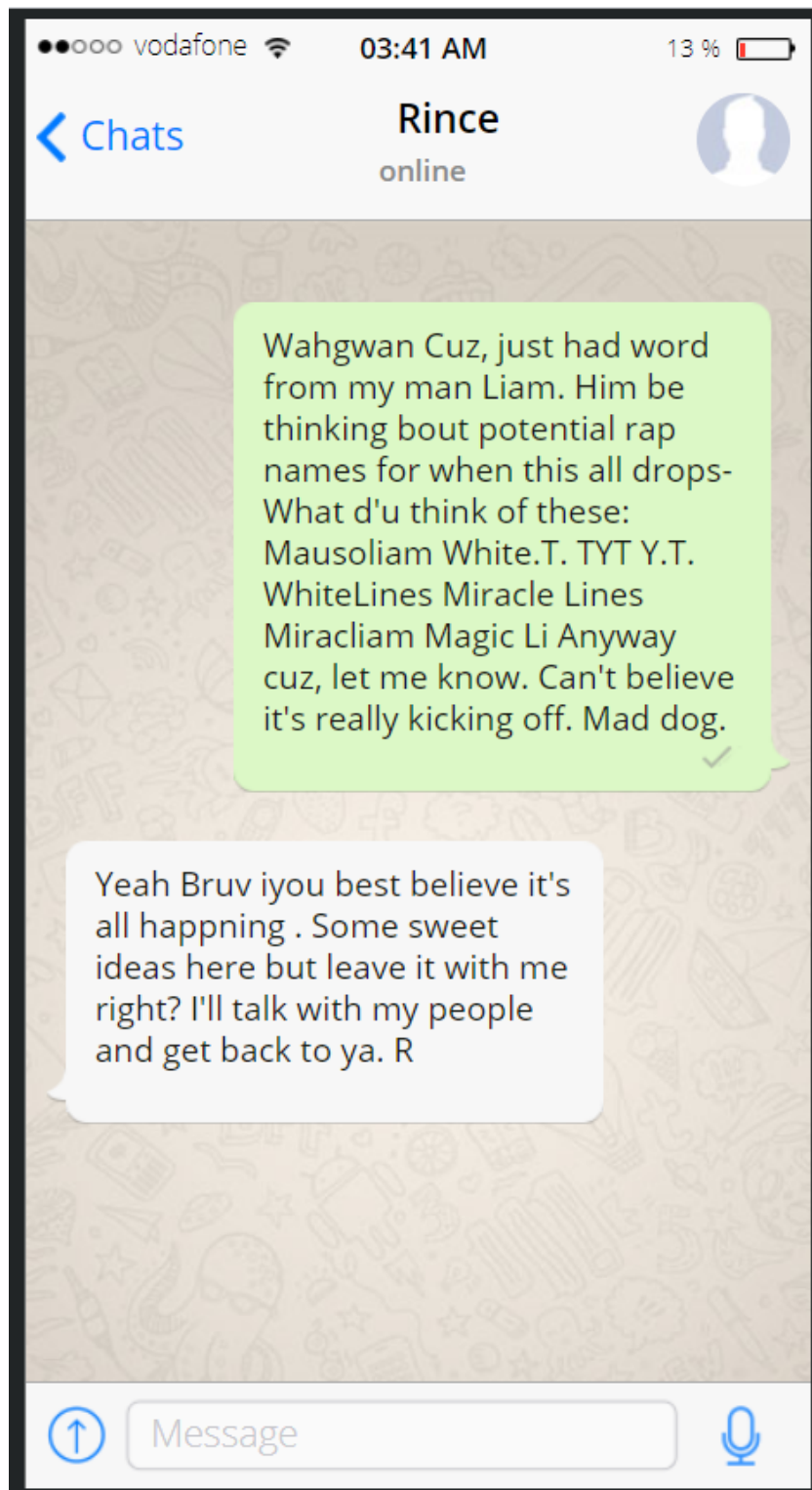






MOOD DIARY: JOANNA ELLIS

Day & Time	Mood / Emotion Rate the intensity of the emotion 0 – 10 (with 0 being least and 10 being most).	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was happening, where, who with?• What went through your mind (thoughts, images)?• What were you doing just before and / or after you felt this way?• Try to be as specific as possible and try to be as honest as possible
	Positive : 7	Kindness of strangers It feels like a reprieve. from my sentence of visiting that is akin to a journey where green lights beckon me through and traffic stops and roadblocks vanish as I progress towards Belmarsh. That brief smile in the security line as I stood waiting to leave and held off my sobbing until I was in the cocoon of my car. The strangeness of kindness in that place make me feel like I am a recipient of an paying-it-forward gesture
	Positive : 7	I aim to visit Finn in the morning and see Max after.



Wahgwan Cuz, just had word from my man Liam. Him be thinking bout potential rap names for when this all drops- What d'u think of these: Mausoliam White.T. TYT Y.T. WhiteLines Miracle Lines Miracliam Magic Li Anyway cuz, let me know. Can't believe it's really kicking off. Mad dog. ✓

Yeah Bruv iyou best believe it's all happning . Some sweet ideas here but leave it with me right? I'll talk with my people and get back to ya. R

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In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number **Name**

Wing **A47495CG** **FINN ELLIS**

My latest Efforts

I'm grinding daily, no pause in sight,
Improving myself and trying to do right.
Working on my flaws each day and night,
My path to freedom is about to take flight.

Each step forward, is a new battle fought,
Breaking those chains, I'll learn the lessons taught.
I'm walking along some new roads I've sought -
In the tin mirror, my growth now is caught.

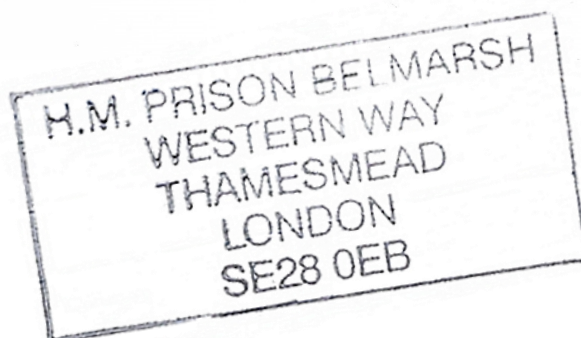
~~I'm looking at things I can redefine,~~
~~Like the shape of desire in this head of mine.~~
I'm writing it into a thing sublime,
I'm writing to escape these prison confines.

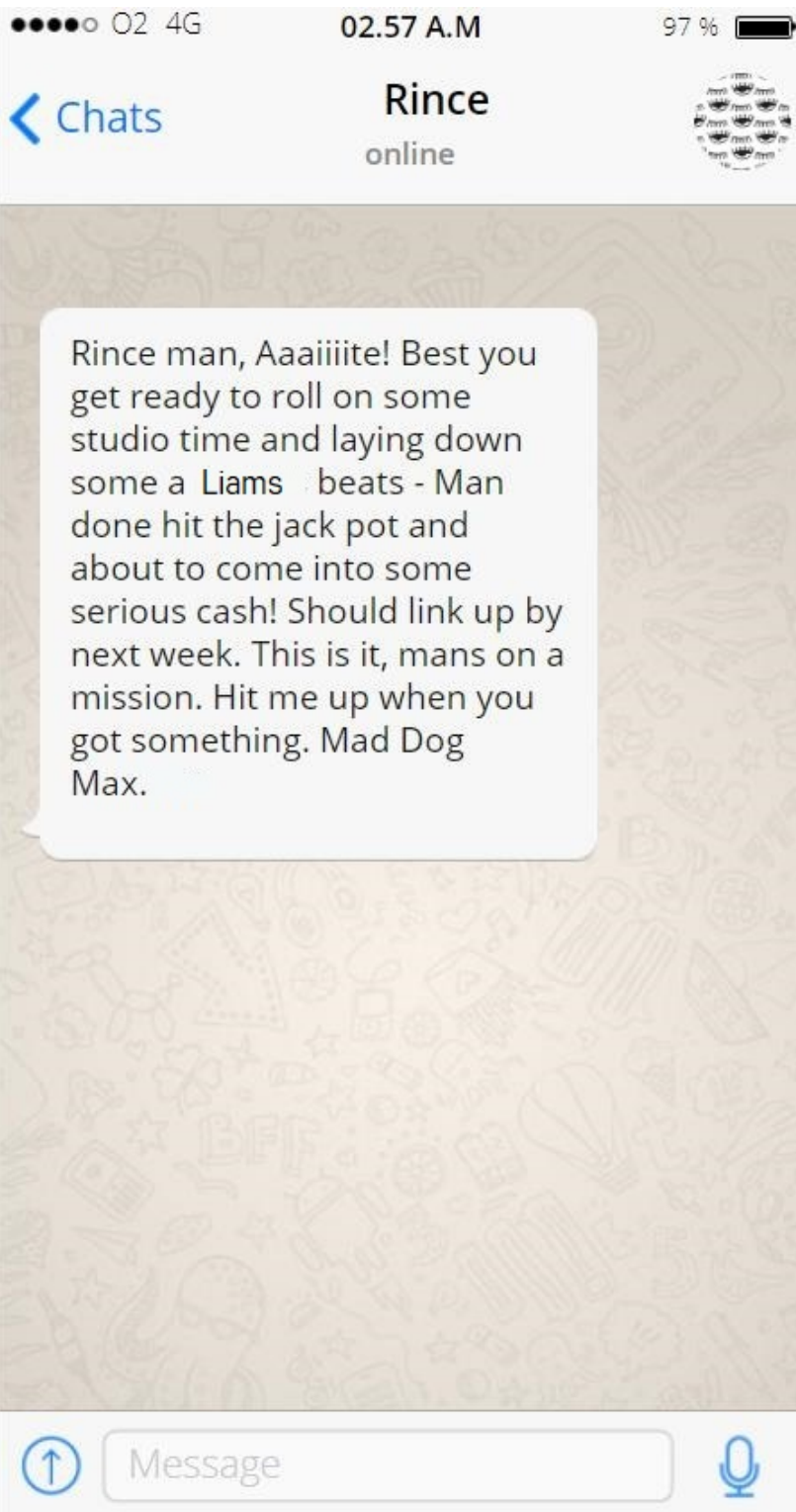
What d'you think? I know it's a bit contrived but Dave, the workshop guy, seems to rate it - I don't know though... Would you be able to top up my comms account?

Love you millions

~~Finn xxxx~~

VF004 (F243)







HMP Service

Glossary

Glossary of MLE (Multi-ethnic London English) terms

With acknowledgment to:

Tony Thorne: language and innovation [web page] URL <https://language-and-innovation.com/>:
[First accessed 2016]

Aiitte!	Positive greeting	Mandem	Male friends
Allow It	Stop it, leave it	Mans	I, me , myself
		Mission	Going somewhere
Bare	A lot of - much, many	Next Level	Really good
Bars	Lyrics/part) a song	On your ones	Be alone
Benz	£10	Po -po	Police
Big up	To praise someone	Random	Unknown person
Bless	Something good	Raw	Really harsh
Boydem	Police	Safe	Greeting or ok person
Brapp	Excited exclamation	Score	£20
Bruv/h	Male friend	Shank	To stab
Deep	Out of order, harsh	Shook	scared
Dutty	Nasty, bad	Shotting/slinging	Selling drugs
Easy	Positive greeting	Slipping	Careless doing things
Ends/z	Local area	Skank	To dance, perform
Facety	Argumentative	Skeng	knife
Fam	Family, closest friends	Slay	To win
Feds	Police	Slew	To defeat
5.0	Police	Smash it	Doing it well
		Solid	Good
G	Gang leader	Vetra	Police
Licked	High from drug	Vexed	Angry
Lickle	Little	Wah gwan	Greeting
Long	Take a big effort	What you saying?	What's going on?
Luka	Money	Wavy	Drunk, high
		Wuup-two	What are you up to
		Yard	House

Critical Commentary

Introduction

The roots of my research project are located in my own historical and personal experience as a mother to a son who was involved in criminal activities and faced recidivism. My lack of knowledge about the prison system primarily fuelled my fear about my son's initial term of incarceration. My understanding was shaped by media portrayals in movies, television, newspapers, and radio reports, which often evoked anxiety and uncertainty. However, this apprehensive stance was not unique to me; it is a common reaction as most individuals possess limited insight into the intricacies of the prison system. The pervasive fear for my son's safety was intensified by my ignorance of what his imprisonment would be like: the conditions he would face, the experience of visiting him, how we would be treated, and the broader impact of his incarceration on my own life. The multitude of questions I had far surpassed the information available to me or my ability to access it.

As I adapted to the rhythm of my son's recurrent incarcerations, I began contemplating the portrayals of prison in media. Despite the abundance of prison-related films, none seemed to reflect my personal experience. My circumstance, which I believed to be relatively common due to my repeated visits to various prisons over the years, was less well represented and apparent within the majority of narratives. Although there were abundant depictions of the experiences of both men and women within the prison context, my search for narratives that explored the impact of prison life on families, and more specifically, on mothers, yielded comparatively few results. The difference in the availability of such content was striking.

In reflecting on my experience of regularly visiting my son in prison over a matter of years, I recognised the disparity between my expectations and the actualities of visiting prison. What I had anticipated about visiting prisons was not borne out in reality. I came to realise that both inmates and their relatives were subject to a coercive process of rehabilitation. Further, I observed that as a means of coping with the pressures imposed by the prison environment, both my son and I turned to writing to express our experiences through the

medium of poetry. In this process, it became evident that writing, especially in the form of poetry, served as a means to navigate intense emotions and impose structure on turbulent thoughts. This revelation underscored how the act of writing, particularly through poetry, could be seen as a tool of liberation.

I will be arguing that the received idea of prison is, for the most part, predicated on unhelpful media constructs. Whilst the most dominant form of representation comes from television and cinema, there is also a wealth of literature on the 'prison experience'. Of the array of prison literature available, both historic and contemporary, the primary focus concerns the experience of prison from the offender's perspective. These depictions, and other portrayals that concentrate on the central offender experience, therefore neglect the relatives' perspective. Accordingly, some things are inevitably lost in the narrative of prison.

Consequently, these representations show a lack of understanding of (or perhaps interest in) the wider bearing that prison has on the family unit. For example, that the rehabilitation is extended beyond the offender to their families because of the frequency of their visits. The repeated acquiescence to intrusive and uncomfortable security checks that families endure when attending prison underpins a sense that they are an extension of the offender and as such they too are visible, known and subject to scrutiny. Less frequent visitors such as friends or legal representatives are also expected to acknowledge and obey each prison's rules and thus the overt expectation of conformity is reinforced. Within the broader context of prison narratives, the significance of these discourse processes often becomes obscured when only articulating either exclusively the offender's perspective or a singular, first-person narrative of imprisonment.

The dominant representations of prison consumed by the general public in such forms as television dramas, documentaries and cinematic films are largely gratuitous and misleading. The incessant focus on conflict and violence encourages consumers to understand prison through a 'specific Dante-esque lens of darkness and lightness and Heaven and Hell, and that these metaphors – which underpin numerous cinematic portrayals – serve to justify and authorize the prison as infernal hell-hole' (Jewkes 2015, p.201-204) This narrow lens, leaves

unseen many other complex facets of the prison system which deserve to be considered and which provide a fuller understanding and appreciation of the prison experience. The focus of my research is not on the broader and more dominant representations of prison as my direct experience of it is confined to a secondary position of being the mother of an offender. This important adjacent view is often less well explored in prevailing narratives and discourse on prisons whether that be in film, documentaries or books. Consequently, my research project adds an additional perspective to the narratives of prison experience and contributes another voice from a mother's 'I' view. Further, within this commentary, I will be discussing the creative process that I took in my writing.

My research project, a verse novel, uses both verbatim material and found forms, to explore how writing and poetry are liberating avenues of expression. The material is conveyed through four distinct characters and a narrative arc that sees each character's journey through the prison experience. The project makes extensive use of personal experience since, as Kaufman suggests, there are many ways that creativity can help people 'find meaning in life' and in particular 'writing narratives or memoirs, creating art, or finding a unique creative passion may help someone make sense of their own life' (Kaufman 2018, p.5). Engaging in the act of writing about traumatic experiences has been shown to alleviate stress and ease psychological burdens (Goncalo J.A. 2015, p. 32-39). My research adds to this understanding by offering a perspective on the prison experience which is under-represented and often marginalised by more dominant representations. In doing so, it highlights how poetry can serve as a form of liberation in this context.

Using Personal Material

While personal experience has frequently been a source for poetic creation, the use of visceral detail in poems and subjects that might be deemed to be socially 'taboo' has historically, and reductively been labelled as 'confessional'. The critic M. L. Rosenthal is credited with coming up with the term "confessional poetry" in the 1950s when he reviewed Robert Lowell's *'Life Studies'* (www. Poetry Foundation n.d., [www. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/)). It was used to encapsulate the essence of this genre,

characterized by the deep contemplation of personal experiences and introspective self-examination.

Confessional poetry came to describe writing that was unflinching in the examination of autobiographical experiences and reflections that ordinarily were kept from public view because of the uncomfortable nature of highly personal material. Poets such as Lowell, Plath and Sexton as well as Snodgrass became synonymous with the form.

However, the term, and form were divisive and garnered as much praise for the apparently personal content as it won criticism. Many rejected the use of it.

Snodgrass, who disliked the term said 'It suggested either that you were writing something religious and were confessing something of that sort, or you were writing bedroom memoirs' (www.Poetry Foundation n.d., www.poetryfoundation.org). That sentiment is echoed by writer Jackie Kay who says of the term:

I don't really like the term confessional poetry. It feels very old now, like a term critics used about women's poetry, for people like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, back in the 1960s. I mean what is it you would be confessing to: falling in love, or having an open heart? People say in confessional poetry that you use too many raw emotions, but I think there is a great deal of craft that goes into dealing with those emotions. There is as much craft in what you haven't said in the poem, as to what you have said...We might have to come up with a new term in poetry for this, as opposed to confessional. (J. Kay 2012, www.spectator.co.uk)

Much as Jackie Kay harnesses her experience of being adopted by white Scottish parents, in her collection *The Adoption Papers*, my verse novel similarly draws from my own experiences and that of my son. Faulkner suggests that using this subjective and personal material as the basis for poetry 'taps into the universal through radical subjectivity' (S. Faulkner 2012, p. 210). Further, she suggests that in using personal experience, the writer or poet 'creates something larger from the particular; the concrete specifics become universal when the audience relates to, embodies, and/or experiences the work as if it were their own words' (S. Faulkner 2012, p. 210).

Whilst Jackie Kay's individual experience of adoption remains distinct to her, the themes she addresses in the collection will resonate with those sharing the experience of adoption. Beyond that, they will inform a greater understanding for a broader audience of the issues at stake, especially in an interracial adoption. This holds true for the personal journeys represented in my verse novel, centring around visits to my son in prison. Those who share a comparable experience may resonate with the themes depicted, while those unacquainted with such encounters may gain insight into the experience from a less dominant perspective and representation that is unburdened by the influence of prevailing sensationalised prison stereotypes.

Kay's selection of highly crafted autobiographical material transforms and translates her personal journey into a poetry sequence that explores the experience from three distinct perspectives: herself, her adoptive mother, and her birth mother. In doing so, the constructed element of her work speaks of transformation rather than confession. I use a comparable technique in my work. My experience as a mother visiting her son in prison is encapsulated through the presentation of three distinct poetic personas and a minor voice: the mother, Joanna; her son, Finn; another inmate, Liam, and his brother Max. Similarly, I would suggest that while my work draws from personal experiences, the creation of characters who bear the weight of both personal and narrative elements moves its generic classification from a confessional category to a more emancipatory one.

In order to provide the reader with a clear orientation within the text, enabling them to discern between the distinct voices, Kay prefaces the sequence of poems with a visual explanation of the different voices:

The Adoption Papers

In The Adoption Papers sequence, the voices of the three speakers are distinguished typographically:

DAUGHTER: Palatino typeface (as rest of book)

ADOPTIVE MOTHER: Gill typeface

BIRTH MOTHER: Bodoni typeface (J. Kay 1991, p.8)

In line with Jackie Kay's use of different fonts to distinguish her characters in *The Adoption Papers*, I also use different typographic styles to establish distinctions between each character. However, I extend this differentiation by also incorporating varied linguistic registers and employing found forms, further enhancing the difference for readers. For instance, Joanna's introspective moments are often framed within found forms of mood diaries and creative response proformas. Additionally, while both the male characters, Finn and Liam, are attributed prison note paper to respond to letters, their use of language is markedly different; Finn adopts a more standard English usage, whereas Liam's writing features a dominant element of Multicultural London English (MLE).

Using poetry to transform personal experience 'allows us to articulate matters of concern in such a way that they become physical, tangible, and immediate' (J. Parini 2008, p.25) and transcend the personal life of the poet to become 'indestructible objects in their own right, taking on a life beyond the immediate circumstances of the poet to create them' (J. Parini 2008, p. 25) Therefore, my use of personal experience extends beyond my own individual encounters in prisons to shed light on perspectives and insights that have been marginalised or underrepresented in prison literature.

The incorporation of personal experiences into my work serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it functions as a testament to my exploration of the emotional burden I carried when my son became entangled in criminal activities. Secondly, it illuminates the concealed impact that visiting a prison has on individuals. Much like *The Adoption Papers*, the experience and themes in my work are both personal and simultaneously shared by others who have family in prison. My work is enriched by the inclusion of this lived experience, and by harnessing the microcosm of my individual reflections I am able to traverse the broader landscape of shared experience that all too often is omitted from the representations of the prison experience.

Faulkner says of poetry which utilises personal experience that it 'has the power to highlight slippery identity-negotiation processes and present more nuanced views of marginalized and stigmatized identities to demonstrate embodied experience' (S. Faulkner

2014, p.1-2). Similarly, in *'Argument and Evidence in the Case of the Personal'* Candace Spigelman suggests that personal experience can be used 'as a frame to speculate on a broader topic' and 'serve political, social, or cultural purposes' (Spigelman 2001, p.65-66). She argues that writing which draws upon the personal is 'intended to serve ends beyond pure expression of opinion or cathartic confession' (Spigelman 2001, p.65-66). Thus, the personal dimension of my work challenges the latent biases inherent not only in the prevalent representations of relatives of prisoners but also in the perceptions about them. My work uses experiential, personal and fictional elements to explore and illuminate aspects of the prison experience that are often marginalised by more dominant representations of prison.

Whilst some may be inclined to classify the incorporation of personal experiences in my work as 'confessional', particularly in the context of incarceration, I would argue that its inclusion serves as a framework for a more comprehensive exploration of how the coercive dynamics inherent in the prison system affects both the incarcerated individual and their family. The personal element within the poems should not be construed as confessional in nature. Instead, it serves as an illustration of how the act of composing poetry emancipates the writer from the constraints of emotional entanglement within imposed hierarchies.

Throughout the construction of each character, and the subsequent revelations they convey, deliberate decisions were made regarding what elements became apparent and what remained concealed. Hence, the inclusion of personal elements in my work underscores the ability that language, specific detail, and framing have to shape the experience. In alignment with Kay's proposal to establish a new designation for this form of writing, I advocate for redefining the use of personal experience as 'liberatory.'

Ethical Considerations

Although my son's repeat offending was primarily his experience, there was an element of the predicament being shared with me as his mother. To clarify: it was my son who was subject to arrest; was placed in holding cells; was interviewed by police; was placed on

remand, attended court appearances, sentencing appearances and finally imprisonment. However, I was the one person who consistently supported him throughout. I was solely responsible for navigating the legal system to gain the best outcomes for him; I attended each court appearance and supported him financially, practically and emotionally throughout his sentences in various prisons. Thus, the events that took place involved both of us.

Over the years of my son's recidivism, I collected a large volume of documents. I never discarded anything in case it was useful or pertinent to his next inevitable case. I perhaps also collected the documents to act as witness to a troubling and turbulent time that, at the time, seemed surreal. The found forms and personal material I have made use of in my work have resulted from that archive of material. The range of evidence spans indictment and charge sheets, police interview transcripts, solicitor meetings and letters, and of course communications between myself and my son in the form of letters and emails. This being so, to meet ethical guidelines and not to misappropriate documentation of my son's lived experience, I needed express consent from my son to make use of the accumulated material.

The project's aims, scope and details were explained to my son, and I went through how I intended to use the material. I was keen that my son was fully conversant with how I would use specific information to inform my writing. To preserve his privacy, it was vital that I could ensure his anonymity. To do this I had several strategies. Any identifying details such as dates, names or addresses would be altered. However, because Police stations, courts and Prisons have a generalised population passing through them, the names of the institutions would remain the same. Additionally, to further obscure any identifying details, the work when published, would be under a pseudonym. Further, the material from the events that took place, as well as specific details from indictments, charge sheets, and prison records, would be distributed through the main three characters rather than attributed to just one. With these considerations in place, my son was encouraging and enthusiastic about my project and gave his full verbal consent to the use of the material.

Dominant and Other Representations of the Prison Experience

A morbid fascination with what it might be like in prison is often fuelled by ignorance of it and an inquisitive desire to imagine just how awful it might be. In imagining the very worst of experiences, people can shudder and be thankful that it is not them enduring that particular hell. So, it is logical that 'crime narratives and representations are, and always have been, a prominent part of the content of all mass media' (Reiner 2007, p.308). In this chapter I recognise the existence of various strands of prison representation, however the focus of it is not on a comprehensive discussion of all these strands. Instead, my intention is to explore the highly prevalent strand of representation that has garnered significant popularity in contemporary media which encompasses films, dramas, and literature. This dominant strand portrays prisons as places where there is a pronounced emphasis on pervasive violence.

Within the multitude of diverse prison tropes that have proliferated, certain representations of the prison experience persist in popularity. These range from the '*Camaraderie and Friendship*' trope, wherein the bonds formed among inmates showcase the relatable 'human side' of those incarcerated, to the '*Corruption and Power*' trope, featuring corrupt guards, inmate hierarchies, and power struggles within the facility, and the '*Redemption*' trope, which illustrates characters' potential for personal growth within the prison environment. Additionally, there are other prevailing representations, such as '*Wrongful Convictions*,' '*Escape and Survival*,' and '*Social Commentary*'. However, among these dominant tropes, one stands out: '*Violence and Brutality*.' This particular portrayal of prisons places a heavy emphasis on the all-pervasive violence within them, illustrating the harsh 'realities' of life behind bars. These prison tropes provide a framework through which contemporary media explores the complexities and challenges of the penal system but often influence perceptions of incarceration for audiences. A recurring issue with many prevailing representations is in depicting the inmate's experience, the perspective of the incarcerated individual's family (or loved ones) is marginalised. It is this marginal perspective that my writing explores.

Media and literary texts habitually use the *Violence and Brutality* trope to portray violence as a 'source of pleasure either as a site of voyeuristic titillation and gory spectacle or as an aesthetic principle in all the major mediums of information and entertainment' (Giroux 1995, p.334). This phenomenon, coupled with our inheritance from American cinema, has contributed to the perceived stereotype that the experience of men in prisons is one of violence and where to be 'manly' danger is perceived as exciting, and there is a pervasive calloused and negative attitude towards women and sex (Zaitchik 1993, p.323).

This reductionist, albeit prominent, approach to prison narratives problematises the way individuals (who lack direct experience of incarceration) perceive prisons. By fixating solely on the extreme and grotesque aspects of prison depictions, this particular representation of prison, obscures crucial components of a wider prison narrative. For example, often neglected is the considerable toll that visiting a loved one in prison exacts on the family of the offender; both financially and emotionally. Further, that gap of knowledge, and the lack of understanding, fuels the stigmatisation of offenders and of course, the families of offenders. Thus, there is a need to challenge the disparity of prevailing discourses. My work seeks to bridge this gap and present another picture of the wider effects of prison through the ordinary voices of a mother, brother and two offenders.

As might be expected, most people whose knowledge and understanding of prison and its inmates are solely 'fed by media images and portrayals of the prison in television and film' (Levenson 2001, p. 14-15) not only have an intensified fear of prison institutions but also of the men within them. Jewkes, in *Media and Crime*, observes that the majority of people will never experience prison first-hand and thus:

The prison film stands in for the real thing and, in celebrating prison violence and encouraging voyeuristic participation among the audience, the prison film even has echoes of the spectacle of public executions ... with the film viewing audience replacing the crowd at the gallows. (Jewkes 2015, p. 201-204)

As previously mentioned, the popularity of the prison narrative has given rise to a wide range of themes in representation. There are narratives about hardened criminals and innocent inmates, survival strategies, revenge and retaliations, prison hierarchies, corruption, gangs, brutal regimes, escape plans, friendship and loyalty, and of course redemption. Of particular note as a film about redemption is *American History X*, which combines dominant tropes of violence, loyalty, gangs, and racism in a potent narrative delivered through the lens of a brother dynamic. Their interactions and the destructive influence they have on each other's beliefs and actions drive much of the plot. Whilst the older brother Derek Vinyard (a former neo-Nazi skinhead) serves time for two racially motivated murders, he undergoes a transformation. However, his influence on his young brother Danny has a gravitational pull that ultimately leads to a fatal consequence. The nuanced layering of this film makes it transcend the often one-dimensional cinematic tropes that categorise many prison films.

In addition to the dominant trope of violence and cinematic representations of the hard, violent man in prison, there are many other popular fictional representations of prison inmates. The popular trope of the wrongly convicted, 'innocent' or 'soft criminal' who has to develop survival strategies to endure hardships in prison (whilst also trying to use intelligence to gain their release, escape or revenge) is seen in films such as *The Shawshank Redemption*, and *Cool Hand Luke*. In a similar vein to the 'soft criminal' character trope is the charismatic, defiant and 'loveable rogue' who challenges and defies the hardships of incarceration, but ultimately pays the price for such resistance. Examples such as *The Longest Yard* and its more recent adaptation *Mean Machine* embody the same resistance to authority.

The focus of such films is the way in which the individual struggles to beat an unjust and corrupt system. Arguably, this style of prison film is less about prison per se and more 'about individual perseverance and the indomitable human spirit' (Jewkes 2015, p.201-204). In *The Shawshank Redemption*, the main protagonist, Andy Dufresne (played by Tim Robbins) is convicted of the murder of his wife and her lover, albeit wrongly, and thus sentenced to two consecutive terms of life imprisonment.

Dufresne is an unassuming but intelligent man who befriends another lifer 'Ellis Boyd Redding' (Morgan Freeman). 'Red' 'procures' for Dufresne, both a small rock hammer at the beginning of the narrative to carve stone chess pieces and a series of large posters. Over the course of the film, Dufresne endures physical and sexual assaults which nearly cost him his life. Despite prison authorities being aware of the violence being visited upon inmates, protection is only secured for Dufresne once his intelligence and financial acumen become beneficial to the Warden and Guards. Eventually, and improbably, over the nineteen years of his sentence, Dufresne hatches an escape plan and carries it out successfully by using the rock hammer to tunnel a route out of prison. Not only does he escape the physical confines of prison, but he also escapes the associated poor outcomes for released convicts in securing financial stability by redirecting illicit prison financial transactions. He is shown to not only have won against a punitive system but also to have secured a happy ever-after ending for himself and his friend.

It is worth noting that only a few of the characters, other than the main protagonists, in the film are portrayed sympathetically. The majority of the prison population, guards included, are painted as deviant in some way and thus 'other' to the social norms expected in society. Consequently, this depiction reinforces the idea that prison houses a population that is not only irredeemable but also is best segregated from society. Notable too is the absence of a tangible world beyond the prison walls, despite an apparently thriving smuggling business. In this sense, the film becomes allegorical and perhaps in this regard, it does not need to reflect the realities of prison.

These recurrent themes are somewhat mirrored in the body of literary fiction narratives designed to entertain as they often favour a sensationalised cinematic trope. Many narrative fictions that claim to be based on 'real events' focus on the danger and barely controlled chaos within prison walls and often represent the experience therein as distorted, stereotypical versions of reality. Though undoubtedly there are extreme cases of mistreatment in prison, this popular, but distorted view obscures a richer and more complex picture of prison.

Among the accounts provided by former offenders in autobiographies and memoirs, the available range spans from sensational and jarring narratives to reflective and philosophical discourses. Increasingly, there are also autobiographies penned by those who served as staff in UK prisons: *The Life Inside: A Memoir of Prison, Family and Learning to Be Free* by Andrew West (2022); *THE GOVERNOR: The unbelievable true story of my life inside Britain's most notorious prisons* by Vanessas Frake (2021), *The Loose Screw: The Shocking Truth About Our Prison System* by Jim Dawkins (2008), *Screwed: The Truth About Life as a Prison Officer* by Ronnie Thompson (2008).

Narratives which purport to describe the horror of imprisonment in foreign prisons such as *Banged Up Abroad: Hellhole: Our Fight to Survive South America's Deadliest Jail* (Miles 2012) provide lurid accounts of the experience of the men serving time. The narratives, often presented from a first-person perspective, tend to overlook the impact of imprisonment on families, particularly mothers. This selective form of representation draws upon an inheritance from late twentieth-century American cinema (Wilson 2004, p22-27) and is often fuelled by an apparent increase in appetite for gritty sensationalism.

A prime example of this is the recent *The Inmate* by Freida McFadden which is described as a 'gripping, twisty thriller' by the online selling platform, Amazon. The novel is set in a men's maximum-security prison and explores how the 'penitentiary's most notorious and dangerous inmates' (www.Amazon.com n.d) some of whom have committed 'grisly murders' threaten a civilian nurse working there. Though the novel may well depict certain grim realities of prison, its lurid sensationalism speaks more to the genre of psychological thrillers than it does to the reality of the prison experience. Similarly, *One more Chance* by Lucy Ayrton is set in a women's prison and purports to be 'a gripping page turner' about one woman's struggle to leave prison to be reunited with her daughter against the backdrop of conniving inmates who want her to stay put. Though, admittedly, it showcases a broader and more sympathetic picture of prison, it is still populated with characters that feed the public imagination with grotesquely drawn stereotypes of offenders confirming the illusion that inmates are distinctly different from 'ordinary' people and mainly deserve punishment rather than compassion and rehabilitation.

Curiously, within the realm of prison literature, it is interesting to note that 'fantasies' about prison extend into the territory of 'adult' themed romantic fiction, as exemplified by the *Saint View Prison* series comprising titles like *Locked up Liars: A Dark Reverse Harem Romance*, *Solitary Sinners* and *Fatal Felons*. These works seem to hover on the edges of a sadomasochistic inclination, where there is a peculiar fascination with the allure of being 'overwhelmed' by dangerous prison inmates.

Piper Kerman's immensely popular book *Orange is the New Black* (which was dramatized for television) is populated with characters who are drawn in a more sympathetic way. The curiosity of her friends and family regarding her experience post her release in 2005 served as a catalyst for writing her memoir. She became aware that people's perceptions of prison did not reflect her experience of it:

People either fantasized prison as an unbelievably uncontrollably violent and depraved place, or as an incredibly rehabilitative place filled with programs that were getting people back on their feet.

(Raptopoulos 2014, www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/)

The consequence of harbouring uninformed assumptions about prisons is the dehumanisation of those who are incarcerated, reducing them to mere faceless entities. As Kerman astutely points out in an article for the Guardian, this tendency to think of prisoners as 'those people' rather than 'us people' (Raptopoulos 2014, www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/) perpetuates a harmful disconnection and an unjust divide between individuals on the inside and those on the outside.

The primary focus of my work centres on portraying the experiences within UK prisons, rather than delving into the broader and generalized depictions of serving sentences in prisons worldwide. Amongst those that attempt to give a more balanced view of the prison experience, especially in the UK are: *In It* by Jonathan Robinson (2014), *Porridge and Passion* by Jonathan Aitken (2005), *Prison Diaries* (1-3) by Jeffrey Archer (2002-2004), *A Life Inside*, James Erwin. (2003), and *The Pain of Confinement: Prison Diaries* by Jimmy Boyle (1985).

A further notable exception which offers a contrast to the popular representations and contests the established and sensational trope is the play script *Inside* by Philip Osment. The play is based on research conducted in Rochester Prison with a young fathers' group who sign up for a theatre workshop programme to avoid the boredom of being in their cells. The play offers an insight into their childhoods and a comorbidity of poverty and either absent or abusive fathers.

The thirst for 'gritty realism' more in line with the prison trope of violence and tension ensured a largely unfavourable review at the time, by the online *British Theatre Guide*. Of the production, the reviewer stated that 'Life in prison is undoubtedly dull. Days pass by slowly and monotonously. Unfortunately, the same can be said for much of Philip Osment's play *Inside*' (Finlayson 2010, www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews). That such a play, based on research with real offenders in a real prison, is criticised because it is 'dull' is interesting as it speaks of the pervasiveness of the dominant trope of violent 'gritty realism'.

Another production that contests the dominant cinematic prison trope is the film drama *Everyday* which was broadcast on television. It is about a working-class father separated, because of imprisonment, from his wife and children and how his incarceration affects them. Michael Winterbottom has said about his production (which was filmed over a five-year period to reflect the offender's sentence) that it is 'about duration' and separation rather than 'crime and punishment' (Gilbert 2012, www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/). However, an online Guardian review of the film reveals a disappointment with a nuanced portrayal stating 'It's a sad, undramatic, well observed slice of minimalist realism, an interesting experiment in helping us to share the experience of time slowly passing. But little more.' (French 2013, www.theguardian.com/film). This dismissive review exemplifies the prevailing appetite for sensationalised portrayals of prison life. Such representations often overlook the broader implications and consequences of imprisonment and fail to acknowledge the profound repercussions that incarceration inflicts upon the families of inmates.

Accordingly, the characters in my verse novel are positioned within an alternative to the dominant portrayals of a UK prison, the details of which are drawn from my experience of attending several prisons across southern England. Consequently, my work tries to write unconventional representations to the dominant ones in context. Moreover, it seeks to present a narrative that shows how prison affects the dynamics of relationships, between both pairs of characters: the mother and her incarcerated son and the sibling of an incarcerated brother.

The work explores not only how the coercive pressures of a prison affect each offender but also the way it works on the relatives of the offenders. In particular, it focuses on the mother and son bond and the alliance between brothers; interactions which are rarely given prominence in popular and dominant prison representations and narratives. The characters are defined as unremarkable and ordinary people who try to navigate their way through the experience of prison rather than escaping the sentence through a fairy tale reformation or transformation. This is conveyed through the verse that they write, and their communication via emails, letters and WhatsApp messages. In this context, the work sheds light on how each character uses writing as a means to break free from the coercive pressures of prison ultimately contributing to their sense of liberation.

Poetic Responses

Poetry, which uses the experience of prison as a base, tends to originate directly from those people who have been incarcerated, though there are exceptions which I discuss later. Overwhelmingly, prison poetry is formed of published in anthologies which showcase work written by prison inmates (through the filter of a creative writing tutor in each prison), and collections from political prisoners, prisoners abroad, and self-selecting inmates. More often than not, these texts shine a light on the author's first-hand experience of serving or having served a prison sentence. However, these representations of prison only tell part of the narrative around prisons. The criticism of this type of poetry, which primarily explores the individual's experience and response to prison life, is that it often overlooks (and therefore renders invisible) the broader impact of the penal system on families, and in

particular the impact upon mothers. While not exclusive to this, poetry addressing the emotional consequences of incarceration often focuses on the effects it has on incarcerated individuals, their relationships with their spouses and children, and the profound disruptions it causes in their lives.

Academics such as Rachel Condry examine the long-lasting ripple ‘effect(s) of victimization’ in both ‘kin and friendship ties’ long after the event (Condry 2010, p32). She explores how a crime committed by a relative significantly affects ‘every corner’ of women’s lives and can impact ‘their very identity and existence’ (Condry 2010, p32). This can be seen in some texts written from the perspective of having a son in prison. It is therefore apparent that the need to record, and make sense of experience, drives these texts, albeit from a limited perspective and even through a sensationalised lens.

Among the non-fiction memoir texts, a substantive proportion emanate from America. Examples such as: ‘*Serving Time Too: A Memoir of my Son’s Prison Years*’ (Williams 2019); ‘*Mother of a Prisoner*’ (Murrell-Godfrey 2018.); *Doing Time with My Son: A Mother and Son’s Enduring Love Through Incarceration*’ (Bettye 2017) and ‘*Shattered: Stories from Mothers of incarcerated Sons*’ (Rose 2019)) tend to have the same insistent ‘I’ voice, and an intimate and informal style, employed in the trope of the individual’s journey of survival:

When my son got locked up ...my world turned upside down....I was in such shock it was all just a blur...the worry, the guilt, the blame game, the whole thought of your child being locked up is horrific to the point you can’t even think about it so learn to become numb to it... My heart felt as if it were in a million pieces. I had to learn as a mother, wife, daughter, grandmother, friend, and mentor to others how to put the pieces back together. I had always been the strong one, the one that had helped others get through tragedy, but not this time, this time I felt so weak, somedays I couldn’t even get out of bed... (Rose 2019, p1-4)

Bunny McFadden’s ‘*Writing Poetry in Prison as an Act of Resistance*’ in the online magazine, *JSTOR Daily*, acknowledges how writing in prison, can offer ‘emotional sanctuary’ and the

‘chance to reckon with both “barriers and freedom.”’ (McFadden 2022, <https://daily.jstor.org/>). Writing in the Poetry Foundation’s online *Poetry Magazine*, Anthony Anaxagorou suggests that though the resulting work of offenders might be unpolished, it nevertheless brings their experience into the light:

The poems they make are not necessarily concerned with form, nuance, or inventiveness. More than anything, they are about making a subject wholly visible. When each day in your life is being diminished, the last thing you want is to obscure meaning; after all, your very existence is predicated on erasure (Anaxagorou 2019, www.poetryfoundation.org).

The examples originating from the United Kingdom are few and far between, however, Natalie Scott’s *Rare Birds: Voices of Holloway Prison* is one such text. In it, she ‘re-imagines’ the experience of the prison through research and ‘re-voicing’ of famous inmates such as Sylvia Pankhurst, Ruth Ellis and Edith Thompson. The imaginative construction of the historic voices seeks to shed light on the experiences of each persona rather than explore the wider impact that incarceration has on the family.

In contrast, *Seen and Heard* by Baldwin and Raikes (2019) is an anthology of poetic responses submitted by incarcerated mothers and fathers, and children of incarcerated parents that express the experiences and emotions arising from the enforced separation of prison. Of the anthology Baldwin states that she and co-editor Ben Raikes were ‘already very aware of the power of prose and poetry’ (L. Baldwin 2019, pxvi) and as such, they wanted to curate a book that:

Would provide not only an outlet for mothers’, fathers’ and children’s voices but also a ‘body of evidence’, straight from the horse’s mouth if you will, that reveals the often hidden impact of parental imprisonment. (L. Baldwin 2019, pxvi)

It would be remiss to not mention the writings and poetry of Bobby Sands when he was incarcerated in HMP Maze, also known as H-blocks, during the ‘Troubles’. Clearly, despite

the terrible conditions that he faced, in contrast to much prison writing, his work looks outwards to explore themes of injustice and freedom rather than focus on his own plight. In this extract from the poem *Dear Mum* (written in 1983) on *The Bobby Sands Trust* website, Sands acknowledges the impact that his imprisonment has on his mother:

What can I write to you this day
For a line or two would never pay
For care and time you gave to me
Through long hard years unceasingly.
How you found strength I do not know
How you managed I'll never know,
Struggling and striving without a break
Always there and never late. (Sands 2019, www.bobbysandstrust.com/writings)

The emphasis throughout the poem is on the actions of his mother rather than his experience in prison and he offers his 'thanks for eternity' for the 'life and love you gave me'. The poem, in the truest sense, is a love poem. Each verse is dedicated to the praise of his mother's kindness, support and fortitude. Consequently, while the poem refrains from a direct examination of the trauma his incarceration inflicts on his mother, it implicitly mirrors its impact.

So, while literature does exist about the experience of individuals connected to prison inmates, its scope is limited especially when it comes to exploring the impact of prison beyond the offender and from the family perspective in the UK. Absent however is a comprehensive collection of poetry, focused on the British experience, that reflects the broader impact of prison on the relative using both verbatim and found form.

Within my work, the character Joanna employs writing as a means of grappling with the profound and challenging emotions and circumstances arising from her son's incarceration. For her, the subject of having a son imprisoned is rooted in shame and feelings of guilt. It is too taboo and fraught with difficulties, to openly broach with others. This reluctance stems

from the transference of secondary shame associated with a family member's incarceration to a first-hand sense of shame borne by the relative. Hence, the comfort she discovers in writing, which is initially recommended by her counsellor, quickly evolves into a channel through which she navigates these intricacies. Writing provides a means to document her experiences and also serves as a framework that brings order to her thoughts, facilitating her acceptance of events that extend beyond her sphere of influence. Like Baldwin, I wanted to 'remind readers that behind every statistic is a human being, a story, a life' (L. Baldwin 2019, p.xvi).

Consequently, my work serves a dual purpose: to shed light on and deeply investigate the coercive processes within UK prisons that reshape the behaviours of family members, but with a pronounced focus on the mother's standpoint. In this context, my work emerges as a pioneering and innovative endeavour and the poems are offered as liberatory. This research project attempts to bridge this substantial gap in the existing literature by producing a body of work that explores the radiating impact that prison has on an offender's mother, an element often obscured in prison literature. Moreover, the research attempts to illustrate that poetry can help individuals to resist the pressure of the prison regime, not only within the confines of these institutions but also beyond the walls.

Masculinity

Although my work does not explicitly revolve around masculinity or its expressions, I remain cognizant that the depiction of the male characters in my verse novel subtly hints at particular masculinity patterns. However, it is important to clarify that my work does not intend to delve into an examination of masculinity within the prison context. Moreover, the portrayals of masculinities within my work stem from both the verbatim material I have incorporated and the original connecting poems that I have crafted, rendering them subject to the reader's individual interpretation. While I acknowledge the potential for readers to explore the masculinities of the male characters in my work, this is not the central focal point of my endeavour. Accordingly, the scope of my work is specifically aimed at illuminating the coercive dynamics inherent in the prison system, extending beyond its

impact solely on the offender to encompass their family, with a particular emphasis on the mother voice.

The study of prison often centralises Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity to investigate the evolving nature of prison masculinities. These masculinities are typically regarded as constructed gender behaviours that originate from societal norms and patriarchy that presume and perpetuate men's power over women and other men in a hierarchical dynamic amongst men (Connell 2005, p. 829–859). The prevailing depiction of men within prison settings often revolves around a somewhat oversimplified portrayal of 'aggression, emotional coldness and machismo' (Gueta 2019, p.105). Much of the prison literature highlights men as embodying an amplified version of masculinity that not only includes 'toughness, aggression and violence' but also 'homophobia and hatred of anything that appears weak, effeminate or associate with femininity' (Ricciardelli 2015, p.170-191). Aton Symkovych argues that:

One of many prison paradoxes is that they are disempowering and, if we are talking about men's prisons, emasculating' whilst paradoxically being seen as "ultramasculine", whereby many hegemonic masculine values and attitudes, behavioural clichés, corporeal ideals, and personal identities are less nuanced and generally pushed to the extreme. (Symkovych 2023, p.69)

These 'extreme' characteristics are collectively labelled as "hypermasculine." This limited definition finds its prominence in cinematic works, documentaries, theatrical pieces, and literary accounts focused on prison life. However, while undoubtedly instances of this particular form of masculinity can be found in prisons, it by no means constitutes the sole presentation of masculinity within these contexts. My work strives to present an alternative perspective to the prevailing depiction of masculinities in prison, one that aligns masculinity with its broader contemporary manifestations.

Current research into masculinities reveals that changes in employment and the economy are drivers of diversity in the construction of masculinities in society and thus also within

prison settings. These emergent contemporary masculinities lean towards a more 'inclusive' or 'softened' and broader construction of masculinity in response to 'cultural and economic transformations by becoming more emotionally expressive and less misogynistic and homophobic' (Crew 2018, p.17-41). The impact of societal changes on the performance of masculinities can be observed too in prison settings. Instead of the narrow and insistent focus on men in prison being violent and displaying traits of hypermasculinity, 'a new wave of research reveals less extreme, and previously obscured, complex and nuanced masculinities at play within prison populations' (Crew 2018, p.17-41).

Matthew Maycock explored the performative traits of some masculinities in prison by conducting interviews with male inmates situated on an enhanced wing within HMP The Mount. The study focused on participants' experiences and viewpoints of work, encompassing both prison and external contexts. Interviewees responded to questions about 'life before prison; attitudes towards experiences of work while in prison; aspirations for employment on release; and opinions about work, masculinities and relationships with women'. From the gathered data, it became evident that two primary modes of masculinity stood out: '*entrepreneurs* and *tradesmen*' (Crew 2018, p.17-41). The prevalent distinguishing traits of the cohort that self-identified as tradesmen were their upbringing in working or lower-middle-class families, adhering to traditional gender roles within households, being slightly older on average, being predominantly white, and having prior careers in manual or physical labour.

In contrast, the group identified as entrepreneurs exhibited a younger age profile and greater ethnic diversity in comparison to the tradesmen. They were also more likely to have been raised in single-parent households. The entrepreneurs primarily engaged in service sector occupations like retail, catering, or other employment requiring soft skills. Nonetheless, a notable aspect was their tendency to resort to drug sales from a young age to supplement their income.

While the three male characters in my work exhibit distinct modes of masculinity, parallels emerge between their attitudes and behaviours and those outlined in the Maycock's study

concerning entrepreneurs. Notably, the absence of any mention of fathers from the male characters (including from Finn's mother, Joanna's, perspective) implies that their mothers are primarily responsible for their upbringing. Additionally, all three characters exhibit proficient interpersonal skills, more pertinent to service industries rather than manual labour. Lastly, the primary criminal offence that leads to custodial sentences for the main characters involves illegal drug supply as a means of income.

The Disjunction between Reality and Representation

The work partly arises from direct personal experience: when I was first informed that my son was going to serve a prison sentence, I was terrified and horrified in equal proportion. Like the vast majority of people, I had no direct experience of prison and my knowledge and understanding of prison, its inmates, and the processes within them was solely 'fed by media images and portrayals of the prison in television and film' (Levenson 2001, p.14-15). For example, I enjoyed, like many, the vicarious drama and visceral threat in films such as Rupert Wyatt's *'The Escapist'* (2008), Nicolas Winding Redfern's *'Bronson'* (2008), and David MacKenzie's *'Starred Up'* (2013). These media representations of British prisons that I had seen were sensationalized for dramatic purposes and heightened the potential violence within them. For the economy and efficiency of the narrative, they skim over the lengthy security processes that a prison visit entails and instead focus on the interactions of the characters during the visits.

Consequently, based on what I had seen on television, I assumed the worst when it came to prison experiences. I feared that my son would be under constant threat of physical, sexual and emotional violence. However, I also expected that when I went to see him, like the dramas and films I had watched, it would be a matter of presenting my identity and wandering through a hall for my visit. I was misinformed on both counts. Far from the chaos and constant threat of danger, the experience of prison for my son overwhelmingly was one formed of constant observation and micro-managed timetables and routines such as when to get up, access the bathroom, exercise, eat and sleep.

As a visitor my expectations were also challenged, and I was surprised that I too became subject to routines that I had naively thought only offenders were subject to. The experience raised questions to which I struggled to find answers. I accepted that, given the place I was visiting was a prison, there would be more stringent security protocols in place than other institutions such as hospitals and care homes. However, the intrusiveness of some of the security checks seemed excessive. I was also surprised by the brusque, and unhelpful treatment to which I, and other visitors, were routinely subjected. There was a palpable level of distrust on display in the visitor centre from the staff running it and surprisingly from other relatives that were visiting, perhaps for the first time. This led me to question the assumptions that ordinary people habitually make about relatives of offenders, even though their son, brother or father had been convicted and sentenced. The answers were not in any texts or representations that I had seen, which, in itself, was a problem worth exploring in my own writing.

In having my biometric and personal details taken (and held on record), I was made to feel uniquely observed by and 'visible' to the prison; I was 'processed' into a system that required me to behave in a specific way whilst there, just as my son was. Further, I was controlled through the imposition of a timetable and predetermined behaviours from which there could not be any deviation. I had prepared myself for the worst of experiences that I had seen in films but instead, I found that visiting a prison to see my son was more predictable and monotonous than I could have imagined. What I could not have foreseen before my son's incarceration was the extent to which prison institutions' treatment of visiting family members resulted in a uniform classification of criminality of relatives by association.

The Criminal Justice System

Normative social interactions for relatives of offenders, when their loved one enters the criminal justice system, are often redefined and less straightforward than that with which they are familiar. In normal social circumstances interactions that are highly emotionally charged are recognised and responded to accordingly. For example, a person who is clearly

distressed and seeking information either on the phone or in person might be met with some outward display of sympathy and an apparent desire to help and thus lessen the person's distress. However, from personal experience as the relative of an offender, I have observed that this basic accord is often overlooked.

Accessing information about a recently arrested family member is often fraught with difficulties and leaves the relative feeling a sense of disempowerment. Not only is the relative unable to begin to understand the implications of the arrest but they are unable to help with providing support. For example, custody suites can, and will, only confirm whether they have a named person in their cell if the person they hold has given specific permission for them to do so. Even then, to comply with the Data Protection Act Policy (College of Policing. n.d., www.college.police.uk) that all custody suites are subject to, comprehensive information is necessarily sparse until interviews, charges and court appearances have occurred, and the information is reported in the public domain. Further, although information might be gleaned from the prisoner directly by a brief call permitted from the holding cell, they might not necessarily be fully cognisant of the full range of charges they could be facing post-arrest. The reliance, therefore, falls on duty solicitors whose proficiency and care are variable. Furthermore, they can only inform relatives of what has happened if the offender has instructed them to do so or is not considered an adult in law.

The criminal justice process is often slow and cumbersome. Correspondences from solicitor firms are jargonistic and establish the worst-case scenarios for custodial tariffs which are often alarming to relatives of first-time offenders. For example, I was informed of the separate sentencing tariffs my son faced for each offence of possessing an illegal drug which ran into a significant and daunting number of years. Having no one with whom I could consult on the matter (other than a consistently unavailable solicitor dealing with the matter), I felt an overwhelming sense of fear and doom. Only after weeks of communication, was I informed that these separate tariffs, if applied, would be run concurrently rather than consecutively and thus the overall sentence my son potentially faced was far less than it had at first been presented.

Once an offender has been moved from a custody suite to a prison, gaining information becomes even more challenging especially if the prison is large. Administration systems are slow and unwieldy and until an offender is processed and given their p-NOMIS (Prison-National Offender Management Information System) identity number, then it can be difficult to gain further information on how they are, what their circumstances are and whether they are coping. The information initially seems to favour the prison institution, while giving the impression of being kept hidden from family members. For example, the receiving prison administration already has all the details of the prisoner available to them and understands what initial routines are in place. The initial reception and induction of a prisoner are well established and there are processes in place to ensure that there is a smooth transition either from a remand wing into the general population or from a court-holding cell into the prison. Orientating the prisoner is a priority over providing information to a worried relative or partner. Though this system is essential, it negates acknowledging how disorientating and distressing it is for the family of the offender.

Though I believe it is doubtful that this is an intentional process designed to demoralise the relative, it does have this effect. The sense of disempowerment can be overwhelming for both offenders and their relatives alike. Having gone through this experience several times, I know how bewildering it can be. Of course, there is excellent information now available online from non-profit making organisations such as *Families Outside* or *InsideTime* that have dedicated pages which detail what to expect. Despite the good information that these, and other organisations can offer, they admit that 'The induction process will vary from prison to prison and at the moment does not extend to prisoners on remand' (Families Outside 2023, www.Familiesoutside.org.uk). Additionally, they state that 'There are other differences between remand and convicted prisoners (relating to visits, canteen facilities etc.), and it is important to know what these might be' (Families Outside 2023, www.Familiesoutside.org.uk). Amidst the emotional turmoil that ensues when a family member receives a custodial sentence, it becomes challenging to maintain a rational and coherent approach to researching information about an HMP's procedures. Consequently, relatives often find themselves relying on the specific information provided by the receiving prison.

The modification of the individual's sense of personal power within prisons begins with the removal of all familiar social contexts, the loss of autonomy, agency, and privacy. As a visitor, I keenly felt a sense of disorientation in having my everyday 'rights' removed when I entered the prison to visit my son, even as I understood that this would be nothing compared to those freshly incarcerated. My analysis, based on observation, is that the institution begins the process of not only reshaping the offender's inner landscape which makes them more malleable and likely to conform to the prison's required behaviour, but also that of their relatives or friends.

Monitoring through CCTV cameras and the ubiquitous presence of prison guards ensure that the right to privacy, and of being unobserved, is almost entirely eliminated in prison. Hadaway suggests that where individuals' privacy is replaced with 'the all-seeing eye of authority' or constant surveillance, 'an all-pervasive culture of control' is established (Hadaway 2012, p.3). The awareness of being watched, or at least the chance of being watched, coerces the offender to self-regulate their behaviour to avoid potential negative consequences associated with breaking prison regulations. Accordingly, this continuous observation assists in the process of rewriting the offender's awareness of their current predicament, themselves and their actions. However, being under observation can also result in the offender finding ways to resist the imposed order and find a means to undermine or confront the mechanisms of surveillance and authority. One of the more positive routes that this resistance can take is in the writing of poetry.

This deliberate reshaping of the offender's psychological state begins with the confiscation of all personal items including primary expressions of individuality through personal choice of clothes. In their place, a prison uniform is issued. The controlling of personal expression through clothing is also extended to visitors. Before visiting a prison, friends and relatives need to check the prison's guidance on permitted clothing. For example, the advice is against wearing items such as hooded clothing, scarves, dresses or skirts above the knee or ripped jeans, as they 'breach security concerns' (Doing Time n.d., <https://doingtime.co.uk/>). If a visitor has not checked in advance and does wear them, the consequence is they may not be permitted to attend the visit and be turned away at the initial processing stage.

If having ensured that clothes, jewellery, and shoes all conform to the regulations, visitors are then told when going through the security checks that they are not permitted to take off any items such as a jacket, jumper, or cardigan whilst they are in the visiting hall. They must choose whether they are likely to feel warm or cold in advance of attending the visiting hall. Though this seems a minor inconvenience, it does reinforce the understanding that they are under the same strict governance as the person they are visiting.

For the offender, the allocation of a p-NOMIS identification number, which is used in conjunction with the offender's name in any official or personal correspondence, has a practical application and a psychological effect. Firstly, it is effective in the practical administration process of identifying offenders. However, it also requires the offender to acknowledge their altered status every time they send or receive communication with friends or relatives. This is because they must preface any internal or external communication with their p-NOMIS code. With the use of the p-NOMIS number, the offender is required to reframe their sense of self each time they have contact via email or letter. They become first and foremost an offender rather than an individual.

Further, the processing of an individual within the criminal justice system adjusts the sense of personal agency for offenders by storing personal information about both them and their visitors. The understanding that a large organisation holds sensitive information such as biometric details, national insurance numbers, date of birth, job, place of work, address and personal details renders them more compliant with the desired and prescribed behaviour being sought by the institution because it establishes a knowledge (and therefore power) imbalance between the individual and the institution. Offenders and their relatives know little about what will become of the data, how long it will be held, and who might also be privy to it. Further, although the institution states that details and information they hold on each offender (and those associated with them), will be removed or deleted once the offender's sentence has been served, there is no confirmation that this has happened.

Personal infringements regularly occur when attending a new prison. It is not unusual to have to provide biometric details, in addition to expected forms of identity, such as a

passport, a driver's license, and a utility bill. Having irises and fingerprints scanned, a photograph taken, and a UV reactive security stamp on the back of the hand to establish the identity of friends and relatives of offenders is invasive but unavoidable if they want to visit the offender. In surrendering this data to the prison, the relative or friend is rendered obedient to a system even though their only contact with it is through their association with the offender. According to the *College of Policing's* policy on data protection, data should 'not be retained for longer than it is needed' however this is dependent 'on the purposes for holding that information' (College of Policing 2014, <https://www.college.police.uk>). It is this undefined purpose which is a cause of disconcertion especially if the offender is recidivistic.

Although visitors are informed that personal details will be removed from the system once the offender has discharged their sentence, there is no information provided on how they might go about checking. How would a government organisation prove that something did not exist on their files when the files themselves were subject to confidentiality policy? To confirm that personal data had been removed post-sentencing would require a certain doggedness as it would place the enquirer in an oppositional and adversarial position to the prison. From my own experience, most, if not all simply do not possess the tenacity to pursue this. Consequently, the visitor can be left with a lingering sense that they are still being observed and monitored beyond the prison walls and thus are more likely to attract negative attention from the authorities.

The sense that relatives are being coerced into conforming to an institution's dictates begins from the moment they apply to visit their relative in prison. Visitors are advised to arrive at least one and a half hours before their visitation time slot as the processing of their details, and the repeated checking of them takes time. Further, once this initial processing has taken place, visitors have a lengthy wait before they can begin their visit as no one is allowed through to the visiting hall until all visitors have had their details processed. Once this has been completed, visitors are divided into manageable small groups of not more than ten to begin the journey through to the visiting hall.

To do this, they pass through several security bubbles where at each one, they are required to show their visitor identity lanyards, and ultraviolet stamps on hand and confirm the P-Nomis number of the prisoner they are visiting. Depending on the prison, passive drug dog searches may also be used to ensure that despite the warning posters, amnesty bins, and checks, visitors have not managed to smuggle in illegal substances. It is a long and slow process that seems unduly precautionous, as searches have already been made, but it reinforces the notion that the visitor is subject to the prison's particular set of rules, as much as the offender, and encourages cooperative behaviour from them if they want to see the offender.

Security as Coercion

In much the same way that security checks at all airports are predictable to travellers because of their uniformity across all airports, no matter the size or location, it would seem reasonable, for the efficiency of offender management, that the same would be true for processing and security procedures across prisons in England. However, this is not the case. Though there is conformity in the rigour of security when visiting an offender in prison, the variation in processes across each prison is bewildering and can seem designed to be arbitrary. For example, two category B prisons, HMP Lewes and HMP High Down managed security checks of visitors in significantly different ways. HMP Lewes required that visitors only undergo a light body pat down before proceeding to the visitors' hall whereas HMP High Down not only carried out a pat down, but it was accompanied by an electronic body swipe down and the use of passive drug dogs. Though High Down had a larger population, it did not translate that a smaller prison should therefore require fewer security checks. This variation was emulated across all the prisons that I visited.

However, obedience to the system is primary and the need to establish visitor compliance through conformity to a dress code, amount of canteen money permitted, identity requirements and a host of other checks is paramount to establishing a hierarchy of power. In this way, it is not only the prisoners but also their family and friends who are required to conform 'to a highly structured regime' (Gutting 2005, p.47) imposed by an authoritarian

power. Visitors who fail to check the expectations and guidelines before visiting the prison face being turned away. There is no leeway or relaxation of the rules and those that do not conform (and the person they hoped to visit) are punished for their failure to comply with the rules.

Over several years, I have visited a few prisons in the south of England: HMP Lewes, High Down and Worm Wood Scrubs all category B institutions and category A, HMP Belmarsh. Each prison had different requirements for accessing visits, confirmation of identity and security processes though these were not necessarily to do with the HMP category. For example, in Lewes, a passport or driving license plus a utility bill were confirmation enough of identity but in Belmarsh HMP, in addition to these paper forms of identity, fingerprints and retinal pictures were also necessary.

According to the Prison Reform Trust's guide to visiting prisons, and searches on prisoners, the security searches imposed on visitors mimic those for offenders (Prison Reform Trust n.d., <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/>). The most intrusive security searches I encountered were at HMP Worm Wood Scrubs, despite it being a category B prison. Visitors were routinely subjected to a 'Level A' pat down (Prison Reform Trust n.d., <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/>). This involved removing shoes, jacket/ jumper/cardigan before a full body rub down, a swipe down with a handheld metal detector and prison officers checking through hair, looking inside mouths, ears, and noses.

For many, their experience of prison is limited to just one institution and thus their understanding of access arrangements and security checks is defined by that establishment. Once access and security routines are established within that prison, visitors become Pavlovian in their responses to the institution's checks. In submitting to invasive procedures, the visitor is subject to 'pervasive control of the body' (Gutting 2005, p.79) which reinforces the notion that they are as subject to observation as the person that they are visiting. By ensuring that visitors do exactly what the HMP wants, in exactly the way that particular institution wants, the prison can control not only the thoughts of the visitor but how they

behave, 'since the point of changing psychological attitudes and tendencies is to control bodily behaviour' (Gutting 2005, p.79).

So, when visiting Belmarsh HMP, a prison that holds category A prisoners from all over the UK (as well as accepting different categories of local prisoners), the acceptance of having an officer check through my hair, mouth, ears, and nose was so ingrained from HMP Worm Wood Scrubs (and the level of coercive conditioning so internalised) that I anticipated this fuller procedure and obligingly opened my mouth for inspection during the first security pat-down as I had previously been required to do so at a lower category prison.

Assumption of Guilt

Whilst there may be a proportion of visitors who have the intention of smuggling in illicit substances, the majority do not; the stringent security checks are prohibitive and there are more efficient and less risky ways of doing so. For example, the use of drones to drop contraband over security fences more easily bypasses intimate security checks. However, the presumption that a prisoner's family and friends are as likely to transgress the law as the offender whom they are visiting is pervasive and establishes the notion that they are guilty by association.

From entering the visitor reception centre, visitors are made aware of the consequences of potentially illegal actions, such as smuggling in illicit drugs, through a plethora of displays of posters. 'Drugs amnesty' post boxes are situated in the visitor centre, the visiting desk and outside the visiting hall to allow them to change their minds about bringing in drugs before their visiting order is checked. Any clothing taken in by the offender's family is thoroughly checked to make sure that no drugs or weapons are concealed within the items. Seams of jumpers, jackets and coats, shoe soles, and padding in shoes or coats are given intense scrutiny as a bias of guilt is presumed.

Though the presumption that someone will try to smuggle illegal or dangerous goods is not dissimilar to the security checks at airports, unlike airport security that reverts to a positive

bias once innocence has been established, the negative bias is maintained throughout the visitor's experience in the prison through the repetition of searches, warning display posters and amnesty post boxes whilst all under the constant watchful gaze of CCTV cameras and security guards. Once visitors gain access to the visiting hall, they continue to be under intense scrutiny by a high density of guards patrolling around the perimeter of the hall.

Relatives or friends visiting a prisoner are not allowed anything useful into the visiting hall: no paper, no pen which renders it impossible to either jot down information or take in essential information. However, the one thing that each visitor is permitted to take into the hall is a see-through, plastic bank cash bag containing pound coins up to the permitted spending limit which in some prisons is ten pounds per person and in others up to fifteen pounds per person.

Visiting Protocol

Despite restrictions on both visitors and prisoners, there are apparent attempts at making the visits cordial. In a bid to reinforce the reassuring normative behaviours of conventional family mealtimes, groups of up to three visitors are allowed to meet with the offender on visit days. They can sit at fixed 'canteen' style tables with designated and colour-coded seating which dictates where they and the prisoner can sit. In more modern prisons, there are rows of soft seating benches, on one side of a small low table, for visitors to sit on and a single low soft bench seat for the prisoner.

In recreating a domestic facsimile of the nuclear family gathering, whilst under overt physical scrutiny of guards and remote scrutiny via CCTV cameras, both offenders and visitors are required to conform to an unspoken set of behaviours: interactions should be pleasant, and cordial and voices should not be raised above normal conversation level as would be expected at any family meal. Although an attempt to simulate a social event and 'family meal' is achieved through buying cakes, sandwiches, sweets, and drinks from either a 'tuck shop' within the hall or drinks and food vending machines, there are restrictions on movement within the hall (unless it is to buy food or drink). This is manifest in the scrutiny

of prison guards as a constant coercive pressure. This pressure of being observed impacts normal social interactions and compromises overt demonstrations of emotion such as demonstrable distress, frustration or disagreement. Thus, the expectation of a model family interaction is not only internally sought but externally imposed.

Emotional reactions, whether they lean towards positivity or negativity, are restrained not solely due to the constant presence of others and the absence of true privacy, but also due to the perpetual watchfulness of vigilant patrolling guards, who step in with admonitions when needed. I have personally undergone the public embarrassment of a prison guard issuing a cautionary notice, implying that our actions might lead to expulsion from the visiting hall due to a breach of conduct. Despite the seemingly disinterested demeanour of the surrounding individuals, the reverberations of this incident noticeably affected the dynamics within the neighbouring groups.

Further, all prisoners must wear either a sash or tabard throughout the visit to help with their identification during the visit and they must be seated in the hall before the visitors enter it. Physical contact such as hugging, or hand-holding is not permitted other than very briefly at the beginning and end of visiting times. According to the website *Providing Visits and Services to Visitors*, any person indulging in 'long or passionate embraces or kisses' (National Offender Management Service 2021, [www./assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](http://www/assets.publishing.service.gov.uk)) or holding a hug for too long would be intercepted by a prison guard and the visit 'may result in a visit being terminated' (National Offender Management Service 2021, [www./assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](http://www/assets.publishing.service.gov.uk)).

Other than standing to greet and conclude visits, the prisoners must be always seated for the duration of the visit. Visitors may stand to queue at the 'tuck shop' or vending machine and they may, in desperate circumstances and 'as long as it can be managed safely and it does not place unreasonable demands on staff' (National Offender Management Service 2021, [www./assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](http://www/assets.publishing.service.gov.uk)), be permitted to leave the hall to use the toilet. However, 'Visitor re-entry is conditional on the need to consent to another search and on the understanding that the visit will terminate at the original time' (National

Offender Management Service 2021, www/assets.publishing.service.gov.uk). Of course, even if there were enough staff available and leaving briefly was deemed a reasonable demand, it would dramatically cut down on their visiting time. Thus, is advised against by the security staff. Although this makes sense in eliminating the possibility of drugs (smuggled in body cavities) being transferred from visitor to prisoner during the visit, the use of intensive security checks before entering the hall, and the use of passive drug sniffer dogs in prisons where there is a high incidence of drug use, obviates such draconian practices. So, the purpose of this restriction remains questionable unless it is seen as part of the rehabilitation process of the visitor who by association needs reforming in the same way that the offender does.

In all the prisons that I have visited, none allowed the offender to leave the visiting hall to use the toilet once the visit has started. If the offender needs to use the toilet during the visit, then the visit is terminated. So, whilst the visitation hour is intended to recreate a social or domestic family mealtime which encourages civilized interactions, in reality, neither the offender nor his visitors can feel entirely comfortable consuming the food and drink. This is because they have to moderate their consumption as they cannot freely use toilet facilities until after the visit is over and they have exited the visiting hall.

When the visitation time is over, the prisoner is made to stay in their seats while their friends or relatives form a line to leave the hall. The process is agonisingly slow; identification badges and hands are scanned under UV lights to verify that the person leaving the hall is a visitor rather than a prisoner. This seems an unnecessary imposition as, for the duration of the visit, prison guards are stationed around the perimeter of the room and patrolling the aisles. Yet the process of slowly filtering visitors from the hall is another way that the prison can exercise its power over those within its walls and halls.

Meghan Kallman suggests that 'power is something that occurs in the tiniest interactions' (M Kallam 2017, p.30). Therefore, exercising the power to control the visitors' movements, and the time in which they are permitted to take in leaving the prisoner, ensures two things: firstly, that order is maintained and secondly that visitors are conditioned to behave in the way the prison system wants if they want to return for another visitation. The same is true

for the prisoner who is left seated in the visiting hall until the last of the long line of visitors has exited.

Though it is necessary to have stringent levels of security in operation for prison visits, the idiosyncratic variations in security pat-downs and the impositions visited upon prisoners' families seem to speak of a greater intention than just being an indiscriminate punitive culture across the penal system. Rather the variation of rules across different prisons is perhaps the point. It is not the rule that matters but the compliance to that rule that is important, and it can be seen as part of the rehabilitation process of both offender and visitor.

Class Differentiation

Through years of visiting my son in different prisons and conversing with other visitors, it became apparent to me that there was a distinction and differentiation in how visitors were treated by various individuals within the system, including custody suite officers, duty solicitors, prison reception booking staff, and security personnel. I observed that the treatment of visiting friends and relatives was stratified along lines of accent and education that constituted class differentiation.

Prior to my son's entry into the prison system, his pattern of polydrug use frequently exposed him to significant physical risk. Instances of him blacking out and collapsing due to an excess of one substance or an ill-advised combination of drugs often resulted in injuries. The initial phase of his involvement in drug-related criminal activities left me in a perpetual state of heightened vigilance. Any lapse in his activity on social media platforms, or his sudden unresponsiveness to my calls and texts would instantly elevate my concerns. This was in part because, upon resurfacing, he would recount encounters where he had been subject to attacks, held at knifepoint, or assaulted by bouncers or robbed by dealers or others.

In order to assuage my anxiety, I would contact his friends to see if he'd been in contact. When those avenues failed, I would contact official institutions such as hospitals or police stations. However, despite being a desperate mother, seeking information about her missing son, most authorities are reluctant to give out personal information. This, though vexing for the person making the enquiry, is primarily due to the safeguarding of individuals' personal details and thus is standard procedure. I became accustomed to seeking this out sensitive information from institutions that were reluctant to divulge specific details. My soft, deferential and apparently middleclass accent seemed to help me gain the facts I needed.

So, the routine I established whenever my drug addict, mid-level drug dealer son went missing was to assume the worst: he had overdosed; been injured through misadventure, been arrested, or was lying incapacitated and in urgent need of help somewhere. I would routinely ring around all the Accident and Emergency departments of the main hospitals in the vicinity of where he was living at the time and then move on to calling the police stations.

If a custody suite had my son in their charge, and he had already been processed and consented to inform me that he had been arrested, I realised that I was able to elicit more information (than simply that he had been arrested and was being held in their cells) by doing the following: firstly, apologising for the trouble he might have caused or his poor behaviour to them; secondly, delivering a short but compelling narrative about his mental health and drug use; and lastly, capitalising on my crisp, *Southern Counties* accent, that was carefully modulated with a deferential but authoritative tone. This, I believed, was a demonstration of coercive normalisation that rewarded my apparent embarrassment and apologetic stance on my son's behaviour with compliance to the model of middle-classness; the more I seemed appalled by his deviance from the middle class, the more helpful those in authority appeared to be towards me.

It became apparent that my accent (regionally neutral received pronunciation), generated assumptions about my education and class which defined me as less likely to pose a security

risk if more generous responses were provided. As Mugglestone argues in *Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol* (within *A Sociolinguistic Perspective on Accent and Social Mobility in the UK Teaching Profession*) 'Historically, much prestige was associated with the accent referred to Received Pronunciation (RP), itself originally associated with the gentry, aristocracy and, from the 19th century onwards, the upper middle classes of South-East England' (Donnelly 2019, p.498). This was made more apparent when my son first started going to prison and had been transferred from custody, on remand, to prison to await sentencing in court. He was initially remanded at HMP Lewes, a small, category B institution.

When an offender first arrives in prison, they are permitted an early 'Reception Visit' which takes place within the first two weeks of their arrival. This visit is booked by calling the prison's reception centre, rather than using the customary booking online system in place in most prisons. As the booking lines are extraordinarily busy, organising a reception visit entails ringing up, as often as possible, over several days to secure an available appointment.

HMP Lewes had a small staff; it became apparent on both the switchboard and booking line that my voice was recognisable to the people operating those lines. So familiar with my voice were they, that when I called to ask if there were yet any available appointments, they would greet me with my name before I identified myself. In those initial conversations, the staff assisting me would give me advice on the best times to call to be successful and suggest when slots were most likely to be available. Rather than being just another faceless member of the general public, my accent and appearance made me identifiable and distinct. This individuality and discernible middle-class background, led to the perception that I was less inclined to be culpable of my son's engagement in criminal behaviour and thus I was treated with greater respect in interactions.

Further, by epitomising the model of unthreatening middle-classness as a visitor, I was to attain specific privileges that made accessing the system easier. I believed this was a demonstration of the coercive process of rehabilitation that encompassed the offender and their family and friends. In demonstrating that I was more likely to be conservative and conformist, as a consequence of my middle-class accent, I was permitted greater freedom.

This was of particular note when an administrative error saw the early release of my son from HMP Lewes. He called me on a Friday afternoon explaining that he was to be released at 6 o'clock that evening. I had a bail release date for him which was another month away. I called the prison and spoke with the staff there to question the release of my son. When they acknowledged their error, they told me that because the system could not be corrected immediately, I might as well take my son home for the weekend and return with him on Monday. The Governor of the prison called me to apologise for the mistake and to assure me that my and my son's compliance would be looked on favourably when it came to his sentencing trial. Difficult and heart-breaking as it was to return him to prison, I am certain that had it not been for how I presented and spoke with the staff my son would have had to be held in a custody suite over the weekend.

Additional markers of my 'middle-classness' that set me apart from many visitors was my appearance. My clothes expressed an individual, but professional 'style' that was not reliant on current high-street fashion trends (in the same way that I would dress for work). I selected outfits of subdued, neutral colours and absent of patterns. They were neither too tight nor too loose, skirts were mid-length, tops concealing and purposely modest. Without fail, at each prison that I attended to see my son, I was asked the same question when I handed in my visiting order, "Legal?" All reception and security staff assumed that because of my appearance, my deportment and my accent I must be a solicitor. This assumption extended to my mother when she accompanied me on visits.

Whether my interactions with staff were in Police stations or prisons, and though I was governed by the same rules as all other visitors, I felt that they were more helpful and positive because I epitomised being middleclass. My voice, accent and deferential approach conveyed from the outset, that I was educated and knowledgeable. In turn, this suggested that I was already compliant with other institutions' hierarchies and codes of behaviour and therefore their calculus of the risk I posed was accordingly adjusted.

Positionality, White Privilege and Class

In my work, there are four characters whose prison experiences intersect: a middleclass mother and her son and two working-class brothers. The work communicates the shock and bewilderment of the two middleclass characters, Joanna and her son Finn, as they try to navigate the prison system. Their experience is contrasted with that of the two working-class characters who are shown to be less perturbed by the impositions they face and more 'savvy' about their new reality and the limitations placed upon them. All the characters must find ways of coping with the coercive elements of prison.

Though all the characters were conceived as white, and the mother figure overtly identifies herself as white, the three male characters' racial identity is more ambiguous as they all use elements of MLE (Multicultural London English) in their communication. In his *WordPress* blog *Language and Innovation*, Tony Thorne describes MLE as a 'social dialect', 'sociolect' or informal spoken style of UK English'. He suggests that it is 'used initially by 'younger' speakers' and 'associated with London', though its use has spread to most urbanised areas and can also be found being spoken by youths in rural villages (T. Thorn 2017, <https://language-and-innovation.com>). This style of speech has a high level 'of 'black' (Caribbean English, terms possibly coined by Afro-Caribbean speakers in the UK, to a lesser extent US black 'street' language and hip-hop terminology) influences' which deviates significantly from 'standard UK English and differ also from 'traditional white working class' dialects (T. Thorn 2017, <https://language-and-innovation.com>)

Personality, privilege and cultural cache' are suggested through each character's idiolect and sociolect. The status and identity of each character are established through the language apportioned to them, though of course, the use of verbatim material also suggests this. With the mother character, Joanna, I elected to use a 'prestige dialect of 'standard' English and received pronunciation (RP) (T. Thorn 2017, <https://language-and-innovation.com>) to suggest her privileged, middleclass status. The decision to assign an RP accent to Joanna comes from my own encounters with the prison service as a middle-class

mother visiting her son. This choice is rooted in the distinct preferential shifts in treatment that became evident due to the presence of such an accent.

Given that the work is written rather than spoken, it was necessary to convey Joanna's accent through other means. One of the ways I achieve this is by contextual details such as having an address in a fictitious town in Hampshire, a county that epitomises the southern accent and thus is more associated with RP. Further, markers are woven into contextualising details such as the address of her mother (also in the county); her name and the resistance to its diminutive form, 'Jo'; additionally, the choice of her son's name and his reference to his friends' names are all markers of an assumed middleclass privilege. Furthermore, her RP accent is hinted at through the consistent use of a more formal linguistic style compared to the other characters. While she does employ contracted verb forms on occasion, this is infrequent and primarily reserved for personal communications with her son. Her poetic outpourings, for the most part, avoid the use of contracted verb forms.

Of course, other areas in the UK do also have examples of RP (and rarely does anyone speak pure RP) but regional counties also have distinct regional accents. However, for the purposes of the work, it was important to secure the idea that Joanna's use of RP connotes a middleclass status, and thus a position of privilege, which simultaneously provided advantages in her ability to present a more 'respectable' face to the court system but equally, left her feeling alienated in navigating the prison system.

For the three male characters, I made different choices to convey their relative degrees of privilege within the system. For Finn's character, there needed to be an extension of a privileged position, relative to his mother and distinctly different from the other two male characters. However, I wanted to connote his youth and social plasticity by the way he is seen to code-switch between RP and MLE in his written communication. He uses RP (indicated by a neutrality of regional dialect and greater formality in register) in formal situations or when appealing for support from his mother. However, when he wants to show his legitimacy of worldly 'cool' (rather than insulated privilege) he adopts MLE as it confers a

certain 'subcultural capital' (T. Thorn 2017, <https://language-and-innovation.com>) that RP does not.

In contrast to this, the two working-class brothers use MLE almost exclusively. In apportioning this particular 'style' of language, I wanted to show not only that they came from a more urbanised environment but also that they were more likely to be working class. In his article '*The recontextualisation of Multicultural London English: Styling the 'roadman''*', Ilbury suggests that 'MLE is typically spoken by young working-class individuals living in inner-city neighbourhoods in London' and often by those wishing to 'index their alignment with Grime' (Ilbury 2023, p.5).

To contextualise Ilbury's comments, Grime music, originating from East London, arose early on in the 2000s. The culture around Grime music stems from collaborative groups of musicians or 'crews' that produce music and perform together at venues and in doing so 'Grime crews came with a sense of unity, artists had a support group amongst themselves, it made them more creative and thriving' (Manga 2022, <https://blamuk.org/>). Grime has been critically acclaimed for 'its stark social commentary on living in inner-city London, opening listeners' eyes to the stark realities of growing up on a London estate and the intimacies of relationships, friends, and family life' (Manga 2022, <https://blamuk.org/>). Its use of MLE and gritty, low-tech sound production makes the genre relatable and accessible to aspiring working-class youths. A prime example of this can be seen in the viral YouTube video of Stomzy's freestyle performance over grime producer XTC's instrumental 'Functions on the Low', videoed in a south London car park.

The popularity of Grime and the alignment of the 'cool' culture that surrounds the music has made the use of MLE ubiquitous. Indeed, the use of MLE 'has become the unmarked Labovian working-class vernacular' replacing traditional urbanised varieties such as Cockney (Ilbury 2023, p. 5-10). Tony Thorne suggests that the use of MLE by both black and white individuals is so common places that 'if you hear but can't see the speaker, it's impossible to determine their ethnicity' (T. Thorn 2017, <https://language-and-innovation.com>). So, although there are blurred lines of racial identity in the male characters because of the use

of MLE, its use is entirely appropriate as it reflects their age, social and environmental status as well as reflecting their alignment with Grime culture.

By refraining from solidifying the characters' racial identities, I challenge assumptions around class, race and social positioning. Simultaneously, I acknowledge the inherent privilege within the system that is afforded to Caucasians. Their privilege however is stratified by their relative class differences. This is shown through how the middleclass characters have access to a wealth of dispensations that the working-class characters do not. For example, the mother character, Joanna, can afford a counsellor, she can employ a private legal defence team, she is able to gather a wealth of character witnesses for her son, provide him with regular money for his commissaries, and of course afford the time and expense of going to visit him regularly.

Her son's privilege and positioning are demonstrated in a number of ways. Within the communication he has with his friends, he makes references to social activities such as Ayahuasca retreats. More importantly, his privilege is indicated by the lenient sentencing he receives, his outrage at having to share a cell, and his perception of the poor quality of food and the laundry service available inside. The privileges associated with being middleclass confer upon him a sense of entitlement and disdain for authority as his ethnicity, class and background inoculate him from having to conform to rules meant for 'others'.

In a similar way that the son character's outrage at the conditions he faces inside prison suggests his white middleclass privilege, so his mother's discombobulation suggests hers. The mother's middleclass background informs her shock and discomfort at being coerced into having to comply with rules that made little sense to her. For example, not being able to take in pens and paper to note down information during visiting hours. Her frustration and discomfort at being coerced into compliance seemingly for the sake of compliance reveal a privileged position where social norms or behaviour that 'is negotiated and understood through social interaction' (Chung 2016, p.1-28) permeates her life rather than arbitrarily imposed 'rules'.

In contrast, the two working-class brothers are seen to have fewer support systems in place. Their mother is computer illiterate and cannot afford to come to visit, there are complex interpersonal relationships hinted at and their aspirations to raise themselves from poverty rest on the commercial success of their Grime music. The communication between them does not focus on the imposed restrictions but instead on the actions that can be taken to secure a better existence both inside and outside.

Readership

I imagined that the readership for the verse novel would be those who were anywhere upwards of thirty years of age and who were unlikely to be familiar with the prison service or well-versed in Multicultural London English. The personal implication for me was that my readership might be those who were comfortably unaware of various aspects of the penal system and whose exposure to MLE might primarily be through music, film or television in comedies such as *Ali G* or dramas like *Top Boy*.

I wanted to show this through the mother (Joanna), character, whose life has been one of unconscious privilege. Her culture shock when her son enters prison, despite her education, intelligence and cultural awareness, indicates that her understanding of the processes involved is garnered purely from television dramas. I wanted to show how that culture shock obliged Joanna to examine her limited perspective about who and why people entered the prison system and more importantly, confront her unconscious bias towards them. Further, I wanted to show how the custodial sentence of an offender has ramifications for the family, and in particular, the mother who often remains in a supportive and nurturing role as a parent. Therefore, I wanted to produce work for a readership that would be engaging and interesting whilst also gently informing and challenging any unconscious assumptions that might exist. To this end, my decision to include a glossary acknowledged that my readership might not necessarily be familiar with some of the vocabulary that my male characters use. Whilst I acknowledged that the inclusion of a glossary endorses the idea that my readers would be unfamiliar with some of the Multicultural London English used in the text, the glossary was not intended to 'educate' the readership but rather give greater access. The

collection of poems would function equally well without its inclusion. Instead, the glossary, for those who wish to read it, confers another layer of understanding onto the individual poems within the whole collection.

As the author, I feel that it, much like that of Anna Deavere Smith's, should 'play out a series of discourses that do not feed into an obvious interpretative system, but suggest the operation of social dynamics that need to be addressed more fully in the world [outside of the theatre]' (Lyons 1994, p.1-24). The work is not intended to 'school' its readership but, through the inclusion of appropriated language and verbatim material, instead should shine a light upon situations with which the reader may be unfamiliar. It is up to the reader to draw any conclusions that they wish to draw.

Counselling Background

In the work, Joanna, the mother voice, seeks help from a counsellor and employs a couple of counselling interventions to help her process the overwhelming emotions that she has experienced since the arrest and imprisonment of her son. As a device, it effectively established and contextualised Joanna's emotional landscape from the start of the verse novel. It also allowed for the slow revelation of her preconceived ideas, her struggle with the impotence of her actions and her need as a white, middleclass woman to try to ameliorate her situation by benevolence to others in seemingly worse circumstances.

As a trained, but no longer practising counsellor, I was able to draw upon my understanding of a range of strategies and interventions used to encourage clients to navigate depression and anxiety. Rooted in the Humanistic approach to counselling, my job as a counsellor was to enable my clients to move from a place of emotional 'stuckness' to freedom. Though approaches would vary according to each client, what I had repeatedly found helped clients was a mood diary and writing. In using these methods, clients were encouraged to reflect upon their actions, thoughts and feelings in between counselling and bring their observations as a point of discussion to the next session.

Though there are variations in mood diaries, the one that I construct for Joanna reflects the standard aim of the technique which is to categorise and rationalise emotions in terms of the initiating action that preceded the emotion and to give a sliding scale to identify the level of emotional intensity felt. Writing as therapy can take many different forms including journaling, expressive and creative writing and poetry. Writing responses to traumatic events can often help to process emotions from a distanced, analytical position. This understanding has long been established, particularly in America. The website, for *The National Association for Poetry Therapy* cites evidence that writing, and poetry have been used in therapeutic form throughout history. It refers to many instances of writing and poetry use in a healing capacity and to how Dr. Benjamin Rush prescribed supplementary treatments of literature and poem writing (as early as 1751) for his patients (National Association for Poetry Therapy n.d., <https://poetrytherapy.org/History>). So, in effect, the process of writing about trauma liberates a person from amorphous and unruly emotion by providing an encompassing framework to explore feelings and impose context and structure on them.

This is illustrated in Philip Osment's play, *Inside* (2009) which draws upon his experience with 'NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training)' (Osment 2010, p.5) and his participation with a group of young fathers in Rochester HMP. In the drama, the characters enrol in a drama-based education programme because they are 'looking for relief from boredom and a chance to get off the wing' (Osment 2010, book description). However, through their engagement with the process of writing on the course (both rap and letters), they embark upon a journey of self-knowledge and must confront their feelings about their relationships with their children, with each other and with their fathers. Thus, the transformative power of writing enables them to process, transform, and transcend their nebulous feelings into coherent thought, understanding, and realisations.

In the writing of the work, I wanted to show how Joanna's experience necessitates her engagement with writing as her position prevents her from discussing the problems she faces with having a son in prison with her friends. As Joanna liberates herself from the burden of shame, guilt and despair by writing, so does her son Finn and his HMP Belmarsh

contemporary, Liam. Being able to turn experience into concrete written form liberates the individual from having to carry an emotional burden that at times is too difficult to process all at once. Perhaps it is the editing of these ideas that allows for the exploration of experience from a safer, analytical rather than visceral stance.

Carl Rogers, the father of Humanistic Counselling suggested that ‘the individual has within himself or herself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes and self-directed behaviour’ (McLeod 2023, www.simplypsychology.org). By having Joanna document her experience, I attempt to illustrate how the act of writing facilitates her journey in overcoming the hurdles before her. This process empowers her to delve into and question her latent prejudices, re-evaluate her bond with her son, and unearth her own resilience.

As a former practitioner of this counselling style, it made sense to me that the characters in my verse novel should be able to understand themselves through writing and reflecting on their writing. In Joanna’s case, she can see the conflict she has between wanting to help her son and the real difficulties that doing so represents to her. I elected not to include exchanges between her and her counsellor as I wanted the reader to pick up on the transference and projection that she has about her dealings with Max which manifest as ‘blind spots’ in his manipulation of her.

Texts that Resist

Peter Stanford, writing in *The Independent*, suggests that ‘prison writing has long been a distinctive and admired genre’ (P. Stanford 2009, www.independent.co.uk/). Among the list of prison literature ‘giants’ he cites, ‘Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Jack London, Malcolm X, Irina Ratushinskaya, Wole Soyinka and Oscar Wilde’ (P. Stanford 2009, www.independent.co.uk/). It is noteworthy that in this list, only Wilde is British. I would further suggest writers such as James Irwin, Bobby Sands and Jeffrey Archer, who might not be considered literary ‘giants’, but are worthy of inclusion because of their contributions to the Prison Writing canon.

Nevertheless, despite the enormity of the American prison population (and the apparent popularity of expressing personal responses to the experience in poetry) the writing pool from which to draw, though established, is still relatively small. The same can be said of the prison poetry originating from the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the fact that the prison population in England and Wales has 'quadrupled in size between 1900 and 2018, with around half of this increase taking place since 1990' (Sturge 2022, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk>) according to the *House of Commons Library: UK Prison Population Statistics* website.

In having my characters express their innermost thoughts and feelings, using poetry as a vehicle, my work seeks to demonstrate not only the therapeutic value of writing poetry but also the practical reasons for writing it. Most people have a need to express themselves, even if only to themselves. This act of expression, and in particular articulating 'one's thoughts and feelings... can be accomplished through words, choices or actions.' (Kim 2007, p.325-342). In prison, a pen and paper are always available for offenders.

Irish poet and writer Joseph Campbell, as recorded in his prison diary '*As I was Among the Captives*,' proclaims that within the confines of incarceration 'Poetry always breaks out, like scabies, in jail' (J. N. Campbell 2001, p.45). So, the need to voice one's experience is something that figuratively gets under the skin of some offenders and one of the ways in which they can resolve this impulse is to write. On the web page, *Poetry, Prisoners and Transformative Justice* from the website Crimetalk.org.uk, Lucas Alan Dietsche proposes that 'Poetry written by prisoners and formerly incarcerated people is nothing new' (Dietsche 2020, n.d, www.crimetalk.org.uk). This suggests two things: not only is there a precedence and history of prison writing but also there is a recognition that in order to make sense of the experience many prisoners, if they are able to, write about it. Christopher Soto, an American activist and poet agrees with this assertion and suggests that in America, the 'prison poetry canon' is well established. Writing for the Poetry Foundation webpage, *Poetry in the Age of Mass Incarceration: Challenging the Dichotomy of Innocence Versus Criminality*, he asserts that 'In prison, resources are scarce and poetry, in its prolific nature, can be one of the easiest forms of self-expression to diminish the divide between incarcerated and non-incarcerated worlds.' (Soto 2017, www.poetryfoundation.org)

Speaking of the prison poetry published in America, Soto suggests that though the majority 'can be found in anthologies specifically dedicated to prison writing' (Soto 2017, www.poetryfoundation.org) although there also exist 'a handful of poetry collections' that have become 'well regarded within various literary canons'. Of the 'well regarded' collections Soto focuses upon, he cites amongst others, 'Jimmy Santiago Baca, Paul Mariah, Etheridge Knight and Reginald Dwayne Betts' (Soto 2017, www.poetryfoundation.org) all of whom write powerfully about the experience of prison.

These poets, all men, write not only about the impact it has on them personally but also about the injustices, racial prejudice and violence of the prison system in America. However, Soto notes that though their writing articulates their experience nevertheless, they overlook 'the impact of incarceration on family and community members who have been separated from incarcerated people and have been impacted financially or emotionally because of this separation' (Soto 2017, www.poetryfoundation.org). It is this impact on family members that is routinely obscured in much prison poetry and that my work actively seeks to remedy.

Soto points to one or two exceptions, in particular, Natalie Diaz and Ocean Vuong who write about being a relative of the offender and how this affects relatives. In the poem *My Father Writes from Prison*, Vuong writes from the perspective of his father writing letters from prison in Saigon, to his mother. In his poem, he articulates the struggle his father must have faced in accepting his imprisonment:

There are things
I can say only in the dark
how one spring
I crushed a monarch midflight.
just to know how it felt
to have something change
in my hands. (Vuong 2017, p18)

In this brief extract, it is clear that Vuong understands the isolation his father would have experienced, and his desire to have some form of agency in his circumstances. Though the poem is written as a letter to his mother, the focus of it is the father's physical and emotional incarceration rather than how his incarceration affects his wife.

Natalie Diaz, on the other hand, writes candidly from her own perspective about how the criminality of her brother profoundly affects her family. From her poem set, Downhill Triolets, the poem *Sisyphus and My Brother* illustrates the toll that her brother's incarceration has on her family:

The phone rings—my brother was arrested again.
Dad hangs up, gets his old blue Chevy going, and heads to the police station.
It's not the first time. It's not even the second.
No one is surprised when my brother is arrested again.

The guy fell on my knife was his one-phone-call explanation.
(*He stabbed a man five times in the back* is the official accusation.)
My brother is arrested again and again. And again
our dad, our Sisyphus, pushes his old blue heart up to the station. (Diaz 2012,
www.narrativemagazine.com)

The poem concisely sets out how exhausting it is for relatives to have a family member arrested and imprisoned especially if they are a recidivist: 'It's not the first time. It's not even the second./ No one is surprised when my brother is arrested again.' The emotional burden of the brother's recurrent offences effectively desensitizes the family, leaving them numb with resignation, as implied in the following line, 'My brother is arrested again and again. And again/ our dad, our Sisyphus, pushes his old blue heart up to the station.' The comparison of the father's 'blue heart' to his blue 'station wagon' suggests that his actions, though as redundant as those of Sisyphus to whom he is compared, have become automatised. In this, it is clear that the father has become a cog in the machinery of prison every bit as much as the recidivist son. Although Diaz writes as a Mojave Tribe member in America, her identification of the tired resignation that results from visiting a family member in prison holds on a universal scale. It is exhausting and yet for the majority of families, the

need to support their loved one outweighs the toll it takes on them emotionally, physically and mentally.

Within my work, it is the mother's voice, Joanna, that echoes this sentiment. Her resignation comes not from her son's repeated offending but from the coercive process she finds herself in when her son enters the prison system. She is subject to the same requirements as all the other relatives of prisoners. Her middleclass status does not afford insulation from the shock of her son's imprisonment, nor does it afford her any real greater freedom within the system. Joanna's exhaustion and resignation are the results of realising that the capital resources she has in normal society do not hold the same value and sway within the prison system. Visiting her son is arduous physically, mentally and emotionally. She is subject to the same times, dress codes, searches and data checks that all visitors are, and this takes its toll on her.

In exploring the contemporary collections of prison poetry within the UK, it is evident that there is a space and place for regular publications. Where schemes are in place, anthologies of work are collated and edited by prison creative writing tutors, probation officers or more rarely self-published by offenders upon release. There are writers in residence who offer workshops that facilitate the writing of poems. Additionally, there are flourishing partnerships between academic organisations and prisons, such as the *Lewes Prison Partnership* with Sussex University that have produced anthologies of writing showcasing the talents and insights of participating offenders. Further, some select charities such as the *Koestler Trust* and *Women in Prison* (<https://womeninprison.org.uk>) and 'not for profit' organisations such as *InsideTime*, publish poetry written in UK prisons. *InsideTime's* annual poetry collection, *Inside Poetry: voices from prison*, has a guest editor who selects poems from amongst the many that are submitted each month to their online site. A copy of each volume is provided free of charge to all UK prison libraries.

Of the poetry collections by inmates in prison, one of the more notable ones is produced by the *Koestler Trust*, a charity that supports 'people in the criminal justice system to change their lives by participating in the arts' (The Koestler Trust 2023, <https://koestlerarts.org.uk>). The Koestler Awards is an annual event that invites prisoners, from all over the country, to

submit artwork and writing. From the nationwide entries, the best examples are chosen and collated in a poetry anthology entitled '*Koestler Voices: New Poetry from Prisons*'. The organisers attest to the popularity of writing, and in particular poetry, but contextualise this in terms of practical necessity:

Poetry is the biggest category in the annual Koestler Awards, receiving nearly 1000 entries a year. While art materials can be difficult to get hold of in prison, everyone is entitled to paper and something to write with. (The Koestler Trust 2023, <https://koestlerarts.org.uk>)

However, the anthologies that do exist primarily are first-hand reflections either about their existence, or their journey to and experience of prison. As a unifying thread, the poems submitted are sometimes arranged loosely under broad categories. For example, in the anthology *Beyond the Wall*, produced by the men of HMP Nottingham and edited by their writer in residence, David Swann, the poems are organised under the following titles: 'Me: autobiography, Them: other people, Us: love, Inside: prison, outside: other places' (Swann 1998, p.5-74). Similarly, in *Koestler voices: new Poetry from Prison*, the poems are organised under the following titles: Inside, Outside, Portraits/Pictures, and Letters/Confessions. However, although the intimate and deeply individual voices in the poems reflect common themes such as regret, anger, despair, hope or acceptance they do not voice points of view beyond their own. Understandably, their concerns predominantly focus on their own direct experience rather than on how their incarceration impacts those beyond their own confines. For example:

I'm in my pad, we're on the phone
And then I hear that 'end call' tone
I say goodbye, then I'm alone
My heart just sinks – I hate that phone
Then I ring back, we talk and joke
I sing to you, but then I know
That any minute I will hear that tone
We say goodbye and then I go
My heart just sinks – I hate that phone.

(Mathew W 2023, <https://insidetime.org>)

In this poem entitled, *I hate that phone*, the inmate articulates the grief he feels at the separation between him and his loved one. His loss is foregrounded by the emphatic end-of-line rhymes and the refrains 'My heart just sinks' and 'I hate that phone'. In the poem, it is *his* responses to the 'end of call' notice, *his* heart that 'sinks', and *his* actions when he rings back or leaves. The poem is so intent on articulating his suffering that the person on the other end of the phone is obscured from view. As readers, we can only guess if the person on the other end of the phone is a parent, sibling, partner, or child.

Similarly, the following brief poem focuses on the pain experienced by the offender when his incarceration results in the breakdown of a relationship:

Laying slumped in chains
of sorrow
my heart incarcerated in a cell of grief.
Sentenced to a life
of heartache,
for my crime of loving you.
And now you've gone from me,
my love is shackled to this sadness. (Harrison 1999, p.23)

The sentimental reflection on the pain of losing a loved one in this poem, *Sentence of Love*, seems almost adolescent in the fixation on 'sadness'. The oblique view of his loss negates the pain that his loved one might have also experienced by the enforced separation of prison. Whilst this poem employs the conceit of prison sentencing to explore the pain felt at losing love, it reveals an inward-looking 'I' voice that is passive in the situation. 'And now you've gone from me' places the agency of separation upon the absent loved one rather than acknowledging that it is the poetic persona who has 'gone' from the outside world into that of a prison.

Many poetry collections and anthologies intend to trace the trauma that prison inflicts and the realisations that come because of the experience. The writing of multiple subjective experiences from a singular viewpoint reveals, not just that perspective but speaks of a collective experience of prison. However, these poems speak of the inmate's experience and rarely address the broader picture of how their incarceration affects their family.

Poetry submissions by women offenders and ex-offenders, also contribute different perspectives on the experience of being in prison. Poet, writer, broadcaster and activist Brenda Birungi, also known as Lady Unchained, writes about her experience of being sentenced to two and a half years in her collection of poems, *Behind Bars*. The extract from the much longer poem *The Women* illuminates the sense of shared experience despite the vast disparity in age, ethnicity, and education:

I look at these women

young

old

grandmothers

mothers

daughters

children

Black

white

Asian

educated

uneducated

labelled

numbered

tainted

tortured.

They all look like me.

I see the same sad look in their eyes.

Powerless.

Less than those we left outside.

Learning to live behind a fake smile is the first

thing we teach each other

as we watch the sun rise and set through bars. (B. Birungi 2022, p.33)

The poem articulates the same 'powerless' status that each of them shares and the unity there is in the 'same sad look in their eyes'. Birungi looks outwards towards the prison community that she is now part of and sees the commonality between them. Further, she confers a sense of agency in acknowledgement of the actions that lead to their incarceration in the line 'Less than those we left outside'. However, the picture she paints of the community is ambiguous and complex. They, herself included, can either be seen as supportive of each other in the 'thing[s] we teach each other' or complicit with the coercive expectations of the institution that requires women to conceal outward displays of emotion 'learning to live behind a fake smile'.

She mentions that 'When I first went to prison, I told my family/ not to visit me anymore' and in a later poem, *The Letter B*, how despite living hours away from Manchester, her family continue to support her, 'When/ my family came to visit; I remember sitting in the/visitor hall and looking at all the empty chairs/around me'. In mentioning the visits from her family, who lived in London but travelled to see her in Manchester, Birungi acknowledges and gives tacit recognition to the importance of their support. Although she infers that the visit exacted a cost in their time, finances and physical health, she does not do so explicitly. In contrast, the mother's voice in my work makes this uncomfortable cost, which is often impossible to meet for some families, overt and transparent.

Although there has been a recent anthology of poetry compiled by Lucy Baldwin which is

written by prisoners and their children, the scope of much prison poetry in the United Kingdom leans more towards the individual offender writing about their subjective experience. The many different voices that contribute to an anthology of prison poetry capture thematic and emotional swathes but do not extend to examining the coercive pressure that relatives undergo in supporting them. Further, although the anthologies and collections clearly give an insight into the lived experience of prison from a single perspective, they routinely exclude the impact that prison also has on their families.

Baldwin's anthology, *Seen & Heard*, defies this convention. The title simultaneously refers to the archaic expectations that children should be 'seen and *not* heard' also alluding to the infantilising effects that prison has on those who are sentenced to serve custodial sentences in them. Further, it could be argued that the title acknowledges the importance of recognising, the radiating effects that prison has on family members.

It features one hundred poems from across the UK about the direct effects of prison on families written by children of parents in prison, and parents who have been imprisoned and have been separated from their children. The following extract is written by a fourteen-year-old:

The bars, the dogs, the guards

They symbolize our time

Images of control of the state

They are between you and me

These symbols I hate

The hall is noisy, it reeks

Of pain, of sweat, of lost dreams

'no touching' they shout

Their eyes the drugs they seek

We are all criminals now

By association we are guilty

We can't be good, we can't be honest

We are related to criminals

So, logic tells them we are filthy. (L. Baldwin 2019, p.76)

This poem illuminates the trauma associated with visiting his father in prison. The list of hostile elements in the poem's first line assumes a prominent role and accentuates the unsettling atmosphere of prison visits. Simultaneously, the list underscores the way in which these elements adversely influence and hinder the potential for meaningful interactions between the son and his father. As a consequence, the overt controlling elements provoke a visceral response in the line 'These symbols I hate'.

The composition within the poem becomes evident through the use of end-of-line rhyming. This demonstrates a conscious imposition of a structural framework onto the descriptive content. This structuring serves as a reflection of the author's attempt to make sense of the experience. The pervasive observations make him understand that his father's criminality has led to the perception and categorisation of him as deviant. This perception is succinctly expressed in the lines 'We are all criminal now / by association we are guilty.'

Embedded within the poem is a discernible narrative that highlights the intrusive scrutiny the son is subjected to during his visits. His perception is that the relentless security and scrutiny implies that prison guards regard relatives of inmates as 'filthy'. Despite the semblance of defiance encapsulated in the line 'These symbols I hate,' a more subdued undercurrent suggests that the attribution of his father's criminality to his own identity burdens him with an overwhelming sense of shame.

Another poem, this time written by an eleven year old speaks of the emotional impact that having a parent in prison has on him:

E m b a r r a s s e d

H u m i l l a t e d

P u n i s h e d

A b a n d o n e d

A s h a m e d

F r u s t r a t e d

I s o l a t e d

S c a r e d

W o r r i e d

G u i l t y

L o n e l y

A n g r y

U p s e t

B a d

M a d

S a d. (L. Baldwin 2019, p.75)

Unable to fully articulate the experience in full lines, each single word didactically points to a series of negative emotions that powerfully evoke how the experience is overwhelmingly distressing. The stretching and elongation of the words in the first eight lines, suggest that the emotions identified here are lingering and persist beyond the visits to prison.

Poignantly, the words diminish in size and complexity leaving the reader with the simple truth of the pervasiveness of sadness.

The collection is divided into three sections containing poems written by mothers, about the impact prison has on them and their children who are no longer with them, by children about how their parents' incarceration changes their daily landscape, and by fathers about

how the experience marks their children. In this regard, it is innovative. Similarly, my work shows the referred influence that prison has on relatives and further, how the rehabilitation of the prisoner is extended to those who come to visit them.

Unlike the collections of poems from an individual offender or the anthologies built of poems from multiple offenders, my work positions both sets of characters (Joanna and Finn and Liam and Max) in a multi-conversational structure. The poems are organised to emulate a 'call-and-response' arrangement characteristic of the communication available via the service, *Email a Prisoner*. Furthermore, by using verbatim and found forms in my work, the collection spans the gap between fiction and the first-person perspective prison poetry. Not only does it explore how coercion in prison is extended to encompass the inmates' relatives, but it does so by illuminating the strain that the prison process exerts upon the mother and son relationship and the sibling relationship in the verse novel by rendering the inmates impotent of autonomy and casting the mother and brother as facilitators of their needs in the outside world. Thus, my work contributes a distinct, new voice to the canon of prison poetry not only in its scope and broadened subject matter but also in the use of form and narrative arc.

Inheritance

My work attempts to illustrate the varied methods through which poetry serves as a means of transcending the emotional and psychological constraints that imprisonment imposes on both inmates and visitors. In this context, the manner in which my characters harness self-expression via poetry is a juxtaposition of individuality and universality. Their distinct experiences and emotional reactions find expression through tailored poetic decisions encompassing form, structure, language, imagery, and rhyme. The distinct style of poetic engagement for each character stands as a reflection of their respective personalities, ages, and educational backgrounds.

The characters Joanna and her son Finn navigate the coercive experience within the prison environment by expressing themselves through a more 'conventional' approach to free-form poetry. Joanna uses creative response sheets for her poems which are then shared

with her counsellor. Within the context of the work, Joanna's use of poetry enables her to process and come to terms with the traumatic experience of visiting her son in prison and thus resists the mental coercion that she finds the prison system places on her. This is illustrated through the tension that is created between the content of her work, which outlines the emotional chaos of navigating the prison system and the highly structured form of her writing style. It is deliberately different from the poetic expressions of either her son Finn or the other character's writing and intended to locate her character within the educated middleclass sphere.

Finn, Joanna's son, uses identity-stamped prison writing paper to write his poems on. His poetic expression diverges from the formal and conventional style of his mother, showcasing his rejection of societal norms. This stylistic choice aligns with his illicit entrepreneurial attempts to generate income and asserts his individuality. However, a significant disjunction emerges between the poetry that he writes for himself and what he shares with friends and the communication he has with Joanna. This contrast permits me to highlight Finn's efforts to cultivate a self-perception marked by agency within an environment that typically curtails personal autonomy. His writing embodies his need to negotiate a different narrative to the one that has placed him in prison. Thus, in writing a narrative that shows agency in what has happened to him, Finn's writing demonstrates how the act of writing becomes a vehicle for liberation from fear and frustration.

Conversely, the character Liam distances himself from the standardisation of written poetic expression and instead embraces a form of poetry that gravitates toward contemporary modes of performance poetry and in particular Grime lyrics. The juxtaposition of the content of his work with the prison issue paper serves as an act of rebellion. This is further demonstrated by his affinity for the Spoken Word style, which draws on rhythmic oral and performance styles as well as the lyrical essence commonly associated with Grime music. By situating Liam's character within this context, I aim to underscore the encompassing spectrum of diverse expressions and forms that find their place within the realm of poetry.

The fusion-style employed by Liam shares similarities with the artistic approach of Kosal Khiev, a Cambodian poet who faced a fourteen-year imprisonment in the United States due to his connection with a gun-related offence. Following his release, he was subsequently deported to Cambodia. The orality evident in his written style can be traced back to its inception within the confines of prison. During this period, he experienced solitary confinement, which consequently led him to write his thoughts down and share them verbally with others in solitary confinement cells:

They kept me in the hole [solitary confinement] for one and a half years. I almost went crazy...I wrote everything out, fears, hopes, dreams and nightmares...Whatever I was writing I would talk it out, and people [in the other solitary confinement cells] would hear me and say: 'Let us hear something man'.
(Kosal Khiev's Journey from Prison to Poetry 2014, /www.bbc.co.uk)

In writing through traumatic experiences, Khiev suggests that poetry can 'change a person's perspective and outlook' and in effect, provide a means of escape from the burden of trauma. In this extract from his performance poem *Why I Write* he shines a light on mass incarceration in the United States and the exaggerated sentences routinely handed out:

i write for the souls lost in attica
i write for california
the golden state where we holding weight
struggling to hold on to faith
cuz they steady packing us in prisons til we're old and grey
so i write for those in blue thats doing all day
tehachapi, new folsom, corcoran, pelican bay
all the way to susanville, high desert, and back down this way
calipat, lancaster, soledad, ironwood
and so many more built into cesspools
so i write about wats less cool

less fake

so less take a moment of silence for the fallen and press pause

(Khiev 2011, www.youtube.com)

Khiev's writing serves a purpose beyond personal introspection, despite his experiences warranting such contemplation. Through the act of tallying the names of prisons, he effectively directs a spotlight onto these institutions, thereby also highlighting the dire circumstances faced by the incarcerated individuals within them. Khiev's insistent use of lowercase actively resists the imposition of standard English and in doing so, symbolises his rejection of conforming to an externally imposed hierarchy of language rules and the coercion that serving time in prison places on offenders. Further, it serves as an acknowledgement of the oral nature inherent in the composition. To that end, his work extends its reach to those who find themselves imprisoned, isolated, or subject to coercion. By encompassing a blend of rap, performance, and poetry, his work evades easy categorization, thereby offering an avenue of liberation from constraints. In his online performances of poetry, Khiev's rhythmic delivery can be likened to that of Kae Tempest's earlier work.

More recently, Tempest has juxtaposed their spoken word poems with music that amplifies the thematic essence of their poetry. Collaborative ventures with hip-hop artists like Kevin Abstract, Lianne La Havas, and Fontaines D.C. exhibit a lineage tracing back to the inception of fusing poetry with Dub Reggae music, as found in the genre of Dub poetry exemplified by UK poets such as Linton Kwesi Johnson, Benjamin Zephaniah, Jean' Binta' Breeze, Mikey Smith and Roger Robinson.

Creative Practices

This work is not about class, race or prison reform but it acknowledges that there is a coercive process within prisons that seeks not only to rehabilitate the offender but also those associated with the offender, such as family or friends. The stigma attached to being convicted and incarcerated is extended to close family members. This phenomenon, as

Freeman suggests, may be attributed to the perception of crimes as 'offences against the social order,' (Freeman 2009, p.135-137) which places the offender in a category perceived as 'outside of society' and therefore inherently different from other members.

Consequently, being associated with an offender results in the offender and their family being seen as fundamentally 'different from and inferior to "normal" members of society' (Freeman 2009, p.135-137) This situation invariably 'carries a significant stigma', as Freeman (Freeman 2009, p.135-137) points out, affecting all parties involved.

Once entered within the system, both are acted upon by a regime that requires strict adherence to imposed routines. Rehabilitation obliges the offender to conform to externally imposed rules, dress codes, times and sanctions, ultimately remodelling his behaviour to emulate that of a compliant citizen. The same coercion to comply is exerted upon the visitor when they attend the prison to see a loved one or friend. At each stage, they are required to submit their identification, comply with dress codes, and observe rigid rules that range from visitation times to the duration of a hug. To rationalise this process, many choose to write about their experience as 'the act or experience of writing brings a sense of awareness, a transformed identity, and a deeper understanding of the individual writer's place in the world' (Raab 2014, p.187).

Writing, especially in challenging times, is a proactive creative process. It is a form of art that tangibly connects our thoughts and feelings and is an invaluable tool for reviewing and adjusting them. Further, as a tool, it can be useful to 'push boundaries, to ask questions, to learn more about our art and our role within it' (Skains 2018, p.82-97). In seeking to articulate an idea or feeling through imagery, metaphor or simile, or foreground a point through repetition or rhyme, the writer is able to conceptualise their thoughts and emotional landscape through a creative lens. It is this distance that liberates the writer from the trauma of the experience. This PhD seeks to explore how, within the range of texts about prison. On the website, *Psychology Today*, Raab suggests that the use of poetry 'succinctly puts a voice to innermost feelings' (D. Raab, Transcendence and Transformation with Poetry 2022, www.psychologytoday.com) It can be seen as a stabilising activity when the world seems chaotic as it 'helps provide a dialogue for what the poet is experiencing'

(D. Raab, *Transcendence and Transformation with Poetry* 2022, www.psychologytoday.com) and thus emerges as a liberatory form when writing about prison experience.

My work aims to explore and illuminate the tensions and reality of the coercive process within the prison system for offenders and their families. The process of having a loved one enter the prison system is one made up of many moving parts. There are a bewildering number of different stages to get through, different organisations to engage with, timelines to adhere to and processes to navigate. All mesh together on a continuum towards court appearances, sentencing, and ultimately prison. However, at the time, these parts can seem disparate and disjointed and thus can be hard to process in a meaningful way. Markham notes, 'We comprehend the world in moments, fragments, glimpses. I might see something one way one day and completely revise my understanding of it another based on any number of things that happened' (Markham 2017, <https://annettemarkham.com>). My work aims to fuse these disparate moments, through multiple perspectives, to provide an overview of moving through the prison system.

Bricolage, Found Forms and Verbatim

My work 'stitches' together the fragmented and distinct parts of the process, which are commonly obscured from view in literature or media representations of prison, to create a fuller picture. In doing so it reveals a more tangible 'whole' that gives a representation of what it is like to be involved with the prison system. To work towards this collective whole, and more accurately reflect the different registers of written and spoken language, I elect to use different forms and styles of writing as well as making use of found forms and adopting a verbatim approach.

In adopting a bricolage approach to the range of archive, found material I can illustrate the confounding effects of a system which aims to rehabilitate not just the offender but the family and friends of the offender. Using a bricolage approach with found material that has a prescribed structure lends itself to the exploration and illustration of the institutional

framework of prison. In using the format of prison writing paper, my male characters define themselves in opposition to the expectations of a system (that seeks to eliminate individualism and promote conformation) by writing about their thoughts, feelings and experiences within the system. Markham, in her online blog, *Bricolage: A Keyword in Remix Studies* suggests that 'Bricolage can be characterised as an action one takes (as a bricoleur), an attitude (or epistemology), and the resulting product or outcome of both. It is also an approach built (and/ or well-suited) for political resistance' (Markham 2017, <https://annettemarkham.com>).

Peter Reading's *C*

The poet Peter Reading makes use of 'all kinds of material' such as 'conversations, monologues, medical reports, articles from learned journals' (from the inside dustjacket of the collection *C*) in his collection *C*, published in 1984. The collection is focused on cancer, the terminal cancer of the narrator and others, and explores the parameters of its expression by the patient, doctors and caregivers. Interspersed with the found forms, Reading also uses a wide range of poetic forms such as the sonnet, acrostic, haiku, tanka and limerick. This use of a range of forms reflects the struggle and drive to seek different solutions to what inevitably is an incurable problem that sees 'the frightened hopeful ascending, the terrified despairing descending' (Reading 1984, p.9). Arguably, the continuous shift in form also reflects the continuous changes in the narrator's physical form, wellness, physical deterioration, and mental adjustments of the narrator.

In the same way, the different found forms in my project help to frame the content within the prescribed structures of the therapeutic and legal system. Using found forms cements the narrative in the mundane, everyday, bureaucratic procedures that define the essence of prison visitation. Further, by using found forms, I can represent the physical adjustments that all the characters undergo, for example, limited freedom of movement, loss of physical privacy, and loss of physical autonomy when they enter the prison system and show their resistance.

Reading's use of one hundred, '100-word units' (Reading 1984, p.8) similarly shows the restrictions the narrator finds in his predicament and how poetry becomes an act of resistance for him. In many ways, it is his only escape. Of the narrative voice, Twiddy submits that:

The narrator here suggests that although imagination and metre have merit in their capacity to obscure reality, they are insufficiently illusory. At times, however, cancer demands that poetry provide not medicinal escapism, but resistance' (Twiddy 2015, p.9-17).

Within my collection, the characters can also be seen to perform their acts of defiance and resistance against the constraints of imposed structures. For example, the prison-issued (and HMP identity stamped) note paper is used by one character to explain how to navigate the prison system by taking advantage of his position of privilege. In detailing how he accesses specific facilities, such as drug rehabilitation workshops and prayer meetings despite not suffering from addiction nor being religious, he resists remaining in the 'place of disciplinary monotony.' (Foucault 1977, p. 141). Instead, he cynically takes advantage of attending group workshops to avoid the monotony of remaining in his cell and on his wing.

At the beginning of the collection C, the narrator embarks upon coping with his predicament by writing, stating,

How we hate you, busy, ordinary, undying –
Taxi-driver, purveyor of the Evening Star, secretary bouncing
puddings of malleable flesh. Incongruously, I plan 100 100-word
units. What do you expect me to do – break into bloody haiku?

Verse is for healthy
arty-farties. The dying
and surgeons use prose. (Reading 1984, p.9)

Reading highlights the need for individuals, who have no control over their situations, to try to gain order by writing their thoughts down. Further, Reading frames how characters express their situation and how others categorize or respond to it in a tight structure of one hundred-word poems. The limitation of words reflects the limited time patients have left available to them. Each poem is a snapshot that simultaneously permits the reader insight into the narrator's experience and gives a brief window into the drudgery of illness.

The struggle that Reading's characters are shown to experience is mirrored in the mother's and other characters' narration in my collection. Joanna struggles to come to terms with a situation over which she feels she has no control as does her son Finn and the other offender Liam. Similarly, the use of distinct forms and formats for each character in my collection implies, similar to Reading's use of form, the institutional framework that the character opposes or challenges. Joanna's use of poetry and diary is framed as a therapeutic response and is a manifest desire to have an anchor in a turbulent and tumultuous time. In the same way, my bricolage approach to using found forms and original poetry sheds light on those procedural and bureaucratic aspects of the prison system which are commonly left out of narratives but are confounding and disconcerting for the individual.

Reading's use of bricolage (a combination of both found forms and poetic forms) employs a range of different registers and examples of language. The language defines the characters' illness as much as it suggests personality traits. This is mimetic of the way that, in an institutional setting, language can become reductive and depersonalised. Effectively, the language used about the main character defines him through the progress of his illness and the procedures he undergoes, 'Then I was labelled: a plastic strap was snapped round my wrist and inside its waterproof sheath was my name and number and what I was in for – colostomy' (Reading 1984, p.37).

Thus, in adopting a bricolage approach to found material, I was able to show how the characters resist the restrictions and structures that they find themselves in. In expressing a character's thoughts and feelings within a counselling mood diary or prisoner email, I could

provide an insight into the coercive and restrictive processes individuals experience when caught up in the legal system. The found forms I have appropriated consist of official documents, counselling therapy logs, mood diary templates, and recorded police interview transcripts. In using the found forms I attempt to illustrate the small ways that individuals resisted coercive impositions. I have incorporated verbatim techniques with the appropriate forms to further consolidate and locate the reader in the narrative.

As a poet, I have tried to ‘offer a credible (re)presentation for emotional ‘narrative and dramatic effect’’ (S. Hyde 2016, Loughborough University). The intention of the work is not to tackle broader subjects like the portrayal of masculinity, the disparities and biases in policing, arrests, and sentencing, or the policies and reforms within prisons. Rather, the work strives to shine a spotlight on an experience often concealed within this genre; that is the process of entering the prison system as a relative of an offender.

Defiant Language

In the UK, Dub poetry emerged as a vehicle for articulating the lived experiences and challenges faced by Black communities, especially within the framework of racism and discrimination. Dub poets persist in addressing social and political concerns, encompassing matters such as racism, impoverishment, and disparity. In exploring poetic forms of resistance, Dub Poetry occupies a central position. This significance is attributed not only to the genre's ability to highlight instances of oppression, racism, discrimination, and violence, thereby serving as a form of resistance against these elements, but also to its inherent association and use of Dub Reggae. Despite its mainstream accessibility and popularity, Dub Reggae is rooted in resistance against a colonial culture ‘manifest in the oppressive political policy of the Jamaican Government’ (Lacey 2023, [http: hemisphericinstitute.org](http://hemisphericinstitute.org)) of the 1960s. By harnessing the power of Dub Reggae as its musical foundation, Dub Poetry effectively enacts a dual form of resistance against injustices.

Linton Kwesi Johnson’s poem *Sonny’s Lettah (Anti-Sus)*, is written in the form of a letter ‘Brixton Prison / Jebb Avenue / Landan south-west two / Ingran’ (Johnson 2002, p.25-27) and

describes how two brothers, Sonny and Jim, are stopped and arrested by the police under the 'Sus Law'. Linton Kwesi Johnson foregrounds the institutional racism (and associated violence) perpetrated by the UK police against black youths through the enforcement of Section 4 of the 1824 Vagrancy Act in the 1970s colloquially known as the 'Sus Law'. This legislation granted police the power to stop, search, and arrest individuals who they suspected of loitering with the intent to commit an arrestable offence. In practice, the Act led to an imbalanced number of young black men being subjected to stop-and-search procedures, primarily due to implicit biases and racially discriminatory attitudes targeting black youths. Poet, Hugh Boatswain said of his experience of the act 'the problem with the sus for us was that it was...it was enough simply to be black and in the wrong place at the wrong time' (Maggs 2019, <https://irr.org.uk>).

Johnson's *Sonny's Lettah* gives an alternative narrative against the official perception of the 'sus law'. Under the guise of a personal and private letter from an incarcerated son to his mother which details the circumstances of the arrest, Johnson publicly criticises the injustice and police aggression endured by Black Britons as a result of the sus law. This is achieved through the strategic use of elements such as form, structure, rhythm and, in particular, his use of Jamaican Patois. In this use of language, Johnson challenges the cultural hierarchy of power not only by recording Police brutality but also by subverting the standard form of English. In this way, his poetry can be viewed as liberatory. Christian Habekost's commentary on the use of patois suggests:

For dub poets, the use of Patois/'Patwa'/Jamaican language is crucial...as a programmatic statement ...'Creole English vs. Standard English' is extended to mean 'language of the people vs. language of the establishment' (Habekost 1993, p.63).

The poem presents the brutality inflicted upon the brother, as well as the retaliatory violence, without resorting to sensationalism. Thereby it defies the conventional prison narrative that often exploits violence for dramatic effect. In doing so, the poem manages to occupy a unique position within prison literature, addressing violence

without succumbing to the trope, yet still maintaining a presence within its thematic context. Another way in which the poem resists the dominant prison trope lies in the direct address to the maternal figure and the recurrent use of 'Mama.' This deliberate focus on the maternal presence within the poem serves to position the mother figure at its core, implying the pivotal role mothers assume in providing support to their incarcerated sons.

In the article *Resistance and the Dub Griot*, Kim Evelyn comments on the lineage of Multicultural London English (MLE) and its roots in the patois employed within the domain of dub poetry:

As dub poetry developed, it addressed the experiences of Jamaican and Caribbean migrants and over the decades Jamaican Patwah became one of predominant linguistic threads in what has been described as Multicultural London English as it was combined with the speech of other groups in the city (Evelyn 2020, p.5)

In the predominant use of MLE in Grime, it can be argued that the music genre owes as much to dub poetry as it does to hip-hop, rap and UK garage. As Grime uses language that resists cultural standardisation, it owes a direct inheritance to dub poetry and can be seen as a natural conclusion. This resistance is evident not only in the language employed by my character, Liam, but also in the frequent references made to East London Grime MCs such as Crazy Titch and Durty Goodz, in the communication with his brother, Max.

Readers are invited to draw their own conclusions about the parallels drawn between Liam's imprisonment and that of Crazy Titch. However, this comparison serves to highlight Liam's use of MLE, which, linguistically, resists the imposition of cultural norms associated with standard English. Further parallels exist in Liam's use of MLE as it demonstrates the same resistance and defiance seen in Linton Kwesi Johnson's use of Jamaican Patois in '*Sonny's Lettah*'.

It is useful to contextualise the references that the character Liam makes to the two Grime MCs and therefore understand his alignment with them. These grime artists, Crazy Titch (real name Carl Dobson) and his older brother Durrty Goodz (real name Dwayne Mahorn) carry a cultural caché of resistance largely attributed to Crazy Titch's prison sentence. In 2006, a significant legal case unfolded involving Crazy Titch (Carl Dobson), Durrty Goodz (Dwayne Mahorn), and Anthony Green (stepfather to Crazy Titch), who were collectively on remand for the murder of record producer Richard Holmes. At the time, their ages were twenty-three, twenty-five, thirty-five, and twenty-one respectively. During the court proceedings, both Carl Dobson and Anthony Green were found guilty of the murder and subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment, with a parole eligibility set at thirty years. Dwayne Mahorn, on the other hand, was acquitted of both the charges of murder and manslaughter.

Crazy Titch's 2005 mixtape *Crazy Times Vol 1* achieved significant success within the underground scene, garnering a devoted following. The mixtape resonated with the aspirations of working-class youth, offering an avenue to transcend their cultural limitations. The "*Justice4Titch*" campaign highlights the significance of Grime lyrics, particularly those of Titch that:

Voiced the lived experiences of working-class kids while shining a light on our underrepresented communities. Every deprived housing estate was influenced by Grime music, it challenged the powers that be and offered a 'way out'.
(Change.org 2019, <https://www.change.org>)

His conviction in 2006 effectively stopped further any further career progress, however, despite being incarcerated, Crazy Titch was able to release a sequel to his first album in 2010. In doing so, his name and presence within the Grime scene remained relevant. Further, collaborations with his brother, Durrty Goodz, and other Grime artists such as M Huncho, Terror Danjah, Stanaman and on Stormzy's 2017 *Gang, Signs and Prayer* album ensured that as an artist, Crazy Titch is not entirely subsumed by the prison system and thus into irrelevance and invisibility.

Of particular note though is Durrty Goodz' song *Letter 2 Titch* which functions not only as a challenge to the conviction 'I'm still shocked that you got a bid...i can't sleep at night...Thinking they was always gonna send man down...Even though they knew none of us shot him' (Goodz 2007, <https://l-hit.com/en/1846311>) but also as a statement of refusal to let Titch's name fade from memory as it states ' Even though they try to tell me that i can't say your name/On the radio, i say it anyway' (Goodz 2007, <https://l-hit.com/en/1846311>).

Durrty Goodz, uses the epistolary form in his track *Letter to Titch* 'Yo, what up titch? It's been a minute, we ain't spoke, what up kid?/ I know you're holding it up' (Goodz 2007, <https://l-hit.com/en/1846311>) in the same way that Johnson does in *Sonny's Lettah*. However, unlike Johnson's poem, which employs a poetic persona, Sonny, to spotlight injustice, "*Letter 2 Titch*" takes on a direct first-person approach. The intimacy of the personal voice, displayed in both *Sonny's Lettah* and *Letter 2 Titch* transforms personal (and apparently personal) experience to magnify, and make available to an audience, the impact of prison on family members.

Mahorn outlines the conflicting feelings at the verdict 'And they said "mahorn not guilty"/In my soul i was mixed with emotions' (Goodz 2007, <https://l-hit.com/en/1846311>) suggesting some resistance to the construction of Grime being a music of crime. His regret at events and expression of sorrow 'Only if i coulda rewind time/Cah we can see that the scene does miss you/Stratford and plaistow miss you/The kids in the hood, they miss you/If only it coulda been different' (Goodz 2007, <https://l-hit.com/en/1846311>) form the backbone of the song.

Furthermore, both works convey a sense of regret for not being able to protect a sibling. In *Sonny's Lettah*, this sentiment is expressed in the lines 'I doun know how to tell ya dis/For I did mek a solemn promise/To tek care a lickle Jim,' (Johnson 2002, p.25-27) while in *Letter 2 Titch*, it is captured in the lines 'And I told you I'll look over you, soldier/That was my word from Dwayne not Durrty' (Goodz 2007, <https://l-hit.com/en/1846311>). This brotherly dynamic of protection, replacing the mother-son

relationship, takes centre stage between the brother characters Liam and Max in my work.

Found Forms

The poetic approach of Found Poetry or Found Forms, as it is also known, can be traced back to the early twentieth century and has its roots in the Dadaism and Surrealism movements whose focus was on 'the unconscious, chance, and juxtaposition in their work' (Simmons University College 2020, <https://simmonslibguides.com>). The appropriation of everyday objects which 'became a signature of Dada' is also an underpinning approach in Found Poetry 'which utilizes any pre-existing text, whether "literary" in nature or not, as the source of a new poetic creation.' (Simmons University College 2020, <https://simmonslibguides.com>). Pioneers of this approach encompass Ezra Pound, who incorporated an array of texts into "*Cantos*," ranging from personal letters by political figures and heads of religious bodies, to official documents issued by banks and governments. Similarly, T.S. Eliot employed this technique in "*The Waste Land*," weaving in texts from opera, Shakespeare, and ancient Greek sources.

The form gained prominence and popularity in the mid-twentieth century, alongside the Pop Art movement, with exponents such as William Burroughs, Brion Gysin and Tom Phillips. Annie Dillard, in her Found Form collection entitled *Mornings Like This*, said of the form:

(it is) the literary equivalents of Warhol's Campbell's soup cans and Duchamp's bicycle...this is an urban, youthful, ironic, cruising kind of poetry. It serves up whole texts, or interrupted fragments of texts. (Dillard 1996, p.ix)

In drawing from existing material, Found Poetry is able to 'turn(s) the continuous verbal undertone of mass culture up full volume for a moment, offering a chance to see and hear with a shock of recognition' (R. Gross 1973, p.4). In doing so, 'found poetry has emerged as a method to "crystallize" and present findings in both aesthetic and accessible forms' (Amos 2019, p.16-24). The use of this approach has evolved from the strict use of verbatim text,

arranged in poetic form, to more flexible methods including 'cut-up', 'free-form remixing', and 'erasure'.

As the name implies, cut-up poetry is the physical dissection of original text into smaller segments which are then organised and arranged in such a way as to form new meaning in an original poem. Free-form remixing is similar in that words from the text are rearranged to generate new and perhaps deviant meanings from the source material. Erasure or black-out poetry involves the poet eradicating either by blacking out or obscuring all the words from the source text except for the selected ones which will form the poem. Whilst the original material is not the creation of the poet, the way in which the poet frames the found material creates specific emphasis and focus on ideas within the material which might otherwise be overlooked. However, some critics of the method, such as Annie Robinson suggest that:

working with "pure" found poetry is an act of creative editing in that to "play" with someone else's words carries with it ethical considerations best thought of as acts of either intentionality or translation. It is worked and created by the poet/writer/editor but the words did not spring from the mind of that person — they are other. They were found and edited accordingly with all their potential to be drawn on. (Robinson 2022, p.71–78.)

Nevertheless, the use of found forms offers a means through which complex and often difficult concepts can be critically examined and innovatively explored. An example of how original material can be used to reveal something altogether larger is seen in M. NourbeSe Philip's work "*Zong!*" NourbeSe Philip's cycle of poems exclusively draws upon verbatim excerpts from the case report, *Gregson vs. Gilbert*, chronicling the abhorrent massacre of enslaved Africans aboard the Dutch slave ship *Zong* during the latter part of the 18th century. In reconfiguring and recontextualising the content of the legal report, or 'editing' it as Robinson would have it, NourbeSe Philip unveils the incomprehensible madness and horror that the dispassionate legal documentation overlooks. Of the work NourbeSe Philip says:

I use the text of the legal report almost as a painter uses paint or a sculptor stone — the material with which I work being preselected and limited. Henry Moore observed that his manner of working was to remove all extraneous material to allow the figure that was “locked” in the stone to reveal itself. It is an image that has always appealed to me, although I work with words rather than stone. (Philip 2008, p.198)

My own work uses a combination of both free-form remixing and use of verbatim with established and official document frameworks. Like NourbeSe Philip, the material I have used is preselected. Police interviews, indictment sheets, HMP regulations, as well as letters and emails are sometimes used verbatim and sometimes reconfigured to present the characters’ experience and to reveal new insights.

Monica Prendergast argues that ‘found poetry can present participant’s experiences in new ways leading to new, ‘different,’ and emancipatory understandings’ (Prendergast 2006, p.378). The use of these found forms offers the reader a visceral engagement with, and vicarious understanding of, an experience that is more likely outside of conventional life experience. Leavy suggests that ‘poetry is a form that itself brings attention to silence (or as a poet might say to space) and also relies on emotional evocation as part of meaning making’ (Leavy 2015, p.51). In using found forms, I focus attention on that which is often unspoken or ignored in the prison trope.

Verbatim

The use of verbatim techniques, that is the use of appropriating real exchanges, spoken or written in their original form has its roots in verbatim theatre, which in turn originates from documentary theatre of the early twentieth century. The origins of documentary theatre can be traced back to the early 20th century, with the work of playwrights such as Erwin Piscator and later, Bertolt Brecht. These playwrights incorporated documentary elements into their work through the use of journalistic newsreels, audio recordings and projected images on stage to create an immersive experience as a means of political and social

commentary. The modern form of documentary theatre emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, with the rise of the civil rights movement and other social justice movements.

Verbatim theatre, on the other hand, emerged in the 1990s and was made popular by playwrights such as Anna Deavere Smith (*Fires in the Mirror*), Alecky Blythe (*London Road*), and Richard Norton-Taylor (*The Colour of Justice*). These playwrights used verbatim techniques to explore contemporary social and political issues, often giving voice to marginalized communities. So, whilst Verbatim theatre is a type of documentary theatre, it differs in that it uses transcripts of real-life conversations, interviews, and speeches as source material to present a faithful and accurate portrayal of real-life events and people.

Contemporary examples of verbatim theatre include productions by 'Richard Norton-Taylor (*The Colour of Justice*, 1999), Alecky Blythe (*London Road*, 2011) and Gillian Slovo (*The Riots*, 2011) (S.Hyde 2016, <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/25516>). Alecky Blythe's use of material from recorded interviews, in December 2006, with the residents of London Road in Ipswich in the aftermath of five murders of prostitutes demonstrates the power of verbatim. Blythe said of the project that her fascination with the case was 'not what was mainly being reported in the media' which concerned 'the victims or the possible suspects' but instead the 'ripples it created in the wider community' (Blythe 2011, p. v- vi) and how these affected all those who lived adjacent to the events. Blythe's *London Road* looks behind the sensationalised media scope of the events, that took place in Ipswich in 2006, to the effects that they had on the community. Like Blythe's *London Road*, the subject matter of my project focuses on the radiated effects of imprisonment not only on the primary participants but also on the secondary figures. So, my project looks beyond the crimes that are committed to illuminate the effects that the experience of prison has on all those involved.

Blythe's use of verbatim material stemmed from a technique 'originally created by Anna Deavere Smith' which combined 'the journalistic technique of interviewing her subjects with the art of reproducing their words accurately in performance' (Blythe 2011, p. v- vi). However, Blythe contends that *London Road* is a 'departure from purer verbatim form' in that at times characters sing their words instead of speak them as they did in real life.'

Despite this, the 'cadence and rhythms of the original speech patterns' were so accurately conformed to that 'it did not diminish their verisimilitude' (Blythe 2011, p. v-vi). Blyth's use of the original words spoken by real people that exist outside of the text, lend the material a gravitas despite partially being set to music. As such, the use of verbatim material is 'better suited to the task of dealing with serious subject matter' (S. Hyde 2016, <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/25516>). Blyth's departure from pure verbatim affords her the opportunity as an author to shape the material for narrative and dramatic effect and condense the material to affect a cohesiveness of the events and denser understanding for an audience.

Similarly, in my work, I selected specific moments and specific words from the original material, and in some cases created content to accompany the original verbatim. My use of selected verbatim material was then constructed around an invented narrative arc which, for reasons of ethical consideration, deliberately obscured the identity of the real people whose words were used. While this method diverges from the convention of adhering to "pure verbatim," the deliberate infusion of fictionalized particulars within the verbatim content contributes to the crafting of a composite entity that presents as entirely genuine, thereby underscoring the work's key insights into the pervasive nature of prisons' coercive regime.

My approach to verbatim is not exclusive but instead blends it with found forms and original material. The real events and material sit alongside fictionalised elements to create a piece that is a work of dramatic fiction. The format of the collection invites the reader to make comparisons between the two leading male characters, their arrests and their experience in prison. The reader might therefore choose to either read the sections in a linear, consecutive fashion or they might switch between the sections and read them in a concurrent and synchronised manner. Of course, this will have an impact on the overall reception of the piece. However, in having control over how the narrative is consumed, the reader can impose their structure upon it and is permitted the freedom to navigate their way through the work. In turn, this highlights the fact that the characters within the work have little to no autonomy in how time and events within a prison setting take place.

Another way in which my work departs from the verbatim that is seen in Blythe's *London Road* is that some of the characters within my work are fictionalised to preserve the anonymity and privacy of the original persons whose experience was drawn upon. Further, rather than the material arising from research or investigative enquiry, where participants' interviews are made use of, my work stems from personal experience, an archive of documentation, and correspondences arising from my own son's history of offending and imprisonment.

Poetry as a Liberatory Form

The power of poetry as a therapeutic tool is discussed by David Xiang and Alisha Moon Yi in '*A Look Back and a Path Forward*'. Though their exploration of how poetry was useful in lessening the sense of isolation in the pandemic, their observations hold for other circumstances in which the individual is seemingly without autonomy. They pose that individuals who either read or write poetry are better able to manage their circumstances:

Poetry provides a space to vent, to reflect, and to come to terms with their respective situation. It provides an organizational structure with which to tackle new perceptions and deal with negative thoughts.

(Xiang 2020, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles)

In being able to impose structure on their thoughts and feelings, writers anchor themselves in creativity and thus can mitigate, if not fully escape, the confines of imposed restrictions. Moreover, they suggest that engaging with poetry 'restores agency, allowing the individual to be heard and represented' on their terms. This not only 'has immediate benefits' for the person writing the poetry but also for 'the immediate family members' (Xiang 2020, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles). In their work, the Hope Storytelling Project, they observe how the act of writing strengthens 'an individual's sense of identity and voice' and affords them 'avenues of self-expression that cannot be felt through other means of communication' (Xiang 2020, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles). Similarly, Anne Folwell

Stanford's observations about women's experience of writing poetry in *Cook County Jail* concludes that when there are so many variables over which an individual has no control, then writing can simultaneously provide stability and freedom:

Jail, it is a place between arrest and conviction, a place of waiting, a twilight zone where rules arbitrarily shift, roommates come and go, tire assignments change for no apparent reason....it is a place of radical dislocation, in which the writing that emerges often become both grounding and liberating. (A.F. Stanford 2004, p.277-301)

Stanford goes on to assert that the act of writing 'becomes an act of resistance' which empowers the writer in 'a place that attempts to deny power to those who are imprisoned there' (A. F. Stanford 2004, p.278). Thus, writing poetry in prison affords the writer a sense of autonomy and power, both of which they are routinely denied in their circumstances. The individual is granted the capacity for creation, reflection, and resistance and this in turn leads to a sense of liberation from their situation. In reflecting, the writer 'stands back from' themselves...and in this sense all reflection is in fact freedom' (Hovey 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles>). Therefore, poetry is an apposite vehicle for bearing the freight of intense emotion and providing the space to come to terms with it. It is thus a liberating form of writing as, in the transposing of visceral thoughts and feelings to paper, the writer 'moves [our] internal thoughts onto the written page, creating a space for [our] inner thoughts to be in the world in a tangible way' (Hovey 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles>)

It is in the craft of writing about the chaos of experience that sense is made. Whilst Jackie Kay does not believe that 'you can just put anything onto the page' she does ascribe to the therapeutic benefits of writing about difficult things:

What is interesting is creating a form, and working with it, and through that you make sense of chaos. That's the challenge for me as a writer, confronting emotional and difficult things that have happened to you, and turning them into a sonnet, a memoir or a monologue. (Jackie Kay 2012, www.thebottleimp.org.uk)

My work seeks to exemplify how poetry is a tool and an accessible form of writing that each character uses. Of the four characters in the novel three of them, Joanna, her son Finn and Liam who is also serving time, all actively engage in writing. Joanna's route into poetry initially stems from therapeutic exercises prescribed by her counsellor. Although at the outset, she is self-conscious about writing poetry, she acclimatises rapidly and can reflect on some of the emotional and traumatic events with which she has had to contend. Her son, Finn, uses poetry as an attempt to marshal his thoughts and, as a coping strategy, mentally construct a persona that appears both nonchalant and shrewd. Therefore, whilst his vulnerability, naivety and privilege are expressed through his communications with his mother, his survival techniques are displayed in his poetry written both for himself and for his friends. In doing so his writing resists his acknowledgement and subliminal understanding that he has failed in his drugs business enterprise.

Conversely, Liam, Finn's counterpart, uses poetry in the form of Grime lyrics to express his rage at a system that he sees as unjust and harsh despite his criminal activity. Though he writes for himself to express his outrage at his treatment, he also is mindful of writing for a wider audience. By writing using this form, Liam aligns himself with Grime culture and thus sees it as a potential way to gain financially from it. Additionally, his adoption of Grime anchors him within an artistic genre that is unrepentant and defiant.

The fourth character is Liam's brother, Max. Whilst he does not engage in writing poetry directly, he is encouraging and supportive of his brother Liam's collection of Grime verse. He sees the subculture of Grime as an avenue of escape, not only from the harsh sentence imposed on his brother but also from their poverty, an underlying factor in Liam's criminal activities.

Each character navigates the personal journal of their experience, engaging with writing poetry in different styles to crystallise their thoughts and feelings. Joanna and Finn not only try to make sense of their parallel situations but also try to navigate the strain that prison exerts on their relationship. In the crafting of their work, each character is able to gain a degree of emotional separation from the impact of the event. This affords them the space

to reflect upon their situations more rationally and analytically. In their attempts to impose structure, order and an individual poetic 'style' on their experiences, the characters liberate themselves from the emotional millstone that the prison system places around their necks. Further, in doing so, in the writing of poetry, they can mentally resist the external coercive pressures of the prison system placed upon their physical beings.

Conclusion

The impetus for this work emerged from a decade-long experience of and familiarity with the punitive and intimidating regimes within UK prisons, notably through the lens of visiting my son. Whilst I saw that prisoners were sometimes visited by their friends, the regular visits to prisoners were principally made by family members. During the time that I was visiting my son, I noticed that the range of coercive mechanisms intended to punish and rehabilitate offenders also affected their families. Therefore, the coercive environment of prisons which impacted both inmates and their families, became a central theme in my work.

Mechanisms of coercion appeared in the simplest of things such as conforming to a prescribed dress code which dictated specifics such as the permitted length of skirts or earrings, the appearance of jeans or even permissible graphics on t-shirts or sweatshirts. It appeared to me that these restrictions, as well as the many others aforementioned in this commentary, imposed on families during visitations, served a dual purpose: to adhere to security protocols but more importantly to disempower and control those who regularly visited prisoners. In the simplest of ways, failure to comply with the dress code ensured failure to proceed with a visit. However, a broader undercurrent pervaded each visit. Visitors were implicitly accused of being responsible for their loved one's crimes through some non-compliance with societal expectations, casting them as failed mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, or wives.

Over time, the families that I saw regularly visiting their brothers, sons, uncles, nephews or fathers in prison gave the appearance of becoming inured to these small acts of coercion

and acquiescent. The loss of autonomy through ‘the oppressiveness of situational security measures, such as CCTV cameras, and the endless ‘rules about rules about rules’ together with the ever-present ‘the prison’s coercive potential is always coiled in the background’ (Crewe 2011, p514-518) resulted in an acceptance of a regime which seemed to be designed to rehabilitate the offenders’ families as much as it was designed to control the offenders. Moreover, the heightened scrutiny and stringent regulations associated with each visit engendered an unmistakable perception among visitors that their identities, as much as the offender they were visiting, underwent scrutiny during their presence.

Though my experience as the mother of an offender was less extreme and intense than that of my son who served multiple sentences, I believe that the accretion of minor intrusions into personal privacy, restrictions on personal autonomy, and routine humiliations experienced during security checks gradually manifested in the same negative effects. I argue that the families of offenders undergo comparable adverse effects, such as ‘the feeling that one’s very personality was being assaulted’ (Crewe 2011, p513 -518), due to the overt and constant scrutiny they face, akin to the experiences of the offenders themselves. I felt continuously anxious and overwhelmed and began to feel a strong sense of shame. I do not think my experience was unique to me. Despite there being no basis for shame or paranoia, I felt both as a consequence of the security checks and subsequent suspicion I was subject to as a visitor to my son. Thus, writing about the experience became a way to examine the process with a degree of separation from the primary unsettling experience.

The resulting work might well be viewed as confessional, in as much as it draws upon my personal experiences (and those of my son) with the prison system. However, in a similar way to Jackie Kay’s approach in *The Adoption Papers*, my work transcends the confessional mode. To broaden the perspective on how the coercive prison regime impacts individuals, I distribute the weight of experience across various poetic personae instead of solely presenting my viewpoint. This approach aims to offer insights into how the prison environment affects both inmates and visitors. The diverse viewpoints of the characters reveal nuanced insights into the coercive nature of prison. Together, their experiences paint a multi-perspectival view of the psychological toll of incarceration, not just on the individual

but also on their family. By doing this, the work moves away from purely personal introspection found in confessional modes by exploring the experience of the prison regime from different perspectives. This is further emphasised through the use of a range of forms that include the use of verbatim material to construct facsimiles of solicitor letters, unadulterated and transformed transcripts of police interviews, letters, emails and of course original poetry. This approach incorporates a more diverse perspective and storytelling approach.

My experience of visiting prisons led to the awareness of the misleading nature of dominant tropes about prisons. Ross, in *Prison Tropes "R" Us*, suggests that:

the general public has a poor understanding of what goes on in correctional institutions and this is largely because their opinions about this branch of the criminal justice system are based upon the knowledge and myths they have derived from popular culture portrayals.

(Ross 2021, para 4:<https://jeffreyianross.com>)

Dominant tropes, regardless of the medium, routinely detailed 'physical confrontation on the yard, somebody being shived, a prison rape, or intimidating looking gang members' (Ross 2021, para 5:<https://jeffreyianross.com>). This seemed to conflict with the repeated experience my son described across several different prisons in the UK. His descriptions spoke more of the frustration and boredom he encountered when serving a sentence. His testament confirmed Ross' assertions that 'life inside jails and prison is mostly boring both for the inmates and the correctional officers who work there' (Ross 2021, para 6:<https://jeffreyianross.com>). Consequently, my work confronts widely accepted narratives about prisons and offenders. It aims to offer a more nuanced perspective which drives the narrative beyond the conventional boundaries depicted by familiar tropes as the vulnerable inmate who is bullied, the well-connected and influential prison kingpin, the corrupt or vindictive guard or the drug-carrying visitor. In these tropes, coercion is often portrayed as a personal power dynamic. However, my work aims to explore coercive dynamics on a broader scale within the prison experience.

Kay's narratives and alternative perspectives on adoption, Blyth's verbatim interviews with London Road residents, and Reading's use of found forms about cancer offer profound insights into challenging subjects. Their diverse approaches invite reflection from various angles. It is the transformative power of personal verbatim material and found forms that significantly influences my own use of unconventional forms.

An essential aspect of my work lies in exploring how personal narrative content, when placed within specific found forms, creates tension and resistance against their original purposes. Through mediums like prison writing paper, counselling templates, and 'Email a Prisoner' correspondences, my work unveils language's transformative potential against oppressive structures. In my poetry, characters boldly reject the constraints imposed by the prison regime and the monitored written modes of communication. They freely express their emotions and hope, refusing to be stifled by either the watchful eyes of surveillance or the prescribed formats of communication. By authentically expressing themselves within these observed and regulated forms, my characters resist being confined by the potential scrutiny of their thoughts or the limitations of communication's physical form. In doing so, they subtly challenge the coercive regime. In this way, found forms become tools for achieving psychological liberation from imposed limitations. Poetry, therefore, as a distinct form of writing and when expressed in a diverse range of forms becomes 'more than mere writing, a poem is ... a desire for encounter and resistance...' and the words therein become 'weapons of resistance and understanding' (Aktypi 2016, p4).

Drawing from a collection of material gathered over the years, my work employs poetic approaches in different forms such as lyrical poetry, rap and drill to shed light on the impact of coercion within the prison system. Using pre-defined structural formats such as prison writing paper, mood diaries, and WhatsApp texts, I establish poetry as a form of resistance against the challenges faced by writers, particularly within the rigid routines and regimes that confine my characters' lives.

For instance, Finn communicates with his friends on prison paper, expressing his belief that he has outwitted the system. Similarly, Liam uses prison notepaper to pen 'bars' in

anticipation of his music debut while still serving time. The exchanges between Liam and his brother Max reveal that even within a system meant for punishment and rehabilitation, they brazenly scheme to extract money from Joanna.

In contrast, Joanna finds solace in addressing her discomfort through counselling templates rather than plain notepaper. The poetry that my characters write illustrates that 'the experience of poetry can offer crucial 'thinking spaces' in which to reflect on our lives' (Simecek 2016, p310) providing a metaphorical space where an interesting, new formulation of liberation from distress might be achieved. My work suggests that through writing poetry, individuals like Joanna or the other characters in my work can explore their experiences and emotions in a safe and creative space. In doing so, they can potentially gain new insights and thus attain some relief from their distress.

Further, my work demonstrates the power of storytelling, by weaving together diverse techniques and verbatim material, along with original poetry to shine a light on the underlying coercion inherent when visiting an offender in prison. Central to the work is the exploration of poetry in different forms as a tool for resistance and liberation. Christina Domenech, in her TEDx Rio de la Plata talk: Poetry Frees the Soul, suggests that poetry can help prisoners to 'open up about their experiences and find a psychic escape from their confinement through the freedom of the written word' (Kedmey 2015, para 1:<https://ideas.ted.com/>). Her experience of running poetry workshops for prisoners in Buenos Aires, Argentina led her to understand that the restrictions placed upon prisoners were 'not just physical...but psychological' (Kedmey 2015, para 2:<https://ideas.ted.com/>).

While daily life in prison might not resemble that depicted in dominant tropes, being subject to overt and covert rules and codes of conduct does inhibit the free expression of opinions, ideas and emotions. This restriction, evident from my own observations, affects both offenders and their visiting families alike. Poetry offers a means to voice the unspoken, to explore experience and escape the system from which there is no physical escape for some and no psychological escape for others.

By employing different forms of poetic expression, my work seeks to illuminate how the experience of prison impacts not only the offender but also the offender's family. In doing so, it offers a platform for voices to be heard which are often silent or marginalised. As the work concludes it serves as a reminder that the consequences of the prison experience, and the coercive structures therein, reverberate far beyond the offender, to have considerable and broader implications for the family. It further suggests the importance of poetry and creative writing as a means to change perceptions in that 'perhaps if we listened a little more to what they have to say [...] we might understand a little better and judge more wisely' (Spargo 2014, p13). My work is an invitation to listen to voices that emerge not from the dominant narrative tropes of prison, but rather from the margins. It prompts reflection on the familial experience during prison visits and how writing reflectively through various forms of poetry can lead to liberation from the stigma of suspicion and shame imposed by a coercive regime.

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